

# Public Document Pack

SOLIHULL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

## **CPH Children and Education Decision Session**

**Tuesday 8 November 2022  
6.00pm**

### **ARRANGEMENTS FOR PUBLIC ACCESS TO REMOTE MEETINGS**

During the Covid 19 pandemic virtual meetings are taking place.

**PLEASE NOTE** that any member of the press and public may listen to proceedings at this virtual meeting via a weblink which will be publicised on the Council website at least 24hrs before the meeting.

To view live paste this link into your browser: <https://solihull.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

Members of the press and public may tweet, blog etc. during the live broadcast, as they would be able to during a regular Committee meeting in the Council Offices. It is important, however, that Councillors can discuss and take decisions without disruption, so the only participants in this virtual meeting will be the Councillors concerned and the officers advising the Committee.

## Disclosing Pecuniary Interests - What Must You Do?

(a) You must complete a declaration of your disclosable pecuniary interests, including those of your spouse/civil partner (or someone with whom you are living as such) and send it to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of your election or appointment to the Council.

(b) When you attend a meeting of the Council, Cabinet, Scrutiny Board, Committee, Sub-Committee or Joint Committee etc, and a matter arises in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, unless you have been granted a dispensation, **you must:**

- Declare the interest if you have not already registered it
- Not participate in any discussion or vote
- Leave the meeting room until the matter has been dealt with
- Give written notice of any unregistered interest to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting

(c) If you are the Leader or a Cabinet Portfolio Holder you may not exercise any of your delegated powers as a single member in relation to a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest or take any other step except to give written notice of any unregistered interest to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of your becoming aware of the interest, or arrange for another person or body to deal with the matter.

Disclosable Interest	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain by you or your partner.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the Council) made or provided within 12 months of your declaration of interests in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses.
Contracts	Any contract between you or your partner (or a firm or body corporate in which you or your partner is a partner or a director, or in the securities of which you or your partner has a beneficial interest) <b>and</b> the Council (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; <b>and</b> (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the Council and which gives you or your partner a right to occupy the land or receive income.
Licences	Any licence held by you or your partner (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the Council for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to your knowledge)— (a) the landlord is the Council; <b>and</b> (b) the tenant is a body in which you or your partner has a beneficial interest i.e. a firm or body corporate in which you or your partner is a partner or a director, or in the securities of which you or your partner has a beneficial interest.
Securities	Any beneficial interest held by you or your partner in securities of a body where—  (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the Council; <b>and</b> (b) either— (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; <b>or</b>  (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you or your partner has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.  “securities” means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

SOLIHULL METROPOLITAN  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

To:  
Councillors M Gough, L McCarthy and  
B Groom

NICK PAGE  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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Date Tuesday 1 November 2022

**CPH CHILDREN AND EDUCATION DECISION SESSION - Tuesday 8  
November 2022**

**AGENDA**

**Mayor/Chairman of the meeting to announce:**

**'May I remind everyone present that this meeting will be broadcast live via the internet.'**

**1. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

To receive notification of any declarations of pecuniary and /or conflict of interests from Members.

**3. QUESTIONS AND DEPUTATIONS**

To answer questions and hear deputations, if any, asked by any resident of the Borough pursuant to Standing Orders.

**4. REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING 2022/2023 AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2022 (Pages 5 - 16)**

To inform the Cabinet Portfolio Holder of the financial position for the core service and Dedicated School Grant (DSG) budgets as at Period 6 2022/23.

**5. CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT HUB - DFE GRANT (Pages 17 - 20)**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the Department for Education (DfE) grant for **£642,402** to support essential improvement activity within Childrens Services.

6. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

The meeting is likely not to be open to the public during discussion of the following items because the reports contain exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972

7. **PRIVATE APPENDIX** (Pages 21 - 58)

The appendix is referenced in the public report item 5 on the agenda.



