

Islington Schools Forum

Meeting documents and minutes published on [Islington Schools Forum webpage](#).

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 21 October 2021 at 2pm – held virtually (MS Teams).

Attendees

Present

- Abi Misselbrook-Lovejoy (AM-L); Head teacher, Newington Green Primary School (Chair)
- Alan Streater (AS); Head teacher, Beacon High Secondary School (Islington Futures Federation)
- Jenny Lewis (JL); Head teacher, Thornhill Primary School
- Patrick Mildren (PM); Head teacher, Canonbury Primary School
- Ana Sevilla (ASe); Executive Head, New River Green and Packington Children's Centres
- Ann Curran; Head of New River Green Children's Centre (supporting ASe)
- Anita Grant (AG); CEO, Islington Play Association
- Cassie Moss (CM); Head teacher, Yerbury Primary School (Vice-chair)
- Tanya Watson (TW); Head teacher, William Tyndale (Primary Academy)
- Fiona Maccorquodale (FM); Head teacher, Prior Weston Primary School & Children's Centre
- Penny Barratt (PB); Head teacher, The Bridge Special School (Academy)
- Susan Service (SS); Head teacher, Arts & Media School Islington Secondary
- Paul Lasok (PL); Governor, St Aloysius Secondary School (and St Joseph's)
- Sally Franklin (SF); Head teacher, North Islington Nursery and Children's Centre
- Claire Hersey (CHe); Principal Finance Officer, City of London Academy Trust
- Maggie Elliott (ME); Governor, Montem Primary School (Edventure Collaborative Federation with Drayton Park) (Vice-chair)
- Francis Gonzalez (FrG); Head teacher, Richard Cloudesley Special School
- Joe Simpson (JS); Governor, St Peter and St Paul Primary
- Andrew Bosi (AB); Governor, Rotherfield Primary School

Other attendees

- Sarah Callaghan (SC); Director of Learning and Culture
- Tim Partington (TP); Head of Children's Services, Finance
- Jane Wright (JW); Manager Schools and EY Governance (Clerk)
- Debbie Stevenson (DS); Head of Early Years and Schools Funding
- Alison Cramer (AC) Assistant Director, School Support and Information Services
- Candy Holder (CH); Head of Pupil Services
- Susan Woodland (SW); Interim Finance Manager (LBI)

Apologies

- Coleen Marshall (CMA); 14 to 19s partnership - City & Islington Sixth Form College
- Nigel Smith (NS); Head teacher, New River College (Pupil Referral Unit)
- Vicky Linsley (VL); teacher, St Mary Magdalene Academy
- Cate Duffy (CD); Interim Corporate Director People

Not in attendance

- Cllr Rakhia Ismael; Non-executive LA member

Meeting minutes

No.	Agenda item	Action
1.	<p>Welcome/Apologies for absence/not in attendance</p> <p>AM-L welcomed all to the meeting, including the new members, Sally Franklin (SF), Headteacher of North Islington Nursery and Children’s Centre, Ana Sevilla (ASe), Executive Head of Packington and New River Green CCs and Ann Curran (AC), Head of New River Green, who is supporting (when necessary substituting for) ASe. Apologies as above.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 July 2021</p> <p>a. Accuracy – the minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting,</p> <p>b. Matters Arising – there were no matters arising.</p> <p>Agreed</p>	
3.	<p>Schools forum composition</p> <p>The clerk (JW) spoke to a short report that had been circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p>3.1. Non Schools Member Early Years Practitioner representative</p> <p>Ana Sevilla, Executive Head of Packington and New River Green Children’s Centres, has taken up the role from 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2025. She is being supported as necessary by Ann Curran, Head of Nursery, New River Green CC (her substitute).</p> <p>3.2. Non Schools Voluntary & Community representative</p> <p>JW had attended the EY Providers Forum in the summer term 2021 to talk about Schools Forum and to invite nominations for this role, but no nominations were received. As Anita Grant (AG) from Islington Play Association had already indicated that she was prepared to do a final third</p>	

