

To all members of the Sunderland Schools Forum

Together for Children Sunderland  
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Date: 26<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Our ref: TFC-SF/ZW

Dear Colleague

## SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM –MEETING 6 JULY 2023

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Schools Forum to be held in the Conference Room at the Link School Pallion at **8.30 am on Thursday 6 July 2023** (and scheduled to end no later than 10.30am).

### A G E N D A

#### 1. STANDING ITEMS

1.1 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Apologies for absence: Mr S Renwick and Mrs D Orr

1.2 Election of Chair and Vice Chair

1.3 Declarations of Interest

1.4 Minutes of last Virtual Meeting held on 25 May 2023 (attached)

1.5 Matters Arising / Action Log (attached)

1.6 Feedback from Short Life Working Groups

- Schools Forum Membership

- School Meal Provision

Simon Marshall

Simon Marshall

#### 2. PRESENTATIONS

#### 3. REPORTS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

3.1 Birth Rates – Impact on Early Years Schooling (deferred until September 2023)

Alan Rowan

3.2 Schools Forum Provisional Future Dates and Workplan 2023/24 (attached)

Michael Hartnack

3.3 Terms of Reference (attached)

Simon Marshall/Kim Richardson

#### 4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

#### 5. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

To be confirmed – provisionally Thursday 14 September 2023

14 September 2023

19 October 2023 (usually only 1 agenda item so may be deferred)

23 November 2023

11 January 2024

7 March 2024

## SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting Held on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 8.30 am

### School Forum Member Attendance Voting

Michael Hartnack - Chair	Maintained – Governor
David Airey	Church of England Diocese
Sara Bainbridge	Maintained Primary - Washington
Ann Blakey	Maintained Catholic School
Paula Hegarty	Academy Secondary – 11 to 16
Julie Heron – Vice Chair	Maintained Nursery
Madeleine Hope	Academy Secondary – Voluntary Aided
Catherine Jones	Maintained Primary - South
David Martyn	Private, Voluntary and Independent Nursery
Emma Monaghan	Academy Primary
Phil Smith	Chief Finance Officer
Nancy Wakeman	Teachers Association
Donna Walker	Maintained Pupil Referral Service
James Waller	Maintained Special Headteacher
Lisa Wood	Maintained Primary - North

### Non-Voting

Simon Marshall	TfC Director of Education
Debbie Orr	TfC Head of Accounting and Finance
Steve Renwick	TfC Director of Finance
Kimberley Richardson	TfC Strategic Service Lead - Education
Cllr Iain Scott	Deputy Lead Member Children's Services
Cllr Linda Williams	Lead Member Children's Services
Zena Wilkinson	School Forum Clerk

### School Forum Non Member Attendance

Vicki Bone	DfE Local Authority Funding Policy Team
Sarah Chapman	Balmoral Learning Trust, Director of Finance & Operations
Debra Dixon	TfC Management Accounting Team
Beverly Feetham	Aim High Academy Trust, Finance Manager
Patrick Grant	DfE Local Authority Funding Policy Team
Mandy Henderson	Ryhope Infant School
John Hope	Technical Account Education Funding
Leigh Morris	TfC School Finance Manager
Pamela Robertson	TfC Strategic SEND Lead
Jill Wilson	TfC Finance Business Partner

		Agreed Action
23/25	<p><b><u>Welcome, Introduction and Apologies</u></b></p> <p>MH welcomed Mr Grant and Ms Bone, DfE representatives from the Local Authority Funding Policy Team to the meeting. MH explained that Mr Grant and Ms Bone were in attendance as observers.</p>	

	Apologies for absence were submitted by Mrs Maw, Mr Little, Mr Lewis and Mrs Ashton.	
23/26	<p><b><u>Declaration of Interest</u></b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
23/27	<p><b><u>Minutes of Previous Meeting</u></b></p> <p>Members <b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To accept the minutes of the School Forum, held on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023, as a true record with the following amendment:</li> </ul> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Kimberley Richardson had been omitted from the attendance.</p>	
23/28	<p><b><u>Matters Arising from the Meeting/Action Log</u></b></p> <p>23/16 Matters Arising/Action Log:</p> <p>SGR confirmed the action log had been reviewed to included both outstanding and completed actions.</p> <p>23/18 Overview of Challenges Around School Meal Provisions and the Resulting Cost Pressures Faced by Schools:</p> <p>SM confirmed a Working Group had been implemented and feedback would be provided under this item of business.</p> <p>23/19 Dedicated Schools Grant Update &amp; Projected Outturn 2022/2023</p> <p>MH noted that monitoring arrangements for procured service provisions had been raised. SM explained that there was a need to verify the contractual agreements had been signed and implemented before services could be assessed in terms of the quality of the provision/best value. KR explained that service specifications for individual providers would be reviewed, to detail responsibilities, and going forward service visits would be undertaken, which could include visits by School Forum members.</p> <p>SM advised that a Working Group may need to be identified to take this forward to ensure consistency and proposed implementing this in September 2023. SM advised that there were a variety of tools which procurement currently used which may be beneficial when completing the quality assurance process.</p> <p>23/21 High Needs Block Additional Funding for 2023/2024:</p> <p>MH queried if JW had received appropriate support for the scheduled Forum on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2023 in relation to inclusion and preparation for the management of children not yet ready for maintained schooling. JW explained that the Forum had been deferred until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 to ensure details of the event were disseminated widely. JW shared that at the current time 40</p>	SM

