

## County Consultative Committee (Governors): Autumn Term 2021

### Minutes

- Meeting: **County Consultative Committee (Governors)** comprising of the County Consultative Committee and East Sussex Governors' Forum (ESGF)
- Date: 13<sup>th</sup> October 2021
- Venue: Microsoft Teams
- Present: Cllrs Standley, Belsey, Galley and Scott
- Also invited ESGF members - Karen Marr (KM), Denise Kong (DK), Monica Whitehead (MW), Richard Sage (RS), Peter Colbourn (PC). ESCC Officers - Jessica Stubbings (JS) and Clare Cornford (CC).
- Apologies: Cllr Shuttleworth

Item	Decisions and Outcomes	Action
1.	<b>Minutes of previous County Forum Meeting – 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019</b> The minutes were noted as a true record.	
2.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> Apologies were received and noted as above.	
3.	<b>Declaration of Interest</b> Disclosures by all members present of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the member regards the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.  No interests were declared.	
4.	<b>Urgent Items</b> Cllr Scott asked if governors are recruited on a skills base to governing boards. KM responded that boards undertake a skills audit to identify what skills are needed. DK stated that governing boards reach out via a number of means to look new members with these skills. Cllr Scott asked how governing boards can better reflect the communities they represent. JS responded that governors are also recruited from various teams across the LA and if boards are struggling to recruit, the Governor and Clerking Service can offer support with governor recruitment and placing governors where boards are finding it difficult to recruit. Social media is also a good tool to support recruitment that the Council uses r. RS aid he had found 5 governors through the Governor and Clerking Service's Recruitment Campaign. For Hastings, the situation is different as all but one of the schools are academies and they have their own methods of recruitment. Cllr Belsey said that there are usually parents in the new intake of pupils that are interested in becoming governors. KM responded that it is important to get a balance of stakeholders on the board, so not too many parents and to include members of the local community.	
5.	<b>Any Items previously notified under agenda item 4</b> None	
6.	<b>Local Authority Governor update for Councillors March 2021</b> The County Consultative Committee noted the report they received in March 2021 from Governor Services and the East Sussex Governors Forum (ESGF).	

7.	<p><b>Academies Update</b></p> <p>JS gave the Committee an update on academy conversion since the last meeting in October 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• February 2020 – St Johns Meads CofE Primary School converted to the Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust (DCAT).</li> <li>• September 2020 - The Causeway School converted to the Swale Academy Trust. Now called The Turing School.</li> <li>• December 2020 – Sedlescombe CofE Primary School converted to DCAT.</li> <li>• September 2021 Roselands Infant School and Stafford Junior School converted to the Cavendish Education Trust.</li> </ul> <p>Upcoming proposed conversions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northiam and Hurst Green CofE Primary Schools to convert to DCAT.</li> <li>• Uplands Community College to join the Beacon Academy Trust</li> <li>• Peacehaven Heights and Telscombe Cliffs Primary schools are consulting about converting to STEP Academy Trust.</li> </ul> <p>PC asked for clarity about the County Council’s view on academisation. Cllr Standley responded that there is no for or against policy. It is up to the governing board of the school. JS stated that the Local Authority will support schools to explore all their options including academisation and federation.</p> <p>Cllr Scott responded by saying Sir Dexter Hut had proactively encourage the academisation of all schools, with promises of money. Teachers were concerned about their contracts. Parents are often not concerned either way. It would be interesting to see how these schools are faring. JS responded that the performance of schools varies.</p> <p>Cllr Galley reinforced that it is the quality of education that matters. Cllr Scott said he would like some comparative information. Cllr Galley referenced a scrutiny report about schools which found that many small schools need a form of partnership to survive. Federations share resources, which can be a saving for small schools.</p> <p>PC raised the issue that if more schools are converting to academy status, the resources available to the local authority goes down and schools get less support.</p> <p>Cllr Standley stated that whether schools are academies or not, the local authority retains a strategic role in performance management. JS reinforced this by reassuring colleagues that school improvement is the responsibility of all schools. As more schools become academies, the role of the local authority has changed to one that helps facilitate more school-to-school support.</p> <p>RS stated that if fewer schools buy into the services on offer, then this will have an impact. Academies can buy their services from where they want.</p>	
8.	<p><b>Local authority governor appointments and governor vacancies.</b></p> <p>Members of the Committee received a report detailing the nomination for appointment of local authority governors for information.</p> <p>Members were made aware of the current governor vacancy rate in East Sussex, it was noted that September is the peak time of the year for vacancies as boards are in the process of making appointments for the new academic year.</p>	

9. **Discussion around COVID, how schools coped and how governors saw their role.**

KM reported to Councillors that the schools had done well in how they coped. It was made difficult because of lots of last-minute instructions and changes from Central Government. This is one aspect that made it hard to cope with. There has been a mixed picture of remote provision. Some schools thrived with this, others not so much.

Remote governor monitoring took place in schools. Headteachers needed support rather than challenge. Governors became sounding boards for senior leadership teams.

Governing boards had different approaches to remote meetings. Some boards were not meeting at the start, but all boards did meet remotely eventually. There is a blended approach now to online and in person meetings.

