

Leicestershire Schools Forum Self-Assessment – September 2023

This document assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the school’s forum and presents a local authority response to 21 questions set by the DfE within their published [Schools Forum Self-Assessment Toolkit](#):

Question	Yes / No	Notes – Completed by Forum Chair	LA Response
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting dates are normally confirmed at the end of the meeting. Minutes are normally published within 2weeks of the meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aim is to set meetings for the academic year, dates are confirmed in minutes of meetings. No further action required
2. Are meetings timed to coincide with key dates? (for example, reporting of funding formula)	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historically, meeting dates have moved if key dates or deadlines require it. OR we have had an ‘extra’ meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, dates coincide with the need for decisions in respect of the budget, outturn data and NFF provisional announcement Additional meetings added when specifically required which for 2023 will include a late November meeting to look at new requirements for 2024/24 in respect of revision to growth policy and Notional SEN review No further action required
3. Are meetings held in an accessible venue to enable observers to attend easily?	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings are still in teams currently, collectively it may benefit from being in a face to face setting at least half of the time so we can meet and interact with each other. Possibly back to Beaumanor? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to hold meetings virtually currently expires in March 2024. The recent induction session was offered in face with limited take up resulting in a virtual only session Facilities for hybrid meetings is limited Further actions – Forum members

Question	Yes / No	Notes – Completed by Forum Chair	LA Response
			<p>will be canvassed for preference for virtual or face to face. Hybrid options will be explored</p>
<p>4. Is there a dedicated website link for schools forum, is it current and regularly updated?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a link. • Could potentially be updated with key information for induction, purpose of forum, decision capabilities etc. • Possibly even a role profile for a forum member and a up to date list with contacts of who represents which area of education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The website has been in place for a number of years and needs to be reviewed for appropriate information and updated where necessary • Needs to be in line with LCC standard practice • Some changes have been made to ensure that membership and the role of the forum are up to date • Further Action – Finance Business Partner to review and instigate any changes, an annual review will be undertaken
<p>5. Are the agenda and papers publicly available on the authority’s website at least 6 working days in advance of the meeting?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always emailed out with plenty of time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Papers published in accordance with LCC corporate standard for committee papers • No further action necessary
<p>6. Are the papers published as a single document, so that users can download easily?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, normally a single PDF which makes it very accessible for all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Papers published in accordance with LCC corporate standard for committee papers • No further action necessary
<p>7. If papers are tabled at the meeting, are they published on the website promptly after the meeting?</p>	<p>Unsure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not sure I can remember items ever being tabled, but should they be, then they must be published on the website promptly • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is not routine process and only done in exceptional circumstances • There have been exceptions requiring papers to be tabled at meetings. This has included the outcome of consultation on a school

Question	Yes / No	Notes – Completed by Forum Chair	LA Response
			<p>block transfer where timing has been exceptionally short and in the development of the former High Needs Development plan and now TSIL where issues have been exceptionally fast moving.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Unsure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have never seen draft minutes, but these are usually only sent to the chair and lead executive, i.e., Jenny. • Q: Are all minute’s draft, until verified at the next meeting? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft minutes are not published, minutes are included in the report pack for the following meeting and checked for accuracy and matters arising • No further action required, draft minutes were circulated to Chair and Vice-Chair for the June 2023 meeting and will be continued
<p>9. Are the minutes clear and unambiguous, with sufficient detail to illustrate the discussions, without reporting verbatim every point made?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, they are also checked via page number in each meeting for any inaccuracy. Think they provide a good summary. • They are always agreed before becoming a record. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed, it should be noted that minutes for LCC constitutional committees record only decisions and the reasons for them. • No further action required
<p>10. Is the constitution clear and appropriate? Including for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	<p>No</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think a refresh of all key elements of point 10 for all would be appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed. The constitution has not been reviewed for a number of years • Further action – Finance Business Partner to review constitution and to include all bullet points under question 10. Please note any changes to the constitution require the approval of the County Councils Cabinet.

Question	Yes / No	Notes – Completed by Forum Chair	LA Response
repetitive non attenders			
11. Is there an induction pack or training programme available for new members?	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been a recent improvement with this. • Don't think it's a current set process, might be worth adding something on the GDS training packages / Targeted invitation for new forum members and noting on EEP newsletter? • Members feel that an induction should be made compulsory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools Forum has had a relatively stable membership over previous years, However, this point was significantly highlighted by a large membership turnover in the past year. • Individual induction for members has routinely been offered • Induction materials have been developed and an induction session arranged which had limited attendance • Further actions – new members will be invited to targeted induction sessions

