

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, 5 DECEMBER 2022

Present: Reverend Mark Bennet (Church of England Diocese), Councillor Dominic Boeck, Melissa Cliffe (Maintained Primary School Headteacher), Catie Colston (Academy School Governor), Sarah East (Maintained Primary School Headteacher), Richard Hand (Trade Union), Keith Harvey (Maintained Primary School Headteacher), Jon Hewitt (Maintained Special School Headteacher), Maria Morgan (Maintained Nursery School Headteacher), Gemma Piper (Academy School Headteacher), Ant Sizer (Maintained Secondary School Deputy Headteacher), Campbell Smith (Academy School Governor), Graham Spellman (Roman Catholic Diocese) and Phil Spray (Maintained Primary School Governor)

Also Present: Avril Allenby (Early Years Service Manager), Rose Carberry (Acting Principal Adviser for School Improvement), Melanie Ellis (Chief Accountant) and Jane Seymour (Service Manager, SEN & Disabled Children's Team), Jessica Bailiss (Policy Officer (Executive Support)), Lucy Hillyard (SEMH Strategic Lead) and Michelle Sancho (Acting Head of Education Services)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Didem Allen, Clare Beswick, Paul Davey, Jacque Davies, Gemma Duff, Michelle Harrison, Richard Hawthorne, Councillor Ross Mackinnon, Catherine McLeod, Chris Prosser and David Ramsden

PART I

136 Minutes of previous meeting dated 17th October 2022

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17th October 2022 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chair.

137 Actions arising from previous meetings

Oct22-Ac2 - information to be added to the proposed possible use for a transfer of funding to demonstrate how the funding would be distributed and how many pupils it would support: Jane Seymour reported that the consultation that had gone out to schools had included information on how a transfer would be used if a transfer was agreed. It had been proposed that it would be used for inflating the band values for children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).

138 Declarations of Interest

Maria Morgan declared an interest in Agenda Item 11 by the virtue of the fact that she was the Headteacher at Victoria Park Nursery School, and reported that, as her interest was a disclosable pecuniary interest, she would not take part in the discussion or vote on the item. Maria Morgan was however permitted to remain in the room and contribute to the presentation of the report as she was one of the listed consultees.

Keith Harvey declared an interest in Agenda Item 18 by virtue of the fact that he had discussed the bid from the Kite Federation with the Executive Headteacher, he would however be considering the bid with an open mind. He therefore reported that, as his

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interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to remain to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

Melissa Cliffe declared an interest in Agenda Item 18 by virtue of the fact that she was the Headteacher at Basildon Primary School, and reported that, as her interest was a disclosable pecuniary interest, she would leave the meeting for the duration of the item.

139 Membership

Jess Bailiss reported that there were currently no members approaching the end of their term of office.

140 School Funding Formula 2023/24 (Melanie Ellis)

Melanie Ellis introduced the report (Agenda Item 6), which set out the results of the consultation with all schools on the proposed primary and secondary school funding formula for 2023/24 and to make a recommendation to Schools Forum.

The recommendations in the report were as follows:

- a) *To mirror the Department for Education's (DfE) 2023/24 National Funding Formula (NFF) to calculate the funding allocations.*
- b) *To use the minimum sparsity factor.*
- c) *To address any surplus or shortfall in funding by adjusting the AWPU values.*
- d) *To not top slice any of the schools' funding to support the High Needs Block.*
- e) *To not reinstate the Falling Rolls Fund.*
- f) *To approve the criteria to be used to allocate additional funds.*
- g) *To approve the proposed services to be de-delegated, but to defer a decision on the Primary Schools in Financial Difficulty Fund to the next meeting.*

Catie Colston queried if the set of recommendations mirrored that of other similar local authorities. Melanie Ellis reported that she was unsure at this particular stage however, she was aware that local authorities were being encouraged to move closer to the NFF. The consultation with schools had included information on how many local authorities had opted for the minimum sparsity level the previous year and Melanie Ellis believed this was about 15. Melanie Ellis did not have information on how many local authorities were choosing to top slice the schools' block.

