



COUNTY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (GOVERNORS)

WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH 2026 AT 11AM, ONLINE VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS:

MEMBERS - Councillors Chris Collier, Alan Shuttleworth, Bob Standley and Georgia Taylor

ALSO INVITED – Denise Kong, Margaret Rooms, Jenny Barnard-Langston, John Murray, Clare Cornford.

Minutes Rosie O'Brien

AGENDA

1. Minutes of the previous meeting (*Pages 3 - 8*)
2. Apologies for absence
3. Disclosure of Interests
Disclosure by all Members present of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the Members regard the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.
4. Urgent items
Notification of any items which the Chair considers urgent and proposes to take at the appropriate part of the agenda. Any members who wish to raise urgent items are asked, wherever possible, to notify the Chair before the start of the meeting. In so doing, they must state the special circumstances which they consider justify the matter being considered urgent.
5. Academy Update
John Murray, Senior Manager: Leadership and Governance, Governor and Clerking Services
6. Local Authority Governor Appointments and Governor Services Update (*Pages 9 - 12*)
Charlotte Johnstone, Project Officer, Governor and Clerking Services.
7. ESGF Report/Verbal Update for Councillors (*Pages 13 - 14*)
to include:
 - If the government is writing off SEND Debt for Local Authorities, how will this affect the service?
 - Due to small rural communities sitting in pockets of East Sussex, it is difficult to get new governors. Could Councillors think about promoting vacancies and roles in their communities. This could also be done via newsletters.
8. Any other items previously notified under agenda item 4

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3 March 2026

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County Consultative Committee - Minutes

Date: Wednesday 19th November 2025 11:00

Meeting: County Consultative Committee comprising of Councillors' and East Sussex Governors' Forum (ESGF).

Present: Councillors Bob Standley (Chair), Chris Collier

Members of the ESGF: Monica Pell, Jenny Barnard-Langston, Margaret Rooms

ESCC Officers: John Murray, Clare Cornford, Rosie O'Brien (Minutes)

1	<p><u>Minutes of the previous meeting</u> Cllr Standley welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were approved with no further comments.</p>
2	<p><u>Apologies for absence</u> Apologies received from Charlotte Johnstone, Councillor Shuttleworth, Councillor Taylor, and Denise Kong.</p> <p>Apologies approved with no further comments.</p>
3	<p><u>Disclosure of interests</u> No interests declared.</p>
4	<p><u>Urgent items</u> No items raised.</p>
5	<p><u>Academy Update</u> Verbal update from JM.</p> <p>JM confirmed that since the last County Consultative Committee took place, there has been one additional conversion. On the 1st of October 2025 St Richard's Catholic College Converted to BOSCO Catholic Education Trust.</p> <p>Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School were due to convert, but this has been pushed back to 2026 due to a land issue. The Local Authority and Diocese have no control over this issue.</p> <p>No further questions raised.</p>
6	<p><u>LA Gov appointments and governor services update</u> Verbal update from JM.</p> <p>Since the last County Consultative Committee Meeting, there have been 10 Local Authority Governors nominated for appointment. 6 of these were Re-Applications and 4 were New Applications.</p>

	<p>JM confirmed that The Governor and Clerking Service continue to deal with a high level of complex complaints in schools increasingly related to SEND and Safeguarding.</p> <p>There has been a new training package added in the last academic year around these issues. The team are making headway but any complaints that remain are highly complex.</p> <p>The ESGF members have been called on in the past to support with these complaints. JM confirmed that the team is grateful to governors who give their time to support with these complaints.</p> <p>JM highlighted that complaints panels are taking further time from volunteers due to the complexity of the issues being raised.</p> <p>Cllr Standley asked if these issues related back to EHCPs, JM confirmed that this is often the focus of the complaints, as well as SEND children transitioning.</p> <p>Cllr Standley highlighted that these issues can be stressful for parents. JM added that there is no correlation between complaints being raised, and successful EHCP applications or appeals.</p> <p>JM highlighted the work that the ESGF have done on Good Governor Inductions recently, which included a targeted networking session for school governors to attend.</p> <p>JM informed the committee that overall, there have been 55 new governors in maintained schools across East Sussex since the last County Consultative Committee meeting.</p> <p>Cllr Standley added that school governors are unsung heroes, and the role is now becoming more complicated for volunteers. He expressed his appreciation of the work that school governors do within East Sussex.</p>
7	<p><u>ESGF Verbal update for councillors.</u></p> <p>To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from Chairs Networking re Safeguarding. <p>MP started the update with feedback from the Term 1 Chairs Networking that had a focus on Safeguarding. There was lots of useful input from Liz Hills in the Safeguarding Team. Above and beyond this, complaints and issues with a focus on these areas bring emotional toll and time constraints on those involved. It can sometimes take days to deal with one safeguarding issue which means the usual day to day work in schools is not done. As a result of this governors would like to support head teachers to free up time.</p> <p>MP discussed new framework around dealing with parent relationships ending which can often be brought into school. The new framework would ensure there are no extra pressures by detailing the exact responsibilities of schools.</p> <p>MP highlighted that Safeguarding issues cause high levels of stress on school staff.</p> <p>Cllr Standley asked who will be coming up with the new framework and MP confirmed this would be the East Sussex Safeguarding Team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on Good Governor Induction Networking.

