

## SCHOOLS FORUM

**Date of Meeting:** 19 July 2017

**For:** Information

### High Needs Block 2018/19

#### Purpose of the report:

1. This report sets out our work plan to address the significant growth in the High Needs Block budget of the Dedicated Schools Grant over the last year. In 2014 there were 765 Statements or Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and in June 2017 there are 835. Since 2014 the age range has been extended to include 0 to 5 and 18 to 25 year olds. This age range extension has led to a significant increase in request and trend. The spend on independent special school places has increased significantly. Measures must be taken to ensure the growth can be contained within the High Needs Block budget.

#### Summary / background / update:

2. The Wokingham Borough 2017/2018 High Needs Block Allocation, issued by the Department for Education (DfE) on 20 December 2016 is £17,558,483. In addition the DfE have allocated £74,000 to Wokingham Borough Council to undertake a review of the High Needs Block spend.
3. The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). There is growth in the population of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). In addition the age range has been extended to include 0-5 and 18-25 year olds. This age range extension has led to a significant increase in request and trend. In January 2014 765 children and young people had a statement or an EHCP but in June 2017 this number had increased to 835 ( an increase of 9% )
4. Each plan is funded through the High Needs Block and High Needs Block funding has not increased at a similar level.
5. The EFA makes an allocation to local authorities for high needs as part of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The EFA do not specify what amounts should be spent on each area of high needs however the grant is expected to fulfil statutory functions.
6. The council is not expecting an increasing the High Needs Block based on the figures released to date. The final arrangements for 2018/19 are still out for consultation but the range of disparity between authorities in the 2017/18 settlement is significant. Nottingham was allocated 20.5% growth whilst Wokingham was allocated 7%
7. Appendix 3A highlights the 2017 / 2018 budget and forecast expenditure.

8. To address the issues the following proposals are being considered

- **Staff and Associated Costs**

This area shows net costs of £507,000 for 17/18 and a review of staffing funded by the High Needs Block is to be undertaken. This relates to services such as GRT, EY inclusion and the learning support team.

- **Special school placements including placements for looked after children who also are also SEND.**

This area shows a net cost of £6,619,494. In 2016/17 this budget came under considerable pressure with an outturn position of an over spend of £893,000. The service has a number of actions in place to ensure that our EHCP thresholds are right, that the EHCPs are of high quality and internal decision making processes and authorisation are being reviewed. A needs analysis of our SEND cohort is being undertaken so that we can also influence the market provision within Wokingham Borough. The additional residential offer at Northern House planned for September 2017 is an example of how needs might be met more locally.

- **Alternative provisions inc The Foundry and Resource Bases**

Place funding for resource bases shows net costs of £950,000 for this financial year. This includes £200,000 for The Oaks resource base at St Crispin's School that was not profiled in the HNB budget for 2017/18. A wholesale review of funding of resource bases is proposed. The six primary and two secondary bases all have different funding agreements and top ups. Some of the bases are receiving AWPU in addition to the £10,000 place funding, some are not. None of the primary resource bases have a service level agreement and whilst schools need the guaranteed Place Funding to secure the specialist staff, some resource bases are not full. The Foundry receive £470,000 but have no capacity to meet the current numbers of permanently excluded children or those at risk of permanent exclusion. Appendix 3B highlights some of the issues being faced by this provision.

- **Special Schools**

This area shows a net cost of £5,313,147 for 2017/18 which includes Place Funding and top up funding. A local agreement was entered into with Northern House to guarantee Place Funding for 69 places as part of the programme to provide stability following the inadequate inspection and conversion to an academy. This local agreement also included a clause which means that all their Top Ups are paid through our HNB with the responsibility for re coupling from other authorities laying with WBC. Current number on roll at Northern House for September is 49 with 5 pending placements.

- **Top Ups**

This area shows a net cost for 17/18 of £2.427m which included top ups in resource bases, maintained schools, academies out of borough and post 16. There is also £247,000 contingency. A wholesale review of packages within this area is proposed. The review will include recommendations on how to manage future growth.

- **Exceptional Needs Funding**

This area shows a net cost for 17/18 of £150,000. A review of the exceptional needs funding process, decision making and impact is proposed.

9. Key to all of this work is ensuring that the ambition we have for our SEND pupils, highlighted in the SEND strategy, is met. An accurate self-assessment of our work with SEND children and young people which includes an analysis of outcomes for this cohort of pupils is in draft and will shortly be circulated to key partners for their comments and inclusions.
10. A separate piece of work ensuring that we understand the historical and forecasted needs of this cohort will enable us to map their needs against current provision and enable us to review current and new commissioning decisions.
11. In summary, the SEND strategy sets out our ambition for pupils with SEND. Through analysis of our cohort data and their outcomes we can define the provision needs we have in Wokingham. This can then be tested against our current resources creating a gap analysis and from there we can build our commissioning decisions.

**Jane Winterbone**

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