

Schools Forum 30th March 2023

Chair: Simon Horne

Venue: MS Teams

Time: 16:00 - 18:00

Item No	Title of Report	Decision/ Discussion/ Update	Officer(s)	Paper(s)
1.	Apologies for Absence		Chair	
2.	Declarations of Interest		Chair	
3.	Minutes of the meeting held on 12 th January 2023		Chair	
4.	Matters Arising		Chair	
5.	2022-23 DSG Monitoring (M11)	Update	Richard Cox	5. 2022-23 DSG Monitoring (M11)
6.	Schools in Financial Difficulty	Update	Richard Cox	6. Schools in Financial Difficulty
7.	High Needs Block Review	Update	Karen Flanagan	7. High Needs Block Review
8.	High Needs Block 2022-23 Outturn and 2023-24 Budget	Update	Karen Flanagan	To Follow
9.	AOB			
10.	Dates for Next Meetings		Chair	

[Click here to join the meeting](#) Meeting ID: 355 620 237 96 Passcode: vdgEc8

SCHOOLS FORUM
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD
ON THURSDAY 12 JANUARY 2023

Membership	Name	Phase	School	HT/Gov	End Date
Maintained	*Luke Bridges	Primary	All Saints CE, N20	HT	30/11/24
Maintained	*Ziz Chater	Primary	Martin Primary	HT	30/11/24
Maintained	*Simon Horne (C)	Secondary	Friern Barnet	HT	18/01/24
Maintained	*Sarah Sands	Primary	Garden Suburb Infants	HT	30/11/24
Maintained	*Anthony Vorou	Primary	St John's CE, N11	Gov	18/01/24
Maintained	*Harvey Freeman	Primary	Hasmonean Primary	Gov	18/01/24
Maintained	*Chaya Posen	Primary	Noam School	HT	07/07/24
Maintained	Vacancy	Primary		HT	
Maintained	*Liz Longworth	Primary	Northside	HT	31/12/24
Maintained	*Sarah Maltese	Primary	St Pauls N11	HT	31/12/24
Maintained	Vacancy	Primary		Gov	
Academy	*Dan Hawkins	Primary	Childs Hill, Clarendon Fed	HT	31/12/24
Academy	Clare Wagner	Secondary	Henrietta Barnett	HT	31/12/24
Academy	Sian Morris	Primary	The Hyde Prim. Acad.	HT	07/10/24
Academy	Claire Barnes	Secondary	Ark Pioneer	Gov	31/12/24
Academy	*Marc Lewis (Sub for Gavin Smith)	Secondary	Wren Academy	HT	30/11/24
Academy	*Matthew Stevens	Secondary	Saracens	HT	30/11/24
Academy	Robin Archibald	Primary	Broadfields Academy	HT	30/11/24
Academy	*John Bowra	Secondary	Chris's college Finchley	Gov	18/01/24
Academy	*Violet Walker	Secondary	Queen Elizabeth Girls' School	HT	31/12/24
Special	*Ian Kingham	Special Academy	Oak Lodge	Dp HT	18/01/24
special	Gilbert Knight (VC)	Special Maintained	Oakleigh	Gov	18/01/24
EY	*Ben Hasan	Maintained Nursery	Moss Hall Nursery	HT	07/12/25
EY	*Sarah Vipond	PVI	Middx University Nursery		18/01/24
PRU	Joanne Kelly	PRU	PRUs	HT	18/01/24
Post-16	Vacancy				
Trade Union	*Keith Nason	Trade Union	National Education Union		18/01/24

Non-Members:

- *Cllr Pauline CoakleyWebb, Chair of Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee
- *Ben Thomas, Strategic Lead
- Neil Marlow, Director, Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS)
- *Karen Flanagan, Director of SEND & Inclusion
- *Sharon Palma, Head of Finance
- Ashley Hughes, Investments & Innovation
- *Madiha Bhenick, Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Finance Manager
- *Richard Cox, Interim DSG Finance Manager
- *George Peradigou, Clerk

*Denotes member present

1 **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

Nominations for the position of Chair were invited. Members considered the one nomination received on behalf of Simon Horne.

