

School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry Panel

Summary: This is an agenda pack for a meeting of the School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry Panel taking place on the 9 July 2015. The main item is a discussion with representatives of Swansea Association of Governing Bodies and Governors Wales. Background reports are included.

Date: Thursday 9 July 2015 **Time:** 4.00 – 6.00

Venue: Committee Room 6, Guildhall, Swansea

Members of the Panel:

Fiona Gordon (Convener) David Cole Cheryl Philpott Hazel Morris Jeff Jones Ceinwen Thomas	Lesley Walton Lynda James Anthony Colburn Sarah Joiner (Parent Governor Co-optee) Dave Anderson-Thomas (Parent Governor Co-optee) Professor Catherine Farrell (Panel Co-optee)
<p>Copy of agenda for information to: Alan Thomas - Chair of Audit Committee, Chris Sivers - Corporate Director People, Helen Rees-Morgan - Head of Education Improvement, Kathryn Thomas – School Governors Unit.</p>	

AGENDA

No.	Item
1.	Apologies
2.	Declarations of Interest <i>Please see the explanatory note.</i>
3.	Inquiry Planning Meeting <i>a) Notes of the meeting 26 May 2015.</i>
4.	Governors' Perspective <i>Discussion with:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeff Bowen (Chair), Swansea Association of Governing Bodies • Dereck Roberts, Swansea Association of Governing Bodies • Jane Morris (Director), Governors Wales (or representative) <i>Please see attached discussion points.</i>
5.	Evidence from Clerks to School Governors <i>Verbal feedback from the meeting with the clerks' forum.</i>
6.	Letter to Cabinet Members - Attainment and Wellbeing Scrutiny Inquiry Panel <i>This letter refers work to this panel following a meeting on the 11 June 2015.</i>
7.	Discussion Points for the Next Meeting <i>Panel to identify the topics to be covered – initial discussion.</i>
8.	Timetable of Work <i>Please note meeting dates and venues.</i>

*****Please note members should declare party whipping in the usual manner*****
 Contact: Dave Mckenna, Scrutiny Manager, 01792 636090, dave.mckenna@swansea.gov.uk

Item 2

Declarations of Interest – Explanatory Note

This applies to councillors and statutory co-optees.

Advice from Legal (Janet Hooper) at Panel meeting on 3 October 2013 with regard to Declarations of Interest for Councillors

Councillors Code of Conduct applies to this meeting (any meeting constituted by council and that would include anything agreed as a panel by SPC).

If you are a school governor then you will have a personal interest in the business before the Panel if the Panel are discussing your school you must declare that personal interest.

If you are an LA appointed governor for a school being discussed, you will have an exemption under the Code from having a prejudicial interest so you can stay and take part in the meeting (Code of Conduct exemption for LA Governors), but if you are any other type of governor for a school being discussed the exemption for a prejudicial interest does not apply and you must leave the meeting and not take any part in the meeting.

Notes of the School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry Panel

26th May 2015

Attending

Fiona Gordon (Convener), Anthony Colburn, David Cole, Lynda James, Ceinwen Thomas

Professor Catherine Farrell

Scrutiny Officer: Dave Mckenna

1. Apologies

Jeff Jones
Dave Anderson-Thomas
Sarah Joiner
Lesley Walton (withdrawn from the Panel)

2. Appointment of Co-optee

AGREED: Professor Catherine Farrell was co-opted onto the panel.

3. Pre Inquiry Working Group 18 February 2015

- a) *Notes of the meeting 18 February 2015*
- b) *Conveners letter to Cabinet Member 19 March*

No issues raised.

4. Planning the School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry

The inquiry question, lines of inquiry and evidence gathering were discussed.

AGREED:

- The issue of skills / experience mix to be added to the lines of inquiry and survey a follows:

Lines of inquiry:

The Right Mix: Many schools lack different types of governor for example parent governors, or people with business experience. What is the mix that governing bodies should be aiming for? How can the Council help governing bodies fill the gaps?

Survey question:

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

The governing body in my school has the right mix of skills and experience.

Strongly agree

Tend to agree

Tend to disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

How can this be improved?

AGREED:

- Fiona Gordon to attend the clerks forum – Dave to email round panel for other attendees.
- Follow up of school attainment and wellbeing inquiry to be added to the schedule

5. Examples of Research into School Governance

The report by the Scrutiny Research Officer was shared with the Panel as a source of evidence for the inquiry.

