

LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held at 10:00 am on Thursday, 16 March 2023
via Teams

Present:

Schools Members:

Primary School Governors

Stephen Booth (LSF Vice-chair)
Caroline Clayton
Gerard Collins
Lindy King
Michelle O'Neill
Robert Waring
Tim Young

Primary School Headteachers

Daniel Ballard (LSF Chair)

Sarah Barton
Jenny Birkin
Neil Gurman
Deanne Marsh
Helen Shaw
Anna Smith

Academy Governor

Kathleen Cooper
Helen Dicker
Chris McConnachie

Academy Principal/Headteacher

Steve Campbell
James Keulemans
John Tarbox

Alternative Provision Academy

Secondary School Governors

Janice Astley
Gill Donohoe
Brian Rollo

Special School Academy

Special School Governor

Mandy Howarth

Secondary School Headteachers

Ivan Catlow
Oliver Handley
Mike Wright

Special School Headteacher

Claire Thompson

Nursery School Headteacher

Jan Holmes

Short Stay Governor

Liz Laverty

Nursery School Governor

Thelma Cullen

Short Stay Headteacher

Abigale Bowe

Members:

Early Years - PVI

Sharon Fenton
Philippa Perks

Other Voting Members

CC Anne Cheetham
Rosie Fearn
Bill Mann

Observers

CC Jayne Rear
CC Michael Goulthorpe
Margaret Scrivens

In attendance: Sylwia Krajewska
Edith Thompson
Matthew Dexter
Kirsty Lister
Millie Dixon
Toni Rafferty
Caroline Morrison
Emma Nicholson
Sally Richardson
Julie Bell
Aby Hardy
Allison Leach
John Morrissy
Chris Warren
Louise Wood
Sarah Callaghan

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Alison Daly, Cllr Sue Hind, John Davey, Lydia Mannion, Sarah Troughton, Sarah Robson, Keith Wright, Steve Bond and Louise Shaw.

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute members at the meeting.

3. FORUM MEMBERSHIP

Since the last meeting, two primary school headteacher have resigned from the Forum.

- Angela Aspinwall-Livesey
- Keith Wright

Also, on 8 March 2023, the LA emailed school and early years members of the Forum, as part of the annual membership review, to ascertain if individuals wish to continue to serve on the Forum in the next academic year commencing in September 2023. Responses were requested by Friday 1st April 2023

Individual members are asked to complete the annual membership eform by the deadline if they have not already done so.

In addition, officers leaving the Forum included;

- Kirsty Lister, Principal Accountant;
- Sylwia Krajewska, Clerk to Forum

Members also welcomed:

- Millie Dixon, newly appointed Clerk of Forum;
- Matthew Dexter as Principal Accountant

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the report;**
- b) **Thanked Angela Aspinwall-Livesey, Keith Wright, Kirsty Lister and Sylwia Krajewska for their contributions to the Forum;**
- c) **Welcomed Millie Dixon and Matthew Dexter to the School Forum.**

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the last meeting, held on 12 January 2023, were agreed as a correct record.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the minutes as a correct record.**

5. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising raised at the meeting.

6. Oracle Fusion

John Morrissy (Director of Organisational Development and Change) has attended to answer queries from School Forum for Oracle Fusion. Additionally, Chris Warren (Head of Service Financial Management (Operational) Agency - Finance Lead for Oracle Fusion) and Allison Leach (Payroll Service Manager) were in attendance to answer queries.

During John's explanation, he indicated that the team understands the frustrations caused by the new system. The team is working hard to resolve the issues but has welcomed members to raise any issues as they arise.

Payments were causing a great deal of concern. The activity and authorisation take place within a school's SIMS system, and then this data is transferred to Oracle Fusion for payment processing. It was one of the first issues identified and resolved in January. Invoices should now be processed in a normal manner. There still may be rounded differences on invoices and other minor issues that may remain on hold, however, as we move forward there should be a steady flow of payments to be made to suppliers. It was noted that the number of Emergency Payment requests has decreased in recent months.

There has been a question raised by a member regarding the delay in payment to the contractor for firefighting equipment due to Oracle Fusion delays. Currently, there is a problem with inspection codes, which allow the relevant costs to be allocated to the correct business unit or a school, but this is being resolved. Three times a week, Chris Warren meets with a property colleague to discuss matters concerning schools.

It was reported that a school has been advised that service work on firefighters' equipment has been put on hold until payment has been received. In the past, there was no issue, and this may be caused by the new system which poses a health and safety risk to pupils. Chris Warren has agreed to investigate these specific examples and has provided his contact information with the assurance that they will be picked up today.

The previous system allowed for delegation of authority for absences and sicknesses, but the new system does not. Allison Leach has responded that they are aware of this limitation from the new system, and that they are currently working on and progressing an area of responsibility to have this on the system as quickly as possible.

The HR reports are being developed with Roger Livesey as several schools have raised the concern that the new system does not allow a breakdown as it did previously.