The Chair invited the Forum to comment on the recommendations and no comments were received. It was therefore proposed that recommendations (a) – (e) should be voted on collectively.

It was proposed and seconded that recommendations (a) – (e) should be approved. At the vote with all school members (*normally also the PVI representative however apologies had been given*) the motion was carried.

The Chair invited the Forum to consider recommendation (f). It was proposed and seconded that recommendation (f) should be approved by the Forum. At the vote with all Forum members the motion was carried.

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RESOLVED that all recommendations included in the report were approved with the exception of recommendation (g). The de-delegation proposals would be considered and voted on under Item 8 – De-delegation proposals 2023-24.

141 Budgets for Additional Funds 2023/24 (Melanie Ellis)

Melanie Ellis introduced the report (Agenda Item 7), which set out the proposed 2023-24 budgets for the Growth Fund, Primary Schools in Financial Difficulty Fund (PSIFD) and Additional High Needs Fund.

There were three recommendations in the report as follows:

- 2.1) **The Agree that the 2023-24 growth allocation is distributed to all schools via the school formula.** This was estimated to be in the region of £900k. Melanie Ellis added that even if the whole allocation was distributed to schools there would still be about £1m remaining in the fund.
- 2.2) **To defer the decision on the Primary Schools In Financial Difficulty (PSIFD) fund to the next round of meetings.** Melanie Ellis reported that there had been a detailed discussion on this at the Heads' Funding Group (HFG) and it was decided that there should be a consultation with primary schools with detailed questions on the PSIFD fund. This consultation would go out to primary schools shortly. The decision on the PSIFD fund would therefore need to be deferred until the next round of meetings in January 2023.
- 2.3) **To set the Additional High Needs Fund at £65k.** The table in section seven of the report showed that the estimate spend in the current year was £70k.

The Chair invited the Forum to comment on the recommendations and no comments were received.

It was proposed and seconded that that recommendation 2.1 be approved. At the vote with all school members the motion was approved.

It was proposed and seconded that recommendation 2.3 be approved. At the vote with all Forum members the motion was approved.

RESOLVED that recommendations 2.1 and 2.3 were approved. The decision on the PSIFD Fund would be taken at the next round of meetings in January 2023.

142 De-delegations Proposals 2023/24 (Lisa Potts)

Lisa Potts introduced the report (Agenda Item 8), which set out the details, cost and charges to schools of the services on which maintained school representatives were required to vote (on an annual basis). Lisa Potts reminded the Forum that a decision on the Primary Schools in Financial Difficulty Fund (PSIFD) fund would not be taken until the next round of meetings in January 2023. The main difference between the current paper and the one that was presented to the last Forum in October was that the cost of the Ethnic, Minority and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) provision had been reduced following a request by the Heads' Funding Group (HFG). No other costs had changed. The cost of the Therapeutic Thinking provision would be looked at in time for the de-delegations for 2024-25.

The Chair invited the Forum to comment on the recommendations within the report and no comments were raised. It was noted that a decision could not be taken on recommendation 2.2 because there were no secondary members present at the meeting. The decision on this item would be taken at the next round of meetings in January 2023.

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The Chair invited Primary School Representatives to vote on the recommendation under 2.1 of the report as follows:

2.1 That representatives of maintained primary schools should agree to de-delegate funds in the 2023/24 financial year for:

- **Behaviour Support Services**
- **Ethnic Minority Support**
- **Trade Union Representation**
- **CLEAPSS**
- **School Improvement**
- **Statutory and Regulatory Duties comprising:**
 - **Statutory accounting functions in respect of schools**
 - **Internal Audit of schools**
 - **Administration of pensions for school staff**
- **Health and Safety Service to Schools**

It was proposed and seconded that the recommendation be approved. At the vote with maintained primary members the motion was carried.

