

Dudley Schools Forum – Tuesday 3rd October 2006

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Reorganisation of Schools Forum Re-appointment Process

Purpose of Report

1. To obtain the Forum's approval for the implementation of a new mechanism for appointing and reappointing members in order to ensure changes in the Forum's membership are gradual and stable, and to obtain approval for the amendment of the Dudley Schools Forum Constitution to reflect the change.

Background

2. Dudley Schools Forum was established in November 2002, under the Education (Schools Forums) (England) Regulations 2002. The Constitution of the Forum, agreed at that time by the Lead Member for Education and Lifelong Learning and the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning, provided for the appointment and reappointment of members of the Forum.
3. The Constitution states that 'The first elections and appointments will be made for the period 1st November 2002 to 30th September 2005 and thence for successive periods of three years. Whenever a vacancy occurs under the terms of the Regulations it will be filled as soon as possible, by election or nomination according to the type of representative, for a period running to the end of the three-year period then underway'.
4. The current period of membership for Forum members expires on 30th September 2008, after which, under the current Constitutional arrangements, all members will either be replaced or reappointed for a further three-year period.
5. At the meeting of the Schools Forum Working Group held on 25th April 2006 members expressed concern that under the current arrangements a situation could arise whereby at the end of a three year period a large number, potentially even the majority, of Forum members could decline to be reappointed and cease to be members. This would result in a significant influx of new members with no experience of the role and responsibilities of the Forum. It was felt that in this situation the lack of experience of the new members in terms of the business and functionality of the Forum could have a detrimental and destabilising effect.
6. In view of these concerns it was recommended by the Working Group that a system be put in place whereby approximately one third of the Forum would be reappointed on an annual basis, thus removing the possibility of a drastic change in membership and the resulting destabilisation of the Forum. The Forum gave its approval to this approach at its meeting on 9th May, 2006.

7. In the absence of a systematic method of dividing the Forum into three equal parts to be reappointed on a three yearly basis, a reappointment schedule for 2006 to 2008 is suggested to establish a 'rolling' Forum membership. A copy of the proposed schedule is attached at Appendix 1. Care has been taken in the arrangement of this schedule to avoid more than two members of any of the Forum's constituent groups being up for reappointment in the same year, in order to maximise continuity of membership within the groups. However, the Schools Groups may wish to reorder the reappointment of their members in view of personal circumstances or considerations. The schedule ensures that the two members representing special schools will not be reappointed at the same time. This is also true of the Church of England and Roman Catholic representatives.
8. Should the Forum decide to approve the proposed schedule, nominations will be sought from the relevant bodies to fill the spaces occupied by those members in column 1 to serve for the period from 1st November 2006 to 30th September 2009. In the following year nominations will be sought to fill the spaces occupied by those members in column 2 for the period 1st October 2007 to 30th September 2010. Finally in 2008 nominations would be sought to fill the spaces occupied by those members in column 3 for the period 1st October 2008 to 30th September 2011. By this point the transition to a system whereby a third of the Forum's membership is renewed on an annual basis will be complete.
9. Should the Forum approve the new reappointment structure, the Constitution and Terms of Reference will need to be amended accordingly to reflect the new arrangements. It is proposed that the final paragraph of the 'Membership' section of the document, as referred to in paragraph 3 of this report, be amended to read 'Members will be appointed for a period of three years. Whenever a vacancy occurs during the three year period, under the terms of the Regulations it will be filled as soon as possible, by election or nomination according to the type of representative, for a period running to the end of the three-year period then underway'.

Finance

10. There are no direct financial implications.
11. Dudley MBC has a budget for the Schools Forum from which the costs of appointing members can be met.

Law

12. The statutory powers regarding the membership and operation of the Schools Forum are contained in section 43 of the Education Act, 2002 and the Schools Forums (England) Regulations, 2002. The Regulations make provision for Schools Forums to determine their own principles for the appointment of Forum members.

Equality Impact

13. There are no direct equality implications in this report. Given the nature of the work of Schools Forum, decisions made in relation to the reappointment of members will have impact on the financial management of education in Dudley and as such will have an effect on children and young people.

Recommendation

14. It is recommended: -

- That the Forum approve the proposal to reorganise the process for appointing and reappointing members in order to ensure more gradual changes to the membership, as set out in Paragraphs 7 and 8 and in Appendix 1 to this report.
- That the Clerk to the Forum be authorised to take action to facilitate the reappointment or replacement of members according to the schedule set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
- That the Clerk to the Forum be authorised to amend the Constitution and Terms of Reference of the Forum, as detailed in Paragraph 9 of this report, to reflect the changes.



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List of Background Papers

Education Act, 2002
Schools Forums (England) Regulations, 2002
Dudley Schools Forum Constitution and Terms of Reference
Minutes of past meetings of Dudley Schools Forum