

Rotherham Schools' Forum

Venue: **Rockingham Professional Development Centre** Date: **Friday, 4 March 2016**

Time: **8.30 a.m.**

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th January, 2016 and matters arising. (Pages 1 - 6)
3. Communications: -
 - To note the action of the Rotherham Schools' Forum Finance Sub-Committee in considering in detail the excess/deficit individual schools' balances relating to the 2014/2015 school year.
4. SEMH update: - (Pages 7 - 8)
 - Chris Harrison: -
 - Locality models update;
 - High Needs' Block Focus Group update.
5. Eastwood Village Primary School - 'start up' diseconomies funding allocation in first year of operation. (Pages 9 - 13)
 - Eastwood Village Primary School;
 - Formula for future school start-ups.
6. Total Schools' Budget monitoring report to 31st January, 2016. (Pages 14 - 26)
7. Rotherham Schools' Forum - constitution and membership - initial thoughts for consideration. (Pages 27 - 57)
 - Current and potential alternative model detailed within the report.

Rotherham Schools' Forum members are asked to consider the following discussion points relating to RSF structure and business, and discuss views at the meeting: -

1. How do we ensure that schools' forum continues to be a manageable size?;

2. How do we ensure that there is appropriate and representative proportions between school and non-school members?;
 3. Communication of voting rights at the start of each meeting, and agreeing the role of observers;
 4. How do we assess the learning community model and communication within the communities? Do learning communities offer the best way, presently, for establishing the schools' forum constitution and membership?;
 5. How do we ensure that voting is simplified and more effective? How do we ensure that when voting occurs it is, as far as practically possible, a reflection of the wider school setting?.
8. Date and time of the next meetings: -
- 22nd April, 2016;
 - 17th June, 2016.

To start at 8.30 am in the Rockingham Professional Development Centre.

**ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS' FORUM
FRIDAY, 15TH JANUARY, 2016**

Present:- D. Naisbitt (Oakwood) (in the Chair).

Learning Community Representatives: - T. Mahon (Saint Bernard's), P. Di'lasio (Wales), D. Sutton (Maltby), L. Pepper (Clifton), L. Pepper (Clifton), D. Ball (Aston), A. Richies (Brinsworth), I. Holburn (Dinnington), P. Dobbin (Wingfield).

Other stakeholders representatives: - S. Scott (Early Years' PVI), S. Brook / F. Sprague (Teaching Trade Union Rep), J. Mott (Special Schools' Rep), A. Richards (Secondary Governors' Rep), D. Ashmore (Teaching School Rep), P. Bloor (PRUs' Rep), K. Merrin (Rotherham Colleges, on behalf of G. Alton), M. Badger (Support Staff Trade Union Rep).

Also in attendance: - D. Fenton (CYPS, School Planning, Admissions and Appeals Service), P. Williams (CYPS, Inclusion), E. Shepherd (CYPS, on behalf of K. Borthwick), V. Njelic (Finance).

Observing: - M. Young.

Apologies for absence were received from: - K. Borthwick (E. Shepherd representing), G. Gillard, S. Mallinder, J. Robertson, Councillor L. Pitchley, J. Morrison (Swinton), C. Harrison (P. Williams representing), K. Sherburn (Rawmarsh), P. Gerard (Early Years).

18. LYNNE PEPPER OBE.

Lynne Pepper OBE, was congratulated on gaining her honour in the 2016 New Year honours list. Everyone agreed that it was well deserved by Lynne.

19. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 4TH DECEMBER, 2015.

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum held on 4th December, 2015, were considered.

Paula Williams questioned the figures within Minute number 16 (Rotherham Total Schools' Budget Monitoring as at 31st October, 2015) in relation to SEN placements and top-up funding. She did not recognise the number of placements that were being funded. This matter would be looked into.

Agreed: - That the minutes of the last meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum held on 4th December, 2015, be agreed as a correct record.

20. CONTINGENCY FOR PUPIL GROWTH FUNDING ALLOCATIONS.

Consideration was given to the report submitted by Dean Fenton, Service Lead, School Planning, Admissions and Appeals, that outlined the rising pupil numbers within the Borough and the need to increase the number of school places available. There was a need to allocate transitional funding (7/12 for maintained schools and 12/12 for academy schools) that had created new places before the census generated income for new pupils.

The 2015/2016 budget allocation had out-turned at £469,108.

The following allocations were proposed from the pupil growth element of the Schools' Block for the 2016/2017 academic year: -

Aston Hall (4 of 4)	£ 32,711 based on 15 pupils
Sandhill (1 of 4)	£ 56,076 based on 15 pupils
Foljambe Campus (1 of 1)	£ 56,076 based on 15 pupils
Eastwood Village (Y5)	£ 62,556 based on 30 pupils
Brinsworth Howarth (3 of 4)	£ 32,711 based on 15 pupils
Wickersley SSC (Y7-8)	£125,112 based on 60 pupils
Listerdale (3 of 4)	£ 56,076 based on 15 pupils
Brampton Ellis Primary	£ 32,711 based on 15 pupils
TOTAL	£454,028

Discussions were continuing about the amount of transitional funding that would be required at the Eastwood Village Primary School. Conversations were planned to finalise the amount, including due diligence of the School's prepared budget.

The Rotherham Schools' Forum members in attendance considered their options of setting an overall budget for the Pupil Growth fund which was likely to be sufficient to cover the largest amount of transitional funding that the new primary school required. As discussions were continuing this amount was not yet finalised or known. With due diligence this amount could be finalised and any un-used amount would be carried-forward into the 2017/2018 financial year reducing the call on the Schools' Block at that point.

Agreed: - (1) That the report be received and its content noted.

(2) That the Pupil Growth funding 2016/2017 allocation from the Schools' Block be £800,000 (surplus to be used to reduce the call on the Schools' Block in 2017/2018).

(3) That the allocations to eight schools as outlined in the submitted report, totalling £454, 028, be approved.

(4) That discussions and negotiations continue with the Eastwood Village Primary School in order to agree the amount of transitional funding required in 2016/2017.

(5) That a future meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum consider the

pupil growth projections for coming years.

21. DEDICATED SCHOOLS' GRANT, 2016/2017.

Consideration was given to the 2016/2017 Dedicated Schools Grant, which had been announced by the Education Funding Agency on 17th December, 2015.

The total 2016/2017 DSG allocation was £220,046,000. This amount was split between the three Blocks: -

- Schools' Block - £187,254,000;
- Early Years' Block - £12,795,000 (provisional);
- High Needs' Block - £19,997,000.

The Rotherham Schools' Forum were asked to consider the amounts that could be retained centrally by the Local Authority relating to the following budget headings: -

1. Servicing of Schools' Forum – historically been set at £3,000 for the last three financial years (the RSF needed to vote on this);
2. Growth fund (previous item refers) (the RSF needed to vote on this);
3. Schools in Financial Difficulty (de-delegated) (the primary maintained representatives of the RSF needed to vote on this);
4. Central Licences (the RSF needed to note the amount set by the Department for Education).

Discussion was held on the level of funding allocated to the High Needs' Block, and on some broader formula issues: -

- An urgent review was required to stop funding a deficit and determine the value for money within the High Needs' Block;
- The emerging focus group led by Paula Williams would look at this. It was important that the group included Rotherham headteachers of all phases. It was agreed that Paula Dobbin would represent the primary phase, Paul Bloor would represent PRUs/Julie Mott would represent Special Schools and Pepe Di'Iassio would represent the secondary phase;
- In the 2015/2016 financial year the Director of Childrens' Services had moved £2.954m from the Schools' Block and £432k from the Early Years' Block to the High Needs' Block (Minute number 114, 24th April, 2015 refers. 'Proposed Total Schools' Budget 2015/2016 (Estimate)). Was this proposed for the 2016/2017 financial year?;
- The Secondary Governors' Representative asked for consideration to be given to a special school governor joining the Rotherham

Schools' Forum to strengthen governance relating to the High Needs' Block;

- Was there any confirmation of a move to a national funding formula? – there was no announcement at the time of the meeting;
- The Teaching School Representative requested that a future meeting of the RSF receive a model of different Guaranteed Unit of Funding levels.

The Rotherham Schools' Forum turned their attention to the areas of centrally retained DSG for Statutory Services: -

1. Servicing of Schools' Forum – a vote was taken on whether to de-delegate an amount of £3,000 for the servicing of the RSF. £3,000 had been allocated in the previous three financial years.

The Rotherham Schools' Forum voted on a unanimous basis to centrally retain £3,000 for the servicing of the Rotherham Schools' Forum.

2. Growth fund – vote taken in the previous item (Minute Number 20).

An amount of £800,000 was agreed to be centrally retained on a majority basis by the Rotherham Schools' Forum.

3. Schools in Financial Difficulty. This funding was de-delegated from the budgets of local authority maintained primary schools. Information about the background and history of Schools in Financial Difficulty funding had been forwarded to all of Rotherham's local authority maintained primary schools and they were asked to indicate whether they supported the principle of SiFD. Maintained primary schools were given a week to reply. In total there were nineteen responses – 16 in support of maintaining the fund and principle of SiFD, and 3 votes against maintaining the fund/ principle.

Two detailed comments were received and considered about the SiFD. One school felt that the number of local authority maintained primary schools was declining to such a level that the pot of money would be reduced and become an ineffective amount. Another school felt that it would be fair for schools to repay the amount following their financial recovery.

The local authority maintained primary school representatives in attendance voted on a unanimous basis to maintain the Schools in Financial Difficulty Fund in 2016/2017 at a value of £75k.

4. Central Licences had been negotiated by the Secretary of State at £237, 089.

£237, 089 would be centrally retained from the Schools' Block as it represented the charge for all Rotherham schools and academies relating to copyright licensing.

Resolved: - (1) That the information shared be noted.

(2) That the High Needs' Block Focus Group meet and report back to the Rotherham Schools' Forum on issues relating to the High Needs' Block, including setting an appropriate budget and achieving value for money.

(3) That consideration be given to a representative of special school governance joining the Rotherham Schools' Forum.

(4) That models be presented to a future meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum relating to differing levels of Guaranteed Unit of Funding.

