

**THE ROLE OF THE PARENT REPRESENTATIVES ON THE CHILDREN,
SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Report of the Director, Children, Schools and Families

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1. Purpose of the Report

To give members of the Scrutiny Committee information about how Parent Representatives (PRs) on the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee are fulfilling their responsibilities, as requested by Cliff Broadhurst.

2. Summary

2.1. The main responsibilities of PRs can be summarised as follows:

- To attend and speak for parents at committees to which they have been appointed
- To keep in touch with the views of parents and report back discussions and decisions of the LEA
- To act as a sounding-board of parents' views for the LEA and establish good relationships with members and officers
- To liaise with colleague PRs within the LEA

2.2. This report summarises the activities and attitudes of the PRs in relation to each of these responsibilities, since their election in 2000, on the basis of information provided by the PRs themselves in early February 2003.

3. Conclusion

Members of the Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the contents of the report, and decide if/how further scrutiny of this issue should be undertaken.

4. Background

4.1. Parent Governor Representatives (PGRs) were elected under the provisions of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. Although elected by and from parent governors on school governing bodies their brief was to represent all parents in the county. Under the provisions of *The Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001* the LEA was required to appoint 'at least two and not more than five...to each of their education overview and scrutiny committees and sub-committees'. The LEA decided that there should be one representative for each Quadrant.

The election, administered on behalf of HCC by the Electoral Reform Society, took place in April/May 2000 so that the PGRs could be appointed by June of that year. All parent governors were contacted and invited to stand for election. Their period of office is four years.

4.2. The outcome of the election was as follows:

A total of 1733 ballot papers were issued, and 677 were returned (39.1%)

By Quadrant:

North

367 issued; 147 returned (40%)

There were 5 candidates.

Pat Cherry received 75 votes with a majority of 44 votes.

East

557 issued; 198 returned (35.5%)

There were 7 candidates

Cliff Broadhurst received 44 votes with a majority of 6 votes.

South

331 issued; 125 returned (37.8%)

There were 6 candidates.

Maureen Thompson received 34 votes, with a majority of 10 votes.

West

478 issued; 207 returned (43.3%)

There were 2 candidates.

Terry Douris received 154 votes, with a majority of 101.

4.3. To try to emphasise their role in representing all parents PGRs have come to be known as Parent Representatives (PRs) and that designation is used in this report.

5. Attending and speaking for parents at committees to which they have been appointed

5.1. All four PRs were appointed to the Education Committee in June 2000 and subsequently to the Children, Schools and Families (CSF) Scrutiny Committee. They attend meetings, contribute to discussions and ask questions regularly.

5.2. In addition, all have been appointed to other panels and/or topic groups, including Resources, Achievement, Strategy, Casual Admissions, Provision for Autism, Corporate Parenting and Special Needs. All of these meet

several times a year. Two of the PRs were elected as Vice-chairman of the panels/groups on which they served. Three have been appointed as Core Members of the Admissions Forum constituted under the 2002 Education Act including one as vice-chairman of the Forum.

5.3. Particular issues on which they have spoken or taken a close interest include the closure of Wall Hall Nursery School, admissions, provision for children with Special Educational Needs, the 16-19 Strategy and Operation Coachman.

5.4. On the wider, national, front one of the PRs attended the inaugural Annual Conference of Welsh PGRs (in Wales!). Hertfordshire belongs to the East of England group and one of its PRs has become the chair of the national network committee for PRs in England.

6. Keeping in touch with parents' views and reporting back LEA discussions and decisions

6.1. Accessibility to Parents

During the first year following their election, a poster giving the name and contact point, including telephone number, for the relevant PR was sent to every school for display. It also included details of their role and main responsibilities. One PR was invited to speak to a group of parents about the role.

When parents have approached PRs directly, mainly over issues related to school closures (e.g. Nevells Road, Wall Hall) or occasionally when individuals have raised concerns of a more personal nature, PRs have referred them to the relevant Member or officer, with an explanation that PRs are not able to take on casework.

All the PRs attended consultation meetings held around the county over proposed changes to admission arrangements.

6.2. Reporting to Parents

All governing bodies have been asked to nominate a contact parent governor (Parent Governor Link) and there are approximately 110 on an email database. Once a term the Links are invited to a meeting organised by the PRs. Topics addressed include Bullying, Admissions, Teenage Pregnancy. Numbers attending vary but have rarely exceeded fifty. Occasional reports have been written and included in *Hertfordshire Governor*.

7. Acting as a sounding-board for the LEA, and establishing good relationships with Members and Officers

7.1. The involvement of PRs in the policy and scrutiny roles of the LEA is set out in paragraph 4 above.

7.2. Relationships with members and officers are built through formal meetings of CSF panels and committees and through briefings of the PRs by the Director of CSF prior to meetings of the Scrutiny Committee.

8. Liaising with colleague PRs in Hertfordshire

8.1. Because of the limits of time and location, liaison is mainly through the use of email. There are occasional meetings, principally prior to CSF Scrutiny Committee to go through the agenda and agree on any issues they might particularly wish to raise, and in order to plan and prepare their termly meeting with parent governor links.

9. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

Background information used by the author in compiling this report.

- Parent governor representatives on local authority committees dealing with education, DfEE 87/2001

If you would like to know more about the issues referred to in this report please contact Andrew Pennycook Tel: 01582 830373