

Lancashire Schools Forum meeting of 12 January 2021 at County Hall, Preston

Executive Summary

1. Attendance and Apologies for Absence and 2. Substitute Members

To note attendance and apologies for absence and welcome any substitute members.

3. Forum Membership

To note the Forum membership changes since the last meeting.

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting and 5. Matters Arising

To agree the minutes of the last meeting held on 20 October 2020 and any matters arising.

6. High Needs Block Monitoring 2020/21

To consider the High Needs Block monitoring update for 2020/21.

7. Consideration of the Schools Budget 2021/22

a) Schools Budget 2021/22

To consider the report about the Schools Budget for 2021/22, including information on each of the 4 funding blocks:

- Schools Block;
- High Needs Block;
- Early Years Block;
- Central School Services Block

b) Schools Block Transfer Consultation – Analysis and Responses

To consider the Consultation Analysis and Responses from the consultation about transferring Schools Block Headroom to the Early Years Block in 2021/22.

c) Recommendations from the Forum Chair's Group Budget Meeting

To consider the recommendations from the Forum Chair's Group on 7 January 2021, in relation to the Schools Budget for 2021/22.

d) Formal Forum Decisions relating to the Schools Budget 2021/22

To consider and vote on the formal Forum decisions relating to the Schools Budget 2021/22.

The Forum is asked to:

- a) Note the report, including the 2021/22 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations and the budget proposals for each of the 4 funding block;
- b) Note the recommendations from the Forum Chair's Group meeting on 7 January 2021 (to be presented at the Forum meeting on 12 January);
- c) Support the Schools Budget proposals for 2021/22 for the Schools Block, High Needs Block, Early Years and Central School Services Blocks;
- d) Support the Dedicated Schools Grant Reserve underwriting the uncertainties around the Schools Budget 2021/22;
- e) Formally approve the budget lines requiring Forum agreement (as set out at item 6d).
- f) Express any views to be brought to the attention of the Cabinet when setting the 2021/22 Schools Budget.

8. Recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group

To consider the recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group held on 8 December 2020.

i. School Block Funding 2021/22 and local modelling and numbers

This report provided an update on schools block modelling for 2021/22 and local pupil number data from the October 2020 school census.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report.*

ii. Consultation on the Possible Schools Block Transfer to the Early Years Block

The initial estimates suggest that the implementation of the National School Funding Formula (NFF) methodology in Lancashire is affordable as the local funding formula and modelling indicates that there could still be circa £2m of headroom available in 2021/22. The county council has therefore issued a consultation with the schools seeking views on a possible transfer of headroom only, from the Schools Block to be used in the Early Years Block.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Expressed support for the proposed Schools Block transfer to Early Years Block;*
- c) Noted that final decisions would be taken by the Forum in January when school consultation responses and final DSG allocations would be available.*

iii. School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme

Each year, reports are presented to the Forum about the arrangements for the School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme. This report provided information around scheme arrangements in 2020/21 and proposals for 2021/22

The Working Group

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Supported the proposed 2021/22 School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme arrangements.*

iv. Schools Expansion Funding 2021/22

The School Expansion: Policy for Additional Revenue Funding provides support for basic need growth commissioned by the LA. Information was provided about the level of MPF to be used in the 2021/22 Expansion Funding Policy.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Supported the use of the higher MPF levels in the 2021/22 School Expansion Funding Policy, incorporating pay and pensions uplifts as the level most reflective of the additional costs being borne by schools for extra pupils*

v. *Covid workforce fund to support with costs of staff absences in schools and colleges*

On 27 November 2020, the DfE announced new funding to support schools and colleges during Covid pandemic. The Covid workforce fund is to support with costs of staff absences in schools and colleges and information about the details and conditions of the fund were provided.

The Working Group

a) *Noted the report.*

vi. *Update on exceptional cost claim related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) from March to July 2020*

DfE have now assessed all claims for costs outside of the three eligible categories and have determined there are no new categories of extraordinary costs that they are able to reimburse.

The Working Group:

a) *Noted the report.*

vii. *The Cost of a New School*

An update was provided about the possibility of new school provision being required in certain areas to meet this demand, and the revenue funding implications associated with this.

The Working Group:

a) *Noted the information.*

viii. *Covid Winter Grant Scheme (FSM during Christmas holiday period)*

Members enquired if there was any information available from the county council about the Covid Winter Grant Scheme. Information was confirmed that the government announced a package of extra targeted financial support for those in need over the winter period.

The Working Group:

a) *Noted the information.*

The Forum are asked to ratify the Working groups recommendations.

9. Recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group

To consider the recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group held on 3 December 2020.

i. *SEND/AP Strategy Update*

Dr Sally Richardson, Head of the Inclusion Service attended the working Group for this item. Sally discussed key issues raised by the working group at previous meetings, including the drivers behind the increases in the Out County budget, including increased number of pupils needing placements and rises in the costs of provision. Information was provided about some of the strategies being deployed to control expenditure, which included the commissioning arrangements.

