

Lancashire Schools Forum meeting of 13 January via Microsoft Teams

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 19 October 2021 and any matters arising.

6. Consideration of the Schools Budget 2022/23

a) Schools Budget 2022/23

To consider the report about the Schools Budget for 2022/23, 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 the possible transfer from Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2022/23.

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

To consider the recommendations from the Forum Chairs' Group on 11 January 2022, in relation to the Schools Budget for 2022/23.

d) Formal Forum Decisions relating to the Schools Budget 2022/23

To consider and vote on the formal Forum decisions relating to the Schools Budget 2022/23.

The Forum is asked to:

- a) Note the report, including the 2022/23 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations and the budget proposals for each of the 4 funding block;
- b) Note the recommendations from the Forum Chairs' Group meeting on 11 January 2022 (to be presented at the Forum meeting on 13 January);
- c) Support the Schools Budget proposals for 2022/23 for the Schools Block, High Needs Block, Early Years and Central School Services Blocks;
- d) Support the proposals for the high needs funding supplementary grant for 2022/23;
- e) Support the Dedicated Schools Grant Reserve underwriting the uncertainties around the Schools Budget 2022/23;
- f) Formally approve the budget lines requiring Forum agreement (as set out at item 6d).
- g) Express any views to be brought to the attention of the Cabinet when setting the 2022/23 Schools Budget.

7. Recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group

To consider the recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group held on 7 December 2021.

i. Apprenticeship Levy Update

This item was deferred, as complications had very recently arisen about the ESFA teacher programme and the apprenticeship levy team need to look at the structure of the apprenticeship teacher programme before sharing anything with forum/publishing further information to schools.

An Apprenticeship Levy item is included elsewhere on the agenda

ii. Schools Block Funding 2022/23

This report provided an updated on the latest Schools Block funding information and pupil numbers. Final 2022/23 proposals are included in the Schools Budget 202/23 report at item 6.

The Working Group.

- a) Noted the report and the updated NOR data;*
- b) Noted that final Schools Block budget calculations would need to await the 2022/23 DSG allocations from the DfE, expected around 16 December 2021;*
- c) Requested that the School Place Provision Strategy document be circulated to the working group.*

iii. Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded Government consultation

A Forum response to the DfE consultation on 'Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded' was agreed using the Urgent Business Procedure. This report provided information on the urgent business responses and included a copy of the final Forum submission.

A copy of the full consultation document was provided for the working group. The consultation sought

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Noted the Schools Forum consultation response agreed under the Urgent Business Procedure;*
- c) Expressed further concerns about the DfE proposals on Reforming how local authorities' school improvement functions are funded and expressed a view hoping that whatever decision are taken by DfE that implementation is delayed giving all involved reasonable notice of the changes.*

iv. 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 set out proposals for the 2022/23 Scheme changes for consideration.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Noted the uncertainties around the current scheme monitoring position for 2021/22;*
- c) Supported the proposed 3% increase on premiums and reimbursements.*

v. Healthy Relationships Training Programme Outcomes

In 2014/15, the Forum allocated a non- recurrent resource of £600K to commission a number of projects to enable staff in schools to develop the confidence, skills and resources needed to deliver effective Healthy Relationships Education and therefore support young people to form healthy relationships now and in the future. Forum agreed to funding being utilised across multiple years and a final outcomes report was now presented.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Expressed thanks to Kate Piercy and her colleagues for the report and the training provided since 2014;*
- c) Asked that enquiries be made about any school staff helpline considerations that had taken place in Lancashire.*

vi. School Feedback on Covid Catch Up

The Government has made a number of additional funding streams available to schools to assist with the educational recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The County Council's Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee has asked for information about the impact of the DfE catch up funding. Forum members were specifically asked about funding related feedback on the catch up grants.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Asked that the views expressed about Covid Catch-Up Funding be considered fed into the wider Scrutiny report.*

vii. Coronavirus (COVID-19) workforce fund to support schools with costs of staff absences

DfE have announced that the government have reopened the Coronavirus (COVID-19) workforce fund to support schools with costs of staff absences. The new window of support will only cover 22 November to 31 December 2021 and strict eligibility criteria are included in the fund conditions.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report.*

viii. School Financial Management Information Software

A small number of schools are considering changing their School Financial Management Information Software and the Scheme for Financing School specifies that whatever system a school chooses, they must be able to provide the County Council with their accounts in the required format or meet the costs of modification. Forum views were sought, and the members commented that the increased recent interest in alternative providers may have been caused by concerns over recent communications from SIMS, where the new owner is automatically extending the contract from one year to three years from February 2022.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Reiterated their original view around costs and notice periods where schools choose to change their School Financial Management Information Software;*
- c) Asked that officers seek advice from Lancashire County Council Education Digital Services about the SIMS contract position.*

The Forum are asked to ratify the Working groups recommendations.

8. Recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group

To consider the recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group held on 2 December 2021.

i. Appointment of HNB Chair and Possible Vice-Chair

Members consider the appointment of a new Chair and Vice-Chair for the Working Group.

