

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Schools Forum on 8 March 2023

Schools Forum meeting held at City Hall on Wednesday 11 January 2023

Commenced 08:10
Concluded 10:40

RECORD OF MEETING ATTENDEES, APOLOGIES AND ABSENCES

Schools & Academies Members

IN ATTENDANCE

Member	Membership Group
Ian Morrel (Chair)	Maintained Secondary Schools – Headteacher
Ashley Reed (Vice Chair)	Academies Member
Wahid Zaman	Academies Member
Helen Williams	Academies Member
Brent Fitzpatrick OBE	Academies Member
Richard Bottomley	Academies Member – Alternative Provision Academies
Bev George	Maintained Nursery Schools – Governor
Sian Hudson	Maintained Nursery Schools - Headteacher
Graham Swinbourne	Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher
Kathryn Swales	Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher
Jonathan Nixon	Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher

APOLOGIES RECEIVED

Member	Membership Group
Heather Lacey	Academies Member
Amanda Sloney	Academies Member
Mathew Atkinson	Academies Member
Melanie Saville	Academies Member
Victoria Birch	Academies Member
Michael Thorp	Academies Member
Michelle Farr	Academies Member – Special School Academies
Emma Hamer	Maintained Primary Schools – Governor
Nicky Kilvington	Maintained Primary Schools - Headteacher
Lyndsey Brown	Maintained Special Schools - Headteacher

NOT IN ATTENDANCE (WITHOUT APOLOGIES RECEIVED)

Member	Membership Group
Andrew Morley	Academies Member
Kirsty Ratcliffe	Pupil Referral Unit (maintained)

Non-Schools Members

IN ATTENDANCE

Member	Membership Group
Tom Bright	Teaching Unions
David Johnston	Officer Representing Vulnerable Children

APOLOGIES RECEIVED

Member	Membership Group

NOT IN ATTENDANCE (WITHOUT APOLOGIES RECEIVED)

Member	Membership Group
Junaid Karim	Council for Mosques (Bradford)

Substitute Members present at the meeting as a Member (not as an Observer)

Substitute Member	Membership Group

Substitute Members present at the meeting as an Observer (not as a Member)

Substitute Member	Membership Group

Local Authority Officers present at the meeting

Officer	Position
Niall Devlin	Assistant Director, SEND and Inclusion
Asad Shah	Committee Secretariat
Marium Haque	Strategic Director, Children's Services
Dawn Haigh	Principal Finance Officer (Schools)
Jonty Holden	Principal Finance Officer (Schools)
Andrew Redding	Business Advisor (Schools)

40% of the School Forum's membership (filled membership positions) must be present for a meeting to be quorate. This meeting was quorate, with 48% of members present (13 out of 27 currently filled membership positions).

In introducing the meeting, the Chair explained:

- This is the main annual recommendations and decisions meeting for the Forum for the 2023/24 financial year.
- As we've done in previous years, agenda item 12 pulls together all the recommendations and decisions into one document (Document PQ). The agenda items running up to this provide updates and little more information, which will aid Members' understanding of the recommendations and decisions that they are now asked to take. So we will run through these documents (relatively quickly) and then turn the Forum's attention at agenda item 12 to the recommendations and decisions. We have previously approached decision making 'by exception', section by section.

- There are no particular ‘surprises’ being presented today, with the main themes of the decisions and recommendations being as we have presented and discussed across the autumn term. We are however:
 - Presenting the Early Years settlement and consultation document on our proposed Early Years Single Funding Formula for the first time.
 - It is also the case that, following the December settlement announcements, we have been allocated more High Needs Block money, alongside a new funding condition that has been set by the DfE relating to special schools and PRUs / Alternative Provision Academies.
 - The cost of our Schools Block funding formula has also quite substantially changed, as a result of the October 2022 Census requiring the use of Schools Block reserve.

These matters require highlight and consideration, though the Chair explained that none of them really materially alter the decisions we take for 2023/24.

- Members may feel that they need more time to consider some of the final recommendations and decisions. If so, the provisional meeting next Wednesday is available.

655. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

The following members declared interests for agenda item 5 (Growth Fund allocations): Ian Morrel, Helen Williams, Ashley Reed.

656. MINUTES OF 7 DECEMBER 2022 & MATTERS ARISING

The Business Advisor (Schools) reported on progress made on “Action” items from the 7 December meeting. He reported that:

- **Item 643 (Schools Block Growth Fund)** – we are re-presenting to this meeting, under agenda item 5, now fully confirmed Growth Fund allocations for 2022/23.
- **Item 644 (Early Years Block)** – The Early Years Block settlement and operational guidance was finally announced on 16 December and this is presented under agenda item 6.

The Business Advisor then reported the following:

- On 16 December, the DfE announced a new additional grant for mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies, termed **the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG)**. This is a non-ring-fenced grant. A primary focus of the Grant is providing on-going support for energy costs, replacing the government’s current energy protection scheme, which reduces

in scale and scope at the end of March 2023. As such, schools will need to assess the extent to which this Grant constitutes 'new money' into their budgets, or just replaces existing energy costs financial support. There is a link to the DfE's announcement on MSAG available via BSO latest news and updates.

- In the DSG settlement for 2023/24, that was announced on 16 December 2022, **an additional £400m of High Needs Block funding** has been allocated to local authorities. This comes from the additional £2bn for the national schools budget that was announced by the Chancellor on 17 November 2022. Bradford's share of the £400m is £4.76m. This is allocated into our High Needs Block, mostly for us to use according to local circumstances and pressures. An additional DSG Condition of Grant however, has been established by the DfE. The purpose of the Condition is to require local authorities to pass through to Special Schools, Special School Academies, PRUs and Alternative Provision Academies an additional + 3.4% in funding per place, using a proportion of the £4.76m to do so. The increase is set at 3.4%, as this is the average additional % increase in funding that mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies are receiving via the new Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MSAG). We present estimated details of this allocation under agenda item 10.
- Also on the 16 December, the DfE confirmed that **Pupil Premium Grant** rates of funding for 2023/24 are increasing, by 5.00% (rounded). These increases are reflected in the indicative modelling that is presented to the Forum at this meeting.
- So far, we cannot see that the DfE has announced the post-16 funding settlement for the 2023/24 academic year.

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2022 be signed as a correct record.

657. MATTERS RAISED BY SCHOOLS

A member representing maintained primary school headteachers asked for information on how many primary schools are reducing their Published Admission Numbers (PANs) this year.

Resolved – That information be provided on how many schools have reduced their Published Admission Number (PAN) this year.

658. STANDING ITEM - DSG GROWTH FUND ALLOCATIONS

As presented by the Principal Finance Officer, in Document PJ, Forum Members were asked to agree proposed allocations, from the 2022/23 Schools Block Growth Fund, to maintained secondary schools and to secondary academies. These allocations were agreed. Members did not have any comments and did not

ask any questions.

Resolved –

- (1) The Schools Forum agreed to allocate a total of £590,715 from the Growth Fund in 2022/23 to maintained secondary schools and secondary academies, as set out in Document PJ.**
- (2) Members noted that an indicative total sum of £1,319,606 of surplus balance of Growth Fund is ring-fenced and is forecasted to be carried forward into 2023/24 within the Schools Block.**

LEAD: PRINCIPAL FINANCE OFFICER (SCHOOLS)

659. CONSULTATION – EARLY YEARS BLOCK FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS 2023/24

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented a report, **Document PK**, which presented the Authority’s consultation on proposals for Bradford’s 2023/24 Early Years Single Funding Formula. It was explained, subject to the Forum’s agreement, that this consultation will go live immediately following this meeting and will have a closing date for responses of 6 February 2023. The Business Advisor explained that this consultation follows from discussions in the 7 December Schools Forum meeting about the knock on implications for our decision making timetable of the late publication by the DfE of the 2023/24 Early Years Block settlement and operational guidance. These were published by the DfE on 16 December. The Early Years Working Group will meet on 16 January.

The Business Advisor explained to the Forum how our Early Years Block settlement for 2023/24 is extremely disappointing. He explained that a 1% settlement, at a time of significantly increasing costs, will create a very challenging financial environment for early years providers across the District. It is disappointing that the DfE has fully implemented the proposals that were set out for consultation in the summer, without adjustment (despite our response), and also that, despite additional funding being made available nationally for early years funding (as a result of the 17 November Autumn Statement), Bradford’s settlement has remained at 1%, which is the lowest settlement that is being received by local authorities in 2023/24.

