

**Report to:** County Consultative Committee

**Date of meeting:** 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024

**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**

**11 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 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023, 6 local authority governors were nominated for appointment, all were approved for a 4 year term of office. There were four new appointments and two reapplications.

Anthony Mayo	Denton Community Primary School	Reapplication
Helen Vine	Heathfield Community College	Reapplication
Alison Wicks	South Malling	New Application
Emma Neil	Burwash CofE Primary School	New Application
Mark Atkinson	Sussex Spires Federation	New Application
Sam Attwater	Polegate School	New Application

2.2 The GovernorHub System is working well for our team to communicate with governors and collate information and resources which they can access easily. Out of the 1139 governors in maintained schools and academies who buy into the Governor and Clerking Service, only 95 have not yet signed up to the new system.

Since the County Consultative Committee last met in November 2023, the GovernorHub system was not being used by 185 maintained governors across East Sussex. Since this time, we have been increasing our communication with clerks and chairs to encourage governor sign ups. There are now only 95 governors who have not yet signed up to the GovernorHub system. This is a change of 83% of maintained governors using the GovernorHub system in November 2023, the figure up to 91% of maintained governors using the system as of March 2024. We will continue working on these conversations with boards to improve this figure even further.

2.3 The Governor and Clerking Service has continued to enhance the training, networking and briefing sessions for the 2023-4 academic year, and we are frequently updating and creating new sessions to meet the training needs of the governors. We have received positive feedback from governors who have attended our complaints training, Feedback included “An excellent, informative and interesting session. Thoroughly recommend” and “An extremely useful and information training session”. Following governor and school feedback and a rise in complaints

from schools, we have developed three new sessions with Jenny Barnard-Langston who will also be delivering these. These sessions will cover 'Managing an Effective Stage 3 Complaints Panel' which is targeted at Chairs but Clerks are also invited to this training. 'Undertaking a Thorough Stage 2 Complaint Investigation' for governors and lastly 'Handling Complaints for Headteachers and Senior Leaders'. The Governor and Clerking Service have been supporting schools with advice and guidance around complaints that may be more complex in areas and have received positive feedback from headteachers. Andrea Keith, the headteacher at Cradle Hill told us *"Inevitably, and sadly, handling complaints is something that headteachers deal with and whilst usually a conversation, reassurance and the strong relationships you build with families, ensures these are not too difficult, sometimes however they can be incredibly challenging. When I had one of those challenging complaints, it was incredibly reassuring and supportive to be able to access expert advice and support from Governor Services. The governor training was extremely valuable to my Chair of Governors and when we needed an additional governor for a Stage 3 panel, Governor Services provided us with a highly skilled and knowledgeable governor that was an additional reassurance. I would thoroughly recommend all headteachers access the training and support that Governor Services provides."*

We also ran two Local Area Forums with the subject 'Getting it Right for Children with SEND' which was delivered by Katie Ridgway and Nathan Caine and facilitated by the ESGF. 90 governors over 58 schools attended these sessions and we received feedback which included *"Excellent presentations and discussions with other governors"* and *"Networking was very helpful and made me feel supported."* Following the outcomes of these forums and with governor feedback Katie and Nathan have agreed with governors to provide a session which will be focused on high-needs funding.

2.4 There have been 124 new governors appointed since the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023 in maintained schools. There has also been some further success with the Governor Recruitment Campaign, with 8 people expressing an interest in becoming a governor since the last County Consultative meeting in November 2023. The Governor and Clerking Service are working with Governors for Schools to support the recruitment campaign as they have a lot of corporate contacts within local and national companies that East Sussex schools will be able to access.

2.5 Clerking: As it currently stands the locum clerk service have supported 20 meetings across 9 schools since September. In addition to providing locum clerk to those schools who are temporarily without a substantive clerk, we also provide support and advice to those schools who to come up with innovative methods to recruit new clerks. This includes vacancy promotions on the school website, in the school newsletter, in school promotion i.e. posters. Promoting vacancies at school fairs/fetes and events, speaking to friends and neighbours who may be interested. Also reaching out to parents of children in reception who may be interested in returning to work now that they're children are in school. We also provide guidance around what to include in clerk recruitment adverts and will read through and provide feedback on draft clerk job adverts.

In order to meet the changing needs of the Clerk, we have reviewed and updated what was the Clerk Accreditation. The new course is called the 'East Sussex Excellence in Clerking Programme' and we have a full first cohort which started in March, and already have a number of clerks signed up to the next cohort starting in September. This programme will offer clerks a more bespoke training programme which will be specific to East Sussex schools so they can practically take their learning straight into action.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Appendix 1