The Chair invited maintained special, nursery and PRU heads representatives (PRU representative apologies noted) to vote on the recommendation under 2.2 of the report as follows:

2.3 That representatives of maintained special, nursery and PRU heads should agree to de-delegate funds in the 2023/24 financial year for:

- **Trade Union Representation**
- **CLEAPSS (Special schools and PRU only)**
- **Statutory and Regulatory Duties comprising:**
 - **Statutory accounting functions in respect of schools**
 - **Internal Audit of schools**
 - **Administration of pensions for school staff**
- **Health and Safety Service to Schools**

It was proposed and seconded by the maintained special and nursery headteachers (PRU Representative had given apologies) that the recommendation be approved. At the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED that

- Recommendations 2.1 and 2.3 were approved by the Forum.
- The decision on maintained secondary school de-delegations would be taken at the next round of meetings in January 2023.

143 LAL Funding (Jane Seymour)

Jane Seymour introduced the report (Agenda Item 9), which sought a decision on the Theale Learning and Literacy (LAL) funding deficit and LAL budgets for 2023-24. The recommendation was for the Forum to agree to a new model for funding the LALs at Theale and Winchcombe Primary Schools, which were an important part of the district's Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision.

The proposed model for funding was set out in the report and would mean an increase of about £13k per LAL per annum starting from April 2023. There was also a recommendation in the report to agree a contribution to the deficit which had built up in the Theale LAL budget due to under-funding of the LALs (£51,813). This figure had been

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calculated by applying the new funding model retrospectively to see what the funding should have been for the LALs in previous years.

The table under 4.1 of the report showed that minimal increase in the LALs budget had not kept pace with what was needed. Between 2019-20 and 2021-22 the budget allocated for the LALs did not fully cover the cost of the teacher in charge.

The Chair invited the Forum to consider the recommendation under section two of the report. It was proposed and seconded that the recommendations be approved and at the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED that:

- The recommendation to agree a contribution to the deficit that had built up in the Theale LAL budget was approved by the Forum.
- The recommendation to increase the budget allocation to both LALS from 2023-24 to cover costs was approved by the Forum.

144 Update on HNB Invest to Save Projects (Jane Seymour)

Jane Seymour introduced the report (Agenda Item 10), which aimed to update the Schools Forum on the invest to save projects agreed in 21-22 (and carried forward in to 22-23). The recommendation within the report was to make the following two of the invest to save projects permanent: the Autism (ASD) Fund and funding for children who were Emotional based school avoiders (EBSA). The recommendation was based on the outcomes achieved by both initiatives.

Jane Seymour drew attention to the ASD Fund, which was covered in detail under section four of the report. The allocation for the initiative was £52,685. There was a detailed impact report included within Appendix A to the report. The summary report covered some of the objectives that were achieved and risks that had been avoided including children becoming EBSA, being excluded or needing very expensive specialist placements. It was felt that the benefit of the area of work justified the relatively small amount of funding being sought.

Lucy Hillyard provided information on the impact of the EBSA Fund. A large amount of input went into EBSA cases and it seemed like there was only a small output however, Lucy Hillyard stressed it was a lengthy process. As the process had evolved thought was being given to how the link up could be improved between the various services and intervention could take place earlier, through listening carefully to schools about what was working well and what was not. Lucy Hillyard reported that the team was pleased with the impact achieved so far but were constantly asking questions regarding how things could be made better and improved for the children involved.

The Chair thanked Jane Seymour and Lucy Hillyard for the comprehensive report.

Gemma Piper referred to 5.12 of the report, which showed the evidence of impact. It was noted that these did not directly relate to the objectives listed in 5.3. Going forward Gemma Piper suggested it would be helpful to have the impact in line with objectives. It was also suggested that there should be a baseline provided at the beginning of each year that could be measured against.

