

# Devon Association of Governors

**Minutes of the Executive Committee held on Thursday 10th March 2005, 5.30pm at the West of England School, Exeter.**

**Present:** Leon Winston (Chair), Roger Adcock, Laurie Burbridge, Faith Butler, Jenny Currie, John Gale, Ivan Godfrey, David Gravell, Helen Morrison, Don Paterson, Ian Rogers, Rob Shilvock, Claire Tod, Martin Weiler.

**Apologies:** Mike Billington, Judy Burgess, Debbie Clapshaw, Margaret Hosford, Margaret Ladbury, Simon Howes, Jane Lucas, Iris Watson.

## **05.07 Discussion and Debate:**

05.07.01 The DAG Executive has been invited to give views on the qualities required for Judy Burgess' successor as Head of Devon Governor Services. The following were identified as important:

- The role is a pivotal one within the strategic leadership of the LEA and position / salary should reflect this
- Candidates for the post should:
  - have good people management skills - not only for DGS staff but the thousands of governor 'volunteers' that make up governing bodies in Devon
  - have experience in governance – i.e. must be or have been a governor
  - be a fundraiser and need to be aware of funding / selling opportunities to keep DGS 'alive'
  - be able to identify strengths of the current DGS team and build on these ( with this in mind it might be worth considering a psychometric test [ Belben ] of the current team to see which skills may be lacking )
  - be able to delegate when appropriate
  - have good presentation / communication skills with an ability to get across information to many different people
  - be a good listener
  - bring experience from other local authority areas if possible
  - have an understanding of the unique cultural and physical set up of schools in Devon.
- It is important for DAG to have a representative on the interviewing panel

05.07.02 Local Learning Communities The Executive considered what practical steps could be taken to encourage governors to participate in LLCs and came up with the following suggestions:

- The title Local Learning *Communities* leans towards a wider involvement for other parties such as governors.
- Involvement in LLCs would help governors and heads look at issues together.
- Particular issues should be focussed on - not just general discussion or 'meetings for meetings sake'.
- Training & Structure - when individuals move on there is a danger of governor involvement being lost. Therefore a structure with support from the LEA needs to be developed.
- Possible long term aim - 'a parliament of governor representatives' who could feed into LLCs and the DAG Executive
- Conclusion: Resources, training and structure in collaboration with the LEA could create a sustainable and fruitful working partnership.

05.07.03 The Executive discussed a paper produced by NGC regarding the possible merger of NGC / NASG. They identified the current strengths of NGC as:

- Professional structure of chief executive and policy officer works well.
- Good relationship with groups of governors.

And the current strengths of NASG as:

- Good publications & resources.
- Good relationship with individual governors.

They saw the pros of merger as:

- One united voice will have greater influence and can 'watch out for governors in a period of change'.

- Shared resources are more cost effective.
- There is already common ground - both organisations represent governors.
- Political and publication arms joined together.

But saw one possible con of merger:

- One voice not as strong as two.

The overwhelming conclusion was that 'It makes sense to merge'. A suggested name for the new organisation was 'National Council of School Governors'

**05.08. Minutes of the meeting held on 20th January 2005** were agreed as a true record. Proposed by Rob Shilcock, seconded by David Gravell.

**05.09. Matters arising from the minutes not dealt with later in agenda:**

- Extended Schools. Debbie Pritchard is waiting for written guidance from DfES and will use this to write a Devon version.
- DAG website. New search engine has been added. DGS webforum is up and running.
- DAISI. Ivan will invite Liz Hill, Director of DAISI to an executive meeting. They are still looking for a new Chair, who needs to be nominated by DAG but does not have to be a governor. There will be four DAG reps on the DAISI board, David Gravell, Leon Winston, Margaret Hosford and the new Chair.
- DAG leaflet. Jenny circulated updated version, and took note of any changes. It was agreed to add the new Executive after the Annual Assembly and arrange to have one put into the Autumn Devon Governor and New Governor's Packs. Ivan will liaise with Judy about this.
- Annual Assembly. Ivan has spoken to Deborah Magill about her presentation and she wishes to give a very specific focus to governor needs and opportunities for action. Laurie Burbridge offered to make badges - Ivan will send him a list of names. Ivan & Jenny to prepare packs, Jenny to give out packs & badges on the day. Executive to encourage members of their governing body to attend.
- Purchase of 'Matters Arising'. Ivan to find out how many copies would need to be purchased to give to long serving governors.
- Ways of acknowledging Judy Burgess' retirement were discussed.

