

FINANCE WORK GROUP REPORT TO FORUM FOR PRESENTATION AT FORUM ON 23rd May 2024



Date of Work Group meeting: Tuesday April 30th 2024

Items discussed (brief summary of key items):

Minutes and matters arising. The minutes of 12th September 2023 were approved. Verity Dixon will ask to circulate statistics on local and national LEA DSG deficits which recently went to Chief Executive.

2023-24 DSG Financial Monitoring Statements (Verity Dixon, Ian Murray). It was not possible to publish final out turn figures for DSG and SEND for 2023-24, as these need to go to full council. The expected accumulated deficit is now £20m, once approved the figures will be made available and should be ready for Finance WG in June.

Independent School and College payments (Steve Fenton). As Steve Fenton was not available these figures could not be published. They will be available for the June meeting.

Capital Works Update – Laura Watson.

Headline figure is £32m total investment in schools over 3 years.

- School improvement programme basic needs is available to all schools including academies, mainstream sufficiency places in response to Ann Pearson's school organisation plan.
- LW updated that they are looking at secondary places at the moment and primary needs are now completed. Completed accommodation for Cheswick Green and just completed Alderbrook.
- The Heights has now opened, hope to see benefit of that in other figures received.
- LW advised they have been invited to resubmit their bid for a free school and will know outcome in late May. Capital funding has been allocated to bring design forward in case bid is not accepted.
- School maintenance programme £3m only for maintained schools. Draft programme of schools approved by cabinet in December. Those schools have been contacted, working towards delivery this year.
- Previous stock condition survey for maintained schools were done in house but now external contractors will do surveys. Those results are filtering through now.
- CDC2 condition surveys that DfE are undertaking separately, is now informing amount of funding that is received for each body.
- DL asked about schools contributing certain percentage to improvements. LW confirmed yes, it is usually 2 years' worth of DSC.
- LW confirmed contributions to LA from housebuilders. The team are designing 2fe exemplar primary schools.
- DL asked about childcare expansions capital fund. LW confirmed this area was owned by Ann Pearson and Lisa Morris. When schools and private nursery come forward, they will be evaluating their proposals and allocating to the most appropriate need. In terms of capital of approximately £400K, there is a defined split between EY and wrap- around care.
- DL asked about bringing the new School Asset Management Plan to this group in future. LW advised they are hoping to have ready for Cabinet meeting in July and will circulate to this group for comment.

Procurement Update- Laura Russell Laura Russell arranged to attend in Chris Lowe's place but sent apologies. Her update is: -

- Chris Lowe has now retired; we are currently recruiting for his replacement and as soon as we have someone in post we will confirm with all key stakeholders.
- The schools' contract register is currently being updated, an update on upcoming projects will be shared at the next forum

A.O.B DL shared AF's item from Clare Smith at Tudor Grange Solihull around money received by schools for SEND in notional budget. The delay in allocation of monies and receipt by schools was discussed at the previous Forum meeting and CS asked if we would get an update at the next meeting on 23rd May. VD replied she could not respond on behalf of heads of service but will advise Tim Browne of the expectation. She also reiterated that they are fully and fundamentally reviewing the way in which they are forecasting the expenditure around children with SEND, including notional budget and that allocation of funding for children. Finance are pushing for the same information quicker and if the information is quicker, payments can be made quicker.