

Warrington Schools Forum

Agenda

Date: Tuesday 18 June 2024

Time: 4.30 pm – 6.30 pm

Venue: via Teams

	Item	Enc / Verbal	Decision; Discussion; Information	Lead
1.	Apologies and welcome			Chair
2.	Minutes from the previous meeting and matters arising (19 March 2024)	Enc		Chair
3.	SLAs – response to in-year increase (Invited as action from previous meeting)	Verbal	Discussion/ Information	Stephen McNulty
4.	Outturn Report	Enc.	Information	Emma Norman
5.	Maintained Balances	Enc.	Information	Emma Norman
6.	DSG High Needs update	Enc.	Information	Emma Norman
7.	Academy Conversions (update)	Enc.	Discussion/ Information	Felicity Wisken
8.	AOB			Chair
9.	<p>Meeting schedule for 2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 October 2024 <p>All Tuesdays at 4.30 – 6.30 pm via Teams</p> <p>Suggested dates for 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 January 2025 (face to face) • 18 March 2025 • 17 June 2025 • 14 October 2025 			

Warrington Schools Forum

Minutes – 19 March 2024 (via Teams)

Draft to be confirmed June 2024

Membership

Membership with differentiated voting rights ~ Total Membership of 28, of whom 22 are entitled to vote on funding formula issues										
Sector Representation (22)	Appointed by the Council following election by:	Member	Dates and Attendance							
			11 October 2022	17 January 2023	21 March 2023	20 June 2023	10 October 2023	16 January 2024	19 March 2024	18 June 2024
Maintained Nursery School Senior Staff (1)	Primary Headteachers Group	Marcia Atherton	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Special School Staff (1)	Special School Headteachers Group	Lucinda Duffy	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Special School Governor (1)	Governors Forum	Hazel Coen	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	
PRU (1)	PRU Management Board	Lindsay Regan	A	A	A	A	X	A	A	
Academy – all phases (9) Agreed this should be: (5 secondary including UTC) (4 primary)	Academy Schools (secondary)	Gwyn Williams	P	P	P	P	A	P	A	
		Vacant	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
		John Carlin	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	
		Christian Wilcocks	P	P	A	A	S	P	P	
	Academy Schools (primary)	Gary Cunningham CHAIR - Schools Forum	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
		Jane Rooney (from March 2024)	A	A	A	P	A	-	P	
		Cath Cooke	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
		Craig Burgess	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	
	UTC	Chris Hatherall	A	P	A	A	P	A	P	
	Maintained Primary School Sector (6)	WAPH and Governors Forum	Siobhan Bentley	P	A	P	A	P	P	A
Kathryn Berry			A	A	P	P	P	P	A	
Andy Hayes (from March 2024)			A	P	P	P	P	-	A	
Ian Moss			A	P	P	A	A	P	P	
Janet Lazarus Governor			P	P	P	A	X	P	P	
Donna Kendal Governor			A	P	A	A	P	P	A	
Maintained Secondary School Sector (2)	WASCL	Chris Hunt	P	P	A	A	S	P	P	
		Ed McGlinchey	P	P	A	A	A	A	A	
Private Voluntary and Independent Providers (1)	PVI Providers Forum	Kelda Willians	P	A	A	A	X	A	A	

Representing	Member	Dates and Attendance							
		11 October 2022	17 January 2023	21 March 2023	20 June 2023	10 October 2023	16 January 2024	19 March 2024	18 June 2024
Non-Schools Members (6)									
Anglican Diocese (1)	Jane Griffiths	A	A	A	X	X	P	A	
Roman Catholic Diocese (1)	Vacant	A	A	A	X	-	-	-	
16-19 Institutions (1)	Damian McGuire	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Parent Governor (1)	Vacant	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
NEU (Trades Union)	Lucie Humphreys	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
NASUWT (Trades Union)	Laura Watson	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	

Representing		11 October 2022	17 January 2023	21 March 2023	20 June 2023	10 October 2023	16 January 2024	19 March 2024	18 June 2024
		Warrington Borough Council							
Director of Education and Community Services (Deputy DCS)	Paula Worthington	P	A	P	P	A	P	P	
Head of Service – Quality Education and Learning	Louise Atkin	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Finance Manager	Janet Davies (from Jan 2024)	S	P	P	P	-	P	P	
Senior Accountant (Schools)	Emma Norman (from March 2024)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
Executive Member for Children and Young People's Services	Cllr Sarah Hall	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	

Key:

P ~ Present

A ~ Apologies

X ~ Absent with no apologies

C ~ Meeting cancelled

S ~ Substitute

- ~ Vacancy

O ~ Observer

Presenting item:

Simon Bleckly

for item 3

Alison Purcell

for item 4

Minutes:

Gill Sykes

1. Apologies and Welcome

The chairperson, Gary Cunningham, welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising (from 16 January 2024)

The minutes were accepted as a true record and the following was noted:

- Page 4: Noted that the clerk for admissions appeals has returned from maternity leave. Adam Kellock was going to ask the clerk to speak to headteachers to give feedback following appeals.
Action: Paula to follow up with Adam Kellock.
- Page 6: Query raised about the three schools going through the academy conversion process and how this went with the costs. Louise noted she was not aware of academy charges. Paula shared that she had a meeting with the DfE and raised the issue that the grant has not increased. There was acknowledgement from the DfE, they said they were aware of this.
- Page 9: Hazel clarified that although she mentioned Green Lane school she was commenting about all schools in all school settings.

3. Internal Audit Plan

Simon Bleckly presented his report to the forum which shows the main findings from the school audits carried out by Internal Audit since the previous report in March 2023 and provides an overall opinion on the governance and control frameworks in place in schools, supporting the completion of the Council's Annual Governance Statement.

The following key points were shared:

- Last year there was discussion about resource level impacting on the ability to conduct school audits. Formal comment was received from Schools Forum expressing concern and was included in a report presented to the Audit and Governance Committee in November 2023 highlighting the impact of reduced internal audit resource. Approval was given for extra resource at the level of auditor to do school visits.
- The intention is to catch up on school reviews and are conscious some schools have not been audited for up to 10 years. There is value in having a review of finance, governance and control frameworks on a more regular basis.
- A relatively low number of audits have been completed so far (seven) and a couple more are planned. There is good news with the findings, opinions are still mainly high or substantial (with the exception of one school) and is testament to the way schools are handling money in difficult circumstances.
- Opinions are generally good with recommendations around financial management and control. It is acknowledged that schools find it difficult to have separation of duties and oversight. There are no high or critical recommendations which is good.
- There is one school where a full review is planned due to serious concerns being raised and the audit team have already started supporting the Interim Executive Board (IEB).
- One key element of the revised Global Standards is a requirement for internal audit to ensure that all recommendations arising from reviews are followed up to assess whether they have been implemented.
- If recruitment for the new posts is successful we hope that the testing programme for 2024/25 will mean more schools can be audited and then be able to return to the 5 yearly cycle of audits.