Upon a show of hands, the Forum **RESOLVED** that Simon Horne be appointed as Chair for the year, or until his successor was appointed.

Simon Horne took the Chair.

Nominations for the position of Vice Chair were invited. Members considered the one nomination received on behalf of Gilbert Knight.

Upon a show of hands, the Forum **RESOLVED** that Gilbert Knight be appointed, in his absence, as Vice Chair for the year, or until his successor was appointed.

The Chair stated that, should he decline the position, this item would be revisited at the next meeting.

2 WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

The Chair introduced Ben Hasan, new Headteacher at Moss Hall Nursery, who was successfully elected to represent maintained nurseries. It was noted that Ben Hasan had previous experience on a school's forum from his previous role in another borough.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted on behalf of Neil Marlow, Sian Morris, Claire Barnes and Robin Archibald. Harvey Freeman had also sent apologies for lateness.

4 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

Luke Bridges declared that he was a union representative for NAHT. No other declarations of interest were declared related to the agenda items to be discussed.

5 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2022, copies of which had been circulated prior to the meeting, were confirmed, and approved by the Chair, subject to the following amendment:

6. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Monitoring Forecast Outturn 2022-23

The second paragraph was amended to read: The latest DSG allocation showed an additional £2.688m. The Forecast DSG reserve at year end as £4.1m with an *underspend* of £1.460m against the Growth Fund.

Matters Arising

4. Budget Working Party

Members were reminded that the Budget Working Party had been co-ordinated by Sarah Sands, with support from the LA, to help deal with the high number of schools with deficit budget balances. The Chair suggested that an update on the working party's proceedings be given at the next meeting.

Action: Sarah Sands

7. National Funding Formula (NFF) 2023-24

The Chair requested an update on the £2.3b promised to schools nationally by Central Government in its Autumn statement. Sharon Palma informed Members that, while this was not included in the latest NFF figures, the latest information from the Department for Education (DfE) was that this money would be received by schools by way of grant in April 2023.

Marc Lewis informed members that the DfE had recently published some information on their website detailing how much schools could expect per pupil, which could be used to ascertain an estimate.

11. High Needs Budget Update

Members of the Forum were previously asked to participate in the review via stakeholder interviews, where they would represent their area and phase, and later be involved in the recommendations stage. Nothing had yet been received from Karen Flanagan, who was leading this review.

12. Document Uploads

Keith Nason stated that, although current documents had been uploaded to the website, some past information was still missing. He undertook to send a list of documents to the Clerk, who would then liaise with the Finance Team and upload these.

Action: Clerk

There were no other matters arising.

6 SCHOOL'S FORUM MEMBERSHIP

The Clerk updated the Forum regarding ongoing elections, as follows:

Maintained Primary School Vacancies: A notice was due to be circulated by the end of the month notifying the maintained school community of the existing vacancy following Nicola Curtis stepping down from the forum. A further vacancy has been created following the resignation of Kirstie Barrett from Coppetts Wood Primary School, for which an election would be arranged.

Post-16: A replay was being awaited from Woodhouse Collage and Barnet & Southgate Collage regarding the existing Post-16 vacancy.

Maintained Nursery: Ben Hasan had been appointed to fill the Maintained Nursery School vacancy.

7 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT (DSG) MONITORING FORECAST OUTTURN 2022-23

Sharon Palma explained that the report contained an update of the 2022-23 DSG forecast outturn as at month 8.

The forecast carried forward balance within the reserve was highlighted. Charges against the reserve amounted to £2.8m, as outlined in the report. After the top-up of £1.44m, the carry forward would read £3.51m.

It was noted that, later in the meeting, proposals would be put forth regarding spending plans for the reserve carry forward.

Anthony Vourou joined the meeting at this point.

Ben Hasan stated that he noticed the underspend related to supporting Hong Kong & Afghanistan Refugees. He enquired as to whether this money could be used to permanently house refugee families as opposed to having them stay in hotels. In response, the Chair stated that this was outside of the scope of this report but invited Cllr CoakleyWebb to share any further information on the issue.

