



Education Partnerships in Somerset

Building a consensus on the way we work

October 2021

Background



- Spring/Summer 2020
 - Covid changed how we work in education
 - Highly critical SEND inspection shone a light on culture and practice
- Autumn:
 - LA shared ideas for new ways of working followed by consultation on reforming Schools Forum
- Spring:
 - 'watershed' moment around High Needs funding – anxiety and concern about how funding proposals were shared
 - Letter from Julian Wooster to all stakeholders with initial proposals to create a new cross-cutting board and requesting feedback
 - Second letter from Julian Wooster in response to feedback inviting participation in a 'roadshow' to give leaders the chance to engage and debate in the issues

Since then

- Feedback from Roadshow was positive about direction of travel
- Invitations went out over the summer for people to apply for Chair and Board members for new Strategy Board
- The selection process has just been completed with elected members
- Progressing with re-advertisement of Chair



New Board

Name	Position	Phase	Structure
Rebekah Arthurs	Teaching Assistant	Middle School	Standalone Academy Trust Trade Union
John Abbott	CEO	All	MAT
Paul Baker	Parish Councillor Advisor	All	Local authority
Helen Farnell	Executive Headteacher	PRU Special	Local authority
Rebecca Fisk	Advisor	Early Years	Private sector
Robin Head	Teacher	Middle	MAT Trade Union
Luci Hooper	Deputy Headteacher	First	LA / VA
Charlie Hull	Governor District Councillor	Primary	LA/ VC
Nicola Nevell	SENCO	Primary	LA / VC
Swavek Nowakewicz	Headteacher	Special	Local authority Independent
Rachel Parish	Manager	Early Years	Voluntary sector
Kevin Rowlands	Governor	Secondary PRU Higher education	SAT Local authority
Christopher Sanders	Governor	Upper	Local authority
Luke Talmage	Headteacher	Primary	MAT
Mark Woodlock	Headteacher	Secondary	SAT



Building on early help system that works for everyone

- We are taking forward work with a range of partners including health and the voluntary sector to think hard about **early help**.
- The focus is on understanding what is available – there is a lot across different communities but it can be hard to find and access, and it sometimes therefore leaves gaps for families.
- **Oxford Brookes** has been commissioned to do a rapid research project to help us envision how we could do better with what we have.
- The new Strategy Board have engaged with this work as their first task together



Board's role is to create an ambitious strategy that all stakeholders can sign up to



Capacity through Sharing

Being small can make it hard to deliver everything needed to flourish

We should be more creative in finding ways to share scarce resources of all kinds

Sustainable Future

The long-term matters – for our finances, structures and the environment

We should work together to build long-term plans that put providers and pupils on a secure footing

Knowledge and Skill

Education is an enterprise of the mind and adults need to continually learn as well as children

We should invest in the knowledge of skill of everyone in the system

Inclusion Mindset

Inclusion means everyone - it is about justice and fairness and it comes down to how we think about others

We should use education to change the culture of society as a whole




Schools Forum Reform






October 2021

Audit Objective

To establish the extent to which current governance and decision-making arrangements support effective management of the school budget and achievement of corporate objectives.

Assurance Opinion	Number of Actions	
		Priority
 <p>Significant gaps, weaknesses or non-compliance were identified. Improvement is required to the system of governance, risk management and control to effectively manage risks to the achievement of objectives in the area audited.</p>	Priority 1	0
	Priority 2	2
	Priority 3	10
	Total	12

Risks Reviewed	Assessment
1. Governance arrangements and processes for the Somerset Schools Forum do not support effective management of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget or achievement of corporate objectives.	Medium

Key Findings	
	There is no clear deficit management plan for the control or recovery of the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit.
	There is a lack of clarity among Forum members on SCC's education strategies and objectives. Forum's role in supporting achievement of objectives has not been clearly communicated.
	Reports and records are not always readily available prior to School Forum sessions, meaning members cannot always adequately prepare for meetings. The volume of information also limits capacity to review and understand the content.
	The Schools Forum has no Terms of Reference or Constitution. Three of the four associated working groups' Terms of Reference are also outdated.
	There is no formal induction, training, or training curriculum available to support Forum members.

Audit Scope
<p>The primary purpose of the audit was to provide assurance on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The roles and responsibilities of the Forum and members • Governance documents including Terms of Reference • Effective financial management practices; and • Strategic objectives have been identified by the Council and Schools Forum. <p>We reviewed the processes and controls in place for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The forum reporting structure • Voting and decision-making arrangements • Induction and training • Budget setting, monitoring, and reporting; and • Local authority strategies. <p>In addition, we surveyed both members and non-members to identify desired areas of improvement.</p>



New constitution

- Once agreed, this will not be put in a drawer.
- We intend to use it to ensure the Forum is well managed and will review it in the final meeting of each year to check it is still up to date.
- New in this version:
 - Membership structure
 - Focus on culture and behaviours (Nolan Principles)
 - Clearer about specific powers and function as set out in regulations
 - Explicit about use of resources and learning and development needed in order to deliver effective management

ABLE

- Embedding learning and development so that anyone from the sector can confidently participate
- Committing to simpler, clearer financial reporting that is user-led

BELIEVABLE

- Being explicit about culture and expectations of integrity
- Consequences where standards are not upheld – though sure they will be!
- Making psychological safety an explicit goal

CONNECTED

- Create an informal 'safe' space where we can build relationships as well as do business
- Commit to mapping the inter-relationships of partnership and sharing this widely
- Publicising membership so others know who is representing them

DEPENDABLE

- Getting 'the basics' right in terms of meeting administration
- Being explicit about the work programme so members know what has been promised and what has been delivered





