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| Schools Forum | **Agenda Item 5** |
| Date: 11 January 2023 |  |

**Minutes of 30 November 2022**

**Microsoft Teams**

**08:30 – 11:08**

Approved 11 January 2023

In Attendance

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| Rod Lane (RL) – Chair | Jo Barak (JB) | Jinnie Nichols (JN) |
| Jeff Fair (JF) | Carole Herman (CH) | Marilyn Smith (MS) |
| Sean Moriarty (SM) | Philomena Cozens (PC) | Chanel Lassman (CL) |
| John Hunter (JH) | Sue Bardetti (SB) | Stuart Roberts (SR) |
| Claire Styles (CS) | Harriet Phelps-Knights (HP-K) | Robin Taverner (RT) |
| Nigel Hill (NH) | Pam Langmead (PL) | Lyn Wright (LW) |
| Simon Wall (SW) | Richard Green (RG) | Ruth Sturdy (RS) |
| Ruth Bird (RB) | Jo Santinelli (JS) | James Saunders (JSa) |
| Jody Gee (JG) | Ferliene Willis (FW) | Gareth Rott |
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| **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 | Alice Tickner (AT) |  |
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| **Observer** |  |  |
| Patrick Grant, Local Authority Funding Policy Team, DfE |  |  |

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| **1.** | **Apologies for Absence and substitute notices**  There were three new secondary headteacher representatives who joined Schools Forum today. The Chair gave a welcome to Sarah Speller (Tabor Academy), James Saunders (Honywood School) and Jody Gee (Anglo European School). However, the third headteacher, Sarah Speller was unable to attend today’s meeting.  The Chair also welcomed Patrick Grant from the Local Authority Funding Policy Team at the DfE. Patrick observed today’s meeting.  Apologies had been received from Debs Watson, Luke Bulpett, Emily Welton, Sarah Speller, Suthan Santhaguru.  Ferliene Willis substituted for Debs Watson and Pam Langmead substituted for Luke Bulpett.  Clare Kershaw and Cllr Ball had to attend another meeting at 9.45am and were expected to return at 10.30am. To accommodate this change the agenda was therefore re-arranged as follows:  Item 2a and 2b, then decision items 7-9 followed by Forum business (items 11-13). If by this time Clare and Cllr Ball have returned to the meeting, we will go back to item 3, if not items 14-15. |
| **2a** | **Early Years Funding – Alice Tickner, Graduate Finance Trainee**  Alice gave a presentation which explained to Schools Forum how Early Years funding is calculated and the reasons for the underspend in 2021/22. There was a focus on historical data at the beginning. AT shared the finance timelines of 2021/22 based on previous synopsis. AT explained the data is collected in the Spring Term thus capturing the number of children enrolling in Early Years.  **Recommendation:**  The Forum noted the presentation. |
| 2b | **Early Years Update – Carolyn Terry**  CT updated Forum with the report on the forecast budget requirement for 2022/23 and updated Forum on proposals to allocate a further £550,000 of the Early Years Block surplus balance.  Section 4 was information which was shared in the September meeting. Will update in the New Year. Section 5, Table 2 showed the latest forecast outturn for 2022/23 as at Period 7 (October 2022). The **£1.2 million** forecast underspend is due to the Authority’s forecast of children taking up the free Early Years entitlement being lower than the DfE’s forecast. The underspend has been moved to a contingency as it is likely to be clawed back by the DfE.  5.2 Table 3 showed the Early Years Block underspend total is currently **£3.1 million**, this paper sets out a proposal to allocate **£550,000** of this total, with options for the remaining balance to brought to the May 2023 meeting. If approved the remaining surplus balance will be **£2.6 million**. The proposal is to use the **£550,000** for Early Years intervention posts. We are seeing more and more children emerging with SEND needs. When analysing it is a more transient delay where children have missed out on opportunities and general life learning experiences. We want to identify those children early and the majority of children will be able to catch up.  Other parts of the system – we are working with Early Years settings and thinking about intervention put in for these children which will be different from before. 5.3.3 drew attention to increased confidence with parents as an Early Years system we are working with them. 5.3.4, Table 4 sets out the budget for the posts for 2 years. We have allowed for costs including any potential redundancy costs. We have taken the proposal to the Early Years Reference Group, and it has been endorsed to be brought here for approval.  Section 6. Public Sector feeling and pressures are the same as before and still remain. Recruitment and retention issues also remain, and we are starting to see some care providers taking the decision to close. Another pressure is the increase to the minimum wage on the Early Years Sector which has a big impact and another cost pressure to keep an eye on for the sector.  **Questions**  PC was looking at the chart for uptake in areas like Basildon, Harlow and Epping. With the closure of centres/providers, does that reflect there is not enough provision in those areas and parents are not accessing it? Are those children not accessing it, then identify educational needs?  