Cllr CoakleyWebb stated that her understanding was that the Home Office was co-ordinating this effort directly with hotels. The Home Office had been represented at a recent LA meeting to discuss some of the issues the hotels were having.

Sharon Palma explained that the scope of the refugee funding did not extend beyond supporting the schools who enrolled qualifying pupils mid-year and have missed the census.

The Forum noted the 2022-23 updated forecast.

8 BUDGET PROPOSAL 2023-24

Richard Cox introduced the report, which summarised how the LA was funded for its education functions through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Harvey Freeman joined the meeting at this point.

The report provided detailed analysis of each of the four blocks that made up the DSG and how the funding was broken down. Richard Cox highlighted that there was increased across all four blocks, as follows:

- Schools Block: £19.392m
 - High Needs Block: £6.67m
 - Early Years Block: £1.799m
 - Central School Services Block: £0.103m
- Total: £27.964m

The Chair reminded Members that, as previously stated, these figures were not including the additional £2.3b promised by central government via its Autumn statement.

A proposed Minimum Funding Guarantee of +0.5% meant that every primary and secondary schools would receive at least this percentage increase per pupil through the National Funding Formula (NFF) in 2023/24.

The Forum noted the DSG draft budget for 2023/24 compared to the previous budget as outlined in Table 1 of the report. Sharon Palma reminded members that Barnet was one of the very few LAs which mirrored the National Funding Formula.

Early Years Block

Members' attention was drawn to Appendix 3, which detailed the breakdown for the Early Years Block, where some significant changes were expected. The amount the LA would pay early years providers was due to increase from £5.45 to £5.87 per child. This represented an 8% increase, which was more than the actual funding rate. While the aim was to pass on at least 95% to providers, £5.87 represented 92%. This is because some is kept back to fund Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and other contingencies.

For DfE funding rate for 2year-olds had increased from £6.29 to £6.92 per hour. This included the Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector. Sarah Vipond raised concerns that, while the increase was good news, this area was still underfunded when PVIs were expected to provide high quality, sustainable Early

Years provision. In response, Richard Cox stated that this was a central government issue as the LA was passporting on the maximum amount possible.

The new funding arrangements for maintained nursery schools were **AGREED**.

The revised funding rates for 3-4year old children in nursery provision were **AGREED**.

Schools Pupil Led Factor Rates for the Authority Proforma Tool (APT) Submission

Members were pleased to note that the LA's per-pupil funding was due increase by approximately £200 for primary schools and approximately £200-300 for secondary schools.

The 2023/24 formula factor rates used in the APT submission as shown in Table 2 were **AGREED**.

Growth Fund

Members were reminded that Growth Fund criteria and Split Site Funding were agreed at the previous meeting. However, the report specified that approximately £2.5m was required in total for the Growth Fund.

A list of growing schools was outlined within the report, which accounted for approximately £1m of the Growth Fund. As the following year was the last year of intake for Ark Pioneer, this would gradually start to drop.

Whilst there was no set date for the conversion of Barnet Hill from an independent faith school to an LA maintained school, an estimated £1.4m was required as contingency in the Growth Fund.

The Growth Fund, amounting to £2.5m in total, was **AGREED**.

Support for Schools in Financial Difficulties

In response to a query from Ben Hasan, Richard Cox confirmed that the increases outlined were growth in real terms and not just a reflection of year-on-year comparison.

In response to a further question from Ben Hasan, Richard Cox stated that the Finance Team have been providing targeted support to schools in financial difficulties through various means. The Chair added that the Budget Working Party was a good example of this and was well supported by the LA's Finance Team and the BELS School Improvement Team. Richard Cox also outlined the plan to set up a Schools in Financial Difficulty Panel. He emphasised the importance of both teams being involved as financial difficulties could negatively impact on School Improvement plans.

Special School Funding from the High Needs Block

Ian Kingham enquired as to who to contact regarding information sought related to the passporting on of High Needs Block Funding to Special Schools. Karen Flanagan undertook to investigate this and asked that Ian Kingham contact her describing what information was sought after.