One of the members reported that they are still experiencing delays in invoicing and are being chased by their suppliers for payments. As a small school, this has a significant impact. It was stated that the payments are flowing correctly and in the appropriate timeframe. Therefore, specifics can be emailed over to Chris for investigation.

Due to issues caused by Fusion, another member has asked if late charges for payments would be covered by LCC. Once again, a member was encouraged to send in specific details for it to be considered.

Additionally, it was raised that employee details were not copied correctly into the new system. This appears to be a data migration error, as Allison is not aware of this issue. She has passed on her details to investigate.

Furthermore, it was mentioned that the headteacher does not have access to the staff details, and it was asked who they might contact to resolve this issue. Alison has advised to email her so she can forward this information to a colleague who can guide the headteacher on how to change this setting on the system.

HR technical support was reported to be not as efficient as it should be and if there is no response it should be escalated to a senior manager within the hierarchy that schools have access to. But the guidance for HR services will be looked for further developments.

It was noted that if an employee is not receiving pay, the issue should be resolved within two days. The priority is given to employees with zero pay first, followed by those with partial pay.

According to the team, there are a number of issues that the system causes to the school. It is evident from the statistics that the volume of pay errors has decreased and issues are being resolved. There has been a request for these figures to be shared in order to present this information. Allison has agreed that the data may be shared once anonymized, but it will be across all LCC and not limited to schools. This will be sent to Forum Clerk once ready and shared back with members.

The team confirmed that tests were conducted before implementing the system, but the live version had revealed additional implications which they are working to resolve as quickly as possible. John has added that they are happy to provide further information or clarification at the future meeting if the School Forum so requests it.

The Forum:

- a) Noted the information;**
- b) Thanked Oracle Fusion representatives for their clarifications**

7. Admissions/Attendance

Aby Hardy (Head of Education Improvement) brought this item to the agenda to provide a quick update for Admission and Attendance new processes.

Firstly, Kirsty Lister (Principal Accountant) reminded members that the service is funded through Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) from Central School Services Block (CSSB), as it should be. However, if there are any changes, School Forum should be notified.

Admissions Team is responsible for year 7 allocations each year, but this is a very small part of their duties. In the past year, the service received 5,000 in-year applications. This number has increased dramatically in the last few years. Most of this is when pupils move to a different school across Lancashire.

It was noted that last year the team had issues with sickness absence, but this now has been resolved and the team is at full capacity.

- 96.7% got their 3 preferred allocation this year

As a result of unexpected arrivals, Aby has thanked the schools that have increased their capacity for pupils who were new to the country.

The new Education Management System will provide live data on the number of children in each school so that the team will not need to contact the schools directly to find out whether there are available places. Training has already begun on this and as of September, this process will be implemented.

Regarding attendance, statutory duties have changed, and from September onwards each school should be asked if they like an attendance visit as part of their statutory duties. There is, however, no capacity within the team at this time to provide this service to all 630 schools, including independent schools, therefore a Service Level Agreement may be drafted.

To determine whether schools would be interested in a traded service, a consultation would be written and conducted outside school forums directly with headteachers.

Attendance will be discussed in greater detail at the next headteacher briefing next week.

A member asked regarding what the visit would entail. It would be a supported visit if a school is experiencing difficulties with attendance, best practices, advice, and opportunities to improve following the guidelines provided by the Department for Education.

Due to Ofsted's questions regarding this, a member has inquired whether it will be available to nurseries. Aby has confirmed that it will also be available to nurseries.

Another member expressed concern about not being informed about the decline in birth rates and asked if they could receive this information. The dashboard (Asset) provides information on various areas, and once Julie Lloyd begins as a manager, she will be able to share this information with schools.

The Forum:

- a) Noted the information;**
- b) Welcomed changed in Admission and Attendance processes.**

8. Inclusion Engagement Support Team (IEST)

Sally Richardson (Head of Service Inclusion) attended the meeting and provided a quick verbal update. They have appointed to a vacant post as School Forum has agreed to fund the team from June. The team is still very busy and continue to provide support to schools.

The Forum:

- a) Noted the information.**

9. 2023/24 Budget and NNDR Issue

Kirsty Lister (Principal Account) has delivered a presentation about 2023/24 budgets and NNDR issue face by the county. The presentation was agreed to be shared with members after the meeting was held.

Kirsty has explained what was agreed in January meeting and further pressure points on School Block that caused a shortfall ;FSM (18% increase), PFI Charges (£1m increase), Rates (£1.1 m increase) and SB transfer to HNB for Hameldon Site (£2 m) which was discussed with ESFA for compliance.

