

Meeting:	Herefordshire Schools Forum
Meeting date:	10 March 2017
Title of report:	Dates of Meetings and Work Programme for 2017-18
Report by:	Governance services

Classification

Open

Key decision

This is not an executive decision.

Wards affected

Countywide

Purpose

To confirm scheduled dates for meetings of the Schools Forum during the 2017/18 municipal year and to consider the Forum's work programme for that period.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) the dates for meetings of the schools forum during the 2017/18 municipal year be agreed; and**
- (b) the work programme for the schools forum for 2017/18 be agreed, subject to any amendments the forum wishes to make.**

Alternative options

- 1 The forum could choose not to establish a work programme for 2017/18 and rely on items being presented on an ad hoc basis for consideration at each meeting. This is not recommended as it could lead to the workload being spread unevenly across the year and to decisions not being taken in time to meet internal and external deadlines.

Reasons for recommendations

- 2 The schools forum needs to develop a manageable work programme to ensure that it operates efficiently and has sufficient information and time to properly consider the

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
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issues placed before it. A clear work programme will ensure that members of the forum and presenting officers know the pieces of work to be considered at each meeting and can prepare appropriately. It will also help to ensure that decisions are made at the appropriate time to meet external deadlines set by the Department for Education and others.

Key considerations

- 3 It is for the schools forum to determine its work programme to reflect the priorities and challenges of Herefordshire schools and settings. The forum needs to ensure that it fulfils its statutory role in relation to the implementation of the national schools funding formula and provides timely advice to the Local Authority on issues relating to the management of the schools budget.
- 4 In considering the draft work programme, the forum should be mindful of the key milestones during the financial and academic year and the decisions that surround these. Fixed deadlines, particularly those set externally by the Department for Education and others, must be taken into account.
- 5 In addition to the statutory items it is required to be consulted on, the forum may wish to undertake or be requested to undertake research and consultation on issues relating to the management of schools budgets including:
 - the national schools funding formulas;
 - ways for schools to use funds more effectively or efficiently;
 - arrangements for the education of pupils with special educational needs;
 - arrangements for the use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school; and
 - arrangements for early years education.

Any such pieces of work should have a clearly defined remit and desired outcome and be appropriately resourced.

- 6 The budget working group is a permanent advisory sub-group of the forum which provides additional consideration of, and recommendations regarding, key budgetary options and related issues. In addition to the standard budgetary items the forum may refer other items for consideration by the budget working group or establish specific task and finish groups as it deems necessary. Items referred to any sub-group of the forum should be added to the work programme with a clear indication of when the sub-group is expected to report back to the forum.
- 7 The schools forum is required to meet at least four times a year. It is proposed that six dates are confirmed for the 2017/18 municipal year, with two meetings set for each term. If there is insufficient business to justify a particular meeting taking place then up to two of the scheduled meetings can be cancelled while still achieving the required minimum number of meetings.
- 8 Proposed dates are as follows, each to start at 9:30am unless otherwise agreed:
Friday 9 June 2017
Friday 7 July 2017
Friday 20 October 2017
Friday 1 December 2017
Friday 12 January 2018
Friday 2 March 2018

Community impact

- 9 The items considered and decisions made by the forum should have regard to what matters to schools and settings in Herefordshire and how the forum can best contribute to managing the current changing and challenging financial circumstances.

Equality duty

- 10 The Public Sector Equality Duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying “due regard” in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. In relation to school finance it is the responsibility of individual governing bodies to commit expenditure according to the individual pupil need. However the items included on the work programme for the forum should have regard to this duty and the potential implications of any decisions made.

Financial implications

- 11 A budget of £12,000 has been allocated for administering the schools forum and associated activities for the 2017/18 financial year. This is funded from the dedicated schools grant received from central government and includes a modest budget for the commissioning of expert advice and reviews.

Legal implications

- 12 The schools forum is established by virtue of S74A of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (as amended by the Education Act 2002). The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 prescribe the functions of the forum and the duties of the local authority to consult with the forum on school funding issues. The Education Funding Agency provides a summary of powers and responsibilities of schools forums which includes decisions it can make on proposals put forward by the local authority.

Risk management

- 13 Approval of the recommendations will help to ensure that the forum fulfils its statutory functions and that the council complies with its statutory duty to consult the forum as specified in the regulations. Failure to approve the recommendations (or suitable alternatives) may lead to the forum not having adequate time and information to make recommendations, which would require the council to make decisions in the absence of guidance from the schools forum. This could lead to action by the DfE or decisions being taken which are not in the best interests of, or supported by, schools and settings.

Consultees

- 14 The draft work programme has been put together following discussions between the assistant director, commissioning and education, the schools finance manager and the chairman of the schools forum.
- 15 The approved work programme will be a live document, with changes and additions reported to the forum via a regular item on the agenda of the meeting.

Appendices

Appendix A - Draft work programme 2017/18

Background papers

None identified.