

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Executive Director of Finance and Resources  
Executive Director of Children and Public Health

To  
**Education Board**  
On  
**9<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

Agenda  
Item No.

Report prepared by:  
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In consultation with:  
Resources Sub Group

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## Dedicated School Grant (DSG) 2024/25 budget planning and 2023/24 budget update

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### **1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update the Education Board (EB) on DSG budget planning for 2024/25 following the Department for Education (DfE) July 2023 School funding announcements, but noting this paper, has now been revised as presented and stated in person at the EB on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023 to a paper of note and where 2024/25 DSG funding matters remain applicable following the announced and apologised DfE error on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2023 in relation to Individual Mainstream School block funding announcements for 2024/25.
- 1.2 And therefore given this unfortunate DfE error, the direct decision in relation to the principle of formally setting the Individual School Block per pupil amounts (in view of the National Funding Formulae) has now had to be deferred to the December 2023 EB Board. A decision that was proposed by the leading officer of this attached paper, and formally agreed by the Chair of the EB, and Chair of the Resource Sub Group (RSG) over the weekend prior to the 9<sup>th</sup> October Monday AM meeting and endorsed at the EB on the 9<sup>th</sup> October.
- 1.3 To update the EB on the latest DSG budget for 2023/24 following the applied annual DfE July 2023 funding update changes and subsequent 2023/24 high need place fund change requests following the late summer 2023 additional high need places required from September 2023.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Education Board are therefore now asked to simply note, the remaining valid considerations of this paper at this stage of planning the DSG for 2024/25.

### **3 Background**

#### **2023/24**

- 3.1 The updated DSG budget for 2023/24 follows the annual July 2023 release from the DfE of the latest 2023/24 DSG funding block allocations at a Local Authority (LA) level, where funding changes have been applied to both the High Needs block and Early Years.

#### **2024/25**

- 3.2 The DSG budget planning for 2024/25 follows the DfE's annual July 2023 release of the "Schools revenue funding 2024 to 2025 operational guide" and indicative 2024/25 national funding allocations for the Schools Block, High Needs Block and Central Block. All of which are used to help guide LA's and their Schools Forums/Education Boards to plan local implementation of Dedicated School Grant funds.
- 3.3 The Government have continued to re-affirm their position of intention to move to a Hard NFF, whereby individual school budgets would be set through one single national formula rather than local funding formulae.
- 3.4 In terms of the NFF funding formulae itself, it must be noted and continually commended that our own LA and Education Board has positioned itself well over the last now seven years to align our Mainstream School DSG resources to the principles of the NFF (which started in 2017/18) and support those principles. It must also be minded, it is also incredibly restrictive to now be able to move away from any of the principles regardless of the fact it still remains a local decision with the agreement of School Forum, and if you are an LA that does not follow the NFF, the DfE are also continuing to enforce all LA's to move to the NFF by reducing those flexible parameters. The DfE also report that just over 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s of all LA's now follow the full principles of the NFF.
- 3.5 By way of note in this paper, as these additional allocations remain outside of the DSG for 2023/24 and 2024/25, the DfE published and announced in July 2023, a new and additional Teacher pay grant for both of these years, which commences from September 2023 to March 2024, and will also cover the whole of the 2024/25 financial year. This will be paid directly to all mainstream academies school by the DfE, and for maintained mainstream schools, special schools, and alternative provision schools the grant will first be paid to the LA who will in turn will pass port the funding on in full to all applicable settings as per the allocations of the DfE formulae and conditions. The teacher pay grant has been set to fund 3% of the 6.5% 2023/24 teacher pay award.
- 3.6 It must also simply be noted by way of note to this paper, as this additional allocation also remains outside of the DSG for 2023/24, that the DfE in July 2023 have also formally published an additional Early Years (EY) 2023/24 supplementary grant allocation applicable from September 2023 to March 2024. And as per the DfE conditions of this new grant the LA has and will passport on in full the additional allocations to all EY providers. In effect, the introduction of this new grant, is the start of the government pledges as made in the 2023 Spring Budget statement for the expansion of funded child care provision. The

rates of this new grant, are recorded in this paper under the EY section simply because the DfE will be building these rates into the EY DSG 2024/25 funding formulae, and they are therefore referenced by way of early planning to be presented through to the EB for 2024/25. It is expected and hoped that the DfE will have formally announced the EY DSG funding rates for 2024/25 ready for the December 2023 EB, which in turn allows early as possible planning for our EY Providers for 2024/25.

