



## Sheffield Schools Forum December 2021 Executive Summary of Decisions

### SEND Top-up Funding Arrangements

- Further to consultation with schools and discussion at the Forum, **the Forum agreed** to transfer £1.5m from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block in 2022/23 to support inclusion by increasing access to mainstream schools by supporting localities. The activities supported by transfers to the High Needs Block in previous years, which were intended to help reduce exclusions and escalations to special schools, will now be supported by the High Needs Block.
- We need to be able to support schools to meet needs and therefore change the way funding is distributed.
- Change needs to be incremental and may require consultation.
- We will test the costing of Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans to better help understand funding required, and Locality F will be part of the trial from January 2022.
- A further update will be given to the February Forum to clarify how much funding is required to continue to support inclusion - ongoing work and one-off projects - previously supported by the £1.5m transfer.

### DSG Overview

- The 2022/23 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation is: awaiting final confirmation, prior to the Chancellor's Autumn budget and based on the October 2020 Census.
- Sheffield has an overall increase of £17.7m in DSG.
- We have now received Funded Early Learning (FEL) rates for 2022/23 and this information will be reviewed by the Early Years Working Group prior to an update being given to the February Forum.
- Demand for High Needs continues to outstrip places.
- Central Services Schools Block - we are awaiting a decision as to whether the Sheffield City Council (SCC) can continue to cover reductions in historical commitments via a cash allocation, but it is the expectation that this will be agreed.
- There is a £10.3m cash increase on Schools Block in 2022/23.

### School Budget Modelling and National Funding Formula

- The Forum Funding Working Group set out the principles on how individual school budgets should be allocated for 2022/23 and worked through models based on those principles:
  - maintaining the National Funding Formula (NFF) ratio between primary and secondary of 1:1.29;
  - maintaining stability in primaries (our 2022/23 model shows that we are investing £8.6m more in primaries than the NFF suggests);
  - investing in Social Deprivation as a local priority as well as in line with the NFF; and

- increasing the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) to ensure that all schools receive at least a 2% increase.
- **Forum members agreed to the implementation of Model 3** for producing school budgets for 2022/23: as by having an Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) of 2% it provides an increase for schools with high and moderate levels of social deprivation, but it also provides a more significant increase for small schools with low levels of deprivation. This model ensures more schools will gain at an optimum level.

## School Balances

- Further to the action from the September Schools Forum. We wrote to all schools with a surplus balance, requesting confirmation of balances; the reason for the balance; and to request details of strategic expenditure plans.
- Some schools have enquired as to the reasons behind this request and many have stated that due to Covid, projects have been put on hold. Schools are looking at maintaining higher balances which can then be used to support future years due to the volatility and uncertainty related to Covid and national funding allocations.
- Further work is required to analyse responses and to establish the acceptable level of balances across the school sector. There are still some schools with substantial balances - over and above the permitted 5% for secondary and 8% for primary.
- We also now have details of academy balances and again, these require further analysis – academies need to hold larger reserves to manage expectation around future need.
- **The Forum agreed** that further work should be undertaken by the Funding Working Group to analyse responses and understand planned use of reserves by schools.

## Schools Insurance

- There are too few schools remaining in the Council's Insurance Fund to continue insurance by this method.
- Further to discussion at the September Forum, the Forum was asked to confirm which option the school community had selected.
- The two options were:
  1. All schools join the DfE's Risk Protection arrangement and deal directly with the DfE for insurance and claims.
  2. All schools opt into a new scheme with Zurich Municipal and continue to be supported by the Council's Insurance Team.
- The Zurich Municipal scheme is only available if all schools participate, so the option for schools to choose between the two options on an individual basis is not available.
- The Forum Chair had sought opinion from colleagues and responses were in favour of the Zurich Municipal option.
- **Maintained school members** (including the PRU and special schools) **voted in favour of the Zurich Municipal option.**

## Broadband Contract Update

- Further to the paper presented to the September Forum, the Forum was updated on progress as follows:
  - The contract has now been extended to May 2024, with schools having the option not to renew beyond May 2022.

- Good progress is being made with sign up - over 80 schools have now signed up and we are contacting those who haven't.

### **School Information Management System (SIMS) update**

- Further to the paper presented to the September Forum, the Forum was updated as requested:
  - SIMS and the company that maintains it, Education Software Services (ESS) has been sold.
  - There were previously a number of contract options and we were recommending a possible one-year extension, but since then ESS have made a decision to change the way they contract with schools – they plan to contract with schools directly for three years.
  - This change will require scrutiny.
  - We have written to schools to explain the offer.
  - If schools want to sign up, they will need to inform SCC.

*All Forum papers and other meeting information is available to download at*

*[www.sheffield.gov.uk/schoolsforum](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/schoolsforum)*

*You can also download a list of Forum members on this page should you wish to raise an issue/ask a question*

*If you have any queries about the Schools Forum, please contact:*

*[amanda.murray@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.murray@sheffield.gov.uk)*