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	<p>term in the event of there being no nominations, AG is continuing from 27 September 2021 until 26 September 2025.</p> <p>3.3. Nursery head teacher representative</p> <p>Sally Franklin, Head of North Islington Nursery, has been appointed as the representative of this group from 22 September 2021 until 21 September 2025.</p> <p>It was agreed to deal with an Any Other Business item relating to membership at this point rather than at the end of the meeting.</p> <p>3.4 Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) representative.</p> <p>NS's term of office was due to end on 25 October 2021. Forum was informed he was being reappointed for another term of office, although a member of his senior leadership team may take up this position.</p> <p>Noted and agreed</p>	
4.	<p>Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Budget Monitoring (in-year)</p> <p>TP spoke to a report that had been circulated in advance.</p> <p>As of the end of September 2021, the overall forecast across all spending blocks was an underspend of £5.803m (3.7%). Much of this is being held against risks in current and future years.</p> <p>Schools Block</p> <p>Goes to schools after top-slicing for growth (£300k) and falling rolls (£400k). These are projected to net off:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • + £7k (+2%) overspend against the budget for growth • - £7k (-2%) underspend against the budget for falling rolls <p>De-delegated Budget</p> <p>All this funding goes to schools. We are currently expecting to allocate the schools in financial difficulties (£220k) and priority support (£188k) budgets in full this year.</p> <p>The school redundancy budget (£205k), made up of in-year de-delegated funding of £83k, a £22k carry forward from previous years and £100k of core Council funding, is currently expected to be fully allocated this year.</p> <p>Central Schools Services Block (CSSB)</p> <p>Funding for central services. £120K reduction per year – more detail about this under Item 8 – a proposal to go to schools for use of some underspend under this block.</p> <p>High Needs (HN)</p> <p>To cover 0 to 26 year olds. A large underspend is projected, but schools are under increasing pressures and our costs are going up.</p>	

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	<p>The following variances are forecast against the high needs block:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £1,210k remaining balance from the £1,524k underspend carried forward from 2020/21. £314k has been allocated to schools with higher than average numbers of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). <p>It is proposed to use £51k towards the collaborative action research project (Item 8).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • - £1,324k (4%) unallocated high needs funding in 2021/22. This is the remainder of the growth in funding we received in 2021/22 to meet increasing cost pressures. We need to be cautious as the outlook for further growth in funding for high needs is uncertain after 2022/23. The DfE are also reviewing the funding formula for high needs which could result in Islington losing funding. • - £0.340k (2%) forecast underspend against the budget for centrally commissioned places in academies, the independent sector, further education and out of borough provision. While an underspend is currently forecast, there are likely to be further increases in cost, particularly in relation to FE provision where further growth in the cohort is likely. • - £0.234m (39%) unallocated funding against the budget for additional needs – is likely to be allocated to schools in spring 2022. <p>Early Years (EY)</p> <p>It is difficult to predict the outturn given the impact of COVID on numbers taking up the free offers - in particular in relation to the autumn and spring terms. Also we are currently permitted, through disapplication, to retain some funding to allow us to increase the level of funding for the two-year-olds offer but there are no guarantees we will continue to be able to do this.</p> <p>The current variances are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • - £463k funding for free offer for 2 year olds - balance from previous years that is being held to smooth in new funding arrangements for providers in future years. The cost of 2-year-old provision is greater than 3- and 4-year olds provision but the hourly rate received from the DfE is less. • - £2,033k contingency balance from 2019/20. <p>It is likely that we will receive significant in-year and retrospective funding reductions in relation to 2020/21 in November that will be met from this balance – based on internal calculations we could lose £762k in funding. This represents a medium- to long-term funding risk, and will impact on the sustainability of provision of early education and childcare in the borough if the headcount does not recover to pre-pandemic levels.</p>	

