Schools forum self-assessment toolkit

This toolkit provides local authority officers and elected members with a framework for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of their schools forum. The toolkit is designed as a set of questions which can be considered by individuals or the forum as a whole.

Question	Yes / No	Notes
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	Dates are set at the beginning of the Academic Year with details of the venue. The dates are published on the Council's website and via the schools network.
2. Are meetings timed to coincide with key dates? (e.g. reporting of funding formula)	Yes	Meetings are arranged to coincide with key matters
3. Are meetings held in an accessible venue to enable observers to attend easily?	Yes	The venue is accessible to the public with on-site parking, disabled access, etc.
4. Is there a dedicated website link for schools forum, is it current and regularly updated?	Yes	Website link is https://democracy.southend.gov.uk However links could be improved – i.e. agenda and papers should be linked to the schools network.
5. Are the agenda and papers publicly available on the authority's website at least 6 working days in advance of the meeting?	No	The agenda and papers are currently published 5 clear working days before the meeting (in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972)
6. Are the papers published as a single document, so that users can download easily?	Yes	The Board is administered through the Council's democratic services committee management system. The agenda and papers are produced as a pack which is easily accessible and downloadable. There is also the mod.gov app which allows the public to view/download the agenda via their

Question	Yes / No	Notes
		mobile/tablet devices. However – Are occasions where reports/papers are not at the stage to publish – these are marked to follow on the agenda and are published as a supplementary pack to the agenda which is accessible and downloadable.
7. If papers are tabled at the meeting, are they published on the website promptly after the meeting?	Yes	Any papers which are tabled or sent out after the agenda is published are put on the committee management system straight after the meeting.
8. Are draft minutes published a reasonable time (e.g. within 2-3 weeks) after the meeting, rather than waiting until the following meeting?	Yes	Yes – draft minutes are published no later than 10 working days after the meeting.
9. Are the minutes clear and unambiguous, with sufficient detail to illustrate the discussions, without reporting verbatim every point made?	Yes	The minutes reflect general discussions and the key issues/concerns raised – Resolutions are clear and concise.
10. Is the constitution clear and appropriate? Including eg - 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 repetitive non attenders	Yes	The Constitution sets out clearly all the matters listed. However, timely to review in light of new guidance issued.
11. Is there an induction pack or training programme available for new members?	Yes/No?	New members receive an electronic copy of the constitution and the Clerk contacts the new member to explain role, etc. However – this is ad-hoc and could be strengthened. No training programme - ? something to look at?
12. Is the election process clear and transparent? i.e. representatives are elected only by the group they are representing, whether phase-specific for maintained schools, or by the proprietors of academies for academy	Yes	This is clearly set out in the constitution.

Question	Yes / No	Notes
members.		
13. Do the papers contain clear recommendations and indicate in a consistent manner whether the item is for information, consultation or decision?	Yes	All reports/papers have clear proposals and are listed as information, discussion, decision, etc.
14. Is it clear to observers who attendees at the forum are representing? (eg by use of name plates, indicating sector)	No	Do not use nameplates. So not always clear to observers. Easy win to reinstate.
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?	Yes	The Chair manages the meetings efficiently and takes a holistic view of the issues – all have equal opportunity to put their views across
16. Is there inclusive participation in discussions for all phases and types of members?	Yes	All members have significant opportunity to contribute to discussions, including non-voting members.
17. Do members actively canvass views and objectively represent their whole peer group at the forum and provide feedback after meetings?	Yes / No	No comment.
18. Where votes are required, is it clear who is eligible to vote for different items?	Yes	As set out in the constitution and on the membership list.
19. Where votes are required, are the arrangements for recording the votes clear and unambiguous?	Yes	Decisions are by general consensus but where a vote is required the Clerk records the vote. Voting arrangements are set out in the constitution.
20. Is there a system in place for a decision if votes are tied?	Yes	The Chair has the 'casting vote'.
21. Is the operational & good practice guide used to regularly review the forum's adherence to good practice?	Yes	Constitution was revised and updated following the previous guide. The recently published guidance will be used to review good practice, etc.