

# SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE

Monday 12 December 2022

1.00 pm Luttrell Room - County Hall,  
Taunton



To: The members of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families  
Committee

Cllr L Redman (Chair), Cllr O Patrick (Vice-Chair), Cllr S Aujla, Cllr J Baker, Cllr S Carswell, Cllr A Hadley, Cllr S Hart, Cllr B Height, Cllr J Hunt, Cllr J Kenton, Cllr E Potts-Jones, Cllr M Lovell and Cllr J Snell

R Hobbs, E Tipper and The Revd T Osmond – co-opted members

All Somerset County Council Members are invited to attend.

Issued By Scott Wooldridge, Monitoring Officer and Head of Governance and Democratic Services - 2 December 2022

For further information about the meeting, please contact Neil Milne on 01823 357628 or [neil.milne@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:neil.milne@somerset.gov.uk) or Fiona Abbott on 01823 357628 or [fiona.abbott@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:fiona.abbott@somerset.gov.uk)

Guidance about procedures at the meeting follows the printed agenda.

This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution under Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

This agenda and the attached reports and background papers are available on request prior to the meeting in large print, Braille, audio tape & disc and can be translated into different languages. They can also be accessed via the council's website on [www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers)

**Are you considering how your conversation today and the actions you propose to take contribute towards making Somerset Carbon Neutral by 2030?**



**RNID typetalk**

## AGENDA

Item Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee - 1.00 pm Monday 12 December 2022

### **\*\*Information on the Committee\*\***

### **\*\* Public Guidance notes contained in agenda annexe \*\***

#### 1 **Apologies for Absence**

to receive Members' apologies

#### 2 **Declarations of Interest**

Details of all Members' interests in District, Town and Parish Councils can be viewed on the [Council Website](#)

The Statutory Register of Member's Interests can be inspected via request to the Democratic Service Team.

Any new or updated declarations of interest will be received.

#### 3 **Minutes from the previous meeting held on Monday 7 November 2022** (Pages 11 - 18)

The Committee is asked to confirm the minutes are accurate.

#### 4 **Public Question Time**

The Chair will allow members of the public to ask a question or make a statement about any matter on the agenda for this meeting. **These questions may be taken during the meeting, when the relevant agenda item is considered, at the Chair's discretion.**

#### 5 **Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee Work Programme** (Pages 19 - 30)

To receive an update from the Governance manager. To assist the discussion, the following documents are attached:

- (a) The Committee's work programme
- (b) The Committee's outcome tracker

Please use the following link to view the latest Executive Forward Plan of planned key decisions that have been published on the Council's website  
[Executive Forward Plan of Key Decisions](#)

Item Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee - 1.00 pm Monday 12 December 2022

6 **Education Strategy for Somerset - progress update**

To receive a progress update - Presentation (to follow).

This item will be led by the Council's Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills Amelia Walker.

*Note – the Chair will allow 15 minutes for this agenda item.*

7 **LA Maintained Schools - Core Offer - Business Case** (Pages 31 - 150)

This item will be led by the Council's Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills Amelia Walker. To consider Report (attached).

(There is a Covering Report, DRAFT Executive Key Decision Report and Appendices 1-5).

*Note – the Chair will allow 50 minutes for this agenda item.*

8 **Somerset Connect and links to the Frome LCN development**

To consider Report and to receive Presentation (to follow).

This item will be led by the Council's Assistant Director Commissioning Richard Selwyn, Strategic Manager, Vikki Hearn and Strategic Manager Public Health, Patsy Temple.

*Note – the Chair will allow 30 minutes for this agenda item.*

9 **Verbal Update on Task and Finish Groups**

To receive an update on the Committee's Task and Finish Groups: -

- (a) Sufficiency of external placements
- (b) Home to School Transport

10 **Items for Information - Standing Item**

This is a standing agenda item and will provide details of information sent to Committee members in between meetings, that cover Children & Families Scrutiny policy areas.

Item Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee - 1.00 pm Monday 12 December 2022

- (a) 2022 key Stage assessment results – correspondence sent to the Leader Somerset County Council on 14 November and Response received on 15 November;
- (b) Somerset [Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2021 – 22](#) - circulated on 15 November
- (c) [Peninsula Fostering Framework Agreement](#) - Decision taken on 16 November 2022 – circulated on 21 November

If Committee members have any questions or comments on the information, please contact [fiona.abbott@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:fiona.abbott@somerset.gov.uk) in the first instance and before the date of the meeting.

11 **Any other urgent items of business**

The Chair may raise any items of urgent business.

## **Information about the Committee**

This Scrutiny Committee covers the full range of functions covered by the Lead Member for Children and Families. The key focus of the Committee is to assist the Lead Member, the Executive, the Council and its partners to improve the life chances of all children in Somerset through effective and joined up approaches to the delivery of services.

The membership of the Committee includes 2 co-opted church representatives, 2 co-opted parent governor representatives, 2 school governor representatives and 1 representative from the Schools Forum. These co-opted members have voting rights on education matters.

The Committee has a useful 'glossary of terms' document, and this can be found on the website on the following link – [Glossary of Terms](#)

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## Guidance notes for the meeting

### 1. **Council Public Meetings**

The former regulations that enabled virtual committee meetings ended on 7 May 2021. Since then, all committee meetings need to return to face-to-face meetings. The requirement is for members of the committee and key supporting officers to attend in person, along with some provision for any public speakers. Provision will be made wherever possible for those who do not need to attend in person including the public and press who wish to view the meeting to be able to do so virtually.

### 2. **Inspection of Papers**

Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Democratic Services at [democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk) or telephone 01823 357628.

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### 3. **Members' Code of Conduct requirements**

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: Honesty; Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Leadership. The Code of Conduct can be viewed at: [Code of Conduct](#)

### 4. **Minutes of the Meeting**

Details of the issues discussed, and recommendations made at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting.

### 5. **Public Question Time**

If you wish to speak, please contact Democratic Services by 5pm 3 clear working days before the meeting. Email [democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk) or telephone 01823 357628.

Members of public wishing to speak or ask a question will need to attend in person or if unable can submit their question or statement in writing for an officer to read out.

After entering the Council building you may be taken to a waiting room before being taken to the meeting for the relevant agenda item to ask your question. After the agenda item has finished you will be asked to leave the meeting for other members of the public to attend to speak on other items.

A slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been agreed. However, questions or statements about any matter on the agenda for this meeting may be taken at the time when each matter is considered.

At the Chair's invitation you may ask questions and/or make statements or comments about any matter on the Committee's agenda – providing you have given the required notice. You may also present a petition on any matter within the Committee's remit. The length of public question time will be no more than 30 minutes in total (20 minutes for meetings other than County Council meetings).

You must direct your questions and comments through the Chair. You may not take a direct part in the debate. The Chair will decide when public participation is to finish.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with many people wishing to attend the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

An issue will not be deferred just because you cannot be present for the meeting. Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, to three minutes only.

In line with the council's procedural rules, if any member of the public interrupts a meeting the Chair will warn them accordingly.

If that person continues to interrupt or disrupt proceedings the Chair can ask the Democratic Services Officer to remove them as a participant from the meeting.

Provision will be made for anybody who wishes to listen in on the meeting only to follow the meeting online.

## 6. **Meeting Etiquette for participants**

- Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.
- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.
- Switch off video if you are not speaking.
- Speak clearly (if you are not using video then please state your name)



- If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.
- Switch off your video and microphone after you have spoken.
- There is a facility in Microsoft Teams under the ellipsis button called turn on live captions which provides subtitles on the screen.

## 7. **Exclusion of Press & Public**

If when considering an item on the agenda, the Committee may consider it appropriate to pass a resolution under Section 100A (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, as defined under the terms of the Act.

If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Democratic Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, ask Participants to leave the meeting when any exempt or confidential information is about to be discussed.

## 8. **Recording of meetings**

The Council supports the principles of openness and transparency. It allows filming, recording, and taking photographs at its meetings that are open to the public - providing this is done in a non-disruptive manner. Members of the public may use Facebook and Twitter or other forms of social media to report on proceedings. No filming or recording may take place when the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting.

Please contact the Committee Administrator or Democratic Services on 01823 357628 or email [democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk) if you have any questions or concerns.

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## **SCRUTINY FOR POLICIES, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee held in the Luttrell Room - County Hall, Taunton, on Monday 7 November 2022 at 1.00 pm

**Present:** Cllr L Redman (Chair), Cllr O Patrick (Vice-Chair), Cllr S Aujla, Cllr J Baker, Cllr S Carswell, Cllr A Hadley, Cllr B Height, Cllr J Hunt, Cllr J Kenton, Cllr E Potts-Jones and Cllr M Lovell  
R Hobbs, E Tipper and The Revd T Osmond – co-opted members

**Other Members present:** Cllr T Munt and Cllr F Nicholson

**Other Members present virtually:** Cllr C Ellis, Cllr A Govier, Cllr S Osborne, Cllr E Pearlstone, Cllr L Trimnell and Cllr R Woods

**Apologies for absence:** Cllr S Hart and Cllr J Snell

1 **Declarations of Interest** - Agenda Item 2

There were no new declarations of interest made at the meeting.

2 **Minutes from the previous meeting held on 3 October 2022** - Agenda Item 3

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 3 October 2022 were approved and signed as a correct record.

3 **Public Question Time** - Agenda Item 4

Mr Whittaker asked a number of questions relating to the Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services and to policies and procedures in Somerset in particular relating to Special Guardians (who provide care to children when their birth parents are unable to and is in between foster care and adoption) and provided details of his family's experience of being a Special Guardian.

The Executive Lead Member Cllr Tessa Munt apologised to him for the experiences he described and that the Council values the work of Special Guardians. The Lead Officer, Mr Paul Shallcross echoed the comments and said he was saddened he feels so unsupported and ignored and the aim is to always provide the best possible level of care for Special Guardians.

The Executive Lead Member and Lead Officer offered to meet with Mr Whittaker to help move things forward. The Chair asked for a written response / outcomes from that meeting.

4 **Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee Work Programme - Agenda Item 5**

The Committee considered and noted the current work programme and outcome tracker and the Executive's Forward Plan of planned key decisions in the coming months.

The Chair advised that a meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs would be taking place later in the week.

It was agreed that:

1. The following 2 Task and Finish Groups be established – (a) Sufficiency of external placements; (b) Home to school transport. The Governance Manager will email Committee members for expressions of interest (max 4 per each Task & Finish Group) and to circulate a note providing greater detail on tight timeframe for the work (reporting back to January meeting).
2. The work plan and outcome tracker be updated.

5 **Progress on Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services Action Plan - Agenda Item 6**

The Committee received a presentation from the Council's Acting Assistant Director Community and Strategy, Paul Shallcross on the Inspection of Children's Services progress on action plan.

Somerset Ofsted in 2022 had two named areas for improvement –

- placement sufficiency, including for emergency admissions, for older children with complex needs – the efforts already made in Somerset were recognised by Ofsted, for example Homes and Horizons
- the take up of return home interviews and use of data to inform individual and service planning.

Mr Shallcross advised about the post Ofsted service planning 2023/24 and there is a draft plan in place following extensive consultation and further consultation on final draft is planned for the end of November. There are five key areas of focus:

- workforce
- prevention
- protection
- care
- partnership and strategy

The Committee discussed the presentation, and the following questions and issues were raised and responded to, as follows: -

- comments made that it would have been helpful to have seen the presentation ahead of the meeting
- how working in partnership with neighbouring authorities and cross border working especially around exploitation and missing young people – explained the close working by the Police and the work of the Missing and Vulnerable Exploitation Panel; there is good communication and working with partners in a number of different forums / different local authorities with the south west; referenced the regional approach taken to understanding how exploitation affects the South West and also focussing on Somerset
- question about how feeding back to governors and schools and how involving governors who are community representatives and therefore in a strong position to feed in their local intelligence / perspectives – education is a key element of safety and resilience for children and young people, and that are working closely with colleagues across Children’s Services and not only in Children’s social care, which enables a focus on the importance of education as a way of protecting children and see schools as most important safeguarding partner
- question about children and young people who are missing or perhaps elsewhere and monitoring / how ensure they are safe – confirmed that there are processes in place
- the Chair reminded members of the opportunities to visit their local services to help understand the bigger picture around many different processes
- mention about the innovative work being undertaken with Homes and Horizons, which was recognised by Ofsted and is being looked at for its innovative nature.

On behalf of the Committee the Chair thanked Mr Shallcross for the detailed presentation.

It was AGREED:

1. That the draft plan be shared with the Committee.
2. The Committee asked to see the Improvement Plan in 6 months’ time (around May 2023).
3. The Committee noted the role of the Corporate Parent Board and that potentially the Board may ask Scrutiny to look at the two main themes (e.g return home interviews).

The Chair also congratulated both the Acting Director Children’s Services Claire Winter and Mr Shallcross on their recent appointments.

## 6 **LA Maintained Schools - Core Offer - Overview** - Agenda Item 7

This is a pre-Executive Scrutiny Item.

The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills, Amelia Walker, who provided an overview of the proposed changes to the LA maintained schools core offer. She advised that the policy will be considered by the Council's Executive at its meeting on 14 December and the Scrutiny Committee will consider the full business case prior to that, at its meeting on 12 December 2022.

Ms Walker highlighted the risks if there was no change – resource compartmentalisation; short-term granularity; inability to flex to demand; the 'moral hazard' (to risk) and compliance. She then highlighted the issues needing to be addressed – cost pressures; academisation; long term planning; compliance failures and crises. The 4 main options available and strategic mitigation were then highlighted. The preferred offer is option 3, which is to reform the service and charging to provide higher income but with value added to service to mitigate (core offer), as this is the only option where risk is manageable.

The discussed the presentation, and the following questions and issues were raised and responded to, as follows: -

- Question about option 2 (do minimum – pass on the entirety of cost pressures to schools with no added value) – confirmed this option has not been completely ruled out but the preferred option is option 3. Have consulted on what is effectively option 2 because option 3 has not yet been to the Executive for decision and do not have agreement to take that option forward. Need to make sure from statutory perspective that it not agreed that there is another option available (and did not default to option 1 (do nothing, absorb cost pressures, and cut services))
- With reference in the slides to governors not having a consistent understanding of what compliance entails and their responsibilities and asked whether any training has been / will be provided – explained that the full details of what the core offer would entail is not provided in the papers but what have shared with schools is a draft in terms of the potential deliverables for inclusion in a core offer
- Question whether other organisations can / will offer this core offer to schools- highlighted the scope of the business case and that there is currently not a not robust market in place
- Questions about the cost pressures information detailed in the papers, for example in April 2023 will lose ~£500k from the removal of the LA Monitoring and Brokering Grant (funds school improvement posts) – explained these were government grants and were withdrawn nationally, following consultation last year. Did put up stout defence about it and made clear the impact would have

- Question about the 2030 target for full academisation and if achievable – focus on full academisation is in the Schools White Paper and are required by law to cooperate with academisation. In the recent staff reorganisation made clear that the local authority is not a company and that it is important that all staff, regardless of where they are in organisation, can see how their work tracks back to the children and what they are doing to help them receive the best education possible and improve outcomes. Are operating within a system where a decision as taken in 2015 that education would be funded by trading and in order to do the improvement work required, can only do that if trade
- Question about the options of a local authority (LA) multi academy trust (MAT) – mentioned good relationships with Diocese of Bath and Wells. Options though for a LA MAT option is not currently enabled by the government. What is enabled is the creation of additional MATs where the local authority is part of setting it up but is not part of running it

On behalf of the Committee the Chair thanked Ms Walker for the detailed information.

It was AGREED that:

1. The paper to be considered at the Executive meeting on 14 December be shared with the Committee and this include details of the Equality Impact Assessment undertaken.
2. This will be the substantive agenda item at the next meeting of the Committee.

## 7 **2022 Key Stage assessment results** - Agenda Item 8

The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills, Amelia Walker, who provided further details on 2022 education outcomes. The Committee had already received information on the Somerset's school's performance data for 2022.

Ms Walker outlined the 'headlines' from the data which: -

- show very weak performance across the board, including in phases which were previously stronger
- GCSE preliminary results looked more positive, provisional results are now in and are very poor
- Somerset now clearly one of weakest areas nationally
  - In top ten LAs nationally for number of inadequate schools
  - Weakest GCSE attainment and progress in the Southwest
  - Ongoing decline in outcomes for most disadvantaged
  - Outcomes have declined compared to national in every phase
  - Focus in schools is on SEND but this is not what is driving underachievement
  - Economic development focus is science – this subject is polarised

The Committee had a detailed discussion on the information presented and the following questions and issues were raised and responded to, as follows: -

- GCSE data and science having highest proportion of pupils not passing whereas the individual science subjects (Biology, Physics, Chemistry) is one of the county's strongest subjects – the subject is polarised and want to do some further analysis to understand the makeup of pupils who are being put forward for the different examinations to help understand why this is happening.
- The impact of shift to on-line learning in pandemic, digital poverty and whether had impact on achievement and also school readiness – some factors would also affect other areas / statistical neighbours who would have similar issues around rurality and isolation, but the pattern of performance is not matching other areas and pupils have done less well. Its about the basics of education and quality of schools across the piece and this is being reflected in Ofsted judgements. With regard to early years, there is fragility of this sector and the financial pressure on the sector is acute.
- Questions about the information presented for SEND pupils –pupils with SEND do have a lower level of attainment and progress than in other parts of the country, but the gap is smaller because all pupils are at such a low level
- Is there a plan to address quality of teaching – explained work of the Education Strategy Board and Strategy being developed and hopes to come back to the Committee soon with the plan
- Question asked about the slide information which had been shared before the meeting is same as presented in the PowerPoint presentation – confirmed information is same but the slide with the chart on KS2 disadvantaged pupils has been updated and the updated pack will be recirculated.
- Query about what causing quality of decline and if its funding, staff, infrastructure - there does need to be more work done to better understand 'the why' and factors could be (a) the way academisation happened in Somerset (high level fragmentation / high number of single Academy Trusts, / high number of small Academy Trusts; (b) way support structures; (c) have fantastic teacher and leaders but consistency; (d) fragmented system in county with mix of a 2 tier and 3 tier systems - legacy of all factors over period of many years.

In view of the seriousness of the information presented, it was AGREED that the Committee would write to the Leader of the Council expressing alarm and concern and requesting the Executive, as a matter of urgency, task Officers to undertake a review to identify the underlying issues leading to this continued under performance. This review is of critical importance as improvements must be made in Somerset Schools to enable all pupils to achieve better outcomes.



The Committee will be closely monitoring progress and will seek reassurance from the Executive and Officers that improvements are being made.

**8 Scrutiny at Somerset Council - Agenda Item 9**

The Committee considered a report from the Council's Scrutiny Officer, Jamie Jackson which was seeking nominations from the Committee to sit on a forthcoming scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

The Task and Finish Group will meet to discuss and eventually draft a set of proposals as to how scrutiny should be structured and how it should operate within the new unitary authority from April 2023. It was confirmed that seeking 3 representatives from the Committee.

It was AGREED that members would be contacted separately, asking for expressions of interest. The Committee NOTED the time commitment involved between mid-November and mid-January 2023.

**9 Items for Information - Standing Item - Agenda Item 10**

The Committee noted the following items for information:

- (a) Briefing on Wyvern Nurseries – Implementation Update
- (b) SEND, Data and Commissioning FAQ's – key points from SEND, data and Commissioning workshop on 28 September 2022
- (c) Member Development Panel information
- (d) Education and Inclusion Services redesign / restructure – follow-up update.

**10 Any other urgent items of business - Agenda Item 11**

There were no other items of business.

**(The meeting ended at 3.30 pm)**

**CHAIR**

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## Scrutiny for Policies Children and Families Committee Work Plan 2022 - 2023

Overarching themes	Committee meeting dates / proposed agenda items	Lead Officer/Item Lead
<b>7 November @ 1 pm</b>		
Work plan	Proposals for creation of 2 Task and Finish Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Sufficiency of external placements</li> <li>- Home to school transport</li> </ul>	
Training item	Progress on Ofsted Action Plan - presentation	Acting Director Children's Services Claire Winter, Strategic Manager, Paul Shallcross
Universal Education Pre Executive scrutiny	LA Maintained Schools – core offer / traded offer - overview	Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills Amelia Walker
Universal Education	2022 Key Stage assessment results – national data	Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills Amelia Walker
Forward look	Scrutiny at Somerset Council – to inform the recommendations going to Full Council in February 2023	Service Manager, Jamie Jackson
Items for Information – Standing Item	Items for Information: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Briefing on Wyvern Nurseries – Implementation Update – circulated on 27 October 2022</li> <li>b) SEND, Data and Commissioning FAQ's - key points from SEND, data and Commissioning workshop on 28 September 2022 – circulated on 11 October 2022 <a href="#">Consultation on SEND Strategy 2023/26 (closes 23 Dec 22)</a></li> <li>c) Member Development Panel information – circulated on 31 October 2022</li> <li>d) Education and Inclusion Services redesign / restructure - follow up update – circulated on 28 October 2022</li> </ol>	Early Years Lead, Alison Jeffrey  Programme Lead (Health), P Watts  Acting Director Children's Services Claire Winter  Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills Amelia Walker
<b>12 December @ 1 pm</b>		
Universal Education	Education Strategy for Somerset – progress update	Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills Amelia Walker
Universal Education	LA Maintained Schools – core offer / traded offer – Business Case	Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills Amelia Walker

The focus for the Committee is – what impact does this have on the children in Somerset?