**05.10 Reports Back.**

- Meeting with Devon Governors Services: It was agreed to hold a single Executive meeting in the summer - Thursday 9th June.
- Single Education Plan Working Group - Margaret Hosford is on this committee and they have started to look at the implications of combining the Visions for Learning and Wellbeing.
- Exeter DAG branch. Martin Weiler and Ian Rogers to discuss the finances as group has come to an end and a small amount of money can be transferred to DAG.
- From Leon Winston - "Exmouth governors meeting on Thursday 28th January. Really worth while. A friendly and informal gathering of governors from different schools. They have agreed to get together once a term with speaker, but also for a get-to know each other, and to meet at a different school each time. They would like DAG to attend." The committee felt that this was a good idea to develop - but if this were to happen they would need to share the load across the Executive as there are 30+ LLCs!
- Ivan Godfrey, Roger Adcock and Don Paterson are attending the NGC regional meeting on 15th March. Amongst items to discuss is the NGC manifesto.
- Exeter LPIG - still looking for a governor rep.
- Cornwall Conference - Roger Adcock to attend - guest speaker is the new Children's Tsar (Al Aynsley-Green).
- New Relationship with Schools conference - Margaret Hosford unable to attend due to illness.

## **05.11 Officers' Reports.**

### **FINANCE**

- Ian Rogers circulated the accounts for period ended 10th March 05. Last year's accounts have been audited. It was agreed to continue subscriptions to both NASG and NGC. Ian Rogers to check signatories of bank account - they need to be changed.

### **SECRETARY**

- Provisional dates for forthcoming meetings were agreed: 9th June 05, 22nd September 05, 10th November 05, 19th Jan 06, 9th March 06, Annual Assembly 25th March 06.
- Executive for next year. Martin Weiler has decided to take a break from governing and will not be standing for Executive next year. Martin has various committee positions and these will need to be reviewed. The executive passed on its thanks to Martin for his considerable contribution to DAG over the years.
- Iris Watson and Ian Rogers nominations were agreed. All other nominations should be sent to Ivan who will put names forward to the Annual Assembly.
- Structure of meetings. It was agreed to hold one executive meeting next term, and review the Area meeting structure. It was felt that it would be more efficient to hold area meetings in the autumn and spring term only. This would mean reducing the number of areas to 8, and holding 4 meetings per term instead of three. The summer term link governors meetings can feedback any important issues.
- Carol Robinson had raised the issue of student representative governors as her school has 4 College Council students appointed to the Governing Body as Associate Governors who attend meetings of the Full Governing Body and sit on Students, Curriculum & Infrastructure Committees. She wondered whether there was any training available that would help them. Carol will contact DGS, and would appreciate any feedback from other governors who have experience of this. It was agreed that the principle of students being involved in GBs was a good one, and it would be a good idea to invite a student representative to a DAG meeting in the future.
- Paper from Charles Rich, retiring Chair of Chagford Primary, would be discussed at the next meeting, and at the Annual Assembly. Ivan to put on the agenda, committee please read before the next meeting.

**05.12 Review of meeting.** There were positive comments about the discussion format at the beginning. It seems to be a very good way of getting across ideas and resolving issues.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm. **Next meeting - Thursday 9th June 2005, 5.30pm West of England School, Exeter.** Refreshments from 5pm.

### **ACTION POINTS**

#### **Secretary/Asst. Secretary**

05.09

- DAISI. Ivan will invite Liz Hill, Director of DAISI to an executive meeting.
- DAG leaflet. Jenny to do updated version. Ivan to ask Judy about putting one in the Autumn Devon Governor / New Governor Packs.
- Annual Assembly - Ivan to send Laurie a list of names for badges. Ivan & Jenny to prepare packs.
- 'Matters Arising' book. Ivan to find out how many needed.

05.11

- Charles Rich paper - put on agenda for next meeting (and for discussion at Annual Assembly)

#### **Treasurer**

05.10 & 05.11

- Change signatories on bank account
- Discuss Exeter DAG branch wind-up with Martin Weiler.

**DEVON ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNORS**  
**Reports back for Executive Meeting on 10th March 2005**

**Schools' Forum**

**Date of Meeting** 21/01/05 **Representatives:** As listed

**Issues to discuss at Executive** None

**Issues for Information**

- Ivan Godfrey re-elected as Chair, Margaret Hosford as Vice-Chair for next 2 years
- A steering group with one representative from each of DAPH, DAG, DASH and SHAD and led by Deborah Magill will be set up to take the Devon Vision for Learning forward.
- Firm proposals for primary school catering have been developed and will be put out for consultation within the coming months. The key element will be the transfer of ownership of catering decisions to individual schools
- Proposals for active redeployment procedures for all school staff in Devon were approved
- Slight increases to the powers of Schools' Forums were welcomed.

