

REPORT FOR SCHOOLS FORUM

1.	Date of meeting:	Friday 24 November 2017
2.	Title:	Dedicated Schools Grant - Admissions and Appeals Funding
3.	Directorate:	Children and Young People's Services

1. Background

- 1.1 This report proposes a revised model for funding with a change from a mixture of DSG and traded services to a DSG funded model creating a saving to schools and academies for School Planning, Admissions and Appeals Services.
- 1.2 The creation of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding blocks in 2012/13 restricted some central services that could be funded from the DSG thereafter to historical levels. The Department for Education (DfE) guidance for 2017/18 has since relaxed this rule for Admissions.
- 1.3 The Local Authority subsequently made a request to Schools Forum for a contribution from all schools totalling £154k towards funding to maintain the statutory duty to coordinate admission arrangements with all admission authorities within the local authority area and with neighbouring authorities. This request was approved by Schools Forum for 2017/18.
- 1.4 Admissions and Appeals Services are offered to all Schools and Academies as a traded service either by Service Level Agreement (SLA) for Academies and Service Level Entitlement (SLE) for Maintained Schools. All but 2 schools/academies in Rotherham have SLA's / SLE's with the Council for Admissions and all schools/academies have agreements in relation to appeals.
- 1.5 The total cost of the School Planning, Admission and Appeals Services is £422k plus £126.00 per admission appeal to meet costs for case preparation, clerking, premises, translation costs, panel member expenses, legal advice and other associated costs. There are between 450 and 600 Admission Appeals heard annually meaning that the current charging arrangement would generate a charge of between £56.7k to £75.6k annually under current financial arrangements once maintained schools are brought in to this schedule from 2018.
- 1.6 The costs are currently met for the services through a funding allocation of £154k from DSG (agreed by Schools Forum for 2017/18), £84k revenue linked to SLE's (*which the Local Authority intends to recharge maintained schools to recoup from 2018, plus the cost of admission appeals at the current rate of £126.00 per appeal*) and £184k from income from academy SLA's totalling £422k and £126.00 per admission appeal. The total cost of Admission and Appeals services is £422k plus between £56.7k to £75.6k for appeals dependant on academic year volume.

- 1.6 The variation between the proposed total cost of services of £450k from DSG and the current charge (£422k + £56.7k to £75.6k) includes the costs for relief clerk cover, raising invoices, processing accounts, ad-hoc legal advice etc which would create a saving to schools and academies of between £27.7k and £47.6k should the proposal be approved to fund the whole service from DSG as opposed to trading via SLA's.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 Schools Forum are asked to consider 2 options regarding the funding of School Admissions and Appeals services for schools:

2.1.1 **Option 1**

Maintain the current funding arrangements outlined in section 1 of this report

2.1.2 **Option 2**

Replace the current funding model with a single funding arrangement from DSG of £450k to fund Planning, Admissions and Appeals Services for all schools and academies, reducing administration and staff cover costs by removing the need for traded financial transactions and passing on a saving to schools.

3. Key actions and relevant timelines

- 3.1 The current DSG allocation funding agreement expires at the end of the 2017/18 financial year and traded services around admissions are invoiced in 2 parts – April to August (5/12 of total cost) and September to March (7/12 of total cost) annually. Invoices for Appeals are sent on a pay as you go basis. With this in mind, schools and academies will need to be notified of the financial decision in advance of 1st April 2018.

4. Risks and mitigation

- 4.1 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to ensure a sufficiency of school places in its local area and to coordinate admission arrangements with all admissions authorities in its own area and with neighbouring local authorities. Given the current traded services model and dependency on 'buy back' rates, there is uncertainty on an annual basis around the staffing profile to meet the coordination responsibilities. A fixed model of funding would allow a stable structure for planning, admissions and appeals services and create a saving to schools.

5. Recommendations to Schools Forum

- 4.1 It is recommended that Schools Forum approve option 2 and replace the current SLA / SLE trading model with funding the service from DSG at a cost of £450k generating a saving to schools (£27.7k to £47.6k annually) as outlined in the report and minimising financial transactions.

6. Name and contact details

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