



North Tyneside Council

Minutes

Meeting Schools Forum **Date** Thursday 10 March 2021

Location Via Microsoft Teams

Present

✓ Present D Deputy A Apologies O Absent
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Name	Organisation	Representing	13.01.21	10.03.21
Andrew James	St Aidan's Primary	Primary	✓	✓
Angi Gibson	Hadrian Park Primary	Primary	✓	✓
Candida Mellor / Claire MacLeod	Trade Unions	Trade Unions	Claire Macleod	Claire Macleod
David Baldwin	Churchill Community College	Secondary	N/A	N/A
David Bavaird	Norham High School	Governor - Secondary	✓	✓
David Watson	St Thomas More	RC Schools	✓	✓
Gavin Storey	Cullercoats Primary	Primary	✓	✓
Jill Wraith	Benton Dene Primary	Primary	✓	✓
Joanne Thompson	Holystone Out of School	Early Years PVI	✓	✓
John Croft	Sir James Knott	Nursery	✓	✓
John Newport	Marden Bridge Middle School	Middle	✓	✓
Karen Croskery	North Tyneside Student Support Service	PRU	✓	✓
Kelly Holbrook	Longbenton High School	Secondary	✓	✓
Kerry Lillico	Grasmere Academy	Academy	✓	✓
Laura Baggett	Monkhouse Primary	Primary	✓	✓
Marie Flatman / Mo Dixon	Tyne Met	16-19 Provider	Marie Flatman	O
Fr Martin Lee	Diocese	C of E Diocese	✓	O
Matt Snape	Marden High School	Secondary	✓	✓
Michael Young	Spring Gardens Primary	Primary	✓	✓ *part meeting*
Paul Mitchell	Whitley Bay High School	Governor – Secondary	✓	✓
Paul Johnson	Churchill Community College	Secondary	✓	✓ *part meeting*
Peter Gannon	Silverdale School	Special	✓	✓
Peter Thorp	Redesdale Primary	Governor - Primary	A	O
Philip Sanderson	Kings Priory	Academy	✓	✓
Stephen Baines	Holystone Primary	Primary	✓	✓
Stephen Easton	Marine Park First School	First	✓ *Joined late	✓
Steve Wilson	Whitley Bay High School	High	✓	✓
Tim Jones	Langley First School	Primary	✓	✓
<u>In Attendance:</u>				
Mark Longstaff	Head of Commissioning & Asset Management	NTC	✓	✓
Claire Emmerson	Senior Manager - Finance Strategy & Planning	NTC	✓	✓
Noel Kay	Senior Business Partner, Finance	NTC	✓	✓

Diane Thompson	Finance	ENGIE	✓	✓
Christina Ponting	Senior Manager - Schools HR	ENGIE/NTC	✓	✓
Mary Nergaard	PA to Head of Commissioning & Asset Management	NTC	✓	✓
Diane Buckle	Assistant Director for Education	NTC	✓	N/A
Kevin Burns	Senior School Improvement Officer (Vulnerable Learners)	NTC	✓	N/A
Rob Smith	School Improvement Advisor, PE, Sport & Health	NTC	N/A	N/A

Item		Action
1.	Apologies for Absence	
	See Table above. ML was asked to Chair the meeting on behalf of Peter Gannon and welcomed everyone to the Schools Forum.	
2.	Attendance Register / Membership	
	Fully appointed in terms of membership	
3.	Public Meeting / Observers	
	The Chair welcomed the public to the meeting	
4.	Declaration of Interest	
	None	
5.	Minutes of the last meeting	
	Minutes agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.	
6.	Matters Arising	
	No matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting	
6.1	Finance Update Claire Emmerson	
	CE talked through the PowerPoint presentation based on the briefing paper. Main points to note as follows: i. Finance Update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2019/20 outturn was £0.165m against a forecast budgeted deficit of £4.661m • Budgeted deficit at the beginning of 2020/21 was £6.755m. First monitoring showed an improvement to a £5.677m deficit which was improved again at the second set of budget monitoring to an estimated £2.900m • This a budget variance of £3.855m subject to changes following the resolution of a number of outstanding queries • This improvement is despite the impact of Covid-19 • One additional school that was not previously forecasting a deficit, is now forecasting unauthorised deficits over £5000 in 2020/21 with a forecast position that is £0.028m worse than budget. 	