Simon noted that the audit report concluded that, subject to the limitation in scope imposed by the number of schools that we have been able to audit, and the one school causing concern, there is Satisfactory Assurance that Warrington schools have effective systems of governance and internal control in place.

Questions/comments:

- Gary referred to the work being done with the IEB and asked if the statement is in the conclusion or will it be impacted on next year's conclusion. Simon noted that it will be picked up in next year's report. Work being done so far will be treated as an assessment within that school and for the IEB to see key risks. When the normal audit is conducted this will lead to a formal opinion and reported back.

- Query raised about if there is a way of escalating to audit when budget officers have concerns following monitoring visits. Emma noted that the finance team do report to the senior accountant, they liaise with audit and at the KASUR (keeping all schools under review) meetings it is all raised as part of a wider picture. If we have concerns they will be raised and advice sought from audit.
- Janet asked how schools are chosen to audit. Simon noted that his deputy is making sure we have the links with finance and other areas in education, picking up risks and identifying which schools need to be audited. It has been difficult over the last few years due to capacity but we will now try to clear the backlog of audits.
- Louise noted that the particular situation where audit was working with the IEB was initiated by education and Louise had a conversation with the audit team about flexibility in the system and to include Emma. Simon noted there is scope for better working together.
- Hazel thanked Simon for his comprehensive report and the council for putting additional funding in this area, it is worth it for financial probity.

Recommendations:

- (i) The forum is asked to note and comment on the contents of the report. **NOTED**

4. Proposed Early Years funding rates

Alison Purcell presented her report to the forum which provides Schools Forum with information of the proposed early year funding for 2024-25, following agreement from the Early Years Single Funding Formula Group (EYSFFG) meeting, on 11/01/24. The following key points were shared:

- The proposed rates were well received based on the 2023 census. There are lots of changes this year and next year with early education and there will be a few more census updates. They may not follow the typical census format and we may need to request extra information from schools to align with their original estimates.
- Early education funding for 2, 3 and 4 year olds will change and in September 2024 will expand to include working parents of children aged from 9 months. Alison noted that providers don't currently have the staff to accommodate the new expansion.
- We are not comparing the 2 year old working parent offer and the disadvantaged offer differently as we don't want providers to find one more desirable than the other. Providers were happy with the £7.53 proposed rate and this was accepted at the single funding formula meeting. They agreed with the logic to treat the offer fairly and noted there are ways to support a disadvantaged child and Early Years can give advice about the process.
- The proposed rate of £5.50 for 3 and 4 year olds is an increase of 24p from the current rate and is from April 2024. Members of staff can access deprivation funding and other funding streams to top up where appropriate.

The indicative funding for 2024/25 totals £25.5m and there is a contingency of £56K. The roll out is an unknown as we don't know what the take up will be for under 2 year olds with working parents. We have tried to be sensible with the contingency amount which can be used at our discretion for some 2 year olds, particularly if the family has no recourse to public funds, also we might have a family in receipt of funding and due to a situation out of their control they are no longer eligible. We might feel a need to maintain the standard and routine for the child and keep them in the provision. For children put into emergency foster care and to avoid splitting up siblings then this is the funding pot that could be used to keep them in a provision. Although £56K sounds a lot of money it could be used up very quickly. Requests are considered on a case by case basis through discussion as a team.

From 1 April 2024 working parents of 2 year old children will be able to access 15 hours childcare. They have to meet criteria and it works in the same way. Need to apply the term before to get an eligibility code to give to the provider, every 13 weeks they have to reconfirm their eligibility. From September 2025 those working families will have an increase to 30 hours. Most parents need childcare all year round and the free hours are for a 38 week period over a year. Hours can be banked so could potentially have a free day every so often. Parents can pick and choose where want to go depending on services.

April 2024	Working parents of 2 year olds will have access to 15 hours of free childcare.
September 2024	15 hours of free childcare will be extended to all eligible children above the age of 9 months (the term following turning 9 months)
September 2025	Working parents of children up to the age of 5 years will be able to access 30 hours of free childcare per week.

Alison explained that they are trying to recruit a dedicated team member to help providers. There are two funding pots from the DfE, a capital pot if providers need to physically expand (to create additional places structurally, not for refurbishment costs), whether early years or wraparound and a small pot providers can apply for. There is a criteria and they have to make a business case. One provider is not being favoured over another, the provision should have a sustainable offer, but we don't want to fund it if demand is already met in the area. We are trying to make it as fair and transparent as possible. The DfE has made it clear the service has to be sustainable and realistic.

By September 2026 it is expected that the wraparound expansion will be in place and any parent of primary aged children who wants to access formal childcare between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm should be able to do so. Schools/providers could join together and make a hub, could create EY foundation units with nursery pupils and reception to create more space for older children. A governance group will consider different ideas to get a true representation of what the sector thinks.

Alison noted that if you have anyone you think needs to know more about whether to critique the service you already have, if you would like a presentation to all school staff or for someone to speak to parents about the funding Alison's team can do that. It will give parents the right information at the right time to make informed decisions.

Questions/comments:

- How do schools find out about the pots of money and support Alison's team can offer. Alison noted she has been emailing to offer briefing sessions. Also, if a school has a nursery on site they will automatically be emailed once applications are live.
- If you have any queries please email the team inbox and mark the subject as: funding available CHI-EEFTeam@warrington.gov.uk
- Marcia echoed what Alison has said already and met Kelda Willians as part of the EY Single Funding Formula Group and they were happy with the amounts. It was felt to be a fair spread across the sector.

