



North Tyneside Council

Quadrant, The Silverlink North, Cobalt Business Park,
North Tyneside, NE27 0BY
Tel: 0345 2000 101

Item 3 Minutes

Meeting Schools Forum **Date** 13th November 2024

Location Via Microsoft Teams

Present

✓ Present
D Deputy
A Apologies
O Absent

Name	Organisation	Representing	13.11.2024
Angi Gibson	Hadrian Park Primary School	Academy	✓
Anthony Gollings	St Thomas More	RC Diocese	✓
Claire Withers	Fordley Primary School	Primary	✓
Colette Bland	St Mary's RC Primary School (NS)	Academy	D (Joanne MacDonald)
Colleen Ward	Coquet Park First School	First (*)	✓
Daniel Jamieson	Burnside Community College	Secondary	✓
David Watson	St Thomas More	Academy (*)	✓
Diane Turner	Tyne Coast	16-19 Provider	O
Finn Wilcock	Southridge First School	First	✓
Gavin Storey	Cullercoats Primary School	Primary (*)	✓
Gillian Tawes	Shiremoor Primary School	Governor - Primary	✓
Jane Lowe	Monkseaton Middle School	Governor - Secondary	✓
Joanne Thompson	Holystone Out of School	Early Years PVI	✓
Jonathan Heath	John Spence High School	Academy	✓
John Croft	Sir James Knott	Nursery	✓
John Newport	Marden Bridge Middle School	Middle (*)	✓
John Ord	Greenfields Primary School	Governor - Primary (*)	A
Justina Terretta	Beaconhill Specialist School	Special	✓
Karen Croskery	North Tyneside Student Support Service	Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	✓
Kelly Holbrook	Longbenton High School	Secondary (*)	✓
Kerry Lillico	Grasmere Academy	Academy	O
Laura Baggett	Monkhouse Primary School	Primary (*)	✓
Lesley Griffin	Wellfield Middle School	Governor - Secondary	✓
Louise Bradford	C of E Diocese	C of E Diocese	✓
Matt Snape	Marden High School	Secondary (*)	✓
Phil Kemp	Trade Unions	Trade Unions	D (Claire MacLeod)
Philip Sanderson	Kings Priory	Academy (*)	✓
Stephen Baines	Holystone Primary	Primary (*)	✓
Steve Wilson	Whitley Bay High School	High (*)	✓
Wayne Myers	Richardson Dees Primary	Primary	✓

In Attendance:			
Julie Firth	Director of Children's Services	NTC	✓
Jon Ritchie	Director of Resources	NTC	A
Andrew Brown	Principle Accountant, Finance	NTC	✓
Christina Ponting	Senior Manager – Schools HR	NTC	✓
David Mason	Head of Finance – Deputy S151 Officer	NTC	A
Diane Thompson	Senior Accountant – Schools Finance	NTC	✓
Jane Cross	Senior Business Partner, Finance	NTC	✓
Ian Wilkinson	Strategic Lead, Education and Inclusion Review	NTC	✓
Lisa Ramshaw	Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion	NTC	✓
Mark Mirfin	Assistant Director, Commissioning, Partnerships and Transformation	NTC	✓
April Gibbs-Thorn	Statutory Services Officer – Schools Forum	NTC	✓

(* indicates current member of Finance Sub Group)

Minutes of Meeting

Ref	Item	Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
	<p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and issued a reminder that the meeting is live streamed to the public on the Authority's YouTube Channel.</p> <p>A reminder of roles and responsibilities for Forum Members was provided.</p> <p>See table above for apologies.</p>	
2.	Attendance Register / Membership	Christina Ponting
	<p>Attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See table above. <p>Membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP reminded Forum that a vacancy remains in the South-West area and a replacement is being actively sought. • Some terms have recently been renewed, with a further couple of terms being up for renewal shortly. • CP is working with individuals and will update at the next Schools Forum meeting. 	
3.	Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising	
	Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.	

