

Update to councillors Feb 2026

The ESGF has run two chairs' networks and a new chairs' network since our last county consultative meeting.

At the **chairs' network**, ESGF members who had attended link governor networks passed on topics around **special educational needs and safeguarding**. Governors recounted SEND practice that they had seen in other LAs as part of their professional life, where authorities were attempting to make best use of funds. Everyone was aware that no major decisions can be made before the White Paper on SEN comes out. Governor Services agreed to arrange a meeting between ESCC managers and the ESGF to discuss a way forward, once the paper is released. A new update in safeguarding was around the increasing resource schools are having to spend managing the fallout of acrimonious parental breakups. Some guidance is being written on this and ESCC safeguarding will update the governor safeguarding network, which they lead, when this is ready.

After the **new chairs' network**, we had some discussions around **school culture and vision**, which are fundamental to governors' work. Governors' roles involve supporting schools to develop and promote their vision. This can be a nebulous topic, so it was good to discuss how people could put this in practice and work with their leadership teams. One of the attendees contacted me afterwards to ask more about board effectiveness, which we had discussed and I gave her some ideas and resources, so it seems people find the mutual support element of the meetings helpful.

Recruitment of governors came up at this meeting, and has been a recurring theme elsewhere. Governor Services have run a campaign on this and ESGF members took part in interviews to provide material for a written and video campaign, emphasising the benefits to volunteers of taking part. One of the networks helped develop ideas around recruitment, which may involve promotion of the role to ESCC employees and advertising vacancies online. *The campaign recently began and so far Governor Services have received a handful of expressions of interests from across the county. We're hopeful this number will increase as the campaign develops.*

Q - The ESGF wondered whether it would be possible to ask councillors to promote school governance in their newsletters?

The Lewes Alliance ran governor training on **equality and diversity** in January. The Lewes Alliance is separate from the ESGF and is part of the Educational Improvement Partnership structure for school leaders. The training was suggested by one of the schools in Lewes and attended by an ESGF member, as they belong to one of the schools. The school had begun to look at this problem 18 months ago, when families had experienced racist behaviour, and had formed a group among

staff governors and parents to try to address it. This is an ongoing problem with no easy answers, but it was good for schools to get together. Some ESGF members had experienced this in their schools, and governor questioning at different schools has revealed varying levels of staff and leadership confidence in addressing this. There is more work to be done in spreading good practice and the ESGF has agreed to explore this further.