- There were 12 schools who applied for a deficit agreement to a total value of £12.822m.
- 8 of these schools were in deficit in 2019/20 and 2 are in structural deficit
- Both monitoring 1 and 2 showed an improvement of £1.230m resulting in a reduced total deficit of £11.592m at monitoring 2
- Of the 12 schools, all bar one have reported an improvement with one school reporting that their pressures have increased. The Local Authority is working with closely with this school to improve this position

Discussion followed around:

- It was noted that a large percentage of the deficit is down to 3 schools. CE noted that 2 of those schools are in structural deficit and that the Local Authority continues to work proactively with both these schools. Discussions are ongoing to bring these schools into an in-year financial balance. 1 of the 3 schools is not a structural deficit school and it has been able to produce a recovery plan that will bring the school back into financial balance within the 3 years as outlined in the plan
- SW noted that the circa £4m variance stands out. CE noted that schools manage their own budgets and some schools may be overcautious and build in some risk to their budget planning whereas others may be more realistic, and this may account for some of the variance. There has historically been a positive movement throughout the year. The Local Authority does not have any part in that budget planning process other than working with those schools in deficit. It was noted that the accuracy of budget plans forms part of the Strategic planning and that decisions are made based on those budget plans.
- CE noted that a report was taken to Cabinet in January which she will share with Forum. It was noted in the appendix to this report that a large proportion of schools are in balance. This shows that the majority of schools are maintaining their budgets well. With regard to the deficit schools, other than the 3 schools highlighted, the other schools are also managing any deficits well
- A query was raised on Covid costs. CE noted that an online survey was carried out where schools were asked to submit their Covid costs. This may be something that the Local Authority can look at again
- A query was raised on what would constitute a structural deficit. CE noted that under the Scheme for Financing Schools, Section 4.9, it states that a structural deficit is a school that cannot submit a recovery plan that will bring them back to at least an in-year balance. Previously the scheme for financing school gave 5 years for schools to come back into balance. It was agreed by Schools Forum to reduce that to 3 years. The longer standing schools that were in deficit had to at least bring their budgets back into an in-year balance within that 3-year timeframe.

ii. High Needs:

- The High Needs Block ended 2019/20 with a pressure of £4.542m. It should be noted that the High Needs Block forms part of the DSG which is ringfenced and does not form part of the general fund
- This pressure is in line with the national and regional picture

- The forecast at February 2021 shows that this pressure has worsened with an anticipated in-year pressure of £4.325m, resulting in a cumulative pressure of £8.867m, and reflecting a rise in demand for special school places and a general increase in the complexity of children supported in both special and mainstream schools
- A High needs recovery plan is currently being developed which will need to be agreed by Schools Forum
- As part of the workstreams that have been identified the Local Authority will be looking for reps from Schools Forum and the wider School Network to support the work in developing the recovery plan
- PG noted that the proposed new National Funding Formula (NFF) for High Needs has come out and there are some early indicative signs that this will be based on 2017/18 expenditure. This would not be a positive outcome for North Tyneside of the North East in general. CE noted that she will provide an update on the High Needs Consultation later in the meeting.

