

**SCHOOLS FORUM**  
**VIRTUAL MEETING**  
**HELD ON 19<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2021**

**PRESENT:**

**Primary Maintained School Headteachers:** Mrs S Richardson and Mr A Ruffell

**Primary Governors:** Mrs L Dowson, Mrs M Dowson and Mr C Wilson

**Secondary Academy Headteachers:** Mrs G Booth and Mrs L Spellman

**Trade Union Representative:** Mrs M Williams

**Pupil Referral Representative:** Mrs R Campbell

**LA Representative:** Councillor C Clark

**Observer:** Councillor L Evans

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Mrs A Allen – Senior Finance Partner Nicholas Postgate Trust

**OFFICIALS:** Mr A Bryson – Chief Accountant  
Mr M Gray – Director Children's Services  
Mr E Huntington – Head of Education  
Mr G Waller – Senior Accountant  
Mrs N Fletcher - Secretary to the Forum

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs L Graham, Mr M Little, Mrs C Taylor, Mrs M Tudor and Mr S White.

2. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Members were invited to declare any personal or business interests they may have in any item included on the agenda.

No interests were declared.

3. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

RESOLVED that

- a) the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020, be amended to include Councillor L Evans – Observer in attendance at the meeting.
- b) the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020, once amended, be approved.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

4.1 **High Needs**

M Gray reported that the requested information would be forming part of the SEND Strategic Review which was to be considered at the next meeting.

## 5. BUDGET MONITORING – SCHOOLS BUDGETS 2020/21

Members had been circulated with a report which provided an update of the current projected outturn position on the Schools Budget based on the information to the end of December 2020. It was estimated that there would be a deficit of £5.63m at the end of the 2020/21 financial year, this included the overspend brought forward from 2019/20 of £4.424m. The reasons for the reduction in the projected overspend of £106k, since last reported position in September 2020 were:

- *Individual Schools Budget (before Academy Recoupment)* – £500k projected saving on Early Years funding based on estimated take-up for spring 2021 being at least at spring 2020 levels.
- *Contingencies (de-delegation)* – £19k saving as contingency budget for potential formula errors was currently unlikely to be required.
- *Top-up Funding Maintained Providers* – Estimated increased overspend of £118k mainly due to additional top-ups to maintained schools (£76k) and additional transport costs to the PRU (£42k).
- *Top-up Funding-Academies and Free Schools* – £428k additional top-ups to SBC and out of area mainstream and special academies.
- *Top-up Funding Independent Providers* – £120k additional Agency placement costs.
- *Hospital Education Services* – £20k saving relating to the implementation of the central Home and Hospital Education Service.
- *Other AP Provision* – £210k saving on implementation of Pathway Development Centres, as agreements were not yet all in place.

**A member asked whether the new agency placements were required due to provision being full in Stockton or provision not in place?** M Gray explained that it was a mixture of both, placements were based on need. As part of the SEND Strategic Review provision across Stockton was being looked at.

## 6. SCHOOLS BUDGET 2021/22

The Schools Budget for 2021/22 and appendix 1, which set out the proposed Schools Budget and confirmed the final Stockton funding formula arrangements for 2021/22, had been distributed to members in advance of the meeting.

While it remained the government's intention that a school's budget should be set based on a single national formula, in 2021/22, local authorities could continue to determine final funding allocations for schools through a local formula.

To agree the local formula the authority consulted with all schools. This exercise was undertaken during October and November 2020 and the results were reported to the Schools Forum on the 17<sup>th</sup> November. The Forum subsequently agreed the proposals for the schools funding formula and a 0.5% transfer from the Schools to High Needs block for 2021/22 of £0.698m. The budget presented in this report for 2021/22 was based on the agreed decisions.

Within the overall budget setting process, there were a few central spend decisions that the Forum had responsibility for, and these were presented for approval.

### **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Allocations**

The 2021/22 DSG allocation for Stockton was £191.684m (including the teacher's pay and pension grants rolled into the formula) compared to the revised funding of £175.573m in 2020/21. These amounts included funding for both maintained schools and academies.

*Schools Block*

The 2021/22 primary unit of funding for Stockton was £4,531.11 and the secondary unit of funding was £5,777.58 (compared to £4,192.69 and £5,329.71 respectively in 2020/21). Stockton's allocation for 2021/22 was £145.080m after the £0.698m (£0.660m in 2020/21) transfer to High Needs. This would be the allocation before academy recoupment which would be taken and given to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) for all Stockton's academies and free schools from the DSG allocation.

There was a total increase of 200 pupils from 2020/21 up to 28,464 pupils (including those in the free schools) and this represents an overall increase of 0.7%. Growth funding was within local authorities' schools block national funding formula allocations and it was requested that the Schools Forum approve £0.625m to cover growth fund items in 2021/22 (2020/21 £0.55m).

