

Committee:	School Forum
Meeting Date:	21 May 2015
Title:	Developing the Schools Forum
Author:	Gavin Bultitude
Decision making / consultative / information:	Decision Making
Who can vote?	All voting members of the Schools Forum

What is the Forum being asked to decide?

1. The Forum is being asked to endorse the plans to undertake a programme of development work to help the Schools Forum and the Local Authority improve the way they work to get ready for the challenges ahead. Forum members are asked to comment on the details set out in this report to shape the proposal
2. The Forum is asked to agree that the Chair of the Forum and AD Resources & Support would select and appoint an interim manager to take on this role.
3. Forum agrees that this work is routinely reported back to the Forum

Reason for recommendation

4. The Forum has a number of strengths. It has taken clear and consistent decisions on funding reform, understands the longer term risks and issues, and has a broadly representative base.
5. However there are also a number of problems; communication has not always worked well, Forum members, and others, have been at times unsure of their roles, and the support provided by LA officers has not always facilitated good decision making.
6. The proposal in this paper is to commission a package of work to develop the Schools Forum.

Alternative options

7. Forum could decide not to undertake this development work or to make alternative proposals as to how it could be carried out.

Who will be affected by this decision?

8. This will directly affect all Forum members and the officer who supports the Forum. Indirectly this could affect all schools in Suffolk.

Main body of the Report

9. We propose to bring in an interim manager on a short term basis to work with the Forum, local authority officers and other stakeholders to review the functioning of the Forum and make changes to improve the way it works.
10. We would suggest that the first step is to follow the Signs of Safety methodology and meet all Forum members and key officers to look at:
 - what is working well,
 - what are we worried about, and
 - what needs to be done.
11. The proposed outcomes from this piece of work are:
 - a better focus on key issues
 - a clearer understanding of the role of the Forum
 - better communications and linkages with school, and other partners
 - better presentation of papers and reports from officers
 - well-functioning and influential working groups
 - members who clearly understand their roles, and a 'job description' for Forum members
 - membership which complies with DfE guidance and the Forum's own constitution
 - a credible forward plan for the Forum and clear timetable for decision making.
12. We propose that the person undertaking this work to be working for three days a week or similar for about three months. The outcome is not a report or set of proposals but the real tangible improvements to the way the Forum works as set out above.
13. We suggest that person who undertakes the work to have the following skills and experiences:
 - an understanding of the role of the Schools Forum
 - experience of working with Schools Forums in other Local Authorities
 - an understanding of the wider education policy landscape
 - organisational development skills
 - good communication skills
 - an ability to build relationships in difficult circumstances
 - credibility with stakeholders.
14. The costs would be met from SCC reserves and would not fall on schools' budgets.