

Classification: Open	Decision Type: Non-Key
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date: 15 October 2025
Subject:	Schools Finance Team Phased Reduction	
Report of	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation	

Summary

1. Schools in Bury were initially slow to academise, but there has been a significant increase in the rate of conversion over the last 18 months. As of June 2025, there were 32 maintained schools and 52 academies. Further conversions are in the pipeline with dates to be confirmed.
2. The schools finance team deliver the finance SLA to maintained schools and some academies. The senior schools finance officer manages the team, produces the schools budget and completes statutory reporting requirements in relation to schools and the Dedicated Schools Grant.
3. Due to the reduction in workload and loss of SLA income following academy conversions, the proposal is to phase down the schools finance team through accepting voluntary early retirement applications and to incorporate the statutory/residual work into the Children's and Young People Finance Team.

Recommendation(s)

4. Agree the deletions of the following posts within the schools finance team through accepting voluntary early retirement applications, support the payment of voluntary early retirement and capital costs associated and commend this proposal to Council for their agreement:
 - Schools finance officer proposed end date 31 October 2025.
 - Senior schools finance officer proposed end date 30 June 2026.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

5. The proposed phase down approach of reducing the schools finance team is to ensure that the forecast schools buy back SLA income covers the cost of providing the service to maintained schools.

Alternative options considered and rejected

6. None

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Background

7. The schools finance team deliver the Finance SLA to maintained schools and some academies. The seniors schools finance officer manages the team, produces the schools budget and completes statutory reporting requirements in relation to schools and the Dedicated Schools Grant.
8. Schools in Bury were initially slow to academise, but there has been a significant increase in the rate of conversion over the last 18 months. As of June 2025, there were 32 maintained schools and 52 academies. Further conversions are in the pipeline with dates to be confirmed.

Year	No. Converted	New Schools	Cumulative No. Academies	Remaining Maintained Schools	Total
2011	1		1	81	82
2012	0		1	81	82
2013	0		1	81	82
2014	2		3	79	82
2015	1		4	78	82
2016	0		4	78	82
2017	5		9	73	82
2018	4		13	69	82
2019	7		20	62	82
2020	5		25	57	82
2021	1		26	56	82
2022	3		29	53	82
2023	4		33	49	82
2024	13	2	48	36	84
2025	4	0	52	32	84
2025 - forecast	5	0	57	27	84
2026 - forecast	10	0	67	17	84

9. Included in the forecast above are:

2025 – Autumn Term

- Two confirmed high school conversions.
- Two primary school conversions, applications already submitted to DfE.
- One further primary school conversion, as indicated by school and Trust.

2026

The five remaining Catholic primary schools to convert May 2026, as indicated by the Trust and five further primary school conversions forecast, based on the recent rate of conversions, and discussions taking place.

Proposal

10. Due to the reduction in workload and loss of SLA income following academy conversions, the proposal is to phase down the schools finance team and to incorporate statutory/residual work into the wider CYP Finance Team.
11. There is opportunity for the schools statutory work to be absorbed within the proposed finance restructure, whilst retaining one school finance officer post to continue to provide finance support to maintained schools that have not converted.

Post	Grade	F.T.E.	Top of Grade £	On-Cost £	TOTAL £
Senior Schools Finance Officer	16	1.00	£53,460	£17,693	£71,153
Schools Finance Officer	12	1.00	£44,075	£14,456	£58,531
Schools Finance Officer	12	1.00	£44,075	£14,456	£58,531
Schools Finance Officer	12	1.00	£44,075	£14,456	£58,531
Schools Finance Support Officer	6	1.00	£25,989	£8,216	£34,205
TOTAL		5.00	£211,674	£69,277	£280,951

12. In addition to the academisations, is the finance restructure & transformation programme, as a result, the senior schools finance officer, 2x schools finance officers and the schools finance support officer will be surplus to requirements over the coming 18 months.
13. The tables below show the forecast schools buy back SLA income reducing and the need to reduce staffing cost, otherwise the service will be unable to recover costs.

