

Report No.  
ED15116

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

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**Decision Maker:** EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date:** Wednesday 5 November 2014

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

**Title:** PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNANCE WORKING GROUP

**Contact Officer:** Jane Bailey, Assistant Director, Education  
020 8313 4146; jane.bailey@bromley.gov.uk

**Chief Officer:** Executive Director of Education, Care & Health Services

**Ward:** All

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1. Reason for report

1.1 This is a report back on progress on the recommendations of the School Governance Working Group as endorsed by the Education PDS Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

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2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 The Education PDS Committee is asked to note and comment on the progress made in implementing the recommendations of the School Governance Working Group.

### Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
  2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People
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### Financial

1. Cost of proposal: No Cost
  2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable
  3. Budget head/performance centre: Education Workforce Development and Governor Services
  4. Total current budget for this head: £ 134,190
  5. Source of funding:
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### Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional):
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: n/a
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### Legal

1. Legal Requirement: None:
  2. Call-in: Not Applicable:
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### Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected) Bromley schools and academies (96)
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### Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

### **3. COMMENTARY**

- 3.1 The School Governance Working Party was reconvened on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2014 and met in February and March 2014. Its recommendations were supported by the Education PDS Committee at its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014 and subsequently confirmed by the Education Portfolio Holder.
- 3.2 A commentary on the Working Party's detailed recommendations is set out in Appendix A to this report.

### **4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The recommendations and actions in this report support the delivery of priorities for children and young people as set out in the Council's Education Commitments and agreed at the Council meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2013 to work to improve school governance.
- 4.2 The Recommendations and actions also support the work programme as set out in the Education Portfolio Plan for 2014 and 2015 to promote educational opportunity in the borough, ensuring all families have a choice of good and outstanding schools and early years, and to work with governing bodies, the Department for Education and others to expand popular and successful schools and create additional early years capacity.

### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The financial implications of this report can be contained within existing resources.

### **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Local Authority has a number of statutory duties pertaining to governing bodies of schools: to make the Instrument of Government for all maintained schools and federations of schools (DfE 067); to nominate local authority governors to all maintained schools and give information for school governors (DfE 068); to appoint additional governors if the school is eligible for intervention (DfE 117).

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	Personnel Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	ED14033 Recommendations from School Governance Working Group

	<b>Developing the role of Local Authority Governors: Recommendations</b>	<b>Progress and action</b>
3.3.1	<p>Local Authority Governor Recruitment continue to be supported through advertising and/or speakers at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bromley Adult Education College;</li> <li>• A range of community meetings including the Bromley Residents' Associations annual meeting, Safer Neighbourhood Panels and Snow and Parks Friends meetings;</li> <li>• Community Links Bromley;</li> <li>• Local businesses, such as solicitor firms, to recruit Local Authority Governors with specific skill sets; and other advertising and/or recruitment events as appropriate.</li> </ul>	<p>With reconstitution and the move towards academy schools, the number of LA governor positions has been reducing. In managing this process governing bodies are recommended by DfE to undertake skills audits to reallocate posts as required and to appoint new governors where required, ensuring they have a broad mix of skills available.</p> <p>In order to widen recruitment of LA governors, and provide a 'brokerage' service to governing bodies of schools and academies, potential new governors have been recruited using the following sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council website – 'Become a school governor' leaflet, application form, recent governor newsletters and training programme</li> <li>• SGOSS (School Governors One Stop Shop) sponsored by the DfE recruiting potential governors nationally through advertising and working with employers</li> <li>• Bromley Adult Education College prospectus: advertisement</li> <li>• Advertisement in Bromley News Shopper for 'taster' courses for potential new governors in September 2014 and January 2015</li> <li>• Leaflets and posters in libraries and local centres</li> <li>• Circulation in newsletter to Borough residents (to 40,000)</li> <li>• Adverts in internal publications such as 'In Touch' for officers</li> </ul> <p>This process has identified some 37 potential applicants in 2014 whose cvs have also been circulated to all governing bodies to be considered for other vacancies arising from skills audits.</p>

	<b>Developing the role of Local Authority Governors: Recommendations</b>	<b>Progress and action</b>
3.3.3	<p>Training and communication processes between Local Authority Governors and the Local Authority be developed through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training sessions for prospective Governors of Local Authority Maintained Schools and Academy Schools delivered through the Local Authority’s Governor Services Training Programme;</li> <li>• Encouraging schools to subscribe to the e-learning element of the Governor Services Training Programme;</li> <li>• An induction pack which dealt with the specific role of the Local Authority Governor;</li> </ul>	<p>The programme of Governor training has been enlarged and extended for 2014/5 (up from 44 to 47 sessions) with new courses being offered in response to changing needs and feedback from users. At £615 it remains good value to schools when subscribed as a package although elements can be purchased separately. Operating on a trading account basis, the programme has capacity to introduce new courses to meet demand. A free ‘taster’ course was run in September 2014 attracting 19 people, many of whom submitted applications. A further course is scheduled for January 2015, and there are five scheduled training sessions for new governors. In addition there are termly Link Governors, LA Governor and Chair of Governors Forums available to all schools free of charge. The average attendance at courses is high and feedback is carefully analysed. New trainers have been engaged to ensure that presentation remains fresh and up to date.</p> <p>The e-learning element is advertised in the brochure and can be purchased separately at a cost of £89 with the package, or £110 without. 14 schools have signed up for this package.</p> <p>New LA Governors are given a copy of the NGA ‘Welcome to Governance’ guide which includes a comprehensive description of their role, and links to the DfE Governors Handbook, updated regularly on line. Given the pace of change, internet based are more up to date, accessible and cost effective than printed sources of information. LA governors would also be invited to attend the termly LA Governors Forum as well as the 5 induction sessions.</p>

