

## **NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **SCHOOLS FORUM**

## **CHANGES TO THE DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT**

### **1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT**

- 1.1 To update the Forum on further reductions to the Historic Commitments element of the Dedicated Schools Grant in 2023/24 and to consider the options with regard to the implications for its current use in supporting schools.

### **2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 2.1 The DSG Central Services Historic Commitments element currently funds two main strands of work:
- Peer Leader Programme/external SIPs: school improvement focussed activities which are managed through the local authority, together with a small number of externally brokered School Improvement Partners who are not in substantive posts with the local authority
  - Learning networks: largely delegated to the Primary Consortium and Secondary Heads and Principals, as well as funding some central development and support such as the Primary Engineering, and innovation grants for schools
  - Schools' contribution to the Children's MARS board
- 2.2 In Autumn 2019 The DFE announced the intention to make year on year reduction to the Historic Commitments budget with the ultimate removal of the grant. In 2021 the Department also announced the two phase removal of the Local Authority monitoring and Brokering Grant, which funds the substantive school improvement team. Last year elected and appointed leaders determined to fund the substantive school improvement team through council revenue funding to ensure all schools regardless of designation would be able to access support without cost.

- 2.3 The DSG for historic commitments 2023/24 is a total of **£149,504**. Last Year it was £186,880 so a reduction of £37,376. In 2022/3 the funding was used as follows:

Learning Networks	72,000
Peer Leader Programme/external SIPs	140,000
Schools Contribution to MARS	<u>20,000</u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>232,000</b>

Learning Networks funding has been used in 2022/23 to fund the Primary Consortium to develop the role and reach of Curriculum Pioneers at a cost of £40,000. It also funds Secondary Heads and Principals to work together to improve outcomes for secondary aged children at £25,000. The remainder of the funding has been used to fund central education opportunities such as primary engineering, green education projects.

The Peer Leadership Programme is a well established and valuable approach to delivering school to school support through high quality sector led improvement. It is built on the principles of professional generosity and the shared determination for system leadership to drive up standards and improve outcomes in schools across North Lincolnshire. The cost currently of the Peer Leader Programme is £140,000 which is funds school leaders to provide a minimum of three days of support and challenge to the school they work with at a rate of £1200 per year, and funds a small element of training and support for training and development of the leaders who take part.

## 2. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 2.1 **Option 1** - Reduce the funding for the Peer Leader Programme and retain CMARS and Learning Networks funding in full.
- 2.2 **Option 2** - Continue the to fund the Peer Leader Programme in full, reduce the CMARS funding and cease to fund the learning Networks activity.
- 2.3 **Option 3** - Reduce all three strands proportionately

## 3. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 3.1 **Option One** would enable Secondary Heads and Principals to continue and the Primary Consortium to receive Learning Network allocations, and perhaps allow a small residue for central education development initiatives. Funding for Peer Leaders could continue for the summer term but then from September the activity would be very largely unfunded with the residue being spent on training and development for Peer Leaders and release costs only for those

participating heads who need that. Consultation through stakeholder groups indicates that most headteachers who undertake the role of Peer Leader do this primarily from professional generosity and the belief in the importance of system leadership to improve outcomes for all North Lincolnshire children. However, some headteachers, particularly in small schools, may face prohibitive costs which would prevent them participating in the programme without funding to support their release.

- 3.2 **Option Two** would support another year of funding for Peer Leaders at a time when schools are reporting increased cost pressures and may facilitate a smoother transition to a largely unfunded programme for 2024/25. It would however impact on the delivery of the workstreams managed by the Primary consortium and Secondary Heads and Principals. The Primary Consortium steering group have indicated the Curriculum Pioneers could potentially be supported to continue in a part traded model
- 3.3 **Option Three** would impact on all three areas but may allow for the smooth transition of workstreams across all three activity areas

#### 4. **FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1.1 Last financial year the Central Services element was £186,880 with a contribution from central DSG agreed by Schools Forum to bring the funding up to £232,000, however this year most of this is allocated. Due to pay awards and other increased costs to schools. The Central Services Historic Commitments for 2023/24 is £149,504, so an effective reduction of funded work across the related budget areas of £82,496 as per the proposals.

#### 5. **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Ensuring that all children are able to access high quality education through excellent schools is pivotal to their future education and career pathways. It is essential that the use of DSG Historic Commitments funding has a positive impact on children's lives through ensuring positive educational experiences, opportunities and outcomes. The balance of decision making must consider the importance of investing in effective schools, supporting improvement and must have least adverse impact on children who attend failing schools.

#### 6. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 Discussions have taken place throughout the year with the Primary Consortium Steering Group, the Secondary Heads and Principals, and the Peer Leader Stakeholder Group.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 It is suggested that Schools Forum consider the issues and implications of each option to determine the best route, however Option Two would have least impact in the short term on the delivery of the sector led school improvement work participated in by the large majority of local schools.

### HEAD OF STANDARDS AND EFFECTIVENESS

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**Background Papers used in the preparation of this report – Nil**