

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**MONDAY 16 DECEMBER AT 2.00 P.M.**

Agenda Item No.

9

**ESTABLISHMENT OF SCHOOLS FORUM**

Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families

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**1. Purpose of the report**

To provide information on the purpose, organisation and administration of a Schools Forum, and to consult on the possible membership and organisation of the Schools Forum.

**2. Summary**

Each LEA is required under the Schools Forum Regulations 2002 to establish a Schools Forum by 15 January 2003. The guidance enables the authority to constitute the forum on the basis of existing consultative groups (in the case of Hertfordshire, there seems to be a close connection to the Resources Partnership - RPG).

The existing partnership consultative arrangements, including the level of membership, are highly successful and indeed were praised by Ofsted during its inspection of the authority. Consequently, it is proposed that a basic principle should be to minimise the change compared to existing arrangements.

The regulations require the authority to have regard to proportionality in terms of the split between primary and secondary membership, relative to the number of pupils within each sector.

**3. Conclusions**

Cabinet is invited to consider the constitution of the Hertfordshire Schools Forum as set out in Appendix A.

## **1. Background**

## **2. Functions of Forum**

2.1 The functions of the Forum are threefold:

- To be consulted on the LEA's funding formula
- To be consulted on specific issues in connection with the Schools Budget
- To be consulted on service contracts for schools

2.2 Whilst all of these functions fall within the existing remit of RPG, only the first two are formally specified and we would need to amend the remit of the group to recognise them. The group would also need to be renamed Hertfordshire Schools Forum: the Resources Partnership Group.

## **3. Membership**

3.1 There must be a minimum of 15 members of a Schools Forum. This number comprises school and non-school members. The school members must be headteachers or governors. This compares with 12 existing members of RPG (as set out in Appendix A). The authority can also provide for weighted representation of community, foundation, voluntary controlled and voluntary aided school.

3.2 The current membership of the RPG has an even representation of primary and secondary members, representing all school types. We would need to consider increasing the number of primary representatives in the proportion 1.2:1 to comply with the regulations. Consequently we have proposed an increase in the Primary Headteacher representation in the proposed model.

3.3 To comply with the regulations, there must be at least one school member from a special school. There are currently two such members on RPG.

3.4 The regulations allow for non-schools membership of up to 20% of the forums total membership. The existing RPG nursery headteacher representative could be a non-schools member under the regulations, and consequently this is reflected in the proposed model. Other members could include:

- Representatives of early years organisations
- Representatives of Diocesan authorities
- Trade Union representatives.

3.5 The inclusion of Diocesan authorities on the Schools Forum is to ensure that the perspective of funding voluntary aided schools is heard. Both denominational Dioceses representatives have indicated that, provided that voluntary aided schools are included in the membership, they would not wish to be directly involved.

3.6 In terms of union and professional associations we already (unlike other authorities) have a tried and tested mechanism through the member partnership groups for consulting on strategic management issues with our stakeholders, and the Schools Forum has recognisable parallels with what we have already. In addition we have an equally tried and tested mechanism for consultation with employee representatives which follows three routes:

- the termly Joint Consultative Committee where members meet the teaching unions
  - the cycle of meetings between the Director of Children Schools and Families (CSF) with the County Secretaries of the six teacher unions
  - the Personnel Group where the Head of Human Resources for CSF meets with all of the unions 6 times per year
- 3.7 Nursery Schools have been represented within the Resources Partnership Group since the advent of LMS, and we would propose their representation continues through non-school membership.
- 3.8 The local Learning and Skills Council has a right under the regulations to attend as an observer.
- 3.9 The Resources Partnership Group has in each annual budget round met with the Executive member - CSF (or previously Education Committee Chairperson). It is considered that there would be benefit to the Forum in including the post of Executive member - CSF as a member of the Forum to ensure connectivity between policy debate with school representatives and the Executive of the Authority.
- 3.10 The convention has been that the Resources Partnership Group has been chaired by the Assistant Director – Resources (CSF). It is proposed that this post is incorporated into the membership of the Forum so that the Forum has the flexibility to continue this arrangement if it deems that to be appropriate.

#### **4. Declarations of Interest**

- 4.1 The guidance enables the authority to require members to make declarations of interest where relevant, for example in consideration of matters related to service contracts. Headteachers and governors are currently required under the Scheme for Financing Schools to maintain a register of business interests for their school. This requirement could be extended to the Schools Forum with responsibility for maintenance of the register resting with the Clerk to the Forum.

##### Members Expenses

- 4.2 Reasonable expenses must be provided to members of the forum to recognise additional costs that could not be absorbed within existing budgets and there is a requirement to develop a policy to deal with expense issues. This provision is to encourage broad representation of membership. Such expenses may for instance be used to encourage membership from schools where the headteacher has a high teaching commitment, and attendance at meetings would have significant financial consequences to the school. Similarly, reimbursement of travel costs could be considered where the distance that the member has to travel to attend meetings are significant and such costs would place pressures on existing budgets.

#### **5. Consultative arrangements and feedback**

We have undertaken an extensive consultation with the headteacher and governors reference groups as well as with members of the Strategy Panel during the Autumn Term 2002. All

groups have been supportive of the proposed arrangements, particularly given its close alignment to existing arrangements.

The Strategy Cabinet Panel considered this item at their meeting of 17 September 2002. They recommended no changes to the proposals (as set out in this paper) and agreed that they should be presented to Cabinet.

## **6. Financial Implications**

We anticipate that the cost of supporting the Schools Forum can be met within existing budget.

Background information referred to by the author in compiling this report, Schools Forums: Regulations and Guidance Note on Procedural Matters - DfES 12 August 2002 and report to Strategy Panel 17 September 2002.

## **Appendix A**

### **Existing Membership of Resources Partnership Group**

3 Primary School Headteachers  
3 Secondary School Headteachers  
2 Special School Headteachers  
3 Governors (2 of whom are primary/secondary governors and 1 secondary governor)  
1 Nursery School Headteacher

Members represent 11 community, 2 foundation and 1 voluntary aided school.

### **Proposed Model**

#### **School Members**

##### **7 Primary**

4 Primary School Headteachers  
3 Primary School Governors – at least one of whom represents both secondary and primary

##### **5 Secondary**

3 Secondary School Headteachers  
2 Secondary School Governors

##### **2 Special**

2 Special School Headteachers

**School members will include at least 1 voluntary aided school**

#### **Non-school members**

1 Nursery School Headteacher  
Executive Member – CSF  
Lead Officer - CSF

#### **Observer**

Learning & Skills Council