Secondly, Gemma Piper raised a query regarding the third bullet point under 5.12, which stated that 'attendance level rose to over 90% for 15% EBSA cases'. Gemma Piper queried if this was 15 percent of 25 children. Lucy Hillyard appreciated that it was a small number in terms of the cases they were looking at. Lucy Hillyard stated that it came back to Gemma Piper's first question regarding objectives and a strategic approach. There had been a lot of learning hence the amount of questions being asked by the EBSA Forum. Lucy Hillyard agreed regarding the tracking. It was about how cases needed to

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be unpicked and then categorised and she commented that this had not been straight forward. Lucy Hillyard reported that the EBSA had noted this and were now thinking more strategically about what data was needed and what needed to be done to capture this. It was acknowledged that some of the processes in place needed refining. It was hoped that going forward there would be a better handle on how the cases were coming in and tracking them from the outset. This would help cases to be monitored more closely.

Gemma Piper referred to Lucy Hillyard's response and felt that this was true of a lot of the projects set up. It was important to capture a status initially so that impact could be assessed. Although it was a relatively small amount of money in the grand scheme of things, it was a large amount of money considering the small number of children involved. Gemma Piper stated that it was important to know if the children were returning to school and avoiding alternative placements. Lucy Hillyard agreed and stated that another part of the problem was the lateness of referrals. Conversations with the Education Welfare Service needed to be taking place at the right point so that the EBSA process of risk could be considered earlier on. There was further work to do on this area.

Michelle Sancho commented that it was quite difficult to measure some of the areas being discussed. There had been a good increase in learning and engagement, and there had been a good level of impact seen in some quite complex cases, which was movement in the right direction towards improving attendance. The 90 percent attendance level measure had been chosen however, it was important to note that there were other children that had increased attendance but maybe not quite up to the 90 percent.

Catie Colston queried if the impact was greater if children involved in the project were younger. Lucy Hillyard reported that this was sometimes the case however, a case by case approach needed to be taken because it often depended on previous input. There had also been success with some cases where children were transitioning to secondary school and some very simple changes had increased attendance. Lucy Hillyard felt that the earlier services were linked up and the more the process was refined the quicker the process would be. Michelle Sancho agreed that a case by case approach needed to be taken however, the earlier a problem could be intervened the more likely a child would stay at school and difficulties could be prevented from getting worse.

The Chair invited the Forum to vote on the recommendation under 2.1 of the report. It was proposed and seconded that the recommendation be approved and at the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum agreed the ongoing funding of the ASD fund and EBSA fund/posts projects.

145 **Nursery School SEN Funding (Jane Seymour)**

Jane Seymour introduced the report (Agenda Item 11), which proposed an alternative method of funding children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in the Local Authority's maintained nursery schools, Victoria Park Nursery and Hungerford Nursery.

Jane Seymour reported that the two maintained nursery schools had historically attracted a high level of children with SEND and had developed a positive reputation for this. Both nurseries were now in a position where around 28 percent on roll were children with SEND, which was significantly greater than the percentage of children with SEND in maintained primary and secondary schools, which averaged out at 17 percent.

The nurseries did not receive a dedicated SEN budget. They could request Education Health and Care Assessments however, this process took time and the child had often moved on by the time an EHCP was issued. The only way the nurseries could attract

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funding for SEND support was to approach the local authority's SEND panel for each child individually. This consisted of a bureaucratic process and created a lot of work for the nurseries, which could cause a delay in the funding being received and the speed in which support could be put in place. This also created a volatile budget and made it difficult for the settings to hold on to experienced members of staff.

Given that the level of children with SEND had been static at the two nurseries over the years it was proposed that they move to a different model of funding and that a sum of money should be allocated to each nursery in the next financial year, based on historical spend.

The Chair invited the Forum to consider the recommendation. It was proposed and seconded that the Forum should agree the recommendation set out in 2.1. At the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED that the Schools Forum agreed the new proposed method of funding children with SEND at Victoria Park and Hungerford Nursery Schools.

(Ant Sizer arrived at 5.45pm)

146 **Scheme for Financing Schools 2022/23 (Melanie Ellis)**

Melanie Ellis introduced the report (Agenda Item 12), which advised of the consultation responses on the updated Scheme for Financing Schools. Melanie Ellis reported that only one comment had been received in support of the scheme so it would be adopted from 6 December 2022.

