

SCHOOLS FORUM

THURSDAY, 20 JANUARY 2022

PRESENT: Martin Tinsley (Chairman), Chris Tomes (Vice-Chairman), Isabel Cooke, Michael Wallace, Andrew Morrison and Joolz Scarlett,

Also in attendance: Councillor Maureen Hunt

Officers: David Cook, Clive Haines, James Norris, Kevin McDaniel, Sarah Ward and Tracey Anne Nevitt

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received by John Fletcher and Maggie Callaghan.

Andrew Morrison reported he would be late.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no dclarations of interest received.

MINUTES

Resolved unanimously: that the minutes of the meeting held on 16th December 2021 were approved as a true record.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT MONITORING & BROKERING GRANT SUPPLEMENTARY CONSULTATION AND DE-DELEGATION 2022/23

The Forum considered a verbal report regarding school improvement monitoring and brokering grant.

The Head of Finance Achieving for Children informed that at their last meeting the Forum discussed the proposed reduction in funding. This reduced the grant by 50% for 2022/23 and 100% the following year. It had been confirmed that this reduction would be implemented.

Consultation was undertaken with maintained schools, 50% responding, asking three questions:

- Do you support the current service model and the proposal to de-delegate. 10% supported this.
- Do you support the current service and use of our reserve from previous years. 85% of schools supported this.
- Would you support a change in service and not funding from de-delegation. 5% supported this.

Given the results of the consultation it was proposed that we should fund the 2022/23 provision by using existing balances held by de delegation from existing years.

Chris Tomes said that 85% of schools had agreed with the proposal and asked this was funds that maintained schools had paid into and was informed that this was money from the last three years that maintained schools had paid into, £70k would be used and the rest reconciled back to the schools. Given the results of the survey Chris Tomes agreed with the proposal.

Mike Wallace said that 50% response was better than before but still not enough, however 85% of respondents did support the proposal. He supported the proposal and also recommended that a working group be established to look at the options when 100% of funding was removed.

Resolved unanimously: that funding for 2022/23 provision should come from existing balances held and that a working group be established during 2022 to look at future options.

BUDGET MONITORING AND FORECAST 2021/22

The Forum considered the report regarding the latest Budget Monitoring and Forecast for 2021/22.

The Head of Finance Achieving for Children informed the Forum that the report considered the projected financial position for 2021/22 along with a summary of associated Risks and Opportunities; the projected reserve deficit balance as at 31 March 2022 and an understanding of the financial pressures faced in respect of the Dedicated Schools Grant. A new report template was being used so it was accessibility compliant but the content remained the same.

The Forum were informed that table 2 set out the summarised financial position for 2021/22. With regards to the High Needs Block this showed a favourable movement of £260,000 compared to the previously reported position. This related to a reduction in the volume of pupils within the Further Education provision and AFC colleagues reducing the projected costs.

Overall there still remained a £936k in year deficit, combining this with the £1.8 million brought forward deficit this resulted in a £2.7 million pressure which results in a 2% deficit position overall.

The Forum were informed that paragraph 2.7 of the report showed two assumption associated with future risks around the Schools Block and High Needs Block. With regards to High Needs an estimated provision of £450k for future provision for the year had been set, although it was not expected to be exceeded.

The Chairman asked if we knew the number of children with education and health care plans would be coming forward and the Director for Children's Services reported that we received about 12 to 15 requests each week, with about 50 currently active in the process so the amount built into the forecast was a reasonable assumption.#

(Andrew Morrison joined the meeting)

It was noted that a Deficit Management Plan was being produced and would be presented at the April meeting.

Resolved unanimously: that Schools Forum notes the report and:

- i) the cumulative projected reserve deficit balance as at 31 March 2022**
- ii) the Deficit Management Plan would be reported in April 2022.**

DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET ALLOCATION 2022/23

The Forum considered the report regarding an update on the indicative settlement for 2022/23 budget.

The Head of Finance Achieving for Children informed that table 2 set out the DSG December settlement for 2022/23 for each block compared with the provisional allocations received in summer 2021. The Early Years block funding was due to be updated in July 2022 to reflect the January Census.

- The Schools Block saw a decrease of £221k based on pupil lead numbers.
- Schools Block National Non Domestic Rates, allocation would be to sliced and used to pay rates.
- High Needs Block, an increase of £102k and the Supplementary Grant new allocation of £911,000 includes funding in respect of new burdens on the High Needs Block including the new Health and Social Care Levy estimated by the ESFA as 1% pressure on authorities' High Needs budgets.
- Early Years Block provisional allocation for 2022/23 was only provided as part of the December settlement and not included in the summer notification; the £10 million allocation included in table 2 reflects the ESFA funding increase for 2022/23 of 3.4%. It was anticipated that in accordance with regulations, 95% of the increase would be built into the Early Years funding formula with the remaining 5% retained for Central Early Years services. After consultation the results would be brought back to the Forum.

The Forum were also informed that there was the Supplementary Grant new indicative allocation of £2 million that provided support for the costs of the Health and Social Care Levy and wider pressures. The level allocations of the schools' supplementary grant for the 2022/23 would be published in spring 2022. This funding would be allocated through the schools' supplementary grant 2022/23.

The Forum were informed that section 3 of the report showed the budget build process with the final budget due to go to Council in February 2022.

Resolved unanimously: that the Schools Forum noted the report.

The meeting, which began at 2.00 pm, finished at 2.30 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....