



**Meeting held on Monday 10 March 2025 at 8.00am  
via TEAMS**

**MINUTES**

	<p align="center"><b>Attendees</b></p> <p>Nina Siddle (NS) (Chair)  Alex Allenby (AA), Jane Aukett (JA), Sarah Bate (SB), Liz Brummer (LB)  Kate Cowdroy (KC), Cllr Margaret Cracknell (CMC), Richard Gargon (RG),  Wendy Jackson (WJ), Steve Kernan (SK), Emily Powell (EP),  Lorna Pendred (LP), Carianne Robson (CR), Rebecca Taylor (RT),  Neville Wilkinson (NW), Ann Marie Wilson (AW), Corinne Wilson (CW),</p>
<b>60/25</b>	<p><b>Welcome, introductions and apologies.</b></p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
<b>61/25</b>	<p><b>Chair's Welcome</b></p> <p>NS thanked everyone for attending.</p>
<b>62/25</b>	<p><b>Minutes of Previous Meeting/Matters Arising of the meeting held on 5 November 2024</b></p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2024 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising from the Minutes.</p>
<b>63/25</b>	<p><b>Schools Funding 2025/26</b></p> <p>LB advised that the working party had met in January and the paper summarised the formula for 2025-26 for individual school budgets taking into account the individual positions with the new Primary Schools and the setting of the growth fund. The process this year was not as comprehensive as previous years due to the timing of the release of information from the DfE. The members noted the following conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The maximum Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) is set at -0.48%. The total cost of providing the MFG is £0.2M</li> <li>• The cost of ensuring schools are at minimum funding levels is £0.4M</li> <li>• Put 71.5% of the funding through Basic pupil factors – Age Weighted Pupil Factors (AWPU). This was 71.9% in 2024/25</li> <li>• Put 93.3% of the funding through Pupil led factors – Age Weighted Pupil Factors (AWPU), deprivation, prior attainment etc. This was 93.3% in 2024/25.</li> <li>• Establishes budgets for the 2 new free schools for 2025/26</li> <li>• Includes block transfer from Early Years of £0.2M</li> <li>• Establish an in-year 2025/26 growth fund of £0.1M</li> <li>• A transfer from EY block funding of £0.2m.</li> </ul>

	<p>Appendix 1 circulated showed the factors used and the format. LB stated that this had been submitted and approved by the DfE as a valid proposal. NS asked if an Appendix was available for each school to determine whether there were any substantial “losers”. LB offered to check if this information could be shared as it included academies.</p> <p><b>Action: LB</b>  <b>Resolved: That Forum members noted the report.</b></p>
64/25	<p><b>High Needs Block 2025-26</b></p> <p>LB stated that the High Needs block allocation for 2025/26 was £34.3m which was an increase of £2.8m on previous years. However, it included the teachers’ pay and pension grant and the increase needed to cover those payments as well as a price increase for providers and demand within the system. The DSG was in a deficit position and at the end of 2023/24 reflected a deficit of £4m. Due to activity in 2024/25 this increased to £12.2m at the end of March which was a significant increase. Currently, the LA, in line with regulations, held this as a separate deficit outside of normal Council activity so there was no specific impact on the LA or schools. However, this arrangement ends in March 2026 and this deficit must be dealt with in a year’s time unless the regulations known as statutory override were extended. Guidance was awaited from the DfE as it was a national situation. NEL was in the same trend as other local authorities. The following factors were taken into account when reviewing the High Needs Block for 2025/26:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An increase in demand and complexity</li> <li>• Price increases from providers</li> <li>• Current spend commitments</li> <li>• The current DSG position and outturn forecast</li> <li>• The DBV programme</li> </ul> <p>LB stated that she had worked with colleagues within the service but was forecasting a £9.5m in year deficit in 2025/26 which would increase the cumulative deficit to £21.7m. A summary was included of key areas of the High Needs Block where increases were expected aligned to the EHCP trajectory, agency placements, special academy school top ups and increase in prices.</p> <p>The DBV had provided some support and some continuation of the projects had been factored into the figures. There were a number of places within different settings which had been created to try and mitigate external provision and high cost placements out of the Borough.. NS referred to the costs of EHCPs and the amount of funding that the LA was providing and asked if there would be any increase in this particularly where a mainstream school needed to support children rather than a specialist setting. RT responded there had been increases in mainstream but the banding system was still being followed in mainstream schools but would be moving to a different system in the Special Schools and the RSP were costed slightly differently. As the volume of children increased, the amount of money increased. Further discussions would be held around funding in terms of what could be done differently. RT expressed her concerns around the banding criteria and this may possibly be reviewed for mainstream schools in terms of what could be different in the future and whether the banding was fit for purpose in mainstream schools bearing in mind financial pressures. This could increase the spend but decrease it for Special Schools and further conversations would be held. NS acknowledged the difficult and challenging situation.</p> <p><b>Resolved: That Forum members noted the report.</b></p>

