



# North Tyneside Council

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

## Item 5 Minutes

**Meeting** Schools Forum      **Date** Thursday 9 November  
**Location** Via Microsoft Teams  
**Present**

✓ Present
D Deputy
A Apologies
O Absent

Name	Organisation	Representing	21.09.23	09.11.23
Angi Gibson	Hadrian Park Primary School	Primary	D (Wayne Myers)	✓
Anthony Gollings	St Thomas More	RC Diocese	O	O
Claire Withers	Fordley Primary School	Primary	✓	✓
Colette Bland	St Mary's RC Primary School (NS)	Academy	N/A	✓
Colleen Ward	Coquet Park First School	Primary	✓	✓
David Watson	St Thomas More	Academy	✓	✓
Diane Turner	Tyne Coast	16-19 Provider	O	O
Finn Wilcock	Southridge First School	Primary	✓	✓
Gavin Storey	Cullercoats Primary School	Primary	✓	✓
Jane Lowe	Monkseaton Middle School	Governor - Secondary	N/A	✓
Joanne Thompson	Holystone Out of School	Early Years PVI	✓	✓
John Croft	Sir James Knott	Nursery	✓	✓
John Newport	Marden Bridge Middle School	Middle	✓	✓
John Ord	Greenfields Primary School	Governor - Primary	N/A	✓
Karen Croskery	North Tyneside Student Support Service	PRU	✓	O
Kelly Holbrook	Longbenton High School	Secondary	✓	✓
Kerry Lillico	Grasmere Academy	Academy	O	A
Laura Baggett	Monkhouse Primary School	Primary	A	D (Kate Byrne)
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	A	✓
Phil Kemp	Trade Unions	Trade Unions	D (Candida Mellor)	D (Candida Mellor)
Philip Sanderson	Kings Priory	Academy	✓	✓
Rob Harker	Carville Primary Diocese	Primary	✓	✓
Stephen Baines	Holystone Primary Diocese	Primary	✓	✓
Steve Wilson	Whitley Bay High School	High	✓	✓
<b>In Attendance:</b>				
Mark Longstaff	Director of Commissioning & Asset	NTC	✓	✓

	Management			
Jon Ritchie	Director of Resources	NTC	✓	✓
Andrew Brown	Principle Accountant, Finance	NTC	✓	A
Christina Ponting	Senior Manager – Schools HR	NTC	✓	✓
Claire Emmerson	Former Head of Finance – Deputy S151 Officer	NTC	✓	N/A
David Mason	Head of Finance – Deputy S151 Officer	NTC	N/A	✓
Diane Thompson	Senior Accountant – Schools Finance	NTC	✓	✓
Jane Cross	Senior Business Partner, Finance	NTC	✓	✓
Julie Firth	Director of Children’s Services	NTC	A	✓
Mary Nergaard	PA to Director of Commissioning & Asset Management	NTC	✓	✓
Ian Wilkinson	Strategic Lead, Education and Inclusion Review	NTC	✓	A
Lisa Cook	Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion	NTC	✓	✓
Mark Mirfin	Assistant Director, SEND Transformation	NTC	✓	✓

## Minutes of Meeting

Ref	Item	Action
<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome / Apologies for Absence</b>	
	<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>The Chair noted that Mark Longstaff who has been involved in Schools Forum for approximately 20 years and that this will be his last meeting. The Chair issued thanks on behalf of Schools Forum for all of Mark’s hard work over that time.</p> <p>See table above for apologies.</p>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Attendance Register / Membership / Roles and Responsibilities</b>	
	<p><b>Roles &amp; Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reminder of roles and responsibilities for Forum Members was provided.</li> </ul> <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 we have 2 new governor members, Jane Lowe and John Ord</li> <li>Also have a returning member with Collette Band rejoining Forum as a representative for the RC Diocese.</li> </ul>	