Members of the ESGF discussed the recent Good Governor Induction Networking that took place.

JBL mentioned how they remind governors how much the Local Authority supports school governors, and how they recognise that strong leadership is scaffolded by good governance. The ESGF is providing important networking to contribute to governor development and is strongly promoting the partnership between the County Council, Governors, and Schools.

Cllr Standley asked the ESGF if the slides in the recent Networking session were in reaction to New Governors who felt they did not have sufficient support.

MP confirmed that the session was implemented following New Governor Networking Sessions that reflected little support being offered in some boards. The ESGF wanted to build a framework and show the support that was available. The purpose was to focus governing bodies minds on inducting new governors and helping them to understand why they are there.

Cllr Standley asked if any training was mandatory for new governors.

CC confirmed that the GCS regularly reach out to new governors with the suite of training directed to new starters. There are lots of opportunities for new governors, but nothing is mandatory, they are encouraged to attend.

Cllr Standley highlighted that it would be interesting to see the take-up percentage of new governors attending these sessions.

MR added that the discussions during new governor networking sessions confirmed two extremes. Some schools were doing little to nothing which resulted in new governors feeling abandoned. Some schools were bombarding new governors with information and overwhelmed them. This confirmed to the ESGF that new governors need to move into their roles gently.

MP further highlighted that new governors have support from Governor Services but also need it from their own governing body so that they don't feel lost or overburdened.

Cllr Standley asked whether this support should come from the Chair of Governors. ESGF members confirmed that this support should come from the Chair of Governors, and that the group is trying to promote this support to Chair's to develop this area.

- CPD re new RSE policy

ESGF members confirmed that training on this area will be coming throughout the academic year, and the Policy must be in place in 2026.

- SEND

Cllr Standley highlighted how the current pressures are enormous. The White Paper has been pushed back from June 2025 to 2026.

JBL added that current pressures are parents' expectations which lead to complaints. This includes an upsurge in AI generated complaints. These result in a breakdown of relationship between schools and parents.

Cllr Standley added that the current situation is difficult to deal with because the number of children with Special Educational Needs is increasing. Unless regulations are changed, or money is increased, the current system can not cope with the number of children who need support.

MR highlighted a positive development which is an increase in specialist provision within mainstream schools. This saves money and keeps pupils in their own community. It also gives mainstream schools more ownership, facilities, and extra funding to support pupils.

Cllr Standley agreed that this is a positive development.

- Minimising EHEs as part of the safeguarding agenda.

JBL stated that there is no safeguarding responsibility for teaching at home. Flexi schooling is therefore more difficult to manage. This means that if a child is only attending school part time, there is increased pressure for continuity.

Cllr Standley asked what the reasons are behind the trend of flexi schooling.

JBL Confirmed that schools use this as an offer, because where there are low pupil numbers this offer will attract parents who are looking to home school their children.

Cllr Standley asked what the driving course is behind the offer

JBL Confirmed that the offer is attractive to parents who think education is too heavy for children, but who do not wish to home educate full time.

JM added that this is very similar to Electively Home Educated numbers rising. There is an even divide between parents who have a philosophical rejection to schools but who still want to tap into the core learning. Legally, it is the right and decision of the Headteacher to agree to this and to set it up. Headteacher's have chosen to do this because of funding problems. They would rather gain funding from part-time attendance than to lose it completely. However, this is not a realistic way to keep budgets running. The Council position is not pushing people towards this, but ultimately it is down to the headteacher and the boards.

Cllr Standley highlighted how this must be disruptive for other pupils. Members agreed with this.

