

# DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

## SCHOOLS FORUM

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 14 MARCH 2016

**Forum members Present:** Reverend Mark Bennet, Patricia Brims, Ben Broyd, Chris Davies, Reverend Mary Harwood, Jon Hewitt, Peter Hudson, Stacey Hunter, Brian Jenkins, Sheilagh Peacock, Chris Prosser, Graham Spellman, Bruce Steiner, Suzanne Taylor, John Tyzack, Keith Watts and Charlotte Wilson

**Also Present:** Avril Allenby (Early Years Service Manager), Cathy Burnham (Principal Education Psychologist), Ian Pearson (Head of Education Service), Jane Seymour (Service Manager, SEN & Disabled Children's Team) and Claire White (Finance Manager (Schools)) and Councillor Dominic Boeck (Executive Portfolio: Education), Councillor Roger Croft (Executive Portfolio: Leader of Council, Strategy & Performance, Finance), Councillor Mollie Lock (Shadow Executive Portfolio: Education and Young People, Adult Social Care) and Jo Reeves (Policy Officer)

**Apologies for inability to attend the meeting:** Paul Dick, Anthony Gallagher, Keith Harvey, Angela Hay, Derek People, David Ramsden and Clive Rothwell

#### PART I

##### 1 Minutes of previous meeting dated 25 January 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2016 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

##### 2 Actions arising from previous meetings

Action 1 had been completed and could be removed from the list of actions arising from previous meetings.

Jane Seymour provided a verbal update regarding action 2:

**Actions undertaken by other Local Authorities to reduce their spending on High Needs:** Jane Seymour advised that she had spoken to two other authorities, each predicting a £2m overspend in their High Needs Blocks. Their overspends were for similar reasons to West Berkshire, including increased use of Thames Valley Free School and increasing placements in special schools. They were looking at reducing their spending on special schools and resourced units. One authority had made a 1.5% reduction to schools funding and transferred the headroom from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block. The other local authority had also moved its underspend in the Schools Block to support the High Needs Block.

Peter Hudson enquired whether there was any national or regional body of High Needs providers which could be pressurised to reduce their charges. Jane Seymour confirmed that there was a National Association of non Maintained Special Schools.

John Tyzack asked how many other local authorities had been approached; Jane responded that five had been contacted and two responded.

Reverend Mark Bennett questioned what options there were for joint working with these other local authorities to reduce the costs of out of area placements in the medium term. Jane Seymour advised that a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment would be undertaken

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with the other authorities to examine opportunities to work together, in particular looking at post 19 provision. She further explained that there was a pan-Berkshire commissioning group which might be able to look at achieving economies of scale with therapy services.

**Buy in rate for CALT service:** Jane Seymour advised that 59 schools buy the full 'Plus' service and six schools used a 'pay as you go' option. This was 71% of schools in West Berkshire.

**Breakdown of entry points at which placements into special schools is most prevalent:** Jane advised that the pressure points in order of prevalence were as follows:

- Top primary/ low secondary
- Foundation stages 1 and 2 (children who never went into mainstream provision)
- Year 9 (usually due to emotional and behavioural difficulties)

**Potential financial impacts of risks associated with savings options:** Jane advised that the report for agenda item 8 included this information.

**Options to reduce savings on non West Berkshire Special Schools:** Jane reported that she was pleased to announce that reduced fees had been negotiated.

### 3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

### 4 Membership

Jo Reeves presented the latest information on the membership of the Schools Forum.

This was John Tyzack's last meeting of the Schools Forum, having announced his resignation as a Primary Governor representative at the previous meeting. John Tyzack had been the Chairman of the Schools Forum since it was established in 2002 and had been a Governor at various Primary Schools in the District for some 29 years. He planned to accept the role as the Foundation Governor at Enborne Primary School. Jo Reeves, speaking on behalf of all the Schools Forum members, thanked John Tyzack for his eminent service to the Schools Forum and the community.

It was noted that Peter Hudson had come to the end of his term as a Primary School Governor representative on the Schools Forum. John Tyzack thanked him for his service and noted that he had stood again in the recent election for Primary governors.

Chris Davis, Headteacher at Francis Baily Primary School, had replaced Kate House as a Primary Headteacher representative. Ben Broyd, Learner Services Manager at Newbury College had replaced Fadia Clarke as the Non School Post 16 Provider representative. Both were welcomed to the Schools Forum.

