**Schools Forum Meeting Minutes of 10th January 2024**

**held via Microsoft Teams**

**08.30 – 10.07**

*Approved by Schools Forum – 10th July 2024.*

In Attendance

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| Carole Herman (CH) | Charlotte Little (CL) | Claire Styles (CS) |
| Dan Leonard (DL) | Ferliene Willis (FW) | Harriet Phelps-Knights (HP-K) |
| James Saunders (JSau) | Jeff Fair (JF) | Jo Barak (JB) |
| Jo Santinelli (JSan) | Jody Gee (JGe) | John Hunter (JH) |
| Luke Bulpett (LB) | Lyn Wright (LW) | Marilyn Smith (MS) |
| Nigel Hill (NH) | Pam Langmead (PL) | Philomena Cozens (PC) |
| Robin Taverner (RT) | Rod Lane (RL) | Ruth Bird – Chair |
| Ruth Sturdy (RS) | Sean Moriarty (SM) | Simon Wall (SW) |
| Stuart Roberts (SR) | Sue Bardetti (SB) |  |
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| **LA Officers** |  |  |
| Cllr Tony Ball (TB) | Andrew Page (AP) | Carolyn Terry (CT) |
| Val Cleare (VC) - Minutes | Yannick Stupples-Whyley (YSW) |  |
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| **Observers** |  |  |
| Ashley Milum (AM) | Jennifer Grotier (JGr) | Maggie Loveday (ML) |
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| **1** | **Apologies for Absence and substitute notices**  Apologies were received from Debs Watson, Emily Welton, S. Roberts, Clare Kershaw, Chanel Lassman, Jinnie Nichols, Scott Bowak.  RB welcomed Dan Leonard who joined Schools Forum for the first time today as Secondary Academy Headteacher.  Ferliene Willis substituted for Debs Watson and Pam Langmead substituted for Primary Headteacher vacancy. |
| **2** | **DSG Budget 2024/25** (Yannick Stupples-Whyley)  YSW informed Schools Forum on the updated School Funding Settlement for 2024/25 of the assumptions built into the budget and seeks agreement of the relevant elements of the Dedicated Schools Grant budget for 2024/25.  YSW referred to Section 3. We consulted with schools in October 2023, so that once this has been achieved movement of the up to 0.5 from the School's Block applicable any exclusions for the minimum funding. However, guarantee is not applicable in terms of delegation. These decisions were agreed in September 2023 for general duties and met for maintained schools also agreed.  In September 2023, Central Spend on pupil growth is in Section 5 and fully involved in Section 7 Central Spend on Early Years Block provision and is in section 11 spend on the High Needs Block is in section 12.  Section 4 showed the settlement itself as of 19th December. 2023. Overall, the national level is a **£3.4 billion** increase, which was **£917,000,000** went into Schools Block, **£440,000,000** into the High Needs Block and Early Years Block got **£2 billion**.  **Table 2** showed the settlement at the December stage, which is still provisional. Because the Early Years Block is not funded on the January 2024 and January 2025 Censuses and behind this we import/ export to an adjustment which is also funded on the January 2024 Census, though overall we've gone from one point of **£467 billion** if we base the 23/24 on the two additional grants that came in for mainstream schools and Early Years and then we have an overall settlement of **£1.563 billion** which is a **£95.9 million** increase or 6.5%.  If a School Block goes up to 31 point **£9,300,000**, Central School Services Block **£12.6 million** on behind these blocks and the biggest increase on the earliest block is **£51 million**. With regards to the Schools Block we have the primary and secondary unit of funding which gets multiplied by the October 23 Census. YSW explained we then add in premises funding, which is at the previous level, unless it is PFI which gives operated by the retail price index excluding mortgage interest. We then have funding for positive growth based on middle super output areas and we also have new 24/25 funding for falling both funds. That is the opposite to the Growth Fund, but any fall in funding has to be within a middle layer super output area (MSOA) which has to be a 10% reduction, so there will be a **£31.9 million** increase.  Figure 2 showed that has two elements of the ongoing responsibility than historic commitments and an ongoing responsibility. This is funded on a per pupil rate, and this includes the **£3.08 million** element of the former Education services grant, which is for the Central Services for all schools and that has increased by **£320,000** due to the increase in pupil numbers.  Then we have the historic commitment, which is the funding for PRU and Capital SEND project. For a number of years, the DfE have been trying to wind down historic commitments and they apply a 20% reduction each year. We have applied again for 24/25 and it has been agreed, but 24/25 is the last contribution to the PRU and Capital SEND project.  