(5) That the 2016/2017 budget allocations be confirmed as: -

- a) £3,000 from the Schools' Block to be retained centrally for the Servicing of the Rotherham Schools Forum;
- b) £800,000 from the Schools' Block to be retained centrally for the Growth Fund;
- c) £75k to be de-delegated from local authority maintained primary school budgets for the Schools' in Financial Difficulty Fund;
- d) £237, 089 from the Schools' Block to be retained centrally for copyright licence fees.

22. SEMH UPDATE.

Paula Williams, Service Leader, gave an update to the Rotherham Schools' Forum on the continuing development of the new Alternative Provision.

- A series of meetings were planned in the next two weeks regarding establishing locality-based provision;
- It was important to establish which schools were engaged at this stage, although the local authority was keen for the models to be shaped by schools themselves;
- The primary discussions were in the early stages of discussion, secondary was much more developed. Eventually it was thought that the separate primary/secondary locality groups would join into one locality group.

Feedback from the Rotherham Schools' Forum about the process included that it had not been productive to separate the early discussions into 'primary' and 'secondary', nor was it useful for primary to be further behind in terms of progress at this stage. This was in the context that the

process could identify savings and opportunities to re-deploy funding. Not having both sides fully engaged could have slowed this process.

It was agreed that feedback from the locality meetings would be provided to the next Rotherham Schools' Forum meeting.

Resolved: - (1) That the information shared be noted.

(2) That the standing update be provided to the next meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum to be held on 4th March, 2016.

SEMH Partnership Events

- **North Partnership, 13th January, Town Hall, John Smiths Room**
- North Primary 9.30 -11.30
- North Secondary 1.00-3.00
-
- **Central Partnership, 18th January, Town Hall, John Smiths Room**
- Central Primary 9.30-11.30
- Central Secondary 1.00-3.00
-
- **South Partnership, 22nd January, Town Hall, John Smiths Room (am) and Room 3 (pm)**
- South Primary 9.30-11.30
- South Secondary 1.00-3.00
-

23. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETINGS: -

(1) That the next meeting of the Rotherham Schools' Forum take place on Friday 4th March, 2016, to start at 8.30 am in the Rockingham Professional Development Centre.

(2) That future meetings take place on: -

- 22nd April, 2016;
- 17th June, 2016.

To start at 8.30 am in the Rockingham Professional Development Centre.

High Needs Working Group
Notes from Meeting – 29.02.16
Newman Special School

Attendees:

- *Andrea Baldwin (RMBC – Finance Dept)*
- *Paula Dobbin (Redscope Primary School)*
- *Pepe Di'Iasio (Wales High School)*
- *Julie Mott (Newman Special School)*
- *Paula Williams (RMBC – Head of Inclusion)*

The current structure and spending of the High Needs Budget was detailed line by line.

There were some immediate actions identified from the conversations involved in this information sharing;

- A short interim email with the current designations of the special schools would be beneficial to all settings and staff
- Further engagement of Rowan strategically. The Head of Rowan has recently begun attending a number of strategic groups as the remit is different to Aspire and dual representation is advised by Paula Williams. This includes Special Heads Meetings.
- A link between Rowan and Newman Additional Resource be created as some children are similar, so a more graduated response to the highest levels of need between the two sites can be devised.
- Paula Williams to hold a discussion with John Morrison (Swinton) regarding the Swinton Autism Resource and gather his views about its success given that the primary models for autism are currently being addressed.

Over the next year further work to be addressed:

- Quality Assurance for all processes (eg top up funding to specials, the EHC process, service provision)
- Discussion about the Home Tuition Service, its remit and how it relates to Special Provisions, particularly around post-operative support
- Wider consultation and investigation into the services provided by high needs funding (and those SEND services not funded through high needs) to

appropriately fund. This includes, traded and non-traded services, where they currently sit within structures, how they are currently funded and whether there are ways to improve service and/or become more cost effective)

- The work of this group to be aligned within the wider SEND work and that work to be appropriately communicated as one strategy to all stakeholders (currently being written by Paula Williams)

PW/29.02.16

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO ROTHERHAM SCHOOLS’ FORUM

1.	Meeting:	Rotherham Schools’ Forum
2.	Date:	4th March, 2016
3.	Title:	Eastwood Village Primary School – ‘start up’ Diseconomies funding allocation in first year of operation
4.	Directorate:	Children and Young People’s Services

5. Summary

This report outlines proposals for the ‘start up’ Diseconomies funding allocation to Eastwood Village Primary School.

6. Recommendation:

It is recommended that:

- a the allocation recommended be approved by the Rotherham Schools’ Forum and allocated from the pupil growth element within the Schools’ Block**
- b the funding formula outlined in the report be approved by Rotherham Schools’ Forum for future new school funding**

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 Pre- opening funding allocation to Eastwood Village Primary School previously agreed by Schools' Forum:

The School opened as scheduled in September 2015 with a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 30 to pupils in statutory year groups FS2 to Y4. Using previously agreed funding formulas and salary levels it was agreed by Schools' Forum to allocate the funding indicated below as a pre start up allocation.

Financial Year – 2014/15	Expenditure
Eastwood Village Primary: Leadership funding based on L10 leadership salary as previously agreed by Schools Forum (Sept 14 to Mar 15) – 7/12	£34,289 Formula and allocation agreed by Schools Forum
Financial Year – 2015/16	Expenditure
Eastwood Village Primary: Leadership funding based on L10 leadership salary as previously agreed by Schools Forum (Apr 15 to Aug 15 – 5/12)	£24,492 Formula and allocation agreed by Schools Forum
FS2 to Y4 = 5 classrooms Using Schools Forum agreed formula for expanding schools agreement to fund: <i>5/12 x Teacher</i> <i>5/12 x Teaching Assistant</i> <i>£3,000 allocation per classroom</i>	£65,731 Teachers £22,985 T/As £15,000 Classroom TOTAL = £103,716 Formula and allocation agreed by Schools Forum

7.2 Funding allocation from September 2015 to cover diseconomies during the school's first year of operation

The definition of what diseconomies of scale costs relate to has been extracted from the DfE funding document:

Diseconomies costs relate to the need to incur some fixed management and premises costs as new schools build up their numbers. This funding must be

made available to new academies on the same basis as maintained schools, including those funded on estimates – this can be paid to new schools that have opened and have not reached their full number of year groups.

Diseconomies costs should not be funded by artificially inflating pupil numbers in the formula since this has the effect of obscuring the pupil based funding. Instead estimated pupil numbers should reflect the number of pupils expected to join the school in the Autumn term to calculate the schools formula funding and any additional diseconomies funding for the school should be paid from the growth fund.

7.3 Diseconomies in funding allocation recommendation:

Funding allocated to Eastwood Village is based on the end of the first academic year projection provided by the LA – 100 pupils.

School opened for the 2015/16 academic year as a 1 form entry primary school from FS2 to Y4 (150 places)

Following a period of financial challenge to Eastwood Village in relation to the funding request and allocation amount to ensure 'due diligence' it is recommended that a sum of **£315,500** be allocated to Eastwood Village Primary School to fund diseconomies in the first academic year of operation, using the formula below:

Variation between funding and full	100 / 150 = 50	
Variation allocation per empty seat AWPU rate = £3,135 per pupil	£ 3,135 x 50	£156,750
Resources / premises / Infrastructure	£1,223 x 50	£ 61,150
Deprivation (ever 6) allocation		
50% + £548 per pupil	50 x £548	£ 27,400
29% - 49% £300 per pupil		
15% - 28% £150 per pupil		
0 – 14% £ NIL per pupil		
EAL (20% +) £367 per pupil	50 x £367	£ 18,350
pupil mobility (10% +) £500 per pupil	50 x £500	£ 25,000
Low attainment factor £537 per pupil	50 x £537	£ 26,850
Total Allocation		£315,500

The allocated amount will be advanced on a monthly basis. The School / Academy Sponsor will submit monthly budget monitoring returns and there will be an end of Academic Year reconciliation and recovery of any surplus funds.

8. Finance

- 8.1 The Local Authority is responsible for funding any diseconomies in funding during the first year of operation. Eastwood Village Primary school received a formula budget for September 2015. The Local Authority estimated the pupil numbers expected to join the school in September 2015 at 60 - 80 and funding was allocated accordingly. The Local Authority estimated the pupil numbers would rise to 90 - 100 by the end of the 2015/16 Academic Year.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

- 9.1 There are always risks and uncertainties when school place provision is considered since future pupil numbers are based on estimations. Over provision at one school could influence pupil numbers at other schools. Local Authorities are obliged, however, to provide sufficient places, promote diversity and increase parental preference.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

- 10.1 The major theme supported by the forward planning and provision of school places is 'to ensure that everyone has access to skills, knowledge and information to enable them to play their part in society'.

10.2 Rotherham School Improvement Mission:

- ~ All children will make at least good progress
- ~ There will be no underperforming cohorts
- ~ All teachers will deliver at least good learning
- ~ All schools will move to the next level of successful performance

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- 11.1 Reports to Commissioners in relation to:

Proposals to increase maintained school admission numbers temporarily
Prescribed alterations to maintained schools
Expansions to academies via statutory process
Increase in admission numbers at academies via statutory process

- 11.2 Reports to the Local Admissions Forum and approval of annual Admission to school Consultation and agreed arrangements

12. Contact Name

Dean Fenton (Service Lead – School Planning, Admissions and Appeals)

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Summary Sheet

Council Report

Rotherham Schools Forum – 4th March 2016

Title

Rotherham Total Schools Budget Monitoring Report for the period ending 31st January 2016

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Ian Thomas – Strategic Director of Children & young People’s Service

Report Author(s)

Andrea Baldwin – CYPS Principal Finance Officer, Finance & Corporate Services
Email: andrea.baldwin@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

All

Executive Summary

This Budget Monitoring Report confirms the Total Schools Budget allocation for 2015/16 and provides a financial forecast for this budget to the end of March 2016 based on actual income and expenditure to the end of January 2016.

The Total Schools Budget available after confirmation of the Dedicated Schools Grant allocation, the EFA Post 16 SEN Funding for 2015/16 and the DSG carry forward from 2014/15 is £127,644m (after deductions for Academy recoupment).

The current projected outturn position for the Total Schools Budget based on expenditure and income to the end of January 2016 is an over spend of £288k (0.23% over budget) including the agreed carry forwards from 2014/15 to 2015/16 financial year.

