

SCHOOLS' FORUM

24 November 2020

Commenced: 10.00am

Terminated: 10.45am

Present:	Karen Burns (Chair)	Primary Schools – Academies
	Susan Marsh	Governor, Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Lisa Lockett	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Steve Marsland	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Lisa Gallaher	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Simon Brereton	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Gemma Patterson	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Kirsty Rimmer	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Richard O'Regan	Secondary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Simon Wright	Primary Schools – Academies
	Heather Farrell	Primary Schools – Academies
	David Ainsworth	Governor, Secondary Schools – Academies
	Andrew Foord	Special Schools – L/A Maintained
	Rosario Sarno	Governor, Special Schools – Academies
	Anthony Benedict	Pupil Referral Service
	Anne Morgan	Tameside Teachers' Consultative Committee
	Elaine Sagar	Early Years Private, Voluntary and Independent Sector
	Elaine Horridge	Diocesan Representative
	Councillor Leanne Feeley	Executive Member
	Tim Bowman	Assistant Director, Education TMBC
	Christine Mullins	Finance Business Partner TMBC
	Louisa Siddall	Senior Accountant, TMBC
	Wendy Lees	Senior Finance Officer, TMBC
Apologies for absence:	Elizabeth Jones	Governor, Secondary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Donal Townson	Governor, Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Andy Card	Primary Schools – L/A Maintained
	Anton McGrath	14-19 Sector
	Councillor Oliver Ryan	Executive Member

16 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

17 MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of the School's Forum held on 29 September 2020. It was noted that Minute 8, DSG Budget update for 2020-21 and Early Years Outturn position 2019-20, referred to a **projected deficit** of £0.466m for the Early Years Block. However, this should have referred to a **projected surplus** of £0.466m.

RESOLVED

That, with the amendment stated above, the minutes of the meeting of Schools' Forum held on 29 September 2020 be approved as a correct record.

18 HIGH NEEDS DEFICIT RECOVERY 2021-22

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director of Finance and the Assistant Director of Education. The report outlined the work streams proposed to address the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs deficit. It was highlighted that these strands of work had been discussed at previous meetings of Schools' Forum and that these proposals would be included in the DSG Management Plan to the DfE, outlining the recovery proposals.

Members of the Forum were reminded that, under the 2020/21 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) conditions, paragraph 5.2 required that any local authority with an overall deficit on the DSG account at the end of the financial year 2019/20 or whose DSG surplus had substantially reduced during the year, must present a plan to the DfE for managing their future spend.

Reference was made to previous discussion at Schools Forum on 29 September 2020, where members had previously indicated that they would be minded to support a 1% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block and that a disapplication request must be submitted to the Secretary of State in order to facilitate this.

The plan set out the proposed actions to address the deficit, which, as reported in the September 2020 meeting of Schools Forum, was forecast to be £3.638m. Details of the plan and an outline of the measures to mitigate this deficit were presented.

With regard to funding, it was proposed that, subject to the approval of Schools' Forum, a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block be made to the High Needs Block, with a further transfer of 0.5% to be requested, subject to Secretary of State approval, assuming that this could be achieved in adherence to the NFF funding bands. The final element of this funding proposal anticipated that future funding from the DfE would be provided, with the removal of the significant cap on funding (£3.1m for Tameside).

In addition, it was stated that a detailed review of services funded from the High Needs Block was underway, which was expected to realise financial savings. Areas under review included Sensory Support Services and Specialist SEND Services. Alongside this, it was also highlighted that there were currently 2 specialist posts, currently funded inappropriately from the High Needs Block. As both of these posts solely supported the Early Years agenda, it was explained that they would be funded from the Council's centrally retained element going forwards.

Members of the Forum were made aware that a review of Element 3, top-up funding was underway. It was explained that the financial implications of this had not been fully considered at this stage as a banding model was being developed, which focused on the provision needed to support the pupils' need rather than funding the type of need. With this in mind, a Matching Provision to Need (MPTN) document had been developed by the SEND team and would be fully consulted upon moving forwards.

