



DAG Annual Assembly 2004

Record of the meeting held in the Main Council Chamber, County Hall, Exeter on Sat. March 24th 2004

The Chairman, **Douglas Lomax**, gave a warm welcome to all those present, prepared to give their free time to governance and to DAG. He paid tribute to the work of his colleagues on the Executive, at Devon Governor Services and in the LEA and to all governors during the past twelve months of sustained governor activity. He made particular reference to the work of his predecessor, Martin Weiler, and to the ' indefatigable ' energy of the County Secretary, Ivan Godfrey.

Julia Barker proposed that the **Minutes of the 2003 AGM** be approved. This was seconded by Faith Butler and agreed unanimously. The **County Secretary** then presented his summary of what he perceived to be the main activities of DAG over the past year (**copy circulated separately**)

Ian Rogers, DAG Treasurer, presented the **verified accounts for the Year ending December 31st 2003**. Copies were circulated and available for all present. DAG finances were supported by all schools who subscribed to Devon Governor Services, at the rate of £1 - 25 per member of each Governing body. In addition the LEA gave a grant to DAG in acknowledgement of the role it played in supporting education within Devon. The accounts revealed a healthy balance that reflected developing plans for the large amount of DAG work currently being undertaken and planned for the future. New costs included the appointment of an Assistant Secretary, the joint DAG/DGS Conference and the planned DAG Project on Inclusion. Concerns about the cost of membership of NGC had diminished as a result of the range and level of activity of the NGC over the past year. He felt, however, that it was important for DAG to maintain a healthy balance in order both to maintain and expand its current role and to ensure against possible future changes to funding sources. There were no questions. Roger Adcock moved and Hilary Anderson seconded a proposal that the Accounts be adopted and this was passed unanimously. The Chairman thanked Ian for his efficient and thorough work throughout the past year. It was further agreed unanimously to **reappoint Mr. Michael Steed as Verifier for the accounts** for the coming year. Thanks were recorded to Mr. Steed for his continued work and willingness to support DAG.

Delegates had a list of proposed names for **Election to the New Executive Committee** representing a spread of geographical, educational and nomination backgrounds. The Chairman proposed that the assembly endorse the list in its entirety. This was agreed unanimously. (List available separately)

The Chairman invited Roger Adcock, President of DAG, to make a **presentation to Simon Goodenough** who was shortly to finish his work as a governor. Roger recalled that Simon had helped establish DAG, been its first Chair and gone on to play a pivotal role in the establishment of NGC, becoming its first Chair and, later, its full-time administrator. He had been the instigator of DAG's sponsorship of the creation of DAISI, had been a key player in support for the development of Governorline and, more recently, provided the vision for the DAG Project on Inclusion. He was now working for Upstream, an organization seeking to create healthy, active lifestyles for the elderly. Above all Roger wished to record our thanks to Simon for his outstanding contribution to individual schools, to DAG and to the whole cause of governance. To prolonged applause he presented Simon with a set of Bohemian drinking glasses from Prague – a memento of a recent visit to the city.

In response Simon thanked delegates and DAG warmly for their kindness and a gift that would evoke particular memories of an enjoyable visit. He recounted the numerous changes of personnel within DAG and the LEA since he had started and thanked in particular his two mentors from the early days, Roger Adcock and Peter Page. He concluded by stressing that, throughout his time with DAG, he had sought to encourage enthusiasm amongst governors and the sense that they were people who could ' make a difference ' to the schools they represented.

There followed a break for tea / coffee. After the break the Chairman welcomed **Dr. Phil Norrey** and **James Hennessy** as **Guest Speakers** for their presentation on ' **Creativity – Revitalising the Education Agenda** '

(see separate report). At the end of the presentation and subsequent question and answer session the Chair thanked both presenters most warmly for their contributions and responses to a challenging and positive session. Delegates showed their appreciation by lengthy applause.

In the final **Open Forum** session the following issues were raised (comments from DAG officers and delegates as well as Phil Norrey in italics : thanks to Judy Burgess for the notes kept)

- Primary School Places/Declining Roles/Federation of schools. *A serious issue being addressed by the LEA.*
 - How can spare places be used in a creative way? *Watch out for a letter to schools asking for a response. DCC is not considering the ' whole scale shutting of schools ' . Small rural schools are still the heart of communities - using spare places may provide a community asset. There is the issue of sustaining the balance of the teaching within small schools declining in role. Three governors from small schools represent governor views on a Working Party looking at related issues. A further group of representative governors of small schools to feed into this debate could be set up.*
 - Are there any examples of use of schools for after school clubs that has not been sustainable because of falling roles? *None were offered.*
- Funding
 - A school had written questioning the availability of financial support as all its main scale teachers were at the top of the scale. *It was pointed out that 90% of Devon teachers are at the top of the scale!!*
 - Upper Pay Spine 3 and above - how can schools afford it? *A mess!! The original intention was that a small proportion of teachers would achieve UPS3. The government is now proposing to support the funding of up to 75% of staff. However, the government has still not come up with helpful criteria. Who develops the criteria? Not the LEA!! Criteria have now been developed for UPS3 but they are similar to UPS2. Criteria should be in place before the process begins - at the end of the day the headteacher (not the governors) decides which staff move on to UPS3. UPS 4 and 5? These categories have been abandoned and a category of ' Excellent Teacher ' has been created with ' strict criteria ' (!!).*
 - Small school budget issues and the problem of balancing the budget in very small schools. *It was suggested that comments on these concerns be passed to the Schools' Forum.*
 - Concerns were raised about the extra (and varying) cost to schools of courses for KS4 students at FE colleges. *The impact of these programmes appears to be beneficial. Feedback suggests that these opportunities are successful. Outcomes data will be available at the end of this year. The sustaining of finance for this has been at risk. This good idea needs funding. DCC is making representation to DfES about this.*
- Legal support / cover for governors. If there is an issue between a school and the LEA, how can DGS be seen to be objective in their support and advice? *There can be difficulties of interest and there can be an outlet created for independent legal advice but this depends on the individual case. Governors were advised to use Governorline. There have also been a very few individual cases of rough rides for governors going to the GTC to justify their actions in schools. This is a national issue that will be raised with NGC and NAGM.*
- Workforce remodelling *This has been and remains another area causing anxiety. However, much work has been done within the LEA and Pat Collarbone has written to Phil Norrey to congratulate Devon on its approach. There is a hint of more money (Thank you, Mr. Brown!)*
- Protocol for opening school buildings - a school had written, protesting at interference in choice of guest speaker. *It was pointed out that there is a protocol to be followed. Why should there be such a protocol? The County Council has usually paid for the school build! It was also felt that Councillors are quite happy to share the opening role with other guests. A letter has been circulated to schools as a reminder of current practice.*

There being no further business the meeting closed at 1.05 p.m.

Ivan Godfrey 23/03/04