

**High Needs Block Committee**  
(Draft minutes amended – 19/02/2021)

**Draft minutes of the meeting held on  
12<sup>th</sup> February 2021 at 9.30am via Zoom**

**Schools 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 30<sup>th</sup> 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 ways forward with deficit recovery**

- 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 Schools 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 Schools 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 HNB £1.3m transfer to Early Help continues to make a very significant contribution to the deficit.
- 4.2.4 There is a need to understand who the client group is. For example, there is hardly any engagement between Early Help and the borough's special schools as all of their pupils go through the Social Services Disabled Children's Team. The funding is used for family support,. It is for anyone aged 0-18. Some central government funding is also available for this.
- 4.2.4.1 The committee is not aware of any other borough which transfers funding out of their High Needs Block budgets and into Early Help. There is no statutory framework to support this.
- 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 to Early Help in a particular period when it was felt that, due to some high-profile cases in the borough, this warranted a temporary funding boost to support families in need.
- 4.5 MD has raised this historical anomaly over the years at Schools Forum, (including at the meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> January), but there has always been a reluctance to seek a remedy to the situation because of the potential negative impact on Early Help clients. However the Committee were now in agreement that the Schools Forum needs to protect the HNB and not just shift money into Early Help when there was no requirement to do so.
- 4.6 It was **agreed** that this point should be restated at the Schools Forum, and that MD would reiterate his point that, had this sum of money not been taken annually from the HNB for the length of time it has been, the Block would actually be in credit, (unlike most others in the country), and would properly reflect the hard work that the Committee has done in reducing expenditure whenever possible.
- 4.6.1 KB will recirculate to the Committee a paper 'HNB DSG: A guide for LA's on allowable expenditure' (which he sent to Schools Forum in October). A working group had worked on useages by HNBs with the aim of coming to a consensus of what services should or should not qualify for HNB spending. Early Help did not appear in either list.
- Action KB**
- 4.7. 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 Schools Forum setting out the above points. It would request that the funds were re-allocated to the HNB, preferably in a single hit, or if not in a phased fashion overtime. If the latter, the very least information required would be that there were clear prescriptive criteria set out justifying how the money is spent in relation to the guiding imperative of High Needs funding; how it is used for SEND and disabled pupils specifically. This will be shared with Ann Graham and Tony Hartney.
- Action MD, PdL**
- 4.9.1 It was **agreed** that it should be possible to remove funding from unnecessary activities 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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