

Cheshire West and Chester Association of Governing Bodies



April 2017

Governors' Forum meeting 2nd March 2017

We held a very successful governors' forum meeting on the 2nd March on the issue of finance. Thank you very much to everybody who attended, we would love to see as many governors at all our meetings. Initial conversations at the meeting were around the potential effects of the new National Funding Formula and how it will affect negatively all but a handful of CWAC schools. The second part of the discussion was around the need for all schools to find cost savings to counter flat income whilst still having inflation pressures.

We have subsequently had very good feedback from the meeting, even if much of it was around concern about just how bad things might become financially.

The National Funding Formula consultation

As an Association, we have responded to the consultation using the CWAC response as our basis. We thank all the governors and schools who responded to the consultation themselves. We can now only wait and see whether all our concerns about the proposed funding formula are taken notice of. We are not expecting a final outcome to the consultation responses until late in the summer term.

Governors' Forum meeting 28th June 2017

The next Governors' Forum meeting will be held on the 28th June at 1900 at Ellesmere Port Catholic High School. Full details of the agenda will be in the May newsletter but please note the time and date in your diary so that we can have another good turn out to the meeting. The AGM of the Association will also be held at this meeting.

Networking event

We are always aware of the fact that governors do not find it very easy to meet other governors outside of their own governing body. All the available information says that governing boards can gain significantly by swapping ideas with other governors.

We are therefore looking to host such a networking event. This will be at a more local level than the governors' forum meetings, as we accept that getting too Borough-wide meetings is a difficulty for many governors.

We would welcome any thoughts from members as to how such an event could be held ensuring a good attendance.

NGA skills audit

In January 2017, the DfE released a new Competency Framework for Governance, structured around the DfE's newly identified "six features of Effective Governance". The governance handbook 2017 states that "Boards should carry out regular audits of the skills they possess in the light of the skills and competences they need, taking account of the department's Competency Framework for Governance".

The Competency Framework for Governance identifies 200+ competencies and no governor is expected to have all these attributes. National Governors Association has therefore developed

Contacts

| | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|
| CHAIR | Janet Myers | t 01244 319368 | e janet_myers@cantab.net |
| VICE CHAIR | Harry Ziman | t 01829 751214 | e hziman@clara.co.uk |
| SECRETARY | Duncan Haworth | t 0151 353 8448 | e phaworth@whieldon-blythe.co.uk |
| TREASURER | John Freeman | t 01606 852872 | e jjcfreeman@talktalk.net |

a new version of their longstanding skills audit to fit with the new national guidance. There are two versions, one for MATs and one for other stand-alone schools. We suggest that it would be best practice to consider carrying out a skills audit in your governing board during the summer term. This can identify areas of weakness in skills across the governing board and therefore lead to either governing board training or recruitment of governors with identified skills. The skills audit can be found here.

<http://www.nga.org.uk/Guidance/Workings-Of-The-Governing-Body/Governance-Tools/Skills-Audit.aspx>

Schools Financial Values Standard (SFVS) and three year budgets

All schools who are maintained schools should have submitted their SVFS forms to the LA by the end of March. This task should have been carried out by the governing board to assure themselves that the school has rigorous financial systems in place or if not be indicating how they will over the next 12 months do something about it.

Part of the SFVS review is about making sure that the school governing board has good knowledge of future finances in their school. That, to us, is about being able to see the likely situation in the next three budget years. For most schools that will not be a very rosy picture, especially given the uncertainty around the New National Funding Formula. What is important is that school governing boards are starting to consider how they will be able to set a balanced budget in year 2 and 3 of their three year projections. That may mean for some taking immediate action or more likely mean that governing boards should be considering what actions might have to be taken over the next 9 to 12 months, when the outcome of the new National Funding Formula is known.

Safeguarding

Every governing board should have a governor who is the named safeguarding governor and has an overview of all safeguarding of pupils in the school. That overview starts with the Single Central Record (SCR). Can your governing board be sure that the SCR is up to date?. Does it have all staff on record and has the school carried out each aspect of safer-recruitment?

So for instance is there both a barred list check and a prohibition list check, signed and dated for each staff member along with an EEA Restrictions Check? If not then you may well have a serious issue when Ofsted come calling.

Executive members for the Association

We recognise as an Executive that many of us have been on the Executive for a considerable period and that the time is now right for new people to join the Executive. We have the ability to co-opt 4 governors onto the Executive. What we are looking for are governors who will help to organise some of the events we run and take an active part in the discussions that we hold with the LA and other appropriate organisations. If you feel able to help please contact any of the CWACAGB officers to find out more details.

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Or contact us at CWACAGB@gmail.com