

## Schools' Forum Meeting

### 10 June 2022

#### Attendees:

#### Members

Mark Tilling (MT) (Secondary) (Chair)  
 Sara Crawshaw (SC) (Academy – Secondary)  
 Carole Bradley (CB) (Primary - Large <50%)  
 Emma Espley (EE) (Academy - Secondary)  
 Martyn Gordon (MG) (PRU)  
 Lisa Grieg (LG) (Academy – Special)  
 John Hardy (JH) (Primary – VA Small)  
 Katie Hill (KH) (Diocese – C of E)  
 Sue Sharpe (SS) (Primary - Large Deprived)  
 Chris Simmons (Academy – Governors)  
 David Turner (DT) (Primary – Small)  
 Lee Walker (Primary Academy > 50% FSM)  
 Zoe Westley (ZW) (Special)

#### Local Authority Officers

Sandra Shears (SSh) (Head of Finance – Corporate and Schools)  
  
 Joan Stevens (JS) (Administrator)  
  
 Danielle Swainston (DS) (Assistant Director Joint Commissioning)  
  
 Jane Watt (JWa) (Children's Finance)

Agenda Item	Action
<p><b>1 Apologies -</b></p> <p>Apologies were submitted by the following:</p> <p>Tracey Gibson (Secondary) – Emma Espley substituting            Jo Heaton (JHe) (Diocese – C of E) – Katie Hill substituting            Linda Richardson (Early Years)            Rachel Williams (Diocese RC)            Amanda Whitehead (AW) (Assistant Director Education)</p>	
<p><b>2 Minutes of the Last Meeting – 23 March 2022 - Minutes approved.</b></p> <p><b>Minutes of Schools Capital Sub-Group Meeting -</b> With reference to the dissemination of condition surveys to all schools, and AW, it was noted that the action had been allocated to the wrong person. It was agreed that Julie Reed (JR) would be asked to disseminate the surveys and that JWa would progress this.</p> <p>In relation to indications that previously completed fire safety work at Springwell would need to be redone. DS had indicated that this would be raised as a funding priority with the capital sub group. An update on this was to be provided under 'AOB' later in the meeting.</p>	

	<p><b>Decision</b></p> <p>Julie Reed (JR) to disseminate the condition surveys. JWa to progress this.</p> <p><b>High Needs Block Projected Outturn</b> – DS indicated that she would provide an update as part of the report later in the agenda.</p> <p><b>Growth Fund Update</b> – A response from ESFA on use of the growth fund reserves remains outstanding. An update on this will be brought back to the Forum.</p> <p><b>Outstanding Actions Log</b></p> <p><b>Schools Capital Sub Group vacancies</b> – SC and CB agreed to fill vacancies. JWa to inform David Mitchell.</p>	<p><b>JR / JWa</b></p> <p><b>DS</b></p> <p><b>JWa</b></p> <p><b>JWa</b></p>
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and De-delegated Budgets Update</b></p> <p>JWa updated the Forum on the outturn position for the Dedicated Schools Grant and the de-delegated budget. It was noted that the DSG had:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) The overall DSG expenditure for 2021/22 was £43.382m;</li> <li>ii) A small overall overspend of £0.009m; and</li> <li>iii) A significant underspend of £0.293m against the Early Years Block;</li> <li>iv) Small underspend in across Central School Services Block, Schools Block (after Academy recoupment) and £0.050m underspend against the Growth Fund. The exception being the High Needs Block where there had been a £0.386m overspend. An update on High Needs block spending to be presented to the Forum on a quarterly basis.</li> </ul> <p>A discussion followed on the Early Years underspend. The importance of robust forecasting and monitoring of the financial situation was recognised as part of the process to understand the requirement for future financial mitigation. In addition to this, if required, the previously created task and finish group would be re-established.</p> <p>Particular concern was expressed in relation to the early years underspend and the very patchy take up of nursery places by vulnerable children. The Forum wished to ensure that the available resources are fully utilised, services are promoted with every contact or conversation.</p> <p>In addition to this, a piece of work was needed not only to promote the importance of all children being back in school post pandemic, but generally the importance of attendance generally. The completion of this piece of work was to be explored with the HBC communications team.</p> <p>The Forum queried the process to access the under spend and how best to promote that process. It was agreed that Head Teachers needed to be involved in the development of the process and that the best way to do this</p>	

