



NORTH YORKSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

Date of meeting:	Thursday, 19 May 2022
Title of report:	Locality Board Update
Type of report: Delete as required	For discussion
Executive summary: Including reason for submission	The report discusses the evolving work of locality boards and the actions taken to manage resources effectively both within 21/22 and looking forward to 22/23
Budget/Risk implications:	Not applicable
Recommendations:	
Voting requirements:	None
Appendices: To be attached	None
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Presenting officer: If not the originator	

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update Schools Forum members on the operation of the locality board budgets, the areas of resource deployment, and some of the challenges that have been experienced and mitigations that have been put in place.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Locality Board arrangements – and associated budget allocations - were implemented for the 2020/21 financial year. There are five locality boards across the County:

- Craven
- Hambleton/Richmondshire
- Harrogate/Ripon/Knaresborough
- Scarborough/Whitby/Ryedale
- Selby

Each locality board has been awarded an allocation of resources in respect of two elements: School Improvement activity, and Inclusion activity.

- 2.2 The resource allocations applicable in the 2021/22 financial year are summarised in the table below.

	21-22 School Improvement Budget (£000s)	21-22 Inclusion Budget (£000s) (*1)	Total Budget (£000s)
Craven	50.3	71.7	122.0
Hambleton/Richmondshire	50.3	160.7	211.0
Harrogate/Ripon/Knaresborough	50.3	157.7	208.0
Scarborough/Whitby/Ryedale	50.3	252.7	303.0
Selby	50.3	105.2	185.5
	251.5	748.0	999.5

Notes

(*1) The Inclusion Budgets reflect the arrangement whereby the budgets contribute towards the project resource to support developing and tracking projects

- 2.3 In terms of working arrangements, the Locality Boards are chaired by leaders from the school community, and have representation from all sectors supporting the education of young people aged 0-25 across the County.
- 2.4 In the inaugural financial year, 2020/21, the Locality Boards experienced some challenges to fully commit their budget resources – partially because for most Boards it was only in the Autumn term of that year that the Boards really became functional. These challenges continued through into the 2021/22 financial year, and in discussion with the Locality Board Chairs, some of the challenges identified included:
- (a) In the case of arrangements that involve the recruitment of staff - underestimating the time required to establish appropriate management arrangements for the role,

develop a new job role, secure an appropriate job evaluation, and then undertake a recruitment process.

- (b) In the case of projects which involve offering schools training or licencing/membership opportunities – there is a challenge of how to reconcile on the one-hand, assuming a full take-up for prudent budget management purposes, with on the other hand, the risk of relatively low take-up resulting in significant under-deployment of resources.
 - (c) In the case of projects involving the procurement of services - an underestimation of the time required to ensure that the local authority is acting appropriately in procurement/legal terms, alongside some confusion over how exactly those arrangements would operate.
- 2.5 A combination of the above factors, some locality specific factors, and the challenges of securing input from school leaders through what has been a particularly challenging period to ensure the continuity of education provision, ran the risk of some individual locality boards significantly underspending in the financial year 2021/22. Local authority officers reviewed the operation of locality boards, working collaboratively with locality board chairs in December/January time. As a result of those discussions, the local authority agreed to increase the permitted level of carry forward at the end of the 2021/22 financial year to 25% for each locality board budget, with the following conditions:
- (a) that the maximum carry forward permitted would revert to 10% for the 2022-23 financial year and subsequent years;
 - (b) the carry forward resource would only be released in the new financial year if a full spending plan for the new financial year was agreed by the individual board by, at the latest, the June 2022 round of Board meetings.
- 2.6 In addition, to amending the Carry Forward rules, all of the Boards have brought a very sharp focus to their discussions, to ensure that where possible new schemes were brought forward, that the take-up of existing schemes was publicised amongst their schools/education community, with the result being that the year-end position was significantly better than was predicted around December 21. In the end, only one Inclusion Locality Board spent at a lower level than the level that corresponded to the 25% carry-forward.
- 2.7 In terms of the year-end position for 2021-22 in relation to the Inclusion budgets, three locality Boards achieved a spend at a level that all resources were deployed in-year (either through actual spending or through the carry-forward of resources into 2022-23. This was the case in Craven, Harrogate/Ripon/Knaresborough and Scarborough/Whitby/Ryedale.boards. In the case of Hambleton/Richmondshire a small resource of circa £4k was not deployed (which represented a significant achievement compared to the position relatively late in the financial year) and in the case of the Selby Locality Board, the non-deployed resource was more significant at c.£25k. In the case of Selby, the challenges were the non-delivery of agreed projects/programmes, rather than delays in developing spending plans.
- 2.8 In the case of the school improvement budgets, the position was that spending levels were generally lower, with an aggregate year-end spend of £123,311 (including

resources carried forward into 2022-23) compared to the aggregate budget of £251,500.

