

## County Consultative Committee - Minutes

Date: Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025 15:00

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

Present: Councillor's Bob Standley (Chair), Peter Pragnell, Chris Collier, Alan Shuttleworth, Colin Belsey

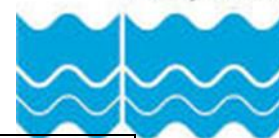
Members of the ESGF: Denise Kong (DK), Monica Pell (MP)

Other attendees: Cllr Paul Redstone (Governor at The Genesis Federation)

ESCC Officers: Clare Cornford, John Murray, Charlotte Johnstone (Minutes)

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| 1 | <p><u>Minutes of the previous meeting</u><br/>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><br/>No apologies received from Monica Whitehead (ESGF).</p>  |
| 3 | <p><u>Disclosure of interests</u><br/>No interests declared.</p>   |
| 4 | <p><u>Urgent items</u><br/>No items raised.</p>  |
| 5 | <p><u>Academy Update</u><br/>Verbal update from JM.</p> <p>Since the last County Consultative Committee Meeting in November, there have been two new conversions: Robertsbridge Community College, converted on 1 March 2025 to Aquinas Church of England Education Trust and Ringmer Primary and Nursery School converted on 1 March 2025 to Durrington Multi Academy Trust (DMAT).</p> <p>There are three current conversions in progress. St Mary Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School (proposed conversion date - 1 May 2025) - BOSCO Catholic Education Trust. St Thomas a Becket Catholic Primary School (proposed conversion date - 1 May 2025) - BOSCO Catholic Education Trust and Grove Park School (proposed conversion date to be confirmed) - London South East Academies Trust (LSEAT).</p> <p>New Academy Orders have also been received for the following schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>St Richards Catholic College (proposed conversion date to be confirmed) - BOSCO Catholic Education Trust</li> </ul> |

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School (proposed conversion date to be confirmed) - BOSCO Catholic Education Trust</li> <li>• Grovelands Community Primary School (proposed conversion date to be confirmed) - Wandle Learning Trust</li> <li>• Hellingly Community Primary School (proposed conversion date to be confirmed) - Wandle Learning Trust</li> </ul> <p>JM confirmed that the above changes were in motion prior to the national government changes to academisation.</p> <p>Due to technical issues, Cllr Pragnell left the meeting at 15:10.</p>  |
| 6 | <p><u>LA Gov appointments and governor services update</u><br/>Verbal update from CJ.</p> <p>Since the last County Consultative Meeting in November, 5 Local Authority governors were nominated for appointment. All of these were approved within their boards for a 4-year term of office. 4 of these were reapplications, 1 was a new application.</p> <p>The Governor and Clerking Service has developed and delivered new information sessions for East Sussex Headteachers, Governors and Clerks on the topic of the Governor Disciplinary Committee (GDC) which takes place following the suspension or exclusion of a pupil.</p> <p>The team confirmed that there has been very positive feedback from Headteacher's and Governors who attended these sessions, and these sessions will be running again in Term 4 and Term 5.</p> <p>CJ confirmed that the team is also working on a new information session for Headteacher's which will outline the full complaints process. CJ confirmed this was to respond to the positive feedback received from Headteacher's who attended the GDC information sessions.</p> <p>CJ spoke of the golden thread of the topics of Belonging and Inclusion which has been at the forefront of the training, networking and briefing programme this year, including an ESGF-led forum and and ESGF-led networking, both on the topic of Belonging. CJ explained that feedback from these sessions indicates governors want to continue discussing this topic, and the team and the ESGF will look at continuing this conversation in future work.</p> <p>CJ also explained that the team are currently developing training around the topic of transition, inc. Transitioning between school settings, between year groups and further.</p> <p>Since the committee last met in November 2024, there have been 52 new governor appointments in maintained schools. This is an increase from the 40 new governors who had joined boards as reported in the November '24 minutes.</p> <p>Since November 2024, there have been 3 clerk inductions provided to clerks at maintained schools.</p> |



The Locum Clerk Service has also been used in this term, with East Sussex Locum Clerks supporting 8 meetings across 4 schools.

The second cohort of the ESCC certified course for clerks, Excellence in Clerking, recently completed their final sessions and are currently undertaking the final knowledge test. CJ explained that this group of clerks have been very supportive of one another and engaged very meaningfully with the programme. CJ confirmed the next cohort will begin in Term 5.

Cllr Standley commented on how great it was to hear the positive feedback.

Cllr Standley enquired as to how to target the governors who don't typically attend training and we make all governors aware of its importance.

CJ explained that the team recently asked Clerks to complete checklists and part of that was to look at training gaps in their board.

JM agreed that there was scope to engage with the few boards who don't engage with Governor Services or attend the training programme. JM also highlighted that just because a board has one or two really engaged governors that attend training frequently, it doesn't mean that the board as a whole is highly skilled.

