

SCHOOLS FORUM

At a meeting of the Schools Forum on Wednesday, 19 January 2022 held remotely

Present: Councillor T. McInerney (Observer)
A. Jones, Democratic Services, HBC
A. Jones, Financial Management, HBC
N Shafiq, Financial Management, HBC
R. Sprigings, Financial Management, HBC
A. Leach, Education, Inclusion & Provision
M. West, Education, Inclusion & Provision, HBC
K. Landrum, (Chair) Primary School with a Nursery Representative
J. O'Connor, PVI Representative
T. Bell, 16-19 Provision Representative
J. Coughlan, Primary Representative - Infant School
N. Hunt, Pupil Referral Unit Representative
J. Wilson, Secondary Governor Representative
E. Haver, Special Academy Representative
A. Sheppard, VA Schools Representative
J. McConville, Secondary Academy Representative
I. Critchley, All Through Schools Representative
L. Roberts, Small Primary Representative
C. Dalton, Secondary Academy Representative
C. Liku, Community Nursery Schools Representative

Also in attendance: one member of the public

Action

SCF13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Heather Austin.

SCF14 MINUTES

The minutes from the meetings held on 13 October 2021 and 3 November 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

SCF15 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2021/22

The Forum received a report of the Operational Director – Finance, which provided the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) forecast outturn for 2021-22.

The DSG allocation for 2021-22 was £130,991,359 which was broken down into four blocks: Schools Block, Central Schools Services Block, Early Years Block and High Needs Block. The report provided explanations on the

forecasts within each block and Appendix A presented the individual budget lines for each block.

The in year position was a deficit of £1,525,151 plus the deficit balance from 2020-21 of £995,742, which gave a cumulative deficit of £2,520,893.

Representatives discussed the following, resulting from the information contained in the report:

- The predicted underspend in Early Years (EY) of £580k due to reducing numbers of children accessing the provision and the recovery of this amount by the DfE;
- The difficulties with the allocation of funding in EY due to the budgets not being confirmed by the Department for Education (DfE) until July 2022;
- The plans for addressing the £2.5m deficit – the root cause of overspend around high needs was the reliance on specialist provision and a lower than average number of SEND pupils accessing mainstream provision;
- the Special School application; Invest to Save; and increasing specialist provision were being put in place;
- The delay with the construction of the new Special SEMH School and the repercussions of this on the High Needs budgets;
- Discussions with DfE on the impacts of the delay with the Special School and the possibility of working with the Yes Trust;
- Potential savings and impacts that the new Special SEMH School would make on provision in the Borough; bearing in mind it would be operated jointly with St Helens Borough Council; and
- The work of the Behaviour Support Team.

It was noted that for the last two years no requests were made to transfer funds from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. However, it was discussed previously that if costs within High Needs Block continued to rise, a further request for transfer of funds would be made for 2022-23. A disapplication request for a 1% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block was submitted to the DfE in November. This equated to an amount of £1,013,903 and in accordance with the consultation, the plan was to use £250,000 to fund three *Invest to Save* proposals and the balance used to reduce the deficit.

Further to the discussions on the Behaviour Support Team, the Chair requested a report on this for the next meeting.

Operational
Director
Education,
Inclusion
and
Provision -

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SCF16 SCHOOLS FUNDING 2022/23

The Forum considered a report of the Operational Director – Finance, which presented the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2022-23.

Representatives were advised that the DSG allocation for 2022-23 was announced on 20 December 2021 at £135,294,589. This was broken down into: Schools Block, Central Schools Services Block; Early Years Block; and the High Needs Block; allocations for each were presented in the report.

An overall budget increase of £4,303,230 was noted however, a reduction of £788,035 would be made by the DfE to the Schools Block and an estimated £3,158,000 would be recouped by the DfE from the High Needs Block – this would leave allocations of £101,390,390 and £19,874,222 respectively. Officers advised that supplementary DSG funding for 2022-23 had been announced by the DfE, but allocations would not be confirmed until the Spring Term.

Officers outlined the change in the way business rates costs will be handled, affecting maintained schools and academies. The allocations for these were included in the figures and more information on how the system would work in practice would be provided once known.

It was announced that the disapplication request for the 1% transfer to High Needs had been approved; so the individual budgets presented had taken this into account. Officers also described the options available for setting the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to be applied to the Schools Block Funding Formula for 2022-23 – the recommendation for this was 1.75%, which required agreement today.

Maintained school representatives were also asked to decide which budgets from the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) they wished to fund. The proposed budgets for de-delegation were sent to Representatives via email yesterday for discussion at the meeting.

RESOLVED: That Schools Forum

Operational
Director - Finance

- 1) note the report;
- 2) agree that the level of Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to be applied to the Schools Block funding formula for 2022-23 is 1.75%; and
- 3) maintained schools' representatives agree to fund the following de-delegated budgets for 2022-23: School contingency, Staff Responsibility, FSM Eligibility, Financial Management, Capital Works, Health and Safety, and Dismissals.

SCF17 BRIDGE SCHOOL OUTREACH AND REINTEGRATION SERVICE

The Forum received a report from Nigel Hunt, Headteacher from the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), which presented the outcomes to the Service Level Agreement (SLA) for The Bridge School Outreach and Reintegration Service.

Schools Forum agreed to release £100k in February 2020 to support the start-up of The Bridge School Outreach Service (now *SEMH Outreach and Reintegration Service*) and the employment of three staff, to cover roles within this service. This amount was increased in June 2021 following agreement at Schools Forum to £125k, to cover staffing and overhead costs.

The report outlined the purpose of the Service and presented its KPI's and outcomes so far, as well as survey feedback from students, parents/carers and schools.

The Bridge School requested an additional two years extension to the current SLA at a cost of £131,200 for each year (1 April 2022 to 31 March 2024). An explanation of costs being incurred was provided to the Forum.

Representatives discussed the performance indicators for the service and the evaluations made by Mr Hunt, the Lead Teacher for the Outreach Service and the Divisional Managers for Placements and 0-25 Inclusions – their report was attached as an appendix – *a Reintegration Service Update* – and gave the service impact for the first 14 months.

It was accepted that although outcomes for the Service were improving, not all performance indicators could

be met. The School did not have capacity to address the needs of all students, as there would always be a percentage of them with more complex needs requiring alternative provision and some at risk of exclusion.

Overall, Representatives supported the Service and agreed to a two-year extension to the current SLA. Ian Critchley abstained from the vote as he was a member of the Management Committee of the Bridge School.

Looking forward, the School requested a review of the terms of the SLA be carried out, to ensure that focused and realistic targets were maintained to reflect the now established service offer. Additionally, an evaluation of the SEMH Outreach and Reintegration Service in line with the local offer was requested, for beyond 2024.

RESOLVED: That the Schools Forum

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) approve the request for an additional two-year Service Level Agreement, to operate The Bridge School SEMH Outreach and Reintegration Service, at a cost of £131,2k each year for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Financial
Management,
HBC

Meeting ended at 5.07 p.m.