

## ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
2.	<b>Date:</b>	<b>21<sup>st</sup> November 2012</b>
3.	<b>Title:</b>	<b>Response to Scrutiny Review: The Role of School Governors</b>
4.	<b>Programme Area:</b>	Children & Young People's Services

### 5. Summary:

The Improving Lives Select Commission undertook a review, between September 2011 and April 2012, into the role of the local authority in supporting governing bodies to undertake their leadership and challenge role in schools and achieve the best outcomes for pupils. The outcomes of the review were published in July 2012 and submitted to Cabinet on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2012.

The Review identified 16 recommendations covering the following areas:

- School Governor's Taskforce
- Recruitment
- Local Authority governors
- Induction and Training
- Role of the Clerk of governing Bodies
- Services provided by the Council

The School Effectiveness Service welcomes the interest of the Improving Lives Select Commission into the roles and responsibilities of governing bodies and recognises the positive impact that effective governing bodies can have upon school improvement.

In compiling a response to the 16 recommendations within the Review, the Governor Development Service considered it crucial to obtain the views of school governors into the validity and feasibility of the recommendations. A copy of the Scrutiny Review was forwarded to all Chairs and Vice Chairs of governing bodies in September 2012 and, in addition, a substantial part of the agenda of the Chairs and Vice Chairs Forum held on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2012 was given to consideration of the Review document and in particular the recommendations contained within. The views expressed by those attending this meeting, along with the views of the Governor Development Service are reflected in this response, which can be found as an Appendix to this report.

### 6. Recommendations:

- **To agree the responses provided in relation to the Recommendations of the Scrutiny Review**

## **7. Proposals and Details:**

Please refer to the Appendix to this report

## **8. Finance:**

There are no direct financial implications for the Council arising out of this review as much of the work associated with implementing the Recommendations can be incorporated into the work plan of the Principal Officer: Governor Development, however as work from the recommendations develop, this could have financial implications for school budgets, either directly i.e. Recommendation 14, or indirectly via developments to the services offered to governing bodies via the Leadership Levy (any developments which have funding implications would have to met from schools' budgets because there is no budget allocated by the Council to support the work of the Governor Development Service with governing bodies).

## **9. Risks and Uncertainties:**

The Review re-iterated the important role school governors have in challenging poor performance and improving outcomes. Underperformance is often prevalent in more deprived communities and to tackle this there is an increasing need to recruit governors with a range of skills and experiences that can support improvements in schools.

Failures in effective governance can have a negative impact on Ofsted outcomes for schools, potentially leading to an increase in schools judged inadequate by Ofsted. In turn, this could lead to a rise in the number of schools being forced by the Government to become sponsored academies, independent of the local authority, thereby impacting negatively on the positive influence a local authority can have in raising standards of attainment.

## **10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications:**

Transforming Rotherham Learning is a key strand of the Children and Young People Services Plan, and effective governance can contribute significantly to the achievement of this priority.

## **11. Background Papers and Consultation:**

Scrutiny Review: Role of School Governors  
Chairs and Vice Chairs Forum: 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2012

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## Cabinet's Response to Scrutiny Review: Role of School Governors

<b><u>Recommendation</u></b>	<b><u>Cabinet Decision</u></b> <i>(Accepted/ Rejected/ Deferred)</i>	<b><u>Cabinet Response</u></b> <i>(detailing proposed action if accepted, rationale for rejection, and why and when issue will be reconsidered if deferred)</i>	<b><u>Officer Responsible</u></b>	<b><u>Action by (Date)</u></b>
<b>School Governor's Taskforce Recommendation 1</b>  That a Taskforce comprising of representatives of governing bodies already accredited with developing good practice is established. Their role and responsibilities should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create local Good Practice Guidelines, including a checklist of the elements that comprise an effective governing body</li> <li>- Benchmark and cascade good practice, knowledge/skills to others and train new governors</li> <li>- Provide peer support and high challenge through the Learning Communities</li> <li>- Working with the School Improvement Partnership Board/Teaching School Alliance to look at barriers to improvement e.g. removing ineffective governors</li> <li>- Encourage governing bodies from underperforming schools to collaborate with their peers from high performing schools;</li> </ul>	<b>Accepted</b>	This recommendation was generally welcomed by Chairs and Vice Chairs as a positive development and some expressions of interest in becoming involved in such a Taskforce were made at the meeting.	Principal Officer: Governor Development	Jan/Feb 2013