NOTED:

- Need to recognise the clear differences between the Welsh and English systems
- Idea of a central pool of governors with specialisms
- Idea of a parent governor forum
- Idea of providing a timeline of activities for governing bodies
- Importance of website information for governors
- Idea of a checklist of questions for governors to ask
- Idea of a personal training schedule for governors, with the mandatory training listed and space to add extra training attended

AGREED:

- Need to see the Cardiff scrutiny inquiry report if available.
- Catherine Farrell to review council website pages for school governors to provide independent perspective

6. Welsh Government Schools Governance Task and Finish Group

Professor Catherine Farrell presented the report.

NOTED:

- Value or otherwise of bronze award
- Template for self-evaluation

- Template for skills audit
- Checklist for development appraisals
- Need to encourage people proactively to become governors
- People may be worried by the legal responsibilities
- Schools need to have a strong community base
- Different schools can have very different cultures
- Whole governing body training

AGREED:

- To check whether the issue of looked after children needs to appear on governing body agendas

7. Proposed Future Meetings

AGREED:

Future meetings as follows (venues to be agreed).

All 4.00-6.00:

9 July (provisional – topic to be agreed)

15 July (Corporate Perspective)

30 July (Estyn),

1 Sep (provisional – topic to be agreed)

8 Sep (provisional – topic to be agreed)

AGREED: Declarations of interest to be clarified at the start of each meeting as an agenda item (all councillors at this meeting highlighted that they are governors).

Meeting Closed

School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry

Governors' Perspective – 9 July 2015

Discussion Points

1. Are governors clear about their role? How can governors' understanding of their role be improved?
2. Do governors have the confidence and the right skills to challenge effectively? How can training and development be improved?
3. Are there shortages of particular types of governor (e.g. parent governors, or people with business experience)?
4. Is there a particular mix of people that governing bodies should be aiming for? How can the Council help governing bodies fill any gaps?
5. Do school governors have a constructive relationship with head teachers? How can the culture of governing bodies be improved to ensure effective challenge of head teachers by governors?
6. How can the relationship between school governors and challenge advisors be improved?
7. Do governors get the information they need in the format they need?
8. Is recruitment of governors a problem? How can the numbers of school governors be increased?
9. Should the support for school governors be independent of school support?
10. Is the selection of LA governors an effective process?



City And County Of Swansea

Dinas A Sir Abertawe

Councillor Christine Richards
Cabinet Member for Services for
Children and Young People

Councillor Jennifer Raynor
Cabinet Member for Education

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Scrutiny

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29 June 2015

BY EMAIL

Summary: This is a letter from the Attainment and Wellbeing Scrutiny Inquiry Panel to the Cabinet Member for services to children and young people and for Education following the meeting of the Panel on the 11 June 2015. It is to follow up on impact of a previous scrutiny inquiry into Attainment and Wellbeing in Schools in Swansea.

Dear Councillor Richards and Councillor Raynor,

Attainment and Wellbeing Scrutiny Inquiry Impact – 11 June 2015

The Panel would like to thank you and officers for attending our meeting on the 11 June and for providing us with the impact report on the scrutiny recommendations arising from the inquiry into attainment and wellbeing across schools in Swansea.

We were pleased to hear that the UNCRC and Rights Respecting schools aspects have been particularly successful and would like to congratulate schools and the council alike for this important progress which is helping to improve the school lives of many children across Swansea.

We do still have some concerns around the progress made in relation to the aspects of the report relating to school governors including, for example, Recommendation 6 which was about encouraging a wider range of people with different knowledge and skills sets to become governors. We did feel that the authority is not being proactive enough in this area. The impact of recommendations 4, 6, 7 and 8 have not produced the outcomes we would have hoped at this point so we will refer them onto the recently convened School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry for inclusion in their work.

Your Response

Could you please provide us with further information in relation to progress/impact in relation to Recommendation 3 which was not included within the impact report

Scrutiny / Craffu

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discussed on the 11 June (see below for summary of recommendations mentioned in this letter).

We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Fiona Gordon

Convener, Attainment and Wellbeing Scrutiny Inquiry

✉ Cllr.fiona.gordon@swansea.gov.uk

Recommendations mentioned in letter:

Recommendation 4

Investigate different media for the wider training of governors including the use and availability of online training tools and involvement in appropriate inset days and in wider all school training.