#### *Early Years Block*

The 2021/22 three & four year old per hour per pupil unit of funding for Stockton had increased to £4.59 (up £0.06). Stockton's allocation for 2021/22 was £11.275m. The Early Years block would continue to pay for free nursery places up to 15 hours in primary schools, including academies and Private, Voluntary and Independent providers together with the additional 15 hours for three and four year old children of eligible working parents.

For disadvantaged 2 year old Stockton's allocation was £2.212m. This was based on the weighted national average which for Stockton was £5.36 per hour (£5.28 in 2020/21)

#### *High Needs Block*

The DfE announced an additional £730m of additional funding nationally for High Needs in 2021/22. For Stockton this meant an additional £3.724m over 2020/21, making the total £31.283m before recoupment. The allocation received was provisional as adjustments would be made in year for the export/import of places between authorities.

It should be noted that the Governments High Needs funding allocation announcement only referred to one year's funding for 2021/22 and looked no further ahead. Stockton's allocation for 2021/22 was £31.283m, but this would be increased by the £0.698m transfer from Schools Block to £31.981m.

#### *Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)*

The CSSB brought together funding previously allocated through the retained duties element of the ESG, funding for ongoing central functions such as admissions and residual funding for historic commitments. The 2021/22 allocation was £0.939m and included a further 20% (£0.024m) reduction for historic commitments.

#### **Transfer Between Blocks**

The level of funding under each block was represented in the table presented within the document which outlined changes from 2020/21 against 2021/22.

#### **Schools Block Spend**

In 2021/22 local authorities continued to have discretion over their schools funding formulae. The Authority consulted to increase the formula factors in line with the National Funding Formula i.e. an increase of 3% to the formula's core pupil led factors (plus lump sum), except for Free School Meals which would rise by 2% and PFI factors which would be increased by inflation. The 2021/22 factors and associated values were shown in Appendix 1 with 2020/21 figures included for comparison.

The minimum per pupil levels in 2021-22 would be set at £4,180 for primary schools. This meant that every primary school would receive a minimum of £4,000 per pupil, with a further addition of £180 per pupil from the rolling in of grants. The minimum per pupil levels would be £5,215 for KS3 and £5,715 for KS4, ensuring that standard secondary schools with 5-year groups received at least £5,415 per pupil. This included £265 per

secondary pupil for the rolling in of grants. For calculating whether and how much a school should be 'topped up' to the minimum level, its per pupil funding included all funding it received through the local schools' formula, excluding premises and growth funding.

The minimum funding guarantee (MFG) would be set at a positive 2% per pupil in 2021/22 as agreed following the consultation for all mainstream schools and academies. This replaced the current MFG which limited increases to 1.84% per pupil.

#### *Growth Fund*

Based on current analysis, it was estimated that the Growth Fund requirements for 2021/22 would need to increase to £0.625m (2020-21 £0.550m) to accommodate requirement for the provision of secondary growth. Therefore, it was recommended that School Forum approve an allocation of £0.625m for 2021/22.

### **Early Years Block Spend**

#### *3 & 4 Year Olds*

Stockton was proposing to pass on the funding rate increase from central Government. Overall funding allocated per hour to each child would be £4.14 per hour for 2021/22 (£4.08 in 2020/21) and deprivation and sparsity would be the same as current levels.

The Authority would continue to pass on the EYPP funding to all state-funded early years providers at 53p per hour per eligible pupil. This meant settings would receive a maximum of £302.10 for each eligible 3 or 4 year-olds who took up the full 570 hours of state-funded early education they are entitled to.

#### *Disadvantaged 2 Year Olds*

It was proposed that the disadvantaged 2-year old's hourly rate for 2021/22 would be set at £5.27 (2020/21 £5.19).

### **High Needs Block Spend**

The budgets included within Appendix 2 were based on historic trends and spend in the current financial year, projected growth, and the savings programme that was currently being work on. As members were aware from regular updates, there were continuing significant pressures against the high needs areas which was also evident from the current year's Budget Monitoring report received today.

The additional government funding of £3.72m provided within the High Needs block had been allocated to those specific budgets which had seen pressures arising, predominantly agency, top ups and alternative provision. The increase in budgets between 2020/21 and 2021/22 were detailed in Appendix 2.

As presented in the November High Needs report, an element of the additional funding, £1.287m had been set aside to offset any additional growth over and above that already built into the budgets and as a contingency if there were any delays or issues with achieving the savings targets. Any surplus funds against this at the end of 2021/22 would be utilised to offset the estimated £5.631m DSG deficit.

