

## **Minutes of the meeting of Herefordshire schools forum held at online meeting on Friday 17 March 2023 at 9.30 am**

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

Mr D Bennett	Academies
Mr D Brearey	LA Maintained Primary School
Mr A Davies	Academies
Mr P Deneen	Trade Unions
Ms N Emmett	Academies
Mr R Foster	Academies (primary)
Ms N Gilbert	LA Special Schools
Mrs G Griffin	Primary Governors
Mrs S Jenkins	Local Authority Maintained Primary School
Mr P Jennings	Academies
Mr S Kendrick	Local Authority Maintained Primary School (with Nursery)
Mr C Lewandowski	Trade Unions
Mrs R Lloyd	Early Years
Ms S Taylor	Academy Special Schools

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

### **69. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Christine Bryan, Tim Knapp, Tracey Kneale and Sian Lines.

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

There were no substitutes.

### **71. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Paul Deneen declared an interest as a representative of Trades Unions.

### **72. MINUTES**

The Head of Additional Needs confirmed that the Local Authority's bid for a new SEN free school as reported at the previous meeting was unsuccessful. The LA would use the feedback received to improve the bid and hoped to resubmit in a future round. In the meantime the LA would continue to explore other options to add capacity through smaller expansions and use of non-standard buildings.

**It was resolved that:**

**The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2023 be approved as a correct record.**

### 73. HIGH NEEDS BUDGET 2023/24

The strategic finance manager (SFM) presented the report and explained there was insufficient funding in the high needs block from the Department for Education (DfE) to meet both cost inflation and demand pressures. The budget as presented in the report was already overspent by £0.5m and was likely to overspend by between £1m and £1.5m by the year end.

Risk factors included:

- growth in mainstream top ups;
- costs of out of county placements;
- increased costs of new provision planned from September 2023 as details are worked up;
- the possibility of additional pupils with complex needs – every additional pupil in this category costs over £100k.

The cost of the SEN protection scheme now exceeds the 0.5% that can be transferred from the schools block. The budget working group will be asked to consider options over the course of the coming year to be implemented for 2024/25.

The projected overspend for 23/24 will result in a cumulative deficit of between £2.5m and £2.7m, in line with the forecasts previously produced. The government has extended the statutory override to allow councils to carry over deficits for a further three years. After this, the council will become responsible for any remaining deficit.

Forum members discussed the proposed budget and in response to queries it was noted that:

- the increase for special schools (LA and academy) is based on the minimum funding guarantee of 3.4%, compared with mainstream schools who received a 6.2% increase and it is possible to improve the increase to special schools with a small addition to the overall deficit;
- new provision autism and language units will be spread across the county, subject to agreement with the hosting governing bodies or academy trusts;
- much depends on how the DfE implements the SEND review, which appears to focus on inclusion, and if any additional funding is forthcoming to support this;
- the latest publications from the DfE talk about a uniform funding matrix, which in the view of officers is unlikely to address the challenges faced, and give little indication of significant change before the next general election;
- the DfE paper of 8 March also talks about a small amount of funding through the 'supporting families fund' to bring the early help offer closer to SEND provision but historically the LA had to bid for this funding so it is not guaranteed.

Feedback from the budget working group was noted. The proposed budget had been discussed in detail and while members of the working group were reluctant to recommend a deficit budget, the working group recognised that there was no viable alternative. Herefordshire is one of the last LAs in the country to be in this situation and had done well to hold off for so long. The group had approved continued funding for the secondary nurture group at Earl Mortimer College and funding for the summer term for the satellite nurture project at Orleton Primary as part of ongoing efforts to reduce future demand pressures.

It was proposed and agreed that an additional £100k be added to the budget to increase the allocation to special schools to bring them closer to the 6.2% increase received by mainstream schools.

The requirements on schools to set balanced budgets was discussed. It was noted that academies were not allowed to set deficit budgets and that the LA approach for its schools mirrored this. Changes in pupil numbers are the biggest impact on budgets and despite the current challenges it is important that schools do their best to set a balanced budget as failing to tackle the impact of falling pupil numbers early can lead to spiralling deficits. The impact of future pay settlements is also a concern as current proposals indicate there will be no additional funding to cover this.

It was proposed that the forum write to MPs and ministers on the issue of SEND funding, as well as continuing to support the work of the f40 group in lobbying government. The DfE must properly fund SEND services and the wider education system.

In concluding the discussion forum members were asked to note that as part of the validation process for the schools budget approved in January, a small improvement in the funding allocation had come to light which means that the reduction on national funding formula values will be 0.75% rather than the 1% previously agreed.

