Colleagues,

[apologies if this email is not relevant to you - please delete *or* pass on if another colleague should now be the recipient]

Across the last few months, it has been difficult to gain traction in the media on issues related to school funding (when the narrative is naturally focussed on 'teacher pay', industrial action and the unfunded/partially funded offer from the Secretary of State).

Yesterday's NAO report put the issue of capital funding centre stage, with the BBC (and others) reporting very directly and critically on the issue.

A few stories are beginning to press home: see, for example, this from Vic Goddard. [https://www.itv.com/news/anglia/2023-06-20/educating-essex-headteacher-all-we-can-do-is-offer-less-to-children](https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.itv.com%2Fnews%2Fanglia%2F2023-06-20%2Feducating-essex-headteacher-all-we-can-do-is-offer-less-to-children&data=05%7C01%7Cdbarton%40cornwallsecondaryheads.co.uk%7Ca65f9a4aa6f94bfe98bd08db78a56909%7C14d72ab047bb4ac6944b661cb50f8fb6%7C0%7C0%7C638236424069540452%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=LIG6d81%2F8Fa8%2FfajLolsnR2iDV7QC57hgiDAR5vGLrY%3D&reserved=0).

It remains the case, however, that marginal differences in income vs. expenditure and the depletion of reserves don't make great headlines!

**I now need your help to make those headlines.**

*Last night, the governors at this school reviewed our financial position. The Trust board acknowledged, with little surprise, that in this academic year (2022/23) our expenditure will have exceeded our income by £200-£300k, depleting our limited reserves correspondingly. The budget forecast for 2023/24 was also provisionally approved. Our income is set to rise by about 2.5%; our projected costs by very much more than that (regardless of the uncertainty over salary levels). We are expecting a very substantial in-year deficit next year* ***and the deficit we are forecasting will exceed our reserves.****As such, after a decade of ‘efficiency measures’ (or workload intensification) technically the Trust is approaching insolvency before next Easter. Our governors were clear that no further cost-saving reductions in provision can be sanctioned.*

*As an individual academy we will be approaching the ESFA with our concerns reporting the material risk. The ESFA should not be surprised: our auditors warned of this possibility last Autumn. Moreover, the DfE recently surveyed school leaders - through a third-party polling company: one of the questions was whether the school/Trust would have a deficit next year greater than reserves (i.e. "run out of cash").*

*Our governors were also clear that we should prepare to talk publicly, to the media, about this predicament;* ***but that we should look to do so with other schools in the same situation.***

**So, what I need - please reply to me (not reply all) - are the names of schools/school leaders in a similar position who are willing to go public.** This can include schools who expect to 'run out of cash' during next year (2023/24) and those whose forecast shows the same eventuality the year after (2024/25). We need to be clear that our forecasts are reasonable, prudent and robust as they may face public scrutiny.

Please share this message with colleagues who may be in the same position. We need to be 'in this together'. I will work with those who step forwards to co-ordinate media representation aiming for the mainstream broadcasters.

We need to be ready in the next few weeks, during which time we may have to 'compete' with the STRB outcomes to make our noise heard above the 'facile' declarations of more funding than ever ...

Hope this all makes good sense: email me those contact details please!

Robin M. Bevan  
Headteacher  
Southend High School for Boys

Email Disclaimer: <https://www.shsb.org.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=1357>