RESOLVED that the updated Scheme for Financing Schools would be adopted from 6th December 2022.

147 **Draft Central Schools Block Budget 2023/24 (Lisa Potts)**

Lisa Potts introduced the report (Agenda Item 13) that set out the budget proposal for services funded from the Central Schools' Services (CSSB) block of the DSG and to propose measures to enable the budget for this block to be balanced.

A draft figure had been provided for the CSSB and the current allocation was a reduction of about 2.5 percent from the current year. A reduction of about the same amount had happened over the last few years. The issue was that staff costs were increasing. The costs had been looked at in detail last year to help balance the budget. The difficulty for 2023-24 was that staffing costs had gone up by about four percent, placing increased pressure on the block.

Lisa Potts explained that the shortfall in the block for 2023/24 was about £53k. There were a couple of options to help balance the budget including further cost savings, transferring funds from another block or setting a deficit budget. The Heads Funding Group had been in support of reducing costs.

Reverend Mark Bennet reported that he had contact with a number of school business managers and they were feeling very under pressure. He queried if anyone had scoped the additional support that might be required if there were further unfunded pay rises for teachers. More schools were in fear of having to submit deficit budgets. Reverend Mark Bennet felt that many school business managers were feeling the pressure in terms of setting next year's budget in uncertain times and some might be feeling too much pressure. Melanie Ellis referred to the point about further schools in deficit. Sarah Reynard (Senior Accountant) was the dedicated resource for schools in or facing difficulty. Schools could approach Sarah and she would help them potentially avoid deficit or would work very closely with those in deficit. There had been a varying number of schools in deficit over the last few years and the amount that Sarah Reynard could

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manage depended on the level of need of each school and the competency of the business manager. There were a number of factors that made it difficult to state exactly how many schools could be supported. Whether extra resource was required needed to be looked at along with whether the schools accountancy team could deliver a higher level of service to schools in deficit.

Gemma Piper asked how many schools were thought to be on the cusp of being in deficit and whether it was just one or two or a 'cliff edge' type scenario. Melanie Ellis reported that a survey had been sent out to all schools and she was going to present the results to the next meeting in January. Questions included a focus on cost pressures and whether schools expected to fall into deficit. The survey had been sent out in October and focused largely on the impact of the pay award. Gemma Piper reported that the non-teaching pay award had been confirmed since then as well and this had tipped many schools over the edge. Melanie Ellis added that they were also unsure currently regarding extra funding announced as part of the Government's Autumn Statement, which could impact on the number of deficit schools going forward.

Ant Sizer noted that Melanie Ellis had some information on schools on the cusp of facing a deficit but noted that it had been stated that there were also some school business managers not as competent as others. From this he queried if it was known which schools might require extra support to deal with the impending cost implications as some schools would be able to deal with pressures better than others. Melanie Ellis reported that this was not currently factored in but would need to be later in the year. It was noted that some schools did not have a school business manager and only had finance officers. It also depended on the size of schools as smaller schools had a much smaller resource and were often the ones facing more financial difficulty. A judgement call would be required on how much support was needed. Sometimes it was not possible to know this until work with individual schools started.

Catie Colston observed from the detail in the report that an enormous amount of money was being paid for national copyright licenses. It was noted that the cost was determined by the relevant national agencies and Catie Colston queried what this meant. It was also queried what the national copyright licenses paid for. Lisa Potts reported that an invoice was provided by the DfE and the money was taken directly out of the funding allocation. Lisa Potts reported that she had a breakdown of the costs and it included the school printing music license, newspaper licensing agency, education recording agency, public video screening licenses, motion picture licenses etc. Catie Colston was unsure of how many schools made use of all the things listed and commented that it was a very large amount of money.

