

Meeting:	Schools Forum
Meeting date:	Friday 15 March 2019
Title of report:	Work programme and dates for future meetings
Report by:	Clerk to Herefordshire Schools Forum

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision.

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

To confirm scheduled dates for meetings of the Schools Forum to the end of the summer term 2020 and to consider the Forum's work programme for that period.

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 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.

Recommendation(s)

- (a) the dates for meetings of the schools forum to the end of the summer term 2020 as set out in paragraph 7 of this report be agreed; and
- (b) the work programme for the schools forum to the end of the summer term 2020 as set out in appendix A be agreed, subject to any amendments the forum wishes to make.

Alternative options

1. The forum could choose not to establish a work programme 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.

Key considerations

2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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:
 - a. the national schools funding formulas;
 - b. ways for schools to use funds more effectively or efficiently;
 - c. arrangements for the education of pupils with special educational needs;
 - d. arrangements for the use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school; and
 - e. arrangements for early years education.

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

5. 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.
6. Following a request by forum members, a workshop session has been arranged to take place at 11am on Friday 21 June 2019. The session will discuss how Herefordshire schools are managing the transition to the national school funding formula, the key challenges that lie ahead for our schools and how the county's MPs can help in representing Herefordshire schools at the national level. Jesse Norman MP has provisionally agreed to attend the workshop. The Budget Working Group will produce a short briefing covering the key issues. The Schools Forum is requested to give a steer as to the areas this should focus on.

7. The schools forum is required to meet at least four times a year. It is proposed that the following dates be set, each to start at 9:30am unless otherwise agreed:

Friday 21 June 2019
Friday 26 October 2019
Friday 17 January 2020
Friday 13 March 2020
Friday 10 July 2020

Community impact

8. 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

9. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

10. The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine 'protected characteristics' (age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation). In particular, the council must have 'due regard' to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.

11. Any potential detrimental impact on vulnerable pupils will be managed by school governing bodies prioritising vulnerable pupils within the school's grant income.

Resource Implications

12. A budget of £12,000 has been allocated for administering the schools forum and associated activities for the 2019/20 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

13. 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

14. 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

15. The draft work programme takes account of regulatory requirements and external deadlines.
16. 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 2019/20

Background papers

None identified