

TITLE	Review Of The Effectiveness Of Governing Body - Monitoring
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Children’s Services on 4 November 2013
WARD	None Specific
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR	Pauline Maddison, Interim Strategic Director of Children’s Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The Ofsted Inspection framework has expectations that governors will provide the appropriate support and challenge to school leaders and where this is good it will be reflected in the overall judgement of the school.

In the academic year 2012/13, 16 inspections of WBC primary schools judged 80% of governing bodies (GB) to be at least Good.

Where governance was underperforming Ofsted identified the following causes:

The GB relies too heavily on the Headteacher for information about the quality of teaching;

The GB has undergone many changes and does not yet provide consistent challenge to school leaders about pupils’ achievements or the quality of teaching;

The GB is supportive of the school and is aware of its strengths and weaknesses.

However, it does not yet challenge the school’s performance enough and hold leaders to account for bringing about improvements.

GBs in this category are encouraged to attend appropriate governor training to ensure they carry out their support and challenge role effectively.

RECOMMENDATION

That this report be noted.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

On 29 November 2012 the Executive Committee received a report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Children’s Services, where a Task and Finish Group had been established to review the effectiveness of school governing bodies and local authority support. Within this report were 18 recommendations and the following information provides a monitoring report on the implementation of those recommendations twelve months from that approval.

The actions are identified against the relevant recommendations in the Appendix 1

1. Background

Between May and July 2012, a Task and Finish Group of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny panel undertook a review of the work of school governing bodies and the services provided by the Local Authority in helping them undertake their responsibilities. There were eighteen recommendations put forward by the Task and Finish Group which were approved by the Executive in November 2012.

The Governor Services traded service for the financial year 2013/2014 has been subscribed to by all WBC schools including Academies with the exception of Maiden Erlegh. The current charge is £900 plus £17.50 per governor for maintained schools and £1300 plus £17.50 per governor per annum. This indicates a continuing high level of confidence and satisfaction with the service.

2. Analysis of Issues

The attached Appendix 1 gives an update on actions taken to follow up on the recommendations.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

There are no specific financial implications emerging from this report.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Cost neutral	Yes	Revenue
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Cost neutral	Yes	Revenue
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Cost neutral	Yes	Revenue

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

The cost of the core governor services staff is funded entirely by the revenue from the traded service.

Cross-Council Implications

None

List of Background Papers

None

Contact Sylvia McDonald

Service Children's Service

Telephone No	Email sylvia.mcdonald@wokingham.gov.uk
Date 21/10/2013	Version No.3

APPENDIX I

Overview and Scrutiny Panel Task and Finish Report on the Effectiveness of School Governing Bodies:

Recommendations on strengthening advice, support and training and officer response and proposed actions.

Recommendations	Officer Response and Proposed Action (s)	Actions Taken to date (October 2013)
<p>1 All governing bodies and Head Teachers be provided with a copy of the Statutory Instrument and the associated Department of Education Guidance and the contents of both documents be reiterated at Headteacher and Chairs Briefings. The role of the local authority should also be restated to chairs</p>	<p>Agreed. All new governors receive an induction pack from Governor services in advance of them attending an induction course. This refers them to the governor's main reference document – the Governors' Guide to the Law. This includes details on the instrument of government and the constitution of governing bodies. The Instrument for a governor's own school setting can be obtained from the clerk to their Governing Body. Clerks to Governing Bodies are advised as part of their training to provide a copy of the Instrument to all new governors. Additionally the service will now take the opportunity at the next Chair's Briefing to remind governors of the role of the Local Authority.</p>	<p>The Governors' Guide to the Law has now been superseded by the Governor's handbook which provides more detail on the strategic role of governors but little guidance on procedural matters. The Chairs' Briefing on 13/2/2013 specifically covered the role of the School Improvement Officer and LA support. The level of school improvement support provided to schools is dependent on the category of that school (e.g.) outstanding, good, requiring improvement or special measures. Chairs of Governors have been copied into a letter sent to Headteachers informing them of what categorisation their school is currently in and what support they can expect from the LA.</p>
<p>2 The role and responsibilities of governing bodies within the school to be reiterated to chairs and Head Teachers at their briefing sessions and the Head Teachers be asked to communicate this to their staff.</p>	<p>Agreed. Along with the briefing to Chairs of Governing Bodies there will also be a further briefing opportunities to Head Teachers through our established partnership meetings. This can be supported by circulating the Governing Body Decision Planner which demonstrates who has delegated authority for certain decisions. This is a document that is referenced and circulated at many training courses.</p>	<p>Roles and Responsibilities of governing bodies are discussed as part of the New Governors Induction Training and are also covered as part of the Ofsted training which outlines governors' statutory duties. The "How to Support and Challenge Your School" training also covers this. A reminder about the decision planner was included in the Governor Digest and it is provided as a reference document in courses mentioned. Governors are also updated at Termly Briefings.</p>
<p>3 Strategic leadership training to</p>	<p>Not Agreed. It is the officers' view that this</p>	<p>Strategic leadership continues to be offered</p>

