

Interim Report For School Governors Review (Part A)

Background

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

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.
 4. In 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 overarching 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%)

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

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 economic background of all current school governors. To compare whether the ethnic balance of each governing body reflects each school's local community, information has been sought on the ethnic balance of York residents as a whole, and of the ethnic balance of pupils within York schools on a ward by ward basis – see Annex A.
6. The survey was sent out to all Governors at the beginning of January 2008 and information taken from the responses has since been fed into the database in order to provide the following reports:
 - Ethnicity balance of Governors across all York schools - Annex B
 - Gender, age and economic background of Governors across all York schools - Annex C
 - Ethnicity balance of Governors within primary and secondary schools - Annex D
 - Gender, age and economic background of Governors within primary and secondary schools - Annex E
 - Ethnicity balance of Governors by ward - Annex F
 - Governors age by ward - Annex G
 - Governors economic background by ward - Annex H
 - Gender balance by ward - Annex I

Issues Arising

7. At the last meeting, Members considered the print, postal and database costs involved with carrying out this survey, i.e.:
- 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 = £300.00
£822.00
8. The Governor Support & Development Service agreed to finance the work involved in improving the database as this benefited their service area. As the remaining costs needed to be covered by the Scrutiny budget, an interim report was presented to Scrutiny Management Committee (SMC) on 25 February 2008 which provided an update on the work completed to date and a request for additional funding in the amount of £650.00.
9. A number of school governors indicated in their completed survey their interest in participating further in this review. Each of these governors has been invited to attend an informal consultation session (scheduled to follow this formal committee meeting), giving Members the opportunity to gather their views in relation to both Parts A and B of this review.

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 was subsequently sent out to all governors who have resigned since the start of the academic year 2006-07.
12. The Governor Support & Development Service Manager will provide feedback from any completed questionnaires returned, at the meeting of this Committee on 15 April 2008.

To identify ways of increasing community involvement with Governing Bodies

13. 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 together with a questionnaire, be presented at a full governors' meeting of each school. A draft of this questionnaire is attached for Members consideration – see Annex J (to follow).

Issues Arising

21. Additional questions could be inserted into the draft governing body questionnaire if, having considered the reports at Annexes B-I, Members identify gaps in the information received from individual governors.
22. 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. Any changes identified will then be incorporated into the documents before they are sent out.
23. 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

24. 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

25. As the information provided by the individual governors is covered by the Data Protection Act, this Committee has been very careful not to request statistical information which could identify individual governors. However, the changes that have been 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 any future training requirements. This in turn will ensure that any new governors receive all of the necessary training to support them in their role.

Options

19. Having considered the information contained within this report and associated annexes, Members may choose to:
 - i. Amend the governing body questionnaire, as presented
 - ii. Identify any additional questions to be included in the questionnaire

Implications

20. 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 and therefore a request has been made to SMC.
21. There are no known Legal, Equalities, HR, implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

Corporate Priorities

22. 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

23. 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

24. In light of the above options, Members are asked to:
 - i. Note and provide comments on the interim report
 - ii. Agree any amendments to the governing body questionnaire

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



Date 21 December 2007

Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: N/A

Annex A – Ethnic Profile of York Residents & of Pupils Within York Schools By Ward

Annex B – Ethnicity Profile of Governors Across York Schools

Annex C – Gender, Age & Economic Profile of Governors Across York Schools

Annex D – Ethnicity Profile of Governors Within Primary & Secondary Schools

Annex E – Gender, Age & Economic Profile of Governors Within Primary & Secondary Schools

Annex F – Ethnicity Profile of Governors by Ward

Annex G – Governors Age Profile By Ward

Annex H – Governors Economic Profile By Ward

Annex I - Gender Profile of Governors By Ward

Annex J – Draft Governing Body Questionnaire (to follow)