

SCHOOLS FORUM AGENDA ITEM

For Action



For Information



Brief Description of Item (including the purpose / reason for presenting this for consideration by the Forum)

This report asks Members to review the Forum's administrative and membership arrangements for 2016/17.

Date (s) of any Previous Discussion at the Forum

The Forum's Conduct of Meetings document and membership arrangements are subject to annual review. Members agreed arrangements for the 2016 calendar year at the meeting held on 21 October 2015.

Background / Context

Accompanying the changes in the national funding system, the Government revised the Schools Forum Regulations. These came into force on 1 October 2012. Although much of the detail on how Forums operate is still left for local decision, the revised Regulations required some significant changes, including publicly accessible meetings, for Forum papers to be published and for decisions to be taken on formula funding and on de-delegated DSG funds on a phase by phase basis. Non schools members are also not permitted to take part in decision making on formula funding. The Forum's Conduct of Meetings & Procedural Matters was adjusted in October 2012 to incorporate these changes.

The DfE introduced a small change to the Schools Forum Regulations, regarding membership, for 2015/16; that, where these exist, Special and Alternative Provision Academies or Free Schools are required to be represented on the Forum. The DfE has also formally extended the Forum's consultative role to include the SEN and Alternative Provision places to be commissioned by the Authority and the arrangements for paying top-up. This is something that we already consult Bradford's Schools Forum on as part of the annual DSG budget setting process.

Within good practice guidance, the DfE has stressed to authorities that it is essential that Forum membership arrangements keep pace with the changing landscape, in particular the conversion of maintained schools to academy status. The Forum must consider annually how best to provide for responsive arrangements, to ensure the Forum remains representative and to avoid any unintended bias towards any one phase, whilst continuing to ensure stability of membership. In 2014, we increase the number of Academy representatives to 6, in response to the estimated growth of the proportion of pupils that will be educated in academies and free schools. We also added a Nursery Governor membership, in response to feedback and to strengthen our representation. We made no changes to membership arrangements in 2015. For 2016 (in October 2015), we reduce the maintained secondary headteacher memberships by 1 to 2 in order to establish 7 academy.

Details of the Item for Consideration

Schools Forum Conduct of Meetings & Procedural Matters

Please see Appendix 1, which is the proposed Conduct of Meetings document for 2016-17. The only amendment to the 2015-16 version is in paragraph 3.4 and is highlighted in red. This change, and its rationale, is explained further below.

Current Schools Forum Membership

Paragraph 3.1 of Appendix 1 outlines the Forum's membership framework as it currently stands. Appendix provides a list of current members and vacant positions.

- There are currently 35 memberships; 27 schools & academy members and 8 non schools members
- The 27 schools & academy members are separated into: 2 Maintained Nursery Schools (1 Headteacher, 1 Governor), 2 Maintained Special Schools (1 Headteacher, 1 Governor), 12 Maintained Primary Schools (8 Headteacher, 4 Governor), 3 Maintained Secondary Schools (2 Headteacher, 1 Governor), 7 Academies (distribution decided by academies) and 1 Maintained PRU (Headteacher).
- Of the 8 non schools members, 4 are currently vacant (two of which have never been filled)

The challenge we face, in setting membership arrangements for the coming year, is that the landscape is very fluid and we cannot be certain at this point of the number of schools that will convert from maintained to academy status or the timescale for this. However, we can expect that the eligibility status of a number of current members representing maintained schools will change; Maintained Schools members should not remain as Maintained Schools members once their own school has converted to Academy. We have

Details of the Item for Consideration (continued)

previously agreed to handle this on an on-going basis, by reviewing membership arrangements each autumn term. This has worked well and has ensured membership has remained proportionate. However, the position this year right now is so fluid and uncertain that it is not likely to be possible to establish arrangements now that will adequately and appropriately last the entirety of the 2016/17 academic year. The Authority is also keen to avoid making ad hoc individual adjustments to membership on a case by case basis as change occurs.

On current information, expecting the possible conversion of the known c. 65 schools to academy status before 1 April 2017, our membership profile could alter during 2016/17 as follows:

- Maintained Primary - 4 memberships (leaving 8 remaining)
- Maintained Secondary - 2 memberships (leaving 1 remaining)
- Academies +5 memberships (increasing the total to 12)
- PRU +1 membership for an academy PRU

6 current representatives of maintained schools are associated with schools that are known to be planning to convert to academy status (1 PRU, 3 Primary, 2 Secondary), possibly in the next few months, which in theory then, ends their memberships.

Although we must ensure that no single group of stakeholders is disadvantaged by arrangements, and that we comply with the regulations and expectations around the operation of the Schools Forum, we also must ensure that the Forum has competent, continuous and secure membership, especially over the September to March period in which the key decisions and recommendations on formula funding and the allocation of the DSG are taken. Appendix 2 highlights current vacancies in the schools and academy positions; we have found it difficult to fill these vacancies and we would not wish to fall into a position whereby the Forum's capacity and expertise is significantly depleted over the September 2016 to March 2017 period because of recruitment issues. Recruitment of members also takes time (allowing for periods of nomination and election).

In recognition of the 'unique' period of school transition in Bradford, the Authority proposes an interim membership solution, which would govern the composition of the Schools Forum for September 2016 to the end of March 2017, at which time this will be reviewed. If this is agreed by the Forum, the Authority will publish these arrangements on Bradford Schools Online, so that opportunity is given for these arrangements to be understood and commented on. The Authority will also then provide a report to the March 2017 meeting, which will outline proposals for arrangements from April 2017.

The following interim solution is proposed:

- Continue existing arrangements for Non Schools Members.
- Continue existing arrangements for maintained nursery schools and maintained special schools memberships.
- Continue the maintained PRU membership. Specifically review this at the point that an academy alternative provision setting is established (the Regulations require memberships to be offered to both maintained and academy providers, meaning that we would have 2 alternative provision memberships).
- Remove the vacant maintained primary governor membership.
- Ask the current incumbents of maintained primary and secondary school memberships (headteachers and governors), whose schools transfer to academy status during the period, to continue on the Schools Forum as academy members at the point their status changes. These representatives would not take part in decisions concerning de-delegated funds if their status has changed before the 11 January 2017 meeting
- Retain all other incumbents of maintained primary and secondary (headteachers and governors) and academy memberships to the end of March 2017 without change.
- Seek to recruit to the vacant maintained secondary headteacher membership (on a fixed term basis to the end of March 2017).
- Seek to recruit to the vacant maintained primary headteacher membership (on a fixed term basis fixed term to March 2017).

Paragraph 3.4 in Appendix 1 is amended to provide for this interim solution.

How does this item support the achievement of the District's Education Priorities

The Schools Forum has a key part to play in the way that resources for education, through the DSG, are allocated. It is essential that the Forum is representative of all settings that will be affected its recommendations and decisions.

Implications for the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) (if any)

No direct implications

Recommendations

The Schools Forum is asked to review the Forum's Conduct of Meetings & Procedural Matters document, to note the re-calculation of membership according to pupil numbers, and to agree the proposal interim arrangements for the 2016/17 financial year.

List of Supporting Appendices / Papers (where applicable)

Appendix 1 – Schools Forum Conduct of Meetings & Procedural Matters 2017

Appendix 2 – Schools Forum Membership at September 2016

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