

Forum Newsletter

**SOLIHULL SCHOOLS FORUM met on 9th July 2019,
the following is a précis of business undertaken**

Assistant Director's Items

- Phil Leivers

Phil had attended the recent ADCS National Conference where the Minister for Children and Families, Nadhim Zahawi, recognised the pressures around the High Needs Block and reassured delegates that he is making a case to the Treasury as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review process.

Proposals around resourcing and funding of education representation on the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub are being prepared and will be presented to schools via Forum/work groups in due course.



Group Reports

Reports for Capital WG, Finance WG, EdSEND and SSSAB (May meeting) were accepted.

Forum approved annual grants for Records Management of £30,000, Admissions Service of £253,000, Safeguarding Training of £26,500, a contribution of £13,540 towards the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership and a de-delegation for maintained schools for TU Facilities Time of £132,000.

Jenny Godsall provided a verbal report on the 3 July SSSAB meeting, which included discussions on Alternative Provision, Safeguarding, schools' email security arrangements, the Council's Troubled Families Strategy, an update on the SMILE pilot and a lengthy discussion about the HNB overspend.



SEND Update

Briefing Paper to CLT (Steve Fenton, Stuart McHale)

A Briefing Paper, based largely on papers presented to Forum in May, was presented to the Council's Corporate Leadership Team on 18 June. It provides the background to the HNB overspend, summarises local and national issues behind the current position, highlights Solihull's five key areas for action – SEND Commissioning Strategy, Inclusion Policy, SEND Processes, Review of Provision and Funding Strategy and Planning - and explains key legal, financial and safeguarding implications, with high regard to impact on customers – pupils, parents, families. A formal project has been set up to review the HNB and this will form the basis of the Council's Recovery Plan. In response, the CLT has pledged its support in working to resolve Solihull's High Needs funding crisis. The next step will be a Consultation with schools in early September about top-slicing the Schools Block in 2020-21, a decision on which will be taken at the 1 October Forum meeting. Steve Fenton will alert all schools to this action before the end of Summer Term. (The Briefing Paper is not a public document and has not been published on-line, however it can be made available to schools' colleagues on request to schoolsforum@solihull.gov.uk)

HNB Funding Briefing Note to SSSAB (Steve Fenton)

The Briefing Note had provided a helpful basis for debate at SSSAB's 3 July meeting and SSSAB and some Collaboratives are planning to hold extra-ordinary meetings in early September before the 1 October Forum meeting. At Forum, members sought assurance that the Authority had explored all options before resorting to a top-slice of schools' budgets in order to restore a balanced HNB. Steve Fenton responded that alternative options were limited and that the DfE has stated there is no expectation that HNB deficits will be dealt with other than through the DSG, ie. there is no consideration that schools do not have the resources. On the basis that any top-slice will have a significantly negative impact on schools, Steve agreed to furnish schools with detailed proposals in early September. Finally, it was noted that it would be difficult for the LA to go ahead with a top-slice without Forum's approval.

0-25 SEND Report (Ann Lowe)

Ann Lowe delivered a progress report covering the areas of the Children's Disability team, the StART team, the Educational Psychology Service and SISS. An additional £530,000 funding was agreed in April 2019, which will fund increased capacity across the service. Members raised a number of questions and concerns, including that the criteria around exclusion and attendance to access the SEMH non-traded service could be used as a target rather than a threshold; Early Years colleagues would find access to the EP Service beneficial in an early intervention capacity for children with fully recognised SEN and when working towards an EHCP and members were keen that targets and timescales were placed on a number of areas linked to the SEND Strategy and post-Ofsted Action Plan.

Commissioning Strategy Update (Ann Pearson)

Ann Pearson provided an update on key priorities for future development, including plans for the ASD Free School, due to open in 2023 and which will respond to the largest proportion of children currently being educated out-of-borough. The Commissioning Strategy will be updated in September and the key focus for 2020 will be primary and secondary Additionally Resourced Provision.



Full minutes and papers are available to view and download on the Solihull Schools Forum website at:
<https://www.solgrid.org.uk/education/support-services/schools-forum/>