



Wirral Schools Forum

Date:	Tuesday, 19 March 2024
Time:	5.00 p.m.
Venue:	Ganney'sMeadow Nursery School CH49 8HB

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AGENDA

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES
2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2024 (Pages 1 - 8)
3. MATTERS ARISING
4. EARLY YEARS FUNDING RATES AND CONSULTATION OUTCOME (Pages 9 - 12)
5. DELIVERING BETTER VALUE UPDATE AND HIGH NEEDS FUNDING ARRANGEMENT REVIEW PROPOSAL (Pages 13 - 20)
6. SPECIAL SCHOOLS PLACES UPDATE (Pages 21 - 24)
7. DSG MANAGEMENT PLAN - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (Pages 25 - 28)
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WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday, 23 January 2024

Present: A Whitely (Chair)

Members	K Kennedy	H Barker
	Ralph	Ball
	Loftus	Jones
	Trigg	Farrelly
	L Prescott	K Williams

In attendance:

Councillor C Cooke	S Ashley
S White	Y Allen
J Backhouse	M Jackson
A Brown	A Snow
A Varughese	

54 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair Welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from:

- Jo Proctor – Catholic Diocese
- Shaun Allen – Primary Governer
- Kate Ball – Primary Headteacher
- Chris Mervyn - Primary Headteacher
- Mark Bellamy – Academy Representative
- Sue Powell-Wilde - Councillor
- Kathy Hodson - Councillor

55 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2023

The Chair noted that his name had been misspelled on page one of the minutes and that his first initial had not been included.

With those amendments, it was:

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2023 be approved as an accurate record.

56 SENSORY SERVICE UPDATE

James Backhouse, Assistant Director for Education presented a report which updated members on the Sensory Service. The report noted that Wirral had 530 children and young people with a significant vision/hearing impairment (0-19

years) who accessed the Sensory Service. They were all assessed using the National Eligibility Criteria for intervention and must have had a clinically diagnosed impairment. This Criteria can be found on the SEND Local Offer. The aim of the Service was to deliver early intervention from birth and then to support pupils more heavily in Key Stage 1 and 2. This was to develop independence skills in Key Stage 3 and 4 in preparation for adulthood. The report broke down the number of children and young people with hearing, visual and multi-sensory impairments, Resource Provision, targeted intervention, staffing comparisons from 2015 to 2023, and gave referral data.

The Chair queried if there was a finite capacity for the service and was informed that space was available at Greenleas Primary School and that the authority regularly met with the headteacher regarding the Resource Provision there. James Backhouse noted that a better approach to provision will be going in to the local offer as well and will keep schools informed.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

57 **ENERGY PRICE UPDATE REPORT JANUARY 2024**

Andrew Snow, Energy Conservation Engineer, presented his report which gave a brief update on the procurement of electricity and natural gas on behalf of schools and suggested budget changes for the 2024/25 financial year. The extreme market volatility of the past two years had reduced and the council was seeing a reduction in prices but the future remained unpredictable. The content of the report was only applicable to accounts that were part of the Crown Commercial Service framework agreement. The Council held no information for schools which made their own energy supply arrangements and could not comment on their arrangements. It noted that the information provided was based on market intelligence covering half of the contracted purchasing period which ran from 1 October 2023 to 31 March 2024. Observations on future prices should therefore be interpreted as indicative.

Members discussed the need for caution regarding the forecasting of energy costs, noting that assuming too much of a reduction could have an adverse effect on budgets.

Officers noted work being carried out look into replacing gas boilers at local authority schools with air or ground source heat-pumps. Further work to look at capital allocation of funding for boiler refurbishments being used towards heat-pumps would be reported to a future meeting. It was also noted that any newly built schools would be carbon neutral.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

58 **SCHOOLS FORUM SCHOOL BALANCES AND PROJECTIONS JANUARY 2024**

Sue Ashley, Traded Services Manager, presented a report which described the current and projected financial position for schools together with action that was being taken. The position remained challenging due to increased costs during 2023-24, even with additional funding provided for 2023-24 financial year.

The report noted that there were ongoing cost pressures in schools arising from pay awards, utilities, other inflationary pressures, changes in pupil numbers and the continuing effects of COVID. There had been additional funding through the Mainstream Additional Grant Grant for 2023-24, which would be added to the formula budget for 2024-25 (Additional funding for Special schools) and Teachers Pay Additional Grant from September 2023 to cover the additional cost of Teachers Pay awards. There would be further increases in DSG for 2024-25 financial year but at a much lower rate than 2023-24.

The report continued to explain that the deficit position was increasing for all phases but remained particularly difficult for Special Schools. Those schools with small credit carry forward balances in March 24 were most likely to move into a deficit by March 2025. Figures at period were more cautious, so although an increase in deficit budgets was likely, some schools would be able to make savings to stay in credit.

Members discussed the difficulties schools faced to remain on budget and noted that they should not do nothing when they are aware that they are struggling with their budgets. They queried what the cut off was for schools to go into a deficit budget for those with an agreed licence budget. They were informed that it would be as soon as they went into deficit and that the amount would depend on the school and the size of their budget.

The Chair noted that schools were working hard to remain within their budgets.

Resolved – That:

- 1. The report be noted.**
- 2. The school budgets continue to be monitored.**

59 **BUDGET MONITORING 2023-24 QUARTER 3**

Asako Brown, Finance Manager, presented a report that provided an overview of the anticipated variations for the current year 2023-24 schools budget. The report noted that the overall the schools budget was forecast to overspend by £5.214m which was mainly due to pressure in the High Needs Block. This reflected a slight increase in the overspend from the position of £4.978m reported at the September 2023 meeting. The 2022-23 financial year closed with a Dedicated Schools Grant reserve cumulative deficit position of £4.763m. The current forecast outturn position meant that the year-end addition to reserve balance would be increased to £5.214m thus delivering a cumulative £9.977m deficit position at the end of 2023-24.

Members noted that the report showed a challenging set of figures for schools. Officers explained that one of the key increases was the increased number of Education, Health and Care Plans which had increased by approximately 23%

over the previous year. They went on to explain that Wirral was seeing slightly higher increases than the national picture, however, Wirral's cost base was slightly better controlled and the increase in cost was likely to be a little lower than the national picture.

Resolved – That the report and forecast financial position of the Schools Budget for 2023-24 be noted.

60 **SCHOOLS BUDGET 2024-25**

Asako Brown, Finance Manager, introduced a report which outlined the Schools Budget for 2024-25 so that Schools Forum could give their views on the proposals. The report described the financial changes to be considered by Schools Forum and Policy and Resources Committee. The proposed budget totalled £378.55m for Early Years, Maintained Schools, Academies, Colleges, and Providers for the financial year 2024-25.

The budget for 2024-25 was compiled from the base budget for 2023-24, approved by Council on 27th February 2023 and updated with the issues identified in the report. The total 2024-25 projected budget (Dedicated Schools Grant and council funded) was £378.55m.

