

**Derbyshire Schools Forum – Review of Working Arrangements – Jan 2014****Schools Forum - February 12<sup>th</sup> 2014**

This document summarises the issues identified and proposed agreed actions following the meeting of the Forum working group on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2014. All references are to the DfE document “Schools Forum Operational and Good Practice Guide – October 2013”. N.B. In the table below, items marked as **agreed** by the working group are **recommendations** for the Schools Forum.

**Executive Summary – Schools Forum Structure**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Possible Issue for Derbyshire</b>	<b>Issues/agreed actions</b>
Membership – 16-19 provider representation	Representation needed under DfE regulations	Head of Services for Teenagers to seek nomination at next provider network meeting
Basis for Membership	Sector representation split between schools and academies – should be primary/secondary/academies	<b>Agreed</b> to retain status quo for 2014 and review in lead up to Forum nominations/elections Dec 2014.
Size of Forum	We have 41 full members (32 schools/9 non schools) – is this the right size? Is the Head/Governor balance correct?	Comparison with other sample LAs shows we are larger than others – Notts (20/7), Staffs (22/8), Leics (21/4) N’hants (25/4), Suffolk (16/6). <b>Agreed</b> to consider further but the Forum should certainly <u>not</u> increase in size
Other Membership	Any issues from members?	None identified

**Executive Summary – Schools Forums Powers and Responsibilities**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Possible Issue for Derbyshire</b>	<b>Issues/agreed actions</b>
Annual Financial Issues		
- Special Educational Needs	Need to consult annually	<b>Agreed:</b> build into 2014/15 programme
- PRU and education otherwise	Need to consult annually	“”
- Early Years Provision	Need to consult annually	“”
- Administration of central government grants	Need to consult annually	“”

## **Section 1 – Constitution and Procedural Issues**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Possible Issue for Derbyshire</b>	<b>Issues/agreed actions</b>
Terms of office	Fixed 4 year cycle – would phased elections be preferable?	<b>Agreed</b> to retain current fixed term as there will be some natural turnover anyway as staff/governors leave.
Nominations/Elections – Headteachers	None, letter to heads of peer group/heads to select preferences if an election is needed	No change required, elections successfully undertaken electronically.
Nominations/Elections – Governors	Letter to governors inviting nominations - <u>individual governors</u> vote if election needed	<b>Agreed</b> that future elections be via governing bodies rather than individual governors. This will help to reduce costs and make elections more efficient.

## **Section 2 – Effective Schools Forums**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Possible Issue for Derbyshire</b>	<b>Issues/agreed actions</b>
Does the Forum have a shared understanding of the priorities, issues and concerns of schools & academies?	Issues to be identified by Forum members	<p>Limited, therefore need to raise profile of Forum and its members and facilitate greater interaction between members and the communities they represent.</p> <p><b>Agreed:</b> Forum business to be reported routinely to Heads Forums/Area Heads meetings, improved induction for new members including use of more experienced members to act as mentors.</p> <p>Governor representation/contact details and work of Forum to be routinely publicised in Governor bulletin so issues can be shared.</p> <p>Greater understanding of role of Forum needed for schools.</p> <p>Improved information sharing via DCC website and Extranet is needed.</p>
Is the Business of the Forum conducted in an efficient manner?	As above	<b>Agreed:</b> routes for putting items on the agenda need to be clarified. Earlier production of papers on website and alerts to members of items posted on web.

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Does the Forum feel it receives open and honest advice from the Local Authority?	As above	Yes, but potential to use project groups on specific tasks where time/importance are appropriate to explore issues in more detail. <b>Agreed:</b> Forum to use groups on a limited basis.
Does the Forum feel fully able to scrutinise and challenge the local authority on specific proposals?	As above	Yes, but sometimes LA appears to have made decisions in advance of Schools Forum. <b>Agreed:</b> LA to review arrangements to ensure that Forum's views are taken into account as part of the decision making process in accordance with DfE regulations.
Induction of new members	Historically this has been limited	<b>Agreed:</b> Induction pack would be useful for. Also "launch event" in early 2015 post Schools Forum elections. This would possibly be facilitated by an earlier start to a regular timetable meeting.
Training budget	National/local events?	<b>Agreed:</b> That a small training budget ~£1k be set aside, expectation would be that learning from training would be reported to the next Schools Forum meeting.
Agenda setting	Dates agreed but work programme is ad hoc	<b>Agreed:</b> outline of dates and a provisional work programme will be produced for 2014/15 academic year.
Is the format of School Forum papers generally acceptable?	Issues to be identified by Forum members	<b>Agreed:</b> format of papers is generally very good and it would help if papers were placed on the website as soon as they are ready.
How might constituents' views be canvassed on issues?	Issues to be identified by Forum members	Greater use of governor bulletin to raise profile (see earlier)
Publishing information on website – is there a general awareness?	How can we raise the profile?	<b>Agreed:</b> LA to review potential to improve profile of Forum on Extranet and Derbyshire website.
Chair needs to understand substance of the agenda	Would a pre meeting be welcome/useful?	<b>Agreed:</b> only where judged necessary, communication by e-mail/telephone would be the starting point.
Chair of Schools Forum – peer support from other LAs	Would this help?	<b>Agreed:</b> potentially yes to share issues of common interest, LA to raise with near neighbour LAs.
Clerking of Schools – issues?	Issues to be identified by members	Clerking felt to be very good, no issues arising
Nameplates	Does the Forum want to use them?	<b>Agreed:</b> yes they would, particularly if meetings are held in Committee Room 1 which is felt to be a better venue anyway.

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Minutes – draft minutes to be published?	Not currently published until approved at following meeting	<b>Agreed:</b> should be published once Chair has agreed them, target is to publish within 7 working days of meeting.
News updates	Need to keep members informed of developments	<b>Agreed:</b> key documents to go on to Forum section of main Derbyshire website.

**Other ad hoc points**

Item	Possible Issue for Derbyshire	Issues/agreed actions
Number of meetings	Historically 4-5 per annum	Current frequency is fine.
Timing of meetings	Historically 6 p.m. at County Hall	Governors consider 6:00 p.m. is fine but would welcome views of other groups