

## **LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM**

**Date of meeting 16 March 2023**

### **Item No 14**

#### **Title: Recommendations of the Chairs' Working Group**

#### **Executive Summary**

On 27 January 2023 and on 10 February 2023, the Chairs' Working Group considered matters, including:

- Requests for Clawback Exemption
- Request for Clawback Suspension

A summary of the information presented, and the Working Group's recommendations are provided in this report.

#### **Recommendations**

**The Forum is asked to:**

- a) Note the report from the Chairs' Working Group held on 27 January and on 10 February 2023;**
- b) Ratify the Chairs' Group's recommendations.**

## **Background**

On 27 January 2023 and 10 February 2023, the Chairs' Working Group considered matters regarding clawbacks requests and request for clawback temporary suspension.

Both meetings were scheduled following Urgent Business Procedure ;

## **Urgency Procedures**

*"In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary for a decision or formal view to be expressed by the Forum, before the next scheduled meeting. In such circumstances, the LA will attempt to convene an unscheduled meeting of the Forum or an appropriate Working Group.*

*If this is not possible, or if time does not allow, the LA shall seek a response from the Forum by emailing all Forum members, allowing all Members the opportunity to express a view on a matter of urgency.*

*Any matters conducted under the urgency procedure will be reported to the next scheduled meeting of the Forum."*

On both occasions, the Chair of the Forum was consulted, and meetings were scheduled. This matter was voted by the Chairs working group, which is composed of all sector representatives that are capable of voting quickly on both matter.

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2023 can be found at Appendix A, and those of the meeting held on 10 February 2023 can be found at Appendix B. The minutes are provided here for members to be aware of what was discussed in detail during the meeting.

**LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM  
CHAIRS' WORKING GROUP**

**Minutes of a meeting held on 27 January 2023 via Teams.**

**Present** Claire Thompson  
**Daniel Ballard (Chair)**  
Philippa Perks  
Stephen Booth  
Steve Campbell

**In attendance** Sylwia Krajewska

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Kirsty Lister and Liz Lavery.

**2. Minutes of the Last Meetings**

The minutes of the meetings held on 12 December 2022 were agreed as a correct record, just with a minor correction to a sentence.

**3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meetings.

Oracle Fusion - During the meeting, the Chair raised the issue of how he receives further complaints and issues from other Headteachers to represent them in these matters since they do not feel they have a direct contact. Suppliers continue to experience these issues at a high rate, as they are unable to receive their monies and become indebted. During the School Forum, the group discussed how LCC has gone through the worst stage and it is only going to get better, which does not seem to be the case. On 23 February 2023, the EY SEN Inclusion meeting will discuss whether delayed payments under the SEND Inclusion Fund are related to Fusion.

An outline of the issues to be addressed to Glynn Peach and Steven Leaf, who attended the School Forum for Oracle Fusion update, will be drafted by the Chairs.

**4. Request for Clawback Exemption**

The Forum reviewed the School Balances and Clawback Policy for 2022/23 in July 2022 and decided to reintroduce clawbacks on excessive revenue balances in March 2023. The group was provided with a copy of the policy that has been agreed upon.

Schools requested that clawback requests be considered prior to the School Forum meeting in March, based on the timing of the end of the financial year.

This meeting has been scheduled after consultation with the Chair of the Forum. By following Forums Operational this meeting was conveyed.

### **Clawback Exemption Requests 2022/23**

Following notification of the Forum's decision, the request has been received from a Lancashire primary school requesting an exception to the policy at March 2023.

#### **Request (1)**

The secondary school in question has saved funds in the past years towards the replacement of the roof structure and pitched roof covering and for the additional teaching spaces and sports hall that was originally planned to accommodate the increase in pupil number of 600. These additional teaching spaces would significantly reduce the crossing of public road for pupils between lessons, significantly reduce time loss from teaching and learning and make staff more productive. The school currently does not have a sports hall, it uses an open space for dining, assemblies, examinations, and indoor sports, which is inadequate in all sense. Thus, a sports hall would not only fulfil a basic need, additionally it will allow the school to develop its PE curriculum and personal development of its pupils.