	<b>Developing the role of Local Authority Governors: Recommendations</b>	<b>Progress and action</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An annual Local Authority Governor questionnaire which included the opportunity for Governors to highlight key successes for their school or academy and issues identified throughout the year;</li>   <li>• Circulation of the minutes of the termly Chairman’s Networking Meeting to Governors, the Portfolio Holder for Education, and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Education PDS Committee;</li>   <li>• Use of the Link Governors Forum to circulate best practice to Governing Bodies;</li>   <li>• More active involvement of Governors with the Termly Governors’ Briefing, for example through a letters page or FAQs</li> </ul>	<p>The annual questionnaire will be sent out in the autumn term after the two conferences and other changes have taken effect, with the results reported in the new year.</p> <p>Reports of networking meetings are circulated to those in each relevant group (Link, LA and Chairs). Items of local and national interest, including the Portfolio Holder’s presentations to meetings and conferences would be included in the termly newsletter sent to all governors, heads and members of the Council and placed on the Council’s website.</p> <p>The Link Governors’ Forum last year considered issues such as academy structures with roles and responsibilities, and approaches to learning for maths and English. This has been incorporated into this year’s training programme, for example with a new course on ‘The Effective Lesson’</p> <p>In the summer term newsletter Governors were invited to submit letters or contributions to the newsletter in the autumn term. The newsletter will also be used as a conduit for parent governor representatives on PDS Committee to develop stronger links with the parent governors they represent.</p> <p>Proposals for a Bromley Governors Association have also been made, with a presentation in the summer term newsletter and at the Governors’ conference seeking to establish a steering group. This would, if successful, become a channel of communication between governors and the Council.</p>

	<b>Developing the role of Local Authority Governors: Recommendations</b>	<b>Progress and action</b>
3.3.4	<p>Best practice be developed through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice provided to schools on areas including:</li> <li>• Developing a standing order for governing bodies;</li> <li>• Use of the updated job description for recruiting Clerks to the Governing Body.</li> <li>• Encouraging schools to recruit an Independent Clerk, remunerated at a level appropriate to the responsibilities of the role.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision making matrix</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A potential Governor Conference held on a Saturday for 2-3 hours, delivered in partnership with Local Authority, maintained Schools and academy trusts.</li> </ul>	<p>Advice is given to schools on request including reconstitution of governing bodies under the 2012 Regulations.</p> <p>A set of model standing orders has been developed and is available to governing bodies on request, based on the NGA recommended standard.</p> <p>The need for independent clerks with a higher level of skills has been identified by Ofsted to manage the documentation of meetings and specifically to record governor challenge, and schools have been encouraged to adopt this approach. As well as acting as a brokerage service between schools, governors services has initiated a recruitment drive for new independent clerks based on a common job description, with leaflets in the central library, civic centre, the Widmore centre, the Council's website, the electronic newsletter and on social media. Accreditation programmes are available as part of the 'professionalisation' of the role and an additional free 'taster' session for potential clerks has been arranged. Schools have been encouraged to pay higher rates to secure competent and qualified clerks.</p> <p>A decision making matrix is included as part of the training course for clerks, and it is available from the NGA and other sources</p> <p>A Governors' Conference was held on Saturday morning 27 September 2014 and was attended by some 49 governors from maintained and academy schools. The keynote speaker was the Chief Executive of the NGA, with presentations also from the Portfolio Holder, Assistant Director, Bromley Healthcare and a National Leader of Governance. A conference is also being held for Chairs of Governors and Heads on 10 November on</p>

	<b>Developing the role of Local Authority Governors: Recommendations</b>	<b>Progress and action</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making Local Authority Governors aware of the information they could reasonably expect to have access to in fulfilling their role and responsibilities;</li> <li>• Continued development of the School Governance area on Fronter; and</li> <li>• The Portfolio Holder for Education, and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Education PDS Committee to meet the Head of Governance on a regular basis.</li> </ul>	<p>the theme of ‘Building Cohesion’, including addresses by the DfE Schools Commissioner and a specialist on the Pupil Premium.</p> <p>Termly LA Governor Forums are held to provide briefing on a wide range of issues and in response to questions arising. Most guidance is now available via open websites such as the DfE Governors’ Handbook which is kept regularly updated and contains links to other relevant documents issued from time to time. The NGA also provides key information on its open website although more detail is available to subscribers.</p> <p>The Head of Governance is available to members as required</p>
3.3.5	<p>Academy Schools be encouraged to have Local Authority Governors through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being approached by the Local Authority to promote the benefits of having a Local Authority Governor.</li> </ul>	<p>Schools are encouraged to retain an LA governor to maintain links with the Council, although with the growth of multi academy and umbrella trusts the focus has for the moment been on creating strong and viable groupings that can support the school on becoming an academy. Many former LA appointees are now academy trustees or governors. The theme of the November conference, ‘Building Cohesion’ has been chosen to explore new ways of working between the LA and schools, mindful of its ongoing responsibilities but having regard to the future capacity to fund central services within the LA.</p>