# Report for Schools Forum – 23 June 2021

# Funding of Schools Facilities Time

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# Background

1.1 The current arrangements for trade union facility time in schools is set out in the document titled “Trade Union Facility Time for Teacher Unions”. This is consistent with the national agreement set out in Appendix 3 of the Burgundy Book and provides facilities and time off to enable local trade union representatives to carry out their roles.

1.2 This document is agreed annually by the Schools Trade Union Forum following annual agreement by the Schools Forum to de-delegate the budget for facilities time to the local authority. The funding arrangements are set out in the document and works on the basis of de-delegated funding and an equivalent contribution from academy schools. This is currently based on £5 per pupil head (the budget was reduced from £6 per pupil head in 2019). This budget is then used to reimburse schools for the release of both teaching and support staff to carry out their trade union duties.

1.3 The current budget is c.£191K per annum – made up of £146K from the de-delegated schools budget and £45K from academy schools. The current cost of teacher trade union facilities time (based on most recent invoices) is £133K, and for support staff unions £85K per annum, totalling £218K per annum. This creates an annual budget pressure of c.£27K per annum.

1.4 The current allocation for teacher trade unions is as follows:

NEU 1.8 FTE

NASUWT 0.4 FTE

NAHT 0.1 FTE

ASCL 0.1 FTE

* 1. Whilst there is no formal allocation for support staff trade unions set out in the current document, the historical and current time reimbursed from the de-delegated budget is:

UNISON 1.0 FTE

GMB 1.0 FTE

* 1. Unite do not have any trade union representatives working in schools. The GMB representative is not employed directly in schools and is a Tower Hamlets employee, seconded to carry out representative duties in schools. The costs have previously been met by the local authority however this position is not sustainable or proper to continue.
  2. Based on current membership levels for each trade union, the facilities time is allocated in roughly the right proportions.

# Options

2.1 The current facilities budget does not cover paying all the annual salary costs for trade union representatives to carry out their duties, therefore options need to be considered to either:

a) increase the budget,

b) reduce the cost of facilities time, or

c) reduce the amount of facilities time.

2.2 Increasing the budget to the required level to cover costs can be achieved by raising the cost per pupil head to £5.75.

2.3 The cost of facilities time could be reduced by:

(i) reimbursing the day rate, to cover the cost of backfilling the days when trade union representatives are carrying out their duties, rather than covering the whole salary cost based on the FTE amount of release time. This option could work well for backfilling teaching posts with supply teachers, yet unlikely to be suitable for backfilling support staff posts.

(ii) funding a proportion of the salary costs with schools (or the local authority in the case of the GMB representative) meeting the difference. Funding at 85% would maintain costs within the current budget, however create an unfunded corporate budget pressure.

(iii) paying a fixed amount for trade union release, again with schools or the local authority meeting any additional cost.

2.4 Reducing the amount of facilities time would require consultation with the trade unions and notice to be given of any changes to the facilities agreement. This would need to be agreed and in place before the start of the next financial year (2022-23). However, decisions about the de-delegated budget are made in December 2021, and if agreement is not reached to reduce the amount of facilities time, this would result in a shortfall in next year’s budget.

2.5 The consultative framework (which includes the facilities agreement) in both the local authority and schools has not been comprehensively reviewed for many years. A review of facilities time within the local authority is planned within this financial year and the review of schools facilities time could be undertaken concurrently. However, it is unlikely that the amount of reimbursed facilities time would reduce and the review is unlikely to be concluded before decisions are taken on the de-delegated budget for the next financial year.

2.6 A review of the Terms of Reference for the Schools Trade Union Forum has already started and this will also inform the review of facilities time.

# Considerations

3.1 The Forum is recommended to consider the options set out in 2.1 above and agree which of these should be progressed to enable the necessary arrangements to be made to set an appropriate budget or level of facilities time for the next financial year.