**Meeting date:** 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022

**Report to:** Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Education

**Subject/report title:** Revenue and Capital Monitoring 2022/23 as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022

**Report from:** Director of Childrens and Education Services and the Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive

**Report author/lead contact officer:** Sarah Cheale, Childrens and Education Services Finance Manager

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**Wards affected:**

- All Wards |  Bickenhill |  Blythe |  Castle Bromwich |  Chelmsley Wood |  Dorridge/Hockley Heath |  Elmdon |  Kingshurst/Fordbridge |  Knowle |  Lyndon |  Meriden |  Olton |  Shirley East |  Shirley South |  Shirley West |  Silhill |  Smith's Wood |  St Alphege
- 

**Public/private report:** Public

**Exempt by virtue of paragraph:**

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**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To inform the Cabinet Portfolio Holder of the financial position for the core service and Dedicated School Grant (DSG) budgets as at Period 6 2022/23.

**2. Decision(s) recommended**

- 2.1 To note the financial position for the Portfolio as at Period 6, 2022/23 and endorse the actions as set out to mitigate the identified risks.
- 2.2 To note that on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022, Cabinet approved the allocation of £192,000 from the Budget Strategy Reserve in 2022/23 to support the implementation of Early Help Level 2.

**3. Matters for Consideration**

- 3.1 This report provides an update on the latest Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) position for 2022/23.

## **Childrens and Education Services Financial Position at Period 6 2022/23**

- 3.2 The Childrens and Education Portfolio position at Period 6 is set out in Appendices A and B.
- 3.3 In respect of the core budget, the forecast position is a £7.204 million adverse variance. These pressures can be partially funded by fully using the Directorate's £2.500 million risk reserve during the year, and the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022 Cabinet approved £0.192m allocation from the Budget Strategy Reserve for Early Help Level 2 implementation, leaving a net adverse variance of £4.512 million.
- 3.4 As outlined in the financial update report including MTFS implications presented to Cabinet 6th October 2022, this portfolio is facing significant financial challenges in this financial year and beyond. These challenges include but are not limited to:
- Social Care Demand impact on staffing requirements
  - Home to School Transport
  - Children's Placements and Section 17 support.
- 3.5 The key risks are set out in Appendix A.
- 3.6 Children's Services is experiencing unprecedented demand for placements, forecasting a £1.616 million adverse variance in 2022/23. The current placements position is not unique to Solihull, with Local Authorities nationally reporting pressures.
- 3.7 A 'per child' Placements model informs the current forecast. The forecast on children's placements can be volatile with changes in the number of children requiring care, and changes in individual child needs costing, or saving, material sums.
- 3.8 Some children in the care system have needed to be placed in more expensive provision. The market impact on costs, remain a high risk in delivering 'step down' arrangements and sourcing placements for new children being looked after.
- 3.9 For children's placements, we may not yet have reached our peak number of CLA and therefore costs. There is a high risk that the pressure will increase further in-year linked to numbers and case complexity, and we continue to manage the lasting effect that covid has had on cases. Placements will be an on-going pressure into future years. The improvement journey should turn this around, other factors remaining stable, but it would be some years before the impact would be seen in Placements expenditure. This will be looked at in more detail as part of future year Budget Strategy considerations.
- 3.10 Other Children's social care services are forecasting a £4.751 million adverse variance. This includes allocating additional staffing resources to manage demand levels, and improvement activities including recruitment of internal foster carers, and the development of internal residential home places. Further detail is shown at Appendix A, but as an example, Legal costs have escalated. Larger case volume

linked to higher caseloads, compounded by high profile and complex cases, including an increase in DOLS (Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding) and Secure Placements requiring QC and barristers, has increased costs for the last few years. Despite efforts, increasing demand and complexity have kept this pressure high. This will continue until a strong Early Help and intervention service is in place and active.

- 3.11 Home to School Transport is another key financial issue, with a forecast adverse variance of £1.289m. There are three major cost pressures:
- Driver shortages - which is leading to considerably reduced competition on route tenders
  - Fuel inflation – which has led to requests for price variations on contracted routes.
  - Continued increase in demand linked to increased number of pupils with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). Where a pupil, because of an EHCP, does not attend their local school, there will almost always be a legal duty to provide home to school transport assistance in some form.
- 3.12 Following a major review of all aspects of the Transport Service by the Corporate Business Improvement Team, four major initiatives to constrain costs are underway: Major revaluation of routes, using new route planning software from Sep-22; only using guides on vehicles where necessary for pupil safety; maximising usage of Council fleet options. However, these initiatives will not mitigate the current pressure, at best they will act to constrain the current level of spend.

