

Blackpool Council

5 April 2024

To: All Members of the Schools Forum

The above members are requested to attend the:

SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 16 April 2024 at 9.15 am
in @the Grange, Bathurst Avenue

A G E N D A

1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to declare any interests in the items under consideration and in doing so state:

(1) the type of interest concerned either a

- (a) personal interest
- (b) prejudicial interest
- (c) disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI)

and

(2) the nature of the interest concerned

If any member requires advice on declarations of interests, they are advised to contact the Head of Democratic Governance in advance of the meeting.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2024 (Pages 1 - 6)

To agree the minutes of the last meeting held on 16 January 2024 as a true and correct record.

4 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET MONITORING 2023/24 (Pages 7 - 10)

To report the budget position of the 2023-24 Dedicated Schools Grant as at 31 January

2024 and to report the amount of Dedicated Schools Grant Reserves Forecast as at 31 January 2024.

5 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET UPDATE 2024/25 (Pages 11 - 14)

To inform Schools Forum of changes to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget for 2024/25.

6 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE (Pages 15 - 16)

To provide an overview of recent developments within the local authority to the Forum.

7 SAFETY VALVE UPDATE (Pages 17 - 20)

To receive an update on the Safety Valve Programme.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note the date of next meeting as 18 June 2024 at 9.15am.

Venue information:

Ground meeting room (lift available), accessible toilets (ground floor), no-smoking building.

Other information:

For queries regarding this agenda please contact Lennox Beattie, Executive and Regulatory Manager, Tel: 01253 477157, e-mail lennox.beattie@blackpool.gov.uk

Copies of agendas and minutes of Council and committee meetings are available on the Council's website at www.blackpool.gov.uk.

Present:

Academy/Free School Representative

Roger Farley, Roseacre (ATC) – In the Chair
Caroline Boothroyd, Hawes Side
Simon Eccles, St Marys (BEBCMAT)
Abrar Hussain, Highfield (Star)
Jane McCumiskey (FCAT)
Matt McIver, St George's / Baines Endowed (Cidari)

Maintained Special School Representative

Neil Oldham, Highfurlong

Maintained Primary School Headteachers/representative

Jonathan Lucas, Layton
Claire Taylor, St Nicholas

Special Academy Representative:

Gill Hughes, Park School

Pupil Referral Unit

Victoria O'Farrell, Educational Diversity

Non-school members

John Philips, Post 16 Representative, Blackpool Sixth Form
Amanda Baines, Staff/Teacher associations
Charlotte Walker, Unison

Others

Lennox Beattie, Executive and Regulatory Manager
Daniel Burrough, Senior Accountant
Victoria Gent, Director of Children's Services
Darren Maddocks, Strategic Management Accountant.
Jeremy Mannino, Head of Service, Children's Services
Paul Turner, Assistant Director of Children's Services
Kim Wood, Childcare Sufficiency Manager

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 OCTOBER 2023

The Schools Forum considered the minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2023.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on 10 October 2023 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 16 JANUARY 2024

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2023

The Schools Forum considered the minutes of the special meeting held on 28 November 2023.

The Forum noted that Caroline Boothroyd, Hawes Side Academy, should be included on the list of attendees but otherwise the minutes were approved.

Resolved:

That, subject to the amendment listed above, the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2023 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

4 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET MONITORING

The Schools Forum received an update on the budget position of the 2023-24 Dedicated Schools Grant as at 30 November 2023 and Dedicated Schools Grant Reserves Forecast as at 30 November 2023 from Darren Maddocks, Strategic Accountant for Children's Services.

Mr Maddock highlighted to members of the Schools Forum the forecast underspend of £686,000 against a budgeted underspend of £690,000 for the Dedicated Schools Grant. While this represented a relatively positive position, Mr Maddock highlighted to members of the Forum the key year variances outlined in the report.

Mr Maddock outlined the Dedicated Schools Grant Reserves forecast for the 2023-24 Financial Year which had been indicated as a £686,000 surplus which along with the Safety Valve funding of £470,000 would reduce the brought forward deficit of £2.785m to £1.629m by 31 March 2024. It was noted that this figure excluded the maintained schools reserves of £3.648m.