There has been great uptake of governor training and an increased number of training, briefing and networking sessions offered by the Governor and Clerking Service. From a training perspective, governors are in a good place. Induction has been hard for new governors as they have not been able to visit the school or meet in person with other members of the board.

RS said he was surprised at the impact of Covid and how it has particularly affected the Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) children. There is a lack of social skills and care needs which is a result of 18 months of disrupted education. EYFS and phonics are a real concern. Children are used to screens at home and have reduced concentration. The word gap is incredible.

MW said that a positive of covid was being able to reflect on what is better than expected. There have been a lot of suggestions around what works better. It is good to meet on Teams and governor attendance at meetings has been better.

There is a real concern about some of the most disadvantaged children and the fear that some will never recover.

School senior leadership teams have been under enormous pressure from Central Government and because of this the situation has been harder to manage.

Cllr Standley reflected that Central Government also made the situation difficult for Councillors as well because of all the last-minute changes. The changes were worse than no information at all. Information would change from Monday to Friday or over the weekend which made it hard to make cohesive decisions.

JS commented that the local authority gave a range of support to schools. There was the daily Covid Message Board, which now goes out on a regular basis by email to get information to schools. There is a team in place to manage this who work closely with Public Health colleagues. It has been a difficult time and the local authority want to offer as much help as possible.

DK recognised that the situation has been difficult for the local authority as they were receiving the information from central government at the same time as schools and governors.

DK said it would be useful to look at the most effective ways of using the recovery premium in practice. JS responded that this is something the Primary and Secondary Boards are looking at.

**Action:** JS to see what can be shared from the Primary and Secondary Boards around this.

It was agreed that the impact of Covid will be seen for years to come.

	<p>KM stated that on the other end of the spectrum, some of the older students in years 10 and 11 have behavioural issues and don't understand why they need to be in school.</p> <p>Cllr Scott said there would be a commentary on the impact of Covid for a few years and suggested that Scrutiny resources could be used to look at the impact of Covid through the scrutiny process. A range of people could be asked about their response over a period of time.</p> <p>JS said that the well-being support being provided is having a real impact. The Mental Health Support Team (MHST) are rolling out support to schools. There is also an ISEND and whole school approach to mental health.</p> <p>There has been a lot of focus on attendance and the culture of the importance of schools as children have spent so much time out of school.</p>	
10.	<p><b>Excellence for All</b></p> <p>JS provided an update on the refreshed version of the Excellence for All strategy which was approved at the recent Lead Member for Education Meeting. This strategy will run from 2021 – 2023. The first version of this strategy was in 2013, so it will have run for 10 years by 2023. The strategy looks forward to the next 2 years and reflects on the pandemic. There was huge disruption to learning and it is important to look at the lessons about learning, including new technology and different ways of doing things. The strategy recognises the impact of the pandemic on staff and school leaders. The strategy is shorter and more focussed.</p> <p>There is a shared ambition which will focus on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening leadership</li> <li>• Improved literacy and oracy</li> <li>• Taking forward the innovations in approaches to learning and participation forward to support the inclusion and wellbeing of pupils.</li> </ul>	
11.	<p><b>ESGF Update to the County Consultative Committee</b></p> <p>KM talked about the way the ESGF have supported governors with the challenges that have been faced around the County, including the challenges around the return to school. Safeguarding has always been on the agenda. There have been some thorough updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education around sexual behaviour. There is a huge focus on making sure schools don't bury their heads in the sand around sexual abuse. Schools need to address these issues.</p> <p>Finance continues to be a constant worry and it is of particular concern to small schools. Federation does help to address some concerns; however, distance means it is not often an easy answer.</p> <p>The long-term vision for the ESGF is for it to evolve as governance changes and to model good governance practice. The ESGF are going to adopt a code of conduct. The group are also moving to a model of co-opted and elected model to mirror the structure of governing boards.</p> <p>The ESGF have had an enhanced networking role and hope to move this forward.</p> <p>Engagement by academy trust governance depends largely on the trust. Some academies have their own governor training and support whilst others access local governance support. Local Governing Bards often have a scheme of delegation which makes conversations difficult in terms of school-to-school support as accountability rests with the Trustees JS stated that provision for school-to-school support is inclusive to all schools regardless of their status.</p>	
12.	<p><b>Local Area Forums</b></p>	

	<p>The data for the last rounds of Local Area Forums was shared and the increased attendance was noted. CC shared that the topic for the next round of Local Area Forums will be <i>Ofsted Inspections are back – what governors need to know</i>.</p> <p>Cllr Standley stated that this meeting of the Committee has been more focussed and covered a lot of ground and works better as a stand-alone meeting rather than following directly on from an ESGF meeting.</p> <p>Cllr Scott stated that it is a lot easier to attend a meeting on Teams.</p> <p>KM noted that she had worked with a consultant for the Standards Learning Effectiveness Service to look at the format. The separate meeting and less governors means that there is a good focus.</p> <p>It was agreed that this format will work better going forward. The agenda also covered a good range of topics.</p>	
13.	<p><b>Dates of Future Meetings</b>  10<sup>th</sup> February 2022 15.30 – 17.00 by Teams</p>	