Education & Skills Funding Agency

Schools forum self-assessment toolkit

This toolkit provides local authority officers and elected members with a framework for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their schools forum. The toolkit is designed as a set of questions which can be considered by individuals or the forum as a whole.

Question	Yes / No	Notes
1. Are meeting dates set in well advance and details (including time and venue) published in an accessible manner to enable interested parties to plan their attendance?	Yes	Meeting dates are agreed in advance. Website has been checked for compliance and this meets requirements of publishing details of meetings
2. Are meetings timed to coincide with key dates? (for example, reporting of funding formula)	Yes	Are we fully in line with council and DFE finance processes timelines in relation to meeting dates that are set?
3. Are meetings held in an accessible venue to enable observers to attend easily?	No	Venue is accessible but we need to confirm arrangements for observers – do they need to give advance notice of attending? How would we manage observers in the room currently used?
4. Is there a dedicated website link for schools forum, is it current and regularly updated?	Yes	Website has been checked for compliance and is up to date
5. Are the agenda and papers publicly available on the authority's website at least 6 working days in advance of the meeting?	Yes	Website has been checked for compliance and this is in place
6. Are the papers published as a single document, so that users can download easily?	Yes	Investigate use of Decision Time to manage the agenda. This allows members to download the agenda as a single document if required or open documents as each item on teh agenda is completed
7. If papers are tabled at the meeting, are they published on the website promptly after the meeting?	TBC	Rare for papers to be tabled without being part of the meeting pack. Have these been published promptly when this has been the case in the past?
8. Are draft minutes published a reasonable time (for example, within 2 to 3 weeks) after the meeting, rather than waiting until the following meeting?	TBC	Minutes are checked promptly after the meeting but are issued with the next meeting pack. In future these will be issued within 3 working weeks of the meeting

Question	Yes / No	Notes
9. Are the minutes clear and unambiguous, with sufficient detail to illustrate the discussions, without reporting verbatim every point made?	Yes	Minutes are a clear record of each meeting
10. Is the constitution clear and appropriate? Including for example: - a clear process for ensuring proportional representation - the process for electing members and their tenure - the timescale for review is clearly set out - the process for dealing with repetitive non attenders	TBC	This needs reviewing and sharing at the next meeting to ensure all Forum members are clear of these items
11. Is there an induction pack or training programme available for new members?	No	To be created for new members – information to be taken from DfE Good Practice Guidance for the induction pack
12. Is the election process clear and transparent? Representatives are elected only by the group they are representing, whether phase-specific for maintained schools, or by the proprietors of academies for academy members.		Membership is updated when changes occur in the number of pupils in Maintained or MAT schools but we need to confirm arrangements for voting
13. Do the papers contain clear recommendations and indicate in a consistent manner whether the item is for information, consultation or decision?	Yes	To make this clearer there will be a summary page at the front of meeting packs that summarises for each agenda item if it is for information, consultation or decision
14. Is it clear to observers who attendees at the forum are representing? (for example, by use of name plates, indicating sector)	Yes	Nameplates to be continued to be used in each meeting. General introductions are made routinely within the meeting and the Chair is aware that, if an 'observer' was present, introductions would include which part of the sector was being represented by attendees. The forum 'overview' document also contains a brief structure of whose who.

Question	Yes / No	Notes
15. Does the chair manage the meeting well, ensuring that all are able to contribute to the agenda items, that no bias towards any sector is evident and that no single person or organisation is able to dominate the discussion?	Yes	An open and respectful culture is maintained within meetings by the Chair. Attendees are given the opportunity to have their opinions heard without interruption or hostility.
16. Is there inclusive participation in discussions for all phases and types of members?	Yes	Each item on the agenda is followed by questions and discussions where appropriate.

Question	Yes / No	Notes
17. Do members actively canvass views and objectively represent their whole peer group at the forum and provide feedback after meetings?	TBC	Members to confirm their arrangements for doing this in time for these to be published as part of the next agenda
18. Where votes are required, is it clear who is eligible to vote for different items?	Yes	Information about which members are voting on agenda items to be included in summary of actions (see Question 13)
19. Where votes are required, are the arrangements for recording the votes clear and unambiguous?	Yes	Counted and recorded by Clerk
20. Is there a system in place for a decision if votes are tied?	No	This needs to be decided – possibly open up to wider Forum to vote or Casting Vote
21. Is the operational & good practice guide used to regularly review the forum's adherence to good practice?	No	Completion of this document is the first step of this process, but this guidance will be referred to by the Chair throughout the meeting cycle in future.