	<p>providers and special schools had signed up to support the Forum.</p> <p>MH queried if there was anything further the School Forum could do to support attendance at the forum. JW explained Adele Tong, SEND Primary Educational Advisor, was arranging for information to be circulated but it would be beneficial if colleagues could circulate this information as widely as possible. JW explained that the Forum would detail wider strategies for children with learning disabilities to ensure they were able to reach appropriate outcomes.</p> <p>JM stated that it would be beneficial if representatives from all primary schools could attend the Forum. SM agreed to detail the Forum within his Communication e mail and raise the Forum at the Primary School Briefings.</p> <p>MH stated that he believed this was an important focus as it ensured inclusion of children within maintain stream schools. MH requested JW to update the SF on the outcome of the Forum.</p> <p>JW volunteered to attend briefings/meetings to provide an overview of the national picture and strategies moving forward.</p> <p>23/22 School Forum Membership Report:</p> <p>MH noted this was an item of business to be considered within the meeting.</p> <p>23/23 Any Other Business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Business Rates – Nursery Headteacher Query</li> </ul> <p>MH questioned if the business rates query had been resolved. SGR advised that further clarification was required because the DfE guidance was unclear. JHo confirmed further investigations were being taken forward which would include contacting those Local Authorities who provided rate funding rebates for their nursery provisions. JHo explained that there was a need to ascertain how these funding arrangements were implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Birth Rates</li> </ul> <p>MH noted that Alan Rowan would draft a report for consideration at the July 2023 SF meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hetton Site</li> </ul> <p>DW reported that the opening of the Hetton site had been deferred until April 2024 following the identification of significant asbestos issues.</p> <p>Members <b>RESOLVED</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A Working Party would be implemented in September 2023 to consider the quality assurance processes required for service providers.</li> </ul>	<p>SM</p> <p>JW</p> <p>JW/ZW/SM</p> <p>SGR/Jho</p> <p>AR</p>
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**Feedback from Short Life Working Groups**School Forum Membership

Copies of the following report were circulated prior to the meeting:

- Report to Sunderland School Forum 25 May 2023: School Forum Membership 2023/2024

MH acknowledged the work undertaken to ensure the membership reflected the educational establishment changes in relation to academisation.

NW questioned why the membership only detailed representation from a Teaching Association, highlighting that there was a high proportion of non-teaching staff employed within schools. SM explained that invitations to attend the SF were open to all trade union representatives but the named Teacher Association representative (or, in their absence, their deputy) should be putting forward their members views on behalf of trade unions.

SM apologised for the late dissemination of the School Forum Membership report explaining that this had been completed following discussions with locality groups. SM reported that this had brought forward a number of expressions of interest to join the membership of the SF, which he believed was positive.

KR advised SF members that the report circulated was based on the School Forum Membership Report, considered at the March 2023 meeting, but with slight amendments in line with feedback received.

KR explained that there was currently 23 members on the SF and this number had remained unchanged but the voting rights had been amended to reflect the distribution of pupils between school and academy groups: there would be 17 academy places and 6 maintained school places.

KR brought SF members attention to Annex 2 within the report, which detailed the proposed membership and voting rights.

KR explained that the proposal included a change to the Maintained Primary School representation, explaining that there would be a named voting representative with a recommendation to appoint a named Deputy to vote in their absence. Primary Headteacher representation from each individual area was invited but they would have no voting rights.

MH noted that the Academy Member titles inferred Headteacher but current representation was from other professionals. MH requested verification that this was permissible. The Clerk confirmed there was no restriction on member designations.

MH noted subsection 3 detailed the appointment for member representatives, acknowledging the SF were not in favour of

