

**EDUCATION SEND GROUP  
REPORT TO FORUM  
FOR PRESENTATION  
AT FORUM ON 12 December 2018**

**Date of meeting: 23 November 2018** - Brief Summary of Items Discussed

- **Alternative Provision (Bev Petch)** – The team is now focusing on out-of-borough AP provision commissioned by schools and the LA. A Quality Assurance Framework, developed with schools to ensure provision is suitable for each child's needs and a new Medical Pathway, developed with Solar CAMHs and Community Paediatrics for children with significant health issues, will both be launched in January. Monthly exclusion data is being closely monitored by the Learning and Skills team. Solihull's permanent and fixed-term exclusions are particularly high for pupils with and without SEND, the main reason being persistent disruptive behaviour. A number of initiatives are being pursued to reduce exclusions.
- **High Needs Block Monitoring at Period 8 (Ian Murray/Steve Fenton)** – The major area of concern continues to be Independent School Fees, where both the number of placements and the individual cost of placements have risen. A number of other budget headings are also showing an overspend. Although there is no intention to top-slice Schools Block for 2019-20, this may be an option for 2020-21, pending the outcome of the LA's agreed strategic approach to Commissioning, Inclusion and Processes.
- **How Local Authorities Fund SEND in Mainstream Schools (Steve Fenton)** – The paper (attached to this report) clearly sets out how mainstream schools are funded. It was noted that, under the NFF, there will be no further local debate around the funding of school support (K) pupils. The paper has already been shared with primary and secondary SENCOs and members agreed it should be shared widely with heads and governors - through Forum, Heads' Briefing (including governors) or the SGA.
- **Out-of-Borough Placements (Steve Fenton)** – The schedule of ex-borough placements and associated transport costs was shared with the group. There was on-going concern at the high-cost of placements, value for money, outcomes and attendance and the fact that many are independent schools with no specialism other than providing a small setting. Members discussed the current situation regarding the Island Project, an independent provider where Solihull currently has three children placed. The school has recently been rated as Inadequate by Ofsted and members asked about the monitoring of such external placements and the processes in place when a provision goes into special measures.
- **START Team (Ann Lowe)** – AL provided an update on Part-time Timetables and explained that the impact of splitting the START service into Assess and Review teams had initially increased the workload, partly responsible for delays in meeting the 20 week timescale.
- **Head of Service Update (Ann Lowe)** – AL provided data on the drivers for out-of-borough placements and explained that following the Inclusion Conference, the next step is to agree what 'inclusion' should look like for each sector and how it should be delivered.
- **SISS Service Update (Paula Thompson)** – PT delivered the SISS Service Report, including rates of buy-back for service areas; this will now be shared with the SEND Board. Members were in favour of plans for the Autism Team, to be implemented in 2019 and the Elklan Speech and Language Strategy for Early Years, a pilot for which will commence shortly.
- **Specialist Assessment Service (Louise Minter)** – The waiting list, with 314 children, remains at 12 months. However a number of new staff appointments is expected to have a positive impact on reducing waiting times next year.
- **SENDIAS (Hazel Clarke)** – The service has the opportunity to bid for five separate blocks of funding, totalling £40k. Each block has a separate remit and HC consulted members on the work to be undertaken in support of the bid and the outcomes the funding could bring.

**CAPITAL WORK GROUP  
REPORT TO FORUM  
FOR PRESENTATION AT FORUM  
ON Wednesday, 12 December 2018**



**Date of Work Group meeting: 9 October 2018**

Items discussed (brief summary of key items):

**Draft School Asset Management Plan – Anthony Watson**

- AWA spoke to a paper and PowerPoint presentation issued to the Group.
- The six aims remain the same, and are aligned with the Council plans.
- The Government is carrying-out a further national buildings' condition survey.
- Approximately one third of Solihull's buildings need significant investment. Rationalising assets is an option for moving forward and there are some opportunities to do this.
- There is greater focus in the AMP on the role of the Council as a Landlord and the requirement for Landlord approval when a school wishes to undertake work.

