



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 Wednesday, 20 March 2024

Location Via Microsoft Teams

Present

✓ Present
D Deputy
A Apologies
O Absent

Name	Organisation	Representing	17.01.24	20.03.24
Anthony Gollings	St Thomas More	RC Diocese	✓	✓
Claire Withers	Fordley Primary School	Primary	✓	✓
Colette Bland	St Mary's RC Primary School (NS)	Academy	✓	✓
Colleen Ward	Coquet Park First School	Primary	✓	A
David Watson	St Thomas More	Academy	✓	✓
Diane Turner	Tyne Coast	16-19 Provider	O	O
Finn Wilcock	Southridge First School	Primary	✓	O
Gavin Storey	Cullercoats Primary School	Primary	A	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	✓	✓
John Croft	Sir James Knott	Nursery	✓	✓
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	✓	✓
Phil Kemp	Trade Unions	Trade Unions	✓	✓
Philip Sanderson	Kings Priory	Academy	✓	✓
Rob Harker	Carville Primary Diocese	Primary	✓	✓
Stephen Baines	Holystone Primary Diocese	Primary	O	✓
Steve Wilson	Whitley Bay High School	High	✓	✓
Wayne Myers	Richardson Dees Primary	Primary	N/A	A
In Attendance:				
Julie Firth	Director of Children's Services	NTC	✓	✓
Jon Ritchie	Director of Resources	NTC	A	✓
Andrew Brown	Principle Accountant, Finance	NTC	✓	✓
Christina Ponting	Senior Manager - Schools HR	NTC	✓	✓

David Mason	Head of Finance – Deputy S151 Officer	NTC	✓	A
Diane Thompson	Senior Accountant – Schools Finance	NTC	✓	✓
Jane Cross	Senior Business Partner, Finance	NTC	✓	✓
Ian Wilkinson	Strategic Lead, Education and Inclusion Review	NTC	✓	✓
Lisa Cook	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
Mary Nergaard	Project Support Officer	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	
	<p>Attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See table above. <p>Membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CP noted that Wayne Myers has joined Schools Forum as a Primary representative. However, he had to submit apologies for this meeting due to a diary clash. CP noted that an update is required from the Academy representatives on any progress made to recruit to the 2 new Academy vacancies. <u>ACTION:</u> Academy Representatives to provide an update to CP. CP noted that the terms of office for 5 Schools Forum Members are up for renewal in May. CP will liaise with the relevant members and their respective localities on membership renewals / replacements. 	Academy Reps

3.	Minutes of the last meeting	
	Minutes agreed as an accurate record of the.	
4.	Matters Arising	
	Page 12, Item 8 – Consideration of Special Leave for 2024/25: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CP met with the Schools Forum Finance Sub-Group and the outcome of that discussion will be presented under Item 7. 	
5.	Declaration of Interest	
	None declared.	
6.	School Construction Issues Jon Ritchie	
	<p>JR provided a verbal update. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools have received updates via Head Teacher Briefings. Key priority is the safety of our pupils and staff in schools. All schools are now back to face-to-face learning. A reminder of the schools affected was provided. The Authority is also working closely with affected Academy Schools to provide support. Face to face learning solution differs from school to school. Overview of the various arrangements for each school was provided. First structural report has been received from Fordley noting that the issue is linked to a type of concrete mix that was common in the 1960s as part of a technique known as “hollow concrete block and plank”, that has become weak and brittle. Awaiting the surveys from the other affected schools. The funding concerns were noted. Some of the Local Authority’s Capital Allocation specific for Schools has had to be used, combined with some additional funding from the General Fund. Awaiting the outcome of all the reports before agreeing a long-term solution for each affected school and the funding routes that will apply. The Authority continues to work closely with all affected schools and the DfE. 	
7.	Schools Finance Update Jane Cross	
	<p>JC talked through the presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p> <p>Budget Monitoring Two</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial school budget plans submitted in May 2023 projected that overall balances would be a deficit of £8.323m. 	

- After Budget Monitoring One the projected position was a deficit of £8.211.
- After the allocation of the additional £1.868m from the DfE to support schools in financial difficulty, the projected deficit was £5.924.
- Most schools have now completed budget monitoring two which shows a projected year end position of £7.548m deficit, before the application of the £1.868m as shown in table 1 of the report.