Completed – yes, partially

Progress - The outcome to ensure the UNCRC and Wellbeing are an integral part of the Governor Training Programme has been achieved within the recommended timeframes. It is not possible at the present time to consider offering on-line training for governors specifically on UNCRC. The focus for developing on-line training (across Wales) for governors will be the mandatory elements of governor training. It may be possible to review this at some time in the future and for Swansea to consider developing an on-line training option for UNCRC governor training when all mandatory elements have been embedded on-line. There will, however, be costs incurred to develop this package and given current financial constraints and forecast budgets over the next few years it is highly likely that funding will not be available to pursue this option.

- The panel felt this had not move ahead substantially and would like to follow up on this further. This will therefore be referred to the School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry Panel for further work.

Recommendation 6

Work to encourage a wider range of people to become governors with a wide variety of skills and knowledge and that are truly reflective of wider society.

Completed – yes, partially

Progress - The outcomes to ensure more school governors who reflect a wider community interest and are trained and have appropriate skills is in progress and ongoing and will be achieved within the timeframes of the recommendation.

- The panel felt that we need to do more in this area and that the authority is not being proactive enough in this area. The panel will therefore refer this recommendation onto the Governance Scrutiny Inquiry for further input.

Recommendation 7

It develops 'questions to ask' guidance in relation to wellbeing in schools for governors using the issues identified in section 3.12 and in consultation with Headteachers and governing bodies. This should be made available online for schools and governors to access.

Completed: No

Progress: The outcome for Governing Bodies to appoint a wellbeing link governor is in development and will be achieved in 2015/16.

- As this is in process of being developed the panel felt that the Governance Inquiry could input into this further and there refer it to them.

Recommendation 8

It facilitates the introduction of a system leaders approach within governing bodies. That is new chairs of governors being supported by experienced governors from other schools across the regions and new governors offered a buddy system from within the individual governing Body.

Completed: yes, partially

Progress: The outcome to continue with existing support arrangements for Governors and influencing the introduction of a system leaders approach has partially been achieved and continues to be developed in 2015/16.

- As this is in process of being developed the panel felt that the Governance Inquiry could input into this further and there refer it to them.

**School Governance Scrutiny Inquiry Panel
Timetable of Work**

When / Where	What / Who
Pre Inquiry Working Group 18 February 2015 Guildhall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of support service by School, Governor and Student Services Manager • Input from Cabinet Member for Education • Discuss whether to hold inquiry
Planning the Inquiry 26 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of key question, lines of inquiry and evidence gathering • Examples of Research into School Governance • Welsh Government Schools Governance Task and Finish Group
Clerks' Forum 24 June	Informal visit by panel members hear views of clerks to governing body.
Meeting 1 9 July, 4pm, Committee Room 6, Guildhall	Governors' Perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeff Bowen (Chair), Swansea Association of Governing Bodies • Dereck Roberts, Swansea Association of Governing Bodies • Jane Morris (Director), Governors Wales (or representative)
Meeting 2 15 July, 4pm, Purple Room, 1.2.1, Civic Centre	Corporate Perspective Corporate priorities, policy commitments, feedback from the recent governors' conference, good practice examples, good practice schools. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jennifer Raynor, Cabinet Member for Education • Helen Morgan-Rees, Head of Education Improvement • Kathryn Thomas, School, Governor and Student Services Manager
Meeting 3 30 July, 4pm, Committee Room 6, Guildhall	ESTYN Perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maldwyn Pryse, HMI, Estyn
Meeting 4 8 Sep, 4pm, Committee Room 6, Guildhall	Regional Perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Betsan O'Connor, Managing Director, ERW • Huw Roberts, School Improvement Service (tbc) • Kathryn Thomas, School, Governor and Student Services Manager
Visits to Good Practice Schools	Aim is to observe governing bodies of good practice schools – these to be identified at meeting 2 and 3. Also an opportunity to meet informally with governors
Meeting 5 tbc	Good Practice Schools The aim is to hear from head teachers and chairs of governors at the good practice schools identified at meeting 2 and 3. An opportunity to feedback and discuss finding from observation visits.
New Governors tbc	Informal Session with governors who have completed their training between one and two years ago to hear about their experiences.
Review of Findings Tbc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings from survey of governors • Findings from evidence gathering • Written contributions

As at: 01/07/2015