

Children's and Education Services Directorate



Meeting Title	Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee
Report Title	Children's Integrated Services: Implementation of agreed Budget Savings
Meeting Date	11 th September 2024

Corporate Director(s)/Director(s):	Ailsa Barr, Interim Corporate Director Children's and Education Nick Lee, Director of Education Services
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Cheryl Barnard
Report author and contact details:	Nick Lee, Director of Education Services

<p>Summary of issues:</p> <p>Providing education services involves a mixture of meeting statutory duties for the local authority and the provision of discretionary services that support the efficient delivery of education by schools and settings and/or improved outcomes and life chances for children. The majority of discretionary services are delivered to schools on a traded basis.</p> <p>As a result of the significant budgetary challenges faced by the Council, all departments were asked to identify savings proposals. The council budget and savings proposals were signed off at Full Council on 3rd March 2024. Included within this are savings commitments within Education Services.</p> <p>This report provides an update on the implementation of the agreed budget savings, delivery plans and summary of progress on each budget savings heading.</p>
<p>Recommendation(s):</p> <p>1. Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee notes the summary of progress on the budget savings relating to Education Services.</p>

1. Background

- 1.1 Providing services for Children and Families is a key statutory responsibility for the local authority. The Strategic Council Plan sets this out as a priority reflected in outcome Child Friendly City. The plan sets out the vision that:
- 1.2 "Every child in Nottingham will get the best start in life, regardless of their circumstances. We will redesign our services to local children supporting them to thrive academically, emotionally and physically, ensuring equality of opportunity for all."

- 1.3 The plan notes that the Council will “prioritise our statutory duties which protect the most vulnerable children in our city by acting as corporate parent to children in care and care leavers, and by helping families to overcome difficulties and benefit from early and effective support. We will work in partnership to seek to improve educational attainment in our city. To do this, we will work with schools, businesses and communities to ensure Nottingham is a ‘child-friendly’ city, where the views and needs of children and their parents or carers are actively listened to and embedded across all of our activities. We will transform our services to ensure that our resources are focused on the right things and find new ways to deliver the improvements we need to make across our regulated statutory services. We will also encourage our partners to do the same, to help jointly deliver a step change in the opportunities and life chances for children in Nottingham”.
- 1.4 Consultation on the Education Services proposals ran from 19th December to 2023 to 16th January 2024. On 25th January 2024 a paper was presented to Children’s and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee which set out Education Services budget savings proposals. Following this, proposals progressed to Full Council on 3rd March 2024. At that meeting the budget and savings proposals were agreed and signed off. Included within this are savings commitments within Education Services.
- 1.5 This report provides the committee with an update on progress of the savings made to date, the delivery plans and the anticipated savings delivery by the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

2. Current position of Education Services Budget Savings

2.1 DP(A)-2444 Increase budget efficiencies – vacant properties

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

Dependent upon disposal of vacant education property to remove holding costs. E.g. security and minimal utilities

Progress against savings target:

Secretary of State approval to dispose of ex. hospital school site at Thorneywood received – site scheduled for auction imminently.

Mitigations: N/A It is anticipated that the savings target will be met

2.2 DP(A)-2454: Increase budget efficiencies – Programme management

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

The savings for 24/25 have been achieved through vacancy management

Mitigations: N/A the savings target has been met.

2.3 DP(A)-2451: Review of Education Partnership service

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

Deletion of 1.0 WTE post delivering discretionary service.

Progress against savings target:

Post has been deleted – post holder left NCC in May 2024

Mitigations:

N/A It is anticipated that the savings target will be met.

2.4 DP(A)-2455: Fund School Uniform Grant through the Household Support Fund

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

Replacement of general fund budget with allocation of HSF to ensure all eligible families claims can be met in 2024/25

Progress against savings target:

The transfer of budget has been made and supporting claimants.

Mitigations:

N/A The savings target will be met

2.5 DP(A)-2445 Maximisation of Dedicated Schools Grant for Virtual School Team

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

Service will be sustained at existing levels; however, it is proposed that during 2024/25 this will be fully funded by Dedicated Schools Grant (subject to School's Forum agreement)

Progress against savings target:

Funding report was approved by School's Forum (January 2024). Service fully funded for 2024/25 by DSG and additional grant support from government

Mitigations:

N/A The savings target will be met

2.6 DP(E)-2405 Education Psychology reducing costs

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

Develop policy with human resources and legal services to enable commissioning of internal (part-time) staff to provide "locum" cover to reduce reliance on external locum placements.

Progress against savings target:

Policy developed and implemented, however, increasing demand for EHCP assessments will impact upon capacity and ability to substantially reduce external capacity requirements. Aligned to national shortage of qualified staff the external locum market presents financial risk to many LA's. Target is likely to be realised but largely driven through vacancy management rather than the internal locum model.

Mitigations:

Traded service continues to over perform enabling service to currently meet increased demand for statutory provision. Vacancy savings will support meeting overall savings target.

2.7 DP(E)-2407: Review of catering in schools service

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

Review of management structure within the Catering service.

Progress against savings target:

Review undertaken – savings target has been achieved through review process.

2.8 DP(C)-2406: Catering in schools - annual pricing review

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

All customer schools to be informed of uplift in pricing for 2024/25.

Progress against savings target:

Implemented and target achieved.

2.9 DP(A)-2460 Health and safety in schools service - increasing income

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

Annual pricing review to ensure income fully covers costs and develop new contracts outside of the city to increase income.

Progress against savings target:

Pricing review completed and additional contract with non-city MAT agreed. Savings target projected to be met in 2024/25.

2.10 DP(E)-2403 SEND Transport – Seek approval for additional grant funding

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

Build business case to demonstrate potential to realise savings in the High Needs budget by further Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) subsidy to SEND transport budget. Seek Secretary of State approval to apply DSG on basis of successful business case.

Progress against savings target:

Subsequent to approval of target, the Department for Education advised that approval for additional application of DSG would not be allowable; leaving the target unachievable through this option.

Mitigations:

4 work streams have been developed to focus on alternative means of delivering the overall savings target.

1. To plan and execute insourcing of additional routes transferring the service from high cost external commissioned transport to our own internal fleet. Projected annual saving is £80-£100k with an estimated £50-70k achievable in the current 24-25 financial year if sufficient resources are available to implement this from September.
2. To identify the opportunity to reduce the PTS budget in-year to align with projected underspend in operating costs, due to vacancies and other reduced expenditure (excluding that required to deliver identified additional in house transport solutions) - £250-£300k in year.
3. To plan and execute options to increase use of a muster/pick up point process where vehicles are recommissioned to a single large minibus with escort to replace multiple taxi's.
4. To complete a high cost commissioned transport review, to focus on recommissioning of routes and allocated passengers, alongside a school placement review. Due to limited capacity of specialist school placements pupils may not be attending their nearest school, but the school that was most suitable of time of placement. A review of these placements may offer opportunities to offer a placement closer to home and remove the need for home to school travel assistance. £60K in year.

Monitoring the cumulative impact of these mitigations is being reported on a monthly basis.

2.11 DP(A)-2458 Close Colwick Park Activity Centre

Delivery plan to achieve savings:

Delete remaining posts from establishment. Identify options/opportunities to transfer building/assets to alternative provider to remove ongoing liabilities for maintenance/utilities etc.

Progress against savings target:

Posts deleted and voluntary redundancy process of remaining staff member complete. Building has been mothballed and transferred to Property Services for disposal/transfer. Negotiations with alternative providers to support access for city schools to adventure camps ongoing. Target is based upon cost avoidance to general fund budget – this will be achieved through the actions taken.

