**Schools Forum Agenda**

Wednesday 12th July 2023, **Microsoft Teams**

**8.30am start**; break **9.40am** finish by **11am**.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Author | Voting / Relevance | Page |
| 1 | Apologies for Absence (and substitute notices) | Chair |  | 2 |

**Decision Papers**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2 | High Needs Block Surplus | Ralph Holloway | All schools | 3 |
| 3 | Schools Contribution to Capital Maintenance | Lisa Freshwater | Maintained Schools | 9 |
| 4 | Early Years Funding 2023/24 | Carolyn Terry | All schools | 13 |
| 5 | Falling Rolls Fund | Yannick Stupples-Whyley | All schools | 19 |

**Forum Business**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 6 | Any other business, feedback from schools through Associations and from Schools Forum representatives on other Bodies | Chair | All schools | 22 |
| 7 | Minutes of 17th May 2023 | Chair | All schools | 32 |
| 8 | Minutes Action Log | Yannick Stupples-Whyley | All schools | 49 |

**Information Papers for Discussion**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 9 | Schools Budget & Education Functions Q1 Forecast Outturn 2023-24 | Yannick Stupples-Whyley | All schools | 50 |
| 10 | Forward Plan | Yannick Stupples-Whyley | All schools | 55 |

**Closing Comments**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 11 | Closing Comments | Chair |  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Schools Forum | **Agenda Item 1** |
| Date: 12 July 2023 |  |

Apologies for Absence

Please remember to mute your microphone when you are not speaking.

Anyone attending Schools Forum as an observer must stay silent throughout the meeting.

The professional headteacher representatives for EPHA, ASHE or ESSET are observers unless they are substituting for a headteacher or governor who cannot attend. Whilst observing they can only ask a question via a Forum member.

To ask a question or to comment on a paper please use the raise hand function. If you cannot use this function, please use the meeting chat.

The meeting chat will also be used for voting purposes. Please type:

* + Yes, if you agree the recommendation,
  + No, if you do not agree the recommendation
  + Abstain, if you do not wish to vote

The agenda and papers will not be shared on screen.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Schools Forum | **Agenda Item 2** |
| Date: 12 July 2023 |  |

**REPORT TITLE: HIGH NEEDS BLOCK SURPLUS BALANCE**

Report by Ralph Holloway

Contact details: Telephone (03330 322691); e-mail: ralph.holloway@essex.gov.uk

**1. Purpose of report**

* 1. To inform Schools Forum of the surplus balance and medium term forecast for the High Needs Block.
  2. To seek Schools Forum approval for a one-off allocation of funds for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 That Schools Forum notes the accumulative forecast balance and the medium term forecast for the high needs block.

2.2 That Schools Forum approves the one-off allocations from the surplus balance at 4.10 to 4.14.

###### 3. Relevant Schools Forum Power and Responsibility

3.1 **Table 1** is an extract from the Schools Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide (September 2018), which sets out the role of the Authority, Schools Forum and the Secretary of State in setting the Schools Budget.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Function | Local authority | Schools forum | DfE role |
| Formula change (including redistributions) | Proposes and decides | Must be consulted | Checks for compliance with regulations |
| Central spend on high needs block provision | Decides | None, but good practice to inform forum | None |

###### 4. Background

4.1 A £13.5 million surplus in the High Needs Block was carried forward into the 2023/24 financial year. Table 2 shows the position of the high needs block since 2018/19.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2018/19  £’000 | 2019/20  £’000 | 2020/21  £’000 | 2021/22  £’000 | 2022/23  £’000 |
| Opening Balance | 2,840 | 2,810 | 10,132 | 5,950 | (3,019) |
| Outturn | 139,075 | 152,533 | 157,861 | 171,996 | 192,397 |
| Funding | (139,105) | (140,932) | (162,043) | (180,965) | (202,853) |
| In-Year deficit / (surplus) | (30) | 11,601 | (4,182) | (8,969) | (10,456) |
| Transfer from SB | 0 | (4,279) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Closing Balance | **2,810** | **10,132** | **5,950** | **(3,019)** | **(13,475)** |

4.2 The latest forecast position for the High Needs Block, as detailed in Agenda Item 9, for 2023/24 is a £10.3 million underspend. There is an accumulative forecast surplus of £23.8 million at 31st March 2024.

4.3 The High Needs Review Group were presented with draft proposals at their meeting on 20th June 2023 shown in Table 3 below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | £m |
| Overall balance | 23.8 |
|  |  |
| 5% Contingency | 10.0 |
| 5% top up funding (special, mainstream, EP and AP) | 3.1 |
| £500 place funding increase (special, enhanced provisions and PRUs) | 2.4 |
| Inclusion Framework | 2.0 |
| Outreach offer (£500K per quadrant) | 2.0 |
| Training | 0.6 |
| Unallocated | 3.7 |

4.4 These proposals required the full financial implications to be assessed as the funding must be containable within the medium term forecast for the high needs block.

4.5 Table 4 shows the impact upon the medium term forecast if the above plans were implemented on an ongoing basis.



4.6 The highlighted yellow cells show the estimated annual increase in expenditure and the highlighted orange cells show the estimated increase in income. Sensitivity analysis has been undertaken and Tables 4 and 6 are presented at the middle point.

4.7 Chart 1 shows how over time the percentage increase in income falls, whilst the percentage increase in expenditure grows.

4.8 If the Authority went ahead and implemented the plans it is forecast that a **£39.9 million** deficit would occur by 31st March 2029. The implication of such a large deficit is that the Authority would need to seek financial help from the Department for Education (DfE) through the Safety Valve scheme but this would require the Authority to make significant cuts to expenditure. A usual condition of financial help is an annual transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. Any planned overspend would require the approval of the Authority’s Section 151 Officer as the deficit will sit on Essex’s balance sheet.

4.9 The current annual cycle of one year budget settlements hinders long-term planning. The Authority recognises pressures within the system and therefore plans to implement the following one-off changes for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

4.10 Ahead of the introduction of the financial elements of the new banding top up system in Essex the priority for investment of the surplus is an immediate uplift in the SEN funding going into Essex settings to support children and young people with an EHCP. A 5% uplift is proposed for top up in special schools, mainstream schools, enhanced provisions and alternative provisions (PRUs) for 2023/24 and 2024/25. The uplift cannot be guaranteed to continue beyond 31st March 2025.

4.11 Special schools, enhanced provisions and alternative provisions will receive up to £500 per pupil depending on the balance held by each setting. The increase is for 2023/24 and 2024/25 and further funding cannot be guaranteed to continue beyond 31st March 2025.

* Schools with less than 210 pupil whose balance is 8% or lower or up to £60,000, whichever is the greater, receive £500 per pupil.
* Schools with more than 210 pupils who have a balance of 8% or lower (5% or lower for secondary schools) receive £500 per pupil.
* Schools with balances above 8% (5% secondary) but below 20% receive £250 per pupil.
* Schools with balances above 20% receive no increase.

4.12 Work is currently underway through ASHE, EPHA, ESSET and the Essex PRUs to develop a programme of outreach support for mainstream schools. An initial funding allocation of £1 million for the 2023/24 academic year is proposed, increasing to £2 million for 2024/25. Further funding cannot be guaranteed beyond 2024/25. A further paper will be brought to Schools Forum in the Autumn term setting out the proposals developed through the current work.

4.13 There was discussion at the High Needs Review Group about whether funding should be allocated to SEN Support and/or the Notional SEN budgets of individual schools. Given the number of children and young people identified at SEN Support (approximately 23,000) this would spread any increase very thinly. In order to greater incentivise inclusion and earlier intervention it is proposed to increase the funding available for Inclusion Framework projects from £1 million to £3 million for 2024/25 only. Further funding cannot be guaranteed beyond 31st March 2025. Concerns were shared about access and transparency and so it is proposed that to accompany the additional funding a more substantial paper on the Inclusion Framework is brought to the September meeting. This would set out how the funding is accessed, what kind of projects and be funded and how Schools Forum will be able to measure both the financial and wider benefits of the increased investment.

4.14 In order to support both the outreach offer and other work with the SEND workforce an investment of £0.6 million is proposed for 2024/25. This will enable sufficient capacity in the system to support the development of a skilled workforce across our settings and the LA. Further funding beyond 31st March 2025 cannot be guaranteed due to the one year funding cycle.

4.15 The funding will be revisited on an annual basis once the provisional funding settlement has been announced each July. The effectiveness of each plan will be reported to Schools Forum and if a plan is not achieving the desired outcomes, it will be ceased. Table 5 shows a summary of the funding for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2023/24  £’000 | 2024/25  £’000 |
| 5% increase to top-up funding | 3,100 | 3,100 |
| Up to £500 per pupil for settings in receipt of place funding. | 716 | 716[[1]](#footnote-1) |
| Inclusion Framework | 0 | 2,000 |
| Outreach | 1,000 | 2,000 |
| Training | 0 | 600 |
| Total | **4,816** | **8,416** |

4.16 The Authority also proposes to hold a 4%contingency to be held given the increasing pressure within Independent Schools. Table 5 shows this can be maintained through to 31st March 2027 but will be used to balance 2028/29.

4.17 Table 6 shows the impact of the proposals on the medium term forecast for the high needs block.



4.18 Whilst it can be seen an estimated surplus balance of **£14.7 million** will remain at the end of 2024/25 due to the uncertainty created by one year funding settlements, the Authority cannot commit at this stage to continue the proposals beyond 2024/25 as a potential deficit of **£11.4 million** could occur by 31st March 2029. The sensitivity analysis shows how a percentage change either way can significantly change the forecast and therefore caution is needed to ensure a deficit does not occur.

**5. Financial Implications**

5.1 The financial implications are embodied in the report.

**6. Other Resource Implications**

None

**7. Consultation with stakeholders**

7.1 The High Needs Review Group was consulted and approved the above proposals.

**8. Background / Supporting papers.**

None

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Schools Forum | **Agenda Item 3** |
| Date: 12 July 2023 |  |

**REPORT TITLE: SCHOOLS CONTRIBUTION TO CAPITAL MAINTENANCE**

Report by Lisa Freshwater

Contact details: Telephone (03330 321761); e-mail: lisa.freshwater@essex.gov.uk

**1. Purpose of report**

* 1. To seek approval of Schools Forum to increase the current contribution from £40 per pupil to £50 per pupil, using a tiered approach dependant on each school’s revenue balance.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 For maintained school members to agree the recommendation of the Finance Review Group (FRG) to increase in school contributions from £40 per pupil up to £50 per pupil, using the tiered approach at 4.5 from 1st April 2024.

