



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** 10th July 2024

Location Via Microsoft Teams

Present

✓ Present
D Deputy
A Apologies
O Absent

Name	Organisation	Representing	15.05.2024	10.07.2024
Angi Gibson	Hadrian Park Primary School	Primary	✓	✓
Anthony Gollings	St Thomas More	RC Diocese	✓	✓
Claire Withers	Fordley Primary School	Primary	O	✓
Colette Bland	St Mary's RC Primary School (NS)	Academy	✓	A
Colleen Ward	Coquet Park First School	Primary	✓	✓
Daniel Jamieson	Burnside Community College	Secondary	N/A	✓
David Watson	St Thomas More	Academy	✓	✓
Diane Turner	Tyne Coast	16-19 Provider	D (Joanne Chadwick)	O
Finn Wilcock	Southridge First School	Primary	O	✓
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	A	✓
John Newport	Marden Bridge Middle School	Middle	✓	✓
John Ord	Greenfields Primary School	Governor - Primary	✓	A
Karen Croskery	North Tyneside Student Support Service	PRU	✓	A
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	✓	A
Louise Bradford	C of E Diocese	C of E Diocese	✓	✓
Matt Snape	Marden High School	Secondary	✓	✓
Paul Johnson	Churchill Community College	Secondary	✓	N/A
Peter Gannon	Silverdale School	Special	A	A
Phil Kemp	Trade Unions	Trade Unions	✓	D (Claire MacLeod)
Philip Sanderson	Kings Priory	Academy	✓	✓
Rob Harker	Carville Primary Diocese	Primary	✓	A
Stephen Baines	Holystone Primary Diocese	Primary	A	✓
Steve Wilson	Whitley Bay High School	High	A	✓
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	✓	A
Lisa Ramshaw	Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion	NTC	✓	✓
Mark Mirfin	Assistant Director, Commissioning, Partnerships and Transformation	NTC	N/A	✓
Mark Taylor	Head of Service, Children and Families Commissioning	NTC	N/A	N/A
Mary Nergaard	Project Support Officer	NTC	✓	✓
April Gibbs-Thorn	Administration Officer – Schools Forum	NTC	✓	✓

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 outlined the criteria relating to the deputy attendance for those members not able to attend. • CP welcomed Daniel Jamieson into Schools Forum as replacement for Paul Johnson, Head of Churchill College. • One vacancy was highlighted. Work is being carried out in the South-West area to appoint to that vacancy, in addition to some terms of office which are due for renewal from 	

	September. This work will be carried out outside of Schools Forum.	
3.	Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising	
	<p>Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. Matters arising are as follows:</p> <p>Page 6/7, Item 6 – Consideration of Special leave for 2024/25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CP and Finance are looking at the consultation for the Autumn and the option to do the Special Leave SLA either separately or as part of the annual consultation exercise to improve consultation, as discussed at the last meeting. • CP has met with the Trade Unions and agreed how the SLA will work under the new arrangements. A workable solution has been agreed for Trade Union Facility Time (TUFT). • The Chair gave thanks to CP and all Trade Union Colleagues. 	
4.	Declaration of Interest	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declarations of interest declared for Item 5: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stephen Baines ○ Kelly Holbrook ○ Claire Withers ○ Colleen Ward 	
5.	Schools Finance Update	Jane Cross
	<p>Local Authority Finance Update</p> <p>DM talked through the presentation on screen. The presentation gave a brief overview of the Authority’s financial position 2023/2024, the Investment Plan and to give context around Reserves. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The General Fund has a £7.2m overspend. • In broad terms, the main pressure are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Corporate Parenting and Placements (£7.3m) with a higher than expected number of children in care and increased use of external residential care and supported placements. ○ Home to School Transport (£3.5m) driven by inflation as well as the number of children with complex needs. ○ School catering (£3.3m) – Difficult decision taken to cease provision in March as it was no longer sustainable. ○ Externally commissioned services (£4m) was noted to be offset by £1.6m operational savings. 	

- The bulk of pressures were felt in the Schools Catering Service and Adult Social Care.
- Still facing a number of challenges linked to transition of complex clients from Children’s Services and hospital settings, increasing homecare hours as part of supporting a home-first approach and reducing short-term residential care placements
- A number of savings have been made on significant pressures and challenges which has helped to mitigate including the use of a number of one-off grants.

Reserves

- The 2023/24 year ended with £41m General Fund Reserves and Balances, most of which are earmarked for a specific purpose.
- Impact of Covid funding was discussed.
- In 2023/24 the Authority utilised £18m of reserves, £11m of which was planned and the remaining £7m met the in-year overspend. There are plans to replenish these over the next few years.
- The Strategic Reserve and General Fund Balance are the last resort in addressing one-off unforeseen pressures.
- The pressure on and use of Reserves has increased significantly in recent years given the challenges that continue to be faced.

