

TITLE	2023/24 Schools Budget Consultation
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Schools Forum on 12 October 2022
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Director, Children's Services - Helen Watson

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

This reports forms part of regular reporting to Schools Forum, informing areas of statutory decision making and improving visibility and consultation on wider Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) financial matters.

RECOMMENDATION

Schools Forum is asked to:

- note the budget consultation process and planned timeline, and
- support the outcome of that consultation.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The report sets out the school consultation process for the 2023/24 budget and asks Schools Forum to support the outcome of that process.

Schools Budget Consultation 2023/24

01. Purpose of the Report

The report sets out the proposed consultation process with schools on the 2023/24 budget and asks Schools Forum to support the outcome of that process.

02. Recommendation

Schools Forum is asked to:

- note the budget consultation process and planned timeline, and
- support the outcome of that consultation.

03. Background

The budget setting process has continued to develop in Wokingham over recent years, as colleagues work together to improve transparency of decision making and inclusion of wider stakeholders in the process appropriately.

In line with DfE guidance, and as part of agreed local arrangements, a consultation is undertaken each year with all schools to inform the budget setting process and recommendations ultimately made through the task & finish groups to Schools Forum.

04. Proposed consultation arrangements for 2023/24

To support informed budget planning for 2023/24 the following will be included as part of an all-encompassing consultation with schools:

1. Principles of the Schools Block funding formula
2. Disapplication request for our all-through school re split site funding
3. Proposed 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block
4. Notional SEN methodology
5. Growth Fund methodology

The original budget planning timetable assumed that the consultation period would be underway in late September, allowing the results to be fed into discussion at the October meeting of Schools Forum.

Given the particular challenges in the current financial climate, and the complexity of variables being worked through as part of budget setting, the planned timeline has slipped and therefore the consultation timetable has been revised.

The aim is still to ensure that schools have a sufficient period of time to consider responses, supported by appropriate information to ensure they can respond in an informed manner. However, this now necessitates a timeline beyond the date of the October Forum meeting.

Disapplication request(s)

While there are a number of factors for budget setting that can be agreed locally, there are areas where changes to the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) require a disapplication request to the DfE. In previous years for Wokingham, this has included:

- Changes to the funding basis of our all-through school
- Transfer between blocks where this is not supported by Schools Forum

Even where a decision has been supported previously, a disapplication needs to be considered on an annual basis.

The DfE deadline for disapplication requests for the 2023/24 budget is 18th November. As this date is before the next Schools Forum meeting in December, the revised consultation timeline means that a Schools Forum view will be needed in advance of the outcome of the wider schools consultation.

Schools Forum is therefore asked to confirm advance support for the result of the consultation with schools given the following implications:

1. All-through school funding – should a majority of school responses support the continuation of the 2022/23 approach, then the LA will submit a disapplication on that basis
2. Transfer of 0.5% from Schools Block to High Needs Block – should a majority of school responses support the transfer then this can be enacted without a disapplication request being required. Should the majority of schools not support the transfer then a disapplication will be submitted by the LA by the 18th November deadline.

Contact:	Lynne Samuel Finance Business Partner – Children's Services
Email:	lynne.samuel@wokingham.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank