

SCHOOLS FORUM

THURSDAY, 16 JANUARY 2020

PRESENT: Hugh Boulter, Martin Tinsley, Mike Wallace, Isabel Cooke, Richard Pilgrim, Amanda Dean, Sarah Cottle, Chris Tomes and Joolz Scarlett.

Officers: Wendy Binmore, Tracey Anne Nevitt, Sarah Ward and James Norris

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Andrew Morrison and Kevin McDaniel. Amanda Hoff submitted her resignation from the Forum and the Chairman thanked her for her input into the Forum.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2019 be approved.

SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS 2019/20

James Norris, Head of Finance (RBWM), introduced the report to Members and explained that it was to provide a summary of any subsequent changes to the draft scheme for Financing Schools that was presented to the Schools Forum on 26 September 2019; the report asked Members of the Forum (for Maintained Schools only) to approve the Scheme for Financing Schools in 2019/20.

The Head of Finance (RBWM) confirmed there had been no major material changes to the scheme, the amendments were to the text of the scheme and the terminology.

All Members unanimously agreed the recommendations of the report.

BUDGET MONITORING AND FORECAST 2019/20

James Norris, Head of Finance (RBWM), explained that the purpose of the report was to provide the Schools Forum with the projected financial position for 2019/20 with associated schedule of Risks & Opportunities; with the projected reserve balance as at 31 March 2020 and an understanding of the financial pressures which were currently being faced. The report asked Members of the Forum to note the contents of the report, including the reported variance, schedule of Risks & Opportunities and the projected deficit balance carried forward as at 31 March 2020.

Members noted the current projected net in-year surplus of £117,000 and the material variances were as follows:

- Early Years Block Private, Voluntary & Independent Nurseries 2018/19 underspend carried forward at (£435,000) after block recalculation.
- High Needs Block £678,000 included increases in volume of Top Up payments and changes placements of children in year between FE colleges and the independent sector.

- Schools Block Growth Fund underspend of (£270,000).
- Miscellaneous central block items totalling (£90,000) underspend.

The Head of Finance (RBWM) added that at this point last year, the figures were showing a slight overspend or were very close to budget but, the position had improved by the last quarter. He confirmed that the main reason was a greater underspend by £26,000 that left the Borough in that position at the end of the year.

All Members noted the contents of the report.

DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT INDICATIVE SETTLEMENT 2020/21

James Norris, Head of Finance (RBWM), introduced the report and stated it was to update the Forum on the indicative settlement 2020/21 for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG); Schools Block, Central School Services Block, Early Years Block and High Needs Block; and to update the Forum on the submission of the draft Authority Pro-forma Took (APT) for schools block funding 2020/21 to the Education Skill Funding Agency (ESFA).

The Chairman stated that paragraph 4.1 of the report talked about the DSG at £1.2m but the report did not deduct funding from the high needs block. Tracy Ann Nevitt explained that Table 1 of the report was an estimate of deductions, the recoupment was being finalised in the coming weeks. Compared to 2019/20, it went from £86m to £92m so there was a significant increase.

Tracy Ann Nevitt had sent out to all schools the finalised formula and the Borough was able to meet that model in full. She was able to look at mobility and any increases in English as an Additional Language (EAL) so EAL was only slightly below the NFF.

The Forum agreed the report was very good news and noted the allocation for the DSG; Schools Block, central Schools Services Block and High Needs Block for the 2020/21 financial year and the details of the 2020/21 APT submission.

SUPPORTING PUPILS AT SCHOOL WITH MEDICAL CONDITIONS

The Forum agreed that due to the Ofsted Inspection that was taking place, they would defer this item to the next meeting.

EARLY YEARS NATIONAL FORMULA 2020-21

James Norris, Head of Finance (RBWM), explained the consultation would go ahead in January 2020 and the proposal was to up to 8p per pupil per hour. The Chairman stated the Forum would know more following the consultation in April 2020 when the results would be available.

The Forum noted the report.

SCHOOLS BLOCK BUDGET 2020-21 DE-DELEGATION RATES

James Norris, Head of Finance (RBWM), introduced the report and explained he was asking the Forum to keep the same rate as 2019 as set out in Table 1. Staff costs had not changed, they had stayed the same and overpayments would be reimbursed, such as maternity costs due. The Forum needed to agree on the primary and secondary sectors separately.

The Chairman asked if maternity costs were at the same rate as maternity costs. Tracy Ann Nevitt responded that she would check with HR and have a look at the policy.

The Forum agreed the de-delegation rates for 2020/21 as set out in Table 1 of the report.

The meeting, which began at 2.00 pm, finished at 2.40 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....