- 3.7 The DfE in July 2023, have also presented the further DSG High Needs growth allocations for 2024/25, which is as referenced in this paper under the High Needs section, but it must be noted, they are not either locally or nationally at the same high level of further and additional growth allocations, that have been funded by the DfE in the last 4 financial years (2020/21 to 2023/24).
- 3.8 In relation to the Central Block and Historic Commitments, the DfE for 2024/25 has also, as expected, reaffirmed the position of unwinding 20% of funding from the previous years base line.
- 4 Dedicated Schools Grant 2024/25 budget planning and 2023/24 budget update**

#### **Foreword**

- 4.1 The 2024/25 indicative DSG funding allocations for the central block and High Needs at a total local level are presented alongside the detail of the latest 2023/24 Budget allocations as shown in “Appendix 1 – DSG Latest 2023/24 budget and Indicative budget 2024/25”. The DfE total funding allocation for 2023/24 DSG resources is now £189.300M. For indicative 2024/25 compared to 2023/24 the High Needs block is a total increase of £1.498M and a further net reduction of (£43,000) has been applied to the Central Block.
- 4.2 All the applicable changes to the updated 2023/24 DSG budget, and basis of the indicative 2024/25 budget allocations are explained within each DSG block of this paper.

#### **5 Schools Block – Individual School Block (ISB) allocations 2024/25**

- 5.1 *As stated, for reasons in sections 1.1 and 1.2, this section has now been removed from this paper and will be presented in the December 2023 EB DSG Paper.*

## **6 Schools Block – Centrally retained 2024/25**

- 6.1 The following is the key 2024/25 headline, released by the DfE in relation to growth and now with the addition of a dedicated falling rolls fund;
- 6.1.1 “We are introducing new requirements for growth and falling rolls funding. We expect these changes to have a positive impact on schools which agree with the local authority to host an additional class to meet basic need, but which previously were not guaranteed for this.”
- 6.2 In relation to local administration of growth funding, the DfE clearly feel there have been inconsistencies in previous practice across LA’s, and in some cases no growth funding awarded at all to schools in an LA area where an additional intake class been required.
- 6.3 On review of the now updated 2024/25 policy and guidance of the growth fund criteria, it is clear that Southend LA and the EB have again positioned themselves well under the NFF to meet the needs of the growth requirement, and do not therefore positively require any change to our current local growth funding formulae. Our local model in place also guarantees applicable schools receive well above the now bare minimum requirement of “£1,550 per no. of pupils applicable for growth multiplied by the local area cost adjustment”, and this is due to the fact our own local funding model also takes account of the overall pupil increase between census’s (based on the Middle Super Output Area’s) which in turn further determines the overall funding size of the growth allocation to be awarded, including the fact we also manage growth over the planned life of the growth (across years). It is however, helpful to know that should in future years a reduction be required to our current growth rates, in consultation with the education board the DfE have now officially set a bare minimum requirement.
- 6.4 And therefore to remind our local principles for Growth funding (as previously agreed through the Education Board) which follow:
- 6.4.1 The March 2019 EB DSG Growth paper. Where Southend has an affordable funding plan to support growth to schools over the life of the expected growth within the funding available and includes declared minimum funding rates which can be set as necessary.
- 6.4.2 And as per the timings of announcements as agreed in the December 2019 EB DSG budget planning paper, final growth rates for 2024/25 will be declared in the January 2024 EB DSG budget paper (so once the final funding DfE allocations are known for 2024/25), alongside any potential and affordable increase adjustment for the rates currently applied in 2023/24.
- 6.5 However, whilst it is clear no changes are required on our local Growth fund policy, it must be noted, now under the NFF for 2024/25, for the first time, which can be shared as positive news in terms of the principle of the fund itself. The DfE have now specifically set within the DSG specific funding allocated to falling rolls. The DfE do state that LA’s will continue to have discretion over whether to operate a falling rolls fund, and where LA’s do choose to run a falling rolls fund, they will only be able to provide funding where the 2022 SCAP shows that those reduced school places will be required in the 3 to 5 years. There is also now no

