

Proposal for Reforming Academy Membership of Schools Forum



Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to set out a revised approach to the nomination, election and direction given to those school forum representatives, drawn from academy trusts, in accordance with the DfE Schools Forum regulations and the Forum constitution as set out by Cambridgeshire Local Authority (LA).

Current situation

Although the choice of academy representatives is required by DfE regulations and the Constitution of Forum to be influenced by Trust proprietors, this is not the case in Cambridgeshire and in fact there is little regard to ensuring a coherent, logical approach to the choice of academy Forum members. There is no consideration of how small or large trusts, primary or secondary are represented or in any way reflecting geographical spread across the county. In many respects, it is based upon willing volunteers stepping forward, via CSH and CPH, to fill vacancies when they arise, without consideration of whether they are the right people to enable CEOs and Boards to appropriately influence the key budget decisions made by the LA.

Principles

The following principles have guided the production of this paper:

1. Membership of Schools Forum, for both LA and academy categories, should ensure representation from all districts in Cambridgeshire, reflecting the diverse socio-economic nature of the county.
2. Membership from academies should ensure involvement in the selection process from the range of Trusts, from standalone academies to the large national groups that are represented in the LA area.
3. Membership from academies should be reflective of gender and diversity amongst the CCEO group and the wider pool of academy leadership from which it is drawn.
4. Academy representation must include special school, alternative provision and primary only MAT members.
5. There must be a clear link between the CCEO network, and the views expressed by academy representatives sitting on Forum, while allowing for independence of action in response to debate and discussion.
6. There should be an equitable distribution of MAT representation.

Process

Category of Academy Representative

Twelve members of Forum are drawn from academies, **ONE** of which must be from an alternative provision academy and **ONE** of which must be from academy special school provision. Members will then be drawn from the following categories:

ONE member each from the following Districts: City; South Cambridgeshire; East Cambridgeshire; Fenland and Huntingdonshire.

ONE member drawn from a category of primary only MATs but sitting as an academy representative

The remaining **FOUR** members are from a wider, non-designated 'General' category but should ideally be representative of: standalone and small MATS (0-5 schools); medium sized MATs (6-15); and large, regional or national groups (16+ schools). The Chair of the CCEO group will give direction to CEOs on ensuring appropriate spread of representation.

Nomination and Election

The LA Director of Education will inform the Chair of the CCEO group of any Forum vacancies and against which of the above categories. The Chair of CCEO will then invite nominations from all academy trusts, using contact details for CEOs provided by the LA Democratic Services Officer. CEOs will nominate themselves or a representative from their Trust following consultation with the Chair of their Trust Board. Nominations will be supported by a simple form setting out the qualities and qualification of the individual. CEOs should have regard to equality and diversity in the overall academy representation on Forum.

In the event of one nomination against a category, the CCEO group may appoint the representative, by common agreement. In the event of more than one nomination, the LA Director of Education will oversee an election process for which all CEOs of Trusts in Cambridgeshire (or their nominated local representatives) can cast one vote each, regardless of Trust size. Votes cast by trusts must be done following consultation by the Chair of the Trust Board acting as proprietor.

Trusts may not have more than **TWO** Forum members at any one time.

Terms of office will be **FOUR** years.

Status of Representatives

Academy representatives should be CEOs; however, they may nominate headteachers from their trust and clearly where a trust has more than one representative. All academy members act in the interest of the whole sector and the wider needs of children and young people in Cambridgeshire. Academy Governors, Trustees and Members should not be representatives.

Chair of Schools Forum

The CCEO group will consider which representatives it puts forward as nominations for the position of Chair. However, the choice of Chair is a matter for all Forum

members. The Chair will represent and be mindful of the view of all Forum members and will retain appropriate independence from the discussions at CCEO.

Relationship between CCEO Group and Forum Representatives

Proceeding a meeting of Forum (but not before the release of papers to all Forum members), the LA Director of Education will present an outline of the key issues for discussion at a meeting of the CCEO group, to which all Cambridgeshire CEOs or their representatives are invited to attend. The CCEO group may wish to take a view on the matters concerning school funding and other relevant matters and seek to give direction to their representatives. The purpose is not however to replicate the debate that will take place at Forum – Forum is the decision making body - but to provide a general view that will ensure that the majority of academies are speaking with one voice, enabling more efficient use of time at Forum.

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