



ORGANISATION/SERVICE ASSESSED

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - GOVERNOR SERVICES

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RECOMMEND CERTIFICATION

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Hampshire County Council - Governor Services (hereafter referred to as Governor Services) provide information, advice, support, and training to governance bodies for schools, academies and education centres and their clerks, to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Governor Services also offer a Clerking Service which is used by over 300 boards. The Service supports the work of over 6000 governors, trust board members and education centre management committee members in Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton, and the Isle of Wight. All governors are volunteers from a variety of backgrounds, working together with the head teachers, principals and centre managers to make strategic decisions affecting the lives of more than 200,000 children and young people. Governor Services is promoted as 'the one stop shop for training and support for governors in Hampshire'. Governor Service employ 18 staff.

Governor Services' website states - 'We have a national reputation for excellence in providing advice, support and training to governing bodies, advisory boards and their clerks'. Certification via the CSE (Customer Service Excellence) Standard is used to validate this statement. This 3-Year Full Review provided the opportunity to validate excellent services.

2. METHODOLOGY

Governor Services submitted evidence against the CSE Standard via Assessment Services online tool. This resulted in a desktop review on the 5th January 2023, with this 3-Year Full Review taking place remotely on the 26th January 2023.

The day started with a session with two Coordinators to address questions which had arisen from the desktop review. This was followed with a meeting with two members of the Clerking team. Discussions focused on how they delivered excellent services, and how their insight was adopted into service improvements.

Three customers were then interviewed by telephone. These were the Chair of a new school and two Chairs who were using the Clerking Service. A session with two members of the training team followed. A further three customers were then interviewed by telephone; two Headteachers of schools receiving additional support and a Chair from a non HCC (Hampshire County Council) school. Discussions focused on their levels of satisfaction with the services they had received.

After lunch the Operational Managers from the three service areas were interviewed to look at how they were ensuring excellent services. A meeting with the Head of Service followed to look at how a focus on putting customers at the heart of service delivery was being maintained.

Two partner organisations had earlier submitted written testimonials regarding working with Governor Services and the benefits to customers. The testimonials also covered how responsibilities were agreed with Governor Services for the delivery of any services, particularly with regard to the quality of services. The partners were EFS (Education Finance Services), an internal partner from within the Council, and an Academy finance training partner (external partner).

The day concluded with a feedback session with the two Coordinators, to present strengths, areas for improvement and the overall position against the CSE Standard.

3. SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS

Sections: **2.1.3, 2.1.6, 2.2.4, 3.3.2, 4.2.1**

A culture where staff are empowered to deliver excellent services is evident. Staff take ownership - 'We have the freedom to do our jobs and decide what is best for our customers'. Staff feel they can solve problems, but know when it is beyond their scope. As a result teams are self-driven, highly motivated and support one another in putting the customer first. (Reference Compliance Plus for Element 2.1.6).

In parallel with the above, staff insight is used daily to drive excellent services. This is facilitated by a strong team ethos, management encouragement and platforms to make suggestions. There is a common goal of 'doing it for the customer' with staff always asking 'can we do this better'. Suggestions from staff are implemented on a daily basis, with the full backing from management. (Reference Compliance Plus for Element 2.2.4).

The evaluation of access channels is robust, regular and thorough, and leads to ongoing improvements. Examples include evaluation of course bookings versus actual attendances, and the monitoring and evaluation of customer satisfaction for training courses. The latter results in constant improvements in how courses are delivered. The GovernorHub is also used to monitor and evaluate training and helps shape future provision. Governor vacancies and type are also monitored to enable tailored support to schools. (Reference Compliance Plus for Element 3.3.2).

SLAs (Service Level Agreements) provide a firm foundation for the delivery of excellent services by clearly defining expectations to clients. They contain comprehensive information on Service Overview, Service Commitment and Quality Assurance. A section entitled Delivering the Service lists what customers can expect. For example - 'We will ensure that the expertise and skills of staff providing the service are commensurate with the work being undertaken'. (Reference Compliance Plus for Elements 2.1.3 & 4.2.1).