<b>3.</b>	<b>Virtual Public Meeting / Observers</b>	
	The Chair welcomed the public/observers to the meeting.	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Declaration of Interest</b>	
	Item 7a – Declarations were declared by Stephen Baines and Kelly Holbrook.	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Minutes of the last meeting</b>	
	Minutes agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
	<p><b>Page 3, Item 2 – Membership:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See item 2 above.</li> </ul> <p><b>Page 3, Item 7 – Annual Review of the Schools Forum Constitution:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Election of the Vice Chair:</u> Nominations were requested for the Vice Chair.</li> <li>• CP noted that David Watson has offered to stand as Vice Chair. Forum agreed. DW was duly elected as Vice Chair of Schools Forum.</li> <li>• <u>Action Plan / Self-Assessment and Constitution:</u> See Item 8 below.</li> </ul> <p><b>Page 8, Item 8 – Schools Finance Update:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of the drop-in sessions were emailed to schools.</li> <li>• Revised report to include the additional recommendation was circulated 08/11/2023 and updated on the website.</li> </ul> <p><b>Page 11, Item 8 – Schools Finance Update:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slides were circulated with the papers of this meeting.</li> </ul> <p><b>Page 11, Item 9 – Reports from Services:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On the agenda under Item 10.</li> </ul>	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Schools Finance Update</b>	<b>Jane Cross</b>
<b>7a</b>	<b>Funding Distribution and Finance Update</b>	
	<p>Jane Cross, Senior Business Partner and David Mason, the new Head of Finance were welcomed to the meeting. JC talked through the presentation on screen. An overview of what was going to be covered was provided. Main points to note as follows:</p> <p><b>2024/25 Funding Allocations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A reminder of the key aspects of the funding formula for 2024/25 was provided as follows:</li> </ul>	

- The minimum per pupil funding levels will be set at Primary £4,610, Key Stage 3 £5,771 and Key Stage 4 £6,331.
- Introducing a new approach to split sites replacing locally determined factors.
- Rolling the 2023 to 2024 mainstream schools additional grant (MSAG) into the NFF. Overview was provided on how that has been allocated.
- Introducing, for the first time, a methodology for calculating and allocating funding for falling rolls.
- It was noted that the Department for Education (DfE) have not yet moved to a hard NFF, however, North Tyneside is already following the NFF Factors as agreed by Schools Forum.
- Other increased to the NFF factor values are as follows:
  - 1.4% to the following factors: basic entitlement, low prior attainment (LPA), FSM6, income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI), English as an additional language (EAL), mobility, sparsity and the lump sum
  - 1.4% to the minimum per pupil levels (MPPL)
  - Both of the above were previously announced at 2.4%, however, following an update from the DfE regarding an error to the funding formula which lead to a reduction of £1.300m in the funding available to schools in North Tyneside, which meant the 2 factors had to be reduced to 1.4%
  - 1.6% to the free school meals (FSM) factor value
  - 0.5% to the funding floor
  - 0% on the premises factors, except for: (i) Private Finance Initiative (PFI)
- Continue to set a Minimum Funding Guarantee in the local formula, which in 2024/25 must be between +0.0% and +0.5%.
- 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 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.
- **Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Allocations:** The indicative DSG Values for 2024/25 were shown on screen (Table 1 of the report).
- Increase to schools of approximately 5.2%
- Reduction in CSSB in line with previous years.

- Increase in the High Needs Block
- Information not yet available in relation to Early Years so this is currently set at the 2023/24 levels until further information is received.
- It was also noted that within the High Needs Block there is the DSG Management Plan / Safety Valve Agreement and the assumption of the £0.751m funding transfer on top of the indicative figures shown.
- **CSSB:** The Indicative Central Schools Block Funding was shown on screen (Table 5 of the report).
- Indicative reduction in CSSB of £0.067m in line with the expected 20% reduction on historic commitments that we have seen in previous years, which results in a 4.13% reduction overall.
- A report will come back to Schools Forum in January 2024 with proposed changes to the CSSB funding allocations to services.
- **Early Years:** It was announced that the free childcare offer will be expanded so that eligible working parents can access 30 hours of free childcare from the term after their child turns 9 months to when they start school. Overview of the phased approach being taken to the changes was shown on screen with full implementation by September 2025. Outcome of consultation results have not yet been published by the DfE, but the Authority will continue to model on that basis. Work will continue on this with the Early Years Sub-Group.

### **Finance Update**

- **High Needs Block**
- In-year pressure of £2.832m is slightly higher than anticipated, however, due to the balance from 2022/23 being better than anticipated we are still in-line with the DSG Management Plan with a cumulative deficit position of £10.474m. A breakdown of the in-year pressure was shown on screen (Table 2 of the report).
- **Early Years**
- 2022/23 surplus of £0.337m.
- There is a New Early Years Supplementary Grant for 2023/24 which will be introduced from September 2023.
- **School's Budget Monitoring**
- 2022/23 deficit of £0.382m which was a decrease in balances of £3.700m.

