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SOUTHEND-ON-SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL

Meeting of Education Board

Date: Thursday, 6th July, 2017

Place: Committee Room 5 - Civic Suite

- Present:** Mr M Sweeting (Chair)
Mr T Barrett, Dr R Bevan, Ms L Clark, Mr J Johnson, Ms J Mullan,
Ms M Rimmer and Ms V Wright.
- In Attendance:** Ms C Hickey, Mr P Grout, B Martin, R Harris and I Ambrose, A
McIlwraith and Cathy Braun.
- Start/End Time:** 8.15 - 9.45 am

1 Welcome, introductions if required, apologies

Apologies were received from Mr L Pryor, Ms N Bannister, Mr S Reynolds, Mr N Houchen, Mr D Parker, Ms A Turner, Mr A McGarel, Mr J Glazier and Mr S Leftley.

2 High Needs Revised Budget 2017/18

The Board received and considered a report from the Council's Deputy Chief Executive (People) presenting the revised High Needs budget allocations for 2017/18. This report is an updated position from the original budget presented to the Board in March 2017.

The Board had an in-depth discussion on the report and made the following points:

- Recognised the pressures that were not previously planned for in the High Needs Block, i.e YMCA increased place funding;
- The budgetary figures must be right;
- Accurate information is essential regarding the need for special placements and what placements are available moving forward;
- Recognised the challenges for schools with the increasing number of children/young people with special education needs;
- Schools need to be equipped to enable them to support SEN/EHCP children/young people;
- Emphasised that some areas are being 'over-funded' while others are under-funded;
- Concerns were expressed about the impact the reduction in school funding will have on special schools (in real terms they were facing up to a 4% reduction on top up funding rates (excluding place funding which is accounted for in DfE Special School MFG Guidance) and must be recognised that this was not a one-off reduction;
- The Board emphasised its duty to sign-off/agree the proposals in the report recognising that there has been a significant overspend in previous years but stressed that a comprehensive strategic plan was need for the future;

- Emphasised that this was a demand led area and the resources need to go with the child in the context that the funding still needs to be managed and as a principal should work within budget;
- Recognised that this was a national problem and was not specific to Southend;

The Board also asked a number of questions covering a number of areas which the officers responded to, summarised below:-

- How many children are there that need special placements and what placements are available? The number of children is tracked through the data and from the EHCP but it is not possible to predict, particularly those coming into the local authority area. Assurances were given that the department was on top of it and each is dealt with on case by case basis; Discussions were taking place with the DoE regarding the provision of special places;
- How accurate are the figures? They are correct to the best knowledge to date;
- Queried the process for Education Psychologists? The system is demand led and is not predictable – it should follow the child and is therefore not as predictable as perhaps it could be;
- Significant risks around mental health needs – who is monitoring and what is the health contribution – are we ensuring Value for Money? Discussions are on-going with the CCG / health regarding shared funding in this area;
- Will Seabrook provide a secure unit? Provision of mental health support is in the phased plan for Seabrook but it cannot provide a secure unit – there will be provision to support children/young people who are coming out of a secure unit;

Resolved:

1. That the Education Board reaffirms its intention that the High Needs budget for 2017/18 and future years should, in principle, be contained within the High Needs DSG Block allocation.
2. That the 2017/18 High Needs budget be agreed and adopted as presented and the Education Board recognises this budget seeks to manage a budget pressure.
3. That the Local Authority, in conjunction with the Vulnerable Learners Sub Group, work towards a revised and consistent top up funding approach across all settings to be implemented from April 2018. This work should also include recommended funding allocations to other high needs services for future years. Progress reports on the revised funding methodology will be reported back to the Education Board during 2017/18, requiring Board approval on final proposals before April 2018.
4. That the submission of a request to the Department for Education (DfE) for the disapplication of the Minimum Funding Guarantee from April 2018 for any applicable high needs provider, given the serious financial risk that significant high need funding pressures to remain in 2017/18 and therefore will continue into 2018/19. Any implementation of a granted disapplication will be dependent

on the actual High Needs DSG Block allocation for 2018/19 and would only be utilised with the express permission/authority of the Education Board

3 The way forwards for the remainder of phase one

The Board was informed that monthly monitoring reports will be reviewed and discussed by the Vulnerable Learners Sub Group.

4 The way forward for design of phase two

The Board was informed that members will be contacted to support the work on the high needs budget for 2018/19 onwards. This will be an intensive piece of work and a sense check/take stock in October 2017.

The Chairman on behalf of the Board thanked the Council officers for their hard work in bringing the High Needs revised budget together.

5 AOB

(a) Seabrook

The Board was informed that Seabrook will formerly become an Academy on 1st July 2017.

(b) MJ Awards

The Board noted that it had been highly commended at the MJ Awards for governance and scrutiny, effectively runner-up in the category.

6 Meeting close

The meeting finished and all Board members were thanked for attending, given the short notice that this extraordinary meeting was called.

Chairman: _____

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