

# Briefing Paper

Subject: - Changes to Schools' Forum arrangements and amendment of Terms of Reference.

Date: - Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2013

Recipient: - Rotherham Schools' Forum

## Summary:

1. The Department for Education (DfE) has produced a school funding document outlining their rationale and principles which is in the public domain – “School funding reform – next steps towards a fairer system”.

Included in this document are improved Schools Forum arrangements.

2. Responses last year to the DfE consultations in April and July have shown that Schools' Forums are not consistent throughout local authorities.

3. In order for local decision making to operate in a consistently fair and effective way and in consultation with schools, there is need to secure greater confidence in Schools' Forums.

4. Changes have therefore been made to Schools' Forums arrangements so that they are in place to support decision-making for 2013-14 and these changes will ensure that Schools' Forum discussions are more focussed, that decisions are more transparent and that those most affected have a greater say.

## Background and details:

5. There will not be any changes to Schools' Forum powers for 2013- 14.

Schools' Forums regulations will be amended as follows:-

(i) Composition of the Forum should be compliant with the regulations and should reflect the pupil numbers expected to be in each category. At this stage it has been decided not to change the numbers/composition until we know which schools will be converting to Academy status.

(ii) Remove the requirement to have a minimum of 15 people on a Forum.

(iii) Restrict other local authority attendees from participating in meetings unless they are a Lead Member, DCS, DCS representative or are providing specific financial or technical advice (including presenting a paper to the Forum).

(iv) Give the Education Funding Agency (EFA) observer status at Schools' Forum meetings to support the local process and to provide a national perspective if members thought it helpful or if there were any concerns about the running of the Forum.

(v) Require local authorities to publish Forum papers, minutes and decisions promptly in a public area of their websites.

(vi) Requirement to hold public meetings.

(vii) Any regular communications from the authority to schools should also draw attention to forthcoming schools' forum meetings and agendas and the minutes of forum discussions.

(viii) Restrict the voting arrangements by allowing only schools members and the PVI members to vote on the funding formulae.

(ix) The regulations state that maintained primary schools, secondary schools and Academies should be represented on Forums in proportionate to the number of pupils in those types of schools.

## **Issues arising**

- Ensuring a balance of academy and non-academy members.
- Do we continue with a member from each Learning community or reduce the representation.
- Ensure appropriate membership of non-school representatives, i.e.
  - Private, voluntary & independent nursery providers
  - Diocesan representatives
  - 14-19 Partnership representative
  - Trade union representatives
- Ensure appropriate LA membership.