Due to unforeseen circumstances the planned Capital Expenditure that was due to take place in the year has had to be revised due to it exceeding the original costs that had been budgeted for. The projects are expected to be delayed beyond March 2023. The roof structure and pitched roof covering that was due to take place over the summer of this year was delayed due to unprecedented increase in costs for the project and therefore had to be revised. The idea before it became too costly was to replace the roof and build on top of it to accommodate extra classrooms and a sports hall. However, the amount required way exceeded the budget.

As a result, this is going to leave the school with a balance over the Clawback amount. The balance remaining after the Clawback will be insufficient to undertake the planned capital expenditure. Therefore, the school would like to make a plea that a special exemption is made so we are able to carry forward the money required into following year to carry out the capital projects in the next financial year. To tackle their current predicament, they have revisited and amended our plans so they can obtain their original goal.

To adjust to the rising prices the project has now been revised to replace just the roof with no added structure above. A summary of the projected costs has been set below which was drafted by our consultancy team, AA Projects. School have employed their services to carry out the necessary work, including, obtaining all 3 quotes. School plan to carry the work in Summer 2023, and to be completed by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> term.

<b>Breakdown of Details</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Summary of Costs from Below:</b>	<b>£858,193</b>
Salix Loan Amount	£8,553
Client Contribution (to reserve)	£96,758
DFE Funding excl. extras	£552,882
Relocation Expenditure & Rent (to reserve)	£100,000
Extras (M&E, false ceiling, contingency, etc.) – Estimated (to reserve)	£100,000

Currently, the school is not able to accommodate for the additional classrooms and sports hall in the project above due to rise in costs, they had to investigate alternative arrangements

to meet their requirements. School decided to opt for the modular build, details of which has been attached and presented below. Given the rise in prices, the modular build will not include a Sports Hall, which is a compromise school had to make. School will look to accommodate for this when it becomes feasible. It is expected to complete this work by Summer 2023, due to the lead times it cannot be carried out prior to April 2023.

<b>Breakdown of Modular Build Costs</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>Current Project Costs (as per the document 1)</b>	<b>£392,580</b>
Demolition Cost (as per document 2)	£16,200
Ground Work (Padding)	£35,000
Contingency Cost (e.g. price increases)	£50,000
<b>All other expenditure not incl. above</b>	<b>£50,000</b>
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>£543,780</b>

As mentioned above, the revised capital projects exclude the necessity of a Sports Hall. The lack of dedicated sports facilities is detrimental to the health and well-being of schools students. The school in the past couple of years have been work and are currently in the process in obtaining additional funding from DfE to accommodate their needs.

School has sent out communication to DfE to re-assess their previous bids in which they are waiting for a positive response. As a result, if DfE are to reconsider their bid, the school will have to provide a contribution to the project which is estimated around £250K.

Schools consider their options on how to move forward with projects quoted and it is a vital reason why they require current reserves to be exempted from clawback as it will result in the school missing out on project critical to the progression of the school.

The previous failed bids was also one of the reasons why there was an initial delay in the commencement to the capital projects as the school had to re-plan to ensure the school maintained a healthy cash balance before re-committing to the projects.

*Note: The £250k has been excluded from the amount requested to be exempt from the clawback (below) due to the ambiguity revolving around the success of the bid.*

**To summarise the total amount we would like to be exempt from the clawback in able for us to carry out the two projects next year is:**

<b>Breakdown of Costs to be Carried Forward</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Client Contribution	£96,758
Extras (M&E, false ceiling, contingency, etc.) – Estimated	£100,000
Relocation Expenditure & Rent	£100,000
Modular Project (as per the above)	£543,780
<b>Total</b>	<b>£840,538</b>

The current amount that has been set-aside in our budget for the capital projects is as follows:

<b>Cost Centre</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>
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02RENTS	Rent towards relocating expenses	£30,000
02DECANT	Expenses relating to relocating	£70,000
09ROOF	Roof Project Capital Costs	£600,000
09CONTING	Contingency towards the Roof Project	£120,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>£820,000</b>

It would be really unfortunate if the funds required is taken away as it would be a massive setback towards the goals of the school and the school would have nothing to show from the savings that have been made over recent years.

