

Meeting	Schools Finance Forum
Date	7 February 2022
Title	The Role and Constitution of the Forum
Author	Siôn Huws – Propriety and Elections Manager
Purpose	Presented for information

Background

1. In 2003 all local authorities in Wales were required to establish a school finance forum, in accordance with the requirements of the School Forums (Wales) Regulations 2003.

2. The Welsh Government issued guidance for establishing forums in 2003 (*'Guidance on the Establishment of School Forums in Wales'*). In 2011, following an independent review of the effectiveness of school forums in Wales, the 'Best Practice Guide for School Forums in Wales' was published (copy appended).

Membership of the Forum

3. The regulations provide that the forum must have at least 15 members. Membership is divided into two categories:

(1) The authority must appoint 'school members' i.e. members elected to represent governing bodies or head teachers of schools maintained by the authority. The authority must make arrangements to ensure that the school members represent primary and secondary schools proportionately and that all categories of school within the authority are represented. The authority must also seek to ensure that so far as practicable at least one school members is a parent governor.

(2) The authority may also decide to appoint 'non-schools members'. No more than 25% of forum members can be non-school members, and this includes representatives of the authority itself, should the authority decide to have representatives on the forum.

4. In appointing non-schools members, the authority must, if it considers that it would be appropriate to do so, seek nominations from:

(a) the Diocesan Board of Education for any diocese of the Church in Wales any part of which is comprised in the relevant authority's area;

(b) the bishop of any Roman Catholic Church diocese any part of which is comprised in the relevant authority's area; and

(c) teaching and other trade unions with members working in Wales.

5. There are also provisions allowing the authority to invite a particular body to nominate a person to attend meetings of the forum as an observer.

The Membership of Gwynedd Council's School Finance Forum

6. When establishing the Forum in 2003 the Gwynedd Council Board decided on the following membership:

School Members

- 6 Governors (2 from each area) nominated by the Federation of Governors
- 4 Secondary Headteachers, to be selected by the Secondary Strategy Group.
- 6 Primary Headteachers, - 2 to represent each area and be selected by the Primary Advisory Group.
- 1 Headteacher representing special schools
- 1 Headteacher representing voluntary schools.

Non-school Members

- 1 member representing the Unions Forum.
- 1 Diocesan member.
- Education Portfolio Holder on the Council Board.
- Finance Portfolio Holder on the Council Board.
- Strategy Director Development.
- Strategy Director Resources.

(It should be noted that the Strategic Directors posts no longer exist in the Council)

The Forum's Role

7. Under the regulations, the authority must consult with the Forum on the following:

- Annually, in relation to its functions relating to the schools budget and changes to their financial plans. An authority may also consult the forum on any matters relating to the financing of schools, as it thinks fit.
- In relation to changes to the schools funding formula.
- In relation to contracts for supplies and services that go beyond the prescribed purchasing threshold.

8. Following on from the above advisory role, school finance forums are also required to report to the governing bodies of schools maintained by the authority on the results of any consultation undertaken.

Meetings

9. Authorities must decide the frequency and timing of meetings so as to promote the business of school forums.

10. The Welsh Assembly Government has recommended that school forums should meet at least each term and that more regular meetings be arranged to discuss any significant issues that arise. It has also stated that forum meetings would benefit from following the local authority financial cycle so that the schools forums can contribute to decision making at the appropriate times.