	<p>implementing formal election processes and had agreed it would be appropriate for candidates to be appointed from within their area groups.</p> <p>SM advised the meeting that Terms of Reference had been drafted for the Headteacher cluster meetings, which stipulated representatives on individual forums would be appointed annually. MH stated that he believed this process was proportionate.</p> <p>MH noted that the proposal included one Faith Representative from Primary but there was no representative for secondary schools. MH noted Mr Blakey was from a Catholic primary school and questioned how they would link to Church of England schools. AB explained that she attended the SF as a representative of the Diocese but if she was appointed as the Faith Representative she would contact all faith schools to confirm they were happy for her to represent them. AB advised that she was also a member of the North Primary Headteacher Group.</p> <p>MH stated that he believed the membership proposals included the necessary principals moving forward, to ensure SF membership did not become unwieldy, acknowledging the responsibility to represent each individual area.</p> <p>CJ congratulated KR and SM for the work undertaken to review the SF membership, stated she was pleased with the arrangements.</p> <p>DW advised that the membership proposal had been considered within the Secondary Headteacher Meeting and attendees had agreed the proposed representation.</p> <p>EM advised that the proposals had been considered within Hetton/Houghton Primary Headteacher Group and they had queried the appointment of the Academy representatives. KR explained that the proposal was for current members to transfer into the new structure.</p> <p>PS noted the voting rights for Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) Nurseries differed to the voting rights of Academy Primary, Infants and Junior. The Clerk agreed to verify the voting rights:  <i>The ESFA Schools Forum Structure: Non-school members – No voting on de-delegation or the scheme for financing schools. PVI representatives can vote on the consultation on the funding formula. All non-school members can vote on any other School Forum business.</i></p> <p>SM advised that a further action which would be taken forward, by KR and ZW, would be to look at the annual meeting schedules to synchronise these to enable votes at the SF meetings to reflect cluster group decisions. SM stated that he believed it would be beneficial to get the scheduling correct but there would be some challenges. SM explained ZW held responsibility for the Primary Headteacher Cluster meetings which would provide consistency.</p>	<p>ZW</p>
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<p>Cllr LW noted that the PVI representation within the membership and questioned how they linked/operated, for example did they have group meetings. MH confirmed a PVI representative attended the SF meetings. Following discussion Cllr LW agreed to discuss this in more detail outside of the meeting with SM and DM.</p> <p>SF members confirmed their acceptance of the recommendations detailed within the report.</p> <p>MH thanked SM, KR and ZW for the work undertaken.</p> <p>SF Members <b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To accept the Report of the Director of Education (25<sup>th</sup> May 2023) Schools Forum Membership 2023/2024, as presented.</li> <li>- To note the information provided within the report when determining their representatives for the academy places for the 2023/2024 academic period.</li> <li>- To receive and update Terms of Reference for the SF.</li> </ul> <p>School Meal Provision:</p> <p>SM noted Keith Miles, Catering Services Manager, had attended the SF meeting in March 2023 and detailed the challenges and pressures being faced by schools for the cost of providing school meals. SM explained that school meal provisions varied, both in cost and provision arrangements, across the City but one area which was consistent was the fact income did not cover expenditure costs. SM stated that he had been tasked with looking to see if there was a mechanism to support schools.</p> <p>SM explained the Working Group discussed potential options in detail but areas of concern were raised, for example the variance in subsidies and parental choice for the provision of meals. SM advised that the Working Group had been unable to identify a fixed national formula for subsidies and had agreed there may be a need to focus on the most vulnerable schools and ascertain whether the SF could support these schools. SM advised that this had highlighted that there were no specific formulas to identify small schools and, when following the DfE guidance, there was only one school which met the criteria of a small school within the City of Sunderland.</p> <p>SM stated that although this had been identified as a significant issue the Working Group had been unable to identify a potential resolution to the issue. SM shared that the Working Group had looked at the potential of locality group schools working collaboratively to reduce overall costs.</p> <p>SM reiterated that the Working Group confirmed that there were no specific mechanisms which would resolve the current issue and there would be a need to identify how additional costs could be met and criteria.</p> <p>MH stated that he believed Mr Miles' attendance had been beneficial and a proposal put forward was to link with other Local</p>	<p>Cllr LW/SM/DM</p>
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	<p>Authorities to ascertain if there were any examples of best practice which could be shared. MH questioned if any feedback had been received on this action. SM stated that he was uncertain of Mr Miles' findings but speaking with LA colleagues they were experiencing similar issues, although the context within individual LA's differed.</p> <p>MH acknowledged this would be an on-going issue but stated he felt the option for schools to work collaboratively may be beneficial. MH queried how this option could be disseminated. SM stated that the SF may wish to write to schools but queried if SF colleagues believed it would be logistically possible for small schools to work together for school meal provisions. PS stated he believed any arrangements would need to be in line with the individual procurement processes, stating that this could involve ending the current contract for school meals provisions and entering into a new contract. PS acknowledge that there was a potential commercial providers may not be interested in taking forward contracts of this nature. PS stated he believed the difficulty would be in making the introductions for collaborative working, stating that from a financial process viewpoint he believed this option was feasible. SM noted that PS worked within an establishment which was large enough to procure cost effective school meals provisions.</p> <p>SM confirmed he would write to all schools detailing the collaboration option proposal.</p> <p>MH noted that East Rainton Primary School had been identified as encountering particular problems and queried if this could be a starting point in terms of looking at what support was available. SM advised that ERPS was the only school who met the DfE criteria for a small school and confirmed this could be the starting point.</p> <p>Cllr LW stated that she would be interested in seeing data detailing the volume of children who took packed lunches. MH explained that Mr Miles had presented this information at the SF meeting in March 2023.</p> <p>MH acknowledged Mr Miles' flexibility in terms of meeting the needs of schools.</p> <p>SM extended an open invitation for SF members to contact him directly if they had any queries or comments.</p> <p>SGR stated that he appreciated the comments provided by PS but stated that there was a need to consider the quality and cost of provisions if the potential way forward was to change providers.</p> <p>SM withdrew from the meeting at 9.22 am.</p>	<p>SM</p>
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**Dedicated School Grant Outturn 2022/2023 and Budget 2023/2024**

Copies of the following report were circulated prior to the meeting:

- Report of Director of Finance 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023: Dedicated School Grant 2022/23 Final Outturn and 2023/2024 Allocation

SGR reported an in-year predicted deficit of the DSG, of £1,479,569, for 2022/23, which culminated in an overall DSG Reserve Balance of £4,559,036 (including the Reserve deficit balance from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 of £3,079,467). SGR reported that the 2022/23 outcome had slightly improved against predictions (£4,427,335). MH acknowledged the improvements incurred were positive.

SGR advised that section 2.15 (Council Statement of Account) verified that the DSG had been deployed in accordance with regulations.

SGR highlighted that section 3 (Dedicated Schools Grant 2023/24), provided a summary of the 2023/24 DSG allocation position, following the transfer of the agreed 0.5% from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block, £1,012,590.

DA withdrew from the meeting at 9.29 am.

SGR assured SF members that he would continue to provide updates on the DSG budget.

MH noted the variance between Residential Non Maintained Independent predictions and actual costs equated to -£774,167, stating that the overall outturn of £6,859,950 was significant. MH queried the reason for the variance. DD explained that the predictions were based on predicted allocations and during this financial period the number of Residential Non Maintained Independent placements had increased unexpectedly.

PR highlighted that the overall costs of placements had also increased in line with the increasing cost of living but assured SF members TfC challenged providers in relation to their charges. PR explained that there was a potential risk that providers would end placements if the increased costs were not accepted.

MH explained that he believed the role of the SF was to probe and ensure best value and queried how they could determine the probity was appropriate in terms of the increases. SGR advised that the current time it was very much a provider market and in terms of the increasing fees the ability to challenge these was difficult. SGR advised that a national review of the care market by the CMA had been undertaken and part of the outcome would include attempts to try to cap profits.