**School Organisation Plan – Ann Pearson**

- AP presented her detailed paper, circulated in advance of the meeting.
- A bulge class is put in at a school to cope with a particularly large influx in a single year.
- There are difficulties accommodating traveller and new family children moving into Solihull.
- Whilst the Government plans on overall capacity, Solihull plans on how schools are organised.

**Early Years & Childcare Sufficiency Plan – Ann Pearson**

- AP presented her detailed paper, circulated in advance of the meeting.
- Over-supply of 3- & 4-year olds is an issue, and so discussions are taking place with schools and SSSAB about achieving the best use of resources.
- A Task & Finish Group is looking at a proposal for schools to organise their own nursery admissions from 2020.

**Draft SEND School Place Commissioning Strategy – Ann Pearson**

- AP presented her paper, circulated in advance of the meeting.
- There is massive demand on growth and pressures on the budget; and so, a forecasting model has been developed which will support strategic planning.
- This has produced a “shopping list” for key priorities, and will try to operate a spend-to-save model with regular reviews.
- In the last 2 years, 20% of children have sought SEND education, which is unsustainable; therefore, things need to be done differently.
- All of this will be widely consulted on.
- The issue of some mainstream schools not accepting young people with SEN is being tackled through the Inclusion Strategy being led by Ann Lowe and Phil Leivers. A special meeting on this was planned for 13<sup>th</sup> November 2018. In my personal view, this is one of the most vital challenges requiring a solution, if we are to ever significantly reduce the very high costs of out of Borough placements.

The next meeting is on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019, unless a pressing matter requires us to meet earlier.

**Andrew Wilkins**  
**Chair, Capital Work Group**  
16<sup>th</sup> October 2018

**REPORT BY THE FINANCE WORK GROUP  
FOR PRESENTATION AT  
THE FORUM MEETING  
HELD ON December 12<sup>th</sup> 2018**

**Date of Work Group meeting: 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2018**

Items discussed (brief summary of key items):

**Out-Turn Monitoring Statement** - This covers the period up to November 2018 and shows an anticipated deficit on Dedicated Schools Grant of £3.212m. This represents a considerable increase on the September figure of £1.466m. While this shows that we are far better at monitoring expenditure and is typical of what is happening in other local authorities, it presents a major problem and one that is likely to grow during the remaining fiscal year; though not at the same rate.

The DSG figures show:

1. A carry forward overspend on the Schools Block of £246k from 2017-18 (mainly from growth spending) and in High Needs of £199k from 2017-18
2. Manageable Central and Early Years Sectors to budget
3. An anticipated deficit on High Needs of £2.966m. Of this there are overspends on contracted services, travel training, Post 16, and top-up funding for out-of-Borough provision; but the major contributor is independent school fees for 2018-19 of £2.411m (on a budget of £3.838m). These figures are based on actual placements and the rising costs of individual placements for the 142 individuals in out-of-Borough/Independent institutions.

Discussion centred on getting the out-of-Borough spending under control and the possibility in future years of asking schools to contribute, though this is not planned for 2019-20.

**School Funding for 2019-20 – Central Services** – S.Fenton tabled a paper making recommendations to Schools Forum in respect of the budgets for various centrally held Central Services: These apply to all non-specialist schools.

- A Growth Fund of £350k to cover the growth in pupil numbers and to cover the £100 deficit from 2017/18
- The Central Services Block of £1.09m (this is Government money in and out)
- Early Years funding of £526K and Family Information Service of £249k
- Early Years Inclusion Fund budget of £250k
- Early Years Contingency of £100k
- A primary de-delegation of £100k to cover contingencies (Maintained primary schools only)
- A de-delegation for trade unions amounting to £6.50 per pupil (down from £7.50 per pupil) in maintained schools.

Finance Committee recommends these to Forum for approval.