The Working Group

a) *Noted the report;*

b) *Agreed to consider any funding implications that would support the various High Needs Block strategies going forward.*

ii. High Needs Block Commissioned Places 2021/22

The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations require that the Forum is consulted annually on the places to be commissioned by the local authority in different schools and other institutions, and on the arrangements for paying top-up funding. This report provided an update about the proposed HNB places to be commissioned for 2021/22, including those place numbers submitted on the DfE on the annual place change notification submission. All the changes to commissioned places relate to the 2021/22 academic year.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Supported the HNB commissioned places set out in the report.*

iii. Historic Commitments Combined Budget Funding 2021/22 (MASH)

Information on DfE School Funding announcements for 2021/22 included confirmation that the historic commitments element of the Central School Services Block (CSSB) will decrease by a further 20% from April 2021. This report provided information from the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) giving a 2020 update.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Agreed to bear the information provided in mind when setting the 2021/22 Schools Budget.*

iv. HNB Teachers Pay and Pensions Grant

For 2021/22 the DfE have incorporated the teachers' pay grant (TPG) and teachers' pension employer contribution grant (TPECG) within the high needs national funding formula. Information was provided on options for incorporating this allocation in Lancashire special school and PRU budgets from April 2021.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Supported the proposed methodology for allocating Teachers' pay and employer contribution funding in 2021/22.*

v. School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme

Each year, reports are presented to the Forum about the arrangements for the School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme. This report provided information around scheme arrangements in 2020/21 and proposals for 2021/22

The Working Group

- c) Noted the report;*
- d) Supported the proposed 2021/22 School Teaching and Support Staff Supply Reimbursement Scheme arrangements.*

vi. High Needs Block Termly Redetermination Process

Some data issues have occurred in the High Needs Block Termly Redetermination Process, partly due to changes in the arrangements for processing the data in the Inclusion Service. The service have looked into this and intend to make a permanent additional appointment to the service for

someone responsible for dealing with the data. Appointments are expected after Christmas and this should improve the data validity going forward.

In addition, for the HNB autumn term 2020 redeterminations the higher of autumn 2020 and autumn 20196 has been used. Statements will be issued in the normal way and an additional letter will be issued to each school explaining the calculation and if any top up protection has been included in the redetermination.

PRU representatives reported that the Covid-19 pandemic continued to impact on the NOR at short stay schools and suggested that protections are again need in the spring term 2021,

The Working Group:

- a) *Notes the information;*
- b) *Support the extension of HNB redetermination protections into the spring term 2021.*

vii. *Update on exceptional cost claim related to the coronavirus (COVID-19) from March to July 2020*
DfE have now assessed all claims for costs outside of the three eligible categories and have determined there are no new categories of extraordinary costs that they are able to reimburse.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report.*

viii. *Covid workforce fund to support with costs of staff absences in schools and colleges*
On 27 November 2020, the DfE announced new funding to support schools and colleges during Covid pandemic The Covid workforce fund is to support with costs of staff absences in schools and colleges and information about the details and conditions of the fund were provided.

The Working Group

- a) *Noted the report.*

The Forum are asked to ratify the Working groups recommendations.

10. Recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group

To consider the recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group held on 1 December 2020.

i. *Early Years Block Funding 2021/22*

Information was provided about the Chancellor's November 2020 announcements of additional £44m for early years education in 2021/22. A draft letter from the working group Chair to the Schools Forum was shared with members, which highlighted the significant pressures being faced by the sector and asked for consideration of three measures:

- Funding for the 2021 spring term, with at least a similar measure as applied this term in comparing it with spring 2020;
- A one off Covid support payment for each setting;
- Additional funding for the whole of the next financial year.

The Working Group

- a) *Noted the report;*

b) Supported the submission of the letter form the Chair of the EYB Working Group.

ii. SEN Inclusion Fund

Following concerns raised at the last meeting, the Chair wrote to the Inclusion Service expressing concerns about inclusion related matters. Subsequently, the Chair, plus a small group of other representatives, have met with the Inclusion Service colleagues to discuss the issue raised.

Members also asked if there was any feedback from the OfSTED SEND inspection of the Authority, to which some colleagues had contributed and officers agreed to check with Inclusion Service colleagues.

The Working Group

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Welcomed the actions from the meeting with Inclusion Service colleagues;*
- c) Requested that the Group be kept informed of developments.*

iii. Take-up of Funded Places.

Information was shared with the group analysing the take-up of funded places in Lancashire. Figures showed a reduction in the take-up of 2 year old places in the county and further analysis revealed some significant variations on a district by district basis.

Officers explained that a number of initiatives were being developed to promote further take-up, both county wide, and targeted at districts with the lowest take-up.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the information;*
- b) Welcomed the initiatives being developed to increase take-up, including the coordination of promotional messages using settings communication channels.*

The Forum are asked to ratify the Working groups recommendations.

11. Urgent Business

No decisions have been taken using the Forum urgent business procedure since the last meeting.

12. Forum Correspondence

To consider the Forum related correspondence received since the last meeting, that is not included within working group reports.

13. Any Other Business

There are no items of AOB.

14. Date of Future Meetings

To note that the next scheduled Forum meeting will be held at 10.00am Thursday 18 2021 at County Hall, Preston, subject to COVID-19 implications.

A draft schedule of Forum meetings for the academic year 2021/22 is attached for consideration.