

Meeting: Schools Forum

Date: 20th November 2017

Subject: Schools Forum and Technical Subgroup Membership

Report of: Deputy Director of Education and Transformation

Summary: The paper provides a review of the membership of the Schools Forum, terms of office of members and vacancies. The paper also provides an overview of current sub-groups, their purpose and remit as well as recommendations for review by the School Forum Members regarding their future purpose.

Contact Officer: Sue Harrison

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. Schools Forum to consider terms of office of current members, current vacancies, current structure and seek elections as appropriate**
- 2. Forum to consider proposed revision to technical subgroups including their purpose, remit and Chairs**

Background

The current constitution of the Central Bedfordshire Schools Forum states that the Forum will consist of 21 Members made up of 12 school members and 5 non-school members and 4 Academy representatives

As per guidance around Schools Forum membership, this is made up as follows: -

School Members (12)

- 2 Lower School Headteachers
- 2 Lower School Governors
- 1 Nursery School Headteacher
- 2 Middle School Headteachers
- 1 Middle School Governors
- 1 Upper School Headteachers
- 1 Upper School Governors
- 1 Special School Headteacher
- 1 Academy Lower School Representative
- 1 Academy Middle School Representative

2 Academy Upper School Representatives
1 PRU representative

Non School Members (5)

1 Roman Catholic Diocese Representative
1 Church of England Diocese Representative
1 Private, Voluntary or Independent sector Provider Representative
1 Local Authority 14-19 Partnership Representative
1 Trades Union Representative

Observer (non-voting)

- the Council's Executive Member for Children's Services

The constitution of the Forum states that members will stand for three years at which time elections will take place for school Members and nominations will be sought for the non-school Members. Should a resignation be tendered from the Forum, an election will be held for the vacancy which will ensure that the representational balance is maintained. Each representative group (Headteachers and Governors by phase) will be responsible for the method by which they elect and nominate school Member representatives.

Current Schools Forum Membership

The constitution and best practice guidance suggests membership of the school's forum should be reviewed annually. The table below provides an overview of current school forum members, including the type of school provision they represent, which technical subgroups (if any) they are currently supporting and the length of office they have served. Whilst our constitution states the forum comprises of 21 members, the current total members, including school, non-school & vacancies totals 19 members. This disparity is unclear and needs formal review.

The forum will note that alongside the current vacancy of the forum membership for Primary Academy representation, there are 5 forum members who have now served more than the three years of office stipulated in the Forum constitution. The guidance relating to School Forum composition has recently been updated and continues to stress the importance of any local Forum accurately reflecting the composition of local schools.

There have been a significant number (28) of new Headteacher appointments in Central Bedfordshire in 2017 which has significantly changed the make-up of Headteachers (and schools) across the educational area. There will also have likely been a number of changes in Governor appointments in the same period since elections were last held. It is therefore recommended that further elections take place after the January Forum, for both the current vacancy and positions which have been held over the 3-year term, as per the Forum constitution.

Schools Forum Membership as at 16 August 2017

School Members	Name	School Represented	Term of Office (start date as SF member)	Sub Group Member
Primary Maintained school Headteachers or representatives	Alexia Moyle	Greenleas Lower School	November 2016	
Primary Maintained school Headteachers or representatives	Paul Burrett	Studham C of E Lower School and Pre-school	June 2012	Growth Fund
Primary Maintained school Governors	Stephen Tiktin	Beaudesert Lower School, St Georges Lower School	December 2009	Early Years
Primary Maintained school Governors	Sue Howley MBE	Fairfield Park Lower School	December 2009	High Needs Growth Fund
Nursery Headteacher	Leigh Davies	Willow Nursery School	September 2016	
Secondary Maintained Headteachers	David Brandon-Bravo	Parkfields Middle School	November 2010	High Needs
Secondary Maintained Headteachers	Karen Hayward	Sandy Upper School	18 January 2016	Growth Fund
Special School Headteacher	Lisa Leonard	The Chiltern School	18 September 2015	High Needs
Primary Academy Representatives	Ali Brabner	Cranfield Cof E Academy	June 2015	High Needs Growth Fund
Primary Academy Representatives (Governor, Headteacher or representative)	Vacancy			
Academy Secondary (Governor)	John Street	Etonbury Academy	June 2012	High Needs
Academy Upper School Rep (Headteacher)	Oliver Button	Queensbury Academy	March 2017	High Needs
Academy of Central Bedfordshire Rep (Executive Headteacher)	Pete Cohen	Academy of Central Bedfordshire	September 2016	High Needs
Special Academy Rep (Executive	Pete Cohen	Weatherfield Academy and	September 2016	

