Select Committee Task and Finish Group Scoping Document

The process for establishing a task and finish group is:

1. The Select Committee identifies a potential topic for a task and finish group
2. The Select Committee Chairman and the Scrutiny Officer complete the scoping template.
3. The Council Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews the scoping document
4. The Select Committee agrees membership of the task and finish group.

Review Topic: School Governance Task Group
Select Committee(s) Children & Education Select Committee
Relevant background The Department of Education defines the three core strategic functions of a governing body as: "a. Ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction; b. Holding the headteacher to account for the educational performance of the school and its pupils, and the performance management of staff; and c. Overseeing the financial performance of the school and making sure its money is well spent."[1] It is well recognised that school governing bodies are integral to raising schools' standards through their role in setting strategic direction, monitoring schools' progress and ensuring accountability. This has become increasingly the case in recent years, as both maintained schools and academies grow more autonomous of the Local Authority. The task group will gather evidence on current school governance arrangements and their effectiveness, including the role of the Local Authority and partners in appointing[2] and supporting school governors.

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[1] Department for Education. "Governors' handbook: For governors in maintained schools, academies and free schools." May 2014.
[2] Under the 2012 Regulations, the Local Authority will no longer appoint Local Authority governors. Instead they will be required to nominate a candidate for a school governing body's consideration. Please refer to **annex 1** for further details.

1

Why this is a scrutiny item

Both Ofsted and the Department for Education have identified that school governance can be a key factor in school improvement.

In addition, the Department for Education published statutory guidance informing all maintained schools of a need to reconstitute under the 2012 Regulations by September 2015. A briefing note on this guidance is attached as **annex 1**.

In an increasingly complex landscape for Education provisions, it is important to develop an understanding of best practice, and how the Council and key stakeholders can work with all Surrey schools to ensure the best opportunities and outcomes for Surrey's students.

What question is the task group aiming to answer?

In light of an increasing focus on school governance arrangements by Ofsted and the Department for Education, what role does the Local Authority and its partners have to play in the nomination of Local Authority governors and in supporting effective governance in all Surrey schools?

Aim

The Task Group aims to identify areas of best practice in school governance across Surrey, and gain an understanding of how the Local Authority can contribute towards good governance for Surrey schools.

Scope (within / out of)

Within Scope:
The nomination and role of Local Authority Governors.
How legislation supports the changing role of governors and models of best practice.
The services Surrey County Council and stakeholders provide to support school governance.
The role of the governing body in improving school performance.
The role of the governing body as 'critical friend', in particular in relation to accountability and risk management.
How do school governance arrangements work in relation to multi-academy trusts?
How do school governing bodies ensure that they have the relevant breadth of skills and expertise?

Out of Scope:
The performance of individual school governing bodies.

9

Outcomes for Surrey / Benefits

The School Governance Task Group will help support the following Directorate priorities:

Children, Schools & Families

"Potential: Support all schools to raise educational attainment"

Chief Executive's Office

"ensure Select Committees contribute to the delivery of value for money and the achievement of better outcomes for residents through scrutiny and policy development."

Proposed work plan

The plan has four phases. It is anticipated that while Phase 1 and Phase 2 will concentrate on scrutiny, the emphasis of Phase 3 and Phase 4 will be on policy development.

Timescale	Task	Responsible
July 2014	Initial meeting to scope Task Group inquiry	Scrutiny Officer
September 2014	Task Group scoping document considered by Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee for approval	Scrutiny Officer/ Chairman
September – October 2014	Phase 1 witnesses: Understanding the Local Authority's role in appointing (nominating once schools have reconstituted) and supporting school governors - Cabinet Member, Assistant Director for Schools & Learning, Surrey County Council, and Governance Consultancy Manager, Babcock 4S	Task Group
September – October 2014	Phase 2 witnesses: Understanding how governance arrangements work within schools to set strategic direction, monitor schools' progress and ensure accountability - Phase Council representatives, and other school governing body representatives.	Task Group
November 2014	Interim Report to Children & Education Select Committee	Scrutiny Officer
November 2014	Task Group review and agree next steps	Task Group
November – December 2014	Phase 3 witnesses	Task Group
November – December 2014	Phase 4 witnesses	Task Group

3

January 2015	Final report to Children & Education Select Committee	Scrutiny Officer

Witnesses

Assistant Director for Schools & Learning
Cabinet Member for Schools & Learning
Primary/Secondary/Special School Phase Council representatives
Governance Consultancy Manager, Babcock 4S
Diocesan Boards of Education
A sample of maintained school governing bodies
A sample of Multi-Academy Trusts: Bourne Education Trust, Good Shepherd Trust, Howard Partnership Trust
Department for Education
National Governors Association
SGOSS - Governors for Schools (a school governor recruitment charity set up with support from the DfE)
Ofsted
Professor of Educational Leadership and Management, University of Bath

Useful Documents

Babcock 4S. "School-Based Welcome Pack for New Governors." Babcock 4S. http://www.babcock-education.co.uk/4S/cms/do_download.asp?did=8847 (accessed July 2014).
Department for Education. "Accountability and governance: Research Priorities and Questions." April 2014.
Department for Education. "The constitution of governing bodies of maintained schools." May 2014.
Department for Education. "Governors' handbook: For governors in maintained schools, academies and free schools." May 2014.

Potential barriers to success (Risks / Dependencies)

Schools will already be in the process of reconstituting their governing bodies, so it will be necessary to ensure that any recommendations remain timely and relevant. An interim report could set out some early findings and make recommendations to help mitigate this risk.

Any discussion of the relative merits of different governance arrangements should be mindful of school autonomy and legislative regulations.

This work is dependent on the engagement of schools and other key partners.

Equalities implications

No discernible impacts have been identified; however, the Task Group will take into consideration equalities implications that may arise as a result of its recommendations.

9

4

Task Group Members	Denis Fuller, Dr Zully Grant-Duff (Chairman), Colin Kemp, Mary Lewis, Chris Townsend
Co-opted Members	Ann Heather Nash (Surrey Governors' Association)
Spokesman for the Group	Dr Zully Grant-Duff (Chairman)
Scrutiny Officer/s	Andrew Spragg

9

5

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