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	<p>JL asked if it was possible to have a breakdown of the school redundancies budget £205K. TP said that he could provide the number of redundancies and schools not names.</p> <p>JL also asked if unallocated HN funding could be used for school places planning – to provide for children with SEND. AM-L reminded Forum that they have no decision-making powers in relation to High Needs funding, This will be looked at under Item 8.</p> <p>FM asked how the HN and EY underspends compare with previous years. TP replied that the EY underspend was reducing, and with the November funding update, it was expected to reduce further. TP mentioned the turbulence that came from the extension of the 15 hours and expected further reductions in future years. In relation to HN, TP said that it was higher than previous years because of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in rolling out the additional needs funding (to clusters) due to Covid • DfE given LBI more funding than we needed over the past two years – although with the review of SEND funding, LBI may have reduced funding in future. <p>TP had added in percentage figures in response to a previous request by CM, and he agreed to do this for all figures in this report.</p> <p>Noted</p>	
5.	<p>School Funding Arrangements, Consultation results (future years)</p> <p>AM-L reminded colleagues of the importance of responding to such consultations in future – there had been only six responses to the recent local funding consultation. Forum members should be role models.</p> <p>DS spoke to a report that had been circulated prior to the meeting. She reiterated what AM-L had said about response levels, as while we are effectively following the hard National Funding Formula (NFF), the LA still needs direction from schools in relation to centrally retained services and de-delegation. This direction will help the LA to set 2022/23 budgets.</p> <p>Growth/Falling Rolls (top-sliced from Schools Block) – respondents were in favour of continuing this, with the same local criteria including the 3-year cap in funding for falling rolls. At November Forum, there will be updated FR projections based on the October 2021 Census, and the DSG estimated allocation.</p> <p>De-delegated Budget – respondents agreed for this to continue. There were some queries, with some wanting to know in future reports who had benefited from the funding. Unlike last year, respondents were in favour of de-delegation of additional funds for three services not previously included:</p>	<p>All</p> <p>DS</p>

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	<p>Behaviour Support, Library Service, and Insurance - Forum to make a decision. This will be reviewed in 2022-23.</p> <p>The respondents were overall in favour of all school membership of the government Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) scheme once the current insurance contract ceased. AM-L asked if there could be a third option. It was clarified that the LBI tendering process is under way so it may be a different provider in future. DS said she would ask the RPA and the council scheme to meet with Head teachers and School Business Managers to explain in more detail their offers.</p> <p>Recommendations to Schools Forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vary MFG within allowable range of +0.5% to +2% and cap budget gains as necessary to ensure school budget allocation remain within funding envelope • Continue to retain Growth Funding • Continue to retain Falling Rolls Funding • To continue to retain funding for services through the Central School Services Block as previously agreed with Schools Forum; final allocations will be presented at the January 2022 Forum • To continue de-delegated services at the current rate • To explore the provision of the additional de-delegated services • Ensure schools have sufficient information from the Insurance and Risk Protection team to make decisions regarding RPA <p>Agreed</p>	
6.	<p>National Funding Formula (NFF) School Funding Consultation Response</p> <p>DS reported to a report previously circulated, which included the LA's response to the questions. As agreed at July Forum, there had been a special meeting of the DSG Sub Group in September where a draft response was presented. It was agreed that Schools Forum would submit a response broadly in line with the LA's, with the exception of the questions relating to the financial year for schools; academic or financial year.</p> <p>This is the biggest DfE consultation in the last 3 to 4 years. The government is moving towards implementation of the NFF at a slow and gradual pace by 2026/27 at the earliest. In Islington, we are already following all values and factors of the NFF.</p> <p>The response had voiced strong disagreement with a number of proposals, including some factors being 'nationalised' eg for premises. A key point made in the response was that the long-awaited SEN Review, which could have a significant impact on the Schools Block, was yet to be completed.</p> <p>ME commented that she and the head teachers disagreed with the LA in relation to questions 13 and 14 – they preferred to be funded on the basis</p>	