CT indicated generally those areas historically have been lower. We work with the Essex Child and Wellbeing Service, and we work with the provider. One reason parents are not taking up is due to accessing benefits. Some will take up 3-year old funding. We are starting to see two areas where there is a shortfall of funded places, Harlow in particular. We are working really hard to keep those provisions going. CT also pointed out although sitting at 70%, it is higher than the national average which is 62%. We still need to support them to do this.  JF asked for clarification about the 24 months period from appointment. There is the start date of the person in post plus 24 months. It is a judgement whether it is useful. People are in temporary posts and looking for other posts before they look for another job. We would be wiser to give 36 months to enable providers who are struggling with support.  CT responded we will be happy to extend this to 36 months and adjust if everyone agrees.  CK said if it has the support of Schools Forum, then happy for this. We will need to bring back updates of the impact on these posts. You will see the benefits across the Early Years system and reducing identification of children with SEND needs. Responding to Covid delay and transient, CK was happy to endorse this if agreed by the Forum.  SM enquired is there a risk if extended to 3 years – no longer required as a one off spend? One of the points in Alice’s presentation must be a one-off cost.  CT indicated it is the intention to ringfence whether it is 24 or 36 months.  SM responded if so looking at how ECC is using the underspend is it possible to record it is no longer a one off?  AP said we can check this. This is one off funding. We can set specific period of time for that. If increase it to 36 months, £990k. We need to be mindful of that. Perhaps look at a variation for year 1 and extend but to be discussed. It is a finite amount of money but can check the conditions for grant funding.  HPK asked why is there redundancy costs if it is a contract that has an end date to it? You are not making that job redundant because it is a fixed period. Why redundancy?  CT felt it was a certain amount of employment and therefore they are treated as an employee. Even though they know it is a fixed contract.  CK expressed regardless of the contract, it is the length of time they are with you for.  CS asked why would it not be as effective to give funding directly to respond to needs of the children? They need the money now and not over the next 2 years.  CT replied we are already including the money for them but that creates more 1:1 staffing in settings to people who are seeing it as emerging SEND and because of pressures in the sector they need additional resources to help them understand what they are seeing.  CL said it is generally because of staffing rather than enhanced support. It is more of a long-term help. The idea of the posts and having someone come in we have lost that as a sector. A lot of it is done more remotely. The sector is asking for someone to be supported.  RL asked JF if he was prepared to accept the motion as it stands with a review at the end of it?  JF was happy with this. It is important because it is a one-off funding, but it has 2 years, and suggested to review it at mid-point with the potential for funding for 3 years.  Question in the Chat – Is there an opportunity to increase capacity in settings as supported by the new Advisors, to support the longevity?  CK answered if Early Years Advisors are picking up themes with Early Years, how do we then think about a model of improvement in terms of impact and legacy of the work? Part of the review where it is training, there is the impact of the legacy once they cease to be with us. FW was happy to discuss further in the Sub Group.  It was recommended that a review is done halfway through with the thought of a possible extension.  JF agreed and there was a majority agreement.  CT said the 2-year posts we would allocate a 3rd year. Allocate within the budget for provision of a 3rd year but this would be subject to the review halfway through.  **Recommendations**:  The Forum noted the forecast outturn for 2022/23 at 5.1;  The Forum approved the recommendation of the Early Years Sub Group to agrees the proposal to allocate £550,000 of the Early Years Block surplus balance at 5.3  **Voting (2b) 2.2: Agreed – 19, Abstained - 6** |
| **3.** | **SEMH Provisions Funding – Ralph Holloway**  RH had discussed this at Schools Forum on a number of occasions.  The Essex enhanced SEMH provisions as a valuable and integral part of  the Essex school landscape to support inclusion. This proposal seeks to:   * Ensure that all the provisions can operate with the appropriate and purposeful staffing structure to meet the needs of the children and young people; * Provide greater stability of funding for CEOs, head teachers and the Trusts hosting the provisions negating the need to generate income from schools to supplement the core funding; * Reduce ECC pressure to place pupils through the Individual Packages of Education Support (IPES) framework;   The current funding being paid to schools was set in 2011 and has not been  adjusted for the last 10 years. It is currently set at £19,952 for primary and  £19,800 for secondary. The increase suggested will be to £25,000 per  place.  **Questions**  YSW had a question from a governor who had left the meeting relating to  Table 3 that St Mary’s Woodham Ferrers is not on the list.  RH agreed it is not on the list. This is brought to the Schools Forum for  agreement.  RL stated our costs are lower than going to an independent provider. Is  there anyway we can access otherwise the effectiveness of these units?  RH suggested it could be measured by pupil outcome success. They return  to the school they were referred from. Do not escalate to EHCP. We would  see what happens as they progress through education.  RL asked what value does it bring to the system?  RH felt we could bring an annual overview of the financial difference. For  example, how many people commissioned independent school places for.  Potential model at a minimum. We can measure investment against the  cost we would have had if to an independent school.  PC said one of the issues that has been said most of these children do not  have an EHCP and do not progress towards one. Without one they would  not go to independent schools. PC liked the idea of opportunities for  those young people to interface with other children within the setting of that  school. Want to move to a model where children have a shorter period of  intervention as a quick success indicator.  RH stated SENCO provides advice and support in schools that enables  schools to look at practice and support and work differently with children.  PC spoke about data for outreach support. It is where we have got the  funding and are able to do something like this. What is the cost against  putting children in PRU’s and reduced numbers so that more children can  be in mainstream schools? Also, there is the cost of living. More and more  people will find it difficult to feed children and heating homes, and we need  to be prepared. We need to be reactive how supporting this.  **Recommendation:**  To approve the increase in the top-up funding paid to SEMH Enhanced  Provisions at 5.1.  **Voting (2) 2.1: Agreed – 18, Abstained - 5** |
| **4.** | **SEN Shortfall Funding – Ralph Holloway**  YSW sought approval from the Forum for an uplift in funding for schools eligible for SEN Shortfall Funding.  The SEN Provision Team pay Shortfall Funding to mainstream schools where there is insufficient value in the school’s Notional SEN Fund to meet the first **£6,000** of support for pupils in receipt of Top-Up (EHCP or IPRA).  We know this has not been changed since 2013. The **£105** value is based on the amount ECC funded schools for Top-Up in 2013/14; **£420** for one hour of support per year. 25% was then applied to this as this was roughly the % pupils on SEN Support at the time.  Over the years the value of shortfall funding has significantly reduced. For the majority of schools this is not a problem. However, for a small number of primary and secondary schools there is an issue where they will not have significant capacity. They are asking for an increase of **£105** to **£150** per pupil. This is not a significant impact on the HNB. Need to be supportive to smaller schools because of the gap.  HPK asked are those schools being identified because they raised an issue or did the Local Authority identify them?  RH responded one raised it and we looked to be certain that we captured the numbers.  JF observed it is a long time this funding has been set at this level.  **Recommendation**:  That Schools Forum approve the proposal to increase the value per pupil of the SEN Shortfall funding at 4.12.  **Voting (4) 2.1: Agreed – 18, Abstained - 5** |
| **5.** | **De-Delegation and Education Functions 2023/24** - **Yannick Stupples-Whyley**  YSW presented the Schools Forum with the Authority’s proposals for de-delegation and education functions for 2023/24.  The recommendations showed who could vote other than 2.4 when everyone can vote. Table 1 showed the powers and responsibilities of the Local Authority, Schools Forum and the DfE for all these decisions.  De-Delegation – we only have one item we do delegate which is for public duties **£1** per pupil for the relevant years. Table 2 showed de-delegation for maintained primary schools basic entitlement for 2023/24 and **£1** per pupil which is estimated **£55k**. Table 3 showed the same for secondary schools. We have basic entitlements for KS3 of **£4,684**, for KS4 of **£5,623** and for the full maintained sectors **£3,805**.  **SEMH Provisions**  YSW reported funding from the High Needs Block there is an extra **£554k** delegated to primary schools. Premature retirement costs are based on the funding for 2022.23. There is a slight reduction for 2023/24.  **Central Services Functions**  We have education functions funded by the Education Services Grant and funding into the Central Services Block. Following the termination of the Education Services Grant (ESG), the DfE transferred **£3.1m** directly into the Central School Services Block (CSSB) to fund the statutory responsibilities that the authority has for all schools. The Authority has maintained the amount at **£3.1m** since 2017/18, thus containing inflation. We need to review on an annual basis. Table 5 showed the Authority’s proposals for 2023/24 with totals of £3.08m.  **Central Services for Maintained Schools**  The DfE brought in regulations whereby if the Local Authority cannot afford these functions, they can ask for funding from the maintained schools. Table 6 showed the Authority’s proposals for Central Services for Maintained Schools. These are different responsibilities such as general landlord duties, Health & Safety and management of asbestos in community schools, maintaining computer systems, planning sufficient school places and school improvement function. We are maintaining the cost of **£48.10** per pupil.  Page 25, Table 8 showed the allocation of Provisional Funding for 2023/24. The NFF has been used in our local funding formula. Now we have a transition to the NFF which is effectively the increase in funding comes back to going through basic entitlement. Some of the factors are still from free school meals  **Questions**  SM – With regards to 5.4 SM was happy to agree to the proposal of £48.10. However, regarding the community and area of asset management and risk of asbestos, SM did not recognise any support from the Local Authority from those areas for the vast majority of the schools in this sector. Three of these are voluntary aided schools and the responsibility is with the diocesan school. The difference to the **£4.77** per pupil will be very small. Those services are not the majority of those four schools in any way.  YSW stated it is one of our duties as to how much goes into the **£4.77**; it would be a very small proportion of that.  JF was impressed that CK had kept this figure for so long. Additional costs will come up. JF highlighted the concern that only one amount is to be spent. More concerned having maintained funding since 2018.  CK informed we sought to keep the amount the same because we recognised the financial pressures.  CK referred to SM’s earlier comments above and will follow up what this does mean for the four maintained schools.  **Recommendations:**  Maintained primary school members agreed the recommendation of the Finance Review Group (FRG) to approve the proposal for de-delegation for public duties at 4.4;  **Voting: (5) 2.1 All 5 agreed.**  The maintained secondary member agreed the recommendation of FRG to approve the proposal for de-delegation for public duties at 4.5;  **Voting: (5) 2.2 Agreed.**  School members agreed the recommendation of FRG to top-slice **£1.3m** for premature retirement costs at 4.8;  **Voting: (5) 2.3 - 17 agreed; 5 abstained.**  Members agreed the recommendation of FRG to approve the education functions funded by the ongoing responsibilities element of the Central School Services Block at 5.3; and  **Voting: (5) 2.4 - 19 agreed; 6 abstained.**  That all maintained members agreed the recommendation of FRG to approve the education functions to be funded by maintained schools at 5.4.  **Voting: (5) 8 agreed.** |
| **6.** | **Funding for Schools Admitting an Exceptional Number of Afghan Refugee Children or Asylum Children – Yannick Stupples-Whyley/Clare Kershaw**  The Chair declared an interest because his school has been asked to take 5 pupils. The Chair passed this item over to Jeff Fair to chair.  CK introduced this item and stated the normal policy and practice is to take papers to the relevant Sub Committees for discussion and debate and then to Schools Forum for recommendation. We have not had the opportunity in this respect. Everyone is seeing this for the first time. However, CK expected RL and JF to have seen in their capacity as Chair and Vice Chair.  There is an increase in demand of Essex. Hotels are potentially receiving a high number of refugees. In fact a high number are arriving at one host co-location. Imagine 20 families arriving at the same time and one school place. In the past we have managed this, and schools have taken a responded magnificently to the situation amazingly well. Now we have the situation where schools have asked to take larger volumes of children at the same time which provides immediate cost pressures on the schools. Host hotels in various parts of the county are now receiving requests for support from schools taken more than 20 places at one.  CK indicated this is a complicated situation. The refugee families arriving in Homes for Ukraine Scheme where households agree to put families up. There is funding to cover that. At the start of the Afghans arriving there is a significant scheme now. In the first instance we did get additional funding but no longer able to get that and it is the Afghans where there is an issue in terms of hotels being sought and large volumes of families arriving. Funding is £20 per pupil per day and is a term behind from the Government. Funding is lagged significantly. General asylum refugees have no funding whatsoever. Originally Afghans but asylum-seeking families only going to stay in the county for a short time. There is escalation and going through two schemes. They are now staying in the places where housed, for a significant time.  We have come to Schools Forum with the proposal about funding for the Afghan children and asylum seeking children into school at a significant volume. It is complicated and do not want to double fund. There is a different proposal for the asylum seekers. Whereas the refugees this is lagged. We want to stop funding once children had triggered funding coming through. There is considerable double funding from the Home Office funding. For example, primary schools in Essex are taking over 25 children at one point in time. In reality on the Census funding it would not go through until 2024.  