condition in terms of OFSTED rating where only schools under any previous LA operating model could have received a falling rolls fund had to be rated 'good' or 'outstanding'. But it also remains minded, any LA that previously operated a falling rolls fund (prior to these new now changes), would have had to reduce funding to other schools for it to be affordable, whereby now in 2024/25 there will be a dedicated fund within the NFF.

- 6.6 It is also a requirement as with the Growth fund, that any awarding of now falling rolls fund should be in agreement with the EB (under school forum matters) to determine both the value of the fund and criteria of allocation.
- 6.7 Now given, the announcement of this new falling rolls fund has only recently been shared, and locally it will not be physically known as to the size of this fund until December 23 (once the DfE have processed the October 23 census). That any consideration to Southend adopting a falling rolls fund, is properly considered and brought back to the EB in March 24. It must also be minded, predicting both growth and falling rolls is an incredibly complex task and given Southend's close borders with Essex's School, so the model itself will need the flexibility (as does our growth model contain) to adapt quickly should pupil number changes continue to occur right up to the start of the academic year.

## **7 Schools Block – De-delegated 2023/24**

- 7.1 In accordance with the annual funding cycle, any proposed amounts for 2024/25 de-delegation consideration (Voting rights maintained schools only), will be presented to the EB in the December 2023 EB DSG paper. And it remains minded, the only current approved funding item for delegation in 2023/24 is staff cost public duties claims allowing further buy in from Academy schools to support and therefore also be eligible for those claims.

## **8 Early Years Block**

### **2023/24 Budget Update (and 2023/24 Final Budget allocation)**

- 8.1 As, repeated on a traditional annual basis, the DfE announced in July 2023 the results of the Early Years (EY) January 2023 census, which not only adjusts and updates the funding applied to EY DSG resources for the last financial year 2022/23 to a now final 2022/23 funding allocation, but also forms the basis of a revised indicated allocation for the current 2023/24 financial year and 2024/25.
- 8.2 The 2023/24 updated budget for EYs is displayed in Appendix 3, the results of the 2022/23 updated budget (following the January 2023 census), has displayed a small (2.5%) reduction in the current take up of 3&4 year old universal offer, higher increases in the 3&4 additional extended entitlement of 5.7% and EY pupil premium of a 0.1% increase and a drop in the take up of the 2 year old eligibility offer, which has decreased by (13.0%). Whilst, it is positive to see a further increase in the 3&4 year old additional extended entitlement offer it does highlight the drop in the 2 year old eligibility take up. The LA EY team continues to target the support and take up of the 2 year old eligibility offer.

- 8.3 The final DfE funding adjustment to the EY budget for 2022/23 reflecting the movements as shared in Appendix 3 has resulted in a net reclaim of circa (£130,000) from the DfE to our Local Early Years DSG funding for 2022/23. This one off sum will naturally fall to reduce the DSG Early Years reserve balance, but and ultimately therefore simply reducing the underspend sum of £332,000 that was taken back to the DSG EY reserves at the end of the March 2023 (as reported in the DSG 2022 23 Final outturn paper in June 2023). However, it again simply highlights the importance of ensuring sufficient level of reserve balances to reduce any impact to EY Providers or LA centrally retained resources as a result of these potential funding adjustments.

