

DAG Chair's Report 2022

The Devon Association of Governance (DAG) is the association representing more than 3,000 school governors, trustees, directors, governance professionals, clerks and company secretaries across the Devon Local Authority. DAG membership is free and automatic for all of these groups, whether in a maintained school, academy or other state-funded school.

Our vision for DAG is to support school governance by providing resources, representation and opportunities for engagement, to raise the effectiveness of governance, hence improving the life chances of all Devon's children and young people. Our plan to deliver against this vision has four aims:

- To be a strong voice for Devon governance through effective representation, informed by good understanding of the views of members.
- To contribute to improving the quality of governance within Devon through provision of high-quality materials and guidance that reflect the latest insights into governance practice and educational issues.
- To ensure that those involved in governance in Devon are aware of DAG, and encourage active engagement.
- To understand the needs of the governance community in Devon, and respond through expanding and improving the support that DAG offers.

We are very fortunate to have a DAG Board and officers who are dedicated to pursuing these aims with energy and commitment, and who volunteer their time freely to doing so. During the year, the DAG Board has seen some changes. Alex Walmsley handed over the Chair role after two 3-year terms of excellent leadership and remains a valued member of the DAG Board. We have said goodbye to Jill Elson after a long history of involvement and thank her for her exceptional efforts to support governance across Devon. Sonia Chanell and Gilly Sanders have become associate members. Sonia is the secondary maintained representative on DEF and Gilly is a secondary academy representative.

The past year has been characterised by efforts to return to more normal circumstances following the disruption caused by the Covid pandemic, complicated by the continued need to deal with the on-going impacts. This has posed a challenge for the DAG Board, with a desire to return to a more normal programme of activities, counterbalanced by the realities of operating under the on-going effects of the pandemic. Nonetheless, the Board has adapted well as a result of the dedication and flexibility of the officers and Board members. Five Board meetings have taken place on-line, and the annual Board strategy meeting was held in person.

DAG continues to fulfil its role in providing representation for those involved in governance across a wide range of fora: Devon Education Forum, Schools Finance Group, Schools Organisation Capital and Admissions Group, Devon Children and Families Partnership, and numerous other working groups and discussions. We are very grateful to all the board members, associates and officers who devote their time to represent Devon governors and trustees in this way.

The year has seen much change at Devon County Council (DCC), with changes in leadership in Children's Services, and the move of Babcock governor services into DCC. We have remained engaged with DCC and Babcock leaders throughout, as well as with Devon Schools Leadership Services, and continue to collaborate closely with these groups in constructive partnerships, driven by the desire to work together in the best interests of the children in Devon.

Our activities to support and promote good governance across the community have again been hampered by the impacts of the Covid pandemic. We planned an in-person OFSTED seminar during the year but needed to revert to an on-line event in light of limited support for an in-person event. Similarly, plans for an in-person conference have been put on hold for the time being. However, we recognise the value of face-to-face interaction, and we hope to be able to return to some in-person events later this school year. Meanwhile, our on-line Chairs' forum and Clerks' forum have both gone from strength to strength, providing useful opportunities for community discussion. Our regular newsletters and website continue to provide a key means of communication with members, with wide reach across the community. We are very grateful to Amanda Blewett and Jill Larcombe for their efforts to produce and manage content.

The accounts for the year to 31 March 2022 are presented at this Annual General Meeting, and we are grateful to Ian Rogers for his efforts to manage the DAG finances throughout the year. 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 £4,185 with reserves increasing to £59,312 at 31 March 2022. 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.

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.

Adrian Hines
Chair