

CABINET RESPONSE TO EDUCATION AND SKILLS BOARD

FUNDING SCHOOLS FOR DEPRIVATION

(considered by Education and Skills on 17 September 2015)

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

Recommendations for Cabinet

1. That the Leader seeks to lobby national government for greater flexibility around the funding for deprivation and early help in order to improve linked pupil-centred support between schools and social care.
2. That the Cabinet seek to link the early help strategy in Children's Services to the issues identified through the school deprivation funding.
3. That the Cabinet are given the opportunity to review the full range of responses to the School Forum consultation - including evidence of the impact of each of the three options proposed and any other options considered- prior to any decision being made.

Recommendations for officers:

- a) That officers proactively explore options with schools about how to best develop a collaborative alternative mechanism for targeting deprivation.

Officers' Response:

The targeting of deprivation to schools is subject to regulation by the DfE. This requires that funding for deprivation must be allocated to individual schools and on the basis of specific indicators only - either free school meals or IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index). Specifically deprivation may not be allocated to groups of schools. Prior to 2013, the council operated a popular tiered deprivation mechanism for allocating deprivation funding but the DfE now requires a standardised approach to be used by all LAs.

- b) That officers develop a strategy with schools to encourage families to register children for Free School Meals where eligible, in order to ensure schools are receiving the appropriate level of Pupil Premium funding.

Officers' Response:

Schools are particularly active in encouraging families to register for free school meals (FSM), as there are considerable financial benefits to the school. The council sends bulletins to schools twice a year reminding them of the need for accurate recording. Additionally, the LA sought and gained the approval of Schools Forum to withhold funding from all maintained schools from April 2015 onwards in order to fund a central FSM entitlement checking service, provided by Babcock 4S.

- c) That officers support the Primary Phase Council in understanding the low response rate to the consultation, in order to develop a wider evidence base of how funding is used.

Officers' Response:

The response of primary schools to the Call for Evidence from the Headteacher / Governor Working Group was relatively low (11%). However the response from

primary schools to the larger Consultation on Schools Funding which included the Deprivation funding proposals was 57.8% (174 schools) – a significant increase on the response rate in the previous year (43.4%). This follows a series of presentations by the Chair of the Primary Phase Council and officers to raise the profile of funding at area headteacher meetings.

RESPONSE:

Decisions from central Government in 2013 reduced the discretion local authorities and schools forums enjoyed as to how school funding could be calculated. In Surrey, a "tiered deprivation funding" element had proved helpful in directing funding to where it was most needed, and this is now prohibited. We will continue to lobby Government to give greater capacity for local discretion as we think this is helpful in directing appropriate funding to where social needs are greatest, area-by-area.

As the Member with the overall lead for Children's Services I am very concerned to ensure that we run a coherent, coordinated strategy. The Children's Services Directorate has established a Programme Board to bring together work on different priority areas, and the Board plays a central part in coordinating work on early help, special educational needs and schools funding among other areas.

Although the time available is short, I am ensuring that all Cabinet Members have access to all the response to the funding consultation and to all the lobbying materials received in the run up to the decision-making meeting. I am satisfied that the original consultation document gave a fair overall view of the services which have been under consideration for reduction. It is important that we make fully-informed decisions and I know that Cabinet has approached these very difficult choices with high concern and a very close focus on the issues at stake.

Mrs Linda Kemeny

Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement

27 October 2015