



# Item 3 Minutes

**Meeting** Schools Forum      **Date** Wednesday, 15 May 2024

**Location** Via Microsoft Teams

**Present**

✓ Present  
D Deputy  
A Apologies  
O Absent

Name	Organisation	Representing	20.03.24	15.05.24
Angi Gibson	Hadrian Park Primary School	Academy	N/A	✓
Anthony Gollings	St Thomas More	RC Diocese	✓	✓
Claire Withers	Fordley Primary School	Primary	✓	O
Colette Bland	St Mary's RC Primary School (NS)	Academy	✓	✓
Colleen Ward	Coquet Park First School	Primary	A	✓
David Watson	St Thomas More	Academy / Vice Chair	✓	✓
Diane Turner	Tyne Coast	16-19 Provider	O	D (Joanne Chadwick)
Finn Wilcock	Southridge First School	Primary	O	O
Gavin Storey	Cullercoats Primary School	Primary	A	✓
Gillian Tawes	Shiremoor Primary School	Governor - Primary	O	✓
Jane Lowe	Monkseaton Middle School	Governor - Secondary	✓	✓
Joanne Thompson	Holystone Out of School	Early Years PVI	✓	✓
Jonathan Heath	John Spence High School	Academy	N/A	✓
John Croft	Sir James Knott	Nursery	✓	A
John Newport	Marden Bridge Middle School	Middle	✓	✓
John Ord	Greenfields Primary School	Governor - Primary	✓	✓
Karen Croskery	North Tyneside Student Support Service	PRU	✓	✓
Kelly Holbrook	Longbenton High School	Secondary	✓	✓
Kerry Lillico	Grasmere Academy	Academy	A	✓
Laura Baggett	Monkhouse Primary School	Primary	✓	✓
Lesley Griffin	Wellfield Middle School	Governor - Primary	✓	✓
Louise Bradford	C of E Diocese	C of E Diocese	✓	✓
Matt Snape	Marden High School	Secondary	✓	✓
Paul Johnson	Churchill Community College	Secondary	✓	✓
Peter Gannon	Silverdale School	Special / Chair	✓	A
Phil Kemp	Trade Unions	Trade Unions	✓	✓
Philip Sanderson	Kings Priory	Academy	✓	✓
Rob Harker	Carville Primary Diocese	Primary	✓	✓
Stephen Baines	Holystone Primary Diocese	Primary	✓	A
Steve Wilson	Whitley Bay High School	High	✓	A
Wayne Myers	Richardson Dees Primary	Primary	A	✓
<b>In Attendance:</b>				
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	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 Cook	Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion	NTC	✓	✓
Mark Mirfin	Assistant Director, Commissioning, Partnerships and Transformation	NTC	N/A	N/A
Mark Taylor	Head of Service, Children and Families Commissioning	NTC	N/A	N/A
Mary Nergaard	Project Support Officer	NTC	✓	✓

## Minutes of Meeting

Ref	Item	Action
<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Vice 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.</li> <li>A reminder of roles and responsibilities for Forum Members was provided.</li> <li>See table above for apologies.</li> </ul>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Attendance Register / Membership</b>	
	<p><b>Attendance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See table above.</li> </ul> <p><b>Membership:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CP noted that the two new Academy vacancies have been filled by Angi Gibson (Hadrian Park Primary School) and Jonathan Heath (John Spence Community High School). Inductions have been carried out.</li> <li>Terms of office have been reconfirmed for Laura Baggett and Phil Kemp.</li> <li>Three Terms of Office are due to end at the end of this month. CP is working with those members on either reconfirmation/ replacement to these posts.</li> </ul>	