The actual balance brought forward from 2021/22 was £1,012,976.

The latest forecast balance provided by the schools finance team assumes that if the projects are completed within the 2022/23 period it would leave a remaining balance of £243,673.

The current estimate of project costs which will be delayed until next year is £840,538 (this excludes the £250k contribution fs the bid for the sports hall is successful) for which we request a clawback exemption.

This would result in an outturn balance of £1,083m at 31st March 2023.

The current forecast guideline (12% of CFR Income) is c£466k, if schools forum approve the exemption of c£840k, this would result in a clawback threshold of c£1,306m.

## Request (2)

The secondary school in question has saved funds in the recent years for projects and they currently in Project Memorandum Of Agreement with LCC to action them.

Please see below information and justifications provided by;

### **What is the planned project including dates for start and completion of the project?**

The project is split into two sections, the improvements to the outside areas to create an outside eating and seating area for the students, we are calling this the outside oasis. This is going to be an area the students can sit/read and relax. The increase in student mental health and wellbeing which is widely publicised has impacted on our students massively. Having a calming environment to relax in is vital for our student's wellbeing.

Secondly the building of an additional multiuse building to create additional indoor dining space that in the evening can be used for the letting of the facilities. This area will have a large open space with moveable walls so it can be used in the daytime by the school and separately by the community in the evenings. This area will also consist of 4 shower cubicles, 4 toilets and hand basins as well as some much-needed storage space.

The planning application is due to be submitted at the end of January 2023 with work being completed in November 2023.

All work is being completed by Lancashire County Councils building and construction.

### **Details of the quote**

- Oasis Area at £175,000
- Office, Staffroom and Kitchen at £50,000
- Science Room at £20,000
- Lettings Extension at £190,000

### **Amount you are requesting to be exempt from clawback for one year.**

£350,000 is the approximate total value of the works listed above as per the attached documentation received from LCC design and construction. My approximate carry forward figure which is allowed within the 12% allowance is £576000, therefore I am requesting £350,000 above this figure to be exempt from clawback to allow the works to be completed.

### **Clarity and justification for the project**

We are an 11-16 school with a school roll of 785 and 4 buildings (3 single storey and 1 double-storey). We have a certain amount of hard-standing between and around the buildings and a large field which is inaccessible in poor weather. Over the past few years the behaviour and attitude of our students around school has been graded as Good by Ofsted. We are a school with a much higher percentage of students with SEND than nationally and locally we have significantly higher level of social deprivation in our school cohort than our neighbouring schools. Behaviour at lunch and break time is often a concern, particularly in poor weather and we work hard to manage our limited indoor social spaces in order to create a calm, civilised atmosphere that is recognised and commented on by visitors to our school.

The next stage in our development is the creation of a covered outside seating space to rejuvenate a derelict area of the school behind the Sports Hall. This will create significant additional capacity for shelter during poor weather as well as enabling our students to sit in a calm, civilised location, reducing the likelihood of silly, immature physical interactions. These often spill over into the following lessons after break and lunch and so the creation of this space will further reduce the impact of low-level disruption on teaching and learning. It will also significantly enhance the physical appearance of the school.

We had set aside the funding for this project but had to allocate that to the unexpected pay awards and energy costs in September 2022. Through careful financial management we are now able to schedule the work based on the financial projections for the coming year, but clawback would unfairly and significantly penalise us for careful financial management – the budgetary issues caused by pay awards and energy crises were not of our making.

### **Request (3)**

The secondary school in question is a generic learning disability school for pupils aged 11-19. Both of the units rented at a location and will be used to support our pupils to undertake internship. Allowing them to gain real life skills and qualification, preparing them for adult life and employment in Burnley.