Kirsty has asked School Forum to;

- Agree for the £380k pressure to be funded from the DSG reserve for 2023/24
- All the 2023/24 Growth Fund has been utilised; therefore, Schools Forum agreed to set a budget for 2023/24 from reserves. Current underspend in 2022/23 is £600k but spend is £1.4mil
- Work with Lancashire PFI Internal Services to review budgets and ensure only exceptional premises costs are charged via PFI / HNB to absorb within their budget
- Early Modelling to take place to confirm if the MFG of 0.5% is still appropriate for 2024/25 or needs reducing slightly to balance the Schools Block and ensure an adequate Growth Fund budget is available
- Lancashire to move to the revised ESFA NNDR process in readiness for 2024/25 budgets to bring the Schools Block back in line

Rates – Neil Kissock to meet Chief Finance Officers from other districts to move over to a new process, to make sure LA has all the district in agreement for 2024/25. This should be confirmed by autumn time and will be brought on the next School Block Working Group agenda and School Forum.

The Forum:

- a) Noted the information;
b) Approved suggested recommendations.**

10. Clawback Suspension Requests

The Forum's meeting in July 2022 discussed the School Balances and Clawback Policy for 2022/23, and it was agreed that clawback should be implemented again at the end of March 2023.

Item 14 from the composite includes the minutes from a meeting of Chairs on 10 February 2023 to discuss a temporary suspension of clawback as per received request. Chairs decided not to suspend clawback since it will apply for the whole year and schools have built up balances since clawback was suspended.

Recently school forum has received further request to consider for the clawback to suspended and School Forum was asked for their views on this.

Members were in full agreement to keep original decision in July's meeting for Clawback Policy to be implemented for 2022/23 balances.

The Forum;

a) Noted the report;

b) Confirmed that Clawback Policy will still be applied at 2022/23.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SCHOOLS BLOCK WORKING GROUP

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the Schools Block Working Group held on 9 March 2023.

Steve Campbell the Chair of School Block Working Group was present to brief through the topics discussed in the working group.

On 9 March 2023, the Schools Block Working Group considered a number of topics, including:

i. Schools Block Funding 2023/24

This report provided updates around the finalisation and publication of the 2023/24 Schools Block Budget, and other brief information about future funding arrangements;

At the Schools Forum on 12 January 2023, decisions and recommendations about the 2023/24 Schools Budget were agreed.

In connection with the Schools Block, the Forum unanimously supported the 2023/24 Schools Block proposals, including:

- The DfE's National Funding Formula (NFF) methodology should continue to be used as the Lancashire formula for 2023/24;
- The Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) be set at +0.5% for 2023/24, mirroring the National Funding Formula;
- Growth Fund allocation not being utilised with National Funding Formula Budgets.
- The use of the Minimum Pupil Funding (MPF) rates contained in the NFF for any new Growth Fund allocations from April 2023:
- Primary £4,405 per pupil o Secondary £5,715 per pupil
- the transfer of circa £2.08m of Schools Block funding to the High Needs Block for the revised payment arrangements needed for the contractual school PFI contribution in relation to the former Hameldon site, as it is being taken over by a Lancashire special school;

On 19 January 2023, the County Council's Cabinet formally approved the Schools Budget for 2023/24.

The Authority Proforma Tool (APT), setting out the agreed Schools Block proposals for 2023/24, was then submitted to the ESFA for compliance checking ahead of the 20 January 2023 deadline.

Some elements of the Schools Budget require compliance checking by the ESFA and approval was received on 20 February 2023.

Budget statements for 2023/24 were prepared and issued on 22 February 2023.

Indicative Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) statements have historically been issued alongside School Budgets each February. Final PPG allocations are then notified to schools later in the financial year, once data has been confirmed by the DfE.

For 2023/24, the DfE are calculating the PPG allocations on the basis of October school census data, rather than the January school census. This means that actual PPG information will be available much sooner, and the DfE have indicated that 2023/24 allocations should be notified to the LA in March 2023.

The LA did not therefore include an indicative PPG statement with the budget notifications. Once we receive the confirmed 2023/24 PPG allocations from DfE, we will inform schools.

Mainstream Schools Annual Grant 2023/24

The 2022 Autumn Statement announced that the core schools' budget will increase by over £2bn in 2023 to 2024 financial year, over and above totals announced at the Spending Review 2021.

In the 2023 to 2024 financial year, mainstream schools will be allocated additional funding through the mainstream school's additional grant (MSAG). This is in addition to schools' allocations through the schools national funding formula.

The MSAG will allocate funding to state-funded mainstream schools only. In addition to the MSAG, local authorities have been allocated £400 million in additional highneeds funding for 2023/24, which will be included in the high-needs national funding formula allocations.

The MSAG will fund the following providers, for the 5 to 16-year-old age range:

- primary and secondary maintained schools
- primary and secondary academies and free schools
- all-through maintained schools
- all-through academies
- city technology colleges

School-level allocations of the MSAG for the full 2023 to 2024 financial year will be published in May 2023.

The funding rates for the MSAG 2023/24 consist of the following 3 elements, which are based on factors already in the schools national funding formula:

- a basic per-pupil rate (with different rates for primary, key stage 3 and key stage 4);
- a lump sum paid to all schools, regardless of pupil numbers;
- a per-pupil rate for pupils who are recorded as having been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years (FSM6), with different rates for primary and secondary pupils.

