

## CONSTITUTION OF THE WEST BERKSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM

### **Background**

1. The West Berkshire Schools Forum (hereafter referred to as the “the Forum”).
2. The requirement to establish a schools forum comes from the Education Act 2002. The main purpose of the Forum is to consider aspects of the relationship between schools and the local authority relating to financial matters.
3. The Forum is a decision making and consultative body in relation to matters concerning schools' budgets as defined in the School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2012, the Schools Forum Regulations 2012 and the School Budget Shares (Prescribed Purposes) (England) 2002. The Schools Forum Regulations 2012 govern the composition, constitution and procedures of Schools' Forums.<sup>1</sup>

This document is divided into 3 sections:

- A. Terms of Reference of the West Berkshire Schools' Forum
- B. Membership of the West Berkshire Schools' Forum
- C. Operating Conventions of the West Berkshire Schools' Forum

### **A. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE FORUM**

#### **Status of the Forum**

The Forum is established in accordance with Sections 47(1) 47A of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012.

#### **Annual Consultation on Financial Issues**

The authority must consult the Schools Forum annually in respect of the authority's functions relating to the schools budget including:

- Arrangements for the education of pupils with special educational needs
- Arrangements for the use of Pupil Referral Units and the education of children otherwise than at school
- Arrangements for early years provision
- Administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants paid to the schools via the authority

#### **Consultation / Decisions on School Funding**

<sup>1</sup> These Regulations can be accessed at:  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/financialmanagement/schoolsrevenuefunding/schoolsforums/a00213728/schools-forums-england-regs-2012>

Consultation on school funding formula: on any proposed changes in relation to the factors or criteria used to distribute school budget shares and the financial effect of such changes.

- The allocation of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) including distribution between phases.
- To agree the amount of expenditure the local authority can retain from the school budget.
- Decision on the de-delegation of allowable central budgets by the schools representatives of the relevant phase on behalf of all the schools they represent.
- Prospective revisions to the authority's Scheme for Financing Schools.
- Oversee and agree the operation of the School Balance Control Mechanism
- Any other matter concerning the funding of schools as the Forum sees fit

The Forum should, as soon as reasonable possible, inform the governing bodies of schools of all consultations carried out.

### **Consultation on Contracts**

The authority must consult the Schools' Forum on the terms of any proposed contract for supplies or services (being a contract paid or to be paid out of the authority's school budget (a) where the estimated value of the proposed contract is not less than the threshold which applies to the authority for that proposed contract pursuant to the regulation 8 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006(b) at least one month prior to the issue of invitations to tender.

## **B. MEMBERSHIP OF THE FORUM**

### **Composition**

Schools' Forums regulations 2012 state that the primary schools, secondary schools and Academies must be broadly proportionately represented on the forum having regard to the total number of the registered pupils. The proportionality of the membership will be reviewed annually so that elections if required can be held by the end of the Summer term ready for the new academic year.

The Forum shall in total comprise of 24 members being 19 school members (including Academies) and 5 non school members. The school members shall be Headteachers, Governors or Early Years representatives drawn from the schools / partnerships in the West Berkshire Local Authority area. The Primary and Secondary Headteacher members groups may also include, at the Local Authority's discretion, representatives of Headteachers; senior members of staff, such as School Business Managers.

### **School Members**

The current number of representatives in each phase is as follows:

- a) Primary Headteachers or their Representative**  
8 representatives from primary schools of which at least 4 must be Headteachers, 3 Governors and 1 other, which can include a School Business Manager.

- b) Secondary Headteachers or their Representative**  
3 representatives from secondary schools of which at least 2 must be Headteachers and 1 Governor.
- c) Special School Representatives**  
1 representative from the special schools.
- d) Nursery School Representatives**  
1 representative from the nursery schools.
- e) Academy Headteachers or their Representative**  
5 representatives from the Academies, as elected by the proprietors of the Academies, of which at least 2 must be Headteachers, 2 Governors and 1 other, which can include a School Business Manager.
- f) Pupil Referral Unit Headteachers or their Representative**  
1 representative from the Pupil Referral Units.

### **Election of Schools Members**

The primary school and secondary school representatives shall be elected by their respective Heads Forum.

Academy representatives shall be elected by the Academies proprietors.

Governors shall be elected by the Governors Forum.

The special school representative shall be elected by mutual agreement between the two special schools.

The nursery school representative shall be elected by mutual agreement between the two nursery schools.

The pupil referral unit representative shall be elected by mutual consent between the pupil referral units.

Support can be requested by Heads Forums or Governors Forum to help manage their election process. The Clerk of the Schools' Forum must make a record of the process by which the constituents of each group elect their nominees to the Forum. An election scheme must take into account the following factors:

- The process for collecting names of those wishing to stand for election.
- The timescale for notifying all constituents of the election and those standing.
- The arrangements for dispatching and receiving ballots.
- The arrangements for counting and publicising the results.
- Any arrangements for unusual circumstances, such as only one candidate standing in an election or where there is a tie between two or more candidates.
- Whether existing members can stand for re-election.

If an election does not take place by any date set by the Authority or any such election results in a tie between two or more candidates the Authority will appoint the schools member.

### **Non-School Members**

In addition to the 19 school members a representative of the following groups will have full voting rights within the Forum except for voting on the funding formulae where only the Early Years PVI Provider representative can vote:

- Roman Catholic Diocese
- Church of England Diocese
- Trade Union
- Early Years PVI Provider
- 14 -19 Partnership

The representative will be elected by their group and the record of the appointment process will be held by the Clerk of the Schools' Forum.