The main reasons for the forecast variance on each Funding Block are:

- Schools Block - £16k under spend on copyright licences for schools
- High Needs Block - £995k over spend due to the recurring deficit carried forward grant position from previous years which has to be addressed through the Councils current financial year DSG allocation. This resulted in a budget allocation which was inadequate to wholly fund the cost of education placements in independent and non-maintained Special Schools. Additional pressure on the complex needs budget as a result of transferring £321k costs from the Social Care Placement budget to the High Needs Block to cover the educational element of 7 in year placements.
- Early Years Block - £691k under spend due to a lower than anticipated number of pupils in Private Voluntary and Independent settings accessing funding for disadvantaged 2 year olds and funding for 3 and 4 year old entitlement to 15 hours free education. The DFE will claw back the grant in 2016/17 to reflect the pupil numbers in the Early Years and School Census data in January 2016. A further budget adjustment will be required in 2015/16 to transfer some 2 year old funding to 9 schools now with in house provision previously provided by private, voluntary and independent providers pending confirmation of the pupil numbers in the census data. This will reduce the current forecast under spend on the Early Years Block.

Recommendations

That Schools Forum receives and notes the Total Schools Budget projected outturn position for the year 2015/16.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 – Total Schools Budget Monitoring as at 31st January 2016

Background Papers

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Rotherham Total Schools Budget Monitoring Report for the period ending 31st January 2016

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That Schools Forum receives and notes the Total Schools Budget projected outturn position for the year 2015/16.

2. Background

- 2.1 This report presents the details of spending against budget for The Total Schools Budget covering the first 10 months of the 2015/16 financial year – April 2015 to January 2016 – and forecast costs and income to 31st March 2016 based on returns from budget holders for the period ended January 2016.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 The table below shows the forecast outturn position for each funding block against agreed revised budgets:

	Revised Budget	Projected Outturn	Variations	
	31 st January 2016	31 st January 2016	Overspend (+)	Underspend (-)
	£000	£000	£000	%
Schools Block				
Delegated Schools Budgets	88,630	88,630	0	0%
School Rates	1,740	1,740	0	0%
Centrally Managed Services for Schools				
Virtual School for Children in Public Care	38	38	0	0%
Education Welfare Central Attendance	14	14	0	0%
Operational Safeguarding Standards & Dev	11	11	0	0%
Sexual Exploitation Team	11	11	0	0%

School Effectiveness (including CLC's)	336	336	0	0%
Training for Children with Medical Needs	11	11	0	0%
Moving and Handling	11	11	0	0%
SEN Transport to Extra District Schools	25	25	0	0%
Young People's Service	6	6	0	0%
Schools Contingencies				
Primary Schools in Financial Difficulty	83	83	0	0%
Servicing of Schools Forum	3	3	0	0%
Pupil Growth Fund	336	336	0	0%
Copyright Licences	205	189	-16	-8%
Total Schools Block	91,460	91,444	-16	0%
High Needs Block				
Special Schools Delegated Budgets	10,592	10,592	0	0%
SEN Placements and Top Up Funding	1,407	2,801	1,394	99%
Primary Exceptional Needs and Specialist Resource Units	1,042	1,042	0	0%
Secondary Exceptional Needs and Specialist Resource Unit	456	456	0	0%
Flanderwell Resource Unit	102	90	-12	-12%
Post 16 to 24 SEN Provision	1,648	1,369	-279	-17%
SEN Complex Needs Placements	1,979	1,947	-32	2%
SEN Extra District Placements	222	149	-73	-33%
Education, Health and Care Assessment Team	53	56	3	6%
Commissioning Team (SEN Placements)	35	35	0	0%
Early Years ASD Support	76	71	-5	7%
Hearing Impaired Service	637	608	-29	-5%
Visual Impaired Service	475	466	-9	-2%
Learning Support and Autism	588	569	-19	-3%

Communication (inc READ)				
Portage Service	231	229	-2	-1%
Pupil Referral Units – Delegated Budget	2,191	2,191	0	0%
Educated other than at School Transport	48	82	34	71%
Home Tuition Service	140	164	24	17%
Total High Needs Block	21,922	22,917	995	5%
Early Years Block				
Nursery Delegated Budget	1,724	1,724	0	0%
Primary Delegated Budget	3,011	3,011	0	0%
Private, Voluntary & Independent Nursery Education (3 & 4 Year old Funding)	3,564	3,353	-211	-6%
Early Years 2 Year old Funding	3,265	2,763	-502	-15%
Childcare Inclusion Support	170	192	22	13%
Early Years Payments/grant adjustments	1,578	1,578	0	0%
Total Early Years Block	13,312	12,621	-691	-5%
EFA Sixth Form Funding Special Schools	950	950	0	0%
TOTAL FORECAST OUTTURN POSITION	127,644	127,932	288	0.23%

A more detailed analysis including the original budget, grant adjustments, budget virements, carry forward balances and forecast outturn for the Total Schools Budget for the above funding blocks for the period ended 31st January 2016 are shown on Appendix 1.

3.2 Delegated School Budgets

For the purposes of this report the forecast outturn position on Schools, the DSG is estimated to be a balanced position. However, it should be noted that Schools have reported a £1.4m under spend based on the latest returns as of February 2016 spring term.

3.3 Presented below is an analysis of the main variances against revised budgets on each funding block and the underlying reasons beneath them:-

3.4 Schools Block (£16k under spend)

Schools Contingency (£16k under spend)

Under spend of £16k on copyright licences for Schools

3.5 High Needs Block (£995k over spend)

SEN Placements and Top up Funding (£1,394m over spend)

Over spends on out of authority independent non maintained School placements £1,385m (53 placements in year and 4 potential places costing £2,098m, average weekly cost of current placements is £1,089 and on this basis the budget could only fund 17 placements), specialist educated otherwise packages of support £108k, specialist education equipment £42k, Speech and Language Therapy £33k and forecast over spend on additional top up funding for exceptional needs £66k, offset by income from schools for permanently excluded pupils £166k and £74k additional income from Clinical Commissioning Group (Health contribution towards placement costs)

Flanderwell Resource Unit (£12k under spend)

Forecast staff slippage on vacant post £12k.

Post 16-24 SEN Provision (£279k under spend)

Forecast over spend on post 16 element 3 top up funding £75k to Further Education Providers (247 in year placements costing £1,723m) offset by additional income of £354k from Clinical Commissioning Group. Weekly cost of mainstream and local provision is £146 with average cost of independent specialist provision for high needs students at £715. Based on an overall average cost of £199 the current budget can fund 218 placements.

SEN Complex Needs Placements (£32k under spend)

Under spend on out of authority placements in independent non maintained Special Schools for pupils with statements of SEN and Education, Health and Care Plans. (35 placements in year and 1 potential placement costing £2,924m and £28k complex support packages) The average weekly cost of a 52 week residential placement is £3,385 and average of a 38 week day placement is £1,114 (average weekly cost of current places £2,019). The forecast includes income from Clinical Commissioning Group of £274k to offset placement costs and £731k costs reported against revenue funding to cover the Social Care element of those placements. A further £321k has been transferred from the Safeguarding Children and Families placement budget to cover the cost of the education element of those placements.

SEN Extra District Placements (£73k under spend)

Over spend of £36k on top up funding for placements in other Local authority maintained schools (based on 40 in year placements costing £258k) offset by additional income of £109k recouped from other Local authorities for pupils in Rotherham Schools. (Based on an average weekly cost of current placements of £246 the budget is sufficient to fund 23 full time placements)

Hearing Impaired Service (£29k under spend)

Under spend on staffing of £29k due to in year staff vacancies. Additional income £9k offset by over spend of £4k on staff advertising and Dbs checks, transport costs £1k and computer costs £4k. (Forecast outturn is based on 9 pupils in places at Bramley, 13 pupils at Wickersley and 289 pupils receiving support from the peripatetic Team at the end of January 2016).

Visually Impaired Service (£9k under spend)

Under spend on staffing of £17k due to in year vacancies and savings on superannuation costs for staff not contributing to the pension scheme. Additional Income from training £4k and supplies £1k under offset by over spend on training costs £9k and advertising/Dbs checks £3k and transport £1k. (Forecast Outturn is based on an active caseload of 239 pupils which includes 5 students using braille)

Learning Support and Autism Communication Service (£19k under spend)

Under spend on staff costs of £50k due to slippage following new appointments to vacant posts offset by over spend on supplies £7k and forecast shortfall in income target of £24k.

Educated other than at school – Transport (£34k over spend)

Over spend on transport costs; taxi provision £15k over spend and bus passes £19k over spend (Taxi provision £53k cost based on 25 students in year and bus passes £29k based on 50 in year students) for pupils within the Pru system.

Home Tuition Service (£24k over spend)

Over spend on tutor costs £42k due to additional hours required for 26 in year pupils accessing the service and 3 referrals pending together with an over spend of £2k on computer supplies, offset by £20k rechargeable pupil costs. The budget was based on funding for 14 students.

3.6 **Early Years Block (£691k under spend)**

Private, Voluntary and Independent Education (3 & 4 Year old funding) (£211k under spend)

Forecast under spend based on current take up levels of the 15 hour entitlement to free early education. The forecast outturn has been based on the updated pupil numbers in the January 2016 Early Years census. The DFE will claw back the under spend in 2016/17 following the new census data.

Early Years Participation Funding for 2 Year olds (£502k under spend)

Forecast underspend based on current take up levels of participation funding for disadvantaged 2 year olds in private, voluntary and independent provision. The forecast outturn is based on the updated pupil numbers in the January 2016 Early Years Census. It is anticipated that some of this funding will need to be transferred to School budgets to fund 9 schools with new in-house provision for 2 year olds in previous PVI settings. (Budget virement in 2015/16 pending confirmation of pupil numbers from School census data this will reduce the current reported under spend). The DFE will claw back the under spend in 2016/17 following the new census data.

Childcare Inclusion Support (£22k Over spend)

Forecast over spend due to high levels of Inclusion Grant applications in Early Years and out of School Settings.