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Specifically support governing bodies to tackle safeguarding issues in schools.</li> <li>- Commission support and development activities through Rotherham School Improvement Partnership (RoSIP)</li> <li>- Identify and seek funding for Governor support and development through National Leadership Fund</li> </ul>				
<b>Recruitment Recommendation 2</b> A generic person specification is developed by the LA Governor Development Service in consultation with Governing Bodies. As a minimum, prospective governors must display confidence to ask questions and query outcomes.	<b>Accepted</b>	This recommendation was generally welcomed by governors, though comment was made that often effective governors are developed over time and do not come "ready-made". A formal process/expectation might be off-putting to some prospective governors, and ultimately some governing bodies might miss out on potentially effective individuals.	Principal Officer: Governor Development	Jan 2013
<b>Recommendation 3</b> Each school be encouraged to develop a more specific role description, detailing the expectations attached to any specific responsibilities (e.g SEN, Safeguarding, improving outcomes for Looked After Children or finance).	<b>Accepted</b>	Governing bodies are currently reviewing (Autumn Term 2012) which nominated governor positions they have in place. Governor Development has already developed a range of specific role descriptions, which are currently undergoing review. These will be shared with clerks to governing bodies at their Spring Term 2013 briefing sessions and governing bodies will be advised to ensure that every nominated governor has an agreed role description in place. These will also feature on the Governor Development Service website (see Recommendation 16).	Principal Officer: Governor Development	Dec 2012

<b>Recommendation 4</b> Consideration be given to encourage Local Authority officers to become Governors, with appropriate time off for attendance for meetings during the school day	<b>Accepted</b>	Discussions have already been held with Paul Fitzpatrick: Human Resources to investigate how this recommendation can be achieved in the most effective and efficient way	Principal Officer: Governor Development	Work already commenced
<b>Recommendation 5</b> Consideration should be given (by both schools and the LA) to the payment of expenses arising from undertaking the role, such as child care or travel	<b>Accepted in part</b>	The Local Authority cannot pay expenses to school governors. The Regulations covering expenses for school governors (The Education (Governors' Allowances) Regulations 2003) specify that, for schools with delegated budgets, only the governing body of a school can establish a scheme for recompensing governors' legitimate expenses. The costs of any scheme established by the governing body must be met from the school's delegated budget, and historically many governing bodies have been reluctant to take money out of the school's budget to cover such expenses. Governor Development has previously published guidance and a model Governors' Expenses policy. This guidance and model policy will be re-published	Principal Officer: Governor Development	Jan 2013
<b>Local Authority Governors Recommendation 6</b> That the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families clarifies what expectations the Local Authority has of its appointees, including attendance at learning and development events	<b>Accepted</b>	The current procedure for recruiting Local Authority governors was last reviewed in July 2011, which incorporated prospective LA governors completing a revised Registration of Interest form. This form provides an opportunity for prospective governors to explain why they want to become a school governor as well as indicating the range of skills and experiences they could bring to the role. The form also clearly indicates that prospective LA governors are expected to make a commitment to raising standards of attainment and pupil achievement and to undertake induction and other ongoing training as appropriate. Prospective LA governors also have to agree to abide by a revised Code of Conduct for Local Authority governors. As a consequence of this review document, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families' Services has asked that the appointment process for LA governors be reviewed again.	Principal Officer: Governor Development	Jan 2013

<b>Recommendation 7</b> That prior to recruitment, LA appointed Governors complete an expression of interest form and undergo a recruitment process that clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of LA Governors.	<b>Accepted</b>	See above	Principal Officer: Governor Development	Jan 2013
<b>Induction and Training Recommendation 8</b> That the induction programme, co-ordinated and delivered by the Governor Development Service, should include council and school processes that impact on governing body and information on support services. Each new or returning governor should be strongly encouraged to attend induction.	<b>Accepted</b>	The Induction for New Governors programme has been revised to incorporate this recommendation. All newly-appointed governors are provided with an Induction Pack upon appointment which emphasises the importance of undertaking the Induction training programme.	Principal Officer: Governor Development	Oct 2012
<b>Recommendation 9</b> A programme for Continued Professional Development (CPD) be developed, including the greater use of e-learning and resources from the National College. This programme should include learning resources to support any specific roles or responsibilities (eg performance management, HR, chairing skills)	<b>Accepted</b>	There was unanimous agreement that appropriate and flexible training and development opportunities should be available for individual governors, governing bodies and within and across Learning Communities. The Governor Development Service is currently developing a Governance Leadership Development programme offering progressive CPD opportunities for all governors and clerks. This will be offered as part of the Leadership Levy offered to schools by the School Effectiveness Service. This programme will offer support and guidance from recruiting new governors through to supporting chairs of governors and will consist of a blended approach to learning and development, incorporating face-to-face, distance learning and online development opportunities.	Principal Officer: Governor Development	Jan 2013