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	<p>of the academic year in line with academies and this position was reflected in the Schools Forum response. The LA's response had commented on the difficulty of effectively having two year ends.</p> <p>Noted</p>	
7.	<p>Additional support to schools: High Needs</p> <p>DS spoke, in place of Candy Holder (CH) who had sent her apologies, to a report that had previously been circulated.</p> <p>The report summarised the 40 responses to a local review of SEND funding. The responses reflected the increasing pressures on schools, including having high numbers of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). This included the call for more fairness between schools and quicker, less bureaucratic access to additional resources.</p> <p>It also set out proposals for future funding, while we wait for the Government's SEND review. This included additional funding for schools – Additionally Resourced Provision (ARPs) - and a new funding model for 2022-23 based on that used in Camden whereby the maximum amount that could be allocated to a child with SEND under Element 2 (ie additional needs funding over and above basic AWPU funding) would be up to £11K not £6K.</p> <p>It also stated that £313,861 from the High Needs surplus was to be distributed as a one-off across those schools with higher than average numbers of children with EHCPs according to a schedule set out as Appendix 1 which reflected the January 2021 Census.</p> <p>A few head teachers queried the accuracy of the figures in Appendix 1 and asked if the calculations could be carried out based on current figures. DS explained that they had used an average in the calculations, and calculations could be carried out again in spring 2022 if additional funding were to be allocated. She agreed she would take this back to CH to check the figures.</p> <p>It was pointed out that children without EHCPs also have needs.</p> <p>Sarah Callaghan explained that the Camden model allocated a higher level of notional funding to schools - up to 11k funding for SEND rather than the 6k that they were currently able to access. By allocating more funding in this way, this represented a shift with funding not only triggered by numbers of EHCPs but also to SEN support, in line with CM's point.</p> <p>FG commented that High Needs funding was meant for children with High Needs so we need to be careful that the proposed use of some the HN funding reaches them.</p> <p>CM flagged up that funding for SEN should not be linked to FSM/disadvantage – SEN can affect all strata of society. Instead the number SEN + children needing extra adult support. S/CH</p>	

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	<p>DS agreed to check with CH whether the formula for additional funds was based not just on number of EHCPs but also other factors.</p> <p>AM-L commented that she was very against this way of funding, given how hard it can be to get EHCPs.</p> <p>FM had been on one of the groups discussing how to allocate this funding, and she acknowledged how hard it is to allocate fairly. The SEN Register is not moderated.</p> <p>JL was concerned that linking the funding to EHCPs would create an extra incentive to apply for EHCPs.</p> <p>SC suggested there was a misunderstanding here of two separate objectives.</p> <p>One was a one-off redistribution of underspend, while the other was a longer-term adjustment to the current process for funding, with a shift in balance towards more support for SEN+ support rather than EHCPs.</p> <p>ASe mentioned that in Camden some funding is held back for non EHCP children and schools bid for funding for them.</p> <p>Noted</p>	DS
8.	<p>Collaboration Project</p> <p>Sarah Callaghan (SC), new Director of Learning and Culture, was welcomed to the meeting. SC spoke to a paper that previously been circulated. A decision was needed from Forum for this item. Cate Duffy had reported verbally at the last Forum on this.</p> <p>The proposal included having a pot of funding to support action research projects across schools, with solutions to common challenges being tested out. The pot would come from £51K of High Needs Block and £199K of Central School Services Block (DSG) underspends, match-funded by the LA to create a total of £500K. Schools and academies would be able to bid for this funding. This equated to about £10K per school and schools would be encouraged to work in new groupings.</p> <p>A School Improvement Board was to include representatives from different age phases and types of school. It would develop a shared vision, shared decision making and shared accountability. This would also hopefully reduce duplication of meetings that has been occurring.</p> <p>There would be a 12-month delivery plan with four to five key objectives that may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing fixed-term exclusions • Addressing NEETS • Outcomes for children with SEND • Persistent absence. 	