## **2024/25 Budget Planning**

- 8.4 As shared and highlighted, in section 3.6, Appendix 3 for information purposes of the DSG, the 2023/24 EY rates now include the updated funding rates from September 2023 for all EY providers, as a result of the newly announced (following the spring budget) EY supplementary grant. And as shared in accordance with the condition of the grant, the rates have been passported on in full. Whilst it is of course welcome that the funding rates have been increased for all EY providers, it must be highlighted that with the considerable expansion planned for Child Care provision, this will also place more strain on EY LA central teams to support the intended growth in child care provision. These considerations will therefore be kept live too, and further planning will commence ahead of formally setting the EY funding rates for 2024/25 (which will be consulted for approval through the EB). It is also hoped, that the DfE will be applying further funding increases in 2024/25 to the updated rates as now shared in Appendix 3.

## **9 High Needs Block**

### **2023/24 Budget Update**

- 9.1 The High Needs Block DSG budget has now been adjusted following the DfE's annual 'import and export adjustment\*' announced in July 2023, and it has decreased our High Needs Blocks funds by (£384,000) to now £32.222M as a result of a net decrease of 64 pupils from other local authorities home based pupils from 2022/23. And this is within the post 16 further education provision. Whilst it is disappointing funding is reduced, it is in view of the DfE High needs formulae as explained in 'import and export adjustment\*' note below, but, reversely and therefore more positively does highlight that more local high needs now young adults are occupying our local further education provision of services.
- 9.2 In terms of the overall 2023/24 funding allocations and given the budgets had already been set for service provision, the reduced budget adjustment will simply be held against the "balance held aside to support in year high need funding pressures". Reducing that held aside funding balance from a previous positive £135,000 to now a negative circa (£249,000) in 2023/24, which will therefore in turn naturally reduces the HN DSG reserve balance. But it also again, further highlights the importance of a sustainable HN DSG reserve balance which can therefore support and cover one off negative funding

adjustments, one off funding pressures, or be allocated to supported one off further HN initiatives and activities. This service line balance itself must be recovered and at minimum set to zero in 2024/25.

'import and export adjustment\*' - relates to a DfE defined in year High Need funding adjustment compiled from the latest January school census and RO6 Individualised learner record. Whereby a local authority's high needs block funding allocation is compensated if there is a net import increase from the previous year due to more other local authority home based pupils placed in their area, or alternatively reduced if there is a net export increase from the previous year if more local authority home based pupils are placed in another local authority area. Southend's 2023/24 High Need block allocation has therefore decreased by (£6,000 per pupil for 64 pupils within the post 16 provision), due to a now overall revised net import of 79 pupils compared to a previous net import of 143 pupils for the previous year.

- 9.3 It is also further highlighted for positive noting, following the June 2023 EB HN paper. That the now final place funding allocations have been confirmed for September 2023, through both the Head of SEND, and Head of Access and Inclusion. There was considerable uptake in final numbers confirmed for further HN places towards end of the summer term, that in turn impacted upon the original place funding allocations reflected in the June 2023 HN paper. The additional place funding is therefore noted and highlighted within Appendix 4. To fund both the increased place fund allocations and therefore resulting top up funding these allocations have been deducted from the funding provision set aside for "further and expected EHCP place and top up growth" and "Alternative Place and top up growth", again, it is with praise that our local planning was able to hold aside these funding allocation within the 2023/24 HN funding allocations as set in the June HN DSG 2023 paper. There will be further updates on the remaining allocations of these funds as we go through 2023/24 and formally confirmed. It must also be highlighted, that the Appendix 5 flexible place fund allocation rate (which is relatively small in terms of cost provision) has also now been further uplifted by 10% from September 2023. Again, this provision is only used where a special school is required to go over funded place number, in year, so given the overall increase in core place funded provision the likely now requirement of using this fund will be reduced.