The Working Group:

- a) Elected Claire Thompson as the new working group Chair;*
- b) Agreed to appoint a working group Vice-Chair*
- c) Elected Liz Laverty as the new working group Vice-Chair.*

ii. Alternative Provision Strategy Group Update

Sally Richardson, Head of Inclusion Service attended the working group and provided an update on the Alternative Provision Strategy Group and wider SEND matters.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Thanked Sally for her presentation.*

iii. High Needs Block Funding 2022/23

This report provided an updated on the latest High Needs Block funding information and pupil numbers. Final 2022/23 proposals are included in the Schools Budget 202/23 report at item 6.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report.*

iv. High Needs Block Commissioned Places 2022/23

This report provided an update about the proposed HNB places to be commissioned for 2022/23, including those place numbers submitted on the DfE on the annual place change notification submission. All the changes to commissioned places relate to the 2022/23 academic year. A copy of the latest commissioned places for 2022/23 are provided with the report.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Supported the Commissioned Place numbers for 2022/23 but asked the LA to be mindful of the comments made.*

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 set out proposals for the 2022/23 Scheme changes for consideration.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Noted the uncertainties around the current scheme monitoring position for 2021/22;*
- c) Supported the proposed 3% increase on premiums and reimbursements.*

vi. School Feedback on Covid Catch Up

The Government has made a number of additional funding streams available to schools to assist with the educational recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The County Council's Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee has asked for information about the impact of the DfE catch up funding. Forum members were specifically asked about funding related feedback on the catch up grants.

The Working Group:

- c) Noted the report;*
- d) Asked that the views expressed about Covid Catch-Up Funding be considered fed into the wider Scrutiny report.*

vii. School Census data – special school termly redeterminations

School census data seems to be taking longer to be available to the school funding team than was previously the case and this can impact on special school termly redeterminations and views were sought on whether the reintroduction of the eform may be necessary to ensure that special school spring term 2022 redeterminations can be processed in a timely manner, especially given the proximity of financial year end.

The Working Group:

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Supported the reintroduction of the special school termly redeterminations eform in spring 2022, if necessary, to facilitate timely redeterminations.*

The Forum are asked to ratify the Working groups recommendations.

9. Recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group

To consider the recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group held on 30 November 2021.

i. Early Years Block Funding 2022/23

This report provided an update on the latest High Needs Block funding information and pupil numbers. Final 2022/23 proposals are included in the Schools Budget 2022/23 report at item 6.

The Working Group

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Supported the proposed EYB funding allocations for 2022/23;*
- c) Recommended that the proposals be shared with the sector so that providers had early notification of the likely rates, for their planning purposes*

Further information about forecast future years funding rates received after the working group is also included in the report.

ii. Chancellor's Children's and Family Services Announcements

On 27 October 2021, the Chancellor delivered his Autumn Budget and 2021 Spending Review. The main implications for the working group relating to the Government's increases to the early years block allocations are reported elsewhere on the agenda. However, there were a number of other announcements made by the Chancellor that were about Children's and Family Services that related to the sector,

Members highlighted that Lancashire was unlikely to receive any additional funding from the training of early years staff to support children's lost learning allocation, as we had already been involved in the programme.

The Working Group

- a) *Noted the report;*

iii. **SEN Inclusion Fund**

A number of working group members are involved in the Early Years SEN Task and Finish Group that has been meeting to review the SEN Inclusion Fund arrangements. Feedback from members indicated that the new process was viewed positively, as simpler and less bureaucratic.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Provided feedback on the revised SEN Inclusion Fund arrangements for consideration at the SEN Task and Finish Group.*

iv. **Household Support Grant – Christmas Food Vouchers for Early Years Children**

Information was provided to the group on Christmas Food Vouchers for Early Years Children. Settings were notified in the early years bulletin.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report.*

v. **Early Years Benchmarking**

The DfE have just published the latest EY benchmarking data, relating to forecast expenditure for 2021/22. It was agreed that the benchmarking spreadsheet would be circulated to members to enable further consideration of the data to take place outside the meeting.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Noted that the benchmarking spreadsheet would be circulated to members to enable further consideration.*

vi. **Operation Encompass**

Operation Encompass is a system that provides schools with timely information about all police-attended incidents of domestic abuse.

The system is not fully operational in the EY sector and it was reported that work was being undertaken to resolve the specific issues that had been identified and enable the system to be rolled out across the sector.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the report*

The Forum are asked to ratify the Working groups recommendations.

10. Oracle Fusion Update

Jon Howard, Head of Payroll Services and Allison Leach, Service Manager Payroll and Recruitment Service will attend the meeting for this item.

To receive a presentation about the Oracle Fusion developments.

11. Apprenticeship Levy Update

James Beardwood, Vanessa Carthy and Victoria Lowton from the Skills Learning and Development team will attend the meeting for this item.

To receive an update on Apprenticeship Levy developments.

12. Urgent Business

Information about a decision taken using the Forum's urgent business procedure is included in the Schools Block report.

13. Forum Correspondence (Enclosure)

To consider the Forum related correspondence received since the last meeting.

14. Any Other Business**15. Date of Future Meetings (Enclosure)**

To note that the next scheduled Forum meeting will be held at 10.00am Thursday 17 March 2022. Arrangements for the meeting will be confirmed in due course.

A draft schedule of Forum meetings for the academic year 2022/23 is attached for consideration.