Schools Block

- Forum members were reminded that they voted against a 0.48% transfer in November 2023. In line with the DSG Management plan, the Authority submitted a disapplication request to the DfE.
- On 18 January 2024 the Authority was informed the disapplication request had been successful and Schools Forum Finance Sub-group met to agree how the reduction would be allocated using the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) where it was agreed that Schools Basic Entitlement would be used.
- A revised version of the APT was then submitted once the work with the sub-group had been completed.
- Officers also discussed the most appropriate distribution of the £1.868m additional funding outlined above and it was agreed that this would be applied against final 2023/24 deficit school balances.
- Potential to reconvene a Finance Sub-Group to finalise the allocations at year end was discussed.

High Needs Block

- Forum members were reminded that the Term 3 monitoring report to the DfE in relation to the Safety Valve Programme reported a slight pressure of £0.016m against the original DSG Management Plan.
- Risks continue to be monitored, however, the Authority remains confident that a positive in-year balance on the High Needs Block can be achieved by the year-end 2027-28.
- A significant programme of work has been carried out and the Authority has met the conditions described in the Safety Valve Agreement. Therefore, the Authority received full payment as set out in the Safety Valve Agreement, including £7.8m in 2022-23 and £1.95m in 2023-24 as shown in table 2 of the report.
- The ongoing challenges in the High Needs Block and the Safety

Valve Programme was noted.

- DW noted that because of the criteria set by the DfE on how the reduction must/must not be applied, the impact for individual schools is not necessarily 0.48%. The actual impact for individual schools has ranged from 0.00% to 0.87%. DW noted the additional pressure that this causes to the Schools Block.
- JC noted that this is as a result of the minimum funding guarantee.
- JC also noted that the Schools Forum Finance Sub-Group also discussed the option to explore alternative options outside of the APT to help mitigate any impact as much as possible.

Arbor Migration

- In July 2023 the Authority was informed that ESS, the supplier of SIMS and FMS, would not host Schools databases after 31 December 2023. After consultation with schools, Arbor was procured by the Authority. The factors that contributed to this decision were provided.
- Migration workshops were carried out. Schools, ICT and the Schools finance team have collectively worked incredibly hard during the implementation and the migration to the new system is now complete.
- The challenge now is for all schools to adapt to Arbor so that they can take advantage of the full functionality of the new system.

2023/24 Year End Closedown

- The Authority's Chief Finance Officer has a responsibility to close North Tyneside Council's 2023-24 statutory accounts by 31st May 2024 for audit and inspection, and to publish them by 30th September 2024.
- Maintained Schools are part of North Tyneside Council's accounts they are required to adhere to the same timeframes, and closedown procedures.
- The closedown timetable is always challenging, so to assist schools to meet the deadlines the year end timetable has been communicated via email to Head Teachers on 1 March 2024. Overview of the timetable was provided.
- The importance of key deadlines before the Easter break was noted.
- Importance of the collaborative working required to hit the key deadlines was also noted.

	<p>Recommendations</p> <p>Schools Forum was asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the forecast position for schools after the second budget monitor for 2023/24 and the subsequent pressure in the Schools block. <p>Noted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the latest position for the High Needs Block as reported in December 2023; <p>Noted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the information on 2023/24 year-end processes. <p>Noted</p>	
7	<p>Consideration of Special Leave for 2024/25</p> <p>Christina Ponting</p>	
	<p>CP talked through the presentation on screen. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forum was reminded of the discussions at the previous Schools Forum Meeting in January 2024. A reminder of the options for consideration was provided. CP thanked Schools Forum Members for the work carried out to review the SLA. A reminder of how the current SLA operates was provided as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part 1 maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental leave and jury service = £23.29 Part 2 trade union facility time (TUFT) = £5.45 Combined price £28.72 It was noted that Schools Forum may not feel comfortable making a decision today and the option for further consultation was discussed. <p>Current SLA and its operation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combined budget across the SLA with priority being given to Part 2 as agreed by Schools Forum. Part 2 is underfunded, and the shortfall has historically been funded by Part 1. Average cost of Part 1 increased in relation to average claim value and less schools buy into Part 1. All schools buy into Part 2. Cost of Part 2 have increased due to a range of factors including the impact of pay wards over time. There is a need to split SLA now as Part 1 is funding Part 2 and less schools are now buying into both. Therefore, it is not appropriate for Part 1 to continue to cover the shortfall. 	