## **2024/25 Budget Planning**

- 9.4 The following is the key headlines, released by the DfE in relation to High needs funding for 2024/25:
- 9.4.1 The funding floor – this ensures that all local authorities' allocations per head of child population will increase by a minimum percentage compared to the baseline. For 2023-24 we are setting the funding floor at 3%.
  - 9.4.2 The gains cap – the limit on gains per head of the population compared to the baseline. For 2023-24 we are setting the gains cap at 5% which means that local authorities can see an increase of up to 5% before their gains are capped.
- 9.5 Therefore, for our own local 2024/25 DSG high need funding allocation this has now been indicatively set at £33.720M, an additional £1.498M from 2023/24, applying a gain increase of 4.8%, so above the funding floor protection of 3%, but slightly below the gains cap of 5%.

- 9.6 Whilst further 2024/25 permanent funding is of course welcome, it must be noted this is not now at the same funded level that has been experienced in the last 4 years, where circa increases of an additional averaged £3.2M was provided for each of those 4 years 2020/21 through to 2023/24. A position nationally that also has been applied to all LA high needs blocks.
- 9.7 Again, as per our local DSG annual funding cycle, the actual full detailed application of this additional 2024/25 funding will be considered as part of the EB June 2024 High Need detailed allocation budget paper. June was agreed through the EB to allow enough time for the SEND team in consultation with respective special schools and mainstream schools to allocate the expected in borough EHCP banded rates for the following academic year 2024/25, a major and significant exercise required before any further funding considerations will be put forward for new permanent funding allocations.

## **10 Central Block**

### **2024/25 Budget Planning**

- 10.1 The following is the key July 2023 headlines released by the DfE in relation to central block funding for 2024/25:
- 10.1.1 As stated previously, the department are continuing to reduce the element of funding within central block that some local authorities receive for historic commitments made prior to 2013 to 2014.
  - 10.1.2 In 2024/25 for those local authorities that receive it, historic commitments will be reduced by a further 20% from the 2023/24 baseline.
  - 10.1.3 The funding for ongoing responsibilities (LA statutory duties) to deliver for all pupils in maintained schools and academies, will continue to be protected for any losses below -2.5% from the 2023/24 allocation for any reduction in changes between per pupil numbers (between October censuses), but reversely any gains gapped at 5.51% where pupil numbers increase.
- 10.2 The reduction in funding for historic commitments is again, no surprise, although of course disappointing and was as first shared in both the October 2019 and December 2019 EB DSG papers, including a position statement at that time that our own LA should now continue to plan on further funding losses in 2021/22 and beyond.
- 10.3 To remind, In December 2020, EB agreed the plan to manage these continued expected funding losses (and after savings were delivered) by drawing on any remaining Central Block DSG reserves, which enables the remaining historic commitment funded services to continue to be funded at their now current levels whilst the DSG central block funding remains. It is again, with praise to our local planning (and decisions approved in December 2020) that there is therefore no need to re-consider this position for 2024/25 or now 2025/26, but it will need to be considered for 2026/27 subject to no further increase acceleration of this funding unwinding by the DfE.



10.4 However, although this paper is directly concerned with the allocation of DSG resources, it does provide the opportunity to highlight the considerable funding pressures also now faced by Local Authorities (LAs), and how, unfortunately at this time, our own LA and other LA's funding does not now meet the service demand and inflationary pressures increase being experienced (which has particularly increased up for our most vulnerable adults and children in society). This point is made within this DSG paper, simply on the fact – the DSG historic commitment funding was previously allocated and allowed to support both joint LA and Educational funded activities, with the intention of education benefits for some of the most vulnerable pupils (i.e. combined budgets), so it is further disappointing that the DfE are not recognising the context LA's are now facing as whole within their total own funding sources and continue to push forward with the unwinding of this funding. It is therefore hoped further direct LA government grant (in the Autumn 2023 term budget) is agreed and supplied to assist with the current known and vocalized LA pressures.