- 14 Schools identified with planned deficits in 2023/24
- Budget monitoring is progressing well and a report will follow in January.
- Deficit clinics are ongoing and the offer to have a Schools Resource Management Advisors (SRMA) continues to be available from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).
- **Schools in Financial Difficulty Funding (SIFD)**
- 2023/24 opening balance £0.578m.
- Schools Forum Finance Sub-group met 16th October 2023 to receive applications for funding.
- £0.419m funding allocation recommended by the sub-group. Overview of the proposed allocations was shown on screen as outlined in Table 3 of the report.
- Additional DfE Support for SIFD was announced with £20m funding allocated nationally. Of which, £1.868m has been allocated to North Tyneside based on school outturn balances for 2022/23. This was the largest allocation nationally.
- Proposal to allocate funding on a straight-line basis based on school deficit balances as at 31st March 2023, taking into account the funding via the SIFD Funding to ensure that schools are not double funded. Overview shown on screen as outlined in Table 4 of the report.
- **2023/24 CSSB Funding Allocations**
- A reminder of the decreases in the 2023/24 allocations was provided.
- Overview of the remaining 2023/24 CSSB funding allocations was shown as outlined in Table 5 of the report.
- As noted above, the 2024/25 indicative reduction will need to be taken from the remaining functions funded by CSSB on behalf of schools and proposals will come back to Forum in January.

Discussion followed around:

- SW noted that as a member of the Finance Sub-Group, when the recommendations relating to the Schools in Financial Difficulty funding applications were made, the Sub-Group was not aware of the additional funding being made available from the DfE and queried if the Local Authority had taken this into consideration when allocating the additional funding, noting that some of the funding being allocated via

SIFD Funding may not have been as much had they known about the additional allocation at the time.

- KH noted that schools applying for the fund were also not aware of the additional funding.
- JC noted that the additional funding was not known at the time of the SIFD funding meeting as the DfE had not announced the allocations. When Officers looked at the proposals for the additional funding, in line with the DfE guidance, the allocations via SIFD Funding was taken into consideration so that no school is funded twice. Where schools appear on both lists, this is because the deficit was in excess of the funding that was being requested via SIFD Funding.
- GS noted the criteria that we have to follow when allocating SIFD Funding and queried why the recommendation in relation to the additional funding was “to note the proposals” and not a request “to approve”. GS also queried what is meant by a straight-line basis and queried if the proposals should have been presented to Finance Sub-Group for agreement first.
- An overview of what was meant by a straight-line basis was provided. This equated to approximately 14.5% of the deficit in each deficit school. Schools with the larger deficit will get a larger monetary amount but this will be the same proportion of their overall deficit across all deficit schools. Rather than setting individual criteria, the funding was allocated on a straight-line basis on the logic that this was how the Government had allocated the funding.
- JR noted that due to the route of the funding, its allocation is to the Local Authority rather than the DSG, therefore, the allocation is a decision by Cabinet with the recommendation being presented in a paper to Cabinet on 27 November. However, because of the importance of working with the schools the Authority is asking for input from Schools Forum. If there is a strong feeling from this Forum then this will be reflected through to Cabinet but ultimately the decision lies with Cabinet and not Schools Forum. This is why the recommendation is a note only as opposed to asking Forum for a decision.
- JR also noted that the allocation to North Tyneside was the largest in the Country and that this reflects the size of the

deficit as well as substantial lobbying by LA Officers to the DfE regarding the options to address the current and forecast maintained school deficits

- GS thank JR for the clarification.
- DW noted that he understood that the basis for the funding to be allocated was on the outturn of 2022/23, however, the guidance to Local Authorities is that there is flexibility around how it is distributed.
- DW also noted his belief that the money came as a result of the 6.5% pay increase and the recognition that the nature of required staffing expenses for some schools, the increase in DSG funding was not going to be enough.
- DW further noted that although the allocation was based on the outturns from 2022/23, the funding is very much intended for 2023/24. DW reiterated that there are 14 schools with licenced deficit balances, however, assuming the 12 schools that are to be allocated funding are still in a deficit position this year, there are 2 schools that potentially may be in deficit at the end of 2023/24 that will not benefit from this money.
- DW also noted that the guidance states that not every school with a deficit should benefit from the funding and that it would expect that funding should be allocated on a case-by-case basis. Whilst he understands the methodology behind the proposed allocation, DW feels that this doesn't look like a case-by-case basis.
- JR noted that the announcement came in after the Schools Finance Sub-Group had met to agree the SIFD Funding allocations. Therefore, it was decided to take those allocations into consideration before agreeing the distribution of the additional funding.
- With a longer run in, this would have been factored in via the SF Finance Sub-group, but because the Authority would like to get the decision taken as quickly as possible, it was considered that without setting specific criteria and consulting schools, the fairest and most logical way to distribute the funding, was on pro-rata basis, so that every school with a deficit at that point in time that the funding was based on, was allocated the funding, adjusted for the SIFD funding. JR stressed again that this methodology was in line with the basis that DfE used to allocate funding to those Local Authorities with the highest levels of deficit.

