

**FINANCE WORK GROUP
REPORT TO FORUM
FOR CIRCULATION TO FORUM
MEMBERS IN FEBRUARY 2021**



Date of Work Group meeting: Monday February 1ST 2021

Items discussed (brief summary of key items):

School Catering (Paul Wayman) - Solihull School Catering is the Local Authority catering service but operates as a trading organisation which most primary schools and some secondary schools in Solihull buy into. Paul attended to answer questions from mainly primary heads around deficits, paybacks when staff have been furloughed, Catering Plus refunds and capital costs. He agreed to follow up concerns and give written detailed explanations directly to schools. Academy school representatives confirmed similar concerns when operating with independent caterers. Solihull School Catering were complemented on their catering meal packs during COVID-19 lockdowns. It was a constructive, detailed discussion.

Trade Union Annual Report on Facilities Time 2019-20 (Gillian Clowe) - GC introduced the report by emphasising the work which the local unions do for education and the wider community in the Borough, primarily in supporting their members in contributing schools, but also working with the Local Authority on School Policies, and introducing Occupation Health and Employee Assistance services. Being a part of the COVID Schools Recovery group and SSSAB had proved a positive experience across the board. Figures for 2019-20 saw a slight fall in case load as more schools academised (5%) but more longer-term involvement, particularly for support staff. There were 1,002 recorded contacts between members and local officers. A summary sheet is attached. In discussion, a more positive way of working between the unions and heads in resolving local issues was reported. Ian Backhouse was thanked for his work over the years as NAHT Heads representative and on Forum representing the education unions.

Out-Turn Monitoring Statement - Review DSG Financial Monitoring Statements (Ian Murray) - IM tabled the General DSG Grant for 2020-21 and the 2020-21 High Needs Block. There had been considerable movement since the last statement in November. Whilst most DSG budgets are within the parameters set, the High Needs deficit continues to increase to an anticipated in-year deficit of £2.8m and an accumulated deficit of £8.8m. Within that figure there had been a fall in the cost out of borough placements of £700k and savings through the closure of Auckland, but over budget rises in contractual services, top-up funding and post-16 funding (up 50%). The latter needs further investigation. In all these figures there is evidence of COVID implications, but equally evidence of work needed through the Recovery Plan.

Termly Report on Out-of Borough Placements (Steve Fenton) - SF emphasised the fall in average unit cost of pupil placement (to £41,431), but more worrying was the rise in overall costs since November and the fact that 16 more pupils had been placed out of Borough due to lack of suitable in-Borough places. It was suggested that pupil profiles, including ages, would provide a longer term view of potential costs and requested that transport costs be added to the schedule. SF was complemented on the data presented.

School Budgets for 2021-22 (Steve Fenton) - SF tabled a paper written for presentation to Cabinet Member to approve:- School Budgets for 2021-22; Top up rates for special schools; Early Years rates, and Forum decisions on Central Services made in December 2020. Discussion noted the increased adjustment in AWPU this year needed to balance the grant against formula restrictions, given that Solihull follows a model of funding very close to the National Formula. SF also said that more detailed work was being undertaken with regard to High Needs and pay and pensions. For example, of the extra funding for High Needs, a third would have to fund pay and pension increases. Likewise, in the School Block the 9% rise would have to fund pay rises leaving about 4% net rise. Finance WG noted the report and thanked Steve for a detailed presentation.

Schools Forum Report (Alison McWilliam and Steve Fenton) - This is the statutory annual grant for Forum to cover its expenses. It covers administration and staffing costs, room hire, refreshments, members' expenses, F40 annual subscription, and SSSAB Chair expenses. It has an annual budget of £91,300. Not surprisingly this year with all meetings being virtual the fund is running at a surplus. Although the number of formal meetings is about the same, there have been no payments made to attending members, this action was supported by FWG members. It is anticipated there will be a surplus of c.£40k and SF reported that this will be retained within the DSG and carried forward as part of an overall DSG surplus/deficit.

Procurement Update (Chris Lowe) - CL reported considerable work during lockdown on: securing contracts due to COVID-19 (e.g. transport), waste disposal, ground maintenance and the Government's Green Paper on procurement. He detailed a wide range of contract renewals and extensions.

DWL 1/2/21

Appendix

Analysis of 2019-20 Facilities Time Report

There were 1002 recorded contacts (767 for Teaching Unions and @235 for Support staff Unions)

	Sickness Absence, Well-being	Disciplinary	Appraisal Capability	grievance staff and parents	Advice	Pay & Conditions	Collective issues
NAHT	11	1	3	4	11	2	4
NEU	96	12	38	16	137	45	54
NASUWT	61	12	20	11	158	46	25
total	168	25	61	31	306	93	83
%	22%	3%	8%	4%	40%	12%	11%
GMB (Est)	26	6	12	6	76	17	5
UNISON	17	9		8	11	18	14
Total	43	15	12	14	87	35	19
%	19%	8%	5%	6%	38%	16%	8%

Comment

Schools These are compatible figures to last year's though they show a few changes:

1. The total for schools is down from 1053 to 1002 (5%) reflecting more schools becoming academies.
2. There were falls in the number of cases in Pay/ conditions and Appraisal/Capability but rises in Sickness/Absence and Advice to members.

Speed of response

The report distinguishes cases by the number of contacts needed to resolve the issue at hand. A number of categories are used:

1. one contact needed
2. Further information and a second contact is needed
3. several contacts are required
4. where a case goes on for an extended period of time

Number of contacts	1-2		3		4	
	2018-19	2019-20	2018-19	2019-20	2018-19	2019-20
Teachers	81.4%	71%	12.6%	16%	6%	13%
Support staff	45.1%	41%	25.7%	27%	29.2%	32%

Comment.

1. **There is a noticeable change this year compared with previous years** that cases are taking longer to resolve
2. For support staff the stats are more even figures, possibly involving perhaps more complicated cases. Without more detailed study it is difficult to draw conclusions, but could it be that there are a lot more cases of MOC here, as schools under the budgetary pressures make economies?