

## **DAG**

### **Chair's Report and presentation of accounts**

The Devon Association of Governance (DAG) is the association representing more than 3,000 school governors, trustees, directors, clerks and company secretaries across the Devon Local Authority. DAG membership is free and automatic for any school governor, trustee, director, clerk and company secretary within the Devon Local Authority whether in a maintained school, academy or other state funded school.

The past year has been a particularly busy one for governors generally and for DAG, with Covid impacting our schools and governing boards. We are fortunate at DAG to have a great team of people, directors and office holders, who are dedicated to governance and work tirelessly to represent governors and to make sure the information needed to support good governance is readily available. The Board meets five times a year, in addition to which we have working group meetings, a Board strategy day and our Annual General Meeting. Following the coronavirus outbreak in March 2020, meetings have been held virtually.

An important objective at DAG is representation. To that end DAG provide members to represent school governors and academy trustees at Devon Education Forum, Schools Finance Group, Schools Organisation Capital and Admissions Group, Devon Children and Families Partnership and a range of working parties and ad hoc groups as needed. Our vice chair Maria Wallis chaired Devon Education Forum. We are grateful to all of the board members, associates and officers who freely give of their time to represent Devon governors in this way.

We have good working relationships with the education team at DCC, with Devon Schools Leadership Service (Formerly Devon Associations of Primary Heads and Secondary Heads) and with Special Heads Association of Devon and have attended their events where relevant. Board members have also attended conferences, briefings and workshops organised by Regional Schools Commissioner South West and other educational bodies.

A second key objective is to provide information and support to promote good governance in Devon. One way of achieving this is through our annual conference. Our conference in Autumn 2019 was once again a great success and special thanks go to our clerk Jill Larcombe for all her work on this conference and to all DAG colleagues who help make these conferences so successful. Unfortunately, the coronavirus outbreak has made it impractical to organise a conference this Autumn.

We decided last year to run an additional event, being an evening seminar. I am delighted to say that our resulting February seminar on the new Ofsted Inspection Framework, arranged in partnership with Babcock and Exeter Diocese, was a great success with about 80 governors attending in Tiverton and enjoying another really informative presentation from Karl Sampson, the Assistant Regional Director for Ofsted South West. We look forward to resuming these evening seminars when circumstances allow this to safely happen.

Our web site has continued to be a key focus. We moved to a new website during the year to improve functionality and ease of access. This was a major task and we are delighted that

it is so well used by governors and trustees. Both Jill and our website content consultant Amanda Blewett put a huge amount of time and energy into this. Together with our regular newsletter, it is our prime means of providing information to support good governance in Devon.

Our vice chair Maria Wallis retired as a governor last year and as a consequence ceased to be a DAG director. We were very sorry indeed to lose Maria from our Board and thank her for her contribution to DAG and long commitment to education in Devon. We were also sorry to lose Teresa Sturtivant who resigned as a DAG associate. We were delighted to co-opt Adrian Hines to our DAG Board and to welcome Kate Brimacombe as a new associate member.

The accounts for the year to 31 March 2020 are presented at this Annual General Meeting. A copy of the Accounts is included with the agenda and they are also available on the DAG website. These accounts show a surplus of £3,685 with reserves increasing to £48,073 at 31 March 2020. Our expectation remains that we are likely to be reducing these in the coming years due to the increasing levels of expenditure on our web site and the greater time commitment of our officers in maintaining and developing this.

Whilst covid has impacted on our operating practices, it hasn't significantly altered our strategic aims. Our action plan for the current year focuses on: -

- Continuing to be an effective voice for Devon governance by meeting our representation commitments.
- Promoting positive governance and raising our DAG profile with stakeholders.
- Expanding the support offer to our membership through our website and digital engagement.
- Facilitating the introduction and induction of new members and associates to DAG.

DAG is keen to encourage serving governors, trustees and clerks who share our commitment to supporting education and improving the effectiveness of governance in Devon to join us as Board members or associates. Colleagues come from a variety of backgrounds and bring a range of skills and experience to the Board. The role is engaging, challenging and enjoyable. If you would be interested in becoming a director or associate please do contact us, either in person, by email or via our web site to register an interest.

The focus of our association is to support school governance by providing resources and representation to raise standards and improve the life chances of children and young people. My thanks go to all office holders, directors and associate board members for their support and contribution over the past year. Together they have enabled us to successfully maintain this focus.

Alex Walmsley  
Chair