

Report to: **Children's Services Scrutiny Committee**  
 Date: **7 June 2010**  
 By: **Director of Children's Services**  
 Title of report: **Update on Scrutiny Review of Governing Body Clerks**  
 Purpose of report: **To inform the committee of progress by the department in taking forward the implementation of the East Sussex Clerking Service.**

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**RECOMMENDATION: The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report and the progress being made by the East Sussex Clerking Service Implementation Group.**

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## **1 Financial Appraisal**

1.1 The Schools Forum has agreed to commit the necessary expenditure for the development of East Sussex Clerking Service (ESCS).

## **2 Supporting Information**

2.1 At the County Forum meeting on 10 March 2010 it was proposed and agreed that an implementation group be established to ensure the smooth introduction of a clerking service, to be known as the East Sussex Clerking Service Implementation Group (ESCSIG). Following debate and discussion at County Forum and the implementation group has been created from the members of the East Sussex Governors Representative Group (ESGRG), officers of the county council and representative clerks.

2.2 County Forum will continue with its strategic role in relation to the development of this service and the implementation group will undertake the detailed work required.

2.3 Headline milestones for the development of the service include the appointment of a Clerking Service Manager (June), the confirmation of the job description, the service level agreement between schools and the clerking service and clerks' contract details (end of May), confirmation with Children's Services Finance of the funding arrangements (mid June), deliver a series of information roadshows (early July), establish IT systems (July), service starts (September) and includes all schools.

## **3 Work of the East Sussex Governors Representative Group**

3.1 The East Sussex Clerking Service Implementation Group (ESCSIG) has met on four occasions and a series of Briefing Papers for distribution to stakeholders is being prepared. Key elements of development that ESCSIG have discussed and agreed so far are:

### Design of the Clerking Service

- The service will build on existing good practice across clerks and governing bodies.
- Clerks will continue to be appointed by the governing body.
- The services to be provided will be reviewed by ESCSIG and agreed by Children's Services Department.
- Minimum quality standards for all Clerks will be adopted, and will be those in BTEC accreditation documentation or equivalent. A summary of competencies will be reviewed with ESCSIG and this will form the basis of a description of what chairs, heads and governors should expect from their ESCS clerks.
- New clerks will be recruited by governing bodies with support from ESCS. Their contracts will be arranged through East Sussex Personnel and SERCO as is the present practice.

### Management of the Service

- The service will be managed by a newly appointed Clerking Service Manager working with the Governor Services team. The role of the manager will be to work with governors, chairs, school improvement professionals, Children's Services and other agencies to provide operational management for the East Sussex Clerking Service.
- The Clerking Service Manager will be responsible for ensuring clerks attend all relevant training to participate in the BTEC qualification or equivalent competence/qualification and to evidence the threshold competence level that will be required.

## Support for Chairs of Governors

- Central to the development of the clerking service will be the provision of support to chairs in their understanding of the clerk's role and their management of them.

## Support and training for clerks

- Training and support sessions for clerks will continue to be delivered during the day at locations across the authority. In addition, twilight and evening sessions will be available for those clerks who find attending daytime sessions difficult.
- ESCSIG have not so far specified the training level but it is anticipated that the expectation will be attendance at a minimum of three clerks briefing sessions each year. This attendance is covered by the hours identified for training and development in each school's allocation of clerking hours.
- All clerks who are not BTEC qualified will be expected to undertake training and development to this level or equivalent as part of their duties; it is hoped that chairs of governors will support this initiative.

## **4 The supportive role of the School Improvement Partner (SIP)**

4.1 The SIPs will be asked to review the development of governance in their schools and make a judgement about the quality of clerking and the effectiveness of the school's governance. This will be introduced during terms 1 and 2, 2010.

## **5 Budgeting for the service**

5.1 ESCSIG are working to prepare a draft budget and indicative figures are given below.

5.2 Advice from personnel based on the draft job descriptions for clerks in the service indicate that the salary for clerks holding the BTEC level 3 qualification (or similar qualification) or working towards the BTEC level 3 qualification will be on Single Status Pay Scale 7 spine. This pay level still has to be finally decided but it will lead to an annual cost of approximately £242,000 for all East Sussex schools.

5.3 Other budget pressures will include, six training sessions across each year plus training materials, BTEC Registration for clerks undertaking the accreditation at £300 per clerk and £38k plus on costs for the salary of the Clerking Service Manager.

## **6 Start-Up Date**

6.1 The service is expected to begin operating in September 2010 and the objective, over a period of time, is for all clerks in East Sussex schools to reach the threshold competency level of BTEC Level 3 or equivalent.

6.2 All schools will be part of the service from Sept 2010. The manner in which this message is relayed to schools will be crucial to the project's success. The supportive collaboration with ESCSIG will assist with this.

6.3 There will be phasing around the level of support that each clerk receives as they move towards the threshold level.

## **7 Future Briefing Notes**

7.1 The East Sussex Clerking Service and the Implementation Group will provide briefing notes to keep clerks, chairs and headteachers updated about developments in the Clerking Service and the support it can offer.

## **8 Conclusion and Recommendations**

8.1 The Committee are asked to note the contents of this report and the progress being made by the East Sussex Clerking Service Implementation Group.

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Local Members: All

Background Documents: None