### **Dedicated School Grant (DSG) Financial Position at Period 6, 2022/23**

- 3.13 The DSG position at Period 6 is set out in Appendix B.
- 3.14 The forecast for this year continues at £3.585 million adverse variance, taking the forecast cumulative deficit to £16.797 million, which is reported in the unusable DSG adjustment account reserve, in line with regulations.
- 3.15 The Council has reported adverse variances against the High Needs Block of the DSG budget since 2018/19. The financial pressures have arisen because of increased demand for Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs), to meet the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
- 3.16 A detailed update on the High Needs Block financial position was presented to the Cabinet 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021, in the SEND Improvement Journey Update. Following financial year end 2021/22, Cabinet was updated on the 2021/22 outturn. On 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022 the linked Strategy for Inclusive Education was presented to Cabinet Member for Children and Education.
- 3.17 High Needs budgets nationally continue to come under significant pressure. Solihull's comparative position is not as severe as some Local Authorities with higher adverse balances, which are subject to the Department for Education (DfE) Safety Valve Programme, to recover their DSG deficits over a period of 3-5 years within a DSG Financial Management Plan.

- 3.18 Solihull have agreed to participate with the DfE's Delivering Best Value programme, supporting our work towards balancing the in-year financial position in the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in future years. This is a voluntary arrangement to review data and service provisions in Solihull. We have started the first phase of this work with Newton, the DfE appointed consultants. In this phase we are working with Newton to review our data to support next steps in the programme.
- 3.19 The Department for Education have advised that the DSG deficit is a potential financial risk for all Councils to meet from their own reserves from 2023/24, if the statutory override arrangements currently in place do not continue. Solihull has responded to a Department of Education national consultation return regarding this risk, on 18th August 2022, but no announcement has yet been made. A significant number of local authorities would be impacted materially if the override was not continued.

## **Capital**

- 3.20 Appendix A also sets out the Capital Programme position at Period 6. The impact of inflation on capital projects is being reviewed, with pressures on the Childrens and Education Portfolio capital programme in future years. Projects currently underway have agreed contract prices, so the impact of inflation will be felt for new project contracts in the medium term.

## **4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?**

- 4.1 The Childrens and Education Portfolio is facing unprecedented pressures in several business areas. The financial impact of these pressures is unmanageable within Portfolio. While some one-off funds have been secured, the short and medium-term implications of responding to the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) and subsequent Improvement Notice issued by the Secretary of State, the National Panel Review into the deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson and findings of further independent reviews in Solihull are considerable. They are, however, highly necessary to safeguard and support the vulnerable children, young people, and families in the borough as we continue our improvement journey and establish our preventative offer.
- 4.2 The Service is managing forecast 2022/23 costs within the minimum possible envelope. Officers are monitoring this carefully and considering how this position will be funded at year end. The on-going needs are also being discussed as part of future year MTFs development.

## **5. Reasons for recommending preferred option**

- 5.1 The current forecast 2022/23 expenditure is necessary to fund the improvement journey that the Service is undertaking and necessary to safeguard children.



## 6. Implications and Considerations

6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull.</li> <li>2. Good quality, responsive, and dignified care, and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it.</li> <li>3. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities.</li> <li>4. Enable communities to thrive.</li> </ol>	<p>The additional financial investment currently being made into the Portfolio is essential to deliver this priority.</p>
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Develop and promote the borough's economy, with a focus on revitalising our town and local centres.</li> <li>6. Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2.</li> <li>7. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable.</li> </ol>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality, and reduce net carbon emissions.</li> </ol>	<p>N/A</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Promote employee wellbeing</li> </ol>	<p>N/A</p>

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1 The updated financial position for 2022/23 and the potential impact for the 2023/24 three-year MTFS was presented to:

- Children's Services Scrutiny on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2022
- Resources & Delivering Value Scrutiny on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022
- Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022.

These considerations are now incorporated within the Council's annual MTFS process led by the Council wide Budget Strategy Group, chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Resources.

### 6.3 Financial implications:

- 6.3.1 These are set out in the report above. The cost pressures for Core and DSG Services are significant. Arrangements are in place to monitor and manage these.

