



Date of Work Group meeting: Tuesday January 10th 2022

Items discussed (brief summary of key items):

Minutes and matters arising. The minutes of 7th November 2022 were approved. Steve Fenton is still developing the model for Notional SEND budgets, there is now not enough time to complete review for 2023-24 – will develop over next year. A report on Early Years Services due at this meeting will be held over to the next meeting.

2022-23 DSG Financial Monitoring Statements (Ian Murray). There had been little change in the figures from November 2022 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%.

It was requested that the monitoring figures, while generally in balance could give a more detailed breakdown indicating where individual budgets were under pressure, rather than just stating "nil variance".

Independent School and College payments (Steve Fenton). The latest figures for November 2022 were presented. For post 16 the number of placements is largely stable at 132 and an average cost per placement of £18K. For 5-16 years there are 150 pupils out of Borough, of which 50 are new placements. Annual costs vary but are in the region of £6.6m at an average of £46k. With regard to age profile very few (15) are primary, but there is a shift from secondary (97) to Post 16 (30). There was a request that transport costs need to be regularly reported.

Early Years funding 2023-24 and TPPG options (Steve Fenton) the funding decision about the Early years part of the DSG was announced on Dec 16th. The introduction of incorporating teacher pay and pensions (TPPG) into the EY funding formula. The total TPPG amounts in Solihull to £352,066 of which £260k is pension grant and £92k is pay. This introduction was considered under 3 modelled options: 1. Not incorporating 2. Incorporating a new supplement for pension grant only. 3. Create a new supplement for pension and pay. Option 2 was recommended but in debate Option 3 was favoured by school members of the group as including pay would help with retaining trained staff.

School Funding update from the DFE On December 16th 2022 the DFE funding arrangements for mainstream schools for 2023-24. They also published details of High Needs and Early Years Funding. SF published how this would affect education provision in Solihull. Headlines are Schools block (including supplementary grant and MSA) up by 6.1%, Central block down including growth funds by 1.1%, high needs up by 9.3% and Early years up by 8.3%. Pupil Premium up by 5%. These need to be applied to Solihull. SF will now work to submit formula figures to DFE for January 20th before distribution to schools.

Alternative Provision (AP) funding (Steve Fenton) this concerns the funding of top-ups when APs are being used.

Firstly, for the LA to subsidise school commissioned places at Solihull Academy 2. School contributions to other AP provisions. The drivers here are to clarify relative responsibilities particular where schools initiate the use of AP; securing better value by reducing double funding of pupils; secondary schools concern at level of top ups at Solihull Academy that could make permanent exclusion a better financial option.

It is proposed that when a pupil in school is still on school roll but uses a AP funded by the LA, a deduction from school budgets should be made for the duration of the stay, and that the deduction be the same for all types of AP settings, (not applicable where schools commission their own AP, e.g. at Solihull Academy). This was recommended.

At Solihull Academy it is proposed that for a pupil still on school role, with the school paying a £8,500 top up, rising to £9000 a trial subsidy of £1000 be made from High Needs. Members felt that while this would reduce the urge to exclude a pupil, such a subsidy even of a temporary trial nature would set a precedent. Moreover, primary schools who strive to keep pupils on register receive no such help. Moreover, the High Needs budget is under increasing stress. This was passed on to Forum for decision.

Solihull Family Information Service – Rosie Ratcliffe. This 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 2020-21 there were 3,596 enquiries)
- 2 year old funding for eligible parents (in 2020-21 there were 1,139 applications) with a take up rate of 96% of DWP target
- Processing 3-4 year old payments including extended hours, disability, Pupil Premium and High Needs (9713 claims) compared to 5008 in 2019-20
- Foster care and 30 hour – so far this year 21 applications

- Free School Meals (in 2020-21 there were 4140 applications)
- Sponsored Day Care places (in 2020-21 42 new placements were set up plus the 25 existing placements)
- In addition the FIS service administered the Holiday Activity and Food programme, Family Information Directory and The FSM Voucher Scheme for School Holidays
- 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 £257,253

Procurement Update A table was produced with the latest information on contracts. In particular new contracts on waste collection, updating Microsoft office, and Janet servers. New legislation is passing through parliament to be introduced next year. This will form an agenda item at the next meeting

. **Terms of Reference for the Finance Work group 2022 (David Lewis)**. New Ts of R were approved incorporating the merger of the Finance WG and the Capital WG .

A.O.B Lynn Clarke expressed her concerns around Attendance monitoring and the speed with which cases raised by schools were being dealt. While this is not a concern of this work group, details will be passed on and managers of the service alerted.

DWL 11/1/23