The Forum noted the Dedicated Schools Grant budget position and Dedicated Schools Grant reserves position at 30 November 2023.

5 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

The Schools Forum received a brief update on recent developments within the local authority from Mr Paul Turner, Assistant Director. The Forum noted the current performance and developments within the Blackpool schools system including updates on staffing, Ofsted inspections and local educational development.

The Forum asked for details of permanent exclusions by school and category. It noted that almost all were from the secondary sector and considered that it may be useful to undertake a further piece of work on transition to secondary especially for those children who had required additional support at primary age. The Forum noted that a large number of permanent exclusions came from South Shore Academy and suggested that these secondary headteachers group could further consider how to share good practice in avoiding exclusions.

The Forum noted that Paul Turner was soon to leave the Council and expressed its thanks to Paul in his role and wished him the best for the future. The Forum noted that Jeremy Mannino would be acting up to the vacant position as an interim step until permanent

MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 16 JANUARY 2024

arrangements could be made. In turn Helen Piggott would act as Head of School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion and Jane Shepherd would act as the Head of Virtual School.

6 SAFETY VALVE UPDATE

Paul Turner, Assistant Director, informed the Schools Forum of the latest developments in the Safety Valve programme, including progress against the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Management Plan.

Paul Turner reminded members of the financial pressures on its High Needs Budget which had led Blackpool, as one of the Council areas with the highest percentage Dedicated Schools Grant deficit, to be eligible for the Safety Valve programme. The programme required Councils to develop plans for reform to their high needs systems and associated spending in exchange for capital funds to address unmet need and additional funding to clear the historic deficit. On the 16 March 2023, Blackpool's Safety Valve fund agreement was approved with the Council being successful in securing the full amount of funding requested of £3.76 million write off of the historic deficit and £6.153 million in capital funding towards three schemes.

Mr Turner explained that a funding condition, the Council had been required to return monitoring information to the Department for Education in June, September and December, and December's monitoring template had been attached to the agenda report for information.

Mr Turner emphasised that the monitoring reports showed that most conditions of the Safety Valve agreement are currently being met, with key performance indicator data showing achievement of the targets for 2023/24. The delay to the announcement of capital funding had led to an adjustment to the Capital Programme to align with capacity and timescale to deliver schemes, but officers were confident that this would have a negligible impact on the ability to meet the deficit recovery targets.

Resolved:

To note the update relating to the Safety Valve programme and the Dedicated Schools Grant Management Plan.

7 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET 2024/25

Mr Darren Maddocks, Strategic Management Accountant, shared with Schools Forum the proposals for the use of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2024/25.

Mr Maddocks outlined that the proposals were in line with the Dedicated Schools Grant and additionally the Local Authority proposed to add £200,000 (Mr Maddocks highlighted that this was an update on the figure included on the agenda report) from the Schools Block to the growth fund contingency, and also to make a transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, which amounts to £561,000. The net figure will be allocated to schools via the local school funding formula.

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The Forum was broadly supportive of the proposals for the Dedicated Schools Grant and offered no negative comments on the Council's approach to its allocation.

8 SCHOOLS FUNDING FORMULA 2024/25

Darren Maddocks, Strategic Management Accountant, presented the proposals for the Schools Funding Formula 2024/25.

Mr Maddocks reminded members of the principles agreed at the 10 October 2023 meeting namely: continued application of the National Funding Formula unit values, set a minimum funding guarantee of 0.5% per pupil, transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block and transfer of any surplus from the growth funding allocation into the growth funds surplus.

Following the last meeting Mr Maddock explained that on the 19 December 2023 the Department for Education (DfE) had announced allocations of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2024/25. Based on a Pupil Unit of Funding of £5,256 and a Secondary Unit of Funding of £7,203, together with pupil numbers taken from the October 2023 school census, Blackpool's Schools Block of funding is £112.228 million, which includes growth funding of £717k.

Mr Maddock highlighted that the Schools Forum had agreed at its October 2023 meeting to make a 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, and to do this by way of a reduction to the Basic Entitlement factor values. Mr Maddocks explained that 0.5% of the Schools Block would equate to £561,000.