YSW reported about the funding. Table 2 showed the proposal. In one instance consider what able to do a few years ago. The trigger would fund where the trigger reached a certain number. Proposing primary schools will be triggered when more than 6 pupils from a postcode and 11 or more from one postcode. Afghan children payment by one terms AWPU until Home Office funding in following term. In terms of the funding when had the paper in January the Growth Fund allocation for the first time was set aside  £1 million contingency to protect if allocation would be lower than required. We asked to use this contingency by funding as set out in Table 2.  **Questions**  PL wanted to check why limiting it to six from one postcode? Is there a chance a school will admit from two settings at the same time and their costs might be more rather than less?  CK said it is where the actual hotels are. We might have to adjust it. The Chair noted there were hotels at Marks Tey, Chelmsford, Harlow, Rochford and Stansted.  SM raised a technical point about the proposal around AWPU. He thought we are moving away from AWPU to basic entitlement.  YSW said SM was correct. We should be using basic entitlement.  HPK spoke about mitigation for the double funding. It comes from the Local Authority and you send it out or is it direct from the Home Office.  CK confirmed it comes to us the funding from the Home Office and we pass on to schools and that is lagged. It is only recently we have got this within the last 2-3 months. That has been keeping us going until now. However now high volumes are coming in and it is lagged.  RL commented he had declared an interest. His school has agreed to take 5 pupils at the moment and would not receive the funding. It is an emerging school; being a new school it is gradually opening year groups. Therefore, percentage of pupils agreed to take in comparison to some other schools is fairly high. Therefore, a scheme of pupils up to a certain percentage,  i.e., 2-3% of population, or this is whichever is the smaller would seem to be fairer. RL understood Headteachers in the Colchester area, one closed as had a meeting and their consortium has agreed to set up a Sub Group of Headteachers of schools in the Colchester area to form a Sub Group to share good practice and assist each other in keeping with what might be a difficult situation.  CK felt that was great news about a Sub Group and will bring schools with expertise and how to take that situation because schools would be receiving funding. We do not want to double fund this and will check this offline. This is for schools who do not receive funding and taking high volumes of children.  CS asked is there any monitoring of how many schools find themselves in what RL explained being asked to take up to 5-10 extra pupils and not receiving funding, and anything to keep those numbers below the threshold?  CK stated we have no control over this. There is no control where hotels are and how many families are placed there. It was noted there is 24-hour’s notice for hotels and so many school-aged children arriving. It is an existing scheme we used to have and how it can apply to this situation. We would expect schools to take 2-3 children but when the numbers come up we need to appoint staff from day one and additional costs.  JF stated we need to keep an eye on these extra costs.  CK will keep this under review. This has gone out in the last two weeks’ and we have done our best to keep this going. We will bring a more substantial approach if this is not working.  JF thought as a first step, this is brilliant.  **Recommendation:**  To approve the Authority’s proposal at paragraph 4.6  **Voting: (6) – Agreed - 16, Abstained 7** |
| **7.** | **School Funding 2023/24 – Yannick Stupples-Whyley**  YSW updated the Schools Forum of the outcome of the school funding consultation and the Autumn statement. At the last meeting the Forum approved for the consultation to go out to schools. There were two proposals to consult on adjusting KS3 and KS4 entitlement to meet the minimum funding requirement. Secondly, to use the formula funding to uplift the consultation of 30th September 2022 and 31st October 2022. There were 26 responses; one respondent did not specify name or school. There should only be one response per school as we were not able to verify the school which was disallowed. Out of the responses three were in favour and one against. From the second consultation – to be funded – 19 in favour, 1 against and 5 not sure. Changes to KS3 and KS4 we know will be abysmal but we require to consult on this. We will continue with the proposal that we increase the funding NFF for 2023/24 value and non-fringe area cost adjustment. YSW added consultation discussed at FRG and they endorsed this.  The Exceptional Premises Factor supporting facilities was agreed a long time ago. However, we have to reapply. Only one school £60k. Already submitted to the DfE and it was noted there is a meeting today to ratify the request.  **Autumn Statement – 17th November 2022**  The Chancellor allocated a further **£2.3 billion** for 2023/24 and 2024/25.  