- 3.7 The forecast overspend has reduced since the October report to Schools Forum by £454k. This is mainly due to the reduced forecast costs on the Early Years Block of £721k following the adjusted pupil numbers in PVI settings following the January 2016 census data outlined above; offset by an increase in overspend on the High Needs Block of £267k. The increase in over spend on the High Needs Block is largely due to the additional costs on the SEN Complex Needs placement budget following the agreed transfer of £321k costs from the Social Care Placement budget in respect of the educational element of 7 in year placements.

3.8 **Budget Adjustments/Virements**

Budget adjustments and virements for the period November 2015 to January 2016 are as follows:-

Schools Block

Primary Delegated School Budget

Budget transfer of £30k for Schools in Financial Difficulty funding (Anston Brook £5k, Bramley Sunnyside £5k, Brampton Cortonwood £5k, Roughwood £5k and West Melton £10k). Transfer of £18k funding for Schools of Concern to West Melton J&I from the School Improvement budget.

Primary Contingency Schools in Financial Difficulty

Transfer of £30k funding to Primary Schools outlined above plus a budget reduction of £7,391 in respect of a DFE recoupage adjustment for in year academy conversions.

High Needs Block

Special Schools Delegated Budget

Further in year funding for Individual assigned resources of £288k; (transferred from the Special Educational Needs Top up funding Budget) in respect of the period October to December 2015 for pupils with exceptional needs. Transfer of £10k Bursary Funding for those schools with post 16 pupils. An additional budget virement of £124k following the transfer of Kilnhurst Resource Unit to Milton Special School for the 5 month period from November 2015 to March 2016.

Primary Schools Delegated Budget

Further in year top up funding for Individual assigned resources of £74k from Special Educational Needs budget for the period October to December 2015. Less the £124k transfer from Kilnhurst School in respect of the 5 month resource unit funding transferred to Milton Special School.

Secondary Schools Delegated Budget

Further in year allocation of individual assigned resources of £26k from Special Educational Needs budget for the period October to December 2015.

Pupil Referral Units Delegated Budget

Additional top up funding of £53k agreed to cover the cost of an increase in the number of excluded pupils in Rotherham Aspire unit.

Flanderwell Resource Unit

Budget reduction of £4k to adjust agreed top up funding allocation.

Early Years Block

Nursery Delegated Budget

Transfer of £7k funding from the primary delegated budget in respect of the early years pupil premium funding for Nursery Schools for the autumn term.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

4.1 Not Applicable

5. Consultation

5.1 Budget Managers, Holders and Operators across CYPS

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

6.1 Not Applicable

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

7.1 All financial details and implications are set out within section 3 of this report.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 No direct implications.

9. Human Resources Implications

9.1 No direct implications.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

10.1 No direct implications.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

11.1 No direct implications.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

12.1 No direct implications.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 At a time of economic difficulty and tight financial constraints, managing spend in line with the Council's Budget is paramount. Careful scrutiny of expenditure and income across all services and close budget monitoring therefore remain a top priority if the Council is to deliver both its annual and medium term financial plans while sustaining its overall financial resilience.
- 13.2 Principle risks and uncertainties relate to the 'needs led' nature of High Needs Budgets in relation to pupils with special educational needs.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Ian Thomas – Strategic Director of Children & young People's Service

Approvals Obtained from:-

Interim Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- Stuart Booth

This report is published on the Council's website or can be found at:-

APPENDIX 1

Total Schools Budget Monitoring 2015/16 as at 31st January 2016

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
Description	Original Budget Allocation 1st April 2015	Academy Recoupment	Revision to Initial Estimate/Grant Adjustments	Budget Virements	Estimated C/Fwd Balances from 2014/15 inc in original Budget	Add Actual C/Fwd Balances from 2014/15	Total Adjustments	Revised Budget Allocation 2015/16 31st January 16	Actual Spend 1st April to 31st January 16	Projected Outturn Position	Current Projected Year End Variance (over spend /under spend -)
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Delegated Schools Budgets	99,998	-11,580		212	-414	414	-11,369	88,630	73,859	88,630	0
School Rates	1,362	0			-95	473	378	1,740	1,450	1,740	0
Centrally Managed Services for Schools											
Virtual School for Children in Public Care	38						0	38	38	38	0
Education Welfare Central Attendance Team	14						0	14	14	14	0
Operational Safeguarding - CYP Standards and Development	11						0	11	11	11	0
Sexual Exploitation Team	11						0	11	11	11	0
School Effectiveness Service (including CLC's)	354			-18			-18	336	336	336	0
Training for Children with Medical Needs	11						0	11	11	11	0
Moving and Handling	11						0	11	11	11	0
SEN Transport to Extra District Schools	25						0	25	25	25	0
Young People's Service	6						0	6	6	6	0
Schools Contingency: Primary Schools in Financial Difficulty	75	-7		-30		46	8	83	0	83	0
Schools Contingency: Servicing of Schools Forum	3						0	3	0	3	0
Schools Contingency: Pupil Growth Fund	500			-164			-164	336	316	336	0
Schools Contingency: CLA Licences	205						0	205	189	189	-16
											0
TOTAL SCHOOLS BLOCK	102,624	-11,588	0	0	-509	933	-11,164	91,460	76,277	91,444	-16
Special Schools Delegated Budget	5,257		-269	5,604			5,335	10,592	8,826	10,592	0
Special Educational Needs (Top up funding for Special Schools and independent non maintained Special School placements)	6,107		1,301	-6,079	655	-578	-4,701	1,407	2,708	2,801	1,394
Primary Delegated - Exceptional Needs Top up Funding and Specialist Resource Units	1,323		-391	111			-281	1,042	868	1,042	0
Secondary Delegated - Exceptional Needs Top Up Funding and Specialist Resource Unit	605		-209	60			-149	456	380	456	0
Flanderwell Resource Unit	100			2			2	102	77	90	-12
Post 16-24 SEN Provision	1,648						0	1,648	1,611	1,369	-279
Special Educational Complex Needs - Statemented Placements - Out of Authority - Independent and non maintained Schools	1,979						0	1,979	1,606	1,947	-32
SEN Extra District Placements	222						0	222	98	149	-73
Education, Health and Care Assessment Team	53						0	53	42	56	3
Commissioning Team (SEND Placements)	35						0	35	29	35	0
Early Years ASD Support	76						0	76	58	71	-5
Hearing Impaired Service	637						0	637	470	608	-29
Visual Impaired Service	475						0	475	385	466	-9
Learning Support Service and Autism Communication Team (Inc READ Service)	588						0	588	443	569	-19
Portage	231						0	231	185	229	-2
Pupil Referral Units - Delegated Budget	2,240		-350	301			-49	2,191	1,825	2,191	0
Educated Other than at School - Transport	48						0	48	63	82	34
Home Tuition Service	140						0	140	126	164	24
											0
TOTAL HIGH NEEDS BLOCK	21,763	0	81	0	655	-578	159	21,922	19,800	22,917	995
Nursery Delegated Budget	1,706			18			18	1,724	1,437	1,724	0
Primary Delegated Budget	4,062			-1,051			-1,051	3,011	2,509	3,011	0
Private, Voluntary and Independent Nursery Education (3 & 4 Year Olds Funding)	3,495		-441	150		360	68	3,564	2,394	3,353	-211
Early Years 2 Year Old Funding	4,848		-1,413		-320	150	-1,583	3,265	2,185	2,763	-502
Childcare Inclusion Support	0					170	170	170	138	192	22
Early Years Academy Payments and Grant Adjustments	0		695	883			1,578	1,578	1,079	1,578	0
											0
TOTAL EARLY YEARS BLOCK	14,111	0	-1,159	0	-320	680	-799	13,312	9,742	12,621	-691
TOTAL DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT	138,498	-11,588	-1,077	0	-174	1,036	-11,804	126,694	105,819	126,982	288
EFA Post 16 Special Education	943		7				7	950	792	950	0
TOTAL SCHOOLS BUDGET	139,441	-11,588	-1,071	0	-174	1,036	-11,797	127,644	106,611	127,932	288

Rotherham Schools' Forum – constitution/membership review of School Members to ensure that all phases and school types are proportionately represented

Initial findings for discussion by the Rotherham Schools' Forum, 4th March, 2016: -

Some relevant sections of the Education Funding Agency's 'Schools Forum: Operational and good practice guide' (March, 2015) (attached for information):

-

- Para 16 – The Schools Forums Regulations provide a framework for the appointment of members but allow a considerable degree of discretion in order to accommodate local priorities and practice;
- Para 27 (under the Schools Members headings) – Whatever the membership structure of schools members on a schools forum, the important issue is that it should reflect most effectively the profile of education provision across the local authority to ensure that there is not an in-built bias towards any one phase or group.
- 17 – no maximum or minimum size but need to have full representation for various types of school;
- 18 – Must have schools members, academies members and non-school members. Schools and academies must have 2/3 of the total membership;
- 18 – The balance between maintained primary and maintained secondary and academies must be **broadly proportionate to the pupil numbers** in each category;
- 18 – There is no requirement for academy members to represent specific primary and specific secondary phases, **but it may be encouraged to ensure representation remains broadly proportionate to pupil numbers**;
- 24 - Maintained special schools, nurseries and PRUs must be represented;
- 25 – There can be headteacher and governor representatives within the Schools Member section.