The additional High Needs Allocation for 2023/24 has been applied as a 4.6% increase to the funding floor and proxy factor in the High Needs NFF Allocations

Lancashire Additional funding allocations for 2023/24 are: Mainstream Schools Additional Grant Allocation	£31m
High Needs Additional Funding allocation	£8m
Total Additional Funding 23/24	£39m

Additional High Needs Funding 2023/24

Lancashire has also been allocated supplementary grant funding for the High Needs Block. Following discussions with Forum, it was agreed that the High Needs Supplementary Grant would be calculated in two parts:

A payment to all Special Schools and PRU's as per the DfE guidance and conditions of grant. Details of the allocations for Special's and PRU's have been shared in your budget letter which was published via the portal week commencing 20 February.

A further allocation of a WPN element of additional high needs funding for Primary and Secondary schools, as well as the FE Colleges, will follow a similar process as last year but with additional consideration for Early Years settings for pupils with EHCP plans. This is currently estimated at £493 and will be multiplied by the total WPN on the May 2022 SEN data. Based on 2022/23 figures this would be circa £2.2 million.

This still leaves potentially circa £2.5 million yet to be allocated and views are required on how most effectively this funding can be utilised through the financial year.

High needs supplementary allocations will be finalised in 2023/24 and will match the payment terms for mainstream schools determined by the DfE, for example being paid as a one off payment or by instalments.

Kirsty Lister (Principal Account) informed members that a certain aspect of the Schools Budget were subject to ESFA compliance checks. There is a small overspend in the school budget of £380k, which amounts to approximately 0.02% of the budget. Future meetings with the forum will examine and consult on how to avoid being in this position for the next year; at this time, it will be covered by the DSG reserves.

Additionally, the group noted a recommendation of the High Needs Block to form a Task and Finish Group to decide what happens to the remaining funding of £2.5 million. Members were advised to send an email to the school forum or contact their chairs if they have any proposals that they would like to present at the meeting to be held on 23 March 2023. As recommended by the HN group, the School Forum will be asked if they support the decision to be made by the chairs on the 16 March.

The Working Group:

a) Noted the report.

ii. School Improvement Function

Aby Hardy (Head of Education Improvement) attended the meeting to provide a verbal update.

In previous years, the service had a school improvement monitoring and brokering grant, but the government removed the funds and School Forum was provided with the option to delegate the service for 2023/24.

For School Improvement Function de-delegation 2023/24, the members were reminded that Primary, PRU's, and Nurseries had opted in, while Specials and Secondary did not. Currently, Aby is working on a handbook about the School Improvement Function which will be available to schools to ensure that schools are clear about what is available and the differences between sectors that choose to participate and those that do not.

Nurseries might be asked to contribute a little for certain services since they were offered different amounts for contributions and selected lowest range. The Monitoring Intervention

Team (MIT) will be provided free of charge to other sectors that chose to delegate it. The sectors that did not opt in will still receive statutory visits and guidance but will be offered the MIT services at an additional cost. In addition, the handbook will define what is meant by a school being vulnerable as it may vary from school to school. However, things such as the need for improvement, the challenges, or assistance with the leadership will be considered.

The handbook will provide clarity for members who will vote again for the delegations in October.

The working group;

- a) *Noted the information;*
- b) *Welcomed development of Handbook for School Improvement Function De-delegation.*

iii. Inclusion Hub Funding 2023/24

Following a consultation with schools in the autumn term 2022, the Forum again voted to de-delegate funding for primary inclusion hubs in 2023/24. The de-delegation cost was held at the 2022/23 rate of £11.00 per pupil for maintained primary schools and generates circa £1m for inclusion hub activities in Lancashire.

The distribution methodology has used pupil numbers and a deprivation factor to calculate the allocations for each district. For 2023/24, it was proposed to continue this methodology and the information on the allocations calculated for each district from April 2023 was provided.

Further updates will be presented to the Forum in due course about the operation of the hubs, and the Forum will need to make formal decisions in October 2023 about de-delegation options for 2024/25.

The working group:

- a) *Noted the report;*
- b) *Supported the continued use of the NOR plus deprivation methodology for distributing de-delegated funding to inclusion hubs in 2023/24.*

iv. Clawback

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 copy of the agreed current policy was presented as a Appendix A.

Clawback Exemption Requests 2022/23

There were two requested that were approved by School Block Working Group on 9 March;

Request (1)

During the meeting, members discussed the school's forecasted financial decision and were pleased to learn that the school is implementing a plan for future deficits. As a result of the working group's recommendation, the primary has been exempt from clawback 2022/23.

Request (2)

The members fully supported the request 2, to be exempt from clawback in 2022/23

Chairmans meeting

This report further provided the group with decision made by latest meeting held by Chairs on 10 February 2023. The group was presented with the minutes of the meeting. The meeting was held to consider a clawback suspension due to request received. However, clawback was not suspended because it will apply for the entire year and some schools have accumulated balances over the past few years as clawback was suspended due to COVID.