This funding is in addition to the previously announced Comprehensive  Spending Review 2021. Table 5 showed the increase in funding with a total  of **£3.8 billion**. It is unclear how the additional funding will be allocated,  firstly, how it will be split between the Schools Block and High Needs Block  and secondly whether it will be allocated through NFF or paid as a  supplementary grant.  We do know the Energy scheme ends on 31st March 2023. Any further  extension to the scheme will not be applicable to organisations and it was  also announced at the Education Sub Committee in Parliament effectively  that additional funding will need to cover energy costs in schools.  It is unclear how the additional funding will be allocated, firstly how it will be split between the Schools Block and High Needs Block and secondly whether it will be allocated through NFF or paid as a supplementary grant.  We are expecting a statement in week commencing 12th December 2022. Will bring to the January Forum the funding rates that will be applicable for 2023/24.  **Questions**  SM said regarding new money it is being confirmed on the Government website that it is going to be an extra £2 billion and the Social Care level is being withdrawn. Schools will not be paying it.  JF asked about the decision making process on the KS3 and KS4 split, do you have any indication when this decision will be made for schools on the basic entitlement?  YSW indicated once we have got the financial settlement, we will run the Essex Formula for Funding Schools and then compare the values against the DfE minimum / maximum requirements. We should know by Christmas whether we need to make the change or not.  **Recommendations:**  Forum noted the outcome of the school funding consultation;  Forum agreed the recommendation of the Finance Review Group (FRG) that School members approved that the Authority adjusts the KS3/KS4 basic entitlement weighting as necessary to meet the DfE’s minimum / maximum funding requirement, at 4.6; and  Forum agreed the recommendation of FRG that school members approved that the Essex Local Formula should use the 2023/24 NFF values increased by the non-fringe area cost adjustment at 4.7.  Forum agreed the Authority continues to use the Exceptional Premises Factor for Joint Use arrangements at 4.11; and  Forum noted the additional funding announced in the Autumn Statement for 2023/24 and 2024/25.  **Voting:**  **(7) 2.2 – Agreed – 15, Abstained – 7**  **(7) 2.3 – Agreed – 15, Abstained – 7**  **(7) 2.4 – Agreed – 15, Abstained – 7** |
| **8.** | **Scheme for Financing Schools 2023/24 – Yannick Stupples-Whyley**  YSW updated Forum with the result of the consultation with maintained schools and presents the Authority’s final proposals.  YSW reported this was brought to the September meeting, the proposed consultation and changes to the finances in schools. There were two proposed changes, one around section 3.6 borrowing by schools to be removed. The second change was around funding for redundancy costs in line with the previous year, premature retirement costs. On the first question there was an overall majority of Yes – 19 and No – 17. The question relating to aligning of funding for premature retirement costs. The response was Yes – 11. We are proposing to still go ahead with both changes as consulted upon. We took this to the FRG, and they recommend the Schools Forum make the required changes. YSW stated this is maintained schools only.  **Recommendations:**  The Forum noted the outcome of the consultation;  The Forum agreed the recommendation of FRG to approve the proposed change to section 3.6 Borrowing by Schools at 4.6; and  The Forum agreed the recommendation of FRG to approve the proposed change to Annex C Responsibility for Redundancy Costs at 4.8.  **Voting:**  **(8) 2.2 – Agreed – 7, Abstained – 1**  **(8) 2.3 – Agreed – 7, Abstained - 1** |
| **9.** | **Schools Forum Terms of Reference – Yannick Stupples-Whyley**  YSW updated the Forum on the Authority’s proposed changes to the Terms of Reference in light of the recent change to the structure of Schools Forum and updated DfE guidance for online meetings.  Annex A showed the changes proposing and an additional attachment with tracked changes.  Section 1.1 the regulations are updated to include The School and Early  Years Finance (England) Regulations 2021 that amended The Schools  Forums (England) (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.  Section 2.1 the membership table is updated to reflect the addition of a second diocese member that Schools Forum approved in December 2020.  Section 5.2 is updated with the Authority’s proposal to amend the term of  office for the Chair and Vice-Chair to two years from April 2023. This will  allow continuity for two years and allows time for a new Chair to establish  their role.  Section 5.3 proposed to move the election from the January meeting to the  autumn term as this allows a handover period if a new Chair or Vice-Chair is  elected. The Chair and Vice-Chair may stand for re-election in further  successive periods.  Section 7.5 showed the agreed mix of in-person and remote meetings which  were approved by Schools Forum in May 2021. It was noted that the  January meeting may have to be held virtually and move the in-person  meeting to May.  **Recommendation:**    Forum agreed the revised Terms of Reference.  **Voting: (9) 2.3 – Agreed – 19, Abstained 6** |