<b>Recommendation 10</b> Head Teachers to receive training or guidance in working with Governing Bodies	<b>Accepted</b>	The GDS has historically provided guidance each term to head teachers on the content of their written termly report to the governing body. This guidance is being completely revised to reflect the increased expectations on governing bodies to fulfil a largely strategic role and to hold the head teacher and senior leadership team to account for the quality of education provided at the school. Further development work in this area is being planned and will continue until an annual cycle of guidance (Autumn, Spring and Summer terms) has been completed.	Principal Officer: Governor Development	Sept 2012- April 2013
<b>Recommendation 11</b> Training in Self Evaluation techniques should be undertaken by all Governing Bodies with a view to undertaking this exercise every two years in line with National Governors Association criteria (or other resources)	<b>Accepted</b>	There are a multitude of governing body self evaluation tools available to support governing body development and effectiveness. Model governing body agendas provided by the Governor Development Service currently recommend that governing bodies consider self evaluating on an annual basis and provide a range of models that governing bodies may wish to choose from. All of these will shortly be available via the website (Recommendation 16)	Principal Officer: Governor Development	April 2013
<b>Recommendation 12</b> A Personal Development Review (PDR) to be undertaken (by appropriate staff/governor in school or through peer arrangements) ideally every two years with each Governor to ensure training and skills are kept up to date	<b>Rejected</b>	This recommendation provided the highest number of responses from chairs and vice chairs. Some thought that this was a good idea that should be promoted BUT should and could not be made mandatory, however the majority opinion was this recommendation would be very difficult to implement effectively, was impractical and could put off high quality but busy individuals from becoming or continuing as school governors. If Recommendation 11 was implemented effectively, it would make this recommendation superfluous because individual and group training needs would be identified and plans developed and implemented to meet those needs.	Principal Officer: Governor Development	

<b>Recommendation 13</b> <p>Greater use should be made of online training by all school governors through the NGA and Modern Governor. Assessment and targets for online training should be discussed and agreed through the PDR process</p>	<b>Accepted in part</b>	<p>Online training, via Modern Governor, has been available to governors in Rotherham for over twelve months as part of the Leadership Levy. This is being utilised by some governors and governing bodies though its use is not yet fully embedded by many governors and governing bodies. The Governor Development Service aims to raise the profile of online training as part of the Governance Leadership Development programme mentioned in Recommendation 9. Targets for online training as part of the PDR process is rejected in accordance with Recommendation 12 above</p>	Principal Officer: Governor Development	Jan 2013
<b>Role of the Clerk of Governing Bodies</b> <b>Recommendation 14</b> <p>The Review recommends that further work is undertaken by the Governor Development Service, with the School's Forum, to look at options to provide enhanced support to clerks. The review group suggest that this role could be undertaken across a cluster of schools by one 'adviser', whilst each body retains its clerk to undertake administrative tasks.</p>	<b>Accepted in part</b>	<p>Governors welcomed a focus on developing and enhancing support for clerks, and the PO:GD will incorporate support and development opportunities for clerks within the Governance Leadership Development programme (Recommendation 9). Comment was made that a Learning Community clerk was in principle a good idea, in practice this would be difficult to implement especially in the current financial climate.</p>	Principal Officer: Governor Development	Jan 2013
<b>Services provided by the Council</b> <b>Recommendation 15</b> <p>The review supports the continuation and strengthening of the Governor Development Service within the current learning communities and other partnership arrangements.</p>	<b>Accepted</b>	<p>Many governors welcomed this recommendation as they commented that the support of the Governor Development Service was valued.</p>	Principal Officer: Governor Development	



<b>Recommendation 16</b> That the web pages hosted on the Council's own and associated websites (eg Rotherham Connected Learning) are updated to ensure that relevant resources (such as role descriptions, guidance and links to other sites) are available online	<b>Accepted</b>	Work is ongoing to develop the Governor Development website which will be enhanced by the developments connected with this review	Principal Officer: Governor Development	Ongoing – April 2013
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