

Wiltshire Council

Schools Funding Working Group & SEN Working Group - 10th January 2022

Schools Forum - 20th January 2022

DEDICATED SCHOOLS BUDGET – CENTRAL SCHOOLS SERVICES BLOCK UPDATE 2022-23

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Schools Forum on issues relating to the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) budget for 2022-23 financial year and the decisions that will need to be made as part of the budget setting process.
2. Schools Forum will recall the budget proposal was approved in principle at the December 2021 meeting and the only change since this is the actual charge for copyright licences has been received from the DfE.

Main Considerations

3. As outlined in the funding settlement paper the DfE has allocated a CSSB allocation of £2.604 million for Wiltshire. This has been calculated using the national funding formula for the CSSB which applies a unit value of £35.96 to the pupil numbers from the October 2021 census. Funding for agreed historic commitments for 2022-23 is then added to the amount of funding generated by the formula to give the overall total CSSB.
4. Schools Forum will recall allocations were published earlier than usual in July 2021 and as a result a report was presented, and this budget was agreed in principle at the December 2021 meeting.

Protection and Funding Changes

5. Schools Forum will remember that the DfE have been reducing historic commitments. Wiltshire has been allocated £0.293m for historic commitments based on those commitments agreed as eligible in 2021-22 reduced by 20% of £0.074m. The DfE apply a maximum per pupil reduction in funding for ongoing responsibilities of -2.5%. Permitted gains are capped at 5.56% for 2022-23.

Function of the CSSB

6. The CSSB allocates funding to the LA to carry out central functions on behalf of pupils of maintained schools and academies. Funding includes:
 - funding previously allocated through the retained duties element of the Education Services Grant (ESG)
 - funding for ongoing central functions, such as admissions, previously top-sliced from the schools block
 - residual funding for historic commitments, previously top-sliced from the schools block
7. The duties included within the CSSB are listed in Appendix 1 to this report.
8. Additional pension funding that local authorities have claimed for centrally employed teachers are now rolled into the ongoing responsibilities element of the CSSB. This funding has been added as a per-pupil amount to the relevant local authority's per-pupil rate.
9. The decisions that Schools Forum is required to make in relation to the central schools block are listed below. These are in relation to the duties that local authorities have towards all schools.

10. Schools Forum approval is required on a line by line basis for this group of services which are funded from central schools block. The tables show each line, the 2021-22 base and the proposed 2022-23 budget.

Approval required & legislative narrative	Services covered	2021-22 Budget £M	Wiltshire Budget Proposal 2022-23 £M
<p>Section A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools Forum approval is not required (although they should be consulted) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Central Copyright Licences for 2022-23 for Wiltshire as set by the DfE. 	£0.395m	£0.409m*
<p>Section B</p> <p>Schools Forum approval is required on a line-by-line basis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> back pay for equal pay claims remission of boarding fees at maintained schools and academies places in independent schools for non-SEN pupils admissions servicing of Schools Forum contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for all schools contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for maintained schools (voted on by relevant maintained school members of the Forum only) 	<p>The limitation on increases to centrally held spend has been removed from the budgets for admissions and servicing of Schools Forums. It is therefore proposed to apply salary inflation to the budget for the central teams and address the safeguarding and admission pressures. This is affordable within the overall CSSB allocation.</p> <p>Services previously funded by the retained rate of the ESG**:</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Welfare Service 		£0.199	£0.203
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset Management 		£0.186	£0.189
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory / Regulatory Duties 		£0.669	£0.682
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Admissions 		£0.438	£0.447
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Servicing of Schools Forum 		£0.003	£0.003

*the actual amount for copyright licences is calculated by the DfE a 24% increase on 21-22 FY.

** Pay inflation has been added at 2.00% - this can be reviewed as national discussions continue.

Centrally Retained Teachers additional pension costs

Introduced in 2021-22 financial year	£0.110M
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Section C – Historic Commitments

11. In 2017-18 the DfE provided supplementary guidance on the funding and reporting of historic commitments within central DSG. The guidance also detailed the evidence that Schools Forum required on each item in order to approve the spend:
 - **Minutes from the Schools Forum prior to 1st April 2013** – Schools Forum should have agreed the commitment prior to 2013
 - **Proof that the commitment extended at least as far as the 2018-19 financial year.** Evidence can include reports which indicated an end date in to 2018-19 or beyond, or where the commitment has no specific end date.
 - **Where budgets relate to non-staffing costs, there must be a contractual commitment** (such as a PFI agreement or lease agreement) which extends into the relevant financial year.
 - **Schools Forum papers and minutes that show that approval has been granted for the financial year.** The Forum is expected to approve each spending line annually. It is important that Schools Forums have sufficient information to be able to make an informed decision.
12. Having considered the guidance and the available evidence, the commitments agreed by Schools Forum for 2018-19 and therefore funded within the CSSB allocation for 2022-23 are as per the table overleaf. The reduction has been taken from the contribution to CERA in order that vulnerable pupils funding is prioritised.
13. The overall total is within the £0.293m allocated for historic commitments.
14. Schools Forum should consider the DfE's intention to reduce the historic funding over time in this and future years' funding decisions.