<p>be set up, to include a visioning element, and consideration to be given to undertaking this as a whole governing body session.</p>	<p>recommendation misreads the role of the Local Authority, and overlooks what is already in place, so it cannot be fully agreed. While the Service recognises the importance of strategic training, it is not the role of the Local Authority to prescribe for all Governing Bodies the training they need to undertake. Access to this training on visioning is already in place, and has been offered for the last 5 years for Governing Bodies. They can commission this through the traded service. Strategic Leadership Training is also offered through the governor training programme in the School Improvement Planning course which offers an opportunity to use tools and techniques to assist schools with their planning and strategic thinking. In addition, the strategic role of the governor is one of the modules covered in the induction course. Governing Bodies can subscribe to the training programme through the traded service or pay for attendance at one off courses. The National Professional Development Training programme for Chairs is now also available. The Chair's Briefing is again used to discuss and encourage strategic thinking. Where a school is identified as a concern the Local Authority is proactive in targeting training support in this area.</p>	<p>through New Governors' Induction Training and School Improvement training, together with the option of a visioning session as full governing body training. It also continues through Chairs' Briefings, the National Chairs' Development Programme for new and aspiring chairs, and "Taking the Chair" training for new chairs, committee chairs or those aspiring to be a chair.</p>
<p>4 Governing bodies should be encouraged to undertake a review of their strengths and weaknesses on an annual basis in particular where there are concerns about pupil progress, and provide evidence of this in their school development plan. At the same time chairs should be encouraged to review their process of delegation and whether they make</p>	<p>Agreed. Opportunities are already in place for Governing Bodies to receive support and training on effective self-evaluation, however the service recognises the need to promote this work as a priority. The Self Evaluation of the Governing Body session is an established offer in the Governor Services traded service offer and has been a popular choice in previous years for schools. Where a school has been identified as causing concern, this session is usually offered free of charge as part of a support</p>	<p>Governing Body self-evaluation continues to be offered as a full governing body training session. Skills audits are encouraged and suggested to governors and clerks at appropriate points when offering advice. The Ofsted "Twenty Questions" self-evaluation was discussed with Chairs of Governors and Clerks and they were encouraged to use it as a self- evaluation tool. Development Governors will be reminded again at their next meeting.</p>

<p>the best use of the skills and experience of all governors on the governing body.</p>	<p>package to the school. The Service supports Chairs to delegate appropriately by advocating the use of a skills audit which has been circulated via the development governors and clerks. This is also on the Wokingham's website under clerk's corner. Clerks and development governors are reminded annually of these and that they should be used as part of school based induction and at the start of each academic year when membership of committees etc is being agreed, to ensure best use of skills knowledge and experience. Additionally as a Service we will take steps to further promote self-evaluation as best practice for all Governing Bodies.</p>	<p>Where Ofsted judge a school to be requiring improvement and have concerns about leadership and management an external review of governance is recommended by the inspector. Governing bodies must decide who to commission to carry this out. Governor Services offer advice on this.</p>
<p>5 Governing bodies to be asked to consider setting a time limit on the role of their chair and also having a succession planning process in place.</p>	<p>Partly Agreed. Officers agree on succession planning but question the Local Authority's role in recommending time limits. There is a need for Governing Bodies to have a succession planning process in place and previously this has been the focus of a conference. Officers recognise that this needs revisiting in our training and support programme. However with respect to setting a time limit, it is not the role of the Governing Body to set how long a period the Chair is elected for as local circumstances will vary. There is nothing in legislation to say what this period should be. The maximum term of office for all categories of Governors is 4 years but the Governing Body can decide to set a shorter term of office. The Service is keen to advise and support without the constraints on any time limit on Chairs.</p>	<p>Succession Planning will be considered as a specific training session within the Governor Training Handbook for 2014/15. Advice is provided to governing bodies who find themselves in the situation of not having a governor wanting to take on the role of Chair and support is provided where possible which may include negotiating with experienced governors to sit on a governing body to support them as chair or as a mentor for the chair for a specific period of time. Chairs of Governors who have completed the National Chairs' Development training have been invited to address the Chairs' Briefing on 23/10/2013 and share their ideas on succession planning and delegation. We are unable to specify a time limit for a governor to be a Chair of Governors as new Procedures Regulations issued by central government state clearly that it is up to the governing body to have the freedom to determine the length of time someone can be Chair.</p>

