
Dudley Schools Forum – 20th June 2023

Report of the Director of Children’s Services

Combined Services Budget Outturn 2022/23

Purpose

1. To provide Schools Forum with financial data and service provider information in respect of the Combined Services Budget for the 2022/23 financial year ended 31 March 2023.

Schools Forum Role and Responsibilities

2. The Forum is the ‘guardian’ of the local Schools Budget, and its distribution among schools and other bodies, and therefore must be closely involved throughout the development process.

Recommendation

3. Schools Forum to note the report in respect of the Combined Services budget outturn for 2022/23.

Background

4. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funds the Schools Budget. The Schools Budget is a combination of centrally retained budgets together with the ISB (Individual Schools Budget).
5. The DSG is a ring-fenced grant and can only be applied to meet expenditure properly included in the Schools Budget, as defined by the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023.
6. The School Funding Regulations include a provision for “Combined Budgets” under the types of funding that can be retained centrally from the DSG. Prior to 2013/14 it was conditional that the Schools Forum agreed the amounts involved and ensured that there is an educational benefit to the pupils.



7. From 2013/14, in line with the School Funding Reforms, any budget deductions under the Combined Budget provision must not exceed the amount deducted for the previous funding period. This means that no new Combined Budgets can be allowed and existing funding must be constrained in value to the budget set aside in the previous funding period.
8. For 2022/23 Schools Forum has exercised its authority to allocate central funds for:
 - a. Astley Burf Outdoor Activity Centre
 - b. School Visits
 - c. Education Liaison
 - d. Place Planning
 - e. Safeguarding
 - f. Statistical Work
9. Table 1 details the 2022/23 actual expenditure, against a budget of £182,000. Owing to the reduction in the Central School Services Block DSG allocation for 2023/24, these Combined Budgets are ceasing at the end of 2022/23. The narrative in the table below indicates, as well as the spend in 2022/23, the service proposals for 2023/24 and future years.

Table 1 – 2022/23 Final Outturn for the Approved Combined Budgets

Details	2022/23 DSG Outturn £	Description of Provision
Astley Burf Outdoor Activity Centre	12,000	Astley Burf is the outdoor adventure centre owned and run by Dudley Council for the children of Dudley, offering both residential and day visits for schools and children’s groups. Although it has been impacted by the pandemic, a new commercial business plan has been developed to reinvigorate the centre and drive up school awareness, interest, bookings and usage. From 2023/24 onwards, it is expected that the provision will be self-financing.

School Visits	10,000	A traded service to support advice and guidance on School Visits has been developed and it is envisaged that this will be self-funding from 2023/24.
Education Liaison	44,000	<p>This allocation has provided funding for an Education Liaison Officer to support schools with their safeguarding remit, including the following duties:</p> <p>Good understanding of the role of DSL and safeguarding/CP within schools and EY settings</p> <p>Attendance at DART meetings daily and action any tasks to update schools/Early Years setting</p> <p>Operation Encompass – daily admin, contact Schools & Early Years with notifications and liaise with DSLs to discuss pastoral support with child/YP</p> <p>Complete MASH checks with Schools/Early Years settings/CME team/EHE & GRT/Education Admissions (Synergy/Tribal)</p> <p>Engage with schools/Early Years settings and support with threshold pathway and referral process</p> <p>Collate and present accurate data from DART/Op Encompass/MARAC referrals, themes trends, etc. to SERG and DSL Forum and DSPP.</p> <p>From 2023/24, this post will be funded from core budgets and income from the traded service for school safeguarding training.</p>
Place Planning	40,000	The budget for place planning has supported staff in the Integrated Commissioning Hub. The current reorganisation of the Commissioning

		Service will rationalise service provision and increase efficiencies.
Safeguarding	42,000	The safeguarding training role will continue and will be provided as a traded service as previously proposed.
Statistical Work	34,000	The budget for statistical work has supported staff in the Integrated Commissioning Hub. The current reorganisation of the Commissioning Service will rationalise service provision and increase efficiencies.
Total	182,000	

HTCF - Budget Working Group Discussed – Yes – 13 June 2023.

Finance

10. From 1 April 2006, the Schools Budget has been funded by a direct grant; Dedicated School Grant (DSG).

Law

11. The Schools Forum is a statutory decision making and consultative body constituted in line with the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, and its associated regulations, to enable members of the local school community to work in partnership with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council when making decisions about school funding and finances.

The funding of schools is prescribed by the Department for Education (DfE) through the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023.

Risk Management

12. There are no material risks to the Council's Risk Management Framework resulting from the contents of this report.

Equality Impact

13. This report has no direct implications for the Council's commitment to equality and diversity.

Human Resources / Organisational Development

14. This report has no direct implications for human resources, organisational development or service transformation.

Commercial/Procurement

15. There is no impact on the potential to commercially trade and no impact on our customer base.

Environment / Climate Change

16. This report has no direct implications on the environment or the Council's work in addressing Climate and achieving Net Zero target by 2041.

Council Priorities and Projects

17. The 2022/2025 Council Plan is clear in its ambitions for educational outcomes including raising skills, educational and work potential, increasing good or better schools and closing the gap for disadvantaged pupils. This report relates to the use of the Dedicated Schools Grant funding to support the educational outcomes of children and young people in the borough.



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