

Schools Forum Finance Sub-Group – 25th August 2020

Present:

Carew Reynell
Sarah Lovell
Christine Townsend
Cedric Sanguinol

Officers:

Graham Booth
Corrina Haskins
Alison Hurley
Travis Young
Levi Mapstone

Apologies: Garry Maher and Chris Pring

1. DSG Monitor

The Sub-Group noted the latest position; there was not much change overall and the High Needs Block was carrying forward a deficit from last year which was reflected in the HN brought forward value.

The following comments were raised:

- Early years funding overspend needs explaining in the report to Schools Forum;
- There would be a significant increase in the cost of teachers due to the 2.75% pay rise and this was a funding issue for schools.

2. Funding Formula

The Sub-Group noted that, until the Government guidance was available, it was not known whether there would be restrictions in the movements between blocks.

It was also noted that Bristol's formula was now very close to the NFF, and that the amount of money redistributed by the MFG was much lower than used to be the case.

AH confirmed that she was looking how to widen engagement with schools, which could be done using a virtual platform. It was suggested that it would also be useful to engage with Chairs of Governors in addition to Heads, and this would also raise the profile of the Schools Forum.

In response to questions about whether falling rolls in primary schools was an ongoing issue that needed to be reflected in the funding formula, TY confirmed that figures were stabilising and Early Years numbers were slowly starting to increase.

3. Growth Fund

The Sub-Group noted that there was a delay in the opening Oasis Temple Quarter and there were implications for school places and associated funding. This could be an issue for Schools Forum in terms of the Growth Fund.

4. De-delegation

The Sub-Group noted that some areas of the de-delegation budget would not be sustainable going forward – e.g. only 2 secondary schools would be paying into the maternity scheme. As a result some of the rates may rise and a consultation would take place with schools in the autumn.

In response to a question, it was noted that any balances accrued as a result of schools in financial difficulty and underspend in areas such as union fees and health and safety representatives could not be utilised in the Schools Block.

High needs/Education Transformation Programme

The Sub-Group received a draft paper from AH which would be finalised for the September meeting of Schools Forum. Members asked for further details to be included on the impact of the £1.3m which was transferred to the High Needs Block.

It was reported that other authorities had large and growing deficits on the HN block.

GB highlighted the difficulties of forecasting future costs, especially in relation to EHCPs as the cost of a plan varied between the different bands, however, costs would increase as the number of requests for ECHP was rising year on year and there were additional costs associated with the impact of Covid-19.

It was agreed that the report for Schools Forum would include further detail on the number of EHCPs, out of authority places along with an update on the progress made in carrying out the programme measured against the milestones.

Agenda for September Meeting

- DSG Monitoring report;
- Update on 2021/22 funding (to include the blocks and funding levels and an outline of the consultations which will be undertaken);
- Progress on the Education Transformation with contextual information.

Other Issues

- In response to a question about the Apprenticeship Levy and whether schools knew about using the money to invest in training and development, AH undertook to raise this with the Employment and Skills Officer.
- Forum Composition: This was due to be considered in September, but had been delayed due to the current pandemic. AH undertook to look into this with a view to encouraging a diversity of membership and would report back to a future meeting.