Resolved:

To agree to the local authority's proposal for the allocation of school funding in 2024/25.

9 DE-DELEGATION OF SERVICES AND RETENTION OF FUNDING FOR EDUCATION FUNCTIONS 2024/25

Mr Darren Maddock, Strategic Management Accountant, presented a report seeking approval for the de-delegation of services and the retention of funding for Education Functions.

Mr Maddock explained that the Schools Finance Regulations from April 2013 required the delegation to schools of the entirety of the Schools Block funding, subject to certain prescribed exceptions. This meant for maintained schools had to vote to de-delegate services and had for a number of years in Blackpool de-delegated the following services: Free School Meals Eligibility Checks, Union Duties and School Improvement. This de-delegation had advantages in ensuring that the services continued and this model was also proposed in respect of education functions, previously funded by the Education Services Grant.

Members were broadly in support of the idea but while approving de-delegation expressed a view that a review of the outcomes of de-delegation and whether it achieved the desired outcomes should take place in the future through the headteachers group.

Resolved:

1. That the delegation is approved by maintained primary school representatives for 2024/25 in respect of Free School Meal (FSM) Eligibility Checks.
2. That the delegation is approved by maintained primary school representatives for 2024/25 in respect of Union Duties.
3. That the delegation is approved by maintained primary school representatives for 2024/25 in respect of School Improvement.
4. That Maintained school representatives, including primary, special and pupil referral unit members approved an amount to be retained from school budgets in respect of education functions, previously funded by the Education Services Grant.

EARLY YEARS EXPANSION CAPITAL GRANT

Mr Kim Wood, Childcare Sufficiency Manager, briefly updated the Schools Forum on the Government's current plans for the expansion of funded childcare.

Mr Wood reminded Forum members of the reform to childcare announced in the 2023 Spring Budget which would lead to a phased introduction of 30 hours of free childcare.

The Department for Education had announced it would be providing £100m of capital funding in 2023-24 to support local authorities in delivering the expansion of the 30-hour early years entitlement for working families and of wrap-around provision in primary schools. For the financial year 2024/25 Blackpool has been allocated £219,181 for Early Years expansion. Mr Wood explained that the funding would be provided for capital purposes only and could not be used for revenue expenditure of any kind.

Members of the Forum expressed concern at the low level of funding provided for such a transformation but did not think it was intended to act as a catalyst for other capital funding.

Mr Wood explained that the next steps would be that a capacity plan would be developed during early 2024. Further discussions would take place with a range of providers and subsequently expressions of interest would be evaluated.

11 EXPANSION OF WRAP AROUND CHILDCARE FOR PRIMARY AGE CHILDREN

Mr Kim Wood, Childcare Sufficiency Manager, presented a report to the Schools Forum which outlined the Government's current plans for the expansion of wrap-around childcare, and the current work in progress within Blackpool.

Mr Wood reminded Forum members that the wrap-around children had been announced in Spring 2023 budget as part of a range of childcare reforms. The proposal was intended to deliver the government's ambition that by 2026, all parents and carers of primary school-aged children who need it would be able to access term-time childcare in their local area from 8am - 6pm.

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Mr Wood outlined that in order to support this ambition, the government had announced that it will provide start-up funding over two academic years to support local authorities and providers in England to introduce or expand childcare provision on either side of the school day, which parents of primary school-aged children would be able to pay to access. Blackpool would benefit from £608,712 of funding which would be intended to fund the initial set-up or expansion of wrap-around provision where there was evidenced need or demand.

Mr Wood explained that school should already be surveyed to present take-up and demand. Wider information gathering including a parental survey would take place soon in early 2024. This would inform both a capacity plan to be submitted to the Department for Education in February 2024 and then a delivery plan to be submitted in May 2024.

The Schools Forum noted the present position.

12 EARLY YEARS FUNDING FORMULA

Mr Kim Wood, Childcare Sufficiency Manager, presented a report to the Schools Forum on the local authority's proposed funding formulas for Early Years education for 2024/25.