### 6.4 Legal implications:

- 6.4.1 N/A

### 6.5 Risk implications, including Risk Appetite:

- 6.5.1 The budget monitoring report takes account of known forecast variances. In addition, there may be pressures which are currently being monitored and managed by budget managers that could affect the final outturn position for 2022/23.
- 6.5.2 There are significant financial risks for this Portfolio in demand led services, as highlighted in this report. These risks extend not just to the direct provision of services but also to the number of officers required to deliver statutory requirements and keep children safe.
- 6.5.3 The improvement journey requires work at pace and a high level of responsiveness, which makes forecasting complicated. The forecast covers the key known Portfolio risks, which have been analysed at a high level. A full Portfolio forecast is being progressed, for this financial year.
- 6.5.4 As mentioned in section 3 of this report there are several substantial financial risks that the authority is facing because of external economic conditions which will be included in the Council's Budget Setting Process.
- 6.5.5 The Corporate risk relating to the delivery of the MTFS is now at a net level 9. The new MTFS that will be presented to Full Council in February 2023 will need to reduce this risk to at least a net level 8.
- 6.5.6 Covid-19 Funding has now all been committed, and any further pressures will need to be managed within the Portfolio.

### 6.6 Equality implications:

- 6.6.1 N/A

### 6.7 Linkages to our work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Local Enterprise Partnership or the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS):

- 6.7.1 N/A

## 7. List of appendices referred to

### 7.1 Appendix A - Core Position

### 7.2 Appendix B - DSG Position

**8. Background papers used to compile this report**

8.1 N/A

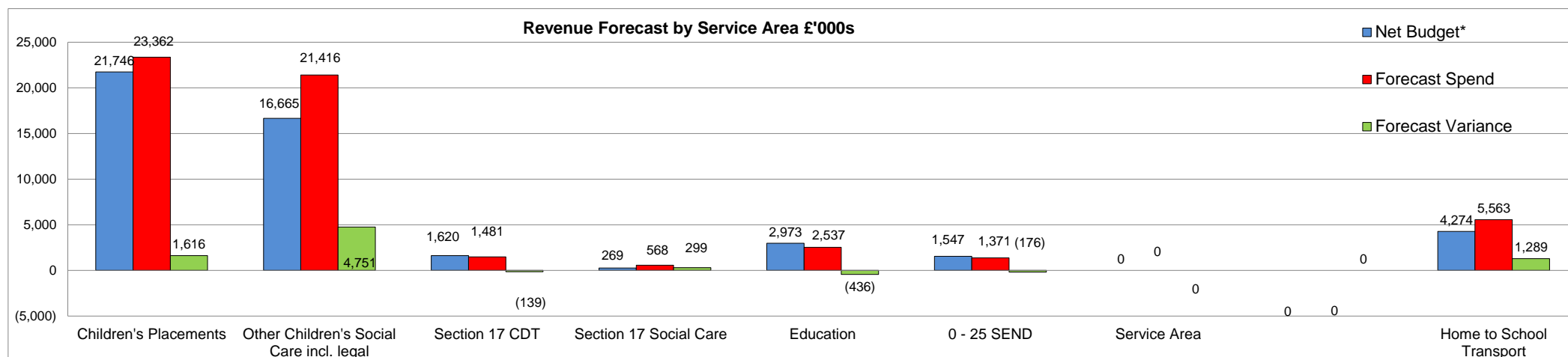
**9. List of other relevant documents**

9.1 N/A

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**Children's Services Core - Portfolio 2022/23 Position**  
**Period 6 (Sept 2022)**

**1. Revenue Position**



**2. Explanations for Key Revenue Variances**

Service Area	Net Budget* £000s	Forecast Spend £000s	Forecast Variance £000s	Commentary on material variances
Children's Placements	21,746	23,362	1,616	This projection is based on detailed case review of all children in the care system. There has been an increase in demand for placements. +£431,000 is related to the revenue set up costs of Residential Homes, with the aim of having places and costs for some residential placements within Council control.
Other Children's Social Care incl. legal	16,665	21,416	4,751	Agreed additional funding for YOS +£132,000, LSCP +£96,000, Social Care Demand £3.714m, +£399,000 Legal costs due to case demand and complexity, +£339,000 Other improvement activities including JTAI recommendations, +£154,000 Fostering Spend to save, offset by (£83,000) Officers travel. Any relevant external income, such as the DfE £642,000 Improvement Grant and any specific additional reserves have been applied.
Section 17 CDT	1,620	1,481	(139)	Based on Social Care System Manager forecast and analysis of other system payments and expected contract payments.
Section 17 Social Care	269	568	299	Based on Social Care System Manager forecast and analysis of other system payments and expected contract payments.
Education	2,973	2,537	(436)	Majority of (£436,000) positive variance relates to (£119,000) Early Retirement historic commitment costs positive variance, with the remaining (£317,000) positive variance relating to vacancies across several teams.
0 - 25 SEND	1,547	1,371	(176)	Comprising of: (£387,000) relating to vacancies in Education Psychology team, +£203,000 forecast additional pay forecast in StART (EHCP), and +£8,000 EHCP team related transport costs.