Recommendations:

- (i) Schools Forum ratify the proposed funding allocation for 2024/25. **AGREED**
- (ii) Following the validated 2024 census, a further report on this funding will be presented to Schools Forum. **NOTED**

5. Membership updates

The chairperson gave an update on forum membership:

- Cath Cooke is leaving and we will need a replacement primary academy rep.
- There is a vacancy for a secondary academy rep and Chris Hunt agreed to take to WASCL for nominations.
- There is a vacancy for a parent governor. Louise agreed to raise this at governors forum on 16 May 2024.
- Subsequent to the meeting Janet Lazarus resigned from Schools Forum, so we will need a primary maintained governor rep.
- Paula noted she has raised attendance at Schools Forum with Councillor Hall and as she is no longer able to attend it was suggested to make the decision to remove Councillor Hall from membership. Laura Watson noted that she has also spoken to Councillor Hall regarding attending Schools Forum and she is updated on schools via other mechanisms. Laura shared that if there is a need for councillor input, she can swap representation during the meeting as she is a councillor too.

The following was suggested:

- For members who have not attended for 12 months, to contact them to find out if they no longer want to be a member. Schools Forum really does need people to attend to see reasoning behind decision making.
- We previously mentioned if a member had not attended the past three meetings to no longer be a member.
- Suggested having membership to be a one year tenure and then refresh the membership.

Paula informed that WAPH Executive had contacted her regarding the timescale for when information from Schools Forum is distributed to members. They are asking for papers to be available earlier in order to have sufficient time before the Schools Forum meeting to consult with the headteacher colleagues they represent. Suggested that this is a conversation to have outside this meeting.

6. School Budget confirmation

Emma Norman presented her report to the forum which illustrates how the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement for Warrington for 2024/25 has been allocated to individual budgets and follows previous funding discussion around the Schools Block of DSG (and the resulting mainstream budgets) at the 16 January 2024 Schools Forum Meeting. The following key points were shared:

- The DSG block allocations have been confirmed by the amounts detailed in the report.
- The ESFA will deduct at source for mainstream academy and High Needs place funding at non-maintained settings.
- There will also be the teachers' pay additional grant (re: pension contributions), applied and in the funding pack. We await further guidance on the additional 5% pension contributions and should get confirmation from the DfE in the early financial year about how it is allocated to schools.
- Application of the EY block was discussed at Item 4 of this Schools Forum meeting.
- HN block pressures were discussed at Item 7 of this Schools Forum meeting. A significant proportion is supporting the increasing EHCPs and trying to resource from the budget we have.
- Detailed information on allocations was sent out on 29 February 2024 along with supporting appendices.

Questions/comments:

- Craig referred to the £1.7m for Committed to Inclusion/graduated response (statutory) support for inclusion and asked for a meeting with Emma to discuss.
- Damian noted that the teachers pensions pay grant calculator on the DfE website came out last week and can be used to calculate for each individual school. It is not looking as good as people might think and is not fully funded from the ones identified so far. It is not vastly different depending on the size of budget. There is no mechanism for putting a claim in. An issue is they are using the per pupil rate.
- John noted there is a portal log in and for his school they are £7K down on what it will cost them.
- Emma noted the calculation is pupil premium and deprivation and because the DfE is using that factor it is not going to be fully funded. For those schools with the finance advisory service SLA they are working with schools. Noted that the funding is lagged.
- Hazel referred to the element 3 funding and noted there is a difference on the table for special schools and asked for a separate meeting with Emma to discuss. Emma noted that we need to make sure it is fair and equitable for all special schools. Lucinda noted there have been conversations previously and it is worth noting there is a difference in the level of need reflected in the level of funding, it is important to review it.
- Emma confirmed she could have a meeting with Craig, Hazel and others after the financial year end, so from May 2024 at the earliest.

Recommendations:

- (i) It is recommended that School Forum Members note the contents of this report. **NOTED**

7. SEN financial pressures – impact on significant projects

Paula Worthington gave a verbal update and explained that finances are incredibly stretched. We have tried to be ambitious around SEND and place planning but as Warrington is one of the lowest funded boroughs this creates difficulties. Paula wanted to let forum members know about some of the work taking place.

- There was a recent SEND State of the Nation workshop to look at complexity of need in SEND and from information in DPs we know of the children coming through the system from EY. Services are under strain due to the complexity of children across all schools and also around places and place sufficiency.
- There are no places left in Warrington and the local authority made a plea for sectors to help and lots of schools offered. There is great practice shared with an incredible amount of goodwill.
- Work around the SEND and AP Provision Board will be brought back to forum. There have been conversations around some of our ambitions to expand in some areas and at the moment we can't do that. We have to recalibrate what we can do this year and look at subsequent years. It has caused incredible frustration and in a meeting with the DfE Paula expressed our frustration that Warrington is promoted as a good practice sector with good working when we are one of the lowest funded boroughs. Paula noted she has raised the issue about Warrington's finances with the Shadow Education Secretary.
- One workshop was around SEND transport and looked at sole occupancy and Post 16 receiving SEND transition. We may have to make hard decisions about using the DfE policy, do we stop children accessing transport which means they may stop accessing school. An exercise showed some children probably shouldn't be on transport but others do need transport to keep them safe, warm, receive education and get access to food. There are conversations happening around this.
- Work is ongoing around the Peace Centre and developing Post 16 and Post 19. With Post 19 to lift children and young people out of dependence on education up to 25 years, which might not be right decision for them. Credibility offer takes them to adulthood and to take control of their lives.
- With place sufficiency part of the challenge is about making sure we have enough places in the borough, which means pushing the boundaries of our current facilities. We were successful in 2019 for an ASD free school but the DfE are still yet to build it. With places at the free school and the Peace Centre also taking a cohort, it would free up places at Woolston for Lucinda and Jo to have some capacity to expand.

Paula shared that we are trying to keep children in the borough until the Peace Centre is ready in September 2025 and the DfE are saying the free school will be ready next year at the latest. We are therefore in a holding period and are reluctant to send children out of borough, travelling some distance on transport and losing connectivity with community and peer groups.

It is a challenging climate and we appreciate this is a sobering message, but we always want to have forum members sighted on the challenges also happening within the council. In the SEND State of the Nation workshop it was mentioned that all our schools are SEND schools and we may need to restart conversations we started in the past and re-route through all schools.

There is a conversation about DPs and DP funding and different categories of need. It's not saying no, it's saying let's have the conversation in the context of we can do some things now and may have to delay other things. We want to bring information to Schools Forum so we will make the decisions jointly together.