YSW indicated he needed to block that diagram slight changed from previous years. Where we have had the 5% cap applied, it is actually only on the second block of and its overly boxy factors, which is the historic spend factor, the population disability, bad health, key stage 2, low attainment, key stage 4, low attainment, free school meals. They are comparing it to the 23/24 baseline. If it is, the increase is less than 3%, then you get a different funding floor.  If the increase is 3 to 5%, it goes through with no change. If it is above 5%, it is then capped to 5% and we have been capped at 5%. But in terms of the **£12.6 million** increase, **£11.8 million** came from the **£440 million** natural increase. And then we have had an increase of 146 places in special schools, which increases funding by **£859,000**. Figure 4 showed how that block is calculated and we have new for 24/25 under 2 funding and also within two-year old funding everything new from April.  With regards to the two-year old funding for working families, Table 3 showed the funding rates that come into Essex and we had the supplementary grant for 23/24.  The provisional increase is **£51.0 million** due to:  The increase in the hourly rate for 3 and 4 year olds, **£8.9m**  The increase in the hourly rate for disadvantaged 2 year olds, **£11.6m**  New funding for the 2 year old offer to working parents, **£12.3m**  New funding for the under 2s offer to working parent, **£17.2m**  The extension of the early years pupil premium, **£556,000**; and  The extension of the disability access fund, **£441,000**.  **Question**  PC asked to confirm that the extra places with schools are with ECC and  not out of Borough places, the 146 in the special needs are something like  859, whatever it was that is funding for children within Essex schools, not  extra places for children going out of Essex?  YSW confirmed the extra places with schools are with ECC.  YSW explained the ever-changing Early Years funding is the central  retention. Up to and including the current financial year, we are allowed to  retain up to 5% to 3 and 4 year old funding. From 24/25 it would be 5% to 2  year olds working parents, 2 year olds, disadvantaged families and 3 – 4 year olds. Families SEN, at a date not mentioned, it will reduce to 3% retention.  With regards to benchmarking and how we compare to other Local Authorities, which we are ranked as 127 out of 151 Authorities, which is in the bottom quartile in the Central School Services Block, we received **£50** per pupil and that is ranked 42 out of 151 authorities. That puts it in the second quartile of the High Needs Block.  YSW mentioned with the exception of the Central Services Block, we are a  lower funded authority, and we will be doing some more detailed benchmarking which we will bring to a future meeting.  RT wondered on the benchmarking for clarity purposes, how we are ranked,  is this due to decisions made by ECC including the Schools Forum? Or, are  we ranked low because there is nothing that we can do about it.  YSW responded this is how the funding is allocated to us. As we  go through the detailed benchmarking, one thing we are going to be looking at is where we were before the national funding came in, and what has been the impact of the DfE's decision to put more funding through the deprivation factors. There is nothing we can do other than lobbying.  **Growth Fund**  The Authority has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.  The Growth Fund is known as explicit growth and provides funding for basic need growth where schools are expanding. It also provides funding for  bulge classes where temporary growth is required, for furniture and  equipment for new and expanding schools, for the infant class size contingency and funding for schools where growth is required due to Afghan or asylum seeking children.  The funding rates for 2024/25 have increased with primary growth being funded **£1,550** per pupil, an increase of **£30** per pupil and secondary growth is funded at **£2,320** per pupil, an increase of **£45** per pupil. For any new  schools that appear for the first time on the October 2023 census, Local  Authorities receive an allocation of **£76,195**, an increase of **£1,495** per new school. An area cost adjustment is applied.  For each local authority, schools are allocated into middle super output areas (MSOAs). For each school, the October 2022 census is deducted from the October 2023 census. A total is calculated for each MSOA for primary and secondary and where the total is positive growth funding is allocated.  **Table 5** showed an example of how this works at MSOA level.  Basildon has negative growth minus 3.  