3.	<b>Minutes of the last meeting</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minutes agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.</li> </ul>	
4.	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
	<p><b>Page 2, Item 2 – Membership:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academy reps have been appointed as noted in Item 2 above.</li> </ul>	
5.	<b>Declaration of Interest</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None declared.</li> </ul>	
6.	<b>Consideration of Special Leave for 2024/25                      Christina Ponting</b>	
	<p>CP talked through the presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A reminder of the decisions made at the last meeting was provided along with a reminder of the current position in relation to both Part 1 (maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental leave and jury service) and Part 2 (Trade Union Facility Time (TUFT)).</li> <li>• At the last meeting of Forum, it was agreed that the reference points would change to All Pupils from 1 April 2024 (1 September 2024 for Academy Schools).</li> <li>• Forum also agreed to a holding position for Maintained Schools with a combined price of £30.42 (Part 1 = £24.68 and Part 2 = £5.75) and that Part 2 Would move to a cash value as opposed to a number of days.</li> <li>• As agreed by Schools Forum, further consultation has been carried out with four well attended presentations delivered to schools, followed by a number of follow up calls/conversations.</li> <li>• This was followed up with a survey to all schools that asked the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Do they want Part 1 of the SLA to continue;</li> <li>○ If so, at what value; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Held at £23.29</li> <li>▪ Increased to £24.68</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ What value would they feel appropriate for Part 2? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ £6.52</li> <li>▪ £8.04</li> <li>▪ Other</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Survey Results – Part 1:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some respondents said they did not want to be part of the SLA because they already have arrangements in place.</li> <li>• Others said that they wanted the SLA to continue for the</li> </ul>	

following reasons:

- Scope / range of cover.
- Limited conditions / limits / exclusions.
- Value for money / cost.
- Ease of use.
- Refund levels / no capping.
- 77% of respondents who said that they wanted the SLA to remain in place noted that the price should be increased to £24.68 (current value plus 6%).

**Survey Results – Part 2:**

- Schools Forum were reminded that there is a requirement for School Employers to have arrangements in place for trade union facility time and that this is confirmed within the terms of employment and/or as part of the collective agreements put in place as part of a TUPE process.
- Schools Forum were also reminded that they are not representing employers within this Forum.
- A reminder of the price options was provided as follows:
  - a. Lift rate to £6.52 which equates to a 20% increase and provides a spending level that would reduce the existing TU funded time. It was noted that TUs would have difficulty with this as it would change the time that they have available to support schools and their members.
  - b. Lift rate to £8.04 which equates to 45% increase and would accommodate the existing TU time allocated, however, this would not allow for any cost of living / inflationary increases.
- It was noted that both options would require TUs to review existing arrangements and require a review of the central recharge.
- Respondents noted that they value the relationship with TU colleagues and recognise the importance of the arrangements. They also noted that any influencing factors involved in their decision were about affordability not value.
- It was acknowledged that any reduction in the funding would have an impact on availability of TU representatives and could affect some of the ways of how they work with schools.
- Schools noted that the change in reference points/increase in pupil numbers will result in increased costs for all schools therefore increasing the costs on two levels did impact their decision.

- 67% voted to increase the rate to £6.52 (20%).
- 30% voted to increase the rate to £8.04 (45%).
- 3% voted for other which was to hold the rate at the 23/24 rate.
- Breakdown in terms of the response rates by sector and Forum Representation was provided.

**Consultation Results Summary:**

- 83.34% of schools received a presentation.
- Only 42.31% of schools responded to the survey.
  - 30.44% of Academy schools responded to the survey.
  - 47.28% of maintained schools responded to the survey.
- Part 1: 71.43% of Academy Schools and 76.93% of maintained schools voted in favour of an increase to £24.68.
- Preferred outcome: SLA to remain in place at the increased rate of £24.68.
- Part 2: 71.43% of Academy Schools and 65.39% of maintained schools voted in favour of a 20% increase (£6.52).
- Preferred outcome: SLA to remain in place at the increased rate of £6.52 with acceptance that the TUFT will reduce and acknowledgment of the potential impact at school level.

**Additional comments – Part 1:**

- It was noted that some maintained schools said that if they had a choice to buy into part 1, that they would probably choose not to, stating that it was not financially viable for them and/or they already have other arrangements in place.
- Some maintained schools said that if the SLA did not exist for Part 1, that they would not be able to get cover from the market as they could not afford the premiums available in the market or the percentage refund outweighs the money paid in.
- The SLA will come up for review again in January 2025. Forum may need to lead on a further review in the future to decide whether the SLA needs to remain or cease. If it is to remain, consideration will need to be given as to whether the de-delegation route continues to be the preferred option. If this were the case, Forum would also need to consider the lead in time needed to allow enough time for any necessary work/due diligence to be carried out and/or for schools to have enough time to go to the market for an alternative.
- It was also noted that the pay award for September 2024 is still unknown.