	<p>would be to include it in the Early Years Strategy being produced by AW. DS agreed to speak to school Heads to see who would like to be involved in the development of a process.</p> <p><b>Decision</b></p> <p>The Forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Noted the update report;</li> <li>ii) DS agreed to provide a quarterly outturn update for High Needs;</li> <li>iii) DS agreed to explore arrangements for a campaign to promote of the importance of attendance via the HBC communications team; and</li> <li>iv) DS to ask AW to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Include details of the process for accessing the underspend in the Early Years Strategy; and</li> <li>- Speak to school Heads to see who would like to be involved in the development of a process for the allocation of the under spend.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii) DS</li> <li>iii) DS</li> <li>iv) DS / AW</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>High Needs Block Projected Outturn</b>	
	<p>DS updated members on the projected outturn for high needs services for 2021/22. The final outturn for 2021/22 being an over spend of £0.386m which was primarily due to overspends in the areas of independent school fees (£0.472m) and post 16 top-up funding (£0.324m). The final outturn was an improvement against the reported mid-case projection of £0.487m.</p> <p>It was noted that post-16 commitments for pupils with SEND had been an area of financial pressure in recent years and that the final overspend of £0.324m was in line with the previous projection. Peter Gray will be presenting his final report to Head teachers in July, following which a decision will need to be taken in terms of his recommendations. It was agreed that the HNB task and finish group should be reinstated to review and implement the recommendations.</p> <p>In relation to the £0.472m spend in independent school fees, the over spend had been lower than that projection at the last update of £0.569m. However, the cost of independent provision had risen by £1.148m (48%) in 2021/22. It was noted that a large proportion of those children have needs linked to trauma, ACE or SEMH needs moved in to independent school provision in Year 7. A large proportion of these were in social care, often had vulnerabilities from their early years. There were a high number of these children who needed out of area independent placements who were Year 7.</p> <p>Forum members were concerned that opportunities were being missed to put in support early, in a way that could ease their transition in to secondary school and potentially reduce the need for a move in to independent school provision.</p>	

	<p>DS informed Forum that the SEMH Free School may not now open until 2023. This was being managed by DfE so the timeline is largely out of HBC control. MT suggested that the Forum could potentially co-sign a letter to the DfE to relay concerns regarding the delay in the SEMH Free School opening date. It was also suggested that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A multi-agency approach was needed in terms of the provision of transition support;</li> <li>- A clear pathway of support needed to be put in place, and communicated, in Hartlepool; and</li> <li>- There was a need for training in terms of the inclusion agenda.</li> </ul> <p>It was noted that pre-COVID there had been a commitment to a trauma informed pathway with lots of work undertaken to raise the profile of trauma informed need. The award of a Gold Award to Springwell school for being trauma informed was an example of this.</p> <p>The Forum strongly supported a refresh of this commitment and a need for a focus on the provision of ACE training. Emphasis was placed on need to keep up the momentum in terms of identifying how this would be delivered and by who. It was appreciated that nothing could be decided at today's meeting and that these discussions need to be raised with the Head Teachers group to take it forward and encourage the sharing of skills across schools.</p> <p>The Forum explored the effectiveness and value for money of placing children in independent schools. It was noted that whilst a monitoring process was in place, the use of independent provision may not always be the best offer for Hartlepool children. It is considered that Hartlepool Children need to be in mainstream provision wherever possible with the necessary services wrapped around them.</p> <p><b>Decision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) That the High Needs Task and Finish Group be reinstated to consider and progress Peter Gray's review and recommendations;</li> <li>ii) That the Forum, co-sign a letter to the DfE to relay concerns regarding the delay in the SEMH Free School opening date; and</li> <li>iii) That a commitment to a trauma informed pathway be refreshed and discussions progressed with the teachers group to explore who / how this would be delivered and encourage the sharing of skills across schools.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DS</b></p> <p><b>DS</b></p> <p><b>DS</b></p>
<b>5</b>	<b>The Horizon School and Alternative Provision 2021/22 Final Outturn</b>	
	The Forum was provided with an update on the final 2021/22 outturn for the Horizon School and Alternative Provision (AP) services. The budgets	

sit within the High Needs Block and are included in the projected high needs block outturn considered earlier in the meeting.

Attention was drawn to underspends, as detailed below:

- Horizon School had achieved a £0.072m in 2021/22, largely via income in excess of targets. The underspend returned to the HNB and not carried forward by the school; and
- The AP budget achieved a £0.015m underspend in 2021/22 with underspends in transport and clawback income. The only overspend being in relation to school fees with £0.012m utilised in the provision of fees for 15 pupils.