Catie Colston noted in Appendix A to the report that Capita One was listed and included large sums of money. It was queried if this was something again that had to be paid because education data had to be provided. Lisa Potts explained that there were various different modules and this was broken down into various elements. The bulk of the charges related to the provision of information and was why a large chunk came from the CSSB. The Chair queried if the costs were ever challenged. Michelle Sancho commented that the areas went out to tender to get the best price and if there was a better price/provider then this would be determined as part of this process.

Catie Colston commented that she had wondered if the area was made up of a basket of things, which might or might not be required. If they were near a 'cliff edge' in terms of schools then each of the large sums of money listed would need to be looked at closely. Catie Colston acknowledged that there was not a lot else to cut. If what could be afforded was reducing, Catie Colston queried when the local authority would not be able to afford to provide such things anymore, and it was queried how close the local authority was to

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facing a 'cliff edge'. Lisa Potts reported that she could go back to the team to see if all that was listed was relevant.

Councillor Dominic Boeck reported that the local authority was nowhere near a 'cliff edge' and although challenges were being faced the authority would balance its budget for 2023-24 in March. It was perfectly reasonable for the Forum to challenge any element of the schools budgets and he hoped that information could be presented to the next round of meetings in response to these challenges.

RESOLVED that Lisa Potts would investigate the CSSB budget further particularly national copyright licenses and Capita costs and whether all of these were required. Any information would be reported back to the next Schools' Forum meeting in January 2023.

148 **Provisional DSG Funding Settlement Overview 2023/24 (Melanie Ellis)**

Melanie Ellis introduced the report (Agenda Item 14), which set out the provisional Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) allocation for 2023-24. Melanie Ellis reported that the report was for information only and the allocation figures were based on the October 2021 census. This information would be updated later in December when the final allocations were received. It was also not yet known how the extra funding announced in the Government's Autumn Statement would be received. It might be distributed by the formula however, it was more likely it could be a grant. It was also not yet known which blocks it would support.

RESOLVED that the Schools' Forum noted the report.

149 **Draft High Needs Budget 2023/24 (Jane Seymour)**

Jane Seymour introduced the report (Agenda Item 15), which set out the current financial position of the high needs budget for 2022/23 and the position as far as it could be predicted for 2023/24, including the likely shortfall.

Jane Seymour stressed that figures were currently estimates. The shortfall currently in the High Needs Block (HNB) was £8,668,928, including carried forward overspends. Jane Seymour highlighted the key areas of pressure, which were covered in detail within the report. The main areas of pressure were under top up funding and this included children with EHCPs in different types of setting. The level of children requiring EHCPs was rising. Detail on top up funding was included under section two of Appendix A on page 155 of the report. The main areas of pressure in order were maintained special schools, independent special schools, mainstream school EHCPs and free special schools. Detail was provided on each area from section 2.9 of Appendix A. Jane Seymour did not feel that it should be assumed from this information that the many initiatives in place to try and keep children in mainstream school had not been successful. Jane Seymour was confident that if these initiatives had not been in place there would have been even more placements required in the independent sector. If there was a static population for SEND it was likely a net reduction would be seen however, there was an increasing population.

As part of the Council's own provision additional places had been created locally at the Castle at Theale, which had opened in September. However, this provision could only be grown at a steady rate. This meant the longer term impact of the provision was not yet being seen. More places had also been made available at iCollege through the Pod, which was much more cost effective than alternative placements. Kennet Valley SEMH provision was also due to open in September 2024. Jane Seymour reported that when the SEND Strategy was refreshed in 2023, it would need to be considered how many more additional placements were needed in order to save money in the longer term. It was acknowledged that there was a significant deficit in the block, which was cause for

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concern. It was not however felt that this was an indication that the strategy was not working. The benefits of some of the newer provision was not yet being seen.

Jane Seymour continued that West Berkshire was part of a Government programme called Delivering Better Value (DBV). Nationally, 20 local authorities had been placed in a programme called the Safety Valve and these were the local authorities with the highest overspends in their HNB. 55 local authorities were then part of the Government's DBV Programme. There were three tranches to this programme and the first had already started with the second starting in the spring. West Berkshire was in the third tranche and would therefore not benefit from the programme until summer 2023. Local authorities in the third tranche were those with a lower overspend. It was expected some invest to save funding might be seen as part of this programme, which could help to fund some initiatives in the new SEND Strategy.

