

TITLE	2023/24 Draft Schools Block Budget
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Schools Forum on 7 December 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 update on the 2023/24 Schools Block Budget, and
- note the results of the consultation with all schools.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

This report provides Schools Forum with the updated provisional income for the 2023/24 Schools Block budget, using the provisional October 2022 pupil data received from schools.

This report also provides the results of the school consultation held earlier this term.

We will consult with schools showing the indicative school budgets in December requesting feedback at the start of next term. This will enable the final school budgets for 2023/24 to be considered by Schools Forum at its meeting in January 2023, prior to submission to the Education and Skills Funding Agency by the January deadline.

2023/24 Draft School Block Budget December 2022

.01 Purpose of the Report

This report provides Schools Forum with an update on the Schools Block Budget and the results of the consultation with schools held in November.

.02 Recommendations

Schools Forum is asked to:

- note the update on the 2023/24 Schools Block Budget, and
- note the results of the consultation with all schools.

.03 Background

The Department for Education (DfE) issued provisional funding arrangements for the 2023/24 Schools Block in the summer. Since then, work has been undertaken through the Schools Block Task & Finish Group to model affordable options, which then informed consultation undertaken with all schools in the last month.

Final funding for 2023/24 will reflect final pupil numbers from the October 2022 school census and associated updated pupil data, and is not expected to be confirmed by the DfE until mid to late December.

.04 Updated Provisional Allocation for 2023/24

Modelling undertaken prior to the schools consultation was based on information voluntarily shared by schools prior to the formal census date. While October census information has now been submitted, as some academies do not have a data sharing agreement in place with WBC, updates to income projections cannot be undertaken until final census figures are confirmed by the DfE in early December.

Table 1 below show indicative Schools Block Funding based on the summary pupil information provided by schools in September.

While additional funding for schools was announced through the Autumn Statement no detail has yet been received on what that may mean for Wokingham.

Final funding for 2023/24 is expected to be confirmed by the DfE at the end of the Autumn term, in line with previous years timetable.

			Initial modelling	Provisional	Estimated Allocation	
	2023-24	Oct-21	2023-24	Oct-22	2023-24	Increase
Primary (PUF)	4,579	15,665	71,735,988	15,695	71,873,369	
Secondary (SUF)	5,936	10,126	60,112,088	10,684	63,424,604	
Premises Factors			1,634,877		1,634,877	
Growth Factors			1,663,746		1,505,440	
Total		25,791	135,146,698	26,379	138,438,291	3,291,592

.05 Growth Fund

Based on the current 2022/23 forecast, £320k is anticipated to remain at year end within reserve funds held to support growth requirements next financial year.

Growth Fund income has been estimated at £1.5m for 2023/24, however confirmation of funding is not expected from the DfE until December.

Further review of Growth Fund requirements for 2023/24 will therefore continue to be progressed through the Task & Finish Group as further information becomes available, alongside the results from the consultation with schools (see section 6) with regards to the methodology of the funding.

.06 Result of consultation with schools

Consultation was undertaken by all schools in early November, with questions and format of consultation agreed through the Task & Finish Group.

The full consultation pack was made available to schools by email, with responses collated through the Council's consultation portal. Schools will be aware of a technical glitch in the publication of two of the questions on the portal, which was rectified prior to the closure of the consultation. This did not impact the full consultation document that schools received. 14 schools had submitted a response through the portal prior to the correction being identified and corrected. In addition to a wider communication out to all schools, the 14 schools were also contacted individually to offer the opportunity to resubmit their response. 7 of those schools took up that opportunity.

In total 51 individual responses to the consultation were received. Of those, 11 were removed from the result for the following reasons:

- 7 where schools resubmitted their response after the error on Q2 & Q3 was corrected
- 2 where the school submitted the same response twice
- 2 where the submitter did not confirm details of what school they were representing and therefore details could not be validated

40 submissions were therefore considered valid, a 58% response rate, and an increase on the 43% response rate experienced last year.

