

BRIEFING PAPER

SUBJECT: CHANGES TO SCHOOLS FORUM ARRANGEMENTS AND AMENDMENT OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

DATE: 17TH OCTOBER 2012

RECIPIENT: SCHOOLS FORUM

THIS IS NOT A DECISION PAPER

SUMMARY:

- 1 The Department for Education (DfE) is presently in the process of consulting on school funding reform and a document outlining the rationale and principles is in the public domain – “School funding reform – next steps towards a fairer system”. Included in this document are improved Schools Forum arrangements, recently tabled at a Schools Forum Meeting.
- 2 Responses to the DfE consultations in April and July have shown that Schools Forums are not consistent throughout local authorities.
- 3 In order for local decision making to operate in a consistently fair and effective way and in consultation with schools, there is need to secure greater confidence in Schools Forums.
- 4 Changes have therefore been made to Schools Forums arrangements so that they are in place to support decision-making for 2013-14 and these changes will ensure that Schools Forum discussions are more focussed, that decisions are more transparent and that those most affected have a greater say.

BACKGROUND and BRIEFING DETAILS:

- 5 There will not be any changes to Schools Forum powers at this stage and for 2013-14 Schools Forums regulations will be amended as follows:-
 - (i) Composition of the Forum should be compliant with the regulations and should reflect the pupil numbers expected to be in each category. At this stage it has been decided not to change the numbers/composition until we know which schools will be converting to Academy status.
 - (ii) Remove the requirement to have a minimum of 15 people on a Forum.
 - (iii) Restrict other local authority attendees from participating in meetings unless they are a Lead Member, DCS, DCS representative or are providing specific financial or technical advice (including presenting a paper to the Forum).
 - (iv) Give the Education Funding Agency (EFA) observer status at Schools Forum meetings to support the local process and to provide a national perspective if members thought it helpful or if there were any concerns about the running of the Forum.
 - (v) Require local authorities to publish Forum papers, minutes and decisions promptly in a public area of their websites.
 - (vi) Require Forums to hold public meetings.

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- (vii) Any regular communications from the authority to schools should also draw attention to forthcoming schools forum meetings and agendas and the minutes of forum discussions.
- (viii) Restrict the voting arrangements by allowing only schools members and the PVI members to vote on the funding formulae.
- (ix) The regulations state that maintained primary schools, secondary schools and Academies should be represented on Forums in proportionate to the number of pupils in those types of schools. Appendix 1 provides an analysis of the current Forum composition, comparing it to how this will look after the 2012-13 proposed Academy conversions.

6 At this stage we comply with all the amendments/changes.

7 These changes will be determined in accordance with the Senior Manager : CYP Strategic Commissioning delegated power 5.4.12 –

“Following consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, Senior Manager, Legal, HR and Democratic Services and the Senior Manager, Finance and IT, to amend the Terms of Reference and membership set for the Schools Forum and Admissions Forum as far as may be necessary to give effect to any new Act, Regulation or Code of Practice”.

8 **We would therefore seek comments from members on the composition of the Schools Forum going forward on the basis of the new regulations, of the proposed academy transfers there are currently 2 members on the forum that represent the Secondary sector – refer to 5 (ix) above and Appendix 1.**

RESOURCE/POLICY/FINANCIAL/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

None

OPTIONS and TIMESCALES:

The Schools Forum’s Terms of Reference states that the constitution, appointment of the Chair and review of members is considered on an annual basis at the first meeting of the academic year which would be 19th September 2012.

Appendices/Supporting Information:

1 Schools Forum Membership 2012-13

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Appendix 1

Schools Forum Membership 2012-13							
Schools	2012-13 NOR	Current Numbers of Reps	Current Position @ 1st September 2012	Current Numbers of Reps	2012-13 Year End Proposed Position	Proposed New Split	Notes
Primary	15,515	6	14,823	6	13,142	6	
Secondary	8,167	4	7,076	4	2,849	1	
Academy (Primary / Secondary %)	2,786 (31%/69%)	1	4,569 (34%/66%)	1	10,477 (31%/69%)	4	Working on the basis that Academy Representation will be from all sectors
Special	336	2	336	2	336	2	Basis that Head & Governor Remain on Forum
Nursery		1		1		1	
Non Schools		5		5		5	
Totals	26,803	19	26,803	19	26,803	19	Assumption that total remains at 19 Members