

**Schools Forum**

**Date; 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2024**

**High Needs Funding Working Group - Update**

**1. Purpose of report**

1.1 To provide an overview of the work undertaken by the High Needs Funding Working Group.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 To note the work of the High Needs Funding Working Group to date; and

2.2 To appoint a secondary representative to the Working Group.

**3. Background**

3.1 At its meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2024, the Schools Forum established a High Needs Funding Working Group.

3.2 The initial meeting of the working group took place on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2024 to examine the Dedicated Schools Grant, establish the terms of reference, and set a timetable of dates.

3.3 The draft initiation document was later approved at the Schools Forum on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2024 (appendix 1).

3.4 Since being approved, Elyse Phillips replaced Christine Frazer as the special schools representative. The vacancy for a secondary representative has not been filled.

3.5 The Group met again on 12<sup>th</sup> July, 2024 to review data produced by the Council, for the high needs block funding and discussed how to manage the deficit budget and high demand for EHCPs, particularly in Early Years.

3.6 Discussions included the over-recognition of EHCPs in early years, higher top-up rates in Walsall compared to other authorities, and the need to reassess funding allocations to meet demand effectively.



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- 3.7 The group agreed on the importance of keeping more children in Walsall with suitable funding and support, and discussed the possibility of establishing a panel to discuss requests for special school placements.
- 3.8 Specialist support provision was noted as working well, with efforts to transition children into mainstream settings as soon as appropriate.
- 3.9 The Working Group is scheduled to meet on 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2024 to review data and develop a strategic plan. A verbal update on this meeting will be provided at Schools Forum on 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2024.

## **4. Members eligible to vote**

- 4.1 All elected members with voting rights are eligible to vote on this matter.

### **Neil Picken**

Principal Democratic Services Officer

T: 01922 654369

E: [Neil.picken@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:Neil.picken@walsall.gov.uk)