***G Booth questioned whether in light of the current pandemic was any funding being allocated to address students' anxiety, mental health and wellbeing. M Gray explained that the High Needs funding was for placement funding and currently the demand was around autism. Support for mental health and wellbeing, such as CAMHS was not funded via DSG***

L Spellman reported that a paper was being submitted to the Tees Valley Strategic Board, requesting that the £1.3m funding remaining in the Tees Valley Strategic Fund be shared between the Tees Valley local authorities. School would then be able to submit bids to an LA Panel for funding for specific projects etc.

C Wilson expressed concern around staffs' mental health and wellbeing due to extra pressures resulting from the pandemic, was there any funding provision to support staff. Could the money from the Tees Valley Strategic Fund be used to support staff?

E Huntington explained that the Tees Valley Strategic Fund was targeted at students. M Gray highlighted that the authority had produced a comprehensive offer of mental health and wellbeing, from a number of providers which schools could broker support from via Early Help.

***S Richardson question how much of the DSG deficit would be paid off by the end of the next financial year. A Bryson explained that the DfE had only provided a one-year settlement figure, if more funding was provided in 2022/23, the deficit would reduce more quickly.***

In previous years representation had been made to the School Forum regarding the MFG increase for mainstream schools and its non-applicability to special schools despite them facing similar inflationary pressures. As per last year the authority would continue to increase the top up rate in line with the MFG of +2% to be paid to special sector schools and the cost of this had been built into next year's budget.

### **Central Services Block Spend**

It was recommended that for 2021/22 the central items remain unchanged and funds allocated across the following services

- a. Combined Budgets
  - i. Psychology and Intervention £3,748
  - ii. Virtual School Head £30,000
  - iii. First Contact Team £25,000
  - iv. Family Support £25,000
  - v. Local Safeguarding Board £25,000
  - vi. Public Health Team £30,000
- b. School Admissions £212,000
- c. Servicing of Schools Forum £22,000
- d. Termination of employment costs £11,000

The remaining CSSB funding totaling £555,000 would be utilised to fund licenses and statutory central services previously funded from the retained element of the old Education Services Grant.

***Responding to a member's question, M Gray confirmed that the shared Safeguarding role between Stockton and Hartlepool authorities would continue.***

### **Schools Budget 2021/22 and Projected Brought Forward School Budget Balance**

Based on the information earlier in the paper, the proposed 2021/22 Schools Budget for each funding block was set out in **Appendix 2**. It shows the DfE block funding allocation against the spending plans for that area. Updates would be provided throughout the year to the Forum on projected spend against budget.

### **Pupil Premium and Other Grants**

The DfE have advised that

- the pupil premium funding rates for 2021/22 would be held at the 2020/21 level.
- the Looked After Children rate was £2,345 with £1,400 to schools and £945 retained for management by the Virtual Head.
- for 2021/22 the October 2020 school census data would be used to allocate the pupil premium to local authorities. The total amount receivable for pupil premium in the Borough in 2020/21 was £11.37m.
- Free School Meal (FSM) Supplementary Grant would be extended for a year to 2020 to 2021. This was for increases in FSM pupil numbers between October 2019 and October 2020, at a per pupil rate of £450. Allocations would be made in February 2021.

- the Teacher's Pay Grant and the Teacher's Pension Employer Contribution Grant had been included within the appropriate DSG blocks for 2021/22.

Information about other grants for 2021 to 2022 would be issued during 2021.

RESOLVED that members:

- a. Noted the Dedicated School Grant settlement.
- b. Supported the funding formula and proposals for growth fund.
- c. Agreed the proposed Central Spend Block items and associated budget for 2021/22.
- d. Noted that the authority intends to increase the 3 and 4 year old early years rate to £4.14 and continue to set the pass-through rate at 95%.
- e. Agreed the Early Years central spend of £0.564m.
- f. Noted that the authority intends to increase the hourly rate for the extended two year old provision to £5.27.
- g. Noted the position on high needs spend.
- h. Noted the estimated deficit position on the DSG.
- i. Noted the position re Pupil Premium and other grants.
- j. Agreed that the Schools Forum meeting scheduled to take place on 2nd February 2021 was no longer required.

## 7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### 7.1 Scheme for Financing Schools

A Bryson reported that the Scheme for Financing Schools had been updated in line with the national policy and would be published on the SBC website. He explained that as the amendments were at national level, there was no requirement to consult Schools Forum.

### 7.2 Individual School Budgets

***In response to a member's question***, G Waller explained that schools would be provided with their 2021/22 budget information by 28<sup>th</sup> February 2021, in line with statutory guidance.

## 8. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED that

- a) The Schools' Forum meeting scheduled to take place on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 be cancelled.
- b) the next Schools' Forum meeting be held at 1:30pm on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021.