

## HEADLINES FROM THE SCHOOLS' FUNDING FORUM (SFF) 19 May 2023

<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Minutes and matters arising</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance Control Mechanism (BCM) for Maintained Schools: LA confirmed the “lighter touch” BCM process was still being followed and a summary of outcomes will be shared with delegated funding formula sub-group for review.</li> <li>• Maintained Schools &amp; use of Amazon Business Accounts: Internal Audit have confirmed the Amazon business accounts are not considered to be credit arrangements but that should continue to be used with caution and schools are expected to follow their normal purchasing procedures.</li> </ul>	
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Verbal update on changes to key responsibilities within the Local Authority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There have been changes in the responsibilities of the Directors for Integrated Children Services and Education and Special Educational Needs &amp; Disability. Education and Special Education Needs will now both fall under the responsibility of Christine McInnes.</li> <li>• There have also been changes to the senior management structure of Special Educational Needs. Changes will be communicated to schools.</li> </ul>	
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Update on Safety Valve</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Safety Valve Agreement has been published by the DFE <a href="https://publishing.service.gov.uk">Dedicated Schools Grant 'Safety Valve' Agreement: Kent 2022-2023 (publishing.service.gov.uk)</a></li> <li>• Local Authority's with the largest deficits have been invited to take part in the Safety Valve Programme run by the DFE: which provides both advice and financial support.</li> <li>• Kent's total Dedicated Schools Grant deficit stood at around £100m at the end March 2022, with initial forecasts of an in-year overspend on the high needs block in 22-23 of around £45m, bring the total deficit up to nearly £150m by March 2023. Without action, this financial position would continue to worsen.</li> <li>• Kent's agreement with the DFE has secured an additional £140m from the DFE. The Local Authority will also be making contributions towards the forecast accumulated deficit of up to £80m over the next 5 years whilst plans are implemented to return to an in-year breakeven position by March 2028. The School's Block transfer is also allowed to continue during this period subject to Secretary of State Approval.</li> <li>• The combined contributions from the DFE and Local Authority will help to avoid a “cliff edge” and cuts to SEN services to fund the historic deficit. However his funding is contingent on managing its high needs demands annually within budget by 2028.</li> <li>• Mr Love, Cabinet Member for Education &amp; SEND, reassured members that relationships with Kent PACT are strong and positive and he has had a number of meetings recently with their lead trustee. He confirmed that they are an important and valued partner and they remain so and there are no difficulties with our relationship.</li> <li>• For the Safety Valve there is a Programme Board, Programme Manager, and Operational Boards in place with a programme management structure. There are also strong links into the Accelerated Progress Plan.</li> </ul>	
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>General Update on Outturn and DSG</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The year end position on the Dedicated Schools Grant will be reported to Cabinet in June. Further details will be circulated in due course.</li> </ul>	
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>CATIE strategy update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Countywide Approaches to Inclusive Education has been updated and is currently being recommended as a formal strategy of the council. A presentation on the updates and background can be found <a href="#">here</a> and this draft document can be found</li> </ul>	

	<p><a href="#">here</a>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The future use of Childrens Centres, particularly on school sites, is being considered as part of the recent consultation and feedback and the future family hub model.</li> <li>• There continues to be challenges around variations between schools on their SEND practice. The CATIE is looking to help address this.</li> <li>• EHCPs should be for children with the most complex needs and that we need to ensure the places are available for them. However we must also continue to enquire and challenge ourselves on how and why our number of EHCPs is 20% above the national average.</li> <li>• It is important to celebrate the good work of mainstream headteachers in supporting children with SEN and this will be an important pillar of the communication plan for the delivery Safety Valve.</li> </ul>	
7.	<p><b>Headteacher Briefings and High Needs subgroup meeting updates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chair of the High Needs Subgroup presented at the last Headteacher briefings explaining the role and purpose of the group. Headteachers are aware of the financial position of the Council but have raised some concerns about the systems and processes in place.</li> <li>• The High Needs subgroup had received an update on High Needs locality work, Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs), and the Special Schools Review as well as an update on the Early Years review which includes a number of deep dives.</li> </ul>	
8.	<p><b>Services provided to schools including consultation on increasing threshold for maintenance (<a href="#">here</a>)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The authority is continuing to review the services it provides to schools considering changes in government guidance and funding arrangements.</li> <li>• There will be a future consultation with Maintained Schools to review the current thresholds for the responsibility of meeting the costs of repairs and maintenance between the Local Authority and Maintained Schools.</li> </ul>	
9.	<p><b>Update on Early Years Funding (<a href="#">here</a>)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government headlines regarding Early Year changes included a further increase to the funding rates for 2, 3 and 4-year old free entitlement from September 2023. The Local Authority is awaiting further details.</li> <li>• The Local Authority is also planning a consultation on possible changes to the deprivation funding rate supplement for the 3- &amp; 4-year old free entitlement in the Autumn term. Any changes will not come into effect until April 2024 at earliest.</li> </ul>	
10.	<p><b>Outcome of the National Funding Formula (NFF) implementation consultation (<a href="#">here</a>)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Government is planning to complete its intention to move all primary and secondary schools' budgets to a single national funding formula by 2027-28.</li> <li>• The DFE have confirmed changes to the split site funding formula factor along with possible further changes to both the growth and falling rolls funding from April 2024. LA will be notified in July.</li> <li>• The DFE will continue to allow block transfers from the Schools (primary &amp; secondary school budgets) to the High Needs block, but they will look to limit how school budgets can be reduced to fund this.</li> </ul>	