

TITLE OF REPORT: Gateshead's Scheme for Financing Schools – Consultation Outcome

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to bring to Schools Forum Gateshead's updated Scheme for Financing Schools for approval.

Background

This report builds on a report brought to Schools Forum in December 2015.

On the 19th August 2015 the DfE published new statutory guidance for local authorities on the Scheme for Financing Schools. The full guidance is available on the below link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schemes-for-financing-schools>

Under sections 48 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 and schedule 14 to the Act, each local authority must publish a Scheme for Financing Schools. The Scheme sets out the financial relationship between the Authority and the maintained schools which it funds, it contains requirements relating to financial management and associated issues, binding on both the Authority and schools.

The directed revisions state that all maintained schools must be consulted on any updates to the Scheme, and receive approval of the members of Schools Forum representing maintained schools. The revised amendments must be published on a website accessible to the general public.

The Scheme covers all Community, Voluntary Aided and Foundation schools and covers all sectors- Nursery, Primary, Secondary, PRU's and Special Schools. Academies and Free Schools are not covered by the Scheme.

A copy of the draft Scheme is electronically available for review.

Directed Revisions to the Scheme

The main changes are summarised below:

Removal from the Scheme of the requirement of:

- All references to General Purpose Accounts under banking arrangements

Inclusions to the Scheme of:

2.9 Requirement for maintained schools to publish a register of the business interests of their governors, along with any relationships between staff.

9. PFI /PPP

An authority may wish to insert into its scheme other provisions relating to Private Finance Initiative (PFI) / Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects. Amongst other issues these might deal with the reaching of agreements with the governing bodies of schools as to the basis of such charge; and the treatment of monies withheld from contractors due to poor performance.

Among PFI/PPP provisions may be one which formally sets out the power of the authority to charge school's budget share amounts agreed under a PFI/PPP agreement entered into by the governing body of a school.

Other Revisions

- 3.6.1 School Payment Cards has been included
- The following Schools have been deleted from the Scheme following conversion to Academy Status:
 - o Thomas Hepburn
 - o Charles Thorpe
 - o Sacred Heart
- Other Schools that convert will be deleted from the Scheme as they transfer.
- Post titles and references have been changed to reflect the changes in the Authorities internal structure.
- General updates to reflect any changes in legislation.
- The Scheme and the dates of any amendments have to be published on Gateshead Councils Webpage.

Process

In December Schools Forum approved the draft Scheme for Financing Schools to enable a consultation with all maintained schools to be undertaken on the proposed changes to the Scheme.

The a covering letter and draft Scheme were e-mailed to all maintained head teachers and chairs of governors on the 16th May and the consultation ran from 16th May until 24th June 2016, with a request for comments or suggestions to be sent to Carolesmith@gateshead.gov.uk by 5pm 24th June.

No comments or suggestions were received by the deadline.

Proposal

It is proposed that Schools Forum notes that no comments or suggestions were received by Schools Forum and therefore it is requested that Schools Forum approved the proposed revisions to Gateshead's Scheme for Financing Schools.

Once approved the Scheme will be published on Gateshead Council's website and a link will be sent to all head maintained school teachers and chairs of governors to note.

Recommendations

It is recommended that School Forum approves the revisions to Gateshead's Scheme for Financing Schools.

For the following reasons:

- To comply with the DfE's directed revisions to the Scheme and the other amendments and detailed above.
- To enable the updated Scheme to be published on the Councils website.

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