## Scrutiny for Policies Children and Families Committee Work Plan 2022 - 2023

Social Care and commissioning	Somerset Connect and links to the Frome LCN development	Assistant Director Commissioning Richard Selwyn, Strategic Manager, Vikki Hearn and Strategic Manager Public Health, Patsy Temple
	Task and Finish Groups – verbal update (a) Sufficiency of external placements (b) Home to school transport	
Items for Information – Standing Item	Items for Information: (a) 2022 key Stage assessment results – correspondence sent to the Leader Somerset County Council on 14 November and Response received on 15 November; (b) Somerset <a href="#">Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report 2021 – 22</a> - circulated on 15 November (c) <a href="#">Peninsula Fostering Framework Agreement</a> - Decision taken on 16 November 2022 – circulated on 21 November	
<b>16 January 2023 @ 1 pm</b>		
	Scrutiny update on Ofsted Action Plan	Acting Director Children’s Services Claire Winter and Acting Assistant Director Community and Strategy, Paul Shallcross
	Return Home Interviews	Strategic Manager, Prevention Services, Lise Bird
	Task and Finish Groups – update and reports (c) Sufficiency of external placements (d) Home to school transport	
Universal Education	Detailed 2022 key stage assessment results	Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills Amelia Walker
Cross cutting	Budget items – Medium Term Financial Planning (MTFP)	

The focus for the Committee is – what impact does this have on the children in Somerset?

## Scrutiny for Policies Children and Families Committee Work Plan 2022 - 2023

	2023-24 Combined Scrutiny Meeting on 1 February 2023		
<b>Joint meeting with Adults &amp; Health Scrutiny – date to be confirmed</b>			
	Draft Integrated Care Strategy		Maria Heard
<b>Workshops - to be scheduled</b>			
	Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) - <b>Trauma Informed Somerset</b> practice model		multi agency practitioners, schools (vision and direction)
Universal Education	<b>The disadvantage gap</b> - what we know and options to address, to include health impact of inequalities in education		Public Health, SEND, social workers, case studies, wider health organisations, FSM and pupil premium data
<b>6 March 2023 @ 1 pm</b>			
SEND & Inclusion	Response to SEND Green Paper – and policy proposals		Assistant Director Inclusion Dr Rob Hart
	Children missing out on education (numbers, who, reasons)		
Universal Education	Provisional – Academisation – progress update		Assistant Director Education Partnerships and Skills Amelia Walker

**Items to be scheduled / recommendations for Scrutiny Forward Plan**  
**Evaluation of the West Somerset Opportunity Area** – to be scheduled

The focus for the Committee is – what impact does this have on the children in Somerset?

# Scrutiny for Policies Children and Families Committee Work Plan 2022 - 2023

## Universal Education

- Pupil place planning
- Disadvantage gap
- Academisation
- LA maintained capacity and support

## SEND and Inclusion

- Attendance
- Written Statement of Action
- Response to SEND & Alternative Provision Green paper
- SEND Strategy

## Social Care and Commissioning

- Family safeguarding
- Early Help
- Placement sufficiency
- Strategic partnership
- The Care Review

## Cross-cutting items:

- Long-term financial planning that improves outcomes for children (MTP)
- Involving young people and the community in scrutiny
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing (with health partners)
- Medium Term Financial Plan (MFTP) – Children & Families Budgets

**Note:** Members of the Scrutiny Committee and all other Members of Somerset County Council are invited to contribute items for inclusion in the work programme. Please contact Fiona Abbott, Democratic Services (01823) 357628 & [democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservicesteam@somerset.gov.uk) who will assist you in submitting your item.

The focus for the Committee is – what impact does this have on the children in Somerset?

## Scrutiny for Policies Children & Families Committee Outcome Tracker 2022 - 23

Agenda items	Lead / Owner	Agreed Outcome	RAG Status
<b>Meeting held - 20 June 2022</b>			
Family Safeguarding Review	Louise Palmer	<p>PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Strategic Commissioner, in Children's Services Louise Palmer and the Council's Head of Service for Assessment and Safeguarding in Children's Social Care, Paul Shawcross who provided an implementation update on Family Safeguarding in Somerset.</p> <p>Noted the successes and evaluation undertaken by York Consulting which is due in the next month, the positive interim report headlines and issues for consideration - impact of the pandemic on the implementation; the 'workbook'; increasing complexity of cases. It was agreed that the Evaluation Report be circulated to the Committee.</p>	<b>Pending</b>
School Place planning	Amelia Walker	<p>PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Assistant Director, Education Partnerships and Skills, Amelia Walker, the Assistant Director Inclusion, Dr Rob Hart and the Strategic Manager, Phil Curd was provided and offered an overview of school and early years places.</p> <p>The Committee would receive an overview of the new Education White Paper at a future meeting.</p>	<b>Pending</b>
<b>Meeting held – 25 July 2022</b>			
Work plan		<p>Considered and noted the Committee's current work programme and the Executive Forward Plan of planned key decisions in coming months, including Executive meetings. It was agreed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request a 'briefing on a page' about the current situation regarding school exclusions</li> <li>• Request the former Committee's Task and Finish Group report on School Exclusions be circulated</li> <li>• That job titles as well as names, be included on the work plan</li> <li>• Members were invited to email the Chair and Vice Chair if they have any further items they would like the Committee to focus on</li> </ul>	<p>AD Inclusion</p> <p>Clerk - completed</p> <p>Clerk - completed</p>

## Scrutiny for Policies Children & Families Committee Outcome Tracker 2022 - 23

Education and Inclusion Services Redesign	Amelia Walker / Dr Rob Hart	PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Assistant Director, Inclusion Dr Rob Hart, who presented the proposals for the Education and Inclusion Services redesign.  It was agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair, relevant officers and the lead Member for Children and Families will discuss best route for the Scrutiny Committee to consider the proposals	<b>Item for Information at 7 Nov 2022 mtg</b>
Update on budgetary pressures in Children's Services	Claire Winter	Item DEFERRED	<b>5 September 2022</b>
Information Item		Children & Young Peoples Plan – <a href="#">public facing document</a>	
<b>5 September 2022</b>			
Work Plan		A ' <a href="#">glossary of terms</a> ' has recently been published on the Council's website.  Agreed that Home to School Transport presentation would come to next meeting	<b>Oct 22 mtg</b>
2022 Key Stage assessment results for Somerset	Amelia Walker	PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Assistant Director, Education Partnerships and Skills, Amelia Walker, who provided a data and standards update, including the early indications from the 2022 Key Stage assessment results for Somerset and the areas of focus.  Testing generates vast quantities of data and therefore accurate and reliable results to pupil level will not be in the public domain until January 2023. The national data is released in October and the Committee would like to see that when can (possibly November mtg). Ms Walker said that she would circulate the presentation given to the informal meeting last year which provided an introduction to education data and performance.  The Committee had a broad discussion on the issues raised in the presentation. On behalf of the Committee the Chair thanked Ms Walker for the informative presentation.	<b>Nov 22 mtg</b>  Clerk - completed



## Scrutiny for Policies Children & Families Committee Outcome Tracker 2022 - 23

Academisation - moving towards 2030	Amelia Walker	PowerPoint presentation on issues from the Council's Assistant Director, Education Partnerships and Skills, Amelia Walker.	<b>Progress update in Feb / March 2023</b>
Update on budgetary pressures in Children's Services	Claire Winter	<p>PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Deputy Director of Children's Services, Claire Winter, who provided an update on the budgetary pressures in Children's Services.</p> <p>The key areas of pressure are external placements for children in care and secondly education transport – home to school and SEND transport and Ms Winter outlined the key performance cost drivers and actions / activity to address pressures. It was confirmed that the education transport strategy will be considered at the Place Scrutiny Committee on 6 September 2022 and will be brought to this Committee in October 2022.</p> <p>It was agreed that the following will be circulated (a) 'Staying Put' policy; (b) numbers in residential care data for 21/22 and how we sit with statistical neighbours.</p> <p>The Committee also congratulated the department for winning the 2022 LGC award for the fostering campaign. It was agreed that Children's Services budget monitoring will be discussed at the next meeting. The Chair also highlighted that at some point the Committee may consider setting up a task and finish group looking at external care placements, in conjunction with Corporate Parenting Board.</p>	<b>On going work by Committee</b>
Homes for children in Somerset – progress update	Daniel Moncrieff	PowerPoint presentation from the Council's Strategic Manager, Daniel Moncrieff who provided a detailed update on the strategic partnership between SCC and 'The Shaw Trust' to deliver homes for complex children and young people including homes for children, high needs fostering and therapeutic education.	<b>Completed</b>
Information Items		<p>Noted the following:</p> <p>(a) <a href="#">Task &amp; Finish Group Report on School Exclusions</a> – report to Cabinet 23 September 2020</p> <p>(b) <a href="#">Elective home education</a> – report to Committee 3 March 2021</p>	<b>Completed</b>

## Scrutiny for Policies Children & Families Committee Outcome Tracker 2022 - 23

3 October 2022			
Work Plan		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) progress on Ofsted inspection Children's Social Care Services action plan – will be detailed report and debate at the November meeting</li> <li>(b) detailed 2022 Key Stage assessment results for Somerset – add to January 2023 meeting</li> </ul>	
Budget Monitoring	Rob Hart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Noted the proposed actions to address the budget trajectory, including the Children's Transformation Programme, which focuses effort on key areas of demand / pressures</li> <li>(b) Noted that the Executive has asked the Committee to review the 2022/23 budget monitoring position for its services and agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair will discuss further establishing a Task &amp; Finish Group to look at the 'top spends', transport and external placements.</li> </ul>	<p><b>On going</b></p> <p><b>Agreed November mtg</b></p>
Home to School Transport	Phil Curd John Perrett	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) noted the update and current position and proposed next steps and development</li> <li>(b) agreed to add school transport to the Committee's work plan for refreshed Council policy (to reflect statutory guidance and possible discretionary changes</li> <li>(c) agreed that the Chair and Vice Chair to discuss further a possible Task and Finish Group for SEND transport, to include provision for pre and post school club attendance, for example</li> </ul>	<p><b>Pending</b></p> <p><b>Agreed November mtg</b></p>

## Scrutiny for Policies Children & Families Committee Outcome Tracker 2022 - 23

SEND Draft Strategy & Development	Rob Hart Vikki Hearn Ruth Hobbs	<p>(a) Noted the following emerging SEND Strategy Themes which will be underpinned by a number of mission statements, outlining how these will be delivered, for consultation.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Listen, Hear and Respond - Children and young people with SEND and their families will be heard and feel they have choice and control about their lives. Not for me, with me.</li> <li>2. Working Together and Coordinated - We are working together as a co-ordinated system and at the case level, around the family.</li> <li>3. Getting Help as Early as Possible - Children, young people and their families are able to access the right support at the right time.</li> <li>4. Access to the right information, support and provision - Children, young people and their families telling us: "I understand the support and provision that is available to me, and I can access it, if I need it."</li> <li>5. Preparing for the future - Children and young people have the right skills and options, according to their individual needs, to take control of their future and achieve the ambitions important to them.</li> </ol> <p>(b) Asked to see the final report from the Annual Survey when it is available.  (c) Asked that the consultation draft of the SEND Strategy be shared with the Committee  (d) Agreed that the SEND Strategy be brought back to the Committee after the consultation and engagement has concluded.</p>	<b>Pending</b>
<b>7 November 2022</b>			
Work plan		Agreed to establish 2 task & Finish Groups (a) Sufficiency of external placements; (b) Home to school transport	<b>On going – rec's to January 2023 mtg</b>
Progress on Ofsted action plan	Paul Shallcross	<p>PowerPoint presentation received and shared with Committee.</p> <p>Draft plan to be shared with Committee  Committee to see Improvement Plan in 6 months  Noted role of Corporate Parent Board</p>	<p>Clerk – done</p> <p><b>ACTION</b>  Add to work plan</p>

The focus for the Committee is – 'what impact does this have on the children in Somerset'?

## Scrutiny for Policies Children & Families Committee Outcome Tracker 2022 - 23

LA Maintained Schools – core offer / traded offer - overview	Amelia Walker	<p>Presentation on overview of proposed changes to the LA maintained schools core offer</p> <p>AGREED That the report which will be considered at the Executive mtg on 14 December 2022 be shared with the Committee and this to include details of the EIA undertaken.</p> <p>Will be substantive agenda item at Committee's next meeting.</p>	<b>Full Business Case to December mtg</b>
2022 Key Stage assessment results – national data	Amelia Walker	<p>PowerPoint presentation given on the 2022 education outcomes.</p> <p>In view of the seriousness of the information presented, it was AGREED that the Committee would write to the Leader of the Council expressing alarm and concern and requesting the Executive, as a matter of urgency, task Officers to undertake a review to identify the underlying issues leading to this continued under performance. This review is of critical importance as improvements must be made in Somerset Schools to enable all pupils to achieve better outcomes. The Committee will be closely monitoring progress and will seek reassurance from the Executive and Officers that improvements are being made.</p>	<b>Ongoing</b>
Scrutiny at Somerset Council – to inform the recommendations going to Full Council in February 2023	Jamie Jackson	<p>AGREED that members would be contacted separately, asking for expressions of interest. The Committee NOTED the time commitment involved between mid-November and mid-January 2023.</p>	
Information Items		<p>Noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Briefing on Wyvern Nurseries – Implementation Update – circulated on 27 October 2022</li> <li>b) SEND, Data and Commissioning FAQ's - key points from SEND, data and Commissioning workshop on 28 September 2022 – circulated on 11 October 2022 <a href="#">Consultation on SEND Strategy 2023/26 (closes 23 Dec 22)</a></li> <li>c) Member Development Panel information – circulated on 31 October 2022</li> <li>d) Education and Inclusion Services redesign / restructure - follow up update – circulated on 28 October 2022</li> </ul>	<b>Completed</b>

# Scrutiny for Policies Children & Families Committee Outcome Tracker 2022 - 23

## Issues brought forward from last tracker 2017-2022 term of office

- Update from Joint informal workshop with A&H Committee to include Transition arrangements – preparing for adulthood
- Roll out of pantry project etc and support to children & families

*The CYPP 2022 - 2025 had been produced following a multi-agency process. The CYPP had three priorities: keeping children and young people safe (priority 1); supporting physical and emotional health and resilience (priority 2); enabling young people to learn and thrive (priority 3)*

[Somerset Children & Young People's Plan – SSCP \(safeguardingsomerset.org.uk\)](https://safeguardingsomerset.org.uk)

Version as at 30.11.22

Completed	Action complete and will be removed from tracker for next meeting and retained on Master Tracker document.
Pending	Action on-going or plans in place to address.
Incomplete	No action currently in place with a minimum of 3 months since action agreed.

The focus for the Committee is – ‘what impact does this have on the children in Somerset?’

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Somerset County Council  
Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families  
Committee  
– 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022

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## LA Maintained Schools – Core Offer

Lead Officer: Amelia Walker – Asst Director – Education, Partnerships & Skills

Author: Amelia Walker – Asst Director – Education, Partnerships & Skills

Contact Details: [Amelia.Walker@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Amelia.Walker@somerset.gov.uk)

Cabinet Member: Cllr Tessa Munt - Lead Member for Children and Families

Division and Local Member:

### **1. Summary**

- 1.1.** Due to current financial and compliance risks, we are proposing to change the current support offer for Local Authority Maintained Schools. Currently, schools buy back services via SSE (Support Services for Education). A new core offer model would continue the traded model, but to help with compliance and manage/mitigate the risks, we would bundle certain services into two new offers: Base and Business Manager. Other services would remain unchanged and would continue to be offered to all schools.

### **2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations**

- 2.1.** The Committee is asked to consider and comment on the attached draft Executive decision report, full business case and appendices and make recommendations to be included in the final report to the Executive.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1.** Included within draft Executive decision report.

### **4. Consultations undertaken**

- 4.1.** Included within draft Executive decision report.

### **5. Implications**

- 5.1.** Included within draft Executive decision report.

### **6. Background papers**

- 6.1.** Included within draft Executive decision report.

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## **LA Maintained Schools – Core Offer**

Executive Member(s): Cllr Tessa Munt - Lead Member for Children and Families

Local Member(s) and Division: All Somerset

Lead Officer: Amelia Walker – Asst Director – Education, Partnerships & Skills

Author: Amelia Walker

Contact Details: [Amelia.Walker@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Amelia.Walker@somerset.gov.uk)

### **1. Summary / Background**

- 1.1** Due to current financial and compliance risks, we are proposing to change the current support offer for Local Authority Maintained Schools. Currently, schools buy back services via SSE (Support Services for Education). A new core offer model would continue the traded model, but to help with compliance and manage/mitigate the risks, we would bundle certain services into two new offers: Base and Business Manager. Other services would remain unchanged and would continue to be offered to all schools.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1.** That the Executive:

Agree to the implementation of an LA Maintained Schools core offer comprising a Base and Business Manager elements, based on the proposed charging model, with an effective date for new contracts of 1 April 2023.

### **3. Reasons for recommendations**

**3.1** This decision is being brought forward because developments which have emerged in the past 12-18 months have created a situation where both schools and the local authority are facing a significant level of risk and concern. Specifically:

- After three years without data on pupil progress and attainment, data from 2022 is not demonstrating decline across all Key Stages, including phases where performance had previously been stronger. Other indicators show similar levels of underperformance.
- Recent years have seen multiple examples of compliance failure in schools relating to health and safety, safeguarding, finance and property, leading to a loss of confidence in mechanisms of assurance.
- The 2022 Schools White Paper proposed the academisation of all schools by 2030, an announcement that has created a high degree of uncertainty about how this level of transformation could be achieved, and support sustained, in a manner that avoids damage to the support infrastructure for schools.
- The Department for Education announced the removal of the Local Authority Monitoring and Brokering Grant, worth £513k, and the primary source of funding for school improvement work.
- Other funding sources have come under pressure, with the reduction of the Historic Commitments element of the Central Schools Services block by 20% each year, and the unforeseen economic shocks leading to steep rises in the rate of inflation.

**3.2** In order to respond to this picture of rapidly developing risk, a project was launched in October 2021 to begin discussions with schools about a different relationship between the local authority and LA Maintained schools, that would provide a stronger foundation for improvement work, greater assurance in relation to compliance, and support for schools that is more flexible and responsive to need.

**3.3** As part of this project two research exercises were conducted, a deep dive with a small group of schools undertaken by TPX Impact (see Appendix 3) and a survey of all schools in September 2022 on the detail of potential deliverables for inclusion in a core offer to schools.

**3.4** This proposal forms a companion piece to the approval given by the Senior Leadership Team to reorganise Education and Inclusion teams, including a wholly new management structure. While that re-organisation did not assume a core offer, if a core offer is agreed it will provide a staffing structure that is ready to implement the proposals.

**3.5** A full business case accompanies this proposal. The business case sets out four options:

- Option 1: Do nothing
- Option 2: Do minimum
- Option 3: Core Offer
- Option 4: Withdraw from LA maintained support

**3.6** The preferred option is **Option 3: Core Offer**. This is the most complex option, but also carries the lowest risk to the organisation. The option proposes to redesign of traded offer for LA Maintained Schools and service financial model to:

- Increase the level of bundling and move to longer-term contracting
- Set realistic but stretching income targets for all functions
- Gather intelligence and build reputation for strategic move to grow market share with trusts
- Increase resource flexibility to enable ongoing efficiency and right size to need/demand
- Create base budgets for compliance to protect risk management activities

**3.7** Implementation of this model would mean that local authority services would only be available through a Base or Business Manager offer, except where the services has been explicitly identified as appropriate as a discrete offering ('Bespoke offer'). The deliverables that make up the Base and Business Manager offers are set out in Appendices 1 and 2.

#### **4. Other options considered**

**4.1.** The business case sets out four options which have been assessed on the basis of risk. While Option 3 is the preferred option, action has been taken to ensure that Option 2 could still be implemented were proposals not approved. A consultation on de-delegation has been undertaken with schools, and on 16 November Schools Forum voted unanimously to give the local authority approval to implement de-delegation and education functions funding arrangements should a core offer not be approved by the Executive.

#### **5. Links to County Vision, Business Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy**

**5.1.** These proposals form part of the response by Children's Services to the present financial pressures and the MTFP planning process. They are designed to form part of a county-wide response to serious underperformance in educational progress and attainment. As part of preparing a new Education Strategy, analysis indicates that weak support infrastructure for schools is likely a contributing factor in underachievement. While there will need to be many responses to improving pupil outcomes, assuring sound foundations for high-quality, reliable and accessible support for LA maintained schools should form part of that response.

## **6. Consultations and co-production**

- 6.1.** We have consulted and engaged with the affected LA Maintained Schools throughout the last year. As part of the discovery phase of the project we commissioned TPXImpact to work with the schools and research why they buy back the services they do, how they cover services they don't buy back from SSE and what improvements they would like to see. Thirty schools volunteered to take part in that project. The final report for this work can be found in Appendix 3.

