

Minutes

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE CONSULTATIVE BOARD

MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNANCE CONSULTATIVE BOARD HELD ON THURSDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2012, IN SIR WILLIAM RAMSEY SCHOOL, ROSE AVENUE, HAZLEMERE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE HP15 7UB, COMMENCING AT 1.10 PM AND CONCLUDING AT 3.00 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr M Appleyard, Mr J Bajina, Mr D Begley, Mrs M Bull, Mrs N Cook, Ms F Image, Mrs S Imbriano, Ms R Morrisson, Mr A Walker and Ms J Young

1 WELCOME AND ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Members were welcomed to the meeting. It was noted that because the meeting was not quorate, election of Chairman and appointment of Vice Chairman would be deferred to the March meeting. Those members in attendance were happy for Maggie Bull to chair the meeting.

Apologies were received from Jean Stidwell, Deidre Janson-Smith, Geoff Allen, Brian Letchford, Lesley Turville, Sue Allum, Val Letheren, Jenny Puddefoot, Marion Clayton, Deirdre Smaje, and Jayne Howarth

The members introduced themselves.

2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN

Deferred to the next meeting.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2012 were agreed as a correct record. With regard to the actions emanating from the meeting, the following was noted:

- The 'questions that all governors should ask themselves', which the Chairman agreed to circulate, are attached to these minutes. (*Questions are attached*)
- The Governor Services Manager had circulated Brian Ball's presentation but agreed to send it out again if members wished.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



4 DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LEARNING TRUST - UPDATE

Sarah Holding, School Relationship Manager, gave a presentation which was attached to the agenda.

Members discussed how best to provide governors with information on the Bucks Learning Trust. It was suggested that publications such as Governors Times and Schools Bulletins could be used as well having an appendix to the governing body agenda. However, it was uncertain how governors' comments could be collected and in this connection it was suggested that their comments could be recorded in the governing body minutes and fed through to Sarah. However, concern was expressed about the timescale for feeding back comments.

Discussion took place on the Buckinghamshire Shared Principles of Education. The Strategic Director referred to the Aspirations in the document and said that whilst she considered they were the right aspirations there were implications which needed to be unpicked as well as the need for all involved to reach agreement on the principles. Sue asked whether the aspirations referred to every provider of education to our young people.

In further discussion members considered the best way to keep governors informed would be through an appendix to the governing body agenda but there was a need to ensure that the School Relationship Manager received feedback as a collective view, rather from individuals.

It was agreed that the School Relationship Manager and the Governor Services Manager would devise a set of questions to send out with governing body agendas in order to obtain feedback. This could provide feedback on how schools can demonstrate that the shared principles of education are already being carried out. It was agreed that this would be carried out over the Spring Term.

Action: SH, NC

The Governor Services said that whilst the role of the Consultative Board was to be the Governor's Voice, there may be a need to look again at the Board's constitution with regard to the breadth of its representation. She suggested the need for Academy representation on the Board and proposed that the constitution of the Board should be discussed at the March meeting. A member asked whether there would be feedback from the Children's Centres

A member suggested that the new structure of the Learning Trust may be too bureaucratic to compete with commercial organisations. Some members agreed that the new structure was an improvement but there was a need to look at how it would fit into the commercial world.

5 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE SOCIAL WORK MODEL CONSULTATION

Sue Imbriano, Strategic Director for Children's Services gave an update and a copy of the Social Work model is attached to the minutes.

In answer to a question about whether group managers would be geographically based, it was noted that because of the Corporate Landlord Strategy in Bucks, initially most would be based in Wycombe and Aylesbury, but they also wanted units out in the community and this work would be part of the second stage. A member said it would be good to link to liaison groups because in the past social workers have found it hard to communicate with schools because of time constraints and the Strategic Director said it was also their thinking.

A member referred to the Munro Report where it quoted that one child had 32 specialists and the Strategic Director stated that it would not happen under this model. Families First was about partnership working and about having services nearer to the child. A member asked

how this would fit in with Children's Centres and it was noted that Families First is about reconfiguring and redirecting work with Partners. It was not about increasing staff but about doing the work in a different way.