### **Substitute Members**

Representative groups may nominate permanent substitutes who have sufficient experience and knowledge of schools funding to attend meetings.

and/or

A stand-in substitute who attends as a full voting member if a headteacher or permanent substitute is unavailable. Stand-in substitutes may attend some meetings as an observer to gain an insight into the work of the Forum.

The clerk must be notified writing 24hours before the start of the meeting that a substitution will be required. Substitute members will have full voting rights when taking the place of the substantive member for whom they are the designated substitute.

### **Participation of Observers**

Observers shall be invited to attend Forum meetings. Observers may participate in the debate but will not have voting rights should any business of the Forum require a vote. The following groups shall be asked if they would like to nominate an observer (and a named substitute) to the Forum:

- The Education Funding Agency (EFA)

### **Council Officers and Elected Members**

Officers may attend and speak at the Forum meetings in an advisory capacity only. The following or their representatives will be invited to attend the Forum meetings:

- Corporate Director Communities or their representative
- Head of Finance or their representative
- Children & Young People Portfolio Holder
- Children & Young People Shadow Portfolio Holder
- Finance Portfolio Holder
- Clerk to the Schools' Forum

**Terms of Office**

The term of office for members of the Forum is three years. The same members can be reappointed providing they are re-elected by the group that they represent. This also applies to any permanent substitutes.

As well as the term of office coming to an end, a schools member ceases to be a member of the Schools' Forum if he or she resigns from the Forum, giving at least one month's written notice, or no longer occupies the office which he or she was nominated to represent. An election should be held within the outgoing members electing group to nominate a successor. The Clerk will then inform the Forum members of the result of the election within one month.

**C. OPERATING CONVENTIONS OF THE WEST BERKSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM****Ordinary Meetings**

An ordinary meeting of the Forum shall be held, at a minimum, four times a year.

**Administration of Meetings**

Meetings of the Forum shall be convened by the Local Authority, who will arrange the clerking and recording of meetings. The cycle of annual meetings are based on the financial year. All the meeting dates for the next financial year are set by the end of March every year.

Items for consideration by the Forum shall be submitted to the Clerk no later than 10 working days prior to the meeting. The agenda and working papers should be circulated a week in advance of the meeting date. Every effort should be made to circulate minutes to Forum members within 10 working days of the meeting.

**The Chair and Vice Chair**

The Chair and Vice-Chair shall be elected from within the membership of the Schools Forum (but may not be either an elected member or an officer of the local authority).

**Quorum**

The Forum shall be quorate if at least 40% of the total membership is present (this excludes observers and vacancies). If the Forum is not quorate the meeting can proceed and the members present can give advice to the local authority, but the authority is not obliged to take that advice into consideration. Decisions on the schools budgets may not be taken unless 40% of the school members (Headteachers and Governors) are present.

**Voting**

Each member shall only have one vote. Voting shall be by show of hands. If there are equal numbers of votes for and against, the Chair will have a second or casting vote. There will be no restriction on how the Chair chooses to exercise a casting vote. When the vote is on the schools funding formula only the schools members and the Early Years Representative are eligible to vote.

**Sub-Committees and Working Groups**

The Forum may have sub-committees or working groups. The Forum shall receive reports from the sub-committees or working groups to approve formally.

### **Declaration of Interest**

Any member of the Forum who has an interest in any proposal beyond the generality of the group that they represent or in which they might have a personal or prejudicial interest shall declare the interest at the beginning of the relevant item. The member can explain any issues to the meeting and then must leave the meeting until the item has finished. The member cannot vote on that item.

Where it is clear that a decision in which a member has an interest is likely to arise at a particular meeting, the meeting concerned may invite a substitute member (with no interest to declare) in accordance with the constitution to attend the meeting in their place. Elected members are subject to the governance of the Council's Code of Conduct.

### **Status of Reports**

All report authors will be responsible for informing the clerk in advance of the status of reports to be included in the agenda i.e. confidential or non-confidential.

### **Expenses**

The Local Authority shall maintain a budget for the reimbursement of all reasonable expenses relating to the operation of the Forum and charge these expenses to the Schools Budget. The Local Authority shall reimburse expenses of members of the Forum when members submit appropriate claims, in connection with attendance at the meetings. Supply cover should only be claimed when it has been necessary to employ a supply cover teacher to enable the Headteacher to attend the Forum.

### **Interpretation of the Constitution**

The Chair or person residing at the meeting shall be the final arbiter regarding the interpretation of the Forum's constitution. The constitution shall be interpreted in conjunction with the relevant provisions contained in the legislation relating to the Forum's proceedings. The requirements of legislation will prevail in the event of there being any inconsistency between the legislation and the constitution.

### **Amendment of the Constitution**

With the exception of matters subject to legislative provision or approval by the authority, the Forum may vary its constitution by a simple majority vote by the members provided that prior notice of the nature of the proposed variation is made and included on the agenda for the meeting.

### **Publicity relating to the Schools Forum**

The Schools Forum is a public meeting and the Local Authority is responsible for putting the Schools' Forum papers, minutes and decisions promptly on the West Berkshire Council website and generally draw schools attention to forthcoming Schools' Forum meetings and agendas and the minutes of forum discussions.