It is important to note that the final outturn position against schools delegated budgets at 31 March 2022 was an underspend of £5.173m. This meant that school balances had increased by £5.173m in 2021/22, to a total of £95.325m.

As a result of recent meetings surrounding clawback, it was noted that there was no deadline or a clear indication of the steps that need to be taken in order to review the request. During this meeting, it was discussed how schools and the authority would benefit from a deadline and guidance on what is expected to be submitted as part of the request.

Applying for Clawback Exemption

The additional proposed guidance has opened a discussion among members of SBWG about how schools should provide the amount of clawback they are subjected to, their NOR, whether they receive Capital Funding and whether they receive any assistance from Pooled Services.

School forum was asked if the following could be added to clawback policy 2023/24;

"Applying for Clawback Exemption

To apply for clawback, please email schoolsforum@lancashire.gov.uk

The deadline for requests to be reviewed is 31 October.

The schools should provide details following details;

- School Number and Name
- What is the planned project including dates for start and completion of the project
- Details of the quote (Evidence provided)
- Amount you are requesting to be exempt from clawback for one year
- Clarity and justification for the project
- Estimated reserves at 31 March
- Amount Subjected to Clawback
- NOR forecast (3 years)
- Please indicate whether you are receiving assistance from the Pooled Resources Operational Plan

Depending on the school type the request will be reviewed by appropriate working groups."

The team will be working on a template that will be available electronically, to improve this process.

School Forum fully supported for the above to be added to the Clawback Policy 2023/24.

The Working Group :

- a) *Noted the information;*

- b) *Approved clawback exemptions for 2022/23 for primary schools;*
- c) *Supported Chairs decision about clawback request suspension;*
- d) *Supported changes to a clawback policy in 2023/24, with additional amendments.*

v. **National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR)**

This item was already covered under Item 9. But during the SBWG;

Kirsty Lister provided a verbal update on NNDR and informed the group that she had been contacting ESFA regarding the transition to the new NNDR process. Consequently, the rates would not be included in the NFF, and the La would provide the DfE with the latest bill and receive funding accordingly. The DfE currently provides funding for rates, but because they are not based on the most recent data and with current inflation there is a delay in receiving the correct funding. However, the county requires all council districts to agree to and follow this new process, as it costs LCC £1 million to not be part of this new process at this time.

The working group:

- a) *Noted the information.*
- b) *Supported for LCC to move to the new NNDR process.*

The Forum ratified the working group's recommendations.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the information;**
- b) **Ratified the working group's recommendations;**
- c) **Supported approval of SBWG for clawback exemption requests for schools in question for 2022/23.**
- d) **Supported Chairs decision to not suspend the clawback.**
- e) **Supported changes for a clawback policy in 2023/24.**

12. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE HIGH NEEDS BLOCK WORKING GROUP

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the High Needs Block Working Group held on 2 March 2023.

Claire Thompson the Chair of High Needs Block Working Group was present to brief through the topics discussed in the working group and asked the forum if they support Task and Finish Group to make a decision on the HNB supplementary grant remaining funding allocation.

On 2 March 2023, the High Needs Block Working Group considered a number of topics, including:

i. High Needs Block Budget 2023/24

There were decisions and recommendations about the 2023/24 Schools Budget made at the Schools Forum on 12 January 2023.

Forum members unanimously supported the High Needs Block proposals for 2023/24, including:

- Agreeing on an increase in commissioned places.
- The historic commitments element transferred to the High Needs Block (from CSSB) to continue for;

- 200K to Emotional Health and Wellbeing commissioned service
- 150K to for the Multi-Agency safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- Increasing the Weighted Pupil Numbers (WPN) rate across all school and FE settings by 3% with additional £626 (of WPN element of High Needs Block Supplementary Grant from 2022/23) to £5,330;
 - For Specific Factors Special School and PRU School Specific factors uplifted by 2% as in 2022/23
- The distribution of additional high needs funding at 3.4% to all Special Schools and PRUS.
 - Pass over the grant as per Department of Education guidance at 3.4%, but also include the WPN HNB element for Primary and Secondary schools, as well as the FE Colleges, following a similar process as last year but with additional consideration for Early Years settings for pupils with EHCP plans. Based on 2022/23 figures this would be circa £2.2 million (further modelling needed with 2023/24 figures) which still leaves potentially circa £2.5 million which will be discussed with relevant working groups to decide on how most effectively utilise this funding throughout the year.
- Inclusion Engagement Team cost of £294,042 in 2023/24 (for following 2 years with yearly review)

On 19 January 2023, the County Council's Cabinet formally approved the Schools Budget for 2023/24.

Indicative Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) statements have historically been issued alongside School Budgets each February. Final PPG allocations are then notified to schools later in the financial year, once data has been confirmed by the DfE.

For 2023/24, the DfE are calculating the PPG allocations on the basis of October school census data, rather than the January school census. This means that actual PPG information will be available much sooner, and the DfE have indicated that 2023/24 allocations should be notified to the LA in March 2023.