**It was resolved that:**

- 1. A deficit high needs budget of £0.54m for 2023/24 be recommended to the Cabinet Member for Children's and Families as follows;**
  - a. Complex needs funding**
    - i. base funding at the agreed 3/7th funding share** £2,285,745
    - ii. an expected overspend of** £400,000
  - b. Independent special schools** £3,550,000
  - c. Special schools**
    - i. Local authority school places** £1,740,000
    - ii. Additional place funding at £1,000 for 390 places** £390,000
    - iii. Special school top-up funding plus 3.4% inflation** £3,903,000
    - iv. tariff matrix amendments re behaviour** £50,000
  - d. Post-16 top-up funding** £2,100,000
  - e. Mainstream school top-up funding includes 3.4% inflation** £3,630,000
  - f. Nurture provision**
    - i. 5 primary and 1 secondary schools full year costs** £372,100
    - ii. North Herefordshire outreach summer term (5/12th)** £10,417
    - iii. North Herefordshire outreach autumn/spring terms subject to review by BWG at** £14,583
    - iv. secondary pilot at Earl Mortimer College for three years until March 2026 at** £40,000
  - g. Resource bases at Hampton Dene and Bishops schools**
    - i. 56 places at £6,204 including MFG at 3.4%** £347,425
    - ii. 56 top-up tariff funding at £8,272 including MFG** £463,230
  - h. New provision Autism and Language Units from June 2023 including set-up costs**
    - i. 4 bases x 8 places at £6,000 per place** £160,000
    - ii. i32 top-up funding at £8,000 average per pupil** £213,333
    - iii. Additional per pupil funding as not in October census 32 pupils at average £4,500** £120,000
    - iv. Inflation at 3.4% to comply with MFG** £16,773

i.	<b>New Provision – additional 10 places for special schools through offsite accommodation</b>	
i.	special school 10 places at £11,000 per place	£110,000
ii.	special school 10 top-ups at £8,000 per pupil	£80,000
iii.	9 full time and 6 part-time reception/ nursery places commissioned from April 23	£132,000
iv.	12 top-up funding at £10,500 from September	£73,500
v.	Running costs £30k pa from June 23	£25,000
vi.	Set-up costs	£5,000
vii.	to note the detailed cost estimate is £140,000 greater than the initial estimate contributing a further £140,000 to the deficit budget	
j.	Early years top-up funding	£150,000
k.	<b>Pupil Referral Service</b>	
i.	60 places including 10 places at Dinedor at £10,000 per place	£600,000
ii.	Teachers Pension Grant at £660 per place and £340 MFG per place	£60,000
iii.	top-up funding 60 pupils at tariff band D2	£573,120
iv.	less assumed income recovery from schools	£200,000
v.	Phasing out TLR allowances, three years from September 2021	£35,000
vi.	Temporary split site allowance whilst on split sites	£38,000
vii.	former Pupil Referral Unit support fund deleted as not used	£0
viii.	H3 Home, Hospital and Hub top-up 50 half time places at £5,500 including TPG at £330 and MFG at £170 at total cost	£275,000
ix.	25 tariffs at tariff C4 £6,168 plus 3.4% inflation	£159,443
x.	the remaining 25 half time places recharged to schools as the school receives full funding for the pupil whilst on the school roll	
l.	<b>SEN protection scheme for primary and secondary schools with a cap on a school's contribution set at £175 x NOR (at Oct 2022)</b>	£616,000
m.	High needs contingency/contribution to reserves	£109,038
n.	<b>SEN support services including 3.4% inflation MFG uplift as marked *</b>	
i.	Additional Needs Management*	£217,000
ii.	Complex Learning Communications*	£118,803
iii.	Equalities team – inclusion*	£281,100
iv.	Hearing Impaired Team*	£434,000
v.	Managed moves	£5,000
vi.	Business support	£59,000
vii.	DSG Services*	£134,100
viii.	Behaviour Support Service – match schools de-delegation	£37,500
o.	<b>Charges and income</b>	
i.	Local authority recoument -	£100,000
ii.	Transfer from schools block -	£616,000
iii.	Transfer from Central services block -	£80,000
p.	the revised per pupil values for the schools budget for 2023/24, as set out in paragraph 11, be recommended to the cabinet member.	

#### 74. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The chairperson led members of the forum in recording their thanks and best wishes to Les Knight on the occasion of his retirement as Head of Additional Needs. Members of the forum noted his long standing support for schools and pupils.

The meeting ended at 10.44 am

**Chairperson**