

**Briefing note to Education Board on the operation of the High Needs Task and Finish Group**

**Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

**Brin Martin, Director of Learning, Southend Borough Council**

**Membership:**

Brin Martin SBC  
Gary Bloom SBC  
Paul Grout SBC  
Jackie Mullen Southend Trust  
Lisa Clarke Hampstel Infants  
Tim Barrett Temple Sutton

**Frequency of meetings:**

17.1 3-5  
31.1 11-2  
9.2 10-1  
20.2 8.30-11  
26.2 (RSG)  
9.3 10-2  
13.3 (Education Board)  
15.3 11-1  
27.3 11-2

**Outcomes of T&F group:**

**To impact upon the current financial year 2017-18**

1. To draw up an outline roadmap of activity to undertake in year and future savings on the HNB DSG
2. To identify in advance those areas and principles that the review will be governed by, and that are non-negotiable.
3. To make recommendations for the VLSG/RSG and then to Education Board
4. To propose in year mitigations and savings (2017-18) in order to minimise the impact of the in year overspend on the HNB DSG
5. To propose to Education Board mitigations to minimise the impact upon the DSG reserves 2017-18
6. To recoup such savings as can be reasonably made against legitimate DSG spend in year
7. To propose further DSG legitimate savings for the next financial year planning

**To impact upon the subsequent financials years 2018-19 and 2019-20**

8. To build on roadmap, identifying actions and activity required in order to provide assurance of intent
9. To map out the planned recovery plan to bring both the HNB DSG back into balance and restore the DSG reserves by March 2020 at the latest
10. To establish clear, transparent, understood and simple principles to achieve the above

11. Through Education Board to consult upon, approve and implement a robust recovery plan
12. To set up clear systems and procedures to monitor and track all spend related to HNB DSG on a monthly basis

### **Narrative**

The group has so far met four times since January. We have separated our work into two phases:

(Fact finding and intelligence)

1. Phase one, interim recommendations relating to reducing the spend in year (17/18) and to identify savings for 18/19;
2. Phase two is the longer work to bring the DSG back into balance and restore reserves. In addition the more complex work of designing and building funding architecture going forwards that will enable the Council and schools clear and unambiguous systems and criteria for funding of all aspects of SEND and high needs spend.

Following the initial intelligence and due diligence, we are now approaching a position where firstly the data on the spend is known and reliable (approaching because some elements remain subject of scrutiny); and secondly identified those areas where there is little or no flexibility or scope for savings.

This exercise has indicated several areas of potential further investigation relating to both in year and next year savings.

Good progress has been made in intelligence, we know more now than we did, and have a far clearer picture of known knowns, known unknowns, which inevitably leads to unknown unknowns.

In addition it has raised several crucial questions that will require answering with regard to anomalous systems and pupil numbers that again will need reconciliation.

The bottom line remains, that currently this is a demand led environment, and demand across Southend is increasing. This demand is partially fuelled by a lack of inclusion exhibited in some areas, resulting in additional pressures.

Given the preliminary work of the group, we have identified the following:

- Immediate savings of £50K
- Areas of interest that could potentially lead to savings in the region of £150-200K

Our next course of action will be to pursue current hit list for savings in the short/medium which are:

On a persona; not I must express my significant gratitude to members of the task and finish group for firstly their time commitment and secondly their willingness to challenge without favour.

Subsequent Board briefings will include the progress in securing the short/medium term savings, and secondly the traction gained in starting phase two.