Questions/comments:

- Craig noted that the concern is around giving dates but then if children go to the private sector, families could end up going to tribunal and an independent school will cost us vast amounts of money. These timelines have to be met or we won't have SEND provision in Warrington.
- Craig shared that he met the Shadow Schools Minister today and shared his concerns regarding funding challenges.

8. AOB

Query around SLAs:

- Lucinda shared that one of the headteachers had raised concern around a mid-year increase and they were questioning the validity of making an increase at that point in the SLA. They met with Stephen McNulty and he explained that it is in the small print when signing up for the SLA, it makes clear that there may be changes. The headteacher asked why it happened and what they could do to try and avoid that risk moving forward.

- Emma noted it was following this that an email was sent out on behalf of David Smith. In January 2023 when the SLA was put on My School Services the annual pay award was still to be agreed. Once it was agreed in December there was a massive increase in cost of cleaning staff. It was a corporate decision to pass on to the client. It was an average 5.8% increase from when the SLA was originally purchased.
- Craig queried the increase and noted that he had read something that said if an increase was over 5% there would need to be a consultation with the people the service has a contract with. Noted that this would have to be taken up with Stephen McNulty. **Action: Paula to contact Stephen McNulty.**
- Gary asked if the schools were notified before the money was taken. Emma shared that for maintained schools the adjustment would go through in March and academies would follow suit.
- Gary asked if there are any current pending increases for SLAs for this financial year. Emma informed that the SLAs are set by individual services, but we would like to think they have learnt from this lesson. It would be a question for David, to ask him if he has contingency to cover costs for next year.
- Gary noted that Stephen presented a paper on SLAs to Schools Forum and if mid-year increases are a pattern it is worrying for the sector and Stephen needs to understand the concern. Communication and forewarning and as much notice as possible is needed. Lucinda shared that that was why they asked for meeting, the SLA report was positive when presented to Schools Forum but then headteachers are reflecting a different story. They asked Stephen what guarantees would there be and what happen so services learn from this. They asked Stephen to share the questions with the services.

Action: Stephen McNulty to be invited to the next Schools Forum meeting to discuss SLAs and mid-year increases.

9. Meeting schedule for 2024

All dates are Tuesdays at 4:30pm–6:30pm via Teams:

- 18 June 2024
- 8 October 2024

The chairperson thanked everyone for attending and the meeting was closed.

REPORT

WARRINGTON
Borough Council



Report to:	Schools Forum	Item:	4
Date:	18th June 2024	For:	Information
Title:	2023/24 DSG & Education Services Outturn Positions		
Author:	Emma Norman / Janet Davies	Queries to:	Emma.norman@warrington.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to notify Schools Forum of the confirmed outturn position for the central Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocations for 2023/24. This includes whole-school activities and central education functions, but excludes individual school balances, which are reported on separately this evening. It also briefs on the wider closing position for Education and SEND.
- 1.2 The accounts for financial year 2023/24 were closed during April but have not yet been officially ratified by the LA's external auditors. Families & Wellbeing Directorate has reported an underspend on DSG of £1,667,498. This represents, in percentage terms, a surplus balance of 0.77%, after accounting for Academy recoupment. Last year's surplus was 0.66%. However, because Schools Block DSG is 100% committed, with the surpluses and deficits being retained by the schools, the reported underspend is, in practical terms, generated purely against the other three blocks (Early Years, High Needs and Central Services, which together total £40.8m), where it represents an underspend of 3.54% (1.78% in 2022/23).
- 1.3 Although the LA was not predicting a particular value for the surplus balance for 2023/24 this surplus is the result of an underspend in the Early Years sector, which from previous experience may likely be subject to a claw back from the ESFA in the 2024/25 financial year. Until confirmation of this is provided in July 2024, this element will remain unallocated until further notice.

2. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT BALANCES

2.1 DSG reported a net underspend of £1.667m in 2023/24, which is an aggregate of a number of individual variances. The table below shows those individual balances with appropriate observations:

	Net Budget	Outturn	Variance	
School Budgets	£86,068,207.00	£86,068,207.00	£0	
Licences	£145,000.00	£155,253.00	-£10,253.00	
Staffing	£5,000.00	£5,000.00	£0	
Early Years	£14,290,839.00	£12,675,476.71	£1,615,362.29	Recalculation of funding due July
High Needs	£13,411,512.00	£14,415,126.00	-£1,003,614.00	Overspends in Independent School Fees, Post 16 places, EOTAS.
Free Meals	£35,000.00	£35,000.00	£0	
Repairs & Maintenance	£80,000.00	£80,000.00	£0	
Contingency	£6,123,625.00	£ 5,057,622.29	£ 1,066,002.71	Some contingency spend credited forward – additional contingency used to support HN overspend.
DSG Received	-£120,159,183.00	-£120,159,183.00	£0	
	£-	-£1,667,498.00	£1,667,498.00	

2.2 In 2023/2024 Teachers panel was overspent by 19% - this means there is no panel de-delegation to carry through to the 2024/25 year.

Another de-delegated activity which posted a substantial overshoot was for maternity cover (overspent by 8%).

The closing DSG position accounts for these aggregated overspends, but clearly there is no unused balance to return to maintained schools.

	<i>De- delegation</i>	<i>B/fwd</i>	<i>Spend</i>	<i>Balance Remaining</i>
Miscellaneous Licences	£32,037.75		£1,400.00	£30,637.75
CLEAPSS	£5410.82			£5,410.82
Teachers Panel*	£70,335.44	£9,064.72	£94,721.00	-£15,320.84
Maternity	£355,975.00		£384,458.40	-£33,013.44
	£463,759.01	£9,064.72	£480,579.80	-£7,756.07

*Original de-delegation adjusted for Academy contributions

3. EDUCATION BUDGETS 2023/24

3.1 Although DSG is the most significant part of non-school education funding, it does not represent the entirety of the sector. Other grant funding and core Local Authority budgets are also employed. In 2023/24, the core (i.e. non-DSG) position for Education, Early Help & SEND was an underspend of £519k And purely for Education & SEND, an overspend of £100.3k