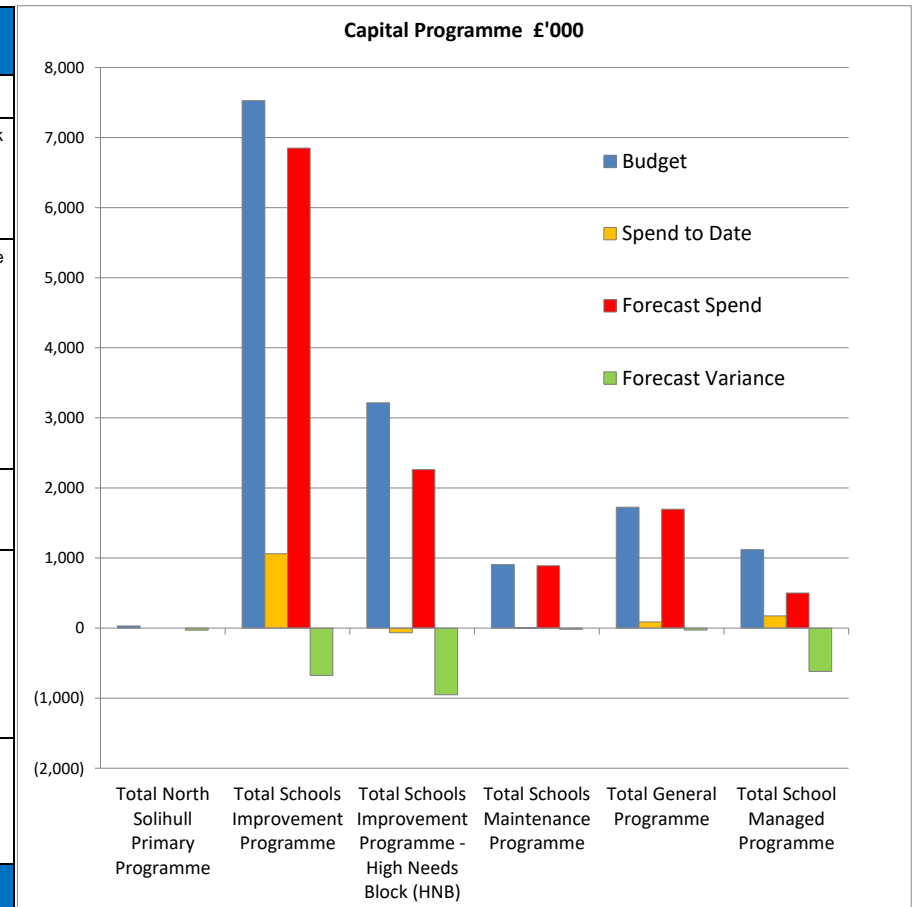
Service Area	Net Budget*	Forecast Spend	Forecast Variance	Commentary on material variances
	£000s	£000s	£000s	
Home to School Transport	4,274	5,563	1,289	3 major cost pressures: driver shortages, fuel inflation, continued demand increase linked to increased EHC Plan pupils. 4 initiatives to constrain costs underway: Major revaluation of routes, New route planning software from Sep-22; new guides on vehicles policy reducing usage to where necessary for pupil safety; maximising usage of Council fleet options.
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>49,094</b>	<b>56,298</b>	<b>7,204</b>	
Children's Contingency Reserve	0	(2,500)	(2,500)	Cabinet Member approved full use of the £2.5m in CPH meeting 21/09/2022 and this requirement has also been reported in the in-year and MTFS update to Cabinet 06/10/2022.
Council's Budget Strategy Reserve	0	(192)	(192)	6th of October 2022 Cabinet approved £0.192m allocation from the Budget Strategy Reserve for Early Help Level 2 implementation.
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(2,692)</b>	<b>(2,692)</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>49,094</b>	<b>53,606</b>	<b>4,512</b>	