Current SLA – Reference Points:

- Pupil data used excludes early years and Post-16, only using reception to Year 11 (R-Y11).
- Part 1 only applies to teaching staff, but it does not differentiate on year groups of claimants.
- To retain the current allocations, Part 2 would need to generate budget of £250k and Part 1 would need a budget of £550/600k in order to meet claims.
- Part 2 is agreed in advance, but Part 1 is more difficult to predict and varies from year to year. Historically, there has been a pattern of 2 low/1 high years of claims however, 23/24 has shown a different costs profile in comparison to previous years.
- Overview of the Part 1 Claims in previous year was provided.
- Awaiting March detail for the 23/24 year which is already higher than expected.
- Overview of the Part 2 Time Allocation/Distribution was provided.

Options for Part 1

- The average claim value per person has increased and the 6% increase allocated in 22/23 was not enough to cover the impact of the pay award, which was greater than expected.
- SLA continues to be valued by schools, but the need further review annually remains.
- Claim patterns hard to predict.
- Based on historic claim patterns a budget of £0.550m would be required. However, it is important to note that 23/24 is not a significantly lower claim year as expected. The need for continued monitoring of claims for 24/25 and to consider a budget of £0.600m was discussed.
- This would become a separate SLA from 1 April 2024, which means Part 1 will no longer subsidise Part 2.
- It is proposed that the reference point is changed from pupils in R-Y11 to All Pupils for all financially maintained schools from 1 April 2024.
- It was noted that Academy school budgets are set from September to August: therefore, for this year only, it is suggested that the 'All pupil' reference point is delayed until September 2024 for Academy Schools.
- If the per pupil price is held at £23.29 this allows for some growth in average cost of claim, assuming current buy in levels. (Estimate 25,518 pupils = £594k).

- It was noted that the SLA runs from April to March and the Pay Awards for teachers effective from September 2024 is not yet known, therefore, Schools will need to accept that refunds may still not be 100%.

Options for Part 2

- As with Part 1, the average claim value per person has increased and the 6% increase allocated in 22/23 was not enough to cover the impact of the pay award.
- SLA must continue to operate in line with local agreements already established/recognition arrangements. Underpinned by T&C.
- The need to annually review the arrangements for funding the TUFT remains.
- A budget of at least £0.250m each year would be required based on existing allocations to each Trade Union (TU) and the central recharge, which does not allow for a % increase to accommodate cost of living.
- As with Part 1, this would be a separate SLA from 1 April 2024 meaning that Part 1 will no longer subsidise Part 2.
- Again, it is proposed that the reference point moves from pupils in R-Y11 to All Pupils from 1 April 2024 for all financially maintained schools. (estimated 31,190 (all) rather than 28,126 (RY11+Sp), a variance of 3,168 pupils).
- As with Part 1 it is proposed that for this year only, the All pupil reference point is delayed until September 2024 for Academy Schools due to their budgets being set from September to August.
- Currently the rate is set at £5.43. This would need to be increased to:
 - £8.04 per pupil to retain existing levels, OR
 - £6.42 (an increase of 20% from the existing rate). This would reduce the time that could be allocated to TUFT and would require a review to determine how this could be accommodated.
- It was noted that the SLA runs from April to March and as previously mentioned, the Pay Awards are not yet known for April 2024 for support staff or September 2024 for teaching staff, however, School agreements are in place until 31st August 2024 and these will need to be honoured.
- It is recommended that the arrangements change to a cash value per respective TU rather than time/days.

- Option to reduce time/cash value allocated to each TU could also be considered.
- The importance and value of the work carried out by TU colleagues and the good working relationships with the Schools was noted.
- Decisions would also need to be made in relation to the central recharge (from the Authority for support it afforded to schools via its Employee Relations framework)
- Illustrative examples of the options considered were shown on screen (R-Y11 vs All pupils over a range of % increases from 10% to 65%). This showed that to provide a budget of £0.250m would require a reference point of All pupils (with or without staggered application) and increased rate of no less than 48%.