The MSOA Basildon 1 would generate no funding as there is no growth.  Basildon 13 would generate **£40,000** for primary growth for the net growth of  26 pupils and **£132,000** for secondary growth for the net growth of 57 pupils.  The allocation for Essex for 2024/25 is **£7 million**, which is a decrease of  **£300,000** from 2023/24.  **Table 6** shows the growth fund requirement for 2024/25. The growth fund request for 2024/25 is **£7.2 million**, which is **£224,000** higher than the **£7.0** **million** allocation. Agenda Item 7 shows there is a **£800,000** contingency for the Growth Fund so it is proposed to take the shortfall from the contingency.  **Questions**  SM wanted clarification on the example of the MSOA looking at the example for Basildon 1 and you have a reduction of minus 3.  If, say, for example Mayflower High showed a significant increase in numbers, but that increase was matched by Buttsbury junior reduction so that overall figure was still minus 3, would that mean under this formula that Mayflower High would not be eligible to receive any growth funding under the formula and therefore Mayflower High would not get any?  YSW explained it is done separately for primary and secondary schools. If Mayflower High did have a positive growth, it would be the primary school that would not get any growth due to the minus 3.  **Varying Pupil Numbers**  This is known as implicit growth and is an alternative method of funding a significant change in pupil numbers. **Table 7** showed the number of growth places funded by varying pupil numbers. In 2023/24 we had 1390 additional places. If no schools were funded on estimated numbers the primary basic entitlement would be **£17.96** per pupil higher and the KS3 basic entitlement would be **£13.25** per pupil higher. However, the Authority would need to seek an additional **£3.3 million** for the Growth Fund.  **Falling Rolls Fund**  The only change to the criteria is that the DfE has removed the requirement for schools to be judged as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted from 1st April 2024. The falling rolls allocation for 2024/25 is **£427,000**. There are currently 7 primary schools within the Falling Rolls Fund. Table 8 showed the budget requirement for 2024/25.  **PFI Affordability Gap**  **Table 9** showed the schools contributions for facility management, cost reasons, costs increase from one year to the next will be based on inflation, so RPI and also if schools have variations in years add cost that will then get added on to the next year.  **Questions**  RL asked how many more years has the PFI scheme got to run?  YSW responded:  Debden will be ceasing in 2026/27  Clacton runs out in 2032/33  BSF runs out in 2035/36.  **Action**: YSW to confirm these dates.  **Delegated Budgets**  **Schools Block**  YSW stated we have to submit how we are funding schools for 2024/25 by  22nd January 2024. There is a small risk that figures in **Table 13** that will  follow could change but overall delegation will remain the same.  **Early Years Block**  **Table 12** showed the proposed hourly rates that will be funded in 2024/25.  In consultation with the Early Years Sub Group, it was agreed there should a  higher rate paid for disadvantaged 2 year olds than 2 year olds from working families.  In line with the new retention of funding arrangements as set out in 4.20 the  Authority has split the retained costs (**£3.7 million**) proportionately across  each funding block. The Authority is provisionally passporting a minimum  97% of each funding block.  The Early Years Block provisional allocation is based on the January 2023  census. Actual funding for 3&4 year olds and 2 year olds from deprived  backgrounds will be calculated on the January 2024 census (5/12ths) and  January 2025 census (7/12ths). It may be necessary to adjust the rates in  **Table 13** once the January 2024 census is published in July.  Funding for 2 year olds from working families and under 2s will be based on  termly census returns as there will be no data for these children on the  January 2024 Census.  **Essex Formula for Funding Schools**  **Table 13** showed the breakdown of the formula how it comes across each of the formula factors.  **Table 14** showed now the Essex Formula has transitioned to NFF the  largest funding increase is within the basic entitlement.  **Table 15** showed the increase schools will receive per pupil in 2024/25.  **Minimum Per Pupil Level**  The minimum per pupil levels (MPPL) of **£4,610** for primary and **£5,995** for  secondary have been fully implemented.  **Table 16** showed the number of schools in 2024/25 that require additional funding through the minimum per pupil level.  **High Needs Block**  **Table 18** showed:  The proposed allocation of the High Needs Block (HNB)  for 2024/25.  Total forecast expenditure against the HNB in 2023/24 is **£227.9 million**  leaving an in-year deficit of **£1.2 million**.  Significant variations between 2023/24 and 2024/25, above **£500,000**, are explained below.  Place funding increases **£591,000** due to an additional 59 special school  places.  The growth in Education, Health & Care Plans (EHCPs) has increased over the last 2 years by 14% and 5.8% of total pupils have EHCPs. Top-up  funding increases **£18.9 million** due to:  The application of a 3.4% in funding to Special Schools and PRUs funded from the contingent budget in 2023/24.  £500,000 Outreach Provision to be provided by the PRUs in 2024/25. This is one-off funding in 2024/25 pending evaluation and future funding settlements.  Increased demand for Post 16 FE places  There is a forecast increase of an additional 139 (35%) independent school places from April 2024.  The number of pupils in other local authority schools is forecast to increase by 7.5% in 2024/25  All costs listed above are forecast to be ongoing cost burdens to the High Needs Block unless stated.  **Questions**  RL asked regarding the top up for independent schools, is that increase in pupil numbers? Is it an increase in their charges?  YSW responded built into the **£4.7million** overspend for the coming year, we built the increase of 139 places which was built around bullet point 12.5 and there will be some increase based on inflation for prices increases.  RL asked how do costs of special schools per pupil compare with independent schools costs per pupil?  YSW offered to check this and report back.  RL felt that comparing any amount of huge increase in costs, we as a Forum need to have some oversight.  YSW stated a Sub Group has been set up to look at independent schools. We have had one meeting so far. There will be a report coming to Forum about that.  HPK enquired about **Table 18** on page 21 – what is the support for inclusion?  YSW replied **£1.2 million** increase, but potentially the **£1 million** of that is what we brought to two Schools Forums in September and November. The £1 million increase will be inclusion framework.  HPK asked, what is the rest of it?  Just because, as Rod said, we need to know what is in all of these sections because it seems an awful lot of money when further on your then talking about a transfer potentially.  I know that's not on the cards at the moment, but it's a lot of money that I think we need to know exactly what is being spent for what, and actually is it necessary that all of that is being spent, which I'm talking as chair of IIFA, but we would not support another transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block this time. And we have said that all the way along.  So, we need to look at all of those bits that you have got on there and why is PFI shown in this High Needs Block table when you have got that in the other section as well?  YSW stated it is because one of the PFI schools is a special school. For mainstream schools we have to de-delegate the affordability gap and invoice schools to return the funding. The regulations for special schools are different and the affordability gap is charged to the High Needs Block  HPK replied with hindsight, I know that is a wonderful thing. Would Schools Forum have agreed the inclusion framework money if we had known this was the situation? Because we are paying it out to now be saying, well, actually, we are going to need some money.  Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but that is something we need to consider. Do we need to be looking longer term when we are making these decisions, so we are not in this position?  YSW replied, the inclusion framework is one of early interventions initiatives implemented by the Authority. A paper on the effectiveness of the inclusion framework will be brought to a future Schools Forum meeting.  HPK asked are there any solutions? I know we have talked about this and independent schools and trying to mitigate that and everything else, but what are the other solutions to avoid the High Needs Block not being overspent to this extent?  YSW said we have set up the Independent Schools Working Group and it has only had one meeting and various proposals have been put forward from different people in that group. YSW stated that group is going to be meeting regularly on a monthly basis and we will be bringing reports to you on that.  HPK said finally, if there was to be a transfer from the Schools Block, that would mean a lot of vulnerable schools going into deficit and therefore needing a loan. So where would that loan money come from?  