

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

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at CEME  
(8.00am – 9.55am)**

**Present:**

**Representative Groups**

**LA Maintained School Representatives:**

**Primary:** Kirsten Cooper (Chair)  
Georgina Delmonte  
Hayley McClenaghan  
Mike Ross\*  
Chris Speller\*  
David Unwin Bailey

\*Mike Ross also representing the Diocese of Brentwood

\*Chris Speller also representing the Diocese of Chelmsford

**Academy Representatives:**

**Secondary** Neil Frost  
Scott McGuinness  
David Turrell (Vice Chair) (also representing Post 16)

**Special Schools** Emma Allen (Maintained)  
Vicky Mummery

**Non-School Representatives:**

**Early Years PVI Sector:** Becky McGowan

**Trade Unions:** George Blake (Teaching staff union representative)  
Julia Newman (Support staff union representative)

**Governor:** Les James

**Non Members in attendance:**

Marcus Bennett**	Head of SEND
Kavan Cheema	Strategic Business Partner
Trevor Cook (TC)	Assistant Director of Education
Katherine Heffernan (KH)	Head of Finance (Business Partnering)
Michelle Morgan	Clerk, HGS
Hany Moussa (HM)	Principal Education Finance Officer

\*\*for part of the meeting

## **ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW MEMBERS, APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS OR OBSERVERS**

All were welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies were received from the following Forum Members:

Emma Reynolds – Early Years PVI sector (Becky McGowan in attendance as representative)

Andy Smith – Special Schools Academy sector (Vicky Mummery in attendance as representative)

Chris Hobson – Primary Academy Sector

Tony Machin – AP Primary sector

Jacqueline Treacy – HSIS Senior Inspector

It was questioned whether Paul Lerner was aware that he was a Forum member. HM would check his contact details held were correct.

**ACTION: Hany Moussa**

Forum Members were asked to seek volunteers from the primary academy and secondary sectors for the remaining vacancies.

It was agreed to appoint Les James, Chair of The Growing Together Federation as Governor Representative.

### **1. TO AGREE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2025**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2025 were received and agreed.

### **2. MATTERS ARISING**

The following were matters arising from the previous minutes that were not included elsewhere on the agenda:

2.1. Forum composition (minute 4 refers): Forum members were appointed as agreed.

2.2. Early Years Quality Assurance (Minute 4, refers): TC advised that a working party had previously been in place. A discussion was held at the Early Years Provider Reference Group (EYPRG), where clarification had been provided and shared with the sector.

2.3. High Needs Task and Finish group (Minute 6, refers): KH advised that the High Needs Task and Finish Group had not met, however a meeting was scheduled immediately following the Funding Forum. It was agreed that the name should be amended to High Needs Working Group until the deficit position had been resolved.

### 3. DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT – YEAR END BALANCE 2024-25

The report set out the year end position on expenditure from the Dedicated Schools Grant in 2024-25 and the proposed use of balances in 2025-26.

Forum members were asked to:

- **Note the areas of under or overspend from the 2024-25 Dedicated Schools Grant**
- **Agree the allocation of funding in financial year 2025-26 as set out in the proposals included in the report**

It was noted that only maintained school Forum Members could vote on the de-delegated aspect of the report.

HM summarised that the carry forward balance from centrally retained DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant) from 2024-25 into 2025-26 was a deficit of £34.722m. The revised deficit, after commitments have been taken into consideration, at the end of 2023-24 was £15.322m, so the in-year increase was £19.4m.

It was noted that during the financial year 2024-25, the revised forecasted return had been estimated to be up to £36.3m. The reason for the deviation was due to the prudent approach taken due to Early Years (EY) entitlement expansion funding calculations which had led to a £1.7m underspend.

