



North Tyneside Council

# Briefing note

**To:** Schools Forum

**Author:** Christina Ponting, ENGIE

**Date:** 16<sup>th</sup> May 2018

**Purpose of the Paper:**

Information	√
Consultation	
Decision	√

**Title of Briefing:** Schools Forum Self-Assessment Toolkit 2018

## Background

In May 2017, it was recommended to Schools Forum that in accordance with EFA Guidance Forum should have in place an Action Plan (EFA Guidance 2015) noting its progress against 21 key points used to demonstrate the effectiveness of Schools Forums. Prior to this North Tyneside Schools Forum whilst meeting the majority of the good practice guidance did not have in place a record of its progress. A draft action plan was presented in May 2017 and Forum members were asked to note and agree the action plan as being an accurate assessment of how they believed Forum were performing against the 21 EFA recommendations.

It was also agreed that this plan would be reviewed annually – May 2018.

## Current Position:

The EFA guidance continues to endorse the use of a self-assessment toolkit and the template available remains the March 2015 version (as used in May 2017). The self-assessment toolkit from May 2017 has subsequently been reviewed and the recommended updates are noted in the attached documents - one with tracked changes and one without the latter being the recommended for adoption from May 2018.

The majority of changes are formatting and minor updates, but it is also noted that one outstanding action from May 2017 is now concluded (item 17, a Governors Schools Forum network group to better support Governors in their role in Forum has been established from May 18. One item action remains outstanding (Item 13 to better support members with a clear direction on what is being asked of them / purpose of the paper. This was recommended in May 2017 and follows a similar model used with the Authority, e.g.:

Purpose of the Paper:

Information	√
Consultation	√
Decision	√

This is not consistently being applied and will be further ensured/ reviewed from September 2018.

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It is also proposed that this self-assessment toolkit operates from May 2018 to September 2019 to allow the tool kit to be better aligned to the forward plan.

**Recommendations:**

Schools Forum having read this report and clearly understood the information provided consider this report and note the following:

1. Note the changes presented from the 2017 to 2018 self-assessment toolkit.
2. Agree that the one outstanding action – item 13 is further developed from September 2018.
3. Note that the next review of the self-assessment toolkit will take place and be presented to Forum in September 2019 in line with the revised forward plan.

## Schools Forum Self-assessment Toolkit

This toolkit is provided by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and 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.

### Noted below is the North Tyneside Schools Forum Self Assessment

As at May 2017 (next review date ~~September~~ May 2019)

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	A meeting timetable is agreed in September each year for the following Academic Year and the dates are confirmed to members, published on the dedicated website. Additionally all dates are communicated electronically to all non-member Head teachers, Chair of Governors and other stakeholder groups so that awareness of the dates is known in advance of the meetings.
2. Are meetings timed to coincide with key dates? (e.g. reporting of funding formula)	Yes	<del>From September 2018,</del> 48 meetings take place per year and are timetabled to fit in with the annual/forward plan and the cycle of decisions/considerations that need to be undertaken.
3. Are meetings held in an accessible venue to enable observers to attend easily?	Yes	They are held at a central location which is a public building and fully accessible for all. The dates and times of the meeting are published in advance via the website, updated to other stakeholders and the meetings are open to the public. Individuals when they become a Forum member are provided with an induction plus any additional support they need regarding access to both the building/papers/etc – this is discussed/factored at induction and agreed support is provided thereafter/as the need arises.  <del>Members of the public/non-Forum members are asked to confirm when they wish to attend and to highlight if they have any access needs that will need to be supported.</del>
4. Is there a dedicated website link for schools forum; is it current and regularly updated?	Yes	The website there is a dedicated page within the North Tyneside Council site that is accessible externally. The website is updated both before and after each meeting regarding documents to be/which have been discussed. In addition the most up to date/recent reference documents are also maintained on the website and updated as and when required. <del>The website is also used by all Schools Forum members to access papers/reports, etc.</del>
5. Are the agenda and papers publicly available on the authority's website at least 6 working days in advance of the meeting?	Yes	The papers are published a week (7 calendar days) before the meeting on the website and notified to members.
6. Are the papers published as a	No	The papers are published on a dedicated page within the website for

