

**Report to:** County Consultative Committee

**Date of meeting:** 13 November 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**

#### **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 11<sup>th</sup> July 2024, 13 local authority governors were nominated for appointment, all were approved for a 4 year term of office. These were all reapplications.

Lisa Mahony	St John's CE Primary School Crowborough	Reapplication
William Lovett	Nutley Primary School	Reapplication
Karen Bye	Groombridge St Thomas	Reapplication
Wendy Collier	Pevensey and Westham CE Primary	Reapplication
Jenny Barnard-Langston	St Mark's CEP School	Reapplication
Christine Johnston	The Genesis Federation	Reapplication
Diana Harvey	Brede Primary School	Reapplication
Mark Atkinson	Cross In Hand CE Primary School	Reapplication
Mark Evans	Chailey School	Reapplication
Emma Collins	Polegate Primary School	Reapplication
Jennifer Sutherland	St Thomas CE Aided Primary School (Winchelsea)	Reapplication
Jenny Barnard-Langston	The Bluebell Federation	Reapplication
Hannah Wood	Meridian CP School	Reapplication

2.2 The Governor and Clerking Service has observed the increasing number of complaints that schools are needing to manage, and this has been shared and discussed previously with the councillors in March 2024. The Governor and Clerking Service has been offering ongoing support to schools who have received complaints. In Term 1 of this academic year, we have supported 7 schools and across the past 6 months we have supported 20 schools with complaints. The forms of support put in place has varied from simply having an initial phone call which can clarify the complaint and the next steps the school needs to take, to more detailed conversations with the Headteacher, the Chair of Governors or the Clerk to Governors to dissect different aspects of complex complaints. On occasion we have arranged for independent governors to sit on Stage 3 Complaint panels to support schools who either do not have enough unbiased governors available, or to support boards who do not have experienced governors to chair a panel. We have reiterated the training offer in place to governors, with multiple sessions running that provide an overview and deep-dives into school complaints. These sessions include:

- Complaints: The Clerk’s Role (Training)
- Handling School Complaints (Training)
- Undertaking a Thorough Stage 2 Complaint Investigation (Briefing)
- Managing an Effective Stage 3 Complaint Panel (Briefing)
- Handling Complaints for Headteachers and Senior Leaders (Training)
- Managing Complex School Issues (Training)

Whilst we are not always privy to the final outcomes of the complaints that we support with, we focus on ensuring boards are following the correct processes and following the school’s complaints policy at every step.

2.3 The Governor and Clerking Service are happy to be running SEND training for governors again this year with the support of Nicola Angus, Senior Manager of SEND Quality of Education. We have run two separate networking sessions, one for primary governors and one for secondary governors. The networking sessions provided a great base for the training programme to be constructed upon, and demonstrated the passion and dedication that our governors have towards strategically monitoring the SEN provision in their schools. The sessions did highlight the work needed to increase the visibility of SEND governance in secondary settings, and the Governor and Clerking Service is working with the support of Nicola Angus to increase this. Work around this includes governor engagement and running surveys to understand what secondary SEND governors want to learn in the training sessions. We are also going to run an additional ‘New to SEND Governance’ session which aims to provide an overview of the responsibilities of SEND governance and to build the confidence in governors to monitor SEND in their schools, as well as ensuring compliance. We will also be following this all up within our Term 2 governor and clerk bulletin with advice, guidance and quick tips for SEND monitoring.

The Governor and Clerking Service has planned termly topics for the year ahead which will be key focuses throughout the team’s communications and the training and networking sessions in each term. The topics are:

- Term 1: Inclusion.
- Term 2: SEND.
- Term 3: Finance.
- Term 4: Transition.

- Term 5: Relationships on the Board.
- Term 6: Preparing for Results.

These topics have been chosen to align with and respond to the Excellence for All vision 2024-2030. In Term 2 the Governor and Clerking Service are looking forward to running a Governor Forum on the topic of Belonging, which will be delivered by Barry Blakelock, Education Director at the Aquinas Trust. The theme of 'Belonging' touches on the topics of Inclusion and SEND, so the forum will compliment the topics already embedded across our training and networking programme for Term 1 and 2.

The Governor and Clerking Service has run the new '*Attendance and Inclusion*' training session in Term 1. This governor training looks at the relationship between attendance figures at school and the topics of inclusion, considering how building on and improving inclusivity can impact attendance figures. The Governor and Clerking Service will review feedback following this new session to see how governors intend to embed their learning within their board.

2.4 Since the County Consultative Committee last met in July 2024, there have been 40 new governor appointments in maintained schools and in total there were 190 new governors appointed across the 2023-2024 academic year in maintained East Sussex schools. 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 particular issues with retention our service is able to support with bespoke recruitment.

2.5 Clerking: Since September 2024, there have been 3 new clerk inductions provided to maintained schools. This ensures 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 also offers support to schools who are recruiting for a Clerk to Governors.

The Locum Clerk Service has also been a beneficial service this term, with our locum clerks supporting 7 meetings across 5 schools since September 2024.

Policy management is a large and at times complex task for clerks to ensure that the board is compliant with their statutory obligations. To support clerks with this task, we provided all boards with a policy compliance tracker that they could adapt to suit the needs of the school. The Governor and Clerking Service have received a lot of positive feedback on this resource and we are glad that this is of benefit to clerks and we hope it will reduce the amount of time and energy that clerks may have to put into this aspect of their role.

The second cohort of the ESCC certified course for clerks, the Excellence in Clerking Programme, began in September 2024 with a full cohort. This cohort is predominantly newer clerks who are at the beginning of their clerking career, and we have received positive feedback, one clerk on the cohort said: "*Coming in as a total novice I found it extremely helpful - I can see there is a huge amount to absorb and learn, but I'm excited to get going!*" We will be checking in with our clerks on the cohort in the next week ahead of our second session in December.

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