The project for a coffee shop and classroom on the same site;

Classroom unit with facilitate the academic elements of the courses undertake while the other will facilitate a fully function not for profit coffee shop in the heart of the community.

Students will gain valuable knowledge and skills through practical work experience in The Coffee Mill. The desired impact of the work-based learning curriculum is that all students can

move on to their intended destinations with transferable skills for the future allowing them to be as independent as possible in their adult lives.

Students will continue to build on their communication skills, develop emotional resilience and improve their mental health and wellbeing. Participating in work-based learning will provide students with a natural sense of accomplishment whilst boosting self-worth, confidence and self-esteem.

Through participating in community and voluntary projects students will become more socially astute, enabling them to build on their cultural capital. They will demonstrate active citizenship in their local community instilling a sense of pride and identity through helping those in need. Values which will hopefully continue into their adult lives.

The school will appreciate for this request to be considered to make necessary plans. They currently plan to start the project on 20 February 2023 with completion 8 weeks late, which passes end of financial year. They are asking for £214,183 to exempt from clawback.

The costs/quotation of Projects for coffee shop and classroom;

- Preliminaries at £1,000 and £1,000
- Building/Joinery at £50,600 and £40,400
- Electrical costs at £19,670 and £24,530
- IT/data at £320 and £320
- Plumbing at £17,820
- Ventilation at £18,690 and £18,690
- Flooring at £8,376 and £8,367
- Decoration at £2,200 and £2,200

Total costs including labour and materials for coffee shop at £118,676 + VAT.

Total cost including labour and materials for classroom at £95,507 + VAT.

There are always going to be unexpected costs associated with building work. We have recently had work done where the asbestos report failed to reveal asbestos present, resulting in a substantial additional cost, in excess of the contingency sum. As a result, we are also spending a portion of the carry forward on new windows and doors in areas of the school that are considered a priority. As part of our carry forward allowance of 12%, we are investing in other improvements and additional staffing for our pastoral team, which was identified by Ofsted as a key concern.

#### **Request (4)**

A fourth request was received from a primary school requesting an exemption from clawbacks. The school's current budget reserves total £86,775 and the project is quoted at £78,340 plus VAT.

The project involves the construction of an additional classroom, a room for intervention, and a room for crisis management.

It has been noted that there has been an increase in the number of pupils in the school who have an EHCP and additional needs. In order to facilitate this, they have had to use staff room at the moment to facilitate the creation of a personalised learning environment.

This project is expected to start in April 2023 and should be completed (ready for use) by September 2023, which is the date when the project is expected to be completed.



The school has provided a quote for **£78,340 + vat**, to carry out this project and they are asking for £78,340 to be exempted from the clawback.

Originally, the project was scheduled to be completed by September 2022, but due to builders' illness/absence, the Christmas break, and lack of supplies, it was delayed three times, which could subject the school to clawback. As a result, the school is requesting that the project amount be exempted so that it can be implemented in the financial year 2023/24.

### **Request (5)**

The primary school in question had their projects delayed and they are planned to be completed in the new financial year. The current estimated balance at 31 March 2023 is at £440,055, the total of the projects is at £172,699 and they are asking for this amount to be exempted from clawback.

School is planning to fence up school boundary due to sale of land next door to school. This raises serious safeguarding concerns for access and visibility of their school premises. The actual start date dependent upon start of demolition and start of build of supermarket. The school has been quoted for £34,450.35 to complete this.

The plan for outdoor classroom was delayed due to weather condition and death of Company Director of a family business. The school used this company as they provided the best quote for the work the school is planning. It is currently quoted for £38,648.40. The school has their own wood/forests at the back of their fields and they want to promote outside learning outdoors. Therefore, the plan is for pupils to have a classroom nearby to promote this learning.