Medium Term Financial Plan – Current Position

- Overview of the MTFP (next 4 years) was provided which includes a combination of £101m in growth, £35m in savings, £9m in funding review and £24m in council tax. This leaves a funding gap of £33m.
- Overview of the MTFP Projects was provided. Project Framework in place and agreed workstreams are progressing. Key updates are provided to Cabinet in the Bi-Monthly Performance and Financial Management reports.
- The MTFP projects have identified over £10m of savings to be delivered in 24/25. Overview was provided.
- It was noted that all emerging pressures link to the existing MTFP Projects.

Investment Plan

- Overview of the Investment Plan for 2023/24 was provided.
- It was noted that 70% of the general fund is funded by external grants.
- Breakdown of spend against the 2023/24 budget was provided.

- Overview of the School Capital Allocation for 2023/24 was provided along with an overview of the some of the schemes that were delivered, which equates to £4.7m of grant funding invested in 25 condition related schemes.
- Overview of the High Needs Provision Capital Grant was provided along with an overview of the some of the schemes that were delivered, which equates to £4.5m in investment.

2023/24 Schools Finance Update

JC talked through the presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:

- A provisional outturn of £2.930m in deficit which is an improvement of £5.226m against a forecast deficit of £8.156m.
- Additional funding for schools in deficit of £1.868m contributed towards the improved outturn position.
- 19 schools ended the year 23/24 in deficit with a total deficit balance of £13.061m.
- The £1.868m funding noted above was allocated to those schools with significant deficit balances at year end.
- Forum were reminded that it was agreed that the funding would be allocated based on 2023/24 actual balances in line with the guidance, to be used specifically towards the elimination of a deficit balance, taking into account the severity of the school's position and prioritising those in greatest need.
- The funding was applied proportionately to the 2023/24 deficit balances, other than for Whitehouse Primary school which academised on 31 December 2023, leaving a £0.221m deficit balance, which was funded in its entirety.

2023/24 Outturn Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

- The 2023/24 DSG started with an £8.340m deficit and ended with an £8.340m deficit, despite significant net changes.

2023/24 High Needs Block Outturn

- Outturn deficit of £9.592m in 2022/23 with an in-year deficit balance of £2.852 for 2023/24 which has been mostly off-set by £2.660m Safety Valve funding from the Department for Education (DfE).
- 2023/24 was the first year of the Local Authority's 5-year DSG Management Plan as part of the Safety Valve Programme.
- A final submission for 2023/24 was made to the DfE.
- This showed that despite a slight worsening against the plan of £0.020, the Authority remains on-track to reach an in-year balance by 2027/28.

- At the end of financial year 2023/24 the Authority had received £9.750m. In subsequent financial years, subject to compliance with the conditions set in the Safety Valve agreement, the Authority will receive the amounts shown in Table 5 of the report which will fund.
- The DSG Management Plan will be continually reprofiled throughout the 5 years on the Safety Valve Intervention Programme.

2024/25 School Budgets Update

- Budget plans were required to be submitted by the beginning of June. A couple of budget plans are pending final Governor review.
- The 2023/24 outturn was £2.930m in deficit.
- As it stands 2024/25 is forecast to be a £9.707m deficit.
- Work will continue with schools to refine budget plans and assist schools with applications for de-delegated funding to mitigate where possible.

2024/25 Deficit Schools.

- There are currently 16 schools with deficit budget plan for 2024/25, including seven new schools requiring a licenced deficit agreement in 2024/25.
- The nine schools that continue to require support from the Authority were in deficit at the end of the 2023/24 financial year. Of these nine schools two had a structural deficit in 2023/24 which continues into 2024/25.
- Work will continue with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to secure additional support from their School Resources Management Advisors (SRMAs). This is free resource and external support. Three schools were supported in 2023/24 and work is ongoing.
- Special mention was made of Longbenton High School, who ended 2022/23 with a deficit of nearly £1.697m. They have been following their deficit plan for some years now and received £0.129m Schools in Financial Difficulty funding for 2023/24.
- Longbenton High School have now presented a budget plan for 2024/25 that could see their cumulative deficit reduce to £0.826m deficit which represents a marvellous achievement.

National Funding Formula (NFF) Consultation for 2025/26

- As in previous years, the Authority will need to determine the local formula to distribute funding to mainstream schools and academies for the financial year 2025/26. Forum were

reminded that the NFF formula is already being followed in North Tyneside.