**School Funding for 2019-20 – General Services** - S.McHale tabled a paper with appendices outlining the responsibilities and statutory duties the Local Authority carries out for all maintained schools including special schools and units. With the reduction in the Government funded General Rate of Education Services Grant this involves a top-slice to school budgets for maintained schools. Despite rising costs and inflation this is to be the same as last year at £66 per pupil for mainstream schools, £165 in special schools and £165 in PRU's.

This amounts to £1.160m against an estimated cost of £1.795m (the balance of £0.635 being met by the LA).

At a time of rising pressure on school budgets it is recognised that these are extra burdens, but given their statutory nature it is recommended that Forum approves the request for top-slice to school budgets.

**Collaborative Funding** – J.Nicholls spoke to a paper outlining how the annual £80k grant from Combined Services is used to sponsor the work of the five Collaboratives in the Borough. £60k goes to the Collaboratives on a pupil pro-rata basis and covers the central administration costs, and the remaining £20k goes in a special project fund administered by SSSAB. Reports from each of the collaborative were tabled outlining the work being undertaken, and evidence of the accounts was available. Of particular note was the list of initiatives being undertaken by SSSAB including:

- The SMILE programme which trains staff in their understanding of mental health and well-being, and how the pilot developed in Solihull can be rolled out to other schools
- Effective classroom observation
- Moderation events
- Peer Reviews
- English and Maths forums
- Extending the SEND initiatives started in the recent SSIF bid.

Finance work group were very impressed by the amount of work being undertaken and recommend the £80k grant be renewed.

**TU Facilities Time 2019-20** – S.Fenton and P.Ellmer gave an update on the initiative to reduce the cost to contributing schools from its present level of £7.50 per pupil. Progress is slow but some reductions have been outlined in the time allocations to teacher union officers, so that next year the service will be offered at £6.50 per pupil. There is more work to be done if the target price of £5 per pupil is to be achieved and FWG agreed to specifically request the LA to work towards introducing compensation to schools where TU reps are based to be at supply reimbursement rate rather than actual salary rate.

**How LEAs Fund SEND in Maintained Schools** – S.Fenton spoke to an information paper outlining how this is done in Solihull. Finance WG recommends this paper for wide circulation

**Termly Report on out-of-Borough Placements and Travel Costs** – S.Fenton tabled details of placements by institution and travel costs. The latest data for October 2018 showed 142 individuals were involved at a cost of £5,628,764 and travel costs amounting to £980,938. Numbers vary each year but the trend in the last year has seen rising costs.

These figures illustrate the need to address urgently the number of placements as well as the quality of the placements - work already being carried out elsewhere.

**Early Years' Service** – L.Morris presented the annual report on Solihull Early Years' Service. This covers all placements for 2 to 4 year olds which are registered including child minding. This totals 421 settings and numbers are growing with the introduction of additional hours. The emphasis in the service is to raise standards in settings rated as less good during annual inspections. The current Ofsted position for EY registered settings rated as good or outstanding is 95% in Solihull. This compares with an England rating of 94%.

Finance WG recommends to Forum that the central spend of £526,810 is continued for 2019-20

**Solihull Family Information Service** – Provides statutory information, advice and assistance to families in Solihull to help them access childcare and services. It is a free service. Services provided include:

- Information and brokerage on childcare (in 2017-18 there were 2,214 enquiries)
- 2 year old funding for eligible parents (in 2017-18 there were 1,409 applications)
- Processing 3-4 year old payments including extended hours (3581 claims)
- Free School Meals (in 2017-18 there were 3935 applications)
- Sponsored Daycare places (in 2017-18 76 placements set up)

Information on services is on the Local Offer website as well as using local social media.

This is a first class service and Finance WG recommends annual funding of £249,000

**Procurement Update** – C.Lowe gave an update on contracts which are up for review and tabled a revised **Draft Rules for Contracts Document** reflecting recent changes in legislation and regulations. This has gone through the different officers in the LEA and will now be circulated to schools and Finance Officers for comment. The closing date for returns is the end of February 2019.