

		AGENDA ITEM 5
		CYP/19/12
Committee:	Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	6 September 2012	
Essex Schools Forum		
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What is Schools Forum?

Schools Forum is a partnership body that links the local authority and the school community in making decisions about school funding.

It was established under the Education Act 2002, which required all Local Education Authorities to establish a Schools Forum consisting of governing body and head teacher representatives. The purpose of Schools Forum is to advise the local authority on matters relating to the Schools Budget.

The role of Schools Forum has developed since its introduction and the Department for Education introduced roles and responsibilities of Schools Forum. The roles and responsibilities of Schools Forum are shown as Annex A.

The Cabinet Member has to accept the decisions of Schools Forum where they have the power to decide but does not have to accept their decision where Schools Forum is consulted with.

How is Schools Forum constituted?

Schools Forum was until recently constituted in accordance with the School Forum Regulations 2010 and consists of school members, academy representatives and non school members. Where an authority has one or more special schools and nursery schools there must be at least one school member for each. There should also be representation for early years provision, 14-19 providers and faith groups.

The Department for Education has recently required all local authorities to reform their Schools Forum by July 2012. The key changes are:

- The removal of the requirement to have a minimum 15 members;
- Only school members will be allowed to vote on decisions concerning the funding formula for schools;

- Local authority attendance will be restricted to the Lead Member (or representative), Director of Children's Services (or representative) and to any officers either providing technical advice or presenting a paper; and
- Schools Forum will be required to hold public meetings.

Essex has reformed its Schools Forum in accordance with the draft School Forum Regulations 2012. The table below shows the current constitution of Schools Forum. The Governance Team is providing advice on the requirement to hold public meetings

Type of Member	Phase	No. of Representatives
School Members	Infant – Headteachers	1
	Infant – Governors	1
	Junior – Headteachers	1
	Junior – Governors	1
	Primary – Headteachers	2
	Primary – Governors	2
	Secondary – Headteachers	1
	Secondary – Governors	2
	Special – Headteachers	1
	Nursery – Headteachers	1
	Early Years Providers	1
	Academy Primary – Headteachers	1
	Academy Secondary – Headteachers	2
	Academy Secondary – Governors	2
	Academy Trust	1
Non School Members	14-19 Providers	1
	Faith Groups	1
	Trade Unions	2
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The number of members between primary and secondary is determined by pupil numbers and is annually reviewed. Two fifths of the total membership must attend a meeting for it to be quorate.

Members are appointed by asking for self nomination within the phase where the vacancy exists for example Infant Headteachers would be asked for self nomination if there was a vacancy for an Infant Headteacher. If one nomination is received the applicant becomes a member of Schools Forum. If more than one applicant applies, an election is held within the wider phase, so for an Infant Headteacher vacancy, all primary schools would be asked to vote.

There are three sub-groups of Schools Forum for finance, special educational needs and early years. The sub-groups consist of Schools Forum members and the groups report back to the main Schools Forum meeting.

How is Schools Forum administered?

The local authority appoints a Clerk to the Schools Forum. In Essex this falls within the role of the Finance Business Partner that has responsibility for school funding. The role of the Clerk is to arrange meetings, to compile the agenda, to distribute papers and to provide technical financial advice to the Schools Forum. The Clerk also briefs the Cabinet Member and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the key issues ahead of each meeting. The Authority also provides a minute taker for meetings.

The Chair and Vice-Chair are elected annually in accordance with the Terms of Reference. The Chair has the casting vote in the event of a tied vote and can give a view on behalf of the Schools Forum where it is impossible to convene an urgent meeting. The Chair can convene an urgent meeting without the need to give a minimum seven working days notice with a full agenda.

How are Schools Forum decisions promulgated?

All School Forum agendas, papers and minutes are published on the Essex Schools Infolink website. Schools are informed of when papers are available through notification in the Education Essex newsletter. Third parties may comment on decisions made by Schools Forum by either contacting Schools Forum members or by contacting the Authority.

How can a third party pass on any views?

Details of membership of the Schools Forum including contact details are published on the Essex Schools Infolink website. All reports contain contact details of the authors. Third parties should contact Forum members to pass on any views that they wish to raise. In previous meetings representatives of small schools were given the opportunity to speak to put across their views.

The Essex Schools Forum is engaging and challenging and has a in-depth knowledge of school funding. There is a good effective working relationship between Schools Forum and the Authority.