

Barnsley Governors Association 2012 Annual General Meeting

Report of the Executive Committee

Introduction

At the inaugural AGM of the BGA, an Executive Committee was elected, which in the following twelve months has been working hard to establish the Association, and to begin to offer support in a variety of ways to governors throughout Barnsley.

Work of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee has met monthly throughout the year to develop ways of supporting governance. The principal focus of the Committee's work has been the pursuit of the Aims set out in the constitution, and a Plan which was drawn up at the start of the year. In order to undertake the work, as well as full meetings of the Committee, a number of smaller groups were set up to pursue particular priorities. Some of the members who were elected at the 2011 AGM subsequently resigned for personal reasons, and one additional member has been co-opted.

Aims

The constitution of the BGA sets out eight aims of the Association. Progress has been made on seven of those aims, and in the coming year the Executive intends to continue that progress and develop approaches to the eighth which relates to the procurement of services.

Priorities

The Aims are broad in scope. At an early stage the Executive drew up a plan for the year with 6 specific priorities which it felt would best serve the needs of developing the Association and quickly provide high quality support to governors and governing bodies. The progress made against each of these is summarised below:

Engage with and recruit into membership of the BGA 75% of Barnsley governing bodies.

Over 83% of Barnsley governing bodies have joined the Association, enabling it to respond to and represent the concerns of the majority of local governors, as well as providing a sound financial basis for the Association's work. Every governing body in membership has a link with a specific member of the Executive, to ensure an effective two way flow of information.

Hold a free half day spring conference, which informs and stimulates governors, and provides opportunity for sharing of knowledge, skills and experience.

The conference in April was attended by approximately 70 governors and was highly successful, as indicated by the very positive feedback from attendees. This was the first conference in Barnsley arranged by governors for governors, and had national, regional and local expert speakers. The Association was grateful for the support given to the conference by Barnsley Local Authority, Barnsley College and the guest speakers, all of which contributed to its success.

Develop and market the BGA website so that it becomes the place to which governors go for up to date and relevant information and ideas.

The website had already been launched just prior to the 2011 AGM, but the last year has seen it extensively developed. Constantly updated, the site provides a wide range of information and support of relevance to governors, and compares very favourably with the websites of other governors associations. The site is intended to be a vital means of communication between the Association and its members and all governors are encouraged to use it regularly. The Association is grateful to its webmaster John Gostelow for making the site so successful.

Barnsley Governors Association 2012 Annual General Meeting

Provide governors with an independent source of reliable and appropriate information, and easy access to the knowledge, skills and experience of other governors. This will be achieved through the conference, the website, a newsletter and in other ways.

In addition to the website and conference, as described above, during the year a new monthly newsletter was begun and has now been issued five times. These contain important current news and stimulating ideas, with many links to the website and elsewhere. The newsletter is distributed by email to chairs of governors and to all governors who have provided their email addresses, as is the National Governors Association (NGA) Bulletin. In addition several good practice and advice notes have been developed with the local authority and published on the website.

Represent governors in an informed way to ensure that their voice is heard, by maintaining a strong relationship with the LA and other stakeholders, and as members of various committees and forums, in order to promote and improve school governance, and respond to consultations and communications.

Positive links have been established with the local authority through membership of the Barnsley Borough Challenge Board and regular meetings with the Executive Director for Children, Young People and Families, in order to represent governors and contribute to the improvement of governance. The BGA has retained membership of the NGA in order to ensure that it is fully aware of national developments.

Work with the LA and others to improve the recruitment, training and retention of school governors.

The Executive set up a working group to pursue this priority and work closely with local authority colleagues. A Training Survey to better inform future training programmes has been developed and is on the website. An external provider has been commissioned to deliver two governor training courses in the next few months to complement the local authority's programme.

Thanks

The BGA's success is due to the efforts of many people and organisations. In particular, the Executive would like to record its thanks to the local authority for its strong support, and the Director Judith Harwood. Peter Steadman and Steve Brailsford have worked closely with the BGA to develop ways of supporting governors that make best use of the authority's and Association's resources and expertise. Valuable financial support and support in kind has been given by the local authority, the Schools Forum and Barnsley College for which the Association is grateful.

The future

It is anticipated that the Executive Committee elected at the 2012 AGM will develop a new plan for the year ahead, recognising and responding to the increasing pressures on governance and the changing scene in which governance operates.

Conclusion

The Executive Committee believes that in its first year of operation the Association has made very substantial progress, and has established a strong base from which it can contribute to the development and improvement of governance in Barnsley schools.

Michael Sanderson, Chair

Margaret Gastelow, Secretary