

Schools Finance Group: Notes of meeting on Wednesday 8 March 2023

Items for DEF to note:

- **Item 5 – Homes for Ukraine funding**
- DEF to note projected year end balance of £1.3m in government H4U funds held by DCC. Further communications to be issued to ensure awareness of funding available to schools with Ukrainian pupils on roll.
- **Item 6 – Growth Fund**
- DEF to note projected year end deficit balance due to a range of factors and a planned review of one-off additional funding for exceptional growth in schools.
- **Item 7 – Early Years funding**
- DEF to note proposed use of carry forward funding to boost support for children with speech, language, communication, and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs.
- Colleagues to look into provision of support funding for Early Years settings with Ukrainian children on roll.
- **Item 8 - Review of SFG and DEF dates in January**
- **SFG Recommendation to DEF** to move January SFG and DEF meeting dates back by one week (from 17th to 24th Jan 2024 - which will still meet Cabinet and DfE deadlines) to allow additional time to consider implications of funding statement normally issued by DfE just before Christmas break.

ATTENDANCE

DCC

Mat Thorpe- **Apologies**

Adrian Fox

Rachel Shaw

Heidi Watson-Jones

Deputy Director of Finance and Public Value

Head Accountant (Education & Learning)

Interim Head of Education (Delivery)

Safety Valve Project Officer

Devon Schools Leadership Services

Primary:

Jamie Stone- **Apologies**

Paul Walker - **Apologies**

Penny Hammett - **Apologies**

Christopher Tribble

Denbury Primary

First Federation Trust

FORT Federation

Honiton Primary

Secondary:

Sammy Crook

Alan Blackburn

Fay Bowler - **Apologies**

Rob Gammon

Tiverton Federation

Uffculme School

Braunton Academy

QE

Alternative Provision:

Rob Gasson

Wave Multi Academy Trust

Special Schools

Keith Bennett - **Apologies**

Sarah Pickering - **Apologies**

Marland School

Mill Water School

DAG

Faith Butler- **Apologies**

Alex Walmsley

Adrian Hines

Special School Governors

Secondary Governors

Primary Governors

Early Years Providers

Gemma Rolstone

Puffins Childcare

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Other DCC Officers

Karlien Bond

Katrina Harverson

Simon Niles

Senior Accountant (Schools)

Principal Accountant – Education & Learning

Schools Planning, Pupil Placement &

Commissioning manager

SCHOOLS FINANCE GROUP

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 6 January 2023

- MT / JR to liaise re. negotiation of top up for special schools for exceeded places – **AF** to follow up
- Communication due to go out to schools highlighting sparsity coming into base funding
- Ongoing actions for high needs funding sub group re. communications and identifying trends in high needs savings
- All other actions complete or in hand.
- Minutes agreed as an accurate record.

2. DSG Monitoring – month 10

- DSG deficit projected to rise to £127m by end of financial year
- £4.2m savings have been achieved, however £4.6m now deemed unachievable, due to a range of factors within the SEND Projects
- Confirmation still awaited from DfE re. inclusion in Safety Valve Intervention Programme.
- SEND strategy day was held with new CEO, Donna Manson who has now established a Gold Command structure to address SEND improvement and the HNB deficit, in a similar structure to emergency response management.
- Deficit projected to increase to £153m without financial support, which would deplete DCC reserves.
- SFG noted summary of high needs block position
- Report noted

3. Carry Forwards 2022-23

- Growth Fund surplus noted – part of which will be used to transfer to the High Needs Block as per previous discussions at SFG and DEF.
- Position noted

4. Mutual Fund Update

- Noted current volatility of claims
- Predicting a small surplus to still be in place at year end

5. Homes for Ukraine funding

- Agreed strategy for managing government funding has been put in place.
- £3.5m total funding has been received with funding going to schools and DCC support services (EMTAS, and Admissions team).
- English speaking Ukrainian teacher engagement has been well received
- Noted some expenditure on personalised home to school transport.
- £1.8m currently unallocated – projected to be £1.3m into new financial year.
- Concerned that not all schools are claiming the funding available to them, and some pupils are not being identified.