KS2 Toilet Refurbishment was delayed due to failed Diocesan bid and scheduling by Arcadis Surveyor. Work is planned to commence in April 2023, quoted for £49,901.26. The KS2 toilet is outdated, the school has reported that the tiles are falling off, doors trapping, and windows do not open for ventilation.

Staff Toilet Facilities are also outdated and were also awaiting tender process from Arcadis, but due to commence in April 2023, quoted at £37,801.62.

Lastly, Staffroom Refurbishment awaiting tender process from Arcadis. But the plan is to commence in April 2023, quoted at £11,897.81. School has reported that the current staffroom is small, and the work planned is to promote staff wellbeing and provide workstation.

These costs total up £172,699 and school would have had this work carried out in the financial year, but due to unforeseen delays it is falling to 2023/24, where they are being subjected to clawback.

### **Request (6)**

A 4-16 range specialist school in question has provided the following letter for Chairs consideration;

"I am writing in relation to our reserve figure for the financial year 2022-2023 which is in excess of the 12% allowance balance and would like to explain our current situation in the hope that we will be granted exemption from clawback on this occasion.

There are a number of factors which have contributed to this situation the main two are outlined below;

- a) We are currently on Phase 3 of our extension building plans for two additional classrooms and facilities. Phase 3 of the entire building project only commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022 due to delays that have arisen from the pandemic and the inability for the building company to purchase materials for the project. We now expect the build to be completed on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

The total build cost including the Phase 1 & 2 is £1,195,747.80. Phase 1 & 2 are now complete. The projected cost for Phase 3 of the project is £558,420.00 as the build project encroaches on the new financial year we would like consideration to be in excess of clawback and we do appreciate this is over the 12% allowance.

- b) Our school roll has grown significantly since my appointment in 2015 (from @ 85 to now 156) and the primary department has expanded by 100% in the last two years. We plan to move from 5 to 6 primary classes in September 2023 in order to try and meet the demand from the LA for places. The building of the additional class rooms has allowed us to meet the demand and will continue to do so with the ability to meet Phase 3 of the build project.

I hope that the above information is sufficient and should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me."

The schools' current reserves up to period 7 is at £517,851. The work falls into 2023/24. Projection of phase 3 build remaining is £489,640.

The schools request to carry over the full amount if possible due to commitments to the build as their budget next year will be also needed for internal furniture to provide provision for additional pupils.

The group has discussed the fact that schools should not be in the position to request exemption from clawback now, as it should be done in advance with appropriate financing. The SFVS indicates the 3-year forecasting, and schools should understand what needs to be accomplished.

The Clawback Policy does not specify a deadline by which schools must submit their requests, although it is understood that some of these exemptions are reasonable. The proposal was made to make changes to the policy, to set a deadline of 1st December for schools to submit their requests for consideration. This should be reviewed on next School Forum meeting. Furthermore, it was stated that COVID has helped schools save for projects, and a member said there was £95m in reserves last year and 200 schools were over School Balance. While some exemptions are reasonable, schools should spend their money on their current students.

There has been a request from a member to know which schools the requests come from so it can be easier to judge the location and circumstances. Furthermore, the need for anonymisation was discussed in order to be able to make an objective decision without being aware of the involvement of schools.

Furthermore, requests were considered individually and voted anonymously;

Request (1) was discussed how they are asking on considerable big amount of money and they should be aware of their position in advance. The 5 chairs voted where 4 agreed and one opposing to it. The chairs have stated that this is only exemption for one year only and they must make sure it will be carried out in 2023/24 with no more delays.

Request (2) had full support of all 5 chairs. There was a question as to whether there was any proof that they were working with LCC construction. The clerk of the forum reassured the chairs that the communication was seen, and all quotes were seen as stated, but not shown to keep them anonymous.

Request (3) had all support from 5 chairs. The members commented how this will help pupils gain qualifications and prepares them for life as it improves their social skills as well as making them more prepared to take on future employment.

Request (4) was fully supported by 5 chairs.