The Chair noted that this was the first time that Members had been asked to approve a deficit budget and sought assurances that it was legal to do so. Officers assured him that it was. They noted that other authorities had done this before and that they felt it was better to set a realistic budget that acknowledged the deficit rather than setting an unrealistic budget that wouldn't be achieved in reality. They noted that Wirral's Section 151 officer was happy with this approach.

The Chair noted the officers' comments and stated that he had concerns about the amount of deficit they would be agreeing. He noted that schools would have to do everything in their powers to mitigate it as they were setting themselves up for a burden that they would have to deal with for a number of years. He noted that he wished for his personal concerns regarding this budget to be recorded and other Members agreed. He also noted that the Forum was only just quorate, with the minimum number of members in attendance to make it so.

Resolved (6:0:1) – That:

1. In accordance with ESFA guidelines, the reduced Contributions to Combined Budgets of £0.429m in 2024-25 for:

- **School Improvement**
- **Local Safeguarding Children's Board**
- **School Intervention**
- **PFI Support**
- **PFI CLC**
- **Looked after Children Education Services**

- **Business Rates, and**
- **Governors Forum**

Be approved; and

- 2. The Schools Budget and views of the Schools Forum be referred to the budget meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee on 13th February 2024.**

61 **NOTIONAL SEN BUDGET 2024-25**

Asako Brown, Finance Manager, introduced a report that provided an update on the latest Department for Education (DfE) guidance on the operation of the notional SEN budget within local school funding formulae, and sought the views of Schools Forum on the local authority's approach for calculating the Notional SEN Budget. The report noted that it was a requirement to identify a Notional SEN budget for maintained schools and academies as set out in regulation 11(3) of the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023. Additional guidance was published in July 2023 by the DfE in 'The Notional SEN Budget for Mainstream Schools: Operational Guide 2024 to 2025'.

It noted that the notional SEN budget was not a budget that was separate from a school's overall budget. It was an identified amount within a maintained school's delegated budget share or an academy's general annual grant. It was intended as a guide for a school's spending decisions and was neither a target nor a constraint on a school's duty to use its 'best endeavours' to secure special provision for its pupils with SEN. The notional SEN budget was not intended to provide the high needs cost threshold set by the regulations (currently £6,000 per pupil per annum) for every pupil with SEN, as most such pupils' support would cost less than that. Nor was the notional SEN budget intended to provide a specific amount per pupil for those with lower additional support costs, although the local authority may make reasonable assumptions about what those costs might be for the purpose.

Resolved (9:0) – That:

- 1. The report be noted.**
- 2. Schools Forum's views were sought on the proposal of calculation methodology for the notional SEN budget for 2024-2025 and the consultation for the future years.**

62 **DE-DELEGATION OF SCHOOL BUDGETS**

Yaqub Allen, Principal Information Officer for Schools, introduced a report which sought a decision by Forum representatives of maintained schools on the possible de-delegation of a number of services to schools, where there was a preference to continue a central service. De-delegation was proposed for the following budgets:

- Contingency
- Special Staff Costs
- School Library Service
- Insurance
- Behaviour Support
- School Improvement
- Former Education Services Grant General Duties
- The School Improvement and Monitoring and Brokerage Grant

Resolved – That:

1. **The Primary Forum Representatives agreed to de-delegate each of the following budgets for the financial year 2024-25: -**
 - a. **Contingency (2:0)**
 - b. **Special Staff Costs, including TU Facilities Time (2:0)**
 - c. **School Library Service (2:0)**
 - d. **Insurance (2:0)**
 - e. **School Improvement (2:0)**
 - f. **Behaviour support (2:0)**
2. **The Primary Forum Representatives agreed a contribution to former Education Services Grant costs of £305,968. (2:0)**
3. **The Secondary Forum Representatives agreed to de-delegate each of the following budgets for the financial year 2024-25: -**
 - a. **Contingency (1:0)**
 - b. **Special Staff Costs, including TU Facilities Time (1:0)**
 - c. **School Improvement (1:0)**
 - d. **Behaviour support (1:0)**
4. **The Secondary Forum Representatives agreed a contribution to former Education Services Grant costs of £49,765. (1:0)**
5. **The Special School Forum Representatives agreed a contribution to former Education Services Grant costs of £102,505. (1:0)**
6. **As per DfE guidance, the Primary and Secondary Forum Representatives agreed a contribution to replace SIMBG costs of £248,800. (3:0)**
7. **As per DfE guidance, the Special School Forum representatives agreed a contribution to replace SIMBG costs of £24,400. (1:0)**

Anju Varaghese, Finance Business Partner, presented a report describing the current representation of the Forum and membership changes. The report noted that there were 7 vacancies.

Members discussed the need to fill the vacant positions and noted that there was currently a very small secondary school representation. Officers noted that work was being done to encourage more membership.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

64 **SCHOOLS FORUM WORK PLAN JANUARY 2024**

Resolved – that the Work Plan be noted.

65 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair noted that an additional meeting had been scheduled for Tuesday 19th March 2024, to be held at Ganney's Meadows Nursery School again, and that an invite would be sent to members shortly.

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**WIRRAL COUNCIL
SCHOOLS FORUM 19th March 2024
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND
EDUCATION SERVICES
EARLY YEARS WORKING GROUP UPDATE**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Wirral's School Forum of discussions at the recent subgroup, Early Years working group, dated 1st March 2024, including service updates.

2.0 Financial Incentive Scheme

2.1 The Department for Education (DfE) selected 22 local authorities to take part in a randomised control trial for an early year's financial incentive scheme. The scheme will be delivered from 1st April 2024 till 31st March 2025. The scheme will enable newly appointed early years practitioners receive £1000 tax free.

2.2 The local authorities randomly selected for the treatment group, who would receive the funding to deliver the scheme and the control group who would not receive any funding.

2.3 Wirral has been selected for the treatment group, receiving a budget around £210,000. The grant has been calculated to include the payment to the practitioner, national insurance and tax contributions and funding for the local authority to deliver the scheme. This equates to about 135 candidates receiving the payment.

2.4 Wirral had to determine how to target the scheme. Feedback from the sector supported the following groups to target:

- Experienced level 3 staff who have left the sector.
- Staff with experience of working with children with SEND.
- Staff willing to work over 30 hours a week all year round.

2.5 From the sufficiency data supplied by the DfE the following areas below will be targeted. Within these wards there are 26 childminders who could recruit assistants, 13 day nurseries, 2 pre-schools, and 2 maintained nursery schools that will be targeted to support recruitment of staff.

- Seacombe ward
- Leasowe and Moreton East ward
- New Brighton ward
- Birkenhead and Tranmere ward
- Rock Ferry
- Bidston and St James ward.

2.6 A delivery has now been approved by the DfE that details how providers will be engaged and how evidence will be collated to show impact of the scheme.

