

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee met on 21 November 2008. Attendances:-

Councillor Maynard (Chairman)
Councillors Dowling, Field (Vice-Chairman), Gadd, Kramer, Ost, St Pierre,
Waite and Whetstone.

Mr J Taylor (C of E Diocese), Mr S Gregory (Parent Governor), Mrs S
Maynard (Parent Governor), Councillor Silverson (District and Borough
representative) and Jeremy Alford (Health representative).

1 Scrutiny Review of Services for School Governors.

1.1. The Committee has completed its Scrutiny Review of Services for School Governors. A copy of the Committee's full report has previously been circulated to all Members and is available on request from Mary Clarke (Tel: 01273 481587).

1.2. The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee established a Scrutiny Review Board, comprising Councillor St Pierre (Chairman), Mrs Sarah Maynard, Councillor Ost and Mr Jeremy Taylor to undertake a Scrutiny Review of services for school governors with the following scope:

Assess, and make recommendations on, how best the local authority can ensure that all governing bodies have the necessary skills and abilities to fulfil their overall responsibility of helping their school provide the best possible education for the pupils.

1.3 During the review the Board :

- considered the effectiveness of the current support, training and development opportunities available to governors; and
- assessed how best the local authority can support governing bodies in East Sussex in carrying out their responsibilities in the future.

☆ 1.4 The Cabinet at its meeting on 26 January 2009 welcomed the report and recommended the County Council to welcome the main recommendations of the Scrutiny Review Board and to approve the response of the Director of Children's Services to the recommendations and their implementation as reported to Cabinet on 26 January 2009. The main recommendations are:

- 1 School Improvement Partners (SIPs) are to ensure that there is governing body representation at all termly SIP meetings with headteachers.
 - a) SIPs are to examine governing body minutes on an annual basis so that they can build up a picture of a governing body's awareness of particular issues and how these are being addressed by governors.
- 2 Governing bodies are to be encouraged to use the recently developed Governor Services 'health check' document to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to use their findings to develop an annual training programme. Access to an independent moderator should be made available to support them in this process.

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- 3 The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee are to carry out a future scrutiny review of the roles and responsibilities of governing body clerks and provide a judgement on whether a centralised clerking service in East Sussex would be better and more cost effective.
- 4 The Local Authority to emphasise strongly that all new governors are expected to undertake induction training.
Governor Services to ensure that there are sufficient induction sessions held at an increased number of locations to meet any additional demand.
- 5 The governor training programme to be redeveloped to provide three clearly defined levels of training: induction, core functions and specialist/advanced training. This would allow governors to access training most suited to their particular level of need as they progress in their role.
Training and support to be strengthened on:
governor roles and responsibilities;
changes affecting schools and governing bodies at both a local and national level;
School Improvement Partner reports and Self Evaluation Forms;
finance and budgets; and
team working.
- 6 Governing bodies to undertake sufficient training to ensure that they have a thorough understanding of the headteacher appointment process and succession planning.
- 7 Governor Services to:
 - a) develop its database so that it can be more proactive in using electronic systems to advertise and promote training courses to all governors contactable by email.
 - b) redevelop the training brochure to indicate to governing bodies how particular courses can help strengthen their experience and knowledge in areas highlighted within the Ofsted inspection criteria and the school Self Evaluation Form (SEF).
 - c) explore different methods for delivering training and support including: e-learning, using experienced governors and visits to other schools.
- 8 Each governing body to be encouraged to appoint a governor who has an overview of the training undertaken by their governors and who can highlight when additional training may be required.
- 9 The Local Authority to review the Governor Services Team and its associate trainers after one year to assess whether it has sufficient capacity and capability to deliver the enhanced training programme and to ensure it can meet demand for whole governing body training sessions.
- 10 Inform the central government working party that East Sussex County Council considers that there is no evidence to support the statement that smaller governing bodies are more effective; and would not support a mandatory reduction in the current size of governing bodies.

[See also report of the Cabinet, paragraph 2, page 10]

CARL MAYNARD
Chairman

21 November 2008