

EDUCATION PDS COMMITTEE: SCHOOL GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held at 5.30pm on 12th March 2013

Present

Councillor Nicholas Bennett JP (Chairman)
Councillor Judi Ellis
Darren Jenkins – Co-opted Member representing Parent Governors
Mrs Joan McConnell – Co-opted Member representing Parent Governors
Andrew Spears – Co-opted Member representing Young People

Also present

Dr Tessa Moore – Assistant Director (Education)
Sue Mordecai – Head of Learning, Education and Care Services
Kerry Nicholls – Democratic Services Officer

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor Nicholas Bennett J.P was appointed Chairman of the Working Group.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF ALTERNATE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Councillor Kathy Bance MBE, Councillor David McBride and Councillor Stephen Wells, Portfolio Holder for Education.

3. OBJECTIVES

The Working Group agreed the objectives of the working group as:

“To ensure that the Local Authority has a pool of well trained governors able to play an effective role in ensuring that schools are well governed, that they are aware of their role and responsibilities and work closely with the Local Authority and have the support they need to undertake their role.”

The Head of Learning also noted the importance of developing a pool of National Leaders of Governance to support strong governance for schools and academies across the Borough.

4. THE ROLE OF THE LA GOVERNOR

The Working Group agreed the role of the Local Authority Governor as:

“Local Authority Governors are appointed by and represent the Local Authority on a school or academy Governing Body. They should consider the views and advice of the Local Authority but are not delegates. Like other categories of governor, they cannot be directed to present a particular point of view. They should act in the best interests of the pupils and the community which the school or academy serves.”

Mrs Joan McConnell noted that Local Authority Governors also had a responsibility to maintain a good record of attendance at school or academy meetings.

5. ADVERTISING AND RECRUITMENT

The members of the Working Group considered advertising and recruitment of LA Governors.

The Chairman noted that the analysis of a questionnaire sent to all LA Governors in February 2013 had indicated that a high proportion of the 40 Local Authority Governors who responded to the questionnaire worked in the field of education.

In discussing the need to develop a pool of LA Governors to meet the wide-ranging governor and skills needs of Bromley schools, the Head of Learning confirmed that schools were particularly seeking governors with financial, legal, Human Resources, marketing, Information Technology and project management experience.

The members of the Working Group considered a number of ways to advertise the role of LA Governor which would attract volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds. These included:

- An LA Governor recruitment event;
- An Open Day at The Glades and The Walnuts Shopping Centres.
- Bromley Adult Education College;
- The Bromley Residents' Associations annual meeting;
- Community Links Bromley;
- The Education Department wraparound sheet of the Bromley News Shopper;
- Safer Neighbourhood Panels through the Bromley Community Engagement Forum;
- Snow and Parks Friends through Environmental Services;
- Targeting local businesses such as solicitor firms to recruit LA Governors with specific skill sets; and
- Utilising local supermarkets through advertising on the back of till receipts and on community notice boards.

6. SELECTION PROCESS AND SCRUTINY

The members of the Working Group consider the selection process for LA Governors and discussed the potential to develop a more formal process through:

- A pre-interview stage where a prospective Governor would be contacted by an existing LA Governor for an informal conversation about the role;
- A selection board of 2-3 people which would comprise the Portfolio Holder for Education or Chairman of Education PDS Committee, Education PDS Committee members, existing LA Governors and a National Leader of Governance. The selection panel might also include a representative of schools seeking an LA Governor;
- A final stage where successful applicants would be matched with a school, but their appointment would be subject to their attending an introductory

training session, to be run on a half-termly basis.

7. CONTRACT

The members of the Working Group considered the contract between LA Governors and the Local Authority and noted a range of measures by which this could be developed.

Induction Pack

- Promotion of the role and responsibilities of both LA and Parent Governors as part of the Induction Pack

Responsibilities of LA Governors and Local Authority

- The need to set out the responsibilities of LA Governors to the Local Authority and those of the Local Authority to LA Governors, which would be included as part of the Education Covenant.

Two way communication

- An annual LA Governor questionnaire which included the opportunity for Governors to highlight key successes for their school or academy and issues identified throughout the year;
- Annual objectives/themes agreed by the Education PDS Committee to be provided to schools and academies for their comments and feedback;
- Circulation of the minutes of the termly Chairman's Networking Meeting to Governors;
- More active involvement of Governors with the Termly Governors' Briefing, for example through a letters page or FAQs;
- Introduction of a hot line number to enable LA Governors to access Local Authority guidance on areas of particular concern that they had already raised with their Head Teachers and Governing Bodies and required additional specialist guidance on;
- The Education Portfolio Holder and Chairman of the Education PDS Committee to contribute details of work being undertaken across the Education Portfolio and by the Education PDS Committee to the termly Governors' Briefing.

Assistance – specialist advice

- The need to ensure that LA Governors were supported in accessing specialist advice from the Local Authority where appropriate.

Training – principles

- Expansion of the training offer at Bromley College of Adult Education through increased access to national courses and training programmes.

8. GOVERNING BODY BEST PRACTICE

The members of the Working Group considered Governing Body best practice

Constitution

- There was discussion on any requirement for schools and academies to publish the constitution of their Governing Bodies on their school websites.

Individual Governor Rights

- LA Governors should be made aware of the information they could reasonably expect to have access to in fulfilling their role and responsibilities.

9. SCHOOLS REQUIRING EXPERIENCED GOVERNORS

The members of the Working Group considered the needs of schools requiring experienced governors or those with a particular skills set.

The Head of Learning confirmed that National Leaders of Governance would have a role in supporting schools and academies. The Local Authority would also be able to signpost schools and academies to existing and new Governors with particular skills sets, particularly following the development of a pool of Governors.

10. LA ACADEMY GOVERNORS

In considering LA Governors to Academy schools, the Chairman noted that academy schools were not required to have LA Governors on their Governing Body but that 14 out of the current 31 Academy schools in the Borough did have an LA Governor on their Governing Board.

The Head of Learning noted the importance of emphasising the benefits of LA Governors to Academy schools, which was highlighted by a shift in emphasis by Ofsted to value the relationship of schools with their Local Authority. The Chairman suggested that academy schools be approached to promote the benefits LA Governors had to Governing Bodies following the establishment of a pool of LA Governors with wide ranging skills sets.

The Chairman requested that a list of academy schools that had chosen not to have LA Governors be circulated to members of the Working Group (**Action: ECS**)

11. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP

Following the consideration of the Working Group, it was **AGREED** that the Assistant Director would look at the recommendations and, where there were substantial resource and/or staffing implications, would report back to the Working Group.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the School Governance Working Group would be confirmed shortly.

The meeting ended at 7.04pm