Members did not have any significant comments on our EYSFF proposals. The Forum offered its support for these and agreed for the consultation document to be published. The member representing maintained nursery school governors suggested, and it was agreed, that it would be better (and more accurate) for the new ‘Quality’ Supplement to be re-worded to be called e.g. the ‘Teacher Pensions Employer’s Contribution Supplement’.

Resolved –

- (1) That the information presented in Document PK be noted.**

(2) That the Schools Forum supports the proposals for the Early Years Single Funding Formula for 2023/24 that the Authority puts forward within the consultation document.

(3) That the document (Appendix 1) be published and that a consultation takes place with providers, as set out in Document PK.

LEAD: Business Advisor, Schools

660. UPDATED 2023/24 DSG POSITION

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented a report, **Document PL**, which updated Forum Members on the position of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for the 2023/24 financial year. This is a main reference document for this meeting.

Members did not have any comments and did not ask any questions.

Resolved – That the information presented in Document PL be noted.

661. UPDATED 2022/23 DSG SPENDING AND BALANCES FORECAST

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented statements, **Document PM Appendices 1 and 2**, which updated Forum Members on the forecasted spending positions of each of the DSG Blocks for 2022/23, on the estimated values of balances to be carried forward into 2023/24, and on the proposed uses of these balances. These statements replaced the initial indicative forecasts that were presented to the Schools Forum on 7 December (in Document PG).

Members did not have any comments and did not ask any questions.

Resolved - That the information presented in Document PM be noted.

662. CENTRALLY MANAGED AND DE-DELEGATED FUNDS 2023/24

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented statements, **Document PN Appendices 1, 2 and 3**, which set out proposed Schools Block, Central Schools Services Block and Early Years Block centrally managed and de-delegated funds for the 2023/24 financial year. The statements at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 replaced the indicative information that was presented to the Schools Forum on 7 December (in Document PI). Appendix 3 newly presented the contributions to be made by each maintained primary and secondary school to de-delegated funds held within the Schools Block and how these compare with the contributions made in 2022/23.

A member representing maintained primary school headteachers asked why further funding is being taken from the 2023/24 Schools Budget for the Growth

Fund, when £1.3m is being carried forward. The Business Advisor (Schools) responded to explain that the value of new budget being taken is reduced, but that the Authority's view is that we would wish to see how the expected new flexibilities, in Growth and Falling Rolls funding as a result of National Funding Formula changes in 2024/25, could be used, in particular to support the primary-phase, before committing the Growth Fund balance (as well as the Falling Rolls Fund balance) elsewhere to more general formula spending.

The member also asked about the position of funding maintained schools for exceptional circumstances, including supporting the financial difficulties that they may face in 2023/24. The Business Advisor explained that the only route for such funding for maintained schools is via a de-delegated fund, and, as members can see in the reports, the Authority does not hold much funding. It would not be permitted to use Growth Fund or Falling Rolls fund balances to support budget pressures in just maintained schools, as academies have contributed to these balances too. There is no mechanism for the Authority to allocate exceptional funding to academies (academies would need to apply to the ESFA). So, although these matters can be considered further, the extent to which the DSG can offer additional widespread financial support for increased levels of financial challenge is very limited.

The member also asked about the proposal to continue the de-delegated fund for the replacement of the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant (SIMB). The Business Advisor confirmed that the SIMB Grant will fully cease at the 31 March 2023. He also confirmed that the de-delegated fund pays for the additional cost of school-to-school improvement support, rather than covering the salaries costs of the Authority's school improvement officers.

Resolved - That the information presented in Document PN be noted.

663. INDICATIVE BUDGETS, FUNDING RATES AND PRO-FORMAS 2023/24

The Principal Finance Officers (Schools) and the Business Advisor (Schools) presented the report, **Document PO, with Appendices 1-6.**

Appendices 1a, 1b and 1c showed the indicative values of allocations to be delegated to individual primary and secondary maintained schools and academies within the Schools Block.

Appendix 1d provided an analysis of the change in cost of Schools Block formula funding following the use of the data collected in / based on the October 2022 Census. Modelling previously presented to the Forum has been based on October 2021 Census data.

Appendices 2a, 2b and 2c showed the proposed indicative rates of funding for early years settings for the 2023/24 financial year. These rates were shown, prior to the completion of the consultation on our Early Years Single Funding Formula (which closes on 6 February). Appendix 3 provides a more detailed analysis of how the High Needs Block planned budget has been constructed at individual setting level.

Appendices 4 and 5 showed the draft Primary and Secondary and Early Years pro-formas, which summarise the Authority's proposed formula funding arrangements.

Appendix 6 provided more details of the additional place-led allocations to Special Schools, Special School Academies, PRUs and AP Academies, as directed by the DfE's change in DSG Grant Conditions that was announced on 16 December.

Members did not have any comments and did not ask any questions on this modelling.

Resolved – That the information presented in Document PO be noted.

664. UPDATED DSG MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Business Advisor (Schools) presented a report, **Document PP**, which was an updated version of the Authority's Management Plan for the Dedicated Schools Grant. This Plan was first presented to the Schools Forum in January 2021. The Plan explains the general management principles that guide our decision making and then focuses on High Needs Block matters. Alongside this Plan was presented a list of specialist places planned to be commissioned in 2023/24 and a future year forecast of the High Needs Block.

In summarising the Plan, the Business Advisor explained that our forecast, which is based on estimates, currently identifies that there is clear risk of a cumulative deficit building within our High Needs Block by the end of the 2025/26 financial year, as a result of recurrent structural in-year over spending. The risk of cumulative deficit by the end of the 2026/27 financial year is then high. As such, our forecast identifies at this time that mitigating action will need to be taken in order to prevent the accrual of a cumulative deficit balance. This will be a piece of work for the Authority to discuss within the Schools Forum during 2023.

The Forum engaged in discussion about the growth in spending on placements in independent and non-maintained settings; the causes and how this can be controlled and reduced. The Assistant Director, SEND and Inclusion, explained that the cost of places has significantly increased, especially around social care, where the DSG picks up the education cost element. The continuing creation of local specialist places, as well as success in our bid for a new Special School Free School, are important factors. The Business Advisor added that the growth in spending on independent placements has also come from significant increases in charges per place, and is a national issue, which looms large within the DfE's March 2022 SEND Green Paper. This Paper offers elements of a national solution e.g. bringing independent schools into a national EHCP banded funding system.

The Chair asked for clarification on where decision making within the High Needs Block sits – with the Schools Forum or with the Authority. It was clarified that the Authority is the decision maker, but also that the Authority would wish to work in partnership with the Schools Forum. The Chair asked then that the Authority presents to the Forum, for discussion, its mitigation plan for the avoidance of a cumulative High Needs Block deficit. The Assistant Director, SEND and Inclusion, responded to explain that the key elements of a mitigation plan are: continuing to increase the number of locally available specialist places in special schools and in

resourced provisions, applying for a Special School Free School, continuing to work with social care to look at the number of children and young people in care and where they are placed, looking to establish local care homes and further developing services so that health needs are met locally. The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for this outline and asked for a report to be presented giving a more detailed mitigation plan.

Referring to the warnings that are given in DSG Management Plan, and in the budget forecast, about the estimated and uncertain nature of the High Needs Block going forward, a member representing maintained primary schools expressed concern about how this Plan, which may not be accurate, is preventing the allocation of the High Needs Block surplus balance to schools to support children and young people now. The Business Advisor responded, accepting the estimated nature of the forecast, to explain its basis, in particular that the forecast estimates the continuation of existing levels of growth in numbers of EHCPs (not new higher levels), which our data currently does not say is an inaccurate position to take. The Advisor also highlighted that the forecast does not include the revenue budget of a new Special School Free School and, whilst we would expect a Free School to start to deliver savings e.g. in the cost of placements in independent provisions, these will take time to materially impact. As such, though based on estimates and with significant uncertainties, the future position of our High Needs Block currently looks very challenging and the Authority's view is that the surplus balance will be needed to manage this.

Resolved –

(1) That the DSG Management Plan presented in Document PP be noted.

(2) That the Local Authority presents to, and discusses with, the Forum its 'mitigation plan', which is to be developed in response to the deficit that is forecasted to grow within the High Needs Block over the next 3 years.