3.0 Working Families Entitlement Expansion update

- 3.1** From September 25 all eligible working families with a child/ren aged 9-months + can receive up to 30 hours childcare provision. This will be a phased approach with eligible families with a two-year-old receiving 15 hours from April 2024 and eligible families with a child aged 9months + receiving 15 hours from September 2024. Both age groups will receive 15 hours from September 2025.
- 3.2** A project board has been set up with four key workstreams;
- Data and Intelligence: To determine supply and demand mapping.
 - Communications with sector: To share key updates with sector.
 - Digital transformation: To work on digital updates with Capita and Liquid Logic.
 - Marketing: To promote the offer to parents.
- 3.3** The Department for Education (DfE) recently informed Wirral that for two-year-old working families entitlement 1061 codes have been issued with 911 of those codes validated (86%) which is currently the highest validation rate across England. This also means that 86% of eligible families have a place for their child. Support from the business team to find places is being promoted across Wirral for any families experiencing any difficulties.
- 3.4** Sufficiency highlights that Wirral may have some deficit for the 30-hour places in particular areas. However, this is based on registered places and anecdotally we know providers are capping places due to recruitment and retention issues. Lots of work is being done to support this issue.
- 3.5** A readiness assessment is currently being completed that is submitted to the DfE to share progress on the implementation of the expansion. Currently Wirral is on track to implement the expansion.
- 3.6** The programme has also received capital funding to support sufficiency of places. The budget is £482,978.40, work is currently being completed to understand where supply will not meet demand. There will then be a process for providers and school to apply for funding to increase places within their existing provision.

4.0 Wrap around provision update

- 4.1** From September 2026 the government expects that every school will have an offer of wrap around childcare provision between 8am and 6pm term time only, either delivered by the school or an alternative provider. The Department for Education (DfE) have provided capacity funding for local authorities to deliver this plan and programme funding to support the creation and expansion of provision.
- 4.2** A project board has been set up with key stakeholders, from schools, Holiday and Activity Fund (HAF) co-ordinator and relevant council

services. The capacity funding has been used to appoint a project officer who has been recruited and should be starting mid-March.

- 4.3 Supply and demand information has been gathered and is currently being analysed to determine where provision is needed to be expanded or developed. A readiness assessment has been completed and is currently showing Wirral to be on track to implement this programme.
- 4.4 The wrap around project also has programme funding this is tapered to enable the provision to be self-sustaining by the end of the project. The total programme budget is £1,616,268.25, this is split over the two-year programme. In financial year 24/25 Wirral will receive £1,090,347.18 and £508,916.50 in 25/26.
- 4.5 Capital funding budget is £120,744.60. Following the development of the delivery plan a capital spend plan will be developed to support provision to develop the new offer.

5.0 Operation Encompass update

- 5.1 Operation Encompass is a partnership programme with the Police. The Police currently notify any school that a child attends that has experienced parental conflict outside of school hours.
- 5.2 From April onwards Early Years Providers will receive the same notification from the early years team. A majority (79%) of providers have signed the information sharing agreement and will complete training this month. The 50 providers that have not yet agreed will be encouraged to sign up so children can be supported.
- 5.3 Early years providers will be notified by the Wirral Council staff as many providers do not have secure email addresses. Alongside the Operation Encompass training, further 'Do you feel what I feel' training has been delivered to support the children experiencing parental conflict.

6.0 Working group discussions.

- 6.1 The group reviewed the budget allocations for all entitlements including the new working family's entitlements. The funding rates were also shared as the following:
 - Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP): £0.68 per hour
 - Disability Access Fund (DAF): £910.00 per year
 - Under two's working families: £10.32 per hour
 - Two-year-olds disadvantaged: £7.76 per hour
 - Two-year-olds working families: £7.72 per hour
 - Three-and-four-year-olds Universal: £4.77 per hour
 - Three-and-four-year-olds Extended: £4.77 per hour

The group requested justification on the different rates for two-year-olds. The enhanced rate for disadvantaged two-year-olds is to ensure that places remain available particularly when the working family's entitlement increases to 30 hours. The group felt providers felt positive about the rates.

6.2 The Disability Access Fund (DAF) is forecast to have an underspend by year end and the group felt that any underspend at year end should be applied to the Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) budget.

6.3 The financial incentives project was shared and there was a feeling that whilst this was beneficial it has the potential to frustrate the current workforce who wouldn't be receiving the incentive.

6.4 There are currently 3 school forum representative vacancies, expressions of interest have been invited unfortunately no submissions have been received. Two of the current post holders are willing to continue for another term of office. The group identified a number of options to garner some expressions of interest.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 School Forum to note the report.

Simone White – Director of Children, Families and Education

WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM – 19th MARCH 2024

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

DBV UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Forum on the Delivering Better Value (DBV) in SEND programme.
- 1.2 To notify the forum that an application was made the DFE in December 2023 for the DBV grant and the LA found out in February 2024 they had been successful in securing the £1 million grant.

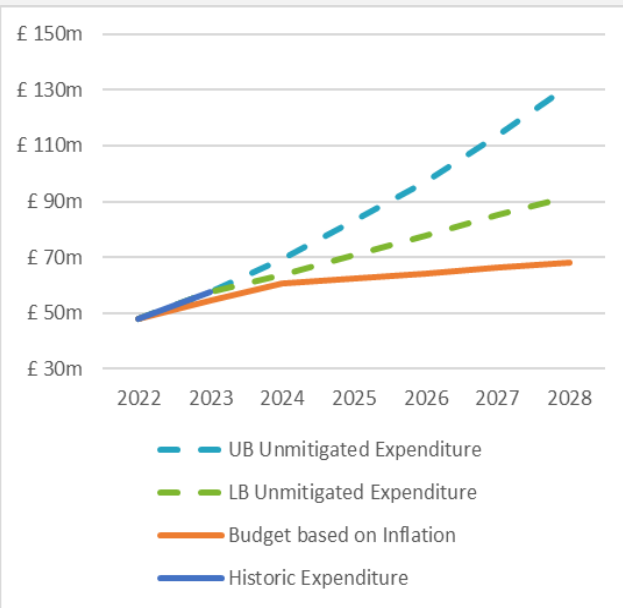
2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The DBV Programme's main objective has been to identify local and national opportunities to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The programme has designed its support through two key approaches:
 1. Short term support: To identify sustainable changes in each Local Authority that can drive high-quality outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and to support Wirral in building an evidence-based grant application to assist the implementation of those changes.
 2. Informing Long Term Reform: Build an objective evidence base across a third of the sector, which can be used to:
 - Inform future policy and drive legislative and funding changes
 - Build a national playbook and share best practice
 - Inform future national programmes of similar scale and intent
- 2.2 The local area commenced the DBV programme in June 2023 with colleagues from across the partnership working to compile all the relevant data sets that were required to capture a clear picture in relation to the current challenges faced in the high needs block. In addition, deep dives and root cause analysis took place to understand the areas of focus that could be identified.
- 2.3 Wirral completed the DBV programme alongside 54 other local authorities currently facing challenges in their high needs block costs.

3.0 KEY FINDINGS

- 3.1 The DBV programme analysed all data captured in relation to unit costs of provision type and the amount of provision being utilised. In addition, the DBV programme outlined the cost pressures ahead if no steps we taken.