	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>Page 9, Any Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair wished to clarify the procedure in terms of a closing school deficit, if this falls to the Local Authority and who the decision maker would be in this process. • JF noted that this would not be a decision as such, and that the expectation would be that any deficit would fall to the Local Authority. A suggestion that any deficit would be taken from the DSG had not been accepted as deemed not proportionate nor appropriate. <p>Page 8, Item 8 – NT Local Funding Consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a concern raised in the last Schools Forum meeting, JC confirmed that Education and Skills Agency (EFSA) and Department for Education (DfE) colleagues had been requested for updates on funding. Updates following the October budget were to be given as part of the Finance presentation. 	
4.	Declarations of Interest	
	None	
5a.	Schools Finance Update	Jane Cross/ Andrew Brown
	<p>JC talked through the presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p> <p>Update on 2025/26 Funding Allocations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EFSA has confirmed there will be no substantial changes to the National Funding Formula for 2025/26 and that the two-year transition period as part of the process to move to the National Funding Formula have been extended and will continue into 2025/26. A reminder was given that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) continues to be comprised of four blocks; Schools, High Needs, Early Years and the Central School services. • On 30 October, the Government announced an additional £2.3bn for mainstream schools and young people in 2025/26. As such, overall core school funding will total almost £63.9bn. • The DfE will announce indicative funding allocations for North Tyneside schools and high needs national funding formulae (NFF) for 2025–26. It is anticipated that this will be finalised and published by the end of November. 	

- For 2025/26 there will be no modelling tool provided. It is anticipated that the final DSG allocation will be published in December 2024 using the October 2024 census results.
- The Government has also said that public sector employers will be compensated for the increase in their National Insurance Charge contributions, and it is anticipated that this will form part of the funding announcement.
- It is assumed that two restrictions will continue in 2025/26:
 - a) Continue to set a Minimum Funding Guarantee in the local formula, which in 2025/26 must be between -0.5% and +0.0%
 - b) Local Authorities can transfer up to 0.5% of their schools' block to other blocks of the DSG, with their schools' forum approval.

To transfer any more than this, or any amount without their schools' forum approval, the Authority will have to make a disapplication request to the Department for Education.

- A table showing an 2024/25 funding allocation compared with prior year actuals was shown on screen (Table 1 of the report).

Early Years

- In the 2023 budget, the Government announced the changes to expand the free childcare offer to working parents. From September 2024, this was extended to parents of 9 month to 3-year-olds.
- It was noted that the DfE have not yet published the expected value of the Early Years or Central School Services Block (CSSB) funding for 2025/26.
- As soon as information comes from the DfE, this will be discussed with the Early Years Sub-Group as soon as possible.
- CSSB funding for 2025/26 will be reported back to Schools Forum in January 2025.

2024/25 Budget Monitoring for Schools

- The overall level of school balances at the end of March 2024 was £2.930m deficit compared to £0.382m deficit as at end March 2023. Budget plans projected deficit of £9.707m.
- Schools are in the process of completing the first set of monitoring for 2024/25. Despite an additional challenge of an IT upgrade this is going well.

2024/25 Schools in Financial Difficulty Funding (SIFD)

- The 2024/25 opening balance was £0.422m.
- Schools Forum Finance Sub-group met 30 September 2024 to discuss and receive applications for funding.
- Following discussion, an agreement was made that SIFD funding should be more robust, and the sub-group recommend that Schools Forum approve the following criteria:
 - a) A school must come back into an in-year balance within their 3-year budget recovery plan
 - b) A school must have ended the previous year in deficit before any applications are considered
 - c) Funding will be allocated based on a school's outturn position, not budget monitor projections
 - d) Schools are required to remain within their deficit recovery plan to be eligible
- Based on the above criteria, some school applications will be deferred to 2025/26 so that the 2024/25 outturn position can be considered and include in-year improvements.
- The sub-group recommend funding approval of £0.185m to 3 schools based on outturn balances from 2023/24.
- A table was shown on screen detailing individual recommended funding in 2024/25 of three schools. (Table 2 of the report).

High Needs Block Update for 2024/25

- As previously reported the High Needs Block outturn in 2023/24 was a pressure of £10.494m, which included Safety Valve funding of £9.750m.
- The second report for DSG Management Plan progress was submitted to the DFE on 28 August this year and the Authority remains on track to achieve a positive in year balance on the DSG High Needs Block by the end of 2027/28. The next reporting deadline is 27 November 2024.

