

**Minutes of a meeting of the North Northamptonshire Schools Forum**  
Held at 1.00 pm on Thursday 19th January, 2023 as a Remote Meeting via Zoom

**Present:-**

Members

James Birkett (Chair)  
Lynne Bolland  
Victoria Bull  
Rob Hardcastle  
Marie Lally  
Annabel Moore

Paul Wheeler (Vice Chair)  
Lisa Bowyer  
Peter Cantley  
Rob Hardcastle  
Nikki Lamond  
Angela Prodger

Officers

Sariya Bi  
Neil Goddard  
Salik Khan  
Yoke O'Brien  
Robert Tite

Ann Marie Dodds  
Nichola Jones  
Judy Matthews  
Raj Sohal

Also in attendance – Councillor Scott Edwards

**89 Apologies for non-attendance, Forum membership changes and declarations of interest**

Apologies were received from the following members: Sandra Appleby and Siobhan Hearne.

Two new members had also joined the Forum: Lynne Bolland and Lisa Bowyer, as representatives from the Early Years sector.

Annabel Moore had replaced Lee Hughes, as the Academy Mainstream Representative.

**90 Minutes of meeting held on 14 December 2022 and points arising/officer feedback**

**RESOLVED that:**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> December were agreed as an accurate record.

**91 2022-23 DSG Budget Update - January 2023**

The Forum considered a report by The Senior Finance Business Partner, which outlines the financial position of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) against the budget for 2022-23.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- One member explained that it had been difficult for the Early Years sector to apply for SENIF funding.
- Members queried which funding model would be used for Glenvale Park School, as the next academy to be launched by the Local Authority, and what the financial implications of this could be.
- Members expressed concern regarding the £1.5M movement of the High Needs Block of the DSG and questioned why the change in this forecast had been so significant.
- Members acknowledged that North Northamptonshire had experienced budgeting problems concerning out-of-county special top-ups and non-maintained/independent top-ups and queried why the 2022/23 forecast had been so inaccurate.

In response, The Senior Finance Business Partner clarified that:

- Glenvale Park was not expected to open in 2023/24 therefore, there was no provision in the budget for this new school. Nevertheless, Weldon Village Academy would open, with full form entry, and would not be funded by the DfE; since growth funding was based upon historical pupil numbers. As a consequence, the budget share available to all schools in Northamptonshire would reduce. The maximum possible funding from the Pupil Growth Fund had been distributed. The Local Authority would essentially have to “foot the bill” until DfE funding could be made available.
- A significant factor causing the shift in the High Needs Block forecast was the identification of historical liabilities, which had not previously been accounted for. Going forward, there would be increased strategic oversight of expenditure within the High Needs Block, which would allow the Local Authority to take action to address the its pressures.

**RESOLVED that:** The report be noted.

## 92 **2023-24 Proposed Scheme for Financing Schools**

The Forum considered a report by The Finance Business Partner, which outlined the proposed changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools.

**RESOLVED that:** The proposed changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools be approved.

## 93 **2023-24 Dedicated Schools Grant Settlement and Other Grants**

The Forum considered a report by The Strategic Finance Business Partner, which outlined details of the 2023-24 DSG settlement and other grant funding.

**RESOLVED that:** The report be noted.

## 94 **2023-24 Schools Block Budgets**

The Forum considered a report by The Strategic Finance Business Partner, which outlined the 2023-24 Schools Block DSG allocation and proposed Mainstream Primary and Secondary Schools Budgets and the Growth Fund Budget, for the Forum's approval.

**RESOLVED that: The Forum:**

- a) approves the Minimum Funding Guarantee to be set at 0.5% for 2023-24.
- b) indicates it's support for the funding formula for 2023-24.
- c) approves the transfer of funding from the Schools Block to the Growth Fund for 2023-24.
- d) approves the de-delegation of £3.56 per pupil for Trade Union Facilities Time and £12 per pupil for School Effectiveness for Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools.

**95 2023-24 Central School Services Block Budgets**

The Forum considered a report by The Strategic Finance Business Partner, which outlined the Local Authority's proposals for central expenditure on education functions for 2023-24.

**RESOLVED that:** The proposals for central expenditure be approved.

**96 2023-24 Early Years Block Budgets**

The Forum considered a report by The Early Years Strategic Advisor, which outlined the 2023-24 Early Years Budgets, announced in 2022 by the DfE, and the methodology for allocating funding to providers.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members queried what methodology had been used as a basis for reducing the notional SEND rate from 8p to 3p.
- One member expressed concern that the pay increase proposed through the new rate was not viable to support early years workers, the majority of which were on the living wage.
- Members queried how much contingency funding had been held back and how it differed from the contingency budget from the previous year.

In response, The Early Years Strategic Advisor clarified that:

- When SENIF funding was introduced in September 2022, £160k funding was available, through the budget. The number of children presenting emerging needs had increased, possibly as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, settings requested additional funding to support individual funding. In order to support this, the Local Authority needed to top-up the SENIF funding, which was taken from the notional SEND pot. SENIF was a more precise way to ensure that SEND funding supported children with additional needs.

- The DfE had released guidance concerning Teachers' pensions and pay, which the Local Authority had to adhere to.
- There was no contingency budget for 2023/24.

**RESOLVED that:** The Forum:

a) approves the budget set aside for SENIF and acknowledges the reduction of notional SEND by 5p.

b) approves the change in NNC's EYNFF to include the Quality Supplement for Schools and Academies Teachers Pay and Pension Grant.

c) approves the funding rates and levels of funding for 2023-24.

## **97 2023-24 High Needs Block Budgets**

The Forum considered a report by The Head of SEND, which outlined the High Needs Block allocations for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

During discussion, the principal points were noted:

- Members queried whether the High Needs budget for 2023/24 should remain at the same level as 2022/23, since there had been an underspend for the previous year.
- One member expressed concern that the early years budget for 2023/24 was half of the amount budgeted for 2022/23.

In response, The Head of SEND clarified that:

- The Local Authority endeavoured to 'plan ahead' in funding the cost of high needs placements long-term and anticipated this cost to be around £13K per placement. The previous year's budget had been overly ambitious, whereas the programme of delivery for 2023/24 was considered to be more realistic. It was likely that the budget for the next year would again increase, as part of a 'phased approach'.
- Although the early years budget had been reduced, SEN would be met in provision and SENIF funding would also be made available. The budget was an estimate, within the wider context of the graduated response. If additional pressures were to arise, this could be revisited in-year.

**RESOLVED that:** The report be noted.

## **98 Homes for Ukraine Funding Proposal**

The Forum considered a verbal update by The Assistant Director for Education, regarding the Homes for Ukraine funding scheme.

The Assistant Director clarified that funding would be fully distributed by the end of January 2023.

**RESOLVED that:** The verbal update be noted.

**99 Schools Forum Plan**

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the item and highlighted the following:

- The next meeting of the North Northamptonshire Schools Forum would be held on the 13th June 2023.

**RESOLVED that:** The report be noted.

**100 Urgent Business**

There was none.

There being no further business the meeting was closed.