Caseload is driving an unmitigated expenditure growth of between 91%-175% over the next 5 years



The assumption of 6.2% of all CYPs being supported by HNB funding by 2028 makes UB expenditure **44% greater than LB forecasted expenditure** by 2028

Table 1

3.2 Table 1 articulates the unmitigated forecast outlining the challenge of caseload growth. The difference between the upper and lower bound is based on the proportion of the population with an EHCP.

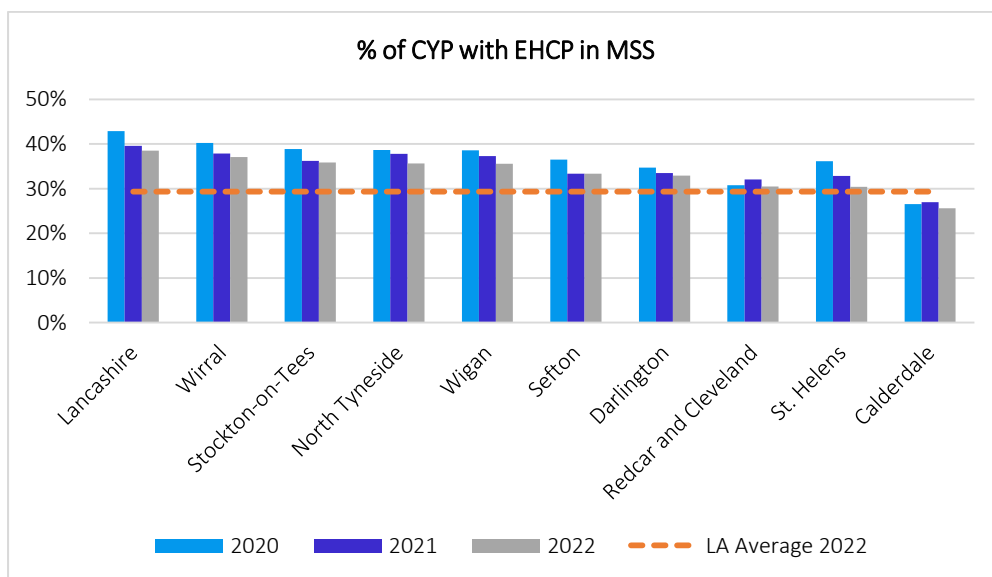


Table 2

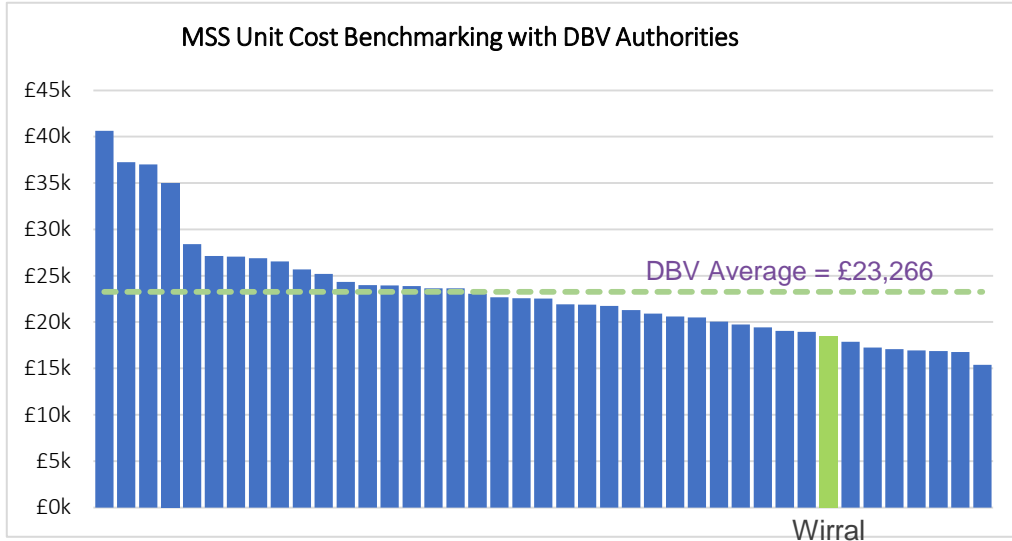


Table 3

3.3 Tables 2 and 3 outline the unit cost and proportion of young people in maintained special schools on Wirral. The proportion of young people with an EHCP on Wirral in a special school is above the national average of 30%, with the Wirral figure being closer to 38 and the second highest compared to statistical neighbours. In relation to unit cost, Wirral is below the DBV average of £23,266 at a figure of around 18K.