**LEADS: *Business Advisor, Schools*
 *Assistant Director, SEND and Inclusion***

665. FINAL DECISION AND FORMAL RECOMMENDATIONS 2023/24 DSG

Resolved –

These are the decisions and recommendations that the Schools Forum has made in supporting the Local Authority to establish the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) planned budget and formula funding arrangements for the 2023/24 financial year. The Forum has taken decisions (as required by the Regulations), and has made formal recommendations, which will go forward for presentation to the Executive on 21 February 2023.

Important points of note, which help explain the rationale for decisions / recommendations, are also recorded.

1. Schools Block Centrally Managed Funds 2023/24 (DECISION)

Schools Block De-Delegated Funds 2023/24 (DECISION)

Document PN Appendices 1 – 3.

1.1 Schools Members representing maintained primary & secondary schools agreed as follows the values of de-delegated funds, and the contributions to be taken from the 2023/24 formula funding allocations of maintained primary & secondary schools.

All items were agreed unanimously.

- a) School Re-Organisation Costs (Safeguarded Salaries) (Primary & Secondary): agreed to continue de-delegation from both the primary and secondary phases for the actual cost of continuing safeguarded salaries in maintained primary and secondary schools.**
- b) School Re-Organisation Costs (Sponsored academy conversions budget deficits) (Primary phase only): agreed to continue to ‘pause’ de-delegation from the primary phase, meaning that no new contribution is taken in 2023/24. Review again for 2024/25. The Schools Forum will be provided with monitoring reports where this fund’s brought forward balance is used in 2023/24 for this purpose.**
- c) Exceptional Costs & Schools in Financial Difficulty (Primary phase only): agreed to continue de-delegation from the primary phase at the 2022/23 per pupil value.**
- d) Costs of FSM Eligibility Assessments (Primary & Secondary): agreed to continue de-delegation from both the primary and secondary phases at the 2022/23 per FSM6 values, with contributions continuing to be taken using Free School Meals (FSM) Ever 6 data.**
- e) Fisher Family Trust (Primary phase only): agreed to continue de-delegation from the primary phase, recovering the cash value to match the actual cost, which is still to be confirmed. *Please note that the Schools Members representing maintained primary schools decided on 12 October 2022 to continue de-delegation in 2023/24 for the purposes of subscribing to FFT. As such, this decision is repeated here only for reference and for completeness.***
- f) Trade Union Facilities Time – Negotiator Time (Primary & Secondary): agreed to continue de-delegation from primary and secondary phases at the 2022/23 per pupil value.**
- g) Trade Union Facilities Time – Health and Safety Time (Primary & Secondary): agreed to continue de-delegation from primary and secondary phases at the 2022/23 per pupil value.**
- h) School Maternity / Paternity ‘insurance’ fund (Primary phase only): agreed to continue de-delegation from the primary phase at a value forecasted to afford the scheme for a full year. The £app cost is shown**

in Document PN Appendix 2 (£26.44 per pupil, which is + 30% on 2022/23). The £26.44 per pupil value includes the release, on a one off basis, of £0.10m of balance brought forward within this fund. It is estimated that the scheme will cost £0.75m in total in 2023/24.

- i) **School Staff Public Duties and Suspensions Fund (Primary phase only):** agreed to continue de-delegation from the primary phase on the same £app basis as 2022/23.
- j) **School Improvement (Replacement of the School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant) (Primary & Secondary):** agreed to continue de-delegation from primary and secondary phases at the 2022/23 per pupil value. Based on estimate of the cost of the Authority's school improvement programme, and of the total income that will be available (incorporating the mid-year conversion of maintained schools to academy), £0.122m of balance brought forward will be used within this fund in 2023/24, alongside new year contributions.

1.2 Schools Members representing maintained primary & secondary schools agreed the principles behind the management of the Schools Block de-delegated funds listed in paragraph 1.1:

- a) **Any over or under spend within these funds will be written off from, or added back to, the DSG's de-delegated funds in 2024/25 on a phase specific, fund specific, basis i.e. if primary schools overspend in the maternity / paternity insurance scheme fund the value of the fund created through de-delegation in 2024/25, support by available surplus balances brought forward, will need to compensate for this.**
- b) **These decisions set the position for the 2023/24 financial year only.**
- c) **The funds will be managed and allocated according to their applicable criteria as set out in the autumn 2022 consultation document (meaning that the criteria to be used in 2023/24 are unchanged from 2022/23).**

1.3 The Schools Forum noted that a total net surplus balance of de-delegated funds of £0.797m is forecasted to be carried forward within the Schools Block into 2023/24. As such, the Schools Forum is not asked to write off from the 2023/24 Schools Budget any deficit associated with de-delegated funds. Within the 2023/24 proposals, £0.100m of the £0.797m is specifically earmarked to support the cost of the school maternity / paternity insurance fund and £0.122m is earmarked to support the cost of the school improvement fund. On this basis, it is estimated that the balance of de-delegated funds held within the Schools Block at the end of the 2023/24 financial will reduce to £0.575m.

Schools Block Growth Fund 2023/24 (DECISION)

Document PN Appendix 1 (full list of DSG centrally managed funds)

Document PQ Appendix 1 (list of allocations from the Growth Fund to existing expanding schools and academies for the Forum's approval).

All Forum Members by consensus agreed:

1.4 The allocations from the 2023/24 Schools Block Growth Fund to existing expansions and existing bulge classes, as listed in Document PQ Appendix 1. Members noted:

- a) There are 15 allocations with a total gross value of £0.571m. 6 Primary schools / Primary academies; 2 all through academies; 7 Secondary academies.
- b) The allocations to the all through academies and to the secondary academies simply complete, for the full 2022/23 academic year, the growth fund allocations that are set out in Document PJ (presented under agenda item 5), which cover the period up to 31 March 2023. Appendix 1 does not include allocations from the Growth Fund to the secondary phase for the 2023/24 academic year. Allocations for both continuing and new expansions and bulge classes in the secondary phase for the 2023/24 academic year will be funded from the provision explained in paragraph 1.5 below and will be presented to the Schools Forum for agreement in December 2023, following the collection of the October 2023 Census.
- c) The £0.374m for academies for the period April to August 2023 will be reimbursed back to the Schools Block via the ESFA's academy recoupment process. As such, the £0.374m does not represent a cost to our 2023/24 Schools Block. So, although the Forum is asked to approve allocations totalling £0.571m, as listed in Document PQ Appendix 1, the actual net cost of these allocations to the 2023/24 Schools Block is £0.571m minus £0.374m = £0.197m.

1.5 A further planned budget of £0.600m be taken from the 2023/24 Schools Block for the Growth Fund to cover new allocations to be agreed during 2023/24. This planned budget is only for growth in the secondary-phase i.e. no new budget provision is taken from the 2023/24 Schools Block for primary-phase growth. All new in-year allocations from the Growth Fund will be agreed by the Schools Forum, prior to confirmation these with the receiving school or academy. Growth Fund allocations will continue as a standing Schools Forum agenda item to enable this. The Forum also noted and agreed:

- a) Recognising: that the pupil population in the primary-phase is reducing, as a consequence of demographic trends, and that a value of £1.320m of balance held within the Schools Block is forecasted to be carried forward into 2023/24, that no new budget has been taken from the 2023/24 Schools Block allocation for the purposes of funding growth in the primary-phase. A proportion of the £1.320m balance instead will be available to be used to meet any costs of new growth that may be agreed for the primary-phase in 2023/24.

- b) £0.600m will fund 8 additional forms of entry or bulge classes in the secondary phase at September 2023 (for the period September 2023 to 31 March 2024). By comparison, the Authority has funded 9 forms of entry, in total, for the period September 2022 to March 2023. As above with the primary-phase, recognising that a value of £1.320m of balance held within the Schools Block is forecasted to be carried forward into 2023/24, a reduced budget has been taken from the 2023/24 Schools Block allocation, for the purposes of funding growth in the secondary-phase, with a proportion of the £1.320m balance being available to meet any additional cost above 8 forms of entry. In doing this, the Authority seeks to use the existing balance to maximise the value of 2023/24 Schools Block funding that is available to be allocated to other purposes, including in support of continuing to afford our full mirroring of the National Funding Formula for mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies.
- c) The Authority does however, also recognise that new flexibilities (for the management of growth, falling rolls and ‘surplus places’) are expected to be brought into Schools Block arrangements in 2024/25, following the most recent National Funding Formula (NFF) consultation. This consultation quite clearly put forward the view that local authorities should retain Growth Fund responsibilities under the NFF. Retaining a surplus balance into 2024/25 will help therefore, given that there are uncertainties currently about how growth will be funded (with the concern that we expressed in our consultation response; that the proposed ‘netting off’ of pupil numbers ‘growth’ from ‘reduction’ may result in insufficient funding being available to support either issue). Falling rolls is also a significant issue for the primary phase, in particular, and we take the view that we would wish to see how the expected new flexibilities could be used, before committing the Growth Fund balance (as well as the Falling Rolls Fund Balance – see below) elsewhere to more general formula spending. However, also in the context of our overall Schools Block spending position in 2023/24, following a £1m cost of ‘data lag’ (this is explained further in section 7), we may wish to consider using the Growth Fund (and Falling Rolls Fund) reserve balances in future years to support the overall cost of our mainstream formula, prior to the full implementation of the NFF.

