

COMPOSITION OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM: UPDATE

To: Cambridgeshire Schools Forum
Date: 24th June 2016
From: Clerk to Schools Forum

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Cambridgeshire Schools Forum on 16th October 2016, the Forum received a report on the need to review its composition in order to comply with the requirements of The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012 and the Schools Forum and Operational Good Practice Guide.
- 1.2 This report provides an update on recent appointments and discussions at constituent groups.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND UPDATE

- 2.1 At its meeting on 16th October 2015, the Forum noted amendments required to its membership to achieve compliance with the regulations. An update on progress is provided below:

2.2 Schools Members: Maintained sector:

(i) Primary

The Chair of Cambridgeshire Primary Heads group (CPH) recently confirmed the election of two head teachers to fill the two vacancies for maintained primary school representatives on the Forum as follows:-

- Jackie North – Head teacher, Benwick Primary School; and
- Andy Matthews – Co-Head teacher, Hardwick and Cambourne Primary School.

(ii) Secondary

Following the conversion of Netherhall to an academy, Trumpington Community College is the only maintained secondary school in the County, and is operated by the Parkside Federation.

Andrew Hutchinson, Executive Principal, Parkside Federation has been appointed to fill the vacancy for a maintained secondary head teacher until such time as the college converts to academy status.

(iii) Special

Spring Common Special School converted to academy status and thus as Kim Taylor was no longer eligible to serve as the maintained special school representative. Subsequently, the Special Heads group appointed Lucie Calow to the vacancy.

2.3. Academies Members:

The “Academies members” category has been increased to comply with the regulations to include 1 academy special representative and 1 academy alternative provision representative.

(i) Special

It has been confirmed that this position has been filled by Kim Taylor. There are currently two special academies, Spring Common and The Centre School, Cottenham.

(ii) Alternative Provision

There is one alternative provision academy in the County, TBAP. Nathan Crawley-Lyons, Head of Business and Operations at TBAP has been appointed to fill this vacancy.

2.4. Election of Academies members

The Forum has previously noted the need to review arrangements for election of academies members given the requirements of the regulations for academies members to be elected by the academy proprietors.

Prior to the publication of the Government consultation paper which impacts on the future role of the Schools Forum (paragraph 2.5 below refers), discussions took place amongst constituent groups as follows:

Governor Advisory Group – As previously reported to Forum, The Governor Advisory Group (GAG) concurred that under the current arrangements governors are able to bring a wider view and degree of balance to the work of the Forum, noting that at present, those elected to the Forum are not aligned to a sector and are broadly representative of the phases. GAG felt it would be detrimental to the Forum to lose the experience and expertise of governors going forward and that the academy proprietors should be encouraged to recognise the balance and independence that governors can bring to the work of the Forum and should be invited to provide some reassurance that academy governors will be included amongst the academy members on the Forum. GAG also considered that academy governor representatives should be elected cross phase with representation broadly proportionate to pupil numbers. A short progress report was also received at the meeting of the Governor Advisory Group on 10th March 2016.

Cambridgeshire Secondary Heads (CSH) - CSH agreed that directors of academy trusts should be asked to give written consent for CSH to determine representation of academies on Cambridgeshire Schools Forum, so that a fair range of interests and views can be represented from across the County's secondary academies.

Cambridgeshire Primary Academy Forum (CPAF) - A new Cambridgeshire Primary Academy Forum has been established and Susannah Connell has been elected as Chair of the group. It is understood that a Primary Academy Chair group is also being formed. There is an expectation that these groups might play a role in electing the primary academy representative to the Schools Forum.

Cambridgeshire Academy Secondary Chairs – Mark Woods, together with Philip Hodgson (Chairman of the Schools Forum) and Dr Alan Rodger (Vice-Chairman) made a presentation on the work of the Forum at the Chairs' meeting on 7th March 2016. The meeting took place on the day of publication of the consultation on the national funding formula (paragraph 2.5 refers) which suggested a limited future role for Schools Forums. The Academy Chairs therefore expressed the view that there might be limited value in making amendments to the current arrangements for making appointments to the Forum.

Prior to publication of the consultation, officers wrote to Dr Tim Coulson, Regional Schools Commissioner for East of England, seeking assistance and guidance in identifying the proprietors of academies in the County and on how the co-ordinated agreement of these proprietors might be achieved to future arrangements for election of academies members when vacancies arise. Dr Coulson has recently responded saying he supports the proposals as set out in this report as a short term measure (until presumably any further guidance is published).

2.5 Future of Schools Forum – Consultation on National Funding Formula

As indicated in paragraph 2.4 above, and as Forum members will be aware, a consultation was published by the Government on the schools national funding formula in March. The consultation originally envisaged that with effect from 2019/20 there would be a hard funding formula with schools being funded directly. In the intervening period, there was to be a soft formula with Schools Forums carrying out their current role of advising on the schools budget and the local formula and making decisions about what spending could be held centrally in relation to schools. The consultation indicated that the Government did not intend to make changes to the make-up or functions of the Schools Forum during this period. In advance of introducing the hard formula, the Government proposed to carry out a review from first principles of the role, functions and membership of schools forum. The recent Government announcement no longer requiring maintained schools to compulsorily convert to becoming academies by a specified date means that further clarification guidance is still required on the future role of School Forums.

In the light of the revised position, Forum may feel there is little value in continuing with the review of arrangements for electing Academies members. There are a limited number of terms of office falling vacant in the two year transitional period and a way forward might be for head teachers to seek consent from the Academies proprietors to allow the constituent headteacher groups to continue to fill any vacancies for Academies members, provided that only Academies members are allowed to take part in any such elections.

In respect of Governors, the Governor positions do not fall vacant until 31 August 2018. Whilst the constitution does not currently split the Governor positions between maintained and academy members, two of the four Governors are currently from Academies in any event. There is one maintained Governor vacancy which can be filled by GAG. There therefore appears to be little point in consulting with Academies proprietors on future arrangements for electing Academies Governors.

If the Schools Forum agrees to take no further action in reviewing the election of Academies representatives, officers will simply update the Constitution to show the new composition agreed at the Forum's meeting held on 16th October 2015.

3.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

3.1 **The Schools Forum is asked to.**

1. **Note the update.**
2. **Consider whether it is content to take no further action on reviewing arrangements for electing academies members in the light of the limited future life of the Schools Forum and to request the head teachers to seek authority from Academies proprietors to allow head teachers constituent groups to continue to fill any vacancies for Academies members that arise.**