3.0 DISCUSSION

- 3.1 The capacity of the Locality Boards to fully commit their resources is not the only consideration in relation to resource allocation decisions. Indeed as a local authority, our prime consideration would be that resources are appropriately targeted at the key challenges within the individual locality, as identified through review and discussion of the performance reports presented to the Board and the expertise of local systems leaders as to what measures will impact most significantly upon improving outcomes within the locality. We do, however, as a local authority consider that timely and measured decisions around resource allocation are more likely to ensure that appropriate targeting is in place.
- 3.2 Resources have been allocated at the same level for locality boards in 2022/23 as was the case in 2021/22 – see table below.

	22-23 School Improvement Budget (£000s)	22-23 Inclusion Budget (£000s) (*1)	Total Budget (£000s)
Craven	50.3	71.7	122.0
Hambleton/Richmondshire	50.3	160.7	211.0
Harrogate/Ripon/Knaresborough	50.3	157.7	208.0
Scarborough/Whitby/Ryedale	50.3	252.7	303.0
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- 3.3 However, in the light of the significance of the Government's announcements regarding School Improvement funding arrangements, the School Improvement component of these budgets cannot be guaranteed beyond the 2022/23 financial year – and this will be an issue that the local authority will want to revisit with the Schools Forum during the course of this year.
- 3.4 In order to support the locality boards to be able to approach the marketplace more effectively, the local authority has invested time in developing an Approved Provider List. This will ensure that appropriate providers to deliver new projects/programmes can readily be identified and will significantly streamline the procurement process. We are imminently about to publicise the new framework, and to invite potential providers to apply to be on the list. We currently anticipate that the list will go live around mid-June 2022, so that any spend proposals for the new year involving commissioning support/services can be routed through the Approved Provider List.
- 3.5 In terms of the application process for organisations to join the approved provider list, we have designed a relatively light-touch process that requires them to answer threshold questions which are mainly yes/no questions around insurance, finances, company history etc. These questions are mainly statutory and very easy and quick to answer. In addition

- there may also be some quality questions which require the provider to provide a written response which will be scored e.g. case studies, past history. Once the framework is up and running, the intention will be to allocate schemes/projects on a light touch basis with works under £25,000 being allocated through direct award with no procurement process, and works with a higher value being awarded via a light touch procurement. In addition, not all locality board spend will need to be directed through the framework and the following areas will be exempt
- allocating the funds so that the local authority can employ additional staff to deliver specific activities/outcomes on behalf of the Boards
- allocating the funds to support the local authority delivering specific additional training activity/programmes designed to meet the needs of the individual locality boards
- allocate resources to purchase/possibly subsidise existing service offers from the NYES service portfolio on behalf of schools in the locality area.

3.6 As well as the specific development around the Approved Provider List, it is anticipated (and local authority officers feel they can see) that appropriate learning and reflection has taken place regarding the challenges that were experienced in 2021/22. In particular:

- Locality Boards are well advanced in having spending plans ready for approval for the 2022/23 financial year
- there is a recognition that appropriate lead-times need to be incorporated for any spend which involves recruiting members of staff (and that there is no guarantee that recruitment rounds will prove successful)
- that the risk of low take-up amongst the schools community in respect of projects that provide the schools with an entitlement needs to be factored into plans and closely tracked
- that contingency spending plans are needed that can be rapidly expedited, if spending is not on course during the financial year

3.7 Further updates will be brought to Schools Forum in Autumn 2022 to provide an update on the in-year spend position for the 2022/23 financial year, and to discuss key considerations for the 2023/24 budget.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Schools Forum is invited to note the contents of this report.

STUART CARLTON

Corporate Director – Children and Young People's Service