

<b>Committee:</b> Board of Governors of the City of London School	<b>Date:</b> 17 June 2015
<b>Subject:</b> Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools Annual General Meeting and Conference	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Edward Lord, AGBIS Representative	<b>For Decision</b>

### Summary

The AGBIS Conference took place on Tuesday 10 March. The day included the formal AGM, a keynote address by Lord Waldegrave, Provost of Eton College, and a number of breakout sessions.

The breakout session on governance seemed of relevance and I felt it important to report to the Board of Governors for your consideration.

Those presenting in that session emphasised the need for regular self-assessment by governing bodies, with external review every four to five years. They also ran through a number of examples of best practice, including the minimum requirements for governors to have committees covering education, finance, and governance issues. Other committees might cover development, pastoral, property, and staffing issues. Some of those could be combined.

### Recommendations

1. That the report be noted;
2. That Members give consideration to undertaking internally (or commissioning externally) a review of governance at City of London School to ensure that the Board is following best practice for similar schools (within the context of being part of the City of London Corporation); and
3. That Members give consideration as to whether the Board ought to appoint any committees.

## Main Report

### Introduction

1. The Annual General Meeting and Annual Conference of the Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools (AGBIS) took place on Tuesday 10 March 2015 at Drapers' Hall. Representatives of over 130 schools of various sizes and types attended.

## Annual General Meeting

2. The Annual General Meeting was formal and short. The meeting was addressed briefly by the Chairman, Richard Green (Prior's Field School) and Honorary Treasurer, Michael Goolden (Benenden). Members approved the minutes of the 2014 AGM; received the report of the directors and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2014 (a copy of which I have deposited with the Clerk to the Governors for reference); reappointed haysmcintyre as auditors; and received the results of the election of directors:

Roger Chapman	Mill Hill *
Pamela Edmonds	St Michael's Prep
Deborah Knight	Haberdashers' Askes' (Boys)
Rosanne Musgrave	St Albans High
Ken Young	The Royal Russell *

\*re-elected

3. One point of concern, which I raised after the meeting with Stuart Westley, AGBIS General Secretary, was that the directors' report and financial statements were not circulated in advance of the AGM and were laid around on delegates' chairs, which meant that they did not have time to read, let alone digest, the content prior to them being put to the vote at the meeting. I commented that this was not good governance practice and that all member schools, not just those attending the AGM, should have sight of them – perhaps as a download from the AGBIS website – ahead of the AGM. He offered to take this back for review.

## Keynote Address

4. The keynote address was delivered by the Right Honourable the Lord Waldegrave of North Hill, former Conservative minister from 1981 to 1997, now Provost (Chairman of Governors) of Eton College. Lord Waldegrave's theme was "From the Vision to the Strategy". Whilst he accepted that Eton is in a very different position to most independent schools, there were nonetheless some common principles which applied to all.
5. Lord Waldegrave was clear that Governors should set the vision for their school, and that the Governors and Head should together develop a Strategy, which would then be implemented by the Head and their senior team. He went on to discuss key themes that he felt were relevant including the need to develop outreach programmes in order to demonstrate public benefit. Particularly important for charitable schools.

## Breakout Session: Governance Review

6. I attended a breakout session on school governance, particular focussing on the need for regular review of governing body capability. Attached as appendices to this report are the handouts from that session:

- Independent Schools Inspectorate – Grade descriptors for ‘the quality of governance’;
  - Independent Schools Council – Joint Understanding of Good Governance
  - AGBIS – Governing Body Self Review Pro Forma
  - National Governors Association and APPG on Education Governance and Leadership – Twenty key questions for a school governing body to ask itself
7. It was strongly recommended that governing bodies should annually or biennially undertake a self-assessment of governance and should commission an external review every four to five years. In my experience on this Board, I am conscious that we have not reviewed our capability and structures. It therefore struck me that it might be helpful for the CLS Board of Governors to undertake or commission such a review in order to ensure that we are following best practice for similar schools. Naturally any review of governance would need to take into account our unique nature as part of the City of London Corporation.
8. The session also covered other aspects of best practice, including the expectation that governing bodies would normally have a range of committees covering, inter alia:
- Development;
  - Education;
  - Finance;
  - Governance and nominations;
  - Pastoral matters;
  - Property; and
  - Staffing

although it was recognised that some of those could be combined. This might be something that the Board of Governors might want to consider for CLS.

### Conclusion

9. Colleagues will, I am sure, agree that City of London School should, wherever possible follow best practice in corporate governance and I submit this report as a starting point for discussion.

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