The LA did not therefore include an indicative PPG statement with the budget notifications. Once we receive the confirmed 2023/24 PPG allocations from DfE, LA will inform schools.

The topic of planning for this allocation has been brought up by a member. Previously, the LA provided indicative statements that were a year behind. However, the LA will provide actual statements as soon as allocations are confirmed by the Department for Education. In meantime, schools can plan with local knowledge for their 2023/24 budgets.

A member has requested a table with the Banding and related WPN figures, which will be circulated once it is available.

The working group;

a) Noted the report;

b) Expressed views on the information provided.

ii. High Needs Supplementary Grant 2023/24

This information and associated recommendations had been covered in the Schools Block Funding report.

During the High Needs block Working group it was discussed in great detail how potential funding could be allocated and used in sectors or if it should be kept in reserves to potentially assist High Needs Block in the future.

A number of members have suggested that they should utilize the funding this year to benefit children who are currently enrolled in school. The discussion focused on the lack of support for children without ECHP plans, the process, the transition period for these children and IEST involvement. It is especially important to identify SEN at an early stage in the educational process since the number of students with SEN is increasing.

As the discussion was lengthy but important, it was suggested that a Task and Finish Group be formed to make a decision regarding how the funding will be utilized. Members have agreed that the decision can be made by the Chairs of the working groups with the support of the finance officers and members of the Inclusion Team. As such, members are encouraged to contact their Chair if they have any ideas to share prior to the meeting or to directly contact School Forum. The meeting was scheduled for 23 March 2023. The item will be placed on the agenda for full forum asking for agreement that the decision is made by the chairs at the planned task and finish group after full forum. This is to ensure the funding can be allocated in the 2023/24 budget.

School Forum fully supported for Task and Finish Group to make a decision about the methodology on the remaining funding.

Members were encouraged to contact their chairs with proposals or to write to school forum prior to the meeting.

The Working Group;

c) Noted the report;

d) Supported Task and Finish Group to decide regarding remaining funding for HN supplementary grant.

iii. Inclusion Hub Funding 2023/24

This information was in School Block Working Group and in High Needs Working Group. This topic is covered in the Schools Block; Inclusion Hub Funding 2023/24 report.

The Working Group

a) Noted the report.

b) Expressed views on the information provided.

iv. High Needs Block Monitoring Forecast 2022/23

Due to the cost and demand led pressures on the High Needs Block budget, arrangements were introduced from 2018/19 to provide the Forum with termly budget HNB monitoring.

Autumn term 2022/23 data is now available, and the monitoring and analysis is

was presented to the group and to the forum.

The HNB budget is currently forecasting a circa £6m underspend at 31 March 2023. The monitoring is an estimate of the full year forecast, based on expenditure that has occurred in the 2022 autumn term.

There remains significant ongoing financial pressure facing this block despite the current monitoring position, as the demand and costs continue to rise. It is anticipated that the final outturn position will come in significantly higher than the current forecast based on historic trends.

Despite the current underspend forecast, Matthew Dexter has explained that future years forecast a deficit in HNB. Previous years, other local authorities have kept their supplementary grants in reserve in order to be in a better financial position in the future.

The Working Group;

- a) Noted the report;*
- b) Expressed views about the autumn term 2022/23 High Needs Block Monitoring.*

v. SEND Strategy Update

Sally Richardson stated that there is an increase in the demand for EHCP and that the data shows 900 more than last years and last year's being at 8,600K. This demand is felt across all counties and not just in Lancashire, with children being identified with more complex needs. The out of county cost have doubled but the number of pupils has not significantly increased. The demand for places has increased in ASD and SCLN. The SEND sufficiency strategy is being refreshed.

Sally has agreed with members that the AP Strategy needs a refresher. She will be working further on this and will shared once available.

The Working Group;

- a) Noted the information;*
- b) Supported to review AP Strategy.*

vi. Inclusion Fund Update

Unfortunately, Kirsty Lister was not available to attend the meeting due to underseen circumstances. However, we are currently awaiting accurate figures which should be available at the next meeting of the High Needs Working Group.

The Working Group;

- a) Noted the information.*

vii. Clawback

All working groups were updated about additional meeting held by Chairs on 10 February 2023 and presented with the minutes of the meeting.

But it was noted that HNBWG has fully supported amendments to the policy.

The Working Group;

- a) Noted the information;*

- b) *Supported Chairs decision to not suspend the clawback;*
- c) *Supported changes for a clawback policy in 2023/24.*

The Forum is asked to ratify working group recommendations.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the information.**
- b) **Ratified the working group's recommendations;**
- c) **Supported Task and Finish Group to make a decision on 23 March 2023 for remaining funding from High Needs supplementary grant.**

13. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EARLY YEARS BLOCK WORKING GROUP

A report was presented setting out the recommendations from the Early Years Block Working Group held on 7 March 2023.

Phillippa Perks the Chair of Early Years Block Working Group was present to brief through the topics discussed in the working group.