65/25	<p><b>Growth Fund Policy 2025/26</b></p> <p>A copy was shared on screen. LB stated that the Growth Fund Policy had not been changed and had been approved by the DfE as well as the purpose of the fund. It was not LAG funding and could not be used for those schools in financial difficulties. As NEL was in deficit, any balances could not be rolled forward. A figure of £0.1m had been set for the Growth Fund for 2025/26.</p> <p>In terms of accessing the Growth Fund the increase in pupil numbers must be in excess of those funded at the previous October head count. In agreeing to fund any increase in pupil numbers the lower of the first 5 pupils or 15% of original PAN will not be funded by the school and will be excluded from the calculation for re-imbursement. Applications must be received by the end of November 2025.</p> <p>LB advised there was no change of policy, it was a reiteration of the position from previous years.</p> <p><b>Resolved: That Forum members noted the report.</b></p>
66/25	<p><b>Centrally retained and De-delegated expenditure 2025-26</b></p> <p>A copy was shared on screen. LB stated that members were required to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• note the decision regarding de-delegation for 2025/26 from the Schools Block for Maintained Schools, and</li> <li>• note the decision of no de-delegation of funding in 2025-26 by the Schools Forum maintained schools representative</li> </ul> <p>WJ stated that she had been asked by the Union to bring a point for consideration in terms of the de-delegation of facilities time. If the Maintained Schools did not wish to de-delegate this pot, this would mean one of two things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a member of their schools needed Union support, there would be no Union support for them or personal time as there was no de-delegation for that Union member to come out of schools to support them, or</li> <li>• Would the school be invoiced if support was required?</li> </ul> <p>WJ requested that this be taken back to Maintained Schools and for a report back. EP stated that when the matter had been discussed by the Maintained Headteachers, they had been made aware of this if they did not de-delegate. It had been discussed and no issues had been raised. However, she agreed to take this back for further discussion and confirmation.</p> <p><b>Action: EP</b></p> <p>LB stated that the centrally retained expenditure was consistent with previous years. SF members were required to vote on a line by line basis whether they wished de-delegation to take place. Forum members should be aware that Admissions costs have not been increased but this would require review in future years.</p> <p>Forum members were therefore asked to approve whether they support the central retention of funds for the following:</p> <p>Centrally maintained Admissions budget      £217,559</p> <p><b>Resolved: That Forum members approved.</b></p>

	<p>Servicing of Schools Forum £6,673</p> <p><b>Resolved: That Forum members approved.</b></p> <p>Termination of employment costs £434,000</p> <p><b>Resolved: That Forum members approved.</b></p> <p>ESG retained rate funding £250,780</p> <p><b>Resolved: That Forum members approved.</b></p> <p>Early Years centrally retained budget £627,600</p> <p>LB stated that the maximum amount of Early Years Support Grant that can be centrally retained had been reduced by DFE from 5% to 4% for 2025-26. NELC had taken the decision to only retain 3%. The block transfer into the schools block was still being facilitated at £0.2m.</p> <p><b>Resolved: That Forum members approved.</b></p> <p>AA advised that detailed of the Education Services Grant could be found in <b>Appendix C</b> and covered the statutory functions across education.</p> <p>LB stated that SF members were requested to note that the Council took advantage of the scheme where the Secretary of State for Education purchased licences centrally on behalf of all schools (academy and maintained) in the Borough and recharged this cost to the DSG allocation. This cost amounts to approximately £140k.</p> <p><b>Resolved: That Forum members noted the report.</b></p>
67/25	<p><b>Early Years rates 25/26 and general update</b></p> <p>CW explained that indicative budgets had been published in December 2024 and had she had analysed these to see how much was needed for retained functions and also the mandatory supplements; the deprivation supplement and EY inclusion funding. Consultation had taken place with all the providers and had two questions:</p> <p>The overall funding for EY was increasing now the expanded offers were almost fully rolled out and the EY DSG was now approximately £21 million. The needs of the service were assessed including the mandatory deprivation rate and inclusion funding to determine the amount of centrally retained funding required. This in turn determined the funding available for the hourly rates within each age range for 2025-26. Consultation had taken place with all providers from 13 January to 2 February and there were three information sessions to support the consultation and for providers to ask questions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Did providers prefer a higher base rate for all children and lower deprivation rate or lower hourly rate and higher deprivation rate?</li> <li>2. Did they prefer to receive their funding termly based on the current tasks or to be paid monthly?</li> </ol>

The outcome was that 57% preferred the higher hourly rate and lower deprivation rate. Almost three quarters (74%) of providers preferred to retain the current payment schedule. There was an overwhelming vote to keep the payment schedule to termly.