6 PLANNING THE ANNUAL GOVERNORS' CONFERENCE 2013

The Governor Services Manager referred to the successful conference held this summer and the need to plan for next year's conference. She suggested inviting Mick Waters who will speak at the BASL conference in March 2013 on designing the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils. It was suggested having an interactive session similar to the one held by John West-Burnham in relation to the role of governors in supporting schools to design a curriculum that meets the needs of pupils. The Strategic Director suggested looking at Ofsted's expectations compared to what we as an Authority believe in. The theme of the conference could be about how to deliver key issues in the nature of the curriculum, such as school readiness; work readiness; life readiness; and how to give these experiences to young people.

The Governor Services Manager referred to a suggestion regarding the support organisations working with young people in building their confidence, and those organisations finding it hard sometimes to engage with schools. The Councillor had asked whether the work of these organisations could be supported by bringing them to the attention of school governors. A member suggested that these organisations could have stands at the conference and recommended contacting Melanie Turner. The Chairman agreed that both schools and governors were unaware of the extent of support that was available and it may be that these organisations could support the work of schools in building young people's confidence. The Governor Services Manager asked members to let her know of any organisations of which they were aware.

Action: All members

Members were asked to suggest a title for the conference and the Deputy Leader suggested 'Education for Life'. Members agreed on the need for awareness about learning the kind of learning skills that young people should have. The Chairman said the theme at the NGA conference run by John Dunsford was 'Who's Curriculum is it Anyway?'

7 PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP LOCAL LEADERS OF GOVERNANCE

The Governor Services Manager said she had recently heard Steve Munby speaking on National Leaders of Governance (NLG). There were currently two NLGs in Buckinghamshire from the first round of applications, of which Andrew Walker was one. She was unaware of the outcome of the second round, but the third round was due to commence in December. Whilst it was recognised that Buckinghamshire had a pool of governors that could be drawn on to support a school by joining its governing body for a set period, this proposal was more about supporting other governors on a shorter, more flexible basis. She asked members whether it was worth developing and building on what was already in place through the governors' pool. Members were asked to think about what kind of support governors may want and the possible inclusion of an induction session and reporting back mechanism.

A member considered it would be good to look at having NLGs but expressed concern that under the new Ofsted Framework the opinion was that there was an infinite amount of people willing to give up their time to be governors. The training requirement for governors was onerous and David suggested there was a limit on what people were prepared to do. Many governors have day jobs and it can be difficult getting time off. He considered it was unreasonable to assume the present situation could continue and many governors were asking themselves why they should do this given the pressures they were put under, particularly from Ofsted.

A member suggested the scheme could be positive for Chairmen of Governors in providing support to sub-committees. He agreed with the comments about the strain on resources and referred to the Local Authority's policy in allowing time for its staff to undertake voluntary activity and wondered how much of it was taken up. He had heard of instances where teachers had been refused permission to take time off for voluntary activities.

The Strategic Director said the principle was right but asked where the accountability would lie. She did not object to people being vetted but asked what would happen if the receiving school was not satisfied with the support and what kind of action could be taken. The Governor Services Manager said there would need to be feedback not just from the coach, but also the people being supported. There needed to be an understanding at what point further guidance should be sought to resolve a concern.

The Governor Services Manager said she took on board the issue regarding demands on time. However, she would not expect many people to come forward. A member questioned whether those people coming forward would be doing justice to their own governing body. In answer to a question about how many requests for support were received, The Governor Services Manager suggested it was difficult to gauge. The Chairman said they regularly received calls and provided help or passed people on to others for support. It was suggested that there could be a collaborative agreement but it was considered the numbers were not significant enough to merit a formal arrangement.

The Governor Services Manager said she would give further consideration as to how this proposal could be taken forward.

8 LEADERSHIP BRIEFING SPRING TERM 2013

The following items were suggested for the briefing:

- National and Local Update
- Social Work Model
- Transitions Protocol
- Families First
- Update on Admissions Working Group

The Chairman asked where work on school place planning would be placed in the future. The Strategic Director said they were unable to produce a plan as they had done in the past, but the data was still being updated. A local forum will discuss the data with a view to providing locally determined solutions that schools would participate in and governors could feed into this.

