

Annex B

Report on results of feasibility consultation on the Role of School Governors - Ref no 127.

Policy Unit Response:

Officers in the Policy Unit were not aware of any duplicating work connected with this issue. They think it could be a quite timely topic in that lots of changes are underway or planned in connection with the implementation of the Children Act in schools. Governors' roles and responsibilities might evolve as a result of these changes - scrutiny might like to consider this too

Performance Improvements Team Response:

Equalities

School Governors' responsibilities have increased greatly during the last few years. Governors have a major contribution to make to the running of and achievement in our schools. They cannot do this in isolation and must work in partnership with schools and with the LEA. It would be useful to explore these relationships to ensure that governors are able to make best use of their roles and responsibilities, and that we are securing the optimum outcome for schools and for our children and young people.

Governors have an important role to play in supporting the inclusion agenda. The Inclusion Strategy, developed as a result of Scrutiny Board recommendations in April 2003 states:

Historically, some groups of children have tended to do less well in our schools than other children. The groups more likely to underachieve include those with special educational needs, children with disabilities, children from black and minority ethnic communities, children in public care, children with additional needs and those facing other challenging personal and social circumstances.

Effective schools are inclusive schools . . . they respect difference and have a commitment to offering all children access to learning opportunities. Such schools will also have good links with parents and with their communities.

In order to develop 'inclusive' schools we must pay attention to the development of 'inclusive' cultures and, particularly, to the building of some degree of consensus around inclusive values in each school's community. Headteachers and other school leaders are particularly important in the development of 'inclusive' schools. Their own commitment to inclusive values and their capacity to get participation

and consensus within their schools is significant. This has implications for the criteria on which school leaders are selected and for the sort of training they receive.

Governors have an important role to play in supporting the inclusion agenda. This scrutiny topic could usefully consider:

- How well governing bodies in their composition reflect the diversity amongst pupils and the local community – and how more parents and local people from under-represented groups could be involved?
- How can governors better support the inclusion agenda? What support or training would help with this? Do the existing roles and responsibilities of governors facilitate this?

Community Strategy

The community strategy doesn't refer to the role of School Governors specifically but it does set out strategic aims in relation to learning that would be relevant to this topic:

- To give our children the best start in life, even before they reach school;
- To redefine learning to enable people to develop the attitudes, skills and sense of purpose, which can help to build confident and creative communities.
- To increase the achievement of all school pupils at every stage in their education;
- To improve levels of literacy and numeracy;
- To encourage and value all forms of creativity and talent;

We also aim to 'encourage and nurture the potential and energy of children and young people' (Inclusive City aim 6)

Performance Monitoring

School Governance have no complaints recorded against their service, but they have recently dropped below the Customer First Standard Target for answering phone calls within 20 secs, the last quarter it was recorded as 81% a drop from 96% in the 1st quarter of 2004/05, this is not consistent with the history of performance for this statistic over the last couple of years where they have been above the 95% target.

Marketing and Communications

There hasn't been much interest in the role of school governors nationally, but I think we could generate some interest in the local media through press releases - there must be several hundred governors across the city.

Director of Education and Leisure

The Governance Service and support for school governors is a unique service within the Council. However, there is potential for other agencies to become involved. For example, the teaching unions may undertake training for staff governors.

It is true that the remit of governors is broadening. With the extended schools initiative they are being asked to take responsibility for an increasing range of educational and out-of-hours provision. It may be advantageous for Members to become more aware of the role of governors and to examine the provision offered by the LEA to support them.

The governance service is a small, tight unit with little capacity for undertaking additional work. The time required to undertake this scrutiny exercise would stretch current resources and it may be that some additional administrative support would be required.

Report prepared by Barbara Boyce Date report prepared 25 May 2005
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