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Question	Yes / No	Notes
single document, so that users can download easily?		<p>each meeting; this ensures that all papers relating to that meeting are grouped together and can either be printed or easily access via a tablet or PC during the meeting. Members have been asked their views on this and prefer papers being provided/grouped in this way (and not within one dedicated document) as it also allows <u>view specific them</u> referencing papers more easily during the meeting electronically and also if they wish to refer back to previous meetings, <u>etc and papers</u>.</p> <p>Filing of the documents in this way does also help with induction for new members as it allows previous meeting minutes, agenda's and notes to be easily accessed and references and support new <del>members in</del> better understanding the role of Forum and their role and responsibilities within it.</p>
7. If papers are tabled at the meeting, are they published on the website promptly after the meeting?	Yes	Please see the comment re point 5 above, papers are published in advance of the meeting – it is therefore the exception that papers are presented at the meeting, but where this occurs the papers are then added to the website page linked to the specific meeting.
8. Are draft minutes published a reasonable time (e.g. within 2-3 weeks) after the meeting, rather than waiting until the following meeting?	Yes	<p><u>Action notes are published within one week of the meeting taking place (this will move to two weeks in September 2018). Minutes are made available at least one week before the meeting and published on the website.</u></p> <p><del>Due to the frequency of the meetings (being more regular) than required a briefing note is also sometimes published in the event that minutes may be delayed. However, the minutes are always made available a minimum of a week before the meeting and published on the website. Members are also alerted by email when both minutes and papers are published and the link to the appropriate website page is included in the email. Papers copies are also made available for members at the meeting.</del></p>
9. Are the minutes clear and unambiguous, with sufficient detail to illustrate the discussions, without reporting verbatim every point made?	Yes	<p><del>A note of the discussion and action points are</del> <u>A note of the discussion and action points is noted.</u></p>
10. Is the constitution clear and appropriate? Including eg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a clear process for ensuring proportional representation</li> <li>- the process for electing members and their tenure</li> <li>- the timescale for review is clearly set out</li> <li>- the process for dealing with repetitive non</li> </ul>	Yes	<p>All of this is included in the Constitution and in addition there is a guidance note/member's handbook which further explains how Forum works in practice.</p> <p>Members are also reminded when a vacancy arises, <u>this is noted in the Constitution and membership is reviewed at every meeting to ensure appropriate representation.</u> and as part of an annual reminder of how the membership is determined, how elections operate, terms of office and non attendance.</p> <p>The Constitution is reviewed annually (or as updates require). The <u>last review took place in May 2017. There are standard agenda</u></p>

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Question	Yes / No	Notes
attenders		<u>items noted on each meeting agenda to support/ clarify understanding.</u>
11. Is there an induction pack or training programme available for new members?	Yes	There is an induction programme and member's handbook which is updated at periodic/regular intervals to ensure that after induction the handbook remains a useful reference tool for new and existing members.
12. Is the election process clear and transparent? i.e. 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.	Yes	There is a clear process for the election of members which is also referenced in the Constitution. Further detail on the actual practice is noted in the member's handbook.
13. Do the papers contain clear recommendations and indicate in a consistent manner whether the item is for information, consultation or decision?	Yes	All papers presented have a summary at the end of the paper noting what Schools Forum are being asked to do, but it is not clear if the paper is being presented for information, consultation or a decision initially. <u>It was recommended that this was added as a This additional clarity will be added as a standard requirement for all papers from September 2017 – this has not been consistently applied and will be further addressed from September 2018.</u>
14. Is it clear to observers who attendees at the forum are representing? (eg by use of name plates, indicating sector)	Yes	All members have name plates which indicate their name and role, additionally a colour coding indicating what phase/sector they represent is also noted. This not only supports observers but also provides clarity to members and confirms what they are able to vote on where a vote is necessary.
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	A Chair is appointed on an annual basis, agreed by the members. The Chair is clear on their role and responsibilities and ensures that the meetings provide opportunity for all members to equally share views and opinions.
16. Is there inclusive participation in discussions for all phases and types of members?	Yes	Please see comments above – point 15. Additionally sub groups are formed where the need arises and each of the groups formed have the opportunity for members to <u>participate</u> and actively contribute.
17. Do members actively canvass views and objectively represent their whole peer group at the forum and	Yes	The Forum membership is set up to support members being able to canvass/discuss the matters in hand with the colleagues they are representing. Networking, awareness and knowledge share opportunities are also supported/facilitated