Concern was expressed that whilst issues were being identified the solutions may not be shared and it was suggested this could be put into the Leadership Briefing. The Deputy Leader suggested discussions at termly meetings or at groups such as the School Governance Consultative Board. The situation was no different to what it had always been, but things were now happening that the Authority had no control over. The Strategic Director said schools cannot be forced to take additional classes if places were needed but they would look at the site and identify whether the governing body was willing to help. It was not about closing schools but finding places.

The Deputy Leader referred to two pressures:

- One special needs school which was becoming an academy, which could affect the local authority's arrangements in relation to school place numbers.
- The emergence of University Technical Colleges that can take young people from the age of 14 years.

Other items suggested for the briefing were:

- Bucks Learning Trust Update
- Schools Funding Forum changes
- Local Leaders or Governance - whether or not to have these.
- Admission arrangements
- Revised Swimming Policy
- Revised capability procedure, but this had not yet been finalised.
- ICT and Public Services Network. Becky Morrison said Headteachers were concerned about PSN and Nicola Cook agreed to look into this.

9 PRIMARY CONSULTATIVE BOARD AND SCHOOLS SERVICES PARTNERSHIP

Primary Consultative Board

The representative on the Primary Consultative Board reported that the following had been discussed:

- The Learning Trust and the primary role
- Bucks Family Information Service First consultation
- SEN

Schools Services Partnership Board

The representative on the Schools Services Partnership Board said they had met on 5 October but no minutes were available as yet. Services for Schools was a key point. Although there had been some improvement in services produced there were still areas where there was no value for money and a change in culture was necessary. They had received a large strategy document regarding the performance of the service desk and it appeared that good work was being done. He said they did not want to receive this amount of information in future. The Deputy Leader confirmed they were working on this. He said the next Schools Forum meeting would be discussing the increase in the price of services for schools.

The SEN Strategy had gone out for consultation and the results should be available shortly.

10 ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The following items were suggested for future meetings.

- Governors Recruitment Strategy
- Review Constitution and Membership of the School Governance Consultative Board.

It was suggested it would be helpful to have a list of all liaison groups and a map of how they fit together. The Strategic Director agreed to provide one.

Action: SI

Members were asked to contact the Governor Services Manager with suggestions for any other agenda items.

The Chairman informed members that the Education Select Committee was enquiring into the role of the governing bodies. The Governor Services Manager asked whether anyone would be interested in taking part in a working group to submit a response. It was agreed that the Governor Services Manager and the Strategic Director would discuss the questions raised by the Select Committee

Action: NC, SI

11 DATES OF NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the School Governance Consultative Group will be held on Tuesday 5 March 2013 at 10.00am in Mezzanine Room 1, County Hall, Aylesbury.

CHAIRMAN

Effective governance for good schools

Twenty key questions for a school governing body to ask itself

Strong governance is essential for good schools. Yet we know that in too many schools, governing bodies are not effective or confident enough. The key role of governing bodies is to support and challenge headteachers in order to ensure pupils receive the best possible education; governing bodies also need support and challenge. We therefore set out to encourage governors to challenge themselves as the best governing bodies already do.

Together we came up with '20 questions for governing bodies' on which we consulted widely at the very well attended meeting of the All-Party Group on Education Governance and Leadership on 21 May 2012. We wanted to keep the challenges to one page in order to engage as many governing bodies as possible in a simple exercise to reflect on their practice. Governing bodies, especially those which are struggling, can be overwhelmed by too much irrelevant information and we did not want this to become a great big handbook on how to be effective which would be overlooked. Governing bodies have to use their limited time efficiently, and we offer these 20 questions to that end.

These questions should enable every governing body to challenge its own practice and, if the answers derive from a genuine discussion based on the evidence available, decide when and how improvements can be made. There are other resources available to help governing bodies improve.

They are **NOT** attempting to:

- cover every aspect of effective governance,
- give the answers – these can only be obtained from reflecting honestly and fully on current practice in comparison with others,
- replace the good guidance for governing bodies provided by a range of organisations.

