

Schools Forum Sub Group Terms of Reference

Schools Forum

6th March 2012

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Parish / Wards Affected: All

Purpose

To consider draft Terms of Reference covering the scope and operation of the Schools Forum Sub Group.

Recommendation

The Schools Forum is asked to review and where appropriate suggest changes to the proposed terms of reference covering the scope and operation of the Schools Forum Sub Group.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Schools Forum established a standing Sub Group on 6th June 2006 with a brief to examine and report detailed financial issues to the Forum. The scope of work undertaken by the Sub Group involved working with the Local Authority (LA) on specific matters (e.g. the local funding formula, Standards Fund allocations, the £1m DSG overspend and Equal Pay) but terms of reference do not appear to have ever been formally agreed.
- 1.2 More recently the Sub Group has met to review more detailed financial matters relating to the management of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) such as the setting of the retained budget, monitoring of school balances and local formula issues. In view of recent enquiries relating to representation on the Schools Forum and the decision making processes relating to school funding, the LA has drafted terms of reference for the Sub Group which are presented below for consideration and approval. These proposals were shared with Sub Group Members at recent meetings and minor amendments have been incorporated.

2. Proposed Terms of Reference for the Schools Forum Sub Group

Role

- The role of the Sub Group is essentially to enable the LA to make better informed proposals and decisions which are in the best interests of Swindon pupils
- The Sub Group provides the LA with opportunities to share detailed information relating to school funding matters, thereby providing a degree of assurance to the Schools Forum that the LA is performing an effective role in managing the DSG.
- The Sub Group is advisory and has no decision making powers but is influential in assisting the LA in developing and assessing the implications of proposals which are more likely to be acceptable to the Schools Forum and the wider Swindon school community

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- The Sub-Group, by considering detailed funding issues and proposals, enables the Schools Forum to perform a more strategic role.

Membership and Attendance

- Any member of the Schools Forum is entitled to attend the Sub Group meetings and as a general guide 5 to 8 Forum members are required which broadly reflect the Schools and Non-Schools membership of the Forum
- Sub Group members attend meetings as representatives of their sectors and not the interests of their School/Academy or any other individual School/Academy
- Lobbying of Sub Group (and Forum) members by individual or groups of Schools/Academies should be discouraged other than via Sector Associations
- The requirement for the Sub Group to meet will, unless there are exceptional urgent circumstances, be reported in advance to the Schools Forum to ensure that the purpose and objective of each meeting is clear and a sufficient number of members can attend
- In exceptional circumstances, meetings will be arranged by the LA in consultation with the Chair of the Schools Forum and Chair of the Sub Group.
- Attendance at Sub Group meetings is on voluntary basis and expenses will not be reimbursed by the LA

Chairing and Operation of Meetings

- A chair of the Sub Group will be established by the Schools Forum and the LA will liaise with the Chair over agendas and meeting arrangements
- Meetings will generally be informal;
 - Where possible agenda papers will be circulated to Sub Group members in advance but may be tabled on the day of the meeting by relevant LA officers
 - As the Sub Group cannot make any decisions formal minutes will not generally be taken unless a record of agreed actions is required. Reference to Sub Group discussions will be incorporated into Schools Forum reports and the Chair of the Sub Group will also provide verbal updates at Forum meetings when matters are discussed.
- Information provided to Sub Group meetings is unlikely to contain confidential information but should be treated as such by Sub Group members

Frequency of Meetings

- The Sub Group does not operate with a set forward plan as meetings are generally responsive to national and local issues.

The Schools Forum is asked to review and where appropriate suggest changes to the above term of reference which can then be formally adopted.

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Alternative Options

The LA could continue working with the Sub Group under current arrangements but with an increasing interest in school funding matters together with the financial pressures arising from DSG cash freeze, establishing transparent terms of reference covering the Sub Group are strongly advised. The proposals do not seek to vary any aspect of the Sub Groups role or operation but will provide a formal confirmation of this.

Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- There are no financial implications arising from this report

Legal / Human Rights Implications

There are no direct legal or human rights implications arising from this report

Links to Corporate Plans and Policies

- Scheme for Financing Swindon Schools and the local fair funding formula.

Diversity Impact Assessments

- As no proposals are made in this report a DIA is not required. Sub Group meetings will however take place at facilities which accommodate any special needs that Officers or Sub Group members may have.

Consultees

The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

Background Papers and Appendices

None