

**FINANCE WORK GROUP
REPORT TO FORUM
FOR PRESENTATION
AT FORUM ON 28th Nov 2022**



Date of Work Group meeting: Monday Nov 7th 2022

Items discussed (brief summary of key items):

Ratification of Vice Chair – Charlotte Shadbolt was elected as Vice-Chair for 2022-23.

Minutes and matters arising. The minutes of 13th September 2022 were approved. Steve Fenton is still developing the model financial outcomes for changes affecting School budgets, Early years, and High Needs. It is proposed to hold an extra meeting of Finance WG to consider the proposals. The grant/loan from DfE to cover growth is £795k.

2022-23 DSG Financial Monitoring Statements (Ian Murray). IM tabled the outlined budgets for DSG and High Needs for 2022-23. School, Central and Early Years Funding have risen slightly with increased government funds, But the deficit on High Needs continues to grow by an anticipated £3.5m to an accumulated deficit of £16.6m. The deficits from last financial year have been carried forward - £162k in Central funding (due to growth) and £13.09m in High Needs.

Regarding High Needs budgets, it was noted how much they had grown. Since 2019-20 the overall budget had risen by £22m or 69%. Within that Alternative Provision had risen 54%; and expenditure around statemented provision by 75%. This has been funded by more Central Government grants and monies from the local Authority, and there are no current plans to seek to fund overspend from schools' budgets. It was also noted that the % allocation of DSG from the government is: Schools Block 77%, High Needs 16%, Early years 6%, Central 1%.

Independent School and College payments (Steve Fenton). The latest figures are yet to be finalised using the latest census figures.

TU Facilities Time Report for 2021-22 (David Lewis) Reports were received from the teaching unions (NEU, NAS/UWT, and NAHT) plus support staff unions (GMB and Unison). There were 1,154 recorded contacts with local union officers of which the greatest number concerned Advice, sickness and well-being; and staff absence- issues around Covid still figured heavily. Having local officers does speed up issue resolution with 71% of teaching staff issues, and 67% of support staff issues being dealt with after 1 or 2 contacts. Facilities time is available to support Maintained schools and those Academy schools who buy into the scheme. It is charged at £5 per pupil.

Central Services and School Forum Decisions for 2023-24 (Steve Fenton) - The annual report to Forum asking for the approval of centrally held budgets in the Central Services and Early Years Blocks was tabled for information, discussion and recommendation to School Forum. The local authority is requesting that centrally held funds be approved at the same level as last year, central grant has been cut by the government by 2.5%, but the authority will seek to absorb this, and pay inflation within the final awarded allocations. The main areas are:

Growth funds £600k – it was noted that the extra funds for growth £795K was a loan not a grant, to be paid back from reducing the growth fund grant, which will increase with the additional pupils.

Central Service Block- £1.338m

Historic commitments -£1.115m

Early Years services - £1.086m

De-delegation from Maintained schools - £149k

Full details will be given at Forum

Finance WG recommends the paper to Forum for approval.

Procurement Update (Chris Lowe) Chris reported that the new ground maintenance contracts were in place with more firms involved for schools to approach. It is planned to do the same for cleaning contracts. The water cooler contract heavily used in schools is being renewed. Likewise, there was a new register of suppliers for temporary staff. Central help is available on contracts etc.

Terms of Reference for the Finance Work group 2022 (David Lewis). The existing T of R were approved. It was noted that these would need to be amended if the intended merger of the Finance WG and the Capital WG goes ahead.

A.O.B concern was expressed that at a recent Forum meeting there were no refreshments bar drinks, but the Council meeting held at the same time had hot refreshments. At a time of austerity this seemed in need of review.

DWL 7/11/22