

1 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from:

Ruth Murton

Thamesmead School

Academy member

the paper, but the general principles of the proposals remained as described in the paper (and as reported to Cabinet).

The main change from the July provisional figures was a £4.828m increase due to updating pupil numbers from Oct 2019 data to Oct 2020, which will largely be offset by increased costs of funding the extra pupils in schools.

Proposals had been presented both with and without transfers to high needs block (because the outcome of the application to DfE was still awaited). If there was a transfer to HNB a ceiling (limit on year on year per pupil gains) estimated at 2.14% would be required, saving around £0.4m). Only 69 schools would have their funding increases restricted to contribute to the ceiling, because so many schools (133-144) were protected by the Minimum Per Pupil (funding) level (MPPL), a minimum average funding level per pupil. If there was no transfer to high needs, Surrey would be able to set its funding rates slightly above the NFF rates and set the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) or minimum average

created by COVID and by current DFE policy on early years funding in spring 2021.

Early years funding for spring 2021

The Early Years rep expressed concern that many providers had few children attending because of government
consequently providers faced uncertainty and

was less than 1% (averaging £4000). The amounts received by the secondary schools were each less than 1% of their budgets.

Total high needs block expenditure in 2020/21 was projected at £193m, an overspend of £33m against grant funding, and the council was required to balance high needs costs against available funding. The paper set out the results of the consultation and the key themes expressed in the responses. The Forum needed to consider whether this funding stream was the best use of resources for children.

LM suggested that the move towards NFF had meant more emphasis on individual funding for SEN. DG commented that the LA could define the notional SEN budget within the NFF, but that the NFF made it more difficult to vary the amount of additional needs funding which went into schools, in order to meet local priorities.

The Family Voice rep noted that there had been a vast response from families to the consultation. Surrey families were well informed, but it had been difficult to determine whether the consultation had been aimed at the public or at schools, and it had assumed a level of knowledge which the public did not have. It was important for a consultation in the public domain to give enough information to allow members of the public to give an informed response. Parents of SEN children were deeply invested in the system and their lack of understanding of the consultation had caused distress to a group of parents who were already struggling. She suggested that it was difficult to see how the proposals would make schools more inclusive. If a school used all of its notional SEN funding to support children with EHCPs, children with lower levels of SEN would lose out. Parents had not been able to see clearly how the proposals would affect children with EHCPs and children at SEN support. She also noted that schools had gone above and beyond duty to support children with SEN in home learning and should not be burdened with additional administration at this time to secure funding. She saw a need for better background information for a consultation which was in the public domain.

The Chair asked that these points be taken into account in the analysis of the consultation responses.

MB recognised that, although the consultation had been presented as a schools funding consultation, it had actually attracted considerable public interest and that had been welcomed.

The council had made significant investment in promoting inclusion, eg graduated response, learners Single Point of Access.

One member suggested that more parents were seeking EHCPs because they believed, or had been told by schools, that it was the only way to secure additional support. Some schools were said to believe that parental requests for EHCPs were more likely to be successful than school requests, although the process was actually the same. LM noted that the vast bulk of EHCP requests came from schools, but that in the summer term there had been a notable increase in parental requests.

The Chair summarised that there was no right answer to the proposals and that the current distribution mechanism did not meet the DfE criteria.

LM would now consider all of the responses and comments and would make a decision in consultation with the lead Cabinet member, before 21 January. That deadline was determined by the need to report proposed mainstream budget arrangements for 2021/22 to DfE by that date. Options could include doing nothing. The decision would be published and linked back to the original consultation. **Action for LM**