1.6 To use the criteria for the allocation of the Schools Block Growth Fund in 2023/24, as set out in the autumn 2022 consultation document, which are the criteria used in 2022/23.

Schools Block Falling Rolls Fund 2023/24 (DECISION)

Document PN Appendix 1 (full list of DSG centrally managed funds).

All Forum Members by consensus agreed:

1.7 To continue the Falling Rolls Fund for the primary phase for the 2023/24 financial year. Whilst we have concluded that the Falling Rolls Fund currently holds limited value, as it is not a mechanism that will

support the vast majority of primary-phase schools and academies, it is a mechanism that was developed following close review. As such, the Authority does not wish to remove this mechanism entirely from our Schools Block funding approach.

1.8 To use the criteria for the allocation of the Schools Block Falling Roll Fund in 2023/24 as set out in the autumn 2022 consultation document, which are the criteria used in 2022/23 (with the reference points moved on one year in time).

1.9 That the cost of the 2023/24 Falling Rolls Fund be met from the balance that will be brought forward from 2022/23, rather than by taking new budget from the 2023/24 Schools Block. Forum Members noted that actual allocations from the Falling Rolls Fund for this current financial year will be presented to the Schools Forum in March 2023. The final value of balance that will be carried into 2023/24 therefore, will be confirmed at this point. On current modelling however, the Authority anticipates that there will not be any allocations from this fund for the 2022/23 financial year. Therefore, the balance carried forward is expected to be £0.500m.

1.10 To continue to retain this balance in 2023/24, to be available to support costs in 2023/24, but also to be available to support schools and academies via the new flexibilities (for the management of falling rolls) that are expected to be brought into Schools Block arrangements in 2024/25. Falling rolls is a significant issue for the primary phase, in particular, and we take the view that we would wish to see how the expected new flexibilities could be used, before committing this balance (as well as the Growth Fund balance – see above) elsewhere to more general formula spending

2. Early Years Block Centrally Retained Funds 2023/24 (DECISION)

Document PN Appendix 1 (full list of DSG centrally managed funds).

All Forum Members by consensus agreed:

2.1 The retention of funds for central management within the Early Years Block, as listed in Document PN Appendix 1, as follows:

- a) £0.037m (continuation) for the Early Years Block's contribution to the DfE Copyright Licences charge.
- b) £0.119m (continuation) for access by maintained nursery schools to Schools Block de-delegated funds (Trade Union Facilities Time, Maternity / Paternity Insurance Scheme, Staff Public Duties and Suspensions). A breakdown of the £0.119m is given in Document PN Appendix 2. This budget counts within the maximum 5% of 3&4-year-old entitlement funding that the Authority is permitted to centrally retain within the Early Years Block.
- c) £0.650m (continuation) for the estimated cost of allocations to early

years providers from the Early Years SEND Inclusion Fund (EYIF). This budget is increased on the £0.500m that was held in 2022/23, in response to a growth in the number of claims (and in anticipation of an on-going higher claim level) The £0.650m budget is split £0.100m for 2-year-olds and £0.550m for 3&4-year-olds. The criteria to be used to allocate the SEND Inclusion Fund are set out in our consultation on Early Years Single Funding Formula arrangements for 2023/24. Please see Document PK. These criteria are the same as currently used in 2022/23. The consultation is currently live and closes on 6 February. At this time, we are establishing the planned budget for the Early Years Block on the basis that the Authority's proposals will be agreed and implemented.

Although the £0.650m budget is shown here as centrally retained, the full value is intended for allocation to providers during the year. As such, the £0.550m proportion of this budget, to be allocated to eligible 3&4-year-olds, does not count towards the maximum 5% of 3&4-year-old entitlement funding that can be retained centrally within the Early Years Block. Although this will also be passed out to providers, because it is not allocated in respect of 3&4-year-olds, the £0.100m EYIF budget for 2-year-olds does count towards the 5%.

The School Forum is asked to note that the Early Years Pupil Premium (£0.437m) and Disability Access Fund (£0.120m) budgets, shown in Document PN Appendix 1, are funds that are also allocated to providers during the year, following the conditions set by the DfE, and these funds also do not count towards the maximum 5% central retention restriction.

- d) £0.216m (continuation) for the Area SENCOs function that is managed by the Local Authority in respect of Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) early years providers. This budget, over the COVID-19 pandemic period, was temporarily charged to the High Needs Block, but was returned to the Early Years Block at April 2022. The budget for 2023/24 includes an allowance for pay award / inflation.
- e) £0.366m (returned to the Early Years Block) for the Early Years Block's contribution to early years SEND support services, including portage. Prior to April 2021, the contribution to early years SEND support services, was charged to the Early Years Block. In seeking to protect the Early Years Block, during the COVID-19 pandemic, we transferred this cost to be met by the High Needs Block, with the intention to transfer the cost back at an appropriate time. In now managing the financial pressure that is increasing within the High Needs Block, in the context of the current more secure position of the Early Years Block, this contribution is returned to the Early Years Block in 2023/24. We will keep this position under review for future years. The budget for 2023/24 includes an allowance for pay award / inflation.
- f) £0.530m (continuation and increase), as presented to the Schools Forum on 7 December (Document PI), for the Early Years Block's contribution to the cost of the Authority's early years entitlement

funding and provider support services. The Authority delivers support services for provider sustainability, quality (including Ofsted support), as well as the delivery of the Early Years Single Funding Formula and related advice, support, monitoring, compliance and intervention. The Forum agreed a new contribution to these services, of £0.100m in 2022/23, which we stated we wish to further review, as the full cost of these services is substantially higher and as there is growing need to ensure that sufficient capacity is available in response to increasing demands and complexities. We have increased this contribution from £0.100m to £0.530m in 2023/24. This is intended to meet the staffing costs of the early years entitlement and quality support teams, inclusive of estimates of pay award / inflation. As we presented to the Forum on 7 December, in the context of financial benchmarking, and the Council's budget position, which is very challenging, whilst being very aware of the need to continue to maximise the funding rates for entitlement providers, the Council is seeking to achieve an increased contribution from the Early Years Block to the cost of these provider support services and functions, on an on-going basis, so that these functions can be sustained. An increased contribution will bring us more in line with the position in other local authorities.

2.2 The Schools Forum noted that a total of £1.368m of the centrally retained budgets listed in paragraph 2.1 count towards the 5% of 3&4-year-old entitlement funding central retention restriction. As shown in the Early Years Pro-Forma (Document PO Appendix 5), we calculate on this basis that 96.7% of our estimated 2023/24 3&4-year-old entitlement funding (excluding the allocation of brought forward balances) will be passed-through to providers; or, to put it another way, 3.3% of our estimated 2023/24 3&4-year-old entitlement funding will be either be centrally retained or will be used otherwise than for funding the 3&4-year-old entitlement and the 3&4-year-old Early Years SEND Inclusion Fund. The equivalent figure for 2022/23 was 97.2%.

2.3 The Schools Forum noted that it is not expected that the balance of Early Years Block centrally managed funds held at the end of the 2022/23 financial year will be a deficit. As such, the Schools Forum is not asked to write off from the 2023/24 Schools Budget any deficit associated with an Early Years Block fund.

3. The Central Schools Services Block 2023/24 (DECISION)

Document PN Appendix 1 (full list of DSG centrally managed funds).

All Forum Members by consensus agreed:

3.1 The allocation of the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB) for 2023/24, as listed in Document PN Appendix 1, as follows:

- a) Schools Forum Running Costs: continue at £11,700, which is the 2022/23 value of £11,000 plus an allowance for pay and inflation. This budget contributes to the costs of running the Schools Forum that are

met by School Funding Team and by Committee Secretariat.

