

WALSALL SCHOOLS FORUM CONSTITUTION

Introduction

Section 43 of the 2002 Education Act, requires Local Education Authorities to establish a Schools Forum to represent governing bodies and head teachers of local education authority maintained schools. As a result of the Schools Forum (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2005, the role of Schools Forums has been expanded to include powers to allow their Local Education Authority to increase the amount of central expenditure they are able to hold according to the regulations by approving:-

- Changes to the Central Expenditure Limited;
- Prudential borrowing;
- Premature retirement and redundancy costs;
- SEN transport;
- Combined budgets (Every Child Matters agenda);
- Schools' contingency funding.

The Schools Forum constitution has been amended in order to comply with the Schools Forums (England) Regulations, 2010.

Role of the Schools Forum

In addition to its decision making function as set out in the introduction the Schools Forum acts in an advisory capacity and is consulted by the LA on:-

- Any issue relating to the Every Child Matters agenda

Membership of the Schools Forum

Membership of the Schools Forum is specified within the proposed Schools Forum regulations 2012. Within these guidelines, the LA has determined the membership as shown below and each Group of Forum Members is required to communicate with the body they represent at least before debating major issues and again afterwards:-

Schools Members

5 primary head teachers to be appointed through the primary forum (voting);

2 secondary head teachers to be appointed through the secondary forum (voting);

1 special school head teacher to be appointed through primary forum (voting);

1 nursery head teacher (voting);

- 2 Academy Head Teachers (voting);
- 1 Pupil Referral Unit head teacher (voting);
- 5 primary governors (voting);
- 1 secondary governor (voting);
- 1 special school governor (voting);
- 2 Academy governors (voting).

(Nominated substitutes to formally take part in meetings in their absence).

Non-School Members

- 1 Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) representative (voting);
- 1 Church of England diocesan representative (non-voting);
- 1 Catholic diocesan representative (non-voting);
- 1 Staffside Associations representative (non-voting);
- 1 14 - 19 Partnership representative (non-voting).

Observers

- Cabinet Portfolio holder for Children's Services (non-voting);
- Education Funding Alliance (EFA) (non-voting).
(if Forum request this).

LA Representation

Local Authority attendees are restricted from participating in meetings unless they are a Lead Member, Director for Children's Services, Director for Children's Services representative or are providing specific financial or technical advice (including presenting a paper to the Forum).

Observers

The authority may also ask other observers to attend Schools Forum meetings, (these might include expert advisors on relevant issues). It can also invite any other body to do so, this would be in addition to the non-voting observers indicated.

Substitutes

Only formally nominated named substitutes can take part in meetings when the main member is unavailable.

Voting

Voting on the funding formulae is restricted to Schools Members and PVI Members only.

Each member will have one vote, and in the event of a tied vote, the Chairman may exercise a casting vote.

Period of Office

The period of office for head teachers and governors will run for four years from 27 September, 2011 (for re-elected Members this to be a new term of office). Any vacancies arising during this period, will be appointed for the remainder of that term of office. The proportional Schools Forum membership be reviewed on a bi-annual basis.

Members shall cease to be members if they cease to be representative of the organisation appointing them.

Any member failing to attend meetings for a period of 6 months shall cease to be a member.

The period of office to be staggered to maintain continuity of experienced Forum Members.

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

The Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected annually at the first autumn term meeting of the Forum for a period of 12 months.

Election and Appointment of School Members

The election of primary school and special school representatives be undertaken by the primary forum and the appointment of secondary school representatives be undertaken by the secondary forum.

The election of governor representatives shall be undertaken by a ballot of all governors, the ballot to take place once a year if necessary during the summer term and vacancies arising mid term to be filled from identified substitutes.

Election and Appointment of Non-School Members

The relevant Diocesan organisation shall nominate representatives to the non-school members group for a term of office of 4 years and shall nominate named substitutes.

Conduct of Meetings

The Forum will meet a minimum of five times a year, with two meetings in the spring, one meeting in the summer and two meetings in the autumn.

In the event of additional meetings proving necessary, the Clerk in consultation with the Chair or in his absence the Vice-Chair be authorised to make the necessary arrangements.

Urgency Sub-Committee

- An Urgency Sub-Committee of five Members (quorum 3) be established comprising:-
 - 2 Head Teachers
 - 3 Governors
 - Chairman (ex-officio)
- To meet to discuss matters of urgency; urgency correspondence will be circulated to all Members and decisions taken by the Sub-Committee will be e-mailed/sent to all members and reported to the next meeting of Schools Forum;
- The Urgency Sub-Committee will comprise the first five applicable Members available to attend a meeting when contacted by telephone;
- The ex-officio member will have the right to move and second matters and vote.

Any decisions would be referred to the next meeting of the Forum for information.

Working Groups

The Forum can establish Working Groups of members to discuss specific issues and to produce draft advice and decisions for the Forum to consider. The size and membership of the Group to be determined by the Forum.

Quorum

The Forum will be quorate only when 2/5^{ths} of the total membership is present (excluding any observers) and excluding vacancies.

An inquorate meeting can proceed but cannot legally take decisions. It can respond to the Authority on consultation and give views to the Authority.

Public Access

Meetings of the Schools Forum will be held in public in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act, 1985 (as amended) and its agendas, minutes and papers will be available on the Council's Committee Management and Information System.

Attendance of Portfolio Holder

The relevant Portfolio holder will be invited to meetings as an Observer with the right to speak.

Administration

Administration arrangements for Schools Forum will be provided by the Council's Constitutional Services section and will provide a link between the Forum, the Chair and the Local Authority. The role of the Clerk will include:-

- Provide the route by which Schools Forum members can access further information and co-ordinate communications to Schools Forum members outside the formal meeting cycle;
- Respond to queries about the business of the Forum from head teachers, governors and others who were not on the Schools Forum themselves (this could be directing people to the web site);
- Ensuring contact details of all members are up-to-date;
- Maintain the list of members on the Forum and advise on membership issues in general;
- Assist with the co-ordination of the nomination/election processes run by constituent groups;
- Ensure the Schools Forum web site was kept up-to-date;
- Monitor on a regular basis in conjunction with the DfES, Schools Forum web sites and general schools funding site on teachernet web site and make available any relevant DfES information to Schools Forum members;
- Provide advice in relation to the operation of the Schools Forums local constitution;
- Organise, operate and record any voting activity of the Schools Forum in line with the provisions of its local constitution;

- Produce notes of each meeting as soon as possible after the meeting to enable members and other to see the outcome of any discussions and decisions/votes taken.

Forward Plan

Schools Forum will maintain a forward plan of items for future meetings.

Annual Report

An annual report on the proceedings of the Schools Forum together with a summary of the accounts will be submitted annually for the June meeting of Schools Forum.

Resources of Schools Forum

The cost of a Schools Forum will fall within the retained budget portion of the schools budget of local authorities, the average cost being £10,000 per annum.

Members Expenses

Members will be able to claim expenses for the cost of:-

Supply cover, travel expenses, loss of earnings and child care costs.

Existing Council Procedures

These will be utilised for claiming such expenses.

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July, 2012.