	<p>SGR stated that there was a lack of resource capacity, therefore services were trying to make the most of what was available but were challenging costs.</p> <p>SGR confirmed the role of the SF included assurance and suggested requesting case studies for placement. PR explained there were occasions when the individual child's requirements were unexpected and unpredictable and if this child was Cared For it was TfC's responsibility to meet the cost of the required service provision package. PR shared that any placement decisions made were dependent on the child's safety. PR advised that resources within Sunderland were at capacity and independent providers had needed to be used and in many cases it was difficult to mitigate the costs incurred. PR explained that under normal circumstances an independent provider would be approached for a complex placement but these applications were now being rejected as the provider did not need the business.</p> <p>MH proposed 2 case studies were drafted for the next SF meeting and acknowledged the concern that TfC may be exploited due to current circumstances.</p> <p>SGR stated that on a positive note TfC had an exceptional partnership with Hopespring which had delivered a significant level of savings. SGR explained that TfC were trying to use a mixed economy for provisions. MH advised members that he had visited Hopespring, with Cllr LF, and commended the provision and the fact they provided services at a cost below other providers.</p> <p>MH acknowledged that the SF had been advised other LA's were experiencing deficit positions in relation to their High Needs Block funding and queried if there was any comparative data. SGR confirmed Sunderland's situation was not worse than others. SGR explained that there were 3 tranches for DBV based on High Needs Block Funding overspend and Sunderland were in tranche 3 for delivery of best value, sharing that there were 3 tiers for intervention. SGR acknowledged that the allocated "safety valves" had been seen by some LA's as a reward rather than highlighting that this had been allocated due to poor behaviour. SGR agreed to collate comparative data to present at the next SF.</p> <p>JH noted that following Covid children with complex SEN needs had been identified and due to a lack of appropriate placements within Sunderland they had been placed outside of the area. JH queried if consideration could be given to nursery aged children remaining within their Sunderland nursery provisions, explaining that maintained nurseries had qualified teaching staff and she believed pupils needs could be quite holistic. MH acknowledged that this would be an extension of the inclusion agenda. PR agreed, stating she believed this was evidenced within the data for new Education Health Care (EHC) plans, in terms of the growing younger cohort of pupils being identified. PR stated that difficult decisions were required when complex needs were</p>	<p>PR</p> <p>SGR</p>
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	<p>identified and it was not always possible to identify the full profile to identify an appropriate specialist provision.</p> <p>MH queried if the issues was a perceived shortfall in communication processes for placements. JH stated that she believed professionals were quick to jump into assessments to identify children needed a specialist provision, whereas she believed it was difficult to fully assess the needs of 3 to 4 year olds and she believed maintained nursery provisions would be able to meet the needs of these children. PR provided assurance that the drive for specialist placements for this cohort was not from the SEN Team but confirmed that they often struggled to identify appropriate mainstream school placements. JW stated that he believed it was possible to identify the needs of 3 to 4 year old children with severe learning difficulties, highlighting that Sunningdale had 30 places available and not all were filled. JW stated that he believed the issue was around having the correct mechanisms in place to identify children who needed specialist provisions. JW stated that he was aware some provisions were good at identifying needs but highlighted that there were older pupils moving to specialist provisions because their additional needs had not been identified</p> <p>MH acknowledged the concerns being raised but stated he felt the discussions were moving away from SF business and recommended these discussions were continued within the appropriate forums.</p> <p>PR withdrew from the meeting at 9.53 am.</p> <p>CJ raised concern about the process for deferred entry and provided an overview of a case within her school: CJ explained that the request was submitted by the parent and agreed appropriate by the school but this application had been rejected. MH recommended CJ raised these concerns with SM outside of the SF. Cllr LW acknowledged the potential detrimental impact of deferred placement on later education and shared that she was aware the number of applications being submitted. MH put forward a proposal for deferred placement data to be presented at the next meeting.</p> <p>MH thanked SGR, DD and the Finance Team for the information presented.</p> <p>SF members confirmed their acceptance of the recommendations detailed within the report.</p> <p>SGR stated that he appreciated the fact that the Forum did not do the finance in isolation of services. MH agreed, stating he believed it was vitally important the needs of pupils were addressed first and foremost.</p> <p>SF Members <b>RESOLVED:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To accept the Report of the Director of Finance (25<sup>th</sup> May 2023) Dedicated Schools Grant 2022/23 Final Outturn and 2023/24 Allocation, as presented.</li> </ul>	<p>CJ</p> <p>AR</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To approve the carry forward of the deficit sum, of the High Needs Block, of £4,427,335.</li> <li>- To receive regular updates on the 2023/24 projected outturn position and how to mitigate the deficit brought forward.</li> </ul>	
23/31	<p><b><u>Birth Rates – Impact on Early Years Schooling</u></b></p> <p>SF Members <b>NOTED</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This item of business had been deferred until the next meeting, in July 2023.</li> </ul>	AR
23/32	<p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b></p> <p>Cllr LW thanked colleagues for the information provided within the meeting and stated that she was looking forward to working together going forward.</p>	
23/33	<p><b><u>Date and Time of Next Meeting</u></b></p> <p>Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at 8.30 am</p> <p>MH noted this meeting would be held virtually but in-person meetings may be considered going forward.</p>	

## REPORT TO SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM

### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

6 July 2023

#### Schools Forum Meeting Schedule and Workplan

##### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek agreement for the schedule of meetings beyond July 2023, the workplan for the year ahead and to consider additional topics that Schools Forum Members would wish to include.