- Indicative funding allocation should come from DfE towards end of July, that will include guidance for capping and minimum funding.
- Once this allocation has been received the Authority will consider modelling potential options for capping and maximising Minimum Funding Guarantees.
- Recommended modelling scenarios will be presented to Schools Forum in September, in advance of the formal consultation with schools during October/November 2024.

Discussion followed around:

- AG requested clarification around reprofiling the DSG Management Plan and the £0.710m that was received in advance from the DfE.
- JC noted reprofiling of DSG management plan is not around income, it is around expenditure. Reprofiling of DSG management plan includes looking at learned lessons, increased spends and where savings can be made.
- JC also noted that £0.710m from DfE was not additional funding, it's an advance payment that will be taken off the 2024/25 funding.
- The Chair queried the usefulness of SRMA's.
- JC noted that she feels that they have been useful and that they provide reassurance to schools. They do make recommendations that can improve the plans.
- JC suggested that a future School Forum could include feedback from schools who have been through the process.
- AB supported JC's comments and noted the reassurance gained from SRMA's, for both the Authority and the individual schools.
- **ACTION: Finance Team to look at collating some feedback from schools on the benefit of the SMRAs to present to Schools Forum at a later date.**

Recommendations

Schools Forum was asked to:

- acknowledge the provisional 2023/24 outturn position on all DSG balances;

Noted

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> acknowledge the school budget plans overall summary position; Noted acknowledge the pressure on schools, the High Needs block and the Authority's progress in the ESFA's Safety Valve Intervention Programme; and Noted note the plan for funding consultation for 2024/25. Noted 	
6.	Falling Rolls and Growth Fund Proposed Allocations	Andrew Brown
	<p>AB talked through the presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Authority have met with representatives from Schools Forum Finance Sub-group. The Subgroup considered the applications for funding on 11 June 2024. Whilst the subgroup has proposed the allocation of funding, the final decision rests with Schools Forum. <p>2024/25 Falling Rolls Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Falling rolls funding £0.300m available, £0.50m carried forward balance from 2023/24 and £0.250m in-year funding. As in previous years a proportion of the surplus funding will be transferred back to academies, this is estimated at £0.050m but the figure is still being finalised. Three Schools eligible for Falling Rolls as outlined in Table 1 of the report, totalling £0.076m. The academy transfer plus the falling roll funding will be deducted from the total available funding leaving an estimated balance of £0.174m, of which £0.050m will remain in falling rolls and an estimated £0.124m will transfer to Schools in Financial Difficulty. The opening balance for Schools in Financial Difficulty funding in 2024/25 was £0.393m. With the estimated balance of £0.124m being transferred from Falling Rolls to Schools in Financial Difficulty, this will increase the available funding to £0.517m. <p>2024/25 Growth Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DfE established a separate fund in the School Block of the DSG for growth funding. In North Tyneside this fund was not used for growth and was instead added to the remaining balances to be redistributed to all schools. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When setting the 2024/25 School Block allocation, Schools Forum agreed to set aside £0.250m of the identified growth funding, however there was a £0.037m deficit carried forward from 2023/24. Therefore, total Growth Funding available in 2024/25 is £0.213m. Two schools were initially identified as being eligible, ahead of a review of evidence provided. One school not eligible. A report will be presented to Schools Forum at the next meeting (September 2024) to give the outcome of the evidence review. <p>Discussion followed around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair noted that the Schools Finance Sub-Group are looking at processes and noted that the £0.250m that goes into Falling rolls and the £0.250m that goes into Growth Fund will form part of the consultation in the Autumn Term to consider whether this figure needs to be adjusted taking into consideration the falling birth rate. <p>Recommendations</p> <p>Schools Forum was asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider and approve the funding allocations as set out in this report; and <p>Approved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree the current position and plans for additional funding sources maintained by Schools Forum. <p>Agreed</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>DFE Safety Valve Update Mark Mirfin Intervention Programme Update</p>	
	<p>MM talked through the presentation. The report covers the period December 2023 to March 2024. Main points to note as follows:</p> <p>Executive Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DSG Management Plan forecast a 2023/24 year-end pressure of £10.474m on the High Needs Block. The outturn position for year-end 2023/24 was £10.494m. This represents a slight worsening pressure of £0.020m in 2023/24 against the original DSG Management Plan. DfE have now confirmed that the Local Authority will receive the first payment of 2024/25. The Authority received £4.681m capital funding to support the implementation of the DSG Management Plan; Officers have 	

now allocated £0.884m to 40 schools to support the wider inclusion in schools and settings agenda.

- In light of the funding remaining, MM strongly encouraged schools to make an application for funding for inclusion work.

High Needs Block Financial Summary

- An overview of the 5 year plan was shown on screen.
- If all payments are made, subject to the conditions outlined in the DSG Management plan, the outturn at the end of the programme it is expected that an in-year balance will be reached.

