

Report of the Chief Auditor

Audit Committee – 12 March 2015

AUDIT COMMITTEE – WRITTEN SUBMISSION TO SCHOOL GOVERNANCE SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP

Purpose:	This report provides details of a written submission provided to the School Governance Scrutiny Working Group
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FOR INFORMATION	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 A School Governance Scrutiny Working Group was held on 18th February where the purpose of the meeting was to consider how the effectiveness school governance can be improved. This included the role and responsibility of governors and issues relating to the recruitment and support provided to governors.
- 1.2 The intention was that the members of the Working Group would then decide whether this topic required further in depth work i.e. a more detailed scrutiny enquiry
- 1.3 Committee will be aware of a number of issues relating to school governance which have arisen at the Audit Committee in the last year or so.
- 1.4 The Chair received a request from the Cabinet Member for Education to provide a written submission to the Working Group highlighting the Committee's issues of concern in relation to school governance.
- 1.5 The written submission is attached in Appendix 1
- 1.6 The Vice Chair attended the Working Group meeting on behalf of the Committee and will provide verbal feedback to the Audit Committee

2. Equality and Engagement Implications

2.1 There are no equality and engagement implications associated with this report.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report

Background Papers: None

Appendix 1 – School Governance Scrutiny Working Group – Audit Committee
Written Submission

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP

AUDIT COMMITTEE WRITTEN SUBMISSION

1. The Audit Committee first became concerned with school governance in June 2013 when Internal Audit identified that a primary school had made little progress in implementing agreed recommendations following a 2nd follow up visit to the school.
2. The issue was subject to discussion by the Committee over an extended period and in October 2013, the Chair, Vice Chair and Chief Auditor met the Headteacher at the school and received assurances that the agreed recommendations had been implemented. However, a 3rd follow up visit by Internal Audit again showed minimal progress in implementing the recommendations.
3. The Committee requested a briefing from the Education Department on the responsibility for implementing audit recommendations in schools. Briefings were provided by the Education Performance, Planning and Resource Manager in March 2014 and by the Head of Education Planning and Resources in April 2014. Both presentations highlighted the future role of Challenge Advisers in monitoring the implementation of recommendations at school visits
4. The former Chief Education Officer provided a detailed briefing on schools delegation in September 2014 and following the presentation, the Audit Committee felt that the role of the governing body in the management of schools is crucial.
5. In October 2014, the Annual Report of School Audits 2013/14 was presented to the Audit Committee. This report identified that the most significant area of non compliance in schools was procurement as had been the case for many years. The report noted that a dedicated procurement officer for schools had been appointed.
6. The schools procurement officer gave a presentation to the Audit Committee in January 2015 which outlined the work done since appointment but disappointingly concluded that slow progress had been made in improving the procurement practices of schools.
7. The various briefings received by the Audit Committee has led the Committee to conclude that the role of a school's governing body is fundamental and that governors need to have sufficient knowledge, background and training to be able to fully consider and if necessary challenge a proposed course of action or recommendation made by a headteacher.

8. The Audit Committee welcomes the opportunity for Scrutiny to challenge school governance and ensure that governors are fully equipped to undertake their important role in schools.
9. The Audit Committee would like to see governing bodies involved in the monitoring of the implementation of audit recommendations.
10. It is understood that the Internal Audit Section will soon be introducing self assessment questionnaires into the audit process and it is felt that this is another area where the governing body can provide challenge by reviewing the questionnaires on a regular basis.