

Report to: County Consultative Committee
Date of meeting: 11th March 2026
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 19th November 2025, 3 local authority governors were nominated for appointment, all were approved for a 4-year term of office. These were formed of 1 reapplication and 2 new applications.

Shaun Jarvis	Rocks Park Primary School	New Application
Philippa Field	Blackboys Church of England Primary School	New Application
Janice Constable	Westfield School	Reapplication

2.2 The Governor and Clerking Service have launched a social media campaign with the aim of recruiting new governors. The Governor and Clerking Service have previously spoken to councillors within this committee about the struggle that some governing boards are facing in terms of recruiting governors to fill the vacancies on their boards. This issue is particularly relevant for schools in rural areas of the county. The social media campaign launched on National School Governors Awareness Day on 12th February 2026 with posts going live on platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

This campaign has been made possible due to the support from current governors, many of whom are members of the ESGF, who partook in interviews which will be shared on social media. We want to thank these governors for giving up their time to support our team in developing this campaign.

The Governor and Clerking Service will be monitoring the Expressions of Interest we hope to receive as part of this campaign and will undertake a 'matchmaking' service to put the candidate to the appropriate board. It will still be the responsibility of the board to review the candidate and determine whether they want to make the candidate a governor. The Governor and Clerking Service also aim to develop this campaign by engaging internal ESCC staff to promote the benefits of being a school governor, and we have asked governors across East Sussex to promote the social media posts to help increase the visibility of this campaign.

2.3 The Governor and Clerking Service have also arranged the ESCC Governor and Clerking Conference 2026, due to take place on Thursday 16th April. The focus of the conference is managing complaints, but through the lens of inclusion. We have two speakers; one is Iain Grafton MBE, former Detective Superintendent and National Leader of Governance who will look at the psychology of complainants, the six groups by which complainants can be categorised, and strategies for schools to manage these categories. We also have ESCC Principal Educational Psychologist Rosie Hitchings who will be looking at the research evidence on inclusion in schools, contributing to the conferences focus on how children and parents feel included in school settings, even when going through a complaints process where individuals may feel excluded from the school community.

The conference currently has close to 150 delegates booked on, and we have opened the conference to all schools across East Sussex, as well as ESCC Education Division staff. We know internal staff are also affected by the impact of school complaints and we feel this would be of interest. We also hope that this will raise the visibility and importance of school governance across the ESCC Education Division, which could also support our aforementioned recruitment goals.

2.4 Following the governments new processes and guidance for Ofsted inspections, we are pleased to have recently announced our new and updated training offer around Ofsted inspections for governors. Following some inspections under the new Ofsted framework, we have been fortunate to have an East Sussex Chair of Governors run several briefings to provide their perspective of the Ofsted inspection, including what questions they were asked, what data they needed to know and what key themes are emerging from inspections. We have already run two briefings with high numbers of attendance of nearly 40 governors from schools across East Sussex with another session due to take place. Our 'Being Prepared for Ofsted' training will take place in Term 5 and will be delivered by a current Ofsted Inspector and current East Sussex governor. We are pleased that our training offer to governors around Ofsted inspections has been robustly supported both by the ESGF throughout the consultation stages, and current East Sussex governors through attending our training, briefing and networking programme.

The Governor and Clerking Service has been working closely with Education Division colleagues and our governor consultants on SEND, and with the recent release of the proposed SEND white paper 'Every Child Achieving and Thriving' we will be able to build on this work. The ESGF have already spoken about responding to the consultation for the paper and we will support governors with the upcoming changes to the SEND system, with the support from East Sussex Education Division colleagues.

2.5 Since the County Consultative Committee last met in November 2025, there have been 39 new governor appointments in maintained schools. This figure is slightly lower than what was reported in the previous 3-month gap between the meetings of the County Consultative Committee. 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 issues with retention our service can support with bespoke recruitment. The Governor and Clerking Service are acutely aware of the sometimes-challenging task of recruiting governors and the difficulties that boards can face when they hold many vacancies. In response to this, the Governor and Clerking Service have undertaken a social media project to allow us to promote the role of the governor and reach wider audiences to hopefully increase engagement. Our aim is to build on this process and offer further support to boards with governor recruitment.

2.6 Clerking: Since the County Consultative Committee last met in November 2025, there have been two new clerk inductions provided to maintained schools. Clerk inductions offer the welcome to new clerks and also ensure 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 has been working closely with boards holding vacancies for Clerk to Governors to recruit quickly. We have found that some current ESCC Clerks are interested in expanding the number of boards they clerk for. We therefore have put these interested clerks in touch with Chairs and Headteachers who have vacancies to see if they are the right fit. We have supported several schools with recruiting clerks

in this manner over the past few months, which reduced the length of time that governing boards were without substantive clerks, and also has meant that governing boards are recruiting clerks with a great deal of experience and knowledge of clerking in East Sussex schools.

The Locum Clerk Service has supported 3 meetings across 2 schools since the County Consultative Committee last met in November 2025. Though this is a smaller number than average, the meetings that our locum clerks have supported have been more complex, including Staff Disciplinary Appeal Panels and Governor Disciplinary Committees following a Permanent Exclusion.

The fourth cohort for our ESCC certified course for Clerks, the Excellence in Clerking Programme is nearing its conclusion with the clerks about to take their final knowledge test. This cohort has been extremely engaged, inquisitive and supportive of each other. Following feedback received, we are pleased to hear that clerks are actively taking their learning straight back to their boards and supporting board development. We are also especially pleased with the encouragement from Chairs of Governors who have supported their Clerks to engage with accessing CPD to help them develop in their role.

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