



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** 19th March 2025

Location Via Microsoft Teams

Present

✓ Present
D Deputy
A Apologies
O Absent

Name	Organisation	Representing	19.03.2025
Angi Gibson	Hadrian Park Primary School	Academy	✓
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	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	A
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 (*)	✓
Justina Terretta	Beaconhill Special School	Special	D (Gill Wilson)
Karen Croskery	North Tyneside Student Support Service	Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)	O
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 (*)	A
Stephen Baines	Holystone Primary	Primary (*)	✓
Steve Wilson	Whitley Bay High School	High (*)	✓
Tim Jones	Spring Gardens	Primary	✓
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	✓
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	A
April Gibbs-Thorn	Statutory Services Officer – Schools Forum	NTC	✓

(* indicates current member of Finance Sub Group)

Minutes of Meeting

Ref	Item	
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"> Christina updated Schools Forum on current membership and confirmed those members with membership terms coming to an end have agreed to renew. Tim Jones was welcomed as a new Member to Schools Forum as an Academy representative. 	
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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous Action (Page 7): Distribution of an individual budget breakdown for special schools. Jane Cross confirmed that a special schools' budget session would be taking place on 20th March. Indicative budgets would be given out on that date. These were noted to not be in the same level of detail as a mainstream school. Jane committed to picking up a separate conversation with individuals as appropriate. It is hoped that the banding review for special schools will be commenced in September 2025. • Previous Action (Page 18): Special Leave presentation within January Schools Forum meeting to be shared with Forum. Christina confirmed the presentation has been shared as requested. 	
4.	Declarations of Interest	
	None.	
5.	Schools Finance Update Jane Cross/Andrew Brown	
	<p>AB/JC talked through the presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p> <p>Schools Budgets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools have now completed budget monitoring 2 and the figures (projected year end variance) are shown in table 1 of the report. This shows a projected year end position of £8.433m deficit against the planned budget deficit of £9.707m. • This shows an improvement of £1.274m against planned 2024/25 deficit. • It was noted that Schools and Finance staff have worked hard to mitigate the difficult financial position of our schools and Andrew extended his thanks to both Schools and the Finance team. • There is positive improvement across all phases of schools; Middle schools are projecting almost exactly to budget. <p>2024/25 Schools in an expected Deficit Position</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BM1 projected 25 schools compared to 2023/24 was 21. Projected deficit of 22 schools for 2024/2025. • 47 Schools out of 59 with in-year projected deficit at BM1 has dropped to 37 with an in-year projected deficit at BM2 • Andrew noted the importance of joint working between Schools and Finance team to address potential deficits. 	

- Total deficit school pressure noted as £15.648m at BM1; £15.617m at BM2.
- Outturn at 2023/24 was approx. 5 million.

2025/26 Schools Block

- Following consultation with all schools during October 2024, Schools Forum, voted against a 0.5% block transfer from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block at its meeting on 13 November 2024.
- The Local Authority, in line with the DSG Management plan, subsequently submitted a disapplication request to the DfE to approve the transfer. This was approved on 11 February 2025.
- Forum did agree that should the block transfer request be approved by DfE, that the allocation should impact on all schools.
- Request to DfE also requested permission to disapply MPPF and MFG.
 - Basic Entitlement – NFF less 0.6%
 - Minimum Per Pupil Funding (MPPF) – NFF less 0.46%
 - Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG): -0.67% (DfE range -0.5% to 0.0%)
 - Capping: 4.45%
- Following conversations with the Schools Forum Finance sub-group to further limit impact on schools, the Local Authority committed to using the original cash figure from the DSG management plan reducing the impact of the transfer to 0.46%.

2025/26 Central Schools Services Block

- There is a potential £0.117m reduction in funding for 2025/26 which would result in a reduction of the same value to the funding allocated to the Schools Support Service. This was discussed within the Schools Forum Finance Sup-Group.
- The Local Authority have submitted a challenge to the DfE to retain the historic CSSB funding at the same level as 2024/25. If this is successful there would be a smaller reduction of £0.015m as shown in Table 2 of the report.
- The DfE have acknowledged the challenge and confirmed a response by the end of March 2025.
- The response to the challenge will be shared with Schools Forum.

Schools Business Services (SBS) Migration Update

- Following a challenge from the Schools Forum and at a Headteachers Briefing, a formal update was requested regarding their financial system migration.
- Weekly meetings have been held and will continue with a standing invite to the Director of Operations, Richard Page.
- The update has been received and includes,
 - A formal statement of commitment and support to North Tyneside Schools, a Service Level Agreement (SLA) document, sharing and monitoring of the North Tyneside Issues Log, a link to development roadmap.
- A commitment has been received that the SBS system will be fully functional for the financial year 2025/26.
- Andrew noted that the Authority currently have a 1 year rolling contract with SBS. As appropriate, and dependent on full functionality, the contract may be reviewed.

Discussion

- John Ord queried if there would be financial compensation if SBS are not meeting the initial SLA.

Andrew noted that compensation has already been paid to those schools affected by the lack of a Student Planner Template.

The contract is currently under review by Procurement as regards any compensation; however, to ascertain which specific elements were not functional would be complex.

ACTION: The issue of compensation to be raised again with SBS.

Jon Ord noted the necessity of compensation levels should be discussed and confirmed at the outset of any procurement agreement.

- The Chair asked, if there is no fully functional system in 2025/26, at what point would a new provider be sourced. Andrew highlighted that the first test of functionality should take place after the summer holidays. Within the Finance team, the actual date known could be earlier, in May/June this year during staff uploads. A new provider request would also involve agreement from all schools.

ACTION: Internal conversation regarding any potential future procurement with a new provider to be held with the Local Authority Head of Applications and IT.