**Schools' Support Services Board**

**Date of Meeting** 27/01/05 **Representatives:** Ivan Godfrey : Carol Robinson.

**Issues to discuss at Executive** None

**Issues for information**

- Members identified many problems with sims.net. & expressed dissatisfaction with 23% increase in Capita service charges for incomplete product.
- Portfolio 05/06: Graduated charge, esp. for Primaries, for Legal services to be considered. Comprehensive insurance packages to be investigated. Transport policies to be reviewed
- Alternative Portfolio, 06/07; SSSB investigating future collaborative SW provision. Draft Specification due this term. Training needs for Primaries re. decision-making in procurement identified & to be addressed. Disaggregation of goods & services.
- School Meals Review; Change in service delivery - to be delegated to schools by Sept. 05 .

**DAG/DGS Conference**

**Date of Meeting** 10/02/05 **Representatives:** Mike Billington : Ivan Godfrey

**Issues to discuss at Executive** - None

**Issues for information**

- The main item for discussion was the securing of people to attend the event; either in the capacity of – opening the conference, after dinner speaker, keynote speaker, workshop facilitators and closing the conference. Several suggestions have been made for all the categories and enquiries are being pursued.
- Next meeting 9.30am 250405 – with an e-mail update on enquiries to the group in March.

**Meeting with Devon Governor Services**

**Date of Meeting** 12/02/05 **Representatives:** Ivan Godfrey : Leon Winston

**Issues to discuss at Executive** - PGR elections : summer term meeting date

**Issues for Information**

- New booklet from the DfES ' Governing the School of the Future ' is being circulated to all schools. A useful tool to support governance and to promote the process of the independent appointment of LEA governors
- Parent Governor Representative elections will be taking place this summer. Thought will need to be given about how to encourage interest and participation in this
- In the context of the later than usual Annual Assembly and IG's absence during the second half of the summer term a single executive meeting was suggested for the summer term on Thursday June 9<sup>th</sup>. Judy has this date in her diary!
- Judy will seek to establish a joint DAG/DGS working party to extend the work already being undertaken by John Udy and Andy Mulcock . ' Blue Peter guidance ' for schools was suggested. Further volunteers will be sought for the e-mail network considering Extended Schools' matters.

- Arrangements for the Annual Assembly and the importance of Deborah Magill's address focusing on the practicalities of governor concerns were discussed. Ivan will arrange a meeting with Deborah to discuss this further. It was also suggested that we should have badges for Assembly delegates with a different colour badge for Exec. Members.
- Webforum. Leon would try to access and report back on any problems should they arise. Ivan will seek further volunteer monitors. The possibility of identifying case studies of good practice through the forum was also considered
- Ivan will investigate further the possibility of obtaining summary documents on current policy issues either from Hertfordshire CC or NGC
- Judy will require a lift to the Annual Assembly!

#### Admissions Forum

**Date of Meeting** 23/02/05

**Representative:** Roger Adcock

**Issues to discuss at Executive** None

#### **Issues for Information**

- The Forum dealt solely with the recently issued guidelines for protocols regarding 'Hard to place children' - not a good description as it covers a wide range of admissions problems. Hard to place would better describe the DfES' correspondence about it which in places seems contradictory! It was discussed in the context of Devon's current protocols which seem to be working well and it was agreed to support their continuation.

#### POLICE/EDUCATION LIAISON GROUP

**Date of Meeting** 03/03/05

**Representative** Mike Billington

**Issues to discuss at Executive** - None

#### **Issues for information**

- Police guidelines as to the use of Drugs Dogs and Drug Testing equipment in Schools are on the Force website for all to see. The guidelines will constantly be reviewed, especially in light of the powers being given to head teachers regarding the random testing of pupils.
- The National Truancy Sweep initiative is running from 280205 to 180305. The various LEAs are running different initiatives with Police assistance. However, The Force view is not to support national initiatives but to assist in local 'needs led' events.
- Various updates were received on Restorative Justice, Force Youth Strategy and Youth Justice Board.
- Date of next meeting not yet confirmed but will probably be between 080705 and 200705 and will be at Torpoint Community College.