Croydon Schools Forum

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 10th November 2025

Members Present:	Jolyon Roberts Theresa Staunton Dan Bowden Karen Steele Fiona Robinson Julie Evans Markie Hayden	Tyrone Myton Debbie Ryle Gillian Larocque Sue Lenihan Cllr Joseph Lee Chris Andrew
Observers Present:	Sharon Hemley Shelley Davies Susanna Roe Vicky Owusu Daaku	Abioye Asimolowo Cllr Maria Gatland Brian Smith Darran Money
Apologies:	Priya Perera, Stephen Hehir, Kate Lanning, Dermot Mooney, Sarah Hunter, Cllr Amy Foster, Dave Harvey, Jenny Bartlett, Jenny Aarons and Miriam Sechere	
Elected Chair:	Jolyon Roberts	
Elected Vice Chair:	Gill Larocque	
Clerk:	Mori Bates	

Item	Detail	Lead/ Action
1.	**Welcome & Apologies**	JR
	Apologies received by MB from PP, SHeh, KL, DM, MD, SHu, CllrAF, DH, JB, JA and MS John Fennell, Sharon Hemsley, Vicky Owusu Daaku were in attendance as observers	
2.	**Minutes & Actions – Meeting 22nd September '25**	JR
	Minutes, actions, and matters arising from last meeting 22nd September 2025 Summary of comments made in reference to the previous minutes: 2.1 Feb'24 minutes: (4.1) Under Q3/A3, relating to children under the category of Support for Inclusion/Home Education, further information was requested. SD agreed to take over this action – **ACTION: SD (COMPLETED)** 2.2 Under 2.3: It was noted that there should be two maintained primary school headteachers serving on the Forum, rather than a member and alternate member as it currently shows on the membership. Therefore,	

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	Karen Steele (KS) will be invited to all future Schools' Forum meetings as the second representative for maintained primary schools. **ACTION: CLERK (COMPLETED)** 2.3 Under 5.8: GL queried the figures for Croydon Pupil Referral Units (Line 9 of Appendix A), JB agreed to carry out further investigation into the breakdown of these figures shown in Appendix A and the cost centres for each one. a) SD noted the action and agreed to arrange a meeting outside of Forum with GL and then revert back to Forum. **ACTION: JB (Updated to include SD)** 2.4 SD provided Forum with an update on the Therapies contract, explaining that the providers have now gone live and meetings will take place with schools tomorrow (11th November). The contract has generated media interest from various newspapers which the LA is aware of.	JB & SD
3.	**SEND Paper**	**SD**
	3.1 SD presented a paper with some SEND related updates. Discussions have been taking place about the SEND provision and the CLSS both of which have seen a significant increase in demand for their services. 3.2 The focus has moved onto writing a strategy and are using the views of Croydon Active Voices, a parent and carer forum, and other stakeholders to create a strategy in a co-produced manner. 3.3 There will always be children with complex needs who have to be placed out of borough in order for those child's needs to be met. Last year, it was reported that 70 children were coming into reception requiring specialist placements. As a proactive response to this the CLSS is now incorporating Early Years interventions to support families in the early stages of a child's education without the initial need for an EHCP. 3.4 Graph 1 of the paper showed the rate of increase in both transport costs and the number of EHCPs where both are showing a rise in numbers across time but with a more shallow rate of growth for transport costs. 3.5 Conversations are taking place with academy trusts that may have capacity for an annexe for a satellite special school, although this will be a lengthy process and not a quick solution. There are also discussions underway to look at having three provisions on the St Andrews site which has been gifted to the LA; 3.6 JR queried if there had been a step change with independent SEND schools in the borough school. He asked how we might best understand where these schools are being located and how Croydon might make best use of them? SD confirmed that children would only be placed in Ofsted graded provisions. Placing children in independent settings within the borough, as outlined in 2.5 of the paper, has allowed for the LA to	

	bring out of borough places back into the borough. 3.7 MH queried the places for SEMH needs as there didn't seem to be any provision for these children in the ELP placements that have been commissioned. SD explained we have some SEMH places within the borough, if there are schools with capacity to take on more SEMH children, SD is happy to have conversations pertaining to this. 3.8 It was noted that the CLSS model is not just about allocated funding, but about collaborative working. The restructuring of the SEND service has expanded roles with early intervention, who will focus on this within the borough who will work directly in schools. The funding for the CLSS is allocated on a termly basis as part of a graduated response and is not an additional pot of funding. 3.9 SD stated that there is a need to continue to work together and avoid blame and adversarial interaction (the LA, the school or parents, for example). DB added that there has been a significant increase in parents going down legal routes when they are informed that their child may not meet the criteria required to have an EHCP. 3.10 The Chair indicated that the national threshold for EHCP may need to rise in the forthcoming white paper given that we now have nearly 6,000 children in Croydon with additional needs - nearly one fifth of the total school population. 3.11 Forum noted the contents of the paper, with all voting members in support of the proposal and the continuation of the CLSS.	
4.	**Formula Factors**	**AA**
	4.1 AA presented Forum with a paper on the formula factors which was reviewed prior to the Forum meeting by Schools Block Working Group and the steering group. The DSG funding allocations have not yet been released by the DfE. Therefore, the ranges for the amounts are not yet known. 4.2 A proposal was put forwards in connection to line 34, Looked After Children to remove this from the formula factor and include it as part of the growth fund. It was questioned as to whether or not there would be enough in the growth fund to support the LAC on top of what it already supports. A proposal was also presented for the PFI to be done at the lowest allowable rate. **Q1:** TS: In the event that the midpoint cannot be met, how do we decide what sits at the high rate and what will sit at the lower rate **A1:** AA: Provided that the amounts sit within the minimum and maximum, the rates can be flexed with an option to cap and scale the minimum funding guarantee (MFG) gains rates until the funding fits within the range or review the formula factors to the lowest (-2.5%) limit allowed. 4.3 Based on the question above, it was agreed that in the event where there	

