

SLOUGH SCHOOLS FORUM
4 July 2012

Consultation on changes to the Schools Forums regulations 2010
(Director of Education & Children's Services)

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Schools Forum of proposed changes to Schools Forum regulations and provide an opportunity for members to respond with comments.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Schools Forum notes the proposed changes.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Schools Forum is required to operate in accordance with regulations so it is appropriate for Schools Forum to be aware of proposed changes.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 The school funding reform changes published on 26 March 2012 referred to improved Schools Forum arrangements and the need for local decision making to operate in a consistently fair and effective way and in consultation with schools and academies. The Education Funding Agency (EFA) has now reviewed the legislation relating to Schools Forums and is proposing to revoke and replace the Schools Forum Regulations 2010. Proposed new draft regulations were published on 13 June which are consistent with decisions the DfE have already announced.
- 5.2 For 2013-14 the DfE have said that they will take the following steps to amend the Schools Forums Regulations:
- Remove the requirement to have a minimum of 15 people on a Forum,
 - Restrict other local authority attendees from participating in meetings unless they are a relevant Lead member, Director of

Children's Services (or their representative), a Chief Finance Officer (or their representative), or are providing specific financial or technical advice (including presenting a paper to the Forum),

- Restrict the voting arrangements by allowing (a) only schools and academy members (and the private, voluntary and independent sector (PVI) members) to vote on the funding formulae and (b) only relevant, maintained school members to vote on items which will be subject to de-delegation,
- Require local authorities to publish Forum papers, minutes and decisions promptly on their websites, and
- Require Forums to hold public meetings, as is the case with other Council Committees.

5.3 The EFA will also be given observer status at Schools Forum meetings with the right to participate in discussions. This will enable the EFA to support the local process and to provide a national perspective.

5.4 As a result of other funding changes, DfE also propose to:

- Include Pupil Referral Units as a separate group among schools members, to reflect their receipt of delegated budgets from April 2013, and
- Remove the requirement for local authorities to consult schools forums annually about arrangements for free school meals and insurance as these are to be allocated through the formula in future.

5.5 In summary:

- Regulations 3 to 8 provide for the constitution of a schools forum, including the election of schools members, the election or selection of academy members and the appointment of non-schools members to the schools forum, their meetings and proceedings.
- Regulations 9 to 11 require the authority to consult their schools forum before entering into certain types of contract and annually in relation to a range of financial issues and the governing bodies of schools maintained by them to be informed of any such consultation.
- Regulations 12 and 13 require the authority to pay the expenses of their schools forum out of the schools budget and the reasonable expenses of its members.

5.6 The DfE did consult on the future role of forums in the summer of last year and announced decisions in March 2012. The proposed new draft regulations give effect to and take account of these decisions. In addition, the aim is for the regulations to be in force by early October 2012. As a result, the DfE has set a four week consultation period and have asked for comments to be returned by 11 July 2012 at the latest.

6 Attached at Appendix A is an executive summary produced by the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) highlighting the results of a best practice review of the role of schools forums.

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

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The relevant legal provisions are contained within the main body of this report.

Section 151 Officer – Strategic Director of Resources

- 6.2 The financial implications of the report are outlined in the supporting information.

Access Implications

- 6.3 There are no access implications.

7 **CONSULTATION**

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 None.

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Not applicable.

Representations Received

- 7.3 Not applicable.

Background Papers

Draft Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012.

Contact for further information

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