



**Meeting held on Monday 26 June 2025 at 8.00am
via TEAMS**

MINUTES

	<p align="center">Attendees</p> <p>Steve Kernan (SK) (Chair) Alex Allenby (AA), Sarah Bate (SB), Liz Brummer (LB) Cllr Margaret Cracknell (CMC), Richard Gargon (RG), Jo Indian (JI), Wendy Jackson (WJ), Lorna Pendred (LP), Carianne Robson (CR), Jenni Steel (JS), Corrinne Wilson (CW),</p>
71/25	<p>Introductions and apologies.</p> <p>SK opened the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance during a busy time. Apologies for absence had been received from Nina Siddle, Rebecca Taylor and Ann-Marie Wilson. A round of introductions took place.</p>
72/25	<p>Chair's Welcome</p> <p>SK requested that thanks be passed to Amanda Palmer and the wider team for collating and circulating all the documents for the meeting. It represented a significant amount of work. JS advised that there were contributions from other officers in the Council and Amanda pulled it all together to ensure that everything was published in line with timescales. JS advised that Amanda was currently on leave but would pass on members' thanks.</p> <p>Action: JS</p>
73/25	<p>Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 10 March 2025/Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 March 2025 were agreed as a true record.</p> <p>Matters arising:</p> <p>(i) <u>Minute 64 - High Needs Block 2025-26</u></p> <p>SK asked if there was any update on the deficit arrangement which ended in March 2025. LB responded that there had been a recent announcement of an extension to the deadline which was now March 2028. As part of the spending review, the Government had announced an SEND reform which had provided some time. However, the situation must continue to be monitored in terms of the impact for the LA but it had taken the pressure off in terms of any issue in a year's time. SK expressed thanks for the update.</p> <p>(ii) <u>Minute 66 – Maintained Schools De-delegation for union facilities time</u></p> <p>WJ stated that schools were still adamant that there was no de-delegation. However, there was a small amount of money in the facilities pot but this would</p>

(iii)	<p>not last for long and schools would have to pay upfront costs for any union support.</p> <p><u>Minute 68 – NS suggested a High Need Working Group to discuss specific challenges</u></p> <p>JS advised that this had been actioned outside of the Forum and the High Need Working Group had met.</p>
74/25	<p>Finance Update</p> <p>Copies of the 2024/25 DSG Outturn report were displayed on screen. LB stated that it reflected the dedicated schools grant as at 31 March 2025 to inform members of the position and outturn. There were 4 different blocks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools Block • High Needs Block • Early Years Block • Central Services Block <p>In terms of the outturn position, the schools block did have a small overspend mainly related to PAN growth. The LA were obliged to pay its growth fund to individual schools. This was 0.1% so represented a small amount and there were no concerns. In EY, there was a small overspend of £50,000 and there were no concerns at the Central Services Block. The High Needs block outturn showed an overspend of £7.7m which was 24.34% so was significant. This was due to increasing demand, complexities of need, the increase in EHCPs and external placements. Agency placements and complex needs showed an overspend of £1.7m and SEND services an overspend of £0.4m. Post 16 was £0.8m and reflected increased demand across different age ranges. Import and export adjustment indicated where funding had been moved between different authorities. Other was £0.07m and was a small overspend. LB stated that it was significant that it was known where overspends where and it had previously been forecast in those areas. However, the growth was more rapid than originally expected. In addition, there had already been an over allocation to the High Needs Block of £3.7m in total, and in terms of the overall position, the cumulative deficit sits at £12m. However, this was consistent across other LAs and the reason why it had been highlighted in discussions. Central Government and the DfE were looking at how to deal with this. NEL had considerable mitigation in place and JS's team had worked hard on this. Without this work, there would have been a bigger overspend. Until the Central Government's reforms were known, this overspend would continue and it was being forecast for the end of this financial year. LB had circulated another table which outlined all the different areas of spend. If anyone had any questions, they were asked to contact LB.</p> <p>In terms of SEND, a reform review had been announced and it was hoped in the autumn there would be more information in terms of what could be expected. The funding into schools had been increased to £4.7b by 2028/29 but there was no detail yet on this.</p> <p>The free schools meals programme would continue for those families on Universal Credit. There was more investment into the schools' re-building programme but the timing of this was unknown.</p> <p>SK thanked LB for all her hard work. LB thanked AA for compiling the report whilst she had been on leave.</p>

