

### ***DAG DISCUSSION PAPER TO LLC CHAIRS 9 MARCH 2010***

Good afternoon, on behalf of Don Paterson, Chair of DAG, Pam Barnard, DAG Chair Designate, I would like to thank you for the opportunity for DAG to present to you an initiative, namely Governors' formal and equal involvement in and responsibility for, the 31 LLCs in Devon, with a start date of Sep 1<sup>st</sup> 2010.

Let me say from the outset we recognise the importance and value of the LLCs in offering mutual support through individual and corporate hard times. We also recognise that these meetings are an excellent opportunity to share ideas but also to vent frustrations and even resentment privately, amongst professional colleagues. Nothing we are proposing will interfere with those important aspects.

In bringing this initiative to you I wish to assure you that we have established our position thoughtfully after a considerable length of time and after much discussion and consultation. I also wish to assure you that this is not a take over of the LLCs by Governors. Our sole aim is to make LLCs stronger and more effective to ensure that the delivery of the LLCs enhances, further, the quality of education our children receive. We also think that a valuable resource, the knowledge, skills and experience of many hundreds of Governors is not being used. These skills could and should be used to great effect as LLCs become increasingly more responsible for commissioning and resource management, are encouraged to invest to save with ever tighter budgets and to contribute more and more to each community. Nonetheless, we have identified that with some, but not many, noble and commendable exceptions, Governors are insufficiently integrated into, engaged with, or even knowledgeable about, the work undertaken by the LLCs. Governors rarely attend meetings; until recently have only seen the minutes of any meetings infrequently; do not, in the main, know how LLCs priorities have been identified to inform action plans and finally what has been done with the £2,781,900 that was allocated to the LLCs in 2009. Some of the decisions / actions flowing from meetings could fall on Governors to implement, and that is not right, if they have had no sight of or involvement in the process.

Following the various consultations and meetings we are confident that we have the formal strong support of:

- DAG Board – naturally!!!
- A large number of Governors
- The LA, and most importantly
- The leaders of the 3 professional associations DASH / DAPH and SHAD.

In addition, it is clear from my informal chats to various Chairs of LLCs at the Area Review Meetings and my personal experience of attending the CYPS Collaboration Conference in November 2009 and other events, that there is considerable support for our idea.

I hope by the end of this presentation that I will have secured your agreement too and we can then decide the process to get everything in place by the start of the next Academic Year.

LLCs have moved far beyond the reason for their original establishment, namely to assist youngsters to transition from Primary to Secondary School. We understand that Governor involvement was not specifically required for that process, and probably accounts for lack of Governor involvement thereafter in LLC business.

However phase transition is now a well-managed process and thus no longer the prime aim of any LLC. There are other issues however involving LLCs, which in our view clearly need Governor involvement, noting.

- The long-standing competitive elements of education have shifted to ones of collaboration and cooperation – and schools are encouraged / required to look over their walls, into and beyond their local community
- That LLCs have ever increasing responsibilities, which are likely to increase further, as witnessed by the responsibilities devolved currently through the ESS provision and agenda
- The LA's former parental role is being replaced by a Commissioning duty and this will be discharged through the LLCs
- There will be strong pressure to share resources and invest to save – immediately and in the longer term
- Whatever shade of Government is elected in May, their focus on, and demands to raise, standards will remain the highest priority. Individual schools and GBs may find this difficult to maintain without LLCs involvement
- Governor representation will ensure every school will attend LLC meetings. We have been led to understand that some HTs remain disengaged from their LLCs. If this is so, GBs can help ensure individual schools will be represented and therefore contribute some value for the money EVERY school gets through their LLC
- Strategic planning will be vital to the long-term success and value of the LLC. Governors would bring an additional strategic value to the work of the LLCs, since strategic planning is a statutory Governor responsibility, and one many are used to exercising
- In addition Governors are used to an important monitoring and evaluation responsibility, and bring very useful oversight skills.
- Governors bring a wealth of individual specialist knowledge. They come from a wide range of backgrounds and professions. We have Governors who are captains of industry; senior managers in a number of businesses and

occupations; who are former educationalists; who are Lawyers, entrepreneurs and who knows what. We may have a number of skills HTs are not blessed with. We know many of you will think strategically, but the nature of your profession tends to be of a tactical nature, and I say again strategic planning is a statutory Governor responsibility.

There is also a legal and statutory element of authority and actions, which cannot be ignored, I am afraid. DAG accepts fully that there neither has been, nor is there, a deliberate policy of exclusion of Governors from the LLC, our absence has just evolved but LLCs are now entering a future arena where we need to ensure that all decisions are correctly taken. There are really only two sources of such authority I have just mentioned. One is that which derives from legislation and government policy. This empowers the LA and the individual HT to make sure that they comply. The other is that which derives from the GB. The HT has no authority without it coming from one of those sources and certainly no grouping of HTs is authorised to take decisions affecting school budgets and staffing and indeed policy without governors' agreement.

Let us look 3 years hence and consider the role of LLCs at that point. By then considerable development will have taken place and no doubt many will be employing directly some of their own staff and taking policy decisions about SEN provision for example that will require the involvement of governors to properly authorise such arrangements. There will no doubt be the decisions about rationalising educational provision following the area reviews...the LA as the major player in this will want to have as much local agreement and decision making as possible to avoid the political fallout and this will need the involvement of GBs. It may be that LLCs develop as mini LAs with the real LA commissioning and monitoring. The consideration of such issues will necessitate the involvement of governors in their role of strategic oversight and with responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of actions with robust challenge. If we set up groups of governors with the LLC responsibility these will need to derive their authority from their individual GBs as governors do not carry authorisation automatically but can only act in line with the decisions of their GB. We believe that we can grow together in better understanding this process, if we start soon.

What are we commending?

We realise that with some LLCs having 18 members, that it would be impractical to have equal representation on such committees because 36 people on a Committee is simply not workable.

We would not wish to be too prescriptive about how any group is run but our preference is for each LLC to appoint a Strategic Planning Group, membership numbers to be determined by the individual LLC, with equal numbers of HT and

Governors, but from different schools, appointed to operate under agreed, standard, TORs, including a formal oversight of the LLC budget and planned spend.

Agendas would also be agreed with standing items but also appropriate to the needs of the LLC.

It is envisaged that the HT and Governors would meet separately in the morning, enjoy lunch together, with the afternoon taken up by a meeting of the Joint Strategic Group

We would also hope that there could be a shared vision across LLCs that all Devon schools will be assessed at least Good, within 4 years or something like that. This would help GBs and HTs seek help in their LLC when necessary and encourage outstanding schools to share their skills etc for the benefit of all.

It is appreciated this is a major change, but we hope an improvement to the work of the LLC, and with assurances, once again, of the virtuous motives we have in proposing deeper and equal contribution to and involvement of and by Governors in LLCs, hope that you will feel able to support our proposal.

### ***Anticipated way ahead***

We would ask you to seek feedback from your LLC Committee and pass on comments for further consideration to be with DAG by end of April.

If agreed we would then inform GBs of any outcome and take the next step – hopefully one which will look at the standard TORs and Agenda etc. Complete by end of June.

First Strategic Group Meeting as determined by the dates of the first LLC Meeting scheduled for AY 10 / 11