##### 2. Meeting Schedule and Workplan

- 2.1 Schools Forums are required to meet at least four times a year and in the past Sunderland Schools Forum has met on seven occasions per annum.
- 2.2 A schedule is detailed in Appendix A, which proposes dates of future meetings to July 2024. The schedule proposes seven meetings, with the option of cancelling the October meeting if not required and bringing the December meeting forward to November as agreed in 2022/23. The workplan has been adjusted to accommodate this proposed change. The rationale for the change is the November meeting should allow Schools Forum to consider the Funding Formula for the year ahead for further consultation with Schools and Academies as funding determinations are not usually released until late December. This means that there is normally no new information to present at the December meeting. The final funding formula would be agreed at the January meeting, no change to the current process.
- 2.3 The agenda for the Schools Forum is currently managed by Together for Children, on behalf of the local authority, in order to ensure that the Forum's statutory role in relation to school funding is carried out. The Council's Section 151 Officer and Lead Member are standing invitees to the Forum.
- 2.4 To optimise the benefit of the Forum, it has been agreed that appropriate topics would be agreed in advance and relevant speakers invited to make presentations and facilitate discussions. Previous examples include Sunderland City Council in relation to Council Budget Updates, Internal Audit, TfC HR (Schools) and the University of Sunderland. Appendix B (attached) details a proposed workplan for the year ahead.

2.5 Included in the workplan for 2023/24 is the continuation of a new agenda item included for the first time in 2020/21, which is for the Schools Forum to review the effectiveness of the Forum itself. This is good practice in corporate governance and is designed to facilitate an open discussion; it is held without officers present.

### **3. Recommendations**

3.1 The Schools Forum is recommended to:

- i. Agree the dates of future meetings and the proposed workplan for the year ahead.
- ii. Consider additional topics that can be included in the Schools Forum 2023/24 work plan.

**PROPOSED FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE**

- 14 September 2023
- 19 October 2023
- 23 November 2023
- 11 January 2024
- 7 March 2024
- 23 May 2024
- 4 July 2024

All meetings are held on a Thursday between 8.30am and 11.00am either over Teams™ or at the Link School, Pallion.

**Schools Forum - Proposed Workplan September 2023 to July 2024**

<b><u>Date of Meeting</u></b>	<b><u>Agenda items</u></b>
<b>14 September 2023</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 School Funding Reform</li> <li>2 Budget Planning Framework 2024/25</li> <li>3 HNB Review</li> <li>4 Dedicated Schools Grant Update and Projected Outturn 2023/24</li> <li>5 High Needs Block Commissioned Places 2024/25</li> <li>6 Review of Effectiveness of Schools Forum</li> </ol>
<b>19 October 2023 (if required)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 High Needs Block Commissioned Places 2024/25</li> </ol>
<b>23 November 2023</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 School Funding Reform</li> <li>2 Budget Planning Framework 2024/25</li> <li>3 HNB Review</li> <li>4 Early Years Block - Update</li> <li>5 Growth and Falling Rolls Funding Report 2023/24</li> <li>6 School Funding Formula - Approval of Exceptions for SoS (if applicable)</li> </ol>
<b>11 January 2024</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 School Funding Reform</li> <li>2 Dedicated Schools Grant Update and Projected Outturn 2023/24</li> <li>3 Budget Planning Framework 2023/24</li> <li>4 School Funding Formula <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Individual School Budget Share - Impact Analysis</li> <li>b. Schools Block Return to ESFA</li> </ol> </li> <li>5 High Needs Block 2023/24 Update</li> <li>6 Early Years Block 2023/24 Update</li> </ol>
<b>7 March 2024</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Dedicated Schools Grant - Update</li> <li>2 HNB Review</li> <li>3 Early Years Funding Update 2023/24 and 2024/25</li> <li>4 Schools Forum Membership Report</li> </ol>
<b>23 May 2024</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 School Funding Reform</li> <li>2 Dedicated Schools Grant Outturn 2023/24</li> <li>3 HNB Review</li> <li>4 School Place Planning</li> <li>5 Schools Forum Membership Update (if required)</li> </ol>



**4 July 2024**

- 1 Election of Chair and Vice Chair
- 2 School Funding Reform
- 3 DSG Update
- 4 High Needs Block Commissioning Arrangements Update 2023/24
- 5 Schools Forum Provisional Future Dates and Workplan 2024/25

**PROPOSED MEETING SCHEDULES 2023/2024 A**

Cluster meetings would be held the on the Wednesday following School Forum Meetings

	Meeting Day	Time	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul
<b>School Forum Meetings</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	8.30 am	14th	19th	23rd		11th		7th		23rd		4th
<b>Primary Headteacher Cluster Meetings - North</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	8.00 am	20th		1st	6th	17th	14th	13th	17th		5th	10th
<b>Primary Headteacher Cluster Meetings - South</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	1.30 pm	20th		1st	6th	17th	14th	13th	17th		5th	10th
<b>Primary Headteacher Cluster Meetings - Hetton &amp; Houghton</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	9.30 am	20th		1st	6th	17th	14th	13th	17th		5th	10th
<b>Primary Headteacher Cluster Meetings - Washington</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	10.00 am	20th		1st	6th	17th	14th	13th	17th		5th	10th
<b>Secondary Headteacher Cluster Meeting</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	9.00 am	20th		1st	6th	17th	14th	13th	17th		5th	10th
<b>Area Primary Headteacher Chairs &amp; Vice Chair Meetings</b>	<b>Friday</b>	1.30 pm	29th		10th	15th	20th		20th	26th		14th	12th

School Holidays

				23rd - 27th		21st - 31st	1st - 5th	19th - 23rd		29th	1st - 12th	6th; 27th - 31st	close 22nd
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**PROPOSED MEETING SCHEDULES 2023/2024 B**

