

## **SCHOOLS FORUM FOR ROCHDALE**

### **Principles, Constitution and Terms of Reference** (Amended March 2008)

#### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Schools Forum :-

provides a formal channel of communication between the LA and schools as the principal mechanism for consultation concerning the funding of schools

provides unambiguous professional advice and strategic direction to education decision-makers regarding the funding of schools

aims to agree recommendations which present the best possible, most equitable compromise between competing claims on limited resources through a transparent and properly informed process of discussion in a framework of agreed principles

has strategic oversight of ALL funding decisions affecting schools so that it can agree recommendations in the context of the full picture of funding

has limited powers to make decisions (transferred from Secretary of State in 2006)

will be involved in annual consultation in respect of the LA's functions relating to the schools budget in connection with the following : pupils with SEN, use of PRUs & EOTAS, early years, insurance, revisions to the LA's scheme for the financing of schools, administration of central government grants to schools including Standards Funds, arrangements for free school meals

shall be consulted on any proposed changes to the LEA school funding formula .. and the financial effects of any proposed changes

#### **PRINCIPLES**

Whilst members are representatives of their specific sectors or phase, they should be able to consider the needs of the whole educational community, rather than using their position on the Schools Forum to advance their own sectional or specific interests.

#### **CONSTITUTION**

##### **Title**

The title of the forum shall be the 'Schools Forum for Rochdale' herein after referred to as 'The Schools Forum'

##### **Introduction**

The Schools Forum has been established in accordance with the provisions of the Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2002 coming into force on 1 September 2002 and subsequently amended in 2004, 2005 and 2007. The following document lays out a revised constitution and terms of reference of The Schools Forum, building

upon the original documentation drawn up in June 2003. The Schools Forum is a separate statutory body and as such is not a committee of the Local Authority.

### Functions of The Forum

- a) To agree local funding issues:
- Agree minor changes to the operation of the Minimum Funding Guarantee, where not more than 50% of schools are affected.
  - Agree the level of schools specific contingency at the beginning of each year.
  - Agree arrangements for combining elements of the centrally retained Schools Budgets with other elements of LA and agency budgets where there is a clear benefit to schools.
  - Agree an increase in the Central Expenditure Limit either prior to the start or once a multi funding period has begun.
- b) To consider changes to the school funding formula
- The Authority must have regard to the advice of the Forum on proposed changes to the formulae they use for determination and redetermination of schools' budget shares.
- c) Consultation on contracts
- The Authority shall consult The Schools Forum on supplies and services contracts over EU thresholds.
- d) Consultation on financial issues

The Authority shall consult The Schools Forum annually in respect of the Authority's functions relating to the schools budget, in connection with the following:

- The arrangements to be made for the education of pupils with SEN;
- Arrangements for the use of pupil referral units and the education of children otherwise than at school;
- Arrangements for early years education;
- Arrangements for insurance;
- Prospective revisions to the Authority's scheme for the financing of schools;
- Administrative arrangements for the allocation of central government grants paid to schools via the Authority, and
- Arrangements for free school meals.

### Membership and Attendance

The Schools Forum will be made up of at least two-thirds schools members and up to one-third non-school members as listed below:

Schools Members (Headteachers, Deputy Heads, Governors or Bursars) Primary and Secondary representation broadly in proportion to the ratio of primary to secondary pupil numbers.

- 6 Primary representatives to be elected by RAPSH

- 1 Governor representative from the Primary sector, to be elected by the Governors Forum.
- 6 Secondary representatives to be elected by RASH
- 1 Governor representative from the secondary sector, to be elected by the Governors Forum.

NB One of the primary or secondary nominations as a minimum to represent aided schools.

- 2 Special Schools representative to be elected from the Special Schools Headteachers & Deputy Headteachers Group
- 1 Nursery Schools representative, to be elected from the Nursery Headteachers Group.

Non-Schools Members as nominated by their representative groups from the following groups

- 1 Early Years
- 1 14 – 19 Partnerships
- 1 LA Inclusion
- 1 LA Improvement
- 1 Union
- 1 Learning and Skills Council
- 1 LA Member
- 1 Additional Support place (Emerging issues)

The following will be entitled to nominate one observer, who shall be entitled to attend all meetings of the Forum.