We also conducted a detailed survey during September 2022 of all LA maintained schools, and 68 out of 140 schools responded. The surveyed detailed the deliverables within the core offer and asked LA Maintained schools to let us know about any possible impacts to them regarding school staff and/or school contracts with other providers. This information has then been used to help finalise the current core offer model, and which services form part of it and which remain outside as part of the bespoke offer.

## **7. Financial and Risk Implications**

- 7.1.** The financial model is complex, but it is based on a reasonable set of assumptions that, due to their nature, will change over time. The model will be reviewed early in 2023/24 and appropriate mitigating action taken immediately should any change result in a financial pressure.
- 7.2.** Extensive financial analysis has been undertaken to provide assurance that the proposed charging model will be sufficient to cover costs both for the Education, Partnerships and Skills function and for all other corporate functions delivering core offer services. These services have formed part of a Project Board and have been part of ongoing development work to capture costs and deliverables for the model.
- 7.3.** Further analysis has also been undertaken in the following areas:
- Comparison of charges to schools, where charges are likely to increase most and how this compares to schools in financial difficulty
  - Inflationary pressures in the current financial year and likely areas of increase in 2023-24
  - Potential impacts of increased charges on other areas of buy back income
- 7.4.** Overall, this has concluded that, with the identified mitigations (para 6.3 of the business case), the model should be affordable for both the local authority and schools. The level of charge for the base offer (5% of individual schools budgets before any additional grants) is similar to charges by multi-academy trusts (averaging between 4-6%) and lower than local authority charges have been historically (8-12%).

- 7.5.** While the strategic focus for Education broadly is focused on improving outcomes for children, the drivers for these proposals primarily focused on reducing risk. This is because it has been identified that the current level of risk could derail attempts by the local authority and by schools to secure improvement and that stability, and a secure footing is a necessary precondition for the local authority to support others.
- 7.6.** The overall risk model and key risks are detailed in the business case (para 4.1 and 7.6).

## **8. Legal and HR Implications**

- 8.1.** Local authority trading is governed by regulations and guidance issued by the Department for Education. We have consulted the Education and Skills Funding Agency to confirm that proposals to change de-delegated and education functions funding arrangements to become fully traded are permissible within the guidance and this has been confirmed.
- 8.2.** The Department for Education guidance encourages local authority trading of services to be offered singly as well as in packages. However, the guidance is clear that this must be practicable, and that any restriction to schools' freedom of choice must be reasonable.

Analysis of outcomes for pupils, school quality based on Ofsted outcomes, and other critical indicators such as the level of exclusions, demonstrates that the risk of non-compliance with standards that affects children is very high at this time. The proposed model has been devised to mitigate identified compliance risks, with a particular focus on risk to children, and the bundling of services is essential as a response to the identified 'moral hazard' associated with the selling of discrete services. Therefore, reductions in choice are reasonable because of the imperative to reduce risk and significantly improve standards.

- 8.3.** There are two groups of staff who could be impacted by the introduction of a Core Offer: local authority staff and staff in schools.

In relation to local authority-employed staff, a staff reorganisation was consulted on during July-September 2022 and is in the process of being implemented. While this staff reorganisation could deliver the current service, it has been designed to make delivery of a Core Offer possible and therefore no further change would be required.

In relation to school-based staff, the survey of all schools in September 2022 asked detailed questions about staffing with the express intention to avoid creating any TUPE implications through the design of a Core Offer.

## **9. Other Implications**

### **9.1. Equalities Implications**

The proposed core offer is designed to focus on compliance and mitigate risk across the LA Maintained Schools cohort.

Services/support currently offered to LA Maintained schools will continue under the new core offer model and because of all schools receiving the base package, service delivery will increase, so the core offer will not result in services reducing.

As part of the core offer for LA Maintained schools the Curriculum, Projects & Resources team will help provide support around facilitated access to community groups representing a wide range of interests and protected characteristics, including online and curriculum resources and networks in relation to protected characteristics.

Schools will continue to have equalities responsibility under the Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty, as do we as the Local Authority.

### **9.2. Community Safety Implications**

There are no community safety implications.

### **9.3. Sustainability Implications**

The core offer includes deliverables which support schools in the procurement of energy and water in a sustainable way, as well as access to curriculum resources and networks in relation to the climate emergency.

### **9.4. Health and Safety Implications**

Recent incidents have raised concerns about the level of assurance that the local authority has in relation to health and safety within schools, including safety in relation to property. The proposed core offer is designed to focus on compliance and mitigate risk across the LA Maintained Schools cohort.

### **9.5. Health and Wellbeing Implications**

Analysis supporting the development of an Education Strategy for the county suggests that a weak support infrastructure may have contributed to higher levels of anxiety among staff and pupils within the county. While this is likely to be only one factor, improving the quality, reliability and accessibility of support is intended to have a positive impact on mental wellbeing.

## 9.6. Social Value

The local authority trades with schools in Somerset and beyond, and this has always been with the objective of utilising a surplus from such trading to support schools in the county. The current proposal has the same objective, but with an increased focus on providing transparency about how school funding secures stronger support, and with a greater focus on ensuring that all activities in relation to schools contribute, even if indirectly, to better educational outcomes for children and young people.

## 10. Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

**10.1.** Children and Families Scrutiny Committee considered an advance briefing on this proposal on [7 November 2022](#). The committee asked for assurance that the business case would include an Equalities Impact Assessment, which it does. The full business case will be subject to pre-decision scrutiny on 12 December 2022.

## 11. Background

**11.1.** In 2014 Somerset County Council created Somerset Services for Education (SSE) and moved the majority of schools-focused services within the council onto a full-cost recovery traded basis. This function has now been in operation for eight years. A number of other local authority teams also trade with schools. Additionally, Children's Services includes a small number of schools-focused teams outside of the SSE line management chain that operate a mix of traded, statutory and grant-funded functions.

This complex picture of functions together provides the local authority's contribution to a high-performing education system in the county. However, the education system in Somerset is performing poorly, and prior to the pandemic, was in a cycle of rapid decline. Not only does significant underperformance impact on children's lives and opportunities, and in the long term, the health, wealth, and competitiveness of the whole population, but escalating failure carries with it significant short- and medium-term cost and risk implications for the local authority.

## 12. Background Papers

- 12.1. Appendix 1** - Full list of deliverables included in Core Offer – Base Offer
- Appendix 2** - Full list of deliverables included in Core Offer – Business Manager
- Appendix 3** - TPXImpact discovery final report/slide pack
- Appendix 4** - Implementation timeline for Core Offer Go live

**Appendix 5 – Full Business Case (Including Risk Matrix and financial modelling)**

**Report Sign-Off**

		Date completed
Legal Implications	Honor Clarke	Click or tap to enter a date.
Governance	Scott Wooldridge	Click or tap to enter a date.
Corporate Finance	Jason Vaughan	Click or tap to enter a date.
Customers, Digital and Workforce	Chris Squire	Click or tap to enter a date.
Property	Paula Hewitt / Oliver Woodhams	Click or tap to enter a date.
Procurement	Claire Griffiths	26/10/22
Senior Manager	Claire Winter	Click or tap to enter a date.
Commissioning Development	Sunita Mills / Ryszard Rusinek	26/10/22
Executive Member	Cllr Tessa Munt - Lead Member for Children and Families	30/11/22
<b><u>Sign-off Key Decision / Consulted on Non-Key Decision</u></b>		
Local Member	n/a	Click or tap to enter a date.
Opposition Spokesperson	Opposition Spokesperson - Children & Families - Cllr Frances Nicholson	Click or tap to enter a date.
Scrutiny Chair	Scrutiny for Policies - Childrens and Families - Cllr Leigh Redman	29/11/22



DRAFT

# Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes – available from your Equality Officer

<b>Version</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>21 November 2022</b>
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## Description of what is being impact assessed

A revision to the way that services are offered by the local authority to Local Authority Maintained Schools. Services that were previously offered individually will now form part of a package. Services that were previously funded by agreement of Schools Forum to ‘top-slice’ school budgets will now be offered as part of the traded package. No services that were previously offered are proposed to cease. Some services that were previously funded by government grant will now be charged to schools.

## Evidence

**What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups?** Sources such as the [Office of National Statistics](#), [Somerset Intelligence Partnership](#), [Somerset’s Joint Strategic Needs Analysis \(JSNA\)](#), Staff and/ or [area profiles](#), should be detailed here

A research exercise was conducted with schools and forms part of the papers for this decision. Data relating to school past purchasing decisions was analysed alongside school and local authority budgetary information and data to enable forecasting of inflation.

**Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups?** If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

A research exercise was conducted with schools and forms part of the papers for this decision. A further survey was conducted of all relevant schools, with responses received from 47% of schools.

## Analysis of impact on protected groups

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
<b>Age</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Because charges to schools may be higher than in previous years, this may have an impact on schools serving children 4-16. However, the assessment demonstrates that other options would have a more detrimental impact and therefore this proposal offers the highest chance of protecting children against adverse impacts. Proposals have been designed to treat all schools as equally as possible and to mitigate more significant changes.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□
<b>Disability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Because charges to schools may be higher than in previous years, this may have an impact on special schools serving children with disabilities. However, the assessment demonstrates that other options would have a more detrimental impact and therefore this proposal offers the highest chance of protecting children against adverse impacts. Proposals have been designed to treat all schools as equally as possible and to mitigate more significant changes.</li> </ul>	□	⊗	□
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	□	□	□

<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	☐	☐	☐
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	☐	☐	☐
<b>Race and ethnicity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because charges to schools may be higher than in previous years, this may have an impact on schools serving a population with proportionately higher ethnic diversity. However, the assessment demonstrates that other options would have a more detrimental impact and therefore this proposal offers the highest chance of protecting children against adverse impacts. Proposals have been designed to treat all schools as equally as possible and to mitigate more significant changes.</li> </ul>	☐	☒	☐
<b>Religion or belief</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because charges to schools may be higher than in previous years, this may have an impact on schools with a religious designation. However, the assessment demonstrates that other options would have a more detrimental impact and therefore this proposal offers the highest chance of protecting children against adverse impacts. Proposals have been designed to treat all schools as equally as possible and to mitigate more significant changes.</li> </ul>	☐	☒	☐
<b>Sex</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because charges to schools may be higher than in previous years, this may have an impact on schools where there is a gender imbalance in the school population. However, the assessment demonstrates that other options would have a more detrimental impact and therefore this proposal offers the highest chance of protecting children against adverse impacts.</li> </ul>	☐	☒	☐

	Proposals have been designed to treat all schools as equally as possible and to mitigate more significant changes.			
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	•	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Other, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Because charges to schools may be higher than in previous years, this may have an impact on schools in rural locations. However, the assessment demonstrates that other options would have a more detrimental impact and therefore this proposal offers the highest chance of protecting children against adverse impacts. Proposals have been designed to treat all schools as equally as possible and to mitigate more significant changes.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Negative outcomes action plan**

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>

	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.</b>				
<b>Completed by:</b>	<b>Amelia Walker</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>21 November 2022</b>			
<b>Signed off by:</b>				
<b>Date</b>				
<b>Equality Lead/Manager sign off date:</b>				
<b>To be reviewed by: (officer name)</b>				
<b>Review date:</b>				

**LA Maintained Schools – Core Offer****Base Offer Deliverables**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Team</b>	<b>Deliverables (base only)</b>
Finance	Exchequer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payment of supplier invoices through an interface direct from MIS into the County Council's corporate ICT system</li> <li>• Cashiering and Accounts Receivable Services</li> <li>• Provision of Procurement Cards</li> </ul>
	Insurance	<p>Insurance cover and associated advice and support (including managing risks and ensuring that insurance claims are dealt with fairly and swiftly) on the following areas: Public Liability; Employers Liability; Professional Indemnity; Hirers Liability; Personal Accident; Libel and Slander; Crime Insurance (enhanced Fidelity Guarantee Insurance - employee and third-party dishonesty); School Journey/Travel Insurance; Property Insurance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Material Damage cover – Buildings and Contents</li> <li>• Additional Expenses (Business Interruption) cover</li> <li>• Computer Equipment</li> <li>• Money</li> <li>• Engineering inspection provision</li> <li>• Contract Work (Works in progress)</li> </ul>
	Children's and Adults Finance Business Partnering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of policy advice and guidance to support leadership and management (Strategic finance)</li> <li>• Provision of analysis and advice in relation to schools in financial difficulties</li> <li>• Overview of financial performance and provision of financial data</li> <li>• Delivery of statutory reporting across all schools</li> </ul>
	Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to legal advice and support in appropriate circumstances that meet the threshold, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Parents and pupils</li> <li>○ Site Matters</li> <li>○ Contract and Procurement</li> <li>○ Legal Proceedings</li> <li>○ Charges</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Customers and Digital	HR Admin and Payroll	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring all staff (permanent, fixed term, casual and ad hoc workers) are paid accurately and on time</li> <li>• Assurance that statutory and contractual requirements are met - including absence, expenses, pensions administration and auto-enrolment, production of contractual paperwork, managing and providing information to support family absence and sick pay</li> <li>• Provision of pay-related monthly costing and data load files</li> <li>• Advice and guidance in relation to pay, HR process or staffing transactions</li> </ul>
	Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of 3 yearly fire risk assessments (Non-VA)</li> <li>• Provision of 3 yearly Health and Safety Audits (Non-VA).</li> <li>• Outdoor education trip approvals</li> <li>• Delivery of commissioned open access training in Health and Safety</li> <li>• Provision of policy advice and guidance to support leadership and management (Health and safety)</li> <li>• Provision of clear information about minimum standards for leaders and governors to self-assess compliance (Health and Safety)</li> </ul>
	Technology and Digital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of clear information about minimum standards for leaders and governors to self-assess compliance (Digital and technology safety and standards)</li> <li>• Targeted audits and compliance checking for ICT safety and standards</li> </ul>
	Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to Communication professional advice in the event of emergency or crisis</li> </ul>

## Appendix 1

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of communication materials (press releases, parent comms etc) in the event of emergency or crisis</li> </ul>
Corporate Property	Estates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual consultation and bidding process between schools and corporate property to determine the highest priority condition items to be nominated for condition fund investment.</li> <li>Data overview of (property related) compliance and the condition of the school estate, including potential for decarbonisation where available. Data to be held in online Technology Forge database (TF) where schools can access and manage property data.</li> <li>Comprehensive biennial property condition survey.</li> <li>Biennial (property related) statutory compliance checks and onsite audit, plus live monthly monitoring of compliance data entered into TF.</li> </ul>
	Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procurement of school's energy and water</li> <li>Bill verification and query management with suppliers</li> <li>Data tools to help monitor and manage energy consumption.</li> </ul>
	Asbestos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery of regular re-inspection of Asbestos containing items depending on risk in schools identified as containing asbestos.</li> <li>Delivery of Asbestos Awareness Training to all schools built pre 2000</li> </ul>
Waste	Somerset Waste Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collection of recycling, food, and other waste material from schools</li> </ul>

Education, Partnerships and Skills	Curriculum Projects and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overview of individuals and organisations with curriculum expertise</li> <li>Provision of opportunities for curriculum and subject collaboration</li> <li>Delivery of commissioned training in Curriculum or relevant Curriculum Topics</li> <li>Access to over 170,000 books to support the curriculum</li> <li>Coordination of curation and supply of curriculum exemplars</li> </ul>
	Education Leadership Advisory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of policy advice and guidance and resources to support leadership and management (HR, governance, safeguarding)</li> <li>Provision of clear information about minimum standards for leaders and governors to self-assess compliance (HR, governance, safeguarding)</li> <li>Board management tool (database) for clerks to use and update.</li> <li>Risk-based targeted audits of safeguarding practice, including Single Central Record</li> <li>Provision for the local authority to exercise its' statutory duties in respect of governance, safeguarding &amp; HR</li> <li>Delivery of commissioned training in HR, Governance and Safeguarding</li> </ul>
	Education Leadership Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision of policy advice and guidance to support leadership and management (Academisation)</li> <li>Recruitment strategy and actions to improve recruitment and retention</li> <li>Induction and succession planning across schools</li> <li>Headteacher counselling and coaching (Headteacher support service)</li> <li>Overview of Ofsted forecasting and commissioning of inspection support from relevant teams</li> <li>Overview of attainment and progress data and communication about standards</li> <li>Provision of standardised social media collateral, templates and documentation to support recruitment</li> </ul>
	Education Relationships and Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dedicated Relationship Manager who acts as a single point of contact for the school and works on their behalf to connect the school to people, organisations and services</li> </ul>



## Appendix 1

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct capacity or brokerage of support on a targeted basis in relation to crises or pressures (inadequate judgement, unexpected leadership absence, safeguarding incident)</li> <li>• Commissioning and or brokering of specialist advice on a routine basis in relation to identified needs</li> <li>• Back up support from a flexible Relationship Management team for first line contact</li> <li>• Record-keeping system and intelligence gathering that ensures everyone working with a school has access to up-to-date information about activities, contacts and needs</li> <li>• Management of complaints and concerns about schools</li> <li>• Overview of statutory intervention process (standards)</li> <li>• Commissioning of suite of appropriate communications including bulletin, information online, virtual and face to face events</li> </ul>
	Education Information Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data transfer management and support to ensure that all integration between schools and the LA systems are effective and operational</li> <li>• First and Second line support, providing expert advice and guidance on all areas of the MIS through a self-logging help desk. Essential for ensuring basic functionality and effective use of the MIS.</li> <li>• Technical Support including upgrades, transfer of finance files and resolving system failures where required, including the use of relevant third-party remote management tools.</li> <li>• Priority functionality support during inspections or emergency situations</li> <li>• Payment of licence fees for SIMS (or other provider up to value of equivalent SIMS licence)</li> <li>• Provision of policy advice and guidance to support leadership and management (Data quality)</li> <li>• Provision of clear information about minimum standards for leaders and governors to self-assess compliance (Data quality)</li> </ul>
	Education Grounds Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of commissioned targeted specialist safety checks (play and grounds, including tree inspections)</li> </ul>
	Education Finance Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of clear information about minimum standards for leaders and governors to self-assess compliance (Finance)</li> <li>• Provision of tools and resources to support financial practice and compliance</li> <li>• Risk-based targeted financial control checks</li> <li>• Support for closing of Year End Accounts support and production of the consistent Financial Reporting (CRF) return</li> <li>• Provision of a Senior Finance Officer (SFO)</li> <li>• Access to helpline support and provision of a query service to support month end reconciliation accounts</li> <li>• Targeted support with key elements of annual budget planning, financial monitoring, and reporting</li> <li>• Provision of clear information about minimum standards for leaders and governors to self-assess compliance (catering)</li> <li>• Targeted audits and compliance checking for catering</li> </ul>
	Education Property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitation of statutory Servicing and compliance checks to Plant and Equipment including PAT testing &amp; Legionella Risk Assessments</li> <li>• Facilitation of Repairs via schools chosen contractors</li> <li>• Facilitation of Safety Glazing Audits</li> <li>• Facilitation of Display Energy Certificate as required</li> </ul>
	Data Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of policy advice and guidance to support leadership and management (Data Protection)</li> <li>• Provision of a Data Protection Officer (DPO)</li> <li>• Management of Subject Access Requests and FOI requests</li> </ul>

**Appendix 1**

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crisis support to manage data breaches and contact with parents, legal representatives, and the Information Commissioner's Office</li> <li>• Risk-based targeted audits of website and GDPR compliance</li> </ul>
	Training and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensive package of training and CPD in a variety of formats including face-to-face, online, and pre-recorded, commissioned from relevant experts</li> <li>• Coordination of annual assessment moderation for EYFS and KS1</li> </ul>
SWAP		
CLEAPPS		
Care First		
Trade Union Facilitation		
Maternity		
Redundancy		
Teachers Pension Audit		
Contingency		

**LA Maintained Schools – Core Offer**  
**Business Manager Package Deliverables**

Schools purchasing Business Manager time, can request support of any kind relevant to the skills and capabilities of our expert teams, to the limit of the hours purchased. Examples of the kinds of support that can be provided include:

- External compliance checks against financial schemes
- Access to an in-house team of property specialists to provide 24/7 emergency response and to project manage repairs and maintenance assessed as critical
- Supporting Schools in considering and developing their ICT strategy and infrastructure to ensure they effectively use technology - in and out of the classroom.
- Schools Website, Building, Hosting, Supporting, update service - ensuring full DfE and Ofsted Compliance
- Microsoft 365 Support - Fully managed support package - Email, OneDrive, SharePoint and Cloud Services
- Schools Development and rolling ICT Business Plan, 1/4 visits to all schools offering technical and practical support and advice on DfE funding and support school.
- Procurement Best Practice Price Benchmarking service - guaranteeing schools' best purchase price on all ICT Equipment
- ICT Project Management Services, all aspects of Project Management - Small or large ICT Purchases, Builds, Installation and Compatibility
- Facilitation of servicing contracts on electrical and mechanical equipment to meet statutory requirement, including electrical load testing
- Facilitation of day-to-day maintenance requirements.
- Support and advice on building related issues and potential improvement projects
- Maintaining and updating policies for hiring and leasing of land and buildings by third parties.
- Support in considering the effects of accommodating third parties e.g., pre-schools on School sites.
- Developing and advising on energy management strategy
- Comprehensive Budgeting – ready for presentation to Govs.
- Comprehensive Reporting – preparation of 6 reports a year for the school leader to present to Govs
- Access to a review of the Schools Finance Policy and School Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

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# Analysis of Local Authority Maintained Schools Non-teaching Responsibilities

For Somerset County Council



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# Somerset's ask

Somerset's history and geography has resulted in a support system for schools that feels fragmented. Somerset is progressing thinking on how to improve this, aligning with emerging government timelines for all schools to join MATs by 2030.