###### 3. Relevant Schools Forum Power and Responsibility

3.1 **Table 1** is an extract from the Schools Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide (September 2018), which sets out the role of the Authority, Schools Forum and the Secretary of State in setting the Schools Budget.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Function | Local authority | Schools forum | DfE role |
| Capital expenditure funded by revenue | Proposes | Approves | Adjudicates where schools forum does not agree local authority proposal. |

###### 4. Background

4.1 Schools’ Forum agreed the contribution of £40 per pupil in 2014.

4.2 Essex County Council (ECC) has always sought contributions from schools towards the cost of school capital maintenance projects. The contribution applies when a capital maintenance project of a value greater than £10,000 is undertaken at a school.

4.3 The level of school contribution to capital maintenance cost has not changed since 2014. Therefore, the current apportionment of responsibility does not reflect inflation in building costs during that period.

4.4 Inflation averages 4.07% per year between 2014 and today, which means ECC is paying an additional **43.24%** on Capital projects compared to 2014.

4.5 It is proposed to use the DfE recommended level of revenue balances, as used in the balances criteria within the Falling Rolls Fund, to determine the contributions each school should make. The proposed tier approach is detailed below.

* Small primary schools with 210 pupils or fewer with revenue balances of £60,000 or up to 8%, whichever is the higher, will continue to contribute £40 per pupil.
* Primary schools with 211 pupils or more with revenue balances below 8% and secondary schools with revenue balances below 5%, will continue to contribute £40 per pupil.
* Schools with revenue balances above 8% (above 5% for secondary schools) but less than 20% will contribute £45 per pupil.
* Schools with revenue balances of 20% or higher will contribute £50 per pupil.

Revenue balances are shown as a percentage of the revenue budget allocation for the relevant financial year.

4.6 It is proposed to implement the new tiered approach from 1st April 2024.

**5. Financial Implications**

5.1 ECC are under continued pressure from reductions to capital budgets provided by the Department for Education. At the same time, the condition of the school estate continually depreciates, resulting in an increased maintenance liability

5.2 ECC receive an annual capital maintenance grant from the DfE and also bids for grant funding through Salix. This funding contributes towards the school building maintenance programme. The contributions from schools help the authority to undertake additional capital maintenance work. The school contribution (paid either from the School’s budget or Formula Capital Grant (FCG)) has always been a mechanism to achieve this objective

5.3 Annex A shows for each maintained school the indicative contribution payable based on balances at 31st March 2023. The actual contribution will be based on balances at 31st March 2024. Maintained voluntary aided schools are excluded from Annex A as the Authority is not responsible for capital maintenance for these schools.

5.4 Table 1 shows the impact on the average sized school for each level of contribution for the schools shown in Annex A.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | £40 per Pupil | £45 per Pupil | £50 per Pupil |
| Average – Primary | 218 pupil | 259 pupils | 282 pupils |
| Current contribution | £8,720 | £10,360 | £11,280 |
| Proposed contribution | £8,720 | £11,655 | £14,100 |
| Primary increase | £0 | £1,295 | £2,820 |
|  |  |  |  |
| Secondary | - | 1,220 pupils | - |
| Current contribution | - | £48,800 | - |
| Proposed contribution | - | £54,900 | - |
| Secondary increase | - | £6,100 | - |
|  |  |  |  |
| Average Special | 200 pupils | 176 pupils | 248 pupils |
| Current contribution | £8,000 | £7,040 | £9,920 |
| Proposed contribution | £8,000 | £7,920 | £12,400 |
| Special increase | £0 | £880 | £2,480 |

5.5 The Authority will treat each school individually. If the school advises they are struggling to pay due to urgent commitments, ECC will look to either spread the contribution over 2 years or postpone collection until the next financial year.

5.6 Table 2 shows the amount spent on capital maintenance and the sources of funding and Chart 1 shows the percentage split of the funding sources for school capital maintenance.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Year | Total Capital Maintenance Programme Spend | Salix Grant Funded | School Capital Allowance  (ECC Funded) | School Contributions |
| 2020/21 | £9,698,504 |  | £9,698,504 | £315,860 |
| 2021/22 | £10,061,567 | £2,391,032 | £7,670,535 | £359,632 |
| 2022/23 | £8,221,783 | £375,384 | £6,837,939 | £321,591 |
| Total | **£27,981,854** | **£2,766,416** | **£24,206,978** | **£997,083** |

**6. Other Resource Implications**

**7. Consultation with stakeholders**

**8. Background / Supporting papers.**

8.1 Annex A – Indicative school contributions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Schools Forum | **Agenda Item 4** |
| Date: 12 July 2023 |  |

**REPORT TITLE: EARLY YEARS FUNDING 2023-24**

Report by Carolyn Terry

Contact details: Telephone (03330 136481); e-mail: Carolyn.terry@essex.gov.uk

**1. Purpose of report**

* 1. To update Schools Forum on the outcome of the consultation with early years settings on the distribution of the former teachers pay and pension grants.
  2. To seek the support of Schools Forum to delegate the decision of increasing funding rates for early years settings to the Chair, Vice-Chair in consultation the two Early Years representatives.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 To agree to distribute the former teachers pay and pension grants via a Quality Supplement to all eligible schools.

2.2 To note the details of the additional funding from September 2023.

2.3 To agree to delegate the decision to increase funding rates for 2023/24 to the Chair and Vice-Chair of Schools Forum in consultation with the two early years representatives.

###### 3. Relevant Schools Forum Power and Responsibility

3.1 Table 1 shows the relevant responsibilities in relation to Early Years which is taken from the Education and Skills Funding Agency’s Schools forum powers and responsibilities published in September 2018.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Local Authority | Schools Forum | DfE |
| Early Years Funding Formula – Proposes and Decides | Must be consulted | Checks compliance with regulations. |
| Retained Expenditure - Proposes | Decides | Adjudicates where Schools Forum does not agree local authority proposal. |

###### 4. Background

4.1 Schools Forum approved the Authority consults with the early years sector on the proposal to use the Quality Supplement to enable schools with early years classes to continue to receive the former teachers pay and pension grants.

4.2 A short consultation was held between 22nd June and 6th July. The consultation detail is set out in Section 7.

4.3 The consultation received 46 responses and of these: -

* 46% agreed with the proposal – 21 responses
* 54% disagreed with the proposal – 25 responses

Table 2 shows a breakdown of the consultation response by sector type.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Setting | Yes | No |
| Day Nursery | 5 | 8 |
| Pre-School | 5 | 12 |
| Childminder | 8 | 4 |
| Maintained Nursery School | 0 | 0 |
| Maintained School Early Years | 2 | 1 |
| Academy Early Years | 1 | 0 |
| Total | **21** | **25** |

4.4 It can be seen in Table 2 the majority response is **not** in agreement with the proposal. However, of the 25 responses that disagreed with the proposal to use the Quality Supplement to enable schools with early years classes to continue to receive the former teachers pay and pension grants, there was not a clear outcome on how the funding should be distributed: -

* 1 response said the funding should be used to resolve other issues
* 6 responses said the funding should be used for all settings that employ teachers
* 18 responses said that the funding should be distributed to all settings

4.5 When taking all responses into consideration as follows: -

* 21 responses agreed with the proposal to use the 18 responses stated that the funding should be distributed to all settings
* 6 responses said that the funding should be distributed to all settings that employ teachers
* 1 response did not give a clear answer

the overall outcome of the consultation is the majority view is that the funding should be used as a Quality Supplement to enable schools with early years classes to continue to receive the former teachers pay and pension grants

4.6 The Government announced the details of the **£204 million** additional investment in the childcare sector on Friday 7th July. The funding is to help settings with pressures such as staffing costs, training and bills. The increased funding rates will be paid from September.

4.7 The average rate for three and four year olds increases from **£5.29** to **£5.62** and the average funding rate for two year increases from **£6.00** to **£7.95**.Table 3 shows the increased rates for Essex.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | April 2023 to August 2023  £ | September 2023 to March 2024  £ | Increase  £ | Increase  % |
| 2 year olds | 5.91 | 7.83 | 1.92 | 32.5 |
| 3 & 4 year olds | 5.05 | 5.36 | 0.31 | 6.1 |
| Maintained Nursery Schools Supplement | 3.80 | 4.01 | 0.21 | 5.5 |

4.8 The early years pupil premium will increase from **£0.62** to **£0.66** for eligible pupils from 1st September 2023. The Disability Access Fund increases from **£828** to **£881** for eligible pupils also from 1st September 2023.

4.9 Funding will be paid as a supplementary grant. The Authority is still waiting details of the total allocation which will be based on the January 2023 Census. Once this information is available the Authority will be able to calculate the rates payable to settings.

4.10 Early years settings, like schools, are struggling with the ongoing cost pressures caused by high inflation. The Authority would like to start paying the new rates from the beginning of the Autumn term to ensure settings receive the increased funding as soon as possible.

4.11 To enable this to happen requires Schools Forum to delegate authority to the Chair and Vice-Chair of Schools Forum in consultation with the two early years representatives to agree the Authority’s proposals.

4.12 From April 2024, eligible working parents of two year olds will receive a new offer of 15 free hours of childcare per week. From September 2024, eligible parents will receive 15 free hours of childcare per week for children aged 9 months until their children start school. This offer will increase to 30 free hours per week from September 2025.

4.13 Sixteen local authorities have been selected to work with the government to develop plans for the universal provision.

**5. Financial Implications**

5.1 Funding rates will be increased within the funding envelope to ensure the Early Years Block remains in a surplus balance.

**6. Other Resource Implications**

**7. Consultation with stakeholders**

**7.1** Essex Schools Forum and Essex County Council are undertaking a consultation with all Essex Funded Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) providers on the allocation of the Teachers’ Pay and Pensions Grant from the 2023 / 24 Financial Year that forms part of the Early Years Block

**This consultation is open until 5pm on Thursday 6 July 2023**

**Context**

Eligible schools have received Teachers’ Pay Grant from 2018 and Teachers’

Pension Employer Contribution Grant from 2019 to help meet the increased costs arising from the Teachers’ pay awards and higher employer pension contributions. Schools which provide FEEE provision for 3 and 4 year olds have historically received a separate grant from the Department for Education (DfE) in the form of a Teachers’ Pay and Pension Grants (TPPG).

This funding was distributed directly to the qualifying schools based on the number of eligible pupils and was not included in the hourly rates

From the start of this 2023-24 financial year, the Government ceased these

separate grants and passed the funding on to Local Authorities through the Early Years National Funding Formula (EYNFF). As a result of this change, there is no guarantee that schools will get the same level of funding allocated to them as under the TPGG. The DfE encourages local authorities to use the quality supplement so that funding can be targeted at the providers that have the additional pressures from teachers’ pay and pension costs.

