

CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Education held on Wednesday, 16 January 2019 at 10.00 am at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Suzy Horton (in the Chair)

Councillor Tom Coles

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Coles declared a non-prejudicial personal interest as a member of the Local Advisor Board of Penhale Infant School (thinking Schools Academy Trust).

Councillor Horton declared a non-prejudicial personal interest as Vice Chair of Governors of Craneswater Junior School.

3. 2019-20 School Funding Arrangements and Dedicated Schools Grant Budget

The Finance Manager, Finance and IT, presented the report

She highlighted that

The revenue funding arrangements for mainstream schools in 2019-20 has already agreed, and Schools Forum has endorsed, the following principles in respect of it, which are summarised below

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member:

- a) Approved the determination of the 2019-20 schools budget (including the individual schools budgets) shown at Appendix 1, together with the supporting explanations contained within this report.**
- b) Endorsed the amount of the growth fund for 2019-20 at £754,400**
- c) Approved the proposed changes to the mainstream schools revenue funding formula as set out in section 6.**

- d) **Approved the school revenue funding pro-forma at Appendix 6 for submission to the ESFA on the 21 January 2019.**
 - e) **Approved the 2019-20 Special school, Inclusion Centre and Alternative Provision places as set out in Appendix 4**
 - f) **The decision to approve the 2019-20 Element 3 Top-up rates for Special Schools, Inclusion Centres, Alternative Provision settings and for Children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in mainstream schools as set out in Appendix 5 was deferred to the next meeting.**
 - g) **Approved the proposal that any carry-forward balances from 2018-19 be used to assist with the continued introduction of the funding reform changes and fund any potential financial pressures arising during 2019-20.**
 - h) **Approved the local funding arrangements in respect of the 2, 3 and 4 year old early years provision for 2019-20 as set out in section 8 and Appendix 3**
- 4. Proposal to close Willows Centre for Children - outcome of pre-statutory consultation**

The Deputy Director for Children, Families and Education presented the report and highlighted the following areas:

- The Willows Centre was a maintained special school offering specialist early years and primary phase education to children aged 3 to 7 with Special Educational Needs (SEN) from a site next to Cliffdale Primary Academy (a special academy school). Willows had 42 full time equivalent specialist places for nursery, reception and year 1 pupils. Pupils were placed at the Willows by the Local Authority.
- That there are reservations about the proposed changes, despite the excellent quality of provision at Cliffdale and the outstanding reputation and standards across the Solent Academies Trust.
- Formal advice from the government had confirmed that the Willows Centre for Children could not become a stand-alone academy or one within a Multi-Academy Trust as it did not meet the required criteria. Therefore, retaining the Willows as a separate entity was not possible.
- The final position depended on the Secretary of State approving the business case for the Solent Academies Trust.

The Cabinet Member said that she was supportive of the direction of travel and that it was important that it was realised that financial pressures had forced the Council to make this decision. She went on to say that she had visited the school, and had found that staff were reluctantly supportive of the move.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet Member

- a) considered the responses to the pre-statutory consultation carried out on the proposal to close Willows Centre for Children but to continue to deliver the specialist provision provided by Willows as part of an expanded Cliffdale Primary Academy.**
- b) authorised the Director for Children, Families and Education to proceed to the publication and representation stages of the statutory process to close Willows Centre for Children.**

5. Early Years SEND Funding Review

The Early Years and Childcare Manager presented the report and highlighted that the proposed closure of the Willows Nursery School provides an opportunity to remodel the way in which Portsmouth City Councils supports early years children to access their funded entitlement. The report outlined the proposed changes to the funding and support for young children with SEND.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet Member approved the following changes to funding and support for early years children with SEND:

- 1. Commission places for early years children with complex SEND through a specialist provision at Cliffdale Primary Academy (subject to the conclusion of the current consultation on the closure of Willows Nursery School).**
- 2. Establish a single funding stream for mainstream early years providers with two elements:**
 - a flexible 'complex needs' funding stream (*EY Inclusion Fund - Enhanced*) where funding will follow the child to the setting of their parent's choice. This element will be funded through the DSG High-Needs Block, using the funding released from the proposed closure of Willows Nursery School;**
 - a refocussed Early Years Inclusion Fund (*EY Inclusion Fund - Core*) which supports children with 'low and emerging' needs, in-line with Statutory Guidance. This is already funded from the Early Years Block.**
- 3. Subject to consultation with the current service providers, refocus the allocation of funding to early years outreach on a resource which can consistently deliver practical support and role modelling to settings across the spectrum of needs. A SEND outreach officer role will be managed either through the Early Years Area SENCO team or Portage Plus.**

- 4. Review existing training and development opportunities for mainstream early years providers to ensure they meet the needs of children and the settings they access.**

6. School Organisation Suite of Documents

The Deputy Director of Children, Families and Education introduced the report and highlighted the following areas that:

- The Council had a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for resident children. This duty required the council to forecast future pupil populations to ensure that sufficient places are provided and determine whether action was needed to meet anticipated future demand for school places for Portsmouth resident children.
- The Council's approach was documented in a suite of four key documents, each of which covered a 6-year period, but also looked forward to the longer term demand for places:
- The over-arching purpose of the four documents was to:
 - Commission additional school places to meet increasing demand
 - Prioritise the capital investment that is required to address sufficiency
 - Ensure the council meets its statutory duty of providing sufficient local school places for every child of school age whose parents/carers wish them to have one
 - Set out the council's policy on managing school organisation

The Cabinet Member welcomed the documents and said that they were a good balance between the vision and the principle of the service.

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member approved the suite of School Organisation documents, which underpin the council's approach to ensuring sufficient school places in the city.

The meeting concluded at 10.41 am.

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Councillor Suzy Horton
Chair