

FALLING ROLLS FUNDING

Report of the Director of Children's Services

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1 Purpose

- 1.1 To seek approval to retain centrally the existing £1.5m allocation to falling rolls funding.

2 Summary

- 2.1 At Forum's meeting in September it was agreed as part of the budget strategy to retain centrally within the Schools Block £1.5m for Falling Rolls funding. It was agreed that officers would report further on the use of this funding.
- 2.2 Whilst in the coming year only one school will continue to be eligible to receive funding, the problems which this funding was intended to mitigate or address remain substantial if not even more challenging. We do not yet have solutions for these, beyond continued financial support for small secondary schools; but this cannot be indefinitely sustained. It is proposed, however, to retain the current allocation to support any future strategy to find a new solution for the financial problems caused by small scale.

3 Recommendation

- 3.1 Forum is asked to agree to retain centrally the existing £1.5m allocation to falling rolls funding for 2020/21.

4 Background

- 4.1 Falling Rolls funding of up to £500k has been available for small secondary schools in areas of demographic growth, where current rolls and budgets are not sustainable but school places will be needed in the future. The criteria for determining allocations for the Falling Rolls Fund have been previously

agreed by Forum. DfE guidance requires that Forum is consulted on the allocations themselves, which are worked out on the already agreed criteria.

- 4.2 In 2019/20 £1.5m is allocated to the Falling Rolls Fund with 3 schools meeting the eligibility criteria in receipt of £500k each. One of the schools, School A, no longer meets the eligibility criteria for funding in 2020/21 by reason of a decline in its Ofsted Inspection judgement and another school, School B, is joining a multi-academy trust and as a result of other linked changes is also no longer eligible. The third school, School C, remains eligible.
- 4.3 Despite no longer meeting the eligibility criteria School A continues to be impacted by low pupil numbers and sustainable solutions are required for both School A and School C for the longer term. We are anticipating that there will be a potential cost to facilitate these. By providing one-off financial support to these two schools we would expect the schools to grow and no longer require future funding support.
- 4.4 Before any specific proposals are made and implements, we would need to return to Forum for support and approval. However, at this stage we wished to re-affirm the need to retain the current financial provision for a further year.

Conclusions:

Forum is asked to support the recommendation above.