### 3. Three Year Savings Targets £000s

None for Children's Services

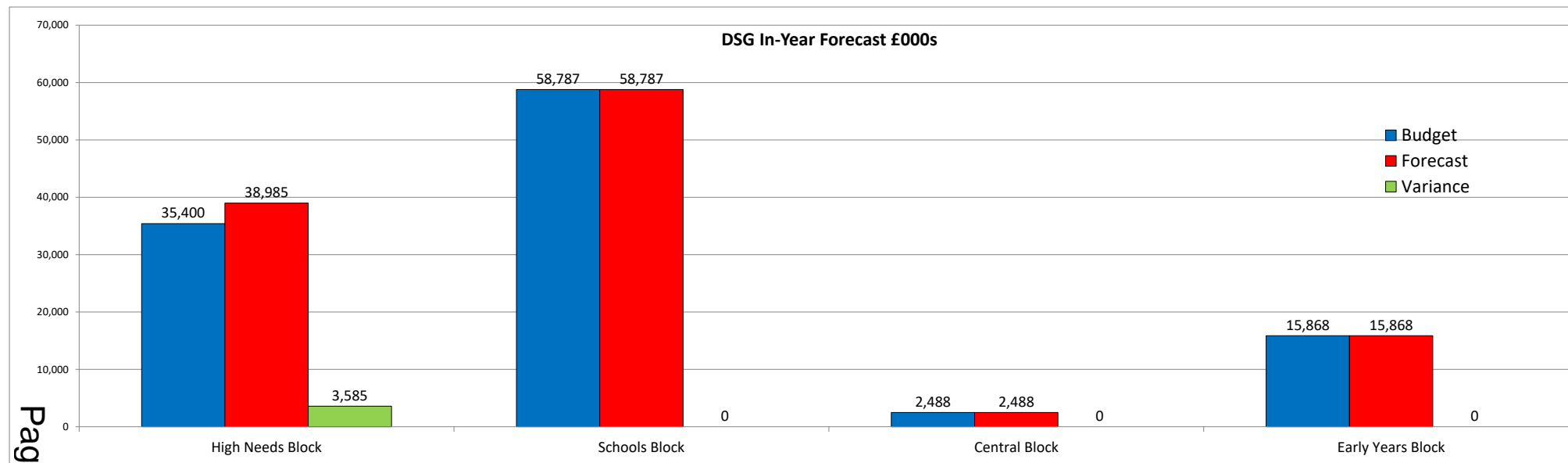
### 4. Capital Position

Schemes	Budget	Spend to Date	Forecast Spend	Forecast Variance	Comments
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	
Total North Solihull Primary Programme	30	0	0	(30)	Programme complete, contingency for residual costs.
Total Schools Improvement Programme	7,526	1,060	6,850	(676)	Cheswick Green on site. Phase 2 at Alderbrook now started Discussions taking place with Valley regarding future options. Variance key element: (£676k) general contingency.
Total Schools Improvement Programme - High Needs Block (HNB)	3,214	(67)	2,262	(952)	Demolition works to enable the Free School are now complete. Targeted completion for the building works, to enable the Summerfield move to the former Daylesford Infant's site is for December 2022. Variance key elements: (£550k) Yew Tree SEMH expansion slippage, and (£402k) creation of additional school places with allocation to be determined linked to strategic HNB priorities.
Total Schools Maintenance Programme	907	3	890	(17)	This sub programme continues to address our stock condition priorities. Most projects commenced during the summer break.
Total General Programme	1,724	87	1,697	(27)	Includes new grant funded project for £1.2m to develop Children's Residential Homes, with property transfer only just completed. Works need to be completed within the grant spend deadline of 31/3/23 or an extension in writing obtained. Also covers other ongoing schemes, including DDA Compliance and Temporary Classrooms.
Total School Managed Programme	1,119	174	500	(619)	Ongoing school managed projects. Variance key elements: (£319k) estimate of schools devolved capital requirements, (£300k) Fordbridge double modular classroom will not now go ahead due to affordability issues.
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,520</b>	<b>1,257</b>	<b>12,199</b>	<b>(2,321)</b>	



