

Education Scrutiny Committee
Meeting to be held on 11 March 2014

Electoral Division affected: All

Lancashire County Council's Governor Services - a traded service for schools.
(Appendices A-D refer)

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Executive Summary

This report sets out the traded services arrangements for Lancashire County Council's Governor Services.

Recommendation

The Education Scrutiny Committee is asked to give its views on the traded service arrangements.

Background

Lancashire County Council has provided traded Governor Services to school governing bodies since the introduction of Local Management of Schools following the 1988 Education Reform Act.

There are approximately 9000 governors in Lancashire, all volunteers, whether at maintained schools or academies. Lancashire County Council's Governor Services is highly regarded in the North-West and nationally, and this is reflected in the number of school governing bodies buying in to the services, see tables 1 and 4 below.

The primary function of the Governor Services team is to provide high quality information, advice, guidance, support, training and development opportunities to the governing bodies of Lancashire's schools. The Service also undertakes a range of functions relating to the Local Authority's statutory and strategic responsibilities for school governance.

All of the functions of the Service contribute to improving the quality and effectiveness of school governance and to supporting governing bodies in meeting

their statutory responsibility of conducting the school to achieve the best outcomes for its pupils, as defined in the Education Act 2002.

School governors have 3 key functions:

- Setting the strategic direction of the school
- Holding the headteacher to account for its educational performance
- Ensuring financial resources are well spent

The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances)(England) Regulations 2013

Service Context

Most of the functions undertaken by Governor Services have their foundations in the statutory responsibilities of the Local Authority, for maintained schools. The local education authority shall:

- a) Provide governors, free of charge to every governor, with such information as the local authority considers appropriate in connection with the discharge of their functions as a governor
- b) Make available, free of charge to every governor, such training as the local authority considers necessary for the effective discharge of those functions.

Education Act 2002

Originally, funding for support to governing bodies “should account for at least 5% of the school improvement element” of the standards fund (*DfEE circular 16/99 ‘The Standards Fund’*). This sum was intended to provide “information, training and support for school governors to help them fulfil their role in promoting high standards of educational achievement”. Much of this funding was devolved to schools to allow governing bodies to buy in clerking, training and development support from providers of their choosing, of which Lancashire Governor Services is just one amongst an increasing number of providers in a competitive market.

Description of Service

Governor Services is part of Lancashire Learning Excellence. The functions of the Service can be divided into four main areas:

- a) Clerking of Governing Bodies (traded service), including providing training and development courses, seminars and conferences for its own staff, independent clerks and clerks employed by other local authorities
- b) Governor Training and Development (traded services), including governing body reviews
- c) Information to Governors

- d) Local Authority Statutory and Strategic functions (for example: the appointment of Local Authority governors)

The Service also contributes to the wider responsibilities of the CYP Directorate, including:

- **Support for schools in challenging circumstances**
Schools and their governing bodies have a key responsibility for school improvement, raising standards of attainment and achievement for their pupils. The Local Authority has established criteria to identify schools requiring special support, and these may include difficulties relating to the governing body. In certain circumstances, such as the school being placed in special measures by Ofsted, the Local Authority may intervene and appoint additional governors to the governing body, or it may dismiss the governing body and establish an interim executive board to govern the school.
- **Operation of delegated budgets to schools**
The scheme for financing schools in Lancashire sets out the conditions and requirements which governing bodies must follow in carrying out their delegated responsibilities. In certain circumstances, the Local Authority may intervene and suspend delegation.
- **School organisation**
The Service supports governing bodies where a change to the organisation of a school is planned, such as school closure, school age-band changes, schools federating or schools collaborating, for example to share a headteacher.

Details of the Services' statutory, strategic and traded service functions are included as **Appendix A**.

Functions of the Service

a) Clerking of Governing Bodies (fully traded)

School governing bodies are able to make their own independent arrangements for professional clerking to provide advice, support and clerking of governing body and its committee meetings. However a significant proportion of Lancashire maintained schools buy into Governor Services Clerking provision and as Ofsted have become more focused on evaluating the effectiveness of governing bodies, looking for professional minutes which provide evidence of effective challenge and support given to a school's senior leadership in driving up standards of pupil achievement and attainment, the number buying in additional clerking support for committee meetings is increasing.

The Service also provides a clerking service to governing bodies of academies and of schools in neighbouring authorities.

The School Governance (Roles, Procedures and Allowances)(England) Regulations 2013 states that governing bodies must take notice of advice from their clerk, who should be highly professional and well trained to support the effective governing body.

The clerking buy-in options are included in **Appendices Bi and ii**. The percentage buy-in for maintained schools and academies is:

TABLE 1

Year	Maintained schools			Academies		
	All	Option 1	Option 2 & 3	All	Option A	Option B & C
2011/12	97%	14%	83%	8%	4%	4%
2012/13	98%	13%	85%	52%	32%	12%
2013/14	97%	11%	86%	68%	44%	24%

The number of meetings of maintained school and academy governing bodies clerked by the Services' Governing Body Advisers is:

TABLE 2

Year	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Governing Body meetings	1670	1693	1735
Committee meetings	1372	1660	1896
Pupil Discipline	161	113	155
Staff Discipline	80	73	83

b) Governor Training and Development (fully traded)

The Service provides a range of some 30 courses for governors of all types of schools to governors within and beyond Lancashire. These are offered at a variety of venues at varying times to provide access for all Lancashire governors. Additionally a number of courses, together with bespoke development sessions, are offered to individual governing bodies.

