

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Agenda
Item No.

**Report of the Corporate Director for
People
to
Cabinet
on
28th June 2016**

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Head of Learning

Proposal for an Education Board to replace the existing Schools Forum

**People Scrutiny Committee
Executive Councillor: Councillor James Courtenay
Part 1 (Public Agenda Item)**

1. Purpose of Report

This report is intended to raise awareness of the proposals to establish an Education Board within Southend on Sea to ensure that the Council can retain influence and leverage in education when the majority of school are no longer maintained. It sets out an indicative structure and governance arrangements for the Board. The Board will undertake the statutory functions currently discharged by the Southend Schools Forum, but in addition make strategic recommendations on broader education policy and strategy for the Council to consider.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes, comments upon, and approves the establishment of the Education Board.
- 2.2 That members require officers to work with the current Schools Forum to ensure efficient transition to a new Board.

3. Background

Following the publication of the White Paper "Education Excellence Everywhere", matters concerning education and school outcomes are increasingly being devolved to school leaders. This proposal considers the establishment of an Education Board to improve its engagement with schools, academies, and other organisations involved in the provision of education and related services. An Education Board would both contribute to key priorities that will improve outcomes for children and young people in Southend, but also, working with partners, allow the Council to retain strategic influence of the school improvement agenda.

The purpose of this report is to describe the proposed structure, operating and governance model for an Education Board.

Attached in Appendix 1 is a PowerPoint presentation that includes a proposed structure diagram and remit for the Education Board.

4. Proposed Structure

The proposed structure diagram for the Education Board builds on the existence of the Schools Forum. This is currently a statutory body, with a specific school finance related constitution set in national regulations, specific decision making functions, and elected representation from all school phases/settings and interested bodies associated with the provision of education. The Schools Forum does not form part of the Southend Council Constitution.

Following the publication of the White Paper, we strongly believe that there is a continued need for a representative strategic partnership body to advise the Council on financial, policy and other educational matters.

The Schools Forum statutory consultation role re school revenue funding and contracted/SLA services may change but there is a wider education remit to advise the Executive Councillor for Children and Learning on matters such as (a) school performance, (b) resources, including school organisation/capital and admissions, (c) vulnerable learners and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and (d) business, skills and enterprise; all of which do not fall within the statutory Schools Forum role. Each of these would potentially have a sub group meeting periodically to discuss key issues and developments and would make recommendations to the Education Board itself.

The resources sub group above (b) would also function for issues that fall within the current Schools Forum statutory role to make recommendations to the Education Board for financial decisions that it cannot delegate.

The Board and sub groups would have wider representation other than Schools Forum membership to broaden engagement and develop representation. In order to ensure continuity and representation between sub groups and the Board, there would be overlap between the membership of sub groups and the elected representation on the Education Board.

The Headteacher associations executives, including academies, Southend Schools Governors Association and non-school education bodies (dioceses, early years, Unison, teacher unions, post 16 providers, university and commercial/businesses, Health) would also have strategic roles to appoint representatives and raise items and issues for the Education Board.

The structure diagram shows indicative representation on the Education Board. The Board would comprise current Schools Forum membership plus the Director for People, the Head of Learning and the Executive Councillor for Children and Learning, but without voting rights. In addition, the chairpersons of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board and the Corporate Parenting Group would also be invited as observers. Other non-school representatives might include nominations from universities, businesses, employers and commerce.

Lead officers from each of the sub groups would be associate members of the Education Board, and would attend as required to present reports.

Consideration will be required about the interface with other bodies, including the Success for All Group and People Scrutiny Committee. The structure diagram suggests an interface as and when required on matters of common interest. The proposals for the Education Board also include a quarterly report to Cabinet.

The timetable of decisions on financial matters that inform current Schools Forum agendas will need to be mapped against other strategic plans and reports in order that the structure of agendas for a future Education Board can be coordinated. It would also be necessary to ensure that if any sub groups are set up, the timing of those meetings fits in with Education Board meetings.

This report and attachments set out as draft proposals for the structure, operating model and governance of a future Education Board. The views of all stakeholders will be taken into account in any formal member decision process.

5. Summary of benefits of the proposal

Should the Education Board be established, it will:

1. Allow the Council to retain an influence in broader education matters when it no longer directly accountable for the performance of any schools, thereby;
 - a. Allow the Board to shape priorities and targets going forwards;
 - b. Allow the Board to ensure clear linkage between available resource and shared priorities;
2. Establish a collaborative strategic body that can advise on matters of policy for Southend. The membership of this body would ensure sign up from constituent member organisations;
3. Continue with the further development of existing school and sector led improvement strategies;
4. Ensure an effective vehicle for two way consultation with all stakeholders and the Council;
5. Enable a mechanism for the broader dialogue regarding education from the start of life through to later life, including the skills agenda.

6. Other Options

It would be possible in the short term to retain Schools Forum as it currently stands, although with National Funding it will increasingly lack influence. The Schools Forum will eventually no longer exist, and any formal relationship with schools and education providers would be lost at that point.

7. Reasons for Recommendations

The rationale for the establishment of the Board is set out above.

8. Corporate Implications

The interface with other Southend Borough Council and external partner's governance will need to be aligned.

8.1 Financial Implications

The operational costs of the board can be met from within the existing £18k budgeted for the Schools Forum. This is part of the 'Schools Budget' funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant.

8.2 Legal Implications

In the transition from a statutory School Forum to an Education and Skills Board, attention must be given to discharge the current statutory functions.

8.3 People Implications

There would be a requirement to effectively administer the Board and sub groups.

8.4 Property Implications

None

8.5 Consultation

This paper will form the start of the consultation and engagement process for the transition to the Education Board.

8.6 Equalities and Diversity Implications

None

8.7 Risk Assessment

One of the risks of this sort of structure is that the Board could be seen simply as "rubber stamping" recommendations made by sub groups or that the reports just get minor revisions and go in full to the Education Board. This could make the agendas/meetings repetitious and unwieldy. There will always be some repetition because the decisions of the Schools Forum (Education Board) cannot be delegated and there is a requirement to consult all relevant members on matters that affect the funding of schools and other settings.

8.8 Value for Money

The proposal to establish the Education Board will allow existing resources from the Council, schools themselves and from targeted national government grants to be combined to ensure effective commissioning and value for money.

8.9 Community Safety Implications

None

8.10 Environmental Impact

None

9. Background Papers

None

10. Appendices

Appendix 1, Details of proposal