

LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

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| Meeting / Date | SCHOOLS FORUM 12 JUNE 2013 | Agenda Item | 6 |
| Report Title | New Way of Working for Schools Forum | | |
| Decision/ Discussion/ Information | For Decision | | |
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| Appendices | Appendix A: Timelines of Key Actions Required by the Local Authority and Schools for setting budgets for 2014-15 Appendix B: Task & Finish Groups Role in supporting Key Decision Making | | |

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1** For 2013-14 the Local Authority would like to introduce improvements to the School Forum arrangements, by changing to the report format, forwarding planning meetings and reports, introducing Task and Finish working groups, and holding pre forum briefing sessions on key reports.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools Forum are asked to:

- 2.1** Agree or recommend changes to the report format.
- 2.2** Agree the new Schools Forum Forward Plan
- 2.3** Agree to establishing four Task and Finish working groups:
- a. To review the distribution of funding for 2014-15 amongst the 5-16 formula factors in light of benchmarking information;
 - b. To review the formula factors for 2014-15 for 2 and 3-4 year olds;
 - c. To review the High Needs factors for 2014-15 Factors; and
 - d. To review the use of the 2012-13 DSG underspend.

- 2.4 Agree to School Forum technical briefing sessions before key decision meetings.

3. REASON

- 3.1 The Local Authority wishes to provide members and relevant parties/stakeholders an opportunity to increase their participation in the process of setting schools budgets.
- 3.2 Under the new School Funding Reform arrangements, the decision making time lines have changed. On 4 June the DFE issued the 2014-15 Revenue Funding Arrangements. Please see link to the June DFE guidance

<http://www.education.gov.uk/ukccis/researchandstrategy/a00221523/school-funding-and-high-needs-funding-arrangements-2014-15>

- 3.3 Appendix A sets out the key actions and time lines under the new guidance.
- 3.4 The Task and Finish groups need to be established in June and July to ensure that the deadlines for the Education Funding Agency can be met, especially for the 5-16 Schools Block.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Reports are taken to Schools Forum following a standard timetable so that budgets can be allocated to schools by 31 March for the coming financial year. These reports tend to be detailed and technical in nature.
- 4.2 The reports are brought to members over a period of time so that issues can be discussed and reports reflect member's comments for the final decisions.
- 4.3 Schools and Settings are consulted on the changes proposed prior to Schools Forum deciding on their recommendations to Cabinet for decision.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 A number of proposals are being introduced. The first of these is to have shorter reports in a format similar to this one, which is that used for Council Cabinet Reports. The report should be no longer than 3-4 pages with additional technical detail set out in appendices.
- 5.2 The second proposal is to set a Forward Plan for School Forum reports and give members an opportunity to request other reports to be taken to School Forum. The current proposal is to change the number of

meetings and hold five key decision making meetings in September, November, January, March and June.

- 5.3** The third proposal is to establish Task and Finish working groups to enable members to engage in the strategies for the preparation of School Forum reports.
- 5.4** Previously working groups were successfully established to deal with changes in the local funding formula and more recently the response to the DFE on the school funding reforms.
- 5.5** The Local Authority is seeking to establish Task and Finish groups to set out the direction and discuss key issues facing school budgets so that strategies are formulated and discussed at length and members can be confident that their colleagues have been involved in the formulation of recommendations to Schools Forum by officers.
- 5.6** It is proposed that four task and finish groups are established for 2013-14.

| Task & Finish Group | Membership | Local Authority Officers |
|--|---|--|
| a. Schools Block (5-16 Year Old Formula) | School Forum Members | Rishi Peetamsingh & Graham Moss |
| b. Early Years Block (3-4 Year Olds and 2 Year Olds) | Schools Forum Members and additional PVI settings | Raina Turner & Eve McLoughlin |
| c. High Needs Block | School Forum Members, Special School Heads and Post 16 Institutions | Shehwar Sultan, Jaynn Taylor and Graham Moss |
| d. Use of DSG underspend | School Forum members | Rishi Peetamsingh |

- 5.7** The topics to be considered by each group have been set out in Appendix B.
- 5.8** The fourth proposal is to introduce pre School Forum briefing sessions for key decision making reports. It is recommended that these sessions start at 5.30 p.m. on the evening of the School Forum meetings and will be informal sessions for all attendees.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1** In previous years, schools were consulted during the period November to early January. Under the new arrangement consultation for the

Schools Block will take place for a shorter period during the summer and involve taking reports to Head Teachers Groups where possible.

- 6.2** The Early Years consultation will take place in the autumn as their budgets are not set until February/March using actual head count data. The consultation with the High Needs block will be as inclusive as possible and include all Special Schools Heads, Post 16 institutions and PRU/AP provision.