Funding had been set for Horizon School for two years as a temporary measure and the Forum had, in March 2022, approved additional expenditure of £0.014m to be funded from the 2021/22 projected underspend. There was now a need to put in place long term funding for the Horizon School and a view needed to be taken as to whether the level of PEXs will continue long term. On this basis, as part of the remit of the task and finish group is to set a clear funding allocation per child for the Horizon School.

MG was commended on the work of the Horizon School with English Martyrs. He indicated that they had been pleased to be able to return the under spend to the HNB and thanked the Forum and schools for their support.

ZW queried why the under spend was not retained by Horizon School. Whilst it was recognised that the 2021/22 underspend could not be passed back to the Horizon School, it was suggested that should an under spend occur next year the necessary changes be made to allow it to be passed back. Its use to be decided by Horizon School, through its Management Committee.

During the course of discussions it was noted that:

- The Horizon School receives funding per pupil of £10,000 per place and £10,000 top up (total of 34 places). Although no funding is received for extra pupils above number, unless the school is able to recharge for additional outreach pupils;
- A value for money comparison of services provided by the Horizon School (£20,000 per place) and out of the area providers needs to be considered when a future funding model is developed. Strategies for pupils, including the provision on actions that address issues before exclusions occur, and feedback from secondary schools on the effectiveness of the Horizon School also need to be considered.
- In the development of the service, MG's exploration of provision nationally had shown that the provision of primary and secondary advice under one umbrella, via one organisation, works best. There was a need to look at primary schools in terms of the provision of early stage

	<p>support to prevent issues at secondary level. There was, however, a need to decide where support goes in lower year groups;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Despite additional demand on support from the Horizon School, it had been possible to maintain a reduction in permanent exclusions; and</li> <li>- MG stated that the recommendation is for class sizes of 6, with a teaching assistant for each class. The Horizon School, however, provided 2 teaching assistants across 5 groups.</li> </ul> <p><b>Decision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) That the report was noted;</li> <li>ii) MG thanked the Forum for its support of the Horizon School and asked that his thanks also be relayed to the schools;</li> <li>iii) That the task and finish group set a clear funding allocated per child for the Horizon School; and</li> <li>iv) That future underspends by the Horizon School be retained.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ii) DS</li> <li>iii) DS / MG</li> <li>iv) DS / MG</li> </ul>						
<b>6</b>	<b>Update to Scheme for Financing Schools</b>							
	<p>Each year, ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) publish changes required to the Scheme for Financing Schools. Local authorities are required to incorporate the changes into their Scheme and associated documentation, in consultation with schools.</p> <p>The Forum considered the required changes to the existing Scheme as detailed below.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="236 1227 1302 1451"> <thead> <tr> <th>Paragraph</th> <th>Change</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2.3.1 Submission of Financial Forecasts</td> <td>Forecasts must cover 3 years (previously described as multi-year). Submission date brought forward to 30 June (previously 31 August).</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3.8 Borrowing by Schools</td> <td>The reference to the Salix scheme has been removed as the scheme has now closed.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>In addition to the changes listed above Annex 1 of the Scheme had been updated to list the schools covered by the Scheme following the latest academy conversions.</p> <p><b>Decision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) The ESFA changes, as outlined in the report, were noted; and</li> <li>ii) The changes outlined in the report are confirmed in the Scheme documentation and the reviewed Scheme approved for publication.</li> </ul>	Paragraph	Change	2.3.1 Submission of Financial Forecasts	Forecasts must cover 3 years (previously described as multi-year). Submission date brought forward to 30 June (previously 31 August).	3.8 Borrowing by Schools	The reference to the Salix scheme has been removed as the scheme has now closed.	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>JWa</b></p>
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<b>7.</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>							
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) <b>High Needs Capital Allocation</b> – This will be going to committee on the 21 June</li> </ul>							

	<p><b>Decision – Noted</b></p> <p><b>ii) IPS SEND Funding</b></p> <p><b>Decision –</b> It was agreed that the early year’s rate be increased from 15 hrs to 30hrs.</p> <p><b>iii) Cancellation of the 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022</b></p> <p><b>Decision – Agreed</b></p> <p><b>iv) Terms of Office -</b> It was thought that the terms of office of members of the Forum would be ending in August and May. This needed to be checked and the necessary arrangements put in place.</p>	<p><b>ii) SSh</b></p> <p><b>iii) JS</b></p> <p><b>iv) JWa</b></p>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Date and Time of next Forum meeting</b>	
	20th September 2022 at 2pm. Venue details to follow.	