Rotherham's current model and an alternative structure for consideration / discussion: -

Rotherham's current model: -	Potential model for consideration: -
Geographical learning communities model	'Phase / school type model'
16 learning community School Members who organically represent primary/secondary/academy/maintained phases (in addition to non-school members)	Proportionate representation from the phases and school types; Must be based on pupil numbers in each phase and school type. (in addition to non-school members)
Strengths include: - All areas of the Borough are represented; This is how Rotherham is organised (note paragraphs 16 and 27 above). Good attendance at RSF meetings from a range of stakeholders	Strengths include: - Can be annually reviewed to ensure that the pri/sec and acad/maintained proportions are correct. School Members are presenting their phase, not local area
Weaknesses include: - Not guaranteed to proportionately represent pupil numbers in pri/sec, adac/maintained; Can make voting issues difficult / or lead to only a small number of Reps voting on a decision (can be mitigated by consultation as per SiFD decision, but outcome would not be binding on the RSF members)	Weaknesses include: - May mean large geographical areas of the Borough do not have a representative – will those schools become isolated/ marginalised? Each area of the Borough has different demographics and these may not be fairly represented.
Practicalities: - Arrangements must be made for representatives to attend in the absence of the main representative – what does this do to the proportions?! Currently there are too many Non-Schools members (based on 16 learning communities there should be 10/11 at maximum, there are currently 13, although some could be re-classified as Schools' Members (Governor Reps) and bring the number into line)	Practicalities: - Depending on numbers of seats assigned in this model, Rotherham may have to reduce numbers of non-school members to ensure that school members have 2/3 of the seats

Based on the data from the October 2015 school census (the January 2016 census has not yet been finalised) Rotherham's education sector looks like: -

Phase / setting	No. of settings	Number of pupils on roll	%	Seats on the RSF is alternative model adopted =?
Primary Maintained	60	16,212	65.5%	
Primary Academy	34	8,513	34.5%	
Totals	94	24,725 (57% overall)	100%	
Secondary Academy	11	12,874	70%	
Secondary Maintained	5	5,465	30%	
Totals	16	18,339 (43% overall)	100%	

Current non-schools' members are: -

- Special Schools (Para 24 - statutory member);
- Nursery Schools (24 - stat member);
- PRUs (24 - stat member);
- Teaching School Representative;
- PVI Early Years Rep (P46 stat member);
- Primary Governor (Para – 25 can be classed as a Schools' Member);
- Secondary Governor (25 - can be classed as a Schools' Member);
- Teaching Trade Unions Rep;
- Support Staff Trade Unions Rep;
- Diocese of Sheffield Rep;
- Diocese of Hallam Rep – unfilled;
- School Business Managers Rep;
- Colleges (stat member – para 45).

Future developments?: -

There could be changes in the way Rotherham's education sector is organised – e.g. SEMH partnerships, multi-academy trusts, and these could necessitate restructure of the Schools' Forum.

Engagement and consultation: -

Make better use of technology to improve engagement and consultation with all Schools – such as voting buttons on Outlook, the RSF Digest, learning community meetings and others...

Timescale for any changes to the structure and representation: -

Traditionally the RSF has nominated Chair, Vice-Chair and Reps at the April meeting for the following academic year. This could change to the October meeting to more closely align to the school-year.

Hannah Etheridge, Senior Democratic Services Officer, (01709 822055,
hannah.etheridge@rotherham.gov.uk)

Learning Community Representatives: -		Voting (and phase)	Substitute: -
Aston	Deborah Ball	Primary – maintained	
Brinsworth	John Henderson	Primary – academy	Richard Fone
Clifton	Lynne Pepper	Primary – maintained	Mark Young Primary- academy
Dinnington	Chris Eccles / Ian Holborn	Secondary – academy	Chris Eccles / Ian Holborn
Maltby	David Sutton	Secondary – academy	Graham Hayward
Oakwood	David Naisbitt	Secondary – academy	Ann Abel
Rawmarsh	Kay Sherburn	Primary – academy	
St. Bernard's	Terrance Mahon	Secondary – academy	
St. Pius	Helen McLaughlin	Primary – maintained	
Swinton	John Morrison	Secondary – maintained	
Thrybergh			
Wales	Pepe Di'lasio	Secondary – academy	
Wath	Sally Armstrong	Primary – maintained	David Silvester
Wickersley	Craig Roberts	Primary – academy	
Wingfield	Paula Dobbin (Redscope)	Primary – maintained	Joanne Cook (Greasbrough)
Winterhill	Roger Burman	Secondary – maintained	
Stakeholders: -			Substitute: -
Special	Julie Mott		

Schools			
Nursery	Peter Gerrard		
Pupil Referral Units	Paul Bloor		
Teaching Schools	David Ashmore		
PVI Early Years	Steve Scott		Jo Gray
Primary Governor	Sue Mallinder		
Secondary Governor	Alan Richards		
Teaching Trade Unions	Susan Brook		Fred Sprague
Support Staff Trade Union	Unison / GMB		
Diocese of Sheffield	Geoff Gillard		
Diocese of Hallam			
School Business Managers	Laura Redmile		
Colleges	Gill Alton (Rotherham College)		Richard Williams (Thomas Rotherham College)



Education
Funding
Agency

Schools forum

Operational and good practice guide

March 2015

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Introduction

1. This guide is designed to provide local authority officers and school forum elected members with advice and information on good practice in relation to the operation of schools forums.
2. It is organised in two sections:
 - Section 1 provides information on the constitutional and organisational requirements for schools forums; and
 - Section 2 covers a number of key aspects of the operation of schools forums at local level, drawing on good practice from a number of schools forums.
3. The guide draws on the experience and knowledge of schools forum members, local authority members and officers and the Department and its partners. Other than where it is describing requirements set out in the Schools Forum Regulations 2012 it is not designed to be prescriptive – what is good practice in one schools forum may not be appropriate in another, given the diverse circumstances of local areas. However, it is hoped the guide will stimulate some debate within schools forums and contribute to their ongoing development.
4. The Department hopes that schools forums and local authorities find this guide useful. It has been the subject of consultation with a wide variety of external partners. In particular, members of the Department’s Schools and Academies Funding Group, made up of representatives from central and local government, teaching associations, unions representing support staff as well as organisations representing academies and governors, have provided valuable input and advice on the content of the guide. The Department is grateful for their assistance.
5. The Department’s website contains details of all the announcements, documents and other information relating to school funding and schools forums. This website also has a range of useful links to other sites that may be of relevance to schools forum members.
6. A short [guide to the schools forum for schools and academies](#), which may be helpful to stakeholders and the wider school family, is available on GOV.UK.
7. If you have any queries about the operation of schools forums please contact [schools forum team](#) at the Education Funding Agency

The postal address is:

Education Funding Agency
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 3BT

Section 1 – schools forum regulations: constitution and procedural issues

Regulations

8. [National regulations](#)¹ govern the composition, constitution and procedures of schools forums. Local authorities can provide schools forum members with a copy of these regulations or alternatively they can be accessed at:
9. A short [guide to the schools forum for schools and academies](#) is also available to provide a wider understanding of the work of schools forums.

Schools forum powers

10. Schools forums generally have a consultative role. However, there are situations in which they have decision-making powers. The respective roles of schools forums, local authorities and the DfE are summarised in [schools forum powers and responsibilities](#). The overarching areas on which schools forums make decisions on local authority proposals are:

- De-delegation from mainstream schools budgets (separate approval will be required by the primary and secondary phase members of schools forum), for prescribed services to be provided centrally.
- To create a fund for significant pupil growth in order to support the local authority's duty for place planning (basic need), including pre-opening and diseconomy of scale costs, and agree the criteria for maintained schools and academies to access this fund.
- To create a fund for falling rolls for good or outstanding schools if the schools' surplus capacity is likely to be needed within the next three years to meet rising pupil numbers and agree the criteria for maintained schools and academies to access this fund.
- Continued funding at existing levels for prescribed historic commitments where the effect of delegating this funding would be destabilising.
- Funding for the local authority in order to meet prescribed statutory duties placed upon it. Approval is required to confirm the amounts for each duty and no new commitments or increases in expenditure from 2013/14 are permitted unless agreed by the Secretary of State.
- Funding for central early years expenditure, which may include funding for checking eligibility of pupils for an early years place, the early years pupil premium and/or free school meals.

¹ Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 (S.I. 2012/2261) (as amended)

- Authorising a reduction in the schools budget in order to fund a deficit arising in central expenditure that is to be carried forward from a previous funding period.
- In each of these cases, the local authority can appeal to the Secretary of State if the schools forum rejects its proposal.

11. Local Authorities should be aware that the provisions of the [Local Government Act 2000](#) restrict the delegation of local authority decisions to Cabinet, a member of Cabinet, a Committee of Cabinet or an officer of the Council, which would not include schools forums. As a result the local authority cannot delegate its decision making powers to schools forum, e.g. decisions on the funding formula.

12. Regulations state that the local authority must consult the schools forum annually in connection with various schools budget functions, namely:

- amendments to the school funding formula, for which the voting is restricted by the exclusion of non-schools members except for PVI representatives
- arrangements for the education of pupils with special educational needs in particular the places to be commissioned by the LA and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding
- arrangements for the use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school, in particular the places to be commissioned by the LA and schools and the arrangements for paying top-up funding
- arrangements for early years provision
- administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants paid to schools via the local authority

There is no specific definition of these consultation requirements over and above the wording in the regulations. It is a matter for the local authority to decide on the appropriate level of detail it needs to generate a sufficiently informed response from schools forum.

13. Consultation must also take place when a local authority is proposing a contract for supplies and services which is to be funded from the Schools Budget and is in excess of the EU procurement thresholds. The consultation must cover the terms of the contract at least one month prior to the issue of invitations to tender.

14. The schools forum has the responsibility of informing the governing bodies of all schools maintained by the local authority of the results of any consultations carried out by the local authority relating to the issues in paragraphs 12 and 13 above.

15. Local authorities will need to discuss with the schools forum any proposals that they intend to put to the Secretary of State to:

- vary the MFG,
- use exceptional factors
- vary pupil numbers
- allow additional categories of, or spending on, central budgets

- amend the sparsity factor
- vary the lump sum for amalgamating schools
- vary the protection for special schools and special academies

Proposals will then need to be approved by the Secretary of State.

Membership

16. The Schools Forums Regulations provide a framework for the appointment of members, but allow a considerable degree of discretion in order to accommodate local priorities and practice. A quick guide to the [structure of the schools forums](#) is available.

17. There is no maximum or minimum size of a schools forum. Authorities will wish to take various issues into account in deciding the actual size, including the need to have full representation for various types of school, and the local authority's policy on representation of non-schools members. However, care should be taken to keep the schools forum to a reasonable size to ensure that it does not become too unwieldy.

18. Types of member: schools forums must have 'schools members', 'academies member(s)' if there is at least one academy in the local authority's area and 'non-schools members'. Schools and academies members together must number at least two-thirds of the total membership of the schools forum and the balance between maintained primary, maintained secondary and academies members must be broadly proportionate to the pupil numbers in each category, so the structure of Forum should be regularly reviewed, e.g. annually. Academies members must represent mainstream academies and, if there are any in the LA area, special academies and alternative provision academies. There is no requirement for academies members to represent specific primary and secondary phases, but it may be encouraged to ensure representation remains broadly proportionate to pupil numbers. Academy members must be separately elected and designated from maintained school representatives.