The election for two Primary School governor representatives had closed and the successful candidates would be announced on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

**RESOLVED** that the changes to the membership of the Schools Forum were noted.

### 5 DSG Budget Monitoring 2015/16 Month 10

The Schools Forum considered a report (Agenda Item 6) which set out the current position of the services funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant, highlighting any under or overspends forecasted at month 10 of the 2015/16 financial year.

At the end of January 2016 the total DSG overspend position forecast for year end was £602k, compared to the month 9 forecast of £495k overspend, all in the high needs block.

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The Schools Block was expected to be largely on-line. Any under spends in the growth and falling rolls fund (contingency) budget, primary schools in financial difficulty budget, and other de-delegated services would be ring fenced and carried forward to 2016/17 and would not impact on the overall position of the DSG.

Although Month 10 monitoring was showing no variance on the early years block, the latest forecast using data from the January census was that there would be a large under spend as the actual number of hours of provision being funded had not seen a significant increase in year as expected. Furthermore, the number of children the Council was to receive funding for in year (an average of the two January censuses) was greater than the actual number of children accessing early years provision.

The High Needs Block anticipated overspend had increased since month 9, mainly due to reaching agreement with the two special schools on additional place funding where they have admitted pupils over their allocated places. The pressure of new placements in non West Berkshire Special schools, mainly Thames Valley Free School, and top ups at the PRUs remained.

In addition to the £604k overspend on the high needs expenditure budget, the budget for this block was set £127k over the actual grant available. This means that £731k would need to be met from the 2016/17 allocation of DSG.

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

### 6 DSG Budget 2016/17

The Forum considered a report (Agenda Item 7) which provided an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding for 2016/17 and an overview of the total current budget position. Other reports on the agenda went into further detail on the high needs and early years' blocks. The 2016/17 budgets for these blocks would need to be agreed at this meeting.

The Department for Education (DfE) announced the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement for 2016/17 on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2015. DSG funding is split into 3 funding blocks – schools, early years and high needs, each calculated in a different way. There was no increase to the funding rates for the schools block and early years block, but there was a small increase to the high needs block allocation.

The 2016/17 budget estimates had been revised since the last meeting based on the most up to date information. The current overall position was shown in Table 2, with a more detailed breakdown by cost centre shown in Appendix B to the report.

**TABLE 2**

<b>2016/17 Estimate</b>	<b>DSG Funding £'000</b>	<b>Budget Estimate £'000</b>	<b>Headroom/ (Shortfall) £'000</b>
<b>Schools Block</b>	95,870	95,870	0
<b>Early Years Block</b>	7,337	7,134	203
<b>High Needs Block</b>	20,206	21,584	(1,378)
<b>Total</b>	<b>123,413</b>	<b>124,588</b>	<b>(1,175)</b>

#### **Schools Block**

In order to meet DfE deadlines, this block was decided at the last meeting of the Schools' Forum and was now balanced and set for 2016/17. Headroom available in this block was

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transferred to the high needs block (total transfer of funding £848k). No further changes could be made.

### **Early Years Block**

Early years funding for 2016/17 would be based 5/12 on the January 2016 census and 7/12 on the January 2017 census. For the purpose of setting the budget for 2016/17 the figures from the January 2016 census only had been used. This assumed that the numbers of children accessing the free entitlement would not be significantly different next January.

The funding figures included an estimated net carry forward from 2015/16 of £577k. The actual should not differ significantly from this as most payments for the year had been made.

The budget estimate for 2016/17 assumed the same level of take up as in 2015/16, and maintaining the same hourly rates. On this basis part of the under spend from 2015/16 would be required, but this still would leave £203k available as one-off funding. The proposals for this block were set out in another report on this agenda.

### **High Needs Block**

The significant shortfall in funding in the high needs block for 2016/17 (£2.2m reduced to £1.4m after transfer from the schools block), was due mainly to the following factors:

- A significant over spend of £731k in the current year high needs block which will need to be met from next year's DSG.
- Carry forward of under spend from previous years in the high needs block have been used up in the current year (£345k in 2015/16).
- Pupil numbers and needs in the high needs block continue to rise without a corresponding increase in funding.
- Only a minor increase (£284k) to our funding allocation to go towards increasing numbers and demands.

Another report on the agenda set out the proposals for balancing the high needs block over a two year period.

