

Schools Forum 20th September 2018

Agenda Item: Central provision for single status costs

- 1.1 In financial year 2008/9 the Telford & Wrekin Schools Forum agreed to set aside £300,000 from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for potential single status costs and in 2009/10 a further £306,000 (on the basis of the same amount plus 2% inflation) was set aside.
- 1.2 Since then these funds have accumulated interest and so at 31 March 2018 the balance stood at £642,350
- 1.3 Single status has yet to be implemented – as noted in the update provided to the Schools Forum meeting of 11 January 2018, the current potential implementation date is in financial year 2020/21. Single status is only required to be implemented by community and voluntary controlled schools. All other schools – voluntary aided, foundation, trust and academies - are not bound by single status, although could choose to adopt a parallel system.
- 1.4 Clearly the funds have remained in place for a considerable period of time already, and the implementation of single status is still some time away. Individual schools also have monies set aside, amounting to £2.618m at 31 March 2018.
- 1.5 Over the period of time since the monies were put aside, some schools have closed or converted to academies. At the time the funds were put aside, these changes, in particular the growth in the number of academies, would not necessarily have been anticipated.
- 1.6 As noted in the high needs paper presented to this meeting and extensively discussed in recent schools forums, the high needs budget is currently under intense pressure in T&W, as in many other local authorities. This led to a DSG deficit exceeding £0.5m at the end of 2017/18 and a significant possibility of a deficit still being carried at the end of 2018/19
- 1.7 One option is therefore to treat these funds as a provision to be used to offset any DSG deficit at the end of 2018/19. An argument for this approach would be that it would avoid building a one-off source of funding into ongoing budgets. It would also benefit all schools, whereas if the funds remain for single status, their eventual deployment will only benefit those schools to which single status applies, whereas all schools (e.g. including those that have subsequently converted to academies) had contributed to the original top-slice.
- 1.8 *The Schools Forum is invited to express any views on the use of these funds and whether they should continue to be held for potential costs of single status.***

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September 2018