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| **AGENDA ITEM 5** |

**Title of report: SEN Funding 2021/22**

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**Details on who has been consulted with on this paper to date:**

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| **Executive Summary.**  This report details the number of funded places and the levels of top ups provided and proposed future developments. |

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| **Recommendations.**  Forum is asked to:   1. Note the number of High Needs Place for Special Provision for 2021/22 2. Note minor revisions to top ups rates (rounding) for 2021/22 3. Agree to the setting up High Needs working group with and nominate membership. 4. Agree timeline for producing High Needs Recovery plan |

1. **Background.**

**The costs to the high needs block continue to be a pressure for all Local Authorities. Whilst significant increases in the allocation for Tower Hamlets has supported the position for 2020/21, the bought forward DSG deficit of £11.8m at the end of 2019/20 will need to be addressed over the coming years. An updated full recovery plan will need to be developed, working with all Schools with the assistance of the Schools Forum**

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## 2021/22 High Needs Places

The number of high needs places at both Special Schools and mainstream resource bases are attached. Provision continues to be developed to support increasing need with additional places at Phoenix and Bowden House Special School as well as proposed new base provision at Ben Johnson and Hermitage School.

Increases in Bowden House and the new provision at Ben Johnson School will support delivery of SEMH places for Primary age pupils where Cherry Trees schools reducing roll has left the school in an unsustainable financial position. Both new provisions will benefit from the significant experience of the current school staff as well as opportunities and economies of scale being part of a larger school will bring.

The proposed provision at Hermitage school will support the increased demand for ASD provision with mainstream opportunities

Places at Special Provision are funded at a base budget of £10,000 for Special Schools and £6,000 for occupied places in resource bases, pupils then receive “top up” to reflect the full cost of the provision.

## Top up Rates 2021/22

Top up Rates for 2021/22 for both mainstream and Special provision have been set at similar rates to 2020/21 with just minor changes to give rounded numbers for ease of calculation for both the council and the providers. These are attached.

It is the intention that these rates and the number of places available within Tower Hamlets will be reviewed over the financial year to ensure future sustainability and availability of local provision.

## High Needs Working Group

There are a number of pieces of work that we believe would benefit from some more targeted support and input from the Schools to support the work of the Schools forum. Whilst the preferred make up would be from current members of the Schools forum if volunteers are not available, we could go out to the wider schools’ community.

The Tower Hamlets High needs recovery plan that was previously agreed with the DfE in February 2020 will require a significant refresh to ensure that it reflects current levels of funding and need. Review of provision and top up rates as detailed above should have a level of scrutiny from the sector to ensure schools have confidence and clarity on the use of high needs funding and the different statutory and discretionary services that have been provided.

Forum agreed that the headroom funding in the school’s block after applying the 2% MFG would be transferred to the high needs block, but ringfenced to target those schools that are highly inclusive but with lower notional SEN funding. The intention is that a formula would be developed to recognise those schools to distribute this funding. The working group would consider potential proposals before presenting to full forum.

As with all funding finite resources mean that sometimes difficult decisions on the best use of these resources will be required, a cross sector specialist forum group would support the council in presenting options on future decisions.

The recommended School representative would be:

2 Primary Schools without a base

1 Primary School with a base

1 Secondary School without a base

1 Secondary School with a Base

2 Special Schools

The Council would be represented by colleagues from Education and Finance.

1. **Timeline for High Needs Recovery Plan**

It is recommended that the full High Needs recovery plan come to Forum in September, which if agreed will give the working group the opportunity to meet several times over the summer term and support the council in developing a comprehensive and realistic recovery plan and timeline.

An Interim update be provided in June’s Forum to update the forum of either the workstreams of the Working group or the Council internal group if a specialist group is not agreed

Link to DfE recovery details.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dedicated-schools-grant-dsg-deficit-management-plan>