


Non-Executive Report of the: General Purposes Committee February 2024	 TOWER HAMLETS
Report of Steve Reddy, Corporate Director (Children's Services)	Classification: [Unrestricted or Exempt]
Framework for LA Governor Nominees	

Originating Officer(s)	Farhad Ahmed
Wards affected	All wards

Executive Summary

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the processes and support mechanisms involved in identifying and nominating suitable candidates for the position of Local Authority (LA) governor. It outlines the statutory legislation, the role and of LA governors, the challenges in governor recruitment, and the collaborative efforts between the Governor Service and schools to ensure a robust selection process identify individuals with the skill and the time to serve effectively on a board.

- **Overview of LA Governor Role:** LA governors are nominated by the local authority and appointed by the Governing Body to serve as members of a school's governing body. Their role is crucial as they contribute to the strategic direction, oversight, and overall management of the school, ensuring it meets its educational objectives and maintains high standards.
- **Support Mechanisms:** The Governor Service facilitates the nomination and appointment process for LA Governors through establishing collaborative partnerships, providing comprehensive guidance, facilitating nominations, offering ongoing support and development, and engaging in community outreach and diversity initiatives.
- **Challenges and Conclusion:** The document highlights the challenges in governor recruitment, such as vacancy rates, time commitment, changing personal circumstances, and lack of awareness or understanding of the role's importance. It concludes by emphasising the pivotal role of Governor Services in supporting schools, enhancing board diversity, and maintaining educational excellence through collaborative efforts.

Additionally, this report also provides a data breakdown and additional information about candidates whose nomination was deferred in the last GPC on is presented due to several key reasons

Recommendations:

This report is for noting.

1. REASONS FOR THE DECISIONS

1.1 This report is for noting and no decision is required at this stage.

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3. DETAILS OF THE REPORT

3.1 Local Authority Governors (LA Governors)

Maintained schools are required to have a local authority governor on their board. This is a voluntary role. They are nominated by the local authority (LA) and appointed by the board to serve as members of a school's governing body. While regulations do not specify additional criteria, these governors are expected to bring perspectives and skills deemed necessary by the governing board to effectively oversee their school.

What they do

Their role is the same as any other governor. The statutory guidance supporting the regulations states that all governors must work for the benefit and success of the school or group of schools and must not pursue any other agenda.

Statutory legislation

The School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012 regulation 8 states that

8. In these Regulations “local authority governor” means a person who—

(a) is **nominated** by the local authority; and

(b) is **appointed** as a governor by the governing body having, *in the opinion of the governing body, met any eligibility criteria that they have set.*

The [Governance Handbook](#) explains this on page 64:

“LA governors must govern in the interests of the school and not represent or advocate for the political or other interests of the local authority; it is unacceptable practice to link the right to nominate local authority governors to the local balance of political power.”

Governor Services Role

Tower Hamlets Governor Services is dedicated to supporting schools in identifying suitable candidates for the position of LA governor. Collaboration between Governor Service and schools is essential to ensuring a robust selection process to support boards in filling this role.

Governor Services facilitates the nomination and appointment process for LA Governors in Tower Hamlets through the following:

1. Establishing Collaborative Partnerships:

- Engagement: The service actively cultivates relationships with schools, engaging in discussions about governance roles' importance. Governor Services actively supports schools in recruiting governors from underrepresented groups, providing accessible tools for school leaders. We share information via GovernorHub and the Council's website.

We recently commissioned a campaign to enhance representation across all governor categories on boards. This involved the commissioned company meeting with a focus group of Tower Hamlets Education Partnership (THEP) Headteachers, followed by one-on-one meetings with six Tower Hamlets headteachers and some clerks to Governors to drive this effort. The company also directly engaged with governing bodies across the borough, conducting interviews with 14 school and college governors. Many of these individuals were later featured in the tools developed to support our aims. A toolkit was additionally developed to support recruitment and retention.

A handbook and online training programme were developed and available to the wider community via [this link](#).

The campaign and other resources we have created to drive this work are available on the Council's website and can be viewed [here](#).

- For schools that have a service level agreement with Governor Services, the clerk is usually responsible for finding potential governors and vetting our internal applications. This involves thoroughly reviewing and evaluating their suitability by assessing skills and following up with a telephone call to ensure candidates meet the requirements that the school is seeking and we mitigate common concerns such as explaining that governance usually requires about 6 hours per month and term time only.

For potential candidates applying for the LA governor position, if both the candidate and school key individuals (GB) are happy, we submit the same application form to the General Purposes Committee (GPC) and the Chair and/or Headteacher will propose the candidate to

the GB and write a brief supporting statement endorsing the candidate to the GPC as an LA governor nominee.

We acknowledge that our current application forms may not always effectively capture information, which is why follow-up calls, candidate meetings with Chairs and Headteachers, and attendance at meetings as observers are vital. We are currently working on new application forms, aiming to have them in place by the end of January 2024.

- Collaborative Decision-Making: Engaging in consultative processes with school leadership to finalise nominations, ensuring alignment with school ethos and objectives.
- Information Dissemination: We set up consistent communication channels to convey the importance of the roles held by LA governors, offering clear guidance and nomination criteria.

Case study

After an LA governor stepped down this academic year, the Chair of George Green's school sought guidance on nominating a replacement. The service provided comprehensive direction, emphasising the role's importance, referencing relevant legislation, and maintaining regular communication to address queries and ensure a robust selection process. The governing board approached a governor recruitment charity, stressing the need for candidates with a strong community interest and the strong finance skills they needed to further strengthen their board, resulting in seven applications. A dedicated recruitment working group meticulously reviewed the submissions, ultimately selecting a candidate suitable for the board. While the school is not part of the Governor Service Level Agreement (SLA), they chose to involve the LA due to the service's commitment to effectively communicate with key stakeholders, ensuring alignment with the school community's needs.

