

TITLE	2024/25 Draft Central School Services Block Budget
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Schools Forum on 6 December 2023
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:

1. Note the provisional 2024/25 budget allocation for the Central School Services Block (CSSB) of £1,075,657
2. Note the planning assumption made of a 3% uplift on government arranged licences to £169,258
3. Approve the proposed budget allocation from the remainder of the CSSB as follows:
 - a. Statutory and Regulatory Duties £505,000
 - b. Education Welfare £117,000
 - c. Asset Management £49,000
 - d. Other Ongoing Duties £236,000
4. Approve that any further adjustment required following notification of the final CSSB allocation and licences for 2024/25 will be amended from (a) above

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The Department of Education (DfE) has set a separate block within the Dedicated Schools Grant to support the local authority in delivering educational statutory duties. The grant is a contribution to the total cost of the central statutory services operated by the Council.

The provisional Central Support Services Block allocation for 2024/25 is £1.076m – an increase of £37k (3.6%) on the current year's allocation of £1,039k.

Final allocation for next financial year is expected to be confirmed by the DfE in December, along with confirmation of the government arranged licences to be top-sliced. An assumption of a 3% increase on current licence costs gives £32k additional funding (3.7%) to the LA for 2024/25 in comparison to the current year, which will provide a small contribution to pay and other inflation costs incurred.

2024/25 Draft Central School Services Block (CSSB)

December 2023

.01 Purpose of the Report

This report is to request that Schools Forum support the Council's proposed allocation of the Central School Services Block (CSSB) as contributory funding for the statutory education functions that must be delivered by the local authority for 2024/25.

.02 Recommendations

Schools Forum is asked to:

1. Note the provisional 2024/25 budget allocation for the Central School Services Block (CSSB) of £1,075,657
2. Note the planning assumption made of a 3% uplift on government arranged licences to £169,258
3. Approve the proposed budget allocation from the remainder of the CSSB as follows:
 - a. Statutory and Regulatory Duties £505,000
 - b. Education Welfare £117,000
 - c. Asset Management £49,000
 - d. Other Ongoing Duties £236,000
4. Approve that any further adjustment required following notification of the final CSSB allocation and licences for 2024/25 will be amended from (a) above.

.03 Background

The Department of Education (DfE) introduced a new block in the DSG allocation known as the Central School Services Block (CSSB) in 2018/19, to fund local authorities for the statutory duties they hold for both maintained schools and academies.

The CSSB brought together funding previously allocated through the retained duties element of the former Education Services Grant (ESG) and funding for ongoing central functions, such as school admissions, previously top-sliced from the Schools Block.

The provisional CSSB allocation for 2024/25 is £1.076m, an increase of £37k (3.6%) on the current year's allocation of £1,039k.

The CSSB provides a contribution to the full cost of the statutory services provided by the Council, costing around £2m, and consequently a significant proportion of the cost is funded from general fund budgets raised through local council tax collection.

.04 2024/25 Proposed Budget Allocation

The Council proposes to use the CSSB to fund statutory services largely in line with that approved by Schools Forum for the current financial year.

The cost of the various licences which are determined nationally and allocated centrally to local authorities is not yet known, therefore for planning purposes a 3% uplift on current year costs has been assumed, increasing the cost from £164k to £169k. Based on the provisional CSSB allocation, this cost assumption gives £32k additional funding (3.7%) to the LA for 2024/25 in comparison to the current year, which will provide a small contribution to pay and other inflation costs incurred.

The proposed allocation of the provisional CSSB is included in Appendix A. The figures do not represent the full cost of each service, the table represents an internal allocation of contributions only.

There are many education services offered to schools like educational psychology, various therapies and other services which were previously funded by the Education Support Grant, that the Council continues to provide without any additional funding from the DSG.

.05 Summary

The Central School Services Block (CSSB) covers funding allocated to LAs to carry out central functions on behalf of pupils in both maintained schools and academies.

The provisional Central Support Services Block allocation for 2024/25 is £1.076m, an increase of £37k (3.6%) on the current year’s allocation of £1,039k.

Final allocation for next financial year is expected to be confirmed by the DfE in December, along with confirmation of the government arranged licences to be top-sliced. An assumption of a 3% increase on current licence costs gives £32k additional funding (3.7%) to the LA for 2024/25 in comparison to the current year, which will provide a small contribution to pay and other inflation costs incurred.

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	Description of Service	Budget 2023/24 £'000	Draft Budget 2024/25 £'000
Statutory & regulatory duties	Director of Children's Services, education staff and planning for the education service as a whole.	187	219
	Revenue budget preparation, preparation of information on income and expenditure relating to education, and external audit relating to education. Authorisation and monitoring of expenditure not met from schools' budget shares. Formulation and review of local authority schools funding formula. Internal audit and other tasks related to the authority's Chief Finance Officer's responsibilities under Section 151 of LGA 1972 except duties specifically related to maintained schools.	117	117
	Health & Safety	12	12
	Standing Advisory Committees for Religious Education (SACREs).	7	7
	Provision of information to or at the request of the Crown other than relating specifically to maintained schools.	150	150
	Education Welfare	Functions in relation to the exclusion of pupils from schools, excluding any provision for education to excluded pupils. School Attendance Responsibilities regarding the employment of children	117

	Description of Service	Budget 2023/24 £'000	Draft Budget 2024/25 £'000
Asset Management	Management of the Local Authority's capital programme including preparation and review of an asset management plan, and negotiation and management of private finance transactions	39	39
	General landlord duties for all buildings owned by the local authority , including those leased to academies	10	10
Other ongoing	Copyright Licences *	164	169
	School Forum servicing	4	4
	School Admission – duties relating to the admissions process	232	232
TOTAL **		1,039,875	1,075,657

* Assumed 3% uplift on current year cost

** Contribution towards total annual cost of statutory services, circa £2m.

