

High Needs Block Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on
12th February 2021 at 9.30am via Zoom

School Forum Members

Martin Doyle: Headteacher Riverside School – Chair
+ Peter Catling: Headteacher Woodlands Park NS&CC
Melian Mansfield: Pembury House Chair of Governors
Mike McKenzie: Headteacher Alexandra Park School
+ Will Wawn: Primary Heads Rep
+ Gerry Robinson: Alternative Provision
+ Kurt Hintz: CoNEL

Also Invited

Nathan Jones: Head of Service: Special Educational Needs & Disabilities
Phil di Leo: Governor The Vale
+ Paul Durrant: Finance
+ Rowan Griffin: Project Manager
+ Tony Hartney: Chair, Schools Forum
Kristian Bugnosen: Finance Officer
+ Ngozi Anuforo: Commissioning Manager

Attending

Charles Cato: Finance Officer
Sarah Hargreaves: Governance Officer + Denotes absence

1. Welcome, apologies for absence and acceptance

- 1.1 The Chair (Martin Doyle) welcomed everyone present to the meeting. Charles Cato is attending for Ngozi Anuforo.
- 1.2 Apologies for absence have been received from Peter Catling.

2. Minutes of the meeting of 30th November 2020

- 2.1 The minutes were **agreed** as a correct record of the meeting. They will be signed and returned for safe keeping when this is next possible.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

- 3.1 A detailed budget will not be produced at this stage but an end of year budget position will be provided. **Action NJ, KB**

4. RAS and Way Forward

- 4.1 It was agreed that the RAS would be the end point of a range of discussions which have yet to occur.
- 4.2 Clarification was sought that the reason that there had been no request to the School Forum to transfer back to the HNB the money which had previously been taken out of the budget and put into the Schools Block was because it would make little difference to the size of the deficit. This was confirmed to be the case.
- 4.2.1 However, this situation can be reviewed annually and an application could be made for 2021-2022. In particular if the budget is showing signs of recovery.

- 4.2.2 An application can either be made locally to the School Forum or directly to the DfE/ESFA. The latter option was introduced to assist with deficit budgets but it was before many around the country got as large as they currently are. Any request to the DfE would need to be grounded in evidence.
- 4.2.3 The £1.3m transfer to Early Help needs to be seen in the context of the early intervention universal offer for children with disabilities.
- 4.2.4 There is a need to understand who the client group is. There is very little liaison between Early Help and the Special Schools as all of their pupils go through the Disabled Children's Team. The funding is directed at those prior to receiving an EHCP or who could be on SEND Support. It is for anyone aged 0-18. Some central government funding is also available for this.
- 4.2.4.1 In Haringey, unlike in the majority of other LA's, the funds have been used for family support work. Other areas use it for cognition and learning support within a school setting.
- 4.3 NJ confirmed that the focus groups will continue working after he leaves at the end of February.
- 4.4 The background in Haringey is that the funds were transferred from the HNB due to historical service needs. KB's research, as part of a pan London project, shows that there is no other borough using the funding in this way.
- 4.5 The Committee were in agreement that the School Forum needs to protect the HNB overall and not just shift money between the different blocks.
- 4.6 It was **agreed** that this point should be re-stated at the School Forum.
- 4.6.1 KB will re-circulate a finance paper submitted to the summer School Forum and also a paper from Ann Graham which covered these points. **Action KB**
- 4.7 The Social Care Team would need to be informed with sufficient notice of the potential drop in their income.
- 4.7.1 There is also funding going to the Alternative Provision (AP), service (previously used within the Tuition Service) which should be in the HNB.
- 4.8 It appears that some funds are remaining with schools when they transfer pupils to Alternative Provision. They are then funded again in AP, but the school funding is not reclaimed so the school does not transfer their AWPU.
- 4.9 It was **agreed** that MD and PdL would write a letter to School Forum setting out the above points. It would request that the funds were re-allocated to the HNB or at the very least that there were more prescriptive criteria set for how the money could be spent and how it is to be used for SEND and disabled pupils at the earliest possible opportunity after the identification of their need(s). This will be shared with Ann Graham and Tony Hartney. **Action MD, PdL**
- 4.9.1 There is also a need for standards to be set for schools for what they should be providing for pupils from the HNB fund.
- 4.9.2 It was **agreed** that it should be possible to remove funding from unnecessary activities or unless removing it would cause harm. This is currently difficult to quantify as it is unknown what some of the funding is being spent on.

5. Banding Descriptors

- 5.1 Modelling and benchmarking of the options and what can be afforded needs to be undertaken. Currently this is not transparent and different people have different perspectives on the system.
- 5.1.1 Once they are written a formal consultation process is likely to be needed.
- 5.1.2 Once they are written they will need to be formally agreed by Cabinet.
- 5.2 The Bands will describe what schools should be doing at each level and for the universal levels. There will be a cap of funding allocations at each level. Schools will be held to account for what they are providing.
- 5.3 It was noted that some schools create a hostile environment so that families with SEND children do not feel that they are welcome. This leads to an imbalance in the number of SEND pupils across schools. There is a need to move towards a system where if the school does not provide the required services or support they do not receive the funding.

- 5.3.1 There is a need for more information to be shared so all parties know what different schools are providing.
 - 5.4 The most effective way to reduce the HNB deficit is for SEND pupils to remain within mainstream schools. Conversely if specialist units are built they can be filled with pupils.
 - 5.5 It was **agreed** that a weakness in the overall system is that special needs issues are split between a range of providers; health, social care, school improvement, teaching and learning etc which means that there is no one person or service with responsibility for pupils.
 - 5.5.1 It is also very difficult to find the right person to report to if there are concerns about SEND provision, eg. as a parent. There is nothing on the website and no clear details of who to contact.
- 6. AOB**
- 6.1 NJ said that this will be his last meeting as he is leaving Haringey at the end of February. Everyone wished him well in his new role. He will be replaced by Mary Jarrett as Head of Service. She will be invited to the next HNB meeting. **Action Clerk**
 - 6.1.1 There will also be a new Early Help and SEND post sitting above the Head of Service role.
 - 6.2 The next meeting will be held on **March 12th 2021** at **9.30am**. **Teams** invite to follow.

There being no further business the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at **10.40am**.

Signed

Date