

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL

Meeting of Southend Schools Forum

Date: Monday, 9th December, 2024

Place: Committee Room 1 - Civic Suite

Present: Ben Stickley – Secondary/Primary Academy
Adeela Fethi – Secondary Academy
Michael Skelly – Secondary Academy
Deborah Henley – Academy Primary
Tracy Dennis – Academy Primary
Nicki Kelly – 16-19 Sector
Lee Thorne – AP Sector
Jackie Mullan – Special School Sector
Sue Bishop – Early Years

In Attendance: C Braun, A Champ, P Grout and L Hunt, D Borien and R Harris

Start/End Time: 8.30 - 10.15 am

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from D Woollard, E White, S Ayub, E Matthews, A Douglass and S Venn.

2 Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair

Resolved:

1. That Mr Ben Stickley be appointed Chair for the academic year to October 2025.

2. That Ms Adeela Hassan be appointed Vice-chair for the academic year to October 2025.

3 Southend-on-Sea Schools Forum Constitution

The Forum received a brief summary of the Education and Skills Funding Agency setting out the statutory powers and responsibilities of the Schools Forum.

Resolved:

That the Education and Skills Funding summary of the Schools Forum roles and responsibilities, be noted.

4 **Dedicated School Grant Budget (DSG) Planning 2025/26 and Forecast Outturn and Budget Update 2024/25**

The Forum considered a report from the Senior Finance Business Partner seeking a decision in principle concerning the setting of the 2025/26 Individual School Block funding allocations per pupil, in view of the very restrictive revisions of any such changes to the formulae as now administered through the National Funding Formulae (NFF). The report also sought a decision on the final indicative 2025/26 DSG budget allocations for de-delegated maintained school block allocations and central block funded services to schools and updated on the Dedicated School Grant forecast spend balances for 2024/25, alongside annual 2024/25 DfE DSG budget adjustments for early years and high needs.

The Forum also received the minutes of the Resources Sub Group held on 3rd December 2024.

The Forum discussed the report and sought clarification on a number of areas. The Forum also commented on the following areas:

- In reference to the National Funding Formulae uplift proposals for Schools block, noting that although this was theoretically an increase it was not an increase in real terms (after accounting for rising costs, etc). The implications for schools would be discussed at the next meeting with a view to writing to the DfE setting out these concerns.
- In terms of the union facilities support fund more academies need to buy-in into the fund. It was agreed to raise the issue at the Primary and Secondary Heads associations.
- Noted the importance of having a minimum DSG reserve.
- The need to be mindful of post-16 and the effects for SEN and young people with additional needs.
- The need to start to plan and prioritise now for 2026/27, given the reducing balances within the DSG central block and the options need to be discussed at the Primary and Secondary Heads Associations.
- Reference was made to the A Better Start Southend legacy and the work taking place within early years and childcare.

Resolved:

1. That, with regard to mainstream individual school's budget (ISB) planning for 2025/26, to continue on the trajectory of adopting the principles of the National Funding Formulae (NFF) as set out in the submitted report and therefore:

(a) Any mainstream school that attracts their core NFF pupil led funding factors (i.e. with no need for Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) funding floor protections to be applied), to receive the full NFF applied rates as set out in the submitted report.

(b) All remaining mainstream schools whose per 2025/26 per pupil led funding rates are either above the revised NFF mandatory 2025/26 minimum funding amounts per pupil or core NFF funding rate per pupil as reference in the report, to receive up to the same maximum NFF built in protection allowance of up to a 0% uplift per pupil (cash flat).

2. That the continuation of the exceptional premises circumstances funding for one school, as set out in the report, be endorsed.

3. That the decision to continue the de-delegation of funding to be centrally retained from the schools block for the following services, as reference in the report, be approved in writing with the maintained school members:

- Staff cover costs (public duties)

4. That the amounts and services that will continue to be funded centrally from the central block where the local authority holds a statutory responsibility for all schools, as referenced in the report, be approved.

5. That, on the basis of the principle decisions undertaken through both this December 2024 DSG report and the following January 2025 DSG School Forum report, including planned 2025/26 early years funding rates, will be recommended to Council for final approval in February 2025.

6. That it be noted that in line with the previous Education Board (covering School Forum matters) through the agreed principle decisions of both the March 2019 DSG report and the December 2020 DSG report, that the growth fund to support schools will continue to be held centrally within the schools block and distributed to provide the extra required planned places within the authority, as reference in the report.

5 Date and time of future meetings

The dates and times of future meetings were agreed as follows:

21st January 2025 at 8.30am

24th March 2025 at 8.30am

10th June 2025 at 8.30am

Chair: _____