

Cabinet Decision: Thursday 16 May 2024

Title of Item/Report Delivering Better Value Agreement with DfE

Record of the Decision

1. Title of Item/Report

Delivering Better Value Agreement with DfE.

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that advised Cabinet that the Council successfully submitted a revised Delivering Better Value plan (DBV) to DfE on February 19, 2024. The plan was approved on behalf of the Council by the Director of Childrens Services and the Councils 151 Officer after positive scrutiny by DfE advisors and in accordance with delated authority. The Council was awaiting the formal signature to the plan and agreement by Government Ministers.

Resulting from the submission, the LA was in Phase 2 of the DBV programme which provided DfE grant funding to support the implementation of the action plan and SBC had been allocated £1m for this purpose. This funding, covering financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25, was originally based on 3 main initiatives but following the re-submission of the DBV plan it had been agreed with DfE to re-align the plan with the 8 DBV initiatives.

The agreement required the Council to fully mitigate the aggregated DSG deficit by 2027/28 where lasting sustainability and reaching an in-year balance could be demonstrated for its High Needs Funding Budget.

Schools' forum with the DCS and AD for Education agreed to undertake a review of what was needed and how best to delivery for local children and school's forum to look at how they could support with extra places for SEND children who might otherwise need to be placed in expensive independent placements. School leaders were open to suggestions and a range had agreed to either expand existing provision or look at some capital works to create new spaces. Some of this work had begun and other elements were at the feasibility and planning stages.

The school's forum's banding group also agreed to some commissioning work for communication and speech and language needs prioritising work with younger children but also looking at transition work for older children. This was underway, led by children's head of strategy and

commissioning.

School leaders were now looking at creative ways of supporting groups of children with high needs funding rather than just individuals. This could mean moving individuals to be with one or two others to use funding more effectively whilst keeping them attached to a mainstream school.

The work programme described above may well necessitate some invest to save proposals which may not result in immediate savings but should result in a more fit for purpose HN system in Stockton; one that was in-line with the revised DBV plan and that would enable the LA to mitigate the aggregated DSG deficit by 2027/28.

School's forum had been kept abreast of developments and had helped to co-construct these innovative solutions in partnership with LA officers and the Director of Children's Services.

Considerable work had been undertaken to fully understand the needs of children and young people with EHCP plans together with consultation with school leaders and School Forum which had informed a DBV plan that would increase the number of children with a EHCP in mainstream schools through inclusion, improve outcomes for children and young people and reduce the need for EHCP's through earlier access to resources, and reduce costs and the need for out of area and costly settings.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

3. Reasons for the Decision

The report was for noting only.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

None

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

N/A

Proper Officer

Reasons for the Decision The report was for noting only.

**Alternative Options
Considered and Rejected** None

**Declared (Cabinet Member)
Conflicts of Interest** None

Details of any Dispensations

**Date and Time by which Call
In must be executed** N/A

Date of Publication: Monday 20 May 2024