

# High Needs Block Committee

## Draft minutes of the meeting held on 12th December 2022 at noon via Zoom

### 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, Chair, Schools Forum

Gerry Robinson: Alternative Provision

+ Kurt Hintz: CoNEL

### Also Invited

Mary Jarrett: Integrated Head of Service

Phil di Leo: Chair of Governors, The Vale

Brian Smith: Schools Finance Manager

### Attending

Robin Hindley: CoNEL

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.

1.2 Apologies for absence have been received from Sian McDermott.

#### 2. Minutes of the meeting of 26th September 2022

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 3.1 Martin, Robin and Dean haven't met to discuss the Year 14 placements. RH said that he and MJ had been working through these issues. They will build on last school year's work. 35-40 young people, aged Year 14 and above, went to CoNEL last year which was a positive development. RH said that the cost of these places was covered by the general adult education budget; CoNEL receives £30m, which is the largest budget in London.

3.1.1 There needs to be more work done on the 19-25's. They can be high cost placements; those with EHCPs can cost £80-100,000pa. CoNEL is looking at offering longer days with specialist support. **Action MD, RH**

3.2 Pt 6.5 MM and WW have both approached a possible new Member of the Group. MM will chase him to see if he is interested. **Action MM**

#### 4. Minutes of the Early Years Working Party of 15th November, for information

4.1 The minutes were noted.

#### 5. High Needs Block Recovery: Mary Jarrett

5.1 Mary said that additional funding had been announced by the government of £400m. It is not yet clear as to what this will need to be spent on; restrictions are anticipated. Special schools are likely to receive additional funds. Settings have told her that salaries and fuel costs are their

biggest increases in expenditure currently. . It is anticipated that all funds will have to be passed through to settings.

- 5.2 It is now unlikely that a decision on the Safety Value programme will be made before Christmas. It hasn't yet gone through the Treasury and the House of Commons is in Recess from December 15<sup>th</sup>,
- 5.2.1 £400,000 has been budgeted to support the Safety Value programme.
- 5.3 Mary advised that the DSG Management Plan will include all four blocks of funding.
- 5.4 Any additional funds will bring forward the date at which the HNB budget will cease to overspend. .
- 5.5 *Members expressed their concern about the lack of capacity in the central team and the impact on the existing staff of the current workload.* BS said that they are currently interviewing for 8 posts.
- 5.6 MJ confirmed that the HNB Recovery Plan will remain the document being worked to, until the Safety Value programme is approved.. Safety Value will have a high level of scrutiny via it's own governance and Board arrangements
- 5.6.1 The work with ISOS on the bandings and top-ups is continuing. There was a parent and carer's day run in November. There will be further discussions at the SEND Executive meeting
- 5.6.2 There will be a further day on SEND Sufficiency run in January 2023.
- 5.7 *Members asked if there was likely to be an expansion of the Nurture Hub programme or any increased capacity at The Vale; especially for pupils with autism.* MJ said that the capital allocation was yet to be confirmed by Central Government.
- 5.7.1 It was noted that if additional facilities could be built/converted then it would be possible to bring more of the higher costing pupils back into the borough and so save money longer term.
- 5.8 Recruitment is underway to a Supported Internship post which will focus on preparation for adulthood and which will cover health, employment, independent living and housing, friendships and relationships and community input.
- 5.9 *Members asked how money was going to be saved from the HNB budget.* . There has been some re-classification of hearing and visual services and out of school tutoring. There is now a better understanding of the categories of expenditure. The Safety Valve programme contains a comprehensive series of projects designed to address the structural reasons for the HNB overspend.
- 5.9.1 *Members suggested that any savings should be turned into a good news story and promoted.*
- 5.10 MJ confirmed that her paper would be updated in time for the School Forum meeting in January.

**Action MJ**

## **6. AOB**

- 6.1 The level of financial information required by the Group was again discussed. MJ said that the s151 report will be used to give assurances and the Safety Value reports will come to the HNB meetings.
- 6.2 After discussion, it was **agreed** that the HNB had a role in oversight and challenge but it is not in itself a delivery agent. Maximum impact can be achieved via good delivery by officers and advocacy by the HNB.
- 6.3 RH said that CoNEL had recently had an Ofsted inspection consisting of 19 inspectors over 5 days across 11 sites. The official judgement has not yet been received but it appeared to be positive. Ofsted were keen to see them meeting the local skill needs of employers. Members congratulated CoNEL on their work on apprenticeships.

## **7. AOB**

7.1 Future meeting dates. The next meeting was confirmed as:

**24th January at 11am. Online**

There being no further business the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at **1pm**.