- b) **Pupil Admissions:** continue at £0.987m, which is the 2022/23 value of £0.931m plus an allowance for pay award and inflation. Forum Members will recall that the Pupil Admissions budget was substantially increased in 2022/23 in response to service pressures.
- c) **DfE Copyright Licences:** a value of £0.406m. *The cost of copyright licences for primary and secondary schools and academies is met from the CSSB. This is not a matter for decision for the Schools Forum, as the DfE negotiates the price and top-slices our DSG. The costs for early years and high needs providers are charged within our DSG model to the respective blocks. The DfE confirmed the 2023/24 costs on 21 December 2022; increased in total by 10.6% on 2022/23.*
- d) **Education Services Grant (ESG) Statutory Duties:** continue at £1.559m, which continues to passport to the Local Authority's budget the 2022/23 committed cash budget. This is the former ESG Centrally Retained Duties Grant that was transferred into the DSG at April 2017 and is now allocated in support of the statutory duties that are delivered by the Local Authority on behalf of all state funded schools and academies. A list of statutory activities was presented to the Forum on 7 December 2022 in Document PI Appendix 3.
- e) **Education Access Officers:** continue, and be uplifted in 2023/24 to £0.500m (from £0.472m held in 2022/23) for pay award / inflation.
- f) **Education Services Planning:** continue at £0.148m, which is the 2022/23 value of £0.140m plus an allowance for pay award and inflation.

3.2 The Schools Forum noted that there is no transfer of CSSB funding to any other DSG block. The full value of the 2023/24 CSSB funding settlement is allocated to spending within the CSSB. The Schools Forum also noted that CSSB spending for 2023/24 is funded without any reliance on any other DSG block. However, the total cost of the funds listed in 3.1 above is £3.612m, which exceeds the 2023/24 CSSB allocation by £0.054m. The £0.054m is met from the surplus balance that is forecasted to be carried forward into 2023/24. Please see section 5.

4. The High Needs Block 2023/24 (RECOMMENDATION)

- Document PL (the 2023/24 DSG summary, which summarises the planned High Needs Block budget).
- Document PP (the DSG Management Plan, which includes an updated view of the estimated High Needs Block future year trajectory and a list of planned commissioned specialist places).
- Document PO Appendix 3 (which shows in more detail how the High Needs Block planned budget for 2023/24 has been constructed at individual setting and budget heading level).
- Document PO Appendix 6 (which shows estimated allocations to special schools, special school academies, PRUs and alternative provision

academies, as a result of the new condition that is attached to the additional £4.76m High Needs Block funding).

4.1 All Forum Members by consensus agreed that the formula approach (the High Needs Funding Model) that the Authority proposed in our autumn term consultation, and that was reported back to the Schools Forum on 7 December 2022 (Document PE), is used to delegate High Needs Block funding to high needs providers, mainstream schools and academies and other settings in the 2023/24 financial year. This approach includes the following significant elements:

- a) The continuation, with uplift (ranging between 3.7% at Band 3L and 1.7% at Band 4H; 1.7% for the Day Rate Model), of our EHCP Banded Model and of our PRU / Alternative Provision Day Rate Model.**
- b) The continuation of the existing setting-led need factors as are currently applied to the funding of specialist provisions.**
- c) The continuation of the allocation to specialist provisions of the former Teacher Pay Grant and the former Teacher Pension Grant, separately from top up funding, using the method and values we used in 2022/23.**
- d) The continuation for an additional year of the SEND Funding Floor mechanism, in support of Element 2 funding for SEND and EHCPs in mainstream primary and secondary settings, with an adjustment (to increase – from median plus 1% to median + 3%) the thresholds that are used to calculate this Floor, in seeking to control the growth in the cost of this mechanism and to better retain the Floor’s original purpose, in keeping with the DfE’s expectations, which is to support a minority of schools and academies that have significantly greater numbers of pupils on roll with EHCPs. Despite this adjustment, we estimate that the cost of SEND Funding Floor in 2023/24 will be £0.785m higher than the 2022/23 planned budget estimate.**
- e) The amendment of our definition of Notional SEND budgets for mainstream schools and academies, to bring this definition more in line with the national picture and to improve fairness.**

4.2 The Schools Forum noted that we have estimated allocations to special schools, special school academies, PRUs and alternative provision academies, as a result of the new condition that is attached to the additional £4.76m High Needs Block funding that has been allocated, following the 17 November Autumn Statement. Please see Document PO Appendix 6. We estimate that these allocations will cost £1.393m. This is an estimate only, based on the DfE’s directed methodology, with final allocations to be confirmed, including following consultation with the recipient settings. We will present confirmed allocations to the Forum on 8 March.

4.3 The Schools Forum also noted the following significant elements, estimates and assumptions, which are incorporated into the construction of the 2023/24 High Needs Block (HNB) planned budget that was presented

to the meeting:

- a) **The 2023/24 High Needs Block planned budget is calculated without any transfers of funding in from other Blocks or out to other Blocks. The only transfer relates to the contribution to early years SEND support services, which represents a transfer of expenditure (rather than funding) from the High Needs Block to the Early Years Block. Please see section 2 for more details of this transfer.**
- b) **Forum members are reminded that the Authority presented reports in May (Document OM) and July (Document OR) 2022, following discussions regarding the use and retention of the High Needs Block surplus balance that was carried forward from the 2021/22 financial year. The July 2022 report set out a plan for £920,000 of investment, in 3 areas, in support of inclusion. This initial investment will run to the end of the 2022/23 academic year, where it has been agreed that a review of impact will inform whether the High Needs Block surplus balance continues its investment in these areas. Currently, for planning purposes, it is assumed that the £0.920m will continue for a full financial year in 2023/24 and this is built into the planned budget that is presented to this meeting.**
- c) **We estimate that, in addition to the £0.920m investment, we may need to deploy in the region of £3.280m of surplus balance brought forward within the High Needs Block to fully cover 2023/24 High Needs Block planned budget expenditure. This represents a significant over-spending, which we will need to respond to. The DSG Management Plan, presented in Document PP to this meeting, discusses the position of the High Needs Block in more detail.**
- d) **The Local Authority continues to take a prudent approach to the setting of the planned budget. The Forum is reminded that High Needs Block expenditure is more difficult to predict than that in other DSG blocks, and is more subject to changes during the year. This difficulty is especially present currently due to the amount of structural change that continues to be delivered, and the scale of growth in the numbers of children and young people with EHCPs.**
- e) **The 2023/24 planned budget that is presented to this meeting includes £4.23m of revenue budget for the further development of specialist SEND provisions. This is made up of full year (from April: +116 places) and part year (from September: +100 places) budget provision. This provision aligns with the SEND Sufficiency Statement, which was presented to the Forum on 7 December (Document PH). A list of planned commissioned places is presented in Document PP Appendix 1.**
- f) **The 2023/24 planned budget is constructed to support the building of sustainable capacity for the longer term, by seeking to avoid under-estimating the full final cost (when established and fully occupied) of new places. The planned budget is constructed therefore, on a 'full year full places occupancy' style basis. This is done with the understanding**

that the filling of newly established or establishing capacity will be achieved in a managed way, and that there will be some degree of fluctuation in the occupancy of both new and existing provisions during the year. Whilst the 2023/24 planned budget includes £4.23m of revenue provision for new specialist places therefore, it is expected that the actual spending on newly created places in 2023/24 will be lower than this, as places will be created and occupied at different points.