Early Years Block Update for 2024/25

- The Early Years Block outturn in 2023/24 was a surplus of £1.046m.
- The 2023/24 surplus balance after clawback is £0.859m, £0.655m is estimated as required to fund the additional week in the 2024/25 local payment schedule.
- The projection for this year is a break-even in-year position across Early Years entitlements.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For 2024/25, funding will be known as Early Years Budget Grant (EYBG) with effect from September 2024. <p>Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In relation to SiFD funding, Finn Willcock asked how many schools expecting a deficit were deferred and what did those projected deficits amount to? JC confirmed that 3 other schools (not detailed in the presentation) were deferred. AB noted the overall amount of deficit was £0.240m. The amount of funding requested contributes, it does not fund the whole deficit balance of schools. Jane Lowe asked if Monkseaton High School were to close, what impact would this have on funding? JC clarified DSG Guidance which indicates that funding allocated to a closed school would be clawed back from that school and added back to Growth funding. If it is known where pupils of the closed school were going, this would be a straight transfer. If unknown, the clawback would be allocated to Growth funding and allocated accordingly. <p>Recommendations</p> <p>Schools Forum was asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the delay in indicative allocations for each of the four Dedicated Schools Grant funding blocks; Noted Note the positions on High Needs, Early Years Block funding; Noted Note the budget monitoring process for schools; Noted Agree new Schools in Difficulty Funding criteria; Agreed Agree the Schools Forum Subgroup recommendation for allocation of Schools in Financial Difficulty funding. Agreed 	
5b.	<p>National Funding Formula and Outcome of Consultation</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Jane Cross/Andrew Brown</p>	
	<p>AB talked through the presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p>	

- Officers have been working on a review of the Local Funding Formula (LFF) and to assess potential impacts if LFF remains aligned to the National Funding Formula (NFF). Due to the delay in receiving indicative funding allocations, this has been based on 2024/25 funding and general principles.
- AB thanked those participating schools for their engagement and responses and noted this was appreciated.
- A Table showing the response rate by phase was shown on screen (Table 1 of the report). The response rate was 39%. This was a decrease from the 55% rate in 2023 which was noted as slightly disappointing.
- Regular updates have been presented and discussed with Schools Forum and Schools Forum Finance sub-group and the LFF consultation aimed to gather the views of individual schools, running from 7th – 27th October 2024.
- Relevant information was presented to schools at 3 separate Finance briefing sessions and included an introduction on the wider funding formula and a focus on the main changes.
- AB noted that the main changes across all blocks of the DSG were unable to be outlined because there have not been any indicative funding allocations issued yet for 2025/26 by the DfE.

Local Funding Formula (LFF)

- The consultation asked if schools agreed that, within the funding allocation, North Tyneside should set its Local Funding Formula (LFF) in line with National Funding Formula
- 96% (27 schools) voted in favour of keeping the National Funding Formula factors and rate increases as supplied by DfE, 4% (1 school) disagreed.
- 93% (26 Schools) voted in favour of the Local Authority continuing to set the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG), subject to affordability.
- When asked which factors should be used to allocate any surplus after delivering the chosen MFG protection level, the preferred option chosen was by basing it on basic entitlement, Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU).

Growth Fund / Falling Rolls

- Schools were asked for their views as to whether Schools Forum should continue to allocate £0.250m to growth and falling rolls funding, change ESFA Calculated Value (Growth

£0.751m, Falling Rolls £0.140m) or reduce funding based on historic averages (Growth £0.200m, Falling Rolls £0.100m).

- An overview of the responses was shown on screen (Table 2 of the report).
- 93% voted to reduce funding based on historic averages for Growth Funding and 71% voted to reduce funding based on historic averages for Falling Rolls.

0.5% Transfer

- Schools were asked if they were supportive of a transfer of 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block.
- 89% of schools voted as NOT in favour of the transfer, 11 % voted in favour of the transfer.
- Additional comments were requested as part of response on whether to transfer 0.5% from Schools Block to High Needs Block.
 - a. 39% of schools who did not support the transfer, cited the reason which had impacted their decision being schools' budgets are too tight and already facing financial pressures.
 - b. 21% of schools had concerns over how the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) funding is calculated and felt this needs to be addressed at a National Level.
 - c. 18% noted an inequality in how the transfer was calculated.
 - d. 18% commented that Benefit Realisation is yet to be seen.
- 61% of schools noted that, if the 0.5% transfer were to go ahead, they would prefer that it impacted on all schools. 32% stated they thought that relevant schools should be protected through MPPF and MFG.
- Schools Forum were advised that if they do not agree to the 0.5% transfer, then the Local Authority would be required to submit a disapplication request, in line with the Authority's DSG Management Plan. The deadline for the submission is 18 November 2024.