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Question	Yes / No	Notes
provide feed back after meetings?		via the Local Authority for non-school colleagues. A network group/forum for Governor representatives has been established from May 2018, identified as an action for further development.
18. Where votes are required, is it clear who is eligible to vote for different items?	Yes	Please see comments above – point 14.
19. Where votes are required, are the arrangements for recording the votes clear and unambiguous?	Yes	Members are clear on voting arrangements and the name cards also support this, both induction and the member's handbook also support the clarity of understanding. <u>Members are provided with further guidance on how voting operates periodically (the last update being provided in December 2017). Members continue to be</u> Additionally before given 'point-in-time' support as/ when a vote is taken and this included members are reminded of what is being voted for and who is eligible to vote.
20. Is there a system in place for a decision if votes are tied?	Yes	<p>If there is a tied vote members are asked if they wish to reconsider their vote or to receive further information to allow them to reflect on their original vote. Dependent upon the views of the member's further information may be presented within the meeting or may be deferred for receipt of additional information to a further meeting. A subsequent vote will then take place (where additional information/ clarity are needed outside of the meeting the vote may need to be deferred until further information has been provided), either within the original meeting if further information has been provided to allow this to happen) or at a following meeting.</p> <p>If a vote remains tied the status quo is maintained, this is also referenced in the Constitution. If members did not wish for the status quo to be maintained a further vote/votes could continue until a majority vote was arrived at.</p>
21. Is the operational & good practice guide used to regularly review the forum's adherence to good practice?	Yes	<p>This document is hosted in the Forum website and also used to inform the member's induction and handbook. Additionally, all members receive a copy of the documents noted below as they are appointed onto Forum. All Forum members are also reminded and provided with an electronic link via email updates as documents with updates as documents are revised, any changes would be highlighted to members for their information/views.</p> <p>New Forum Members are supported to access an induction 'pack' of information from the dedicated website (and as required would re receive a paper 'pack' if needed). The</p>

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		<p>induction 'pack' includes <u>including</u> dates of meetings, current membership/ representation, Constitution, members handbook, quick reference guide, EFA operational and good practice guide. (*)</p> <p>(*These documents are all listed on the dedicated website alongside an introduction to Forum and how it operates including where to seek more information, how to attend meetings, how to express an interest in being a Forum member. The website is also a public website and all published papers are on the website – currently dating back to 2014).</p>

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# Schools Forum Self-assessment Toolkit

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2. Are meetings timed to coincide with key dates? (e.g. reporting of funding formula)	Yes	From September 2018, 4 meetings take place per year and are timetabled to fit in with the annual/ forward plan and the cycle of decisions/ considerations that need to be undertaken.
3. Are meetings held in an accessible venue to enable observers to attend easily?	Yes	<p>They are held at a central location which is a public building and fully accessible for all. The dates and times of the meeting are published in advance via the website, updated to other stakeholders and the meetings are open to the public. Individuals when they become a Forum member are provided with an induction plus any additional support they need regarding access to the building/ papers/ etc. – this is discussed/ factored at induction and agreed support is provided thereafter/ as the need arises.</p> <p>Members of the public/ non Forum members are asked to confirm when they wish to attend and to highlight if they have any access needs that will need to be supported.</p>
4. Is there a dedicated website link for schools forum; is it current and regularly updated?	Yes	The website there is a dedicated page within the North Tyneside Council site that is accessible externally. The website is updated before each meeting regarding documents to be discussed. In addition reference documents are also maintained on the website and updated as and when required. .
5. Are the agenda and papers publicly available on the authority's website at least 6 working days in advance of the meeting?	Yes	The papers are published a week (7 calendar days) before the meeting on the website and notified to members.
6. Are the papers published as a single document, so that users can download easily?	No	The papers are published on a dedicated page within the website for each meeting; this ensures that all papers relating to that meeting are grouped together and can either be printed or easily access via a

