

**APPROVAL OF CENTRAL SCHOOL SERVICES BLOCK 2020-21**

*Report of the Director of Children's Services*

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To seek the approval of the Forum for the Central Schools Services Block for 2020/21

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Forum is asked to agree the 2020-21 central budgets listed in Table 1 in section 4.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The Central Schools Services Block has to be agreed annually by the Schools Forum.
- 3.2 For 2019-20 the Forum agreed a number of central budgets in the central school services block. These fall under the following headings:
- a) Admissions and Appeals
  - b) Servicing of Schools Forums
  - c) Former Retained Duties ESG
  - d) Combined Services –School Family workers
  - e) Payment of fees for pupils without SEN in Independent Schools
  - f) Licenses arranged nationally by the DfE
- 3.3 A separate DSG allocation is provided by DfE to meet the costs of CSSB services. The allocation in 2019/20 was £5.727m and in 2020/21 it is projected to be £5.792m
- 3.4 The CSSB includes ongoing responsibilities and the historical commitment for school family workers. The school family workers budget is funded from

carry forward, and an allocation of carry forward from the CSSB has been proposed as part of the overall budget strategy.

#### 4. Central Budgets Requested for Approval

- 4.1 As regards the other ongoing central services, Forum has in the past agreed that the cost of these services needs in total to equal the allocation by DfE of CSSB DSG. The level of DSG per pupil allocated for 2020/21 has not been uplifted for inflation, although the extra DSG resulting from the increase in pupil numbers provides a limited additional resource for cost and demand pressures. It is currently estimated that the CSSB budgets for ongoing functions shown below will exceed the CSSB DSG block by £138k, equivalent to the contribution to support the admissions appeals service. It is proposed to fund this from additional use of carry forward in 2020-21.
- 4.2 Adopting this approach, Table 1 below summarises the 2020-21 central budgets that the Forum is asked to agree for the CSSB. For comparison the 2019-20 budget figures for these items (excluding the transitional use of £89k of carry forward to support the appeals service budget) are also shown.

**Table 1: Central School Services and School Blocks Centrally Retained Budgets**

	2019-20 Budget (excluding use of carry forward) £000	2020/21 Budget £000	Change £000
<b>CSSB Ongoing Functions</b>			
1. Admissions & Integration	1,745	1,850	105
2. Appeals administration	221		(221)
Admission appeals		138	138
Exclusion Appeals		30	30
3. Servicing of Schools Forum	30	30	0
4. Boarding Pathfinder	12	12	0
5. DfE arranged Licenses	965	995	30
6. SACRE	25	20	(5)
6. Former ESG retained duties	2,878	2,854	(24)
<b>Total ongoing functions</b>	<b>5,876</b>	<b>5,929</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>CSSB Historical Commitment</b>			
6) School Family Workers	891	891	0
<b>Grand Total CSSB</b>	<b>6,767</b>	<b>6,820</b>	<b>53</b>

- 4.3 The remainder of this section gives further details about the central budgets requested for approval.

#### 4.4 **Admissions & Integration** – Proposed Budget £1.850m

Forum agreed in earlier meetings this year to increase staffing within the Integration Team and associated budgets to support managed moves by £138,000. This is reflected in the table above. (The 2019-20 budget incorporated the part year cost of this increase amounting to £69k. Therefore, the further increase for Integration in 2020-21 is £69k).

Additionally, a 2% uplift for inflation has been applied to the admissions and integration budget.

#### 4.5 **Appeals administration** – Proposed budget £168k

Elsewhere on this agenda is a report dealing in more detail with the administration of admission appeals. The budget proposed here is made up of an on-going element of £30k in respect of the central funding of exclusion appeals, and an element of £138k which is intended to be for the coming year only. The budget for the service is progressively reducing over time and this year will be less than last.

#### 4.6 **Servicing of Schools Forum** – Proposed Budget £30k

This is the budget for support for the Schools Forum by County Council officers plus venue costs. (This budget was reduced by £10k in 2018-19 after an underspend was recorded).

#### 4.7 **Payment of Fees to Independent Schools for Pupils without SEN – Boarding Pathfinder** – Proposed budget £12k

The Boarding Pathfinder Project is a national scheme that has been promoted to all local authorities by both the last and current governments to offer an alternative way to support disadvantaged children and families in crisis. Only a very small number of children meet the criteria for this support. In recent years, the Lead Adviser to the Virtual School has been successful in securing significant reductions in fees and therefore the budget has been reduced accordingly.

#### 4.8 **DfE Arranged Licenses** – Proposed Budget £995k

The DfE operates an arrangement whereby the main licences relevant to schools are procured nationally to drive best value for money. This arrangement is expected to continue in 2020/21 and the central budget is requested to fund this license charge. The cost of DfE arranged licences in 2020/21 was £965k. However, some increase is expected in view of the increase in pupil numbers and inflationary pressures and therefore an additional £30k is requested.

#### 4.9 **SACRE** – Proposed Budget £20k

Last year's budget indicated that there would be a £5k reduction in the contribution for SACRE in 2020-21.

#### **4.10 Former ESG retained duties – Proposed Budget £2.854m**

Whilst general duties ESG has been cut, the former retained duties ESG was transferred into the CSSB block. This funding is to fulfil responsibilities for all pupils regardless of whether they attend a maintained school or academy. The full allocation of this funding is required to enable core services to schools to be continued. Retained duties responsibilities include education strategy, preparation of revenue budgets, discharge of financial responsibilities, provision of an attendance service, oversight of elective home education, general landlord duties and a number of other services. This includes an item of £853,000 contribution to the costs of relevant services delivered by HfL, as previously agreed by Forum.

An inflation uplift of 2% has been applied to the budget. (The 2019-20 budget included a one- off allocation of £80k in respect of changes to the Herts Grid for Learning.)

#### **4.11 Historical commitment–School Family Workers – Proposed budget £891k**

Historical commitments budgets can only continue to be held if they comply with DfE criteria (including the requirement that the budget cannot increase between years). A paper to the June 2018 Forum meeting (item 9) provided details of this budget, including demonstrating how the school family worker budget complies with DfE guidance. Officers are investigating whether a small amount of additional funding for SFWs might be provided from the Early Years block in recognition of work undertaken with families with early years children and an update will be provided in January.

### **5. Conclusions and Recommendations:**

The Forum is asked:

1. To agree for 2020/21 the central budgets listed in Table 1.