

Agenda Item 7

TITLE Schools Forum Membership Review 2023

FOR CONSIDERATION BY Schools Forum on 11 October 2023

WARD None Specific;

LEAD OFFICER Director, Children's Services - Helen Watson

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

A well proportioned membership will ensure a fair representation of schools in the Borough in Schools Forum, strengthening the decision making process.

RECOMMENDATION

That Schools Forum determines its membership to reflect recent changes in schools' status.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The report contains information about the changes that occurred since the last membership review and offers a proposal for a new membership structure.

Background

Schools Forum undertakes an annual review of its membership, usually at the beginning of each new academic year.

The last membership review took place on 6 July 2022, when Schools Forum decided to retain its current membership structure at that point in time. The current membership structure is as follows:

Maintained Primary Schools – 6 representatives
Maintained Secondary Schools – 1 representative
Academy Primary Schools – 3 representatives
Academy Secondary Schools – 6 representatives

Special Schools – 1 representative
PRU – 1 representative

Early Years – 2 representatives

WBC – 2 representatives

Post 16 Education – 1 representative

Analysis of Issues

Since the last membership review 4 schools converted to academy status, and a further 8 schools are due to convert in the next few months or in 2024.

Taking into account the total number of pupils per school (as per October 2022 Census):

- In the primary phase there has been an increase of 26% in the number of pupils in primary academy schools.
- 65% of all primary school pupils are attending primary academy schools (was 39% at the time of the last review).
- Most secondary schools in the borough are now academy schools, the remaining secondary maintained school is in the process of becoming an academy.

The guidance indicates that primary schools, secondary schools and academies must be broadly proportionately represented on Schools Forum, based on the total number of pupils registered at them.

The total number of places available in Schools Forum is 23, this number seems to work well and there is no indication that this should be changed. Based on the numbers it is suggested that the number of primary academy representatives be increased by around 25% or 4 members, and that the number of maintained primary school members be reduced by 3. The soon to be redundant secondary school place can be transferred to the primary phase - to a primary academy representative.

In respect to schools' members, the guidance states that there should be at least one headteacher and one governor representative in Schools Forum. Over the last few

years, the participation of governors in Schools Forum in Wokingham has diminished. With the resignation of Paul Miller, there are now no governor representatives on Schools Forum. Schools are urged to approach their governors to recruit volunteers with the relevant knowledge and experience to join Schools Forum.

In respect to the term of office, Schools Forum has historically opted to retain expertise and not limit membership to a specified time. Schools Forum can continue with this arrangement.

See:

Appendix 1 - the current membership list

Appendix 2 – the proposed new structure

Appendix 3 – the official guidance

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	n/a		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	n/a		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	n/a		

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

n/a

Cross-Council Implications

n/a

Public Sector Equality Duty

Please confirm that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken and if an equalities assessment has been completed or explain why an equalities assessment is not required.

n/a

Climate Emergency – *This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030*

Please state clearly what the impact of the decision being made would be on the Council's carbon neutral objective. n/a

List of Background Papers

n/a

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