



City and County of Swansea

Notes of the **Scrutiny Inquiry Panel - School Governance**

Committee Room 4, Guildhall, Swansea

Monday, 25 September 2017 at 5.00 pm

Present: Councillor F M Gordon (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

L James
J A Raynor

Councillor(s)

D Helliwell

Councillor(s)

L Gibbard

Co-opted Member(s)

D Anderson-Thomas

Officer(s)

Kathryn Thomas, Head of Learner Support
Michelle Roberts, Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): J W Jones and L J Tyler-Lloyd

1 Apologies for Absence

2 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interest

None

3 School Governance Inquiry Impact Report and follow up on progress

Cllr Jennifer Raynor, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning and Kathryn Thomas, Head of Learner Support Service attended the meeting to present the impact/follow up report on School Governance.

The following issues were raised and discussed when considering the [report](#):

- **Recommendation 1** – *Develop a council wide mechanism for filling the skills gaps identified by governing bodies either through transfers, swaps or by matching new governors with particular skills and experience.*
The panel recognised that this recommendation had not been agreed but were informed that action had taken place in this area. The Governor Unit have made available a self-evaluation toolkit to schools to identify skill gaps. Governing bodies have been made aware of the governors Wales Self-evaluation tool and advised to undertake a self-evaluation exercise.

The panel thought it was important to ensure that we are flagging up what the can offer to assist governing bodies.

The LA are in currently reviewing the appointment process for LA Governors and a report is being prepared for the Cabinet member to take to council. Proposals will require governing bodies to provide self-evaluation assessment to indication the skills gap in order to realign appointment of LA governor with skills identified by each individual governing body.

- **Recommendation 2** – *Produce a mini booklet for governors providing a simple guide to their role.*

It was thought that ERW was provided one but that has not yet been completed so governor unit have put together a short booklet. An example of the booklet for school governors was circulated to panel members at the meeting. The panel were pleased to see this had been developed and that this will be sent out to new governors and will made available on the council's website.

- **Recommendation 3** – *Undertake a review of information provided to school governors with ERW, Estyn and governors Wales with a view to ensuring a shared approach that avoids duplication.*

The Panel were informed that ERW have undertaken a review and Swansea participated in this. Also Governor's Wales have undertaken a review following a consultation by Welsh government on the Reform of School Governance: regulatory framework. The outcome of this consultation is currently delayed due to high levels of response.

Swansea awaiting outcome and recommendations from this review before this aspect is moved forward.

The panel said that they had a review of Swansea provided information with small 'r'. They were pleased that there are links on our website to ERW, Governors Wales and My Local School but felt that these signposts need more explanation to help governors understand what they are for and what they can do for them.

- **Recommendation 4** – *Provide a standard data template to headteachers and encourage them to use it.*

The Panel recognised that general data packs are available and were pleased to hear ERW has a sample Headteacher report. The panel felt that access to this sort of information can help empower governors by developing a better understanding of complex information. The Panel would like to see this flagged up on the Councils website with a link to this information can be found.

- **Recommendation 5** – *Work with ERW to provide information about all training opportunities for governors in one place.*

The Panel would like to see this flagged up and link to the specific pages on ERW from the Councils website. The panel did notice also that the ERW does not have a specific area on its site for Governors.

- **Recommendation 6** – *Move from civic centre based training provision to a flexible model that combines, whole governing body, cluster school and e-learning.*

The panel welcomed the flexible package of training was available and particularly that bespoke training can be arranged for schools and across clusters. Panel were pleased to hear that termly meetings were had with Challenge Advisor for School Governance and the Head of School Support to identify governing bodies in need of support.

The panel did feel that many governors may not be aware of this especially the bespoke and the targeted training approaches available for specific purposes and that this could be flagged up on the Councils website.

- **Recommendation 7** – *Develop an online learning log that governors can use to self-manage their training and development.*
and
- **Recommendation 8** – *Consider how the mandatory new governor training might help governors to think about the self-management of their training and development.*
- The panel heard that the governor database has been revised and is managed on a different system, much work has been undertaken to transfer data from the previous database and that further work is required to develop an online learning log for governors so they can self-manage training and development. The panel were pleased to hear that the new system was now up and running and that it is much more user friendly. We are now keen to see the next stage of development: the online learning log for governors.
- **Recommendation 9** – *Build the involvement of all governors into the Autumn Core visits.*
The panels heard that this was not agreed because it is not possible to involve all governors in the Autumn Core Visits. The governor unit however plans to deliver governor training in the autumn to improve governor understanding of this core visit process. The Panel were pleased to hear that Challenge Advisors are attending a meeting of the Governing body of all Red and Amber schools.
- **Recommendation 10** – *Undertake a campaign to promote the role of governors targeted at private sector employers and partners in the public and third sector.*
Panel members heard that Welsh Government plan to undertake a campaign to target from private sector and employees from the public sector. Swansea will use this campaign and run a local campaign in conjunction.
- **Recommendation 11** – *Write to the chair of governors and headteachers of each school to promote the good practice points included in this report.*
The Panel would like to see a mechanism in which practice can be shared between governors and governing bodies.
- **Recommendation 12** – *Write to every school governor thanking them for their work on behalf of the Council and highlighting the list of 'what every school governors should expect'.* Members asked if this had been circulated to all governors because they had not seen it. The Panel recommend that it is circulated to governors on an annual basis and that it forms a part of the booklet (in Recommendation 2) for new governors, they also would like to see it made available online.
- **Recommendation 13** – *Take additional steps to publicise the good work being done by governors and governing bodies.*
Panel members felt that this was important because it was about sharing positive practice. The Head of Governor Unit said that she will look into a way that positive outcomes from Estyn Inspections that relate to governing bodies be made available on the Councils website.
- **Recommendation 14** – *Simplify the information on the Council Website about schools governors which should provide links to the Governors Wales website for all general information.*

The panel felt that the Councils website should be used to signpost to sources of useful information for governors to save them time having to search out this information.

- **Recommendation 15** – *Remind all schools that whole governing body and cluster school training can be arranged upon request.*
See answer in recommendation 6
- **Recommendation 16** – *Hold a seminar for LA Governors to explore their role in sharing practice.*
The panel were informed that it is not considered appropriate to target a specific group of governors for governor training in isolation. Bespoke training can be provided for Elected Members who are school governors if required.

4 Panel to discuss thoughts on progress and agree feedback

The Panel discussed and made the following conclusions:

- The panel felt that good progress has been made with many of the recommendations but that there does need to be better signposting of information.
- The panel recognised that there is a lot of information out there for governors so emphasised the need to help and direct them to the most pertinent. This includes for the Council website better explained links and more signposting of governors to useful information both within the website and to external bodies.
- The panel ask the Cabinet Member to ensure that the following items have been and will be circulated to governors and that they are made available on the Councils Website.
 - Booklet for Governors
 - What every governor should expect (Appendix B of original report)
 - Ensuring Effective Challenge: Good Practice Advice for Chairs of Governors and Headteachers
- The panel were pleased to hear that Challenge Advisors are now attending governing bodies in the Autumn Term for schools that are identified as Red or Amber.

Following on from this meeting:

- a) A letter will be written from the Convener of the Panel to the Cabinet Member summarising the discussion and outline the panels thoughts and recommendations.
- b) Any outstanding issues relating to this piece of work will be following up via the Schools Scrutiny Performance Panel.

The meeting ended at 6.25 pm