

CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Education held on Thursday, 16 January 2020 at 4.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Suzy Horton (in the Chair)

Councillors Tom Coles
Terry Norton

Apologies for Absence

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Members' Interests

Councillor Horton declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as she is the Vice Chair of governors at Craneswater Junior School.

Councillor Coles declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as he is on the Academy Advisory Board at Penhale Infant School.

Councillor Norton declared a personal and non-prejudicial interest as his partner works at Mayfield Secondary School and his Daughter attends Mayfield pre school and he works for a supply agency although currently not in a Portsmouth school.

3. School Modernisation and Sufficiency Programme

The report was introduced by Caroline Corcoran, Head of Sufficiency, Participation and Resources.

In response to questions she clarified the following:

- There had been a further few leaks on the roof at The Lantern. The majority of the previous works were on the inside of the building. The building was not of the highest quality and it was inevitable there would be maintenance costs on this site - the recent spell of rain had not helped. A longer term solution is being sought but it is recognised that The Lantern will be required for the medium term and the level of investment to support the high standard of refurbishment reflects this.

The Cabinet Member advised that this was Caroline's last meeting so wished her well and thanked her for the quality of all her reports.

DECISIONS:

The Cabinet Member for Education:

1. **Noted the progress on the school modernisation "urgent condition" projects, the secondary school sufficiency projects and the special school sufficiency projects (as set out in the report and in Appendix A).**
 2. **Approved the schemes agreed since the last report.**
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4. **Education Portfolio Budget Monitoring Report for the Second Quarter 2019/20**

The report was introduced by Angela Mann, Finance Manager.

DECISION:

The Cabinet Member for Education noted the Education Portfolio forecast revenue and capital budget positions, as at the end of September 2019, together with the variance and pressure explanations.

5. **Dedicated Schools Grant 2019-20 Quarter 2 budget monitoring**

The report was introduced by Alison Egerton, Group Accountant.

Councillor Norton said it was important to note that the government are planning to spend an extra £2.6 billion on education next year nationally.

Councillor Horton added that the additional money received this year has really helped the situation. There is £3 million additional funding from government for SEN for the next financial year however there is still significant pressures across the country on SEN therefore any additional funds would be welcomed.

The Cabinet Member for Education:

1. **Noted the forecast year-end budget position for the Dedicated Schools Grant as at 30 September 2019, together with the associated explanations contained within the report.**
2. **Approved the necessary adjustments to Dedicated Schools Grant to reflect the Early Years budgets and Dedicated Schools Grant income budget, to reflect the adjustment in grant funding due to pupil number changes, as set out in paragraphs 3.30 and 3.31 of the report**

6. Targeted Short Breaks

The report was introduced by Julia Katherine, Head of Inclusion.

In response to questions the following matters were clarified:

- The authority seek applications in February each year and the money is then be allocated to the cards from April. New families who are eligible are informed when their ECHPs are finalised. The application process is straight forward.
- The number of applicants has grown each year; partly because there are more children who are eligible and partly because the authority is more effectively getting the information about pre-paid cards out to families. Currently parents have to apply once and reconfirm each year that they would still like the card. The authority writes to every family directly each year.
- Officers received quite a few phone calls with queries which indicated that families had received the information, but there was not a huge response to the request for feedback on the proposals.

Councillor Norton was very concerned the impact these proposals would have on families as it would be a reduced service.

Councillor Horton firstly wished to place on record her thanks to officers for all their work on this report, and also to the parents and everyone who had engaged with the consultation. She felt that this was a really important decision and there was a lot of positive changes proposed in this report. This is a budget pressure coming from a changing landscape with no increase in money.

Councillor Horton felt it was sensible to review the pre-paid card annually. She felt a lot more families may receive something with this proposed change in allocating the funding. She said when she made a decision, she always traced that back to families to identify the impact this would have on them. On two occasions she met families where she felt that the cut of the card would have a negative impact on their quality of life and she had heard examples of things they would no longer be able to do in terms of their respite. She did however meet other families where this proposal wouldn't affect them.

Councillor Horton said she was therefore not happy with recommendation b which was that pre-paid cards are only available to those not accessing a specialist short break package and she wished officers to look further into options for the pre-paid cards. She felt that the other two recommendations were pragmatic and a sensible way to go forward and should start immediately.

DECISIONS:

The Cabinet Member for Education agreed to the steps below which will ensure that personal budgets in the form of prepaid cards can continue to be provided to eligible families within the budgets available:

- 1. The value of pre-paid cards is set every year, dependent on the estimated number of applications.**
- 2. Families will have to apply for a pre-paid card annually.**

7. School Revenue Funding Arrangements 2020-2021

The report was introduced by Angela Mann, Finance Manager.

DECISIONS:

The Cabinet Member for Education:

- 1. Approved the proposed changes to the mainstream schools revenue funding formula as set out in section 7.**
- 2. Approved the school revenue funding pro-forma at Appendix 4 for submission to the ESFA on 21 January 2020.**
- 3. Approved the budget to be held centrally for the payment of central licences nationally for all schools by the Secretary of State.**
- 4. Approved the implementation of the disapplication requests as set out in section 8 of the report.**
- 5. Endorsed the carry forward final balance of the Schools Specific Contingency Fund from 2019-20 to be used for the same purpose.**
- 6. Endorsed the Growth Fund criteria for 2020-21 and secondary values as set out in Section 7 and Appendix 5.**
- 7. Endorsed the budgets to be held centrally, specifically:**
 - Schools Forum**
 - Admissions**
 - Duties retained by the local authority for all schools.**

8. Home to School Transport

The report was introduced by Julia Katherine, Head of Inclusion.

In response to questions officers clarified the following:

- Table 3 showed the percentage of children with and without a statutory entitlement to home to school travel assistance. Statutory eligibility in terms of SEN are those children who would never be able to travel independently. The number of children with a statutory entitlement has increased. The percentage of children who receive assistance without a statutory entitlement has reduced. There are different ways in which travel assistance can be provided, depending on the needs of individual children. It is important that we look at supporting children to**

travel to school in ways that also enable them to learn independent travel skills, as appropriate for their particular needs (e.g. some children will be able to travel by bus if they have had travel training).

The Cabinet member thanked officers for the report and said there was some very positive steps being considered.

DECISIONS:

The Cabinet Member for Education:

- 1. Noted the scale of the budget pressure together with the remedial actions taken by the Education and Early Help Service over an extended period in order to contain overall costs as set out in sections 3 and 4 of the report**
- 2. Noted the actions and plans that the Education and Early Help Service is undertaking in 2019/20 to address existing and future budget pressures as set out in section 5 of the report and in Appendix 3.**

The meeting concluded at 4.57 pm.

Councillor Suzy Horton
Chair