Cluster meetings would be held the day immediately prior to the School Forum

	Meeting Day	Time	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul
<b>School Forum Meetings</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	8.30 am	14th	19th	23rd		11th		7th		23rd		4th
<b>Primary Headteacher Cluster Meetings - North</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	8.00 am	13th	18th	1st	6th	10th	14th	6th	17th	22nd	5th	3rd
<b>Primary Headteacher Cluster Meetings - South</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	1.30 pm	13th	18th	1st	6th	10th	14th	6th	17th	22nd	5th	3rd
<b>Primary Headteacher Cluster Meetings - Hetton &amp; Houghton</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	9.30 am	13th	18th	1st	6th	10th	14th	6th	17th	22nd	5th	3rd
<b>Primary Headteacher Cluster Meetings - Washington</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	10.00 am	13th	18th	1st	6th	10th	14th	6th	17th	22nd	5th	3rd
<b>Secondary Headteacher Cluster Meeting</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	9.00 am	13th	18th	1st	6th	10th	14th	6th	17th	22nd	5th	3rd
<b>Area Primary Headteacher Chairs &amp; Vice Chair Meetings</b>	<b>Friday</b>	1.30 pm	22nd	3rd	10th	15th	19th		15th	26th		14th	12th

**SUNDERLAND SCHOOLS FORUM  
TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**1. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

1.1 The Schools Forum brings together key partners in the provision of education in Sunderland and is established by the Local Authority under powers contained within the Education Act 2002.

1.2 The Terms of Reference for the Schools Forum are drawn from The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012.

1.3 The Schools Forum is a statutory consultative body and has the following powers and responsibilities (detailed by the Education & Skills Funding Agency):

<b>Function</b>	<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Schools Forum</b>	<b>DfE Role</b>
Formula change (including redistributions)	Proposes and decides	Must be consulted [voting restrictions apply - see schools forum structure document] and informs the governing bodies of all consultations	Checks for compliance with regulations
Movement of up to 0.5% from the school's block to other blocks	Proposes	Decides	Adjudicates where the School Forum does not agree LA proposal.
Contracts (where the LA is entering a contract to be funded from the school's budget)	Proposes at least one month prior to invitation to tender, the terms of any proposed contract	Gives a view and informs the governing bodies of all consultations	None
Financial issues relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• arrangements for pupils with special educational needs, in particular the places to be commissioned by the LA and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding</li> <li>• arrangements for use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school, in particular the places to be commissioned by the LA and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding</li> <li>• arrangements for early years provision</li> <li>• administration arrangements for the allocation of central government grants</li> </ul>	Consults annually	Gives a view and informs the governing bodies of all consultations	None

Minimum funding guarantee (MFG)	Proposes any exclusions from MFG for application to DfE	Gives a view	Approval to application for exclusions
De-delegation for mainstream maintained schools for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contingencies</li> <li>administration of free school meals</li> <li>insurance</li> <li>licenses/subscriptions</li> <li>staff costs – supply cover</li> <li>support for minority ethnic pupils/underachieving groups</li> <li>behaviour support services</li> <li>library and museum services</li> <li>School improvement</li> </ul>	Proposes	Maintained primary and secondary school member representatives will decide for their phase. Middle schools are treated according to their deemed status	Adjudicates where the School Forum does not agree LA proposal
General Duties for maintained schools  Contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for maintained schools.	Proposes	Would be decided by the relevant maintained school members (primary, secondary, special and PRU).	Adjudicates where the School Forum does not agree LA proposal
Central spend on and the criteria for allocating funding from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>funding for significant pre-16 pupil growth, including new schools set up to meet basic need, whether maintained or academy</li> <li>funding for good or outstanding schools with failing rolls where growth in pupil numbers is expected within three years</li> </ul>	Proposes	Decides	Adjudicates where the School Forum does not agree LA proposal
Central spend on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>early years block provision</li> <li>funding to enable all schools to meet the infant class size requirement</li> <li>back-pay for equal pay claims</li> <li>remission of boarding fees at maintained schools and academies</li> <li>places in independent schools for non-SEN pupils</li> <li>admissions</li> <li>servicing of the School Forum</li> <li>Contribution to responsibilities that local authorities hold for all schools</li> </ul>	Proposes	Decides	Adjudicates where the School Forum does not agree LA proposal
Central spend on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>capital expenditure funded from revenue – projects must have been planned and decided on prior to April 2013 so no new projects can be charged</li> <li>contribution to combined budgets – this is where the School Forum agreed prior to April 2013 a contribution from the schools' budget to services which would otherwise be funded from other sources</li> <li>existing termination of employment costs (costs for specific individuals must have been approved prior to April 2013 so no</li> </ul>	Proposes up to the value committed in the previous financial year and where expenditure has already been committed.	Decides for each line	Adjudicates where the School Forum does not agree LA proposal

new redundancy costs can be charged) • prudential borrowing costs – the commitment must have been approved prior to April 2013			
Central spend on: • high needs block provision • central licenses negotiated by the Secretary of State	Decides	None, but good practice to inform forum	None
Scheme of financial management changes	Proposes and consults the governing body and Head of every school	Approves (school members only)	Adjudicates where the School Forum does not agree LA proposal
Membership: length of office of members	Decides	None (but good practice would suggest that they gave a view)	None
Voting procedures	None	Determine voting procedures	None
Chair of the School Forum	Facilitates	Elects (may not be an elected member of the Council or officer)	None

## 2. CONSTITUTION

2.1 The Membership of the Schools Forum shall be as follows:

Primary Headteachers (M <sup>1</sup> )	1 Headteacher
Academy Primary, Infants and Junior	8
Secondary Headteachers (M)	0 Headteacher <sup>2</sup>
Academy Secondary and All Through	8
Nursery (M)	1 Headteacher
Special (M)	1 Headteacher
Academy Special (Mandatory)	1
Pupil Referral Services (M)	1 Headteacher
Faith Representative	1 Headteacher (Primary)
Governors	1 Governor

2.2 Members representing schools may be drawn from Headteachers (or their representative), CEOs and all classes of Governor.