Recommendations

- A reminder of voting rights was outlined.

Schools Forum were asked to:

- Agree to continue to use factors in line with NFF, funding permitting

Agreed

- Agree to allow the Authority to set a Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) and capping based on affordability.

Agreed

- Agree that AWPU factors be used to distribute any surplus after delivering MFG.

Agreed

- Agree that Growth and Falling Rolls funding should each be set based on historic averages – Growth £0.200m, Falling Rolls £0.100m.

The Chair raised a point of clarification in that there is no application for funding in this context. Amounts to be allocated are calculated through a formula. All qualifying schools would receive funding.

Agreed

- Consider the response to the request to transfer 0.50% School block funding to High Needs and agree either to:

- a) Support a 0.50% transfer from Schools block to High Needs block to support the draft DSG Management plan.
- b) Not support any transfer of funds from Schools block to High Needs block.

There were no votes cast to agree to the transfer of funds.

- Agree that if a 0.50% transfer is approved that the allocation should impact on all schools by adjusting the MFG and MPPF.

Agreed

Whilst the transfer of 0.50% from the Schools block to the High Needs block was not agreed, members did agree that had this been agreed, it would operate on an ALL school basis.

- The Chair reiterated thanks to schools and to Finance officers for their work on briefings.
- The Chair also referred to the disappointing response to consultation. Moving forward, finance officers will follow up with schools who attended briefings but did not submit a response to understand why and inform future consultations.

6.	Annual Review of Schools Forum Constitution Christina Ponting	
	<p>CP talked through the review of the Constitution. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As agreed at the last Schools Forum meeting, the annual review was deferred to November meetings. • CP confirmed that the ESFA Guidance has been checked and remained unchanged. There are however, two recommended updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The constitution date will be amended to November 2024. b. To incorporate a minor amendment to the Constitution with regards to the live stream. In the event of an IT failure of the live stream, either on commencement or during, it was agreed that moving forward the Schools Forum meeting will continue without the live stream. • Schools Forum Toolkit: annual review has taken place all recommended actions remain up-to-date/ relevant. Date to be amended to November 2024. • If Schools Forum members are in agreement, the updated documents would replace the current document provided to members and noted on the Schools Forum website and the Schools Forum Constitution will be reviewed again in November 2025. <p>Agreed</p>	
7.	Consideration for Special Leave for 23/24 Financial Year Christina Ponting	
	<p>CP provided a verbal update. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools Forum were reminded that the Special Leave SLA runs from April to March and that there is an agreement in place to review the SLA annually. The next review is due in January 2025 as part of the budget setting process. • The SLA comes under a de-delegation decision for majority of Forum members, for those schools where funding is not through that mechanism there is an ability to opt in/opt out. It was noted that charging mechanisms, processes and costings are identical. • Previously, work was carried out to split the SLA into two parts; part one covering Maternity/Paternity/Jury Service/Shared Parental leave and Adoption leave, part two covering Trade Union facility time. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of the May 2024 Schools Forum, a wider consideration was raised. Should part one stay in place and if so, what should that look like? There was also a query on if part one should remain as a de-delegation arrangement or move to SLA buy-in. • It is proposed that a conversation will be held within Finance Sub-group and further information will be presented to Forum in January to consider options. • Agreed that Finance Sub-Group work with officers to bring proposals back to Schools Forum in January 2025. <p>The Chair thanked all members of the Finance Sub-Group and took the opportunity to encourage membership from Primary and First schools and that colleagues can contact Jane, Christina or the Chair if they are interested. Current Finance Sub-Group Membership @ June 24: David Watson, Steve Wilson, Phillip Sanderson, Matt Snape, Kelly Holbrook, John Newport, Gavin Storey, Steve Baines, Laura Baggett, Colleen Ward, John Ord.</p> <p>Live stream ended.</p>	
8.	Any Other Business	
	None	
9.	Date and Time of Next Meeting	
	Wednesday 15 January 2025 at 12:30pm via Microsoft Teams	