- With more time the Authority may have consulted more widely but as some of the Schools with deficits have already asked if they will be getting some of this funding, a decision was made to bring the proposals as soon as possible so we could get confirmation back to those schools.
- GS noted that the guidance also states that if the funding is not spent within 2023/24 then it can be spent as part of the DSG in 2024/25 which suggests that the DfE is not expecting the funding to be spent immediately and that there is a bit of time available to carry out financial monitoring over the course of 2023/24. Some schools that may not have been in deficit at the end of 2022/23 may find themselves in deficit at the end of 2023/24 as a result of the pay award.
- JR noted that the Authority's Strategic Risk Register shows the size of the deficit in comparison to the existing balance, and that the deficit in maintained schools will ultimately rest with the general fund once school balances are no longer ring fenced at the end March 2026, without any flexibility to move it. Therefore, the Authority wanted to get the funding allocated as soon as possible. JR acknowledged that there are arguments either way, however, the Authority wanted to get it allocated because it's a known risk that's quantified now, and £1.868m against a total deficit of circa £13.000m is only 14.5%. JR further noted that the Local Authority is not top slicing any of this allocation, however, it does help address the overall strategic risk for the Borough.
- KB queried, is it not better to allocate funding with care and time rather than speed.
- SB noted whilst he has declared an interest in this item, he is not sure that the proposed allocations will be best value in terms of the use of the money.
- KB echoed the earlier comments around the flexibility in the way the funding can be allocated and/or added to the DSG, noting that SIFD Funding has already been addressed in the appropriate way, via the appropriate sub-group and decisions have been made. This is extra money, and there are additional pressures for all schools as a result of the pay award.
- KB noted her belief that there is a compelling argument that doing something because it's simple isn't necessarily the right solution and appealed that this note is not moved

forward. KB acknowledged that a commitment had been given to consider other proposals and requested that there isn't a speed in which this needs to be done.

- LG asked if the Schools Forum Sub-Group can make recommendations to the Authority on how the additional funding can be allocated.
- JR noted that if a Finance Sub-Group can be convened quickly then we would be happy to support that, highlighting that there are time pressures in terms of the Authority's reporting position to Cabinet in November and that we need to have a resolution. As the statutory officer for the Authority's budget his professional opinion is that a decision needs to be made quickly.
- JR disputed the proposals in relation to adding the funding to the DSG for 2024/25 due to the scale and risk to the Authority in the current financial year.
- JR noted that this can be discussed further via the Finance Sub-Group with a recommendation being brought back to Schools Forum in January which would still allow time to include a recommendation in the budget report to Cabinet.
- JR noted his concerns around allocating the funding across all schools as this could dilute the funding so much that it moves away from the intention. This funding came about following some very hard lobbying of the DfE and the Authority would not want to lose the benefit that came into North Tyneside overall.
- Members of the Finance Sub-Group agreed to convene a meeting to resolve this issue.

### **Recommendations**

Schools Forum was asked to:

- Note the update on indicative allocations for each of the four Dedicated Schools Grant funding blocks;

#### **Noted**

- Note the reported positions on High Needs, Early Years Block funding;

#### **Noted**

- Agree the Schools Forum Subgroup recommendation for allocation of Schools in Financial Difficulty funding. £0.419m

#### **Agreed**

- Note the Local Authority proposal for the allocation of the additional £1.868m SIFD funding.

	<p><b>Not agreed.</b></p> <p><b><u>ACTION:</u> Meeting of the Finance Sub-Group to be convened in the next 2 weeks with a further proposal to come back to Forum in January.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Note the impact on funding the Authority’s services via CSSB from the decisions in 2023/24 and the expected additional impact in 2024/25.</li> </ul> <p><b>Noted</b></p>	<p><b>JC</b></p>
<p><b>7b</b></p>	<p><b>National Funding Formula and Outcome of Consultation</b></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Jane Cross</b></p>	
	<p>JC talked through the presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation exercise ran from 2nd – 20th October 2023 for all schools funded through the Schools Block.</li> <li>3 separate Finance briefing sessions to outline changes and allow for questions.</li> <li>However, the news of the error from the DfE came out in the middle of the consultation period after 2 of the sessions had already taken place. The final session was subsequently rescheduled, and the consultation was extended to 27 October as a result of the announcement.</li> <li>All sessions were well attended, and JC thanked schools for the engagement that took place.</li> <li>55% response rate, up from 16% in 2022. Although this is still not as high a response as we would like.</li> <li>Table showing the response rate by phase was shown on screen (Table 1 of the report).</li> <li>It was noted that one schools submitted 2 responses. Therefore, where schools have submitted more than one response only the first response was taken into consideration.</li> <li><b>Local Funding Formula (LFF)</b></li> <li>90% (35 schools) voted in favour of keeping the National Funding Formula factors.</li> <li>82% (32 Schools) voted in favour of the Local Authority continuing to set the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG), subject to affordability.</li> <li>When asked which factors should be used to distribute any surplus after delivering the chosen MFG protection level, the preferred option has changed to basing it on deprivation, for 2023/24 with Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) (the preferred option in 2022/23) coming second. The recommendation</li> </ul>	

would be to go with the majority.