Membership

- Everyone who has contributed to Schools Forum over the past few years is valued – grateful for contributions of so many
- Our audits have identified that the management of membership is not compliant with regulations
- We will need to conduct elections – SASH, SAPH and SEN-SE will administer these, but they will be open to all, not just to association members
- If only as many people stand as there are seats, there will be no ballot required



Draft timeline

- 29 September – Informal meeting of Schools Forum
- 30 September – Invitations to stand for membership invited
- 15 October – Deadline to stand for membership
- 18-29 October – Ballot open (by email, if required)
- 4 November – Membership confirmed and published
- 17 November – Formal meeting of Schools Forum – Chair elected from new membership



School Forum Funds

- £50,000 currently in the budget in support of effective Schools Forum operations
- School Forum considering what will bring most value from the use of these resources:
 - administration
 - grants to schools to offset the costs of participation
 - central project support for Forum priorities
 - funding for external learning and development opportunities where this is not available at nil cost

Ongoing improvement work for financial reporting



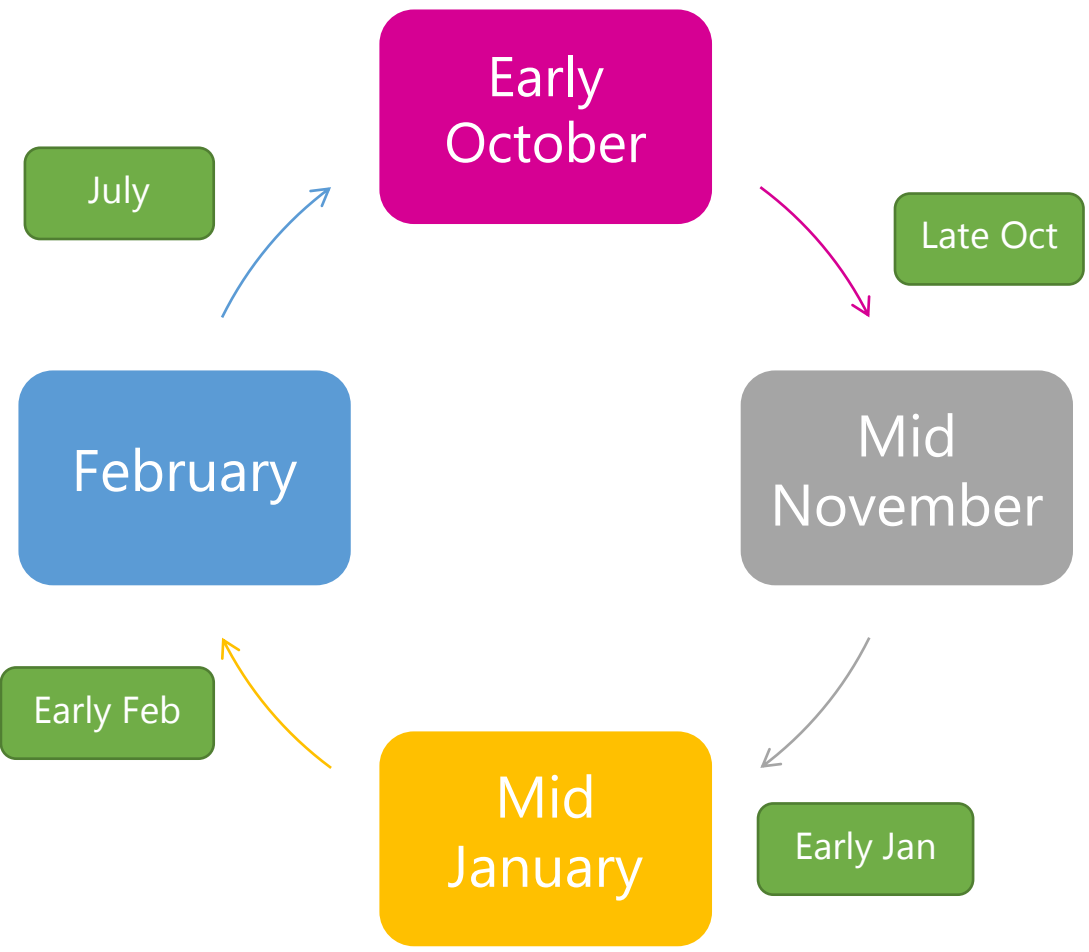
Objectives we have identified for future reporting:

- 1) All items in Central Schools Services Block / High Needs reported alongside the relevant line in the regulations
- 2) Funding for teams reported as 'whole function' rather than on itemised basis
- 3) Development of 'objective' based financial allocations

What else would make reporting clearer and more effective?



Annual Meeting Cycle



Purpose	Formal or Informal?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To appoint chairman & vice-chairman for the Forum (2yrs) To receive updates from DfE provisional allocation To review and inform proposals for funding consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal Informal Informal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To consider any proposals for disapplication, funding for services for maintained schools and de-delegation To consider any proposals on local changes to the Financial Management Scheme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal Formal
To receive a report on the DSG settlement and consider proposed schools budget and central spend	Formal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To consult on the allocation of the high needs funding block To review the membership to ensure proportionality To review the constitution to ensure it remains aligned to regulations, guidance and good practice To approve the work programme for the next academic year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal Tbc Tbc Informal
Informal meetings to work through DfE updates, technical detail and to undertake induction and professional development	



Relationship to other groups

- Somerset Education Strategy Board
- Somerset Professional and Schools Associations
- Somerset Teaching and Leadership Partnership
- High Needs Group
- Early Years Partnership
- SSE Client Group