

## **Minutes of the meeting of Herefordshire schools forum held at Online meeting on Friday 18 March 2022 at 9.30 am**

**Present:** Mrs K Weston (Local Authority Maintained Primary School) (Chairperson)

Mr D Bennett	Academies
Ms C Bryan	Academies
Mr A Davies	Academies
Mr R Foster	Academies (primary)
Ms N Gilbert	LA Special Schools
Mrs G Griffin	Primary Governors
Mr P Jennings	Academies
Mr S Kendrick	Local Authority Maintained Primary School (with Nursery)
Mr T Knapp	Academies
Mr C Lewandowski	Trade Unions
Mrs R Lloyd	Early Years
C Rushton	Trade Unions
Mr A Teale	Diocese of Hereford

**In attendance:** Councillor Diana Toynbee, Cabinet member children and families

**Officers:** Strategic Finance Manager, Head of Additional Needs, Childrens Wellbeing and Service Director - Education, Skills and Learning

### **40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from the following members of the forum: Alison Banner, Paul Deneen, Nicki Emmett, Andy Gosling, Sue Jenkins, Tracey Kneale and Sian Lines.

### **41. NAMED SUBSTITUTES (IF ANY)**

Carol Rushton acted as a substitute for Paul Deneen  
Andrew Teale acted as a substitute for Sian Lines

### **42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **43. MINUTES**

**Resolved:** It was resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2022 be approved as an accurate record.

### **44. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRPERSON**

The chairperson thanked the previous vice-chairperson for her work as both chairperson and vice-chairperson over a number of years.

Paul Jennings proposed and David Bennett seconded the nomination of Alison Banner as vice-chairperson of the forum.

**Resolved: It was resolved that Alison Banner is elected vice-chairperson of the Herefordshire Schools Forum for the remainder of the academic year.**

**45. HIGH NEEDS BUDGET 2022/23 (Pages 5 - 18)**

The Strategic Finance Manager (SFM) gave a presentation on proposals for the High Needs Budget 2022/23. He explained the expected outturn position for 21/22 would be a small deficit and that a balanced budget was proposed for 2022/23. The forum was required to be consulted on these proposals and would make recommendations to the cabinet member children and families who would make the final decision.

Two corrections to the recommendations in the published report necessary to correct an arithmetic error in the budget model were highlighted as follows:

In recommendation (r) - high needs contingency is now £0

In recommendation (t) part (ii) - LA recoupment income is now £211,508

The Head of Additional Needs (HAN) provided additional commentary on the proposals and highlighted key points as set out below.

- The significant growth in independent school placements, particularly for pupils with SEMH and autism, had led to proposals for an autism secondary hub to be established. The council was working with the local branch of the national autistic society to design a suitable setting and was seeking a site and partner school to operate it.
- The growth in demand for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) had outpaced projections. Plans were being developed to increase capacity but capital projects take time to bring to completion.
- The funding required to supplement the income of the Behaviour Support Team might not be as much as suggested in the proposed budget as some details were still being worked through. The service was trying to balance trading services with centrally funded support.
- It had been difficult during the covid pandemic to judge the true picture of demand for places at the Pupil Referral Unit. The situation would continue to be monitored going forward.

Forum members discussed the proposals and put questions to the SFM and HAN. It was noted that:

- The budget proposals consulted on in the Autumn term 2021 had proposed an increase in funding for in-county special school places of 20 but due to a lack of site capacity a reduced increase of 10 places was now proposed.
- It was necessary to seek short and medium term solutions to the pressure for special school places while longer term plans were developed and implemented.
- The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) had deducted at source for academy and free school places. The deduction of 18 post 16 academy special school places was queried. The SFM indicated the places were at Barrs Court and agreed to clarify where these places were, make sure that there was no double counting and report back to the next forum meeting. The recommendations in the report were based on the net budget after the ESFA deductions so represented the funding available to be allocated at this point.
- Independent special schools were inspected by Ofsted (or Estyn for Welsh-based settings). The council also made visits, for example attending annual reviews, and where placements were joint with social care then social workers would also visit and share information as necessary.
- *(Post meeting note: it was confirmed following the meeting that the council contracts team also conduct paper-based checks on provider policies and procedures.)*