As previously discussed at Schools Forum, it was explained that a review of resource bases was also underway in order to increase provision in the borough; to meet the needs of young people locally and reduce the need for Out of Borough and Independent settings. It was envisaged that additional places in each of the four localities be established and, whilst it was acknowledged that these proposed changes would require additional funding to establish, it was stated that this would support the LA in avoiding more costly provision elsewhere. It was, therefore, anticipated that this would represent a net saving. Members of the Forum were also made aware that the LA would look to further develop additional sites and carry out a review of the centrally managed bases. The outcome of this review would, again, be subject to the LA's normal governance and staffing related consultation and decision-making processes.

In relation to Building Contracts and Estates Review, it was explained that one of the special schools had a PFI style contract for which a review would be undertaken in order to assess value for money. It was envisaged that potential savings could be found from this contract. Furthermore,

it was explained that a review of the special school estate use of PFI buildings would be considered over the longer term, including its use and whether better use of space could be identified. Members of the Forum were informed that both of these reviews would require appropriate decision making through the LA's normal governance routes and approval before any savings could be realised.

An explanation was provided in relation to Growth and Overcapacity Funding in special schools. This followed an initial discussion during Schools Funding Group in October 2020 and was with regard to the funding of additional special school places outside the annual place review process. It was explained that Schools Funding Group had supported a 5% range of placements and had asked that this be shared with special schools for consideration. This proposal had previously been shared in Summer 2019. However, at that time, the proposal was stalled due to significant increase in growth. It was stated that, as growth had now stabilised and additional provision was being commissioned within the borough, it was appropriate timing to revisit this proposal.

Members of the forum were informed that sixth form provision was being established at Cromwell school to provide increased parental choice and expand the provision in the borough, with appropriate LA governance and consultation underpinning this proposal.

In relation to Tameside Pupil Referral Service (TPRS) provision and Inclusive Schools, members were informed that, following the appointment of a new headteacher at TPRS, the post holder would be looking at the rate of exclusions in the borough and appropriate support to schools. It was expected that, with appropriate support over a longer term, exclusions would reduce and, therefore, the number of places needed at TPRS would decrease accordingly. It was also highlighted that funding for targeted interventions would be considered as part of this plan.

Members of the Forum were informed that, in line with current DSG regulations, the LA would be following the guidance that funding for excluded pupils follow the pupil. It was explained that the regulations state this should include all pupil-led funding and pupil premium, where appropriate, and that this would be implemented from January 2021.

In conclusion, it was stated that, without appropriate action, the High Needs DSG Block would continue to overspend and the deficit would be increased. This deficit was currently being cash flowed from LA general funding and reserves. It was highlighted that this was not sustainable. Without the Management Plan, members were informed that the LA would be in breach of the DSG conditions of grant and would be subject to further investigation by the DfE, on behalf of the Secretary of State.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report be noted and supported

19 SCHOOLS BLOCK FUNDING FORMULA 2021-22

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director of Finance and the Assistant Director of Education with regard to Schools Block Funding for 2021-22.

It was explained that a consultation on the proposals of this report had been circulated to all schools and Chairs of Governing Bodies. Due to the timing of this consultation, the results had not previously been published. However, a briefing paper outlining the results was shared with members of the Forum in advance of the meeting and a summary was provided.

The consultation was launched on 22 October 2020 and closed on 11 November 2020. There were 21 respondents in total. However, 2 of the respondents did not state which school they were from so had been discounted. In addition, there were also 2 schools in which 2 responses were received (both providing the same response). As a result, the response rate was reduced to 17 schools from a potential 98 (17% response rate).

The results of the consultation are detailed below:

Q1. Do you support a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block (as agreed in principle with Schools Forum) whilst adopting NFF 2021-22 rates and accepting a 0.5% MFG and 3.21% Gains Cap?

Q2. Do you support increasing the transfer to 1%, if we were still able to adopt the NFF rates for 2021-22, and obtain approval from the Secretary of State through the disapplication process?