HM went on to explain the proposals:

#### **Early Years Block**

- **£1.3m to allocate to providers as a one off enhancement of the base rate in 25/26 based on the summer term census data.**
- **£221K to be retained for SENIF (Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding) fund for 2025-26 financial year to have means to support any additional demand.**
- **£154K to be retained for the 2025-26 financial year as the DfE had published new guidance stating that Local Authority (LA) would now have to submit census claims 3 times per year so there would be potential infrastructure changes required in order to meet the additional demand.**

A Forum Member questioned the £154K for central team staff and sought further clarity on what additional infrastructure would be needed. HM explained that the EY admissions team might need to add additional capacity to their team and there may also be additional software costs as the current provider had a monopoly in the sector. Other options were being explored, however the provider had a strong hold of the market.

TC advised that what was presented was the indicative budget and not the actual spend. It was hoped therefore that not all the funds would be required.

**Forum members voted and unanimously agreed to the proposals.**

## **Schools Block**

- **£220K to be retained for Growth to support start-up costs for the new Special School – Balgores.**

TC advised that start-up costs of such a large special school were sizeable and the LA had benchmarked with other similar projects within the London boroughs. Costs would however be staggered over the period between now and the opening of the school which was scheduled for September 2027.

**Forum members voted and unanimously agreed to the proposal.**

## **Central Schools Block**

- **£1K to be allocated to School Partnerships/SCC.**

**Forum members voted and unanimously agreed to the proposal.**

## **De-delegation**

- **Carry forward £46K for the re-organisation of arrangements for TUFT (Trade Union Facility Time) as part of the COSWP (Conditions of Service Working Party). This figure was composed of the cumulative balance from the previous year (£26K), in year de-delegation (£2K) and academy buyback (£18K).**

GB summarised for Forum Members the work of the district officers and stressed that their role was not to work at odds with education colleagues but to support with HR procedures and where possible de-escalate situations to avoid more formal (and more costly financially and time) processes and procedures. GS reported that there were currently 3 district NEU officers, all of whom had high caseloads. If the district officers did not have the time to resolve the issue, these would be referred to the regional officer which would delay the process which was not ideal for either the employee, or the school.

The Chair reiterated that as de-delegated funds, this was for maintained schools only and that academies had to make their own TUFT arrangements. GB responded that he would also like to see more academies contributing to trade union time. Funding Forum members therefore sought clarification that some of the TUFT from de-delegated funds was being used to support employees of academies. GB responded that although maintained schools were prioritised, academy employees were also supported.

Funding Forum members shared concerns as they had been unaware that facility time that maintained schools were funding, was also being used for the academy sector where, for some, no financial contribution had been made for this support. Maintained schools should not be subsidising academies.

TC stated that this was an ongoing discussion with the COSWP group. The LA had been clear that all unions should not support colleagues who were not contributing to facility time. The group was looking at whether funds could be allocated based on members, however finalised numbers were awaited from one

of the unions. If unions choose to work under alternative arrangements then the unions should invoice these schools directly.

In response, the Chair explained that this also raised the question why all schools could not use an invoice system, as this could be a cost saving; it was not acceptable to bill one group of schools, and not the other.

An Academy representative stated that 2 years previously, discussions had been held about having more clarity around TUFT and the support that unions members received; more details had been requested by the NEU, however this information had not been shared. It was added, that the experience of Trade Union reps had been working against the school hence the reluctance from some to pay into this system. GB responded that he understood this impression, during hearings the reps were there to support the employee, however reiterated that there was work going on in the background about trying to resolve and deescalate issues early. If there were no district officers, the regional support could take much longer. JN supported and explained that the role at times was to act as a mediator between the school and the employee, with this there would be an increase in formal proceedings.

The Chair thanked GB and JN for their input especially for the transparency from GB which was appreciated. Forum members also stated that their concern was not with the quality of the union representation, just the funding element and, for this meeting, the focus had to be financial.

Referring to the proposal, KH explained that the loss against EAL and Attendance and Behaviour, had been largely offset by Maternity and Insurance.

**Forum Members (Maintained schools only) voted and agreed to the proposal.**

With regards to the element around TUFT, Forum Members were not willing to agree without consulting with the respective clusters. The VCH questioned, if not agreed, would the maintained schools be compromising their schools. KH gave reassurance that the de delegation for this year had already been agreed. TC suggested that the proposal was agreed in principal, however was subject to cluster feedback and an update at the next meeting on the potential allocation model of funding; a final decision would therefore be made in October 2025.

