

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.