From analysis of the funding distributed from last year’s TPPG a total of £654,167 was paid to 96 eligible  schools, as follows: -

* Between £755 and £24,279 per year, an average of £6,815.00 / school for the year
* Between £129.76 and £185.36 per child, an average of £181.82 / child for the year

This level of funding equates to £22.80 per full time FEEE 15 hour place over 38 weeks, or an average of £7.60 per term.

Both Essex Schools Forum (SF) and Essex County Council (ECC) are committed to ensuring that, as far as they are able to, no part of the early years sector will receive less funding that it has previously been allocated, irrespective of whether it is a Private, Voluntary or Independent (PVI) or maintained setting. This approach means that all parts of the early years sector will continue to receive funding in the same way, without any reductions.

Therefore, Essex Schools Forum and ECC are proposing to continue to ring fence this funding for the purpose in which it was originally introduced and continue to make payments to the qualifying schools via a quality supplement.

This consultation asks for you to confirm if you agree with this approach.

**Questions Asked**

**Q** Do you agree that the TPPG should be paid via a quality supplement ring fenced to the qualifying schools, as set out above?

**Q** If you answered Yes, please tell us why

* I do not believe that any part of the early years sector should receive less funding than it has previously been allocated, irrespective of whether it is a Private, Voluntary or Independent (PVI) or maintained setting
* Other

**Q** If you answered No, please tell us why

* I don’t agree the funding should be used for its original purpose and think the funding should be distributed to all early years settings offering Funded Early Education Entitlement (FEEE)
* I agree the funding should be used to support the higher costs of teachers pay and pensions, but think this should be distributed to any early years setting that employs a qualified teacher and is offering FEEE
* Other

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Schools Forum | **Agenda Item 5** |
| Date: 20 June 2023 |  |

**REPORT TITLE: FALLING ROLLS FUND**

Report by Yannick Stupples-Whyley

Contact details: Telephone (03330 138464); e-mail: yannick.stupples-whyley@essex.gov.uk

**1. Purpose of report**

1.1 To present to Schools Forum an additional application received for the Falling Rolls Fund.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 To agree the recommendation of the Finance Review Group that Finchingfield Academy receives Falling Rolls funding for 2023/24.

2.2 To approve the Falling Rolls Fund is increased by **£58,000** to be funded from the Schools Block underspend in 2022/23.

###### 3. Relevant Schools Forum Power and Responsibility

3.1 **Table 1** is an extract from the Schools Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide (September 2018), which sets out the role of the Authority, Schools Forum and the Secretary of State for the Falling Rolls Fund.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Function | Local authority | Schools forum | DfE role |
| Central spend on and the criteria for allocating funding from:   * funding for good or outstanding schools with [falling rolls](#_Falling_rolls_fund) where growth in pupil numbers is expected within three years | Proposes | Decides | Adjudicates where schools forum does not agree local authority proposal |

###### 4. Background

4.1 Schools Forum approved the revised criteria for the Falling Rolls Fund at the meeting on 11 January 2023 and the balances criteria at the meeting on 17 May 2023.

4.2 The Authority contacted all schools that met the mandatory Ofsted rating and the falling rolls criteria. Each school was sent a proforma to complete and details of the falling rolls fund. Table 2 shows the schools that were contacted and those that have made a subsequent application.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| School Contacted | Application Submitted |
| Cherry Tree Academy | No |
| Clavering Primary | Yes |
| Doddinghurst Junior | Yes |
| Felsted Primary | No |
| Finchingfield Academy | **Yes** |
| Holt Farm Infant | Yes |
| Monkwick Infant | No |
| Prettygate Infant | Yes |
| St Andrew’s CE Primary, Marks Tey | Yes |
| St Margaret’s CE Primary, Bowers Gifford | No |
| St Mary’s CE Primary, Hatfield Broad Oak | Yes |
| The Alderton Junior School | Yes |
| Wethersfield CE Primary | Yes |
| Wimbish Primary | Yes |

4.3 The following information has been received from Finchingfield Primary to support their application.



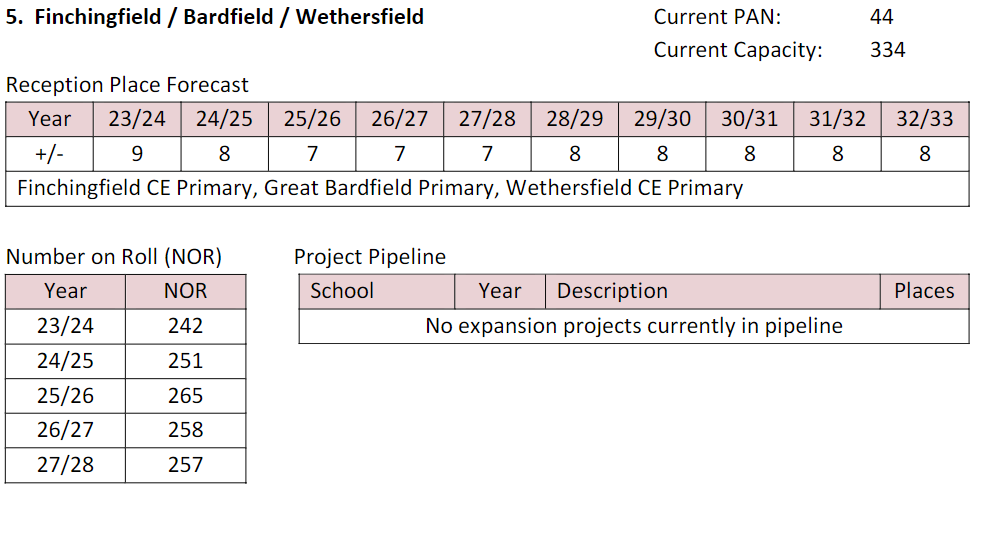


Table 3 shows the funding for 2023/24 and indicative funding for future years based on the school’s pupil forecasts.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Total Pupils Funded | £ |
| 2023/24 | 17 | 57,554 |
| 2024/25 | 24 | 81,252 |
| 2025/26 | 28 | 94,794 |
| 2026/27 | 30 | 101,565 |
| 2027/28 | 30 | 101,565 |

4.4 The school is rated Good by Ofsted with the last recorded inspection in October 2017. The school had a surplus balance at 31st August 2022, but is forecasting to close the 2022/23 academic year with a deficit balance of £48,000 and has submitted a copy of their management accounts. The NOR is forecast to increase in October 2024 and in subsequent years

The school has recently had a change in leadership, as it has appointed an Executive Headteacher who has a track record of exceptional leadership at Stisted Primary Academy, a successful and outstanding small rural school. Additionally, a new Head of School has been appointed to aid Finchingfield Academy in becoming the preferred choice for parents in the local community. There are also 50 new houses recently built and the Pupil Place Planning team estimates this will result in 15 children requiring school places.

The school meets the requirement of the falling rolls fund and it is recommended that the application is approved.

**5. Financial Implications**

5.1 Schools Forum approved expenditure of **£542,000** at the May meeting.

5.2 Table 3 shows the funding that will be paid to the school and the revised total for the falling rolls fund.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| School | 2023/24  £ | 2024/25  £ | 2025/26  £ | 2026/27  £ | 2027/28  £ |
| Finchingfield Academy | 57,554 | 81,252 | 94,794 | 101,565 | 101,565 |
| Previously Approved | 541,682 | 754,978 | 687,268 | 402,885 | 301,320 |
| Total | **599,236** | **836,230** | **782,062** | **504,450** | **402,885** |

5.3 The budget has been set at £542,000 so is insufficient to fund the additional cost. Forum will recall from the last meeting within the Schools Block carry forward **£685,000** related to an increased allocation for the growth fund. At the last meeting Forum agreed to use **£76,000** to increase the funding for the Falling Rolls Fund. The Authority proposes to use a further **£58,000** to increase the Falling Rolls Fund to account for the addition of Finchingfield Academy.

**6. Other Resource Implications**

**7. Consultation with stakeholders**

**8. Background / Supporting papers.**

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| Schools Forum | **Agenda Item 6** |
| Date: 12 July 2023 |  |

Any Other Business and Feedback from Associations and Other Forum Members

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| Schools Forum | **Agenda Item 6a** |
| Date: 12 July 2023 |  |

**High Needs Review Group Minutes of 20th June 2023**

**Microsoft Teams**

**09:00 – 09:59**

*(subject to approval)*

In Attendance

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Jeff Fair (JF) – Chair | Ruth Bird (RB) | Rod Lane (RL) |
| Sue Bardetti (SB) | Simon Wall (SW) | John Hunter (JH) |
| Jo Barak (JB) | Emily Welton (EW) | Scott Bowak (SBk) |
| C Herman (CH) | Philomena Cozens (PC) | Pam Langmead (PL) |
| Luke Bulpett (LB) |  |  |
| **LA Officers** |  |  |
| Ralph Holloway (RH) | Yannick Stupples-Whyley (YSW) |  |

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| **1** | **Apologies for Absence and substitute notices**  Jeff Fair chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone.  Apologies had been received from:  Harriet Phelps-Knights |
| **2** | **High Needs Block Surplus (Ralph Holloway)**  RH introduced the report outlining the plans that invests in the system but also helping to build a sustainable high needs block for the future.  YSW stated the financial position of a £13.5m carry forward and a forecast outturn of a £10.3m underspend.  RH stated that it was crucial not to commit money we do not have so that in 2 years we have to seek a schools block transfer.  **Questions**  JB stated we do not get it. We get a flat rate from send DOPS for our pathways. We don't get any additional money for Children in our cohort with an EHCP.  PC added pupils were now staying up to 3 years and that there is a question that they should get top-up funding.  PC asked if it applied to special schools.  RH responded it applies to all settings that get place funding.  PL asked about children on SEN support in relation to the notional SEN.  RH stated there are 23,000 children so the funding would be spread out very thinly.  PL responded it was about the potential to recalibrate the notional SEN for small schools.  RH responded it could be looked at.  EW stated that as there was still £3.8m unallocated that more could be spent on early intervention.  RH responded that the inclusion framework, outreach offer and training were all intended as early intervention.  CH stated that the inclusion framework had not been communicated well.  RH suggested a paper goes to Schools Forum.  SB raised the issue of not getting funding for pupils who join at census day.  RH responded that the high needs block cannot supplement AWPU funding.  JH stated that something needs reviewing to see the dynamic of it.  JB asked when the increases would be received. RH responded September.  JF asked for clarification on the outreach money. Is it £2m or an extra £2m.  RH clarified outreach is new so it is £2 million.  PC raised concerns with the growth in permanent exclusions and outreach support.  RH responded it can be discussed at alternative provision meeting at 12.30pm.  EW added that ESSET were in the process of putting together an outreach programme for schools.  RB suggested £800,000 be added to the outreach budget, leaving £3m unallocated.  JF summarised the proposals and asked for an indication if members supported the proposals. |
| **3.** | **Closing Comments (Jeff Fair)**  JF thanked everyone for attending. |