2. Providing Comprehensive Guidance:

- Training and Induction: We offer training sessions and an induction highlighting governor responsibilities, expectations, and benefits.
- Sharing detailed information that outlines the nomination process, eligibility criteria, and the scope of the role.

3. Facilitating Nominations:

- We actively encourage diverse applications from both the school community and the borough. We firmly believe that governance benefits greatly from a variety of perspectives and experiences represented at the table. Schools do not have to recruit through Governor Services, and some schools reach out to governor recruitment organisations such as Governors for Schools, which offer a skills-based matching service to identify potential candidates.

Additionally, we maintain a relationship with this organisation, providing an extra layer of vetting to ensure suitability, aligning with our objectives.

- Assistance in Selection: Supporting schools in shortlisting and selecting nominees, offering advisory guidance as needed. Schools can

4. Ongoing Support and Development:

- Continuous Assistance: Providing ongoing support to LA governors post-appointment, offering resources, networking opportunities, and training sessions.
- Performance Evaluation: Conducting periodic assessments to gauge the effectiveness and impact of LA governors, aiding in their continuous development. As an example, in cases of poor attendance, we will step in to encourage and improve attendance levels.

5. Community Engagement and Diversity:

- Inclusivity: Encouraging diversity in nominations, ensuring representation from varied backgrounds, including parents, community members, and professionals. We are currently in discussions with London Met and Queen Mary University, London to engage young people on boards.
- Community Involvement: Engaging community stakeholders in raising awareness of being a governor and how to go about it. Pre- Covid, two officers from the team attended community events such as Parent Conference held by colleagues in the Family Support Service to raise awareness about being a governor regardless of the category. This is something the service wishes to resume including attending a variety of community events which we have already identified but with funding stretched, this may not be possible.
- Pre-Covid, the service had leaflets and application forms in libraries. This is a practice we aim to reinstate.

The Challenges

There's a national vacancy rate of 10% for all governor roles, leading to numerous empty positions. Closing this gap demands considerable effort, which can be challenging at times. The role itself can be time-consuming and demanding, and individuals' personal circumstances may change (relocating for work or family reasons and work demands). This underscores the reason why Governors Services places a strong emphasis on supporting schools to recruit effectively and ensuring our clerks anticipate any upcoming vacancies in advance.

1. **Vacancy Rates:** There's often a significant number of empty governor positions nationally (currently 10%), making it challenging to fill all roles effectively.
2. **Time Commitment:** The role of a school governor can be time-consuming, deterring potential candidates who might already have demanding schedules.

3. **Skills and Expertise:** Finding individuals with the right skills and expertise to contribute effectively to governing bodies can be difficult. Many boards are now paperless and a number of forms are completed electronically upon joining and annually.
4. **Changing Personal Circumstances:** Individuals' personal situations, like relocating for work or family reasons, or facing time constraints, can lead to governor vacancies.
5. **Awareness and Engagement:** Lack of awareness or understanding of the role's importance can result in challenges retaining governors..

Conclusion:

Tower Hamlets Local Authority plays a pivotal role in supporting schools by providing guidance, assistance, and resources to identify nominees for Local Authority Governor positions. We also highlight the benefits of being a governor such as that the role allows individuals to develop their skills both personally and professionally. This collaborative approach ensures that school governance reflects the diversity and aspirations of the school community while maintaining educational excellence.

As of the latest data collection in December 2023, 32.5% of governors in Tower Hamlets come from the Global Majority (also known as Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic - BAME) backgrounds. In comparison, the national figure for England stands at 3.5% (NfER, last data in 2020). This illustrates Tower Hamlets' dedicated efforts to enhance board diversity. For LA governors, while the LA oversees the nomination process, the board holds the appointment authority.

4. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 It is important that governing boards reflect their communities so that their decisions consider the needs, perspectives and lived experiences of those communities. This is supported in the Governance Handbook 2020, p36, which states '*A board composed of governors and academy trustees who bring a diverse range of skills, experiences, qualifications, characteristics and perspectives and who are from different backgrounds and settings will have a positive impact on setting the strategic direction for the organisation*'.

5. OTHER STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This section of the report is used to highlight further specific statutory implications that are either not covered in the main body of the report or are required to be

highlighted to ensure decision makers give them proper consideration. Examples of other implications may be:

- Best Value Implications,
- Consultations,
- Environmental (including air quality),
- Risk Management,
- Crime Reduction,
- Safeguarding.

5.2 There are no further specific statutory implications arising from the report.

6. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

7. COMMENTS OF LEGAL SERVICES

- 7.1 The Public sector equality duty came in to force in April 2011 (s.149 of the Equality Act 2010) and public authorities are now required, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 to:
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2 To ensure transparency, and to assist in the performance of this duty, the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require public authorities, named on , to publish:
- equality objectives, at least every four years (from 6th April 2012)
 - information to demonstrate their compliance with the public sector equality duty (from 31st January 2012)
- 7.3 The provision of additional equality information from the remaining governors whose data is currently unknown will better enable the Council to ensure that they are meeting their equality duty.
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Linked Reports, Appendices and Background Documents

Linked Report

- LA Governor Appointment

Appendices

- None

Local Government Act, 1972 Section 100D (As amended)

List of “Background Papers” used in the preparation of this report

List any background documents not already in the public domain including officer contact information.

- NONE

Officer contact details for documents:

Farhad Ahmed