## Dedicated Schools Grant 2022/23 Period 6 Forecast

### 1. 2022/23 Revenue Outturn Forecast - After Recoupment for Academies and ESFA Funded High Needs Places



### 2. Explanations for Revenue Variances over £50k

Service Area	Budget £000s	Current Period In-Year Variance Forecast £000s	Previous Period In-Year Variance Forecast £000s	Movement between Periods £000s	Carry Forward from 21-22 £000s	Forecast Accumulated Position £000s	Explanation
High Needs Block	35,400	3,585	3,585	(0)	13,091	16,676	The DSG accumulated adverse variance from prior years is £13.212m, with £13.091m attributable to the HNB. The position is reflecting the increasing ECHP numbers in the system and the resultant increase in service demand, a picture replicated nationally. In year on-going the forecast is +£2.671m, less than the +£3.950m 2021/22 HNB outturn. There is a further +£0.914m forecast for 2022/23 from restructuring and performance improvement at Summerfield PRU, prior to its recent academisation. In total a further +£3.585m is forecast to be added to the carry forward at the end of 2022/23, taking the total to £16.797m. An update report was presented to Schools Forum at their July 2022 meeting and updates to the Director for Resources and CLT following that. Solihull has voluntarily signed up to the Delivering Better Value (DBV) Programme under the DFE to support moving towards a balanced in-year position. We have started the first phase of this work with Newton, the DFE appointed consultants.
Schools Block	58,787	0	0	0	162	162	
Central Block	2,488	0	0	0	(41)	(41)	
Early Years Block	15,868	0	0	0	0	0	
2022/23 DSG	(112,543)	0	0	0	N/A	N/A	The total 22-23 DSG for Solihull is £241.697m. Of this, £129.154m is recouped by the ESFA to fund academies, high needs places and NNDR for schools.
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,585</b>	<b>3,585</b>	<b>(0)</b>	<b>13,212</b>	<b>16,797</b>	

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**Meeting date:** 8<sup>th</sup> November 2022

**Report to:** CPH Children and Education Decision Session

**Report title:** Children's Services Improvement Hub - DFE Grant

**Report from:** Pete Campbell – Director of Children's Services

**Report author/lead contact officer:** Ben Fegghi – Programme Manager, Children's Services

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**Wards affected:**

- All Wards |  Bickenhill |  Blythe |  Castle Bromwich |  Chelmsley Wood |  Dorridge/Hockley Heath |  Elmdon |  Kingshurst/Fordbridge |  Knowle |  Lyndon |  Meriden |  Olton |  Shirley East |  Shirley South |  Shirley West |  Silhill |  Smith's Wood |  St Alphege
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**Public/private report:** Public

**1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the Department for Education (DfE) grant for £642,402 to support essential improvement activity within Children's Services.
- 1.2 Following the outcome of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI), and the Non-Statutory Improvement Notice issued by the DfE in February 2022, it was deemed necessary that grant funding would be required to help provide transformational and cultural change to address serious practice failings within Solihull's Children's Social Care Services.
- 1.3 Due to the immediate need for improvement across the service, expenditure has already been committed against the value of the grant during the current financial year, as well as the terms of conditions of the grant being signed by the then Interim Director for Children's Services.

**2. Decision(s) Recommended**

- 2.1 To note the terms and conditions of the grant and to gain retrospective approval.
- 2.2 To note the value of the grant and the expenditure committed to date.
- 2.3 To seek approval for the continued commitment of expenditure against the grant.

