

Schools Forum

Minutes

Tuesday 27 June 2023

PRESENT

Voting members	Non-voting members
<p>Primary School Heads Michele Barrett, Randolph Beresford / Vanessa Nursery Sam Naismith (Flora Gardens Primary)</p> <p>Academies and Free Schools Gary Kynaston, Hammersmith Academy (Chair)</p>	<p>Observers Alex Parker Aiden Smith Jacqueline Munroe</p>

Officers

Jacqui McShannon (Director of Children's Services)

Peter Haylock (Director of Education and SEND)

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education)

Irolla Valerie (Principle Accountant)

Daryle Mathurin (Strategic Lead - Education, Assets and Operations)

Satwinder Saraon (Strategic Lead for Education, Early Years and Transformation)

Amrita White (Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Elizabeth Stevenson.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

3. Q1 UPDATE - HIGH NEEDS BLOCK 2023/24

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education) presented the report which provided an update on the current position and progress of the transformation programme across the High Needs Block (HNB). A breakdown of the high-level forecast and a progress update on the HNB workstreams was provided. He spoke about the challenges for the HNB, the safety valve agreement, including the work required to ensure the yearly goals were met and the final savings were delivered.

The Chair asked how the risk for the retained deficit (2025/26) would be managed without a safety valve payment. In response Peter Haylock

(Director of Education and SEND) explained that the level of risk was high due to the size of the challenge. The Council was receiving a high volume of Education, Health, and Care Needs assessment requests. It was noted that the number of Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) had also increased. He outlined the two primary areas of work to progress which were around the Special Educational Needs and Disability Capital plan and the preparation for adulthood for children over the age of 16-18. These children could move to a different provision which would be supported with an element of education and social care, ensuring that their needs were being met. This would help reduce the financial impact on the HNB and associated travel costs.

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education) highlighted that the risk around inflation was very likely to impact on costs within the HNB. Officers would find out next month what the provisional HNB funding allocation was for 2024/25 and how this compared to the assumption of the funding growth within the safety valve forecast.

The Chair asked for further clarification to be provided on costs relating to an EHCP including travel costs. Peter Haylock (Director of Education and SEND) noted that travel care costs, were an associated costs which fell under the general funds remit. These costs were significant and could be aided by reducing the amount of EHCP's received. It would also prove beneficial to both the Council and Young People to decrease the travel distance to school for YP.

The Chair asked if there was any progression on how support would be provided to YP going forward (offering support based on needs rather than allocating a specific set of hours etc). Daryle Mathurin (Strategic Lead - Education, Assets and Operations) provided an overview on the forward plan timeline for this programme. It was noted that work would commence in April 2024 around how EHCPs would be managed. Officers would explore top up rates for mainstream schools and benchmark those against the special school's unit.

RESOLVED

The Schools Forum noted the report.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair asked for Officers to review and update the following anomaly between academies and maintained schools in relation to funding recoupment for permanent schools.

When a pupil is excluded from a mainstream maintained school, the local authority must deduct from the school's budget in-year the amount within the formula relating to the age and personal circumstances of that pupil, pro rata to the number of complete weeks remaining in the financial year from the 'relevant date'.

Tony Burton (Head of Finance for Children's Services and Education) noted that officers would check this against the operational guidance and report back at the next meeting.

Key finance papers would be brought to the next meeting. The Chair requested that a letter be circulated to all schools summarising the Council's position on funding and requesting volunteers to join the membership for this group.

Action: Tony Burton

Jacqui McShannon (Director of Children's Services) closed the meeting by thanking the Chair and Head Teachers for all the invaluable work that was executed behalf of the YP in the borough.

Meeting started: 2:00pm
Meeting ended: 2:30pm

Chair

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