The report is attached for information to these minutes. Mr Wood explained that the Local Authority's proposal amended the funding formula to reflect the changes to government-funded childcare programmes. It was proposed that as in previous years 3.6% would be retained by the Council to cover central costs across all age groups. The Council would also continue to apply the existing deprivation formula for 3 and 4 year olds. Similar allocations for the Early Years Inclusion Fund and the Teachers Pay and Pension Grant were also included. The Council would also consult with Early Years providers prior to the formula being finalised in March 2024.

The Schools Forum endorsed the proposed Funding Formula as a suitable way forward.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Schools Forum noted the date of next meeting as Tuesday 5 March 2024.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 10.45am)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
Tyrone Wassell Democratic Governance Adviser
Tel: 01253477211
E-mail: tyrone.wassell@blackpool.gov.uk

Report to: **SCHOOLS FORUM**
Relevant Officer: Daniel Burrough, Senior Accountant
Date of Meeting: 16 April 2024

DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET MONITORING 2023-2024

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To report the budget position of the 2023-24 Dedicated Schools Grant as at 31 January 2024 - Appendix 4a.
- 1.2 To report the amount of Dedicated Schools Grant Reserves Forecast as at 31 January 2024 – Appendix 4b.
- 1.3 Action required:
 - For information

2.0 Recommendation:

- 2.1 To note contents of the report.

3.0 Background:

- 3.1 The Dedicated Schools Grant 2023-24 Budget Monitoring report at Appendix 4a highlights a forecast over spend of £54,000 against a budgeted under spend of £690k, so a £744k variance. This excludes any Safety Value receipts from the Department for Education.
- 3.2 The major in-year variances are as follows:

- Special School place funding due to commissioned places less than budgeted.
- Special School top up funding following a banding review.
- Pupil Referral Unit Top up relating to additional income from schools.
- Mainstream School Top Up due to increased demand.
- Post-16 Education due to commissioned places more than budgeted.
- Access and Inclusion due to continuum of provision being less than budgeted.

The position has deteriorated since the last report mainly as a result of a re-banding review in January 2024, back-dated to October 2023 This also potentially puts in jeopardy future Safety Valve funding so mitigations are currently being formulated to address the pressure.

3.3 Reserves

The statement of forecast reserves is set out at Appendix 4b to this report. Budget monitoring for the 2023-24 Financial Year is forecasting a £54,000 deficit, assuming Safety Valve funding of

£470,000 this will reduce the brought forward deficit of £ 2.785m to £ 2.369m by 31 March 2024. This excludes the maintained schools reserves of £3.648m.

4.0 List of Appendices

4.1 Appendix 4a - Dedicated Schools Grant 2023-2024 Budget Monitoring Report to 31 January 2024 .

Appendix 4b - Dedicated Schools Grant Reserves Forecast as at 31 January 2024 .

List of Acronyms :

DSG	-	Dedicated Schools Grant
LA	-	Local Authority
HNB	-	High Needs Block
SSA	-	Special Support Assistant
ESFA	-	Education and Skills Funding Agency
SERF	-	Special Education Referral Unit
PRU	-	Pupil Referral Unit

Appendix 4a - Dedicated Schools Grant 2023-2024 Budget Monitoring Report to 31 January 2024