- Diocesan Representative C of E
- Diocesan Representative RC
- The St Anne's Academy
- Head of Service Schools
- Head of Service Learners and Young People
- Head of Service Finance
- Union

In addition meetings should normally be open to the public, although there is no automatic opportunity for members of the public to speak. Public involvement can come through Forum invitation only. Where the Forum discusses matters of a confidential nature e.g. contracts where there is a commercial interest, then this should be considered private and confidential and members of the public excluded. In all cases the principles of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act apply.

#### Meetings and Proceedings of The Schools Forum

Members shall abide by the National Code of Local Government Conduct. If a proposal specifically, and differently from other similar schools affects either a school at which the Member is a Governor or which his or her children attend or in which he or she might have a pecuniary interest, then the Member should declare that interest and withdraw from the meeting, taking no part in the decision.

If a Member does not attend for two consecutive meetings, then The Schools Forum shall determine at its next available meeting whether that Member should continue to serve on the Schools Forum.

The Forum shall be quorate if at least 8 members are present at the meeting (i.e. approximately 33 per cent of total membership).

A Member may nominate an alternate to attend a meeting if he or she is unable to do so, but the alternate must also fulfil the same criteria as the Member. That is they must be from the same category of school within the local authority. The appointed Member, prior to the meeting, shall notify the name of the substitute Member to the officer acting as Clerk.

A Chair and Vice-Chair shall be elected annually from those members present at the first meeting of the academic year. The term of office being one year, with no bar on restanding for office in subsequent years.

The maximum term of office for all Forum members be set at 3 years with 1/3 of members subject to re-election each year. The determination of where members fall in this cycle to be agreed at the last meeting of the 2007/08 financial year, but to include an equal split between primary and secondary representatives and a proportionate number of non-school members.

#### Administrative Arrangements

The LA shall act as clerk to The Schools Forum and ensure that all of the procedural aspects of Forum performance are complied with.

The Schools Forum shall meet at least once per term with two meetings in the Spring term to consider matters relating to the new financial year.

The Schools Forum may elect to see a delegation in respect of any particular issue in order to assist in the consideration of a matter.

Agenda - a draft agenda shall be agreed for the 12-month period at the first Forum meeting of the academic year. The extract from this for the next meeting to be circulated three weeks before the date of the meeting, allowing Forum members to add additional items via contacting the clerk. The final agenda and written papers are to be circulated 5 working days before the start of the meeting. Verbal or tabled reports will only be accepted in extenuating circumstances.

Voting procedures at Forum are covered in the Annexe attached.

#### Provision of account to schools

The Forum shall, as soon as reasonably possible, inform the governing bodies of schools maintained by Rochdale BC of all consultations carried out under functions of the Forum above.

#### Charging of expenses

All expenses of the Forum shall be met by the Authority, and charged to the schools budget.

#### Members' Expenses

Rochdale LA shall reimburse all reasonable expenses of members in connection with attendance at meetings of The Schools Forum. Based on the agreed process for the School Organisation Committee loss of earnings allowances shall not be offered.

Instead for those members who are eligible, out of pocket expenses may be claimed. These could include supply cover, travel expenses and childcare costs.

Future Amendments to the Terms of Reference

These terms of reference can be amended through a two-thirds majority of members present at a quorate meeting of the Forum.

### **Voting Procedures**

1. The decision as to whether a ballot is held will normally be determined by the requirements of the paper tabled. In exceptional circumstances where members wish to hold a ballot and record the outcome to an item not previously considered to require a vote; then a vote can be triggered by a formal proposition by a member and subsequently agreed by the Chair.
2. Votes shall be cast by a show of hands unless the chair decides that a secret ballot is appropriate.
3. Each member of the Schools Forum, or their substitute, shall have one vote. Non-members (e.g. officers, observers) are not entitled to vote.
4. Issues put to the vote shall be decided by a majority of the members, or their substitutes, present at the meeting and voting on the issue.
5. In the case of equal votes, discussion will continue to try to achieve consensus if this cannot be achieved, the Chair will be deemed to have a second or casting vote, with no restriction on either how or whether this is exercised
6. The numbers of votes and abstentions cast shall be reconciled and recorded in the minutes.
7. If the members feel that the consultative process is best served by advising decision-makers of the wider views represented in the Forum, then these will be recorded in the minutes together with the weight of each opinion as indicated by votes cast
8. When casting a vote, members exercise their judgement to decide on issues, bearing in mind the views of their constituent organizations.
9. Declarations of special interest should be made before a vote and recorded in the minutes to cover situations where the decision would affect an individual or particular type of school.