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| Schools Forum | **Agenda Item 6b** |
| Date: 12 July 2023 |  |

**Finance Review Group Minutes of 20th June 2023**

**Microsoft Teams**

**11:00 – 11.42**

*(subject to approval)*

In Attendance

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Jeff Fair (JF) – Chair | Ruth Bird (RB) | Rod Lane (RL) |
| John Hunter (JH) | Carole Herman (CH) | Nigel Hill (NH) |
| Sean Moriarty (SM) | Sue Bardetti (SB) | Pam Langmead (PL) |
| **LA Officers** |  |  |
| Clare Kershaw (CK) | Yannick Stupples-Whyley (YSW) | Lisa Freshwater (LF) |

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| **1** | **Apologies for Absence and substitute notices**  Ruth Bird chaired the meeting until Jeff Fair joined and welcomed everyone.  Apologies had been received from:  Harriet Phelps-Knights |
| **2** | **Schools Contribution to Capital Maintenance (Lisa Freshwater)**  LF introduced the report outlining the plan to introduce a tier approach to maintained schools contributing to capital maintenance based on the revenue balance held by each school as a percentage of their revenue funding.  **Questions**  PL asked where the funding spent on capital maintenance comes from.  LF responded the Authority receives an annual capital maintenance grant from the DfE. The Authority can also bid for grant funding from Salix for any work on heat carbonisation, solar energy or LED lighting.  CK stated that costs are often higher than the grant funding and that LF also has to manage emergency work that is not planned. It is fair to say we can never do capital maintenance work as quickly as headteachers want us to.  PL asked a question concerning the balances of small schools on whether there was any protection for small schools.  YSW replied that the criteria could replicate that used for the falling rolls fund.  CK stated that we should be replicating the falling rolls fund and that it was an omission on our part.  YSW replied that the criteria for small schools would be changed to 8% or £60,000 whichever is the greater.  YSW stated that the maintained schools listed in Annex A excluded VA schools as the Authority is not responsible for capital maintenance for these schools.  SM thanked YSW for pointing that out and asked if the maths were affected by taking 3 large secondary schools out of the calculation.  NH stated it was right to change the implementation date to April 2024.  NH asked if a project starts in two years, will the balances be recalculated at that time. LF responded yes.  **Recommendations**:  For FRG to recommend that Schools Forum approves an increase in school contributions from £40 per pupil up to £50 per pupil, using the tiered approach at 4.5  FRG approved the recommendation |
| **3.** | **Falling Rolls Fund (Yannick Stupples-Whyley)**  YSW outlined the application received from Finchingfield Academy for falling rolls funding. The school meets all the criteria and the Authority recommends the application is approved.  **Questions**  There were no questions.  **Recommendations**:  To approve the application presented at 4.3 and to recommend that Schools Forum approves Finchingfield Academy receives Falling Rolls funding for 2023/24.  FRG approved the recommendation. |
| **4.** | **School and Academy Balances (Yannick Stupples-Whyley)**  YSW introduced the paper. Following on from the recommendation from Schools Forum the paper recommends that the review looks at schools with historic balances of 30% or higher.  **Questions**  JF stated that looking at historic balances strikes him as being politically much stronger.  CK stated it would help with the messaging around the pandemic. Depending on the information that comes back Forum can determine if it wants to ask further questions. This is a strong starting point.  RB declared a conflict of interest as she is associated with one of the schools listed in Annex A.  PL raised the proposed letter at Annex B in terms of softening it a little bit.  SM agreed with PL’s suggestions and added a couple of further suggestions to make the letter read better.  CK suggested that we take away the letter and a revised version will be circulated for comments and hopefully sign off.  **Recommendations**:  To agree the schools to be included in the review of school balances at Table 2.  To agree the letter to be sent to schools (Annex B).  Noting that the letter would be changed and circulated for agreement, FRG approved both recommendations. |
| **5.** | **Any Other Business (Jeff Fair)**  None |
| **6.** | **Closing Comments (Jeff Fair)**  JF thanked everyone for attending and looked forward to seeing everyone at July’s Forum meeting. |

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| Schools Forum | **Agenda Item 6c** |
| Date: 12 July 2023 |  |

**School Forum Early Years Sub-group**

**MINUTES**

**Thursday 15th June 2023**

**7.00pm to 8.30pm**

**Via TEAMS**

**Attended**

Carolyn Terry, Yannick Stupples-Whyley & Sandie Leader – ECC

Rod Lane –Schools Forum

19 attendees – see list below

**Apologies**

* Linda Reynolds – Home from Home Childcare Harlow
* Ruth Bird – Schools Forum

**Review of minutes and action log**

Minutes agreed as accurate, actions completed.

**Action**: Sandie to follow up on 2 providers who expressed an interest in joining

**Schools Forum meeting feedback – 17th May 2023**

Shared current issues facing the sector and the Childcare reforms. EY surplus spend was agreed and evaluation of spend discussed.

**Early Years items discussed**

* Result of survey for meeting days/times – No definitive day or time expressed by responses to survey. Tuesday am 11 votes and Thursday eve 10 votes. Decision made to remain as is for this year and review for next financial year as dates are set.

**Action:** Review meeting days/times for next financial year in January 2024

* SEND Ops – Maggie Richmond Preschool, has experienced delay in EHCP as a result no school place was offered. Issue has been resolved now.

General census of group; settings are struggling to access support from IPs. Often support is in the form of being sent a link to training or website and not personal face to face.

All EY sectors are seeing an increase in children with emerging or transitional needs due to COVID. Increase in assessment of need for children is across the county. Not a consistent approach to support offered across quadrants. Recruitment pressures are across all sectors – EPs & Ips.

Carolyn stated that ECC have recruited to the new roles and should have all 4 posts operational during September. It is hope that these roles will be able to support with some of the issues raised.

Paperwork for EHCP is onerous for EY settings. Carolyn said that it is hoped the new Transition Funding being introduced for summer 2024 will encourage schools and EY settings to apply to support with transition. May alleviate the need for an ECHNA. One setting is documenting time spent completing paperwork to support children with SEND.

Settings are attending SENCO meetings but still difficult to know how to support children. Could teachers from specialist schools deliver support sessions and practical help as have first-hand experience. Carolyn stated that the provision and capacity of specialist schools is under review but could take this back to be considered.

Pressures from outside agencies resulting in delay of S23 being issued. Conflicting messages from agencies is not very helpful.

Parents push for EHCP as feel will have more choice of school. This is not necessarily the case as will depend on what is included on EHCP. Parental expectation needs to be managed sensitively.

**Action:** Carolyn to discuss whether teachers from specialist schools could offer support sessions and practical help to EY settings

**Early Years Updates**

* Budget reforms – ECC meeting with DfE and have requested that guidance to be issued as soon as possible, DfE have said further guidance should be published in a couple of weeks. LA have started to plan for reforms and will share any information as soon as we can in the autumn term.

Uplift of funding from September hope to be informed of funding amount in July. Once received funding rates for the autumn 23 and spring 24 terms will be reviewed.

Roll out of wraparound care, schools anxious about this. Have asked if provision can be 3rd party on school site or does it have to be school delivering.

Q: Will the change in ratios have an impact on the FEEE contract?

A: No, the change in ratio is voluntary as part of the EYFS and a decision to be made by individual settings.

Setting have had an influx of expression of interest from parents for childcare from April 2024.

ECC will be looking at what comms can be made available for parents to support with expectations and meeting the criteria.

* EYR block underspend –proposals to Schools Forum all agreed.
* Recruitment & Retention – Essex School website has been renamed to include EY in title. Comms sent to inform EY setting can apply for 12-month free membership so would encourage providers to sign up and advertise vacancies so that they are all in one place.
* SEN Top up funding review – Briefing sessions all completed. Will be sending out the PowerPoint, draft operational guidance, draft application form and recording of briefing.
* TPPG consultation – Consultation has been agreed by Schools Forum and will be sent out to funded providers next week. Responses from survey will be reviewed at Schools Forum meeting in July.
* New Early Years and Childcare Strategy – Year 2 Priorities big ticket items are SEND offer, Recruitment & Retention, GLD data & analysis. Childcare reforms have been introduced as a new workstream.
* Budget update – No change from May meeting as awaiting final funding position from DfE in July.

**Items to take to the Essex Schools Forum 12th July 2023**

Nothing specific raised to take to meeting

**AOB**

* Insurance – has anyone seen a significant increase in renewal premium quotes?

EY Alliance has stayed the same. Dot to Dot only a small increase.

**Date of next meeting –** 7th September via TEAMs 7.00-8.30pm

**Future dates –** 2nd November, and 7th December

**Attendees**

Annalei Smith Roydon Preschool

Chanel Lassman Safari Childcare / Safari Childcare Preschool

Claire Macklin Christ Church Preschool

Gaynor Baker Buzzee Beez Preschool

Kelly Buzzee Beez Preschool

Helen Hill Oakey Dokeys Pre school

Lisa Rozee Roydon Preschool

Michelle Wisbey Westwood Montessori

Ruth Edwards The Treehouse Forestry Nursery & OOS

Helen Taylor Tiddlywinks Preschool

Catherine Hamilton Little Sunbeams

Maggie Catmull Richmond Preschool

Sharlin Paul Star Bright Day Nursery

Dawn Saunders Wivenhoe Park Day Nursery

Zoe Orr Harwich Connexions Noahs Nursery

Tina Carnegie-Dielhenn Whipper-snappers Daycare Nursery

Rhiannon Dyson Treetops Preschool

Angie Owen Tolleshunt D'Arcy Preschool

Sam Cottrill The Colourwheel Montessori

**Action Log**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Action | Action for | Date to be completed | Action completed |
| Contact 2 providers who expressed an interest in joining sub-group | Sandie | Next meeting |  |
| Review meeting days/times for next financial year | Sandie | January 2024 |  |
| Discuss whether teachers from specialist schools could offer support sessions and practical help to EY settings | Carolyn | Next meeting |  |

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| Schools Forum | **Agenda Item 7** |
| Date: 12 July 2023 |  |