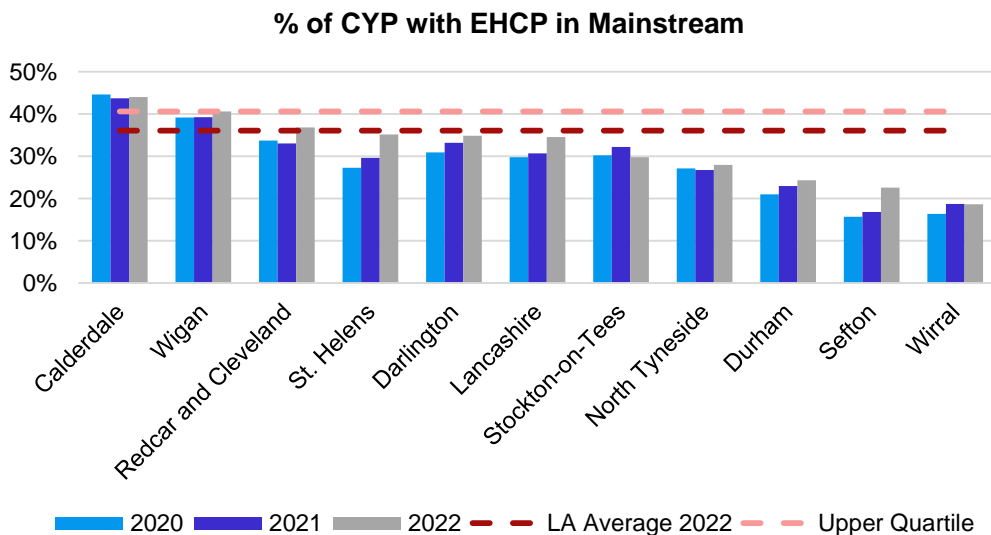


Table 4

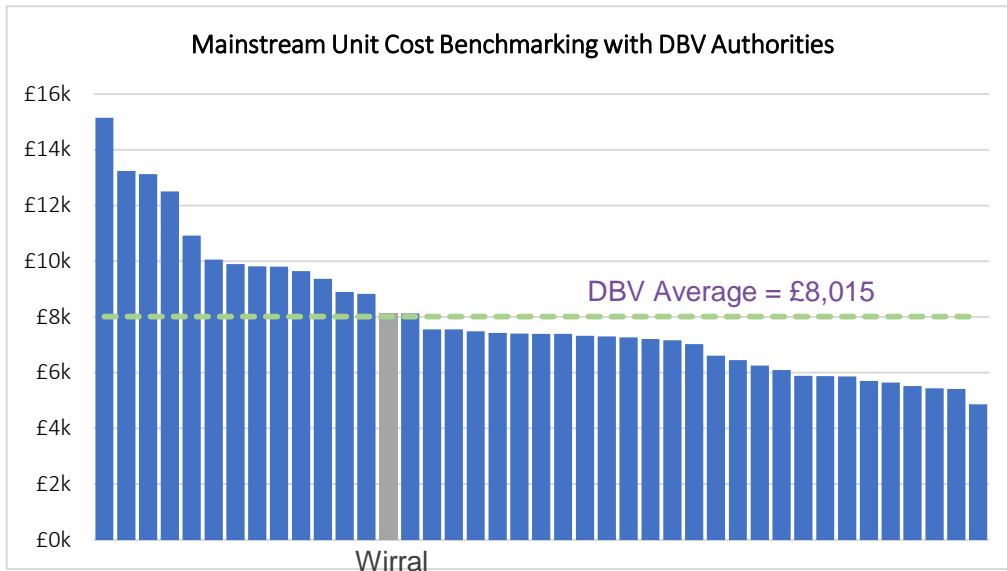


Table 5

3.4 In tables 4 and 5 you will see the unit cost and the proportion of young people with an EHCP in a mainstream provision. In relation of proportion of EHCP's in a mainstream provision, Wirral is below the national average figure of 38%, with proportion of young people with an EHCP in mainstream standing at 19%, this is the lowest in comparison to statistical neighbours. In relation to unit cost, the Wirral is almost identical to the DBV average at £8K.

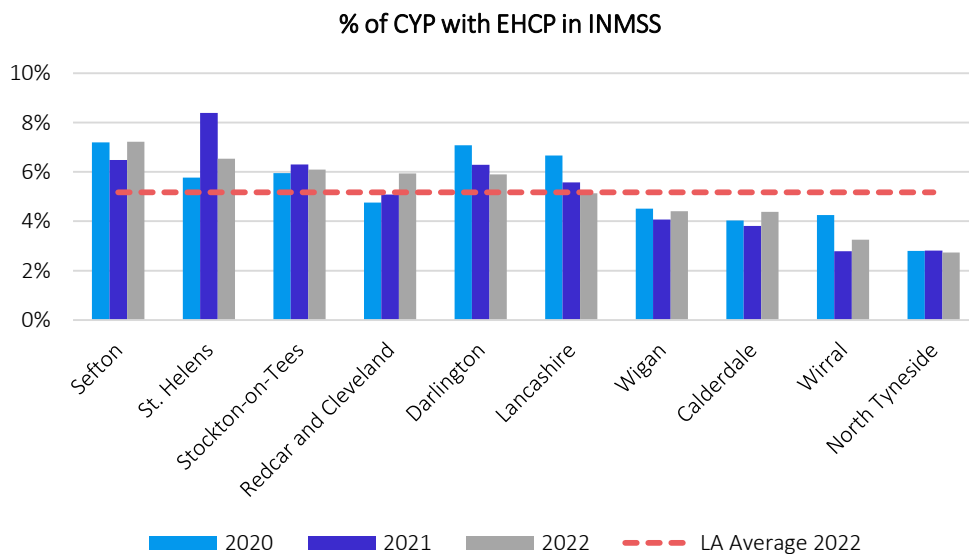


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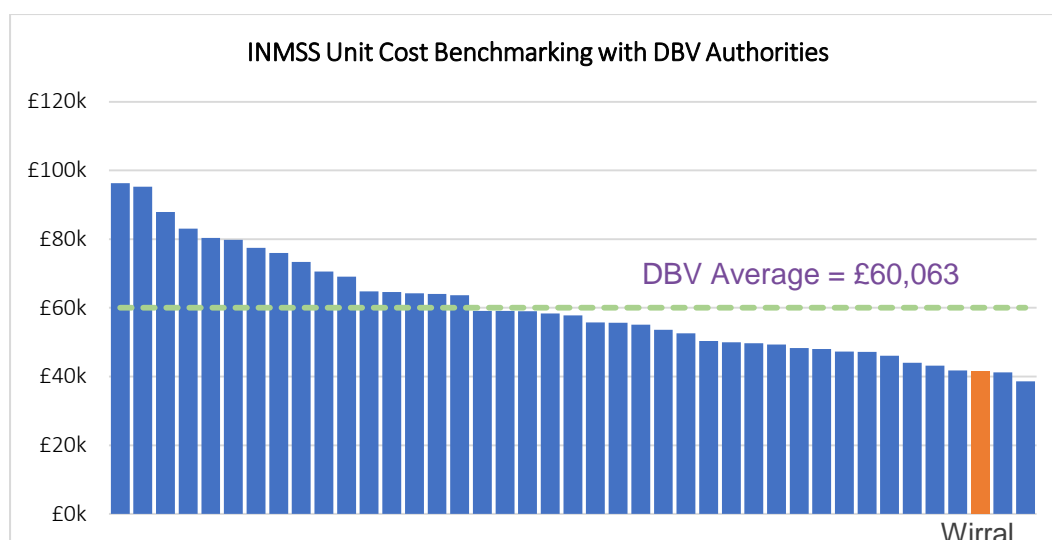


Table 7

3.5 In relation to tables 6 and 7 it can be seen the proportion of young people with an EHCP accessing an Independent Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) is below the national average of about 5.8% at about 3.5% on Wirral. This is also one of lower amounts when compared to statistical neighbours. In relation to unit cost, Wirral is significantly lower than the DBV average of £60K at around 40K. As outlined in other reports, as the maintained special school system reaches saturation the requirement for using INMSS will increase over the next 5 years putting significant pressure on the high needs block.

3.6 Following the work by DBV to articulate unit costs and the proportion of young people attending different provisions with an EHCP, Newton Europe undertook a deep dive to articulate the key areas of focus that would support young people achieving the best educational outcomes in a financially secure approach.

3.7 The following areas were identified as the key themes to support the local area in achieving better outcomes.

- Ensure that Mainstream schools can provide inclusive environments to allow children and young people to thrive, with the right spaces, resources, skilled staff and parental engagement.
- Support children & young people in Wirral with a range of multi-disciplinary services to meet their need, at the right time and right level, to prevent needs escalating; with all staff are clear and confident in delivering it
- Best support children at key transition points – especially primary to secondary – and take a child-centred approach which enables children and young people to thrive between phases.

3.8 Alongside the key areas of focus, the DBV has also highlighted the funding arrangements for the high needs block have not been reviewed since 2018 and given the units costs highlighted for some provisions, it would be appropriate to

review the high needs block funding arrangements to clarify best value is being achieved and all provisions are funded appropriately.

- 3.9 Following the Newton Europe/CIPFA programme a grant application was made to the DFE to support the work needed to take place over the next 18 months to address the key themes that have been identified. Wirral was notified in February 2024 of its success in receiving the grant monies for the next financial year.

4.0 KEY FINDINGS

- 4.1 The business case submitted to the DFE has identified 5 initiatives to support the local area in meeting the needs of young people and at the same time looking at mitigations to address the overspend in the high needs block. As identified in the DSG management plan and earlier in this report the key driver to increased spend on the Wirral is the increased EHCP assessment requests. The 5 initiatives that need to be delivered as part of the DBV programme are the following.