Service Level Agreement	2024-25 Actual	2025-26 Forecast	2026-27 Forecast
Full School Finance Support	£246,390	£150,320	£98,900
Basic Reports	£1,920	£1,280	£660
School Bank Accounts	£3,400	£2,650	£1,760
TOTAL	£251,710	£154,250	£101,320

Current Establishment Cost

Schools Finance Team Posts	2024-25 Actual	2025-26 Forecast	2026-27 Forecast	2027-28 Forecast
Schools Finance Officer *	£43,574	£0	£0	£0
Schools Finance Support Officer *	£32,045	£34,205	£0	£0
Schools Finance Officer *	£44,540	£46,825	£0	£0
Schools Finance Officer	£55,252	£58,531	£58,531	£0
Schools Finance Officer	£55,675	£58,531	£58,531	£58,531
TOTAL	£231,086	£198,092	£117,062	£58,531

Schools SLA Over/(Under) Recovery	£20,624	(£43,842)	(£15,742)	
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Proposed Establishment Cost with Phasing Down

Schools Finance Team Posts	Proposed End Date	2024-25 Actual	2025-26 Forecast	2026-27 Forecast	2027-28 Forecast
Schools Finance Officer *	31-Dec-24	£43,574	£0	£0	£0
Schools Finance Support Officer *	30-Sept-25	£32,045	£17,103	£0	£0
Schools Finance Officer *	31-Oct-25	£44,540	£27,314	£0	£0
Schools Finance Officer	31-Dec-26	£55,252	£58,531	£43,898	£0
Schools Finance Officer		£55,675	£58,531	£58,531	£58,531
TOTAL		£231,086	£161,479	£102,429	£58,531

Schools SLA Over/(Under) Recovery	£20,624	(£7,229)	(£1,109)	
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Note:

- One Schools Finance Officer left the Council on the 31 December 2024 and the Schools Finance Support Officer left the Council on the 30 September 2025.
- One schools finance officer post is 0.8 FTE due to secondment to Unison one day per week, however, the substantive post is full-time.

Voluntary Early Retirement

14. Applications for Voluntary Early Retirement, with severance, have been received from two members of the schools finance team, with a further member of staff indicating they would be interested in applying. The proposed end date for each post is shown in the establishment costs tables above.

Financial Implications

15. The proposal is to phase down the schools finance team as set out in the above tables and the estimated exit cost implications are set out below, exit costs will be funded through a combination of the capital pension allowance and the flexible use of capital receipts, acknowledging those exit costs over £100k require Cabinet and Council approval.

Post	Proposed End Date	Estimated Exit Cost	3 Years Salary Cost
Schools Finance Officer	31-Oct-25	£112,729	£175,593
Schools Senior Finance Officer	30-Jun-26	£146,101	£213,459
Schools Finance Officer	TBC	TBC	£175,593
TOTAL		£258,830	£564,645

Links with the Corporate Priorities:

16. These proposals seek to support the Council in ensuring it has the right structure and capacity in place to deliver against the Corporate Plan and LET'S Do It Strategy going forwards.

Equality Impact and Considerations:

17. The proposals do not affect Council policy and are delivered within the scope of the agreed Voluntary Exits Policy which has been subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment.

Environmental Impact and Considerations:

18. No negative impacts identified.

Assessment and Mitigation of Risk:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
The proposed changes remove capacity and experience necessary to organisational delivery	The proposed departure dates and future structural arrangements have been designed to mitigate this risk.

Legal Implications:

19. The Supplementary Guidance (Openness and Accountability in Local Pay) supplements the existing pay accountability guidance published in February 2012 made under section 40 of the Localism Act 2011. Requires Local

Authorities to present to Council for approval, details of any severance package paid to an officer where the value of the package exceeds £100,000.00.

Financial Implications:

20. The estimated capital costs of £258,830 will be funded through a combination of the capital pension allowance and the flexible use of capital receipts, that can support redundancy costs where service transformation and financial savings are achieved. There will be no further direct impact on the Council's general fund budget from this decision.

Appendices:

None

Background papers:

None

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning