

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM

CENTRAL SERVICES FOR SCHOOLS

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 and to consider the options with regard to the implications for its current use in supporting schools.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The DSG Historic Commitments funding currently funds two main strands of work:
- i. Peer Leader and School Improvement Partner programmes: school improvement focussed activities which are managed through the local authority.
 - ii. Learning networks: largely delegated to the professional associations, as well as funding some central workforce development such as the aspirant head programme, Safeguarding Pro, and innovation grants for schools or the Primary Engineering project.
- 2.2 In Autumn 2019 The DFE announced the intention to make a 20% year on year reduction to the Historic Commitments budget. The 2020/21 Historic Commitments element of the DSG should have been reduced by £73,000, however Schools' Forum agreed that £55,000 could be contributed from DSG earmarked reserves to support transition and enable consultation to happen as to how to secure reductions.
- 2.3 However, this means that for 2021/22 there will be a steeper reduction across the historic commitments top line, resulting in a total budget for Peer Leadership Programme, SIP School Improvement Support and the Learning Networks of £233,000. This reduction presents some challenging choices.

DSG - Central Services Schools Block (CSSB)	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
		20% reduction offset from reserves	20% reduction
		292,000 + 55,000	
Historic commitments (contributions to combined budgets)	365,000	347,000	233,600

2.4 The subsidy from DSG earmarked reserves in 2020/21 ensured a range of activities funded through the Learning Networks continued in 2020/21 without reduction of funding, as did the SIPs and Peer Leader Programme, apart from the impact on all service delivery of COVID-19. Use of the budget currently is as follows:

DSG - Central Services Schools Block (CSSB)		2019/20	2020/21
			20% reduction
Historic commitments		365,000	292,000
Learning Networks	E763	180,000	125,000
Peer Leader Programme and SIPs	E764	140,000	140,000
LSCB	E610	27,000	27,000
Legal Services SLA	D921	18,000	0
		365,000	292,000
Learning Networks (contribution from DSG reserves)		0	55,000
Learning Network Budget		180,000	180,000

2.5 The current usage of the allocation of the Learning Networks monies is as follows:

Learning Network	2020/21	£
	Primary Consortium	85,000
	Secondary Headteachers and Principals	55,000
	Centrally organised support initiatives which included	30,000
	• Teach NorthLincs	12,000
	• Primary Engineering	16,000
• Leadership training	3,000	
Safeguarding Pro	8,500	

2.6 The current usage of the SIPs / Peer Leader budget is as follows:

SIPs / Peer Leadership Programme	2020/21	£
	Payments to schools to release Peer Leaders	55,700
	SIPs and other support for schools	82,000
	Leadership development	2,000

2.7 The implications for the financial year 2021/22 are that the Historic Commitments budget will decrease by £114,000.

2.8 It is suggested that there are a number of ways the reduction for the 2020/21 budget could be managed and each of these will have implications. The Schools Forum will need to consider how best to manage the necessary reduction in a way that minimises adverse impact on children

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Option One: to reduce the allocations to both the learning networks and the Peer Leader/SIPs budget proportionately.

		2020/21	2021/22
Learning Networks	E763	125,000 (+55,000)	100,000
Peer Leaders / SIPs	E764	140,000	112,000
LSCB	E610	27,000	21,600

3.2 Option Two: to prioritise and invest in the Peer Leader Programme.

		2020/21	2021/22
Learning Networks	E763	125,000 (+55,000)	72,000
Peer Leaders / SIPs	E764	140,000	140,000
LSCB	E610	27,000	21,600

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 **Option One** could enable Secondary Heads and Principals to continue and the Primary Consortium to receive Learning Network allocations, perhaps £35k and £55k respectively, and perhaps allow a small residue for central education development initiatives to be funded for schools to access. Depending on these decisions, it could be agreed to continue either Teach North Lincs or Safeguarding Pro.
- 4.2 The use and impact of Learning Networks funding allocated to the Primary Consortium and Secondary Heads and Principals is monitored by each organisation and is used to support schools working together.
- 4.3 The Primary Consortium currently use the funding to release subject leaders to develop foundation subject expertise, having recently initiated a programme of structured, time limited investment into middle leadership, sharing good practice and building the skills of foundation leaders to support the demands of broader curriculum demands and scrutiny from Ofsted.
- 4.4 Secondary Heads and Principals use the funding to support professional partnership working by heads across the sector. This has been through a robust programme of Peer Reviews. Feedback from some secondary leaders is that the programme of Peer Reviews which Learning Network funding supported has slowed and this funding now often supports existing partnership working.
- 4.5 The Historic Commitments funding provides direct support to all schools through the Peer Leader and SIP Programmes, and that support is available to any school situated in North Lincolnshire regardless of designation. The effectiveness of the support is closely monitored by the Local Authority. The reduction suggested

in Option One would necessitate decisions about whether and to what extent those activities remain funded.

- 4.6 **Option Two** enables the support schools receive through the Peer Leadership and SIP programmes to continue in their current form for another year but would necessitate the Learning Networks allocation to be significantly reduced both to the professional associations and to the central elements.
- 4.7 The Peer Leader / SIP support directly impacts on school effectiveness and the extent to which all schools are known, sharing effective practice, and providing advice, challenge, and support for areas to improve.
- 4.8 Peer Leaders, who are current North Lincolnshire headteachers, are currently funded at a rate of £1,200 per year to be released from their schools in order to undertake the support activities with their partner schools.
- 4.9 The Peer Leader and SIP Programme are both school improvements focussed activities which are managed through the local authority and the impact of both these programmes on school outcomes is measurable through reporting and assurance mechanisms.
- 4.10 North Lincolnshire Council's education strategy is invested in further strengthening leadership. A key element to this is through developing system leadership. The Peer Leader Programme is now in its third year, with refinements based on the learning from the two previous years.
- 4.11 The shared ambition is that this sector-led, quality assured approach to school improvement becomes the universal offer for strong and effective schools. This would continue to be alongside a targeted, bespoke offer for schools which are vulnerable to decline, requiring improvement or where there are more complex factors affecting the school's performance.

5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A saving of £114,000 needs to be secured to balance the budget on the Historic Commitments line from the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2021/22.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 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.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Discussions have taken place throughout the year with the Education Chairs Group, which is made up of senior LA officers and the chairs of the primary and secondary professional associations and the chair of Schools Forum.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 It is suggested that Schools Forum consider the issues and implications of both options.

HEAD OF STANDARDS AND EFFECTIVENESS

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report – None