

London Borough of Enfield

Council

Meeting Date: 16 November 22

Subject: Amendment to the Constitution - Staff Forum/Joint Consultative Group for Teachers (JCGT)

Director: Director of Law and Governance

Key Decision: N/A

Purpose of Report

1. This report proposes changes to the arrangements for consultation meetings between School Professional Associations, elected members, senior officers, and others.

Recommendations

2. Note that the General Purposes Committee has agreed that the Staff Forum should be replaced with the Members and Professional Associations Schools Group to facilitate discussion and consultation between elected members, senior officers and school professional associations on issues related to the school's workforce
3. Note that the School Workforce Consultation Group (SWCG) will continue to meet termly and that the half-termly meetings with Enfield Schools' Personnel Service will also continue, as required.
4. Agree to abolish the Staff Forum and to delegate authority to the Director of Law and Governance to make any necessary consequential changes to the Constitution to effect this change.

Reason for Recommendations

5. The recommendations are made to ensure the meetings with the School Professional Associations and others are focused appropriately, reduce repetition, and increase effectiveness. Whilst continuing in the current format is possible, it would benefit all parties to update the format and terms of reference.

Relevance to the Council Plan

6. The Council Plan puts a commitment to safe, healthy, and confident communities including to inspire and empower young Enfield to reach their full potential. Schools are key to supporting this and the Council has a commitment for all our schools to be good or outstanding. To achieve this, we need the best staff within our schools to deliver quality education. By working

with Professional Associations, we can improve relationships for the benefit of the young people.

Background

7. The Staff Forum is a non-statutory committee of the Council where School Professional Associations, elected members, senior officers and others meet once a term to discuss issues relating to the school workforce. These are stated in the terms of reference as: Discuss matters concerning school-based educational issues and the education service in Enfield; discuss matters submitted by professional associations and trade unions, the lead officer for Schools and Children's Services and/or the lead officer for Schools HR; make suggestions and proposals to the Director of Schools and Children's Services
8. With the arrival of the Covid pandemic there was a change to the way in which meetings between the authority and School Professional Associations were held. It was decided to have more frequent meetings in a virtual environment (MS Teams) to support swift responses to any concerns raised, increase understanding of any emerging issues, and consider these together with possible solutions. These meetings rotated to include the Cabinet Member for Education, Headteachers, Governors, and the Local Authority Education departments and Schools HR departments. These have been found to be a very beneficial way to work since they are swift, responsive and promote greater understanding of school workforce issues in a timely fashion.
9. The Staff Forum has been continuing during this time, in addition to the increased meetings with the local authority. This has resulted in short meetings due to issues having already been covered elsewhere, and the meeting has become a recap of issues discussed elsewhere, with much repetition.
10. Therefore, in discussion with members of the Staff Forum, it has been proposed that the change in the way of working is an improvement on previous working arrangements. Hence it is proposed that the Staff Forum is abolished and that these more frequent meetings are adopted as a standard way of working, to include inviting not only the Cabinet Member for Education but also Lead Members for Education from other political groups.

Main Considerations for the Council

11. The current composition of the Staff Forum includes 5 Elected Members – 3 Majority (which should include the Cabinet Member with responsibilities for education) and 2 Opposition. Set out in Appendix A is a proposal for a termly meeting between Members, Professional Associations, and the Local Authority where the Lead Members for Education from each party would be invited (the proposed Members and Professional Association Schools Group). This will continue to provide information to all parties and discussions would focus on staffing matters in schools as they do currently, including changes in demographics which would impact budgets and hence staffing levels.
12. The current composition of the Staff Forum includes 10 members from the Teachers Committee. The proposal is to reduce this so that in all meetings

(two a term) will include the Local Representatives of Teaching Professional Associations in Enfield (NEU, NASUWT and NAHT). This keeps consistency of message, and the representatives can feedback to members of the Teachers Committee on a more frequent basis, and raised questions more rapidly rather than waiting for once a term

13. The current composition of the Staff Forum includes 9 members from Support Staff Professional Associations. This would be reduced in all the meetings (two a term) to include the Local Representatives for Schools only (Unison and GMB). The remaining representatives that are currently invited (Unite, AEP, Prospect and Soulbury NEU) are concerned with corporately employed colleagues and either already attend or can be invited to attend, as appropriate, the fortnightly meetings facilitated by Corporate HR with regards to their members.
14. The current composition of the Staff Forum includes a Headteacher and a Governor. These would continue to be represented on a termly basis at meetings with the Local Authority and Professional Associations as part of the established School Workforce Consultation Group.
15. There has been discussion at the Staff Forum about the changes and there has been agreement that an alternative and improved format of meetings would streamline and support communication. These discussions have been minuted with regards to the Staff Forum meetings since June 2021, and papers had been shared about the changes with Professional Association colleagues and Members of the Forum at the time.

Safeguarding Implications

16. The proposed changes should have a positive impact on safeguarding for children because the meetings will be more frequent and better focused, hence supporting increased relevant discussion.

Public Health Implications

17. The proposed changes should have a positive impact on children's health because the meetings will be more frequent and better focused, allowing any concerns to be raised in a timely fashion.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

18. It has been agreed that an EQiA is not required. However, we have ensured suitable access requirements as the proposal provides for all meeting to take place virtually.

Financial Implications

19. The proposal to disband this committee will not have any financial implications. There are no specific costs linked to the operation so there will be no financial savings, but the proposal will reduce pressure on limited staffing resources

Legal Implications

20. Local Education Authorities have a general duty under the Education Act 1996 to promote high standards of education, including a duty to ensure there are sufficient schools in their area that provide appropriate education. Whilst having a Staff Forum is not a statutory requirement, its purpose and functions would assist the authority in complying with its general duties.
21. The Staff Forum is a non-statutory committee appointed by the council. Its current terms of reference are found in Chapter 2.7 of the constitution.
22. The decision to delete the Staff Forum, can only be taken by Full Council. Chapter 2.4, paragraph 2.1(vii) of the constitution says that only Council can agree and/or amend the terms of reference for committees and panels, decide on their composition and make appointments to them.
23. In addition, chapter 4.5, paragraph 1.1 of the rules and procedure allows the Council, at its Annual Meeting, to appoint such committees as required by law, together with any others thought necessary to carry out its functions. Subject to any statutory provision, (which there is none) the Council may at any time also dissolve a committee or alter its membership.
24. These proposals will ensure the business of the Staff Forum continues to be covered but in an alternative improved format of meetings, and no longer operating as a formal committee of the Council.