TPX was commissioned to undertake a research project that identifies opportunities that improve the quality of support provided to schools.

The aim is that this work can be used to inform a future operating model for the Council's offer to schools (a "core offer" to maintained schools, and an offer to MATs).

# Executive summary

Context

Somerset Council wants to rethink how it positions itself and how it can better support schools. The Council wanted to understand non-teaching pressures and costs, and to gain insights into the experiences and pain points of schools using Council services, and other third party services. This report provides insights and recommendations which will help inform a future operating model for a services provided by the Council.

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Summary of findings

Maintained schools are broadly well disposed towards the Council, except where there are concerns about quality and value for money. Schools rarely differentiate between different parts of the Council, and clunky processes outside of Traded Services can affect perceptions.

A more defined core offer for all maintained schools could provide better clarity for schools on what they can expect, as well as ensuring schools have the right safety nets in place. It would also provide stability for priority Council services so they can focus on ensuring the quality of service provided. The research has highlighted areas where responsibilities may best be retained in schools, and opportunities where the Council can play a greater support role (see “what does for the core offer” [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).

For all schools – and small schools especially – there is very limited capacity for researching to inform decisions or chasing the Council. The Council could better support schools by providing stronger strategic-level advice (e.g. finances), clearer benchmarking and signposting (e.g. quality), and streamlining processes (e.g. recruitment, property etc).

There are also opportunities for defining an offer to Academies and MATs, helping define the role of the Council and transition to 2030.

What is in this report

[The financial picture](#)

[Quality assurance and school improvement](#)

[Back-office functions \(HR, Legal and Finance\)](#)

[Recruitment and talent management](#)

[Site management, Maintenance and compliance](#)

[Partnership landscape](#)

Implications for the core offer

[Recommendations for addressing three prioritised themes](#)

[Recommended projects for defining the Council offer:](#)

- A core offer to maintained schools
- An offer to academies



# 01 Our approach



# What we did

Collaborative

Iterative

Transparent

User-lead

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1. [Kick-off workshop](#) with the Council to build shared understanding of the strategic context, scope and ways of working
2. [Financial analysis of DfE data and council data](#) to understand financial context and identify lines of enquiry for qualitative analysis. Reflections on White Paper. Identify representative sample group of schools for 1-2-1 interviews
3. [Detailed interviews with schools and LA staff](#) and refining lines of enquiry after each session
4. [Regular synthesis and playback](#) of emerging themes with both LA Team and schools
5. Workshops to identify common [themes and prioritisation](#)
6. Workshops to build [‘how might we’ statements for each theme and ideas](#) for potential solutions
7. [Wider survey](#) to validate hypothesis
8. Final workshop to bring all the work together and [refine the final product](#)
9. [Final show and tell](#) to share in detail with schools and other stakeholders

# Who we spoke to

Page 59

Analysis of financial data of 31 volunteer schools

9 Council staff

11 school business managers

13 Headteachers

50 attendees in two show and tells

1 survey of 31 schools

Including:

- Governance
- HR
- School Improvement
- Building surveyance
- Property & Grounds

Fairmead  
Birchfield Community Primary  
Dunster First School  
Lydeard St Lawrence  
Nether Stowey C.E. V.C Primary  
Burnham Infants  
Hindhayes Infant School  
Curry Rivel Primary School  
Evercreech Primary School  
St Dubricius CofE School  
Norton St Phillip First School  
Lovington CofE Primary School  
Wadham Community School

# Lines of enquiry for interviews

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## Council staff

What do we know about schools' (non-teaching) priorities and experiences?

What services are provided (statutory and traded) by the Council for schools?

How are schools supported with selection and buying services (from the Council and third party suppliers)

What is the relationship with the Council as landlord, and how are Health & Safety, repairs and maintenance managed?

How are schools supported to understand how well they are doing for their pupils and families, and risk

## Schools

What are the non-teaching responsibilities for schools, and how are these met?

What do leadership and business management spend their time on outside of learning, and what support do they need to reduce demand on their time?

What are the experiences of using the Council services and third party suppliers?

What do schools do for catering, cleaning, maintenance and H&S compliance?

How are premises managed and budgeted for, and what services (Council or otherwise) are used?

What are the drivers behind deciding to deliver in-house, go with the Council or with another provider?

What are the current and future pressures that might change the financial outlook

What partnership arrangements does the school take part in, what value does the school get, and how can this be improved?

How do schools budget, and mitigate/ insure for unintended costs? What are the biggest risks and financial pressures?

# 02 The financial picture



# How to use this section

This section gives a summary of the overall financial picture from our analysis of [DfE](#) 2020/21 and Somerset financial data.

The insights were used to help us focus the qualitative research on areas of interest.

The data and tables can be looked at in more detail [here](#).

# High-level Financial picture

Relative to other LA Maintained Schools across the country, Somerset Primary schools are in **relatively good** financial position – they are in the **top quartile of schools with surplus** across Primary, Special and PRU schools and the **bottom quartile of schools in deficit** for Primary.

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Somerset LA maintained schools have the **highest expenditure in relation to other local authorities** across the country on: Administrative and clerical staff, Bought in professional services, Cost of other staff, Indirect employee expenses, Grounds maintenance and improvement, Information and Communication technology, Supply Teaching Staff and Vehicles, equipment and machinery.

Unsurprisingly, smaller schools spend more per pupil. Schools with fewer than 100 pupils (<100 NOR) spend £1,887 more per pupil than larger schools overall, including double on back office costs per pupil – **£371.91 vs £788.10** for schools with over 200 pupils.

There is a weak positive correlation between the size of school and total balances held. **The vast majority of schools are in surplus** and have under £250k balance held, with some outliers above that.

# Size of school (NOR) and expenditure

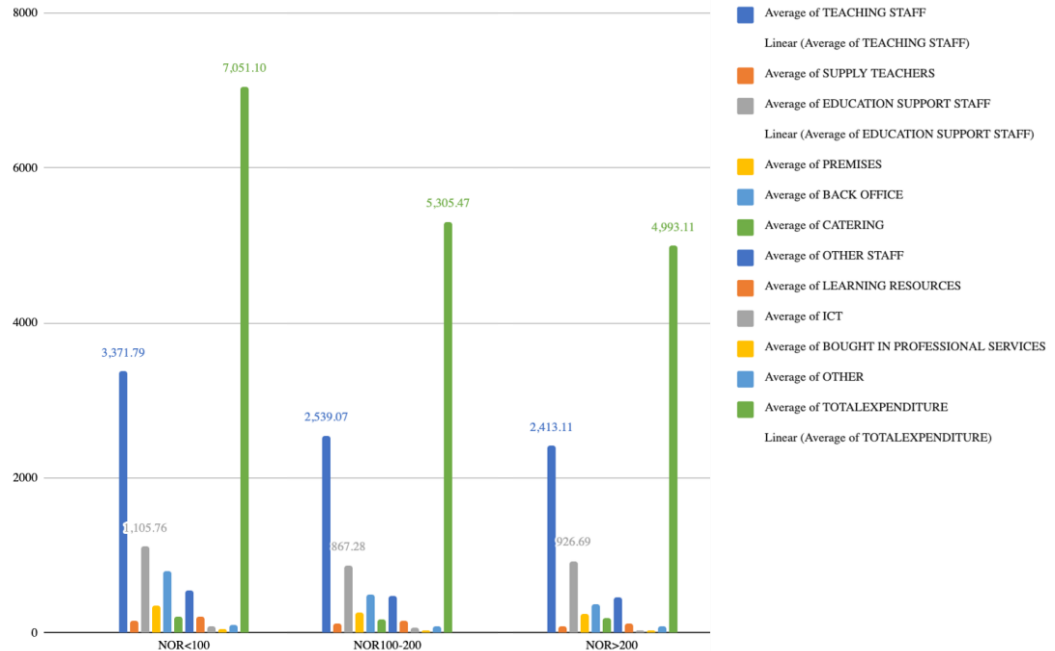
This graph shows levels of spend, according to the size of the school (NOR = numbers of pupils on roll)

Page 64  
The overall trend is that the larger the school, the lower the costs per child on nearly all measures.

These economies of scale are most prominent once the schools exceed 100 pupils.

The most noticeable economies of scale come in the form of 'Teaching Staff Costs' and 'Back Office' cost.

Raw data available [here](#)





# Spend comparison to other areas

The table indicates where Somerset spend is closest to 0 and therefore in the lowest percentile for spend across the country in **green** and where Somerset spend is closest to 1 and therefore in the highest percentile for spend across the country in **red**.

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Somerset LA maintained schools have on average higher expenditure compared to other areas in the country on:

- Administrative and clerical staff,
- Bought in professional services,
- Cost of other staff,
- Indirect employee expenses,
- Grounds maintenance and improvement,
- Information and Communication technology,
- Supply Teaching Staff
- Vehicles, equipment and machinery.

Expenditure item	All maintained schools	Primary	PRU	Secondary	Special
Acquisition of land and existing buildings (CE01)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Administrative and clerical staff (E05)	0.675	0.635	0.737	0.661	0.845
Administrative supplies (E22)	0.536	0.403	0.805	0.691	0.816
Agency supply teaching staff (E26)	0.165	0.086	0.650	0.428	0.580
Bought in professional services – curriculum (E27)	0.099	0.112	0.203	0.248	0.610
Bought in professional services, other, not PFI (E28A)	0.801	0.675	0.883	0.932	0.919
Bought in professional services, other, PFI (E28b)	0.596	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.904
Building maintenance and improvement (E12)	0.264	0.317	0.543	0.255	0.360
Catering staff (E06)	0.649	0.668	0.000	0.631	0.794
Catering supplies (E25)	0.556	0.496	0.407	0.691	0.808
Cleaning and caretaking (E14)	0.211	0.231	0.524	0.451	0.117
Community focused school costs (E32)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Community focused school staff (E31)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Cost of other staff (E07)	0.993	1.000	1.000	0.969	0.985
Development and training (E09)	0.589	0.364	0.873	0.879	0.698
Direct revenue financing (revenue contributions to capital) (E30)	0.364	0.337	0.834	0.676	0.757
Education support staff (E03)	0.284	0.271	0.776	0.721	0.345
Energy (E16)	0.490	0.390	0.825	0.721	0.345
Exam fees (E21)	0.668	0.000	0.582	0.969	0.610
Grounds maintenance and improvement (E13)	0.814	0.827	0.912	0.293	0.735
ICT learning resources (E20)	0.158	0.132	0.747	0.413	0.183
Indirect employee expenses (E08)	0.980	0.980	0.990	0.969	0.992
Information and communication technology (CE04)	0.814	0.874	0.815	0.375	0.617
Learning resources (not ICT equipment) (E19)	0.675	0.556	0.902	0.646	0.772
Loan interest (E29)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
New construction, conversion and renovation (CE02)	0.192	0.092	0.776	0.556	0.779
Other insurance premiums (E23)	0.006	0.000	0.912	0.000	0.875
Other occupation costs (E18)	0.158	0.178	0.524	0.368	0.375
Premises staff (E04)	0.536	0.509	0.747	0.563	0.875
Rates (E17)	0.576	0.423	0.669	0.789	0.000
Special facilities (E24)	0.403	0.470	0.592	0.390	0.801
Staff related insurance (E11)	0.350	0.344	0.776	0.000	0.786
Supply teacher insurance (E10)	0.715	0.781	0.815	0.000	0.448
Supply teaching staff (E02)	0.887	0.920	0.611	0.578	0.808
Teaching Staff (E01)	0.443	0.450	0.747	0.120	0.683
Total bought in professional services (E28a/b)	0.596	0.543	0.864	0.684	0.889
Total expenditure	0.529	0.496	0.844	0.496	0.698
Total net expenditure	0.576	0.562	0.854	0.511	0.705
Vehicles, plant, equipment and machinery (CE03)	0.688	0.728	0.864	0.902	0.676
Water and sewerage (E15)	0.271	0.317	0.524	0.436	0.264

# Revenue balance

This table shows levels of surplus and deficit compared to other local authority areas in England and Wales. Shades of green indicates Somerset is in the upper percentile with dark green being the highest (e.g. Somerset is in the upper percentile of schools with surplus) and red indicates that Somerset is in the lower percentile of schools, with dark red being the lowest.

Page 66  
Somerset LA maintained Primary schools are in the upper percentile of schools with surplus and the lower percentile of schools with deficit.

Conversely, Somerset LA maintained PRU, Secondary and Special schools are in the upper percentile of schools with deficit and the lower percentile of schools with surplus.

Revenue Reserve field	All LA maintained schools	Primary	PRU	Secondary	Special
Sum of number_schools_with_surplus	0.880	0.887	0.864	0.458	0.742
Sum of number_schools_with_deficit	0.622	0.483	0.728	0.781	0.661
Sum of PC_schools_with_surplus	0.721	0.715	0.291	0.203	0.294
Sum of PC_schools_with_deficit	0.324	0.298	0.747	0.796	0.705
Sum of total_revenue_balance_million	0.814	0.841	0.970	0.195	0.727
Sum of average_revenue_balance	0.331	0.317	0.883	0.195	0.507
Sum of revenue_balance_as_pc_total_income	0.814	0.854	0.873	0.195	0.713
Sum of total_revenue_reserve_schools_surplus_million	0.801	0.807	0.970	0.526	0.720
Sum of total_revenue_reserve_schools_deficit_million	0.264	0.609	0.242	0.165	0.242
Sum of schools_surplus_over_threshold	0.913	0.907	0.912	0.413	0.750
Sum of school_over_threshold_pc_surplus	0.867	0.860	0.572	0.443	0.558
Sum of school_surplus_over_threshold_million	0.841	0.860	0.970	0.481	0.750
Sum of school_over_threshold_av_per_school	0.099	0.112	0.932	0.413	0.514
Sum of total_income_million	0.668	0.708	0.932	0.518	0.580
Sum of B01_million	0.682	0.701	0.776	0.646	0.566
Sum of B02_million	0.841	0.874	0.980	0.165	0.816
Sum of B03_million	0.768	0.754	1.000	0.654	0.757
Sum of B05_million	0.860	0.536	0.000	0.954	0.014
Sum of B06_million	0.185	0.139	0.029	0.120	0.051
Sum of OB01_million	0.794	0.821	0.941	0.285	0.779
Sum of OB02_million	0.132	0.132	0.029	0.090	0.036
Sum of OB03_million	0.847	0.741	1.000	0.909	0.750

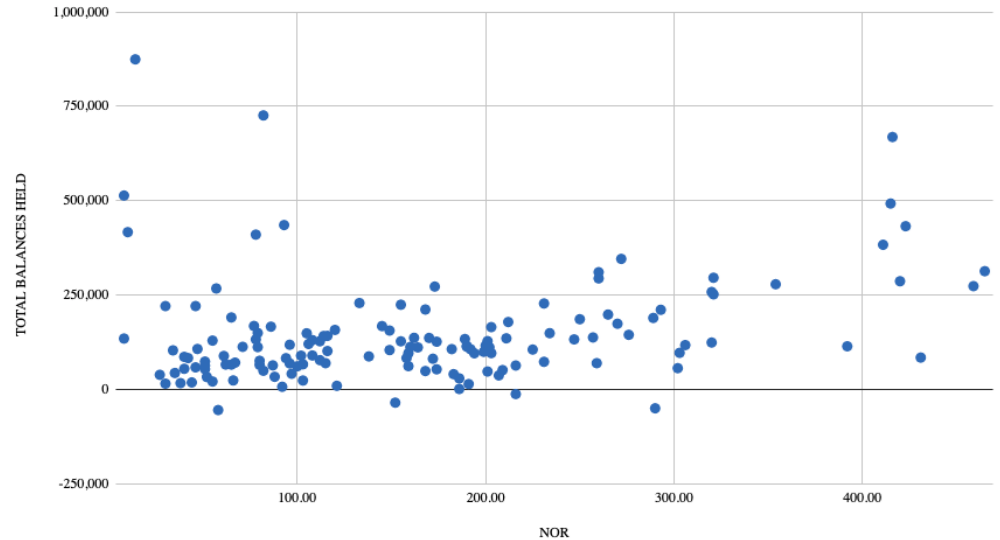
# Revenue balances

*This scatter graph shows total balance (£) held according to the size of the school (NOR = numbers on roll)*

Page 67  
There is a weak positive correlation between the size of school and total balances held.

The majority of schools are in surplus and have under £250k balance held, with some outliers above that.

TOTAL BALANCES HELD vs NOR



# 03 Insights from the research



# How to use this section

This section outlines findings under the [main themes](#) that have come from the research.

Against each theme, we have suggested what this might mean for adjusting a core service offer from the Council.

We have also suggested some key questions (How Might We) that the Council may want to further explore when defining its service offer.

# Themes from research

Our interviews surfaced five main themes about schools' non-teaching responsibilities

Page 70

## Quality assurance and school improvement

The activity schools undertake to ensure they are meeting expected standards

## Maintenance and compliance

The activity schools undertake to ensure they are providing a safe learning environment

## Recruitment and talent management

The activity schools undertake to ensure they are attracting, developing and supporting staff with the right skills and expertise

## Back-office functions (HR, Legal and Finance)

The activity schools undertake to ensure they are financially viable and compliant

## Partnership landscape

The current and future role of local/national school networks and MATs

# Insights: Quality assurance and schools improvement



# Insights: School interviews

Page 12

School improvement was a key area schools felt could be better delivered through collaboration and improved partnership working. There was also an emphasis on the value of consistent and rigorous quality assurance checks for schools to ensure high standards are maintained across Somerset.

Currently, school improvement activity is largely individualised, ad hoc and heavily reliant on school's and Head teacher's personal relationships and network – there is a risk of losing the scale of the bigger picture in Somerset if school improvement is solely done on this basis.

Primary Head



I am particularly keen to see how school improvement can be strengthened at the county level – drawing on shared resources and expertise



There was a strong desire to leverage and share the collective knowledge and effort across Somerset with regards to curriculum, staff training and innovative pedagogical approaches.

Secondary Head



School improvement is very primary focussed – this is a gap for secondary schools



Given the small number of LA maintained Secondary schools in Somerset, it was noted that the school improvement offer was geared more towards Primary.

Primary Head



As soon as school becomes Outstanding they are forgotten about... then they don't stay Outstanding for very long



There was nervousness around the lack of support, assurance and checks for schools once they receive a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' judgment – it was felt there needs to be a consistent approach for this applied to all schools, regardless of Ofsted score.



# Insights: School interviews

Page 73

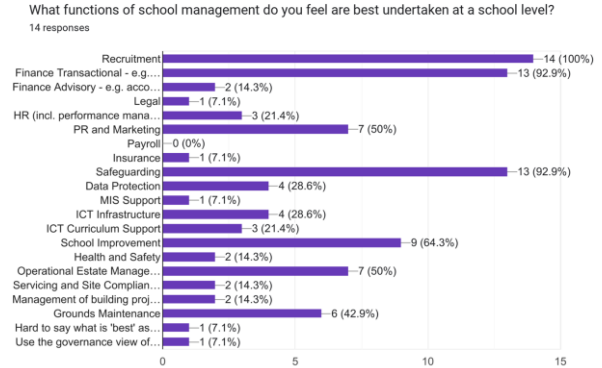
1. **A joined-up, ambitious vision and approach for Somerset** – There was a sense that sometimes in Somerset education leaders can struggle to move outside of their comfort zone and be ambitious about put learning outcomes for young people first.
2. **Sharing best practice and resources** – There was also a strong desire for a more coordinated, collaborative approach to sharing best practice and resources around curriculum development. Currently there is a lot of duplication and wasted effort going into lots of schools “recreating the wheel”. This is particularly acute for smaller schools, who have smaller workforces and less capacity to continuously improve and upgrade curriculum maps and pedagogical approaches.
3. **Consistent quality assurance, no matter the position of the school** – There was a clear sense that approaches to school improvement felt fragmented and ad hoc. There is an understanding that the school improvement team in the Council is currently under a lot of pressure, and the focus of this team should be on holding leaders to account consistently, not just when schools are failing or need rescuing.
4. **MAT consideration** – The curriculum development and wider school improvement offer was a key factor schools interviewed were considering when thinking about joining a MAT. There was lack of clarity and confidence in school improvement activity happening within trusts.

# Insights: School survey

63% of respondents felt that school improvement was best undertaken at a school level, and only 36.4% of respondents indicated they needed specific expertise and external support over and above what was available. 41.7% of respondents felt School Improvement should be included as part of the Somerset core offer.

63.6% of respondents felt that school improvement could be better delivered through sharing resources across groups of local schools.

When asked what aspects of school improvement they needed more support with, respondents largely indicated curriculum development, shared best practice (particularly in ICT) and Ofsted related training.