19. Schools forum members will need the skills and competencies to manage Forum business (as detailed in [school forum powers and responsibilities](#)) and to take a strategic view across the whole education estate whilst acting as representative of the group that has elected them. Furthermore, they should be easily contactable and pro-active in raising the profile of issues and communicate decisions, and the reasons behind them, effectively.

Term of office

20. The term of office for each schools member and academies member should be stipulated by the local authority at the time of appointment. Such stipulation should follow published rules and be applied in a consistent manner between members. They need not have identical terms – there may be a case for varied terms so that there is continuity of experience rather than there being a complete change in the membership at a single

point. The term of office should not be of a length that would hinder the requirement for the structure of the schools forum to mirror the type of provision in light of the pace of academy conversions. Examples of how this may work include:

- Holding vacancies until the schools forum structure is reviewed providing that this does not mean holding vacancies for an unreasonable length of time
- Increasing the size of the schools forum temporarily to appoint additional academy members, then delete schools member posts at the end of a term of office or when a vacancy arises
- Consider continuity of service – where an academy conversion affects the school of a current schools member, would academies consider appointing that person as an academies member?

21. The length of term of office for non-schools members is at the discretion of the local authority. Schools and academies must be informed, within a month of the appointment of any non-schools member, of the name of the member and the name of the body that that member represents.

22. As well as the term of office coming to an end, a member ceases to be a member of the Schools Forum if he or she resigns from the schools forum or no longer occupies the office by which he or she became eligible for election, selection or appointment to the schools forum. For example, a secondary schools member must stand down if their school converts to an academy. A schools member representing community primary school governors who is no longer a governor of a community primary school in the relevant local authority must cease to hold office on the schools forum even if they remain a governor of a school represented by another group or sub-group. Other situations in which membership of the schools forum ends are if a member gives notice in writing to the local authority and, in the case of a non-schools member, the member is replaced by the local authority, for example at the request of the body which the member represents.

Schools members

23. Schools members represent specified phases or types of maintained schools within the local authority. As a minimum, schools forums must contain representatives of two groups of schools: primary and secondary schools, unless there are no primary or secondary schools maintained by the LA. Middle schools and all through schools are treated according to their deemed status.

24. Where a local authority maintains one or more special schools the schools forum must have at least one schools member from that sector. The same applies to nursery schools and pupil referral units (PRUs).

25. The local authority then has discretion to divide the groups referred to in paragraph 16 and 17 into one or more of the following sub-groups:

- headteachers or headteachers' representatives in each group;
- governors in each group;
- headteachers or headteachers representatives and governors in each group;
- representatives of a particular school category, e.g. voluntary aided.

26. Headteachers can be represented by other senior members of staff within their school. Governors can include interim executive members of an interim executive board. The sub-groups do not have to be of equal size – for example, there may be more representatives of headteachers of primary schools than governors of such schools, or vice versa. The membership structure of the schools forum should ensure there is sufficient representation of each type of schools member in each group to ensure that debate within the schools forum is balanced and representative. As a minimum, there must be at least one representative of headteachers and one representative of governors among the schools members.

27. Whatever the membership structure of schools members on a schools forum, the important issue is that it should reflect most effectively the profile of education provision across the local authority to ensure that there is not an in-built bias towards any one phase or group.

Election and nomination of schools members

28. The relevant group or sub-group is probably best placed to determine how their schools members should be elected.

29. It is good practice for those who draw up the scheme to ensure that a vacancy amongst a represented group would be filled by a nominee elected according to a process that has been determined by all those represented in that group, e.g. community primary school headteachers, or secondary school governors, ensuring that everyone represented has had the opportunity to stand for election and/or vote in such an election. The process must be restricted to the group in question – a headteachers phase group could only vote as a whole for headteacher members if the voting excluded academies, as academies members form a separate group.

30. It is not appropriate for a single person to be elected to represent more than one group or sub-group concurrently, i.e. if they were a governor at a primary and secondary school. They can stand for election from either group but can be appointed to represent only one of those groups.

31. The purpose of ensuring that each group or sub-group is responsible for their election process is to guarantee that there is a transparent and representative process by which members of schools forums are nominated to represent their constituents.

32. Appropriate support to each group or sub-group to manage their election processes should be offered by the clerk of a schools forum, or the committee/democratic services of a local authority. This may just include the provision of

advice but may also consist of providing administrative support in actually running the elections themselves.

33. As a minimum, we would recommend that the clerk of a schools forum make a record of the process by which the relevant schools within each group and sub-group elect their nominees to the schools forum and be able to advise the Chair of the schools forum and local authority on action that needs to be taken, where necessary, to seek new nominees.

34. In determining the process by which elections should be operated it is perfectly legitimate for a local authority to devise, in consultation with their schools forum, a model scheme for the relevant schools within a group or sub-group to consider and be invited to adopt. However, such a model scheme cannot be imposed on that body of schools: adaptations and/or alternative schemes may be adopted. A single scheme need not be adopted universally.

35. Care should be taken to ensure that every eligible member of a group or sub-group has an opportunity to be involved in the determination of their group's election process, is given the opportunity to stand for election if they choose to do so, and is involved in the election of their representative(s).

36. It would not be compliant with the regulations for the steering committee or Chair of a 'parent' group simply to make a nomination to represent their group or sub-group on a schools forum. Schools members must be elected, subject to paragraph 39 below.

37. The local authority may set a date by which the election should take place and must appoint the schools member if the election has not taken place by that date. The person appointed should be a member of the relevant group.

38. We would recommend that any scheme takes into account a number of factors:

- the process for collecting names of those wishing to stand for election;
- the timescale for notifying all constituents of the election and those standing;
- the arrangements for dispatching and receiving ballots;
- the arrangements for counting and publicising the results;
- any arrangements for unusual circumstances such as only one candidate standing in an election; and
- whether existing members can stand for re-election.

39. In the event of a tie between two or more candidates, then the local authority must appoint the schools member instead. The local authority may decide to appoint someone else rather than one of the candidates and might wish to take into account the experience or expertise of the individuals, and the balance between the different types of school represented on the schools forum.

Election and nomination of academies members

40. Academies members must be elected by the proprietor bodies of the academies in the local authority's area, and they are probably best placed to determine the process. Academies members are there to represent the proprietor bodies of academies and are, therefore, not necessarily restricted to principals, senior staff or governors. The same factors should be taken into account as for the election of schools members, set out in paragraphs 28 to 39. For the avoidance of doubt, Free Schools, University Technical Colleges and Studio Schools are classed as academies for this purpose. There is no distinction between sponsored, non-recoupment and converter academies.

41. There are three sub-groups for academy members: mainstream academies, special academies and alternative provision academies and it is for the proprietors of academies within each of these sub-groups to elect their representatives. It is not appropriate, therefore, for headteacher phase groups to determine representation unless the academy proprietors have agreed and even then the voting would need to exclude maintained school representatives. There is no requirement for academies members to be split into primary and secondary sub-groups. However, local authorities may wish to encourage academies to consider the pupil proportions across all academies when electing their representatives.

42. Where there is only one academy in a sub-group in the local authority's area, then their proprietor body must select the person who will represent them.

43. It is possible that a single person be appointed as an academies member to more than one schools forum, for example if an academy chain is located across multiple local authorities, providing they are elected on each occasion in accordance with the agreed election process for each separate schools forum.

44. As with schools members, the local authority may set a date by which the election should take place and must appoint an academies member if the election does not take place by that date, or if an election results in a tie between two or more candidates.

Non-schools members

45. Non-schools members may number no more than a third of a schools forum's total membership (excluding observers – see paragraph 58). A representative of providers of 16-19 education must be elected from those providers. This includes those in the FE sector (FE and sixth form colleges) and other post-school institutions that specialise in special education needs (SPNs), where 20% or more of their students reside in the local authority's area. As with academies the providers are probably best placed to determine the election process.

46. The local authority must appoint at least one person to represent early years providers from the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector. Early years PVI settings need to be represented because funding for the free entitlement for three and

four year olds and eligible two year olds comes from the Dedicated Schools Grant, and all settings are funded through the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF).

47. Before appointing additional non-schools members to the schools forum, the local authority must consider whether the Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses situated in the local authority's area; and, where there are schools or academies in the area with a different religious character, the appropriate faith group, should be represented on the schools forum. If diocesan authorities nominate members for appointment as non-schools members they may wish to consider what type of representative would be most appropriate – schools-based such as a headteacher or governor, or someone linked more generally with the diocese, e.g. a member of the education board.

48. It is also good practice for local authorities to ensure that the needs and interests of all the pupils in the local authority are adequately represented by the members of a schools forum. The interests of pupils in maintained schools can be represented by schools members. Some pupils in a local authority, however, are not in maintained schools but instead are educated in hospitals, independent special schools and non-maintained special schools. Certain types of non-schools members can play an important role in representing the interests of these groups of pupils. They can also play a role in representing the interests and views of the services that support those groups of vulnerable and at-risk pupils who nevertheless are on the roll of maintained schools, such as looked after children and children with special educational needs.

49. The purpose of non-schools members is also to bring greater breadth of discussion to schools forum meetings and ensure that stakeholders and partners other than schools are represented. Organisations which typically provide non-schools members are trades unions, professional associations and representatives of youth groups. Parent groups could also be considered. However, as there are clearly limited numbers of non-schools members able to be on a schools forum, care should be taken to ensure that an appropriate representation from wider stakeholders is achieved.

Other membership issues

50. There are three restrictions placed on who can be a non-schools member of a schools forum. The local authority cannot appoint:

- an elected member of the local authority who is appointed to the executive of that local authority (a lead member/portfolio holder) 'executive members',
- the Director of Children's Services or any officer employed or engaged to work under the management of the Director of Children's Services, and who does not directly provide education to children (or manage those who do) ('relevant officer' (a) and (b)),
- other officers with a specific role in management of and/or who advise on funding for schools ('relevant officer' part (c)).

51. Schools forums have the power to approve a limited range of proposals from their local authority: the restrictions ensure that there is no conflict of interest between the proposing body (the local authority) and the approving body (the schools forum).