4. AREAS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Sections: **1.2.1, 1.2.3, 1.3.1, 1.3.2, 1.3.4, 5.3.3**

Currently there is no written strategy for consultation and engagement with customers, although a variety of mediums are used. Consideration may be given to formalising the strategy for consultation and engagement. This could potentially have benefits in terms of improving the promotion of consultation and engagement, as well as making it easier to evaluate methods in order to ensure they are effective. (Reference Elements 1.2.1 & 1.2.3).

Despite the introduction of new methods for post-course evaluation, response rates remain relatively low at 30%. Consideration may therefore be given as to what could be done to improve response rates. This could help provide Governor Services with more feedback on which to base improvements in the delivery of training courses. (Reference Element 1.3.1).

There are satisfaction scores for both the Clerking Service and the Quality of Service. However, there does not appear to be an overall summary of post-course evaluation forms. Governor Services may wish to consider if this is something they wish to pursue, and how they might derive appropriate scores for the satisfaction with courses. This could help further promote courses. (Reference Element 1.3.2).

There are six questions within the Quality of Service questionnaire. This is creating six percentile scores, with the most recent scores revealing a range of scores from 62 to 88%. Consideration may be given as to whether a question should be used for overall satisfaction with the Service, and how this could be used as a base-line score to which an annual stretch could be applied. This could help to further drive continuous improvement, as well as giving a score which could be used to promote services. (Reference Element 1.3.4).

It is proving difficult to obtain comparative data from similar organisations regarding the quality of timeliness of service. Governor Services may wish to consider how they can address this situation through identifying meaningful comparisons. This could help to validate performance as being excellent. (Reference Element 5.3.3).

5. ASSESSOR'S FINDINGS

- Not Compliance
- Partial Compliance
- Compliance
- Compliance Plus
- N/A

I - CUSTOMER INSIGHT

1.1 Customer Identification

- **1.1.1 We have an in-depth understanding of the characteristics of our current and potential customer groups based on recent and reliable information.**
Governor Services have five main customer groups; Hampshire County Council Maintained schools, Academies, Multi Academy Trusts, Schools and Academies from other Local Authorities and Non-Subscribing schools, who may access training on a Pay As You Go basis. Subscriptions are renewed every January, and this provides the opportunity to review characteristics prior to issuing new contracts which reflect any changes. For example, schools going through structural changes or academisation. There are also three internal customer groups; Education Personnel Services (EPS), Education Finance Services (EFS) and Hampshire Inspectorate Advisory Services (HIAS). Governor Services have an ongoing understanding of the characteristics of these customers through regular meetings, advisory work and training courses.
- **1.1.2 We have developed customer insight about our customer groups to better understand their needs and preferences.**
Through the methods outlined in Element 1.1.1, Governor Services obtain insight into the needs and preferences of their customers. In addition, Quality of Service Questionnaires and three-yearly Clerking Service Evaluation exercises help obtain more specific insight. These help determine training needs, such as Chairs' Networking meetings and Development and Training Governor meetings - 'Outcomes feed into our annual directory planning process'. A further example of identifying needs shows how staff undertook a research project through interviews with Chairs of Governors from different schools. The project looked at leadership approaches and explored their changing role during the Covid-19 pandemic. 'The outcomes informed a training needs analysis and enabled recommendations to be made for service improvement.'
- **1.1.3 We make particular efforts to identify hard to reach and disadvantaged groups and individuals and have developed our services in response to their specific needs.**
Customers at risk of digital exclusion are seen as a hard-to-reach and a potentially disadvantaged group. This group's needs have been heightened as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the shift towards more digital channels. As a result, Governor Services have produced a video which provides a virtual tour of GovernorHub and the website. A narrated virtual tour of the Moodle learning platform has also been provided, to enable participants on the Leading Governance training to access learning. Customers who have self-identified as having low IT confidence and skills have also received personalised 1:1s.

1.2 Engagement & Consultation

- **1.2.1 We have a strategy for engaging and involving customers using a range of methods appropriate to the needs of identified customer groups.**
Surveys are used as one of the principal methods for consultation and engagement. Three surveys are used for this purpose; A Quality of Service-Questionnaire, a Local Authorities Clerking-Services Survey, and a Non Hampshire County Council Customer Survey. Other methods deployed include designated Focus Groups and a Service Review Group. In addition, complaints and compliments are seen as a means of engagement, with all feedback via this channel regularly reviewed.