# What does this mean for a core offer?

While it is clear that schools value their autonomy in school improvement efforts, there were expectations that **the Council has a role in preventing schools falling into trouble, joining up opportunities for cross Council working on this, and ensuring there is adequate quality assurance in place** to ensure school leadership are making the best decisions in the interest of their pupils. Many schools rely on trusted advisors, external consultants and local partnership to deliver their quality assurance and curriculum development support, but the quality and price of these consultants can vary and is often based on existing relationships.

## Guiding questions for the Council to consider in shaping the core offer:

1. How might we consider a wider package of tools that supports school leadership to understand how they are performing?
2. How might we ensure opportunities for improving the quality of education in Somerset are joined up and maximised?
3. How might we establish a Somerset-wide vision for education in Somerset that everyone understands their role in delivering, and a roadmap in place for achieving it?
4. How might we facilitate school leadership to make clear strategic and operational decisions in the most efficient way possible?

# Insights:

## Back office (HR, legal and finance)



# Insights: School interviews

Page 77

Business Managers and Finance Officers form a key part of the strategic planning resource in schools, but often don't have the capacity to focus on the more strategic and tactical aspects due to the demands of the every day, operational aspects of the role.

The Local Authority needs to be able to provide strategic, tactical and operational advice to schools and create capacity for Business Managers to deliver this work. In order to do this, it is key to identify which aspects of back-office functions are best held at a school level versus a Local Authority level (or a third party).

Primary Head



Our biggest bugbear is staff absence management - would be great if this could be done elsewhere



Primary Head



It's hard to try and identify and optimise access to funding from different pots - would be great to have someone from the LA help us with grant finding



Business Manager



We need stronger support around HR - we've had a huge influx of cases and referrals since the pandemic and we are looking at buying outside of the Council for this because the process hasn't been efficient enough



# Insights: School interviews

Page 78

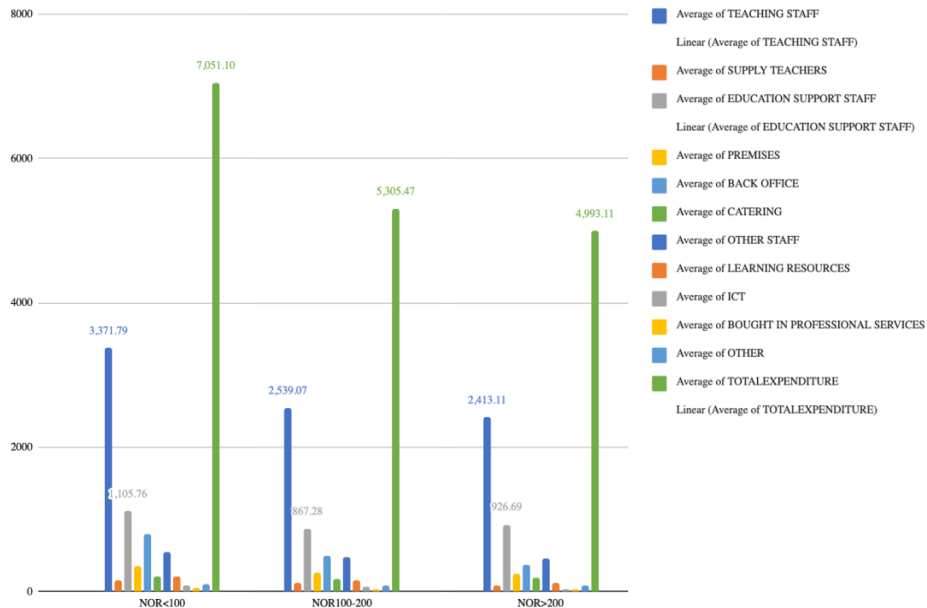
- Schools are pleased with the quality of HR, Legal and Finance support** – Across the board schools praised the quality of the services they bought back from SSE and the flexibility of these services. There was a particular emphasis on the value of HR and Legal support, as these are areas that are usually outside the area of expertise of a Business Manager or Finance Officer. There was a desire for increased support with HR, particularly around staff absence management, operational health and back to work processes.
- Schools felt the Local Authority support services meant they don't need to engage in complex procurement processes – they looked to third party providers only when and where they felt they weren't getting value for money.** Schools referenced the cost efficiency and ease of buying back these services from the Local Authority as key factors in their decision to continue to buy back these services from the Council.
- More strategic/tactical advice is a gap in the offer from maintained schools at the moment.** There is a lack support for Head teacher's with strategic and tactical decision-making, particularly where there is high turnover or skills gaps in the governing body.

# Insights: Financial analysis

Page 79

Back-office is the third highest area of spend for schools regardless of school size, which is consistent with the [national picture](#). Research suggests that on average, academies are spending more per pupil on back-office functions than LA Maintained Schools, and larger academy trusts are spending more per pupil than smaller trusts.

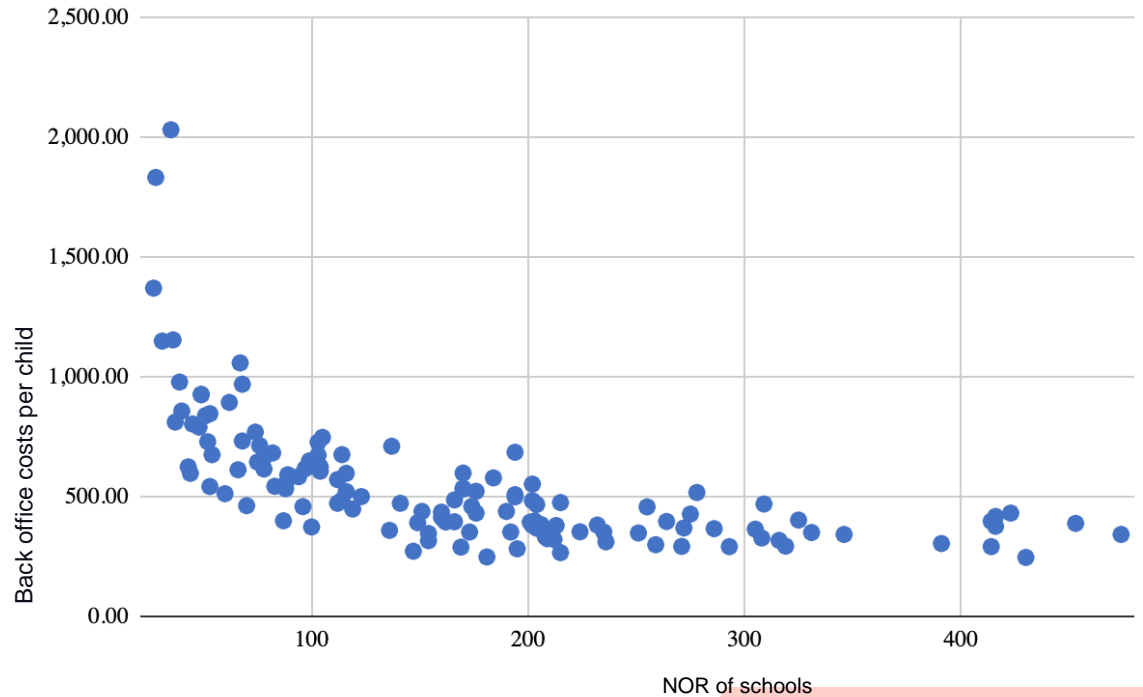
Relative to other LA Maintained schools across the country, Somerset schools spend in the upper percentile for [Administrative and Clerical Staff \(shown on slide 13\)](#) and Bought In Professional Services – other, which includes professional services/consultancy relating to: management, finance, legal, personnel and premises.



# Insights: Financial analysis

Smaller schools spend almost double their larger counterparts of back-office and administrative functions.

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# Insights: School survey

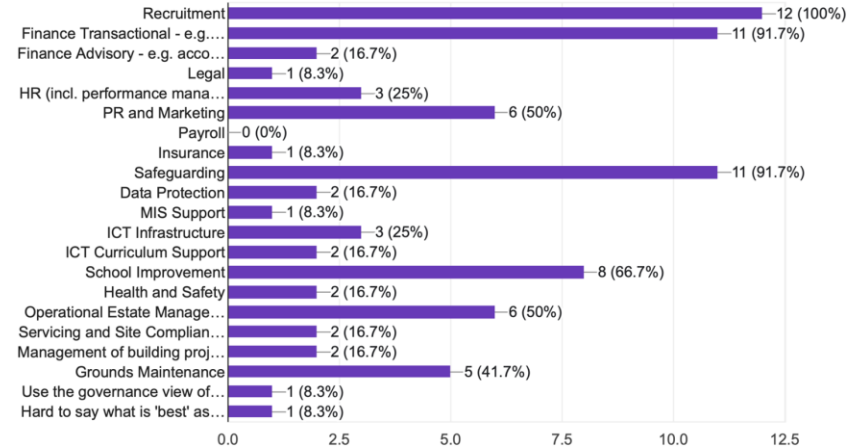
**Recruitment** and **Finance Transactional** (e.g. ordering, invoicing, monthly reconciliation) were the back-office functions that scored the highest as being best undertaken from a school level - selected by **90% or more** respondents.

**PR & Marketing** came next, selected by between **50%** of respondents.

The back-office functions that were selected the least frequently as being best managed at a school level were **Legal, HR, Finance Advisory, Insurance, Data Protection**.

**No respondents felt payroll was best managed at a school level.**

What functions of school management do you feel are best undertaken at a school level?  
12 responses



# Insights: School survey

Page 82

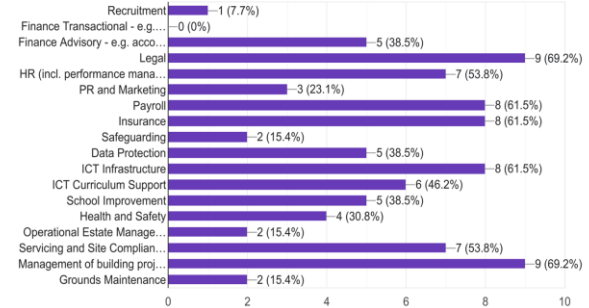
The back-office functions that the highest number of respondents indicated they required more support with over and above what is currently available were: **Legal, HR, Payroll, Insurance.**

This is largely correlated with the back-office functions respondents felt would be best made available through a clear Somerset 'core offer': **Finance Advisory, Legal, HR, Payroll, Insurance and Data Protection.**

Functions that low/no respondents selected were: **Recruitment, Finance Transactional and PR and Marketing.**

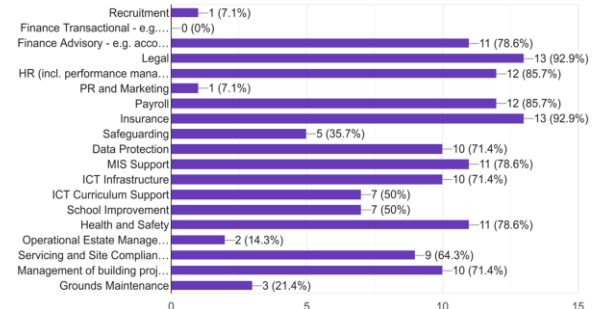
Which of these areas do you feel require more specific expertise and external support over and above what is currently available/accessible?

13 responses



Which of these areas do you feel would be best made available to schools through a clear Somerset 'core offer' for all LA Maintained schools?

14 responses



# What does this mean for the core offer?

There was strong consensus between the interviews, the survey and the financial analysis that there is buy-in for schools around the core offer for back-office functions. This is currently an area where spend in Somerset is high relative to other Local Authorities across the country, which is particularly acute for smaller schools. Schools trust and rely on the quality of the service that is provided currently and the majority of survey respondents indicated that **Legal, HR, Payroll, Finance Advisory, Insurance and Data Protection** would be best made available through a core offer to Somerset schools.

## Guiding questions for the Council in developing the core offer:

1. How might we support a comprehensive understanding the impact of the White paper on individual schools (including future roles and responsibilities), and the role of the Council in facilitating schools to make the best decision within the interest of their pupils and community?
2. How might we ensure the package of services schools buy from the Council are what they are best placed to provide (e.g. can't be done better by an individual, MAT or the market)?
3. How might we facilitate school/ MAT leadership to make clear strategic and operational decisions in the most efficient way possible?
4. How might we support groups of schools/ MATs to commission in bulk where economies of scale provide better value for money – including developing the market where necessary?

# Insights: Recruitment and talent management



# Insights: School interviews

Page 85

Recruitment and talent management are time consuming and costly processes for schools. Feedback from interviews around where recruitment was best placed was mixed, with some schools citing they would favour centralised recruitment and some schools indicating they wanted to retain autonomy over their recruitment processes.

Across the board, schools we spoke to indicated that recruiting highly skilled staff with the right capabilities for roles could be challenging in Somerset, with schools sometimes having to run multiple recruitment rounds to hire one member of staff. Performance management, succession planning and CPD are also areas where schools need more support, in order to retain and develop high performing staff.

Primary Head



We spent £9k doing our own recruitment last year - too much time being spent on something that should be centralised



Primary Head



A Site Manager salary of £21k is not competitive enough around here for Site Managers, we have Hinkley Point down the road offering a much better rate



Business Manager



A better staff training and CPD offer is vital for us to improve retention



# Insights: School interviews

Page 86

1. **Schools expressed finding it difficult to attract and retain the right talent across the board, from governors, to site managers to SENCOs** – Schools indicated that banding for LA maintained schools is not progressive enough, e.g. a Site Manager salary of £21k versus real world expectations of a good site manager. This can make it difficult to hold onto really good quality learning support assistant because salaries are too low.
2. **Additional support with performance management, CPD and staff retention** – School's expressed a desire for a more consistent approach to performance management, development and retention, both for paid and voluntary staff across all levels (incl. governors).
3. **Challenges with advertising and marketing roles.** Some schools stated that they had to run several recruitment campaigns to hire for one role sometimes because response rates were so low.

# Insights: Financial analysis

Page 87

Somerset LA Schools scored in the top 10% percentile for **Indirect Staffing Costs**, which includes: **recruitment costs such as interviews, advertising and relocation expenses.**

This is in line with feedback from from qualitative interviews, where schools cited that a sharp increase in their indirect costs over the past few years was related to recruitment and staffing fluctuations and shortages throughout the pandemic.

Expenditure item	All maintained schools	Primary	PRU	Secondary	Special
Acquisition of land and existing buildings (CE01)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Administrative and clerical staff (E05)	0.675	0.635	0.737	0.661	0.845
Administrative supplies (E22)	0.536	0.403	0.805	0.691	0.816
Agency supply teaching staff (E26)	0.165	0.086	0.650	0.428	0.580
Bought in professional services – curriculum (E27)	0.099	0.112	0.203	0.248	0.610
Bought in professional services, other, not PFI (E28A)	0.801	0.675	0.883	0.932	0.919
Bought in professional services, other, PFI (E28b)	0.596	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.904
Building maintenance and improvement (E12)	0.264	0.317	0.543	0.255	0.360
Catering staff (E06)	0.649	0.668	0.000	0.631	0.794
Catering supplies (E25)	0.556	0.496	0.407	0.691	0.808
Cleaning and caretaking (E14)	0.211	0.231	0.524	0.451	0.117
Community focused school costs (E32)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Community focused school staff (E31)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Cost of other staff (E07)	0.993	1.000	1.000	0.969	0.985
Development and training (E09)	0.589	0.364	0.873	0.879	0.698
Direct revenue financing (revenue contributions to capital) (E30)	0.364	0.337	0.834	0.676	0.757
Education support staff (E03)	0.284	0.271	0.776	0.721	0.345
Energy (E16)	0.490	0.390	0.825	0.721	0.345
Exam fees (E21)	0.668	0.000	0.582	0.969	0.610
Grounds maintenance and improvement (E13)	0.814	0.827	0.912	0.293	0.735
ICT learning resources (E20)	0.158	0.132	0.747	0.413	0.183
Indirect employee expenses (E08)	0.980	0.980	0.990	0.969	0.992
Information and communication technology (CE04)	0.814	0.874	0.815	0.375	0.617
Learning resources (not ICT equipment) (E19)	0.675	0.556	0.902	0.646	0.772
Loan interest (E29)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
New construction, conversion and renovation (CE02)	0.192	0.092	0.776	0.556	0.779
Other insurance premiums (E23)	0.006	0.000	0.912	0.000	0.875
Other occupation costs (E18)	0.158	0.178	0.524	0.368	0.375
Premises staff (E04)	0.536	0.509	0.747	0.563	0.875
Rates (E17)	0.576	0.423	0.669	0.789	0.000
Special facilities (E24)	0.403	0.470	0.592	0.390	0.801
Staff related insurance (E11)	0.350	0.344	0.776	0.000	0.786
Supply teacher insurance (E10)	0.715	0.781	0.815	0.000	0.448
Supply teaching staff (E02)	0.887	0.920	0.611	0.578	0.808
Teaching Staff (E01)	0.443	0.450	0.747	0.120	0.683
Total bought in professional services (E28a/b)	0.596	0.543	0.864	0.684	0.889
Total expenditure	0.529	0.496	0.844	0.496	0.698
Total net expenditure	0.576	0.562	0.854	0.511	0.705
Vehicles, plant, equipment and machinery (CE03)	0.688	0.728	0.864	0.902	0.676
Water and sewerage (E15)	0.271	0.317	0.524	0.436	0.264

# Insights: School survey

Page 88

Feedback from the school survey indicates that **100%** of respondents felt that recruitment functions are best undertaken at a school level. **66.7%** of respondents indicated that when thinking about how to attract, develop and retain staff, the area they need more support in is **faster recruitment processes**. Only **9%** school indicated that they needed more support with recruitment and that they think it should be part of the core offer.

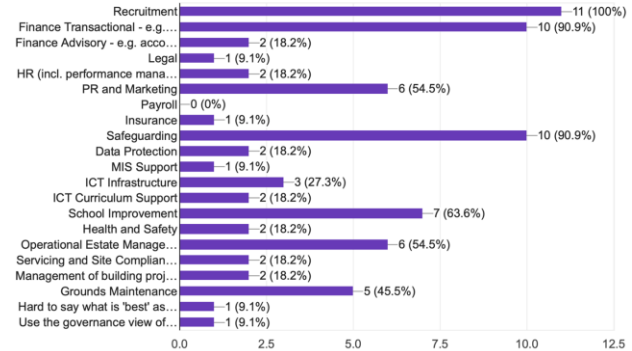
Only **18.2%** of respondents felt that HR (including performance management, grievances, disciplinaries and restructures) are best undertaken at a school level, and only **11%** felt they needed more support with performance management and succession planning. **90%** of respondents felt this would best be made available through a core offer from the Local Authority.

One school provided additional feedback:

***"We need funding for staff progression and funding for CPD. We don't need help – we need money."***

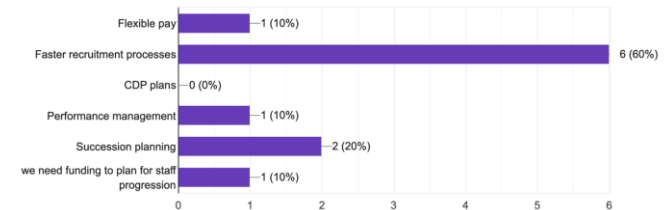
What functions of school management do you feel are best undertaken at a school level?

11 responses



Thinking about how you attract, develop and retain staff, which of these areas do you feel you need more support in?

10 responses





# What does this mean for the core offer?

Page 89  
It is clear that school autonomy on owning the candidate experience, interview and assessment process is key to ensuring the right hire for the school. However, there are several areas surfaced through the research that could benefit from a Council-wide service as part of the core offer, such as: advertising and marketing for roles across Somerset, setting salary bandings, consistent hiring processes to speed up recruitment timescales.

Schools also indicated through the survey that aspects of talent management such as performance management, grievances and restructures would be best addressed at a Council level. This was validated through interviews, where several Headteachers cited how time consuming these processes were and expressed a desire for a more consistent approach.

## Guiding questions for the Council in developing the core offer:

1. How might we support a consistent and comprehensive approach to talent management and performance in Somerset schools – so that people are attracted to work in Somerset, are supported to develop, and are facilitated to perform to the best of their ability.
2. How might we ensure the marketing and attractiveness of roles is competitive at a hyper local and national level – including ensuring pay and conditions reflect the level of skills and experience needed
3. How might we ensure governors have the right skills and experience, and feel confident in performing their roles effectively

# Insights: Partnership working



# Insights: School interviews

Page 91

Schools value the various different partnerships they attend – but have found the emerging landscape difficult to navigate and are constantly reviewing the opportunity costs due to the demand on their time.

They particularly valued shared training, linking staff and support to curriculum leads.

They felt a more strategic view of the landscape of partnerships is needed – some valuing geography, and others wanting to join with schools they have more in common with.

The delay to the White Paper has caused confusion about the nature of schools relationship with the Council and the future decisions they need to make. Schools within the cohort interviewed are by definition well disposed towards the Council.

Primary Head

LA has always fundamentally been a good group of people that relied on and trust, and I value that

Primary Head

Training is the biggest area we would get value from working in partnership on.