Approval required & legislative narrative	Services covered	2021-22 Budget £M	Wiltshire Budget Proposal 2022-23 £M
<p>Section C</p> <p>Historic Commitments:</p> <p>Schools Forum approval is required on a line-by-line basis. The budget cannot exceed the value agreed in the previous funding period and no new commitments can be entered into</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> capital expenditure funded from revenue – projects must have been planned and decided on prior to April 2013 so no new projects can be charged contribution to combined budgets – this is where the Schools Forum agreed prior to April 2013 a contribution from the schools budget to services which would otherwise be funded from other sources existing termination of employment costs (costs for specific individuals must have been approved prior to April 2013 so no new redundancy costs can be charged) Prudential borrowing costs – the commitment must have been approved prior to April 2013 	<p>Funding for LAC Personal Education Plans - Schools Forum decision December 2007 to support PEPs for Looked After Children from 2008/09 financial year as required under "Care Matters". Allocation based on original estimate of £500 per LAC and managed by Virtual Head Teacher. PPG Plus now also supports PEPs <i>and so this funding was reduced to £103,000 in 2018/19 – no change is requested by the Virtual School.</i></p>	0.103	0.103 <i>Meets definition And required evidence is available</i>
	<p>Child Protection in Schools Adviser - Schools Forum decision January 2006 to support staff within Children's Services to provide support and advice to schools enabling them to meet their statutory responsibilities.</p>	0.056	0.058 <i>Meets definition And required evidence is available</i>
	<p>Prudential Borrowing Schools Forum decision to support approx. £3m capital financing for 13-year period</p>	0.208	0.133 <i>Meets definition And required evidence is available</i>
Total		0.367	0.294
Balance unallocated and available to transfer to the HNB		0.270	0.227

15. Local authorities can fund services previously funded from the general funding rate of the ESG (for maintained schools only) from maintained school budget shares, with the agreement of maintained school members of the Schools Forum.
16. The relevant maintained schools members of the Schools Forum (primary, secondary, special and pupil referral units (PRUs), should agree the amount the local authority will retain.
 - If the local authority and Schools Forum are unable to reach a consensus on the amount to be retained by the local authority, the matter can be referred to the Secretary of State.
17. Local authorities should set a single rate per 5 to 16-year-old pupil for all mainstream maintained schools, both primary and secondary; in the interests of simplicity, this should be deducted from basic entitlement funding.
18. Many Schools Forums have agreed a top slice of schools funding to meet this shortfall. Wiltshire's schools have benefitted from taken the decision to treat the reduction in ESG funding as part of the general austerity reductions when setting the Council's medium-term financial plan. This has allowed the Council to fund business plan objectives and local priorities. The Council has deliberately selected to offer a level of protection for our school effectiveness services and have managed to avoid seeking approval from Schools Forum to date.
19. Assuming the proposed budget is accepted by Schools Forum, an amount of £0.227m unallocated CSSB is estimated to transfer to fund high needs pressures.

DfE Consultation in Progress – Removal of the School Improvement Monitoring & Brokering Grant

20. The DfE launched a consultation proposing the removal of the local authority grant on 29th October 2021 with a response date of 26th November 2021.
21. Schools Forum working group held an extraordinary meeting to prepare a Schools Forum response. This has been shared with chairs of WASSH and PHF and members encouraged to respond. The proposals have been the subject of much discussion and lobby groups including the f40 have submitted responses. There are concerns around the removal of this grant at this post pandemic time having a detrimental impact on attainment focus and financial recovery and being incongruous to prevention and support meaning that formal intervention powers are avoided, and pupil outcomes prioritised.
22. The DfE proposal is for local authorities to de-delegate these services at 50% reduced grant for 2022-23 and complete removal for future years. The DfE findings to their consultation are yet to be published.
23. Following a separate local consultation around de-delegation, at Schools Forum in December, a consensus could not be reached and local consultation and further information provision for school leaders and governors is scheduled to take place on 6th and 7th January 2022 with decision making postponed until the January 2022 meeting. Support for de-delegation was 86% in the Autumn consultation, 100% in session 1 and 86.6% in session 2. Full consultation feedback and the question and answers sessions will be shared as part of a separate report on this agenda.

24. There are no proposals to fund services for maintained schools only contained within this report however, there is a separate report where members will consider de-delegation for these services.

Proposals

1. Schools Forum is asked to note the change to the copyright licence cost for 21-22 and reduction in the contribution to the high needs block in the report and the required decisions in relation to the central schools block budget for 2022-23. These will be considered fully in the decisions paper.
 - i. Section A – central copyright licences - consult only
 - ii. Section B – central functions - approve on a line-by-line basis
 - iii. Section C – historic commitments - approve on a line-by-line basis
 - Including the transfer of surplus CSSB grant to support the high needs block
2. That the future arrangements around school improvement brokerage and monitoring grant are discussed in the separate report on today's agenda on this and are subject to the DfE's official response, anticipated early January and not available at the time of writing this report.

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