Request (5) Chairs objected to it since there are a number of projects that could have already begun. This school is being perceived as not being financially prudent and not completing their projects. The fence could have been funded by the Diocese when safeguarding is an issue or by a supermarket without spending funds that should be allocated to children's needs. Chairs rejected this request, unless further clarification could be provided for the delay, for this to be reconsidered.

Request (6) had full support from the chairs, it was noted how the request is a very good example on how school understand their position. The phase 3 of the projects falls into 2023/24, therefore they simply need the exemption to finish the project.

#### **The Chairs' Group:**

- a) Noted the report;**
- b) Approved Requests (1),(2), (3), (4) and (6) schools requests to be exempted from clawback.**
- c) Rejected Request (5) unless further clarification from school will be provided for consideration for the delays of projects.**

#### **5. Any Other Business**

School Forum meeting - A member raised the issue of the next School Forum meeting being scheduled on 16 March 2023, which coincides with the strike day. The strike days are scheduled for 15 and 16 March, so the attendance of members may be affected depending on their circumstances at school. Therefore, it was proposed that the meeting be postponed by a few days. The clerk of the School Forum has expressed the need for their members to be present in order for the meeting to be successful and all appropriate matters to be discussed. However, it was raised that the room may not be available at a later date at such short notice, but this could be reviewed. The chair has purposed that the meeting could be done over teams which may aid with attendance.

The alternative date will be taken into consideration and, if not feasible, will be arranged via teams as a last resort, as it was mentioned in many meetings, face-to-face meetings are much better to be in discussion with members.

**The Chairs' Group:**

- a) **Noted the information.**
- b) **Supported the alternative date for School Forum or to be arranged via Teams if no room availability.**

**6. Date of Next Meeting**

To be arranged as required.

**LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM  
CHAIRS' WORKING GROUP**

**Minutes of a meeting held on 10 February 2023 via Teams.**

**Present** Claire Thompson  
**Daniel Ballard (Chair)**  
Philippa Perks  
Stephen Booth

**In attendance** Matthew Dexter  
Sylwia Krajewska

**7. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Kirsty Lister and Liz Lavery.

**8. Minutes of the Last Meetings**

The minutes of the meetings held on 27 January 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

**9. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meetings.

**10. Request for Clawback Suspension**

In July 2022, the Forum considered the School Balances and Clawback Policy for 2022/23 and agreed that clawback should be reintroduced on excessive revenue balances at March 2023.

A number of requests were already received and considered by the forum/chairs following notification of the Forum's decision.

There are still issues with the implementation of Oracle Fusion at the authority. Glyn Peach, Director of Digital, has informed members that black windows are still expected to further improve the system, and emergency payments are still made. Although the testing was completed prior to implementation, the live scenario differs from the test scenario, resulting in inevitable problems.

It is well known to members that schools faced numerous issues and delays in implementing a fully functioning system. There were issues related to accessing the system, making payments, or duplicating payments. Additionally, schools' suppliers were negatively impacted by this, with missed payments and possibly resulting in personal debt.

At the last school forum meeting, members mentioned that their school managers were working extra hours to handle this situation. Despite reassurances from Fusion leads, the chair was still receiving further complaints from headteachers. It was decided at the last Chair meeting that a letter will be sent to the leaders to address these concerns. The group was presented with a copy of a letter to Steven Leaf/Glyn Peach and a response.

Furthermore, a request was received for the suspension of a clawback for 2022/23. The request continues to express concern about Oracle Fusion and its enormous impact on schools. A copy was provided in the papers.

The current situation with Oracle Fusion prevents internal departments from purchasing materials, resulting in schools not receiving some services, such as signage.

Chairs meeting is scheduled to decide whether to suspend of clawback for 2022/23 due to unforeseen distributions caused by Oracle Fusion.