10.5 The table below simply illustrates the now confirmed DSG funding losses for our LA central block historic commitment allocation from the start of 2019/20 through to 2024/25 with a further current suggested trajectory to 2026/27 at the current continued rate of a 20% loss from the previous years base line. This is then also mapped alongside the now current funded commitment for historic services (following the EB December 2020 DSG paper), highlighting an indicative suggestion of how long those commitments can remain funded at their current levels until a Central block DSG reserve deficit balance would now occur in 2026/27. Again, this table is caveated that the DfE could potentially choose to accelerate these losses further although have now continued on the same trajectory for some time.

	<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>
<b>A</b>	DSG Funding remaining	£905,000	£724,000	£579,000	£463,000	£371,000	£297,000	£237,000	£190,000
	% unwound*		20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
	Funding loss*		(£181,000)	(£145,000)	(£116,000)	(£92,000)	(£74,000)	(£60,000)	(£47,000)
<b>B</b>	Current spend commitment*					£430,000	£430,000	£430,000	£430,000
<b>A - B</b>	Variance Underspend or (Overspend)					(£59,000)	(£133,000)	(£193,000)	(£240,000)
	Central Block forecast reserve balance at 31 <sup>st</sup> March (Deficit)				£506,000	£447,000	£313,000	£121,000	(£119,000)

\* Current spend commitment following the December 2020 Education Board

## 11 Latest forecast DSG reserve balances

- 11.1 The latest position on DSG reserve balances remains as presented in the EB June 2023 DSG Final Outturn 2022/23 paper, barring the now reduction to the EY reserve balances as highlighted in section 8.3 and the reduction to the HN reserve balances as highlighted in sections 9.1 – 9.3. And all agreed conditional use of Reserve balances remain in place, and as per our local annual reporting cycle, an updated position of all reserve balances will be supplied in the December 2023 EB DSG paper, alongside an updated 2023/24 forecast spend positions for all blocks at that time.

## 12 Conclusion

- 12.1 Whilst it is welcome the announcement of the additional teacher pay grant for 2023/24 and 2024/25 has ended the 2023/24 pay dispute and teacher strikes. It should be remain noted, that some particular local schools (not to be named) do still remain under heavy financial pressure. This is not due to what the DfE have agreed a funded pay award for 2023/24, but in view, of the already and existent inherent cumulative funding pressures that already rolled into 2023/24 from 2022/23. This includes significant inflationary pressures during 2022/23, that have rolled into and continued in 2023/24 and 2022/23 pay awards themselves including LGPS staff pay award that added further strain to school budgets. Particular Schools will therefore currently continued to be challenged to be able to meet their costs within allocated resources. It must also be noted, the previous High Needs (HN) funding gains experienced in the last 4 years, have now been reduced in 2024/25, so it remains absolutely critical that the careful and considered planning of HN funding allocation continues to support the required education provision of HN pupils.
- 12.2 And it also of course, also must remain noted, it is disappointing that the DfE intention for Dedicated School Grant funding allocations to support “historic commitments” under the Central Block in 2023/24 has continued to unwind further, despite our now local strategy to mitigate these losses up until 2026/27.
- 12.3 However, It again, must be highlighted with praise for the collaborative working approach of the Local Authority with the Education Board and respective sub groups representing all sectors, including high needs and early years. That the DSG funding continues to be maintained and sustained on an affordable basis funding the educational requirements of our local children and young people.

## 13 Appendices

Appendix 1 - DSG Updated budget allocation 2023/24 and Indicative budget allocation for 2024/25

*Appendix 2 - DSG Illustrative Individual mainstream school budget per pupil led funding rates 2024/25 (now removed and to be re-presented at the December 2023 EB)*

Appendix 3 - Early Years 2023/24 Updated budget allocation

Appendix 4 - Place funded pupil number per schools or college from Sept 2023 (updated)

Appendix 5 - Flexible place funding from Sept 2023 (updated)