

## SCHOOLS ORGANISATION STRATEGY GROUP

### CONSTITUTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### Introduction

As the strategic commissioner of school places, the Local Authority (LA) has responsibility for ensuring sufficiency of suitable school places for children residing within its boundary and, in accordance with the latest School Organisation regulations<sup>1</sup>, supports the government's aim of increasing school autonomy by allowing schools to have more control when making decisions about their size and composition.

The Local Authority's School Organisation Strategy Group (SOSG) is therefore constituted for the purpose of partnership working to allow key stakeholder involvement at an early stage in the planning process.

Government guidance issued for those proposing to open, close or make changes to schools (e.g. governing bodies and LAs), decision-makers (LAs, the Schools Adjudicator and governing bodies), and for information purposes for those affected by a proposal (dioceses, trustees, parents etc.), will inform the SOSG process.

#### Membership

To reflect the needs of local communities and the different types of schools across the Borough, the SOSG membership will consist of representatives of the local authority, schools, dioceses, parents and the local community.

Members will be appointed to the SOSG by the Local Authority and will comprise of membership, as set out below:

Core Membership	Number	Comments
Representatives of Cheshire East Local Authority	9	To represent the various service areas covering education from 0-25.
Church of England Diocese	1	Nominated by the Chester Diocesan Board of Education.
Roman Catholic Church Diocese	1	Nominated by Diocese of Shrewsbury
ECaph	1	Chair or Vice Chair - East Cheshire Association of Primary Headteachers
CEASH	1	Chair or Vice Chair - Cheshire East Association of Secondary Headteachers
Governors	2	Nominated by the Cheshire East Association of Governing Bodies – 1 primary, 1 secondary.
Representatives of the local community	TBC	TBC - Nominated by Head of Communities TBC

<sup>1</sup> [The School Organisation \(Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools\) \(England\) Regulations 2013](#) [The School Organisation \(Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools\) Regulations 2013](#)

### **Appointment and Tenure of Members**

Persons appointed to the SOSG as members will hold and vacate office in accordance with the terms of their appointment and, on ceasing to be members of the SOSG, are eligible for reappointment.

No person may be appointed as a member for a period exceeding 4 years

Any member appointed will vacate office if he or she ceases to be a member of the group being represented, or is removed from office following a recommendation of the core members.

### **Alternate Members**

Members can nominate, by giving written notice to the secretary, alternate members as representatives at meetings in their absence, who must also be a member of the group being represented. The alternate member can vote at meetings in the absence of the core member provided they fall into the same category as the member and have the support of the group they represent.

### **Election to Office**

Chair and vice chair are elected at the first meeting and at meetings every year thereafter. Chair and vice chair can resign their office by written notice to the secretary.

### **Secretary to SOSG**

The members must appoint a person, nominated by the Local Authority, who is not a member of the SOSG, to act as secretary.

### **SOSG Meetings**

Procedure at meetings will be regulated by the core members themselves

Meetings must be held at least twice per year. The first meeting will be convened in the spring term and a mid-point meeting in June/July.

It is the duty of the secretary or, in the absence of the secretary, of the Local Authority, to notify every member at least two weeks in advance of the time and place of each meeting. Documentation pertaining to agenda items must, where possible, be provided to members at least two weeks in advance of the meeting to allow members to prepare for the meeting.

In any vote, the vote will be carried by a simple majority of those members present and, in the case of equality of votes, the chair, or in their absence the vice-chair, has a second or casting vote.

### **Establishment of Sub-Committees**

Where a sub-committee is established, the SOSG is responsible for determining the sub-committee's:

- (a) membership and constitution;
- (b) procedure for convening and holding meetings;
- (c) issuing of advice and recommendations.

### **Purpose and Functions of the SOSG**

The SOSG will have responsibility for reviewing pupil forecasts and contributing to the identification of basic need requirements; for considering existing school accommodation when formulating options for change and for making recommendations to the Local Authority and other proposers.

The SOSG will provide advice and recommendations to Local Authority management, in accordance with the agreed internal decision-making procedures and to elected members and publicly funded schools within its area.

The SOSG's objective is to review school capacity and make recommendations for ensuring a sufficiency of pupil places; optimising parental preference as far as possible whilst avoiding over provision in some schools that can lead to higher levels of pupil mobility, fluctuations in pupil numbers with associated management and financial impact; and taking into account all relevant legislation and DfE Guidance.

A key priority for the SOSG will be to consider a review of school place planning areas to ensure these are fit for purpose, reflecting pupil distribution and links between local schools.

Managing the supply of school places needs to be informed by robust evidence of future demand. Detailed analysis of current numbers on roll, current demand for school places (using admissions data) and live birth data will be undertaken to determine projected pupil numbers and future demand in planning areas across the Borough. Outcomes will be presented to the SOSG to begin the annual review process.

The SOSG will consider the impact of new housing and its effect on demand for school places.

The SOSG will make recommendations to assist the Council in its long term strategy, which will identify demand for places over a five year period.

The recommendations of the SOSG will be reported to the Local Authority in accordance with established procedures (Currently EST, SMT, CLB)

## **Consultation**

The School Organisation Regulations and Government guidance<sup>2</sup> specify the duties on proposers in relation to school organisation proposals. Where statutory procedures are required, these will be followed. There is no statutory duty to consult but proposers must adhere to the usual principles of public law: they must act rationally; they must take into account all relevant considerations; and they must follow a fair procedure. The recommendations of the SOSG will be referred to in any consultation or briefing undertaken.

The outcomes of the SOSG process will, in the first instance, be presented to headteachers via CEASH and ECaph representative groups.

Where changes are planned, effective consultation will be undertaken with parents and other interested parties to gauge demand for a proposed change(s) and to provide them with sufficient opportunity to give their views.

Consultation on proposals made by governing bodies will be referred to the SOSG to ensure that, where possible, a proposal is aligned with wider place planning/organisational arrangements.

## **Endorsement**

The SOSG is the Strategy Group for the area covered by Cheshire East Council. Its Constitution has been agreed by the Council's EST and SMT officer groups on 19 February and 24 February 2015 and the Council's Safeguarding Children and Adults Portfolio Holder.

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<sup>2</sup>

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/278418/School\\_Organisation\\_Guidance\\_2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/278418/School_Organisation_Guidance_2014.pdf)