

Bristol Schools' Forum

Feedback from Schools Forum (25th September 2018) to Cabinet (2nd October 2018) regarding the report on the High Needs Budget 2018/19

8. High Needs Budget 2018/19

Schools Forum considered the same paper on the High Needs Budget 2018/19 that Cabinet is to consider on 2nd October 2018. Schools Forum were invited to provide feedback on the report prior to Cabinet considering it.

Proposed recommendations in the paper

1. Schools Forum to provide any advice or comments to Cabinet and Council on the proposed approach to re-determining the High Needs Budget to £53.905m for 2018/19.
2. Note that the budget for 2018/19 is prepared on the basis of not disturbing other aspects of the budget and no increase to general council tax in 2018/19.
3. Schools Forum to advise the Authority on whether it would agree now or defer until year-end:
 - i. to transfer the unallocated central services funding in 2018/19 of £0.566m to the High Needs Block; and/or
 - ii. in principle, to transfer any unspent Early Years funding at year-end to the High Needs Block.

Summary of advice and decisions

Schools Forum understands the approach taken by the Council for re-determining the High Needs Budget. Schools Forum decided that £0.566m of unallocated funding in the central school services block could be transferred in 2018/19 to the high needs block.

Schools Forum deferred any decision about transferring unspent Early Years funding until later in the year. Early Years colleagues at the meeting urged any underspends in Early Years to be spent on early years settings where acute difficulties were being experienced in managing within the resources currently available. They also felt that the Equalities Impact Assessment should be updated to identify the consequences for Early Years if monies are to be moved.

It was noted that there was still a current year deficit projected on the High Needs budget and there were concerns that this would come back to schools to address. Indeed, no firm plan had been put forward to get the High Needs budget back into balance.

Schools Forum agreed on the following points to convey to Cabinet:

- a) the agreed transfer of £0.566m unallocated funding from the central school services block for 2018/19 would increase the proposed High Needs budget of £53.905m to £54.471m;
- b) a strategy that included continuing transfers from other blocks to the High Needs Block would not be sustainable in the long term;
- c) in view of the pressures on all areas of the education service, the Council

should consider all possible sources of funds, and not just the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG);

d) in view of the pressures, the Council should set out a timetable to balance the DSG, which may need to extend beyond the timetable envisaged by the original recovery plan.

As agreed by
Carew Reynell
Chair of Bristol Schools Forum
27th September 2018