



# Northumberland County Council

**Wellbeing and Community Health Services Group**  
**Education and Skills Service**

**Agenda Item 9**

## **SCHOOLS FORUM**

**04 July 2018**

### **Schools Forum Self Assessment Toolkit**

#### **1. Purpose of the Report**

In 2015 the Education Funding Agency produced a Schools Forum self-assessment toolkit. This was to provide local authorities and schools forums a framework for assessing the respective strengths and weaknesses.

#### **2. Background**

The self assessment toolkit is one of a range of guidance and information in order to promote good practice, including:

- Schools forums operational and good practice guide;
- Schools forums structure;
- Schools forums powers and responsibilities; and
- Schools forum self assessment toolkit

Further information is available from the Department for Education (DfE), the latest version of which is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-forums-operational-and-good-practice-guide-2015>

3. Schools Forum undertook a review in September 2015 a copy of which is attached.

4. Forum is invited to consider whether it is now timely to again consider a self assessment review using the toolkit, and how this can best be achieved using a small working group or accepting written submissions using the template.

#### **5. Recommendation**

The Schools Forum is recommended to approve the report and adopt the proposed draft of the Scheme for Financing Schools.



## Schools forum self-assessment toolkit

### (Northumberland Schools Forum Sept 2015)

This toolkit provides local authority officers and elected members with a framework for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their schools forum. The toolkit is designed as a set of questions which can be considered by individuals or the forum as a whole.

Question	Yes / No	Notes
1. Are meeting dates set in well advance and details (including time and venue) published in an accessible manner to enable interested parties to plan their attendance?	Yes	Meeting dates for the whole school year are set out in the agenda for each meeting.
2. Are meetings timed to coincide with key dates? (e.g. reporting of funding formula)	Yes	
3. Are meetings held in an accessible venue to enable observers to attend easily?	Yes.	
4. Is there a dedicated website link for schools forum, is it current and regularly updated?	In part	Agenda and papers are posted once published and Minutes are published once approved.
5. Are the agenda and papers publicly available on the authority's website at least 6 working days in advance of the meeting?	Mainly	Most papers are circulated to members of the Forum, although occasionally the odd paper is late or tabled at the meeting when there is good reason to do so. Need to ensure that these go on the website on the same timescale.
6. Are the papers published as a single document, so that users can download easily?	In part	Papers are sent to Schools Forum members by email as a set of individual papers but within a zipped folder. Is such a single file helpful?
7. If papers are tabled at the meeting, are they published on the website promptly after the meeting?	Not consistently	

Question	Yes / No	Notes
8. Are draft minutes published a reasonable time (e.g. within 2-3 weeks) after the meeting, rather than waiting until the following meeting?	No	
9. Are the minutes clear and unambiguous, with sufficient detail to illustrate the discussions, without reporting verbatim every point made?	Yes	
10. Is the constitution clear and appropriate? Including eg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a clear process for ensuring proportional representation</li> <li>- the process for electing members and their tenure</li> <li>- the timescale for review is clearly set out</li> <li>- the process for dealing with repetitive non attenders</li> </ul>	In part	Revisions required here
11. Is there an induction pack or training programme available for new members?	Yes	
12. Is the election process clear and transparent? i.e. representatives are elected only by the group they are representing, whether phase-specific for maintained schools, or by the proprietors of academies for academy members.	Yes	Difficulty in gaining nominations for Governors from First and Middle School Headteachers and from Academies.
13. Do the papers contain clear recommendations and indicate in a consistent manner whether the item is for information, consultation or decision?	Yes	
14. Is it clear to observers who attendees at the forum are representing? (eg by use of name plates, indicating sector)	No	Needs to be implemented.
15. Does the chair manage the meeting well, ensuring that all are able to contribute to the agenda items, that no bias towards any sector is evident and that no single person or organisation is able to dominate the discussion?	Yes	

Question	Yes / No	Notes
16. Is there inclusive participation in discussions for all phases and types of members?	Yes	
17. Do members actively canvass views and objectively represent their whole peer group at the forum and provide feed back after meetings?	No	Very difficult in a rural County, but using school partnership meetings for consultation and feedback should improve the situation.
18. Where votes are required, is it clear who is eligible to vote for different items?	Mainly	Need to clarify within the agenda item.
19. Where votes are required, are the arrangements for recording the votes clear and unambiguous?	Yes	
20. Is there a system in place for a decision if votes are tied?	Yes	
21. Is the operational & good practice guide used to regularly review the forum's adherence to good practice?	No	Chair and officers need to start doing this at the beginning of each school year

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