

**FINANCE WORK GROUP
REPORT TO FORUM
FOR PRESENTATION AT FORUM
ON 7 JULY 2020**



Date of Work Group meeting: Monday 24th April 2020

Due to the conditions arising from Covid 19 the meeting was held by issuing papers for comment.

Summary of papers:

- **Minutes of last meeting (27.1.20)** No matters arising
- **2019-20 Final out-turn statements for HNB and Non-delegated DSG**
DSG showed a variance of £5,934,000 deficit of which High Needs made a £6,068,000 deficit. Of the latter, major deficits were recorded against service administration (£573k), Independent School Fees (£3.024m), Post 16 (£94k) and top-up funding (£1.73m).
- **2019-20 Maintained school reserves**
For 2019-20 these stood at £11.106m. This is a snapshot figure and given the circumstances around Corona virus should be viewed with caution.
- **Independent school placements termly data**
The data for 31st March 2020 showed a total spend of £7.017m with a rise of £2.143m since May 2018 and an average cost per place of £50,127 (on 140 placements).
- **Chairman's report on budget areas for annual review post-April 2020**
This paper outlined the proposed changes in responsibility for Finance WG given the recent changes in historic funding introduced by the Government. This report will be carried forward to the September meeting.
- **HN Recovery Plan report plus Appendices**
At the time, the LEA was awaiting DfE guidance on the submission of deficit recovery plans given the current crisis. This was an item for information.
- **HN Recovery Plan Newsletter March 2020** for Information

The next meeting of the Finance Work Group planned for June 17th 2020 was cancelled. Items planned for this meeting will be carried over to the meeting on September 10th 2020

**CAPITAL WORK GROUP
REPORT TO FORUM
FOR PRESENTATION AT FORUM
ON 7 JULY 2020**



Date of Work Group meeting: Wednesday, 1 April 2020

Due to the conditions arising from Covid 19 the meeting was held by issuing papers for comment.

Summary of papers:

Capital

- The Children's Services Capital Programme will be updated shortly for the period 2020-21 to 2022-23, hopefully to comply with the traditional approval cycle, concluding with the Cabinet Member session in June.
- There have been new allocations of School Condition and Basic Need Grant of £1.3m and £4.3m respectively for this and future years. The new allocations will be amalgamated with existing programme balances to present a budget position for established and new priorities over the next three years. Diocesan Authorities now also receive separate, direct School Condition grants.
- Future focus will be around SEN provision, despite there being no specific grant allocations. Instead there will be permitted flexibility around use of funding. In addition a Treasury review is due, the outcome of which is unknown. Sound strategic thinking therefore remains essential.

Operations

- The programme is split between major projects, special projects and maintenance schemes, with discussions taking place with designers, contractors and affected schools across all elements. However the development process will be significantly impacted by the Corona crisis, so despite alignment of funding with priorities, in the short term, it will be about delivery in an incredibly different operational setting.

School Place Planning

- Planning and feasibility work is ongoing to further increase places across primary and secondary sectors in support of significant housing developments across the borough.
- The SEND School Place Commissioning Strategy was updated in December 2019 and includes proposals to develop a number of Additional Resourced Provisions for SEMH and Autism across primary and secondary, north and south Solihull.
- There continues to be immense pressure on special school places and officers are looking at ways in which schools could be expanded.
- The circumstances around the Corona pandemic will impact on the timescales to deliver on projects currently in focus.

The next meeting of the Capital Work Group is scheduled for 5 October 2020

REPORT BY SSSAB FOR PRESENTATION AT THE FORUM EXECUTIVE MEETING BEING HELD ON THURSDAY 25 JUNE 2020

Dates of Virtual SSSAB meetings: 7th, 13th, 18th May, 1st, 15th June 2020

Virtual SSSAB meetings have been established to ensure schools are up to speed with Local Authority support for schools during the coronavirus crisis and to ensure schools receive a consistent message from Public Health. Membership has been temporarily reduced to ensure meetings can be carried out effectively online with representation from key council officers, one headteacher from each of the collaboratives, plus new members brought in to represent secondary schools and alternative provision. Collaborative representatives have been asked to ensure regular collaborative meetings are set up to keep everyone engaged and to establish concerns.

Items discussed (brief summary of key items):

Thursday 7th May 2020

- Ruth Tennant, Director of Public Health and Commissioning, gave an update on the current situation for the country. The virus had been suppressed through lockdown and the challenge was to now safely manage coming out of that.
- There was discussion about making judgements on individual risk assessments for staff returning to work, the need for a consistent message to parents from the LA to ensure that individual schools work to the same set of rules, the effectiveness of PPE for staff in schools, social distancing in schools, handwashing stations and school transport.
- A planning document and audit document for the reopening of schools were shared with the group.
- RT was asked to use the Virtual SSSAB group if she needed a reference group of headteachers.

