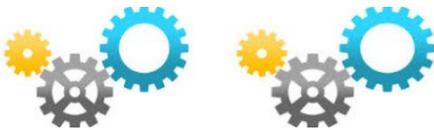


Forum Newsletter

**SOLIHULL SCHOOLS FORUM met on 8th May 2019,
the following is a précis of business undertaken**

Trade Union Facilities Time

Adrian Cattell explained the difficulties and risks associated with vigorously pursuing a reduction in the rate by schools that buy the service to £5 per pupil by September 2019. Members appreciated the situation and asked AC to continue working towards a rate reduction by way of continuing to encourage more academies to buy-in and by implementing a transitional arrangement for the schools of newly appointed TU reps to be recompensed at the supply rate, rather than actual cost. This course of action is likely to lead to a cost reduction, but at a much slower rate.



Financial Out-Turn 2018-2019

The DSG is now made up of four, largely ring-fenced Blocks. At 2018-19 year-end spend on the Schools, Central and Early Years Blocks matched the budgets. However, the High Needs Block resulted in a £2.074m overspend, the majority of which related to Independent School Fees. The Council has applied a one-off recovery sum from its Reserves, reducing the overspend to £1.7m.

Final School Budgets 2019-2020

Steve Fenton explained that for 2019-20, in line with Forum's previously agreed strategy, the National Funding Formula had been replicated as closely as possible. However a shortfall in the grant received from the ESFA meant that gains made by gaining schools had to be scaled back. In addition, the NFF minimum per pupil values had been reduced by 0.5%, resulting in values of £3,482pp for primary (rather than £3,500pp) and £4,775pp for secondary (rather than £4,800pp). It is anticipated that the NFF will be implemented in full by 2020-21.

Group Reports

Reports for Capital WG, Finance WG, Ed-SEND and SSSAB were accepted.

Forum approved annual grants for the Sports Federation of £26,500 and Health and Safety Training, Evolve and CLEAPSS of £52,350.

SEND - Solihull's Response to Rising Demand and Increasing Pressures on Schools

In March, Forum Executive agreed that the May Forum meeting was a good time to update Forum members and the wider schools' community on the current and potential future funding situation and the range of initiatives being progressed in response to rising demand and costs. Executive commissioned a number of detailed reports, an overview of which is below. Individual reports and full minutes are available to view on the Forum website.

High Needs Funding, including Transport (Steve Fenton)

Assuming current trends continue, Solihull's High Needs budget is likely to be overspent by over £4m this year, equating to a 2% overspend on the DSG and triggering the '1% Rule' where we have to report to the ESFA with an Action Plan. Following previous cuts to the Transport budget, Council Members have recently approved a £1m restoration of funds this year in order to meet demand linked to increasing out-of-borough placements. For 2020-21 Forum will have to consider transferring funds from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. Schools Forum can approve a transfer of up to 0.5%, equating to £750k. If a bigger transfer is required or Forum does not agree, a request must be made directly to the Secretary of State. It also seems unavoidable that around £1m will need to be saved from the Pupil Support Services and Alternative Provision areas of the High Needs Block, which are currently balancing their budgets.

Auckland Education Centre (Ann Pearson)

Following consultation and Cabinet Member approval, permission has been requested from the Secretary of State to close Auckland from 31 December 2019. Appropriate provision has been identified for the majority of pupils currently at the Centre. As the majority of pupils have SEND needs, the future strategy centres on a new non-traded Council service to support high needs children with SEMH to stay in mainstream education and avoid permanent exclusion. Where there is no alternative to permanent exclusion, a Fair Access Protocol is being developed.

Non-traded High Needs SEMH Team (Paula Thompson)

A non-traded team is being created to support HN pupils with SEMH to stay within mainstream, following the graduated approach and involving external agencies for severe and complex cases. The team will also support transition to other provisions (ASD Free School, ARPs, etc.) and managed moves. The provision will serve a much wider range of children and be funded from savings made from the closure of Auckland.

Inclusion Strategy (Paula Thompson)

On 7 June a final workshop will take place, with representatives from all areas (primary, secondary, parents, early years, SMBC) to sign-off the draft Inclusion Charter before it is shared and signed-up to by all parties. Beneath this over-arching Charter will be the SEND Strategy, which is currently being updated.

Commissioning Strategy (Ann Pearson)

The Strategy demonstrates the demographic issues that Solihull is facing, allows us to improve annual forecasting and provides an evidence base for future investments on the basis of securing the biggest impact for the largest number of children at best value for money. Recent investments have been made in ASD ARPs, the AP Academy and additional specialist places and a number of initiatives are in progress, including an ASD Free School and additional ARPs focused on SEMH.

ASD Free School (Ann Pearson)

Solihull was successful in its bid to host an ASD Free School and the DfE favours a new-build school on the north Solihull site. The school will serve children from across the Borough. A competition is now under way for a Trust to run the school, the outcome of which is expected by January 2020, with a likely opening date of September 2023.

START Team Processes (Phil Leivers)

An additional £500k has been approved for addition to the team's base funding in order to increase staffing to help meet the statutory 20-week limit for production of EHCPs. The funding will also support work to bring the Annual Review process back on-track, a vital piece of work which heads have been concerned about for some time and which, when formally in place, will help to identify pupils currently educated out-of-borough who could return to Solihull schools. Consultation for this will take place with schools from September 2019.