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	the APT is unaffordable, Forum will then decide whether to either : a) Cap and scale b) Apply a percentage decrease to the midpoint whilst leaving the top range factors as they are. 4.4 Forum noted the recommendations of the paper and **AGREED** to the NFF midway point being used for the formula factors where necessary, except for lines 13,19, 26 and 27 where the top of the range would be used. For basic entitlement rates at lines 1, 2 and 3 all key stages will be advanced by the same percentage, whatever that may be after the DSG allocation is known.	
5.	**Growth Fund Update**	**AA**
	5.1 AA presented a paper with an update on Growth Fund. 5.2 Table 1 shows the agreement Schools Forum made back in March about the expenditure for the Growth Fund. The 25/26 forecast underspend is £70,000. 5.3 Points 5.3 to 5.5 outlined the criteria for which this fund can be used or areas that it cannot be used to support. 5.4 CA noted that the falling roll referenced in the paper has very strict parameters that could be used as a mitigating factor to help schools with a fall in numbers. Forum **AGREED** that Croydon will not implement a falling roll fund in 2026/27. 5.5 TM added that the underspend in growth fund has been significantly reduced and if needs are placed elsewhere such as on ELPS and Saffron Valley, there needs to be consideration for an alternative plan. AA explained that it would be expected to balance out. The LAC would not be supported by formula factors, so the growth fund will be utilised in the most efficient way. Officers will revert back to Forum in the case of any issues arising in order to decide what to do next. 5.6 GL said that the funding from the DfE for the APST (Alternative Provision Specialist Task Force) will be ending on the 31st March '26 and there has to be consideration as to how these areas will be supported as the Task Force has significant impact on the outcomes of children in our area. 5.7 Forum agreed to recommendations 1 to 5 of the paper and reject 6 relating to Falling Roll Fund.	

6.	**Proposal from Archbishop Tenison's**	**Decision**
	6.1 SD declared an interest with this agenda item, requesting consent from the Chair to comment in their capacity as the director of education and consent was granted. 6.2 The Chair informed Forum that a proposal had been received from Archbishop Tenison's School, written by the governors of the school, requesting £100,000 to be paid related to past, unfunded, growth. Given that the underspend left to allocate is £70,000, forum **AGREED** that the vote will be based on this amount, rather than the £100,000 requested. 6.3 The Forum's attention was drawn to some sectors in the paper where further clarification was required by the LA. These were highlighted on the paper following the steering group and the Chair went through these. Under 1.2, it was noted that, with the support from the LA, the school's PAN was increased from 96 to 120. 6.4 SD confirmed that there had been discussions with Archbishop Tenison's to expand following the closure of St Andrews. The LA is not aware of any written proof to the agreement outlined between Archbishop Tenison's and the LA as regards the St. Andrew's students that Tenison's took. AA added that Tenison's had been asked to take a bulge class in 2021. 6.5 Forum were made aware of an inaccuracy under 2.2, stating that unspent growth fund money reverts back to the DfE. In fact, underspend now reverts back to Croydon's DSG pot, which has been historically overspent due to the High Needs overspend and growth underspend, if any, is used for this purpose. SD noted that, historically, money had also been allocated for a contingency fund for schools to apply and Archbishop Tenison's was one of the schools awarded funds from this pot. From memory this may have been two grants of £150,000 each. Only Virgo Fidelis, now closed, received similar funding from contingency. 6.6 It was noted that there are issues surrounding the definition of growth. The LA did not agree to permanent growth at Archbishop Tenison's but had agreed a bulge class in years 10 and 11 in the year under discussion. This would not affect the subsequent intakes at year 7. 6.7 An observer, allowed by the Chair, questioned if there was a discrepancy between the dates specified in the paper as there was a possibility that the start date in the paper could be September 2011. However, it was decided that the members of Forum have to vote based on the information presented within the paper and this had come directly from the governors at Archbishop Tenison's 6.8 **The vote**: 11 members voted against the proposal presented, meaning the request for funds was denied.	

7.	**Working Group Updates**	**TS/TM/ FR**
	7.1 Updates were received from the working groups as followed – minutes to be marked as read: **a) Early Years –** No meeting took place **b) Schools Block** – The working group read and reviewed the Formula Factors and Growth Fund paper presented at the Forum meeting. **c) High Needs** – Updates received on the therapies contract and SENIF payments.	
8.	**AOB**	**ALL**
	It was noted that the next meeting should focus on the Scheme for Financing Schools paper and a SENIF update. The January meeting will be moved from the 26th January to the 19th January with a view to having an update on the Growth Fund and the Mid Point Adjustment.	

Meeting Adjourned: 11:45am
Date of next meeting: Monday 8th December 2025
F10, Croydon Town Hall