2.3 Academy Trusts in the local area are required to consider the type of representative and from which sectors within their group. However, at least one member must represent special academies as required by Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) regulations.

<sup>1</sup> M – denotes Mandatory place

<sup>2</sup> No Maintained Secondary Schools now

- 2.4 Maintained primary representatives will be elected from within their area Headteacher groups. It will be the responsibility of current Forum representative to ensure that appropriate discussion and representation takes place.
- 2.5 Maintained primary members will be required to elect from their maintained primary membership group the representative who is to hold voting rights to vote on their behalf. It is recommended that a deputy is also identified for occasions where the voting member is unable to attend Forum.
- 2.6 Faith schools will continue to have a primary place available in the school's group as well as two non-school places representing the Church of England and Roman Catholic Diocese.
- 2.7 Current members who have not attended three or more Forum meetings will be discharged from their membership duties and replaced via the Terms of Reference membership process
- 2.8 As well as the term of office coming to an end, a member ceases to be a member of the Schools Forum if he or she resigns from the schools forum or no longer occupies the office by which he or she became eligible for election, selection or appointment to the schools forum.
- 2.9 Members of Schools Forum have an obligation to inform and consult, as appropriate, with their cluster or sector group that they are responsible for representing and to bring back to Forum the collective views / voting intention of that representative group.

## **2.10 Substitute Members**

Where a Forum member is unable to attend they are responsible for arranging an appropriate substitute to attend the meeting.

The substitute for headteachers must be from the same representative group and can be a member of the headteacher's senior management team or a headteacher from another school. Alternatively, if a substitute cannot be found the headteacher may ask their headteacher association to substitute.

Where a cluster area representative is unable to attend their nominated deputy should do so.

Governors can only be substituted by a governor. The substitute can be a governor from the same governing body or from another school within the same representative group. If no substitute can be found, the Authority will arrange a substitute from a pool of elected substitutes.

If a member knows that they need to leave the meeting early, they should arrange for a substitute to attend the whole meeting and then the substitute can take over when the member leaves.

Substitutes have the right to vote provided they are acting on behalf of a member with voting rights.

Members are required, where possible, to notify the Clerk to Schools Forum of any substitutes no less than 24 hours before the meeting at [Zena.wilkinson@togetherforchildren.org.uk](mailto:Zena.wilkinson@togetherforchildren.org.uk).

## **3. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS**

- 3.1 The current members of the Schools Forum are responsible for the appointment of vacancies to the membership as set out in the table in 2.1. The representation for primary and secondary schools will remain proportionate to the number of pupils within each sector. The representation in relation to maintained schools and academies will remain proportionate to the number of pupils.

- 3.2 Nominations from current members will be considered as will direct nominations from prospective members themselves.
- 3.3 Following discussion at Forum a vote will be held in respect of the appointment of a new member, with the majority vote being ratified at the same meeting. The new member will be informed by the Clerk to the Schools Forum and invited to attend the next scheduled meeting.
- 3.4 If an election is required for headteachers, or their representatives, all relevant schools will be balloted. For governors all governing bodies for the relevant section will be balloted. The candidate with the highest number of votes will be appointed. In the event of a tie, a second election will take place for those candidates who have equal votes. If there is more than one vacancy within a representative group, all groups eligible to vote will have one vote per vacancy.
- 3.5 In circumstances where a vacancy on Forum remains with no nominations the Authority will liaise with schools and academies from the relevant sector to encourage the submission of nominations.
- 3.6 Any change of the nominated officer from non-school bodies, shall be notified to the Clerk to the Forum at least 14 days before the next meeting.

#### **4. CONDUCT AND TERMS OF OFFICE**

- 4.1 In carrying out their functions, members of the Schools Forum are expected to act in accordance with the seven principles of public life set out in the first report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. Members will need to take a strategic view across the whole education estate whilst acting as representative of the group that has elected them. Furthermore, they should be easily contactable and pro-active in raising the profile of issues and communicating decisions, and the reasons behind them, effectively.
- 4.2 The term of office for Schools Members will be a maximum of four years from the date of appointment, subject to their remaining eligible. The term of office for Non-Schools Members will be a maximum of four years from the date of appointment.
- 4.3 Schools Members may resign from membership of the Schools Forum and will also cease to be a member if he or she is no longer eligible to be a member.
- 4.4 Any member, who fails to attend three consecutive meetings of Schools Forum, even where a substitute attended on his or her behalf, may have their membership terminated on a majority vote of the other members.
- 4.5 After their term of appointment comes to an end, individuals may choose to stand down, however, there is no limit on the number of consecutive terms of office an individual may serve on Schools Forum if they are re-elected. Members who have not attended regularly are prevented from standing again for 2 years after their last term of office.

#### **5. CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR**

- 5.1 The Schools Forum shall appoint from within its membership a Chair and Vice-Chair, elected (if necessary) by a majority of votes cast. These posts may not be held by an elected member or employee of the Authority.

- 5.2 A Chair or Vice-Chair shall cease to hold office if he or she resigns by giving written notice to the Clerk to the Schools Forum, or if he or she ceases to be a member of the Schools Forum.
- 5.3 Chair and Vice-Chair shall be elected at the first meeting of the academic year. A Chair or Vice-Chair may stand for re-election in further successive years where eligibility criteria is met.
- 5.4 The Chair's responsibilities include chairing meetings and overseeing the preparation of the record of the meeting. In the absence of the Chair the Vice-Chair shall fulfill these roles.
- 5.5 If in any circumstances, it is necessary that a view be given on behalf of the Forum and it is impossible to convene an urgent meeting in accordance with 7.2, the Chair shall be entitled to express a view on behalf of the Forum. The Chair shall inform the Members of the Forum, informally as soon as possible, but shall nonetheless report that view and the circumstances behind the need to give that view to the next meeting of the Forum.
- 5.6 The Schools Forum shall select one of its members to preside over a meeting if both the Chair and Vice-Chair are unable to attend.
- 5.7 The Chair can be removed from office between annual elections only if the Schools Forum passes a resolution on a majority of votes cast to remove him or her; and
  - a) fourteen working days notice of such a meeting is given; and
  - b) removing the Chair is a specific item on the agenda for such a meeting; and
  - c) before the vote at the meeting, those proposing that the Chair be removed state reasons for the proposal, and the Chair is given an opportunity to make a statement in reply.

