**Questions for James and Catherine re Home Ed concerns**

**March 2024**

1. Budget – The budget that has been shared with P Arrowsmith appears to be in a significant deficit, with an in-year overspend of around £200-250,000 each year for several years. Despite repeated requests, nobody from the LA has fully answered Mr Arrowsmith’s questions about this overspend. On inspection, it appears that the base budget has not been included in the rest of the HCES budget, and it appears on paper that this base budget has not always been passed on in full to HCES.
* Can the LA confirm that the previously-allocated base budget of £450k will remain in place when the service amalgamates with WHS, with any additional income HCES generates being surplus and not clawed back, except via LA-wide agreed claw back rules that apply to all other schools?
* Can the LA also confirm that any future uplifts to this budget will be passed on as normal?

1. Head of Service – The current Head of HCES is on a secondment from another role within the LA. We believe that this secondment is due to end at some point on or before September 2025.
* Can the LA confirm its plans for the current Head of Service position?
* Is this a position that will be vacant before, or from, September 2025?
* If so, will the vacancy be filled by Wirral LA, or will there be a requirement for WHS to advertise and fill this role from September 2025?
1. SEND Team – Wirral’s SEND team are increasingly viewing HCES as a long-term destination that is a viable alternative to a special school. Consequently, around 50% of the students now have EHCPs, with some of those single rolled to HCES. As a service, HCES is not funded adequately to manage this number of children, and their complex needs. For example, HCES does not have a SENCO, nor does it appear to have the budget capacity to employ one.
* What is the LA’s long-term plan in relation to the use of HCES for children with an EHCP but who no clear destination?
* Also, what role does the LA expect HCES to have in helping children who have been out of education and subsequently allocated an EHCP to make a transition to their long-term provision?
1. LA Section 19 Duty – It is a statutory duty upon the LA to provide education for **all** students who are out of school for 15 days and would otherwise not be accessing suitable education provision.
* Can the LA confirm that HCES, and the new WMNES, will only ever have responsibility for those students with medical needs, i.e. no role for permanently excluded students, or those who come under other aspects of the LA’s Section 19 duty?
1. Staffing – There is currently no uniformity to the way HCES staff are employed and contracted. The disparity between staff is a source of significant conflict, both between staff and towards the management.
* Can the LA confirm that they will carry out a full staffing review of HCES prior to September 2025, including taking on the responsibility for any redundancy/settlement payments as a result of this review?
* Can the LA also confirm that it is the intention of any such review to arrive at a staffing structure that includes a far greater reliance on permanent staff and a reduction in reliance on non-contracted staff?
* Finally, can the LA confirm that all HCES teaching staff will be contracted under the terms of the STPCD?