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- Noted government H4U scheme has been extended, but no confirmation that any further funding will be made available to local authorities.
- Clarity being sought on support funding available for the FE sector or whether they would be eligible to receive some of this funding.
- SFG noted the prudent approach to funding allocation given the ongoing conflict and lack of clarity for funding post 2022-23.
- SFG felt that it will be important to continue to raise awareness that funding is available to schools still receiving Ukrainian pupils. Schools are being welcoming and demonstrating resilience well.
- Noted that some additional SEN needs are now emerging as children become more settled and included.
- Additional SEN needs and associated costs will need to be monitored and possibly additional contingency considered if needed.
- SFG would be supportive of continuing half-termly allocations to schools should further funding become available.
- Further monitoring and update to be discussed at next SFG in June.

ACTION:

- **RS/SN** to issue further information through School Leadership Update to further raise awareness of funding and support available.
- **SN** to provide further monitoring update report to next SFG

6. Growth Fund

- An Growth Fund underspend had been projected at the time of SFG and DEF discussions around use of Growth Fund to support HNB.
- National Non Domestic Rates for maintained schools, a reduction in APT funding, shortfall after reduction in the sparsity factor, and further in-year growth have also impacted negatively on Growth Fund, resulting in a deficit balance of £808k at year end.
- Understand funding will be made available for Afghan bridging hotel costs, which will change bottom line.
- 2022-23 Admissions round has been challenging – with some reluctance emerging for schools admitting additional pupils, and feeling that growth funding associated with a 'bulge year' would be inadequate. SFG agreed that Simon Niles conduct a review of one-off additional funding.
- Allocation of slippage against the overspend has been proposed.
- Finance colleagues confirmed that there would be no proposals to recoup funding from Schools Block.

ACTION:

- **SN** to review Growth Funding one-off allocations to schools experiencing a 'bulge year' of admissions.

7. Early Years Funding

- SFG noted proposal that funding rates for Early Years providers be increased
- Funding increases notified by DfE before Christmas and DCC were able to implement some increases from Spring Term rather than waiting until April 2023, which was well received by providers.
- Noted cessation of grant funding for Teachers pay grant and Teachers Pension employer contribution grant from April 2023.
- Noted carry forward proposal of £100k be used to boost support for speech, language and communication, and SEMH.
- Understand that settings are managing any incoming Ukrainian refugee children well, however the service continues to consider extending the offer for these children.

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- GR felt that providers would welcome additional funding for support for Ukrainian children, and additional inclusion funding would be gratefully received.
- Noted challenging environment for Early Years provider settings, and government funding increases do not meet the required level of support including and increases in minimum wage, and business rates for providers, and covering grant funding around pay and pensions. Ongoing lobbying in place to raise the issues with MPs.
- Report noted

ACTION:

Marie Stone to liaise with Simon Niles re. accessing funding to increase childcare offer for Ukrainian children

8. AOB

3.4% uplift for AP budgets for 2023-24

- to be discussed at High Needs Funding Sub Group

Timetabling for year end – all information on the finance blog

- **27/3** for submitting March claims for Mutual Fund
- **24/3** for submitting year end accruals information – giving a week for finance to process prior to end of term.

Review of SFG and DEF dates in January

- Lateness of information from DfE prior to Christmas makes situation difficult to process
- **SFG agreed** recommendation to move meeting dates back by one week which will still meet Cabinet and DfE deadlines

9. Items for DEF

- Standard Monitoring items
- Growth Fund
- Carry Forwards

Future meeting dates:

- **Wednesday 7 June 2023** (09.15 – 12.30 – Teams)
- **Monday 10 July 2023** (12.30 – 15.45 – Teams)
- **Wednesday 13 September** (09.15 – 15.30 – face to face – Venue tbc)
- **Monday 6 November 2023** (14.00 – 17.30) – Teams
- **Friday 5 January 2024** (09.15 – 12.30 – Teams) – **proposed move to Friday 12th Jan**
- **Wednesday 6 March 2024** (09.15 – 12.30 – Teams)