Question	Yes / No	Notes – Completed by Forum Chair	LA Response
<p>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.</p>	<p>No</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wouldn't say all members feel they have a good handle on this. • I would also say that non-forum members don't know how to become a member easily. • I accept than not all turned up for the induction when invited but before the induction some of the older members (me) never got that when we started. • Think we need to develop a starter/induction pack. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process for electing / nominating members is set out within the constitution • The constitution also includes a Code of Conduct for both members and the LA setting out clear expectation. • Communication of Schools Forum business has been strengthened. In advance of meetings an alert is now in place to the business to be conducted at meetings and the decisions made. Both are included in both governor and headteacher briefings • Induction pack is now in place • Further actions – revise election / nomination process to ensure it remains applicable
<p>13. Do the papers contain clear recommendations and indicate in a consistent manner whether the item is for information, consultation or decision?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think they have always done this, the most recent change with a box at the start of each section with who is expected to make decision or vote is clearer. • Think it would be good for forum members to know each other's background a bit to give each other comfort of background knowledge. • Will share WPAs governor pack as a suggestion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports have included two tables. The first sets out what is being requested from Forum e.g. decision or noting required and a second setting out which groups of Forum are being asked for that action. This has been in place for a number of years and previously recognised by the DfE as good practice. • Further actions – Forum members to consider whether individual profiles would be helpful and informative. If the decision is 'yes' them it incumbent upon individual members to ensure they are

Question	Yes / No	Notes – Completed by Forum Chair	LA Response
			<p>maintained and kept up to date. The Schools Forum area of the LCC website is the only place these could be stored so members need to be comfortable with this information being in the public domain.</p>
<p>14. Is it clear to observers who attendees at the forum are representing? (for example, by use of name plates, indicating sector)</p>	<p>Not on Teams, Yes in face to face meetings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes in face to face situations. • No on teams, as people don't title themselves as 'Martin Towers, Secondary Representative'. • Members discussed meetings being held virtually or in person. Whilst in person meetings were thought to be a good idea to be able to meet people, it was more efficient to hold virtual meetings so that people would not have to travel and therefore more easily attend. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name plaques are in place for face to face meetings • June meeting introduced segregated voting procedure via Teams for specific groups
<p>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?</p>	<p>Work in progress, first meeting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues were incurred at the commencement of the 2022/23 academic year where no nominations for either chair or vice chair were received, and the issue continued to the February meeting but is now resolved. The new Chair is being supported and is actively contributing to the further development of Schools Forum • No further action required

Question	Yes / No	Notes – Completed by Forum Chair	LA Response
<p>16. Is there inclusive participation in discussions for all phases and types of members?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think there are ample opportunities for people to speak up. • Think it takes time for new people, took me 12 months before I thought I could speak up. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation is encouraged both for individuals and membership groups including the ability for non-participating substitutes. • Members need to be aware of the requirements of the role and be prepared to fully undertake this • Expectation are set out both within the constitution and the code of practice included in it. • Further actions – any member of Schools Forum unclear about their role and how to undertake it to contact the Finance Business Partner for clarification
<p>17. Do members actively canvass views and objectively represent their whole peer group at the forum and provide feedback after meetings?</p>	<p>Mixed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think some do, some don't. • Think this is a clear area of future development. • Think members and LCC need to work on members having the ability to contact their peer group easily. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a key requirement for all members who serve on Schools Forum to represent the views of the groups that they are elected / nominated to represent • Full membership details for all members have been provided which includes email addresses for communication within groups. • A dedicated email inbox has recently been set up where the LA can facilitate communication through members of within headteacher / governor briefings if requested • Further actions, Schools Forum members to consider the best method for communicating with

Question	Yes / No	Notes – Completed by Forum Chair	LA Response
			<p>the groups they represent including area in which the LA may be able to facilitate this</p>
18. Where votes are required, is it clear who is eligible to vote for different items?	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the change with the minutes, I would say yes. • Think on Teams is hard to know who needs to vote for certain items? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully covered above in Q 13 & Q14 • No further action required
19. Where votes are required, are the arrangements for recording the votes clear and unambiguous?	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly in minutes or a Teams poll is used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Team poll was recently included • For face to face meetings votes are recorded as per the decision needed • No further action required
20. Is there a system in place for a decision if votes are tied?	Unsure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't know this, does the Chair have a casting vote? • Some members wondered how on a potential contentious issue a chair would remain objective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The constitution makes no provision for this situation • Further actions – constitution review to confer a casting vote for the Chair. Note – any changes to the constitution require the approval of the County Councils' Cabinet
21. Is the operational & good practice guide used to regularly review the forum's adherence to good practice?	Not to my knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this the constitution? • What does a regular review look like? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This has been used in the past but not regularly or routinely • Further actions – implement a review on an annual basis to ensure Forum operates effectively

Source – Questions 1 - 21 and columns 1 -3 are as per the DfE's Schools Forum self-assessment toolkit