YSW stated if there is no surplus balance then we would need to be talking to the Local Authority how we could offer loans.  JB said it mentions the **£500,000** for outreach for 2024/25. JB informed we have yet to receive the **£250,000** out for outreach for 2023/24. Could JB be assured that has not disappeared somewhere and when would we be likely to get that when we were already moving into the next financial year?  JF believed we needed to remind ourselves that we are aware of the difficulties, the High Needs Block has been in for some time. It was raised at the last Forum meeting by Claire to identify that there was an issue in terms of which is why some of the proposals were already reduced at the last meeting of the Schools Forum to actually reduce the commitment.  JF spoke about funding budgets in that he has not had a year in all the years that he has been involved with the Schools Forum and before Schools Forum where we have not had an issue with High Needs funding because it has always exceeded the amount of money apart from the unusual event for the last two or three years where the Government seemed to do a catch up and because we had put in place strategies to minimize our costs as far as possible, we put pressure on mainstream schools  JF felt we need to be thinking ahead, which is what part of the Independence Working Group is saying what capital works do we need to do to expand our own provision.  The one thing JF could say to RL to answer his question about the funny difference there is a huge difference amount of funding that special schools get per pupil compared with independent schools, which is why the independent sector is always so much more expensive and the difficulty is when you read the papers and you look at the inclusion framework that has been published, it is also to do with trying to manage parental expectations.  JF went on to say we are trying to ensure that we have our own in-house provision. Within, however, we tend to do it and that it is part of the reason we can be looking for the support for inclusion in the early intervention. It is to try and manage the system as well as it can be managed and in a structure which has been decimated over many years because of austerity and funding cuts that have gone through in terms of the Local Authority.  JF also remembered when we had a lot more people who were working to provide services to mitigate these events that we have currently within Essex simply because there is not the funding anymore.  JF stated he would not want to be transferring money from the Schools Block to High Needs Block any more than you would, but the difficulty actually is that is the DfE approach that if there is a difficulty in the High Needs Block that is their go to solution and that is what they implement and if it has not necessarily been in the Schools Forum in those Local Authorities that are in difficulty with their High Needs Blocks.  JF said it is an instruction from on high that is going to be transferred and what Yannick identified, the half percent there, the minimum that the DfE is transferring is 1% and have felt it when we were looking at these papers, it felt important that we actually knew the difficulty of what is and what as a whole forum and all our schools in Essex need to be doing to work together to try and minimise that risk and that impact.  AP was picking up on HPK’s point and just reinforcing what JF had said. AP had previously made people aware of his nervousness around the risk and the volatility of this block. It is such a real concern for us and that is why we wanted to increase the reporting on this and, we will increase the reporting, how it will bring back that analysis and continue that all through the Schools Forum.  But it is really important that we must try the early intervention. If we do not impact through early intervention, then the cost base will continue to grow and it just gets bigger and bigger and we have not got the funding that will keep pace with the spending that we have got at the moment.  AP felt it was just to make everyone aware of a conversation with a number of other Authorities yesterday and, for example, Norfolk is forecasting an in-year deficit of **£25 million**, we have a forecast deficit of **£1.2 million**.  We have surplus funds to cover that and in the immediate future, but it is just raising that at some point or other sooner, rather than later, we will be falling into deficit and so we need to look at the early intervention and also more importantly, we have the Independent Schools Group that has been set up.  AP explained that independent schools account for about 3% of our schools population, but they take about 20% at the High Needs Block funding. We need to look at that ratio and change that.  