- The Chair asked for comments and questions on this matter.
- SW noted that only 14 schools voted for this to be based on deprivation which is very small percentage and that this has always been based on AWPU in the past. Given that deprivation is being factored in via other elements, such as the Deprivation factor, AWPU and also Covid Recovery Premium, which is based on Pupil Premium, SW queried if it would be fairer to distribute this money to AWPU whilst that recovery premium is in place.
- A query was raised if Equal Share and AWPU basically equated to the same thing meaning the 2 combined would be 19 schools, which would be a higher majority than Deprivation with 14.
- DT noted that the two factors are not the same. Equal share would equate to the same amount per pupil regardless of school phase and AWPU has a different value for secondary and primary.
- JC proposed picking this up in the Finance Sub-Group that will be convened as above. **Forum agreed.**
- PS noted that he also felt AWPU was a much fairer way to distribute the funding than the deprivation factors because of the variability of the deprivation factors across the Borough.
- JR noted that the Schools Finance Team can bring some analysis to the Finance sub-group, but that it is only about £0.100m overall and AWPU would weight it towards Secondary and away from the areas of deprivation, however, based on over 70 schools the difference may be fairly marginal.
- **ACTION: Analysis to be brought to Finance Sub-Group for a further decision.**
- Schools were asked for their views as to whether Schools Forum should continue to allocate £0.250m to growth and falling rolls funding or increase the allocation in line with the NFF value. Overview of the responses was shown on screen (Table 2 of the report).
- **Growth Fund / Falling Rolls**
- 62% voted to keep Growth Funding at £0.250m and 44% voted to keep Falling Rolls at £0.250m. Forum agreed with the recommendation.
- **0.5% Transfer**
- 28% of schools voted in favour of the transfer which was set

JC/DT

at 0.48% as opposed to a 0.5% as this equates to the amount stated in the DSG Management Plan (£0.751m) to the High needs Block. This was compared to 18% last year.

- The remaining 72% of schools cited reasons which have impacted the decision as follows:
  - a) 39% stated the impact on School Finance when they are already facing pressures.
  - b) 36% stated that they have concerns over how Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) is funded from Government and that it should be funded in a different way.
  - c) Comments were also received around the inequality in how the transfer was calculated. Because of the MFG & MPPF, 15 school would not have been impacted by the transfer meaning other schools picked up a larger percentage and some of the schools felt that this was not fair. The calculation is part of the NFF and not something set by the Local Authority.
- If Schools Forum don't agree to the transfer, then the Local Authority would be required to submit a disapplication request to the DfE in line with the DSG Management Plan. Deadline for the submission is 17 November.
- If that request was not successful, then the DSG Management Plan and the High Needs system would need to be revised in line with the reduced resources available.

Discussion followed around:

- DW asked for clarification on the requirement to submit a disapplication request with regard to what form this takes and asked how this would be presented to the DfE.
- JR noted that being accepted onto the Safety Valve Programme by the DfE and the agreed Safety Valve Funding being higher than initially expected (circa £16.000m) with an allocation of £19.500m over the 5 years, was subject to hitting key performance criteria. There was an expectation from the DfE that an up to 0.5% transfer would be included for the full 5 years of the programme. As a result of the views from Schools Forum last year and the strength of feeling regarding the pressures on finances, the Authority pushed back on this stating that a transfer should not go forward for year 1, however, whilst the DfE fell short of mandating it for years 2-5, they strongly advised that it would be expected. The

Authority recognise that this would be subject to approval annually which was understood by the DfE, however, the transfer is included in the base position.

