

**TO: SCHOOLS FORUM**  
**DATE: 28 NOVEMBER 2013**

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**SCHOOLS FORUM: OPERATIONAL AND GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE**  
**(Director of Children, Young People & Learning)**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report presents the Schools Forum with the latest version of the Department for Education's (DfE) *Schools Forum: Operational and Good Practice Guidance*. Agreement is sought to a small number of changes and also the identification by members of the Forum of any other changes that may be beneficial.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **The changes proposed to the operational arrangements for the Schools Forum as set out in paragraph 5.5 are AGREED;**
- 2.2 **That members of the Forum AGREE any other changes they wish to be made.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is appropriate for the Schools Forum to be aware of, and where relevant, comment on these matters.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 Not applicable.

**5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Purpose

- 5.1 The DfE guide is designed to provide members of Schools Forums, local authority officers and elected members with advice and information on good practice in relation to the operation of Schools Forums.
- 5.2 The guide draws on the experience and knowledge of Schools Forum members, local authority members and officers and the Department and its partners. Other than where it is describing requirements set out in the Schools Forum Regulations 2012 it is not designed to be prescriptive – what is good practice in one Schools Forum may not be appropriate in another, given the diverse circumstances of local areas. The guide is intended to stimulate debate within Schools Forums and contribute to their ongoing development.
- 5.3 The guide has been the subject of consultation with a wide variety of partners, in particular, members of DfE Schools and Academies Funding Group, made up of

representatives from central and local government, teaching associations, unions representing support staff as well as organisations representing academies and governors.

5.4 The guide can be found at Annex 1.

#### Local context

5.5 A review by officers of the latest guidance has identified the following areas where changes are considered beneficial and relatively straightforward to implement:

- Election of a non-schools member to represent 16-19 providers. This is a new requirement, expected to be effective from January 2014. Relevant providers will be contacted in the new year to arrange the election.
- Improve the flow of information to governing bodies on the outcomes of consultations with the Schools Forum in respect of contracts to be funded from the Schools Budget and other financial issues. This is a Schools Forum responsibility and the proposal is for the Council to email copies of the agenda for each meeting, and the subsequent minutes setting out decisions to head teachers for onward reporting to relevant governor meetings.
- Some corrections are required to budgets that should be de-delegated, rather than centrally managed, and these changes were set out on the funding consultation sent to all schools in September. It relates to funds for premature retirement / dismissal cost, support to new, amalgamating or closing schools, exceptional costs in primary schools and checks on pupil eligibility to a free school meal.
- Improvements to induction of new members to ensure appropriate background information are made available in a timelier manner.
- Improvements in communications to non-school partners, in particular private, voluntary and independent sector providers of early years childcare and education. This will be done through emailing minutes and agenda items of the Forum to all providers.

5.6 All other aspects of the local operation of the Bracknell Forest Schools Forum are considered to be compliant with Regulations and representative of good practice. However, Forum Members are invited to make any further suggestions for improvement.

#### Conclusion

5.7 Overall, the Bracknell Forest Schools Forum operates along the best practise model described by the DfE in the latest (DfE) *Schools Forum: Operational and Good Practice Guidance*. There are a small number of areas for improvement that have been identified and are straightforward to implement and these will be introduced over the coming months.

## **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

#### Borough Solicitor

6.1 The relevant legal provisions are addressed within the main body of the report.

### Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The Borough Treasurer is satisfied that no significant financial implications arise from this report.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 There are no specific impact assessments arising from this report.

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 There are no specific strategic risk management issues arising from this report

### Other Officers

- 6.5 There are no issues arising from this report that are relevant to other officers.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

### Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 None. For consultation with the Schools Forum only.

### Background Papers

Schools Forums: operational and good practice guide – October 2013 version  
From the DfE

#### Contact for further information

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