Although the over spend in the current year's high needs block required a one off saving (being met from the schools block in 2016/17), there was still a significant ongoing shortfall of £1.5m in the high needs block which needed to be addressed and which could only be met by a reduction in funding rates, reduction in services, and by increases in charges to schools.

Reverend Mark Bennett questioned whether the forecasting assumptions regarding the number of places in the Early Years Block meant that there was no ambition to increase take-up of early years places, particularly among hard-to-reach families. Avril Allenby advised that the number of places was usually consistent with the new settings opening as others closed. Take up of places for two year olds had increased but not to the level that had been hoped .

Councillor Dominic Boeck asked what risk there would be to carry forward a deficit in the High Needs Block into 2016/17. Claire White advised that the risk would be minimal as there was a proposal to balance the budget over two years. Councillor Boeck referred to the deficit at John O'Gaunt school and enquired whether there would be similar risks to the local authority if a deficit budget was set in the High Needs Block (HNB). Claire White confirmed that the only risk of setting a deficit HNB budget would be to the DSG and not to the Council.

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Bruce Steiner commented that there was always a risk in setting a budget where one did not know what the available funding would be. Claire White agreed that this was the case for the Early Years budget. The HNB budget was the more unpredictable budget.

Peter Hudson posited that there was a risk in moving funding from the Schools Block to the HNB because individual schools might find it difficult to set a balanced budget or to keep to their budget, and that the local authority might become liable for their deficits. Claire White explained that schools were responsible for their own budgets and any resultant deficit. There was a Schools in Financial Difficulty Fund but there was a long period of intervention and support between the local authority and the school before they became eligible to apply for that fund. John Tyzack commented that the Schools Forum no longer dealt with as many applications for the Schools in Financial Difficulty Fund as it once had.

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

### 7 High Needs Budget 2016/17

The Forum considered a report (Agenda Item 8) which presented saving options for balancing the high needs budget for 2016/17. The previous two rounds of meetings of the Heads Funding Group (HFG) and Schools' Forum (SF) had received reports setting out the funding position of the high needs budget for 2016/17. These reports had detailed the services making up the high needs budget, and possible savings options in order to close a £1.9m estimated funding gap. The reasons for this gap were as summarised again below:

- A significant over spend in the current year high needs block which will need to be met from next year's DSG.
- The carry forward of previous years' under spend has supported the budget up to now, but this was one off funding which has now all been used up.
- Pupil numbers and needs in the high needs block continue to rise without a corresponding increase in funding.
- The DfE has provided only a small increase to our funding allocation which falls significantly short of our increasing numbers and level of support of pupils being funded from this budget.

At the meeting of the Schools Forum on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2016, the members acknowledged all the options and did not rule any out. As part of setting the schools block budget for 2016/17, it was agreed that £848k of funding would be transferred from the schools' block funding to the high needs budget as a contribution towards the savings required.

In the meantime Officers had revised the estimates for the current year forecasts and the budgets for next year, using the latest pupil placement and other relevant data.

The overall position for 2016/17 was now a shortfall of £1,378k compared to £1,915k as reported in January 2016. The reasons for the £537k change were:

- Transfer of funding from the Schools Block: shortfall reduced by £848k
- Increase in 2015/16 overspend: shortfall increased by £106k
- Increase in 2016/17 estimate for top ups: shortfall increased by £205k

Ian Pearson drew the Forum's attention to the amendment report which had been circulated at the meeting and the briefing note provided under Item 12 - Any Other Business. The previous week, the government had launched consultations on schools funding. The consultations had been launched after the publication of the agenda and report for this meeting of the Schools Forum. The amendment had been recommended

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by officers to ensure that the Forum's financial planning was compatible with the proposals outlined in the consultation.

The consultation that had been launched regarding mainstream schools funding proposed a national funding formula. The decision at the previous meeting of the Schools Forum to move the forecasted headroom in the Schools Block to the High Needs Block would have no impact on mainstream schools funding from 2017/18 because it would be based on a national formula and not historical funding levels.

Regarding the consultation on the High Needs Block (HNB), the government view was that an entire overhaul was necessary on how the HNB was funded. Commitments had been made to look at the way local authorities received funding and it was thought that the HNB funding should reflect the increase in places and the higher levels of needs being supported. It was proposed that proxy measures be used to determine the extent of the funding.

It was proposed that in the future, schools would be funded directly by the Schools Funding Agency, whereas High Needs funding would continue to be received and then distributed by local authorities.