Action: Karen Flanagan

Band E Pupil Funding

Dan Hawkins raised the concern that he had a number of pupils within his schools identified as Band E, meaning they had met the criteria for a special school place although they remained in mainstream schools due to a lack of available special school places. He explained that he had found it difficult to access the funding available for these pupils and enquired as to whether this funding would still be available.

In response, Karen Flanagan reassured members that the system was still in place and undertook to investigate the cause of delays in accessing the funding.

Action: Karen Flanagan

9 CENTRAL SCHOOLS SERVICES BLOCK (CSSB) 2023-24

The report contained an update of the 2023-24 Central Schools Services Block (CSSB).

Members noted that, compared to 2022-23, the final CSSB for 2023-24 had increased by £0.104m to £2.369m. Where appropriate, the increase in budget had been pro-rated against the 2022-23 budget.

The expenditure lines that comprise the Central School Services Block were noted and **AGREED**.

10 DE-DELEGATION AND SERVICES PREVIOUSLY FUNDED FROM EDUCATION SERVICES GRANT

The report contained an update of the 2023-24 De-Delegation Rates.

It was noted that the rates previously reported were calculated using pupil numbers from the October 2021 census and that the new rates outlined within the report had been adjusted to take account of the updated figures according to the October 2022 census.

Members **Approved** the updated de-delegation rates for 2023-24.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Support Staff Cost of Living Payments

Luke Bridges expressed concerns about the LA's one-off bonus payment of £150 to support staff who were working below Band E.

In response to a query, Sharon Palma explained that this money was not coming out of the schools' budget, which was why the Forum had not been asked to approve it.

Sharon and Richard Cox stated that the payments were made according to payroll numbers, meaning it was irrelevant whether staff had more than one role or worked at more than one school.

Luke Bridges stated that he understood that this was being offered to community schools as the LA were the employers, whereas the employers of voluntary aided (VA) schools were the governing boards. However, he felt this was inequality because VA schools, who's staff are on the same pay scales, were serving the same community, and the schools were unable to increase taxation to fund their own bonus payments.

Richard Cox confirmed that this was a Chief Executive decision, which was originally intended for council staff but was later extended to community schools. Keith Nason expressed his dismay at this differentiation of council employees and school staff and reiterated that community school staff were equally council employees.

Proposed Use of DSG Reserves

The report outlined proposals for the use of DSG Reserves in 2023-24.

Of the £1m previously earmarked for spending on new arrival asylum seekers for 2022-23, it was expected that no more than £0.25m would be spent at year end. Therefore, as the reserve was still healthy, it was proposed to continue this in 2023-24 but reduce the maximum to £750k.

The second proposal was to earmark £1m of DSG reserves to fund therapies for children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) as these were expected to increase since the threshold for a Statutory Education, Health and Care, Needs Assessment (EHCNA) was lowered, and the age range had increased to 0-25 years.

In response to queries around managing future demand for therapies, Karen Flanagan stated that the LA had procured Whittington Health, a new provider, who had reduced their vacancy rate from 80% to 20%, meaning there were more therapists available, although it may not be evident to schools yet as there was still a backlog.

The Integrated Care Board (ICB) was currently undertaking a review of the north and central London boroughs, and there was likely to be an increase of input from the ICB for therapies in Barnet. Karen Flanagan had also strongly lobbied that Barnet be part of a pilot universal offer. Furthermore, preventative work was ongoing with the ICB to help ensure families were not misusing EHCPs as a gateway to speech and language therapy.

The Forum **AGREED** to the proposed use of £750,000 of DSG reserves to fund new arrival Asylum Seekers and the proposed use of £1m of DSG reserves to fund therapies for children with EHCPs as set out in the report.

There being no further business for discussion, the Chair brought the meeting to a close.