Engagement

- MM noted that substantial engagement has been carried out with schools and partner organisations, but this update focuses on the significant engagement with Children and Young People, including;
 - Graduated approach
 - ARP's and SEN units (parents and children)
 - SEND Youth Forum
 - Neuro-diversity
 - Easter play Scheme
- MM noted that engagement has been carried out with approximately 266 children and young people within this reporting period, and noted huge thanks to the schools involved for promoting the engagement.

You said/we did together

- Headteachers collaborative held recently reviewed all work done this year and a detailed summary is included within the return to DfE.
- MM gave an overview of ARPS and SEN Units. Work has concluded on the coproduction of an SLA and approved the funding model for ARPS and SEN Units. By Jan 2025, the aim is to have 167 ARPS/SEN Unit places. In September 2024 there will be 157 places. Since safety valve went live, places have increased by 20 and again, thanks to the schools involved.
- Redesignation involves both the DfE and cabinet and a series of reports are intended to go to Cabinet shortly.
- Commissioned services review phase one is now complete. Phase two will review need, offer impact, value for money and development of a single front door approach.
- Capital Funding for Inclusion has funding of £0.106m remaining. 40 schools have received £0.884m in funding. MM strongly

encouraged those schools who have not applied to get in touch.

- Whole School Audit. 76% of schools have taken up this offer. MM urged schools to get in touch. There is no charge to schools for this Audit and feedback from Headteachers and SENCO's has highlighted the significant benefits of using this external lens to assess some of the challenges and what is working well.
- The Graduated approach has been launched with expectation to roll out in September 2024.
- The Early Years inclusion service is now soft launched and is to be officially launched in September 2024. The Riverside Family Hub has been refurbished and 11 new posts created.
- The SEND Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) Team has been established and are on track for 100% completion of Annual Reviews of post 16's.

Your Views - Building on what we are doing

- All schools' views on focus areas, and those areas schools wanted to focus on, were taken into account from survey.
- This includes broadly 8 areas:
 - Banding and Tariffs review
 - Child level SENK funding for inclusion
 - Delegated funding to schools' clusters to support young people with SENK
 - Early years Assessment Nursery
 - Single front door to services
 - Alternative provision review
 - Post 16 routes for SEND learners and what the offer is
 - Training and Workforce development
- A QR code is available for schools to complete a survey and is being issued weekly until end of term. MM noted completion would be much appreciated to gather views, inform priorities and to know what else can be done.
- Overview of the significant challenges was provided and the importance of engagement in the survey was discussed as this helps inform the priorities as we go into year 2 and beyond.
- The DfE expect that the DSG Management Plan will be reprofiled as we move through the programme.

Next steps

- Lead on strategic priorities within the DSG Management Plan, in addition to the wider SEND Improvement Plan.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter consultation on the 0.5% transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block for 2025-26. • Re-profiling the DSG Management Plan ahead of 2025-26, including any new initiatives. • Key dates: The next Safety Valve returns are: (Term 2) 28 August 2024 and (Term 3) 27 November 2024. 	
8.	Reports from Services for 25/26 Financial Year Proposal	Christina Ponting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reminder of the services in receipt of funding via Central Schools Services Block and the De-Delegated Items was provided. • Schools Forum were asked if they wish to receive a report or presentation from service leads in the Autumn. • Forum did not request either further clarity or presentations. 	
9.	Proposed Meeting Arrangements 2024/2025	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed meeting dates were circulated to the group in advance. • Forum were asked whether or not they wish to continue with virtual meetings or return to face to face. <p>Recommendations Schools Forum is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to continue with the virtual meetings. Forum Agreed. • Agree the proposed dates/times. Forum Agreed. 	
10.	Any Other Business	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair welcomed April Gibbs-Thorn as the new Schools Forum Administrator and noted she will be taking over in the Autumn term. • The Chair thanked Mary Nergaard for her excellent work over the last five years in supporting Schools Forum and noted the extensive background work that goes into the administration of Forum. 	
<p><i>This is to give notice of that item 11 was considered in private. Observers were excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that the report contains information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.</i></p>		

11.	Responsibilities for Redundancy & Early Retirement Costs – Annual Update	Christina Ponting
	<p>The live streaming was ceased at 13.45pm and CP talked through the main points from the confidential briefing paper.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <p>Schools Forum is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the recommendations as outlined within the report. <p>Forum agreed</p> <p>The Chair noted thanks for all for the hard work carried out by schools and Finance Officers.</p>	
12.	Date and Time of Next Meeting	
	Wednesday 25 September 2024 at 12:30pm via Microsoft Teams	