It had been suggested that High Needs funding in 2017/18 would be at a similar level to expenditure in 2016/17. Ian Pearson advised that the Schools Forum needed to be careful not to reduce the budget so far in 2016/17 that the funding in 2017/18 was disadvantaged. Ian Pearson pressed the need however to balance the High Needs budget.

Table 1 of the amendment report summarised the savings (totalling £647k) that were now being proposed. It was still proposed that a two year approach was adopted in balancing the budget.

<b>TABLE 1</b>	<b>2016/17 £</b>	<b>2017/18 £</b>
<b>Total Saving Required:</b>	<b>1,378,170</b>	<b>888,610</b>
1. Resourced unit place funding – reduction in places	29,170	
2. FE College Top Up – reduce fees by 10%	94,330	
3. PRU Top Ups – reduce daily rate		76,950
Alternative Curriculum from 1/9/16 – reduce by £20.25 per day	107,730	
Reintegration Service from 1/9/16 – reduce by £10.25 per day	41,120	29,370
4. PRU top ups – increase contribution from schools		
Alternative Curriculum from 1/9/16 – increase by £750 p Pupil per year	24,000	12,000
Reintegration Service from 1/9/16 – increase by £10 per day	13,420	9,580
5. PRU top ups Reintegration service – increase by 6 th no. of weeks paid for by schools from 1/9/16	41,390	29,570
10. Efficiency savings in Language and Literacy Units	18,400	
13. Pre School Teacher Counselling – Council cut, won't be funded by DSG	85,000	
14. Learning Independence for Travel – Council cut, will be partly funded by DSG	35,000	
<b>Savings Proposed</b>	<b>-489,560</b>	<b>-157,470</b>
<b>Shortfall Remaining after Proposed Savings</b>	<b>888,610</b>	<b>731,140</b>
Additional resources available in 2017/18		-731,140

The savings above were colour coded according to their likelihood of being achieved:

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- **Green**: certain it could be achieved as within the Local Authority's control.
- **Yellow**: the reduction to rates/places would be made but as the budget was demand driven the saving level was uncertain (the figure is based on current demand).
- **Grey**: the reduction to budget was subject to negotiation with external organisations.

The savings that had now been removed totalled £402,350 and were as follows:

- The reduction in sensory impairment (£23,880)
- The reduction in places at Engaging Potential (£154,360)
- The reduction in the equipment budget (£10,000)
- The reduction in therapy services (£32,440)
- The removal of PRU outreach service (£117,000)
- CALT team – the increase in charges to schools (£20,000)
- Learning Independence for Travel (£40,000)
- FE College Top Ups (£4,670)

Ian Pearson explained that the services that were no longer proposed to be reduced were preventative and early intervention services which had the potential to reduce the pressure on the HNB further down the line. The savings as proposed above was proposed as the best way to safeguard essential services. The revised table would still mean that £489k of savings were required in 2016/17 and £157k was required in 2017/18.

Chris Davis enquired how likely the savings shown in grey were to be achieved. Jane Seymour responded that there was always a risk when savings were based on negotiations which had not yet been finalised, however there had been an underspend on Further Education college top ups which had enabled the budget to be reduced.

Chris Davis further asked what assurances could be offered that the savings would be successful in balancing the HNB and mitigating the trend of increased pressure. Ian Pearson advised that the number of children with Statements and EHC Plans could not be predicted, however underspends in some areas had been used to offset overspends in others. Services, in their forecasting for 2016/17 has assumed an increase demand on provision and this had been accounted for.

Chris Davis raised the point that there had been an anticipated £2m shortfall in the HNB for 2016/17 which was now £500k. He further asked for information on how the spend in that block could be controlled. Ian Pearson advised that budget setting had been more realistic and had taken into account the increased pressure.

Jane Seymour confirmed that the 2015/16 overspend had been calculated into the service budgets for 2016/17 and officers were looking at a strategic approach to reducing the overspend. For example, a new Autism Spectrum Disorder resource had recently been opened and another was planned to open in the next academic year.

Cathy Burnham contributed that research had been completed to establish the reasons for increased placements in specialist settings and why mainstream schools were less able to support children with high needs.

Ian Pearson advised that Language and Literacy Centres were no longer proposed to be removed because their early intervention prevented higher demand on other services.

Cathy Burnham advised that the Vulnerable Children's Grant of £60k was no longer considered for a budget reduction because it had a beneficial impact, despite being a small budget.