| **10.** | **Election of Chair and Vice Chair – Yannick Stupples-Whyley**  YSW stated as members are aware Rod Lane will be standing down as Chair at the end of the January 2023 meeting. We are now looking for a new Chair. Is anyone willing to stand as Chair?  Ruth Bird said she would step in but as her term of office ends in January, she wondered as would still need to be re-elected by the Schools Forum.  **Action**: YSW will need to check appointment of governors to Schools Forum in the regulations and will report back in January.  It was agreed in principle subject to Ruth Bird getting re-elected. She can attend the Chair’s briefing and be involved in any discussions between now and January.  Agreement was sought to Ruth Bird being Chair subject to be re-elected to Schools Forum after her term ends on 31/1/23.  All were in agreement.  **Vice Chair**  Jeff Fair is willing to stand. Is anyone else wishing to be considered as Vice Chair?  RL thanked JF for being Vice Chair over the years. It has worked well. JF has a wealth of experience and has been chairing the various Sub Groups.  **Voting:**  **(10) Chair – Agreed – 13, Abstained – 9**  **(10) Vice Chair – Agreed – 18, Abstained - 4** |
| **11.** | **Any other business, feedback from schools through Associations and from Schools Forum representatives on other Bodies.**  **ASHE**  CH reported major concerns about energy costs. There was help for schools coming in from the Autumn statement, but it is unclear how that will support schools going forward and we are aware of the implications of that. There has been a lot of discussion about early help for young people who are at risk of needing a place in our PRU’s across the county and there is discussion with Ralph Holloway and other colleagues about how to ensure there is a fast track through to needing a PRU place because there is no funding for outreach.  **EPHA**  HPK reported energy and increase in salaries have caused a huge impact financially for schools as well as the level of pupil needs. Also added costs before any issues are made and changes in behaviour which is quite challenging at times and the impact of supporting those children. The retention from a salary point of view is an issue. There are a lot of support staff and they are leaving and it is difficult to recruit to those places because of the added difficulties the children they are supporting. Working with Essex for an outreach proposal and continue with ESSBT on this.  RL enquired is the bad behaviour going back to Covid? HPK said, yes, but you cannot blame Covid. Nevertheless, we are seeing the impact of it.  **ESSET**  No report as Emily Welton had sent her apologies.  **PRUs**  JB .  We are in discussion about an outreach model and funding to start it. In our area it is staff absence and impact of Covid falling more with staff and levels of resilience and recruitment. Some of the posts in the main do not offer homeworking element and we are in competition with jobs that are better paid. There is a strain on recruitment, but staff absence is the biggest pressure.  PC agreed with Ashe and EPHA and Jo. We are becoming not a PRU but a destination provision. That cannot carry on. There is no aptitude taking children back. Further work is required. We support in primary schools. Work done has reduced permanent exclusions from primary schools. It is more expensive to keep children in. We in Essex have larger PRU’s than anywhere else. Lots of areas are finding it the same. It is getting difficult to move children.    **Early Years – Nurseries**  CL commented it is the cost of living and families taking more of a decision to look at cost of childcare and reducing hours. They are questioning attending if payment to go with that. Again, staffing and recruitment still proves to be an issue. Energy prices as well. The minimum wage and sustainability for settings and voice for potentially closing is getting louder. There is an increased number of children with SEND and support and monitor issue on staff as well in the sector.  **ESGA**  RB reported they had a very successful coffee and chat on two occasions which were recently well-attended, and debates were quite lively which was very encouraging. It is the cost of living which is on the minds of governors about maintaining budget and attention of children.  **Unions**  JF reported concerns about energy costs, staff salary costs and impact on budget. The whole situation is impacting on pupils and staff. JF reiterated the overall concern is lack of Government funding. He said £2 billion does not bring funding up to comparable in real terms. The pressure people are put under in terms of providing support is considerable. There is less resilience because members are worn ragged, and the expectations placed on them. There is concern that headteachers are feeling ragged too and education is struggling overall. Magic money tree can exist but this does not feel like it this time around. Funding is part of the reason there is industrial action from the teaching staff.  **Unison**  MS commented on the impact on recruiting, retention and funding of support staff in schools. There is an impact on them if teachers are not being retained. Noted things said by the other unions and other organisations. We need more Government support for rises in salaries.  **Church Rep**  Jo Santinelli stated there was nothing to report. There was nothing to raise by the Diocese but simply to be here and listen to the discussions.  Sean Moriarty referred to schools in earlier discussion. Will report to the Director of the Diocese of Brentwood, Robert Simpson.  **High Needs Review Sub-Group** -  The Group has met and minutes were attached. Any comments about the minutes? No. All were happy to note the minutes.  **Finance Review Group** – the FRG had met. Any comments? No. All were happy to note the minutes.  **Early Years Sub-Group** – Early Years has met and minutes were noted. |
