

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 October 2021 at 4.30 pm at the Council Chamber, Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Suzy Horton (in the Chair)
Terry Norton
Judith Smyth

25. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Jeanette Smith, Sally Hodges and Mike Stoneman.

26. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Horton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as she is Vice Chair of governors at Craneswater Junior School. Councillor Norton declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest as he is employed at Mayfield School through a cover agency.

27. School funding arrangements 2022-23

The report was introduced by Angela Mann, Finance Manager.

In response to questions officers clarified the following:

With regard to the MFG protection for Ark Charter Academy Angela explained originally schools were protected based on the actual value received and not on per pupil numbers. Ark Charter Academy historically had a large protection and when it changed to per pupils, the expansion of the school meant that the pupil numbers increased and they would not need the whole of that protection anymore. The disapplication request is to keep the protection they had for the 600 pupils but where they have expanded the protection does not apply. The disapplication is to protect Ark Charter Academy's budgets and to allow them to expand but not disproportionately give them more money. It is likely that this would be the last year this would be needed.

The deadline for submitting responses to the national funding formula was 30 September 2021 and officers were not sure whether they had published the results of this yet. There is a forum to meet with other local authorities and Angela said she would find out and let members know responses to this. The impact on Portsmouth schools was not as big as what it would have been if we were not on the national funding formula. Members commented that appendix 2 was very informative.

Officers will be looking at the budget between now and the next Cabinet member meeting in December to proposed where they will be allocating the budget.

DECISIONS: the cabinet member:

(1) Noted the Department for Education's proposed changes to school revenue funding arrangements for 2022-23, as set out in this report.

(2) Approved the proposals for implementing the local funding formula arrangements as set out in this report in particular to:

- **Implement the National Funding Formula rates for both primary and secondary schools in 2022-23 as set out in Appendix 1**
- **Implement a minimum funding guarantee (MFG) of at least +0.5% and up to +2.0% subject to affordability, for 2022-23 as set out in paragraph 5.8**
- **The method of managing affordability as set out in paragraph 5.10**
- **Implement the disapplication request as set out in section 6**

28. Dedicated Schools Grant quarter 1 Budget monitoring report and revised budget

Angela Mann, Finance Officer introduced the report.

In response to questions officers clarified the following:

Councillor Horton asked about the Early Years final numbers and said whilst it is known that there is a delay in the guidance from the DfE in relation to the EY Block Funding, whether officers have any idea of reduced numbers locally and could this result in a viability issue? Angela advised this would be for Mike Stoneman to answer and Councillor Horton said she would follow this up with him after the meeting and the response circulated to opposition members.

It was noted that the CFE portfolio budget monitoring report was not able to make this meeting and that usually this is considered alongside this report to give a clear overview of budgets. Angela explained that a new corporate financial system had recently been implemented which meant that getting the data in time was quite tight and the portfolio budget report could not make this meeting. This report will come to the next meeting in December. Councillor Horton reminded members that it was important to keep the DSG and portfolio budgets separate. The DSG has clear rules on what any underspend money can be spent on, and this could not be transferred into the portfolio budget.

The DSG is in four blocks and there are regulations that the Council must comply with. The budget is ringfenced from the rest of the Council's funding so it cannot be used for other normal LA expenditure. If there is an underspend this year on the high needs block, this would roll forward to next year and would be spent on the purposes that the grant is intended for. In terms of Early Years, if there was an underspend this would be due to activity and the DSG would be reclaimed by the Department for Education.

In terms of the Schools Block, this is distributed under the National Fair Formula Funding values and is dependent on the character of pupils at the defined period of times that it is set. The Council receives an overall amount and when the information is received on the schools this money is distributed to the schools based on the pupil characteristics.

The Early Years Complex Needs Inclusion fund is for pupils identified as having additional needs to provide extra support to enable them to get ready for school. This is funded by the high needs block and does not affect the hourly rates paid via the Early Years block.

Opposition members said it was about keeping up the desire to have as little underspend as possible the need to be transparent as possible to residents as to why there is an underspend. Councillor Horton said that officers work closely with Schools Forum and she considers their views before making her decision. The Council runs a needs led service so that would not be curtailed because of this funding.

DECISIONS: the cabinet member:

(1) Noted the forecast year end budget position for the Dedicated Schools Grant as at 30 June 2021, together with the associated explanations contained within this report.

(2) Delegated to the Section 151 Officer or their delegated representative, the responsibility to adjust the Early Years block budget in line with the DSG allocation adjustments in November 2021 and January 2022.

(3) Approved the revisions to the 2021-22 budget as set out in Appendix 1 and section 8.

The meeting concluded at 5.05 pm.

Councillor Suzy Horton
Chair