	<p>JS stated that the figures were unacceptable and each and every day difficult decisions had to be made. For example, the four specialist advisory teachers funded through DSG had been removed from their posts . There was a consistent review of functions aligned to what the LA had to deliver and difficult decisions would be made over the coming year regarding the staffing model in terms of what had to be delivered as a LA. JS acknowledged that the position was not sustainable and she welcomed any opportunities for further discussion on this. She reiterated the difficulties of the current situation. LB stated that it was a balance of delivering the services against the financial position. The matter was discussed regularly to maintain expenditure at a reasonable level.</p> <p>SK stated that it was a national picture. He asked if there was any indication of the LA's position in the national picture. For example, in terms of comparable data, whether the LA was in the top or bottom 10% in respect of its deficit. LB responded that national information was not available although she could source this from neighbouring LAs. She offered to compile this information and circulate to members.</p> <p>Action: LB</p> <p>SK stated that it would be useful to see where NEL was in terms of its statistical neighbours. SK referred to agency places in NEL which represented a significant sum of money each year. He stated that It would be useful for a breakdown of where they were, how many children accessed them, who they were and average spend per student. For example, a student could cost £250,000 a year for one place and this wider picture must be understood. It would be useful to have the picture of number of places and average cost as this represented a significant amount of money. LB stated that she did not have this information to hand but a briefing can be prepared and will be brought to the next meeting. JS added that the costs were hugely significant and there were also the transport costs to be taken into account. The situation was recognised by the LA and constant discussions took place focussing on places for these children.</p>
75/25	<p>Early Years rates 25/26 and general update</p> <p>Copies of CW's Early Years report had been circulated. CW stated that she wished to highlight the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LA had been awarded an expansion grant to support those providers who had places for under 3s and where the take up of the new expanded offer was happening. • NEL had an additional £194,311 to distribute across the sectors. There was a formula in place where the take up data was used to distribute funding to all sectors. All providers offering places for funded 2 year olds will be given an extra 18p per hour for every hour accessed this term and 27p per hour for every under 2's hour that has been accessed. Across the sector for individual settings, this equated to between £102 as an expansion grant for a Childminder up to almost £10,000 to one of the largest providers. There was a welcome increase in funding to support the final roll out which would start in September where all working families with under 3s, if eligible for the working offer, will now be able to take 30 hours of funded childcare as a term time offer from September. Two year olds from working families started last summer and the under 2's roll out had commenced in September. There had since been an increase in take up across the new offers.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When looking at sufficiency data, although there were enough funded places across the Borough, they were not in the right place or age range. There was an oversupply of 3/4 year old places but in some Wards, additional 2 year old places and definitely places for under 2s were required. At Ward level, for under 2 places, there was a need for approximately 150 part time equivalent places. A part time place was 15 hours so a family who required 30 hours would therefore need two places. There were different offers where families were eligible for different amounts of funded hours. • Potentially, six Wards may need some additional places. There were 150 under 2 places possibly required and 31 part time equivalent places for 2 year olds. The LA were working with existing sectors on capacity. • There was a very small amount of capital funding left to support this expansion and currently, four providers were interested in putting forward a final bid. Once received, the grant panel will assess these. Before September, the final amount of capital funding of about £15,000 will be allocated. . • There was a new funded provider this term who had taken over a venue previously used for childcare and their numbers were increasing. They were doing a stepped approach and were currently, at one third capacity. In September, they would be opening another third and from next year, possibly moving to full capacity of the building. A child minder had taken over the group setting and they wished to have a phased approach. • There were still some proposed places still to open which had previously received capital funding which should be open by September for final roll out of the expansion. • There was a potential closure in Cleethorpes which may be happening and there were discussions on this. LP may provide further detail on this. • The take up over this academic year had increased for the under 2s funding. The 2 year old working offer had increased but there had been a decrease in the Disadvantage offer take up which had declined. However, there was a small group of families who were eligible for both the low and no income offer. It was considered that this was the reason for the decrease. • The under 2s offer had seen an increase since it started and a further increase was expected. • There was a split across the sectors which were more defined in that more children were staying in the private sector rather than moving to school based provision. Previously, 3 and 4 year olds would go into schools when eligible but now the universal offer was available, only .4% more children were going to school sector Nurseries as opposed to private. But when looking at 30 hours for working families offer, there was now 80% of all children eligible who were staying in the private sector. Feedback from parents was because of flexibility for longer days and more weeks were available during holidays.. Work was taking place with schools to see if there was more flexibility to be offered for this. <p>SK thanked CW for her comprehensive report.