

## High Needs Block Committee

### Draft minutes of the meeting held on 19th November 2021 at 2.00pm via Teams

#### Schools Forum Members

Martin Doyle: Headteacher Riverside School – Chair  
Sian McDermott: Headteacher Rowland Hill Nursery School and Children Centre  
Melian Mansfield: Pembury House Chair of Governors  
Mike McKenzie: Secondary Heads Rep. Headteacher Alexandra Park School  
Will Wawn: Primary Heads Rep. Headteacher Bounds Green School  
+ Gerry Robinson: Alternative Provision  
+ Kurt Hintz: CoNEL

#### Also Invited

Mary Jarrett: Integrated Head of Service  
Phil di Leo: Chair of Governors, The Vale  
+ Tony Hartney: Headteacher Gladesmore, Chair, Schools Forum  
+ Brian Smith: Schools Finance Manager  
+ Ngozi Anuforo: Commissioning Manager

#### Attending

+ Robin Hindley: CoNEL  
Lewis Antony: Finance Trainee  
Ruth Abiona: Principal Accountant, Schools and Education  
Sarah Hargreaves: Senior Governance Officer + Denotes absence

#### 1. Welcome, apologies for absence and acceptance

- 1.1 The Chair (Martin Doyle) welcomed everyone present to the meeting. He welcomed Ruth Abiona and Lewis Antony to their 1<sup>st</sup> meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies for absence have been received from Brian Smith and Ngozi Anuforo.

#### 2. Minutes of the meeting of 8th October 2021

- 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 Pt 3.4 Martin, Robin and Dean Britton~~ain~~ are still to meet to discuss pathways out of education for those post ~~Year 11 and~~ Year 14. **Action MD**
- 3.2 Pt 3.6 The autumn special schools conference, run by HEP, will now be held in the spring term.
- 3.3 Pt 3.3.1 and 4.3.2 Mary to circulate details of the feedback received so far on the consultation; in particular that received from parents. The consultation period ended on 7<sup>th</sup> November. The report will now go to Scrutiny and not Cabinet as there are no financial implications to it. **Action MJ**
- 3.4 Pt 5 WW said that the HNB funding was discussed at the Schools Forum pre-meeting. He will distribute the minutes of the School Block working party to show further discussion on the topic. **Action WW**
- 3.5 Pt 5.4 and 5.5 It is not clear as not how many places are being funded at CoNEL, if any. Ruth will speak to Brian and report back. **Action RA**

- 3.6 Pt 5.9 The prevalence of EHCPs in EY needs to be part of the EY Review. Mary pointed out that this is not her department but she will speak to Ngozi. **Action MJ**
- 3.7 Pt 5.10 There is a meeting on Nov 24<sup>th</sup> to discuss the funding formula for 2022-23, the results of which will then go to School Forum for consideration.
- 3.8 Pt 6.1 The Terms of Reference were circulated to the group as agreed, but Neetha Atukorale of Governor Services has asked for a ~~further~~ copy. **Action Clerk**
- 3.9 Pt 6.2 Dates for the rest of the financial year have been circulated by Kathy Mahoney; (7<sup>th</sup> Jan, 11<sup>th</sup> Feb and 8<sup>th</sup> March).

#### 4. Minutes of the Early Years Forum meeting (30<sup>th</sup> September) for information

- 4.1 Noted.

#### 5. Update on High Needs Block Recovery Plan: Mary Jarrett

- 5.1 Mary explained that there are 4 projects working at the same time. The Isos partnership will be assisting the borough for 6 months with re-modelling the funding allocations made since February 2021.
  - 5.1.1 Mainstream schools with EHCP pupils appear to be the main area of concern; it is recognised that the £6,000 top-up funding is insufficient to meet all the costs schools incur and EHCP costs are driving many schools' deficits. EHCPs in mainstream schools are not evenly distributed across the borough.
  - 5.1.2 EY and PVI settings will be considered after mainstream schools as the Inclusion Support grant works differently.
  - 5.1.3 Members expressed concern about the efficiencies of this model as SEND funding is not forming part of the current EY review either; even though this review is due to end in 4 weeks time. The Code of Practice is to cover all pupils from 0-25 and so the 2 reviews need to be joined up, even if the financing streams are different. Mary said that she will speak to Nick Hewlett. She asked MM and SMC for examples of the need for SEND funding within EY settings. **Action MJ, SMC, MM**
- 5.2 There will be workshops run on preparing teenagers for adulthood next.
- 5.3 Ofsted had noted that there are piecemeal areas of excellent work in the borough but there are also gaps.
  - 5.3.1 Mary is working with Ngozi on models for change.
- 5.4 There is planned to be an extra classroom at Riverside School for September 2022; this will help to keep more pupils in-borough. The capital funds are available. It was noted that having a strategy to keep pupils in-borough was good but but further work need to be done to ensure pupil don't need to be in-itself insufficient as they have to be offered places somewhere.
  - 5.4.1 The extra places at The Grove will all be taken by transfers from their primary to secondary.
- 5.5 It was noted that in some areas, for example, Leeds, Notts and Camden, HNB funds are allocated without the need for an EHCP. This means that students can be funded sooner (as it can take 20 weeks to obtain an EHCP). There is a need to complete the paperwork sooner so that pupil's needs can be met.
  - 5.5.1 There needs to be consistent practice across all cases although a "one size fits all" approach won't work.
- 5.6 It was agreed to carry on with the current system until a full review has been completed, rather than tinkering at the edges and possibly creating unintended consequences.

