

City of Wolverhampton Council

SCHOOLS FORUM

Date	30 September 2021
Report title	Devolved Formula Capital and School Budget Update
Contact Officer	Terry Shaw, Finance Manager
Contact Email Address	terry.shaw@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Summary

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Schools' Forum of the Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) balances held at 31 August 2021, to note the balances held within the Local Authority's maintained schools and to note the work being undertaken on the Scheme for Financing Schools.

Decision

Members of the Schools Forum are asked to:

1. Note the DFC balances held in schools at 31 August 2021
2. Note the update on school budget balances
3. Note the work being undertaken on the revision of the Scheme for Financing Schools

Schedule of background papers (If applicable)

Conditions Grant Spend Guidance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980214/Condition_Grants_Spend_Guidance_2021-22.pdf

School condition funding methodology for financial year 2021 to 2022

Explanatory note

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/980375/Condition_funding_methodology_2021-22_.pdf

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) grant was introduced in 2000-2001 with the aim of allowing schools to target capital funding at their own capital priorities (including ICT).
- 1.2 Each school receives an allocation which is driven by a formula, based on a lump sum, supported by a per pupil amount derived from the previous year's January census. The pupil rate is based on the type of school, rather than the individual pupil. Therefore, a pupil in a SEN resource unit in a primary / secondary school will be allocated the appropriate primary / secondary rate, **not** the Special rate).
- 1.3 For 2021-2022, the allocations were calculated using the January 2021 census data:

School Provision Type	Lump Sum	Phase related weighting	Non-boarding pupil rate
Nursery / Primary	£4,000	1.0	£11.25
Secondary	£4,000	1.5	£16.88
Post-16	£4,000	2.0	£22.50
Special / PRU	£4,000	4.5	£50.63

The funding is paid to the Local Authority, and is transferred to the Schools Budget, based on the individual school allocation advised the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

- 1.4 The exception to this, is for Voluntary Aided schools, where the funding is paid to the appropriate Diocese and is adjusted for the VAT implications.

2.0 Grant Terms

- 2.1 The general condition of the grants is that it is used for capital purposes, such as:
 - a. structural improvements to buildings, fixtures and fittings;
 - b. the purchase of capital equipment, including ICT; and/or
 - c. other long-term improvements to the school estate.
- 2.2 Schools are expected to make best use of DFC as soon as it is received, but may choose to set aside their annual allocations up to three years to fund medium sized projects.
- 2.3 No school can enter a deficit position with DFC, though it may, at the Local Authority's discretion be permitted to borrow grant forward from future years' funding. This is only permissible where future years' funding levels have been confirmed.
- 2.4 At present the current reporting mechanism allows for Local Authorities to extend this time limit to the end of August, to allow for local priorities. However, this cannot be guaranteed for future years, as the terms specifically refer to 3 years in the current guidance.

3.0 School DFC Balances

- 3.1 The report in Appendix 1 illustrates the balances held in Wolverhampton schools, as at 31 March 2020 and 31 March 2021 and expenditure to 31 August 2021.
- 3.2 The DFC balance of the Local Authority Maintained Schools as at 31 August 2021 is £1,345,857, which includes the in-year allocation of £396,095.

- 3.3 27 schools are carrying balances of DFC that had exceeded three years as at 31 August 2021 and the total of this element of the DFC is £388,323.
- 3.4 The schools carrying the DFC balances that have exceeded three years have robust plans in place to utilise this element in addition to the DFC allocations received in 2018-2019, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022.

4.0 Local Authority Reporting on DFC balances

- 4.1 As part of its annual reporting cycle to the ESFA, the Local Authority is required to provide an explanation of the DFC balances and planned usage.
- 4.2 Individual school balances are reported to the ESFA through the Consistent Financial Reporting (CFR) framework and high levels of underspend may invite further scrutiny from the ESFA, who may claw back excess balances from individual schools.
- 4.3 The Local Authority will continue to make requests from schools holding surplus capital balances for the intended use of this grant by way of annual returns.

5.0 School Budget Update

- 5.1 As reported at the July 2021 Schools' Forum, the total combined closing surplus balance of the 51 maintained schools in the City was £13.205 million as at 31 March 2021. This figure included three schools with deficits and 43 schools carrying surpluses in excess of the permitted thresholds of 5% for secondary schools and 8% for other settings.
- 5.2 On 10 September 2021, the Council sent a separate letter to each maintained school carrying an excess surplus to enquire about how they intend to utilise their surplus balances going forward, with a deadline of 24 September 2021 for schools to return the form.
- 5.3 The ongoing impact of the Coronavirus pandemic has led the Council into an unusual position regarding schools' surplus balances for the financial year 2020-2021. It is the Council's intention to allow schools to hold these surpluses for use over the next financial year, on condition that schools provide the Council with suitable returns on the proposed use of the funds.
- 5.4 Maintained schools are required to submit revised budget plans by 31 October 2021 and the monitoring of excess surplus balances, capital balances and deficit recoveries will be reviewed in line with previous plans and will be reported back to Schools' Forum in a timely manner.

6.0 Scheme for Financing Schools

- 6.1 Local authorities are required to publish schemes for financing schools, setting out the financial relationship between them and the schools they maintain.
- 6.2 The City of Wolverhampton Scheme for Financing Schools was last updated in January 2019 and is currently being updated to align to the new Department for Education recommended model.
- 6.3 The revised Scheme for Financing Schools will be consulted upon and will be presented at a later Schools' Forum meeting for approval.