Primary Head

Partnerships could become more diluted as schools join MATs, as MATs are protective. There have been instances of people dropping out due to joining a MAT

# Insights: School interviews

Page 92

1. Schools value partnerships and **attend a number of different formal and informal partnerships**. However they want to ensure they are a good use of time, and **find the shifting landscape difficult to navigate** – the emergence of MATs has made that even more complex.
2. **Training and staff mentoring is a strong area of focus for partnership** working, and there is potential for greater support of leads across schools (e.g. curriculum, business managers etc) who would otherwise be working in isolation.
3. Partnership working is particularly important for small schools, who value **learning on best practice and sharing of responsibilities**. They recognise that working in multiple ways isn't efficient.
4. Geographical partnership was important, but some schools wanted **a more strategic approach that joined up schools who were tackling the similar issues**.
5. There are some examples where **joint procurement might be beneficial** – for example buying tech.

# Insights: School survey

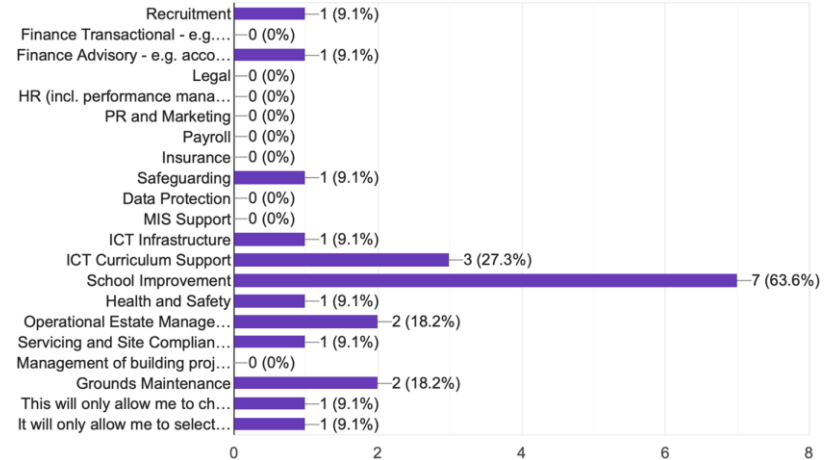
Page 93

**63.6%** of respondents indicated that school improvement could be better delivered through sharing resources across groups of local schools and **27.3%** of respondents felt that ICT Curriculum support could be better delivered through sharing resources.

Generally respondents did not seem to indicate that any of the other functions could be better delivered through sharing resources.

What functions do you feel could be better delivered through sharing resources across groups of local schools?

11 responses



# What does this mean for the core offer?

Partnership working has value for schools, and there is a lot of potential for greater collaboration through these – particularly on professional development.

The landscape of partnership working is constantly evolving, and cannot be tightly controlled, but there is a need for a strategic overview of what clusters make most sense and how areas of cooperation are facilitated – particularly as schools move towards MATs.

Page 94

## **Guiding questions for the Council:**

1. How might we ensure the Council is able to facilitate a county-wide view of partnership arrangements, training networks and communities of practice?
2. How might the Council create economies of scale through joint procurement in areas like tech and equipment?
3. How might the Council support a CPD and succession planning offer so that people can learn and develop across schools, and schools have a pool of talent to draw on?

# Insights: Site Management, Maintenance and Compliance



# Insights: School interviews

School value the services they get on compliance as this is not their area of expertise, but were not adverse to going to a third party supplier if better value can be found.

Page 96 Maintenance and repair activities are favoured at a school level (either in-house by existing staff or by small suppliers), but access to a list of approved suppliers was valued as this saved valuable time.

Primary Head

Responsibility for compliance sits with governors, who need a buffer and help with compliance aspects. It keeps us up at night as it's not our area of expertise. I would be interested to hear from LA how can support us

Primary Head

We realised we were not getting value for money for BEAMIS. We did a thorough cost benefit analysis and realised it was better doing in house.

As result of not being in BEAMIS we are able to do things like switch maintenance to someone more competitive and who's doing a better job.

Primary Head

Compliance is a big job across multiple schools. Having a "handyman" or contracts with small local providers can help with small, practical activities - but couldn't afford a large compliance programme.



# Insights: School interviews

Page 97

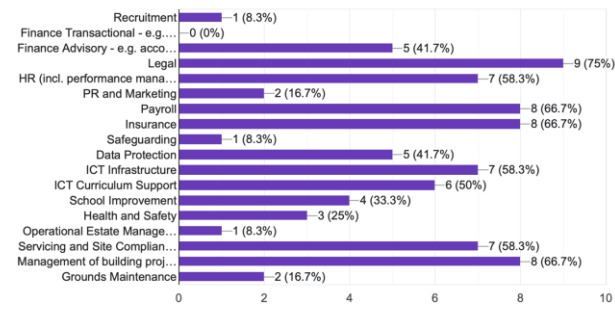
1. Schools (especially governors) need **mechanisms to ensure that the right checks and balances for compliance are in place** – it isn't an area of expertise. Large scale compliance programmes are too specialist/complex to run in-house (even across a number of sites). There is a mixed picture for how schools currently address this, with many schools satisfied with the service from the Council – but examples of third party suppliers providing value for money as well.
2. For **maintenance and small practical tasks, schools favour small local providers or in-house** (incorporated within broader roles such as caretakers). Schools value the Council's list of approved providers, but they question whether the costs currently provide good value for money. There is a weigh-up between the financial saving and time it takes to negotiate themselves.
3. The annual conditional survey is used as the basis for both the Council and schools to prioritise capital spend, but the pressure on capital budgets – and confusion over responsibilities for what the school or Council (as landlord) pays for – can create **disincentives to invest in preventative maintenance**.
4. Whilst big-ticket repair costs are covered by the Council as landlord, the **knock on impact of an unexpected repair can make a dent to school in-year budgets** when they do occur – meaning schools may not be able to deliver on other priorities.
5. The transformation and maintenance of **Tech is recognised as a priority for capital maintenance** to ensure they continue to be a school fit for the future (as demonstrated by the pandemic), as well as recognition that the failure of tech would have an immediate impact on their ability to function.
6. Schools have interactions with the Council outside of traded services, and **identifying who can help them feels disjointed and needs perseverance** (especially when unusual circumstances arise). Schools feel they can be passed from department to department without the issue being addressed, leading to a drain on their time, lost opportunities and knock on costs.

# Insights: School survey

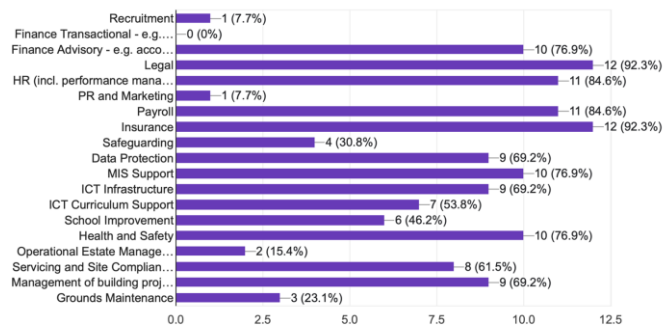
Page 98

Management of building projects and Servicing and Site Compliance were both identified as areas where schools needed more support that could best be made available through a core offer to LA maintained schools, while Grounds Maintenance and Overall Estate Management were identified as areas best managed at a school level.

Which of these areas do you feel require more specific expertise and external support over and above what is currently available/accessible?  
12 responses



Which of these areas do you feel would be best made available to schools through a clear Somerset 'core offer' for all LA Maintained schools?  
13 responses



# 04 Recommendations for prioritised themes



# How to use this section

Three themes were prioritised for developing recommendations.

These have been organised between actions that can be started now, and actions that need to be started later. This was based on the potential level of impact, urgency and available resources.

**Quality assurance and school improvement**

**Back-office functions**

**Recruitment and talent**

# Recommendations – to start now

1. Review and **clarify the core service the Council provides to all maintained schools and arrangements for funding** these (a minimum offer), so that the support that is most appropriately delivered at a Council level is in place for all maintained schools at the point they need it. This should be for the medium term, with a view to transition to post 2030 arrangements. The core service will need to incorporate the statutory services the Council provides, as well as the elements of traded services where they are recognised as vital and most appropriately delivered by the Council.
2. Together with the community and schools, develop and **agree a shared vision for educating children and young people in Somerset** that people can be proud of. This should include detail on how the strategic vision will be delivered (a theory of change)
3. Develop a **shared understanding of the landscape of how schools are doing in Somerset**, this can be done initially through the development of a data dashboard and its use to help guide discussions, identify themes / commonalities, signpost to resources/support and and provide a platform for schools to work collectively on shared issues.
4. Develop a **range of school improvement resources, good practice examples and tools that school leadership and governors can draw on** at any time to provide reassurance they are delivering for their children and young people, and how they can improve. This might include a wider team of school improvement partners
5. Develop a clear and **comprehensive understanding of compliance** – ensuring schools have access to tools and advice so they understand and have measures in place to comply with the regulations, standards and laws affecting all aspects of their operations
6. **Influence DfE priorities for the Trust Capacity Fund** (the fund to support trusts to take on new schools) to ensure it aligns with Somerset's priorities and emerging theory of change.

# Recommendations – to start next

1. As part of work to empower schools to know and implement what good looks like:
  - develop a **peer review model** of schools to review and learn from one another
  - **identify schools that are already leading the way on particular challenges** so that other schools can learn from them
  - develop a two year cycle to ensure schools review performance and compliance against key areas (quality of education, safeguarding, premises etc)
  - **Develop communities of practice for school leaders and business managers** of to come together around common needs and share resources to address shared challenges.
2. Develop a cycle of continuous improvement for **Council services outside of the Traded Services umbrella** working with schools – to ensure they are addressing and meeting needs in the most effective way, and are ready for the transition to 2030.
3. Develop a **shared prospectus across all schools in Somerset that outlines the common approach to education in Somerset**. This can be used to build a shared identity, greater commonality, and ensure an education system people can be proud to be a part of in Somerset.
4. Building on learning from use of the data dashboard, develop a **clearer escalation and intervention structure** for schools at risk and in need of additional support.

# Recommendations – to start next (cont.)

Page 103

1. Create **greater standardisation across Somerset schools** as a way to reduce burden on leadership and ensure consistent quality and expectations. This can be done through (but not limited to):
  - Greater standardisation of governance and expectations on governors – for instance through developing key questions governors can ask of schools leaders to satisfy themselves on pupil experience and compliance.
  - Job descriptions of leadership roles, where people hold core responsibilities
1. Develop **training and personal development for people leading on curriculum subjects**
2. Develop **greater risk mitigation/ insurance across schools for highest risk situations** such as high staff absences and high cost maintenance – by reviewing approach to contingency, reserves and pooled budgets.

# Recommendations – to start now

Page 104

1. Develop a core service (5% top-slice), informed by
  - Refine with schools and service leads what the roles of the Council are vs schools
  - Refine where external support is needed/helpful, and where there are gaps in support
  - Develop a map of the market – who is providing / is able to provide for schools and what their offer is
  - Identify where there are gaps in provision where schools have fewer options
1. Use customer satisfaction data to raise the profile of traded services, and validate / address concerns
2. Set up fixed term partnership groups around areas that need a more joined up/ strategic approach (e.g. ICT, recruitment etc), and use the outcomes from this to inform longer term arrangements
3. Use models of good practice to inform where sharing of resources between schools vs local delivery is most appropriate



# Recommendations – to start next

Page 105

1. Develop a roadmap to delivery of the core offer – what will be done and when
2. Consider options for resourcing ongoing commissioning in bulk and consider it as part of the core offer – for instance is a core team of people needed for ongoing market development and contract management vs different schools leading on different contracts
3. Develop joint commissioning approach with Trusts and emerging Trusts (e.g. access to subjects expertise, insurance etc)
4. Review the need for a “super bursar” to lead groups of schools
5. Work with schools to identify what can be learnt from larger MATs elsewhere in the country

# Recommendations – to start now

Page 106

1. Develop a **quality and clear CPD offer to new teachers** with regular supervision and support. This will help ensure they feel supported to perform well, reduce employee attrition, and help build a common identify and approach to education in Somerset.
2. Review resources for and develop a **dedicated resource/team for recruitment** – to ensure swift and effective recruitment of school staff.
3. Develop a **clear offer of advice and training for people undertaking recruitment** in schools
4. **Promote Somerset as an attractive place to work**, through a shared marketing plan and activity – drawing on the Council’s expertise and networks for this. Longer term, consider joining this up where there are similar roles across the Council. Identify good work that is happening in Somerset schools – so that people begin to recognise Somerset as a dynamic place to work and live
5. **Review terms and conditions** – including pay and allowances – to ensure Somerset is comparable to the market rate and schools are able to attract people of the caliber required.
6. Provide clearer links and clarity on the link with the Teaching Hub – what can be provided by the Teaching Hub/ Council and other providers

# Recommendations – to start next

Page 107

1. Review recruitment processes to
  - a. make sure they enable effective and swift recruitment of quality candidates and reduce burden on candidates (e.g. requirement to supply references at application points, use of online capability tests etc)
  - b. moderate roles and recruitment across schools and organisations – to ensure competitiveness ensure learning and commonality about what is working and a shared understanding of pay & conditions.
  - c. Communicate, provide training and support so people are clear of their responsibilities
2. Identify, maximise and explore the creative use of external grants (such as the Apprenticeship Levy) that can be used to increase resources and staff in Somerset schools
3. Identify and share best practice of recruitment and CPD – to ensure greater standardisation of standards around recruitment.
4. Review and quality assure NVQs for teachers to ensure they are fit for purpose.
5. Rescope recruitment of governors to ensure they are clear on the demands of the role, and are not expected to undertake operational responsibilities.
6. Develop a pan-Somerset approach to mid/senior level moves and succession management – to ensure that talent is fostered and maintained within Somerset, and schools have a greater pool of people to draw on for succession planning.
7. Enable regular governance reviews to ensure governors feel empowered to hold school leadership to account

# 05 Next steps for the Council offer



# How to use this section

Page 109

This section suggests next steps for the Council to define what the new core offer will be.

It identifies the projects that will collectively help define what the core offer is.

To support this, it also suggests a starter for ten on:

- A framework for grouping Council education functions – to ensure a more joined up and complete picture for schools.
- A set of principles for defining what is within the offer.

Finally, it suggests a set of projects that are relevant to all schools in Somerset, and will help set the journey towards 2030 and all schools becoming MATs

# Projects for defining a core offer to maintained schools

In order to determine the core offer, there are a set of priority projects we recommend undertaking. Four of them can be done concurrently.

Page 110

Financial modelling for the core offer

Defining the service offer

Engagement with schools

Transition to MATs

Defining the final offer (including any transition)

# Understanding functions by experience

Page 11

I want to ensure my school is making the right decisions	I want to ensure my school is financially viable and meeting its statutory responsibilities	I want to ensure my school is performing well against expected standards	I want to ensure my staff have the right skills and expertise and are supported to develop	I want to ensure my school is a safe and effective learning environment for pupils	I want to ensure my school is leveraging its local network and drawing on best practice
SSE Governance	Education Finance Service	School Improvement	Employee Assistance Programme	SSE Property and Grounds	Spaeda Arts School
School resources for leaders	External Finance Services	West Somerset Research School	Occupational Health	Scientific Monitoring for schools	Bath & Mendip Partnership
	Exchequer Services	Moderation and Assessment EYFS	SAPH	Futures of Somerset	Wessex Teaching School
	Procurement		Career Progression Pathways	Refuse and Recycling	Meta Curriculum Project
	Somerset and South West Mutual Fund		E-Learning Service	Cleaning Consultancy	Somerset SACRE
	Insurance Services		Early Career Teaching	Ecology Services	Art Education Network
	Legal Services		Specialist and Personalised Training	Acoustic Services	Inspired Somerset
			HR Advisory	ICT	Connect PSHE
			School Recruitment	Data Protection	
			HR Admin and Payroll	MIS	
				Health & Safety	

It is recommended that the Council defines the core service according to school experience. This will ensure transformation is joined up and schools experience is complete. Here is an example of how existing functions might be organised. This is a starter for ten and needs refinement.

# Principles for defining a core offer

To help define what is and what isn't included within a core offer, it is recommended the Council agrees a set of principles. A starting point for these principles could include:

Page 112

<b>Responsibility</b>	Do these services help the Council fulfil its statutory role on Education?
<b>Risk</b>	If the school were to decide not to do this, what is the level of risk if it wasn't done, or done badly?
<b>Suppliers</b>	Are there others in the market who deliver better value for money than the Council?
<b>Expectations</b>	Do schools and others expect the Council to deliver these services?
<b>Affordability</b>	If it isn't included in the core offer, would schools be able to afford it?
<b>Performance</b>	Is the Council service valued by schools and delivering value for money?



# Project: Financial Modelling

Page 113

**Description:** In defining what elements of Council services will be included in a core offer, a large factor will be affordability. A vital step is to identify what the total income will be if all maintained schools contribute a total of 5% to Council services. The Council will need to identify a total figure, as well as a figure that individual schools will be contributing so they can plan ahead.

This will need to be on a sliding scale as schools move towards MATs in the journey towards 2030, and the total available reduces.

It should also include a comparison with current income and spend, highlighting any immediate or future pressures on current budgets.

**Target outcome:** Understanding of the total finances available for a core offer to schools from April 2023 onwards, used to inform the future shape of individual functions and how teams will transition to a core service (and eventually all schools to MATs)..

# Project: Defining the service offer

**Description:** Council services to schools (traded and other) will need to shape up a proposal for what activities might be provided within the core offer (using the principles as guidance). As part of this, they should consider if there are alternative ways to provide their functions.

It is recommended to do this iteratively in discussion with schools and staff. Grouping these functions according to school experience will help identify any interdependencies, and help provide a more seamless experience. A starting point could be for service managers to provide a short overview that details:

- Description of the function and how delivered
- Total current cost and staffing
- Take up and any performance measures
- Proposal for what should be included in the core offer – including costs and staffing, and risks and opportunities
- Minimum viable offer – including costs and staffing, risks and opportunities
- What activities could be offered outside of core offer, for schools to buy-back

## Target outcome:

- Understanding of current costs and staffing and future pressures
- Costs of individual functions and options for the future shape (higher and lower cost)

# Project: Engagement with schools

**Description:** Schools and services will need to know what the implications of a core offer are, in order to plan ahead. They will need detail on how their budgets are likely to change, as well as what services might fall in or out of the core service (so they can address any gaps or duplication).

Their input is vital in understanding any risks and opportunity, and getting the offer right.

It is recommended that this is done iteratively. A first step is to provide a high level proposal, for schools to comment on. This can be done concurrently to the other projects.

## Target outcome:

- High-level proposal for what activities are provided by the Council as part of the core service offer
- Clarity on what responsibilities are retained within schools or groups of schools
- Proposal for any additional services the Council might provide that schools may opt to procure on a case by case basis

# Project: Transition to MATs

Page 116

**Description:** As we progress towards the Government's 2030 deadline for all schools to join a MAT, the number of schools buying into the Council's core offer will diminish, and some schools may decide not to buy into the core offer ahead of transitioning to a MAT. This could potentially impact the quality and viability of the services during the transition. To mitigate this, the Council will need to undertake work to define how it will work with schools who **a)** choose not to buy into the core offer and **b)** what an offer to MATs should include. The latter should be done in consultation with MATs and through analysis of service buyback from MATs currently.

**Target outcome:** A transition plan and research-backed service offer for MATs.

# Project: Defining the final offer

**Description:** The final step on defining the core offer is to triage the school feedback, service proposals and finances to define the core offer.

It is proposed that a set of priorities can help define what is an essential part of the core offer.

The Council will also need to factor in:

- Any transition needed to new proposals, and how this will be addressed (including how budgeted)
- The Transition to MATs by 2030, and how services can plan ahead

## **Target outcome:**

- A final core offer of what services will be provided to schools by the Council, and by when
- Service level budgets for the medium and longer term
- Guidance to schools on transition, and how to manage any gaps or duplication

# Defining an offer for all schools

As well as the core offer, there are a number of projects the Council can lead on that are relevant to all schools in Somerset.

Partnership working

Recruitment discovery

Succession planning

Building control

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

# Project: Partnership working

Page 119

**Description:** Through our research with schools, many expressed they were keen for the Council to facilitate more effective partnership working, particularly around curriculum development, staff training and CPD and other school improvement activities. This project should map the current partnership landscape in Somerset and look at how to cluster schools to achieve common outcomes.

**Target Outcome:** A resource for schools that forms part of the core offer that enables them to see what types of partnership arrangements exist across Somerset and options for clusters for schools to join based on their objectives (e.g. curriculum development, CPD, school improvement etc)

# Project: Recruitment Discovery

Page 120

**Description:** Research highlighted that while certain aspects of recruitment are best managed autonomously at a school level (e.g. candidate experience, interviews, sifting) there are opportunities for elements of school recruitment to be managed centrally by the Council in order to streamline the overall process and make it more effective and efficient. A more indepth discovery of the end-to-end school recruitment process and resources should be undertaken, across a larger sample of schools, to identify what could be delivered better through a Somerset core offer.

**Target Outcome:** An evidence-based recruitment function that will be made available to schools as part of the core offer that will ensure a better, faster recruitment experience for schools and candidates.