3.2 The overall 2023/24 position is illustrated below.

<i>Service Area</i>	<i>Allocation</i>	<i>Outturn</i>	<i>Total Underspend / (Overspend)</i>
FWB4_1_1 Retained School Budgets	£13,525,912.00	£13,525,912.00	£0.00
FWB4_1_2 Music	£213,887.00	£211,266.00	£2,621.00
FWB4_1_3 Ach & Incl education 11-19	£834,034.00	£833,574.00	£460.00
FWB4_1_4 Plan & participation 11-19	£1,158,459.00	£1,135,990.00	£22,469.00
FWB4_1_5 Central Schools	£288,552.00	£277,958.00	£10,594.00
FWB4_1_6 School Meals	£104,560.00	£104,249.00	£311.00
FWB4_1_7 Admissions & School Organisation	£51,100.00	£59,122.00	-£8,022.00
FWB4_1_8 Transport	£3,385,679.00	£3,431,453.00	-£45,774.00
FWB4_1_9 DSG Free Meals	£35,000.00	£35,000.00	£0.00
FWB4_1_10 Commissioned SEN Support	£10,652,553.00	£10,882,208.00	-£229,655.00
FWB4_1_11 Support Teams	£412,000.00	£403,404.00	£8,596.00
FWB4_1_12 CWD Services	£796,136.00	£658,064.00	£138,072.00
FWB4_1 Head of Education Services & SEND	£31,457,872.00	£31,558,200.00	-£100,328.00

4. FAMILIES & WELLBEING SERVICES

4.1 The modest underspend on core budgets in Education, Early Help & SEND of £519k forms just part of the overall picture for Families & Wellbeing directorate. That aggregate position is an overspend of £15.853m, as broken down below:

	<i>£'000</i>
Executive	12
Adult Social Care	-4,143
Children's Social Care	-12,241
Education, Early Help & SEND	519
	-15,853

4.2 The directorate overspent by £15.9m in 23/24 which represents a c12% overspend on budget, this is more than double the overspend in the previous year. The directorate is

under significant financial pressure. Externally commissioned placements for Children in Care is the biggest area of overspend (c10m).

4.3 External provision of care in the Adult Social Care sector continues to cause pressures and exceeded budget by c£4m in the year 23/24. A rising area of demand is the provision of care for the under 65's age group.

4.4 Families and Wellbeing holds the largest base budget for the council, taking up roughly 70% of the council's allocation. It is also the biggest area of overspend.

4.5 Warrington Borough Council draft statement of accounts is now on the Internet with a reported position of £5.9m overspend. Corporate financing (5.7m) and transfers from reserves (5.3m) mitigating some of the Families and Wellbeing overspend.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Schools Forum is asked to note the 2023/24 outturn position for DSG, and that this underspend will be brought forward in anticipation of an adjustment from the ESFA.

5.2 Maintained school representatives are asked to note that no additional balances are due to be returned in respect of de-delegated services.

REPORT

Report to:	Schools Forum	Item:	5
Date:	18 th June 2024	For:	Information
Title:	2023/24 Maintained School Balances		
Author:	Emma Norman	Queries to:	emma.norman@warrington.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to notify Schools Forum members of the final individual balances for Warrington maintained schools as at the end of the 2023/24 financial year, and to compare the overall picture with the corresponding situation in the previous year. For the first time in several years, there were no in-year conversions to Academy for Warrington schools, so the two financial year out-turns are directly comparable.
- 1.2 At a meeting in June 2018, Schools Forum resolved to set aside its formal balance challenge, in doing so removing the grounds for any of the calculated 'excess' balance to be clawed back. Nevertheless, the triggers in Warrington's challenge process derived from the recommended Audit Commission balance levels, so posted balances in excess of these remain significant and worthy of mention; they will be highlighted separately in section 2.4. Those schools concerned may still wish, independently, to investigate the circumstances surrounding the accumulation of what was previously a challengeable level of surplus – and WAPH and WASCL may indeed consider adopting this process of self-assessment as a standard example of good practice.

2. SCHOOL BALANCES

- 2.1 The aggregate of school balances for Warrington maintained schools at the end of the previous financial year was £10,252,925 (an average retention level of 10.6%). This compares to the corresponding aggregate balance reported at the end of 2022/23 of £9,036,115 (9.5%). During early stages of finalising the year end processes balances were in line with last year, we were notified that of a 3% increase on interest than budgeted which increased some balances significantly. Analysed by sector, the figures were as overleaf:

Sector	2022/23 £m	2023/24 £m	Movement
Primary/Nursery	£5.701m*	£6.394m	+0.693m
Secondary	£2.101m	£2.824m	+0.723m
Special & AP	£1.234m	£1.035m	-0.199m
TOTAL	£9.036m	£10.253m	+1.217m

*inc. 2 schools that converted to Academy during the 23/24 Financial year

- 2.2 We remarked last year that there was a degree of polarization, especially in the primary sector – simultaneously, numbers of projected deficits increasing alongside increasing balances at several schools. Underlying the primary phase increase of £0.693m we can see 6 schools where in-year the balance has decreased by 15% or more. And the number of schools seeking permission to set a licensed deficit for 2024/25 has decreased to 7:

Cherry Tree
 Grappenhall Heys
 Latchford St James
 Newchurch
 St Vincent's
 Twiss Green
 Woolston Brook

- 2.3 Individual school balances are detailed in **Appendix 1**. The 'excess balance' schools are highlighted on this summary.
- 2.4 In terms of settings which perhaps merit deeper investigation, 24 primary schools, 3 secondary, 3 special schools inc. 1 6th form provision, plus the nursery school, recorded balances more than the Audit Commission recommended levels of 8% for primaries & specials, and 5% for secondaries. Numbers last year were 18, 2, 2 and 1, respectively.

These are highlighted overleaf for information.