On 7 March 2023, the Early Years Working Group considered a number of topics, including:

i. Early Years Rates

In the meeting prior to 7 March 2023, rates were discussed in the early years. It was noted that the nurseries discount for business rates relief came to an end on 1 April 2022. Steve Little (Principal Estates Surveyor) attended to provide further information regarding business rates (NNDR – national non domestic rates) and how they are calculated.

The 2017 rates are based on 2015 valuations. The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) has recently updated the rateable values of all business, and other non-domestic, property in England and Wales and these rateable values will take effect from 1 April 2023.

In case any questions regarding the rates arise in the future, Steve has indicated that he is happy to be contacted.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the information.*
- b) *Thanked Steve Little for delivering his presentation.*

ii. Early Years Recruitment

Aby Hardy (Head of Education Improvement) provided an update about current recruitment process for Early Years.

The adverts are live on the radio last week and the contract will last for four weeks. Additionally, they had put together a website for Vacancies in early years settings -

Lancashire County Council, which public could search for. This provides settings roles available and contact details only; for PVI's and MNS.

The Education Bulletin will be updated with this information. The Social Media strategy will include videos of EY practitioners describing what they do on platforms such as TikTok or Instagram.

It has been appreciated by members that this was managed promptly, and in particular to Lana, the Communications manager, who has assisted in this matter.

The Working Group:

- a) *Noted the information.*
- b) *Thanked Aby for the update and actions.*

iii. Early Years Block Budget 2023/24

At the Schools Forum on 12 January 2023, decisions, and recommendations about the 2023/24 Schools Budget were agreed. In connection with the Early Years Block, the Forum supported the 2023/24 Early Years Block proposals, including:

The use of £1m Schools Budget reserves being used again in 2023/24, to mitigate transitional pressures in the Early Years Block budget to support the 3- and 4-year-old base rate, as the Schools Block headroom transfer is not available.

As per DfE guidance the historic teachers pay grant (TPG) and teachers pension grant (TPECG) received by schools have now been rolled into the early years funding formula and is included within the increased base rate for 2023/24.

Initial modelling on the early years block suggests the full £0.23 pence hourly increase can be funded from within Early Years Block Budget. School Forum understands that Early Years are facing considerable pressures within the sector. Therefore, for 2023/24 School Forum recommended that an additional 4p to be agreed above the national increase from DfE for the 3 and 4-year-old entitlements. This would provide a new rate of £4.75, an increase of £0.27 pence per hour. Final Early Years allocations will be received Summer 2023 and this additional 4p increase may be able to be

funded from within the Early Years Block also, if there is no headroom, then DSG Reserve will be utilised.

The passporting of other DfE Early Years funding increases to providers:

- + £0.06 per hour 2-year-olds providing £5.43 per hour from April 2023
- + £0.64 per hour for the maintained nursery schools supplementary funding providing £4.31 per hour from April 2023.
- + £0.02 per hour for Early Years Pupil Premium providing £0.62 per hour from April 2023, equivalent to up to £353 per eligible child per year.
- + £28 per eligible child the disability access fund (DAF) providing £828 per eligible child per year from April 2023.

The continuation of Deprivation Supplements on the existing methodology for 2023/24.

The continuation of the SEN Inclusion Fund at £500k for 2023/24.

On 19 January 2022, the County Council's Cabinet formally approved the Schools Budget for 2023/24. Some elements of the Schools Budget require compliance checking by the ESFA and approval was received on 20 February 2023.

Early Years budget statements for 2023/24 were prepared and issued on 22 February 2023.

Deprivation Rates 2023/24

There was a communication sent from School Forum on 21 February 2022, entitled 2022/23 3&4 Years Old Early Years Budget Statement. Unfortunately, it was later identified that there has been an error in the deprivation rate calculations that were detailed in the budget statement.

The error identified in calculation was where the data used included settings postcode rather than a pupil. At the School Forum meeting held on 17 March 2022, members were provided with this issue and consulted on the options to move forward.

The analysis showed that if the data was recalculated using correct data, 503 of 934 providers would have changed their deprivation rate.

The LA has contacted providers affected by the change and included details of their specific rate change.

"Feedback from the Forum was sought on the principle to be applied to the correction.
Option 1: Simply apply the correct data meaning that the deprivation forecast for 503 settings will change, either up or down.

Option 2: Use the corrected calculation for settings where the value of the deprivation factor will increase but honour the original deprivation level where the corrected data results in a reduction. This would protect 159 settings for 2022/23 only. The cost of

the protection is estimated at between circa £70k and £80k, which would be underwritten by the DSG reserve.

Members considered the information and supported the use of option 2, to honour the original deprivation level where the corrected data results in a reduction."

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The methodology for calculating the deprivation rates has not changed and is still based on the postcode of children that were in attendance in the autumn term headcount; the rates also remain the same at £0.00 to £0.40 per hour. The deprivation rates for individual settings can therefore change year on year, as it is dependent on where the children live. It is important to note that some settings may see a change for deprivation rate for 2023/24, as Option 2 referred to 2022/23 only.

