

From: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education, Learning and Skills

To: Education Cabinet Committee – 14 January 2014

Subject: Recruitment and Training of School Governors

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

This report summarises the changes in the size and shape of the governing bodies over the past 6 years, and explores the impact on recruitment and training, particularly with regard to local authority governors.

Recommendation(s):

Education Cabinet Committee is invited to comment on the information contained in this report and support

- (i) A review of the nomination and appointment procedures for local authority governors
- (ii) A briefing session for elected members on the roles and responsibilities of 2013 school governance, with the aim of improving the quantity and the quality of nominations in 2014
- (iii) Support for all newly appointed local authority governors to attend a face to face induction event

1. Introduction

1.1 Since 2007 there has been an increased national focus on the effectiveness of governing bodies. This has included increased responsibilities for holding the school to account for good standards, more flexibility in the operational regulations, an emphasis on small skills based governing bodies, and the introduction of a dedicated leadership training programme for Chairs of Governors under the remit of the National College.

1.2 Governors occupy a unique position as 'volunteers with legal responsibilities'. Time to undertake both the role itself and to keep up to date with the changing legislation and frameworks can be very demanding, particularly for the Chair of Governors. Fitting these responsibilities around a full time job, and/or a family have had an impact of the number of people putting themselves

forward with the right skills, time available, and the enthusiasm to undertake the role.

- 1.3 This report considers the changing picture of school governor composition, the recruitment of governors to Kent schools, and the training available and undertaken by new and serving governors to prepare them to undertake the role effectively.

2. Background

- 2.1 Kent has 6077 school governor positions (December 2013), in approximately 451 maintained schools. This is a decrease of nearly 3000 since 2007, and does not include the number of governors serving in academies and free schools, although this is likely to account for a further 1500 governors and trustees in 125 Kent academies. The national agenda for 'smaller skills based governing bodies' has also had an impact on overall numbers with many schools choosing to take advantage of the new legislation to reduce numbers.
- 2.2 The number, type of governor, appointing body, and term of office is determined by the 'Instrument of Government', which must meet regulatory requirements, can be varied by the governing body (in consultation with their foundation body), and is created and held by the local authority. There is a minimum size of 7 members, and a maximum of 29, with individual governors serving a term of office of between 1 and 4 years.
- 2.3 Governors in maintained schools represent a number of stakeholder groups, dependent on the type of school. Governors are either appointed or elected to their post, foundation governors (appointed by the foundation body, e.g. the Diocese in a faith school); community or co-opted governors (appointed by the governing body); local authority governors (nominated by the LA and appointed by the governing body); staff governors (elected by staff at the school); parent governors (elected by parents of pupils at the school). The first staff position is always reserved for the Headteacher.
- 2.4 Governance regulations stipulate the percentages of governors from each stakeholder group that must 'constitute' the governing body. Further flexibilities introduced in September 2012 increased the number of co-opted governors, (recruited by the governing body for the skills and expertise they bring to the role), whilst at the same time reducing the percentage of other stakeholders, e.g. parent governors reduced from one third to a minimum of 2. These changes also reduced the local authority governor component to one, and transferred the 'power' of appointment from the LA to the governing body. This means that for governing bodies who have adopted a post September 2012 constitution, the governing body itself is now in a much stronger position to recruit the governors it needs to build a strong and effective team.

3. Governor Recruitment

- 3.1 In December 2013, there were a total of 6077 governor posts with 1314 current vacancies.

Category	Total December 2013	Vacancies December 2013
Foundation	703	178
Community or co-opted	980	367
Local Authority	600	175
Parent	1283	383
Staff	842	167
Interim Executive Boards	30	1
Other (Associate Members)	325	43
Total	4763	1314

183 individuals are governors at more than one school.

- 3.2 Each year approximately 25% of school governors in Kent come to the end of their term of office as a governor at a particular school. Some will choose to serve only one term, particularly parent governors of children at Primary schools, and some will choose to put themselves forward for a further period of service. At any given time, governor recruitment will be active in a number of schools across the county. In the cases of long term vacancies, School Governance Officers will support the school to either review their constitution, or undertake recruitment campaigns. Some governing bodies, particularly special schools have difficulty recruiting the 1/3 parents required under the 2007 composition, and in some cases are 'holding' parent vacancies in order to maintain a core group of governors to carry out the role.
- 3.3 Over the last 12 months KCC Governor Services have worked closely with the School Improvement Service to identify those governing bodies which would benefit most from additional support. A menu of governance activities both diagnostic and developmental is then tailored to support their individual needs. In most cases this will include a review of their composition and membership, a skills audit, recruitment activities, and some development activities.
- 3.4 In Kent, KCC Governor Services run governor recruitment activities in partnership with School Governors One Stop Shop (SGOSS), a charity organisation part funded by the DfE. They produce information and marketing materials, work collaboratively to organise recruitment campaigns, and host a website where schools can advertise their own vacancies. Materials have been tailored to the needs of Kent and a dedicated 'Recruitment week' is held each year, usually in the spring.
- 3.5 The local authority has the following statutory responsibilities in relation to governor appointments and elections