Headteacher – Oak Bank School)		Oak Bank School (Academy)		
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Non School Members			
Roman Catholic Diocese Representative	Mary Morris		January 2014
Church of England Diocese Representative	Paul Burrett		January 2014
Early Years Private, Voluntary or Independent (PVI) Provider Representative	Ali Challis	Clever Kidz	November 2016
Post-16 Education Representative	Sarah Mortimer	Central Bedfordshire College	January 2014
Trade Union Representative	Martin Foster	GMB Branch Secretary	March 2012

Other attendees who are permitted to contribute to a Schools Forum meeting*

- An observer appointed by the Secretary of State
- The Chief Financial Officer
- The Director of Children’s Services
- Officers providing financial and technical advise to Schools Forum
- The Executive Member for Children’s Services
- Presenters (restricted to the paper they are presenting)
- The Executive Member with responsibility for Resources

Constitution and Forum Terms of Reference

Since the last Schools Forum, the Schools Forum Operational and good practice guide (October 17) has been updated and will have a bearing on the current constitution of Central Bedfordshire's School Forum.

Our current constitution, for example, suggests a Forum meeting will be quorate if 7 of the members are present, however the Schools Forum operational guide states that a meeting will only be quorate if 40% of the current membership (excluding vacancies and observers) are present, which according to our total forum membership would be 8.4 members. There have been other changes in the recent Operational guidance that are not as yet fully reflected in our terms of reference and local constitution.

It is therefore recommended that a more in-depth review of the current constitution takes place, including any proposed updates to the constitution by the next Schools Forum meeting on January, for review and sign off.

Technical Subgroups

There are currently three technical subgroups operating in Central Bedfordshire: -

- Early Years
- High Needs and
- Growth Fund

In addition, there is also an 'Early Years Reference Group'. The Early Years Reference Group had met for many years and includes a wide range of representatives from the Early Years Sector to discuss the emerging policy changes or commissioning changes relating to Early Years. This has included the 2-year offer and revised 30-hour entitlement.

The creation of an additional Early Years Technical Subgroup has created a duplication of time, personnel and debate which is not sensible given current resources and capacity of education colleagues.

It is open to a local Forum to set up any 'working groups' of members to discuss specific issues locally. There is limited guidance around such working groups and their purpose, membership and requirements are not covered by any national guidelines, with the exception of the requirement that *'the schools forum should not delegate actual decisions or the finalisation of advice to a working group.'*

In most local authorities that have such groups, they are chaired by a local authority representative and are designed to engage 'technical expertise' (namely Headteachers or other similar education professionals) in working through changes to guidance, funding or policy relating to one of the three areas mentioned above (high needs, growth and early years).

It is also important that the forum ensures that the oversight of such groups is not seen as having the potential for any 'conflict of interest'. Therefore, where specific

schools or services may be receiving funding from the DSG, it is proposed they should not chair a subgroup that is involved in supporting decisions around this.

Membership for such groups is not restricted to the membership of the Schools Forum, though a link to the Forum is of course important in terms of context, decision making and feedback. In addition, it is important that such working groups are manageable in terms of size if they are to effectively work through key issues and support the local authority in developing recommendations for the Forum.

