

DAG Chair's Report 2023

The Devon Association of Governance (DAG) is the association representing those involved in school governance across the Devon Local Authority area. This includes school governors, trustees, members, governance professionals, clerks and company secretaries. DAG membership is free and automatic for those involved whether in a maintained school, academy or multi-academy trust, 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.

The past year has seen a move to a mixture of on-line and in person meetings and events, recognising the need to balance the benefits of meeting in person with the greater convenience and inclusion offered by on-line discussions. The DAG Board met in person on five occasions through the 22-23 school year for regular Board meetings, and also met in person for the annual DAG Strategy discussion.

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. There remains an on-going challenge in finding representatives from maintained schools given the gradual move towards greater academisation. We are very grateful to all of the board members, associates and officers who devote their time to represent Devon governors and trustees in this way.

During the year we have continued to engage with Devon Education Services and the Diocese of Exeter with a view to ensuring good alignment between our activities, and have worked fruitfully in collaboration with them, including seeking their representation in our most recent strategy discussions. Alongside this, we have established a link with the newly formed Plymouth Governor Network, and are working with them and the Devon Lieutenancy to develop plans for an event celebrating the impact of school governors in the county. We have also remained engaged with Devon County Council through a period of staff changes, and will look to reinforce our relationship with them once permanent staff are in post.

Our activities to support and promote good governance across the community have been primarily on-line. These have included a seminar on disadvantage in Devon, an OFSTED update seminar, and our regular Chairs' forum and Clerks' forum which have both continued to attract a good audience, 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 have also reinstated the in-person DAG Conference, with the event planned for 4th November. The conference theme is "Having an impact through effective governance", and we have a strong line-up of good quality speakers. We are very grateful to Amanda Blewett and Jill Larcombe for their efforts to produce and manage content, and for their hard work arranging the conference.

The accounts for the year to 31 March 2023 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 £4,167.24 with reserves increasing to £63,479.05 at 31 March 2023. We anticipate that our reserves will be reducing this year due to our investment in the conference, and our plans for further outreach activities. We are very grateful to our Treasurer, Ian Rogers, for his diligent management of the DAG finances.

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