

DRAFT Westmorland & Furness Schools Forum – Constitution

1. Membership

The Schools Forum will consist of the following members:

- 1.1 School Members (must include at least one governor and at least one headteacher/senior member of school staff)
 - 5 maintained primary school headteachers/senior members of school staff or governors
 - 2 maintained secondary school headteachers/senior members of school staff or governors
 - 6 academy (primary, secondary and special) headteachers/senior members of school staff or governors
 - 1 maintained special school headteacher/senior member of school staff or governor
 - 1 maintained nursery school headteacher/senior member of school staff or governor
 - 1 PRU representative
- 1.2 Non School Members
 - 1 teachers professional associations
 - 1 non-teaching staff associations
 - 1 CE Diocese
 - 1 RC Diocese
 - 1 representative 16 – 19 providers
 - 1 private voluntary and independent (PVI) early years provider
- 1.3 Observer Members
 - Lead Member for Education, Skills and Training, Childrens' Services or Finance and Assets
 - Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
- 1.4 Local Authority Representatives

Officers of the Local Authority can attend Schools Forum meetings but this is restricted to:

 - Director of Children Children's Services or their representative
 - Director of Resources or their representative
 - Any person invited by Schools Forum to provide financial or technical advice
 - Any person presenting a paper to Schools Forum but their ability to speak is limited to the paper they are presenting
- 1.5 Clerking

Clerking of the Schools Forum is often provided by a local authority employee or Schools Forum can consider the appointment of an independent clerk.

2. Working Groups

- 2.1 The Schools Forum may establish associated working groups. Each member of the Schools Forum will be expected to contribute to at least one of these groups but groups can also include wider representation to enable the group to give a considered view on the local authority's proposals to the School Forum.

3. Election of Members and Terms of Office

- 3.1 For any vacancy that arises, each group or constituency will determine its own procedures for nomination, which may include elections.
- 3.2 Each constituency or group is responsible for the method by which they elect and nominate their representatives.
- 3.3 Appropriate support to each group or sub-group to manage their election processes will be offered by the clerk of the Schools Forum. This may be the provision of advice, but may also consist of providing administrative support in running the elections themselves. Support will be provided in line with the Schools Forum Operational Good Practice Guide – March 2021.
- 3.4 In the event of a tie between two or more candidates, then the Local Authority must appoint the member instead.
- 3.5 There may be occasions where a constituency is unable to nominate a representative. The Local Authority can set a date by which the election/nomination should take place by and must appoint the member if the election has not taken place by that date. The person appointed should be a member of the relevant group.
- 3.6 The term of office is attached to the office and not the person. The usual term of office will be for a period of up to 2 years (to be reviewed).
- 3.7 A member's appointment will end before the expiry of his/her term of membership if that member resigns or no longer holds the office by which they became eligible for election, selection or appointment to the forum. If a member moves to a school within the same constituency, he/she will remain a member of the forum. However, if the member moves to a school in a different constituency, or no longer works in the Local Authority area, that member will cease to be a member of the forum. Vacancies will be filled in line with the nomination and election process for the relevant constituency.
- 3.8 The LA will appoint non-school members who will be nominated by the relevant body. The LA will inform all represented bodies of the details of any non-schools member appointed to the forum within one month of such an appointment. This should be done when initially constituting the forum, and after the appointment of any new or replacement member.
- 3.9 There will be no maximum number of consecutive periods of membership.

4. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

- 4.1 The Chair and Vice Chair of the Schools Forum will be elected from among the members by a majority vote, but may not be an elected member or officer of the Local Authority.
- 4.2 The Chair and Vice Chair will be elected annually at the first meeting of the financial year.
- 4.3 A Chair or Vice Chair may stand for re-election in successive years.

5. Quorum

- 5.1 The quorum shall be 40% of the current membership of the forum, excluding vacancies but including substitutes.
- 5.2 Being inquorate will not prevent a meeting from taking place however, the Schools Forum will not legally be able to take decisions. An inquorate meeting can respond to consultation and give views to the Local Authority.

6. Voting

- 6.1 Decisions will be taken after full discussion and by a simple majority by a show of hands unless any one member requires a secret ballot. Decisions of the Schools Forum may only be rescinded at a subsequent quorate meeting.
- 6.2 School members will vote, by sector, on the level of delegation to schools.
- 6.3 Maintained primary school members will vote on levels of delegation for primary schools which will then be binding on all maintained schools within that sector.
- 6.4 Maintained secondary schools will vote on levels of delegation for secondary schools which will then be binding on all maintained schools within that sector.
- 6.5 Academies and special schools are not able to de-delegate in this way.
- 6.6 In the event of a tied vote the Chair will have a second or casting vote except for when voting, by sector, on the level of delegation to schools. In the event of a tied vote on the level of delegation to schools – action will need to be decided.

7. Substitutes

- 7.1 If elected, members should, wherever possible, attend all meetings. If a member is unable to attend, he/she should seek to secure an appropriate substitute to attend the meeting on their behalf. Appropriate being a headteacher/senior member of school staff or a governor from the same constituency. Substitute members will count as part of the quorum. Substitutes attending in place of members should not become the norm.

8. Clerk

8.1 To be provided by the Local Authority, or appointed externally.

9. Frequency and Pattern of Meetings

9.1 There will be at least 4 meetings each year. The forum may wish to arrange additional meetings eg. to discuss budget issues in the autumn term; or it may wish to set up committees or sub-groups to consider specific issues.

9.2 Meetings can be held remotely; this includes telephone conferencing, video conferencing, live webcast and live interactive streaming.

9.3 Unscheduled or extraordinary meetings may be called to consider urgent business.

9.4 Alternatively, if it is not possible to schedule an additional meeting, a process such as clearance by email correspondence, allowing all Forum members to have an opportunity to participate, can be used.

9.5 The Chair cannot take a decision on behalf of the Schools Forum however, should an urgent issue arise which needs an immediate decision, the Chair will have the power to give the Local Authority an view on the issue.

9.6 There is a requirement that meetings of the Schools Forum will be public meetings.

10. Exclusion of Access by the Public to Meetings

10.1 Schools Forum meetings will be open to the public. Papers, agendas and minutes will be publicly available on the Local Authority website in advance of each meeting (add link to page here).

10.2 The public must be excluded from meetings whenever it is likely, in the view of the nature of the proceedings, that confidential or exempt information would be disclosed.

10.3 Confidential information means information given to the Local Authority by a government department on terms which forbid its public disclosure or information which cannot be publicly disclosed by court order.

10.4 Exempt information means information falling within (*number to be added in line with Westmorland & Furness Council constitution*) categories as set out in the Local Authority constitution.

11. Expenses

11.1 School members and non-school members will be entitled to claim reasonable travelling expenses.

- 11.2 Members of the Schools Forum will also be eligible to claim reasonable reimbursement for additional costs such as childcare costs, loss of earnings or costs incurred at school due to absence. Should the need arise, the definition of reasonable will be determined by the Chair on the advice of the Director of Children and Family Wellbeing.
- 11.3 Such costs will not be paid to LA Councillors who have a separate expenses system.

12. Declarations of Interest

- 12.1 Members of the Schools Forum will declare an interest in any individual proposal which directly affects a school at which they are employed, or at which they are a governor. In these circumstances members may participate fully in the discussion and any subsequent decision. However, where a member might have a pecuniary interest in any decision made they shall withdraw from the meeting, taking no part in the discussion and any subsequent decision.

13. Schools Forum Powers and Responsibilities

- 13.1 The Schools Forum powers and responsibilities are set out in a separate document, published by the Department for Education which is attached at Annex 1.

E&S/NS