- Some independent settings were profit making but the level of profit varied. The council sought to minimise the use of independent placements but was always likely to need some independent places to meet very specialist needs.
- Inflation was expected to have an impact on charges for placements. Herefordshire was part of the west midlands framework which interrogated price uplifts from private providers rigorously and had been successful in limiting uplifts. The main driver in uplift in costs was usually wage costs as independent settings often had high staffing ratios.
- The supplementary grant that had been paid before Christmas 2021 was expected to be consolidated into the high needs block grant in future years.
- The proposed autism hub was expected to be in operation by September 2023 but might open earlier. There was nothing to prevent a mid-year opening.

The chairperson of the Budget Working Group commented on the discussion of the budget proposals at the most recent group meeting, the key points of which were summarised in the report. The working group had supported the proposals set out in the report. The working group had also noted the post pandemic impact and increased needs across all age groups and the need to reduce out of county placements. The deficit position of the dedicated schools grant was concerning but Herefordshire had done very well to remain in surplus for so long compared to other local authority areas.

The chairperson closed the debate by thanking the officers for their work on the budget proposals and the working group for their deliberations. The recommendations were then put to the vote as set out in the report with the two corrections advised.

**Resolved: It was resolved that a balanced high needs budget for 2022/23 be recommended to the Cabinet Member for Children's and Families as follows;**

- a. **Complex needs funding £2,285,745;**
- b. **Independent special schools £2,920,000;**
- c. **Special school commissioned places £1,743,000;**
- d. **Special school top-up funding**
  - i. **Base funding £3,826,000;**
  - ii. **inflation at 6% for tariffs D - F £279,560;**
- e. **Post-16 top-up funding £1,600,000;**
- f. **Mainstream school top-up funding**
  - i. **Base funding £2,863,000;**
  - ii. **inflation at 3% on tariffs A - C £135,890;**
- g. **Nurture provision for 5 primary and 1 secondary schools including outreach, full year costs £372,100;**
- h. **Autism and Language Units 56 commissioned places at £6,000 each £336,000**
- i. **Autism and Language units top-up funding**
  - i. **base funding £362,432;**
  - ii. **inflation at 3% £10,873;**
- j. **Early years top-up funding £150,000;**
- k. **Pupil Referral Service 50 commissioned places at £500,000;**
- l. **Pupil Referral Service top-up funding 40 pupils at tariff band D2 £9,338 (less income recovery from schools) net budget £239,555;**
- m. **Pupil Referral Service – additional 10 outdoor places at £15,643 i.e. £156,434;**
- n. **H3 Home, Hospital and Hub top-up funding**
  - i. **Base funding £397,000**
  - ii. **inflation 3% £4,491;**
- o. **Pupil Referral Unit additional support for**

- i. Phasing out TLR allowances, three years from September 2021 £35,000;
  - ii. Temporary split site allowance £38,000;
  - iii. Pupil Referral Unit support fund £50,000;
- p. SEN protection scheme for primary and secondary schools with a cap at £158 x NOR (number of roll at Oct 2021) £517,000;
- q. Teachers Pay Grant allocations
  - i. Special schools and PRU 466 places at £660 per place £307,560;
  - ii. Central SEN Support services £52,000;
  - iii. NI 1.25% levy for 466 places at £100 per place £46,600;
- r. High needs contingency/contribution to reserves £0;
- s. SEN support services including 3% inflation uplift as marked \*
  - i. Additional Needs Management\* £209,863;
  - ii. Complex Learning Communications\* £114,897;
  - iii. Equalities team – inclusion\* £271,855;
  - iv. Hearing Impaired Team\* £419,725;
  - v. Managed moves £5,000;
  - vi. Business support £73,000;
  - vii. DSG Services\* £129,677;
  - viii. Behaviour Support Service – match schools de-delegation £37,500;
- t. Charges and income
  - i. Excluded pupils (AWPU)/ Hospital offset by compensating reduction in PRU top-ups £0;
  - ii. Local authority recoupment -£211,508;
  - iii. Transfer from schools block -£507,224;
  - iv. Transfer from Central services block -£75,000.

The meeting ended at 10.27 am

Chairperson