Service	2023/24								Comments	
	Budget	In Year Adj.	Recoupment	Adjusted Budget	Forecast Outturn	Month 9	Prior Month Variance	Variance		
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s		
Schools Block										
Local School Budget										
- Delegated	104,774	52	(84,952)	19,874	19,874	19,874	0	0		
- Third Party & Public Liability Insurance (de-delegated)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
- Union Duties (de-delegated)	0	18	0	18	18	18	0	0		
- Free School Meals Eligibility Checks (de-delegated)	0	19	0	19	19	19	0	0		
School Improvement	0	48	(4)	44	44	44	0	0		
- Education Functions (retained)	0	158	0	158	158	158	0	0		
Business Rates	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Pupil Growth Contingency	295	(295)	0	0	0	0	0	0		
	105,069	(0)	(84,956)	20,113	20,113	20,113	0	0		
Central School Services Block										
Servicing of Schools Forum	18	0	0	18	18	18	0	0		
Licences & Subscriptions	104	0	0	104	104	104	0	0		
School Admissions	177	0	0	177	181	181	0	4	Pay Award	
Former ESG Retained Duties										
- Education Welfare	260	0	0	260	260	260	0	0		
- Asset Management	72	0	0	72	72	72	0	0		
- Statutory / Regulatory Duties	101	0	0	101	101	101	0	0		
	732	0	0	732	736	736	0	4		
Total Schools Block	105,801	(0)	(84,956)	20,845	20,849	20,849	0	4		
High Needs Block										
Special Schools										
Place Funding	6,054	0	(3,480)	2,574	2,490	2,413	77	(84)	Commissioning less places than budgeted	
Top-up Funding	5,242	30	0	5,272	5,603	5,263	340	331	Special School Banding Review	
SERFs										
Place Funding	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Top-up Funding	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Transport	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Resource Provision										
Place Funding	454	0	(328)	126	126	126	0	0		
Top-up Funding	873	0	(0)	873	913	873	40	40	Updated forecast	
Pupil Referral Units										
Place Funding	1,750	0	0	1,750	1,750	1,750	0	0		
Top-up Funding	1,520	0	0	1,520	1,448	1,448	0	(72)		
Other AP	300	0	0	300	300	300	0	0		
Mainstream Schools										
Top-up Funding	2,949	132	0	3,081	3,790	3,556	234	709	More Pupils in Mainstream than in earlier forecast, Autumn 23 figures processed, Spring 24 Forecast	
Exceptional Circumstances Funding	158	0	0	158	110	110	0	(48)		
Post-16 Education	3,299	0	(1,190)	2,109	2,195	2,212	(17)	86	Forecast reduced by £17k in Month 10 due to updated forecast	
Out of Borough	5,671	(130)	0	5,541	5,549	5,534	15	8	Based on Current Placements, updated forecast figures	
EOTAS	0	100	0	100	121	100	21	21	Higher actuals in Other AP	
Specialist Advisory and Referral Service (SARS)	1,550	(129)	0	1,421	1,398	1,394	4	(23)	Staffing Underspend	
Access and Inclusion	1,629	0	0	1,629	1,399	1,399	0	(230)		
Other High Needs Central Services (Management, Central Support Costs, Admin Support, Pension Top-slice)	772	0	0	772	772	772	0	0		
Total High Needs Block	32,221	3	(4,998)	27,226	27,964	27,250	714	738		
Early Years Block										
2 Year Old Grants	1,733	(188)	0	1,545	1,548	1,545	3	3		
Early Years Pupil Premium	118	7	0	125	125	125	0	0		
3 & 4 Year Old Grants	7,069	4	0	7,073	7,075	7,073	2	2		
Early Years Inclusion Fund	0	60	0	60	60	60	0	0		
Disability Access Fund	75	0	0	75	75	75	0	0		
Early Years Central Services	264	74	0	338	335	338	(3)	(3)		
Total Early Years Block	9,259	(43)	0	9,216	9,218	9,216	2	2		
Total Expenditure	147,281	(40)	(89,954)	57,287	58,031	57,315	716	744		
Dedicated Schools Grant Income	(147,971)	40	89,954	(57,977)	(57,977)	(57,977)	0	0		
Total Income	(147,971)	40	89,954	(57,977)	(57,977)	(57,977)	0	0		
In year (under)/over spend	(690)	0	(0)	(690)	54	(662)	716	744		

Appendix 4b - Dedicated Schools Grant Reserves Forecast as at 31 January 2024

Description	Brought Forward 1st April 2023	Total Forecast Expenditure FY 2023-24	Forecast Surplus / (Deficit) at 31st March 2024	Comments
DSG Reserve	(2,784,865)	54,000	(2,838,865)	
Safety Valve Funding	0	(470,000)	470,000	
Maintained School Balances	3,647,766	0	3,647,766	
	862,901	(416,000)	1,278,901	

Report to: **SCHOOLS FORUM**
Relevant Officer: Daniel Burrough, Senior Accountant School Finance and Funding
Date of Meeting: 16 April 2024

DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BUDGET UPDATE 2024/25

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 To inform Schools Forum of changes to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget for 2024/25.
- 1.2 Action required – for information.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

- 2.1 To note the changes to the Dedicated Schools Grant budget for 2024/25.