# Project: Succession planning

Page 121

**Description:** Attracting, developing and keeping staff within Somerset was a key theme that came out of the research. An area-wide project that looks at how staff can be developed and supported in to opportunities across schools but within Somerset would provide the following benefits:

- Retain skills and experience within Somerset
- Ensure there is a greater pool of people to draw on when succession planning
- Ensure greater consistency and learning of best practice
- Reduce recruitment times and costs

**Target Outcome:** A succession and staff development strategy and function, which schools and governors can draw on to help develop and recruit staff

# Project: Condition of buildings

Page 122

**Description:** A conditions review of all school buildings is needed (prioritising the largest and most urgent) to help identify where preventative maintenance issues need to be put in place and how these are resourced. Due to nationally set financial processes, there is a disincentive to budget ahead for large maintenance items, with only the most urgent items addressed.

The Council, as landlord to schools, has a different relationship than traded services. As schools transition to MATs, the Council may retain its function and responsibilities as landlord, and new leases will need to be signed.

**Target Outcome:** Conditions review of all school buildings, and review of processes to ensure preventative activity is underway as well as urgent maintenance.

# Project: Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Page 123

**Description:** Special Educational needs was a strong theme from schools as wanting extra support – either because of a perceived increase in numbers, and/ or a delay in getting a child a statement so they shoulder the costs.

The Council has a number of activities underway to understand this further, including how the relationship with Academies affects numbers, and how to ensure the process for statements is as streamlined as possible.

**Target Outcome:** Reviewed and streamlined processes for SEN, and an understanding of overall trends in Somerset.

# Appendix



# Appendix

## Artefacts and data

Page 125

### 1. Final presentation (this document)

### 1. Financial analysis data and charts

<https://somerstcc.sharepoint.com/x/r/sites/LAMaintainedSchools-ProjectGroup/Shared%20Documents/TPXImpact%20-%20Discovery%20phase/Copy%20of%20Somerset%20-%20AI%20Schools%20Maintained%2020-21%20-%20Additional%20Graph.xlsx?d=we75afe03aa394b3da5a91f1c5e812616c5f1&web=16e=wab2Ntd>

### 2. Survey data

[https://somerstcc.sharepoint.com/x/r/sites/LAMaintainedSchools-ProjectGroup/Shared%20Documents/TPXImpact%20-%20Discovery%20phase/Somerset%20School%20Survey%20\(Responses\).xlsx?d=w787b73d487af46649a914083e4c6d5046c5f1&web=16e=EOwGOC](https://somerstcc.sharepoint.com/x/r/sites/LAMaintainedSchools-ProjectGroup/Shared%20Documents/TPXImpact%20-%20Discovery%20phase/Somerset%20School%20Survey%20(Responses).xlsx?d=w787b73d487af46649a914083e4c6d5046c5f1&web=16e=EOwGOC)

### 3. Show and Tells

#### a. Show and Tell May

##### i. Deck

<https://somerstcc.sharepoint.com/b/2/sites/LAMaintainedSchools-ProjectGroup/Shared%20Documents/TPXImpact%20-%20Discovery%20phase/Show%20and%20Tell%201%20Somerset%20FA%20client%20phase%2020%203.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=OU442>

##### ii. Easyretro feedback

<https://easyretro.io/publicboard/hibk4ef298LQha4rCpJhF6uwQYf92/049ec33d-73db-4ccb-8cc8-d320cd97684e>

#### b. Show and Tell June

##### i. Deck

<https://somerstcc.sharepoint.com/b/2/sites/LAMaintainedSchools-ProjectGroup/Shared%20Documents/TPXImpact%20-%20Discovery%20phase/Somerset%20show%20and%20tell%20-%201%20retro%20version-%2020%20W.pptx.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=1xut4c>

## References

### 1. DfE whitepaper

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/opportunity-for-all-strong-schools-with-great-teachers-for-your-child>

### 2. DfE Financial Benchmarking data

<https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/>

### 3. Somerset internal analysis

### 4. Somerset EHCP data

### 5. SSE Website

<https://www.supportservicesforeducation.co.uk/>

# Thank you

follow us on



Want to know more...

[hello@tpximpact.com](mailto:hello@tpximpact.com)

**TPX**impact

Core Offer Implementation		
<b>Standard SSE</b> - Buy Back Timeline - Traders review their Service Page	Timeline based on a normal year of schools buying SSE traded services	09/12/22
<b>Core Offer</b> live and added to LA Maintained Schools SSE baskets for purchase		09/01/23 13/01/23
<b>Standard SSE</b> - Buy Back Timeline - Traders inform SSE of any new packages or updates to existing packages		13/01/23 13/01/23
Deadline for <b>Core Offer</b> purchases to be made via SSE portal	Prior to Half Term	10/02/23 10/02/23
Chase LA Maintained Schools who havent approved purchase of <b>Core Offer</b>		06/02/23 24/02/23
<b>Standard SSE</b> - Buy Back Timeline - Traders have 2023/24 packages uploaded		13/02/23 13/02/23
<b>Standard SSE</b> - Buy Back Timeline - ' <b>goes live</b> ' timeline - SSE Website	After Half Term	20/02/23 24/02/23
<b>Standard SSE</b> - Buy Back Timeline - Deadline date for Financial Year orders	Involves third parties - Scientific Services, Refuse, CLEAPSS (Academies only), DofE (Secondary and colleges)	24/03/23 24/03/23
<b>Standard SSE</b> - Buy Back Timeline - Deadline date for Academic Year orders		26/05/23 26/05/23

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## Appendix 5

### Business Case

Project Name:	LA Maintained Schools – Core Offer		
Date:	14 December 2022	Status:	Full
Author(s):	Amelia Walker		
Owner:	Amelia Walker		
Business Area:	Childrens – Education, Partnership & Skills		
Current Version:	0.8		
Programme/Project Classifications	<i>Tier 1, 2 or 3 following completion of commissioning gateway and PMO review.</i>		

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### story

Version	Date	Summary of Changes	Author
0.1	03/10/2022	First Draft	AW
0.2	18/10/2022	Iteration following SLT	AW
0.3	11/11/2022	Amendments including service costs	AH
0.4	16/11/2022	Amendments following Finance/Risk meeting	AH
0.5	25/11/2022	Amendments following comments from Finance	AH
0.6	28/11/2022	Responses to above comments	AW
0.7	29/11/2022	Final amendments (Finance)	AH

### Checkpoint

This document requires sign off by SRO and Commissioner

Title	Signature	Name	Date
Briefing		Strategic Commissioning Group	22 September 2022
Briefing		Senior Leadership Team	18 October 2022
Briefing		Director of Finance	30 Nov 2022
Briefing		Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee	12 Dec 2022
Full Business Case Sign Off		Business Case Scheduled for consideration by Executive	14 Dec 2022

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## 1 Executive Summary

In 2014 Somerset County Council created Somerset Services for Education (SSE) and moved the majority of schools-focused services within the council onto a full-cost recovery traded basis. This function has now been in operation for eight years. A number of other local authority teams also trade with schools. Additionally, Children's Services includes a small number of schools-focused teams outside of the SSE line management chain that operate a mix of traded, statutory and grant-funded functions.

This complex picture of functions together provides the local authority's contribution to creating a high-performing education system in the county. However, the education system in Somerset is performing poorly, and prior to the pandemic, was in a cycle of rapid decline. Not only does significant underperformance impact on children's lives and opportunities, and in the long term, the health, wealth, and competitiveness of the whole population, but escalating failure carries with it significant short- and medium-term cost and risk implications for the local authority.

There are four risk factors which have been identified which are impacting on performance:

- 1) **Resource compartmentalisation:** the financial model underpinning services has been designed on a principle of full-cost recovery at service level, not departmental level. This means that resources are exceptionally difficult to re-allocate based on cross-service pressures, need in schools and/or organisational priorities.
- 2) **Short-term granularity:** the trading offer is primarily based on a single year, highly variable offer. This creates a high level of uncertainty in forecasting income and high level of exposure to shocks.
- 3) **Inability to flex:** Due in part to resource compartmentalisation, but also due to culture and practice that is based on historic assumptions about need which remain unscrutinised, there is an inbuilt inflexibility in the overall offer which creates a bias towards historic rather than emerging patterns of demand in the market.
- 4) **Compliance 'moral hazard':** There is well-established evidence that services trading in risk assurance and compliance need carefully designed safeguards to insulate functions focused on income generation from those focused-on mitigating risk. Such safeguards are not currently in place.

These risks will need to be addressed to raise standards and improve compliance. However, in the past year we have seen the emergence of issues which have meant that the trajectory needed to take action must now be accelerated as some of the risks will now crystallise in April 2023.

- 1) **Cost pressures:** Part of the Dedicated Schools Grant includes Historic Commitments which funds council services and is reducing by 20% each year. We are forecasting a loss of £633k in 2023. At the same time, the government's withdrawal of the Monitoring and Brokering Grant, worth £513k annually, will also impact from April 2023. Together, these grants fund the entirety of the council's school improvement and schools causing concern function. These income reductions have come at the same point that the local authority and its services are facing unprecedented inflationary pressures.

- 2) **Academisation:** The Department for Education published a Schools White Paper in the spring in which it signalled its intention to pursue full academisation by 2030. While this may not be realisable by the current government it does create the prospect of an unpredictable and unmanaged shift in the LA maintained cohort which could destabilise buy back levels. While the long-term strategy should be to embed a strong support offer for trusts, this is not yet in place.
- 3) **Compliance failures and crises:** Over the past 2-3 years there have been a series of critical incidents and scenarios which have exposed a weak system of assurance in relation to risk management, compliance, and quality assurance. This includes a critical audit of property compliance, as well as the findings of work within five schools, three of which were subsequently judged inadequate at inspection.

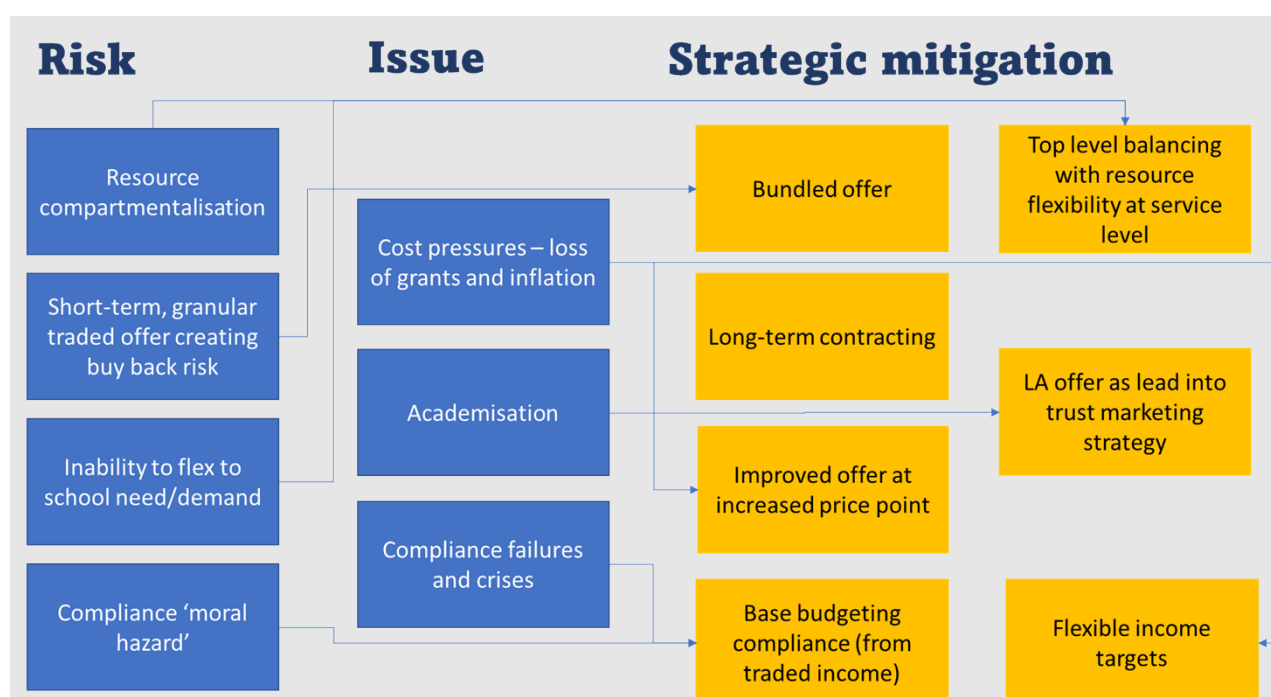
There are four possible responses to the financial pressures in this emerging picture: do nothing; pass all the cost pressures onto schools with no mitigations; leave the school sector altogether and divest of education services; or redesign the service so that charging increases are mitigated by service improvements.

The preferred option is to redesign the approach to strategically mitigate the risks and issues. The 'do nothing' approach carries a very significant level of risk to the system and the local authority and would potentially be dangerous to children. While the options of passing costs onto schools or retreating from the market have surface appeal, the former would put the council into a strategically and financially disadvantageous position and the latter is both likely to be unimplementable and would attract significant cost at a time when the focus is on cost avoidance.

The Core Offer would strategically mitigate risk by introducing the following changes:

- 1) **Bundling and long-term contracting:** The current offer is fragmented and exposes services to a high level of variability in the buy back. The mitigation is to bundle services on longer or rolling contracts to provide greater stability and predictability in relation to income. A more homogeneous approach also enables more accurate and sensitive cost and recovery forecasting which is essential in a time of economic volatility.
- 2) **Financial modelling:** Full cost recovery is currently modelled at service level. This inbuilds an incentive for services to forecast unrealistic income, it works against demand-driven resource re-allocation and removes incentives for income-generation and efficiency in marketable services. The mitigation is to model full cost recovery at department level, with more sensitive income generation and efficiency targets in each service, more tightly aligned to opportunities unique to each form of delivery.
- 3) **Marketing strategy:** In order to avoid catastrophic cuts to school support, a level of cost recovery is unavoidable. However, the strategic positioning of the local authority as a trading function depends on a higher cost service being perceived as good value. Achieving this outcome depends on providing a more consistent experience and adding value in key areas which are currently underrepresented in the offer. This can be done without inflating costs by flexing resources into higher priority functions.
- 4) **Compliance approach:** By moving the accounting for full cost recovery to department level, and by creating a more stable funding basis, the model would move compliance-focused teams onto a base budget for staff alongside a focus on

using intelligence and risk assessment to undertake condition and assurance activities. This would mitigate the potential conflict of interest for staff undertaking these safety-critical activities.



## 2 Strategic Case (Reason)

### 2.1 Strategy investment aims

Indicate the primary drivers of the project/programme for which approval is being sought (tick all that apply). Include any MTFP assumptions/savings.

Project Primary Driver (tick all that apply) ✓	Maintaining/Improving service delivery	Cost Avoidance	Cash Savings	Risk Avoidance	Delivering a Piece of Legislation
✓	✓	✓		✓	✓

### 2.2 Investment strategy

The investment in development was funded by schools through a decision by Schools Forum to re-allocate an underspend in de-delegated budgets in the financial year 2021/22. The funding was used to procure research capacity from TPXImpact to work with schools on the strategic case for change. The cost of this contract was £86,400.

## 3 Critical Success Factors

### **3.1 Success Factors – Internal outcomes**

The project will be successful in relation to outcomes if it results in a service that is:

#### **Positively engaged with families, settings and schools**

Thankfully, we have heard from the recent SEND peer challenge that we have put the 'blame culture' behind us. There is now an appetite, even an eagerness, to work together for the good of children and families. However, we do not have mature relationships, and if we do not invest in and grow our relationships with schools, settings and families, these gains could easily be lost. We want to know our schools and settings really well, and to create an environment where everyone knows they only need to reach out when they are in difficulty and a trusted colleague will be there for them and stay with them until the pressure has passed.

#### **Clear and accountable**

We want every manager and member of staff to have a mandate – a clear and well-thought-through role that means they can fire on cylinders in a job that plays to their strengths. By being empowered to do their job really well, they will become more expert, work better with colleagues without the risk of conflict, and maximise their chance to progress by having delivered impressive gains.

#### **Focused on what matters most**

There is nothing more demoralising than pouring your heart into something, only to find that it wasn't what was wanted. We want every member of staff and team to know they are working on the most important priorities that don't just matter to their managers, but to leaders, to children and to the whole community.

#### **Closer to communities**

We're not a business or a charitable endeavour set up to reflect a particular interest group. We're a local authority, and so we are only successful where we serve our communities and help them to flourish. We want to get closer to communities through more area-based working which is cleverly designed to knit different specialists together in an efficient way.

#### **Ready for the future**

Education never sits still, and whatever the landscape looks like in ten years' time, it will not be the same as it is today. We want to be in the vanguard of designing the future. If we take account of how change has been less successful in Somerset education in the past, we can learn lessons and face the next wave of reform in a strong and confident position.

#### **Affordable and Sustainable**

Our education ambitions are focused on children's learning, but to achieve that we need a system that creates safe, stable and confident organisations to deliver on this. Resources that are sufficient and reliable underpin this goal.

### **3.2 Success Factors – External outcomes**

The project will be successful in relation to outcomes if it results in a school system that has:

### **Affordable and Sustainable – immediate term**

Having a strong support infrastructure for schools enables educationalists to focus on education. That support needs to be affordable at a level that does not create additional strains and pressures for leaders and schools.

### **Increased Leadership Stability – short term**

Between 2014/15 and 2019/20, the level of interim leadership in Somerset was double the national rate. This has improved in the past two years, however, there remains more to be done to attract high quality leadership, retain good leaders and improve the confidence, performance, and positivity of existing leaders. Better support infrastructure has a disproportionate impact on leaders compared to other school-based staff, and therefore we would expect to see impact in the short-term if the quality, reliability, and accessibility of support improves.

### **Reduced Anxiety among staff and pupils – medium term**

Leadership instability, and leadership pressures, play a significant contributory role in schools where staff and pupils feel unsafe or insecure. Data from the Wellbeing Survey in 2020 indicated a high level of feelings of insecurity and anxiety among pupils of all ages, as well as self-reported exhibition of anger and self-harm. As leadership stability improves, we would hope to see this translating into calmer, happier schools.

### **Improved Progress and Attainment – longer term**

Somerset's pupils are underachieving and the trajectory in 2022 is downwards in every phase. While support for schools is only a small contributory factor to progress and attainment, our analysis suggests that weak support infrastructure has played a key role in decline in outcomes over time. Therefore, improvements in the support infrastructure, of which this should be one element, should play a part in stronger pupil outcomes.

## **4 Economic Case**

Because services have not been redesigned or updated for some period of time, and due to rapidly unfolding issues in the economy, the options that are now relevant are rapidly diminishing. Effectively, there are only four realistic options:

- a) To absorb the forthcoming cost pressures into the existing service by maintaining the status quo and only uplifting costs in line with past years. This is the 'do nothing' option.
- b) To uplift the traded offer and the top-sliced services in line with projected costs of the service, including mitigating the loss of grant, without any redesign or transformation of the service or financial model. This is the 'do minimum' option.
- c) To implement a core offer that integrates all the costs and benefits into a single long-term charging model.
- d) To cease trading with LA maintained schools and invest all capacity into wholesale academisation.