</p> <p>SK queried the take up from other Primary schools in regard to having that flexible approach. Previously it had been difficult to staff and he queried the local picture. CW stated that the wrap around project rolled out across Primary Schools was for school aged children so the majority of schools were offering WAC for Reception and above.. NELC were working with schools to consider offering to Nursery children as well. It was difficult because of the 3-11 age range and families were staying in the private sector because they needed</p>
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	<p>holiday provision. Popular schools already had before and after school places for Nursery and so those numbers had increased although only a small amount of places were available. NELC continued to work with them to offer WAC for younger children.. Many childminders picked up holiday care and offered more places for under 3s as, from a business point of view, it was more cost effective rather than doing school pick-ups and drop offs.. CW stated that she would put some information together for the next meeting in terms of how many schools offered this within their EY. There was also the annual childcare audit soon and CW would have clarity once this was completed.</p> <p>Action: CW</p> <p>LP stated that it was not just before and after school care for flexibility, it was also the attendance pattern. Some parents did not want full mornings or afternoons perhaps just wanting 2/3 full days. Parents were stating that they could not always get this within a school provision. LP confirmed that Cleethorpes Childcare would be closing on 25 July. Consequently, this would be LPs last Schools Forum meeting and she thanked everyone for their friendship over the years.</p> <p>SK thanked LP for all her support and work she had carried out for Schools Forum.</p> <p>JS endorsed SK's thanks to LP. She stated that it was a really complex landscape and was not straight forward. Schools were not necessarily giving parents what they needed, whether school based places or the private sector. JS thanked LP for her commitment to Schools Forum over the years and the work with young children and the local community.</p> <p>SK acknowledged that the landscape was complex and was a direct reflection of changes to historical rigid working life styles. These patterns no longer existed such was the pace of change.</p>
76/25	<p>DBV / DSG Management Plan</p> <p>Copies of the DBV progress report had been circulated compiled by RT.</p> <p>JS stated that it would be taken as read. Colleagues were aware and familiar with the landscape regarding DBV and the raft of activity which had taken place which had been shared with Headteachers. SEND had changed massively and RT had been instrumental in the shift and shape of this. The second raft of school evaluations had taken place and everyone's commitment had been "incredible". There were some concerns in relation to post DBV and what it would look like. JS referred members to the last slide in RT's presentation where the key priority was a partnership approach to inclusion. JS stated that the LA self-assessed but could not do this in isolation. There had to be a broader landscape around SEND and alternative provision and there was still a significant amount of work to be done. A new Speech and Language Communications specialist had been appointed who would have a heavy responsibility in terms of their work.</p> <p>RT had identified that NELC must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to deliver training; • Ensure all 60 schools and settings complete SMART targets training and a case study for the DBV project;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise the SALT review and what we do around this to reduce waiting lists and improve parent/carer confidence in services. It was known there was still a lack of confidence in relation to this area. • Expand Springboard Outreach to include a school helpline and training around ASD. • Whole school projects in relation to Positive Regard; ELKLAN and the BUSS model; • Maximise the impact by using teachers' visits. <p>JS advised there had been a review of alternative provision, possible re-commissioning and potential changes including what it will look like post DBV. The LA had been smart in terms of workforce development which was crucial and a collective approach was necessary in terms of workforce development. Considerable activity was taking place. It would have been RT's last Schools Forum meeting as she will be leaving the authority on 22 August and RT had made significant changes. Rachel Revell, Principal at Oasis Academy Wintringham, had been appointed to bring a school leader in to further shape, develop and continue the work established by RT around SEND.</p> <p>JS stated that it was essential to make some bold and courageous decisions in moving forward balanced against the continued challenges around SEND on a daily basis.</p> <p>SK concurred there was significant challenge around all angles and it was massive for all schools. He reiterated thanks to RT and projects team for their work. He stated that members hoped that the legacy of their work would continue. It would always have the biggest impact. He also thanked RT for the wider work she had carried out.</p>
77/25	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>The date of the next meeting had been agreed as 30 September 2025 at 8.00am until 9.00am.</p>
78/25	<p>Any other business</p> <p>JS thanked everyone for their contribution to Schools Forum; it was greatly appreciated. She wished everyone a good summer break. In response, SK thanked JS, the wider group and LA colleagues.. He stated that there were some challenging situations particularly with academisation too.</p>