While there are some magnificent governing bodies, there are also still some working in isolation without a good understanding of what constitutes effective practice or success. We are therefore suggesting that every school should engage with the '20 questions' and seeking willing organisations to commend them to schools. If your organisation is interested in endorsing and promoting them, please contact education.governance.appg@nga.org.uk.

Twenty key questions for a school governing body to ask itself

Right skills: Do we have the right skills on the governing body?

1. Have we completed a skills audit of our governing body?
2. Do we appoint governors on the basis of their skills, and do we know how to find people with the necessary skills?

Effectiveness: Are we as effective as we could be?

3. Do we understand our roles and responsibilities?
4. Do we have a professional clerk and run meetings efficiently?
5. What is our training and development budget and does every governor receive the support they need to carry out their role effectively?
6. Do we know about good practice from across the country?
7. Is the size, composition and committee structure of our governing body conducive to effective working?
8. Does every member of the governing body make a regular contribution and do we carry out an annual review of the governing body's performance?

Strategy: Does the school have a clear vision?

9. Have we developed long-term aims for the school with clear priorities in an ambitious school development plan which is regularly monitored and reviewed?
10. Does our strategic planning cycle drive the governing body's activities and agenda setting?

Accountability of the executive: Do we hold the school leaders to account?

11. Do we understand the school's performance data well enough to properly hold school leaders to account?
12. How effective is our performance management of the headteacher?
13. Are our financial management systems robust and do we ensure best value for money?

Engagement: Are we properly engaged with our school community, the wider school sector and the outside world?

14. How do we listen to and understand our pupils, parents and staff?
15. How do we report to our parents and local community regularly?
16. What benefit do we draw from collaboration with other schools and other sectors, locally and nationally?

Role of chair: Does our chair show strong and effective leadership?

17. Do we carry out a regular 360 review of the chair's performance?
18. Do we engage in good succession planning?
19. Are the chair and committee chairs re-elected each year?

Impact: Are we having an impact on outcomes for pupils?

20. How much has the school improved over the last three years, and what has the governing body's contribution been to this?



Changes in Children & Young Peoples Services

Key Drivers for change:

- Outcome of enquiries regarding the death of Baby P as published in the Munro Report
- Increase in demand i.e. increase in referral rates; increase in looked after population; increase in caseloads.
- Findings from the work of the CHECK team regarding the journey of the child through social care e.g. too many hand-off points, including change of team and change of Social Worker
- Need to reduce bureaucracy and streamline processes
- Too many entrance points into Social Care.
- The need for a coordinated Early Help Offer.

What we are doing:

- Development of a First Response Team for Social Care. A 6 month trial of First Response began in August 2012 and this will be reviewed in January 2013. The proposed long term plan is for this to be extended in the future to form a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- Development of the Early Help Service, which will be renamed 'Family Resilience'.
- Development of small units based on function (i.e. Family Resilience Units; Children in Need Units; Children in Care Units; Children with Disability Units)
- Providing a single Placement Service for access to fostering and residential placements.
- Promoting recruitment of Foster Carers. A recruitment campaign was formally launched in September.
- Streamline of Fostering and Adoption Teams to form a 'First Stop' Service (dealing with enquiries, referrals and queries in relation to Fostering and Adoption) a 'Fostering Team' (undertaking assessment and support of Foster carers) and a 'Permanence Team' (undertaking family finding and other tasks related to finding permanent homes for children looked after and post adoption support).
- Moving to locality based working with Family Resilience and Social Work Units based in localities. Each unit will cover one or more School Liaison Groups.
- Training staff in Systemic working
- Eliminating some of the bureaucracy and enabling staff to spend more time with families
- Extending the CATCH Service to provide a rapid response service to children and young people of all age groups up to 18 who are at risk of coming into care.
- Developing a Court Assessment Team in conjunction with CAMHS.
- Appointing a Principal Social Worker as recommended in the Munro Report 2011

We welcome any opportunities to communicate further with partner agencies. Please contact Gill Steckiewicz: Project Manager: Bucks Social Work Model at c-gsteckiewicz@buckscc.gov.uk if any further information is required.