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Bruce Steiner acknowledged that a briefing note on the consultations for Item 12 – Any Other Business, at paragraph 4.8 stated that no transfers between funding blocks would be permitted. He enquired what the result would be if there was a surplus in one of the blocks. Ian Pearson advised that if the Forum members were minded to approve the High needs budget as laid out in the original report, it would not be possible to transfer the expected surplus of circa £400k back to the Schools Block in 2017/18. Therefore the amended savings proposals put forward a plan to balance the budget. Peter Hudson confirmed that this would mean any future overspend in one block could not be mitigated by an underspend in another block.

Peter Hudson opined that there was a disincentive to reduce the overspend in the HNB due to the likely implications of the consultation's proposals. Ian Pearson agreed that the High Needs budget 2016/17 would in part determine the 2017/18 budget. Peter Hudson suggested that if no savings were proposed then more funding would be received in 2017/18. Ian Pearson pressed the need to balance the budget.

Claire White pointed out that the main issue to consider was that the original proposals had been to create a surplus balance in 2017/18 which could be used to pay back the Schools Block, however this was likely to be impossible if the proposals in the consultation came to fruition. The aim should still be to balance the budget over two years.

Keith Watts congratulated Ian Pearson and the other officers for responding quickly to the consultation and keeping the Forum informed.

Councillor Roger Croft stated that he was not a voting member but would offer his opinion on the matter. He advised that he had considerable experience in trying to estimate government funding formulas and they had proved very hard to predict. It was always difficult to make savings but deferred savings were more difficult to achieve. Like an individual's debt was at risk of being passed on to their children, any deficit budget would be passed on to the next generation of Schools Forum members and officers to resolve. Councillor Croft warned against setting a deficit budget.

Graham Spellman asked for further information on savings 13 and 14 in the table on the amendment report. He questioned these as savings as they had not been funded by the HNB historically. Ian Pearson advised that saving 13, the Pre-School Teacher Counselling Service (PSTCS) was not and would continue not to be funded by the DSG, however the Heads Funding Group had considered the PSTCS to be of value to early years providers and therefore some of the underspend in the early years block would be used to support this service. Saving 14, Learning Independence for Travel (LIFT), had not been funded by the DSG but qualified for funding and it was proposed that £40k be used to fund a replacement of that service and an invest-to-save strategy.

Peter Hudson proposed that the Forum agree the High Needs Budget 2016/17 as laid out in report and as amended by the amendment report. Graham Spellman seconded the proposal. The Chairman invited the Committee to vote on the proposal; at the vote the proposal was carried.

**RESOLVED that the High Needs Block Budget 2016/17 be approved as laid out in the report and as amended by the amendment report.**

### 8 Early Years Budget 2016/17

*(Councillor Dominic Boeck left the meeting at 6.20pm)*

The Forum considered a report (Agenda Item 9) to set out for the Early Years Block the likely financial position and under spend to be carried forward for 2015/16, and detail the proposals for setting a balanced budget for this block in 2016/17.



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As at February 2016, 116 early year's providers were funded from the Early Years block.

In setting the 2015/16 early years block budget, it was assumed that the in year growth in numbers experienced in the previous few years would be repeated, and so the same percentage increase was included in the estimate. On this basis there was a shortfall in three and four year old funding, but the under spend in 2014/15 (mainly from two year old funding) was carried forward to support this budget without the need to adjust downwards the funding rates paid to providers. It was recognised that this would only be a solution for one year *if* all the carry forward was used in 2015/16.

Indicative figures from the January 2016 census were now available to estimate the funding for the year, and Spring term payments to providers had been estimated to be able to forecast total expenditure for the year. Table 2 sets out the current forecast on each budget line within the early years block.

**Table 2**

<b>Early Years Block Budget</b>	<b>Budget 2015/16</b>	<b>Current Forecast</b>	<b>Variance</b>
3 & 4 year old PVI Providers	4,673,650	4,281,550	-392,100
3 & 4 year old Nursery classes in schools	1,080,100	1,070,220	-9,880
3 & 4 year old Maintained nursery	808,730	749,730	-59,000
2 Year Old Funding – all settings	810,000	617,800	-192,200
Central Expenditure on Children under 5	79,820	86,470	6,650
Pupil Premium Grant and Deprivation Supplement	209,590	51,410	-158,180
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>7,661,890</b>	<b>6,857,180</b>	<b>-804,710</b>
DSG Early Years Block funding	-7,004,800	-6,776,830	227,970
SEN Pre School Children (transfer funding to high needs block)	10,000	10,000	0
<b>In Year Net Position (i.e. shortfall)</b>	<b>667,090</b>	<b>90,350</b>	<b>-576,740</b>
DSG carry forward from 2014/15	-667,090	-667,090	0
<b>Net Position Overall</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-576,740</b>	<b>-576,740</b>

The current figures indicated an overall under spend of £577k. The increase in numbers of 2, 3 & 4 year olds accessing the free entitlement had not materialised as forecasted and as in previous years, and this stability in numbers appeared to be a national trend.