Forum Members (Maintained schools only) agreed to the proposal for the carry forward as long as it was based on a further discussion/decision in the autumn term.

**ACTION: Katherine Heffernan / Trevor Cook**

**High Needs Block**

- **The High Needs Block was £36.730m in deficit, with an in year overspend of £21.4m. Some of this was due to the burden of covering out of borough funding for non-Havering resident pupils. This had added an extra £400K to the deficit.**

Forum members reflected that the in-year deficit had accelerated year on year.

**Forum members noted the deficit of £36.730m that had been carried forward from 2024-25.**

#### **4. EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION**

#### **5. LA MAINTAINED SCHOOLS' BALANCES 2024-25**

**The report provided an analysis of the LA maintained school balances carried forward from 2024-25 into 2025-26.**

Forum members were advised that the net balance was now in a negative for the first time; the deficit outweighed the contingencies. KH explained that the schools who were already in deficit at the end of financial year 2023-24 had increased their deficit, however those in surplus, had remained in a similar position. KH shared her concern regarding the deficit, especially as there had been an injection into the high needs funding rate over 2024-25.

KH acknowledged that the financial situation was causing a number of schools a number of difficulties and stress, however advised that the LA was now in the position where it had to take a more rigorous stance. From this year, as part of the budget setting process, schools in deficit would need to provide an in year deficit recovery plan. KH reiterated that it was not the expectation that schools would be able to clear their deficits over one financial year; that was not a viable scenario, however in year deficits had to stop increasing. Forum members were advised that the current financial state contravened DfE and LA regulations. The finance team had received the 3 year budgets and would be having discussions with any school whose budget was not showing a recovery position within this period.

KH stressed that the LA had listened to feedback from Headteachers hence the increase in High Needs funding and the changes made to the falling rolls funding. There were some schools with a healthy surplus and although the LA was not looking to 'claw back' surplus, consideration would be given when looking at falling rolls or other additional funding as to whether it was required.

As previously suggested, KH proposed establishing a working group to look at school balances to identify common themes and to work together to resolve issues. HM added that the aim of the group would be for peer support and to encourage good practice.

The Chair noted the seriousness of the deficit, however also acknowledged that for schools in deficit, the situation was highly stressful and that no one was spending money inappropriately. If the LA wanted to establish this group, then the Terms of Reference would need to be very clear and suggestions would need to be in the school's gift to deliver upon. For example, advising schools to get their funding for EHCPs quicker, was not within their control. The Chair reminded colleagues that even schools with a surplus had to be mindful, that this could be wiped away very quickly.

A Forum Member suggested that there needed to be more efficient joined up working and gave an anonymised example of a school with a healthy surplus,

receiving SEND capital funding where this could have been used to support another school to improve their provision.

It was requested for Forum Members to have more information to provide an informed narrative; the 9 schools who had been in deficit for over 5 years were of greatest concern and therefore what were the reasons for their deficits so that it would be clear in terms of the focus areas. KH advised that such stratification was available internally.

A Forum Member asked how many of the schools with deficits had high SEN pupil numbers. In response, it was suggested that this would be difficult to ascertain as schools with high numbers of SEN pupils all managed them differently; some schools had had to make painful choices in order to avoid a deficit position.

Referring to the proposed working group, the idea was given that the group should also include those schools on the cusp of a deficit, as a preventative measure. KH agreed and explained that she was also looking at those schools who although had a surplus, had shown in year deficits and therefore would likely soon be in a deficit position.

KH was asked about the approval of the deficit recovery plans; feedback from one of the clusters had been that very similar plans had been submitted as Headteachers had worked together, however only one had been approved, which could breed negativity between schools. KH clarified that only plans which showed recovery back into a balanced budget, were approved. KH added that Headteachers should have been informed. KH explained that clearer communication would be a focus for the team moving forward.