**Schools Forum Meeting Minutes of 17th May 2023**

**held at Chelmsford City Racecourse, CM3 1QP**

**8.30 – 11.24**

*(subject to forum approval)*

In Attendance

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ruth Bird (RB) - Chair | Jo Barak (JB) | Luke Bulpett (LB) |
| Jeff Fair (JF) | Carole Herman (CH) | Marilyn Smith (MS) |
| Sean Moriarty (SM) | Debs Watson (DW) | Chanel Lassman (CL) |
| John Hunter (JH) | Sue Bardetti (SB) | Stuart Roberts (SR) |
| Rod Lane (RL) | Harriet Phelps-Knights (HP-K) | Robin Taverner (RT) |
| Richard Potter (RP) | Jinnie Nichols (JN) | Lyn Wright (LW) |
| Nigel Hill (NH) | Claire Styles (CS) | Jody Gee (JG) |
| Ruth Sturdy (RS) | Emily Welton (EW) |  |
| **LA Officers** |  |  |
| Yannick Stupples-Whyley (YSW) | Andrew Page (AP) | Clare Kershaw (CK) |
| Cllr Tony Ball (TB) | Carolyn Terry (CT) | Ralph Holloway (RH) |
| Val Cleare (VC) - Minutes |  |  |

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| **1** | **Apologies for Absence and substitute notices**  Ruth Bird chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone. Richard Potter was welcomed back. He has re-joined as a primary academy headteacher representative.  Apologies had been received from  Pam Langmead, Philomena Cozens, Chanel Lassman, Jo Santinelli, James Saunders, Bowak Scott, Simon Wall. |
| **2** | **Early Years Update (Carolyn Terry)**  CT updated Forum on the draft outturn position of the Early Years Block for 2022/23, outlined the proposals for utilising **£1.9 million** of the surplus balance and sought approval to consult with the sector on allocating the funding for the former teacher’s pay and pension grants.  Section 4 highlighted take-up for funding places. The take-up of the two-year-old FEEE during the Spring term was 3,011 which was 87% of the eligible two-year-olds in the county. The take-up of the universal three- and four-year-old FEEE at the Spring term 2023 headcount was 33,586, which 97.3% of the eligible three- and four-year-olds. This remains above the national take up of 92.3%.  Section 5, Table 2 set out the analysis of the financial position of the draft outturn for 2022/23. The reason for an underspend is that children are not taking as much as forecast to. Table 3 set out the surplus position of **£7.4** **million**. There are proposals to spend £1.9 million of that surplus. If those proposals are agreed, it will leave a surplus balance of **£3.9 million**. This will be held until the Authority knows the outcome of the final adjustment to the 2022/23 allocation which is due in July.  5.4 set out additional resources to support the sector, practical support and some support for parents. It is proposed to temporary increase over 2 years 1fte across the sector helping providers with sustainability and setting up business models to be successful and capacity around children’s team. Items 2 and 3 are contributions towards the Year of Reading and the Year of Numeracy. Item 4 is practical support to invest in Speech and Language. It is for online support whereby settings can access aimed at those children at a low level with language delay to take early action to help those children with their language. There is a focus in 6 levelling up areas funding 42 settings reaching 500 children. We would want to recommend if year one is successful to continue for two more years to allow to continue.  Sustainability and Sufficiency – ECC has identified settings in most disadvantaged areas, that is if there is no other childcare offer, to access their funded place. It needs to be a targeted offer, but business management would bring applications based on criteria. Investment for support for parents. This is talk, listen and cuddle campaign which is a resource for children focusing on families on early language and communication. This is to improve the offer and reach more, and the investment is to make more impact in that way.  5.5 A summary paper regarding a request to undertake consultation on changes to the Early Years Block Teachers Pay and Pension Grants implemented from April 2023 was taken to the Finance Review Group on 25 April 2023. This is with the recommendation that the funding should be used for the purpose originally intended. This will be brought back to Forum in July for final decision.  5.6 was an update on the new SEN Inclusion funding proposals progress and how ECC offer funding across the areas. The funding includes banding descriptors and merging current two streams into one funding source. Update taken to the High Needs Block to continue the work. There will be engagement sessions; the first one is today. Further updates will be brought to the Forum and go live from September 2024. Also looking at formalising transition arrangements from an Early Years setting into a reception class and how funding works. This new process is to encourage early planning between EY settings, schools and parents.  Section 6 was on the budget and Childcare Reforms update announced. ECC is concerned about a lot of areas and a deep dive analysis has been done. ECC is awaiting guidance from the DfE and implemented in April next year. Early Years are concerned about the capacity to deliver and parents expectations, and what is actually going to be delivered. The Schools Forum Early Years and Childcare Reference Group continues to meet. The key areas of discussion have been Early Years children with emerging additional needs and funding levels not meeting the actual cost of providing a funded place for eligible 2-year olds and 3 and 4 year olds which is further impacting the financial pressures on the economy. Also, regarding the recruitment and retention of qualified staff, ECC is looking at what action can be taken to support settings.  **Questions**  RP stated 6.3 was really detailed.  RP asked about volatility going forward and reinforcing. Has there been a study of performance rate against income over the next 5-10 years?  CT responded that funding comes from the DfE. if there are more children, funding increases, or if there are less children funding reduces. ECC is funded at one level and calculate hourly rates based on forecast and census data. If children are not at settings at the January Census, ECC receives less funding. There has been a real push this year to make sure all the children are in the settings on Census day to claim funding.  CK stated there is a sufficiency plan which works alongside, and looks at what is needed. There is a gap there.  CT indicated there is a five-year plan, including Section 106 funded places.  RL referred to 5.4 and asked can Forum have a cost benefit analysis for impact?  CT agreed. If proposals are agreed, an evaluation section will be included and reported to Forum.  SM observed there are a lot of proposals today including a £3 million and  £1 million contingency. Have you got another list of proposals to be considered in July or after? Is there a logical link?  CT responded these are the proposals ECC wants to bring right now. More needs to understood about the childcare reforms and impact. Proposals around how having capacity around that. The DfE has more resources to implement but have not advised of this yet. ECC wants to set up a cycle, to passport funding so everyone gets a proportionate amount.  CK added, it is great investment in the sector and is innovative moving forward but is the investment self-sustaining all the sector which is the biggest concern. CK felt this is the right approach about the volatility and the reforms going forward and not funded.  SB stated it is crucial to put investment in at the beginning.  CT stated that ECC is about to start a recruitment and retention drive.  RL informed as Chair of Schools Forum he has been a member of the Early Years Sub Group. Whilst no longer Chair of Forum Rod is willing to continue this. It was agreed that RL continues on this group and keep RB up-to-date and will share minutes.  **Recommendations**:  The Forum noted the draft outturn for 2022/23 at 5.1  The Forum agreed unanimously the proposal to allocate **£1.9 million** of the Early Years Block surplus balance set out at 5.4.  The Forum agreed unanimously to undertake a consultation on how to apply the former teacher’s pay and pension grants set out at 5.5.  **Action – CT to produce a cost benefit analysis of carry forward proposals** |
| **3.** | **Falling Rolls Fund (Yannick Stupples-Whyley)**  YSW outlined the proposed balance criteria to be added to the Falling Rolls Fund criteria and proposed the schools to be funded from the fund.  **JN declared an interest in this Agenda item.**  **RP declared an interest in this Agenda item.**  Section 4, 11/1/23 the Schools Forum had approved the revised criteria for the Falling Rolls Fund. A further criteria had been agreed to prevent schools with large balances benefitting from the Falling Rolls Fund. 4.2 proposal is effectively seeking the balance to be less than or equivalent to 8%, except for secondary schools which will be 5% of the relevant budget share. This will be reviewed on an annual basis.  4.4 The Authority contacted all schools that met the mandatory Ofsted rating and the Falling Rolls criteria. Table 3 showed the schools that were contacted and those that have made a subsequent application. It was noted that Finchingfield Primary has submitted an application and that will come to the next Schools Forum.  4.6 showed schools recommending approval and going into the Falling Rolls Fund. There are two schools, Doddinghurst Infant and Wimbish Primary who meet all criteria except the proposed balances criteria. The growth predicted by each school has been checked with the School Organisation Team who agree the growth forecast for each school.  Table 5 showed schools recommended funding of a total of **£542,000**. The budget is insufficient for the applications recommended for approval. Within Agenda Item 10 there is a surplus balance in the Schools Block. It is proposed to use **£76,000** of the Schools Block surplus to increase the budget for the Falling Rolls Fund.  YSW explained Annex A – School Applications.  The first table is sent out to schools. The next table is cut out of the 10-year plan and shows schools in the planning group, places and surplus places over the next 10 years. Funding is based on pupil forecasts provided by the school. Although forecasts indicate there will be a significant surplus of places in the Reception cohort for the next two or three years, it is expected these cohorts to increase in size, as they move through primary school, due to additional housing being built in the area.  Regarding confirmed housing is going up in the area, RP does not think this is happening.  YSW informed Prettygate Infants and the Pupil Place Planning Team have confirmed this.  JF indicated we did look at that in detail to make sure what we have been asked to fund was appropriate.  YSW referred to The Alderton Junior School that from October 2023 the school is reducing to a PAN of 60, therefore we are proposing it is funded to a PAN of 60 rather than PAN of 90.  **Questions**  SM asked what has happened to St Andrews Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School.  YSW confirmed they have submitted an application and it did not quite meet the criteria. The school has been contacted and invited to have another look but they have not come back.  SR asked is there any indication how many more schools will be liable once Ofsted rating is removed?  YSW responded of the Falling Roll criteria, there are two.  CK believed this might change moving forward as additional checks are built into the system.  CH stated both primary schools will meet the criteria once it has been removed.  **Recommendations**:  The Forum approved unanimously the balances criteria at 4.2 as recommended by the Finance Review Group (FRG).  The Forum approved unanimously the recommendation of FRG to fund the schools listed at 4.6 to be funded by the Falling Rolls Fund for the amounts shown at 5.2 for 2023/24.  The Forum approved unanimously using **£76,000** of the Schools Block surplus balance to increase the budget for the Falling Rolls Fund at 5.3. |
| **4.** | **School and Academy Balances (Yannick Stupples-Whyley)**  YSW updated Forum on the total balance position for all Essex schools and proposed to recommence the review of schools with balances in excess of 30% of their funding.  YSW referred to Table 4 which showed £176.9 million compared to last year.  Table 1 showed breakdown across each of the phases.  Table 2 showed the movement in balances for maintained schools has decreased by **£5.1 million**.  4.7, Table showed for maintained schools the number of schools in surplus or deficit.  The Table showed there are 12 maintained schools in deficit at 31st March 2023, which is an increase of 9 schools compared to 2021/22.  Table 7 showed there are 18 academies in deficit, which is an increase of 2 schools since 2020/21.  The next set of tables looked at the breakdown of schools percentage balances or deficits.  5.3 The number of primary schools with balances above 30% has increased from 48 schools to 56 schools (12.6%).  Table 9 showed for secondary schools a breakdown of the percentage of balances held with a comparison to the previous year.  It was noted the FRG have undertaken a review with balances in excess of 30%.  **Questions**  SR asked has the DfE got any plans to challenge 60% and above?  YSW was not aware of anything. If maintained schools there would be a balances clawback. The DfE would be aware through the reports they collect. It could be difficult for the DfE to argue this.  CK said it was important with the deep dive. They have not taken into account winter fuel and inflationary pressures. If applied to academy balances there will be £140+ million in balances. There needs more nuance and to know what is going on.  JB queried Table 5.  RP stated larger academies have SCA funding. It was suggested it should be 30% over a period of time.  YSW pointed out on Table 5 it showed the same analysis as Table 3 for academies including trust’s central services balances.  JF indicated Forum are trying to put ourselves in the place of politicians that schools are extremely well funded and not issues at all, but in my experience, they talked about statistics yesterday, fully funded it and if it does not pan out politicians do not look at this. We need to give Cllr Ball information. There are financial defects in schools, but the balances do not show this.  CK responded ECC will look at a 5 year projection and what is going on, and take the 56 schools and build that into the deep dive.  RL asked is there any information about plans in other Local Authorities?  YSW stated ECC can look for maintained balances but not every Local Authority looks at academy balances.  SM responded that it was mentioned 65 primary schools and 6 secondary schools.  YSW clarified it is 4 PRU’s.  **Recommendations**:  The Forum noted the report.  The Forum approved the recommendation of the Finance Review Group (FRG) to reconvene the review of schools with balances of 30% or higher. |