Meeting/Date	Schools Forum 30 March 2023	Agenda Item No.	5
Report Title	2022-23 DSG Monitoring M11		
Decision/ Discussion/ Update	Update		
Author	Richard Cox – Interim DSG Finance Manager		
Appendices	None		
Summary	This report contains an update of 2022-23 DSG forecast outturn as at Month 11 (March 2023)		
Recommendations	Schools Forum to note 2022-23 Forecast outturn		

1. Summary

1.1 In November 2022, the DSG allocation for 2022-23 was revised, increasing the overall budget by £2.501m (Table 1).

1.2 The forecast expenditure for FY 2022-23 is £247.802m (Table 2).

2 DSG revised allocation

2.1 The 2022-23 DSG allocations are shown in Table 1 below. The allocations were amended in December 2022 to take into consideration the High Needs for Import & Export adjustments. The increase in Early Years is due to an increase in the number of pupils eligible for entitlement. Currently, this adjustment is an increase of £2.501m. It is likely that there will be further amendments for recoupment in the March 2023 revision.

Table 1: DSG Allocation including the latest adjustment in Nov 2022

Block	Original DSG Allocation 2022-23*	March 2023 Amended DSG Allocation*	Change
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Schools Block	155,040	155,040	0
Central	2,266	2,266	0
Early Years	28,297	30,719	2,422
High Needs	62,353	62,432	79
DSG Income	247,955	250,457	2,501

*After Recoupment

3 DSG FY2022-23 Forecast

3.1 The November (Month 11) forecast in Table 2 shows the updated DSG budget based on the latest allocation as set out by the DfE and the current outturn forecast is shown in the table below.

Table 2: DSG 22-23 forecast as at M11

Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

Description	Budget	Forecast	Full Year Variance
	£'000	£ '000	£ '000
Schools Block			
- Individual Schools Budget	151,595	151,595	0
- ESG Retained Funding	700	700	0
- Growth fund	2,745	384	(2,361)
Central School Services Block	2,266	2,266	0
Sub-total	157,306	154,945	(2,361)
Early Years Block	30,720	30,720	0
High Needs Block	62,433	62,461	28
Sub-total	93,152	92,857	28
DSG Income	(250,458)	(250,458)	0
DSG Balance	0	(2,333)	(2,333)

3.2 Within the schools' block, the amount forecast expenditure for individual school budgets and the ESG retained funding matches the budget. This is unlikely to change through the year.

3.3 We are showing an underspend in the growth fund of £2.361m. The funds earmarked for Barnet Hill will no longer be required.

3.4 The Growth Fund forecast of £0.384m is made up outstanding payments from 2021-22 to Childs Hill, St Agnes, and Ashmole Academy. And 2022-23 commitments for Childs Hill, St Agnes, and Underhill.

3.5 The Central Schools Services block will be spent to match the budget, leaving no under, or overspending. This will not change through 2022-23.

3.6 High Needs is reporting a small overspend of £0.028m. There are several variations across the range of high needs budgets. The headlines are net savings on top-ups across the piece (special schools, OOB etc.) are offset against cost pressures on hard-to-place pupils and therapies.

3.7 The expenditure in the Early Years block forecast is in line with the budget.

4 DSG Reserves Forecast FY2022-23

Table 3: Forecast Reserve as at M11

DSG reserves	B/Fwd	Use of Reserve	Top Up Reserve	C/Fwd
	£'000	£ '000	£'000	£ '000
DSG Reserve	(4,870)	663	(2,333)	(6,540)

4.1 The current forecast at Month 11 is indicating that the DSG reserve will be £6.653m for FY22-23 as shown in Table 3.

4.2 The schools' forum (13.01.22) has agreed to earmark £1.0m of this reserve to fund Hong Kong & Afghanistan Refugees (HK& A Refugees) joining our schools in Barnet. The spend as at M11 regarding HK&A Refugees is £0.213m. The council is not expecting further significant spending for this financial year

4.3 The Maintained Nursery Lumpsum of £0.400m was agreed following Schools' Forum held on 13.01.22.

4.4 The breakdown of the £0.663m use of reserves is as follows.

Charges to Reserves	£'000
Hong Kong & Afghanistan Refugee Support	213
Trade Union Back Pay (2021-22)	50
Maintained Nursery Lumpsum	400
Total	663

4.5 At the meeting held on 12 January 2023, Schools Forum agreed to earmark £1.75m of the DSG reserve for the following projects:

Use of reserves to fund new arrival asylum seekers	£750,000
Use of reserves to fund therapies for children with EHCP	£1,000,000
<u>Sub-total</u>	<u>£1,750,000</u>

5 Recommendation

Schools Forum note the 2022-23 forecast outturn.