3.0 Background Information

- 3.1 At its meeting on the 16 January 2024, Schools Forum received details of the local authority's proposed budget for DSG in 2024/25. The budget was approved by full Council on the 21 February 2024.
- 3.2 Since the last meeting of the Schools Forum, a small number of adjustments to the approved budget have been made. Details are shown in Appendix 8a to this report, with reasons for the changes set out below:

3.3 *De-delegation and Education Functions*

The amounts relating to de-delegation and retention of funding for education functions have been quantified and shown as separate amounts, with a corresponding adjustment to the Local Schools Budget line.

3.4 *Growth Contingency*

The Growth Contingency increased by £79,000 from original estimate, to £279,000 in total.

3.5 **Central Schools Services Block**

An unallocated amount of £ 24,832 has been split across the expenditure lines in this block, in line with the estimates of costs in 2024/25.

3.6 **High Needs Block**

The High Needs Block is unchanged from the original approved budget, however there are significant cost pressures in 2023/24 (these will be explained in detail as part of Month 10's Budget Monitoring report at Item 4), which will certainly impact the 2024/25 Financial Year and beyond (this will be explained in detail as part of the Safety Valve section) .

3.7 **Early Years Block**

The Early Years Block appears to be showing a significant (£3.6m) reduction in budget, as per the updated Allocations in Appendix 5a. However, this is a timing difference rather than an actual reduction. The original Dedicated Schools Grant allocations are based on a full year budget from April 2024 , whereas the new Early Years initiatives start from September 2024, and this adjustment reflects 7 months of budget rather than the full year.

List of acronyms:

DSG – Dedicated Schools Grant

ESFA – Education and Skills Funding Agency

List of appendices:

Appendix 8a – Revised DSG Budget 2024/25

Appendix 5a – RevisedDSG Budget2024/25

DSG Budget 2024/25

	Updated	Approved	Movement
	2024/25	2024/25	
Schools Block			
Local Schools Budget	111,128,641	111,467,018	(338,377)
- Union Duties (de-delegated)	19,527		19,527
- Free School Meals Eligibility Checks (de-delegated)	19,744		19,744
- School Improvement (de-delegated)	51,072		51,072
- Education Functions (retained)	169,034		169,034
Business Rates reserve	0		-
Transfer to growth contingency	279,000	200,000	79,000
	111,667,018	111,667,018	0
Central Schools Services Block			
Servicing of Schools Forum	18,566	18,113	453
Licences & Subscriptions	113,310	104,433	8,877
School Admissions	184,041	176,827	7,214
Former ESG retained duties			
- Education Welfare	266,281	259,786	6,494
- Asset Management	73,552	71,758	1,794
- Statutory / Regulatory duties	101,318	101,318	0
	-	24,832	(24,832)
	757,067	757,067	0
High Needs Block			
Special Schools			
Place Funding	6,003,000	6,003,000	-
Top-up Funding	5,700,000	5,700,000	-
Total Special Schools	11,703,000	11,703,000	-
Resource Provision			
Place Funding	431,000	431,000	-
Top-up Funding	958,000	958,000	-
Total Resource Provision	1,389,000	1,389,000	-
Alternative Provision			
Place Funding	1,750,000	1,750,000	-
Top-up Funding	1,637,776	1,637,776	-
Other AP Provision	300,000	300,000	-
Total Alternative Provision	3,687,776	3,687,776	-
Mainstream Schools			
Top-up Funding	3,122,000	3,122,000	-
Exceptional Circumstances Funding	158,000	158,000	-
Total top-up for Mainstream Schools	3,280,000	3,280,000	-
Post-16 Education	3,547,000	3,547,000	-
Out of Borough	6,400,636	6,400,636	-
Specialist Advisory and Referral Service (SARS)	1,588,000	1,588,000	-
Access and Inclusion	1,460,000	1,460,000	-
Other High Needs Central Services (Management, Central Support Costs, Admin Support, Pension Top-slice)	771,865	771,865	-
	33,827,277	33,827,277	-
Early Years Block			
2 Year Old Grants	2,148,661	4,641,354	(2,492,693)
3 & 4 Year Old Grants	7,784,847	8,319,369	(534,522)
Under 2's	359,441	1,644,755	(1,285,314)
Early Years Pupil Premium	219,751	219,751	-
Disability Access Fund	149,240	149,240	-
Early Years Inclusion Fund	105,000	-	105,000
TPPG/Quality	173,000	-	173,000
Other Early Years Central Services (Management, Central Support Costs, Training, Admin Support, Pension Top-slice)	394,766		394,766
	11,334,706	14,974,469	(3,639,763)
Total	157,586,068	161,225,831	(3,639,763)
DSG	(158,031,859)	(161,671,622)	3,639,763
ESFA special free school funding			-
Transfer from growth contingency			-
Dedicated Schools Grant Allocations	(158,031,859)	(161,671,622)	3,639,763
Deficit / (Surplus)	(445,791)	(445,791)	0