- If the transfer is not approved, this will have to be relayed back to the DfE noting that this now takes the Safety Valve Plan out of balance. The Authority would have to take off the £0.751m each year which would have a knock-on effect in future years. Alternative options would have to be found to bring the plan back in balance or the whole £19.500m would be put at risk and the Authority could be subject to clawback of the funding that has already received, circa £9.000m to date.
- As part of the plan that resulted in the £19.500m funding, the Authority is funding what is being referred to as the Implementation costs from the General Fund. This wouldn't normally happen as the General Fund would not usually be used to fund school activity. This equates to circa £1.3m this year and as will be shown in the budget proposals coming to Cabinet on 27 November, has been built into the base budget for the remainder of the Safety Valve Plan. This means that the Authority is not in a position to contribute any more money from the General Fund.
- JR noted that there is an expectation from the DfE that the Authority would submit a disapplication request which will then require approval by the Secretary of State. If the request is refused then support provided through the High Needs Block would need to be addressed to take into consideration the reduction in resources and the pressures on the budget, and the team would have to look at what this means in terms of support for schools.
- JR noted that the Authority will present the factual position to the DfE and reiterated that if we lose the £19.500m then the deficit will become a significant risk for the Authority which could require significant changes to provision.
- LG noted that she doesn't support the transfer as Schools are already facing rises in costs, and that this could possibly push schools not in deficit into deficit.
- KB noted that whilst she is fully behind a lot of the elements of the Safety Valve, she expressed her personal concerns there has been a change in how requests for statutory assessment from Schools are being managed and processed. KB expressed her beliefs that children with a high level of needs

are not being considered to have their needs assessed. As a result, this is moving financial pressures to schools. KB further noted that to say the Authority is not going to assess a child's needs is essentially pre-empting the outcome of the Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA).

- KB asked if any audit is being taken / and evidence collated to find out if the Safety Valve and any of its changes are having a positive impact as well as any negative impacts and what they are.
- KB also noted the rise in exclusions, tribunals and appeals and the impact this is having on resources, as well as concerns over staff and pupil wellbeing resulting from children with complex needs being inappropriately placed, reiterating that she would not support a transfer at this time.
- KB further noted that she understood that a significant level of school catering debt was not fully recovered from parents, stating her belief that this potential revenue could have mitigated the need for Schools to contribute the £0.751m at all.
- MM noted that the disapplication request is due on 17 November and provided assurance that as part of that process, the Authority will provide the minutes of this meeting.
- MM acknowledged KB's comments and noted that the Authority invited the DfE to attend SEND panel, where a number of decisions were taken on who received an assessment, those that didn't and those that were deferred, and the DfE advisor supported the views that the panel had taken.
- MM issued a reminder that the meeting is being live streamed and noted disappointment at the tone of some of the discussion. These are really challenging circumstances and a really challenging climate. The SEND Panel is a multi-agency panel with a great deal of expertise, and they make decisions that they believe are to be right with the information that is available to them. That does not mean that as humans, they always get that right. MM noted that where teachers and/or SENCOs have any concerns about a decision that has been made, he will consider how that is escalated in an appropriate and transparent way that is understood by everybody.
- MM noted that historically the Authority has agreed to assess

and issue for the vast majority, but we are seeing a culture change, so we need to be careful in suggesting that what we are doing now is out of kilter when arguably it could be that we were out of kilter with what we were doing before, and what we were doing before, was unaffordable. It may be that as we work through that culture change, we need to find a middle ground, as there has been a change in practice which we recognise.

- MM noted the Safety Valve Programme is monitored and tracked. He noted that whilst we can see a more immediate change in practice decisions, there is a lead time for some of the strategic plans that we have in place, before we begin to see the impact from them.
- MM noted that he is happy to meet with members of Schools Forum and/or their collaboratives to discuss any queries they may have and that he will take on board the comments raised.
- KB noted that she accepts the human element and that two neighbouring LAs appear to be doing something helpful which may support the EHCP evidence process. Any solutions would just be helpful to find a way forward from where we are. KB also noted that she does not underestimate how challenging this is.
- KB asked if the DFE could attend a meeting with Head Teachers to find out why they don't support the transfer and hear what the concerns are.
- JR noted that North Tyneside was an outlier in terms of demographics right from the start, with a higher number of applications received and accepted. This factor, combined with the significant forecast deficit was the reason North Tyneside was invited into the Safety Valve Programme. If we don't find a way forward that is financially sustainable then there will have to be changes. The Authority has to come back into balance otherwise, we could be facing a much wider challenge for the Authority, including the potential of being unable to balance the accounts which would require a Section 114 notice, which has happened with some other Local Authorities. With the combination of pressures on the overall budget, we have to find a way forward now.
- JR noted that we have made the request to the DfE for a representative to attend a meeting with Head Teachers, but

we can't confirm whether they will put someone forward.