- ✓ Quality Assurance framework of the graduated approach from early years to post 16
- ✓ Training, best practice and capacity to embed the graduated approach
- ✓ Evidence and review of health therapies withing the graduated approach
- ✓ Sufficiency opportunities to develop resourced provision across both primary and secondary phases of education
- ✓ Settings, education and employment opportunities for young people

- 4.2 The DBV programme delivery will be reviewed by the Department for Education (DFE) on a quarterly basis over the next academic year. Alongside this, a DBV in SEND board will be developed to oversee the use of the grant monies and the 5 initiatives that have been outlined as part of the bid.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The DBV programme has allowed the opportunity for a root cause analysis in relation education provision use and process in relation to young people with SEND across the Wirral. It outlines the key initiatives that need to be taken forward as part of the grant application.

- 6.2 The DBV programme has also outlined the need to review funding arrangements that have not analysed since 2018. It is imperative the right funding is in place to support young people in Wirral in a way that is cost effected in relation the high needs block.

- 6.3 The DBV programme has outlined the limits in capacity that will occur in the short term and outline the pressing need to increase the amount of resourced provision for young people with SEND across the Wirral.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That the Forum notes the report and the success in being awarded the grant application monies of £1m.

- 7.2 That schools forum receives regular reports as the DBV programme progresses and a schools forum member support the DBV in SEND board that will be established.
- 7.3 That schools forum agrees to a review of the high needs funding model currently in place during the summer term and report is brought back to forum for the September meeting

Simone White
Director for Children, Families and Education

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM – 19th MARCH 2024

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

SPECIAL SCHOOLS – PROPOSED CHANGE TO ADMISSION NUMBERS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Over the last two academic years several special schools have supported the local area by agreeing to expansion, this is due to the increased number of young people with an EHCP and needing specialist provision.
- 1.2 During the academic years, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 the following schools have admitted additional pupil about the agreed capacity numbers – Elleray Park School, Meadowside School, Stanley School, Foxfield School, Hayfield School, Claremount School, Orrets Meadow School and The Observatory School.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In relation to Elleray Park School, it now operates across a split site model with an additional site in the former Pensby Children's Centre. In September 2021 it was agreed to increase the school admission number to 187. Since that time the school has grown further, and the admission number needs to be now 210 based on current numbers. Elleray Park School support young people with complete learning difficulties, due to the continued shift in demand for this provision the correct number of pupils need to be funded to receive the highest quality of education and resources they require in order that their needs can be met successfully. Elleray Park has reached max capacity across its two sites.
- 2.2 In relation to Stanley School, the school currently has a net capacity of 120. Stanely school was able to take an additional cohort of pupils and currently has 150 pupils on roll, this was supported by using an additional classroom across the Pensby/Stanley site. The school will be supporting the local area by taking an additional 20 pupils in September 2023, and therefore will have a net capacity of 170 pupils. Stanley School also supports young people with complex needs and the demand in provision of this type has continued.
- 2.3 The increased pupil numbers in primary complex needs is now starting to filter into the secondary system. Foxfield School currently has a pupil number of 172 matching is net capacity. This will increase over the next 3 years with an expectation pupils will increase by 60. To support this additional space is being created at the Foxfield site over the next 3 years. To support this the admission number for September needs to increase to 195 pupils. Further increases will be brought to school's forum as required. Foxfield School is currently working a split site model with additional space being utilised at the CLC at the new Claremount School site.

- 2.4 Meadowside School has also seen a similar increase in pressure for places to meet the needs of complex young people across Wirral. The LA supported the school with demountable classroom on the Meadowside site during 2022-2023 academic year. The school has a net capacity of 75 and this needs to be increased to 100 based on the current cohort that can be accommodated at the school site. Meadowside School has reached max capacity and cannot be expanded any further.
- 2.5 The Observatory School is just in the final stages of finishing a capital programme at the former Leasowe Maintained Nursery School. In November 2023, Wirral Council Children's Committee agreed to the significant change to allow The Observatory School to expand its age range to KS2, following a previous pilot that was agreed. The school will operate on a 160-admission number, following the agreement of the capacity of 100 agreed at the same committee. The Observatory School meets the needs of young people SEMH profiles. The Observatory school will be at max capacity following this additional site.
- 2.6 Hayfield School supported the local areas by taking a significant increase in pupils at the start of the academic year 2022-2023. This was supported by a capital programme to install 6 mobile classrooms; this has been very successful, and the provision created has really supported the school with this additional pupil requirement. The net capacity of the school has increased from 100 to 160 pupils now on roll. The school caters for the needs of young people with ASC. Hayfield School is now at max capacity.
- 2.7 Claremount School continues a popular school to support the needs of young people with ASC. In September 2021 the pupil number was increased from 226 to 249. Since then, the school has moved sites, to the former Kingsway High School, this has been hugely successful with the school receiving the support required to adapt the facilities to meet the needs of the young people that attend. The demand seen in September 2021 has continued for the following two academic years and it is expected to continue for the next academic year. The school currently has 360 pupils on roll, and this is expected to rise to 400 pupils in September 2024. The new site has the space required to accommodate this additional demand. It is important to note the school will reach saturation point within the next two years. Claremount School meets the needs of young people with ASC.
- 2.8 Orrets Meadow has been able to expand through this academic year and the next academic year by the utilisation of space at the neighbouring Sandbrook Primary School. The school will be able to utilise two classrooms at the start of the next academic year allowing 20 additional places. The school meets the needs of young people with ASC and the admission number needs to increase from the previous 72 to 92. Orrets Meadow will then be at max capacity on its current footprint.
- 2.9 As per the DBV outline our maintained special school system is reaching saturation point. The 8 schools outlined here, 6 of them are reaching saturation point with no further expansion available. Additional provision for young people with an EHCP will be needed to be delivered by significant expansion of resourced provision in the mainstream system.

2.10 The outlined increased in admission numbers were fully costed as part of the DBV review programme and have been considered as part of the DSG management place and included in the budget projections.

3.0 Summary of admission number changes

School	Current admission number	Current number on roll	Admission number September 2024
Stanley School	120	151	170
Elleray Park School	187	212	210
Foxfield School	174	172	192
Meadowside School	75	104	100
The Observatory School	100	146	160
Hayfield School	100	161	160
Orrets Meadow School	72	83	92
Claremount School	249	364	400

4.0 Conclusion

4.1 To meet the needs of the increased demand in pupils with an EHCP requiring an EHCP the special school system has supported the Wirral local area demand and this needs to be reflected in the admission number so the school can access all appropriate funding.

