

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
HAVERING SCHOOLS FUNDING FORUM**

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at CEME.  
(8.00 – 9.15 am)**

**Present: Representative**

**Groups**

**LA Maintained School Representatives:**

**Primary:** Kirsten Cooper (Chair)  
Georgina Delmonte  
Hayley Durrant  
Hayley McClenaghan (HMc)  
Chris Speller  
David Unwin-Bailey (DUB)

**Academy Representatives:**

**Primary:** Chris Hobson

**Secondary** Neil Frost  
Scott McGuinness  
David Turrell (Vice Chair)

**Alternative Provision:** Tony Machin

**Non-School Representatives:**

**Early Years PVI Sector:** Bev Nicholls

**Trade Unions:** John McGill (JM) (Teaching staff union representative)  
Peter Liddle (Support staff union representation)

**Non Members in attendance:**

Angela Adams	Clerk, HGS
Trevor Cook (TC)	Assistant Director of Education
Katherine Heffernan (KC)	Head of Finance (Business Partnering)
Hany Moussa (HM)	Principal Education Finance Officer
Jacqueline Tracey	Senior Inspector (Schools Causing Concern)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS  
OR OBSERVERS**

All were welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies for absence had been received from Emma Allen, Denise Broom and Marcus Bennett. It was noted that Bev Nicholls was attending on behalf of Emma Reynolds.

## **2. TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2024.**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2024 were received and agreed.

## **3. MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising that were not included elsewhere on the agenda.

## **4. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) YEAR END BALANCE 2023 -24**

**Forum members were asked to:**

- 1. Note the areas of underspend from the 2023 -24 Dedicated Schools Grant.**
- 2. Agree the allocation of funding in the financial year 2024 -25 as set out in the proposals circulated in advance of the meeting.**

Balance carry forward from 2023 -24 was in line with forecast but the final position was subject to audit. The cumulative deficit carry forward for DSG was £15.296m, due to the high needs costs rising faster than the funding. The figures had been revised since the paper was published and the updated figures would be circulated.

**ACTION: HM / HGS**

Any surpluses would be used to offset the deficit in high needs including the pupil growth / falling rolls funding but excluding Early Years surpluses.

Underspends in early years funding would normally be discussed further with Early Years Provider Reference Group, however as the amount was immaterial, the decision was referred to Schools Forum.

School support practitioners' funding was underspent due to them being under staffed, any surpluses would be used to offset the deficit in High Needs.

Maternity costs and claims were less than the previous year so there was an underspend of £74k. Attendance and Behaviour service which was for School support practitioners', underspent by £46k due to the service being under staffed and not at full capacity. It was proposed that any surpluses would be used to offset the deficit in High Needs.

For Trade Union de-delegated funding, it was proposed to carry forward the balance of £26k, in order to meet the costs of the TUFT representatives to support schools. The underspend in the for Growth Fund was due to bulge classes originally included in the forecast not needed. Primary Fair Access Panel (FAP) currently met every 2 weeks and a different way of funding FAP and bulge classes next academic year was being considered.

De-delegated funding was managed and reviewed to ensure it stayed in line with the budget de-delegated, it was also discussed at the Chairs and Reps meetings.

High Needs were in deficit by £16.118m, this was made up of a carry forward deficit of £8.523m from 2022-23 and deficit of £7.595m from 2023-24. With the allocation of the underspend from the other de-delegated budgets being moved to high needs, this reduced the deficit to £15.322M.

**Forum members noted the areas of underspend from the 2023-24 Dedicated Schools Grant.**

**Forum members all agreed the allocation of funding in the financial year 2024-25 as set out in the proposals circulated in advance of the meeting.**

## **5. LA MAINTAINED SCHOOLS' BALANCES 2023-24**

**Forum members were asked to note the report**

Forum members noted that at the end of the 2023-24 financial year the overall total deficit for maintained schools in the Borough was £3.6m and the overall surplus was £5.4m, leaving a net balance of £1.8m. There were 8 schools who had been in deficit for more than 5 years.

Forum members noted that there was no additional funding available for schools facing financial difficulty, they needed to draw up a recovery plan to manage the deficit. A new member of staff would be joining the finance team in July and they would be supporting schools with their recovery plans. Forum members also questioned if school to school support could be considered, where by another Headteacher alongside the Local Authority support a school with their recovery plans.

A forum member questioned how many schools were in deficit due to Special Education Needs (SEN) costs. In response it was noted that this was being reviewed, it was acknowledged that there was a direct correlation between the high needs spend and the deficits. School to school support would need to be benchmarked but it would be a supportive measure as another Headteacher would bring an educational insight, act as a sounding board and support collaboratively. It was also stated that not all schools took a significant share of high needs pupils. Funding was not there to reduce the deficits but it was noted that plans were needed to reduce the deficit. There were regulations to meet.

Forum members advised that the number of SEN pupils at schools and the number of staff at each school would be useful to look at so that it could be identified if schools were underfunded for SEN which then led to a deficit. It was stated that they could not continue funding at the full rate.

The unfunded pay increments for support staff and increase by 5% in pension contributions, which was also unfunded, also impacted the schools' budgets. These had not been funded to the extent that schools would like. For some schools staffing costs now accounted for 89% of the General Annual Grant (GAG).

Forum members were reminded that the Local Authority had taken out a capitalisation loan to balance the books, so it had to be demonstrated that schools were not wasting money.

Forum members stated that savings were small but not significant and they were not

wasting money. New ideas had to be managed carefully but there was less money to balance the books.