Subscription to the Training and Development service level agreement also provides all members of a governing body with access to an on-line training and information service provided by GEL, a not-for profit organisation, where the content is prepared by governors for governors.

The range of venues and times of courses offered, together with on-line provision, enables all governors to have access to high quality training and development opportunities.

Appendices Bi and ii provide details of the Training and Development service level agreements. The numbers attending courses, either county-wide or school-based sessions are:

TABLE 3

Year	County-wide		School-based	
	Number of courses	Total Attendees	Number of courses	Total Attendees
2011/12	95	1015	270	2305
2012/13	79	1209	259	2355
2013/14*	96	1542	260	2445

* Includes projections to year end (school year)

The percentage of maintained schools and academies buying into this service level agreement are given below. Training is also provided to governors external to Lancashire on a full-cost recovery basis.

TABLE 4

Year	Maintained schools	Academies
2011/12	89%	0%
2012/13	95%	40%
2013/14	95%	56%

All governing bodies are advised to regularly review their own effectiveness and develop an action plan to improve their performance. One way of achieving this is to arrange an external review of the governing body's practice and operation. The recommendations from the reviewer are then developed by the governing body into its own action plan. Ofsted frequently direct a governing body of a school in a 'Required Improvement' category to commission such a review.

Governor Services is able to provide this service by using senior staff as reviewers and in 2013/14 nearly 50 reviews have been carried out. Charges are based on full-cost recovery.

c) Governor Information

The Local Authority has a duty to provide all governors with such information as it considers necessary for the effective discharge of their roles and responsibilities. This is achieved via:

- **Schools portal**

This provides information, communications and electronic versions of meeting documents for any governors where the governing body buys

into either the clerking or training and development service level agreement.

- **Lancashire County Council website**
Provides basic information to all governors including links to relevant sources of information such as the DfE website. This is available free of charge.
- **Lancashire Governor**
An information magazine provided each term, covering a range of items on effective governance and topics. This is sent to all governors of maintained schools in Lancashire, whether the governing body buys into any service provided or not, and to governors of academies which buy into Governor Services.
- **Lancashire Link**
An electronic newsletter on training and development opportunities sent to a governing body's training link governor and the chair of all governing bodies.
- **Chairs' Forums**
These are arranged each term in each of the 11 districts of the county for the chair of a governing body, or their representative of subscribing governing bodies. The aim is to provide opportunities for governing bodies to network and collaborate, as well as provide information via a range of presentations from Local Authority partner services such as Schools' Human Resources, Schools' Finance and School Advisers.
- **Annual Chairs' Conference**
This event is offered to chairs and vice-chairs of subscribing schools, and on a pay-as-you-go basis for those from non-subscribers. The theme each year reflects current issues in school governance with guest speakers from colleagues within the authority as well as external sources.
- **Seminars**
Seminars on topical or special interest themes, such as Children's Centre governance, School funding and Pupil Referral Unit governance, are provided as required either as part of the service level agreement or offered on a full-cost recovery basis.

d) Local Authority Statutory and Strategic functions

A list of the activities undertaken by Governor Services on behalf of the Local Authority is provided in **Appendix A**.

The Service co-ordinates responses to school-based complaints on behalf of the Directorate and the Authority, as well as providing advice to parents and carers on individual complaints. Those complaints which took time beyond a simple phone response of a few minutes were:

TABLE 5

Year	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Number of complaints	89	216	189	129	165 (projected)

Feedback from Service Users

Development of the Service to meet the needs of governing bodies and their members is built around feedback from service users.

- 1) At each training and development session evaluation forms are provided for this purpose. The table below shows the feedback for courses, in percentages, from participants.

Year	Course Content			Course Tutor			Improved governor knowledge & confidence? Yes
	E/G	A	I	E/G	A	I	
2011/12	96%	3%	0.3%	98%	2%	0%	99%
2012/13	96%	3%	0.1%	99%	1%	0%	99%
2013/14	95%	4%	0.1%	99%	1%	0%	99.6%

Key: E/G = Excellent/Good
A = Acceptable
I = Inadequate

- 2) A survey of governing bodies which buy into the clerking service was conducted in 2011 and the findings summarised in **Appendix C**
- 3) A survey of governors attending Chairs Forums in autumn 2014 was undertaken and relevant sections are included as **Appendix D**.

Governor Services Organisation

Within Governor Services there are three area based teams and a central team.

Central Team, (governor training and development is part of this team)

- co ordinates the work of all the teams
- administers the appointment of and deals with all enquiries about Local Authority governorships
- is responsible for all governor training/support/development

- is responsible for publications and the governors' information via the Schools' Portal and the Lancashire County Council website
- provides clerking for pupil referral units, children's centres, academies, temporary governing bodies and National Challenge initiated education trusts
- leads on policy and project development on governance
- administers the appointment processes and support for parent representatives on local children's trusts and county council committees.
- maintains the accounts and coordinates the collection of data for the Service

Area Teams (East, North and South teams)

- operate the traded Clerking Service in their area which provides clerking for the main governing body meetings and committee meetings
- provide advice and guidance relating to the governance and clerking of the governing body
- provide general advice on governance
- provide notification of governor appointments/resignations other than those of Local Authority governors
- deal with enquiries about governorships other than Local Authority.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

N/A

Risk management

No implications.

List of Background Papers

Nil

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A