- g) Our planned budgets for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years included an earmarked fund of £1.0m, which was to be available to cover further costs that may potentially come from the embedding of our recently amended EHCP Banded Model, especially from the further development of the 'stacking' facility. As our Banded Model will now be into its third year, and recognising that we are already estimating to overspend our High Needs Block allocation, we have removed the £1.0m fund from the 2023/24 planned budget. This means that all unexpected or higher than expected costs, that cannot be met by savings elsewhere within the High Needs Block in 2023/24, will need to be covered by the surplus brought forward balance.
- h) The 2023/24 planned budget for Alternative Provision / PRU provision continues to be based on the principle that our PRU / AP provisions, where funded from the High Needs Block, deliver Local Authority-commissioned provision for pupils permanent excluded. The planned budget for 2023/24 continues not to fund school-commissioned alternative provision. 160 permanent exclusion places are funded within the planned budget for the 2023/24 academic year, compared with 165 places that were funded in the 2022/23 planned budget. The DfE's SEND Green Paper, published in March 2022, proposes some significant changes to the way alternative provision is funded, and to the role of the High Needs Block, with greater emphasis on early intervention (the allocation of funding to prevent permanent exclusion) and movement towards fixed annual budgets for AP providers that are allocated according to a local plan rather than on numbers of pupils on roll. No changes are made to national systems for the 2023/24 financial year. Our current Day Rate Funding Model incorporates a floor, which ensures a minimum level of funding so that our PRU and AP Academy can retain capacity, irrespective of actual occupancy. This is an area that we will need to closely review, when the DfE announces the 'next steps' in the national SEND Review.
- i) The 2023/24 planned budget continues to be constructed incorporating the financial efficiencies that have come from the amalgamation of Bradford's hospital education, Tracks and medical home tuition provisions into a single Local Authority managed service. The DfE has not yet developed a national formula-based approach to the funding of these provisions, and continues to fund local authorities, through the High Needs Block, on historic information. As such, we receive £2.196m of funding in 2023/24, which is greater than our £1.583m estimated planned budget spending. This currently therefore, is an area of 'gain' for us within the High Needs Block, with this gain supporting

other High Needs Block expenditure. However, if and when the DfE alters the national funding methodology, this gain may no longer be present, and the loss of this will increase the financial pressure on the High Needs Block. This is not currently accounted for within the forecast that is presented in Document PP Appendix 2.

- j) **The 2023/24 planned budget is based on a general estimate that our spend on: a) pupils with EHCPs in mainstream settings, b) students in post-16 Further Education & SPI settings, and c) pupils placed in independent and non-maintained special school provisions and in out of authority maintained provisions, will continue to grow in 2023/24 at the same rate as in 2022/23, as estimated in December 2022. Simply put, we are estimating that our number of children and young people with EHCPs will continue to grow over the next 12 months at existing rates. Spending in these 3 areas has substantially increased during 2022/23, and combined, these are the major contributors to the forecasted overspending within the High Needs Block, in 2023/24 and on-going. This is discussed further in the DSG Management Plan that is presented in Document PP.**
- k) **How we have continued to uplift our existing EHCP Banded Model means that separate additional arrangements are not required in order for us to comply with the DfE's Minimum Funding Guarantee for special schools and for special school academies.**
- l) **Provision for SEND mainstream teaching support services held within the planned budget continues to incorporate the changes in structures that were agreed by the Executive back in 2018. The 2023/24 High Needs Block planned budget includes a large proportion of the £0.920m inclusion investment, as presented to the Schools Forum in July, and also incorporates an adjustment following the transfer of the contribution to early years SEND support services back to the Early Years Block. The total High Needs Block budget provision for these services in 2023/24, is £5.715m. This compares with the 2022/23 adjusted High Needs Block planned budget value of £4.683m (adjusted for the transfer of the early years SEND support services contribution).**
- m) **As we have previously reported to the Forum, the DfE's national SEND / EHCP / Alternative Provision system and funding reviews are very likely to have significant implications for our High Needs Block income and expenditure going forward. Whilst we have made some small adjustments in approach, which are aimed at supporting transition, for example, our adjustment to our definition of Notional SEND budgets and our control of the growth in cost of the SEND Funding Floor, we have not significantly adjusted our 2023/24 High Needs Block planned budget in anticipation of changes that may come. There are no changes in the national high needs funding system in 2023/24. The DfE currently indicates that an implementation plan for the SEND Green Paper will be published early in 2023. We will need to review this plan closely. In its autumn term messaging to local authorities, about High Needs Block management, the DfE has stressed that the SEND Green Paper represents a longer term programme of change. However, it is quite**

possible that changes to the high needs funding system may be directed for the 2024/25 financial year. As such, we anticipate that, alongside review work that will be necessary in order to manage our forecasted deficit position, we will also need to review our funding arrangements for 2024/25 in the light of directed changes.

5. The Allocation & Retention of Balances forecasted to be Brought Forward from 2022/23 (RECOMMENDATION)

Document PM Appendix 2.

All Forum Members by consensus agreed:

5.1 The treatment of the £35.665m of balances that are forecasted to be carried forward into 2023/24, as listed in the paragraphs below. £35.665m is 5.3% of the estimated 2023/24 DSG allocation.

5.2 In agreeing this treatment, the Forum noted that the figure of £35.665m is an estimate. The confirmed values of brought forward balances by DSG block will be presented to the Forum initially in July 2023 and then finally in September 2023 (the latter update incorporating the final adjustment to Early Years Block income).

5.3 It is forecasted that a balance of £0.281m will be carried forward from 2022/23 within the Central Schools Services Block (CSSB). The Schools Forum agreed, that:

- a) £0.054m is allocated to the 2023/24 planned budget, to continue existing commitments uplifted for an allowance for pay award and inflation, and to meet the increased cost (+10.6%) of copyright licences for mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies, in combination with the 2023/24 CSSB allocation received from the DfE.
- b) £0.227m is retained in support of CSSB expenditure in future years. In previous years, we have agreed with the Schools Forum that CSSB surplus balances be transferred for use within the Schools Block but that, where a CSSB surplus has been transferred previously, we also expect, if a deficit balance is subsequently held within the CSSB, the Schools Forum will agree for the Schools Block balance to write off this deficit, up to the cumulative value of the surplus balance previously transferred. We are not continuing this policy, meaning that the surplus balance that is forecasted to be held within the CSSB at 31 March 2023 is expected stay with the CSSB. This change of approach will better support us to meet the pressures that we anticipate will be present within the CSSB as a result of the movement to the final cessation of historic commitments funding, which was worth £0.23m in 2022/23 (reducing to £0.18m in 2023/24).

5.4 It is forecasted that a balance of £4.211m will be carried forward from 2022/23 within the Early Years Block. The Schools Forum agreed, that:

- a) The balance of £0.072m in de-delegated funds is ring-fenced and retained.
- b) A balance of £0.741m in the Disability Access Fund (DAF) is estimated to be carried forward into 2023/24. We have previously repeatedly under-spent this fund. We increased the value of the DAF allocation paid per child in 2021/22, from £615 to £1,000, and will increase the value again to £1,200 in 2023/24, with the expectations that this increase will help support provider costs, will complement the Early Years Inclusion Fund, and will also help to begin to release the surplus balance to providers. We will continue to keep this balance, and action to spend it, under review. As there is substantial cross-over between DAF and Early Years SEND Inclusion (EYIF) funds however, in 2023/24 we will use a proportion of the DAF balance that has accrued to help manage the cost of our EYIF fund, which is increasing due to a larger number of claims. In practical terms, this means using an estimated £0.120m of the DAF surplus balance to cover the cost of 2023/24 DAF allocations. As such, £0.120m of the £0.741m is allocated to the 2023/24 Early Years Block planned budget, which leaves a sum of £0.621m that is retained and carried forward.
- c) £0.837m is allocated into the 2023/24 Early Years Block planned budget to support the estimated cost of our Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF). Please see section 6. Whether this value of balance is actually needed (or whether a greater or lesser sum is needed) will depend on how spending develops during the year and how this compares against the entitlement delivery estimates used now. This is also subject to the outcomes of our consultation on our EYSFF.
- d) The remaining value of balance, currently estimated to be £2.561m, is retained to be used in support of the cost, including any unexpected or higher than expected cost, of the Early Years Funding Formula (EYSFF) in 2023/24 and going forward. £2.561m is 5.9% of the estimated value of our Early Years Block in 2023/24. The Authority has sought to explain in our Early Years Single Funding Formula consultation document for 2023/24 (Document PK) the financial position of the Early Years Block, how we are currently managing the structural issues that are present, whilst also continuing to seek to maximise the rates of funding allocated to providers for their entitlement delivery. The availability of reserves will be crucial to how these structural issues are managed and resolved over the next couple of years. The Authority is also conscious that the DfE has not yet confirmed the funding position of maintained nursery schools after 2024/25. Reserves held within the Early Years Block may be needed to support maintained nursery schools through transition that may be required.

5.5 It is forecasted that a balance of £25.830m will be carried forward from 2022/23 within the High Needs Block. The Forum noted and agreed the following, which sets out the position of this balance at this time:

- a) Forum members are reminded that the Authority presented reports in May (Document OM) and July (Document OR) 2022, following discussions regarding the use and retention of the High Needs Block

surplus balance that was carried forward from the 2021/22 financial year. The July 2022 report set out a plan for £920,000 of investment, in 3 areas, in support of inclusion. This initial investment will run to the end of the 2022/23 academic year, where it has been agreed that a review of impact will inform whether the High Needs Block surplus balance continues its investment in these areas. Currently, for budget planning purposes, it is assumed that the £0.920m will continue for a full financial year in 2023/24.