| **5.** | **Constitution and Membership of Schools Forum (Yannick Stupples-Whyley)**  YSW updated Forum of the constitution of Schools Forum. YSW also updates on the membership of the Forum and members attendance at meetings.  YSW suggested under Item 3.2 an amendment. It is now proposed in-person meetings for May and September.  Table 1 showed a total of 28 members.  Table 2 showed the breakdown from the January census 2023 of the ratio of pupils between primary and secondary schools of 1.44:1 which requires no change to the number of primary and secondary representatives.  Table 3 showed breakdown of pupils for primary and secondary between maintained schools and academies as at the January census 2023. No change to secondary representative.  Table 4 showed the members who are coming to the end of their current term of office:  Simon Wall 17 May 2023  John Hunter 27 September 2023  Philomena Cozens 12 July 2023  RB asked if any of the above wish to re-stand to advise accordingly.  Annex A – Schools Forum Membership – posts are full and no vacancies.  Annex B – showed Schools Forum Attendance.  **Schools Forum Attendance**  In terms of membership – need to address about Suthan Santhaguru who has not attended any meetings.  **Action**: ECC will write to the Diocese to seek an alternative representative.  RL enquired if there is a Director of Education in the Diocese?  CK believed there has been an appointment of a Director of Education in the Diocese.  **Recommendations**:  The Forum approved to change the meeting arrangements switching the in-person meeting from January to May at 3.2.  The Forum noted that no changes are required to the constitution of Schools Forum at 3.6 and 3.8.  The Forum noted Membership at Annex A and Attendance at Annex B. |
| **6.** | **Any other business, feedback from schools through Associations and from Schools Forum representatives on other Bodies.**  **ASHE**  With regards to academy balances, CH indicated there are huge issues in schools around budgets. There are concerns around energy. However, there are major concerns regarding recruitment and retention. There have been huge issues in all subjects as came to 31st March 2023 deadline. CH particularly mentioned because of budget implications, issues post pandemic, huge changes in behaviour issues, many more applications for SEN assessments and associated with that there are capacity issues at all levels. Many discussions among ASHE headteachers are at a stage where there is no alternative to permanently exclude young people, and yet not sufficient for them to be appropriately supported. It is a perfect storm that schools are struggling to find our way out of. Those are particular issues exacerbating headteachers at the moment about funding and capacity and funding for expertise such as alternative provision, if can attract the right staff.  **EPHA**  HPK reported on the usual financial pressures for primary schools including:   * energy price increase – this varies considerably from school to school, depending on what contract has been agreed; some schools have been pleasantly surprised and others still struggling to balance the books. * unfunded pay awards – including the impact of the 32 ½ hour week from September. * other inflationary pressures, including the rising price of food, consumables and transport has inevitably impacted on the school’s expenditure and also families’ ability to pay for trips etc which is then having an impact on school finances or learning opportunities.   Many schools are now having to use their contingency/ carry forward to set the budget, as discussed previously, the reason they have such large carry forwards as this was anticipated and many schools concerned about what the next 3 to 5 years will look like financially.  Schools continue to struggle with supporting SEN/ SEMH, and many have reported that there is often a lag in funding and often schools don’t know if/when they will receive top-up funding/IPRA funding etc.  Recruitment and retention of support staff continues to be a problem, putting more pressure on the system, in particular in those supporting SEN. And the cost implications for schools when funding is slow to be released.  A positive EPHA continues to support schools including offering free training, for both headteachers and governors – there has been an excellent take-up of recent training on managing exclusions (around 240 headteachers trained, and 250 governors so far). EPHA were pleased that the education access team were able to attend the training sessions and offer the Essex perspective.  **ESSET**  RB commented on the excellent training mentioned above. RB informed of similar issues already reported. In addition, special schools’ sector first wave of re-banding of the system. ESSET is working closely with the Local Authority and are confident going forward. There is the complexity of needs for more complex children. The recruiting of specialist staff has been a challenge, too. schools are seeing enhanced behaviour, but it is the complex needs and looking a training our staff to deal with this.  One of the concerns is about parental engagement and assessments being completed. Rather than parents having improved confidence in the system, they have decreased confidence, they are incredibly anxious and disengaged. One of the challenges in the special schools’ sector is the capacity within Local Authority teams around plans being amended, and ensuring accuracy is really important. Outreach again to take forward to look at further with Ralph Holloway to support the whole school sector.  **PRUs**  Additional pressures in referrals due to the Local Authority holding high level of permanent exclusions. More capacity in the summer term when year 11’s leave, which will help with capacity issues. PRUs are keen to work with other schools in driving Outreach model software. PRUs have the same issues with recruitment and retention, and funding issues around energy costs, even energy efficient building costs are higher than old, dilapidated buildings.  **Early Years – Nurseries**  CT had summed up everything the early years sector is facing and everything else others have said. DW agreed it has been a most challenging time. The nursery school has seen changes in Children & Families. Covid has made what was coming happen sooner. It is a worry moving forward, funding for children at an earlier point in first 5 years and put in right support at the right time. A lot of school family members have listened to us. The worry is the list that CT has given you is not all about money; it is about children and their families before they get into education and worried about reforms. Parents are being deskilled; they are handing over their children and education settings are then having to pick up what is not in place for those children. Every parent who comes through our door and the Local Authority is working really hard to put in the support.  There is lot of work with CT, speech and language and trying to feed back to families. Children are just not ready, but settings have done the best they can, but the pressures coming down on you and the children, and the pressures on parents, without that support in place, money, health and there are 800 children on speech and language waiting list. Tanglewood is just one maintained school. We are talking about children being excluded now. Three children will not make it with a good transition. With good support and working with SENCO’s, schools are trying to put everything in place.  It is about these children and behaviours. DW has not seen the needs coming through; Covid has just exacerbated this. The DfE needs to change, and other people need to change to recognise these children need more than sitting to do examinations, but DW is worried what settings are seeing coming through Early Years. It is not about recruitment, a better paid job, it is about children who are punching you on the head, are not toilet trained. Parents have similar needs and need support. It is not just about money.  **ESGA**  RL asked has ECC encouraged our universities to develop the therapies we are all so short of and what impact this may have in the future? Those schools in a role with the National Governing Association recommend headteachers look at a recent survey because it is very detailed and will impact on the NGA’s next approach to governing.  RB reported ESGA is working with secondary schools. In July it is planned to have a 6th form conference at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) and as part of that ESGA want to build Governors for the future because of the shortage. The working party has received a £10k grant to putting that on at the ARU and they are giving their buildings free to hold this event. ESGA have said the conference has to have an element of school governance.  With regards to fuel prices especially for oil one of our members has written to Cllr Ball.  CS spoke about school partnerships which has been for headteachers, and that has tied in with what Pam Langmead had been talking about exclusions and school boards, and experience to run exclusion panels because behavioural problems have increased. There is opportunity there to support Governors to extract more value from school partnerships that headteachers have done.  **Unions**  JF commented from teaching staff everyone has said it all. There is frustration with the Government, how you fully fund and take it from something else that was unbudgeted and no school resources. The Government is not able to engage with anyone. With regards to school retention, numbers do not stay in the provision which is not good news and creates pressure in the system. There is concern because of the way funding is dealing with redundancy because of insufficient staff in the system. Schools are in a long period of transition where so many services have been removed, and our members are expected to be Jack of all Trades which is an impossibility. It is about how this has impacted on members and on the schools. The unions are dealing with more cases supporting members who are suffering from behaviours that did not occur in the past.  **Unison**  MS agreed with what JF had said. There are concerns about Government funding along with staff recruitment and retention. There have been more reports from staff who are experiencing violence against them, and it is difficult to deal with. Unison is seeing new rounds of teacher redundancies.  **Church Rep**  None.  **High Needs Review Sub-Group**  JF reported HNRG has met. Further work to be undertaken on the high needs block surplus.  CK added the delay has been caused by the banding work.  **Finance Review Group**  FRG has met and discussed Agenda Items 3 and 4.  **Early Years Sub-Group** –  EY has met and discussed Agenda Item 2.  **Any Other Business**  LB raised about teacher budgets. He described a scenario of a business manager goes and puts in £80k for fuel. Then there is the Government deliberating whether to give pay rises or not. You plan money for the future.  LB understood how budgets look but it is consistently a concern schools have this, and then with whatever has happened you are left with a deficit.  LW commented it was highlighted where Essex does not get identified. For example, in the email from the Local Authority this week announcing about recruitment and retention is that we are actually going to be in a very difficult position because the idea of teachers going to be able to reclaim their loan, Essex does not get this. It is going to make recruitment more difficult.  CK indicated ECC has escalated this to the DfE. Essex is disadvantaged from a school funding perspective and HNB perspective because ECC IS diligent, using the money and able to make a degree of contingency to keep the system going.  CK will challenge claim on student loans.  **Action**: CK to challenge this with the DfE. |
| **7.** | **Minutes of 11th January 2023**  The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record. |
| **8.** | **Minutes Action Log – Yannick Stupples-Whyley**  This related to an Early Years Update to bring proposals for allocating a surplus balance where **£1.9 million** was agreed, which leaves **£3.9 million** held until ECC receives the July update, then come back in September. |