- KB noted that she accepted the comments and that it was a great opportunity for the Local Authority, but that she thinks there needs to be auditing work done on the real impact day to day.
- MM noted that if the disapplication request was refused and we need to find further investment to save, then this would not be done in isolation. Any decisions would be made in consultation with the High Needs Sub-Group, Head Teachers and SENDCos. We will need to collectively look at the system and then look at how we can make those savings.
- JR noted that the vote of this forum and the consultation will be reflected in the disapplication request to the DfE.

### **Recommendations**

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 Deprivation factors be used to distribute any surplus after delivering MFG.

#### **Not Agreed**

- **ACTION: To be discussed at the Finance Sub-Group which will be arranged within the next 2 weeks as stated above.**
- Agree that Growth and Falling Rolls funding should each be set at the historic level of £0.250m.

#### **Agreed**

- Consider the response to the request to transfer 0.48% School block funding to High Needs and either:
  - a) Support a 0.48% transfer from Schools block to High Needs block to support the draft DSG Management plan; or
  - b) Not support any transfer of funds from Schools block to High Needs block.

#### **Not Agreed with the following votes noted:**

- **For = 0**
- **Against = 18**
- **Abstain = 7**

JC/DT

8.	<b>Schools Forum Constitution and Action Plan Review</b>	<b>Christina Ponting</b>
	<p>CP talked through the review of the Constitution and the Self-Assessment. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CP provided the background and confirmed that the ESFA Guidance has been checked and remained unchanged.</li> <li>• There were some minor amendments to the Constitution and the Action Plan which can be noted in the reports circulated in advance of the meeting via the tracked changes.</li> <li>• Summary of the key changes was provided.</li> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• CP had been asked by some Forum members in support of schools to provide updates/awareness raising of the role of Schools Forum and its members, this would be in addition to the update provided to Governors.</li> <li>• The North Tyneside Schools Forum Constitution will be reviewed again in September 2024 as part of its annual review or before this if ESFA guidance is updated.</li> <li>• CP noted that another school has just converted to an Academy with some more schools planning to convert in the new calendar year. Schools Forum will need to consider this and the impact it may/may not have on membership. A report will be brought to Forum at a future date following completion of the Academy conversions to review the membership to ensure the Forum continues to be representative by schools type.</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <p>Schools Forum were asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To consider the changes to the documents and confirm if they are clear on the changes and if they are happy for the documents to be updated as noted.</li> <li>• To confirm if they were in support of updates being provided to Head teachers to support them to better understand the role of Schools Forum and to better support their representatives on Forum.</li> </ul> <p><b>Forum agreed.</b></p>	

9.	<b>Consideration of Special Leave for 2023/24</b>	<b>Christina Ponting</b>
	<p>CP provided a verbal update following the email circulated in advance of the meeting. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools Forum were reminded that the SLA runs from April to March and that there was an agreement to review the SLA annually.</li> <li>• When the rate was last reviewed for the 23/24 SLA year the per pupil rate was increased by 6% to allow the fund to maintain appropriate funding levels/keep in line with inflation. This was based on a number of assumptions, including an estimated 5% pay award and pay progression.</li> <li>• Claims to date have been slightly under in terms of overall cost, compared to last year however, the pay award of 6.5% from September 2023 and the progression point changes are both yet to be processed which will see overall costs YTD increase.</li> <li>• The next review is due in January 2024 as part of the budget setting process. Further information will be presented to Forum in January to consider whether they want the SLA to continue and if so, what the rate should be for 2024/25.</li> </ul>	
10.	<b>Reports from Services (EMTAS and School Support Services)</b>	<b>Lisa Cook</b>
	<p><b>EMTAS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 specialist teachers and 1 teaching assistant in the EMTAS Team.</li> <li>• There has been an increase of 4.7% of children and young people with English as an additional language (EAL).</li> <li>• 280 pupils had their language recorded as other or believed to be other with a huge range of languages within that.</li> <li>• 200 initial language assessments completed and 94 school interventions.</li> <li>• 9 training sessions offered to schools on “Strategy to Support EAL Learners”.</li> <li>• Supported 8 schools with the Festival of Languages.</li> <li>• Parental Engagement provided via Padlet,</li> <li>• Collaborating with schools to celebrate cultural and religious events.</li> <li>• Delivering workshops to celebrate the multilingualism and cultural identity of families.</li> <li>• Multi Agency work to support schools and families with representation in SENDco networks and the North East</li> </ul>	

#### Partnership Project.

- Hosted 3 meetings and delivered 15 sessions for NALDIC.
- 5 schools have achieved the School of Sanctuary Award with the support of EMTAS and NTLT.
- Quotes provided on screen from those that have utilised the service to highlight the positive impact of the service.

