Present -

Members:  
*Special schools*
Kt Khan, Headteacher

*Primary schools*
Mary Walker, governor
Caroline Tyson, Headteacher
Asarena Simon, Headteacher
Stephen Hall, Headteacher

*Nursery schools*
Ben Hasan, headteacher

*Pupil Referral Unit*
Richard Brown, headteacher

*Non-schools members:*
Sandra Hall, staff

Observers: None.

Local authority: Anne Canning, Director of CACH
Ophelia Carter, Head of Schools Finance
Jackie Moylan, Director of Finance (Children, Adults and Community Health)
Andrew Lee, Assistant Director of Education Services
Leah Begley, Clerk to the Forum

1. **Welcome/Apologies for absence**
   1.1. The Chair thanked members for attending. Andrew Baisley unfortunately cannot attend.
   1.2. Apologies for absence were received from David Lowry, Linnia Khemdoudi, Peter Hughes, Rita Krishna, Simon Biggs, Jane Heffernan, Cathy Murphy, Cllr Antoinette Bramble and Frank O’Donoghue. Lisa Neidich gave apologies after the meeting had ended.
   1.3. Noted Kristofer McGhee was not in attendance and did not send his apologies.

2. **Declarations of interest**
   2.1. There were no declaration of interests noted.

3. **Approval of minutes of the meeting of the Schools Forum held on 7 February 2018**
   **Matters Arising (Schools Forum Action Log)**
   3.1. Stephen Hall added as attending the meeting and wording in 3.1 amended.
   3.2. Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.
   3.3. **Free school meals** – report to be provided to members in November 2018.
   3.4. **30 hour free child care** - report will be presented to forum members in June 2018.
3.5. **High Needs – Agreement of Schools Budgets** – members noted that the data referred to would be included in the report provided to members in June 2018.

3.6. Noted information on proportion of spend invested in mainstream compared to special schools would also be included in the report for members in June 2018.

3.7. **Early Years NFF** – information on how many settings are enrolling 2 year olds will be provided in the report provided in June 2018.

3.8. **Consultations Update** – an update on the SEND consultation response will be provided to members in today’s meeting and if a further update is available, including in the High Needs report in June.

3.9. **Traded Services Update** - due to absences, the meeting regarding traded services funding had not yet taken place. Members asked the Chair to also query performance monitoring of the quality of traded services and how this is evaluated.

**Action: The Chair**

**For Information:**

4. **High Needs Funding Update**

4.1. This item was intended for Forum to be more informed to make decisions going forward.

4.2. A letter dated 28 March circulated to members noted the outcome of the SEND Funding consultation. A report was presented to Cabinet on the 19 March which detailed the consultation responses and the recommendations were agreed, to not proceed with the proposed changes. Therefore it was agreed to undertake a wider co-productive process with stakeholders, parents/carers and young people. Currently, work is ongoing to consider how the process will proceed; discussions will take place with relevant members and an external co-production agency. The desired outcome will be to form a task and finish group comprising of officers, stakeholders, parents/carers and young people etc. to consider proposals on how to address funding issues and be able to feedback their views. The process of agreeing the final funding proposal will be via HLT’s Senior Leadership Team and the usual political sign off, and Forum members will be updated once any decisions are made.

4.3. Noted the adjustment of the current resource levels of 5% was not a cut to the SEN budget, but a reduction in element 3 resources levels as reported to Forum in November 2017. The reduction would apply to new EHCP’s and will be considered at the annual review stage of the process for existing plans. All areas of service provision are having to operate as efficiently as possible and the pursuit of efficiencies in how provision is made is preferable to cutting provision.

4.4. Discussions were nearing an end with Special School's regarding funding and a settlement of new funding rates should be reached imminently.

4.5. The Chair asked members for questions/comments:

4.6. Members queried what the 5% reduction on element 3 equated to. Noted this was dependent on the setting and resource level, plus the combination of elements 2 and 3. However, this can range from £300 for some schools to thousands for a larger secondary school. Information to be shared at the next meeting. **Action: AL**

4.7. Members highlighted the issue of the cost of support staff which is uncertain and potentially facing a rise in pay; plus the impact on primary schools when considering the reduction in element 3 resource levels. It was clarified that for children with EHCP’s, resource levels will be reviewed at the annual review stage. For children coming into the process, the new resource levels will apply immediately.

4.8. It was questioned whether officers within the SEND service were concerned with the effective approval of EHCP’s. Confirmed this was not of concern, the methodology, threshold or panel process had not changed. Also the numbers of children with EHCP’s continues to rise, as is the number of students with significant needs, whose needs cannot be met within maintained schools (and sometimes special schools) is on a significant rise nationally.
4.9. The service also continues to be challenged by independent settings who state they cannot meet needs of children and young people as more funding is required. Noted independent settings were under the same pressures as maintained settings as costs have increased on e.g. staffing, building costs etc.

4.10. The Chair stated as a Forum, it has been said clearly that HLT should do their upmost to reduce funding going out of the borough and Forum members should continue to pursue this, however alongside this, members must also understand the pressure officer’s face. The meeting noted that it was evident throughout HLT reports and plans that work is underway to address this issue, however it was noted that the impact of this would not be immediately evident.

4.11. Members queried if out of borough costs are increasing. Officers confirmed, yes this was the case, alongside the fact there was no extra funding is available. The Chair advised members that having scrutinised the evidence officers present, and either accept or not the case HLT cannot do no more than it currently is now, but has longer term strategic plans in place to address the issue long term.

4.12. Officers noted a positive impact can be made however a resolution will not be sought until more funding is received from the Government.

4.13. One of the positive aspects was the Capital Grant Funding to increase provision within the borough, although in context, the grant totalled £1.6m therefore not significant to contribute to the rising costs of SEND. A consultation process was undertaken and so far proposals to consider the business case for increased post 16 ASD provision at the Garden School and SEMH provision through an additional free school had been included. Noted the funding had not yet been received and further information will be published on the Local Offer as proposals develop.

4.14. Members queried the co-production process regarding the new SEND funding model and how the working group will be established. Officers intended to contact various stakeholders through meetings, such as HASGA, Heads Briefing etc., making contact with the student council, SENCo’s, Headteachers, Hackney Independent Parent Forum, Interlink and Turkish parental representatives and ask them if they would like to take part. It was hoped the group would be in place by June 2018 to provide a post direction of travel.

4.15. Members noted the principles of the group were positive however queried whether key experts would be involved in the process, alongside people actually involved in the process. Offices confirmed this could be considered, whether a practical or theoretical expert or the working equivalent in another borough. Agreed the value of having outside expertise gives credibility however need to ensure the group is manageable and has a strong steer to come to an agreed consensus.

4.16. Members queried the potential legacy of carrying forward the deficit, or whether the council have stated HLT cannot set a deficit budget. Officers clarified HLT are a part of the council and the cost pressure cannot be met within the DSG allocation or the SEND service. Currently this was being met from reserves. The cost pressure was due to lack of funding from the Government keeping pace with the increase in plans. Noted this was a national issue across councils, not a Hackney one. High needs is not funded on a per pupil basis and since the reforms, EHCP’s have increased by over 30% with no increase in funding. Officers noted that if cuts were imposed in provision, or indeed other services, there is significant push back and opposition from all parties, the level of scrutiny is intense and it affects the relationship between the Council and community. Above all, HLT has to continually meet the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities therefore cannot cease support.

4.17. Members noted the difficulties of the current funding situation faced by the local authority.

5. Further meetings

5.1. The following meeting dates were noted by members:

- 20/06/18
6. Any other business

6.1. None.

6.2. No confidential items were noted.