

Forum Newsletter

SOLIHULL SCHOOLS FORUM met virtually on 7th July 2020, the following is a précis of business undertaken

2019-20 Financial Out-turn

With reference to the annual position statements for non-delegated DSG and High Needs, against a predicted deficit of £5.8m at autumn 2019, the year-end outcome was a deficit of £5.9m. This will be ring-fenced and carried forward to 2020-21.



Council's Approach to Support for Education during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Tim Browne, recently appointed Assistant Director, Inclusion and Additional Needs, talked through the Council's approach to supporting schools and early years settings, from initial closure to all but vulnerable and key workers' children from 23 March, to the wider re-opening to various year groups from 1 June.

The majority of children have fared well, however there is likely to be a long-term impact, particularly on the attainment gap, for some pupils. Focus has now turned to developing guidance and support plans for September, when all pupils will return full time. TB recognised the enormous efforts of head teachers, school staff and colleagues under such challenging circumstances. Forum members were all agreed that schools had been well supported by the Council over the past few months.

Group Reports

Reports for SSSAB, Finance and Capital were delivered and accepted, with no questions raised.

General Items

It was agreed that the annual election process would be delayed until autumn term, which would take account of significant academisations taking place in early 2020.

The new Schools Forum website is now available at [Schools Forum](#)

Meeting dates for 2020-21 have been circulated and are available on the Forum website.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Antoinette Fisher and Darren Gelder were nominated to serve a further term of office, to be ratified in October.



2020-21 Budget Position and HN Recovery Plan

Despite confirmation that the DfE no longer required a Recovery Plan report for June 2020, the DfE does expect recovery work to continue and a request to provide a progress report could be made at any time. The Council's HN Project Board, chaired by the Director of Resources, has continued to meet, although the Schools Reference Group has not met for some months. In academic year terms, the months lost to Covid-19 will result in a 12 month set-back for the Recovery Plan so it will be vital for the Reference Group to recommence its meetings from September. In the meantime, the delay will place greater pressure on the HNB and, with a likely upsurge in support needed for young people due to time missed from school, some additional HN investment may be required as a 'spend to save' measure, to prevent an escalation of need for statutory services. This would be in addition to the £1bn Government 'catch-up' funding. There is no doubt that additional Covid-related costs and loss of income from clubs, wrap-around services, etc. will put some schools' budgets and reserves under even greater strain.

Post-16/College Update

John Callaghan provided an update on the issues Solihull College has been facing. All three campuses have remained open throughout, with a range of provision delivered dependent on course content and some essential testing has taken place for practical-based courses. Regular contact has been maintained with vulnerable youngsters. Some staff have returned to college voluntarily and some have worked from home; this has required significant investment in PPE and laptops. Whilst buildings have been quiet, the opportunity has been taken to undertake a range of maintenance work. Arrangements are now taking shape for September when all 16-18 students are expected to return. Adult students are not currently included in the guidance, despite being a significant cohort of the college. This will be an issue where there are mixed age groups within classes and will also impact evening classes. There are also concerns around how apprenticeships will work. Throughout, college union representatives have been very supportive and there has been a positive atmosphere of all pulling together.