Cost of Administering the SLA:

- It was noted that there is a lot of work carried to administer this SLA, including tracking and monitoring. This is no longer sustainable, therefore, there is a need for this to be accounted for under any new arrangements:

Considerations:

- It is recommended that the reference point is changed to All pupils from 1 April 2024 (September 2024 for Academies).
- Part 1 price is frozen at 23/24 pupil value of £23.29, assuming schools want Part 1 to continue.
- Part 2 needs to be allocated in cash value as opposed to days, but this will require more administration time for both TU colleagues and CP.
- For Part 2 to be retained at existing level, this would require a 48% increase in the rate (based on a reference point of All pupils).
- CP noted that the Schools Forum Finance Sub-group noted that the relationship with TUs is valued by all Schools, there are good employee relations in North Tyneside schools, and this did not come without time being allocated, the usage has changed overtime, with claim values increasing, additionally the central recharge profile has increased also and this would need to be reviewed.
- Illustrative examples of the potential costs to schools were shown on screen based on an atypical school.

Summary:

- It was recommended that more work and further consultation needs to be carried out with schools to enable them to make an

	<p>informed choice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the price is frozen for Part 1, this will give a budget of circa £0.600m. • There are 2 options for Part 2, a rate of £6.52 will give a budget of circa £0.204m and £8.04 would give a budget of circa £0.250m. • The combined budget for each option was shown but each SLA would be standalone. • In relation to Part 2, a budget of circa £0.204m would be required to stand still or £0.250m to maintain existing. <p>Discussion followed around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RH thanked CP and the sub-group for the work carried out to gather this data. • RH asked if the £8.04 is based on all pupils. CP confirmed that this is All Pupils and the price would be greater if it was left at R-Y11. • RH asked for come clarification on what the central recharge covers. CP provided an overview of the type of support that is covered by the central recharge, including work carried out with NTC Trade Union colleagues on things like job evaluation, pay negotiations, terms and conditions, member support provided by TU colleagues in Unison, GMB and Unite. • SB asked for clarification that Part 1 is optional and asked about the impact on the rate if schools opted not to buy in. • CP clarified that the Part 1 contribution is a De-Delegated decision so this would be a Schools Forum decision. There are some schools that aren't covered by de-delegation who may choose to step away but the majority of the funding comes from de-delegation. • LB asked if any work had been done to see how TU facility time is used and asked who manages the diary to ensure that the time is used effectively. • CP noted that there is claim form that each TU member released from schools must complete which outlines the work that has been carried out. Confidentiality is maintained so the detail is limited but the recording is an accurate reflection of how the time is used for North Tyneside schools and all time paid for is accounted for. This does not apply to the Central Recharge because these are employees of the Authority. • It is recommended that all public bodies publish the percentage of overall pay bills allocated to trade union facility 	
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	<p>time on a .gov website and this is done on behalf of North Tyneside Schools which helps us to compare costs with other Authorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to the published data as follows: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/public-sector-trade-union-facility-time-data • LG asked if the slides could be circulated. • ACTION: Presentation slides to be circulated. <p>Recommendations</p> <p>Schools Forum were asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to move the reference point to All pupils for all schools from 1 April 2024 Agreed • Agree to stagger the implementation of All pupils for academies (changes deferred until 1 September 2024). Agreed • Agree to move Part 2 to cash allocations per each TU. Agreed • Agree to retain existing de-delegation at 23/24 rate amounts plus an additional 6% as a holding position. Overview of the reasoning behind this recommendation and how this would be administered was provided. Agreed • Agree for further consultation to be undertaken with Schools and TUs. CP will work with the Schools Finance Team to cost out some options for the consultation. Agreed • Agree that an Extraordinary Schools Forum is called before 31 May 2024 to receive the outcome of the consultation. Agreed • The Chair thanked CP and the members of the Schools Forum Finance Sub-Group for the work carried out on reviewing this SLA. 	
8.	Any Other Business	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No matters arising. 	
9.	Date and Time of Next Meeting	
	<p>Extraordinary Meeting: Wednesday, 15 May at 12:30pm, via Microsoft Teams.</p> <p>Next routine meeting: Wednesday, 10 July at 12:30pm, via Microsoft Teams.</p>	