- b) When previously considering the balance held within the High Needs Block, the Forum has agreed with the Authority that this balance should not be allocated in support of on-going expenditure increases or pressures. This is because balances can only be spent once. However, it is not possible / realistic to take this position for the 2023/24 planned budget. We currently estimate that we may need to earmark an additional £3.280m of the balance to establish a planned budget for the High Needs Block for 2023/24 that balances back to zero. In total, with the addition of the £0.920m, we currently estimate that £4.200m (16% of the forecasted surplus balance) may be deployed during 2023/24. To highlight here: £0.920m of this estimated overspend is the result of deliberate additional inclusion plan spending, which is to be reviewed, and c. £4.23m is budget for new specialist places, which we do not expect to see full spending of in 2023/24 but which needs to be structurally built into the budget.
- c) On this basis, £21.630m of surplus balance would remain at March 2024. Our updated DSG Management Plan, presented in Document PP, includes a future year estimate of the High Needs Block. This estimate currently clearly indicates the continuation (and acceleration) of a substantial overspending in our High Needs Block, which will require significant mitigating actions, discussion on which will need to form part of our 2024/25 DSG budget setting cycle. We are moving into a period where the risk of cumulative deficit in our DSG account is high.
- d) In this context, the Authority at this time does not plan any other significant use of the High Needs Block surplus. The planned budget is constructed on a series of estimates and we try to take a prudent approach to these estimates. However, a first call on the £21.630m will be meeting in year the cost of change, as well as supporting any unexpected costs that may arise across 2022 and 2023 after the planned budget for 2023/24 has been agreed. The second, perhaps more important, call on the £21.630m balance will be supporting the avoidance of cumulative deficit in the High Needs Block over the medium term. We are also conscious of three significant uncertainties, that are likely to have financial implications for our High Needs Block going forward, a) the outcomes of the national reviews on SEND, EHCP and Alternative Provision systems and funding - it is likely that changes that come from these reviews will alter the cost base that our High Needs Block will need to manage, b) whether we are successful in our bid for a new special school free school, and c) whether the annual increase in High Needs Block funding allocated by the DfE keeps pace with increasing costs, linked with the rate of continued growth in our

costs, especially from the continued growth in the number of EHCPs and the number of specialist places created, which is uncertain. On current information, we would assume that funding will not keep pace with costs growth, and so reserves will be essential in this context.

5.6 It is forecasted that a balance of £5.343m will be carried forward from 2022/23 within the Schools Block. The Schools Forum agreed, that:

- a) £0.797m is retained as the ring-fenced balance of de-delegated funds. A breakdown of this balance is provided in the separate report (Document PN Appendix 2). Within the 2023/24 planned budget, £0.100m of the £0.797m is specifically earmarked for release to support the cost of the school maternity / paternity insurance fund and £0.122m is earmarked for release to support the cost of the school improvement fund. On this basis, £0.575m is retained and carried forward. However, this balance may also be used to support any costs arising from new deficits held by sponsored primary academy converters, as no new value of budget is de-delegated for this purpose in 2023/24. The rest of the balance is ring-fenced and is held in support of the cost of continuing de-delegated funds, in line with the principles set out in paragraph 1.2.**
- b) £1.320m is retained as the Growth Fund ring-fenced balance and will be used to support the cost of allocations in 2023/24 and on-going. Please see paragraph 1.5.**
- c) £0.500m is retained as the ring-fenced balance for the primary phase Falling Rolls Fund. Please see paragraphs 1.9 and 1.10.**
- d) £0.397m is allocated to cover the estimated change in the cost of NNDR (Business Rates) for maintained primary and secondary schools for the 2023/24 financial year. However, this is a 'holding position' only, as our Schools Block will be reimbursed for this sum in 2024/25, when we will have a choice about whether the £0.397m is returned to reserves or is allocated through our Schools Block planned budget. Rateable values nationally are being re-valued for April 2023 (5 year scheduled re-evaluation), and costs nationally are increasing by around 15%. NNDR accounting arrangements are now rather complicated. As we are a local authority, that is still uses the 'old' approach to billing for NNDR costs (rather than the ESFA's 'new' approach), whilst the cost of NNDR changes in academies does not affect our Schools Block spending position, changes in costs in maintained schools do, prior to our Schools Block being reimbursed in the following year. The £0.397m is based on an estimate of NNDR costs, and is subject to confirmation.**
- e) £1.390m in total is allocated into the 2023/24 Schools Block planned budget, in order to afford the mainstream primary and secondary funding formula, as we proposed in our consultation, now using the October 2022 Census dataset. Please see section 7 for further discussion on the allocation of the £1.390m and on the financial position of the Schools Block in 2023/24 following the use of the October 2022 Census dataset. The £1.390m includes the allocation of the £0.421m balance that relates to primary-phase £GUF monies. The**

£0.421m specifically is allocated to support the cost of the primary-phase funding formula, and to bring the 'excess' cost of this down so that this is equivalent with the secondary-phase.

- f) The remaining value of £0.939m is fully retained as a resilience reserve. £0.939m is 0.2% of the Schools Block.

6. Early Years Single Funding Formula and Pro-Forma 2023/24 (RECOMMENDATION)

- Document NK (EYSFF consultation proposals)
- Document PO Appendix 5 (Early Years Pro-forma, which summarises the proposed setting base rates, the mean Deprivation & SEND rates and maintained nursery school supplement funding).
- Document PO Appendices 2a, 2b and 2c (indicative provider funding rate modelling 2023/24).

6.1 As part of the Authority's consultation, the Schools Forum resolved to support in full the Authority's proposals for the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) to be used to fund all early years providers for their delivery of the 2, 3 & 4-year-old entitlements in 2023/24. The Forum agreed also for the Early Years Block planned budget for 2023/24 to be presented on this basis at this time.

6.2 In providing feedback now, the Forum noted that, due to the timing of the DfE's announcements on Early Years Block funding arrangements, wider consultation with providers on our 2023/24 EYSFF has not yet begun, but will begin immediately after the Forum meeting. Our consultation will run until 6 February 2023. Final proposals, incorporating any adjustments made in response to consultation feedback, will be presented to Executive on 21 February and then, subject to the Executive's resolution, to Council on 23 February for final decision. The Forum's next scheduled meeting is not until 8 March, so this means that final decisions will be taken before the Forum has had sight of any consultation feedback and any amendments from this. The Authority will send an email to Forum Members as soon as possible after 6 February to inform them whether the final proposed EYSFF, to be presented to the Executive / Council, has changed from what was proposed in Document PK.

6.3 The Schools Forum also noted:

- a) Local authorities are not permitted to alter their EYSFF arrangements in year without DfE approval.
- b) Deprivation and SEND rates for individual providers will be confirmed once January 2023 postcode data is used to update the Index of Multiple Deprivation 3 year rolling averages. The figures shown in Document PO Appendices 2a, 2b and 2c, and in Document PO Appendix 5, are indicative for this reason. Funding rates are also indicative because they are subject to the outcomes of the

consultation.