Given the significant number of new Headteachers in the local education area, there is a unique opportunity in refreshing and re-framing any technical subgroups that the Forum believes are necessary, to secure broader engagement in some of the issues the forum will be grasping with over the coming months and years.

Summary and Recommendations

The schools, forum constitution and best practice guidance recommends an annual review of membership. Our local constitution also states that elections should take place after members have served a term of 3 years or more.

The current overall membership of the Forum currently allows for more than one representative for several of our settings, providing the Forum with the opportunity of considering the overall size as it seeks to consider elections to consider broadening out membership to new Headteachers and governors.

There are also important considerations in communication of Forum business, particularly given the large number of new Heads in Central Bedfordshire.

Forum members need to also consider how they are feeding back updates and activities from the Forum to colleagues in their relevant sectors as well as bringing forward comments or queries from other Headteacher or Governor colleagues to be raised at the forum.

It is therefore recommended that: -

- A more detailed review of the current constitution and terms of reference takes place against the updated operational and good practice guide to ensure it is fully up to date with most recent guidance
- The Forum considers the size and make-up of the overall Forum as part of this review
- Elections take place in the new year, immediately following this review, to fill the current vacancy and for posts where members have served more than 3 years in office
- Consideration is given to communication briefings, including regular newsletters to schools and Forum members are asked regularly how they are and have fed back information to the other schools they represent.

There are a number of key issues that the Schools Forum and wider educational landscape are currently working through in Central Bedfordshire. Technical subgroups can play an important role in helping to generate ideas and recommendations for the forum in relation to these issues. However there appears to

currently be a lack of clarity locally regarding the purpose and oversight of such groups.

It is recommended that the Forum considers how many subgroups it needs to fulfil its work programme over the coming year. It is suggested the forum considers having two regular working groups for the remainder of the academic year and reviews progress in June 2018. Indicative terms of reference for these groups are suggested below, for the Forum to consider further.

Instead of a standalone Growth Fund subgroup, it is proposed a review meeting takes place of in 2018, to review this year's growth allocations and recommendations for the future. Nearer the time, the Forum could suggest membership and open this out further to other schools as required.

Proposed current groups would be: -

High Needs Technical Subgroup

Purpose

- To review current spend of the HN Block, generating ideas and suggestions to ensure sustainable spend in future years
- To oversee banding changes for children with SEND, to create greater consistency and focus on needs. To support the development of an engagement and implementation plan around banding changes and actively support the roll out once banding is agreed
- To oversee the future provision needs for children with SEN and associated costs that could impact on the Schools Forum

Membership

- Representatives from each of the local SEN Schools
- Representatives from two of the current units attached to mainstream schools
- Post 16 representative
- Representatives from the LA SEND service
- Governor Representative as required

Chair

Recommend Leo Jones, Deputy Director of Education and Transformation

Vice Chair – Head of SEND

Early Years Reference Group

Purpose

- To advise and comment on areas of work relating to early years education and childcare.
- As a sub-group of the Schools forum, the group will provide recommendations to the Forum where required.
- The group will consider aspects of Early Years Funding including relevant aspects of the Early Years National Funding Formula, along with other technical aspects of Early Years work such as revisions to the Local Agreement, new Ofsted Frameworks, and new government initiatives impacting the sector when they arise.

Membership

- Representatives from the Schools Forum
- Private, Voluntary and Independent Providers of Early Years and Childcare
- Primary and Lower schools with Early Years/nursery units
- Maintained Nursery Schools.

Chair

- The group will be supported by members of staff from the Child Poverty and Early Intervention Service. (CPEI)
- The group will be chaired by either the Head of Service (Child Poverty and Early Intervention) or the Childcare and Early Years Team Manager.

It is recommended that the Early Years Technical Subgroup is disbanded, but key debate and issues are covered in the Early Years Reference Group with regular reports to the forum by the Chair, as per the work programme.