Meeting/Date	Schools Forum 30 March 2023	Agenda Item No.	6
Report Title	Schools in Financial Difficulty		
Decision/ Discussion/ Update	Update		
Author	Richard Cox – Interim DSG Finance Manager		
Appendices	None		
Summary			
Recommendations	Schools Forum to note the contents of this report and the proposal to create a Schools in Financial Difficulty Panel.		

1. Introduction

1.1 This report updates Schools Forum on the latest position regarding maintained school balances and provides information on the proposals for the Council to establish a Schools in Financial Difficulty panel.

2. Closing Position 2021-22

2.1 The Schools Accounts for 2021-22 have been closed and all balances have been reconciled and uploaded into Integra via Journal Transfer.

2.2 The cumulative net surplus for all maintained schools after accruals is £12,237,337.

- There are 65 schools with surplus balances totalling £14,260,561.
- There are 22 schools with deficit balances totalling -£2,023,224.

3. Quarter 2 Schools Budget Monitoring

3.1 Quarter 2 monitoring reports were received from all schools apart from two.

3.2 The results of the monitoring exercise show the following:

- 35 schools are expecting to go into deficit by the end of the year.
- 49 schools are expecting to stay in surplus by the end of the year.
- 1 school is expecting too break-even having been in a surplus position.
- 2 schools have yet to post a forecast.

3.3 Quarter 2 monitoring suggests that the net surplus for 2022-23 will reduce from £12,237,337 to £2,494,500.

- There are 35 schools with projected surplus totalling £ 6,741,566.
- There are 49 schools with projected deficit balances totalling -£ -4,247,066.

4. Quarter 3 Schools Budget Monitoring

4.1 Quarter 3 monitoring reports have been received from all schools apart from two.

4.2 The results of the monitoring exercise show the following:

- 31 schools are expecting to go into deficit by the end of the year.
- 53 schools are expecting to stay in surplus by the end of the year.
- 1 school is expecting too break-even having been in a deficit position.
- 2 schools have yet to post a forecast.

4.3 Quarter 3 monitoring suggests that the net surplus for 2022-23 will now be £3,941,893. This compares to the £2,494,500 reported for Quarter 2 monitoring.

- There are 54 schools with projected surplus totalling £ 7,651,187.
- There are 28 schools with projected deficit balances totalling £3,079,294.
- There are 3 schools with unknown balances.
- There is 1 school posting a break-even position.

4.4 Empirical evidence suggests schools are now starting to account for increased costs around teachers' pay, support staff pay, energy cost and general increases in inflation without having additional income to offset these costs.

5. Support for Schools in Financial Difficulty

5.1 Recent Activity – Visits to Schools

The Interim Finance Manager DSG held face-to-face meetings with head teachers, governors, and school finance professionals.

Schools visited:

St Josephs

Frith Manor

Garden Suburb Infant

JCOSS (via Teams)

Moss Hall Infant and Junior (Via Teams)

Woodcroft (Via Teams)

Annunciation Infants

Additional meetings planned.

Tudor

Our Lady of Lourdes

St Theresa's

Direct contact with schools through finance team since Q2

Holy Trinity

Goldbeaters

Holly Park

Chalgrove

Fairway

Hollickwood

Church Hill

BEYA

Bell Lane

On 16 March 2023 finance staff provided support to schools at the budget setting workshop hosted by Entrust Education Services.

6. Schools in Financial Difficulty Panel

6.1 From the Q3 monitoring reports, the schools which brought forward deficit budgets into 2022-23 are still projecting to be in deficit at the end of 2022-23.