<p>6 The local authority to promote as best practice that governing bodies monitoring of the progress/outcomes of the Following groups of pupils: those with special educational needs; gifted and talented pupils; those in receipt of free school meals; pupils with English as an additional language; looked after children and pupils from ethnic minorities and provide possible options For how this could be achieved.</p>	<p>Agreed. This should be the focus of training and is currently already covered in many courses and briefings such as the SEN Forum, Gifted and Talented, Ofsted Framework, How to Support and Challenge Your School, Induction, and Assessing Pupil Progress courses. Briefings on the importance of narrowing the gap have been given to Chairs and SEN Governors but do need to be given greater emphasis.</p>	<p>Narrowing the Gap and use of the pupil premium funding has been addressed specifically at the SEN Forum on 20th March 2013 and Chairs Briefings on 22nd May 2013 and again on 23rd October 2013. An article on narrowing the gap was also included in the Autumn Term Governors' Digest which is circulated to all governors. Ofsted training has been a continual focus with two different sessions offered during the Autumn Term 2013 and this continues to be a popular full governing body training session. "How to Support and Challenge Your School" is an annual training course and again offered at full governing body level and a training session on Gifted and Talented is offered bi-annually. The training for the governors conducting the Head Teacher's appraisal emphasises this as a possible performance objective.</p>
<p>7 The potential for sharing support services e.g. finance officer, caretaker, IT support etc be explored further within clusters.</p>	<p>Agreed. Action is already being taken to encourage the Clusters to work in partnership and it is for them to decide how they can best share resources. This is also encouraged if schools federate or amalgamate. The service will continue to prioritise this in the governor advice to schools and across Children's Services</p>	<p>Governors are encouraged to work with their Cluster and this was discussed at the Chairs Briefing on 24/10/2012 The responses were further discussed at the Briefing on 13/2/2013 Governors felt that the Schools Finance Officers and IT support would not have enough time but they felt it may be possible for caretakers although they felt it was Headteachers who would lead on this.</p>
<p>8 Governor Services should encourage governing bodies to use mentoring and buddy schemes to assist new governors and those</p>	<p>Agreed. Officers would agree with the need to support the good practice use of mentors/buddies. Work in this area currently taking place is as follows: Development Governors are encouraged to arrange</p>	<p>Further discussion to take place with Development Governors on how the mentor system works within their schools and areas of good practice to be shared. Governor Services</p>

governing bodies who could do with some extra support.	a mentor for new governors from within their GB as part of school based induction. It would require the cluster groups to agree to arrange mentors across governing bodies and is not something governor services can arrange or broker. If a school is in difficulties governor services have appointed additional experienced governors for a period of time to support the GB. It is very difficult to find additional governors who are able to support another GB while retaining their responsibilities in their original setting. The need for this kind of support is usually identified if a school requires Local Authority intervention.	continue to provide support with appointing additional governors and are currently looking to put an experienced chair on a governing body to support a new chair of a school requiring support. Clusters are encouraged to support one another and one GB of a Requiring Improvement school have approached another GB from a Good school for support and mentorship.
9 Whenever possible age group specific training e.g. primary, secondary be set up.	Agreed. The focus of training and support does differentiate as far as possible and Courses on Assessing Pupil Progress have been offered separately for secondary and primary governors as have updates on the primary and secondary curriculum. Chairs briefing have a section that is differentiated for Primary and Secondary when required and there is a 30 minute networking development item at every briefing where primary clusters and secondary Chairs meet separately. The Service will continue to differentiate where appropriate and adds value.	This is ongoing and will continue.
10 Governor Services to consider setting up cluster group sessions focussing on specific topics.	Partly agreed. Officers would have difficulty fully taking forward this recommendation as it misreads how clusters need to develop and the available capacity within the service. The goal is to establish self-improvement partnerships between schools not to construct Local Authority led groups. What Governor services can do is to work with clusters to help them commission the training they agree that they need either from Wokingham or elsewhere, or with additional resources help shape this	A specific training session has been commissioned for the Earley Cluster Group for this term and we will continue to do so where requests are received from schools.