| **9.** | **High Needs Review (Ralph Holloway)**  RH updated Schools Forum on the progress made towards the  Implementation of the new SEN top-up funding system for Essex.  RH gave an update on the banding and amended timeline for the financial  element. Numbers were put in place for the next stage of moderation for  mainstream schools. Started this in Summer 2022 starting with special  schools and colleges. They have been moderated and introduced training to mainstream schools and they have been banded as well. Completed  moderation for special schools and did a second round of moderation  which was completed end of Spring term. In special schools there are 3  groups; there is one agreed banding; there is one minor work required on a  particular band; they are doing focus work on a band. Special schools there  is more detailed work on Bands E, F and G.  When making decisions about individual schools looking at individual bands,  school colleagues moderated, agreed or disagreed and made the decision  whether band to be accepted and looked at the profiles of the schools. ECC  looked at a school that had children with severe learning in Clacton and also  in Harlow. In addition to the individual school decisions, also looked at overall profile. When agreed all of the bands they will passed to YSW and the finance team who will calculate the band values, looking at Bands C to G in special schools.  Colleges - One has been accepted. The other six are doing more detailed  work. There are challenges depending on information from previous setting.  Moderation has commenced for mainstream schools. ECC looked at the average for secondary schools and average for primary schools and an analysis for every single school, how it is scored compared for primary, and likewise for secondary. The team has email headteachers asking them do they want to have another look at their banding. Other schools have decided to upgrade them.  ECC has started the moderation process with primary schools. Instead of  20 schools, there are 500. Moderation is commencing with smaller primary schools and effectively can do 10 schools in one meeting. It was valuable to have input and agreed on banding. It is starting slowly and those schools we need to look at again. There may be a second change which is optional.  Mainstream and secondary schools – RH informed he has to add up  everyone in Bands 5 – 10 to get to children allocated by Band G in  mainstream schools. Everything is still on course and is incredibly  challenging. Schools are to back up the evidence with the latest copy of the  Education Healthcare Plan (EHCP) and other supporting information. The focus is on quality not quantity.  Early Years has been more complicated. RH reported where focus has  been on new system for Early Years providers. Early Years banding descriptors framework has been developed for each function can be applied and transition funding for Early Years to reception class. Therefore, the new  system should flow. It will be more sustainable, and the focus is on  transition. The second change to the original offer for children with SEND  (see page 14 Appendix 3 and numbers outturn on page 15.  **Questions**  JN asked how did you put the criteria together?  RH stated you are being compared to all primary schools and is that school  likely to have a different intake? ECC would rather be cautious at this stage  and reject all the bands submitted.  JN enquired what did RH mean by intake?  RH said you are likely to have different children in your school rather than in  a school in Uttlesford.  RH went through the entire list of mainstream schools, looked at percentage  average, sat down with quadrant. Some were obvious like you have not got  a particular band. There were others which were more borderline. It is a  challenging intake.  JN wondered how the conclusion was reached. Maybe looking at our  EHCP’s and it has not been looked at for many years. JN was not sure  what information using.  RH indicated it was about understanding the implications  RH stated it was not an in depth look at the school.  EW asked about transition funding model for those children Early Years  moving. How it differs?  RH said it is a permanent funding stream and it is a more scientific way of  providing funding.  EW asked about additional funding for transition if that child does not have  an EHCP.  RP commented those schools that received the letter based on the known  scientific methodology given that there are children with EHCP’s can go  from any setting to setting. Apparently, choice is not in terms of going to  your nearest setting. RP stated some headteachers may feel that the extra  work for them and their SENCO’s producing more evidence.  RH reported schools have not been asked to re-band but to reconsider.  RH said for Bands 7, 8, 9 and 10, he has; for Band G, RH has 216.  RP indicated there is a line in the letter which asks us to return evidence by  the end of May. There are 11,000 children regarding individual moderation.  RP highlighted the extra work from schools to underpin this process that  they are having to do. Extra piece of work that individual settings are doing  to underpin this process that this is occurring. There is a hidden cost of  person hours.  RH confirmed it was always clear ECC needed this evidence from schools.  Most primary schools are asking for is six. Two people are downloading  evidence for 11,000 children. RH appreciated the massive burden on  schools. RH was apologetic there is a burden but without a rigorous approach the Local Authority may be in millions of pounds of debt.  CK informed whilst working on current budget allocations for top up funding  if need to raise this with the High Needs Block, that has a knock-on effect.  The other consideration is the need to revisit numbers if the current banding allocation of pupils is moved to the new banding allocation, can this be  financially afforded?  If considering a small amount, it needs to be considered as well with confidence and certainty for robustness. ECC does not  want to devalue banding values and cause further problems down the line.  RH stated the starting principle is to put money into this. It has to be money  that is sustainable. The intention was no-one is a loser, everyone is a  winner in 10 years’ time, not just in 2023.  **Recommendations**:  The Forum noted the progress made towards the implementation of the new  SEN top-up funding system for Essex (3.1 to 3.4).  The Forum noted the amended timeline for the introduction of the financial  element of the new banding system for colleges and special schools (3.5 to  3.7).  The Forum noted the strategic direction and principles required for the  Implementation of the new banding system for Early Years providers (4.1 to  4.4).  The Forum noted the methodology and timeline for the moderation of  banding returns from mainstream schools and enhanced provisions (5.1).  RH indicated he would like a High Needs Review meeting next month. This  will be held on 20th June 2023.  Is there other work concerning SEN running in parallel?  RH will bring sufficiency plan to the next meeting and update on overall  programme to the Forum in July. |
| **10.** | **Schools Budget and Education Functions Draft Outturn Report 2022/23 (Yannick Stupples-Whyley)**  YSW updated Schools Forum on the draft outturn position for the year ended 31st March 2023 for both the Schools Budget and Education Functions.  YSW stated the total Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) received for 2022/23 after academy recoupment is **£557.1 million**. The DSG draft underspend for 2022/23 is **£17.6 million**. Table 2 showed the movement in the overall DSG balance between 1st April 2022 and 31st March 2023.  YSW reported in terms of actual cost of the underspends, most are known to you. In the Schools Block ECC set aside **£1 million** of which **£355,000** has been allocated to schools. The remaining **£645,000** will be carried forward to 2023/24. The DfE has recalculated the growth fund allocation and funded an additional **£685,000** for summer term payments to academies.  Central School Services Block has an underspend of **£900,000**. The change here has been around initial Teacher Grant. There has been a historic balance to carry over for a number of years and has never been required to be paid back. In terms of the High Needs Block, there is nothing new that has not been covered previously.  **Education Functions** – previously approved in October 2021.  Table 3 showed the approved services provided to all schools.  Table 4 showed the total funding de-delegated from maintained schools in 2022/23.  The budgets in Table 5 are subject to recoupment each time a school converts to an academy. To date there have been three academy conversions.  Table 6 showed the draft outturn which is a **£14,000** overspend.  **Recommendations**:  The Forum noted the draft outturn position for the year ended 31st March 2023. |
| **11.** | **Implementing the Direct National Funding Formula – Consultation Response (Yannick Stupples-Whyley)**  YSW updated Schools Forum on the Government’s response to the consultation on implementing the direct national funding formula (NFF).  The first area was the interaction between High Needs and Schools Funding. The Local Authority will still be allowed to request transfer from the Schools Block and as part of that the Local Authority would have a selected menu; they would have to go to the DfE as to how they want that adjustment made.  The DfE when moving to the NFF will include an indicative SEND budget.  **Falling Rolls Fund**  Going forward will look at schools and look at area falling roll to form a Falling Rolls Fund. From April 2024 the requirement will be removed to have an outstanding Ofsted.  **Split Sites**  Moving forward 2024/25 plan to introduce a national formula for split site funding and this would be based on eligibility and distance eligibility. The Government will allocate two-third of the available funding through the basic eligibility and one-third through the distance eligibility.  **Exceptional Circumstances**  The Government will continue to progress plans to reform exceptional circumstances. The threshold will remain at 1% for the time-being.  **Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) under the Direct NFF**  There was a majority favourable 84% favourable response. The Government will move to a simplified pupil-led funding protection.  **Funding Cycle**  In terms of helping schools plan, the Government was either going to implement indicative budgets or a calculator. They are introducing a calculator and will work with the Local Authority to advise school calculator plan. They also looked at data collection around de-delegation. They are wanting to determine when collecting the data, when academy converts come to each Local Authority and get the data. One data collection has been agreed each year in March.  ECC expects that the provisional settlement will be announced in July and will bring an update to the September Forum.  **Financial Implications**  Table 1 showed the implication for each school based on the 2023/24 lump sum value. The split site national formula will have a negative impact on Essex schools in receipt of split site funding.  **Recommendations**:  The Forum noted the report. |
| **12.** | **Afghanistan Resettlement (Education) Grant 2022/23 (Yannick Stupples-Whyley)**  YSW updated Schools Forum on the Afghanistan Resettlement (Education) Grant 2022/23.  On 31/3/23 the Government gave guidance on how to allocate funding. They are basically matching as they did allocate out for the Ukrainian Grant. Essentially, ECC is receiving just over **£1 million**. Schools will receive **£1,000** per child for the Summer term. The Local Authority will retain the costs of home to school transport **(£225,000**). The remaining allocation will be held until know actual location of the pupils.  CK informed ECC did not know this money was coming. The Home Office has now issued every family in the 3 hotels in North Weald with notice to move out but will no longer provide them with paid accommodation. (Also, in Marks Tey and Chelmsford hotels.) These children settled in a number of schools in Essex. There are not as many in the North Weald area.  CK stated headteachers have been told that this is coming and it is difficult to plan as well. There are implications where these families move to. If not, do we provide transport (increase home to school transport)?  CK was grateful to the Forum to agree funding into schools. We are putting some of this funding into schools for the Summer term but are keeping some of it back as the future is uncertain.  **Recommendations**:  The Forum noted the report. |
| **13.** | **Forward Plan – Yannick Stupples-Whyley**  YSW read this out and confirmed the dates of future meetings up to May 2024.  Early Years – if there is an announcement on the Early Years Settlement – expecting an August announcement.  CT asked for the current year’s surplus to be discussed either in July or September.  **Action**: YSW to discuss with CT.  **Recommendation**  The Forum noted the dates of future meetings and that additional items as proposed by Schools Forum are included in the Forward Plan. |
|  | **Any Other Business**  Cllr Tony Ball mentioned today is Self-Numeracy Day which follows on from the Essex Year of Reading. We are taking the opportunity from lessons learned. We have Bobby Seagull from University Challenge and doing a programme on BBC Radio 4. Bobby Seagull is launching today Essex Year of Numbers. |
|  | **Chair’s Closing Comments** (Ruth Bird)  Ruth thanked everyone for attending the meeting.  **Date of next meeting – Wednesday, 12th July 2023 at 8.30 am**  Via Teams  **Note**: 27th September 2023 will be held in person at Hamptons Sports & Leisure, Beehive Lane, Chelmsford |