Discussion followed around:

- PM noted that this looks like we are heading for an unsustainable position for High Needs and that he welcomes the review
- CE noted that there are a number of factors that sit behind the deficit and that the DfE are looking at a review of SEND that could impact the way in which High Needs Funding is allocated.
- CE noted that we have seen a large increase in the number of children with EHCPs and that we recognise that there are things that we can do locally. However, this is a national issue.

iii. Budget Planning Tool:

- The Local Authority has been looking at a new budget planning tool to assist schools with financial planning and monitoring
- System demonstrations have been offered and a number of schools have taken part
- A survey was also carried out with the survey results included in appendix A
- The majority of schools would like to see a new tool brought in
- Most schools were noncommittal about paying extra for any replacement tool, with more clarity around cost: benefits being required.
- A number of schools are already looking to approach providers themselves
- The Local Authority would like to undertake a procurement exercise on behalf of Schools that have not already bought into a budget tool
- Whilst this exercise would be carried out on behalf of schools in would need to be financed by Schools individually
- Following the procurement, the Local Authority would work with schools to set up the system and provide training with a view to using the tool for budget planning for 2022/23 and future years
- We recognise that this would have an impact on the finance SLA and we will work with schools over the summer and come back to Forum in September

iv. High Needs Consultation:

- An update was provided on the proposed changes to the High Needs National Funding Formula from 2022/23
- The proposed plan uses 2017/18 actual expenditure as the baseline as opposed to the planned expenditure
- They are proposing an increase percentage from 50% to 60% based on actual expenditure.
- In North Tyneside, we didn't have a pressure in High Needs at that time and our actual expenditure was less than the planned expenditure. Therefore, this would mean that we would receive less as a result of the changes in the baseline
- It is proposed that this tool would be used for 1 year only and this work is happening ahead of the SEND review
- There will be winners and losers and, in this case, North Tyneside would be a loser
- They are also asking for views on the use of proxy factors to reflect more local circumstances. i.e. free school meals, deprivation, prior attainment etc. This won't change the formula for 2022/23 but would influence the formula following the SEND review
- DfE consultation deadline is Wednesday 24 March. The Local Authority will use an online form to mirror the DfE's consultation questions which will go live today with a deadline of Friday 19 March
- CE is attending the Head Teachers drop-in session on Friday (12 March) and the Special Heads Officer Group (SHOG) is meeting on Wednesday 17 March to discuss the consultation response
- Using the results of the internal consultation, the Local Authority will submit a response on behalf of schools and Schools Forum
- SHOG will respond separately
- Schools/governing bodies can also submit their own responses if they wish

Discussion followed around:

- ML noted that it is important that we are clear and strong on the impact that this is having in North Tyneside and the challenges that we will face.
- LB asked if it would be better for all schools to respond individually as well as the Local Authority response to provide a larger voice. CE noted that the consultation is open to all schools, governing bodies and members of the public. ML noted that this is an ideal opportunity.
- LB asked if there was anything schools could do to support parents in providing a response and noted that a carefully worded campaign would be helpful to provide to parents. This was echoed by other Schools Forum members in that a consistent approach across all schools would be useful.
- **ACTION: CE to raise this at the HT briefing and feedback**
- A query was raised on whether or not we have a calculation of the amount that we would lose if this was to go through. DT noted that it would be just over £0.600m. In addition, a move from proxy factors to historic funding has been hinted that could take this up to £0.750m for North Tyneside.
- The building blocks that currently make up the High Needs Funding factor was shown on screen

CE

Recommendations

	<p>Schools Forum is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the forecast position for schools after the second termly monitoring process; Noted Note the latest position for the High Needs Block as reported in February; Noted Approve the planned approach to secure a new budget tool for use in the 2022/23 to 2024/25 budget planning cycle. Approved Note the High Needs Consultation deadline and response arrangements Noted 	
6.2	Central School Services Block	Claire Emmerson
	<p>CE provided a verbal update as follows. Main points to note as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A reminder of the actions agreed in January was provided Diane Buckle has had the first initial meeting to look at the School Improvement Service CE is working on the statutory elements A report will be brought back in July 	
7.	Any Other Business	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JN noted that he was concerned to receive an email from the Education Psychology service at the start of March outlining that unused SLA hours (from this year) are being 'written off'. This is a big loss to schools. Does Schools Forum support this decision? ACTION: ML noted that he is not sighted on this communication and agreed to raise this with the Education Psychology Service and Diane Buckle. 	ML
8.	Date of next meeting	
	Wednesday 7 July 2021 at 12:30pm	