**Additional comments – Part 2:**

- SLA funded route needs to remain in place as to remove this would be in breach of the collective and TUPE agreements and/ or terms of employment.
- Formal recognition arrangements remain in place, and these will continue to be reviewed annually.
- Schools Forum were reminded that they are not the employer representatives in Schools and that TU may choose (on an individual or a collective level) to engage directly with employers on expectations as a result of reduction in paid TUFT.
- Existing arrangements will have to remain in place until 31 August 2024 to support those schools who were releasing their staff to undertake TUFT duties.
- Further meetings will need to be arranged with TUs to look at funding available and thereafter TUs themselves would need to be able to reach an agreement on allocation.
- Again, the pay Award for September 2024 is still unknown.

#### **Decision**

- As this is currently a de-delegated item, Schools Forum make the final decision for the SLA overall and how this then applies specifically to maintained schools.
- Views and opinions have been sought from all schools as the SLA is open to all schools but not all Schools Forum Representatives are eligible to vote on the decision as this is a de-delegated item. A reminder of who was eligible to vote was provided.
- If Schools Forum chose to go against the outcome of the consultation, they will need to provide the rationale.

Discussion followed around:

- SW noted that School budgets are exceptionally tight and expressed concerns about this continuing to be a de-delegated item in the future.
- Option for wider consultation to been carried out to review Part 1 of the SLA from 25/26 was discussed.
- A reminder was provided that sufficient notice would need to be given to schools of any changes to ensure that they have enough time to put alternative arrangements in place.
- DW proposed that further consultation in relation to Part 1 is carried out in the Autumn Term.
- **ACTION: CP to work with the Schools Finance team to include questions around the future of Part 1 of the SLA in the budget consultation.**

**CP**

## Recommendations

Schools Forum were asked to:

- Agree for Part 1 of the SLA to remain in place for 24/25 financial year.

### **Agreed**

- If yes, at what value £23.29 or £24.68?

### **Agreed at £24.68**

- Consideration for 25/26 was discussed. Forum should note feedback from schools regarding scope of choice and that the existing SLA funding ends 31/03/2025.

**Noted. Forum agreed for wider consultation to be carried out with schools in the Autumn with a view to making a decision in January 2025.**

- Agree at what value Part 2 of SLA is to remain in place, £6.52 or £8.04?

### **Agreed at £6.52**

- Consideration for 24/25 and 25/26. Forum should that existing arrangements remain in place up to 31/08/2024, existing SLA funding ends 31/03/2025).

**Noted. Forum agreed for CP to continue to liaise with TU colleagues to agree what the SLA looks like for the future.**

CP

## Further Reflections on the Consultation:

- It was noted that engagement levels were high but responses to the consultation were lower than expected which follows historic patterns.
- The engagement has found that there is a mixed understanding of the role of Schools Forum.
- Membership of Schools Forum is shared with Schools, and it is Schools themselves who nominate their representatives.
- Forum Representatives' role is to represent their locality, not their own school and they should discuss all Schools Forum matters within their locality/network meetings.
- All Schools Forum Members receive an induction.
- Awareness raising has been carried out in the past with all schools and is carried out annually with Governors. However, there are a lot of new Head Teachers.
- It was noted that lack of engagement has been discussed before in relation to other consultation exercises and that the approach and the engagement level overall could be improved.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposals to try and increase engagement were outlined as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ All members to be offered an annual induction/refresher (either in persons or via Teams).</li> <li>○ All Head Teachers are also to be offered an annual update on the role of Schools Forum.</li> <li>○ Live stream reminders are to be sent to all Head Teachers to invite/encourage them to watch the live stream.</li> <li>○ Standing item to be added to the agenda for the online Head Teacher Briefings.</li> <li>○ The Schools Forum Toolkit is to be updated for September 2024 to reflect the actions outlined above.</li> <li>○ A wider piece of work will be carried out to look at how Schools Forum and the Authority can consult and engage better with schools and remove any barriers to participation.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• DW thanked CP, the Schools HR Team, the Schools Finance Team, and the Schools Forum Finance Sub-Group for pulling together the information for schools and carrying out the engagement.</li> <li>• DW also noted his disappointment that despite the significant work carried out and the high level of engagement, the response to the consultation was still low.</li> <li>• DW reiterated that in all the discussions that he has had with Schools regarding Part 2 of the SLA, any issues have been around affordability and not a reflection of the value of the arrangements and relationships with TU colleagues.</li> </ul>	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No matters arising.</li> </ul>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Date and Time of Next Meeting</b>	
	Wednesday, 10 July at 12:30pm, via Microsoft Teams.	