

School Forum 28th June 2012

1. School Forum constitution and business arrangements
2. School Forum de delegation powers

As part of the changes to school funding the DfE has also suggested a number of changes to the way that the school forum conducts business. The DfE are consulting on these proposals. (see appendix 1)

In Torbay we already follow many of the recommended changes such as placing minutes and reports on the council website, opening school forum meetings to the public and not having councillors and officers as members of the Forum. However there are other recommendations which will need to be considered such as the overall size of the forum and representation.

It is important to note that within the proposed changes to school funding there is a presumption of greater delegation. For example from April 2013 a number of budgets that have been spent on centrally provided provision will have to be delegated to schools, for example, insurance, determining free school meal eligibility and some contingencies such as Key Stage 1 class size contingency .

In April 2013 School Forum will, for maintained schools be able to decide to continue to spend these centrally rather than delegate to individual schools, the DfE have called this de delegation. This is an important new power and one which the forum will need to consider in the new academic year ahead of the April 2013 budget.

The consultation states:

The areas they will need to consider are;

- a) Support for schools in financial difficulties (this would not be a separate category but within contingencies);*
- b) Allocation of contingencies;*
- c) Free school meals (FSM) eligibility;*
- d) Insurance;*
- e) Licences/subscriptions;*
- f) Staff costs – supply cover;*
- g) Support for minority ethnic pupils or underachieving groups;*
- h) Behaviour support services; and,*
- i) Library and museum services.*

Contingencies could be retained centrally for maintained schools but only for a limited range of circumstances:

- a) Exceptional unforeseen costs which it would be unreasonable to expect governing bodies to meet;*
- b) Schools in financial difficulties;*
- c) Additional costs relating to new, reorganised or closing schools; and,*
- d) Significant pupil number growth.*

These services and their funding will be delegated to schools in the first instance, but if maintained schools in a phase collectively agree – through the Schools Forum – they can be provided centrally by returning funding to the local authority. The final delegated budget available to each school would then exclude these amounts.

There are four other services that some local authorities have delegated in the past that we do not think should be provided centrally. This is because they are already delegated in many local authorities or link to residual grant arrangements. Individual schools could still buy back these services if sold or they could set up pooled arrangements. The services are listed below:

- a) Funding threshold and performance pay;*
- b) 14-16 practical learning options;*
- c) School meals (primary/special; secondary is already delegated); and,*
- d) Extended services.*

These arrangements mean that most local authorities will need to delegate some budgets that are currently centrally funded into their Individual Schools Budget through their simpler funding formula.

Delegating all funding for these services to Academies means that there will no longer be any need for a Schools Budget Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) calculation as all the funding would be in Academy budgets to start with. Academies could, of course, choose to buy back into any local authority services if they wish.

Recommendations

1. School Forum to consider in the Autumn term the future composition of the School Forum.
2. School Forum to consider areas for 'de-delegation' for maintained schools in the Autumn term