Jane Seymour concluded that the figures included in the report would be reviewed prior to the next round of meetings in January. Jane Seymour added that the costs for some placements that had not yet been agreed had needed to be included because they were at SEND tribunal.

Keith Harvey acknowledged that the pressures being faced in the block and the increasing levels of SEND was a national issue. Apart from the Government's cost saving initiatives, Keith Harvey queried if there was any indication of some joined up thinking regarding how the matter might be managed in the longer term nationally. Jane Seymour did not believe that there was and commented that the Government seemed to be focusing on the programme's mentioned. Jane Seymour felt the thinking was that by putting in some invest to save money in to a large number of local authorities with a deficit, longer term the position would become more sustainable. Apart from this there had been nothing else from Central Government regarding how the issues could be contained. It was agreed that this felt like a sticking plaster approach.

Gemma Piper queried if there was any idea of what the DBV support might look like and it was queried if it might entail challenging the provision of non statutory services. Gemma Piper was aware that this had been a concern for some time and queried if this was a risk. Jane Seymour commented that this was possible but it was hard to say because it was a new programme and there had been little in the way of feedback from tranche one. The only feedback received was that a diagnostic assessment was being carried out, which looked in great detail at data and what this was showing about needs and trends. It was possible that West Berkshire would face challenge regarding spend on non-statutory services when it went through the process. Jane Seymour felt however that there would be a strong case and a good level of evidence so show that these services were helping to prevent spend. It would be interesting to see what other local authorities in the other tranches were finding as part of the exercise.

Gemma Piper stated that it might be worth having a couple of case studies of authorities in the first tranche to track what was taking place. Gemma Piper referred to the 12 percent increase in EHCPs and commented, as a user of the services, that the threshold had not got easier. Further, it was acknowledged that even more applications than what was being approved, were being received. Gemma Piper queried where West Berkshire sat nationally or locally in terms of the rate of increase in EHCPs. Jane Seymour reported that it was quite difficult to get hold of this data but would try again to see if she could collate anything. Jane Seymour confirmed however that on any data she had seen West Berkshire was lower down on the percentage increase in terms of EHCP inflation and this was because the EHCP criteria was applied very robustly. Regarding getting information from other local authorities in the DBV programme, Jane Seymour was aware that most authorities in the south east were part of the programme, so there were close neighbours that could be learnt from in terms of their experience.

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RESOLVED that:

- Case study information to be collected from other local authorities in the Safety Valve of DBV programmes.
- Jane Seymour to attempt to collate information from other authorities on the rate of EHCP inflation.
- The Schools' Forum noted the report, which would be brought back to the next round of meetings in January 2023.

150 Forward Plan

The Schools' Forum noted the Forward Plan.

151 Date and format of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Schools' Forum on Monday 23rd January 2023 would take place virtually.

152 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED that members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the under mentioned item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as contained in Paragraphs 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006. Rule 8.10.4 of the Constitution also refers.

(Melissa Cliffe left the meeting for the Basildon Primary School bid element of the following agenda item.)

153 Part II - Schools in Financial Difficulty Bids from The Kite Federation and Basildon Primary Schools (Melanie Ellis)

(Paragraph 2 – Information identifying an individual)

The Schools' Forum considered an exempt report (Agenda Item 18), which summarised the bids that had been received from schools to access funding from the Primary Schools in Financial Difficulty de-delegated fund.

RESOLVED that:

- The Schools' Forum approved the bid from The Kite Federation.
- The Schools' Forum approved the bid from Basildon CE Primary School.

(The meeting commenced at 5.00pm and closed at 6.30pm)

(The meeting commenced at 5.00 pm and closed at 6.30 pm)

CHAIR

Date of Signature