

SCHOOLS FUNDING CONSULTATION: PROPOSAL 4 (TRANSFER OF 0.5% SCHOOLS BLOCK TO HIGH NEEDS BLOCK)

Report of the Director of Finance and Public Value and the Director of Children & Young People's Futures

Recommendation

- a) That DEF agree to transfer 0.25% (£1.3 million) between blocks for 2024-25, to support the Safety Valve plans to manage the high needs funding sustainably and meet the needs of children and young people earlier
All to Vote (Schools, Academies and PVI)

1. Background

- 1.1. Devon Education Forum discussed proposal 4 of the schools funding consultation at its meeting on 22 November 2023. Further information was required on what the funding would be used for, therefore the decision was deferred until the January 2024 meeting. Members agreed that a further consultation with schools would be conducted.
- 1.2. Schools Funding Group raised concerns about the original request for a 0.5% transfer, given the response to the schools funding consultation. They asked that the Council consider whether a lesser amount would still support plans.

2. Schools Funding Consultation Proposal 4 - Movements into Another Block

- 2.1. A core element of Devon's Safety Valve plans is to improve the inclusion of children and young people with SEND and those who are disadvantaged by meeting needs earlier and in the right place and to ensure demand is managed appropriately.
- 2.2. The current Early Help offer in Devon doesn't meet the current challenges and demand seen locally and schools can't access the support they need which, in turn, meets the needs of children, young people and families. This is backed up by evidence, for example demand for statutory services, attendance and exclusion data.
- 2.3. Investing in strengthening family intervention work and the reach into schools to support a reduction in exclusions as well as a targeted response to those young people experiencing Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) will be part of a wider and developing Early Help offer in Devon. The slide deck setting out what the funding will be used for is provided alongside this paper.
- 2.4. The Council has revised its initial proposal to transfer 0.5% (£2.6 million) and is now requesting a 0.25% (£1.3 million) transfer, which will pump prime this early help work. Schools can be assured that the impact of this funding will be managed as part of safety valve monitoring via the DfE.
- 2.5. It should be noted that as part of Safety Valve negotiations there is an expectation that the Council pursue all potential funding streams. Therefore, should the decision be made to reject a transfer, the Council is expected to request disapplication to obtain the transfer.

2.6. The Council is clear that unlike other authorities, it will not seek to apply the funds transferred in 2024/25 to the 'bottom line' to address the deficit but will reinvest in support for schools to improve the system. It will also not be seeking a significant schools block transfer which may be proposed in other areas.

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