

**FINANCE WORK GROUP
REPORT TO FORUM
FOR PRESENTATION
AT FORUM ON 9th July 2019**



Date of Work Group meeting: Tuesday, 11th June 2019

Items discussed (brief summary of key items):

- **TU Facilities Time Report – Ian Backhouse**

Ian presented the annual report detailing how the monies for Facilities Time had been used. The local TU representatives had logged 1051 contacts (826 for Teaching Unions and 225 for Support Staff). Analysis of the cases shows that the most requests were for advice (31%), sickness, absence, and stress (21%) and pay and conditions (17%). Using local representatives 81.4% of enquiries were dealt with through up to 2 contacts, 12.6% needed several contacts, and 6% were long term. For support staff 45.1% needed 2 contacts, 25.7% needed several, and 29.2% were long term – possibly involving more cases of Management of Change. The Report emphasised stress for school leaders and the impact of MoC on staff, the time spent by support staff unions on LEA reorganisation and the pressure on staff workload of different marking policies. Based on the data, DL made the case of the importance of having local union representatives and the speed they give in dealing with cases, particularly those needing up to 2 contacts. It is recommended that the grant for Facilities Time is renewed.
- **Records Management Update – Lizi Bird**

The report provided an update on the main activities of the IGL – stressing data protection, service use and the planned focus for next year. Introduction of a Data Protection Officer Service, in school-training on GDPR (1 hr sessions), governor training, providing template documents and visits to school to review work undertaken: an updated pupil records guidance and a bi-annual newsletter. 34 schools used the DPO service and 17 schools received the short all-staff training on GDPR. Next year the service will continue the training and a new document on “Retention of Information and Records” will be published. A question was asked about vetting software schools may wish to use and producing a recommended list. Lizi agreed to take this up with the Procurement team if it was recommended by the LEA. It is recommended to continue the annual grant of £30k for next year.
- **Monitoring Out-turn DSG Statement 2018/19 – Steve Fenton**

The Final out-turn figures for 2018-19 were tabled, which were presented to Forum at the May meeting. SF reported there had been a further increase in the High Needs section, producing a deficit on High Needs of £2.974m.; that the Schools Block would record a small deficit: that Central Block would break even, and at the moment the Early Years Block was breaking even but could show a small manageable deficit. This last figure has will receive its final grant in July and so is not regarded to be a problem. This generates an overall year-end deficit of £3.270m on the DSG and High Needs budgets. With the use of LEA reserves, this year the deficit can be halved to about £1.7m which will be carried over to next year. However, as reported in February these reserves are of a one-off nature and will not be available to cover future deficits.
- **High Needs Block Funding Update inc. Ex –Borough Independent Placements – Steve Fenton**

Steve tabled the paper which went to Forum at its last meeting. He emphasised the rapid growth in EHCP plans since the new legislation was introduced (nationally this was 51%, but for Solihull was @12%); that Solihull had a recovery plan but it would take time to implement, and therefore it was inevitable that further savings would have to be introduced and a formal request through Forum would be made for schools to allow a transfer of funds from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. Modelled figures were tabled to illustrate the effects on school budgets, though these have yet to be fully modelled and confirmed. Comments were made about the unhappiness of schools with this, given the financial pressures they are under and given the structure of which pupils go outside the borough, whether secondary schools should make a larger contribution. There was also a general unhappiness about how the deficit had been allowed to escalate and had been poorly managed. This was challenged as there had been a lot of discussion in EdSEND groups, if not in Finance WG. This item would form a major part of the next meeting in September.
- **Maintained School Reserves – Steve Fenton**

The annual report of maintained schools’ reserves was tabled. This showed a growth in school balances with a pleasing picture that showed no schools were in deficit. However, it is recognised that these give only a snapshot and do not take account of three year plans, commitments and pressures on schools in the light of poor funding. Many schools are looking at deficit budgets in the future.

- **Admissions Service Annual report – Lois Brough**

Admissions is a statutory responsibility on all schools and in Solihull all schools and academies use the Borough's scheme (academies buy in the scheme). The service handled some 50,000 phone calls and 20,000 e-mails in 2018-19. The number of appeals for secondary places was 173 with 11 being successful. Due to the pro-active nature of the service and help from the Council's internal audit team there are very few fraudulent applications. The greatest pressure on places is in secondary and reception and there are challenges associated with new housing developments and in-year applications, where the goodwill and co-operation of head teachers is relied upon. Applications for nursery will now be handled by individual schools. The Fair Access Protocol for secondary aged pupils has been working successfully and it is planned to implement the same for primary. Against these problems the Solihull service works on a basis of £6 per pupil against a national average of £9 and a regional average of £8 per pupil. An annual payment is made to this service of £253k and it recommended that this continues.

- **Safeguarding Training Annual report – Lorraine Lord**

The report outlined the Child Protection training undertaken in schools and education settings and for designated members of staff in the period April 2017 to April 2019. Safeguarding training is on a three year cycle to all maintained and academy schools and offered to independent and post-16 as a traded service. On average this is 27 schools per year. In 2017-18 it was delivered to 22 schools and in 2018-19 to 23 schools. This brings schools up to date with the changes in the law and work with the police, awareness training and recruitment. The Education Safeguarding website is similarly updated. All this is backed up by training of the trainers, Dedicated Members of Staff and an annual Designated Safeguarding Lead conference (delivered over 3 days) to which 272 delegates attended in 2018. A similar service is provided for school governors. It is recommended that the annual grant of £26,500 is renewed.

- **LSCP Grant - Steve Eccleston**

The LSCBoard has now become the LSCP Partnership. Responsibilities include an understanding of the effectiveness of current arrangements through a comprehensive annual case audit programme and report, the commissioning, completion and publication of serious case reviews, rapid reviews, and child safeguarding practice reviews when serious incidents occur; the provision and update of multi-agency child safeguarding procedures for practitioners within Solihull and the provision of an extensive multi-agency learning and development offer which is available to all practitioners, and free of charge to those from partner organisations which make a financial contribution to the arrangements. It is of note that there were over 200 attendees from Solihull schools and colleges on the LSCB multi-agency training courses during 2018/19. The LSCP also has to fulfil certain other statutory requirements such as ensuring independent scrutiny of these arrangements and producing an annual report. All of these reports and documents can be found on the Solihull LSCP website. The annual grant of £13,540 renewal is recommended.

- **Procurement update – Chris Lowe**

An updated schedule of contracts was distributed to members.

- **Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

David Lewis was elected as Chair and Andrew Wilkins as Vice-chair for 2019-20.

Date of next meeting 11th September 2019

DWL 16/6/19