

Isle of Wight Schools Forum

Terms of Reference

Background

The Schools Forum is an independent statutory body who have the responsibility for oversight and accountability to the Council for the Direct Schools Grant (DSG) element of the budget. Changes by the DfE in the financial arrangement of the school's budget from April 2006 and the Education Act 2006 have substantially increased the importance and accountability role of the Forum. Members of the Forum play a key role in the performance management and value for money use of the school's budget, as well as determining the areas for allocation of any headroom in the DSG after the minimum funding guarantee is met in each financial year.

The Forum is a public body and its meetings, as with those of the Council, are open to the public. There are usually some six to eight meetings per year on a broadly half termly cycle but with an increased frequency around the annual time of budget setting for both the Council and schools. Other business can be carried out through working groups and the Forum is supported by officers and an administrative clerk. Membership of the Forum is for a maximum of a four year term.

Members of the Forum represent their phase and the wider school or cluster view, not an individual school. The school's membership is by a mix of headteachers and members of governing bodies. With the exception of representation from the Dioceses, Elected Members, LLSC and special schools; membership is by phase.

1. Membership:

- a. The Schools Forum shall have a minimum membership of 15.
- b. Schools Forum must contain representatives primary and secondary, the numbers of members in each group should be proportionate to the ratio of pupils in each phase. Beyond this, Schools Forums must also include representatives of special schools and nursery schools.
- c. Within the membership of 15, there shall be 10 school representatives:
 - (i) 4 representatives of the Primary phase
 - i. 4 representatives of the High phase
 - ii. 2 representatives of the Special phase
- d. Each of the phase representatives shall be comprised of school governors (to be nominated and elected by governors in that sector) and headteachers.
- e. Headteacher representatives shall be elected by colleagues.
- f. Non school members shall be nominated by the Church of England diocese of Portsmouth, the Catholic diocese of Portsmouth, and the Isle of Wight Local Education Authority (LA).
- g. Non school members may number no more than a third of a forum's total membership (excluding observers).
- h. Within the membership, there shall be 4 non school representatives:
 - i. 1 representative of the Church of England Diocese
 - ii. 1 representative of the Catholic Diocese
 - iii. 2 representatives of the Isle of Wight Early Years team
- i. A representative from the 14-19 Partnership will also be invited to attend meetings.
- j. The initial term of office for members shall be 4 years.

- k. The Isle of Wight LA shall end the appointment of any Forum member if the member ceases to hold the position by which he became eligible for appointment to the Forum
- l. Officers of the Isle of Wight LA and the Education portfolio holder shall be invited to attend meetings in an ex-officio capacity
- m. The Forum may co-opt members for specific items

2. Meetings:

- a. The Schools Forum shall meet at least six times a year
- b. The Forum shall elect a chair and vice-chair on an annual basis, such elections taking place at the first meeting of the autumn term
- c. Dates of meetings and venue shall be established in advance for 1 year, on an academic year basis, at the first meeting of the autumn term
- d. Meetings shall take place during normal working hours and shall not last beyond 3 hours
- e. A meeting shall be quorate if at least 40% of the membership is present
- f. Papers to be presented at meetings shall be circulated in advance and in sufficient time to allow members to familiarise themselves with the content before the meeting
- g. An agenda setting group shall be created and each meeting agenda shall be drawn up after consultation with this agenda setting group
- h. Meetings shall be conducted in a business like manner and serviced by the Isle of Wight LEA, with the maintenance of minutes and a register of attendance

3. Function:

- a. The Isle of Wight LA shall consult the Forum on school funding formulae, proposed contracts for tender (subject to regulations 7(1) and 7(2) of the Public Services Contracts Regulations referring to estimated values of the contracts) and the authority's functions relating to schools' budgets
- b. The Isle of Wight LA will include in its consultations:
 - (i) any proposed changes to formulae for allocation of funding
 - (ii) effects of any proposed changes to funding strategy
 - (iii) tenders for supplies and services (above a certain value)
 - (iv) arrangements for the education of pupils with special educational needs
 - (v) arrangements for pupil referral units and the education of pupils otherwise than at school
 - (vi) arrangements for early years education
 - (vii) arrangements for insurance
 - (viii) administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants
 - (ix) arrangements for free school meals
 - (x) advice on such other matters concerning the funding of schools as is seen to be necessary by the LEA
- c. The Forum shall produce a programme of work to coincide with the LA's annual pattern of strategic budgetary planning and implementation

- d. The Forum shall appoint sub-committees as need arises, to consider specific items and to report back to the Forum

4. Accountability:

- a. The Schools Forum shall inform the governing bodies of schools of all consultations carried out as part of its function
- b. An electronic copy of Forum minutes shall be circulated to clerks of governing bodies and to headteachers
- c. Minutes of Forum meetings will be posted on the LEA's website: **www.iwight.com**
- d. Membership of the Forum and membership contact details shall be circulated to clerks of governing bodies and headteachers, and included on the LA's website
- e. The Forum shall produce an annual report to be circulated to clerks of governing bodies, headteachers and the Children's Services Committee. It will also be available on the LA's website

5. Expenses:

- a. The Schools Forum shall include an annual financial statement within the annual report reflecting costs of maintaining the Forum, expenses paid to members and expenditure on commissioning fees¹
- b. All expenses of the Forum will be charged to the Schools Budget
- c. All expenses incurred by individual members in connection with attendance at meetings will be met through the Isle of Wight LA.

Roger Edwardson
Head of Learning and Achievement
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