## **6. CLERK TO THE SCHOOLS FORUM**

- 6.1 The Authority shall appoint a Clerk. The responsibilities of the Clerk include, but are not limited to, drafting a schedule of Forum meetings, convening meetings in line with the schedule, keeping a record of each meeting and ensuring members of the Schools Forum have all relevant information to make a reasoned decision.

## **7. MEETINGS OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM**

- 7.1 The Clerk shall convene the meetings of the Schools Forum, giving a minimum notice of eight working days, with a full agenda.
- 7.2 In cases of urgency, the Clerk shall convene a meeting of the Schools Forum on the direction of the Chair, or in their absence, the Vice-Chair.
- 7.3 The Schools Forum shall meet at least four times a year.
- 7.4 The Schools Forum shall meet as necessary in order to be consulted on contracts for supplies and/or services or other financial issues.
- 7.5 A meeting is only quorate if 40% of the total membership is present (this excludes any observers, and it is 40% of the current membership excluding vacancies). If a meeting is inquorate it can proceed but it cannot legally take decisions (election of a Chair, or a decision relating to funding conferred by the funding regulations). An inquorate meeting can respond to Local Authority consultation, and give views to the Local Authority. It would normally be good practice for the local authority to take account of such 'unofficial' views, but it's not legally obliged to do so. In practice, the arrangements for meetings should



be made to reduce the chance of a problem with the quorum. The quorum stipulation is in the regulations to help ensure the legitimacy of decisions

7.6 Local Authority attendance is restricted to the Lead Member, Director of Education (or representative), Director of Finance (or representative), officers providing financial or technical advice and officers presenting reports.

7.7 The Secretary of State can appoint an observer to attend and speak at meetings, for example a representative from the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

7.8 Agendas, reports and minutes will be published on a website accessible to the public.

## **8. RECORD OF MEETINGS**

8.1 The names of the members present at a Schools Forum meeting must be recorded with the minutes of the meeting. Draft minutes of the meeting shall be circulated within 7 working days of the meeting.

8.2 The Forum minutes must be agreed at the following Forum meeting.

8.3 The Authority should make available the agenda, papers and approved minutes for each meeting. The only exception will be for items that the Forum has decided should be confidential.

8.4 Confidential items shall include those which fall within Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The Chair or Vice-Chair when agreeing the agenda for each meeting shall determine items to be considered in private session and shall have regard to Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

8.5 The minutes of any part of a meeting that are confidential should be kept separate and not available for inspection.

8.6 Members of the Schools Forum shall respect the confidentiality of items of business which Schools Forum decides are confidential.

## **9. VOTING**

9.1 Voting shall be by individual member votes cast, but voting is limited for:

- the funding formula - limited to schools members, academies members and PVI representatives
- de-delegation - limited to the specific primary and secondary phase of maintained schools members
- retaining funding for statutory duties relating to maintained schools only - limited to maintained primary, secondary, special and PRU members

9.2 As the role of the Schools Forum is consultative there shall be no bar upon members abstaining or any need for a Chair's casting vote except in limited situations set out in 9.3.

9.3 In the event of a tied vote the Chair shall have a casting vote.

## **10 PROCEEDINGS**

10.1 The Forum may establish sub-groups to focus on specific issues. If a view of the Forum is required related to the work of a sub-group, then the sub-group shall present a report and/or recommendation to the Forum.

10.2 Schools Forum shall have regard to the requirements placed on the Authority and school governing bodies by all relevant equality legislation and associated regulations.

10.3 Schools Forum will be considered as a 'public authority' for the purpose of the Human Rights Act 1998. Schools Forum must act in a way which is compatible with the rights and freedoms in the European Convention on Human Rights.

10.4 Any complaints about the operation of Schools Forum shall in the first instance be addressed to the Clerk to the of Schools Forum. The Clerk and the Chair / Vice Chair of Schools Forum should seek to resolve problems quickly. The action taken to resolve a complaint must be reported to the next meeting of Schools Forum.

## **11.0 BUDGET**

11.1 The Forum shall determine matters for which they may need funds. Approved expenditure may include expenses for members; costs of Clerk, training courses for Members and the hire of a meeting room, where a room is not provided by the Authority. Officers of the Authority will offer guidance on budgetary procedures.

11.2 The Authority shall prepare an annual statement showing total expenditure for the Forum.

## **12. INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED TO NEW SCHOOLS FORUM MEMBERS**

12.1 When a new member is appointed, he or she should receive background information from the Clerk to the Schools Forum and induction, including:

- a copy of the Terms of Reference
- the procedures for meetings
- recent minutes of meetings

## **13. CHANGES TO THIS DOCUMENT**

13.1 Schools Forum may review the Terms of Reference as necessary and request changes to be made by the Authority. The Authority shall not unreasonably refuse to make such changes.

13.2 The Authority may revise these Terms of Reference as necessary to reflect either the proportions referred to in section 2.1, new guidance from the DfE or new statutory requirements.

## **14. APPROVAL OF TERMS OF REFERENCE**

14.1 Approved by Schools Forum on 6 July 2023.