There is a view that the process for dealing with schools in financial difficulty is re-set from April 2023 whereby schools are:

- (a) Contacted by the Schools Finance team.
- (b) Requested to submit a revised / new deficit recovery plan.
- (c) Agree the plan within one calendar month.
- (d) Agree with the solution or escalate where necessary.
- (e) Agree a licenced deficit where necessary.
- (f) Agree an additional cash advance where necessary.
- (g) Agree redundancy support where necessary.
- (h) Refer to Schools in Financial Difficulty Panel for monitoring (new)

6.2 There needs to be a culture of continuous improvement where a cycle of plan, do, check, action is implemented.

6.3 There needs to be action plans for those schools in deficit to ensure they receive the appropriate support from the Local Authority and are brought back into a balanced position with the agreed timescales.

6.4 It is **recommended** that a Schools in Financial Difficulty is established, to meet on a termly basis, which would consist of key stake holders from the Local Authority, BELS, schools, and Schools Forum and would review the latest data and action plans.

7. Schools in Financial Difficulty Panel – Terms of Reference

Name of Group: Barnet Maintained Schools – Schools in Financial Difficulty Panel

Title: Terms of Reference April 2023 – Next revision due March 2024

Purpose:

- (a) Barnet Maintained Schools – Schools in Financial Difficulty Panel will be established in April 2023
- (b) The broad role of the group is to:
 - a. Receive information on Schools in Financial Difficulty
 - b. Be a conduit for information sharing between Finance, School Improvement, and Internal Audit Teams
 - c. Hold the finance team to account for ensuring due process is adhered to for schools in financial difficulty.
 - d. Hold schools to account for ensuring actions identified as part of a deficit recovery plan are adhered to.
- (c) The broad aims of the group are:
 - a. To ensure there are robust procedures in place to support schools that are in financial difficulty.
 - b. There are action plans in place for both Council officers and head teachers for schools that are in financial difficulty.

Membership:

- (a) The membership of the group is open to:
 - a. Officers of the Council (Finance and Audit)
 - b. Officers of the Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS)
 - c. Maintained School Representatives
 - d. Schools Forum Representatives
- (b) The members of the panel will consist of the following:
 - a. Chief Executive and Director of Education and Learning – Barnet Education and Learning Service (Chair)
 - b. Finance Manager (DSG) and Finance Staff
 - c. School Improvement Advisors
 - d. Maintained School Representatives
 - e. Schools Forum Representatives
 - f. Internal Audit
- (c) The panel is not open to members of the public.

- (d) The panel is not open to representatives from other organisations (Academy Sector)
- (e) The membership will be reviewed each year.

Accountability:

Barnet Maintained Schools – Schools in Financial Difficulty Panel will be accountable to the Executive Director, Children’s Services, and the Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer)

Review:

- (a) The panel will review the value and relevance of the work on an annual basis.
- (b) The panel will review the Terms of Reference on an annual basis.

Ways of Working:

- (a) The panel will adopt a shared learning approach.
- (b) Best practice arising from a review of individual school budgets will be shared school colleagues.
- (c) Any sub-groups or working parties will link into School Budget Working Group

Meetings:

- (a) There will three termly meetings per year which will be held online via TEAMS.
- (b) The meetings will be jointly organised by the chair and the Finance Manager (DSG)
- (c) There will a standard agenda for each meeting and all stakeholders will be given the opportunity to add items to the agenda under Any Other Business
- (d) The agenda and the papers will be circulated no later than one week before the date of the meeting via email. If there are any confidential matters, the email will be encrypted.
- (e) The format of the meetings will be round table discussions with the opportunity to work in small groups, if necessary.
- (f) Non-members may be invited to meetings if appropriate.

Information Sharing:

- (a) The outcome of any meetings and any decisions will be shared with the Schools Finance Group, Schools Forum, and School budget Working Group.

Proposed Meeting Dates for 2023-24

Thursday 25 May 2023

Thursday 19 October 2023

Thursday 22 February 2024

8. Recommendations

It is recommended that Schools Forum note the contents of this report and the proposal to create a Schools in Financial Difficulty Panel.

Meeting/Date	Schools Forum 30 March 2023	Agenda Item No.	7
Report Title	High Needs Block Review: Update.		
Decision/ Discussion/ Update	Discussion.		
Author	Karen Flanagan Director of SEND and Inclusion.		
Appendices	Appendix 1. Consultant details.		
Summary	An update with regard the High Needs Block (HNB) review.		
Recommendations	<p>The Schools Forum is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note that a review of the HNB will be undertaken. • Participate in the review as appropriate. • Consider and support the recommendations of the research as appropriate, including participation in the design, development and mobilisation of any recommendations adopted. 		

