

CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

MINUTES AND DECISION RECORD

23 January 2024

The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

Present:

Councillor: Jim Lindridge (In the Chair)

Councillors Cowie, Harrison, Holbrook, Little and Sharp.

Co-opted Members: Joanne Wilson, RC Diocese representative.
Zoe Westley – Special School Head representative.

Officers: Sally Robinson, Executive Director of Children's and Joint
Commissioning Services
Julie Reed, School Place Planning, Admissions and School Capital
Manager
Sandra Shears, Head of Finance - Corporate and Schools
Amanda Whitaker, Democratic Services Team

38. Apologies for Absence

School Heads Representatives: Adam Palmer (Secondary),
Parent Governor Representative: Martin Pout
Primary School Representative, Sue Sharpe
C of E Diocese Representative, Tracey Gibson,

39. Declarations of Interest

None

40. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2023 were received.

With reference to minute 25 of the meeting held on 14 November 2023 - Dedicated Schools Grant (Former Education Services Grant Rate Per Pupil) – Disapplication Request – the Committee was advised that the disapplication request to the Secretary of State to set the Education Services General Duties rate at £60 per pupil/place for 2024/25, had been approved.

41. Dedicated Schools Grant – School Budget Shares 2024/25 and Central School Services Block 2024/25

(Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services and Director of Finance, IT and Digital)

Type of decision

Key Decision - CJCS 139/23 tests (i) and (ii) applies

Purpose of report

To provide details of the 2024/25 schools block funding allocation and to propose school budget shares for 2024/25.

Issue(s) for consideration

The Committee was referred to the table included in the report which outlined Hartlepool's Schools Block Indicative Allocation which showed the Hartlepool Schools Block allocation of £81.132m based on October 2023 census numbers which was an increase of £1.862m for 2024/25, or 2.3%.

The Committee was advised that the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) of the DSG funds local authorities for the statutory duties and other commitments they hold for maintained and academy schools. CSSB funding of £0.692m for 2024/25 (£0.711m in 2023/24) has been published by ESFA on 19 December 2023 based on October 2023 census numbers. Schools' Forum is required to agree each element of spending against the CSSB on an annual basis. At their meeting on 21 September 2023, Schools' Forum agreed to fund the elements amounting to £0.595m shown in the table set out in the report.

It was noted that at the meeting on 23 November 2023, Schools' Forum had voted unanimously to apply an MFG of 0.5% (the maximum allowed), along with an appropriate cap. The cap had been calculated at 2.5%. ESFA made a late change to the National Funding Formula (NFF) in 2023/24. The funding factor for Sparsity became mandatory and authorities were obliged to allocate a minimum of 10% of the NFF factor to eligible schools. Two schools within Hartlepool were eligible for sparsity funding within the NFF. The 2024/25 NFF included sparsity funding and the same two primary schools were eligible. Allocation of the sparsity funding had to be on the basis of a minimum 20% of the NFF factor but could be up to 100% at the discretion of Schools' Forum. At their meeting on 23 November 2023, Schools' Forum asked for further budget models affecting the sparsity factor so they could consider options available. At the meeting on 7 December 2023, Schools' Forum voted unanimously to allocate 100% of the sparsity factor to the schools affected. This decision meant that Hartlepool continued to follow the "hard" formula that mirrors the NFF.

A table included in the report summarised the proposed school budget for 2024/25. Individual school budgets for 2024/25 would mirror the NFF plus the transfer of funding from CSSB. The table included a comparison with 2023/24 individual school budgets and to provide a meaningful comparison, the MSAG funding had been included in the 2023/24 budget

The increase in funding of mainstream schools compared to that of special schools, which had not received an increase in funding since 2012, was highlighted together with the implications on top up funding by the Local Authority.

Decision

The Committee:

- a) Noted the contents of this report;
- b) Noted the agreement by Schools' Forum to centrally retain funding of £0.595m, with the residual £0.097m being transferred to the Schools Block as outlined in paragraph 5.5;
- c) Noted the agreement by Schools' Forum to transfer the 2024/25 growth funding of £0.334m to the High Needs Block as outlined in paragraph 4.2;
- d) Noted the recommendation by Schools' Forum to allocate the sparsity factor at 100% in line with the NFF as outlined in section 6 of the report;
- e) Agreed the MFG to be used for 2024/25 as outlined in paragraph 6.1 of this report and noting the recommendation from Schools' Forum of applying an MFG of 0.5%, alongside an appropriate cap which has been calculated at 2.5%;
- f) Approved the ISB for 2024/25 as summarised in the table at paragraph 6.2 of this report.
- g) Agreed that letters be sent to lobby the Secretary of State and the Director General, Department for Education, with regard to the funding of Special Schools.

42. School Admission Arrangements for 2025-26 – *(Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

Key Decision - CJCS 137/23

Purpose of report

To consider and agree the proposed admission arrangements for community schools in Hartlepool for 2025-26 academic year. As the local authority, the Council is the admission authority it is therefore responsible for determining the admission arrangements for these schools.

Issue(s) for consideration

It was reported that all admission authorities were required to determine admission arrangements annually, the background and statutory requirements of which were set out in the report.

As Admissions Authority for Kingsley Primary School, the Local Authority is required by the School Admissions Code 2021 to consult on a reduction of the published admission number for entry into Reception for 2025/2026 academic year. A consultation was carried out in accordance with the Code. The proposal is to reduce the admission number from 60 to 55 from September 2025. The reason for the reduction is that the school is receiving a high level of children with special educational needs & disabilities (SEND) and this means extra space and resources are required to accommodate these children. There were no responses received at the end of the consultation period. The Committee was asked to consider the proposed changes to Kingsley Primary School admissions arrangements.

Appended to the report were the published admission number for each community school and the admission arrangements including the over-subscription criteria in respect of community schools.

Decision

The Committee approved the following in respect of community schools, when determining the admission arrangements for 2025-26:

- The admission numbers, which includes a reduction for Kingsley Primary School, as detailed in Appendix 1;
- The current admission arrangements, detailed in Appendix 2.

43. Pupil Performance 2023 – Headline Indicator Summary *(Executive Director of Children's and Joint Commissioning Services)*

Type of decision

For information

Purpose of report

To provide a summary of the pupil performance measures for Hartlepool from the public examinations in the summer of 2023.

Issue(s) for consideration

The report provided a four year comparison from 2019 to 2023 (Pre COVID and the last test results) within Hartlepool, and provided a comparator against national outcomes. The published pupil performance measures for 2023, along with national averages, were presented by way of an Appendix. Hartlepool's quartile placement for each 2023 measure was also presented in the table included in the Appendix. A narrative summary was set out in the report with salient issues highlighted by the Executive Director.

It was noted that currently the DfE are working with the education sector across Hartlepool as part of the Priority Investment Area programme to help address areas where there are weaker attainment and progress outcomes. A Delivery Plan had been developed by the DfE which covered four key funded areas, details of which were set out in the report

Whilst reiterating this Committee's stated ambition that every school in Hartlepool will be graded at least GOOD by Ofsted, it was highlighted that education involved more than those areas identified in the report and the factors/challenges which were barriers to education. Appreciation was expressed to school staff.

Decision

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

The meeting concluded at 4.30 p.m.

H MARTIN

DIRECTOR OF LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN RESOURCES

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