Cllr Ball responded to the difference between independent provision and free school provision for SEND. It is **£65,000** for independent provision for a 38-week placement on average compared to **£37,000** for a free school 38-week placement. Cllr Ball was aware that JF said we did discuss this and AP had mentioned the early intervention, but also when it comes to increasing the free school provision, we are very much on that as well. It is just that what is going to be paid to the independent sector is not sustainable.  YSW reminded we have the Outreach in here **£2,000,000** plus the **£500,000** training, a slight increase in therapies and overall, a **£12.7 million** increase, which is a 5.6% increase.  **Table 19** showed the three-year MTR position so we can see each of the years and they were in year deficits at the moment before cost is to go into deficit in 2026/27. However, should anything significantly change before then, it could come at an earlier date.  **Teachers Pay and Pensions**  YSW stated in July 23 the DfE announced £900 million for 2024/25 in relation to the September 23 Teachers Pay award.  What they have done is to erase that they are paid in 2023/24 and it will just be uplifted by 12 ICE though it was the main income for 2023.  4th full year Gram for 2024/25, though based on applying multiplying everything by 1218.  Looks like visually it will be a £62 per pupil, **£86 pound** KS3, £98 KS4. A lump sum of **£2305** and then eligible free school meals.  Of the six people will get **£53** in primary, **£77** in secondary and then special and alternative provision.  Schools will get **£445** per place.  Funding will continue to be paid as a letter grant, and in the December announcement they have announced further funding will be coming to the pool.  They are increasing the employer contribution rates to the Teachers’ Pension Scheme from April, but further details will be announced in due course.  In terms of risk then opportunities, it is built on known assumptions and pressures identified to date. There is from the continued effective COVID which is still being impacted on peoples’ complexities or volatility and, energy costs and all quantified pressures which will be monitored throughout the year and reported back in the usual monitoring reports. On the notification of budget shares, we have to notify primary schools of their Schools Block allocation in February.  Funding must be notified by the 31st March and the ESFA will inform academies of their GAG allocations by 31st March.  **Recommendations:**  The Forum noted the School Funding Settlement for 2024/25, including the allocation for each DSG Block at 4.4;  The Forum noted the funding for the PFI Affordability Gap at 8.2;  The Forum noted the total delegation for primary and secondary schools at 9.3;  The Forum noted the proposed allocation of the High Needs Block at 12.1;  The Forum noted the risks and opportunities at 14.1;  The Forum agreed the funding for the Growth Fund at 5.10;  The Forum agreed the funding for the Falling Rolls Fund at 7.4;  The Forum agreed the funding rates for early years providers at 9.6; and  The Forum agreed the central expenditure for the Central School Services Block and Early Years Block at 11.1. |
| **3.** | **Any other business, feedback from schools through Associations and from Schools Forum representatives on other Bodies.**  **ASHE**  CH reported, from the secondary school perspective, the focus is on attendance, behaviour, alternative provision and changing that balance offsite direction and managed moves and T levels, all of which were reported previously. Otherwise concerns remain the same.  **EPHA**  PHK informed funding pressures continue for primary schools due to Unfunded Pay Awards and special educational needs putting huge pressures on budgets. Several schools are having to restructure and make redundancies and putting more pressure on remaining staff. When we last spoke about the School Meals Advisory Service, PL has had feedback from some headteachers concerning that rising cost, and that they accept a similar service would cost much the same.  **ESSET**  SW reported it is numbers and demand is through the roof. We have got nowhere to put the children and tribunals continue.  **PRU’s**  JB confirmed we are working through the demand of permanent exclusions.  JB commented about the funding to be released so that we can get the early intervention and outreach support. Our hands are tied because we have not received the funding. PC agreed with these comments.  **Early Years** – nothing to add.  **ESGA**  RB reported ESGA only met on Monday, and it was agreed like others it had only been about two weeks since last reported, so this would be carried over to the next meeting.  **Unions**  JF had concern looking at Heads for the future. The pay review was not good for retention of staff with a fairly small pay increase because it has to be within the budget already got to maintain things. It is not good in terms of funding overall. Unions are already looking at the fact that the battle will be about funding at the next general election, and that schools actually do not have enough money despite the fact there are large balances sitting in some schools.  MS is looking forward to what is happening in the next budget year. It is not certain if we will be going into support staff through restructuring again.  **Church Reps**  CL echoed attendance concerns relating to anxiety and SEMH needs have increased massively. Also reduced timetables across the trust and the funding pressures everybody has already mentioned, along with the potential for restructuring and redundancies.  JS commented there was nothing different from what colleagues have already said, and nothing specific relating to the Catholic sector to report.  **High Needs Review Group** – Have not met since November Forum  **Finance Review Group** – Have not met since November Forum  **Early Years Sub-Group** – Met in December but minutes are not available.  RL had noted the Early Years Sub-Group have not met. We have now entered a phase where the minimum wage has gone up and are still in a situation where many settings cannot afford to pay minimum wage, and I know the real rate is going up for settings, but we are in a situation where staff are leaving nurseries and going to supermarkets where they can earn more money on the checkout, and not only that they get the discount for their food and stuff. We are going to have a situation in Early Years of the Government pulling with one arm and saying we are going to increase facilities for young people, and on the other hand insufficient supply. We are going to be stuck in the middle of a great problem.  **Any Other Business** – none. |
| **4.** | **Minutes of 29th November 2023**  There was one amendment to be made. CH had noted NEAT should be changed to NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).  **Action**: YSW.  The minutes were a true record of the meeting held. |
| **5.** | **Minutes Action Log**  Two items around Early Years underspend.  YSW reported we are still reviewing these proposals for the final adjustment for 2022/23 and will bring to the next meeting in May and then based on that will be able to look at further proposals. We still need to do the cost benefit analysis but that is in progress. |
| **6.** | **Confidential Forum Minutes – 29th November 2023**  **Matters Arising.**  PL asked are we having further discussion about the School Meals Advisory Service at this meeting and whether any feedback around the letter to schools and take-up?  PL reminded everyone that we discussed at the last meeting if 10 schools indicate that they are coming out of the service, and we do not get any additional schools coming in, then the advisory service is not viable. PL was hoping for some sort of update on this matter, because headteachers are asking whether that service is able to continue.  YSW answered we are still in the period where schools can notify whether they want to continue or not. It closes about 21/1/24 and then we will know.  PL asked will it be possible to have some message to Schools Forum members before the next meeting?  YSW will talk to the team and ask to put out a communication.  PL asked, can we have an update from Anita Kemp and Gareth Honeyford about numbers and if any progress on the idea of having an alternative offer around basic compliance?  **Action**: YSW will talk to Gareth Honeyford.  Cllr. Ball stated as soon as he has the response, he will take a view as soon as possible with this information and where our thinking may be going. Let us see what the results are. |
| **7.** | **Schools Budget & Education Functions Forecast Outturn Report**  **Q3 Budget Update 2023/24 (Yannick Stupples-Whyley)**  YSW updated Schools Forum on the forecast outturn position for the year ended 31st March 2024 for both the Schools Budget and Education Functions.  YSW referred to 4.2 and reported the total Dedicated Schools Grant expected to be received for 23/24 is only **£599.3 million**. We have a few schools which could still convert before the end of the financial year so that amount could go down to **£3.6 million**, which is an adverse amount of **£6.9 million**.  YSW explained with the **£3.6 million** and **£27.9 million** underspend on Schools Block, there may be movement from the quarter still showing the £1.2 million and spend that is the **£800,000** held for contingency of the Growth Fund and then **£329,000** if you increase funding from the day fee for summer term payments for academies, and also forecast and cost of furniture and equipment for new and expanding schools **£23,000**.  