4.2 It is important to not the significant increase in the number of places within special schools will be challenging moving forward as the reach saturation point. Additional resourced provision will need to be created in mainstream provision, DBV estimated a need of circa 500 places across the primary and secondary phases. This will reduce the proportion of Wirral children with an EHCP attending a special school and reflect a closer figure to the national average proportions.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 That the Forum notes the report and increased demand on specialist provision

6.2 Forum supports the increased admission numbers for the special schools outlined in the report

Simone White
Director for Children, Families and Education

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

SCHOOLS FORUM – 19th MARCH 2024

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) MANAGEMENT PLAN

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Forum on the actions that are being undertaken to develop Wirral's DSG Management Plan.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The DSG: conditions of grant 2023 to 2024 paragraph 5.2, requires that any local authority with an overall deficit on its DSG account at the end of the 2022 to 2023 financial year, or whose DSG surplus has substantially reduced during the year, must be able to present a plan to the Department for Education (DfE) for managing their future DSG spend.

2.2 As reported at June 23 Schools Forum meeting, the overall overspend of DSG at the end of the financial year 2022-23 was £3.073m with the cumulative deficit position of £4.763m. To comply with the DSG conditions of grant, the DSG management plan needs to be submitted to the DfE.

2.3 Schools Forum is also aware that Wirral has taken part in the Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme. The programme has been established by DfE for 55 local authorities to address the overspend on the High Needs Block. The programme includes forecasting future spend, and then identifying a small number of high impact projects. The DfE consider grant applications of up to £1m for one year of transformation funding. A condition of the grant is to submit a DSG management plan to the DfE with support from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). Wirral submitted a grant application in December 2023 and it has been confirmed that Wirral has been successful in the grant application for £1m.

3.0 DSG MANAGEMENT PLAN OVERVIEW

3.1 To assist in the planning process, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) designed a management plan template to help local authorities to manage their DSG with both statistical and financial information.

The template will help local authorities:

- comply with paragraph 5.2 of the DSG: conditions of grant 2023 to 2024.
- forecast and monitor how DSG funding is spent.
- forecast and monitor numbers of education, health and care plans (EHC plans)
- highlight areas where local authorities may wish to review spending or focus efforts.

- form evidence-based and strategic future plans for the provision of children and young people with SEND
- present complex funding information simply to Schools Forums and other external stakeholders
- share best practice and initiatives by providing a consistent reporting format.

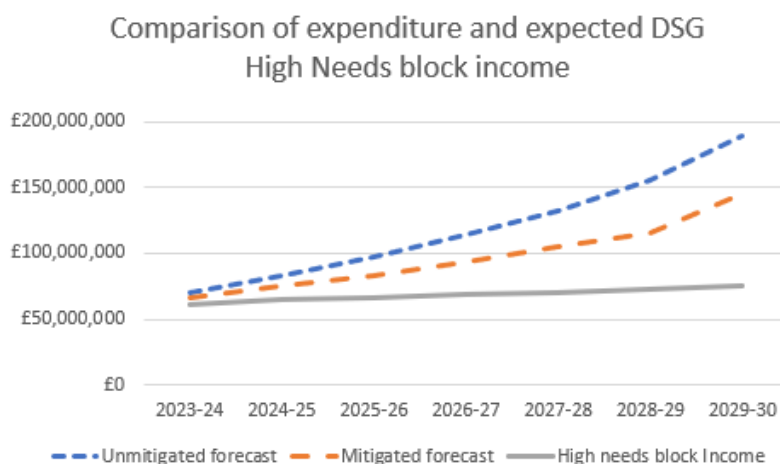
3.2 The DSG management plan provides an unmitigated and mitigated forecast for the period 2023/24 to 2029/30.

- Unmitigated forecast: forecast prior to accounting for any cost reduction and/or invest to save measures in place; a 'do nothing' forecast.
- Mitigated forecast: forecast after accounting for the cost reduction and/or invest to save measures in place.

3.3 Wirral's draft DSG management plan is attached as Appendix 1 – the financial information and forecast have been completed as per the DBV programme grant application requirement. Further work is required for the statistical information for pupils with EHCP.

4.0 FINANCIAL FORECASTING

4.1 The graph below compares the expected DSG High Needs block income for both the unmitigated and mitigated forecasted expenditure. Findings and opportunities from the DBV programme have been utilised in completing the DSG management plan.

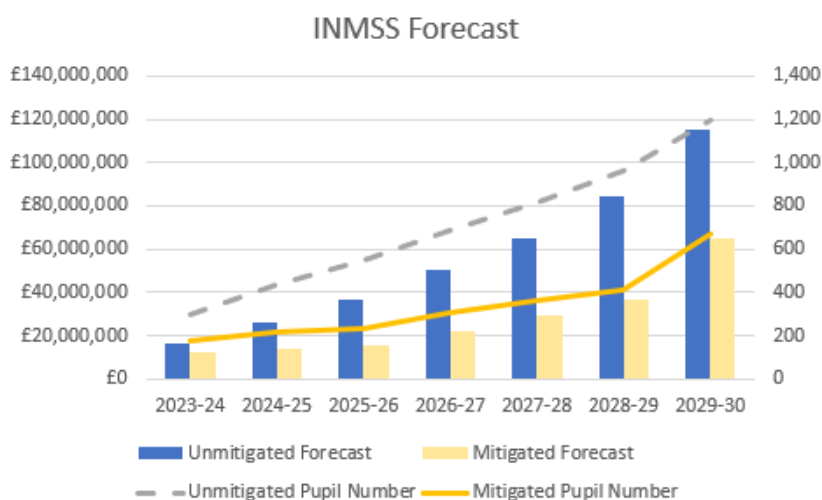


The cumulative mitigated deficit position of each year on the DSG management plan is in the table below.

Cumulative deficit DSG position

	2023-24 £,000s	2024-25 £,000s	2025-26 £,000s	2026-27 £,000s	2027-28 £,000s	2028-29 £,000s	2029-30 £,000s
Unmitigated Deficit DSG position	£13,073	£31,740	£62,403	£107,944	£169,494	£252,370	£367,030
Mitigated Deficit DSG position	£9,977	£20,893	£37,626	£62,496	£96,190	£138,202	£208,739

4.2 The main reason for the deficit position relates to the Independent and Non Maintained Special School (INMSS) provision type. The graph below shows the number of pupils placed in this provision type and forecasted expenditure for each year. The calculation of the expenditure is based on the DBV unit costs for future years for this provision type.



5.0 EXISTING MITIGATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

5.1 The mitigated forecast reflects the mitigations which were planned before Wirral participated in the DBV programme, and new opportunities identified through the programme’s diagnostic phase as below:

- Creating additional places at the maintained special schools (MSS)
- 5 year SEND sufficiency strategy that will create approximately 400 Resourced Provision (RP) places.
- New graduated approach to support the school system with earlier identification and support.
- Review of our commissioning of support - specifically in relation to health pathways

5.2 Further opportunities have been identified since the DBV programme diagnostic phase. These opportunities are not yet reflected in the draft management plan and they will be explored further to be included in the management plan in the future.

- Alternative provision free school
- 18-25 provision for complex young people to reduce the pressure on INMSS.
- Review of the top up finding at MSS and RP

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 Wirral officers will continue to develop the Management Plan and will report back to the Schools Forum meeting.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 That the Forum notes the report.

