



Report of the Director of Education

Education and Skills Corporate Delivery Committee
15 February 2023

Review of School Governance Spring 2023

Purpose: To update members of the Education and Skills Corporate Delivery Committee on progress made against the 2016 School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry Panel report and to consider how to best support school governance in the future to realise the Council's priorities to ensure leadership supports learner progress

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For Information

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2015, a Scrutiny Inquiry Panel was convened in recognition that the role of school governors had changed significantly, with governors playing an increasingly important part in the management of schools and school improvement. The panel sought to consider if existing measures and support was fit for purpose to enable governors to not only meet their statutory responsibilities but also ensure that support and challenge was as effective as it could be.
- 1.2 In January 2016, after a comprehensive review, the panel produced a report entitled "A Very Challenging Role How can the Council ensure that school governors provide effective challenge for their schools?".
- 1.3 The panel found a significant number of conclusions and made 16 recommendations. The panel suggested and acknowledged that some of the recommendations could be achieved in the short to medium-term

but others would need more time to be delivered. The recommendations made in the report were to:

- 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.
- Produce a mini booklet for governors that provides a simple guide to their role.
- 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.
- Provide a standard data template to head teachers and encourage them to use it.
- Work with Estyn to provide information about all training opportunities for governors in one place.
- Move from civic centre based training provision to flexible model that combines, whole governing body, cluster school and e-learning.
- Develop an online learning log that governors can use to self-manage their training and development.
- Consider how the mandatory new governor training might help governors to think about the self-management of their training and development.
- Build the involvement of all governors into the Autumn Core Visits.
- Undertake a campaign to promote the role of governor targeted at private sector employers and partners in the public and third sector.
- Write to the chair of governors and head teacher of each school to promote the good practice points included in this report.
- Write to every school governor thanking them for their work on behalf of the Council and highlighting the list of 'what every school governor should expect'.
- Take additional steps to publicise the good work being done by governors and governing bodies.
- Simplify the information on the Council website about school governors which should provide links to the Governors Wales website for all general information.
- Remind all schools that whole governing body and cluster school training can be arranged on request.
- Hold a seminar for LA appointed governors to explore their role in sharing good practice.

2. Response to the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel Recommendations

- 2.1 The Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning welcomed the report as an extremely valuable piece work and agreed that the recommendations were sound and in the most part deliverable by officers. Some of the recommendations involved partner agencies and therefore necessitated actions beyond the immediate direction of the Chief Education Officer.

- 2.2 Significant early progress was made against a number of the recommendations and continue to now be embedded as business-as-usual processes. Examples of these include implementing an effective recruitment and skills matrix process to recruit to Local Authority Governor vacancies and offering a wider and more flexible training offer.
- 2.3 Regular updates were provided to the panel and a full progress report was presented by the Cabinet Member and officers to the School Governance Scrutiny Panel on 25 September 2017.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 There has been an unprecedented amount of significant change across the education landscape in Wales since the publication of the Inquiry Panel report. Changes include the introduction of the Curriculum for Wales, the commencement of the Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Act and the removal of school categorisation.
- 3.2 At a local level, the regional education partnership ERW has ceased and has been replaced by Partneriaeth. Local Authority membership to the regional educational partnership has changed since ERW and is now comprised of three local authorities instead of five.
- 3.3 Governors Wales no longer exists and is now a private provider, Governors Cymru.
- 3.4 It was recognised in the panel report that governors were playing an increasingly important part in the management of schools and school improvement and many governing bodies had responded positively to this. The need for governors to respond to change, at pace, has exponentially increased in the subsequent years.
- 3.5 It also important to acknowledge the outstanding contribution that governors made to support schools and leaders throughout the pandemic to ensure that education, whilst disrupted, continued to be provided to learners in Swansea. Governing bodies also ensured the wellbeing of pupils and staff was paramount. They demonstrated amazing adaptability and flexibility, conducting their work on-line to ensure the business of school governance still functioned.
- 3.6 Despite the aforementioned significant change and challenges that governing bodies have faced, good and effective practice still exists in governing bodies in Swansea. However, some examples have been observed where better and additional support for governors would improve their role in challenging and supporting schools.
- 3.7 The Director of Education and Cabinet Member have acknowledged that school governance continues to need support and development. As part of the Education Directorate senior leadership team restructure

in 2022, a new position that included responsibility for school governance was created.

- 3.8 The Team Manager for Stakeholder and School Support commenced their position in October 2022 and was immediately tasked with the development of a new vision for school governance, in line with the Council's priority in ensuring that leadership supports learner progress.
- 3.9 As part of a new vision for governance, mechanisms should be found by which to share good practice. Early consideration has been made of the creation of an 'excellence pool'.
- 3.10 Improved use of technological solutions could also assist governors in their role. Hwb as a governance platform for information and resources may need to be considered as is the further development of Arweinwyr, the new Governor Support Database.
- 3.11 Working with key stakeholders, such as Partneriaeth, the Swansea Association of Governing Bodies should have a fresh focus.
- 3.12 The Team Manager for Stakeholder and School Support will ensure that resources continue to be used and developed as efficiently and effectively as possible to support governance and leadership.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 Members may wish to consider which of the original recommendations remain appropriate and fit for purpose and if there are any new areas of focus.
- 4.2 Members may wish to reinforce and refresh that the challenge and support role for governors remains a focus for governing bodies but align this to the Council's priority to ensure that leadership delivers learner progress.
- 4.3 Members may wish to develop and promote the new accountability responsibility on governors in the new school improvement model currently being piloted.
- 4.4 Members may wish to consider how governing body resilience can be improved upon and therein share best practice.

5. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 5.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

5.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the ‘well-being goals’.

5.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

5.1.3 This report is for information only. Any initiatives developed following this review will be subject to the IIA process as required.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Background papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A - The School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry Panel Report:
A Very Challenging Role – How can the Council ensure that school governors provide effective challenge for their schools?