A Forum member shared their experience about being in significant deficit; this had been as a result of being asked to lead a federation which included one failing school. Due to low pupil numbers, the budget deficit had grown and therefore, although the school was now thriving and at PAN, it was incredibly hard to claw back that historical deficit even when in year saving of £300K had been made.

The recommendation was given by a Forum Member that part of the remit of the working group was to support schools to be more accurate in their budget setting.

Information was sought about how other LA's managed school deficits. Feedback was given that there was a different, more robust approach in Essex where schools in deficit had their financial delegated powers removed. KH responded that such an action would not be viable for the number of schools currently in deficit, however agreed that some schools may have to be targeted but it would have to be for the right reasons.

Forum members agreed that schools were carrying the burden as a result of a number of services being stretched; Headteachers and school staff had multi-faceted roles that included health, social care and safeguarding in addition to teaching and learning.

**Forum members noted the report and the idea of establishing a working party subject to clear TOR.**

## **6. SECTION 151 BUDGET SUBMISSION 2025-26**

**The report presented the Section 251 budget statement for the financial year 2025-26.**

Forum members were advised, that LAs were required under Section 251 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 to prepare and submit an education and children and young people's services budget statement to the Department for Education by 30<sup>th</sup> April each year.

HM advised that the projected deficit for 2025-26 for the DSG was £63,201,274 was an increase from £34.7m from 2024-25.

**Forum members noted the Section 151 budget statements.**

*Marcus Bennett arrived at 9.35am*

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

**The report outlined the proposed changes in the entitlement to funded Early Years provision, the Early Years Expansion Grant and the DfE change to the LA data collection for the Early Years Block funding from 2026-27**

KH reported that the proposed changes had already been shared with the EYPRG. The report provided further details regarding the expansion of the EY provision along with the timeline alongside an explanation regarding the funding rates in place and the EY grant expansion.

**Forum members noted the report.**

## **8. HIGH NEEDS FUNDING RATES 2025-26**

**The report detailed the High Needs funding arrangements and rates for schools for 2025-26 and High Needs Task and Finish group.**

KH summarised that approval had eventually been received to move the 2024-25 top up funding for mainstream schools to £19 per hour, which would increase to £20 per hour for 2025-26. KH advised that the rate covered additional NIC costs and some of the provision. It was highlighted that £20 per hour was very generous in comparison with some other boroughs.

Although the current method was to use an hourly rate, there had been a lot of discussion in the High Need Working Group about moving away from this approach to banding. The report showed the initial mapping proposal which illustrated how the current rates would move across into bands.

KH reported that the team had been working with a neighbouring borough which paid a much lower rate of top up funding. Up to 2024-245 the LA had



made the payment to schools, and then recovered the funding from the relevant borough. However, there had not been a great deal of success getting this money back. Discussion had also been held about the rate they used which, as described, was lower; in addition a smaller number of hours were funded across just 3 bands. Where payments had been made and not received, this had led to a shortfall which had contributed to the High Needs deficit by £400K. For 2024-25 schools have not received this funding and KH recognised that it was not a satisfactory situation.

It was questioned if this issue related to a large number of pupils and although the exact number was not known off hand, it was estimated to be between 30-60 pupils. KH explained that in the neighbouring borough, schools had to invoice Havering directly to get the funding. It was noted that the team would engage with the legal team if required. TC added that there were a lot of similar conversations going on about other cross borough services due to the ambiguity in DfE guidance and different interpretations.

**Forum members noted the report.**

- **To agree 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.**

**Forum members agreed.**

## **9. SCHOOL FUNDING FORUM MEETINGS ACADEMIC YEAR 2025-26**

**The report proposed dates for the meetings of the Schools Funding Forum for the academic year 2025-26 and invited members to discuss meeting arrangements.**

**Forum members:**

- **That Schools Funding Forum agrees the dates and times for meetings in the 2025-26 academic year.**

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2025  
Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2025  
Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025  
Thursday 15 February 2026  
Thursday 12 February 2026  
Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2026

**Dates were agreed.**

## **10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no additional business items.

The Chair thanked Forum members for their engagement and contributions.

Meeting closed at 9.55am.