Appendix A provides a breakdown of responses received. For transparency, results are shown both for the 33 responses received following the correction to the

questions on the portal, and those 7 schools who responded prior to that and chose not to resubmit.

Appendix B provides information on further comments received from schools. While these were limited in number, they do identify a need to work with schools to improve understanding on areas such as the Growth Fund and Notional SEN. This will be considered as part of future planning.

Disapplication Requests

The majority of schools supported the submission of a disapplication request on behalf of Wokingham's all-through school (Q3), and this has now been submitted to the ESFA.

The majority of schools did not support a transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block (Q4). In line with previous discussions, the Director of Children's Services therefore authorised the submission of a disapplication request, and this has also now been submitted to the ESFA, in conjunction with Safety Valve discussions.

.07 Next Steps

Following receipt of census information and updated pupil data from the DfE in early December, further review will be undertaken through the Task & Finish Group to update relevant information into the budget model, incorporate the results of the consultation, and consider an appropriate level of a cap on gains.

Further consultation will then be undertaken with schools, later in December, showing the indicative school budgets with feedback requested at the start of the new term. Modelling will then be further updated over the school holiday period once final funding levels are confirmed by the DfE.

This will enable the final Schools Block Budget for 2023/24 to be considered by Schools Forum at its meeting in January 2023, prior to submission to the Education and Skills Funding Agency by the January deadline.

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Appendix A

		Number of WBC Settings	69											
		Number Responded	40											
		Response Rate	58%											
			[A]				[B]							
			Responses received after Q correction				Responses received before Q correction where school did not resubmit			TOTAL Valid Submissions				
			33				7			40				
			Yes	No	Blank	Result	Yes	No	Blank	Yes	No	Blank	Result	
Section 1						Yes - 90%							Yes - 87%	
Q1	Do you agree with the T&F group that MFG should be set at +0.5%?		29	3	1		5	2	0	34	5	1		
Q2	Do you approve the proposal recommended by the T&F group, to use the minimum NFF rates?		31	1	1	Yes - 97%	5	2	0	36	3	1	Yes - 92%	
Section 2			Yes	No	Blank	Result	Yes	No	Blank	Yes	No	Blank	Result	
Q3	Do you agree with a disapplication for all-through school?		29	3	1	Yes - 91%	-	-	-	29	3	1	Yes - 91%	
Section 3			Yes	No	Blank	Result	Yes	No	Blank	Yes	No	Blank	Result	
Q4	Do you agree with a 0.5% transfer to the HNB?		8	24	1	No - 75%	2	5	0	10	29	1	No - 74%	
Section 4			Yes	No	Blank	Result	Yes	No	Blank	Yes	No	Blank	Result	
Q5	Do you agree with increasing the notional SEN budget to the national average?		20	13	0	Yes - 61%	5	2	0	25	15	0	Yes - 63%	
Q6	Do you agree with using more factors to calculate the notional SEN?		28	4	1	Yes - 88%	5	2	0	33	6	1	Yes - 85%	
			Option 1	Option 2	Blank	Result	Option 1	Option 2	Blank	Option 1	Option 2	Blank	Result	
Q7	If you do agree with Q6, what is your preferred option?		18	6	9	Option 1 - 75%	4	0	3	22	6	12	Option 1 - 79%	
Section 5			Yes	No	Blank	Result	Yes	No	Blank	Yes	No	Blank	Result	
Q8	Do you agree to use the MPPL for growth calculation?		17	12	4	Yes - 59%	7	0	0	24	12	4	Yes - 67%	
Q9	Do you agree that lump sum and per pupil amount should be reviewed for an inflationary uplift?		25	5	3	Yes - 83%	6	1	0	31	6	3	Yes - 84%	

Consultation - Additional Comments Received

Question 7:

“increased funding rather than moving funds from other sources”

“should be set at the £6k per head required by law, based on the October census”

Question 8:

Two schools felt they required more information

“no evidence of whether previous years held back funding has been utilised and what the impact is”.

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Question 9:

Two schools said they would need more information of previous spending and impact.