

## **Governors Consultation Session** Held Tuesday 26 February 2008

### **Comments & Responses**

#### Governors Comment

Surprise and disappointment at being asked to provide the personal information requested in the survey, particularly from those who had been a Governor for a long time, as it was felt this information was already known.

#### Response

In cases where individuals had been governors for many years, the information originally gathered when they first became a governor had never been recorded electronically. For more recently appointed governors, only some of the personal information they originally provided had been entered into the database due to the restrictions of the electronic system.

The database has recently been upgraded and the Governor Support & Development Service needed to populate the improved database. It was deemed prudent to supplement the survey due to be issued as part of the current Education Scrutiny review to gather all the current and up-to-date information, rather than take the time to gather in all the original documentation kept on file to abstract the relevant information.

#### Governors Comment

Some of the questions were intrusive e.g. year of birth, ethnicity, socio-economic background

#### Response

As the Local Education Authority, City of York Council is committed to equality. One of the Council's priorities is "to ensure that all residents can take part in the life of the city" which is supported through actions to "work towards equal opportunities for all".

The Council has a comprehensive Equality Policy which includes the aims to:

- create opportunities for representatives of all sections of the community to participate in the work of the Council
- make a commitment to fair recruitment and employment policies.

An applicant for the role of local authority governor would be expected to provide equality information as part of their application for the role. It is the Council's policy to ask all job applicants to complete an equality questionnaire as part of their application. This information is not used in the selection process but is instead used to understand whether our recruitment policies are attracting a true cross section of the community. If this was found not to be the case the Council would revise the way in which jobs are

advertised to ensure equality. This same understanding is relevant within the Governor Support & Development Service.

Other types of governors do not complete an application form in the same way. Instead, once they have been appointed, they are sent a welcome pack which includes a printout from the Governor Support & Development Services database with a request that they provide all the relevant information. At the present time they are not obliged to provide this information but it is expected that future legislation will support this move.

In regard to the question on ethnicity, a recent report from the ODPM identified York as having one of the fastest growing Black, Minority & Ethnic communities in the country. It is known that all York schools have minority ethnic pupils, and although it was thought that the Governing Bodies of York schools reflected their local community, there was no evidence to support this. The survey presented the opportunity to confirm this understanding.

In regard to the age, and socio-economic background questions, it is recognised that historically the role of governor has attracted middle class, middle aged applicants. To encourage a more diverse mix that represents the school's local community, we need to identify the barriers. For example language, work commitments, childcare issues. At the meeting, many governors explained methods that their governing body uses to address these issues e.g. provision of crèche facilities, a buddy system for new governors and holding meetings during extended school hours.