| **12** | **Minutes of Schools Forum meeting held on 28/9/22 – Chair**  There were no corrections. These minutes were unanimously accepted as a true record of the discussions held. |
| **13** | **Actions – Action Log – Yannick Stupples-Whyley**  **Early Years Block surplus balance**  YSW this under Item 2. Now have allocated **£2 million** plus **£550k** which may extend to a 3rd year. It will be **£2.6 million** if it is only 2 years, or slightly lower figure to **£2.3 million** if it is extended for a 3rd year and further papers will be brought out on how to spend the remaining balance.  (This may be brought forward to the May meeting for discussion.) |
| **14** | **Constitution and Membership of Schools Forum – Yannick Stupples-**  **Whyley**  YSW presented the current membership of the Schools Forum in the light of the continuing transfer of maintained schools to the Academy sector and the change in pupil numbers. YSW read out what was agreed at the May 2021 meeting. Table 1 showed 28 members in total. Looking at the May 2022 Census and the ratio between primary school and secondary pupils which is  1.47:1. There is no change to 10 members for primary schools, 7 for  secondary schools. The above primary pupil split in Table 3 between  maintained schools and academies still requires 5 maintained members and  5 academy members.  A full list of members was shown in Annex A. It can be seen that there are  two vacancies, one for a primary academy governor and the other for a  secondary academy governor. The Authority is struggling to fill both  vacancies but has recently advertised the vacancies again in Education  Essex. Should the vacancies remain vacant at the end of the current  election process, options will be brought to July’s meeting to ensure the  vacancies are filled. Table 4 showed the members who are coming to the  end of their 4 year terms.  Annex A – Mark Farmer is not re-standing. There are 3 new secondary  Headteachers.  Annex B – showed breakdowns of attendance at the different meetings.  Schools Forum attendance – need to revisit Post 16 representative and the  inclusion church representative. Other than that membership is good.  **Questions**  JN mentioned her school name will change in January from St Giles and St  Andrews to the Chorus School’s Federation.  **Action**: YSW to amend.  RL stated his intention to stand down as Chairman of the Schools Forum.  It is RB’s intention to stand again for Schools Forum.  **Recommendations:**  The Forum noted the arrangements for how meetings will be held at 3.1.  The Forum noted that no changes are required to the constitution of Schools Forum at 3.5 and 3.7.  The Forum noted Membership at Annex A and Attendance at Annex B. |
| **15** | **Forward Plan – Yannick Stupples-Whyley**  YSW read this out and confirmed the dates of future meetings.  The next meeting is scheduled for 11th January 2023 as an in-person meeting.  POST MEETING NOTE: It was agreed to hold the January meeting via Teams and the May meeting will be an in-person meeting.  January meeting – potential decision paper on Falling Rolls Fund. FRG have reviewed the changes but once we have the October Census, we can do the check. Discuss on 7/12/22 or if not, a communication will be via email.  RL returned to Item 14 – Church of England representative. RL asked if YSW will be writing to the Diocese to ask about this.  Action: YSW.  Post 16 representative. YSW to go to Post 16 representative and ask for Clare White to seek a representative.  **Recommendations:**  The Forum noted the dates of future meetings and that additional items as proposed by Schools Forum are included in the Forward Plan. |
| **16** | **Any Other Business**  Patrick Grant, DfE, had observed today’s meeting and he was asked to say a few words.  He said thank you for having me at today’s meeting. It was very interesting to hear and a lot of the subjects you talked about are also talked about elsewhere in the country. I was here as an observer. I note it is a tough time. I do make a note of your concerns which are in parallel with other Local Authorities across the country. I go to quite a few of these meetings. Thank you for having me and thank you for all the work you are doing. |
| **17** | **Chair’s Closing Comments (Rod Lane)**  RL thanked everyone for their forbearance in the changes in the year of the meetings. RL thanked everyone for attending and for their contributions.  RL wished everyone a Happy Christmas and all the best for the New Year and looked forward to meeting everyone online in January.  **Date of next meeting – Wednesday, 11th January 2023 at 8.30 a.m.**  **Via Teams.**  **Post Meeting Note** – it was decided to change the January meeting to be virtual via Teams. However, the next in-person meeting will be held for the May meeting. |