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Report to: **SCHOOLS FORUM**

Relevant Officer: Jeremy Mannino – Interim Assistant Director – Education, SEND and Early Years.

Date of Meeting: 16 April 2024

LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To provide an overview of recent developments within the local authority to the Forum.

1.2 Action required:

- For information (no decision required)

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 This report is presented for information only.

3.0 Background Information

Blackpool Education Improvement Board

Headteachers met with Council officers and Board representatives a few weeks ago to discuss a new collaborative way of working moving forward. The three Headteachers representatives will be meeting to shortly to move this discussion on and agree the priorities for this group and associated measures. Overall this was received in a positive way and colleagues reflected a genuine desire to make some sustained changes from within their own expertise.

New School Provision

Seaview Trust has been successful in receiving approval from the Department for Education for a new alternative provision Free school and a new Social Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties Free School. These schools will support vulnerable young people who require specialist support to meet their medical needs as well as those with an Education Health and Care Plan with Social Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties as their primary need. The trust is committed to working with the Council to ensure this provision complements the existing provisions and meets the needs of the town.

Pupil Referral Unit

Blackpool's Pupil Referral Unit is currently full with 175 commissioned places having been taken up. This presents the Council with some challenges around how it meets the needs of those children and young people who are permanently excluded and those who come through the Fair Access Protocol process who are deemed unsuitable for mainstream education. There is an acknowledgement however that some schools have significantly lower Permanent Exclusion rates and there is an opportunity to learn from these sustained successes.

Challenges/Opportunities the Council is looking to include:

- Looking closely at those children and young people who may be ready for re-integration from the Pupil Referral Unit – although this requires school support in this process to make it work
- Employing a reintegration officer for the Pupil Referral Unit – whose sole aim will be to support reintegrations – this will be a medium to long term strategy
- Commissioning support from other alternative provision providers for assessment and safeguarding visits.
- Look forensically at the permanent exclusions – an audit of sorts to better identify gaps in systems and enable partners to reflect on how we may best avoid them in the future. The audit group could be made up of headteachers/CEOs to consider the learning.

SEND

The Department for Education reported that it had been encouraged by some of the progress made on the Written Statement of Action. That said, the Council is aware that it is not in the anticipated position and officers anticipate an extended period of monitoring will be required to consolidate some of the progress made and make some gains in other areas particularly strengthening the partnership's understanding and analysis of data, being able to measure the impact for children and families.

List of acronyms:

None.

List of Appendices:

None.

Report to: **Schools Forum**

Relevant Officer: Jeremy Mannino – Interim Assistant Director – Education, SEND and Early Years.

Meeting Date: 16 April 2024

SAFETY VALVE UPDATE

1.0 Purpose of the briefing:

1.1 The purpose of this briefing is to:

- Consider ways to mitigate the projected overspend of the High Needs block to reduce the risk of Safety Valve termination and increased financial liability
- There is expected to be an in-year variation of £744K this year. The variation would increase to a further £1.5M in 2024/25 and £2M in 2025/26 based on full year impact (and assuming we were able to retain the Safety Valve funding agreement).
- Inform Schools Forum of risk identified in short and medium-term financial planning for Dedicate Schools Grant.

