

Report to the Schools Forum 19 May 2022

Exceptional Circumstances Funding 2023/24

1 Background and Context

- 1.1 The funding formula for schools is set by each local authority, after consultation with the local schools forum. However, the factors and data that are allowed to be used are defined by the Educational & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), a DfE agency. If local authorities wish to use any factors outside this defined range, the ESFA has to approve these as 'exceptional circumstances' factors.
- 1.2 Once approved, the ESFA's rules say that local authorities can continue to use the approved factor for six years and then must reapply, recording whether the continuation has been discussed with and approved by the schools forum. As T&W's exceptional factors will have been in place for at least six years by the start of 2023/24, we will need to reapply for the 2023/24 financial year.
- 1.3 Approved exceptional circumstances factors are funded in addition to the general funding formula for schools, i.e. any approved funding represents additional funding flowing to the authority's schools.

2 Criteria for Exceptional Circumstances

- 2.1 The criteria are described in the ESFA's 'Schools revenue funding Operational Guide', as follows

166. Local authorities can apply to ESFA to use exceptional circumstances relating to school premises. These may be for rents, or joint-use sports facilities, for example.

167. Exceptional circumstances must relate to premises costs.

168. Local authorities should only submit applications where the value of the factor is more than 1% of a school's budget and applies to fewer than 5% of the schools in the local authority's area.

3 Telford & Wrekin Exceptional Circumstances

- 3.1 Currently the bulk of the exceptional funding in T&W relates to joint use sports facilities (i.e. those used both by schools and the local community). 2022/23 amounts are as follows:

Oakengates Leisure Centre £350,737 (allocated via Telford Priory)

Stirchley Leisure Centre £207,031 (allocated via Telford Park)

Short Wood Pool £90,000 (allocated via Shortwood Primary)

- 3.2 Joint use factors for Oakengates and Stirchley have been in place for many years, with the amounts involved being inflated periodically. The Shortwood factor was removed a number of years ago, as the number of schools in receipt of joint use funding exceeded 5%, when this limiting criteria was introduced. At the time, Oakengates

funding was distributed via Wrockwardine Wood and Sutherland secondary schools – when these merged, the Shortwood factor was able to be reintroduced and still be within the 5% threshold.

- 3.3 There is also a much smaller exceptional circumstances factor for rental costs incurred by Church Aston Infant school. This amounts to £4,800 and represents the annual rental costs of the school premises, rented by the school from Lichfield diocese, which owns the building.

4 Approval Criteria for Exceptional Circumstances

- 4.1 The ESFA have a standard template for local authorities to complete. This contains the following:

Number of schools directly affected
Have the schools directly affected by this request been consulted?
What are the views of the schools directly affected by this request?
Has the schools forum been consulted?
Does the schools forum agree with this request?
Has the schools forum voted?
Which groups of representatives voted? (maintained schools, academies, etc)
What was the split in votes?
What was the date of the schools forum meeting? (DD/MM/YY)
Was the meeting quorate?

- 4.2 In order to meet these criteria we are therefore asking the Schools Forum to vote on whether it supports the local authority's application to renew the above exceptional circumstances funding for 2023/24 onwards.

Tim Davis
Group Accountant
May 2022