

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1

18 OCTOBER 2021

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

1. Purpose of report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the committee in respect of how:

- Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) and Central South Consortium (CSC) are able to support all school governing bodies in the local authority; and how
- support and training for governing bodies may develop in the future.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:

Supporting a successful sustainable economy - taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.

Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.

Smarter use of resources - ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

3.1 Prior to 2015, the Learner Support Service of the then Children's Directorate included a dedicated governor support function. Due to the requirement to make efficiency savings as a result of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), this function was

deleted following a significant restructure of the Business, Strategy and Support Group.

3.2 Nevertheless, from 2015-2016 (financial year), the Pupil Services Team has provided support to ensure that governing bodies fulfil their statutory responsibilities by ensuring that schools comply with the law, are effectively managed and deliver a quality education to their pupils. The principal responsibilities of the Pupil Services Team are as follows:

- to arrange a comprehensive governor training programme;
- to publicise and distribute information outlining topical training events;
- to recruit, appoint and terminate governor positions, including the appointment of local authority (LA) governors and preparation of associated Cabinet reports;
- to undertake the role of 'returning officer' for parent elections to governing bodies, including support for the process with advice and guidance where required;
- to establish temporary governing bodies where appropriate; and
- to establish new governing bodies where appropriate.

3.3 Previous scrutiny committee meetings have requested that a 'job description' be provided to assist with recruitment of governors. However, it is important to point out that the role of a governor is not a job. The role of governor should be conducted by someone who:

- is a volunteer;
- cares about teaching, learning and children;
- represents those people with a key interest in the school, including parents, staff, the local community and the LA;
- is part of a team which accepts responsibility for everything a school does;
- has time to commit to meetings and other occasions when needed;
- is willing to learn;
- is able to act as a friend who supports the school but is still able to cast a critical eye upon how the school works and the standard it achieves; and
- acts as a link between parents, the local community, the LA and the school

3.4 The LA commissions CSC to provide a school improvement service on behalf of the LA. The LA and CSC have developed a close and effective working relationship which has proved to be extremely beneficial in supporting schools and their governing bodies.

3.5 The core focus of all school improvement activity is providing support and challenge to schools alongside governing bodies to ensure learners across the local authority have the right educational experiences to allow them to make progress and be successful in the next phase of learning or employment.

3.6 As part of its school improvement function, CSC now provides mandatory governor training to all members of governing bodies but the take-up has been noticeably low, relative to the take-up in other local authorities in the region. Initially, the training was offered at CSC headquarters in Nantgarw and this was considered to

be a barrier to take-up. With that in mind, training was offered at various places across Bridgend County Borough but attendance remained low. (It is legislated that if a governor has not completed the training within the required timescale, they will be suspended for six months and should undertake the training within that time. If a governor does not complete the mandatory training within the suspension period they will be disqualified from post. Prior to 2014, the governor support team used to write to individual governors informing them they were out of compliance and that this could result in suspension. This approach was revised after concerns were raised by schools and individual elected members (who were chairs at the time). Now, members' training compliance is a matter for governing bodies to deal with).

- 3.7 CSC has worked with governors across the region to develop a regional support offer and to engage governing bodies in collaborative models like governor improvement groups (GIGs). They have also trained and deployed consultant governors to support governing bodies who require additional capacity. A key part of this offer is the delivery of both in-person and online training opportunities, as well as the development of guidance documents and resources to support governors in their role.
- 3.8 In the past two school years, throughout the pandemic, governor training has been offered online and, despite some initial reticence about this delivery method, it has proved very successful with a sharp increase (161%) in attendance rates.
- 3.9 All of the training and support materials are available to governors. As well as being shared at training events they are also available online on the [CSC website](#).

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 CSC continues to provide the LA with effective school improvement services. This includes the mandatory training modules for school governors. The training offer is created in direct consultation with local authority officers and the governor stakeholder group. It covers the mandatory training as well as other areas that meet identified regional needs. In the past these have been held in person but during the pandemic these have been held as webinars, which has led to greater engagement than previous years. Training provided includes:
- mandatory governor training, as follows:
 - new governor induction
 - understanding data
 - new chair induction
 - headteacher performance management
 - effective challenge and support
 - introduction to coaching skills
 - drop-in/briefing sessions focusing on the big issues.

- 4.2 Governor training includes the 'Challenge and Support' Module which clearly outlines all of the statutory functions and expectations of a governing body (**see Appendix 1**).
- 4.3 The current role of the Pupil Services Team in supporting governors is detailed at paragraph 3.2. It is important to note that schools no longer have the option to buy into a local authority provided service level agreement for a dedicated clerking function and either provide this function from within their own resources or purchase that resource from the private sector.
- 4.4 In spite of some difficulties presented for the local authority around maintaining local intelligence and maintaining a close relationship with governing bodies, including the sharing of information and updates, the shift in practice (eg schools making contractual arrangements for a privately provided clerking service) aligns well with Welsh Government and the LA's expectation that schools have greater independence as part of the self-improving system.
- 4.5 In 2016, the Bridgend Governor Association (BGA) was relaunched with a more forward-looking agenda.
- 4.6 Every governor in Bridgend automatically becomes a member of the Association and the BGA is independent of the local authority but welcomes the support that the LA brings. At the relaunch in 2016, the LA and BGA agreed to provide a renewed focus for the BGA, in particular to support the continuous improvement of all governors and governing bodies.
- 4.7 One approach developed included the concept of GIGs for Bridgend schools and to make this the focus of the role of the BGA in future.
- 4.8 The main function of GIGs would be to work collaboratively to support the continuous self-improvement of all governors and governing bodies, in order to support the raising of standards of education across all BCBC schools. GIGs were identified as needing to be small enough to operate effectively but also of a size to be fully representative of the needs of all governors and governing bodies.
- 4.9 The BGA continues to play an important role in supporting individual governors and governing bodies in Bridgend's schools in collaboration with the local authority and the CSC.
- 4.10 CSC Improvement Partners will continue to support governing bodies with the headteacher's performance management and will support the governing body to understand its role in school improvement. Improvement partners will also collaborate with the regional leads for governors to support school governors to fulfil their responsibility in holding schools to account.
- 4.11 Due to the rise in attendance and participation with online governor training, it is anticipated this delivery method will continue in the future.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socioeconomic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an equalities impact assessment in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

- 7.1 The well-being goals and principles prescribed for within the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 connect directly to the approach to supporting schools. The approach to supporting school governing bodies is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle and more specifically as follows:

Long-term	The approach to governor support focuses on assisting with school improvement to meet the needs of children and young people from the age of 0 to 25.
Prevention	The focus of governor support is to assist with early identification of need and ensuring that there is appropriate learning provision in place to meet individual needs.
Integration	The approach to governor support for school improvement addresses the need for a coherent delivery of economic, social, environmental and cultural outcomes.
Collaboration	A fundamental principle of the approach to governor support for school improvement focuses on improving collaboration and creating a unified system.
Involvement	Ensuring that governors are able to ensure that children and young people, parents and carers are at the heart of the system and that needs are discussed in a person-centred way.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications linked to this report.

9. Recommendations

9.1 The committee is requested to:

- consider the content of this report; and
- provide feedback.

Lindsay Harvey

CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

Contact officer: Sue Roberts, Group Manager (School Support)

Telephone: 01656 754892

Email: Susan.Roberts2@bridgend.gov.uk

Postal address: Civic Offices
Bridgend County Borough Council
Angel Street
Bridgend
CF31 4WB

Background documents:

Appendix 1 Effective Challenge and Support in School Governance (CSC)