2.0 Context

- 2.1 There is an unprecedented rise in Education Health and Care Plans and Special Educational Needs across Blackpool. Officers of the Council are not sure that demand has reached the peak for Education Health and Care Plans and anticipate further growth. This would put significant pressure upon our ability to make the repayments according to the Safety Valve agreement.
- 2.2 There has been a significant financial pressure put upon the Safety Valve agreement since the implementation of an historic agreement to re-band the three Special School populations.
- 2.3 Without a clear plan to get back on track and manage the medium term financial deficit, there is a risk of Safety Valve termination and the loss of a further £2.34M from School Funding, which would further increase the variations

2.4 Initial Considerations for mitigations

The areas below have been identified as potential areas of discussion to reduce the variation alongside some potential future considerations for a more self-sustaining model.

Consideration	£ Full Year impact	Notes	Considerations Impact
Special School Uplift	470K per year	Special Schools have already received significant uplift to funds in the re-banding exercise	Schools may have financially planned for this uplift.
Mainstream Top-up	227K	The number of plans and the way the Top up is allocated to be reviewed, but no uplift proposed for 2024/25 Academic Year	Schools may have financially planned for this uplift.
COP Funding – Inclusion fund to support schools to reduce permanent exclusions	480K	Schools have been expecting this to cease with some opportunity for money to follow children into alternative provision. Possible consider keeping 100K in the next 2 years in this fund to support with individual cases	Increased permanent exclusions Increased pressure on already full Pupil Referral Unit (which has already reduced this down to 175 places) Increased pressure on other AP providers
Resilience Coach and Early Help Team	313K	Schools are very happy with this service and are beginning to engage in early Help work more formally as a result of this work. Some personnel in this team that may be able to become part of Early Help system as vacancies appear.	Increase in request for statutory services involvement from schools. Preventative model and removal may be a backward step

		There could be a joined-up plan here to benefit all that would gradually remove the costs from Dedicated Schools Grant	Staffing costs elsewhere in the system.
Temporary Top-Up (Element 3 funding)	400K	<p>This fund has been awarded for children not with Education Health and Care Plans – it is currently granted at an hourly rate of support.</p> <p>This is not a statutory requirement.</p> <p>The Forum could also consider reducing this to 100K per year, changing the way schools can access this fund (peer panel)</p>	<p>Could lead to permanent exclusions prior to Education Health and Care Plans application</p> <p>Could lead to increased Education Health and Care Plans</p>
SEND Support Team	800k	<p>The SEND support team historically supported all Maintained schools who are now a small number (from September will be 7).</p> <p>The Council has maintained this offer to all schools as free at point of access (paid through DSG).</p> <p>There is a view that there is not the expected number of Education Health and Care Plans in Blackpool due to the work they do (subjective)</p> <p>Blackpool is amongst very few Council that have this offer.</p> <p>This will form the basis for the full Education Services review which has been commissioned for after Easter 2024.</p>	<p>Total withdrawal would spike permanent exclusions and Education Health and Care Plans applications and overwhelm the system.</p> <p>Needs to be a gradual and strategic change to service rather than removal</p>

Top-slice further from DSG into High Needs	250K	Currently at 0.5% Proposed move to 0.75% or higher, requesting schools share contribution to maintain some of the Services/ Funds highlighted above	This might not be feasible until 2025/6 because of financial modelling
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3.0 Next Steps

- Critically evaluate the data sitting behind the projections to establish everybody is the most informed we can be. The Forum is not going to be certain about the percentage in rise of Education Health and Care Plans slowing down for a while.
- Critically evaluate the list of Out of Borough educational placements with relevant team leaders to ensure decisions are being made appropriately, and need cannot be met in Borough.
- Prepare a briefing for Schools Forum (next) that has a few options to consider in terms of savings that need to be made.
- Prepare an interim report for the Department for Education to assure them of our grasp of the issues. Understand ways in which Department for Education might help/support an elongated arrangement.