#### 6. Proposal to Increase SEND Contingency Funding (as an interim measure): Mary Jarrett

- 6.1 0.5% of the budget can be transferred from the Schools Block of the DSG to the HNB. (£1.3m). It is proposed, as an interim measure for 2022-23, to transfer an additional 0.25% (£537,000) to support the 32 schools with higher than average numbers of SEND pupils. This funding is available to any school, it is not ring-fenced to a specific 32 schools.

- 6.1.1 In addition there will be £900,000 of funding (£75,000 each), divided between the 12 secondary schools. It was noted that this £900,000 would be money “in and out” as schools have already committed to supporting the pupils.
- 6.1.2 It was noted that although this would provide useful additional funding there would still be a HNB deficit.
- 6.1.3 A 14 day consultation on the Funding Formula for the Schools Block proposal will commence on 29<sup>th</sup> November which will include models proposing a 0.25% transfer from the SB to the HNB. Following review of the consultation a paper will then go to School Forum in January for a decision.
- 6.1.4 After discussion, and explanation from MJ, members felt that there was insufficient time to consider the suggestions/proposals outlined in Brian Smith’s explanatory email of earlier today. These would require further exploration and evaluation. Therefore the proposal within MJ’s draft paper to Schools Forum for the 0.25% block transfer to be used as per the current SEN Original proposal of £100k transfer to HNB to be used as a stopgap measure for 22/23 whilst a longer term, and better, solution is sought.

**2.50pm Ruth Abiona** left the meeting.

- 6.1.5 MJ asked members to send any amendments through to her **today** so that the proposal can be finalised.
- 6.1.6 *Members asked to what extent parents and SENDCOs have been involved in drafting the document as it could directly affect services to their children and the families SENDCOs work with.* Parents have been asked to be involved via schools.
- 6.2 It was noted that in the West of the borough parents choose to have EHCPs for their children so that they can access funding whereas in the East parents can be more reluctant to engage with services. It is therefore hard to have a one size fits all funding formula. The intention is to have a funding formula which does not create new issues as it removes existing ones. Currently the number of children in the borough has reduced but the formula has not been changed to reflect this fact. (The October Census data is now in, which will give an accurate picture of the number of children using settings in the borough).
- 6.2.1 Changing the formula has been discussed for 3 years but no changes have been made so far.
- 6.3 Next financial year is going to see some challenges. There will be £300,000 cuts in primary school budgets with between 10-15% of cuts before March 2023.

## 7. AOB

- 7.1 Members asked for an up to date report on the budget profile and each cost line as this has not been received by the Committee for some time many months. This should include a budget profile of the out borough placements and the actual versus budgeted spend on all areas. Members discussed that this had proved to be a valuable exercise in the past, not only enabling the Committee to carry out a ‘health check’ on the income and expenditure, but also often finding savings from, for example, expenditure miscoded to HNB.

7.2 Mary will ask Brian to present this at the next meeting as it is not an area she works on.

**Action MJ, BS**

- 7.2 There is currently a child by child costing review taking place. This is also checking how many pupils are being funded in each setting; what the funds are being spent on, where, and on whom. This should provide a “health check” for the whole budget.
- 7.3 The headline consultation responses will be circulated now with more detail coming to the next meeting. **Action MJ**
- 7.4 It was confirmed that SEND transport costs should not be being paid for out of the HNB budget.
- 7.5 *Members asked Mary if she now had the staffing capacity in place to complete all the work which needs to be done.* She said that she now has 4 staff in place which is a significant improvement on the previous situation.

There being no further business the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at **3.10pm**.

Signed

Date