Cost Centre	School	2023/2024 Balance @ 31.03.24	2023/20 24 Balance of Funding	2023/2024 "Excess Balance" @ 31.03.24	Notional Claw back
35002	Dallam	£ 559,566.43	25%	£ 381,794.21	£ 47,724.28
35006	St Elphins CE	£ 240,760.74	11%	£ 71,912.33	£ 8,989.04
35007	St Andrew's	£ 155,388.70	11%	£ 43,532.23	£ 5,441.53
35009	St Barnabas	£ 110,221.46	9%	£ 10,385.29	£ 1,298.16
35010	St Margaret's	£ 581,657.80	22%	£ 368,074.55	£ 46,009.32
35011	Our Lady's	£ 198,609.92	18%	£ 108,808.78	£ 13,601.10
35012	Sacred Heart	£ 262,858.20	23%	£ 170,638.71	£ 21,329.84
35013	St Alban's	£ 201,943.16	16%	£ 101,025.47	£ 12,628.18
35015	St Benedict's	£ 109,915.52	8%	£ 6,197.96	£ 774.74
35016	St Stephen's	£ 163,776.87	13%	£ 59,628.62	£ 7,453.58
35018	Appleton The Cobbs	£ 174,732.68	12%	£ 60,607.47	£ 7,575.93
35020	Appleton St Monica's	£ 81,228.36	10%	£ 14,037.11	£ 1,754.64
35024	Stockton Heath	£ 189,151.52	9%	£ 29,816.83	£ 3,727.10
35026	Thelwall	£ 189,617.66	21%	£ 116,259.63	£ 14,532.45
35033	Culcheth	£ 347,026.27	30%	£ 254,926.59	£ 31,865.82
35036	St Paul of the Cross	£ 67,530.02	8%	£ 1,011.82	£ 126.48
35038	Christ Church	£ 142,903.09	8%	£ 5,316.31	£ 664.54
35045	Locking Stumps	£ 236,175.47	11%	£ 59,801.88	£ 7,475.23
35047	Penketh St Joseph's	£ 254,593.99	20%	£ 150,719.06	£ 18,839.88
35056	Barrow Hall Lane	£ 292,979.18	10%	£ 49,722.23	£ 6,215.28
35057	Sankey Valley St James	£ 116,491.65	9%	£ 7,997.25	£ 999.66
35059	Winwick	£ 179,392.36	17%	£ 97,300.13	£ 12,162.52
35060	Birchwood	£ 252,721.77	21%	£ 157,594.96	£ 19,699.37
35065	St Phillips (Westbrook)	£ 462,106.50	16%	£ 230,832.79	£ 28,854.10
35405	Sandy Lane Nursery	£ 480,570.50	51%	£ 404,509.23	£ 50,563.65
35103	Culcheth	£ 430,506.03	6%	£ 59,702.86	£ 7,462.86
35107	St Gregorys	£ 1,967,290.52	24%	£ 1,564,267.72	£ 195,533.47
35121	Cardinal Newman	£ 426,540.89	7%	£ 135,925.14	£ 16,990.64
35200	Green Lane	£ 478,473.24	12%	£ 164,811.89	£ 20,601.49
35205	Green Lane 6th Form	£ 502,022.81	54%	£ 427,790.31	£ 53,473.79
35201	Fox Wood*	£ 450,965.10	15%	£ 212,126.07	£ 26,515.76
		£ 10,307,718.41	17%	£ 5,527,075.43	£ 690,884.43

*outturn less with deficit in sixth form funding

2.5 The amounts considered “excessive” by the Audit Commission criteria (*i.e.* the *theoretical* 2022/23 challenge level) represent 38% (last year, 41%) of primary balances, 57% (60%) of secondary balances and 45% (60%) of pre-16 special school balances. The previous WBC “automatic clawback” methodology (12.5% of excess balances) would have recirculated £478,178 (£546,766 the last year equivalent) amongst schools – this would be 5.29% (6.04%) of overall balances.

- 2.6 Although the overall levels of balance remain quite high, first impressions may be somewhat unenlightening and there is no substitute for individual schools investigating their balances in detail. Below the bottom-line figure, some of the reported surplus may perhaps relate to pupil premium, primary PE/sports grant, or some of the remaining, residual COVID/catch-up funding streams. It is likely that significant sums may be committed for use in supporting & facilitating a balanced annual budget for 2024/25 (and beyond). Schools with Finance Adviser support may wish to consider deriving an **uncommitted** balance figure, on the basis that this is more meaningful, and better representative of the school's underlying position.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Schools' Forum members are asked to note the level of maintained school balances recorded at the end of 2023/24.
- 3.2 Schools' Forum members representing WAPH and WASCL are asked to consider whether to recommend that schools evaluate internally their closing 2023/24 balances.

APPENDIX 1

Cost Centre	School	2023/2024 Balance @ 31.3.24	2023/2024 Funding	2023/2024 Balance of Funding
		£	£	%
PRIMARY SCHOOLS				
35001	Bewsey Lodge	£ 124,406.65	£ 2,441,409.39	5%
35002	Dallam	£ 559,566.43	£ 2,222,152.71	25%
35006	St Elphins CE	£ 240,760.74	£ 2,110,605.11	11%
35007	St Andrew's	£ 155,388.70	£ 1,398,205.88	11%
35008	St Ann's	£ 39,553.96	£ 1,325,922.91	3%
35009	St Barnabas	£ 110,221.46	£ 1,247,952.16	9%
35010	St Margaret's	£ 581,657.80	£ 2,669,790.62	22%
35011	Our Lady's	£ 198,609.92	£ 1,122,514.31	18%
35012	Sacred Heart	£ 262,858.20	£ 1,152,743.65	23%
35013	St Alban's	£ 201,943.16	£ 1,261,471.08	16%
35014	St Augustine's	£ 57,415.38	£ 1,081,220.89	5%
35015	St Benedict's	£ 109,915.52	£ 1,296,469.55	8%
35016	St Stephen's	£ 163,776.87	£ 1,301,853.07	13%
35018	Appleton The Cobbs	£ 174,732.68	£ 1,426,565.15	12%
35020	Appleton St Monica's	£ 81,228.36	£ 839,890.64	10%
35021	Grappenhall St Wilfrids	£ 97,709.49	£ 2,017,687.77	5%
35022	Grappenhall Bradshaw	£ 20,904.25	£ 1,026,139.19	2%
35023	Stockton Heath St Thomas	£ 85,880.01	£ 1,216,752.84	7%
35024	Stockton Heath	£ 189,151.52	£ 1,991,683.68	9%
35026	Thelwall	£ 189,617.66	£ 916,975.41	21%
35029	Lymm Cherry Tree	-£ 67,680.05	£ 1,076,137.16	-6%
35033	Culcheth	£ 347,026.27	£ 1,151,246.00	30%
35034	Culcheth Newchurch	£ 29,168.41	£ 1,051,172.22	3%
35035	Culcheth Twiss Green	-£ 189,765.81	£ 995,054.60	-19%
35036	St Paul of the Cross	£ 67,530.02	£ 831,477.44	8%
35038	Christ Church	£ 142,903.09	£ 1,719,834.71	8%
35039	Padgate St Oswald's	-£ 20,731.72	£ 1,111,562.09	-2%
35040	Brook Acre	£ 112,371.06	£ 1,584,763.37	7%
35042	St Bridget's	£ 93,026.33	£ 1,333,029.61	7%
35043	Croft St Lewis	£ 49,423.06	£ 731,870.81	7%
35045	Locking Stumps	£ 236,175.47	£ 2,204,669.90	11%
35047	Penketh St Joseph's	£ 254,593.99	£ 1,298,436.66	20%
35048	Penketh St Vincent's	-£ 210,522.46	£ 786,991.65	-27%
35050	Woolston St Peter's	£ 58,395.04	£ 1,024,037.59	6%
35052	Woolston	£ 62,451.14	£ 1,075,458.58	6%
35056	Gt Sankey Barrow Hall Lane	£ 292,979.18	£ 3,040,711.86	10%
35057	Sankey Valley St James	£ 116,491.65	£ 1,356,179.97	9%
35059	Winwick	£ 179,392.36	£ 1,026,152.88	17%
35060	Birchwood	£ 252,721.77	£ 1,189,085.11	21%
35062	Cinnamon Brow	£ 142,667.14	£ 1,970,758.78	7%
35064	Callands	£ 124,094.11	£ 2,024,615.28	6%
35065	St Phillips Church & Comm.	£ 462,106.50	£ 2,890,921.42	16%