## 4.1 Main Options

<b>Option 1: Do nothing</b>	
<b>Details:</b>	No change to service delivery Traded offer unchanged Trading charges, education functions and de-delegated funding all uplifted at the same rate as school budgets
<b>Expected Outcomes:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accelerated decline in standards in local authority-maintained schools</li> <li>• Little to no change in underperformance in schools including academies, potential for further decline</li> <li>• Ongoing pattern of acute incidences of failure with associated factors and costs</li> <li>• Aggravated risk of accountability for compliance and safety failures as level of risk is now known and documented</li> </ul>
<b>Time/Cost Estimates:</b>	No time required beyond business as usual  Costs would be flat in line with 2021/22 budgets or with very modest inflation (e.g. 2%).
<b>Likely Impacts/Cumulative Impacts to SCC:</b>	Not significantly increasing income to mitigate financial losses who lead to extensive and damaging cuts to existing services leading to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to deliver statutory and safety functions due to critically reduced capacity</li> <li>• Inability to retain and recruit staff due to service pressures</li> <li>• Costs of failure (specifically in relation to estates and schools going into a category)</li> <li>• Accelerated academisation and dissatisfaction with service quality leading to ongoing reduction in buy back</li> </ul>

<b>Option 2: Cost recovery without transformation / do minimum</b>	
<b>Details:</b>	No change to service delivery Charges to schools increased as follows from April 2023: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traded offer charges uplifted in line with inflation</li> <li>• Education functions and de-delegated uplifted in line with inflation</li> <li>• Schools' specific contingency increased from £7,500 to £75,000</li> <li>• De-delegation of all School Improvement costs previously funded from Monitoring and Brokering Grant</li> </ul>



	and Historic Commitments
<b>Expected Outcomes:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in proportion of schools in financial difficulties</li> <li>• Unpredictable acceleration in academisation</li> <li>• Increased charging offset by decreased buy back</li> </ul>
<b>Time/Cost Estimates:</b>	<p>No time required beyond business as usual</p> <p>Costs uplifted in line with realistic assessment of inflation (7-10%) on top of additional de-delegation increases in line with Secretary of State instruction in relation to school improvement costs.</p>
<b>Likely Impacts/Cumulative Impacts to SCC:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LA remains exposed to compliance risk Increase in demand for support due to financial pressures on schools</li> <li>• Reduction in buy back for council services as schools mitigate the impact of de-delegated charges and/or academise</li> <li>• In-year budgetary pressure due to inflexibility of resource allocation</li> <li>• Very limited ability to reduce staffing cost in response to academisation</li> <li>• Ongoing risk of service failure in areas highly exposed to buy back variation</li> <li>• Decline in LA maintained satisfaction with long-term impact on sustainability of traded model in relation to trusts</li> </ul>

<b>Option 3: Core Offer (Preferred option)</b>	
<b>Details:</b>	<p>Redesign of traded offer and service financial model to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the level of bundling and move to longer-term contracting</li> <li>• Set realistic but stretching income targets for all functions</li> <li>• Gather intelligence and build reputation for strategic move to grow market share with trusts</li> <li>• Increase resource flexibility to enable ongoing efficiency and right size to need/demand</li> <li>• Create base budgets for compliance to protect risk management activities</li> </ul>
<b>Expected Outcomes:</b>	Set out above under Critical Success Factors
<b>Time/Cost Estimates:</b>	<p>Investment in developing a model has already been undertaken within existing resources.</p> <p>Costs modelled on the basis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost neutral budget setting in each financial year</li> <li>• Benefits from improved income generation model</li> </ul>

<b>Likely Impacts/Cumulative Impacts to SCC:</b>	<p>Critical Success Factors above sets out the objectives and benefits that this option would endeavour to realise.</p> <p>This option would enable staffing costs to be reduced in response to academisation if alternative sources of income or trading arrangements were not realised, with greater ability to use natural wastage rather than reorganisation.</p> <p>Ongoing risks to mitigate would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increases in charges result in reductions in income in other areas</li> <li>• Schools already in financial difficulties face increased pressures</li> <li>• Changing practice results in short-term decline in quality of support</li> </ul>
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<b>Option 4: Withdraw from LA maintained support</b>	
<b>Details:</b>	Implement a rapid plan to see all LA maintained schools academise and divest of support for this sector
<b>Expected Outcomes:</b>	The impact on schools would depend on whether the academisation push was funded from within existing resources or whether the local authority would fund the additional staffing requirement. There is a possibility that funding could be sought from the Department for Education, but the current volatile political context and sums required makes this a high-risk option. If resources had to come from existing budgets, then the impact on schools would likely model Option 1 (high risk of failure and decline).
<b>Time/Cost Estimates:</b>	The Department for Education has proposed full academisation by 2030. Option 3 assumes this trajectory. To bring this forward so that full academisation was complete within three years (April 2026) would require academisation of 47 schools a year, starting in April 2023. The current rate of academisation is 2-3 schools a year, so this represents a multiplier of 19 in terms of capacity needed. There are few to no economies of scale in academisation as every due diligence process is specifically tied to that one institution.
<b>Likely Impacts/Cumulative Impacts to SCC:</b>	<p>The decision could prove unimplementable. While the Department for Education has expressed an interest in giving LAs the power to force schools to academise, the Schools Bill has encountered obstacles in the House of Lords and may be dropped. Without such a power the LA has no ability to force academisation and would remain liable for risk for those schools that remained.</p> <p>Analysis in relation to educational underperformance suggests</p>

that weak support infrastructure has been a contributing factor. At present there are not enough strong trusts operating within the county and therefore any retrenchment of local authority support is likely to exacerbate the current weak outcomes for pupils.

## Appendix 5

Likelihood/Impact	Risk 1 Resource compartmentalisation	Risk 2 Financial risk	Risk 3 Inability to flex to need	Risk 4 Compliance	Risk 5 School failure	Risk 6 Pupil impact	Risk 7 Academisation impact	Risk 8 Cuts to essential support
<b>Option 1 Do nothing</b>	High/Medium  Financial model unchanged – inability to shift resources to manage pressures	Medium/Medium  Cost protection for schools, likely similar pattern of buy-back, ongoing impact on some services	High/Medium  Financial model unchanged, demand likely to increase	High/High  Cuts to services would mean increased risk of non-compliance	High/High  Increased risk of significant school failure	High/High  Increased risk of school failure leading directly to detrimental impacts to children	High/Medium  School failure may push schools into forced academisation	High/High  Significant cuts to services supporting statutory and safety / safeguarding support
<b>Option 2 Do minimum</b>	High/Medium  Financial model unchanged – inability to shift resources to manage pressures	Medium/High  'Laffer curve' – increased cost may bear down on total take	High/Medium  Financial model unchanged	High/High  Moral hazard remains and may be amplified in context of buy back pressure	Medium/Medium  Services able to respond but increased risk of financial pressures impacting performance	Medium/High  Financial pressures may result in cuts to school delivery with greatest impact for disadvantaged pupils	High/Medium  Possible unpredictable and widespread move to academise with knock on impacts	Medium/Medium  Move to protect income might result in cuts <u>regardless</u> if buy back still reduces
<b>Option 3 Core Offer</b>	Low/Medium  Financial model reformed	Medium/Medium  Risk mitigation for base, bespoke elements still exposed	Low/Medium  Financial model reformed	Medium/Medium  Historic issues remain but services better equipped to respond	Medium/Medium  Historic issues remain but services better equipped to respond	Medium/Medium  Historic issues remain but services better equipped to respond	Medium/Medium  Foundation laid for further action in relation to better offer to academies/trusts	Medium/Medium  Services operating at full capacity and above but with all key areas still represented
<b>Option 4 Full academisation</b>	Medium/Medium  Financial model unchanged but lower risk with academies only	High/High  Huge costs to manage scale of change	Medium/Medium  Model designed for historic system, not well adapted for trust-led environment	Medium/High  Current mechanisms for oversight of academies in county are underdeveloped	High/High  Insufficient capacity in strong trusts to take all schools, pressure could amplify risk of failure	High/Medium  Rapid acceleration of structure change likely to distract from pupil needs	High/High  Very unlikely full academisation could be delivered	Medium/Medium  Change in economies of scale could mean some key services would need to cease, leaving academies exposed

## Appendix 5

### 4.2 Preferred Option

The preferred option is Option 3: Core Offer. This is the most complex option, but also carries the lowest risk to the organisation and school system.

## 5 Commercial Case

### 5.1 Commercial Strategy

The preferred option is fundamentally tied to the strategic marketing and long-term prospects for the local authority as a trader in education services. As the local authority becomes a unitary council, the time is right for a review of the trading functions within the council as a whole, looking at unifying branding, charging, management practices and marketing. The council has a significant market share in some areas, and the potential to grow this market share. However, in order to do so it will need to be more agile and less risk-averse in positioning itself in the markets it operates within.

Somerset County Council currently operates a significant business in education services, with an annual turnover of £14m. However, education as a sector is in the middle of a period of fundamental reform that has so far lasted two decades and remains a contested space. No one yet knows what the long-term impact of academisation will be or precisely how the education system will continue to evolve. Because the reform is incomplete, the only certainty is that the current configuration is unsustainable and will change.

There is significant potential to grow market share, however, this will only be achieved based on services that are focused on emerging demand, not historic models of need. Moreover, the ongoing political and economic volatility, particularly the heightened possibility of an early election, mean that the trading strategy must, as much as it is possible, align with a policy-focused view of how central government policy may change in the medium term.

The TPX Impact report into school needs and views is at Appendix 3.

### 5.2 Procurement Strategy

The preferred option does not require any new procurement activity.

### 5.3 Personnel Implications (including TUPE)

There are two groups of staff who could be impacted by the introduction of a Core Offer: local authority staff and staff in schools.

In relation to local authority-employed staff, a staff reorganisation was consulted on during July-September 2022 and is in the process of being implemented. While this staff reorganisation could deliver the current service, it has been designed to make delivery of a Core Offer possible and therefore no further change would be required.

In relation to school-based staff, a detailed survey was undertaken during September 2022 of all LA maintained schools 63 out of 140 schools responded. This survey asked detailed questions about staffing with the express intention to avoid creating any TUPE implications through the design of a Core Offer.

## 6 Financial Case

### 6.1 Charging model

The charging model has been devised to reflect the current pattern of spending by LA maintained schools. There are three types of charges:

- 1) **Base offer:** The purpose of the base offer is to enable services to work with schools to create a greater level of consistency in meeting basic minimum standards across all schools, and to create a 'social insurance' model so that unpredictable costs and crises are adequately supported. The Base offer includes services where:
  - a. 'Buy back' is already very high across all schools
  - b. Support relates to safety, compliance and/or safeguarding
  - c. Support is needed exceptionally but at a high level and withholding support may have an unacceptable impact on children and/or staff in schools.
- 2) **Business Manager offer:** Three services (property, ICT, and finance) have very variable buy back, with lower proportions of schools buying in, but in some cases the level that schools are buying is very high relative to budget. These services would form a three tier 'Business Manager' service. Charges would, as close as possible in the first instance, mirror current spend but access to support would be open across all three services. This would enable services to support schools more flexibly to help improve compliance and reduce risk, while also giving these services greater financial stability.
- 3) **Bespoke offer:** Some services are discretionary (e.g., Music, Outdoors Centres) or charging is based on a highly bespoke needs which differ significantly from school to school (e.g., South West Mutual cover for supply). These items would continue to be sold on an individual basis.

### 6.2 Cost

For the Core Offer to be affordable, it must take account of cost implications in three areas:

- a) Education, Partnerships and Skills whole service cost
- b) Costs of traded services outside of education where these will be included within the Core Offer
- c) Costs to schools, particularly those that are in financial difficulty

### ***Projected income and expenditure***

The projected income and expenditure for the Education, Partnerships and Skills service including the Core Offer income and expenditure for 2023/24 is as follows:

	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
<b>Income</b>		
Core Offer	6.5	
Other income	8.9	
<b>Total income</b>		<b>15.5</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Staff costs	7.5	
Other expenditure	7.1	
Overheads	0.9	
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>15.5</b>
<b>Total income less expenditure</b>		<b>0.0</b>

### ***Costs to schools***

A number of different options have been modelled in detail to understand the impact on schools in different circumstances. The model has been selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- Transparent, fair and easy to explain
- Mitigates the impact of increases on schools where the level of increase is highest
- Reflects as closely as possible pre-existing buying patterns and choices by schools

### **Base offer**

- Primary, Special and PRU – 5% of individual school budget (total school budget excluding any additional grants, e.g., Supplementary, Pupil Premium etc)
- Secondary – 3% of individual school budget (total school budget excluding any additional grants, e.g., Supplementary, Pupil Premium etc)
- Protection – Increases to any school will be capped at 60% in the first year (2023/24), based on level of buy back of services included in the Base offer.

### **Business Manager**

Hours can be accessed from any of ICT, Finance or Property Services. Support utilised will be rounded to the nearest hour. Support cannot be carried over from one financial year to another, except by prior arrangement.

- Level 1 - £4,200 for 60 hours support
- Level 2 - £10,500 for 155 hours support
- Level 3 - £17,000 for 250 hours support

## Bespoke

Services remain unchanged and will be offered in a manner similar to previous years.

All offers are available to any type of school, though it is not anticipated that the base offer would be attractive to academies, having been designed specifically to meet the needs of LA maintained schools.

### 6.3 Funding and affordability

For the purposes of modelling affordability, there are two tests:

- 1) Does the Core Offer provide sufficient income based on inflationary increases to costs and charges for 2023/24, taking into account identified areas for savings in operating costs and/or staffing?

The model described above is very tight but does enable budgets to balance in the context of inflation. Given the level of trading risk and unpredictability in the wider economy, this is based on reasonable assumptions, but ongoing review and very pro-active management of costs will be essential.

The target level of reserves within the service should reflect the agreed level for a trading unit, which represents 5% of trading income or £0.58m. As at 31<sup>st</sup> October the forecast outturn level of reserves for 2022/23 was £0.47m, due to the in-year impact of the increase to the pay award. However, Option 3 would result in a merger of the Schools Contingency and the SSE Reserve. The financial model includes £75k per annum for contingency purposes. As part of implementation criteria for deployment of contingency/reserve funds would be published. This new reserve/contingency would have an ongoing target of £0.58m as a retained minimum to mitigate trading risk, with funds above this level supporting identified schools' needs. In the first year, the historic Schools Specific Contingency will provide the necessary funds to meet school need in 2023/24.

- 2) Are the increases to the cost for individual schools reasonable and has the potential impact on schools in financial difficulties been taken into account?

There will be increases for all schools and for some these increases will be substantial. The average increase would be 47.3% or £16,500. However, the steepness of the increase is an unavoidable consequence of two factors: 1) Schools overall have been under-supported which has likely been a contributory factor to high levels of inadequacy in the system, and 2) school support has previously been subsidised by central government grant which has now been withdrawn.

The most common multi-academy trust top-slice is between 4 and 6%, therefore a charge of 5% is reflective of the costs of support nationally<sup>1</sup>. In 2016 it was reported that local authority support charges nationally most commonly varied between 8 and 12%<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [UHY Benchmarking Report 2021.pdf \(uhy-uk.com\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [How much do academy trusts top-slice from schools? \(schoolsweek.co.uk\)](#)



In mitigating affordability, there are three considerations that have been taken into account:

- 1) A ceiling has been put on increases at the lowest level possible without destabilising the model.
- 2) Recent national Budget announcements have included an additional £2.3 billion for education. Should this take the form of a supplementary grant, this would not be calculated within the 5% or 3% charge and therefore would provide significant mitigation.
- 3) A proposal has been proposed to Schools Forum to establish criteria for an inflation fund to enable schools of all types to access supplementary funding if inflationary pressures are likely to have a detrimental impact on quality of education. This has not yet been developed or agreed but is being evaluated for feasibility.

A further important mitigation is the introduction of the relationship manager function which will provide new capacity to facilitate support for schools in financial difficulty, enabling the supportive and challenging action that may be necessary to address longstanding or emerging deficits.

## **7 Management Case**

### **7.1 Project/Programme Dependencies**

The Education, Partnership and Skills structure redesign. Education, Partnerships and Skills and Inclusion within Children's Services have formally consulted on new staffing structures, and these have now been signed off and implementation has begun.

### **7.2 Project/Programme management arrangements**

The SRO for this project is Amelia Walker

The Project & Change Manager is Andrew Hedges and as part of his role, we have established:

- Initial PID
- Specification for External Partner to help with discovery work
- Project RAIDL (Risks, Action log, Issues, Decisions and Lessons Learnt)
- Project Plan including implementation plan for the Core Offer
- Full Business Case

The Project Governance is made up of a monthly Project Board (established in August 2022), as part of phase 2 of the project and a weekly Project Team meeting (established in November 2021), started as part of the scoping and discovery part of the project. See below for membership of these.

## Project Board

Name	Job Role	Service
Amelia Walker	Assistant Director	Education, Partnership & Skills
Andrew Hedges	Project & Change Manager	Business Change
Julia Ridge	Strategic Manager	Education Systems
Amy Joynes	Strategic Manager	School Improvement
Sian Kenny	Strategic Manager	Finance
Guy Marshall	Service Manager	Finance
Meg Rodwell	Business & Commercial Finance Manager	SSE
Alan O'Coy	Strategic Manager	SSE
Jo O'Callaghan	Strategic Manager	SSE
Andy Kennell	Head of ICT	ICT Operations
Rachael Butt	Service Manager	HR Advisory
Michael Cowdell	Strategic Manager	Somerset Waste Partnership
Rachel Ellins	Strategic Manager	HR Admin & Payroll
Tom Woodhams	Principal Lawyer	Legal
Suzanne Keniston	Service Manager	Legal
Sharon Larkman	Asbestos Manager	Asbestos Team
Keith Hawke	Service Manager	Insurance
Gary Smith	Communications Officer	Communications
Robyn Dexter-Attwood	Senior Business Support Officer	Business Support - Education

## Project Team

Name	Job Role	Service
Amelia Walker	Assistant Director	Education, Partnership & Skills
Andrew Hedges	Project & Change Manager	Business Change
Julia Ridge	Strategic Manager	Education Systems
Amy Joynes	Strategic Manager	School Improvement
Sian Kenny	Strategic Manager	Finance
Guy Marshall	Service Manager	Finance
Meg Rodwell	Business & Commercial Finance Manager	SSE
Alan O'Coy	Strategic Manager	SSE
Jo O'Callaghan	Strategic Manager	SSE
Gary Smith	Communications Officer	Communications
Kate Edwards	Business Development Manager	SSE
Susan Wheatley	Business & Commercial Manager	SSE
Claire Price	School Improvement Officer	School Improvement
Robyn Dexter-Attwood	Senior Business Support Officer	Business Support - Education

### 7.3 Project/Programme milestones

We started to engage with LA Maintained School in relation to this work in late 2021. This was followed by a period of discovery work and research, which we commissioned an external provider to help with (TPXImpact), the final report from this work can be found in the appendices. Democratic decision making will take place in December 2022.

The project plan used to manage this project can be found [here](#).

## 7.4 Timescale

<b>November 2021</b>	Initial school briefings
<b>8 December 2021</b>	Deadline for schools to express an interest in research phase
<b>Jan-Feb 2022</b>	Procurement of research partner
<b>Feb-April 2022</b>	Research with participating schools
<b>June 2022</b>	Final report from research with recommendations for local authority
<b>September 2022</b>	Survey to all schools on draft deliverables
<b>October 2022</b>	Development of business case
<b>October 2022</b>	Administrative Development and Liaison meetings
<b>18 October 2022</b>	Senior Leadership Team review
<b>24 October 2022</b>	Executive / Senior Leadership Team review
<b>7 November 2022</b>	Children and Families Scrutiny meeting to review background to proposals
<b>23/28 November</b>	Briefings for school leaders
<b>12 December 2022</b>	Pre-agenda Scrutiny – Children and Families Scrutiny Committee
<b>14 December 2022</b>	Executive decision
<b>December 2022</b>	Draft core offer published
<b>January 2023</b>	Final core offer and terms published for buy back
<b>February 2023</b>	Buy back deadline to confirm viability
<b>April 2023</b>	Implementation

## 7.5 Expected Benefits

Once we have gone live with the Core Offer, we will look to agree the metrics for the benefits, along with baselines and targets. The project will be successful in relation to outcomes if it mitigates the key risks facing education services in the local authority, specifically:

- 1) Reduction in the indicators of most concern in relation to educational outcomes, specifically exclusion (fixed term and permanent), Key Stage 2 disadvantage gap (Reading and Maths)
- 2) Reduction in the proportion of LA maintained schools found to be Requires Improvement or Inadequate at inspection each year.
- 3) Reduction in the direct and opportunity costs of reacting to acute, preventable failures in the system.

- 4) Education senior leaders are able to successfully re-allocate resources within Children's Services in line with priorities on an ongoing basis, for example, where vacancies arise due to natural wastage.
- 5) Services that are currently not able to recruit permanent staff due to buy back risk are able to do so, and satisfaction with the quality of delivery within those services increases.
- 6) Schools report satisfaction with the range of services provided by the local authority, and a higher level of consistency in the quality of services received.
- 7) Services experiencing acute service pressures due to an imbalance between capacity and demand have those pressures reduced, with positive impact on levels of staff satisfaction and sickness absence.
- 8) Reduction in incidents in schools where unacceptably low levels of compliance with requirements are identified in relation to safeguarding and/or safety.

## 7.6 Risk and Issue Management

All project Risks and Issues have been captured in the project RAIDL and are revisited at the Project Board meetings.

[LINK HERE](#)

The key risks are as follows:

Trigger	Impact	L	I		Control Measures
Insufficient buy back for viability	Would necessitate reverting to Option 2	2	5	10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Relationship managers working directly with schools to sell the benefits</li> <li>2) Terms which incentivise participation</li> <li>3) Cost pressure mitigation</li> </ol>
Academising schools and leaving the offer impacts break-even point	Overspending	2	3	6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Refreshed look at improving wider offer</li> <li>2) Transition work with receiving trusts</li> <li>3) Ongoing review of cost base and opportunities to reduce</li> </ol>
Increases to school budgets creates financial pressures for schools without significant surplus balances	Negative impacts on school operations	3	4	12	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Analysis of incoming budgetary information against profiled base and business manager offer costs</li> <li>2) See mitigations in Section 6.3</li> </ol>

### 7.7 Project/Programme assurance

Once implementation of the Core Offer has been completed, we will have a checkpoint of this phase of the project. We will then scope the next phase of work and plan the next steps regarding this.

### 7.8 Project/Programme transition

Following the completion of this project, the following is out of scope for this Business Case but will need to be worked through following a decision to implement the core offer model.

- 5 Year Business Plan
- LA Trading strategy
- Are we still committed to being a trading organisation?
- What is the trading model options?
- What markets do we want to be trading in?
- Where are our strengths for growth and are there services we should be divesting from?
- What are our branding and identity options?
- How do we operate full cost recovery including calculating overheads?
- What common systems and processes should we be deploying? (Including time recording / CRM)

We will complete a closure/transition report, which will detail any handovers and/or outstanding activity which needs to be owned as part of BAU. The work that has been done as part of the Education, Skills and Partnerships structure redesign has been done in parallel to this work and will result in posts which closely link to the Core Offer and managing the relationship between LA Maintained Schools and the LA.

## 8 Appendices

- **Appendix 1** - Core Offer – Base Offer deliverables/services
- **Appendix 2** – Core Offer – Business Manager deliverables
- **Appendix 3** - TPX Impact – Discovery/Research final report
- **Appendix 4** - Implementation timeline for Core Offer Go live

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