

TO: SCHOOLS FORUM
DATE: 22 OCTOBER 2015

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* and outlines a small number of changes that may be beneficial. To gather comprehensive views from individual Schools Forum members, the report also proposes the completion of the accompanying self-assessment toolkit, in order for the replies to be considered when changes can be agreed at the next meeting.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the improvements identified to the operational arrangements for the Schools Forum as set out in paragraph 5.5 are NOTED;**
- 2.2 **That members of the Forum AGREE to the completion of the self-assessment toolkit, as set out at Annex 4;**
- 2.3 **That the Forum AGREES that any final changes to operational arrangements are determined at the next meeting, taking account of responses contained on the completed self-assessment returns.**

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 None.

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. The latest version was released in March 2015, replacing the October 2013 issue, with no significant changes.
- 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. Complementary documents *Schools Forum Powers and Responsibilities 2015 to 2016* and *Schools Forum Structure* can be found at Annexes 2 and 3 respectively.

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:
- Improve the flow of information to governing bodies, including on the outcomes of consultations with the Schools Forum, such as those in respect of contracts to be funded from the Schools Budget and other financial issues.
 - 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.
- 5.6 All other aspects of the local operation of the Bracknell Forest Schools Forum are considered appropriate and representative of good practice. However, in order to gather views from all Forum Members, it is proposed that the DfE self-assessment toolkit, as attached at Annex 4, is completed and returned by 20 November. The outcomes and any proposed changes to arrangements will then be reported to the Forum for a decision at the 10 December meeting.

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

None

Contact for further information

David Watkins, Chief Officer: SR&EI

(01344 354061)

david.watkins@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Paul Clark, Head of Departmental Finance

(01344 354054)

<mailto:paul.clark@bracknell-forest.gov.uk>

Doc. Ref

G:\Executive\Schools Forum\73) 151022\Operational and good practice guide 2015.doc