

SCHOOLS FORUM

Schools Forum Governance Arrangements

1. Purpose of the report

To undertake a review of Schools Forum governance arrangements with a view to making improvements.

2. Recommendation

That Schools Forum endorses the implementation of improvements suggested throughout the report and makes any suggestions it feels necessary.

3. Background

Schools Forum undertook a self-assessment exercise where some areas for improvement were identified:

- Training and starter pack
- Link to the website and availability of papers
- Election of members
- Voting procedure

Training and starter pack

At the moment there is no training or a starter pack available to Schools Forum members. This is something that could be developed and introduced. One suggestion is that training could be offered once a year (maybe immediately before the first meeting of the new academic year from 9am-10am). Such training could either be delivered by the Finance Officers and experienced members or it could be sourced outside, Schools Forum has a budget for its administration which could cover this expense.

A starter pack could include the statutory guidance, the Schools Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide, past copies of agendas and minutes and a copy of the forum's Constitution.

Link to the website and availability of papers

All agendas and minutes are published to the Council's website. However, it seems that some members are not sure where to find them. There is a need to make this information clearer, one option is to include the link to the website with the agenda papers to make it more visible.

Additionally, Schools Forum members are encouraged to:

- Forward the web link to their colleagues for information.
<https://wokingham.moderngov.co.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=162>
- Inform colleagues that they can sign up to email alerts for the publication of minutes and agendas
<https://wokingham.moderngov.co.uk/ielogon.aspx?lp=1&RPID=3621325&HPID=3621325&Forms=1&META=mgSubscribeLogon>

Election of Members

Each phase of education is responsible for appointing members to Schools Forum. The election process may occur at the headteachers federations or cluster meetings. It is

advisable that federations undertake an annual review of their representation in line with Schools Forum review of membership representation each summer.

Heads of secondary schools may choose to use the Secondary Heads Federation meetings to consider which schools become their representatives.

Primary schools may choose to use the primary school cluster groups to consider which schools become their representatives.

Academy members should write to their Trusts and seek the Trust's endorsement of their appointment to Schools Forum. The DfE guidelines to Schools Forum do not differentiate between the phases for Academy member representation. It would, though, be desirable that Trust Boards', in nominating their Schools Forum members, to take into account a member representation that reflected the number of pupils in the primary and secondary phases of the schools within their Trusts.

Voting procedure

Where voting is required at meetings, a show of hands has been used to determine the decision. Schools Forum can opt to continue with this system or it can introduce a recorded vote system. In a recorded vote system names are called out and each member votes in turn, with the clerk noting down the votes, the voting would be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. Schools Forum should consider:

- A) Retaining the current voting system; or
- B) Retaining the current voting system with the addition of minuting members' individual votes; or
- C) Move to the 'recorded vote' approach.

Members have requested that the attribution of votes should be noted on the agenda with the list of members and attendees.

Members have stated that reports should clearly indicate if the report is for 'noting' or if a decision is required. Going forward reports should clearly state one of the following options: to vote, to note, for information, or to consult. This information is to also be included in the forward plan and in the agenda front sheet.

Task and Finish Groups

Where necessary Task and Finish Groups will be formed in order to enable thorough discussions on the more complex issues with an expectation that the Task and Finish Groups will report back to Schools Forum. The Task and Finish Groups should be chaired by a member of Schools Forum and are likely to include expert officers from the Borough staff.

Expenses

Members are reminded that under the statutory guidance, School Forum members are entitled to claim for parking expenses related to their attendance to Forum meetings.

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