

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education held on Thursday, 14 January 2021 at 4.00 pm virtually.

Present

Councillor Suzy Horton (Cabinet Member)
Councillors Terry Norton
Jeanette Smith
Judith Smyth

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Members' Interests

Councillor Horton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as she is a governor at Craneswater Junior School. Councillor Norton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as he is employed at Mayfield School through a cover agency, his partner is employed at Mayfield School and his daughter attends it. Councillor Smith declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as she is a paid official for Hampshire branch UNISON and represents support staff in Hampshire schools.

3. School Funding arrangements 2021-22

The report was introduced by Angela Mann, Finance Manager who drew particular attention to the following:

- Notification that had been received for the additional funding for early years settings and that the total value of the increase to the hourly rate will be paid to providers.
- Recommendation to approve the element 3 top-up values for Special Schools, Alternative Provision settings, Inclusion Centre and Mainstream Education, Health and Care Plan banding for implementation in April 2021 as set out in Appendix 4. Angela advised that as Schools Forum had made a request to defer a decision on this, the recommendation would now be covered in the upcoming report for February 2021.

In response to questions Councillor Suzy Horton agreed that it would be more likely that there would be an increased need for Children's Social Care after going through a pandemic than not.

Alison Jeffery explained that they keep a close eye on the resources that are available in order to be able to respond to the children that may fall into the 'children in need' category (needing a statutory social care intervention) and

also those that they may need to provide early stage help to on a targeted basis. This is reviewed on a week by week basis to make sure that there are sufficient resources to meet that need and additional staff have been placed in MASH through the pandemic to meet that demand. This comes from the council's cash limit and not from the direct schools grant. In relation to the funds carry over as detailed in 9.1, this money and the direct schools grant can only be spent in certain ways. The council would not be in a position to refocus it on Children's Social Care but Alison offered reassurance that they don't anticipate being in a position where they cannot meet the need for Children's Social Care support, and there are regular and frequent discussions with the finance colleagues.

Angela Mann added that there are plans for using the balances and that a big commitment will be the new special school that is due to open in September 2022. Some of the carry forward will also be for the growth fund and will be used over the next 5 years as per the regulations for the dedicated schools grant.

Alison Egerton clarified that the schools specific contingency fund is only available to maintained primary and secondary schools. This is because the fund is made up from a de-delegated amount that maintained schools have contributed to. The guidance relating to how schools can access it is circulated to all schools at the beginning of every financial year. So far no schools have applied to use the fund but if schools feel that they meet the criteria then they can set up a business case which will go to Schools Forum for decision.

DECISIONS: The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education:

- 1. Approved the proposed changes to the mainstream schools revenue funding arrangements as set out in Section 5.**
- 2. Approved the school revenue funding pro-forma at Appendix 5 for submission to the ESFA on 21 January 2021.**
- 3. Approved the budget to be held centrally for the payment of central licences negotiated nationally for all schools by the Secretary of State.**
- 4. Following the funding announcement from the Department for Education, approved the proposed hourly rates to Early Years providers for 2021-22 as set out in section 7 and Table 5.**

Following approval by Schools Forum the Cabinet Member:

- 5. Endorsed the Growth Fund Criteria for 2021-22 as set out in Appendix three.**
- 6. Endorsed the budgets to be held centrally specifically:**
 - Schools Forum**

- **Admissions**
- **Duties retained by the local authority for all schools**

4. Inclusion Centre Funding Arrangements 2021-22

The report was introduced by Julia Katherine, Head of Inclusion, Children's Services and Education.

In response to questions Julia explained that decisions surrounding the banding criteria is made as part of the statutory assessment process and at the moment a level of funding will be attached to an EHCP or an agreement will be made with an inclusion centre. The change is that they will be allocating a band of funding depending on the child's needs.

The reduction in funding for Milton Park Primary School is not based on actual children currently placed, it's an indicative figure based on the assumptions made in the modelling. If the majority of children at Milton Park Primary were on the core banding then there would be less funding received, but they would also be required to put in a lower level of provision. If the children that are currently placed are at a higher band of funding then the reduction in funding would be reduced. Julia also confirmed that the home school transport funding was not affected.

Originally the admissions criteria for the Milton Park provision were different to that of the other inclusion centres and children had a higher complexity of need. Over the years as the number of children with autism has increased, there were more children with autism who needed that level of support than could be placed at Milton Park. Work was done with a number of the inclusion centres which now means there are six inclusion centres with the same admission criteria. Staff at these schools have been skilled up and training has been provided to develop the provision with them, this means that more children can be placed with them with autism and a higher level of need. This also means that more children can be kept in a local school and in their local community.

The new special school that will be opening in September 2022 will be for children with autism and associated social, emotional, mental health and behavioural issues as that is the biggest growth that is being seen. In the best interests of the children they want to be able to keep children within the city, but if the specialist provision cannot be made in the city then out of city placements will have to be considered.

Placement of any child with an education and health and care plan is made by the council and is based on assessment. The more thorough the assessment and the better the continuum provision available will hopefully mean the child will not have to move schools after the initial placement. Making sure there is the right continuum between primary and secondary means that a child can be placed at a primary school and move through that school and on to an inclusion centre if that remains to be the right provision for them.

In relation to the funding for Milton Park Primary it is not an option to fund every school at £8,000 as this would mean fewer places overall. The funding is matched to the banding criteria and this criteria sets out the range of needs and describes the provision, this includes the adult to child ratio that is needed for the children for example. Schools are not being asked to deliver £8,000 worth of provision and only be funded for £2,000. If a child needs the £8,000 funding then that will be recognised and they will be put at that band, however there are some children that do not need that level and they could be in a number of different schools and not all concentrated within the one school.

As part of the education health and care assessment process parents are always invited to express a preference and written into the legislation and into the code of practice is a presumption of inclusion. This means that if the parents want their child to be educated in a mainstream school there are only two very specific criteria why the local authority cannot comply with that request. Parental preference is always taken into consideration.

These specific reasons are if the type of school is inappropriate for the child's needs or if it would be inappropriate use of resources, in all other case the local authority has to go with the parental preference.

The local offer website is used to inform parents about the provisions that are available across the city and work is done alongside parents with regards to the inclusion centres to make sure that they are expressing their preference with all the information they need.

DECISIONS: The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education:

Agreed the implementation of the proposal to move arrangements for mainstream schools with an Inclusion Centre, as set out in this report.

5. Wimborne Amalgamation Balances

The report was introduced by Alison Egerton, Group Accountant, Finance and Revenues.

DECISIONS: The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education:

1. Approved the transfer of Wimborne Infant and Wimborne Junior Schools closing balances to Wimborne Primary School from the Schools Specific Contingency.

2. Approved the use of the 2020-21 carry forward in 2021-22 to reinstate the School Specific Contingency to the balance of £141,800 as at December 2020.

Councillor Suzy Horton thanked everyone for attending and officers for their reports.

The meeting concluded at 4.48 pm.

Councillor Suzy Horton
Chair