DK spoke of hearing about similar issues when recently attending an NGA conference with governors nationally. DK said that governor engagement seems to be a widespread issue at the moment and that the offer available to East Sussex governors is good.

DK enquired about the possibility of issues with academies who don't want to engage or don't access the offer from Governor Services, and how this can make academies quite insular and how it can impact knowledge and experience. JM confirmed that the academy buy in for the Governor Services traded service is relatively good, esp. with smaller academy trusts, however there are larger trusts who don't buy in to the traded offer and there is low engagement.

JM highlighted CC's work with academy trusts to enable trusts to learn about the traded offer which has led to some more trusts buying in to the traded offer.

JM said some trusts feel that the Governor Services training is only applicable to maintained schools, however JM confirmed this isn't the case and that there is scope to improve communicating this with trusts.

MP spoke of knowing local maintained schools where she doesn't see any governor engagement with training and networking. MP identified the risk of some governing boards with long standing Chairs becoming complacent and feel they do not need training. MP also highlighted the benefit of how easy it is to access training now that it is all delivered online.

MP explained that there are some statutory training requirements, but otherwise you cannot force governors to attend regular training.

PR spoke of it being beneficial for the Clerk and Chair to receive the regular lists of upcoming training, and that an effective Clerk would highlight the training to the Chair, and that the Chair should be telling the governors to engage more with training.

DK explained that it's important to focus on the root of school governance which is to benefit the pupils in the community. DK spoke of her experience in being a governor on complaints or exclusions panels and one of the key takeaways from

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|   | <p>these experiences is that when a complaint or exclusion is handled poorly this can negatively impact on the relationship the child and their parents have with the school.</p> <p>DK added that as a governor, knowing the importance of training also means knowing the importance of the culture and ethos of the school. Cllr Standley agreed and said that without training governors won't know how to handle the problems in front of them.</p> <p>Cllr Standley asked if training could be made mandatory. Governor Services confirmed it cannot be made mandatory.</p> <p>Cllr Belsey explained from his experience as a governor, that training engagement has decreased. Cllr Belsey said knowledge of what it means to be a governor would improve their connection to the school.</p> <p>Cllr Pragnell returned to the meeting at 15:18.</p>   |
| 7 | <p><u>ESGF Verbal update for councillors.</u></p> <p>Verbal update provided by DK on behalf of the ESGF.</p> <p>DK asked Cllrs whether there is an action plan following East Sussex's recent SEN Ofsted inspection to improve the support for children with SEN. DK also asked how councillors are going to assure that the planned actions will take place, esp. given the reorganisation in local government.</p> <p>Cllr Standley explained that East Sussex was rated 2 in the inspection, and that there were things that East Sussex did well and things we know can be improved upon and that we're happy to improve upon. Cllr Standley added that the Cllrs will be holding officers to account.</p> <p>Cllr Standley explained that funding is a much bigger problem, and that transferring from the school budget to the high-needs block is rare, especially compared to other councils who do this annually. Cllr Standley explained that there is high pressure with budgets and that ESCC has been managing budgets better than other councils which has meant we haven't received as much funding from national government as other councils have.</p> <p>Cllr Standley confirmed there will be an action plan. DK asked if this action plan is still being written or if one came out of the Ofsted inspection. Cllr Standley confirmed that there is a general annual plan, however a more specific plan is being developed. DK commented that it will be good to hear how the plan is being developed when the County Consultative Committee next meet.</p> <p>DK spoke of the funding changes and noted that some schools weren't being vocal in opposing the funding changes. DK said these schools were clear they didn't want the transfer to be an annual occurrence.</p> <p>Cllr Standley appreciated the view of these schools as it has impacted their budgets, and that historically this has not been a frequent action and reserves were moved around to lessen the impact of this. Cllr Standley explained that there are</p> |

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|   | <p>enormous pressures currently and it would not be possible to rule out having to transfer funds in the future.</p> <p>DK asked if local government reorganisation will have an impact on the SEN action plan. Cllr Standley explained that this change may distract officers' time whilst the new council is formed, however Cllr Standley confirmed that Cllrs will stay focused in Children's Services.</p> <p>DK made Cllrs aware that there is a possibility of some governors writing to MPs about the universal infant free school meals funding, the issue being that the funding doesn't cover the cost of the meal. Cllr Standley said he is happy to be copied in to any emails or communications sent to MPs on this topic. Cllr Standley added that he is especially aware of the impact this funding can have on smaller infant primary schools who are under pressure with their budgets.</p> |
| 8 | <p><u>AOI under item 4</u></p> <p>No items raised.</p>  |
| 9 | <p><u>Next meeting:</u></p> <p>The date of the next meeting is Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2025 15:00</p>   |