

**13 January 2014****Agenda Item: 9****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION STANDARDS AND  
INCLUSION****SCHOOLS FORUM OFFICER GROUP REPORT****Purpose of the Report**

1. To advise Members of the Committee on the legal status, composition and constitution of the Schools Forum and update Members on its work.

**Information and Advice**

2. The Government requires that each local authority maintain a Schools Forum to represent its schools' views on matters relating to the total Schools Budget. There are national regulations which govern the composition, constitution and procedures of Schools Forums.
3. Schools Forums are made up of representatives from schools and academies, but with some representation from other non-school organisations, such as nursery and post 16 education providers. Schools and academies representatives should be roughly proportionate to the number of pupils in each sector. In Nottinghamshire the membership is reviewed annually to ensure that this proportional representation is maintained.
4. In Nottinghamshire, the current Forum membership is made up as follows:-

School and Academy membership (based on pupil population):

- 16 head teacher representatives - 1 maintained secondary school, 5 academies, 7 maintained primary schools, 2 maintained special schools, 1 pupil referral unit
- 4 governor representatives – 2 maintained primary schools, 1 maintained secondary school and 1 academy.

Non-school membership:

- 2 PVI early years representatives
- 2 Diocesan representatives – 1 Roman Catholic and 1 Church of England
- 1 14-19 partnership representative
- 2 trade union representatives (1 teaching union & 1 non-teaching union).

5. The Forum is chaired by an annually elected member and is required to meet at least four times a year.
6. The role of the Forum is to act as a consultative body on some issues and a decision making body on others.
7. The Forum acts in a **consultative** role for:
  - changes to the local funding formula and operation of the minimum funding guarantee
  - changes to or new contracts affecting schools
  - arrangements for pupils with special educational needs, in pupil referral units and in early years provision
8. The Forum is **responsible** for decisions on:
  - how much funding may be centrally retained within the Dedicated Schools Grant
  - any proposed carry forward of deficits on central spend from one year to the next
  - proposals to de-delegate funding from maintained primary and secondary schools
  - changes to the scheme of financial management.
9. The principal work of the Forum over each of the past two years has been around the reconfiguration of the budget shares between schools. The national reform and simplification of the local funding formula for schools, which were introduced from April 2013, have raised the profile of the work of the Schools Forum. Since the changes were announced in April 2012, the Forum has worked closely with officers to understand, consider and model the impact of the changes required to individual schools and academies and the Local Authority. The recommendations of the Forum, following detailed consultation with the schools and academies, have been accepted by Members as a reasoned and equitable response to the requirements of government to simplify the schools' funding formula in preparation for a move to a national formula early in the next Parliament. Owing to the time constraints imposed by central government, the recommendations of the Forum for the 2014/15 financial year were supported by the Chair of this Committee, and accepted unanimously by the Policy Committee on 13 November 2013, without prior approval of this Committee. However, the recommendations of the Forum were for the minimum possible change for the 2014/15 year, consistent with government requirements, following the significant alterations agreed by this Committee for the 2013/14 financial year.
10. Other work has included that of a sub group which has provided support and commentary on the reconfiguration of the 'Support to Schools' offer of the County Council, which includes all charged for services offered to schools and academies by the Council, including such major items as catering and cleaning. The Forum has also been instrumental in the implementation of the Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) review, which has involved switching significant amounts of funding from the Department's budgets, and from the budgets of the three Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), to the schools in return for their retaining more of their most challenging students, and sharing responsibilities for such inclusion within partnership groups. In particular, the Forum unanimously approved the introduction of a Cost Recovery Mechanism (CRM) to enable the Local Authority to reclaim from schools who permanently exclude students, beyond agreed numbers, the cost of making alternative provision for these young people. This mechanism will ensure that the real costs of exclusion are more fairly shared between schools and the Department.

11. Members of the Forum have a responsibility to represent the interests of their peer group by whom they are elected, and can reasonably expect to be canvassed by schools and academies. Members are also expected to provide feedback to their peers.
12. The local authority's role is to ensure that there are suitable arrangements in place for the organisation and administration of the Schools Forum to ensure that it is effective in its operation. Part of this is to ensure that Forum meetings are open to the public and papers are made available on a public website.

### **Other Options Considered**

13. None. The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 govern the composition, constitution and procedures for Schools Forums.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

14. The Council is legally required to maintain a Schools Forum for the purposes outlined in the report. The report advises Members of how the Forum is set up and the key features of its work.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Financial Implications**

16. The operation of the Schools Forum is financed by a ring fenced budget held within the centrally retained element of the Schools Budget.

### **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) That the legal status, composition, constitution and recent work of the Schools Forum be noted.

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## **Constitutional Comments**

17. As this report is for noting only, no Constitutional Comments are required.

## **Financial Comments (KLA 13/12/13)**

18. The financial implications of the report are set out in paragraph 16 above.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

School Funding: agreement of the local funding formula for 2014-15 – report to Policy Committee on 13 November 2013

<http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/dms/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/3185/Committee/475/Default.aspx>

The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/financialmanagement/schoolsrevenuefunding/schoolsforums/a00213728/schools-forums-england-regs-2012>

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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