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	<p>The board would allocate funding to groups of schools for action research-type projects leading to sharing of good practice. The board would also develop a strategic vision for education in the borough and the use of resources and funding. Schools could therefore influence the commissioning of services by LBI such as CAMHS for example. The board would provide influence for schools to access other resources within the system such as Early Years and Early Intervention (Fairer Together) by highlighting thematic issues in a strategic way.</p> <p>SC was seeking an agreement in principle for a shadow board to be set up in November 2021 to work up the Terms of Reference and mutual expectations.</p> <p>There was lengthy discussion and in response to questions, SC clarified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the use of £51K HN underspend was not for Forum to decide, they could decide the £199K CSSB underspend • The criteria for projects under 2.8 were not set in stone – we are aiming for a genuine collaborative endeavour. But the issues suggested within the report are informed by data and are therefore evidenced. How they can be addressed, however, is flexible as schools will be impacted in different ways. • Given some of the funding was from HN, support for children with SEND would be a priority in the projects • That the projects should maximise the resources available and their impact was to be evidenced – and it would be necessary to develop them in a joined up way with other projects such as School Places Planning as an example of a way collaborative working could help support a more strategic approach. <p>ME welcomed the proposal to bring this together under one board. But she queried why the proposal of the board had not been presented at the Governors’ Briefing the day before when SC spoke about the new relationship with schools, while there had been detailed proposals at the Heads’ Meeting the previous week. ME also felt uncomfortable about committing money at this stage.</p> <p>SC replied that she was asking for Forum to agree to the underpinning principle in the spirit of doing with not to – she was walking a tight rope between explaining something without creating it ahead of collaborative discussions.</p> <p>TM was keen on school-to-school collaborative projects, but queried the time line given the slides at the Heads’ Meeting last week said the board would be set up in November.</p> <p>SC clarified that a shadow board had not been established – this would happen in November, with the actual board being constituted in January 2022. TM felt this timeline was very tight.</p>	

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	<p>AM-L felt Forum needed to know what it was voting for and this vote was premature. The suggested priorities equated to massively complex issues, with funding too low and potential increased pressure on leaders.</p> <p>SC clarified that Forum was not being asked to agree spend today, rather it was to agree to support in principle the model. The terms of reference to be developed by the shadow board would develop the proposed criteria for allocating funds.</p> <p>CM agreed to a strategic and collaborative forum. But there had been no mention of the 'Shadow Board' at the Heads' Meeting and she was concerned about the time line. She also queried some of the language of the report that implied decisions had been made, eg 'projects must be...' A possible outcome could be that schools with less serious funding difficulties would be the ones that had the capacity to get involved. CM also queried why it was £10K per school and why projects could not be developed across existing partnerships. It felt like schools were being channelled into restricted small-scale projects that may have little impact.</p> <p>SC acknowledged CM's points and said we could amend the recommendations in the report. For now she was looking for in-principle support to the development of a School Improvement strategy dependent on schools collaborating, with agreed Terms of Reference and criteria.</p> <p>JL – scope will need to be agreed. She was involved in groups looking at Exclusions and SEND. She felt Forum should agree to commit in principle on the basis that the board will bring such projects together.</p> <p>PL was in favour and felt the board should be set up first, along with ToR – then to have discussion about allocation of money.</p> <p>SC concluded by asking Forum to commit in principle to allocating funding to support the activity of a School Improvement Board. This board would define the Terms of Reference, scope, remit, timelines in relation to the allocation of funding. Decisions about funding would be deferred.</p> <p>Agreed that the idea should be explored in greater depth and a board set up, but did not agree that the money should be released until more detailed proposals are received.</p>	
9.	<p>Schools Forum Best Practice</p> <p>A paper had been circulated before the meeting which included a link to the DfE Operational and Good Practice Guide for Schools Forum.</p> <p>At a meeting of AM-L, CM, ME, AC, TP, DS and JW on 4 October, the following actions were provisionally agreed to improve the efficiency of Schools Forum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add link to webpage to agendas and minutes. This is the link to the page with the documents (including the draft minutes). 	Clerk