35066	Grappenhall Heys	-£ 72,443.92	£ 1,328,961.30	-5%
35067	Latchford St James	-£ 194,496.15	£ 1,056,070.15	-18%
35405	Sandy Lane Nursery	£ 480,570.50	£ 950,765.85	51%
Total Primary		£ 6,393,745.74	£ 64,877,971.00	10%
SECONDARY SCHOOLS				
35103	Culcheth	£ 430,506.03	£ 7,416,063.32	6%
35107	St Gregorys	£ 1,967,290.52	£ 8,060,455.98	24%
35121	Cardinal Newman	£ 426,540.89	£ 5,812,315.00	7%
Total Secondary		£ 2,824,337.44	£ 21,288,834.30	13%
SPECIAL SCHOOLS & ALTERNATIVE PROVISION				
35200	Green Lane	£ 478,473.24	£ 3,920,766.91	12%
35205	Green Lane 6th Form	£ 502,022.81	£ 927,906.24	54%
35201	Fox Wood*	£ 450,965.10	£ 2,985,487.85	15%
35206	Fox Wood 6th Form*	-£ 104,246.80	£ 668,394.53	-16%
35202	Woolston Brook	-£ 292,372.17	£ 1,744,175.48	-17%
Total Special Schools & Alternative Prov		£ 1,034,842.18	£ 10,246,731.01	10%
		£ 10,252,925.36	£ 96,413,536.31	11%

*collective outturn is in surplus

Report

Report to:	Schools Forum	Item:	6
Date:	18 th June 2024	For:	Information
Title:	DSG Budget changes 2024/25		
Author:	Emma Norman	Presenter:	Emma Norman

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

1.1 The purpose of this report is to illustrate that after discussion with the local authority Deputy Chief Executive changes to the planned spend of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement for Warrington for 2024/25 to ensure that we are in line with current legislation.

2. DSG BLOCK ALLOCATIONS FOR 2024/25

2.1 As reported at the March meeting, elements of High Needs and Central Block of funding were to be used for areas such as contribution to transport costs, historical commitments, and support for inclusion.

2.2 To ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the DSG and after consultation with Lynton Green, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 officer of Warrington Borough Council the £3.5 million to be allocated to transport will now be allocated to base budgets and raised as a pressure to the main Warrington Borough Council Budget – this has therefore released the £3.5 million back into the high needs budget to support the current pressures this area is facing.

2.3 The historical commitments within the Central funding block of £401,000 have also been transferred to the main Warrington Borough Council budget enabling this funding to be reallocated and for 2024/25 we propose to allocate to the Growth Addition fund – increasing that from £242,558 to £643,558.

2.4 In light of this, the £447,135 headroom in the school's block will be transferred to help support the increasing pressures facing the High Needs Block.

2.5 In addition to the above amounts, we are looking in detail what the Support to Inclusion contribution of £1.75 million is specifically funding and how over the next four years we can reduce / reallocate that contribution back through the High Needs Block.

2.6 This will cause further additional pressures to base budget lines, so careful consideration regarding this is to be made, and no specific decisions have been made at this time.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that School Forum Members note the contents of this report and support the decision to reallocate the headroom transfer of £447,135 from the school's block to further support spending in the high needs block in 2024/25.

Report



Report to:	Schools Forum	Item:	7
Date:	3 rd June 2024	For:	Information
Title:	Charging Maintained Schools for Costs Associated with Facilitating Academy Conversions		
Author:	School Organisation and Buildings Manager	Presenter:	Louise Atkin

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Schools Forum with an update on the academy conversion charging model currently being trialled.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In 2023 Schools Forum were provided with two reports explaining:
- The Council anticipates an increase in the number of schools opting to convert to academy status, resulting in additional workload for the local authority at a time when revenue is decreasing.
 - The key tasks that officers carry out to facilitate a conversion, ensuring liabilities are appropriately transferred to the academy.
 - The potential need for additional resources to be required, particularly if several schools opt to convert at the same time.
 - Some conversions can be more time consuming than others. The time and resources spent on each conversion does not necessarily depend on the size of the school or whether a school is a primary or secondary school, for example land transaction issues can occur in either of the educational phases and can be costly and time consuming to resolve.
 - Absorbing the costs associated with academy conversions is not sustainable for the Council.
 - To ensure the Council can manage the conversion process efficiently and effectively, in support of the school's decision to convert, and in a similar way to other Councils, a charge to recoup costs was to be re-introduced. This was felt reasonable on the basis that converting schools can receive a £25,000 grant¹ from the DfE to support their conversion.
- 2.2 The first of the reports explained a number of potential charging options had been considered and the Council's Senior Leadership Team had agreed to introduce a flat fee of £10,000. The flat fee aimed to avoid additional costs that would be incurred by introducing a full cost recovery/school specific option (for example costs associated with

¹ The £25,000 conversion support grant is intended to contribute towards expenses incurred by the school to support conversion to an academy. The value of the grant has remained the same for more than five years.

recording of time and using these records to calculate a cost). It also aimed to help converting schools to budget for their conversion.