Simone White
Director for Children, Families and Education

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM – 16th January 2024 WORK PLAN

Meeting Date	Tuesday 26th September 2023	Tuesday 21st November 2023	Tuesday 16th January 2024	March 2024 Provisional meeting	Tuesday 11 th June 2024
Virtual / Physical	Physical	Physical	Physical	Physical	Physical
	Elect chair & vice chair				
Budget	Budget monitoring 2023-24 Growth & Falling Rolls Fund		Budget Monitoring 23-24 Q3 Schools Budget 24-25 De-delegation of budgets School Balances update		Provisional outturn 2023-24 Schools Budget 2024-25 School Balances update
Consultation	2024-25 National Funding Formula for Schools, High Needs and Early Years funding arrangements if new info out	National Funding Formula Update for 2024-25			
DfE Regs & guidelines	Schools Forum Membership If updated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DfE Operational Guide School Finance Regs Scheme for Financing Schools 	Schools Forum Membership If updated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DfE Operational Guide School Finance Regs Scheme for Financing Schools	Schools Forum Membership If updated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DfE Operational Guide School Finance Regs Scheme for Financing Schools	Schools Forum Membership If updated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DfE Operational Guide School Finance Regs Scheme for Financing Schools	Schools Forum Membership If updated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DfE Operational Guide School Finance Regs Scheme for Financing Schools
Working Groups	Early Years	High Needs			High Needs Early Years
Other	Wirral Traded Services Update Delivering Better Value Budget Monitoring Package for Schools Excessive Clawback Mechanism Consultation	De-delegated services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contingency, Special Staff Costs, Insurance Library Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behaviour Support Edsential Update School Admissions	Sensory Support Service Update Energy update Wirral	Early Years Funding Rates and Consultation Outcome Delivering Better Value Update High Needs Funding Arrangement Review Proposal Special School Places DSG Management Plans	LACES /LAC PP Update Home Continuing and Education Service (HCES) update Agree Meeting dates

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS' FORUM 19th March 2024

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

Forum Membership Review

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report describes the current representation of the Forum and membership changes.

1.2 Current Representation

The table below details the current makeup of the Wirral Schools' Forum representation and when the terms of office are due to expire.

Total Membership	Role	2020-2024	2021-2025	2022-2026	2023-2027	2024-2028	Total
5	Primary Headteachers		2	1	2		5
4	Primary Governors		2	1			3
1	Secondary Headteachers	1					1
1	Special Headteacher				1		1
1	Special Governors				1		1
1	Nursery Representative			1			1
13	Total Schools Membership						12
9	Academy Representative		2		3		5
9	Total Academy Membership						5
1	Non-teacher representative		1				1
1	Teacher representative				1		1
1	Catholic Diocese		1				1
1	Church of England Diocese		1				1
1	16-19 representative						0
3	PVI Early Years Providers					2	2
8	Total Non-Schools Membership						6
30	Total Membership	1	9	3	8	2	23

1.4 There are currently 7 vacancies.

- There is 1 x 16-19 provider vacancy
- There is 1 x Primary Governor vacancy – this position may no longer be needed due to primary schools converting to academies.
- There is 1x PVI Representative vacancy. The Early Years representatives Nicky Prance and Simon Davies, have agreed to do another term.
- There are 4 x academy representative vacancies. The expressions of interest have been sent out for these vacancies but at the time of writing this report, no nominations have been received.

1.5 New Members

There has been **no** new members since the January report

Appendix 1 identifies all current members and their role on School's Forum.

1.6 Membership Changes

Regulations governing the forum requires school/academy membership to take account of pupil weighting.

Current		Pupil no's Oct 23 Census	Expected	
9	Primary	21,263	44.2%	8.1
1	Secondary	3,842	8.0%	1.5
9	Academy	22,975	47.8%	9.1
19.0		48,080	100.0%	19.0

- 1.7 As the primary schools are converting to academy, this reduces the membership of maintained primary schools to 8 but increases the maintained secondary schools back up to 2. Since there is a vacancy for a primary governor, it would be appropriate to adjust this to a secondary representative at this time.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Forum notes the report.
- 2.2 Forum agrees to the changes discussed.

Simone White
Director of Children, Families and Education

Appendix 1

Group	Name	Category of Membership	School/Establishment	Term of Office	
Schools	Lorraine Prescott	Primary Headteacher (Birkenhead S)	St Anne's Catholic	Oct-23	Sep-27
Schools	Sue Ralph	Primary Headteacher (Birkenhead N)	St Michael & All Angels	Sep-21	Aug-25
Schools	John McDonald	Primary Headteacher	St Albans Primary	Sep-21	Aug-25
Schools	Kate Ball	Primary Headteacher (Deeside)	Brookdale	Sep-23	Aug-27
Schools	Chris Mervyn	Primary Headteacher	Brackenwood Infants	May-22	Apr-26
Schools	Charlotte Scott	Primary Governor	St Georges Primary	Aug-21	Jul-25
Schools	Shaun Allen	Primary Governor	Raeburn Avenue	Nov-22	Oct-26
Schools	Julie Merry	Primary Governor	Overchurch Infants/Cathcart	Jan-21	Dec-24
Schools	Vacancy	Primary Governor			
Schools	Simon Goodwin	Secondary Headteacher	South Wirral High	Sep-20	Aug-24
Schools	Holly Barker	Special Headteacher	Stanley School	Sep-23	Aug-27
Schools	Paula Wareing	Special Governor	Meadowside School	Feb-23	Jan-27
Schools	Kathryn Kennedy	Nursery Representative	Ganneys Meadow	Mar-22	Feb-26
Academy	Moira Loftus	Academy Rep (Vice-Chair)	Townfield Primary	Jun-21	May-25
Academy	Adrian Whiteley	Academy Rep (Chair)	St Anselms	Sep-23	Aug-27
Academy	Vacancy	Academy Rep			
Academy	Emma Ball	Academy Rep	Greasby Junior	Jan-23	Dec-27
Academy	Mark Bellamy	Academy Rep	Hilbre High School	Sep-21	Aug-25
Academy	Luci Jones	Academy Rep	Cheshire Academies Trust (Gayt	Sep-23	Aug-27
Academy	Vacancy	Academy Rep			
Academy	Vacancy	Academy Rep			
Academy	Vacancy	Academy Rep			
Non-Schools	Kate Williams	Non-teacher representative	Wirral Unison	Dec-23	Nov-27
Non-Schools	Michael Farrelly	Teacher representative	NEU	Sep-23	Aug-27
Non-Schools	Joanne Proctor	Catholic Diocese	Christ the King	Sep-21	Aug-25
Non-Schools	Brian McGregor	Church of England Diocese	Woochurch CE Primary	Sep-21	Aug-25
Non-Schools	Vacancy	16-19 Provider			
Non-Schools	Nicky Prance	PVI Early Years Providers	Barnston Buddies	Mar-24	Feb-28
Non-Schools	Simon Davies	PVI Early Years Providers	Penguins Nurseries	Mar-24	Feb-28
Non-Schools	Vacancy	PVI Early Years Providers			

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