The overall in year position was an over spend of £90k compared to the original estimate of £667k. Had the carry forward from 2014/15 not been available and the rates paid to providers had been reduced, this would therefore have resulted in an under spend but at a significant detriment to providers. This illustrated the volatility of this budget, and the need to have back up funding available.

The overall in year overspend of £90k would be met from the 2014/15 carry forward of £667k, leaving £577k available as one off funding in 2016/17. These figures were forecasts and the final figure for the year could vary by as much as £100k.

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The estimate for 2016/17 is set out in Table 3 (alongside the 2015/16 forecast), based on the following assumptions:

- The same number of hours of provision as per the 2015/16 actual for existing providers (adjusted for the actual number of weeks in the financial year for the maintained sector). No in year growth in hours of provision is assumed.
- Quality bands have been adjusted for each provider as appropriate according to the employee data in the January 2016 returns.
- The same funding rates as 2015/16 have been applied.
- An increase in PPG take up has been assumed.
- An increase in the centrally retained budget due to staffing costs in respect of the additional work involved in PPG and two year old assessments.
- The January 2016 census pupil numbers only have been used to predict the DSG funding for the full year. This assumes numbers will remain stable.
- The PPG grant matching the actual hours of take up.

**Table 3**

<b>Early Years Block Budget</b>	<b>Forecast 2015/16</b>	<b>Estimate 2016/17</b>
3 & 4 year old PVI Providers	4,281,550	4,382,000
3 & 4 year old Nursery classes in schools	1,070,220	1,133,080
3 & 4 year old Maintained nursery	749,730	779,380
2 Year Old Funding – all settings	617,800	611,440
Central Expenditure on Children under 5	86,470	128,100
Pupil Premium Grant and Deprivation Supplement	51,410	100,000
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>6,857,180</b>	<b>7,134,000</b>
DSG Early Years Block	-6,776,830	-6,770,310
SEN Pre School Children (transfer funding to high needs block)	10,000	10,000
<b>In Year Net Position (i.e. shortfall)</b>	<b>90,350</b>	<b>373,690</b>
DSG EY Block carry forward from previous year	-667,090	-576,740
<b>Net Position Overall</b>	<b>-576,740</b>	<b>-203,050</b>

In order to balance the budget in 2016/17, part of the under spend from 2015/16 (£374k) would be required; leaving £203k. Rather than adjust funding rates downwards (which would be a significant negative impact on this sector), it was proposed to maintain the current rates, as set out in appendix B of the report, for a further year by utilising the carry forward. This included maintaining the deprivation rate of £0.47 per hour which is added to the pupil premium. From 2017 increased funding rates and a new national formula were then due to be implemented.

Like with the other aspects of schools funding, the Government had stated its intention to have a national early year's formula from 2017 but further details were unclear.

The Heads Funding Group supported the proposals set out in this report but in addition requested that part of the 2015/16 under spend be used to retain part of the pre-school teacher counselling service (the high needs budget proposal was to cut this budget by £85,000) at a cost of £45,000 in 2016/17.

Bruce Steiner proposed that the Early Years Budget 2016/17 be approved as laid out in the report including the recommendation from the Heads Funding Group. Brian Jenkins seconded the proposal. The Chairman invited the Forum members to vote on the proposal, which at the vote was carried.

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**RESOLVED** that the Early Years Block Budget 2016/17 be agreed as laid out in section 5 of the report and including the recommendation from the Heads Funding Group that part of the 2015/16 under spend be used to retain part of the pre-school teacher counselling service at a cost of £45,000 in 2016/17.

### 9 Work Programme 2016/17 including Forward Plan

The Forum considered the proposed Work Programme 2016/17 and Forward Plan (Agenda Item 10). The work programme largely followed the pattern from the previous year.