The Working Group:

a) Noted the information.

b) Expressed views relating to the information provided.

iv. Early Years Block Additional High Needs Funding

The additional allocations were cover in School Block Funding;

In accordance with the school forum agreement, a further additional high needs funding supplementary grant allocation will be made for any settings that have early years pupils with an EHCP as per the May 2022 SEN data (Lancashire Pupils Only). Based on the May 2022 SEN data, this amount is estimated to be £493 and will be multiplied by the total number of early years pupils WPN on the May 2022 SEN data.

In 2023/24, supplementary allocations for high needs schools will be distributed according to the DfE's payment terms, such as one-off payments or two instalments.

There has been some concern raised by EY member that May 2022 data will not include pupils with ECHP who come through summer holidays and may miss out on some funding. In the long discussion, it was between October or May data, and members agreed that May data works better.

Additionally, Sapphire Murray has added that her team is looking on improving processes for Inclusion Fund by changing the approach and to meet the level needed. Members have thanked Sapphire for her hard work and are looking forward on seeing future improvements.

A Task and Finish Group was discussed during HNB in order to determine how the remaining funds (£2.5m) from the high needs supplementary grant should be used. As the HN working group supported the Chairs in making the decision regarding the methodology, members were encouraged to submit their ideas to the school forum email or to their Chair by 23 March 2023 but noted that the School Forum will be asked if they are in agreement on 16 March and will be reported back if a decision is made.

The Working Group:

a) Noted the information.

b) Expressed views relating to the information provided.

v. Clawback

All working groups were updated about additional meeting held by Chairs on 10 February 2023 and presented with the minutes of the meeting.

Early Years have additionally approved a clawback request for a nursery.

Additionally, it was noted that Early Years Working Group has fully supported amendments to the policy.

The Working Group;

- a) Noted the information;*
- b) Approved the request for a clawback exemption in 2022/23 for a nursery school.;*
- c) Supported Chairs decision to not suspend the clawback;*
- d) Supported changes for a clawback policy in 2023/24.*

The Forum was asked to ratify working group recommendations.

The Forum:

- a) Noted the information;**
- b) Ratified the working group's recommendations**
- c) Supported EYWG approval for clawback exemption request for a nursery in question for 2022/23.**

14. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CHAIRS' WORKING GROUP

A verbal update of the recommendations from the Chairs' Working Group meeting held on 27 January 2023 and 10 February 2023 was provided to School Forum.

The Forum:

- a) Noted the information;**
- b) Ratified the Chairs group's recommendations**

15. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE APPRENTICESHIP LEVY STEERING GROUP

On 10 February 2023, the Apprenticeship Levy Steering Group considered a topic:

- **School Apprenticeship Levy Update**

James Beardwood (Apprenticeship Team Schools Lead) delivered a presentation to members providing an update on the latest information about Apprenticeship Levy, further information are in the report.

In order to maximize investment and to communicate the message within cluster groups and forums, the group was reformed as he had a need to communicate regularly with schools. It was necessary to refocus the previous group since it contained members who did not participate in Levy or did not attend it, for a long period of time.

Currently, schools are not spending their share of Apprenticeship Levy. In his statement to the group, James advised them that his aim was to engage the school with the intention of increasing their use of Levy in Lancashire.

James Beardwood is happy to be contacted if school would like to utilize their Levy.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the information;**
- b) **Ratified the Chairs group's recommendations**

16. FORUM CORRESPONDENCE

There was four correspondence which was presented in the Forum Correspondence item;

1. Daniel as a Chair of Forum sent a letter to the cabinet members/finance director and director of resources about the School Finance Team appointments.
 - The Chair of Forum is in regular meetings with Mark Wynn and Jacqui Old for the posts to be appointed to for Schools to still receive a continues support from School Finance Team.
2. A letter from Chair to Oracle representative from last meeting was sent following Chairs considering clawback request exemptions.
3. A request for temporary clawback suspension was received via email, that followed Chairs to meet to decide on this matter.
4. A letter from Vice Chair was sent to the ' Chief Executive and Director of Resources' about the Oracle Fusion and the Clerk has invited Oracle representative to join us at the beginning of the meeting to answer to those issues.

The Forum:

- a) **Noted the information.**
- b) **Thanked Chair for his support.**

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Supply Scheme for Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) - A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) has contacted School Forum to inquire about receiving a discount to join the Supply Scheme if two more MATs join as a collective of four MATs. It was discussed by SBWG members that this would set a dangerous precedent, particularly when more schools convert. This proposal was not supported by the working group; however, it was noted that this request will be considered at the School Forum on 16 March.

The Forum;

- a) **Noted the information;**
- b) **Supported SBWG recommendations to not offer a discount to MAT.**

18. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted the next scheduled Forum meeting will be held at 10.00 am Thursday 4 July 2023.

A provisional timetable for meetings 2023/24 was shared in the composite, and the dates were approved by Forum for future meetings.