- Additional Item

	MP added that a Heathfield Area Networking has been set up. The first meeting took place on Monday 17 th November, and 9 out of 10 Heathfield schools were represented. They are hoping to attract the 10 th school to join.
8	<u>AOI under item 4</u> No items raised. Cllr Standley thanked everyone for attending.

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Report to: County Consultative Committee

Date of meeting: 11th March 2026

By: Charlotte Johnstone

Title: Local Authority Governor appointments and Governor and Clerking Service Update for Councillors

Purpose: To update Councillors on the nomination for appointment of local authority governors and governor training

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) For information

1 Background

1.1 The local authority has a statutory duty to approve nominations for local authority governors. Once nominated, schools then appoint local authority governors onto their governing board.

1.2 This report provides a summary of local authority governor applications approved for nomination, and information about the level of governor vacancies across the county.

2 Supporting information

2.1 Since the report sent to Councillors on the 19th November 2025, 3 local authority governors were nominated for appointment, all were approved for a 4-year term of office. These were formed of 1 reapplication and 2 new applications.

Shaun Jarvis	Rocks Park Primary School	New Application
Philippa Field	Blackboys Church of England Primary School	New Application
Janice Constable	Westfield School	Reapplication

2.2 The Governor and Clerking Service have launched a social media campaign with the aim of recruiting new governors. The Governor and Clerking Service have previously spoken to councillors within this committee about the struggle that some governing boards are facing in terms of recruiting governors to fill the vacancies on their boards. This issue is particularly relevant for schools in rural areas of the county. The social media campaign launched on National School Governors Awareness Day on 12th February 2026 with posts going live on platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

This campaign has been made possible due to the support from current governors, many of whom are members of the ESGF, who partook in interviews which will be shared on social media. We want to thank these governors for giving up their time to support our team in developing this campaign.

The Governor and Clerking Service will be monitoring the Expressions of Interest we hope to receive as part of this campaign and will undertake a 'matchmaking' service to put the candidate to the appropriate board. It will still be the responsibility of the board to review the candidate and determine whether they want to make the candidate a governor. The Governor and Clerking Service also aim to develop this campaign by engaging internal ESCC staff to promote the benefits of being a school governor, and we have asked governors across East Sussex to promote the social media posts to help increase the visibility of this campaign.

2.3 The Governor and Clerking Service have also arranged the ESCC Governor and Clerking Conference 2026, due to take place on Thursday 16th April. The focus of the conference is managing complaints, but through the lens of inclusion. We have two speakers; one is Iain Grafton MBE, former Detective Superintendent and National Leader of Governance who will look at the psychology of complainants, the six groups by which complainants can be categorised, and strategies for schools to manage these categories. We also have ESCC Principal Educational Psychologist Rosie Hitchings who will be looking at the research evidence on inclusion in schools, contributing to the conferences focus on how children and parents feel included in school settings, even when going through a complaints process where individuals may feel excluded from the school community.

The conference currently has close to 150 delegates booked on, and we have opened the conference to all schools across East Sussex, as well as ESCC Education Division staff. We know internal staff are also affected by the impact of school complaints and we feel this would be of interest. We also hope that this will raise the visibility and importance of school governance across the ESCC Education Division, which could also support our aforementioned recruitment goals.

2.4 Following the governments new processes and guidance for Ofsted inspections, we are pleased to have recently announced our new and updated training offer around Ofsted inspections for governors. Following some inspections under the new Ofsted framework, we have been fortunate to have an East Sussex Chair of Governors run several briefings to provide their perspective of the Ofsted inspection, including what questions they were asked, what data they needed to know and what key themes are emerging from inspections. We have already run two briefings with high numbers of attendance of nearly 40 governors from schools across East Sussex with another session due to take place. Our 'Being Prepared for Ofsted' training will take place in Term 5 and will be delivered by a current Ofsted Inspector and current East Sussex governor. We are pleased that our training offer to governors around Ofsted inspections has been robustly supported both by the ESGF throughout the consultation stages, and current East Sussex governors through attending our training, briefing and networking programme.

The Governor and Clerking Service has been working closely with Education Division colleagues and our governor consultants on SEND, and with the recent release of the proposed SEND white paper 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving' we will be able to build on this work. The ESGF have already spoken about responding to the consultation for the paper and we will support governors with the upcoming changes to the SEND system, with the support from East Sussex Education Division colleagues.

