**London Borough of Tower Hamlets**

**School Forum**

**Executive Summary**

**AGENDA ITEM 6**

**Title of report: Induction of New Forum Members**

**Author of the paper: Steve Worth**

**Officer to present the paper to School Forum: Steve Worth**

**Details on who has been consulted with on this paper to date:**

**Sailesh Patel**

**Exec Summary:**

This report introduces the Schools Forum to new members and provides them with the Forum Constitution, an introduction to the powers and responsibilities of the Forum and an introduction to the Dedicated Schools Grant. It proposes an induction session for new members, which existing members will also be welcome to attend.

**Action Required:**

Schools Forum is invited to note the report and indicate interest in an induction session.

1. **Background.**
   1. Schools forums are statutory bodies established by regulation. The current legislation is set out in The Schools Forums (England) Regulations 2012.
   2. The role of a schools forum is to be a statutory consultative body in matters relating to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) of an authority. The local authority must consult its schools forum on matters concerning the funding of schools and early years settings and on financial matters relating to the Schools Budget. A forum has the power to agree the transfer, central retention and de-delegation of elements of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).
   3. The Forum includes representatives from both the maintained and academy sectors as local decisions on the schools funding formula and central retention affect both sectors.
   4. The Council, in consultation with Forum members, is responsible for determining the structure of the Forum; the membership of which should be kept under regular review to ensure compliance with regulations and to reflect the changing pattern of provision within the local community of schools.
2. **Membership**.
   1. Regulations are not prescriptive as to the size of a forum but set out certain requirements, these are:

* A forum must include certain non-school representatives. These include a representative of the early years Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers and a representative of the providers of 16-19 education.
* Non-school members must not exceed one third of the total membership of a forum.
* School members include representatives of each type of establishment set out in the next point. There must be at least one governor school representative and one headteacher school representative (the term headteacher includes members of the senior leadership team).
* School representatives of each type of nursery to 16-year-old provision must be appointed and where an academy exists as well as a maintained establishment there must be a representative from each. Such provision covers:
  + Mainstream schools and academies,
  + Nursery schools,
  + Special schools and academies,
  + Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) whether maintained or academy.
* Mainstream representatives should be ‘broadly proportionate’ to the numbers of pupils on roll in the following categories.
  + Primary maintained to secondary maintained,
  + Maintained to academy.
* There is no requirement for academy representatives to reflect the primary/secondary split in academy rolls but it is regarded as good practice to do so.

1. **Constitution.**
   1. The Council, in consultation with the Forum, is also responsible for agreeing the constitution; this is attached as Appendix 1.
2. **Responsibilities.** 
   1. The responsibility for deciding how the DSG is utilised and distributed is split between the Council and the Forum. The section on Terms of Reference in Appendix 1 sets this out for Tower Hamlets and the Education and Skills Funding Agency’s (ESFA’s) matrix of the powers and responsibilities of forums is set out in Appendix 2.
   2. In summary, the Council decides the schools and early years funding formulae, but must consult schools and the Schools Forum before doing so. The Council also decides how the High Needs Block (HNB), see Section 6, is allocated, but prior consultation with the Forum is considered good practice. The Council must seek the Forum’s agreement to its proposals for all other elements of the DSG. Where a dispute arises between a Local Authority (LA) and its Forum the LA may appeal to the Secretary of State for Education.
3. **Voting.** 
   1. Not all members can vote on all matters that come before the Forum. Generally, only those members representing constituencies affected by the decision will be able to vote, although early years providers can vote on the schools funding formula and vice versa. The eligibility of members to vote is set out in Annex 2 to the Constitution.
   2. When voting does take place a simple majority is required, with the Chair having a casting vote in the event of a tie.
4. **The Dedicated Schools Grant.**
   1. This is the main focus of the Forum’s work. The DSG is a ring-fenced grant that must be spent in line with the requirements set out in the School and Early Years Finance Regulations. The DSG is split into four blocks:

* The Schools Block (SB). The SB is fully allocated to schools through the Schools Funding Formula. The Forum can agree to set aside a Growth Fund and a Falling Rolls Fund, which are distributed to schools during the course of the year. The SB includes funding for local academies and free schools; the formula allocations for these are removed (recouped) from the DSG and paid directly to the institutions by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Schools Forum can agree to de-delegate funding from maintained schools for use centrally for the benefit of maintained schools.
* Central Schools Services Block (CSSB). This is to fund ongoing central services such as Admissions and a reducing level of historic commitments. The CSSB is reducing annually as the Block is moved to a formulaic distribution. It can be supplemented if Forum agrees to de-delegate funding from maintained schools for specific purposes. The CSSB requires Forum approval annually.
* High Needs Block (HNB). This funds the additional cost of pupils with high needs. It includes the funding of places in special schools, alternative provision and Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) provision. It also provides top-up funding for pupils with special needs in mainstream provision. The HNB covers students in further education to the age of 25. The ESFA recoups funding in respect of academies and other direct payments. The Local Authority decides how this block is used but it is recommended practice to discuss with the Forum.
* Early Years Block (EYB). The majority of this is delegated to maintained schools, nursery schools and providers in the PVI sector. It covers the statutory universal provision of part-time education to all three and four year olds, the provision of full-time education for three and four year olds with working parents and the provision of part-time education to eligible two-year olds. The Local Authority (LA) can retain 5% of three and four year old funding to provide central services, the use of which requires Forum permission. The amount centrally retained can be increased if dispensation is given by the Secretary of State for Education. The EYB also contains specific funds such as the Disability Access Fund.
  1. A detailed look at the working of the DSG, together with the value of its various elements, is set out in Appendix 3. The values relate to the original DSG as notified at the start of the financial year.

1. **Further Training.** 
   1. If members wish, a two hour briefing session can be offered, looking at the DSG and the responsibilities of the Forum. New and existing members of the Forum would be welcome to attend.