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		<p>tablet or PC during the meeting. Members have been asked their views on this and prefer papers being provided/ grouped in this way (and not within one dedicated document) as it allows them to view specific papers more easily during the meeting and also as they wish to refer back to specific papers for previous meetings, etc.</p> <p>Filing of the documents in this way does also helps with induction for new members as it allows previous meeting minutes, agenda's and specific papers to be accessed and referenced to support better understand the role of Forum and their role and responsibilities within it.</p>
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8. Are draft minutes published a reasonable time (e.g. within 2-3 weeks) after the meeting, rather than waiting until the following meeting?	Yes	<p>Action notes are published within one week of the meeting taking place (this will move to two-weeks in September 2018).</p> <p>Minutes are made available at least a week before the meeting and published on the website.</p>
9. Are the minutes clear and unambiguous, with sufficient detail to illustrate the discussions, without reporting verbatim every point made?	Yes	A note of the discussion and action points is noted.
10. Is the constitution clear and appropriate? Including eg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- a clear process for ensuring proportional representation</li> <li>- the process for electing members and their tenure</li> <li>- the timescale for review is clearly set out</li> <li>- the process for dealing with repetitive non attenders</li> </ul>	Yes	<p>All of this is included in the Constitution and in addition there is a guidance note/ member's handbook which further explains how Forum works in practice.</p> <p>Members are advised when a vacancy arises, this is noted in the Constitution and membership is reviewed at every meeting to ensure appropriate representation. The Constitution is reviewed annually (or as updates require).</p> <p>There are standard agenda items noted on each meeting agenda to support / clarify understanding.</p>
11. Is there an induction pack or training programme available for new members?	Yes	There is an induction programme and member's handbook which is updated at periodic/regular intervals to ensure that after induction the handbook remains a useful reference tool for new and existing members.
12. Is the election process clear and transparent? i.e. representatives are elected only by the group they are	Yes	There is a clear process for the election of members which is also referenced in the Constitution and further detail on the actual practice is noted in the member's handbook.

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13. Do the papers contain clear recommendations and indicate in a consistent manner whether the item is for information, consultation or decision?	Yes	All papers presented have a summary at the end of the paper noting what Schools Forum are being asked to do, but it is not clear if the paper is being presented for information, consultation or a decision initially. It was recommended that this was added as a standard requirement for all papers from September 2017 – this has not been consistently applied and will be further addressed from September 2018.
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16. Is there inclusive participation in discussions for all phases and types of members?	Yes	Please see comments above – point 15. Additionally sub groups are formed where the need arises and each of the groups formed have the opportunity for members to participate and actively contribute.
17. Do members actively canvass views and objectively represent their whole peer group at the forum and provide feed back after meetings?	Yes	The Forum membership is set up to support members being able to canvass/ discuss the matters in hand with the colleagues they are representing. Networking, awareness and knowledge share opportunities are also supported/ facilitated via the Local Authority for non-school colleagues. A network group/ forum for Governor representatives have been established from May 2018.
18. Where votes are required, is it clear who is eligible to vote for different items?	Yes	Please see comments above – point 14.
19. Where votes are required, are the arrangements for recording the votes clear and unambiguous?	Yes	Members will continue to be given 'point-in-time' support as/ when members need to undertake a vote. Members are clear on voting arrangements and the name cards also support this, both induction and the member's handbook also support the clarity of understanding. Members

Question	Yes / No	Notes
		are provided with further guidance on how voting operates periodically (the last update being provided in December 2017). Members continue to be given 'point-in-time' support as/ when a vote is taken and this included what is being voted for and who is eligible to vote.
20. Is there a system in place for a decision if votes are tied?	Yes	<p>If there is a tied vote members are asked if they wish to reconsider their vote or to receive further information to allow them to reflect on their original vote. Dependent upon the views of the member's further information may be presented within the meeting or may be deferred for receipt of additional information. A subsequent vote will then take place (where additional information/ clarity are needed outside of the meeting the vote may need to be deferred until further information has been provided).</p> <p>If a vote remains tied the status quo is maintained, this is noted within the Constitution. .</p>
21. Is the operational & good practice guide used to regularly review the forum's adherence to good practice?	Yes	<p>This document is hosted in the Forum website and also used to inform the member's induction and handbook. Additionally, all members receive a copy of the documents noted below as they are appointed onto Forum. All Forum members are also reminded and provided with updates as documents are revised, any changes being noted to members for their information/ views.</p> <p>New Forum Members are supported to access an induction 'pack' including dates of meetings, current membership/ representation, Constitution, members handbook, quick reference guide, EFA operational and good practice guide. (*)</p> <p>(*These documents are all listed on the dedicated website alongside an introduction to Forum and how it operates including where to seek more information, how to attend meetings, how to express an interest in being a Forum member. The website is also a public website and all published papers are on the website – currently dating back to 2014).</p>