52. However, non-executive elected members and those officers who are employed in their capacity as headteachers or teachers and those who directly manage a service which provides education to individual children and/or advice to schools on, for example, learning and behavioural matters are eligible to be members of schools forums.

53. In the case of non-executive elected members, they may be a schools member (by virtue of them being a school governor), an academies member or a non-schools member. As a non-schools member they may be well placed to fulfil the broader overview and scrutiny role they have within the local authority in general.

54. However, the inclusion of non-executive elected members and certain officers is not a requirement. Many schools forums do not have such members on them and it is for each local authority and schools forum to consider how best to ensure the right balance of school and non-school representation on the schools forum, taking into account their local circumstances and preferences.

The role of executive elected members

55. A schools forum needs to ensure that there are systems in place for executive members of the Council to be aware of its views on specific issues and, in particular, any decisions it takes in relation to the Schools Budget and individual budget shares.

56. Executive members with responsibility for education/children's services or resources of the local authority are able to participate in schools forum meetings. By doing so such elected members are able to contribute to the discussion and receive first-hand the views of the schools forum: it is clearly good practice for this to be the case and the regulations provide the right for executive members to attend and speak at schools forum meetings. However, there is no requirement for this to happen so at the very least there should be clear channels of communication between the schools forum and executive members. Communication may also be assisted if schools forum members attended relevant Cabinet meetings as members of the public, e.g. when the funding formula is decided.

Recording the composition of schools forums

57. Each local authority must make a written record of the composition of its schools forum detailing the numbers of schools members and by which group or sub-group they were elected, the number of academies members and the number of non-schools members, their terms of office, how they were chosen and whom they represent. This record should also indicate the term of office for schools and academies members. It

would be helpful if this were published on the schools forum website so schools and wider stakeholders can easily find who their representatives are.

Observers

58. The Regulations provide that the Secretary of State can appoint an observer to attend and speak at schools forum meetings, e.g. a representative from the Education Funding Agency (EFA). This allows a conduit for national policy to be discussed at a local level and provide access for schools forum to an additional support mechanism, e.g. where there are highly complex issues to resolve.

Participation of local authority officers at meetings

59. Only specific officers can speak at meetings of the schools forum. These officers are:

- Director of Children's Services or their representative
- Chief Financial Officer or their representative
- Any person invited by the schools forum to provide financial or technical advice
- Any person presenting a paper to the schools forum but their ability to speak is limited to the paper that they are presenting.

60. In the majority of cases schools forums are supported by a specific officer. In the course of their work, however, schools forums will be required to consider a whole range of issues and they may consider it appropriate that other officers attend for specific items of business. Where this is the case, the local authority should meet the schools forum's requests as far as possible.

Procedures

61. Many procedural matters are not prescribed in the regulations and are at the discretion either of the local authority or the schools forum itself. However, there are requirements in the regulations relating to:

- **Quorum:** A meeting is only quorate if 40% of the total membership is present (this excludes any observers, and it is 40% of the current membership excluding vacancies). If a meeting is inquorate it can proceed but it cannot legally take decisions (e.g. election of a Chair, or a decision relating to funding conferred by the funding regulations). An inquorate meeting can respond to local authority consultation, and give views to the local authority. It would normally be good practice for the local authority to take account of such 'unofficial' views, but it is not legally obliged to do so. In practice, the arrangements for meetings should be made to reduce the chance of a problem with the quorum. The quorum stipulation is in the regulations to help ensure the legitimacy of decisions;

- **Election of a Chair:** Under the Regulations, if the position of Chair falls vacant the schools forum must decide how long the term of office of the next Chair will be. This can be for any period, but the schools forum should consider carefully whether a period exceeding two years is sensible. A long period will also cause problems if the member elected as Chair has a term of office as a member which comes to an end before their term of office as Chair ends. The schools forum must elect a Chair from amongst its own members, so it is not possible to elect an independent Chair. In addition any elected member of the local authority or officer of the local authority who is a member of a schools forum may not hold the office of Chair. Schools forums can also appoint to a position of vice Chair to provide cover if the Chair is absent or the post vacant;
- **Voting procedures:** The Regulations provide that a schools forum may determine its own voting procedures save that voting on:
 - the funding formula is limited to schools members, academies members and PVI representatives
 - de-delegation will be limited to the specific primary and secondary phase of maintained schools members.
- **The powers which schools forums** have to take decisions on a range of funding matters increase the importance of clear procedures, e.g. decisions are made on a simple majority or the threshold to be met if higher. These procedures should take account of any use of working groups by the schools forum – for example a decision might be taken by voting to accept and adopt a report by a working group (see paragraph 65). As part of any voting procedure there should be clarity in the procedures for recording the outcome of a vote, and any resolutions a schools forum makes in relation to any vote taken;
- **Substitutes:** The local authority must make arrangements to enable substitutes to attend and vote (where appropriate) at schools forum meetings. This applies to schools members, academies members and non-schools members. The arrangements must be decided in consultation with schools forum members.
- **Defects and vacancies:** The Regulations provide that proceedings of the schools forum are not invalidated by defects in the election or appointment of any member, or the appointment of the Chair. Nor does the existence of any vacancy on the schools forum invalidate proceedings (see paragraph 61 on quorum).
- **Timing:** schools forums must meet at least four times a year

62. Where the regulations make no provision on a procedural matter, local discretion should be exercised. It is for the local authority to decide how far it wishes to establish rules for the schools forum to follow, in the form of standing orders. While it is entitled to do so, it is of course good practice to allow the schools forum to set its own rules so far as possible.

Public access

63. Schools forums are more than just consultative bodies. They also have an important role to play in approving certain proposals from their local authority and are therefore involved in the decision making process surrounding the use of public money at local level. As a result schools forums are required to be open to the public. Furthermore papers, agendas and minutes must be publicly available well in advance of each meeting. It is good practice that notification that the schools forum is a public meeting is included on the website and papers are published at least a week in advance. Local authorities should ensure that the websites are accessible and easy to find.

64. Some schools forums already operate very much along the lines of a local authority committee. This is perfectly legitimate and will provide a consistent framework for the running of meetings that are open to the public, and the publishing of papers and agendas well in advance of the meeting and minutes published promptly as required under Regulation 8(13) of the Schools Forum Regulations 2012.

Working groups

65. It is open to a schools forum to set up working groups of members to discuss specific issues, and to produce draft advice and decisions for the schools forum itself to consider. The groups can also include wider representation - for example, an early years reference group can represent all the different types of provider to consider the detail of the early years single funding formula. The reference group would then be able to give its considered view on the local authority's proposals to the schools forum. The schools forum should not delegate actual decisions or the finalisation of advice to a working group, as this may have the effect of excluding legitimate points of view.

Urgent business

66. It is good practice for the local authority to agree with its schools forum an urgency procedure to be followed when there is a genuine business need for a decision or formal view to be expressed by the schools forum, before the next scheduled meeting. The local authority may of course call an unscheduled meeting; but it may also wish to put in place alternative arrangements such as clearance by email correspondence or some other means. Such instances should be avoided so far as possible but are legitimate provided all members of the schools forum have an opportunity to participate, the logistics provide a reasonable opportunity for consideration and the local authority policy on data security is not compromised.

67. It is not legal for the Chair to take a decision on behalf of the schools forum, no matter how urgent the matter in question; but a schools forum may wish to put in place a procedure for the Chair to give the local authority a view on an urgent issue.

Resources of the schools forum

68. The costs of a schools forum fall in the centrally retained budget portion of the Schools Block of local authorities.

69. It is legitimate to charge the running costs of schools forums to this budget including any agreed and reasonable expenses for members attending meetings, the costs of producing and distributing papers and costs room hire and refreshments and for clerking of meetings. Beyond these costs some schools forums have a budget of their own to use for activities such as commissioning research or other reports. The [2014 School and Early Years Finance Regulations](#) provide that the level of resource devoted to running schools forums in 2015-16 is limited to 2014-15 levels unless the Secretary of State agrees an increase.

Section 2 – effective schools forums

Introduction

70. As the previous section outlined, local authorities have responsibility for establishing schools forums. They also have an ongoing responsibility to provide them with appropriate support, information and guidance in carrying out their functions and responsibilities.

71. The following outlines some aspects of what local authorities and schools forums should consider in ensuring that their schools forums are as effective as possible. The pace of academy conversions in particular means that this significant sector must be properly represented and feel that it is able to play a meaningful part in the discussions of the schools forum.

72. Central to the effectiveness or otherwise of a schools forum will be the relationship between it and its local authority. The local authority will have a significant influence on this: the support it provides; the resources it devotes and the weight it gives to the views of schools forums all contribute to the nature of the relationship. There are therefore a number of characteristics of this relationship that are particularly important:

- Partnership: Having a shared understanding of the priorities, issues and concerns of schools, academies and the local authority.
- Effective Support: The business of the schools forum is supported by the local authority in an efficient and professional manner.
- Openness: It is important that a schools forum feels it is receiving open, honest and objective advice from its local authority.
- Responsiveness: Local authorities should as far as possible be responsive to requests from their schools forums and their members. Schools forums themselves should also be aware of the resource implications of their requests.
- Strategic view: Members of schools forum should consider the needs of the whole of the educational community, rather than using their position on a schools forum to advance their own sectional or specific interests.
- Challenge and Scrutiny: schools forums may be asked to agree to proposals from their local authority that will have an effect on all schools and academies in the local area. The extent to which schools forums can scrutinise and challenge such proposals is an important aspect of their effectiveness.

73. The characteristics identified above are just some of the aspects that will contribute to an effective schools forum. The following provides more detail on some of the specific issues that local authorities and schools forums may wish to consider in thinking about their own arrangements.

Induction of new members

74. When new members join the schools forum appropriate induction materials should be provided. These might include material relating to the operation of the schools forum together with background information about the local and national school funding arrangements. Typically they might comprise:

- the constitution of the schools forum
- a list of members including contact details and their terms of office
- any locally agreed terms of reference explaining the relationship between the schools forum and the local authority
- copies of minutes of previous meetings
- the programme of schools forum meetings for the year
- the local schools forum web address

75. This Operational and Good Practice Guide, suitably supplemented by local material, should also be provided to new members on their appointment.