1. Background.

- As outlined in the Schools Forum report (item 11) of the 1 December 2022, the Council has commissioned a review of the High Needs Block Spend. The purpose of the review is to ensure High Needs income is being used as cost-effectively as possible and that deployment of resources is equitable and matched to need. The outcome of the review will be a set of recommendations for us to consider with regard best value and the greatest impact on outcomes for children, schools and families.

2. The review.

Areas of the review include:

- The current approach to funding High Needs in mainstream.
- Funding of specialist provision.
- Early Years and Post 16.
- Alternative provision.
- Other expenditure.

Phase 1 (online meetings with stakeholders across education, health, social care, and parent/carer representatives), is now finished. Thank you to all those who took part.

Phase 2

Face to face visits in special schools, ARPS and AP will be starting from the 22 March 2023.

The in-person visits are scheduled to take place on the dates below over a 3-week period.

Week 1 Visits.

Day 1 – Wed 22 March – from 9.30am – 4.30pm

Day 2 – Thurs 23 March – from 9.00am – 4.00pm

Week 3 Visits.

Day 4 – Wed 26 April – from 9.30am – 4.30pm

Day 5 – Thursday 27 April – from 9.00am – 4.00pm

Week 2 Visits.

Day 3 – Wednesday 19 April – from 9.30am – 4.30pm

Day 4 - Thursday 20 April – from 9.00am – 4.00pm

Phase 3:

Between the 1 -12 May, a further 1 or 2 days will be needed to hold further face to face visits and or stakeholder feedback interviews (likely to be Colindale) with

- Primary and secondary mainstream Heads.
- Primary and secondary SENDCos.
- School governors.
- Early years providers.
- Barnet Parent Carer Forum and SENDIASS.
- Post 19 providers.

3. Reporting

- Initial feedback at full Headteacher meeting on the 18 May 2023. This will be followed by a full report with recommendations, that will take into account recent changes such as the [DfE SEND and AP Improvement Plan](#).

4. Next Steps.

- Once the report has been submitted, the recommendations will be discussed at the next Schools Forum and any recommendations agreed will be planned as part of the ongoing SEND and AP action Plan; oversight of which is via the SEND and AP Partnership Board where schools are represented.

Appendix 1. Consultant details:

Peter Gray has worked as a consultant to local and national government on SEND policy/provision issues for over 20 years. He was previously Senior Assistant Director (Pupil & Community Services) for Nottinghamshire County Council and was closely involved there with developing a range of innovative approaches that have stood the test of time. He has developed particular knowledge and expertise with regard to SEN/HN funding and effective approaches/systems for managing behaviour difficulties and exclusions. Key outcomes of his work have been the development of more collective local approaches to the management of challenging policy issues

He has carried out a number of HN funding reviews in London, most recently for Croydon, Sutton, Hounslow and the three TriBorough Authorities. He has also recently been commissioned by the DFE to present a series of regional seminars to LAs based-on case study research into the effective management of HN expenditure which he carried out with SSCYP colleagues earlier this year.

Peter also undertook a research project for the DFE (with Ben Bryant of Isos Partnership) in 2019 regarding exclusions and the use of alternative provision which informed the Government's response to the Timpson Review.

Peter is co-coordinator of the national SEN Policy Research Forum, which brings together a range of stakeholders in examining current policy issues and considering positive options for moving forward.

Penny Richardson was a colleague of Peter's in Nottinghamshire and took a lead role for SEND in the early part of the new millennium. Since leaving Nottinghamshire, she has had substantial involvement in a number of Authorities, most recently in Worcestershire, Surrey and Barnet. She has also been working with Merton which has been experiencing a significant HN deficit and is now part of the Government's Safety Valve programme. She was part of the DFE case study research mentioned above and will be a co-presenter with Peter at the upcoming regional seminars.