

Education Scrutiny Committee– Interim Report For School Governors Review (Part A)

Background

1. In coming to a decision to review this topic, the Education Scrutiny Committee recognised certain key objectives. Due to the work involved in examining these objectives, Members agreed to split the review into two parts, and the following revised remit was suggested:

Remit

2. In regard to Governing Bodies, to encourage an improved level of community involvement and maximise their diversity and skills

Part A - Key Objectives

- i. Investigate the current composition of governing bodies with an effort to find ways of improving the diversity of governing bodies to better reflect the community
- ii. Identify ways of increasing the number of community Governors
- iii. Identify ways of increasing community involvement with Governing Bodies
- iv. Investigate ways of maximizing the skills that individual members of governing bodies bring to their role

Part B – Key Objective

- v. Investigate the role of Governors and current clerking arrangements in extended schools
3. At a meeting on 30 October 2007, Members considered a scoping report for the review which identified the current composition of governing bodies and gave a snap shot of the number of vacant seats at the time of providing the information.

To investigate the current composition of governing bodies with an effort to find ways of improving the diversity of governing bodies to better reflect the community

Information Gathered

4. At a meeting on 5 December 2007, Members were provided with information which identified York as having one of the fastest growing 'Black, Minority & Ethnic (BME) communities in the country, and the following statistics from the most recent Pupil Levels Annual School Census (PLASC) :
 - There are at least 49 languages spoken by children in York schools
 - There are 1340 minority ethnic pupils in York schools
 - All York schools have minority ethnic pupils
 - Until recently the largest ethnic group were Travellers, but this is an over-arching term that includes several distinct groups
 - There are significant Bangladeshi, Chinese and Turkish/Kurdish communities in York
 - Only 27 out of 1578 teachers in York schools are from minority ethnic backgrounds (1.7%)
5. In order to identify ways of improving the diversity of governing bodies, to better reflect the population of their school and their community, Members recognised it would first be necessary to clarify their current level of diversity. It was agreed that a survey of individual governors be carried out in order to confirm the validity of the information currently held on the Governance Service database, and to identify any other information pertinent to the objectives of this review. In order to support each of the objectives for part A of the review, the Committee recognised that the survey would need to identify the age, gender, ethnicity, skills, and socio-economic background of all current school governors (see Annex A).
6. In regard to the first objective, the Committee requested that the information received in the returned surveys be used to provide the following report types:
 - Overall ethnicity across all York schools (ie how many in each ethnic group)
 - Ethnicity by ward (ie how many in each ethnic group in each ward)
 - Ethnicity by type of school (ie how many in each ethnic group in primary; and in secondary)
 - Overall statistics for gender, age and socio economic stats across all York schools
 - Gender, age and socio economic stats by ward
 - Gender, age and socio economic stats by type of school
7. The survey was sent out to all Governors at the beginning of January 2008 and the information from the responses received has since been fed into the database. The Committee will consider the results and compare them to

information known about ward residents at their next meeting on 26 February 2008.

Issues Arising

8. At the last meeting, Members considered the print, postal and database costs involved with carrying out this survey. The Governor Support & Development Service agreed to finance the work involved in improving the database as this benefited their service area. The other costs incurred directly as a result of this review, needed to be covered by the Scrutiny budget as follows:

• Printing of return freepost envelopes	= £ 93.00
• Costs for return post (based on 100% returns)	= £264.00
• Data entry	= £165.00
• Amendments to database to allow production of required report types	= <u>£300.00</u>
	£822.00

To identify ways of increasing the number of Community Governors

Information Gathered

9. In considering ways to increase the number of Community Governors, Members recognised the need to identify the reasons why governors stand down and why some schools have a bigger turnover than others.
10. As a result, Members suggested that the Governor Support & Development Service issue an exit questionnaire to governors standing down so that the information gained could be used to highlight any issues within the governing body. This in turn could then be used to ensure that each governing body was receiving the right type of training and support in order to address the issues.
11. A questionnaire was presented to the Committee at their meeting in January 2008 and following a number of amendments this was subsequently sent out to all governors who had resigned since the start of the academic year 2006-07 (example attached at Annex B).

To identify ways of increasing community involvement with Governing Bodies

12. In order to identify ways of increasing community involvement with Governing Bodies, Members agreed it would be necessary to understand the methods used and level of involvement attained currently. Members considered how best to gather this information and agreed that a report explaining the work of this committee and a questionnaire be presented at a full governors' meeting of each school.

Issues Arising

13. At their next meeting on 26 February 2008, Members will be considering the statistical information provided as a result of the individual governor survey and the draft of the governing body questionnaire. If the Committee identify any gaps in the information received in the individual governor survey, they may choose to insert additional questions into the draft governing body questionnaire.
14. The final version of the governing body questionnaire together with the accompanying report will be presented for Members consideration at their next meeting scheduled on 15 April 2007 with the relevant officers in attendance, and any changes identified then incorporated into the documents before they are sent out.
15. Governing Bodies will be asked to respond within a set timeframe in order that the results can be presented at the meeting of this committee scheduled for 27 May 2008.

Investigate ways of maximizing the skills that individual members of governing bodies bring to their role

Information Gathered

16. A number of questions have been included in the survey for individual school governors that will identify their current skills and what additional training they require to support them in their role. Indirectly, the information they provide could also highlight the skills that are available but not currently being utilised, and those which are lacking within each governing body.

Issues Arising

17. As the information provided by the individual governors is covered by the Data Protection Act, the Committee has been very careful not to request statistical information which could identify individual governors. However, the changes they have instigated to the Governor Support & Development Service database to support the work of this review, will enable the Governor Support & Development Service team to look specifically at the members of each governing body to identify gaps in the skills currently available and identify their future training requirements.

Additional Information

18. The Committee intend to hold an informal consultation session for all school governors who have expressed an interest in participating further in this review. They will be asked to give their views on their role and responsibilities in relation to both Parts A and B of this review. This event is scheduled to take place after the formal meeting on 26 February 2008.

19. As the budget for this review is set at £250, the Committee would like to request additional funding in the amount of £650 to cover the costs set out in paragraph 8, and for provision of refreshments etc at the above event.

Options

20. Having considered the information contained within this report and associated annexes, Members may choose to:
 - i. Grant the additional funding requested in paragraph 19, to support this review
 - ii. Grant an alternative amount of additional funding
 - iii. Refuse the application for additional funding

Implications

21. Financial – In order to support the work of this review as described in this interim report, additional funding over and above the available budget will be required.
22. There are no known Legal, Equalities, HR, implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

Corporate Priorities

23. Although the remit for this review does not fit directly with any of the Corporate Priorities, it could indirectly have a positive effect in relation to Corporate Priority No.7 – 'improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the city'.

Risk Management

24. Without the thorough engagement of current governors the findings from this review could be limited which in turn, could have a negative effect on the number of new applicants. It is recognised that some schools have difficulties in attracting community governors and therefore it is important that governing bodies are supported in attracting applicants for vacant seats, and retaining governing body members.

Recommendation

25. In light of the above options, Members are asked to:
 - i. Note and provide comments on the interim report
 - ii. Agree additional funding in the amount of £650.00

Reason: To ensure work can proceed as planned for this review whilst complying with scrutiny procedures, protocols and workplans.

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Interim Report Approved



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Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: N/A

Annex A – Survey for Individual School Governors

Annex B – Exit Questionnaire