Jo Reeves reported that the incorrect heading would be corrected. There had also been an error in the dates for the meeting during term 1 (October 2016).

Graham Spellman proposed that the work programme 2016/17 be agreed, subject to the corrections being made. The proposal was seconded by Reverend Mary Harwood and at the vote was carried.

**RESOLVED** that the Work Programme 2016/17 and Forward Plan be agreed.

### 10 Home Education Review 2014/15

The Forum considered a report (Agenda Item 11) which presented the Home Education Review 2014/15.

Cathy Burnham explained that this report had been provided in answer to a query from Paul Dick on the cost per hour of home education provision. The home education budget was £300k and used by 37 pupils. The average cost was £8k per pupil, however calculating cost per hour of provision was difficult.

For example, for a pupil who used the service for the full academic year (38 weeks) at full capacity (25 hours per week), it would cost £213/week or £8.50/ hour. However if a child was able to attend at that capacity, one might wonder why they required the home education service.

A pupil who was ill for one term (12 weeks) and used the service for 10 hours/ week would cost £675/week or £67.50/hour.

Cathy Burnham advised that somewhere between £8.50/ hour and £67.50/ hour was the correct figure. To be more accurate it would be necessary to calculate the fixed costs and divide by the 37 pupils first, then look at each pupil individually.

Bruce Steiner thanked Cathy Burnham and Stacey Hunter for providing the report and advised that it in a time when Forum members wanted to control the budget, it provided reassurance.

**RESOLVED** that the Forum noted the report.

### 11 Any Other Business

*(Reverend Mary Harwood left the meeting at 6.30pm)*

Claire White drew the Forum's attention to the briefing note which had been circulated electronically immediately prior to the meeting and were also available in paper copy. This briefing had been prepared to inform Schools Forum members about two "stage one" consultations that had been published by the DfE following the publication of the agenda for the meeting in respect of the schools national funding formula and the high needs funding reform.

Both consultations were stage one – setting down the principles, and what to include in the formula. This stage would close on 17th April 2016. Second stage consultations

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would follow, probably in the Summer Term, which would attach values to formula factors and provide indicative impacts on local authorities and individual schools. At this stage it was unknown whether West Berkshire will be at an advantage or not from these proposals. It was hoped that West Berkshire would benefit because schools were funded below the national average level.

The local school formula for 2017/18 would need to be agreed by the Council's Executive in October 2016, so it was likely that the decision making and consultation with schools would need to take place in a very short timescale.

Claire White described the elements of the schools block consultation, particularly drawing attention to a sparsity element which was not currently used by West Berkshire because the two mile cut off was deemed to be unfair. An exceptional growth fund however would be beneficial to west Berkshire Schools as it would support rapidly expanding and new schools.

*(Suzanne Taylor left the meeting at 6.42pm)*

Keith Watts asked for officers' comment on the government statement that schools would not just be funded on a historical basis. Claire White confirmed that the government had suggested that the funding would be based on need including proxy measures however it was dependent on the total amount of funding available.

Keith Watts advised that following the calculations of the f40 campaign group , West Berkshire would stand to have its budget increased by 4% by 2019. Claire White commented that some members of the group had advised the government in preparing the consultation.

*(Chris Davis left the meeting at 6.45pm)*

Claire White went on to outline the proposals contained within the High Needs funding consultation, in particular noting that funding would not be linked to the number of EHC plans issued as this would be a perverse incentive and there would be capital funding made available for expansion of specialist high needs provision.

Peter Hudson commented that the devil would be in the detail and would await the figures. He asked for the timescales; Claire White advised that the government had not provided a timetable for the consultation and implementation of proposals at this stage.

Keith Watts asked whether Forum members should respond to the consultation. Claire White advised that the council would be responding but urged members to respond on those points that they particularly held strong views on. Keith Watts commented that the National Union of Teachers had asked what weight would be applied to the responses of various consultees and were told that the government would 'take notice of its partners'.

Peter Hudson stated that this might be his last meeting of the Schools Forum, depending on the outcome of the recent election, and expressed that he had thoroughly enjoyed his time as a member.

Keith Watts stated that he had been a member of the Schools Forum for about the same time as John Tyzack and thanked him for his masterful chairing.

### 12 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting would take place on Monday 6th of June 2016, 5pm at Shaw House.

*(The meeting commenced at 5.05pm and closed at 6.52pm)*

**CHAIRMAN** .....

**Date of Signature** .....