TC advised that issues had been identified – support and high needs- so delivering better value had been applied for and awarded. SEN would continue to impact schools as parents were able to choose the school, this was a huge concern. The situation was inevitable, some schools had 2 SEN pupils while others had 20. The local authority were looking at the deficits and High Needs costs.

It was noted that 14 schools had set a deficit balance in 2023-24, with some schools over forecast their deficits for the 2024-25 and the new team member would be able to support schools with budget forecasting going forward.

It was further noted that the percentage for the upcoming pay increments for staff was currently unknown but any pension contribution costs would be funded.

HMc stated that they had inherited a 2 form entry school with a deficit budget, pupil numbers were low at that time however now the school was full but it would take time for funding to filter through and address the deficit.

It was further noted that some pupils lived in poverty but also attended a school that was in poverty. Some schools were in deficit due to falling rolls and other were in deficit due to high needs costs.

DUB stated that schools would welcome the support but the funding model needed to change, there were 24 pupils with Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) at his school. Headteachers did not want to be in deficit. Schools were failing pupils due to a lack of funding.

It was stated that the number of EHCPs needed to be equalised across the Borough although pupils needed to be in the best provision to meet their needs. Support staff were all supporting pupils with an EHCP so were not available to support others with needs.

**Forum members noted the report**

## **6. SECTION 251 BUDGET SUBMISSION 2024-25**

**Forum members were asked to note the section 251 budget statements.**

At the end of the budget allocation for 2024-25 the Local Authority reported a deficit of £16.5m, which when added to the carry forward from the previous year resulted in a cumulative deficit of £32m.

Forum members questioned how they compared to other local authorities. In response it was noted that nearly all local authorities were in deficit and some were on the DfE's Safety Valve programme. There was a clear reason for the local authority to move quickly in order to support schools more. It was further questioned if there was interest charged on the deficit. In response it was noted that the local authority managed cash overall, the debt was to Havering but interest was charged if they borrowed from other sources. PWLB, the treasury, would charge interest which was variable on the loan made to the local authority. The local authority was not currently charging schools

interest on their deficits. The Dedicated Schools grant (DSG) would remain separate along with the High Needs block deficit balance.

Forum members noted that by August 2024 the local authority had to submit a recovery plan to the Government for the capitalisation loan, which was due to the local authority borrowing money as it was in deficit.

It was questioned if there was any research being undertaken as to why High Needs were increasing. TC advised that when they were invited to join DBV programme, the local authority knew they had high levels of inclusivity in schools, which surprised the DfE. The DBV workbook was being looked at alongside Early Help and building parent confidence in schools but ultimately there was not enough funding. The 2014 reforms were not funded. It was noted that there was an increase in the number of EHCPs in Reception classes. There was also an increase in complex medical needs and there was a gap in the provision for these. The increasing number of these cases needed to be looked at alongside the EHCP process taking a long time.

**Forum members noted the section 251 budget statements.**

## **7. EARLY YEARS FUNDING UPDATE**

**Forum members were asked to note the report.**

The report had been previously presented to Early Year providers on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

JM questioned if there was anything to consider that would happen over the next 5 years generally. In response TC advised that there was an updated pupil plan for 2023-28 for projections, they were looking at expansion in some areas as needed, central Romford had the biggest demographic growth, they were also looking at wrap-around care.

It was further questioned if there would be any schools closed leading to redundancies. In response it was noted that any school could be looking at potential redundancies due to pupil numbers. They were also looking at fair access and putting a cap on numbers over PAN in schools. Currently spaces were available in schools but they were not where people were living.

**Forum members noted the report.**

## **8. HIGH NEEDS FUNDING RATES 2024-25 AND DELIVERING BETTER VALUE (DBV) UPDATE**

**Forum members were asked to note the report and agree for the resumption of the High Needs Task and Finish Group, and specialist sub-groups, to review current year and future year arrangements for High Needs funding levels and support.**

The DBV report had been circulated.

The High Needs Task and Finish Group had agreed the funding arrangements at their meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023. This was noted at the Funding Forum meeting on 11st January 2024.

The Task and Finish Group would look again at the funding for 2025-26. It was noted that

there was not enough funding locally and nationally for high needs.

TC advised that some funding had been spent on a Thematic Review and this would be consulted on via Primary cluster groups, Early Years and Secondary School groups in order to obtain full feedback. All feedback would feed into a SEND strategy which would be presented to Cabinet in September 2024. Once approved it could be put into practice. The action plan would improve the offer.

Discussions with regards to High Needs would be formalised and the Task and Finish Group for High Needs would be set up. There would be a meeting scheduled before the summer holidays.

**ACTION: TC**

**Forum members noted the report.**

**Forum members agreed to the resumption of the High Needs Task and Finish Group, and specialist sub-groups, to review current year and future year arrangements for High Needs funding levels and support.**

## **9. NEXT MEETINGS**

Forum members noted the dates of the upcoming meetings for the next academic year.

Thursday 19th September 2024 (room 233)  
Thursday 17th October 2024 (room 235)  
Thursday 28th November 2024 (room 235)  
Thursday 16th January 2025 (room 233)  
Thursday 13th February 2025 (room 233)  
Thursday 12th June 2025 (room 235)

Meetings to start at 8.00 a.m. at CEME room 233 or 235.

## **10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Forum members raised the issue of libraries being closed as this would impact pupils reading and increase their loneliness. It was requested that the email to Headteachers be re-circulated. Leaflets would be circulated and it was requested if an electronic version of the leaflet could also be circulated. It was noted that there was an extensive consultation taking place regarding the closure of libraries. It was being considered to close 5 libraries in the Borough.

**ACTION: TC**

Meeting closed at 9:15 am