

SCHOOLS FORUM

TUESDAY, 16 JULY 2019

PRESENT: Martin Tinsley, Hugh Boulter, Andrew Morrison, Christ Tames, Ian Peters, Sarah Cottle, Amanda Dean and Frances Walsh

Officers: James Norris, Helen Huntley, Tracey Anne Nevitt, Kevin McDaniel, Nabihah Hassan-Farooq

APOLOGIES

Apologies of absence were received from Richard Pilgrim, Isabel Cooke and Alison Penny.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY; That the minutes of the meeting held on the 25th April 2019 were agreed a true and accurate record.

HIGH NEEDS FUNDING - QUALITY ASSURANCE OF RESOURCE BASES AND OUTREACH FUNDS

(The Chair and Forum agreed to re-order the agenda items to take item 5- High Needs Funding; Quality assurance of resource bases and outreach funds as the first item of business.)

Helen Huntley gave a verbal presentation on the above titled item. Members were informed that this report sought to provide an update on the Quality Assurance process conducted throughout 2018/2019 of the High Needs Block (HNB) funding for four Resource Bases (RBs) in RBWM and for two schools to provide an outreach service to local schools. Forum Members were told that there were currently four commissioned schools which hosted Resource Provision (RPs) to provide an education for C&YP with SEND and who already had an Education and Health Care Plan. It was highlighted that the four commissioned schools were as follows:

- Charters Secondary School- physical disabilities
- Furze Platt Secondary School- Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Riverside Primary School- Speech and language difficulties
- Wessex Primary School- Hearing impairments

Forum members were informed that two outreach grants from the HNB had been provided to Furze Platt Secondary School who had received £180,000 to support YP in mainstream schools with ASD and Manor Green School which had received £76,000 to support YP in mainstream schools with complex learning difficulties. It was highlighted that there was a robust quality assurance process in place to ensure that RPs and that there was evidenced value for money with all outreach grants. It was also noted that quality assurance visits had been made to each of the RPs and that each school had been asked to complete a quality assurance audit tool which had been based on the current Ofsted frameworks. As part of the visit it was outlined that a range of activities had also been undertaken which included lesson observations, meeting a range of different staff members including the Head teacher, the RP managers, a pupil voice meeting and feedback from parents. Next steps were highlighted as

including the implementation and embedment of service level agreements to be in place for each school to outline the use of funding and commissioning arrangements. It was also noted that quality assurance visits would be arranged for the academic year , autumn team of 2019/2020 to focus on the use of funding at the relevant school. Members were told that an agreement would then be made regarding the continuation of these grants for the 2020/2021 year.

At the conclusion of the update the Chair queried whether any other schools had come forward and expressed an interest. It was confirmed that 10 other schools had shown interest and that Ben Wright would provide further matric information. It was outlined that there was currently £1.2 million available and that interest was expressed from both primary and secondary schools, with a particular focus on ASD but had now widened to SEND and high behavioural needs.

Kevin McDaniel, Director of Children Services queried the rational for RBs and it was confirmed that there was now one panel as opposed to the SEN panel and that these groups would be invited to the panel for decision making on complex and different decisions. Members discussed the statements relating to ECHC plans and how the dates were conflicting and has caused concerns when assessing individual cases previously. It was noted that RBWM had faced local pressures in relation to the provision in October for places and that clarification of ECHP dates had provided better planning for schools. Helen Huntley confirmed that two schools were currently in receipt of the outreach grant and that this funding currently supported children in mainstream schools to support challenging behaviours and there was confidence that this funding had been spent well.

BUDGET MONITORING AND FORECAST 2019/20

James Norris, Head of Finance (RBWM), Achieving for Children outlined the above titled item. Forum Members were informed that the current DSG budget for 2019/2020 was £63,780,000 which reflected the following in year budget adjustments totalling a net reduction of £652,000. Members were told that the budget would be updated by the ESFA to reflect the final Early Years and High Needs Block allocations for 2019/2020. It was highlighted that budget reductions consisted of increased recoupment for academies direct funding of £652,000. Forum members were told that the current projected net in year deficit was £80,000. Material variances were as follows:

- Early Years Block Private, voluntary and Independent nurseries clawback settlement 2018/2019 estimated at £250,000. ESFA updated guidance due June 2019.
- High Needs Block £340,000 including Top up funding £300,000 based on 2018/2019 and additional place funding £40,000 reflecting indicative pupil numbers
- Others net - £10,000

Forum Members were told that the net overspend would present an additional pressure on the dedicated schools grant general reserve which as of the 31st March 2019 was a deficit of £917,000, it was highlighted that the revised projected deficit as of 31st March 2020 could increase to £1,373,000. Future action included working with local partners to drive down costs of high needs services back in line with Government grant allocations as the level of overspend in the High Needs services remained unaffordable for RBWM. It was also noted that a number of successful cost control measures and savings initiatives that were implemented in 2018/19 would be carried forward into 2019/2020. Members were also told that in addition to these new strategies that

At the conclusion of the update, members queried whether there had been an overall improvement since 2018/19 and it was confirmed that there had been improvements in both risk and forecasting. Members commented that the update showed good news all around and that there was a continuance to good service contracts. James Norris highlighted that the underspend had been rolled forward and should be released back to schools, which was estimated as £5-6k per school placement. Future actions would include maintaining costs with

AFC, and mitigating inflation rises, maximising CCG funding and keeping below the 1% threshold.

Forum members queried whether the £100,000 underspend would be returned to providers and it was confirmed that under the current formula that this money would go into reserves. Any extra funding through deprivation should not be overspent and that the £100,000 would go back into the DSG funding pot.

Kevin McDaniel commented that an annual conference had been held and that the nation formula for funding had been discussed and the impact. Members were told that the Minister for Education had been in attendance and there had been positive recognition. It was outlined that there were currently large amounts of pressure building within the system for health and wellbeing and SEND. The Chairman asked whether there was a particular localised view on funding and it was noted that the lead member, Councillor Carroll had a clear focus of the disadvantaged children and areas of deprivation and that these were high on his agenda. The School improvement forum would drive inclusion, support with CAL block monies.

ACTION- That Councillor Carroll be invited to the next Schools Forum meeting.

The Chairman highlighted that he had received communication from the Ascot Heads Cluster and that they would like to be represented. It was clarified that membership of the forum was based on the number of children within maintained schools within the borough.

Vote of thanks; A vote of thanks was placed on record for Penny Francis and her contributions over the past 8 years to the Schools Forum. Members wished to thank her for her positive contributions and time given to the advancement of the forums agenda.

The meeting, which began at 2pm finished at 2.24pm.

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....