	Total Returns	Q1 Yes Returns	Q1 Yes Returns	Q2 Yes Returns	Q2 Yes Returns
Primary	13	13	100%	8	62%
Secondary	4	2	50%	1	25%
Total	17	15		9	

The provisional allocation for 2021-22 was shared with Forum members and allocations were compared with the 2020-21 position. It was highlighted that, of the £12.5m increase on the Schools Block, £7.5m related to the Teachers' Pay and Pension Grant, which had been rolled into DSG funding. It was further explained that this £7.5m was protected and must be passed directly on to schools, with the remaining £5m increase representing a 3% increase on 2020-21 cash levels.

Forum members were informed that there were increases in funding across all blocks for Tameside MBC, which was positive. However, it was also highlighted that the pressures on High Needs exceeded the increase that the LA is set to receive. With regard to this High Needs pressure, it was explained that Tameside had received the maximum provisional funding increase possible, capped at 12% (before Import/Export adjustments and Recoupment). However, without this cap at 12%, Tameside would have received an additional £3.1m in 2021-22 and, for context, it was highlighted that the 2020-21 cap was £2.6m.

As previously reported, the estimated position on High Needs for 2020-21 was an in-year overspend of £3.543m. It was explained that this was after the £0.85m transfer from the Schools Block (the position would have been an in-year overspend of £4.393m without the transfer). Members were informed that, in 2021-22, whilst the additional increased funding was welcomed, it would still leave a shortfall of £1.775m (based on current estimates) and would not take into account the 2020-21 expected DSG deficit estimated to be £3.638m.

It was explained that this increase in the Schools Block funding would allow all schools to see an increase in their pupil led funding and, as previously reported, the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) of +0.5% to +2% would mean that all schools would see at least 0.5% increase on pupil-led funding.

With regard to the National Funding Formula (NFF), members were made aware that rates had increased by 3% in the majority of instances, except Free School Meals (FSM), which had increased by 2% and a summary of these rates was provided.

A detailed analysis of school-level funding was provided for members and they were asked to note that any figures provided would not be the actual figures received for the 2021-22 financial year as these figures were all indicative and subject to change. These provisional calculations were based on the October 2019 census data, updated to include the 2019 IDACI data. It was explained that, once the LA had received the updated census data for October 2020 (in December 2020), final calculations would be produced. Members were also informed that the premises elements of funding had been updated to reflect an uplift in RPIX for PFI of 1.56%.

Members of the Forum were provided with detailed information on the 2020-21 funding allocation and details of the proposed funding scenario for 2021-22. This scenario would allow a transfer of

0.5% (£0.869m) from the provisional Schools Block allocation to the High Needs Block, whilst continuing to adopt the NFF rates for 2021-22. Based on the provisional School Block allocation the MFG would be set at 0.5% and the gains cap at 3.21% to allow the transfer to take place. They were also provided with information on the impact of the changes introduced by DfE on the IDACI data and inclusion of the Teachers' Pay and Pension grants for further context.

It was explained that the LA had spent the last few years moving to the NFF. This had been with the support of schools, in line with DfE's instruction. With this in mind, the importance of adhering to NFF as closely as possible was highlighted. It was explained that the movement of 0.5% would not fully support the High Needs pressure for 2021-22 and, if there was sufficient funding to allow a 1% transfer (£1.738m) whilst maintaining the NFF rates, the LA would like support from Schools to do this. Members were informed that this would require approval from the Secretary of State through the disapplication process. Members were also reminded that this was an annual decision and so would apply to 2021-22 only, at this stage.

RESOLVED

- (i) That a 0.50% transfer from Schools Block to High Needs Block in 2021-22 (at a minimum) be approved.**
- (ii) That a disapplication request to the Secretary of State to transfer 1.00% (if affordable) from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block be approved.**

20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the next meeting of The Schools Forum be held on Thursday 14 January 2021 at 10am.

CHAIR