2.5 Since the County Consultative Committee last met in November 2025, there have been 39 new governor appointments in maintained schools. This figure is slightly lower than what was reported in the previous 3-month gap between the meetings of the County Consultative Committee. Due to the way that tenure dates work on governing boards, and the rapid change that can sometimes occur in board membership it is not possible for us to determine how many governors have left their role. However, where schools have issues with retention our service can support with bespoke recruitment. The Governor and Clerking Service are acutely aware of the sometimes-challenging task of recruiting governors and the difficulties that boards can face when they hold many vacancies. In response to this, the Governor and Clerking Service have undertaken a social media project to allow us to promote the role of the governor and reach wider audiences to hopefully increase engagement. Our aim is to build on this process and offer further support to boards with governor recruitment.

2.6 Clerking: Since the County Consultative Committee last met in November 2025, there have been two new clerk inductions provided to maintained schools. Clerk inductions offer the welcome to new clerks and also ensure that new clerks are aware of the basic expectations of their role, the key tasks they need to complete and the training available to support their knowledge and development. The Governor and Clerking Service has been working closely with boards holding vacancies for Clerk to Governors to recruit quickly. We have found that some current ESCC Clerks are interested in expanding the number of boards they clerk for. We therefore have put these interested clerks in touch with Chairs and Headteachers who have vacancies to see if they are the right fit. We have supported several schools with recruiting clerks

in this manner over the past few months, which reduced the length of time that governing boards were without substantive clerks, and also has meant that governing boards are recruiting clerks with a great deal of experience and knowledge of clerking in East Sussex schools.

The Locum Clerk Service has supported 3 meetings across 2 schools since the County Consultative Committee last met in November 2025. Though this is a smaller number than average, the meetings that our locum clerks have supported have been more complex, including Staff Disciplinary Appeal Panels and Governor Disciplinary Committees following a Permanent Exclusion.

The fourth cohort for our ESCC certified course for Clerks, the Excellence in Clerking Programme is nearing its conclusion with the clerks about to take their final knowledge test. This cohort has been extremely engaged, inquisitive and supportive of each other. Following feedback received, we are pleased to hear that clerks are actively taking their learning straight back to their boards and supporting board development. We are also especially pleased with the encouragement from Chairs of Governors who have supported their Clerks to engage with accessing CPD to help them develop in their role.

Charlotte Johnstone
Project Officer

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Update to councillors Feb 2026

The ESGF has run two chairs' networks and a new chairs' network since our last county consultative meeting.

At the **chairs' network**, ESGF members who had attended link governor networks passed on topics around **special educational needs and safeguarding**. Governors recounted SEND practice that they had seen in other LAs as part of their professional life, where authorities were attempting to make best use of funds. Everyone was aware that no major decisions can be made before the White Paper on SEN comes out. Governor Services agreed to arrange a meeting between ESCC managers and the ESGF to discuss a way forward, once the paper is released. A new update in safeguarding was around the increasing resource schools are having to spend managing the fallout of acrimonious parental breakups. Some guidance is being written on this and ESCC safeguarding will update the governor safeguarding network, which they lead, when this is ready.

After the **new chairs' network**, we had some discussions around **school culture and vision**, which are fundamental to governors' work. Governors' roles involve supporting schools to develop and promote their vision. This can be a nebulous topic, so it was good to discuss how people could put this in practice and work with their leadership teams. One of the attendees contacted me afterwards to ask more about board effectiveness, which we had discussed and I gave her some ideas and resources, so it seems people find the mutual support element of the meetings helpful.

Recruitment of governors came up at this meeting, and has been a recurring theme elsewhere. Governor Services have run a campaign on this and ESGF members took part in interviews to provide material for a written and video campaign, emphasising the benefits to volunteers of taking part. One of the networks helped develop ideas around recruitment, which may involve promotion of the role to ESCC employees and advertising vacancies online. *The campaign recently began and so far Governor Services have received a handful of expressions of interests from across the county. We're hopeful this number will increase as the campaign develops.*

Q - The ESGF wondered whether it would be possible to ask councillors to promote school governance in their newsletters?

The Lewes Alliance ran governor training on **equality and diversity** in January. The Lewes Alliance is separate from the ESGF and is part of the Educational Improvement Partnership structure for school leaders. The training was suggested by one of the schools in Lewes and attended by an ESGF member, as they belong to one of the schools. The school had begun to look at this problem 18 months ago, when families had experienced racist behaviour, and had formed a group among

staff governors and parents to try to address it. This is an ongoing problem with no easy answers, but it was good for schools to get together. Some ESGF members had experienced this in their schools, and governor questioning at different schools has revealed varying levels of staff and leadership confidence in addressing this. There is more work to be done in spreading good practice and the ESGF has agreed to explore this further.