

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Schools Funding Formula - Delegation of Authority to Assistant Director

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 15 October 2013

Cabinet Member: Councillor Williams

CMT Member: Carole Burgoyne (Director for People)

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Ref:

Key Decision: No

Part: I

Purpose of the report:

The Local Authority determines the local schools funding formula to ensure the equitable distribution across all schools, in consultation with the Plymouth Schools Forum.

The Schools Forum commissions various working groups to undertake the work needed regarding changes to schools funding and following consultation with all schools makes its recommendations to the Local Authority for approval. Currently the final decision regarding the local schools funding formula is made by Cabinet and this report seeks approval to delegate this decision making authority to the Assistant Director for Education, Learning and Family Support in consultation with the Plymouth Schools Forum and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

The Brilliant Co-operative Council Corporate Plan 2013/14 -2016/17:

Growing Plymouth:

The proposals will ensure that the Local Authority and the Schools Forum continues to target funding appropriately to schools in the City based on need and with the principle of investing in to promote a top performing education system.

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land

The recommendations in this report concern the distribution of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The DSG is ring fenced and as such any changes within it will not have a direct impact on the Council's revenue funding. Pressures and solutions relating to expenditure chargeable against the ring fenced grant have been identified in the medium term financial plan.

Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:

- None assessed

Equality and Diversity

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken in relation to school funding formula changes as appropriate.

Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:

Cabinet agree to delegate the decision making authority regarding the Schools Funding Formula to the Assistant Director for Education, Learning and Family Support in consultation with the Plymouth Schools Forum and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

Alternative options considered and rejected:

Cabinet retains the decision making powers which will shorten the time available to model the implications of changes and consult with schools.

Published work / information:

Schools Forum roles and responsibilities [Plymouth City Council - Plymouth schools forum](#)
[School Finance Regulations 2012](#)
[Schools Forum Regulations 2012](#)

Background papers:

None

Sign off:

Fin	PeopleF EC1314 004 CR 02/10/13	Leg	LT 18547	Mon Off	18634/ DVS	HR		Assets		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member: Judith Harwood													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the contents of the report? Yes													

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In 2012 the Government started the process of reforming the school funding system, so that it was fairer, more consistent and transparent and so that funding intended for education reached schools and pupils that need it most.
- 1.2 From 2013/14 the Local Authority, working with the Schools Forum, developed a new funding formulae using simplified and consistent formula factors. The Government has recently reviewed the implementation of the first phase of reforms ahead of introducing a national funding formula in the next spending review period.
- 1.3 As part of the funding reform, Local Authorities were required to submit a pro-forma to the Education Funding Agency by the 31 October each year, setting out how the schools and early years settings in Plymouth will be funded in the following financial year.
- 1.4 Previously, local authorities were required to make an initial determination of the Schools Budget for the financial year and give notice of that determination to the governing bodies of the schools it maintains before the 31 March preceding the start of the financial year.
- 1.5 The change to the 31 October deadline has put pressure on the Local Authority and the Schools Forum to model the implications of any changes, consult with all schools and make its recommendations to the Cabinet for approval. This report seeks the approval to delegate this decision making power to an officer and speed up the approval process.

2.0 Powers and responsibilities regarding the Schools Budget

- 2.1 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ring fenced grant which covers all school related expenditure. In 2013/14 the DSG equated to £177.930m and was split into the following blocks:

	£m
Schools Block	140.6769
High Needs Block	24.676
Early Years Block	9.825
Allocated outside of block	2.753

- 2.2 The Schools Block covers the majority of the DSG and is used predominantly to finance individual schools and academies with a small residual amount used to cover the Authority's historic and statutory commitments. The funding is allocated to individual schools and academies using the Local Schools Funding Formula.
- 2.3 The roles and responsibilities regarding the Schools Budget are set out in the Schools Finance Regulations 2012, the Dedicated Schools Grant terms and conditions and the Schools Forum Regulations 2012. An overview of the national framework for Schools Forums and the local context is outlined in the report: Schools Forum Roles and Responsibilities.
- 2.4 The Schools Forum is a statutory body convened by the Council. Regulations 9 to 11 of the Schools Forums Regulations 2012 require the Council to consult the Schools Forum before entering into certain types of contract and annually in relation to a range of financial issues and for the forum to inform the schools' governing bodies of any such consultation. Specifically in relation to changes to the Schools Funding Formula, the Local Authority proposes and decides in consultation with the Schools Forum and governing bodies.

3.0 Delegation of authority to Local Authority Officer

- 3.1 As part of the funding reforms introduced in 2012, the Local Authority are now required to submit a pro-forma to the Education Funding Agency by the 31 October each year, setting out how the schools and early years settings in Plymouth will be funded in the following financial year.
- 3.2 Previously, local authorities were required to make an initial determination of the Schools Budget for the financial year and give notice of that determination to the governing bodies of the schools it maintains before the 31 March preceding the start of the financial year.
- 3.3 The change to the 31 October deadline has put pressure on the Local Authority and the Schools Forum to model the implications of any changes, consult with all schools and make its recommendations to the Cabinet to approve.
- 3.4 Under the Local Government Act 2000 such decisions can be delegated to an officer of the Authority. Delegation to an officer would speed up the decision making process. All decisions would be made in consultation with the Schools Forum and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

4.0 Other local authority position

- 4.1 A review of the position taken by other local authorities across the region has highlighted that the majority have delegated the decision making powers regarding the Schools Funding Formula to either an officer or the Cabinet Member.

5.0 Ensuring financial accountability and challenge

- 5.1 A Schools Forum needs to ensure that there are systems in place for executive members of the Council to be aware of its views on specific issues. Executive members with responsibility for education/children's services or resources of the authority are able to attend Schools Forum meetings. By doing so such elected members are able to contribute to the discussion and receive first-hand the views of the Schools Forum and to ensure that the Schools Forum considers the priorities for the Council in making its recommendations.
- 5.2 The Plymouth Schools Forum in the main operates effectively and the Local Authority has a good working relationship with the Schools Forum. There is good evidence that the members seek to represent the views of all schools and appreciate the range of issues across the different school phases i.e. nursery, primary, secondary and special.
- 5.3 Issues regarding the Schools Budget will continue to be considered as part of the Council's medium term financial planning.