	programme. There is an established part of each Local Authority Chairs briefing dedicated to cluster working. Joint commissioning has begun to happen as a result of this focus and will continue to be encouraged.	
11 Governor Services should carry out an evaluation of e-learning to ascertain how many people want it; if it is an effective training vehicle and if not whether it should be continued with and if so what improvements could be made.	Agreed. The following steps are already taken: Statistics on the uptake of E Learning courses are shared with the Development Governors twice yearly. The service concern about low uptake on this has been raised by them with governing bodies and the decision on whether to continue with it is reviewed annually. It is a low cost facility at £1.50 per governor per year. The content is via a subscription purchased from an external partner.	This is a regular item on the Development Governors agenda and registration and uptake is continuing to grow. We continue to advertise the GEL e-learning option and where a governor wishes to attend a specific training session that is not available for some time they are encouraged to look at the E-learning option. 92 governors (11.5%) have registered onto Gel in the last academic year. The cost continues to represent good value at £25 per GB which is incorporated into the cost of the GB's buy in to the traded service which is £900 plus £17.50 per governor. If a GB was to subscribe to Gel directly it would cost £150.
12 Guidance to be provided to all governing bodies that strongly encourages attendance at appropriate training e.g. induction, chairs and refresher if they have not undertaken any training in the last two years.	Agreed however we need to be clear that training is not mandatory for any governor. Governor Services encourage ongoing uptake of training and will continue to give this due emphasis. At the moment all maintained schools subscribe to the training package. National benchmark statistics show that in Wokingham 87% of new governors attend Induction Training compared with 57% Nationally.	The Service continues to encourage governor attendance at training through the Development Governor meetings that are held twice a year. Development Governors are tasked with ensuring that their governors are trained and many take this role seriously. We continue to book new governors onto the next available induction training session to ensure that as many governors are trained as possible. We have encouraged our chairs of governors and aspiring chairs of governors to attend the National Chairs Development Programme being offered and have run this as a local offer with 6 governors having attended part or all in the first cohort and 7 governors attending on the second cohort. All maintained schools subscribe to the training

		<p>package and at the moment all but 1 of the academies subscribe.</p> <p>There was 83% attendance at new governors' induction training for the year 2012/13.</p>
<p>13 Governor Services to carry out a review of the effectiveness of Chairs' Briefing taking into account the comments made during the review.</p>	<p>Agreed. This was carried out previously and will be undertaken again and the content of the agendas reviewed.</p>	<p>This was a topic at the briefing on 24/10/2013 and as a result the briefing was reduced to 2 hours rather than 2 1/2 hours with more focus on sharing of good practice and networking opportunities. Discussions with Chairs about their Briefing will continue and they are encouraged to include items on the agenda for discussion. Any comments received regarding the format of the Briefing will be discussed with them further, as and when required.</p>
<p>14 A special Chairs' Briefing to be held to discuss the findings of the review and particularly highlight those areas covered in recommendations 1 and 2 and 17.</p>	<p>Partly Agreed. Officers agree that there is a need to share the outcomes of the review and to discuss with Chairs. However, to ensure that as many Chairs as possible hear the messages we would advise that this takes place as an agenda item at the scheduled Chairs Briefing in October rather than a separate meeting. The findings of the review would be circulated in advance and this would be the topic for the development item at the next Chairs briefing when cluster groups and secondary Chairs meet separately. It is always difficult to get Chairs to give up another evening of their time bearing in mind their current commitments and the fact they are volunteers.</p>	<p>A specific session was not arranged but the recommendations from the Task and Finish Group were brought to the Chairs Briefings on 24th October 2012 and on 13th February 2013 and discussion took place on the recommendations in their cluster groups.</p>
<p>15 Governor Services to be more proactive in trying to identify local authority governors including</p>	<p>Agreed. Steps will be taken to circulate revised promotional material about becoming a school governor to Members and ensure that where there</p>	<p>List of vacancies for LA governors is sent termly to the Lead Member for Children's Services. Where vacancies exist schools are encouraged to</p>