Wednesday 13th May 2020

- The purpose of this meeting was to discuss and agree principles for pupils returning to schools on 1st June.
- Draft documents from the LA (Over-Arching Principles for Re-set and Recovery) and a primary school's principles for reopening and operating had been shared with the group. Agreement to the LA document was being sought from schools and the unions. SSSAB's feedback included concerns around timescales, social distancing and curriculum and it was agreed that 1st June 2020 was an ambitious date for children to return to schools. The final updated document was sent in Head Lines on 15th May 2020.
- Emergency PPE packs would be sent to schools for dealing with a symptomatic child and basic supplies.
- It was agreed that a communication from the LA would be sent to parents setting out what they are asking schools to do and why some schools might do things differently.
- LA guidance around staff who were shielding, staff with childcare issues and those with underlying health issues were being prepared. SSSAB requested a list of guidance documents being prepared to be shared via Head Lines.
- It was agreed that a communication would go in Head Lines stating that SSSAB recommended, for a variety of reasons, that it is not safe for schools to open on 1st June 2020 but to plan for 8th June 2020.
- Secondary schools wanted a consistent approach for all year 6 pupils and to put on some transition opportunities. It was hoped that there would be flexibility around year 2 to 3 transition and there would be guidance for headteachers to prioritise children in year 2 above year 1 for those reasons.
- Feedback was requested about the status of speech & language and physiotherapy assessments.

Monday 18th May 2020

- Public Health were working on guidance for parents explaining why it is safe for their children to return to school.
- A FAQ document was being developed for schools and would be shared with the Virtual SSSAB group before sending out in Head Lines. A FAQ document was also being worked up for parents.
- Feedback from collaborative meetings was shared with the group and the responses were as follows:

- There was still a need for clarity about what would and would not be provided by the LA in terms of PPE.
- Ruth Tennant provided advice about dealing with bubbles of children.
- Any induction plans for welcoming new children before September would need to be virtual.
- There were no plans to share school risk assessments wider but it was suggested this could be done through collaborative meetings to establish whether there is consistency locally.
- It was confirmed that there was an expectation that schools would offer home learning for years 1 and 6, and it was agreed to discuss platforms further at the next meeting.
- Personal social development guidance would be included in the curriculum document.
- Louise Rees' confirmed that the line had been held formally with the Regional Schools Commissioner about the return to schools being individually school led in terms of risk assessment and what works for schools.
- Week commencing 6th July 2020 had been earmarked for secondary transition week in Solihull. SSSAB agreed to include the transition to Nursery and Reception during this week.
- Transport for children would not be set up as it previously had and the logistics and cost implications were being explored.
- Andrea Ashley provided an update from HR which covered well-being, case work, clarification about face to face meetings with members of staff, and pay for casual, breakfast club and after school club staff.

Monday 1st June 2020

- Ruth Tennant's Public Health update included advice around staff risk assessments. It was agreed that it would be more useful to deal with FAQs for staff and school leaders on an ongoing basis through Head Lines.
Schools needed further clarity about bubbles and PPE for staff.
- It was confirmed that urgent speech & language and physiotherapy assessments were being carried out by telephone in the first instance and visual assessments were being done via video conferencing.
- A document was being drawn up, based on government guidance, to support schools with prioritising pupils returning to school where there are capacity issues. It was agreed that this would be circulated to the group for feedback before distributing it wider.
- There had still been no indication from the government about plans for September and it was confirmed that every communication avenue available would be used to press for information in good time.
- The DfE was conscious of the need for school leaders and staff to have a break during the summer holidays and they were not planning to have schools open during that time. However it may be that there could be some expectation about preparation. SSSAB felt strongly that staff need a break and that schools need to know as soon as possible about summer holiday arrangements which Louise Rees would report back.
- The Information Manager and school advisers were leading on learning platforms. Generic and subject specific guidance would be issued.
- It was agreed that although school advisers were keeping in touch with schools there should be a more formal arrangement for them to contact schools to provide support.

Monday 15th June 2020

- Ruth Tennant gave an update on the testing now available for coronavirus and anti-bodies. The use of mobile testing units was being explored to make it easier for people to obtain swab tests locally and for any workplace outbreaks to be dealt with quickly and locally. In the meantime schools should continue to contact Public Health England if anyone in their setting tests positive for coronavirus. The possibility of Solihull doing their own contact tracing of local cases was being explored.
- There was concern about current guidance around vulnerable adults returning to work in that it would be impossible for schools to provide the appropriate level of protection due to their close contact with children. The member of staff would have to be placed in a modified role which would not be feasible in September due to financial implications and potential availability of supply teachers. Louise Rees would share the message about the potential significant impact on schools budgets with the RSC.
- The DfE had now stated that primary schools could open to more year groups and it was acknowledged that this would be subject to capacity which varies enormously from setting to setting.
- Ruth Tennant agreed to follow up further concerns raised about bubbles.
- Guidance would be requested from the RSC about GCSE results day for secondary schools and also any clarification about September 2020.

- It was agreed that a new communication needed to be sent from the LA to all parents with a reminder about social distancing as well as informing them that not all schools were able to open for other year groups.
- It was confirmed that staff and children should not be wearing PPE. Emergency PPE is in school for members of staff working with a child symptomatic before they go home. Catering staff and crossing patrols can wear PPE because they come in to contact with a greater number of pupils.
- It was confirmed that advisers would be contacting schools to offer a scheduled call to discuss September.
- Further concern was expressed about the summer holidays and the government's announcement about summer catch-up for children. The group was reassured that the LA had pushed hard to say guidance for the summer holidays was needed as soon as possible and they had stressed that staff needed a break.
- The School Cell had changed with headteachers now being involved with planning meetings. Any documents to be issued would reviewed by the online SSSAB group before circulation.
- Following a review of options for the future of Head Lines, it was agreed to produce Head Lines weekly, with separate Covid-19 updates.
- Tim Browne gave an overview of inclusion in Solihull and responded to feedback which colleagues were asked to share this within their collaboratives and feedback any concerns.

LM/24.6.20

