

SCHOOLS FINANCE GROUP
on 8 January 2020 at Great Moor House

ISSUES FOR DEF ON 22 JANUARY 2020

Item 6	Mutual Fund DEF to note that 2020/21 Premiums will be reduced by 20% for teachers and 10% for support staff cover.
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SCHOOLS FINANCE GROUP
Notes of meeting
on 8 January 2020 at Great Moor House

		Attendance		
		8/1/20	6/11/19	11/9/19
DCC				
Adrian Fox (Chair)	Head Accountant (E&L)	✓	✓	✓
Dawn Stabb	Head of Education & Learning	✓	✓	✓
Ancilla McKenna	Senior Accountant (Schools)	✓	Apologies	✓
Heidi Watson-Jones	Service Support Officer (E&L)	✓	✓	✓
DAPH				
Jonathan Bishop	Cornerstone Academy	✓	Apologies	✓
Alun Dobson	Marwood Primary	✓	✓	✓
Jamie Stone	Denbury Primary	✓	✓	✓
Paul Walker	First Federation	✓	Apologies	✓
Martyn Boxall	Exeter Children's Federation		✓	
DASH				
Daryl Chapman	Dartmoor MAT	✓	✓	✓
Lorraine Heath	Uffculme Academy	✓	✓	✓
Matthew Shanks	Education South West	✓	✓	✓
Sammy Crook	Tiverton High School	Apologies	✓	✓
Andrew Davies	Exmouth Community College	✓	✓	✓
SHAD				
Keith Bennett	Marland School	✓	✓	Apologies
Jacqui Warne	Learn to Live Federation	✓	✓	
DAG				
Faith Butler	Special	✓	Apologies	✓
Malcolm Dobbins	Primary	✓	✓	Apologies
Alex Walmsley	Secondary	✓	✓	✓
EY Providers				
Lydia Wright	Early Years – PVI providers	Apologies	Apologies	✓
In Attendance				
Katrina Harverson	Senior Accountant (E&L)	✓		
Julia Foster	Senior Manager SEND	Apologies		

1. Item/Focus: Minutes and Matters Arising from meeting on 6 November 2019

Discussion:

- Noted currently 75 Children are in Care from other LAs for which costs are recouped, 13 of which are placed in maintained special schools. Majority in mainstream. Heads sought assurance that the special school placements are appropriate based on the location of the child's placement.
- Concerns were raised regarding children placed in maintained residential provision where alternative complex care arrangements might have been more appropriate.
- A discussion is planned with DfE on the complexities of the import/export process.
- SFG discussed instances where Tribunals have ruled that placements must be made in maintained special schools already deemed to be full. Finance officers confirmed that commissioned planned places will be based on actual numbers for 2020/21.

Key Decision/ Issues for DEF:

Minutes agreed as an accurate record.

Action:

2. Item/Focus: DSG Monitoring – month 8

Discussion:

- Funding Shortfall of £21.5m DSG projected, with demand continuing within High Needs Block. The group noted variances since previous report in volume of EHCPs, Plus Packages and Personalised Budgets, which can prevent additional cost in independent provision.
- Noted FE position, now reported separately.
- Noted additional costs within maintained special schools exceeding expected growth and placements over planned numbers. Considered Special Schools Capital project; follow-up discussion is planned for LA SENTient Heads meeting on 17/1/2020.
- Discussed issues around net budget reductions linked to Element 2 recoupment by DfE for children in care to Devon on roll of schools in other authorities.
- SEN2 return, due w/b 13/1/2020, is expected to show further significant increases in number of EHCPs requested and issued.
- Noted 613 placements currently in independent provision; projected to rise to 664 by March 2020.
- EHCP and Independent Sector growth projection processes were explained. Noted the unpredictable profile of the number of EHCP assessment requests received by the 0-25 SEN team over the last 12 months.

Key Decision/ Issues for DEF:

Report noted

Action:

3. Item/Focus: Financial Planning 2020 / 21

Discussion:

- DSG Settlement was announced in December.
- Noted impact of DfE reduction in historic commitments by 20%.
- High Needs Block budget required for new financial year is £101.4m; a shortfall of £32.3m. DCC budget will represent this as a recovery plan shortfall and negative reserve within the Council's accounts.
- Additional funding received into HNB in December has been allocated to Independent schools budget in recognition of budget shortfall in 2019/20.
- Noted FE Element 2 levels will be increased with a corresponding decrease to Element 3.
- Noted increase in Early Years Block relating to a funding rate increase for 3 and 4 year olds' entitlement. Noted that funding into Devon for 2 year olds and 3 & 4 year olds remains below national average.
- Carry Forward decisions to be presented to March DEF.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted that longer term modelling will be required for DfE Recovery Plan.
Key Decision/ Issues for DEF:	Report noted
Action:	
4. Item/Focus: SEND / High Needs update	
Discussion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The group considered at length national and local strategic issues around sufficiency of high needs funding, Local Authority representation of the deficit budget position for high needs and the impact of the reduction in accessibility of preventative services to schools e.g. Youth Service and Education Welfare, which can lead to SEN concerns becoming more complex without intervention and resulting in higher level support through an EHCP. The group were reminded of the discussion at the November SFG around the possible establishment of a team which could be available centrally to provide support to children with EHCPs in mainstream schools who require specialist provision. Request has been forwarded to schools for 0.5% Schools Block transfer to HNB to establish this new model of central high needs support to mainstream for children with SEN. The group noted that a budget comparator tool and supporting documentation has been provided but there were concerns that schools appear to be submitting responses without reference to the impact on their school budget. Noted that a negative response would result in the LA needing to build the 0.5% (currently approx. £2.1m) into the DSG recovery plan as a minimum. Discussed how a simplified message could be issued through Phase Associations to clarify the wider picture for all Devon schools, the need for a different approach to be funded, and the implications should schools respond negatively. It was suggested that schools be asked to indicate specific areas of ad hoc specialist provision / outreach that they might particularly wish to access if available. A proposal has been drafted outlining measures which could be put in place to better support mainstream schools with children with EHCPs needing to access specialist provision. Mindful that this has not been circulated at this time. Proposed that a group/ Phase Association response is needed to encourage schools to take on board the background to the proposal and to submit a considered response. 	
Key Decision/ Issues for DEF:	Report noted
Action:	Phase Associations to consider how to encourage schools to take on board the background to the proposal and to submit a considered response.
5. Item/Focus: F40 Update	
Discussion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted F40 focusing on high needs funding pressures, but continue to recognise inequity of schools funding nationally. National Conference on 10 March 2020: Alun Dobson agreed to attend to represent schools. 	
Key Decision/ Issues for DEF:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report noted
Action:	AF to follow up response from DfE regarding Recovery Plan enquiry. SFG Members to contact Adrian Fox re. F40 Conference attendance
6. Item/Focus: Mutual Fund Board	
Discussion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted current position projecting an increase in surplus by year end. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SFG considered proposals for reduction of premiums for 2020/21 financial year. The group discussed alternative packages available on the market.
Key Decision/ Issues for DEF:	Agreed to support Option 2 for reduction of 20% for teachers and 10% for support staff premiums.
Action:	AMcK to action.

7. Item/Focus: Learner Services to Schools Re-Commissioning

Discussion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey has been circulated to Schools and Governors – responses to be submitted by noon on 17 January. Technical Project Group to finalise Options Appraisal and undertake soft market research to ascertain interest in pre-procurement processes. Commissioning Board looking at key priorities for services and overarching outcomes for the contract (e.g. offering a traded service, employment of specialist staff, partnership working criteria) Schools Outcomes Focused Engagement Group to be held on 6 February 2020 (venue tbc). SFG members encouraged to attend, along with survey respondents indicating an interest in further engagement. This will provide an opportunity to consider responses to the survey and begin prioritising what outcomes will be assessed when bids are submitted. Formal Tender documents due to be issued in August. Parents currently engaging with the service will be approached through the Participation Team. Discussion planned for LA/SENTient Heads meeting. Understand that Babcock LDP are also undertaking an unrelated evaluation exercise. 	

Key Decision/ Issues for DEF:	Update noted
Action:	DS (HWJ) to circulate date of Schools' Focus Group through HT newsletter SFG members to prioritise attendance at 6 February engagement focus group.

8. Item/Focus: Teacher Recruitment in Devon Campaign

Discussion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools have provided video footage and promotional material to be incorporated into a refresh of the current website. HR are seeking input from schools on how a relaunched recruitment drive could look, where a possible roadshow would usefully be received. Discussed value of national advertising and effective awareness raising of staffing to come to the county. Felt that use of Social media would be most effective and affordable. 	

Key Decision/ Issues for DEF:	Sam Mullins (HR) to circulate an explanatory report to schools, with follow up options presented and discussed at DEF for an agreed steer on way forward.
Action:	

9. Item/Focus: Items for DEF

Items for DEF:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Result of schools consultation request for transfer of 0.5% from Schools Block Reduction in 2020/21 premium for Mutual Fund 	
June Meeting:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Venue required; noted difficulties due to exam accommodation. (HWJ to resolve) 	
Key Decision/ Issues for DEF:	
Action:	

Next meetings:

Wednesday 4 March 2020 (9.15 – 12.45pm) – at Larkbeare House – Exe Room

Wednesday 3 June 2020 (9.15 – 12.45pm) – County Hall – Coaver Ansell Room

Wednesday 15 July 2020 (9.15 – 12.45pm) – at Larkbeare House – Knightshayes Room

Wednesday 9 September 2020 (9.15 – 4.30pm) – at Larkbeare House – Knightshayes Room

Wednesday 4 November 2020 (9.15 – 12.45pm) – at Larkbeare House – Knightshayes Room

Wednesday 6 January 2021 (9.15 – 12.45pm) – at Larkbeare House – Knightshayes Room

Wednesday 3 March 2021 (9.15 – 12.45pm) – at Larkbeare House – Knightshayes Room