

<b>Committee:</b>	School Forum
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	22 October 2015
<b>Title:</b>	Schools Forum Development – Project Initiation
<b>Author:</b>	Helen Carter
<b>Decision making / consultative / information:</b>	Consultative (Influence)

### **What is the Forum being asked to decide?**

1. The Forum is being provided with an update on the programme of development work to review the Forum's operation and processes that Forum agreed to implement at the meeting on 21 May 2015.
2. As agreed, progress on this work will be routinely reported back at each meeting, which is the purpose of this project initiation paper.
3. Comments are invited on the proposed activities and timescales set out in this paper, and suggestions for other individuals or groups to be included in the survey or development work are sought.
4. Nominations are sought for a small steering group for the project with at least one representative for each of school, academy and non-school categories alongside the Chair and AD Resources & Support.

### **Reason for recommendation**

5. As previously agreed, the purpose of this piece of work is to help the Schools Forum and the Local Authority improve the way they work to get ready for the challenges ahead.

### **Alternative options**

6. The proposed work programme could be completed in a shorter time period. This would require members to commit to being available to comment on options and agree next steps outside of the regular schedule of Forum meetings.
7. The scope of the proposed work programme could be amended to enable it to be completed in less time or with less resource by removing some elements. This may compromise the range of recommendations and options made to Forum.
8. An options paper or report could be produced for Forum based primarily on desk research, ideally supplemented with limited interviews with a small sample of existing Forum members and key stakeholders, and Forum could agree next steps for implementation of change based on this

paper. Forum members would have less opportunity to influence the options whilst they were being developed through this approach.

### **Who will be affected by this decision?**

9. 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**

10. The Chair of the Forum and AD Resources & Support have selected and appointed Helen Carter to undertake this work.
11. The original paper set out the following proposed outcomes from this piece of work:
  - 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. It should however be noted that it is expected that this work will be iterative, and that the final recommendations, project outcomes and implementation of changes will be shaped by research and consultation with Forum members and other stakeholders.
13. It was agreed that the Signs of Safety methodology would be adopted so that the research questions will be framed to consider:
  - what is working well,
  - what are we worried about, and
  - what needs to be done
14. This will ensure that the project elicits each respondent's perspective and current concerns about the operation of Schools Forum, but also seeks to determine solutions grounded in real-life experience.
15. The project will comprise the following key stages:
  - completion and review of the Education Funding Agency's "Schools forum self-assessment toolkit – March 2015" with Local Authority senior officer and Forum Chair
  - desk-based review of current practice of Forum against the requirements and principles set out in the Education Funding Agency's "Schools forum operational and good practice guide – March 2015" covering:
    - constitutional and procedural issues

- operation and good practice
- review of good practice in other schools forums, for example Ofsted comparator or neighbouring local authorities, including desk research and potential visits or discussions with Chairs and/or lead officers of other Schools Forums
- survey of Forum members and other stakeholders
- workshop with development sub-group to consider survey and other research findings, and develop options for changes to Forum
- interim report on options for future development of Forum
- agree new structure – consultation and development process to be determined by Forum after review of interim report
- implementation of agreed changes

16. A working timetable for this project is outlined below:

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Stages and activities</b>	<b>Lead</b>
22 October 2015 – Schools Forum meeting	Project initiation paper presented	Gavin Bultitude, Helen Carter
October	Completion of toolkit	Denise Morcom, Gavin Bultitude
October-November	Desk-based research, development of survey	Helen Carter
<b>26-30 October 2015 – Autumn half term</b>		
October-December	Review of good practice in other schools forums	Denise Morcom, Helen Carter
November-December	Complete surveys	All School Forum members, Local Authority responsible officers
10 December 2015 – Schools Forum meeting	Update on initial findings from research and surveys	Gavin Bultitude, Helen Carter
<b>21-31 December 2015 – Christmas holidays</b>		
December-January	Optional additional surveys of other key stakeholders or interested groups identified during initial survey phase	Helen Carter
January-February	Workshop to develop options	Schools Forum development steering group
<b>15-19 February 2016 – Spring half term</b>		
March	Interim report outlining development of options for Schools Forum	Helen Carter
Spring 2016 – Schools Forum meeting	Update on development options and sign-off next steps	Gavin Bultitude, Helen Carter
<b>25 March – 8 April 2016 – Easter holidays</b>		
April-June	Implementation phase for agreed options	Schools Forum development steering group
<b>30 May – 3 June 2016 – Summer half term</b>		

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Stages and activities</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Summer 2016 – Schools Forum meeting	Final review and project sign-off	Gavin Bultitude, Denise Morcom, Helen Carter
<b>21 July 2016 – end of term</b>		