The new hourly rates for 2025-26 were:

3 & 4 year olds EYE	£5.48
2 year olds EYE	£7.80
Under 2's EYE	£10.67
Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP)	£1.00
Deprivation (EYPP eligibility)	£0.20
Disability Access Funding (DAF)	£938

All providers received the consultation outcome report including the confirmation of rates on 6 February ahead of the DfE deadline of 28 February. Indicative budgets for all providers had been prepared and will be sent out shortly with a new contract to be signed for 2025/26. The new rates were published in February. In terms of sufficiency, there were sufficient places for all funded offers but they were not always in the right place or right age range. Work was taking place with providers who had capacity. Within the Borough there was no evidence of unmet demand in any age range. There was a small amount of funding left (£30,000) and care would be taken how this was spent to ensure best value to create as many places as possible.

The take up for the Spring Term was:

Offer	Take up Spring
3 & 4 year Universal offer	95%
3 & 4 year extended	49%
2 year disadvantage	25%
2 year expanded	38%
Under 2's expanded	38%

There were less children entitled to low or no income offer. Although earnings had increased, the threshold for earnings had not increased since 2017 so there were less families who were entitled. All of the Under 2's were now in a funded place in the Borough. In September, the offer for under 3 year olds would move from 15 hours to 30 hours and there will be sufficient places across the Borough although work was taking place with providers to increase capacity wherever possible. This term she was not aware of any unmet demand. There were two young children she was working with to find an appropriate place as they had complex needs. The parents were happy to take the time to find the appropriate place. The census figures had been agreed.

LP asked if there was any indication of any providers who were not prepared to sign new contracts. CW confirmed that currently there were none although there had been considerable queries from providers. The DfE had produced up to date guidance on what could be charged and currently, no one had come forward to advise that they were not willing to sign up to the agreement or offer unfunded places. LP advised that it was in discussion nationally about how many would opt out this year. CW responded that locally, to date, no one had confirmed that they would not offer funded places.

68/25	<p><b>DBV/DSG Management Plan</b></p> <p>RT advised that the DSG management plan had been submitted and the same template had been used as previous years. Capacity had been challenging this year. There was an increase in numbers and projected numbers around EHCPs and there was a need to make longer term considerations in terms of the future. The document was significant and took considerable time to complete. NS agreed that the document was huge and that the financial summary was the key focus reflecting some of the information provided earlier by LB. JS stated that once the DBV went there would be challenges in relation to the High Needs Block to continue the work of the DBV and its legacy.</p> <p>KC stated that it would impact on the training offer which had previously been very beneficial and where money would come from for this. This was a concern for the future in terms of what this would look like.</p> <p>EP asked how soon could discussions commence to discuss how these children would be funded. Schools were dealing with significant numbers of high needs and many children did not have EHCPs. There were many people who wished to start a conversation on the need to work and fund differently.</p> <p>RT stated that currently, there were many projects but the key was to have the necessary resources within the LA to facilitate these. NS suggested a High Needs Working Group to discuss specific challenges to present to the LA and come up with possible suggestions. Headteachers could be part of this. JS agreed that this should be taken away for a Working Party.</p> <p><b>Action: JS/RT</b></p> <p><b>Resolved: That Forum members noted the report.</b></p>
69/25	<p><b>High Needs Return and Commissioned places</b></p> <p>A copy was shared on screen. RT stated that the High Needs Report was completed annually and indicated the growth around the resource specialist provisions and, as they opened, would be included including Yarborough and Humberston Park. The report highlighted the number of high needs places for children in NEL and did not take into account out of area places. The information was required to be shared with SF members for any comments.</p> <p><b>Resolved: That Forum members noted the report.</b></p>
70/25	<p><b>Date and time of next meeting</b></p> <p>The date of the next meeting had been agreed as 26 June 2025 at 8.00am. NS advised that she was unavailable that day and sought a volunteer to Chair the meeting. SK offered to Chair the meeting.</p> <p>NS thanked everyone for attending and brought the meeting to a close.</p>