The uses of the funding **£224,000** will come out of the **£800,000** the Growth Fund and that will leave a contingency at **£576,000** and then the **£433,000** will come out of the **£1.4 million** separate bonus paid forward.  **Questions/Comments**  SM commented potentially there is a further **£800,000** hit because of the schools that have been identified as potentially benefitting from the Falling Rolls Fund in the next year.  YSW responded, yes that would also come out as that balance. The Central School Services Block **£178,000** overspend which is an adverse movement of **£42,000**. As agreed before the team did support **£192,000** and that has been offset by some vacant posts.  YSW referred to Quarter 2 where we were forecasting **£656,000**.  Sorry underspend on vacant posts so some posts have now been recruited to in terms of the Schools Block for **£1.2 million** overspend adverse movement of **£6.9 million** for quarter to so Topper funded for maintained schools both schools and free schools is forecasting a **£3.7 million** overspend due to an increase in volume of people being more education, health and care plan than that and that may have adverse movement **£3.6 million** independent special schools forecasting **£4.9 million** lives spend due to an increase in volume and because the placements and that's an adverse movement of 176,000 essence services forecasting **£10.2 million** underspend main causes the high needs block contingency of **£9.4 million** which is written due to funding increasing faster than expected demand it's our team decided not to contribute to the pension deficit in 2324 which built in a **£753,100** bend and remaining £366,000 undefended due to a compose this is an advertisement **£2,000,000** since quarter two which is due to additional place and top of funding for schools as perfect as presented from in 29th of November 2023 being paid other alternative provision services or cut in **£2 million** overspend due to an increase in pupils being placed through the IPES contract.  This is an adverse movement of **£55,000** support for inclusion forecasting **£343** overspend due to increased expenditure through being inclusion framework of **£857,000** which is offset by underspend in the quadrant SEND teams £**514,000** due to vacancies where new posts have yet to be recruited to and this is an adverse movement of **£1.1 million**.  PC commented on the amount of money that was being spent on inclusion, but yet we are to see the impact in terms of expenditure on other alternative provisions, which is quite an extensive overspend. Have we accessed whether it is making any difference to be spending this amount of money in this way on inclusion?  YSW said the inclusion framework has had some analysis undertaken. This will be brought to a future meeting.  PC felt it needs to be looked at closely and maybe come to the High Needs Block. That is a significant amount of money, but it is not being balanced by a reduction in spending, nor it is being balanced by a reduction in permanent exclusion.  YSW reported about other health related services are forecasting **£426,000** overspend due to the increased use of independent therapists. We are undertaking a review and an update will be provided in a report and brought to the next meeting.  **Recommendation:**  The Forum noted the forecast outturn position for the year ending 31st March 2024. |
| **8.** | **Forward Plan**  YSW read this out and confirmed the dates of future meetings.  It was noted we will be seeking an Extraordinary meeting in March 2024 – date to be confirmed.  PL asked, can we add School Meals Advisory Service to the agenda for the Extraordinary meeting?  RL reminded the Chair that today’s meeting should have had, Election of Chair and Vice Chair on the agenda. This will be added to the agenda for the May Schools Forum meeting.  Also, there was a request to add Election of Chair and Vice Chair to the agenda for the January 2025 meeting.  **Recommendation**  The Forum noted the dates of future meetings and that additional items as proposed by Schools Forum are included in the Forward Plan. |
| **9.** | **Any Other Business** – none. |
| **10.** | **Chair’s Closing Comments (Ruth Bird)**  RB thanked everyone for attending. |
|  | **Extraordinary Schools Forum meeting**   * **Remote, via Microsoft Teams.** * **DATE TO BE CONFIRMED** |
|  | **Meeting – IN PERSON**  **Wednesday, 22nd May 2023 at 8.30 a.m.**  **at Hamptons Sports & Leisure, Tydemans,**  **Chelmsford, Essex CM2 9FH** |