In the discussion, members discussed how Oracle Fusion had a negative impact on schools and that some schools are not able to spend their money as a result of supplier issues caused by Oracle Fusion. All agree that Fusion should be fixed as soon as possible. According to the Chair, the Apprenticeship Levy faces issues taking on new apprentices due to Fusion. There can be no financial reassurance for schools if they cannot pay their suppliers and suppliers incur personal debt. A member has mentioned that they had difficulties paying phone bills and their line was disconnected. This was not due to a lack of funds, but to Fusion's failure to transfer these funds. Fortunately, the school manager was able to arrange for the phone to be reconnected. As a result of the new system, everyone is experiencing difficulties, and these issues are also internal.

Regarding Fusion, it was questioned whether the clawback could be suspended temporarily until the system ceases to have an impact on its users. The officer present advised that clawbacks must be based on the financial year and the decision must apply for the entire year and not just for a particular period. As the chairs discussed, if there were an option for a temporary suspension, they would fully support it, but since it applies over the full year, some schools have accumulated money over the past years, and the money should be spent on the children currently enrolled in school. Therefore, all members supported the decision not to suspend clawback.

As the constant frustration is felt across all schools, members did ask if there is anything that can be done further with Fusion. It was stated that the system had not been fully tested prior to its launch, but this must come to an end. The chair has explained that he has written to Glyn regarding the issues and that the response does not include any new information pertaining to the previous forum meeting. It has been proposed by a member that schools should bring all cases/issues to the forum and have their representatives answer for them. It was noted that a clerk of the forum is currently seeking a representative for the 16 March meeting of the School Forum.

Additionally, due to late submissions of clawback requests it was proposed that a deadline would be set on end of October. Schools with prudent financial management may qualify for clawback exemptions if any projects are planned. An end of October deadline will be proposed at the school forum meeting. In order to improve this further, it was proposed that submissions be received electronically.

#### **The Chairs' Group:**

**d) Noted the report;**

**e) Opposed to suspend clawback exemption for 2022/23.**

#### **11. Any Other Business**

School Forum meeting - A member raised the issue of the next School Forum meeting being scheduled on 16 March 2023, which coincides with the strike day on the previous meeting. A different date was considered, but there was no room available, so it will be arranged via a team meeting.

School Finance/Forum Officer - Due to recent changes in the team, Matthew Dexter (Accountant) will be supporting the Principal Accountant, Funding Streams (High Needs / Early Years) and the Clerk of Forum, to ensure no statutory information is overlooked. In the past, he has attended some meetings, but now he will be a standing member or able to fill in for the Principal Accountant when necessary.

Executive Director of Resources meeting – The chair has reminded the group that a letter was sent to cabinet members and the Executive Director of Resources (Mark Wynn) regarding the leadership void in the School Finance Team. The response provided reassurance that the posts will be recruited soon. A meeting has been arranged by the Chair with Mark Wynn today to further discuss this matter since it has been three years since the team did not have a permanent Head of Service and schools pay for SLA, but do not receive the same level of service from the Finance Team as the post has not been filled. Due to the need for financial representatives, the chair wants to know why it is taking so long for these positions to be filled.

Early Years Head of Service – The Chair of Early Years has commented that, since Andrew Cadman's departure, her role has extended to include meetings as a committee and dealing with issues in the Early Years sector. Prior to this, Andrew Cadman handled all of this as HoS of EY, and the chair does not have the capacity to address everything that he has handled in the past. As an example, it was noted that childminders had an Ofsted visit which resulted in an ineffective judgment, resulting in all Lancashire childminders having their funding limited or terminated within eight weeks. During the last School Forum meeting, this issue was raised regarding the possibility of going out and recruiting for HoS of EY, however no further communication has been received. It has been informed by the clerk of the forum to the Chair that Aby Hardy intends to bring recruitment to the agenda for the next meeting of the EY working group. As a result, providers suffer because of no HoS in EY. The Chair will also raise this issue.

#### **The Chairs' Group:**

- c) Noted the information.**
- d) Welcomed Matt in to his new role;**
- e) Supported Chair meeting with Mark Wynn.**

#### **12. Date of Next Meeting**

To be arranged as required.