AB

AB

2024/25 Year End Closedown

- Forum was reminded that the Chief Finance Officer has a responsibility to publish North Tyneside Council's audited 2024/25 Statutory Accounts by 27 February 2026. To achieve this the Authority must make the draft Statement of Accounts available for audit and inspection by 30 June 2025 and is therefore planning to have completed by 31 May 2025 in accordance with the timetable in recent years.
- As schools are part of North Tyneside Council's accounts and are included in the reported outturn position, they are required to adhere to the same timeframes, and closedown procedures. As explained in previous years, the closedown timetable is always challenging and so to assist schools to meet the deadlines we are communicating requirements as early as possible.
- The year-end timetable and guidance for 2024/25 has already been emailed to all schools on 3 March 2025.
 - Year-end copies of the relevant creditor and debtor forms for completion.
 - CFR committed and uncommitted balances 2024-25.
 - CFR authorisation 2024/2025 form for school capital information and school revenue information (amendments).
 - Leasing return.
- All required returns should be with the finance team prior to 7th April 2025.
- Andrew reiterated thanks to school staff for their hard work involved in BM2 and in anticipation of for work involved in Year End closedown.
- Any issue/queries should be raised with the Authority Finance Team.

Recommendations

Schools Forum was asked to:

- Note the forecast position for schools after the second budget monitor for 2024/25 and the subsequent pressure in the Schools Block.

NOTED

- Note the Central School Services Block update.

NOTED

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the SBS update. NOTED Note the information on 2024/25 year-end processes. NOTED 	
6.	Consideration for Special Leave for 25/26 Financial Year Christina Ponting	
	<p>CP talked through a presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christina reiterated to Forum the figures and considerations discussed at the January Schools Forum meeting. Christina reminded Forum of the decisions reached on 15th January 2025. It was noted mixed views had been received and an agreement made to defer a final decision to the March meeting. Christina noted the default positions. <p><u>Default position on Part One</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SLA to cease from 31st August 2025. Holding position rate confirmed at £26.91; schools charged 5/12ths. Additional 'holding position' funds (7/12ths) returned to de-delegated schools. Claims up to 31st August 2025 would receive a refund in September. Schools will need to make their own arrangements from September 2025 Lead in time to phase out to – 31st August 2025, is to allow schools time to put in place own arrangements. ENT will continue to administer until the SLA closes on 31st August (refunds 30th September) 2025. <p><u>Default Position on Part Two</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PP rate will change by 6% to £6.91. All sector rate of £6.91 pp implemented from 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2025. ENT will continue to administer on behalf of Schools Forum. SLA value /rate per pupil will next be reviewed in January 2026. 	

Results of Consultation

Part 1 – Schools did not want the SLA to continue.

- 10 Nursery, First & Primary (NFP) – voted – 7 requested the SLA to remain; 3 noted they did not.
- 5 Middle, High & Secondary (MHS) – voted – 2 requested the SLA to remain; 3 noted they did not.
- 0 Special – voted.

- Of 56 NFP Schools – 49 noted they did not wish the SLA to continue.
- Of 16 MHS Schools – 14 noted they did not wish the SLA to continue.
- Of 6 Special Schools – all noted they did not wish the SLA to continue.

Part 2 – Schools preferred a 6% increase.

- 10 NFP – voted – 7 requested the SLA to increase by 6%; 3 noted 7%.
- 5 MHS – voted – 2 requested the SLA to increase by 6%; 3 noted 7%.
- 0 Special – voted.

Christina outlined several points for Forum to consider with the options and included.

Part One:

- Lead in times, de-delegation arrangements, a holding position of £26.61 for all schools 5/12th of the financial year, refunds to be provided September 2025.

Part Two:

- A holding position of £6.91 for all schools – 1st April 2025 to 31 March 2026, the impact of reduction in TU time, budget pressures, Future pay awards, future challenges – budgets, falling pupil roll, 2023/2024 reduced allocations, cost of claims.

Discussion

- John Ord noted that with the number of schools in deficit TU involvement is essential.
- Gavin Storey requested a cost breakdown per individual school.

	<p>ACTION: Cost breakdown with actual costs per school requested.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair noted that Schools Forum Finance Sub-group had met last week to discuss the issue. The concept of further consultation had been challenged. The Chair noted his feeling that to decide an increase would warrant further consultation. Christina noted that further consultation would result in the need for an extraordinary Schools Forum meeting, to be held before end of April 2025 to consider the further consultation and decide. Laura Baggett asked if the same stance in the previous consultation would stand; in that, would no response for a default position equate to a 10% rise. No disagreements to this stance were raised. The Chair asked all members of Forum present to ensure that colleagues are informed of the further consultation. <p>Recommendations</p> <p>Schools Forum was asked to approve:</p> <p><u>Part 1:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SLA to cease from 31st August 2025. De-delegation arrangements with 6% increase from 1st April to 31st August 2025. PP rate £26.61 for all schools for 5/12ths of year. Refunds to be made in September 2025 <p>APPROVED</p> <p><u>Part 2:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Deferred decision on Part 2 to allow for further consultation on an increase. Option 1 PP rate of £6.91 – with acceptance of the impact of the decision. Option 2 PP rate of £7.17 – with acceptance of the impact of the decision. <p>APPROVED</p>	CP/DT
9.	Any Other Business	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stephen Baines raised the historic issue of combined Health and Safety and Human Resources SLA. The query would be to understand the justification of the discount applied. <p>ACTION: Query regarding historic discount on combined Health & Safety and Human Resources SLA with Head of HR.</p>	CP

10.	Date and Time of Next Meeting	
	Extraordinary Meeting – 30 th April 2025 via Microsoft Teams	