

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and Governor Services Team Attendance at the 2 October Meeting

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills (County Councillor Jayne Rear) and representatives of the Governors Services Team have confirmed their attendance at the SACRE meeting on 2 October 2023

Below is an extract from the minutes of the Children, Families and Skills Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 10 May 2023 at which their attendance at a future SACRE meeting was discussed and agreed. References relevant to SACRE are highlighted in red

Item 4 - Governor Services – Recruitment and Training

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Jayne Rear, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Jaquie Old, Executive Director Education and Children's Services, Julie Bell, Interim Director of Education, Skills and Culture, Elaine Cluet, SI Secondary Lead, Head of Governor Services and Joshua Mangas, School Based Issue Officer to the meeting.

The report provided an update on the work the council was doing to support the recruitment of school governors, including increasing numbers and improving diversity in governing boards.

A presentation was provided to the committee, a copy of which is attached to the minutes.

Comments and queries were raised by the committee as follows:

- In response to what support and training was available to new school governors, a Chair of Governing Mentoring Service was available across Lancashire for any governor to sign up to. This linked new school governors to experienced mentors. In-house training was also a costed option that provided onsite, venue-based courses for schools.
- Officers highlighted that support from school governors could be provided through personal attendance at scheduled events and on programmes designed for school governors, such as the Chairs Forum and participation on the School Governor Mentoring Programme. The website was currently being developed and the team welcomed any short videos, case studies or messages that could be used to further support new governors in their role.
- The level of delegated responsibilities given to school governors within academies was varied depending on the academy's structure. Officers were looking into providing the same level of support to trustees within academy trusts, as they had the same level of influence and responsibility as school governing bodies.

- The committee was informed that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion data (EDI) was not collected, however, national data could be looked at, subject to GDP regulations. The Governor Hub may be able to assist in collecting data like this in the future.
- In terms of progress on the work on the 2020 Scrutiny Task Group recommendations, it was noted that priorities had been impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. There had also been changes in recent leadership within the team. However, officers reaffirmed their commitment to moving forward with the recommendations of the 2020 Scrutiny Task Group, which concluded in December 2020.
- There were ongoing discussions taking place with internal Communications to create a representative recruitment advert to encourage more people to apply for school governor places, in particular from diverse and minority backgrounds. Potential barriers to the recruitment of parents onto school governing boards was also being evaluated and an update would be provided to the committee at a future meeting.
- It was noted that the appointment of 'governor champions' within local educational settings that represented minority groups would provide a role model for more diverse recruitment from minority backgrounds to school governor positions.
- It was noted that there was an error on page 13 of Appendix 1 of the Governor Services report. Attendance for training delivered by Lancashire County Council officers should have read 100% better, instead of 50%, based on the information provided in table B.
- Regular conversations were taking place with dioceses and the Director of Education to improve the recruitment of foundation governors from churches. Underperforming schools were being targeted in the first instance. Recommended appointments had to first be approved by the dioceses before being finalised. Talks had begun between the Education Improvement Team and the dioceses to identify how to make this process more efficient and address any challenges with appointing foundation governors.
- It was recommended that officers from the Education Improvement Team attend a meeting of the Standard Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). It was highlighted that the SACRE had a large representation of religious and educational bodies, many of which were governors themselves.
- Governing Body Advisors were appointed through a standard application procedure. Successful applicants undertook an induction programme in order that they could manage their own school portfolio. It was confirmed that the position was a paid role to the committee.
- The cost for schools to buy into Lancashire County Councils recruitment support services for school governors varied depending on the option chosen.

The various options and costs for each package would be circulated to committee members after the meeting.

- The county council's staff specialised in knowledge and policy-based training for school governors, and training in current legislation was provided to fulfil the role. Whereas external staff were often sourced from experienced serving governors that provided their own experience on the practical aspects of being a school governor. The external tutors used for training school governors were all representatives of the local authority area who had been through a thorough recruitment procedure.
- It was highlighted that there was no funding pot for secondary schools to support schools in governor recruitment and training, however, a small amount of funding was available for primary schools with financial difficulties. Officers were monitoring potential future funding streams from the Department of Education.
- It was noted that the governing board was responsible for determining the ethos of a school, how this was strategically implemented was decided by each school. New bite-size hour long courses had also been developed on vision and values, culture and ethos and wellbeing to guide schools on creating an effective governing board ethos.
- Officers explained that mentoring and the creation of champions that encouraged parents to become school governors was being developed. Parents were being encouraged to become school governors to have a positive, internal impact on any changes made within their local school setting.
- The recruitment criteria for school governors were seen as inclusive. Recruitment from minority backgrounds to school governor places was viewed as a key priority for the committee.
- The committee queried whether enough active recruitment was taking place with employers to encourage employees to become school governors. Officers welcomed developing this opportunity further. Onsite training for employees to become a governor could be delivered in partnership with large employers.
- It was noted that challenges to the recruitment of governors could be reflected against national figures for volunteering, as volunteer numbers across the country were around 2 million less in 2023 than in 2022.
- The committee requested that the number of governor vacancies per district within Lancashire be provided.
- The committee highlighted that the poster being designed to promote the recruitment of school governors may benefit from further input from county councillors and the Youth Council. It was agreed that views of the committee would be considered in the redesign of the recruitment poster. It was also noted that the poster was one form of communication and other avenues were also being considered.

Resolved: That the following recommendations be shared with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:

- i. Officers from the Education Improvement Team and the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills be invited to a future meeting of the Lancashire Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). The aim being, to use the knowledge and expertise of the SACRE to help support the recruitment of governors in schools and improve the diversity of governors recruited.
- ii. Details of the number of governor vacancies, per district, be provided to the committee.
- iii. Consideration be given to the design of the poster used to market the recruitment of governors. Input from members of the committee and representatives from the Youth Council to be taken into regard.