<p>contacting Councillors where there is a shortfall of local authority governors in their ward/parish and encourage them to volunteer.</p>	<p>are vacancies for governors in schools Members will be made aware of this. In addition, action will be taken to secure governors from across the local business community who might be able to provide additional skills and support and challenge for governing bodies. Where opportunities for employer engagement are identified, Governor Services will ensure that employers are made aware of the current vacancies.</p> <p>With respect to the position of Local Authority Governors it needs to be clarified that the current situation is that with effect from 1 September 2012 the Local Authority can no longer appoint governors. Where a Governing Body has vacancy for a Local Authority Governor they can ask the Local Authority to nominate a governor who meets their skill requirements. Currently we regularly send details of these vacancies to Democratic services who notify members. Uptake has been low in the past with only a few members sitting on governing bodies. The right of parish councillors to sit on governing bodies in the minor authority category was removed by government in 2003. This category became the community governor category is open to any member of the community. There are still a few parish councillors who are governors.</p>	<p>approach their local parish/town council to ask if they would have anyone suitable to fill the vacancy.</p> <p>There are currently 7 members who are governors within Wokingham Borough schools.</p>
<p>16 Governor Services to review the promotional literature e.g. 'Becoming a School Governor' flyer to ensure that it was effective in recruiting new governors and provided sufficient information on the support and training that was available and so consideration to be</p>	<p>Agreed. The promotional flyer will be reviewed and updated as necessary and circulated as before to libraries, schools, GPs surgeries and Members. The strap line about becoming a school governor has been placed on council tax envelopes in the past and we can arrange this for next year if possible. The service is particularly keen to recruit expertise from business on to school governing bodies and letters</p>	<p>The promotional flyer and poster have been circulated to several schools recently for their use.</p> <p>An article on being a governor was in the Wokingham Borough News (Spring 2013) which encouraged more interest in becoming a governor and some vacancies were filled from this. We received 6 enquiries with 3 having</p>

<p>given to how to get the message across to hard to reach communities.</p>	<p>about becoming a governor have been sent to companies in areas of governor shortage in the past. Response has been low but the service will continue to promote with local businesses. Schools have access to all our promotional materials of leaflets and posters so they can run local recruitment drives. The service liaise with the School Governors One Stop Shop who help fill governor vacancies and they have recently bought electoral register details and have agreed to do a leaflet drop to targeted postal codes in the borough which have particular shortages of governors</p>	<p>become governors. Governor Services continue to work with the School Governors One Stop Shop and encourage schools to contact them when they have LA or Community governor vacancies.</p>
<p>17 The role and funding of School Improvement Officers to be clearly communicated to governors, including their role in providing targeted support and advice on whole school self-improvement and challenge on standards.</p>	<p>Agreed. The end of the school improvement Partner programme in 2011 was communicated widely through service briefings and the level of support offered to schools by the School Improvement Officers both on a free and commissioned basis clearly set out to head teachers and chairs of governors. The Local Authority has maintained a core School Improvement Officer allocation to all schools, and this can be used to support school self-evaluation and activities similar to the School Improvement Partner role. In addition schools and governors can access extra support, guidance and training by commissioning through the Wokingham traded services programme. It is recognised however from this Review that further work is needed about communicating changes, and emphasising the importance to schools of the involvement of governors in the programme of support and challenge provided by the School Improvement Offices.</p>	<p>This was an agenda item at Chairs' briefing on 13th February 2013. The level of school improvement support provided to schools is dependent on the category of the school (e.g.) Good requiring improvement etc. Chairs of Governors have been copied into a letter sent to Headteachers informing them of what categorisation their school is currently in and what support the LA will provide.. All training and briefings emphasise the governors' role in providing challenge and support to the school.</p>
<p>18 Consideration to be given to</p>	<p>Partly Agreed. Children's Service's would have</p>	<p>We do provide a list of contacts throughout the</p>

<p>setting up a "one-stop shop" to co-ordinate queries from schools relating to Council departments.</p>	<p>difficulty fully taking forward this recommendation. The understanding is that Wokingham Direct has been established as the first point of contact. Officers would be keen to be involved in discussions at a corporate level on how the Wokingham Direct services can be further developed to meet school's needs.</p>	<p>Council for governors in the Governors' Training Handbook</p>
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