- c) **With the transfer of the Teacher Pay and Pensions Grants for schools and academies into the EYSFF in 2023/24, and the proposed adoption of a “Quality” Supplement (A Teacher Pensions Employers’ Contribution Supplement), all maintained schools and academies with nursery schools must now cease to add these grant allocations into their funding forecasts.**
- d) **A series of estimates have been made in the 2023/24 Early Years Block calculations relating to both income and to the cost of the entitlements (the number of hours to be delivered across the coming year). By necessity, this approach requires end of year reconciliation and may require carry-over of either an under or an over spend into 2024/25.**
- e) **In previous years, we have established our EYSFF rates of funding incorporating the benefit that comes from our DSG Early Years Block being funded for a greater number of 3&4-year-old entitlement hours than providers actually deliver across the 3 terms. We removed this benefit from our calculations within our 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial year planned budgets. As explained in paragraph 2.2, cautiously, we have assumed that some benefit continues / has returned in the 2023/24 Early Years Block planned budget that is presented to this meeting.**
- f) **There is no specific unallocated contingency fund held within the 2023/24 Early Years Block planned budget.**
- g) **In 2023/24 we will use a proportion of the Disability Access Fund (DAF) balance that has accrued to help manage the cost of our Early Years Inclusion Fund (EYIF), which is increasing due to a larger number of claims. In practical terms, this means using an estimated £0.120m of the DAF surplus balance to cover the cost of 2023/24 DAF allocations.**
- h) **As shown in the Pro-Forma (Document PO Appendix 5), our Early Years Block planned budget complies with the DfE’s statutory restrictions for the funding of 3&4-year-old hours delivery concerning a) the minimum 95% pass-through and b) the maximum 12% spend on supplements. Our planned budget also complies with the DfE’s expectation that the specific Maintained Nursery School Supplement is allocated to protect maintained nursery school funding at pre-national reform (2016/17) rates.**
- i) **The Local Authority is now working to move schools and academies onto the Provider Headcount Portal for summer term 2023, using this Portal to collect entitlement delivery information (rather than using DfE termly census downloads). PVI providers already use the Portal. The Authority has begun to communicate with schools and academies on this transition.**

7. Primary and Secondary Formula Funding and Pro-Forma 2023/24 (RECOMMENDED)

Schools and Academies Members (by consensus on a phase specific basis) agreed:

7.1 That the formula approach that the Authority proposed in our consultation, and that was reported back to the Schools Forum on 7 December 2022 (Document PC), is used to calculate core formula funding allocations for mainstream primary and secondary maintained schools and academies for the 2023/24 financial year. This approach includes the following significant elements:

- a) No transfer of budget from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.**
- b) Continue to fully mirror the DfE's National Funding Formula (NFF) at factor level.**
- c) Set the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) at positive 0.5%. Within the calculation of the MFG, we continue to exclude premises factors (NNDR Business Rates, split sites and PFI) in the baselines for both 2022/23 and 2023/24, so that we can continue to closely mirror the way the MFG is calculated within the National Funding Formula.**
- d) Continue to use our existing local formula approach for the funding of split sites, as this is not yet covered by the National Funding Formula.**
- e) Continue to pass through the specific BSF DSG affordability gap values using our current method, continuing the adjustment to ensure that the amounts passed on to academies by the ESFA on an academic year basis are equivalent to the amounts that the Authority requires academies to pay back on a financial year basis. Please see 7.2 below.**
- f) Continue to fund NNDR (Business Rates) at actual cost, with the cost currently estimated within the planned budget.**
- g) Amend our definition of Notional SEND budgets for mainstream schools and academies, to bring this definition more in line with the national picture and to improve fairness.**
- h) Retain, with their existing criteria and methodologies, the funds currently managed centrally within the Schools Block – Growth Fund, Falling Rolls Fund, De-delegated Funds.**

7.2 That the value of the DSG's total contribution to the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Affordability Gap for 2023/24 be set at £8.920m and split £8.003m Schools Block and £0.917m High Needs Block. These figures incorporate an 11.2% increase on 2022/23 for the RPIX. This represents a net increase (allowing for adjustments relating to the apportionment for academies) of £1.159m in cash budget terms on the 2022/23 cost. This contribution will be split between relevant schools and academies on the same % basis as in 2022/23 (based on the school's unitary charge value).

For Secondary schools and academies, this contribution is expressed as a formula factor. For Special schools and academies, this contribution is managed as a central item within the High Needs Block.

7.3 The Schools Forum noted that, as shown in Document PL, the Schools Block planned budget exceeds the 2023/24 DSG Schools Block settlement by £01.787m. The £1.787m is made up of:

- £0.748m overspend in the primary phase formula (this figure is shown in section X of Document PL).
- £0.392m overspend in the secondary phase formula (this figure is shown in section X of Document PL).
- £0.397m increased spending on NNDR (Business Rates) for maintained primary and secondary schools, prior to our Schools Block funding reimbursing in 2024/25.
- £0.303m overspend in cross phase premises factors (the difference between our DSG funding for premises factors and our spend on premises factors).
- £0.053m underspend in cross phase Growth Fund (the difference between our DSG funding for growth and our estimated spend on growth from the 2023/24 planned budget).

Forum Members noted that, in material terms however, the true overspend is £1.390m, because the £0.397m NNDR overspend will be reimbursed in 2024/25.

Forum Members agreed the following position, which was recommended by the Authority: “Whilst we are concerned about the impact of data lag, for a second year, and whilst we would have preferred not to rely on this value of reserves again to manage this position, on balance, we are of the view that the most sensible, defensible and reasonable approach to take now, as we did in 2022/23, is to use a proportion of the Schools Block brought forward balance to implement our proposals in 2023/24, without alteration. This means that we fully mirror the National Funding Formula. This will support maximising the funds that are allocated now to schools and academies, who are currently facing financially challenging circumstances. Within this proposal for 2023/24, we allocate the remaining £0.421m of primary-phase £GUF monies. The allocation of this to the primary-phase formula brings the overspend in this element of the Schools Block down from £0.748m to £0.326m. £0.326m is broadly equivalent to the £0.392m overspend in the secondary-phase.”

7.4 The Schools and Academies Members (by consensus on a phase specific basis) gave their final approval to the Pro-Forma for the 2023/24 financial year, presented at Document PO Appendix 4.

7.5 The Schools Forum also noted:

- a) That the recommended approach for 2023/24 does further reduce the value of the reserve balance that we hold within the Schools Block and, as such, were we to face a similar issue in 2024/25 (e.g. a £1m cost of ‘data lag’), we might not be able to avoid making formula funding

adjustments for affordability reasons. One of the considerations, however, in the favour of using reserves, is that we are only 2-3 more years away from the National Funding Formula, at which point we will not have to locally manage the cost of Schools Block formula funding.

- b) The cost of NNDR (business rates) shown in the Pro-forma is based on estimated figures. The Authority's initial cost estimate for 2023/24 will be subject to changes during the year (with a final reconciliation of actual costs taking place early in 2024).
- c) In moving to using the National Funding Formula at local individual primary and secondary school level, the Schools Forum wished to more closely monitor the actual spending of the Schools Block by phase against the funding received within the Schools Block by phase i.e. phase ring-fencing within the Schools Block. An updated calculation of the position for 2023/24 is shown in section X of Document PL. Forum Members are reminded that premises-related costs and Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund costs are funded on a cross-phase basis so are not included in this calculation.
- d) There is no unallocated contingency fund held within the 2023/24 Schools Block planned budget.
- e) On the basis of the modelling presented to this meeting, the formula funding landscape in Bradford in 2023/24 is as follows:
 - Primary phase: 44 out of 156 schools (28%), including academies, are funded on the Minimum Funding Guarantee. 27 schools (17%), including academies, are funded at the £4,405 minimum per pupil level. All other schools and academies are funded above £4,405 per pupil.
 - Secondary phase: 4 out of 31 schools (13%), including academies, are funded on the Minimum Funding Guarantee. 1 academy (3%) is funded at the £5,715 minimum per pupil level. All other schools and academies are funded above £5,715 per pupil.
 - All through academies: None of the 4 academies are funded on the Minimum Funding Guarantee. All of these academies are also funded above their composite minimum per pupil funding levels.
 - In total, 48 out of 191 schools and academies (25%) are funded on the Minimum Funding Guarantee. This is reduced from 73 (38%) in 2022/23. In total, 31 out of 191 schools and academies (16%) are funded on the minimum per pupil funding levels. This is reduced from 36 (19%) in 2022/23.

LEAD: *Business Advisor, Schools*

666. SCHOOLS FORUM STANDING ITEMS

No matters were raised and no resolutions were passed on this item.

667. AOB / FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The Vice Chair asked the Business Advisor (Schools) for further advice on how schools should budget for pay awards in 2023/24. The Business Advisor offered his 'informal' advice', but add that further information will be presented to the Schools Forum at the next meeting within the 'update on school budget matters' annual report.

668. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next scheduled is Wednesday 8 March January. This meeting will be held remotely.

For planning purposes, the provisional schedule for Schools Forum meetings for the 2023/24 academic year has now been set, as follows:

- Wednesday 13 September 2023, 8am
- Wednesday 11 October 2023, 8am
- Wednesday 6 December 2023, 8am
- Wednesday 10 January 2024, 8am
- Wednesday 17 January 2024, 8am PROVISIONAL MEETING
- Wednesday 6 March 2024, 8am
- Wednesday 22 May 2024, 8am
- Wednesday 10 July 2024, 8am

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a correct record at the next meeting of the Forum.

THESE MINUTES HAVE BEEN PRODUCED, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, ON RECYCLED PAPER