76. Where there is sufficient turnover of schools forum members in any particular year the local authority may wish to organise a one-off induction event to brief new members. Such an event would usefully include an outline of the role of the schools forum and the national funding arrangements for schools and local authorities. It might also include an explanation of the local funding formula and any proposals for review. The opportunity could also be taken to explain the main reporting requirements for school and local authority expenditure.

Training

77. Ideally schools forum members should be able to use some of the budget set aside for schools forum running costs for accessing relevant training activities. Some training will be provided by officers of the local authority but members may wish to attend national or regional events, the costs of which, where necessary, can be supported from the schools forum budget. Local and national bodies have a key role to play in developing the competencies of forum members.

78. Training will need to be provided in response to any changes in the role of the schools forum and national developments in respect of school funding.

Agenda setting

79. The process by which the agenda for a meeting or cycle of meetings is set is in many respects one of the key determinants of the effectiveness or otherwise of a schools forum.

80. The frequency and timing of meetings of the schools forum should be agreed in advance of each financial or academic year. In drawing up this cycle of meetings, in

consultation with the schools forum, the local authority should provide a clear overview of the key consultative and decision-making points in the school funding cycle. These will be drawn from a combination of national and local information and should inform the basic agenda items that each meeting needs to cover. For instance meetings will need to be scheduled at appropriate points to enable the schools forum to consider the outcomes of local consultations and national announcements.

81. Although the business of schools forums must be open and transparent, it is recognised that from time to time items of a confidential nature will need to be discussed. It is recommended that authorities apply the same principles that they apply to Council/Cabinet meetings when judging an item to be confidential and adopt similar practices for dealing with those reports in the meeting, e.g. placing them together at the end of the agenda.

Preparation for a schools forum meeting

82. It is vital that the schools forum is transparent, open and has clear communication lines to all of the members that are represented. This ensures the wider school family are aware of the business discussed, the impact on their setting and the reasons for the decisions.

83. The vast majority of a schools forum's business will be transacted on the basis of prepared papers. It is therefore important that these are concise, informative and produced in a timely and consistent manner. Recommendations should be clearly set out at the beginning of each report. It is also helpful if the front of the report confirms whether the report is for information or decision and who is eligible to vote where relevant.

84. It is good practice for the schools forum and local authority to agree a standard for papers. It is usual for papers to be dispatched at least one week prior to the meeting at which they will be discussed to allow members to consider them and if necessary canvass views from the group they are representing. Papers should be published on the local authority's website at this time to enable representations to be made to schools forum members.

85. Consistency in the presentation of papers also contributes to the effectiveness of meetings: it helps set the tone of meetings, facilitate the engagement of all members and signal the importance the local authority attaches to the work of the schools forum. Ideally such a standard should be agreed between the schools forum and local authority. The publishing of papers as a single pdf file is helpful as it saves time and avoids accessing multiple documents both in advance of, and during, the meeting. An Executive Summary of the reports can provide schools forum members and members of the public with an overview of the agenda and the decisions required.

86. The publishing of papers on a publicly available website well in advance of the meeting ensures that all interested parties are able to access papers. Some schools forums ensure that each represented group meets in the days immediately prior to the

schools forum meeting to ensure the agenda is discussed and schools forum members are properly briefed by the group they represent. Although on occasions it is inevitable that schools forums will receive late, or tabled reports it does create some difficulty for members as they will not have been able to seek the views of those they represent.

87. Schools forums can consider adopting a flexible arrangement for time immediately prior to the meeting. For example it could be used for training of new members, or as a drop-in session for members to ask items of clarification, or for members to meet without officers to discuss the agenda.

Chairing the schools forum

88. The Chair of a schools forum plays a key role in setting the tone, pace and overall dynamic of the schools forum. They should provide an environment within which all members are able to contribute fully to discussions and guide the schools forum to making well informed decisions.

89. The relationship between the Chair and the local authority is therefore vital. The Chair should be very clear on the substance of the agenda items, understand the issues involved and the decisions and/or actions that need to be taken in respect of School Forum business. It is good practice for there to be a pre-meeting between the senior officer of the local authority supporting the schools forum and the Chair of the schools forum to ensure that all the issues are clearly understood.

90. Equally, the Chair has the responsibility of representing the views of the schools forum back to the local authority: for instance, they should, where appropriate, take the initiative to make suggestions for improvements to the way the business is conducted, and, in exceptional cases and with support of the members of the schools forum take the view that they do not have sufficient information on which to base a decision and ask that an item is deferred until further information is available. However, in doing so, the Chair and schools forum should be fully aware of the consequences of deferral.

91. The independence of the schools forum is paramount. Enhancing the role of Chair to a paid position, rather than the reimbursement of reasonable expenses, could blur the lines of independence. Similarly, if the Chair undertakes significant work for the LA in another capacity, e.g. as an external consultant, they could be viewed as equivalent to an officer of the local authority.

92. Local authorities could consider if sharing contact details of the schools forum Chair with neighbouring authorities would be helpful for peer support and improving networking opportunities.

Clerking the schools forum

93. Clerking of a schools forum should be seen as more than just writing a note of the meeting. A good clerk provides an invaluable link between the members of the schools

forum, the Chair and the local authority. It is a role often undertaken by an employee of the local authority though we would recommend consideration is given to the use of an independent clerk.

94. Clerks should manage the logistics of the meeting in terms of ensuring dispatch of papers and producing a note from the meeting. In considering the style of meeting notes consideration should be given to making them intelligible enough for non-attendees to get a sense of the discussion as well as clearly indicating the conclusion and action agreed in relation to each agenda item. Verbatim reports of a schools forum's discussion, however, are unlikely to be very useful. Schools forums may consider whether a simple action log should be maintained by the clerk to ensure all action points agreed are followed up.

95. Beyond this a good clerk can:

- provide the route by which schools forum members can access further information and co-ordinate communication to schools forum members outside of the formal meeting cycle;
- respond to any queries about the business of the schools forum from headteachers, governors and others who are not on the schools forum themselves;
- be responsible for ensuring contact details of all members are up to date;
- maintain the list of members on the schools forum and advise on membership issues in general;
- assist with the co-ordination of nomination/election processes run by the constituent groups;
- keep the schools forum website up to date: e.g. by posting latest minutes and papers etc;
- monitor, on a regular basis, the schools forum and general Schools Funding section of the Department for Education (DfE) website or the gov.uk website; and arrange for the distribution of any relevant DfE information to schools forum members;
- if appropriate, provide technical advice in relation to the schools forum regulations and in relation to the operation of a schools forum's local constitution; and
- organise, operate and record any voting activity of the schools forum in line with the provisions of its local constitution.

96. Not all of these tasks may be able to be undertaken by the schools forum clerk. However, each one is important and there should be arrangements in place to ensure they are discharged adequately.

Good practice for schools forum meetings

97. Schools forums should ensure there is a clear debate of all agenda items. Whilst sub-group meetings are valuable in working through detailed issues, schools forums

should consider that the level of debate held at the schools forum meeting and recorded in the minutes will be the official reflection of the level of challenge and discussion on each issue.

98. The use of nameplates for schools forum members also showing which group they are representing can be helpful to members of the public and presenters of papers. In addition the use of coloured cards or coloured nameplates can be helpful when specific members of a schools forum are eligible to vote on specific items, e.g. de-delegation or changes to the funding formula.

99. Consultations with the schools forum are a key responsibility of a local authority, ranging from the funding formula to the letting of contracts. Each consultation will be different and depend on the subject being consulted on, but local authorities should consider the following factors as good practice for effective consultation:

- Plan and consult early
- Allow reasonable timescales for response (as Forum members may need to consult the groups they represent)
- An open and honest approach
- Fully inclusive
- Allow for ongoing dialogue
- Provide feedback
- Clear communications.

Meeting notes and recording of decisions

100. A vital part of the effective operation of a schools forum is to ensure that an accurate record of the meeting is taken. This must include the clear recording of votes where there are contrary views. Recommendations to, and decisions of, schools forums must be clearly set out.

101. Notes or minutes of each schools forum meeting should be produced and put on the website as soon after the meeting as possible to enable members and others to see the outcome of any discussions and decisions/votes. It is good practice to formally agree the accuracy of the note/minutes at a subsequent meeting but the publication of the draft minutes should not be delayed as a result.

102. In order to provide clarity about representation at each meeting, it is good practice for the minutes to record the group and/or subgroup that each member represents against their name.

Communication

103. Communication to the wider educational community of the discussions and debates of, and decisions made by, the schools forum is fundamental to their effective operation. The more schools and other stakeholders know about the proceedings of the

schools forum, the more their work will be an important and central part of the context of local educational funding. This is particularly important given the decision making role that the schools forum has. Local authorities should consider the operational differences between the types of stakeholders and plan their communications accordingly. For example ensuring effective communications across the PVI sector may be more difficult than with schools, who are more likely to have existing channels of communication e.g. headteacher meetings.

104. Each schools forum should therefore be clear what its channels of communication are. It is fundamental that each member of schools forum represents the views of the group or sub-group that they represent and that all those with an interest in funding work together to ensure that their views are taken into account. Therefore communications directly between members and those they represent is essential; professional associations and phase groups could be suitable channels. This will ensure that schools forum members have an ongoing dialogue with the constituents of their group or sub-group and are therefore well able to represent their views at schools forum meetings. However, the schools forum should also consider additional communication processes. These could include:

- drawing schools' attention to the fact that all its agenda, minutes and papers are publicly available on the local authority's website (this should include the publication of formula consultation documents);
- an annual report on the proceedings of the schools forum;
- attendance by the Chair, or other schools forum member, at other relevant consultative or management groups such as any capital working group; or senior management meetings of the Children's Services Department; or
- a brief email to all schools, early years providers and other stakeholders after each schools forum meeting informing them of the discussions and decisions with a link to the full papers and minutes for further information
- a schools forum newsletter can be a less formal and more interesting way of communicating forum business and raising the profile of the schools forum and its members.

News updates

105. Most, but not all, members of the schools forum will already be in receipt of regular information on school funding matters from the local authority and DfE. Other schools forum members should be copied into such information flows so that they can be kept abreast of developments between meetings.

106. Many local authorities have already established dedicated schools forum websites on which they post key information for schools forum members and other interested parties.



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