- 2.3 At the March 2023 Schools Forum meeting it was agreed the Council should not absorb all the costs, however members felt a flat fee would not be fair and the charge should be on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, at the January 2024 Schools Forum meeting, it was agreed to trial a school specific non-negotiable cost recovery model by capturing the hours and costs of supporting the transfer. It was also stated that the way in which the charge is calculated will be reviewed on an annual basis, with consideration being given to any change in circumstance. To aid budgeting, anticipated costs were shared, these being a minimum charge of £6,000 and the potential for costs to exceed £10,000. Noting these figures assume the additional workload can be met in-house and should there be a need to outsource work (for example in the event a high number of schools convert at the same time) additional costs may be incurred as a consequence of outsourcing to meet timeframes that schools and trusts desire.

3. CURRENT ACADEMY STATUS AND RECENT CHANGES IN GUIDANCE

- 3.1 The current position in Warrington is shown in the following table:

School Status	Number of Schools (%)
Academy (Schools & Technical Colleges)	39 (45%)
Target conversion date agreed	4 (5%)
Maintained schools, not converted/date not agreed	14 (16%)
Faith schools, not converted/date not agreed	30 (34%)
Total	87

- 3.2 During the last six months, six academy orders have been received by the Council. Of which:
- Two schools have converted, the costs for each were between £8,000 and £8,500.
 - One school is approaching the end of its conversion process, whilst costs are yet to be finalised, they will exceed £10,000.
 - Three schools are in the early stages of their conversions, aiming to convert on the same date.

The Council is aware of at least two other schools aiming to convert in the autumn 2024 term.

- 3.3 In March 2024 the DfE updated their guidance on academy conversions. A key change being from 1st September 2024 the £25,000 single-school conversion grant will not be available to individual schools (except special and alternative provision schools). Instead, a grant of £75,000 will be available to groups of three or more schools converting to join or form a trust. It is therefore anticipated that requests to facilitate future conversions will be received in groups of three or more at a time.

4. CHALLENGES

- 4.1 The conversion specific charging model is currently on trial. In its first six months the trial has identified the following challenges:
- The additional work of capturing the hours and calculating costs of supporting the transfer as the conversion processes has increased the amount of time officers are

spending on conversions, at a time when local authority resources are already stretched and officer's focus ought to be on delivery of essential services.

- Legal officers charge in accordance with Solicitors guideline hourly rates for Warrington published by the Courts and Tribunal Service, and whilst they have striven to offer a discounted, flat-fee rate of £2,000 a Commercial Transfer Agreement (CTA) and £2,000 per lease (reserving the right to increase for complex cases), they advise in-house capacity is limited. Consequently, to deliver conversions within the timeframe that schools and trusts desire, they may need to outsource work to external law firms². In light of the DfE's updated guidance and the number of conversions increasing, the need to outsource is more likely.
- For the majority of schools converting trusts have opted to reimburse the Council on receipt of invoice post conversion, rather than the balance being taken from the school's balance at the point of transfer. Consequently, legal officers are including the value of the invoice within the CTA. However, as the DfE require the CTA to be signed one month prior to conversion:
 - The window for officers to provide accurate timesheets, and for costs be calculated accurately is limited, at a time when officers are needing to focus on work associated with the conversion. There is a risk of the CTA signature deadline being missed.
 - As a significant amount of work is carried out in the month post CTA signature but preceding the conversion (for example by Payroll officers) and post conversion (for example by Finance officers and ICT) some services are having to provide estimates for their time, endeavouring to keep costs to a minimum this can result in a loss to the service.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Over half of the schools in Warrington are yet to convert to academy, with the Council having limited influence over the pace and flow of demands placed on its resources associated with conversions. The Council anticipates the number of conversions will increase and, in light of the DfE's new guidance, that requests to facilitate conversions will be received in groups of three or more.
- 5.2 While the conversion specific charging model trial continues, Schools Forum is asked to note:
- The challenges presented by the current model.

² The Council's Legal service is a member of the Northwest Legal Consortium, consisting of organisations that collaborate in the procurement and commissioning of quality legal services to maximise efficiencies and increase the effectiveness of the external legal support required to supplement in-house provision. Following a rigorous procurement exercise, through its lead authority Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, the Consortium has entered into Framework Agreements with external solicitors firms for the provision of legal advice and support. It also has contracts in place with Barristers Chambers for the provision of advocacy and advice. The Consortium website allows the Consortium members to commission work from appointed firms and barristers.

The Council also runs bespoke tendering and procurement exercises for particular pieces of Legal work in accordance with the Councils Financial Regulations and Standing Orders and public procurement legislation. Before outsourcing any Legal work the service explores all avenues for delivering the service in house, through flexible working, reallocation of work, re-structuring, temporary staff and locums or using other authorities staff. As Council services are under a statutory duty to secure Best Value and continuous improvement. Legal hold The Law Society's legal practice quality mark for client care, compliance and practice management (LEXCEL) and are inspected annually. It is a requirement of that standard that our procedures, policies and plans comply with the LEXCEL requirements to provide excellent and efficient service.

- The Council's Legal officers aim to keep academy conversion work in-house where possible, endeavouring to offer a flat-fee rate of £2,000 a Commercial Transfer Agreement (CTA) and £2,000 per lease to converting schools (reserving the right to increase for complex cases).
- The Council's resources are limited. Consequently, to deliver conversions within the timeframe that schools and trusts desire, there may be the need to outsource work. When this is required the converting school and trust will be informed, and information on costs, which are likely to increase, will be shared. Indicative costs for an outsourced lease is £2,500.
- The intention to review the charging model, based on the outcome of the 12-month trial, and taking into consideration any change in circumstance, to ensure the conversion process can be managed efficiently and effectively in support of the school's decision to convert.
- Costs associated with facilitating two conversions since the trial was introduced have been more than £8,000 per conversion, and for one school the charge will exceed £10,000.

6. RECCOMENDATION

- 6.1 In light of the above information it is recommended that Schools Forum:
- Consider the model be reviewed earlier than the original 12 months, seeking a model that is more efficient, less onerous and attempts to overcome the challenges noted in point 4 above and/or
 - Accept that costs may exceed £10K per conversion.

7. PREVIOUS REPORTS

Charging Maintained Schools for Costs Associated with Facilitating Academy Conversions, 14th March 2023 and 28th September 2023.