#### **Education North Tyneside:**

- Relatively wide team compared to other Local Authorities which brings with it a breadth of expertise to support our schools and settings.
- Held 6 headteacher collaborations and 6 online briefings. In a response to a request from Head Teachers, this was introduced as a new way of working with the online briefings being used for updates and the collaborations being used for more networking and in-depth discussions.
- Continue to run the Head Teacher helpline.
- Additional support via Assistant Director, Senior School Improvement Officers and visits over and above any other work that is being carried out.
- Critical Incident Support: The money for Psychology Support Services is provided from this budget. Over 100 hours of critical incident support provided. Purely from the EP, not including the extra help that the Authority provides to schools.
- Inspection Support: 18 inspections last year along with support offered to schools that are in an inspection group. For Head Teachers that have had inspections, the extra support provided is regardless of whether the schools use the service as an SDP or not. If it is a challenging inspection more time will be spent on site and in follow up with the senior team.
- School Improvement: 1456 Schol Visits last year. 6 RAG schools that are meeting every half term. Depending on the level of support required some schools are having more regular 1:1 meetings and extra support where needed.
- Delivery of SLAs and Project work, including Post 16 Changes and Careers
- School Support: Increase in exclusions (3 times increase) however, this is in line with other Local Authorities so North Tyneside is not an outlier.
- There were 96 permanent exclusions. 96 managed moves and case work linked to 2444 days of suspensions. Not every suspension will receive support from the School Support

Team, however, the team monitor this to ensure there is support in this area.

- An overview of the meetings that Education North Tyneside attend to represent Schools and settings was provided. This includes representation on the SEND Panel, of which there were 42 panels last year and another 52 panels to address needs of young people at different points of transition.
- Feedback from these group is presented back to schools via Head Teacher Collaborations and Briefings. Also have the opportunity to take things back to these groups to raise issues on behalf of schools.
- Officers and advisors attend a range of local, regional and national meetings to provide a voice for North Tyneside
- Three conferences were provided last year.
- The team worked directly with schools on 28 Ofsted complaints as well as dealing with corporate complaints and requests for information from Councillors, MPs and the Mayor.
- 8 direct queries to Education North Tyneside linked to Alternative Provision
- Work regularly with Councillors to ensure they are up to date with what is happening in schools as well as taking part in bi-annual Ward Member Briefings.
- In terms of assessments and the Statutory moderation of KS1 and KS2, this was completed with no appeals, and monitoring visits for Phonics and KS2 did not raise any concerns.
- SATS administration completed with no issues needing to be referred.
- Computing in Schools is also part of the Education North Tyneside Offer. Had deep dives in Computing in Schools and the schemes of work. E-Safety support in schools
- Quotes on screen from those that have utilised the service to highlight the positive impact of the service.

**Early Years:**

- Out of the £0.415m funding, £0.144m of that was ring fenced for Early Years.
- Early Years continued with the Launchpad for Literacy work and the Foundations for Learning Programme was also successful with 30% of Primaries engaged with the programme.
- Termly Network Meeting take place in each of the 4 localities, which are well attended and cover a range topics.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of the Statutory work that has been carried out was provided to new and existing Early Years Providers.</li> <li>• Quotes provided on screen from those that have utilised the service to highlight the positive impact of the service.</li> </ul> <p><b>Physical Education, School Sport and Physical Activity (PESSPA):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of competitions with 97% of schools participating in inter school sports and events.</li> <li>• Increase in the number of young leaders supported and good attendance at events and competitions.</li> <li>• Subject leader networks across all phases with over 70% attendance.</li> </ul> <p><b>Health and Wellbeing:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of the work carried out was provided.</li> <li>• Run networks for schools including the statutory relationships, sex and health education (RSHE), vaping, alcohol use amongst young people, and healthy schools relaunch.</li> <li>• Works alongside the Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) newsletter which people find valuable to signpost to resources and support.</li> </ul>	
<b>11.</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
	<p><b>Schools SLAs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CP reminded forum that there was an outstanding action from a previous meeting for a sub-group of Schols Forum to meet to discuss the Schools SLAs.</li> <li>• CP confirmed that the sub-group have now met and that the meeting was very productive. Next steps from that will be reported back to Forum at a future meeting.</li> <li>• CP thanked members for their input and time and provided assurance to Forum that this action has now been concluded.</li> </ul> <p><b>Education Review:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LG noted that she had requested an update on the Educational Review and that the Chair had responded suggesting that forum receive future updates following ongoing consultations.</li> </ul>	
<b>12.</b>	<b>Date and Time of Next Meeting</b>	
	Wednesday, 17 January 2024 at 12:30pm, via Microsoft Teams.	