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| Schools Forum | **Agenda Item 8** |
| Date: 12 July 2023 |  |

**REPORT TITLE: Minute Action Log**

Report by Yannick Stupples-Whyley

Contact details: Telephone (03330 138464); e-mail: [yannick.stupples-whyley@essex.gov.uk](mailto:yannick.stupples-whyley@essex.gov.uk)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date of Meeting | Report | Action Owner | Action | Response | Status |
| 18 May 2022 | Agenda Item 9 – Early Years Update | Carolyn Terry | To bring proposals for allocating £1.5 million of the surplus balance to the July / September meeting. | Schools Forum has agreed proposals totalling £4.5m of the surplus balance to be allocated. The Authority awaits the final adjustment for 2022/23 and will update Forum at the September meeting. | In progress |
| 17 May 2023 | Agenda Item 2 – Early Years | Carolyn Terry | Cost Benefit Analysis of Underspend proposals | To be brought to a future meeting. | In progress |
| 17 May 2023 | Agenda Item 13 – Forward Plan | Yannick Stupples-Whyley | To discuss with Carolyn when to bring a paper on the 2022/23 and 2023/24 funding. | Added to the Forward Plan for September 2023 | Completed |

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| Schools Forum | **Agenda Item 9** |
| Date: 12 July 2023 |  |

**REPORT TITLE: SCHOOLS BUDGET & EDUCATION FUNCTIONS FORECAST OUTTURN REPORT Q1 2023/24**

Report by Yannick Stupples-Whyley

Contact details: Telephone (03330 138464); e-mail: yannick.stupples-whyley@essex.gov.uk

**1. Purpose of report**

1.1 To update Schools Forum on the forecast outturn position for the year-ended 31st March 2024 for both the Schools Budget and Education Functions.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 That Forum notes the forecast outturn position for the year ended 31st March 2024.

###### 3. Relevant Schools Forum Power and Responsibility

3.1 Table 1 shows the relevant responsibilities that Forum has in relation to the Schools Budget, which are taken from the Education and Skills Funding Agency’s **Schools forum powers and responsibilities** published in September 2018.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Local Authority | Schools Forum | DfE |
| De-delegation – proposes | Decides | Adjudicates where Forum disagrees with the Authority’s proposals |
| General Duties for maintained schools – proposes | Decides | Adjudicates where Forum disagrees with the Authority’s proposals |
| Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund – proposes | Decides | Adjudicates where Forum disagrees with the Authority’s proposals |
| Central Spend on Early Years and Central School Services – proposes | Decides | Adjudicates where Forum disagrees with the Authority’s proposals |
| Central Spend on High Needs – Decides | None, but good practice to consult. | None |

###### 4. Background

4.1 The forecast outturn for 2023/24 is set out at Annex A.

4.2 The total Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) expected to be received for 2023/24 after academy recoupment is **£596.9 million**.

4.3 The DSG forecast underspend for 2023/24 is **£11.2 million**. Table 2 shows the overall forecast DSG balance at 31st March 2024.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Schools  Block  £m | Central  Schools  Block  £m | High  Needs  Block  £m | Early  Years  Block  £m | Total  £m |
| Opening balance 2023/24 | **(1.4)** | **(2.1)** | **(13.5)** | **(7.3)** | **(24.3)** |
| 2023/24 Provisional Outturn | (1.1) | 0.2 | (10.3) | 0.0 | (11.2) |
| Closing Balance 2023/24 | **(2.5)** | **(1.9)** | **(23.8)** | **(7.3)** | **(35.5)** |

4.4 As reported to Forum in the Schools Budget Outturn report at May’s Forum the surplus carry forward relates to the contingency held for schools who admit a significant number of refugee or asylum seeking children of which **£645,000** remains. The Authority received **£685,000** for summer term growth payments to academies. The growth fund budget included these payments so the funding is a windfall to the Schools Block. This will be used to fund unexpected growth. Any balance at year end will be discussed with Forum, noting that it can only fund one-off expenditure.

4.5 The surplus balance in the Central Schools Services Block is built up over a number of years. The underspend in 2022/23 **£900,000** was due to utilising other funding streams for School Effectiveness Partners which reduced the cost to the CSSB. The balance is held in anticipation of the impact of future funding changes that the DfE has mentioned in previous consultations.

4.6 Agenda Item 2 covers how the surplus balance in the High Needs Block occurred and this will reduce if the proposals are approved.

4.7 Forum approved proposals at May’s Forum totalling **£1.9 million** to benefit the Early Years sector. These proposals will be reflected in the half-year budget report. The Authority is awaiting the outcome of the final adjustment for 2022/23 which is expected later this month before discussing further proposals at the September meeting.

4.8 The significant variations contributing to the outturn position are:  
  
**Schools Block - £1.1 million underspend**

4.9 Forum are aware the Authority is holding a contingency within the Growth Fund for a future year where the allocation from the DfE is insufficient to meet the growth fund requirement. The contingency was set at **£800,000** and will be held to minimise top-slicing school budgets for an insufficient growth fund allocation. The remaining **£300,000** is due to an increase in the growth fund for summer term payments to academies. The £300,000 will fund any increased funding required for the falling rolls fund, and will reduce by **£58,000** if the proposal at Agenda Item 5 is approved.

**Central School Services Block - £178,000 overspend**

4.10 The overspend reflects drawing down an agreed carry forward for Strategic Support from 2022/23 to 2023/24.

**High Needs Block - £10.3 million underspend**

4.11 Independent special schools are forecasting a **£3.7 million** overspend due to an increase in volume and the cost of placements.

4.12 SEN Services is forecasting an underspend of **£13.9 million**. The main cause of the underspend is the HNB contingency **£12.9 million** which has arisen due to funding increasing faster than expected demand. The contingency is held partly to offset in-year pressures and proposals have been presented in Agenda Item 2 to utilise the surplus. The Authority has decided not to contribute to the pension deficit in 2023/24 resulting in a **£753,000** underspend. The remaining **£200,000** underspend is due to vacant posts.

**Education Functions**

4.13 At the meeting of 30th November 2022 Schools Forum approved the authority’s proposals for services provided to all schools, as shown in Table 3.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Education Functions – All Schools | £’000 |
| Education Welfare | 1,170 |
| Strategic Management | 1,577 |
| Asset Management | 333 |
|  | **3,080** |

4.14 Also at the meeting of 30th November 2022, maintained members of Schools Forum agreed to de-delegate from maintained school £48.10 per pupil to fund the education functions shown in Table 4.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Education Functions – Maintained Schools | £’000 |
| Asset Management | 288 |
| Statutory & Regulatory Duties | 2,168 |
| School Improvement | 438 |
|  | **2,894** |

4.15 The budgets in Table 4 are subject to recoupment each time a school converts to an academy. Up to June 2023 there have been no academy conversions.

4.16 Table 5 shows the forecast outturn position for 2023/24 which is online.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Education Functions | Budget  £’000 | Draft  Outturn  £’000 | Variance  £’000 |
| Education Welfare | 1,170 | 1,170 | 0 |
| Strategic Management | 1,577 | 1,577 | 0 |
| Asset Management – all schools | 333 | 333 | 0 |
| Asset Management – maintained schools | 288 | 288 | 0 |
| Statutory & Regulatory Duties | 2,168 | 2,168 | 0 |
| School Improvement | 438 | 438 | 0 |
| Total | **5,974** | **5,974** | **0** |

**5. Other Resource Implications**

**6. Consultation with stakeholders**

**7. Background / Supporting papers.**

7.1 Annex A – Schools Budget Forecast Outturn Q1 2023/24

**Agenda Item 9 – Annex A**



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| Schools Forum | **Agenda Item 10** |
| Date: 12 July 2023 |  |

**REPORT TITLE: Forward Plan**

Report by Yannick Stupples-Whyley

Contact details: Telephone (03330 138464); e-mail: [yannick.stupples-whyley@essex.gov.uk](mailto:yannick.stupples-whyley@essex.gov.uk)

**1. Purpose of report**

1.1 To bring the Schools Forum Forward Plan and confirm the dates of future meetings.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1That the Forum notes the dates of future meetings.

2.2 That additional items as proposed by Schools Forum are included in the Forward Plan

###### 3. Background

3.1Following a review of School Forum Agendas a Forward Plan has been created. The items included are as follows:

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| **Regular and Administrative items** |
| Apologies |
| Any other business and feedback from schools through Associations |
| Feedback from Schools Forum representatives on other bodies |
| Minutes from previous meetings |
| Forward Plan and dates of next meetings |
| Sub Group updates (HNRG, Early Years, FRG) |

|  |  |
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| **Date of Schools Forum** | **Agenda Items** |
| Wednesday 27th September 2023 | Half Year Budget & Education Functions Update 2023/24 (I) |
| Face to Face – Hamptons Sports | Scheme for Financing Schools (D) |
| & Leisure | High Needs Funding 2024/25 (D/I) |
|  | School Funding 2024/25 including school funding consultation (D) |
|  | High Needs Funding Review (I) |
|  | De-Delegation 2024/25 (D) |
|  | Early Years Funding 2022/23 and 2023/24 |
|  | Falling Rolls Fund |(D) |
|  |  |
| Wednesday 29th November 2023 | Early Years and Childcare Update (I) |
| Virtual | School Funding Consultation Final Proposal (D) |
|  | Scheme for Financing Schools (D/I) |
|  | High Needs Funding Review (D/I) |
|  | SEND and PRU Capital Investment Project (D/I) |
|  | Constitution and Membership of Schools Forum (D / I) |
|  | School Balances Review (D/I) |
|  |  |
| Wednesday 10th January 2024 | DSG Budget 2024/25 (D) |
| Virtual | Third Quarter Budget Update 2023/24 (I) |
|  | High Needs Funding Review (D/I) |
|  | Falling Rolls Fund (D) |
|  |  |
| Wednesday 15th May 2024 | Falling Rolls Fund (D/I) |
| Face to Face – Hamptons Sports & Leisure | Schools Budget & Education Functions Draft Outturn Report 2022/23 (I) |
|  | Constitution and Membership of Schools Forum (D /I) |
|  | Early Years and Childcare Update (I) |
|  |  |
| Wednesday 10th July 2024 | Falling Rolls Fund (D/I) |
| Virtual | Schools Budget and Education Functions Q1 Update 2024/25 (I) |
|  | School and Academy Balances (I) |

1. Funding for 2024/25 will be based on balances at 31/03/24 for maintained schools and 31/08/23 for academies. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)