- The local authority is the ‘appropriate authority’ for organising and determining all matters relating to the election of parent and staff governors. In Kent the responsibility for conducting the elections is delegated to the Headteacher in accordance with the LA’s procedures for election. (see LA procedure booklet – update draft January 2014)
- **2007 Constitution:** the appointment of local authority governors.
2012 Constitution: the nomination of local authority governors.
See procedures and Guidelines

3.6 **Local Authority Governors** – In Kent the responsibility for making appointments and nominations to these posts is undertaken by the KCC Governor Appointments Panel (GAP), in line with its agreed procedures and guidelines. There are currently 175 vacant local authority governor posts, representing a 29% vacancy rate. This figure is high when compared to our statistical neighbours e.g. Hampshire where the vacancy rate runs at between 9-12%. For those schools not yet ‘Good’ in terms of Ofsted inspection outcomes, the local authority has both an opportunity as well as a duty to fill any local authority governor vacancies, to both add to the capacity of the governing body, and to enable it to better hold the school to account for better pupil outcomes. There are higher vacancy rates in areas of deprivation.

3.7 Historically recruitment would have been undertaken by elected members nominating suitable individuals for vacancies at schools in their local areas. KCC Governor Services, which maintains a list of existing and forecasted vacancies, would circulate a ‘Vacancy List’ to elected members 5 times each year in line with the GAP meetings held with the same frequency. However over the past 3-5 years, the volume of nominations has decreased dramatically, and our vacancy rate has risen from 16% to its current level of 29%. This despite referring volunteers recruited under our activities with SGOSS to GAP for local authority governor appointment. A review of how we could improve our recruitment of local authority governors is now underway.

4. **Governor Training**

4.1 There is an extensive annual programme of governor training offered by the local authority under a Service Level Agreement (SLA), to governors of all schools including academies and free schools. The programme includes induction training for new Governors, new Clerks and new Chairs of Governors, annual conferences for governors, chairs and clerks, a variety of topic based training, plus specific sessions for experienced governors identified as ‘Local Lead Governors’. In the year to December 2013, 340 training events were held, 5823 places were booked by governors, with 2505 individual governors attending at least one session. Whilst it is not possible to extract the numbers from our database, we know that staff governors are very

unlikely to attend training sessions for governors, and that training attendance declines into the second term of office.

- 2.2 **New Governor Induction** - All new governors (those that have not served previously as a governor with reference to our database) are sent an 'appointment letter', which includes a free copy of the National Governors Association publication 'Welcome to Governance'. This publication outlines the role and responsibilities of governance and helps every governor make a good start.

New Governor Induction training available	Number of new governors appointed	Number of attendances at Induction
474 places	Approx. 700	410
ELearning – GEL and Modern Governor		Number completed new governor modules
Unlimited	Approx. 700	182

- 4.3 **Headteacher Governor Induction** – all headteachers new to the role in a Kent school are offered a half day session on school governance as part of the 'New Headteachers Induction Programme'. In 2013, 37 new heads attended this training.
- 4.4 Training can be tailored to the needs of individual governing bodies, topic or skills specific, and delivered at the home school at a time and on a date to suit the governing body. This is currently scheduled as 'in-house' governor training. This form of training can be commissioned by the governing body as part of the SLA programme, or delivered in partnership with school improvement colleagues where governance effectiveness requires improvement. 188 in-house governor training events have taken place during 2013.
- 4.5 New Chairs of Governors in Kent have access to the National College Leadership Development Programme for Chairs under a licence agreement. This is a new training offer for 2013 and sits outside our SLA. The course includes 3 face to face training days over 3 modules, online learning, school based projects, and submission of a Learning Log for accreditation. 28 Chairs participated in Cohort 1 which completed on 30 November 2013. Cohort 2 (14 participants) began in October 2013, and Cohort 3 (registration under way) will commence in March 2014.
- 4.6 Given that the role and responsibilities of governing bodies have increased enormously since 2007, one of our biggest challenges is to ensure that every school has an effective governing body.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Whilst many governing bodies have reviewed their size and effectiveness, appointed new governors, and planned for improvement, there are still too many which are 'underperforming'. An increasing number of new governors are coming forward, particularly parents, with good transferable skills and are keen to put their induction training into practice. However, against the Ofsted

inspection framework for the inspection of local authority school improvement services, we are still failing to ensure that every school has the support of a good and effective local authority governor.

6. Recommendation(s)

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6. Background Documents

6.1 KCC Governor Training Programme 2013/14

6.2. NGA publication 'Welcome to Governance'

6.3 Parent and Staff Governor Election Procedures

6.4 SGOSS link <http://www.sgoss.org.uk/resources/publications.html>

6.5 KCC Procedures and Guidelines for the appoint of local authority governors

7. Contact details

Linda Lissimore
Head of Governor Services
01622 203205
Linda.lissimore@kent.gov.uk

Lead Director

Sue Rogers
Director of Education, Quality and Standards
01622 694983
Sue Rogers@kent.gov.uk