## **Report Title: Children's Services Improvement Hub - DFE Grant**

### **1. Matters for Consideration**

- 1.1 In February 2022, the DfE issued a Non-Statutory Improvement Notice to the Authority following concerns raised in respect of fragility of the MASH and insufficient social worker capacity in the Council to deal effectively with presenting need; crisis management to reduce unallocated cases and situations of unassessed and unknown risk for a significant number of children in the Council's area; and the findings from the Joint Targeted Area Inspection.
- 1.2 To support improvement work, the Authority was successful obtaining grant funding from the DfE of £642,402 to cover the period June 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- 1.3 This funding aims to support delivery of 4 immediate priorities:
  - Improving social work practice including improving quality and timeliness of assessments, SMART planning, capturing the lived experience of the child, purposeful visiting, child exploitation and supervision.
  - Develop quality assurance including strengthening audit activity so that there is a clear line of oversight on the quality of social work practice.
  - Management grip on quality of practice, including ensuring thresholds and assessments are timely and clear, decisions are robust and clarified and ensuring that staff receive reflective and impactful supervision.
  - Early help including development of a more streamlined early help offer so children in Solihull receive the right service at the right time.
- 1.4 Conditions of the grant are outlined in a grant offer letter which was sent to the Authority on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2022, which is attached to this report in Appendix 1.
- 1.5 Due to the urgent need to commence improvement activity; the Interim Director for Children's Services accepted the terms and conditions of the grant on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2022 and expenditure has been committed against the value of the grant from June 2022.
- 1.6 Expenditure incurred to date has covered the following pieces of work:
  - Formation of an experienced Improvement Hub team
  - Development of performance monitoring with service leaders
  - Service wide Best Practice workforce training programme
  - Regular quality assurance and performance management
- 1.7 With the approval of the Cabinet member, to continue the successful operation of the activities as set out in 1.6, further expenditure is required to be drawn down from the grant, to maximise use of the £642,402 available within the terms and conditions of the grant.

**2. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?**

2.1 The utilisation of the grant is required to help provide transformational and cultural change to address serious practice failings within Solihull’s Children’s Social Care Services.

**3. Reasons for recommending preferred option**

3.1 Owing to the urgent need to commence improvement activity, and in consideration of service wide financial pressures, senior leaders felt it was in the best interests of the Authority to seek grant funding to immediately mobilise a workforce that will act upon the issues identified in the JTAI and Non-Statutory Improvement Notice.

**4. Implications and Considerations**

4.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p>People and Communities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improving outcomes for children and young people in Solihull.</li> <li>2. Good quality, responsive, and dignified care and support for Adults in Solihull when they need it.</li> <li>3. Take action to improve life chances and health outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities.</li> <li>4. Enable communities to thrive.</li> </ol>	<p>The development of earlier intervention for families who need assistance to meet the needs of their children should reduce the number of children and young people who are impacted by longer term neglect, injury, or abuse. Adults who need support to meet the needs of their children can be supported in a respectful and responsive way, improving life chances, health and ability to thrive and make best use of or contribute to services available.</p>
<p>Economy:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Develop and promote the borough’s economy, with a focus on revitalising our town and local centres.</li> <li>6. Maximising the opportunities of UK Central and HS2.</li> <li>7. Increase the supply of affordable and social housing that is environmentally sustainable.</li> </ol>	<p>The development of our response to children and families who are at risk/in need across the borough will improve outcomes for those who are vulnerable as well as our wider communities. Investment in families and children will contribute to healthy and thriving communities with effective support structures</p>
<p>Environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Enhance our natural environment, improve air quality and reduce net carbon emissions.</li> </ol>	<p>NA</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Promote employee wellbeing</li> </ol>	<p>Providing supportive and enabling workplace systems, learning and development aligned with sufficient resources to deliver the</p>

Priority:	Contribution:
	services required by the community. Meeting the needs of key workers.

#### 4.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

4.2.1 Regular progress reports / updates are to be provided to the DfE as defined in the grant offer letter

#### 4.3 Financial implications:

4.3.1 The grant conditions require specific targets to be met within an identified timescale. To maximise the full claim of the grant, the progress against the targets will need to be managed tightly.

#### 4.4 Legal implications:

4.4.1 None as a result of this report.

#### 4.5 Risk implications, including Risk Appetite:

4.5.1 Risks identified due to grant activity and/or inspection and improvement work will be reflected within risk registers. These will be revised accordingly and managed within current processes.

#### 4.6 Equality implications:

4.6.1 The children's improvement plan will actively seek to reduce inequality and improve outcomes for vulnerable children, young people, and their families within the borough.

4.7 Linkages to our work with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Local Enterprise Partnership or the Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS):

4.7.1 Birmingham & Solihull Integrated Care System (ICS) are a key partner in delivering our services to children, young people, and families.

### 5. List of appendices referred to

5.1 Grant offer letter – which has been attached to the private section of the agenda.

### 6. Background papers used to compile this report

6.1 NA

### 7. List of Other Relevant Documents

7.1 NA

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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