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft minutes to go to the Chair once DS and TP have done initial check. • Chair and two vice-chairs to summarise decisions in the minutes and the clerk then to publish this on Schools Bulletin. • Aiming for draft minutes to be published 10 days after the meeting – on the Islington Schools Forum web page and Governor Hub account for Schools Forum. • Suggested structure of agenda – spending more time on items requiring a decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Items for decision in current financial year ○ Items for noting in current financial year ○ Items for decision in future financial year/s ○ Items for noting in future financial year/s. • Aiming for papers to go out six working days before meeting and in one pdf document • Committees needing to be minuted • Chairs’ group – AM-L, ME and CM meeting with DS before full Forum meetings to go through agenda / papers. • Completion of setting up of GovernorHub account for Schools Forum. <p>The subgroups in ToR were currently High Needs, Chairs, DSG, Capital and Early Years. PB, the chair of HN Subgroup, said that the group used to meet regularly and it had worked well. To aim to revive this.</p> <p>ME felt that minutes of the Capital Subgroup would help Forum. She suggested the DSG Subgroup was redundant with the development of NFF. TW felt that DSG Subgroup was important for engaging with national consultations. After discussion it was agreed that aspect could be picked up by full Schools Forum.</p> <p>EY Subgroup - had been chaired by Fiona Godfrey. DS commented that attendance had been low – important for this group to meet, especially in December/January when allocations for next year known. ASe was prepared to join the group but not chair it. FM agreed to move from Capital to EY. AG agreed to chair the group.</p> <p>DS reminded Forum that not just Forum members could be on subgroups, and chairs can be non-Forum members.</p> <p>AG commented that the timing of EY meetings were not good for her – Fridays. She will review with her group. Also suggestion to avoid subgroups all happening on the same day of the week.</p> <p>Forum agreed to the measures above to improve the efficiency of Schools Forum and to the arrangements for sub groups as discussed above. Also to review the subgroups at the end of the year.</p> <p>Agreed chair/VC</p>	

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10.	<p>Forum Forward Planning (this item was taken after Item 11)</p> <p>DS spoke to a report that had previously been circulated.</p> <p>In relation to the next Forum in November, the agenda will include spending on HN including CAMHS and SLT (CH).</p>	
11.	<p>School Organisation – Strategic Overview</p> <p>AC gave a verbal update.</p> <p>The School Organisation Programme Board is continuing to work on this. Later in the autumn term, a data pack will be shared with schools to inform discussions with governors to support improving sustainability in the context of falling rolls.</p> <p>The board will next meet in November and the school organisation plan will be produced in late spring / summer 2022 in consultation with stakeholders. There is additional capacity now in place to support this work.</p> <p>JL asked for a paper report in future on Places Planning to help her understand progress.</p> <p>Noted</p>	AC
12.	<p>AOB</p> <p>JL flagged up that a headteacher out of borough had told her that there had been a miscalculation in holiday pay for TAs and she wanted to know if DS had heard of this/what the plan was for addressing this in Islington. DS confirmed that there have been changes in legislation but are currently awaiting legal guidance to determine any potential changes to Islington pay conditions. Should updated information become available DS will bring to next Forum.</p>	DS
	<p>Dates of next meetings</p> <p>(virtual meetings on MS Teams unless otherwise indicated)</p> <p>Schools Forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday 25 November 2021, 2 to 4 pm • Thursday 20 January 2022, 2 to 4 pm (Face to Face, venue TBC) • Thursday 19 May 2022, 2 to 4 pm • Thursday 14 July 2022, 2 to 4 pm (Face to Face, venue TBC) <p>DSG/Chairs Sub Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday 13 January, 2 to 3.30 pm • Thursday 12 May, 2 to 3.30 pm • Thursday 7 July, 2 to 3.30 pm <p>Early Years Sub Group – meeting dates to be changed</p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friday 3 December, 1 to 3 pm • Friday 14 January, 1 to 3 pm • Friday 6 May, 1 to 3 pm <p>Capital Sub Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday 11 November, 12.30 to 2 pm • Thursday 24 February, 12.30 to 2 pm • Thursday 12 May, 12.30 to 2 pm <p>High Needs Sub Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monday 15 November to 11 am to 1 pm • Monday 7 March to 11 am to 1 pm • Monday 16 May to 11 am to 1 pm 	