● **1.2.2 We have made the consultation of customers integral to continually improving our service and we advise customers of the results and action taken.**

Governor Services use the methods outlined in Element 1.2.1 to identify service improvements - 'We systematically review our customers' feedback in order to evaluate and improve our provision'. Evaluation reports are produced for the three surveys, and include results and improvements identified. For example, an Outcome Report for Quality-of-Service questionnaires reveals two improvements. These are the lack of spaces on key training courses, and a number of governing body training sessions which did not fully meet the needs of boards. These have been addressed through better use of waiting lists for courses, more webinars and more bespoke courses to meet the needs of Governors. Consultation via a Chairs' Networking meeting, has also led to the development of resources to support governing boards going through academisation.

● **1.2.3 We regularly review our strategies and opportunities for consulting and engaging with customers to ensure that the methods used are effective and provide reliable and representative results.**

As a result of reviewing the strategy for consultation and engagement, the decision was taken to move from paper course evaluations to brief online surveys. This was aimed at increasing response rates. A QR code was also introduced to help delegates access the survey more easily. Delegates now have the option to simply scan the code using their mobile phones or complete the survey via a post course link. The Headteacher Standing Group was also switched to online delivery. This helped maintain consultation during the pandemic, and is now seen as more effective for consultation with busy headteachers.

1.3 Customer Satisfaction

● **1.3.1 We use reliable and accurate methods to measure customer satisfaction on a regular basis.**

Governor Services deploy three main methods for obtaining feedback on customer satisfaction. Firstly, for courses and centre based training webinars, an online post-course evaluation form is issued to course delegates who can also use a QR code to access the form. Delegates provide feedback on a variety of topics. These include, content, facilitation, usefulness and overall satisfaction. The switch to online feedback was made to make results more accurate and reliable, with both quantitative and qualitative feedback sought from delegates. The Clerking Service is evaluated on a three-year cycle based on outcomes. These use self-assessment from clerks to see how effective they are as a result of support provided by Governor Services. For example, one question asks 'Your clerk's impact on improving the effectiveness of your board?' There are also Quality of Service Questionnaires, which are undertaken annually, alternating each year between seeking feedback from chairs of board, and feedback from individual governors. The rationale for this approach is that the questions are aimed at getting a view of how the Advice, Support & Training (AST) package helps to improve the performance of the board.

● **1.3.2 We analyse and publicise satisfaction levels for the full range of customers for all main areas of our service and we have improved services as a result.**

Using the methods outlined in Element 1.3.1, Governor Services are able to derive both quantitative and qualitative feedback, with the latter used primarily to improve services. The most recent scores for the Clerking Service reveal a shift from good to excellent for all seven questions. The overall 'outstanding rating' now stands at 60%, with the overall score for 'outstanding and good' at 95%. The most recent Quality of Service Questionnaire Outcome Report reveals scores for 6 questions based on the impact of support given by Governor Services on the performance of School Boards. For example, one question is 'does the support and guidance available through the Service meet the needs of your board?' The most recent score is 84%, with scores given for all questions. This allows Governor services to identify service improvements. Examples include, the introduction of pre-meetings prior to whole Board training - 'to shape the training to fully meet its needs'. Both evaluations of the Clerking Service and Quality of Service are made available to customers in newsletters and at meetings.

- 1.3.3 We include in our measurement of satisfaction specific questions relating to key areas including those on delivery, timeliness, information, access, and the quality of customer service, as well as specific questions, which are informed by customer insight.**

Quality of Service Questionnaires incorporate specific questions on delivery, timeliness, information, access and quality of customer service. With regard to information, there is a question - 'Does the variety of ways in which we provide information/advice meet your needs?. Based on customer insight, Boards and their Governors are more concerned about the impact of advice, support and training provided on the performance and effectiveness of their Board. To this end several questions, based on this insight, are incorporated in the Quality of Service Questionnaire, such as - 'Has the training attended by your governors contributed towards helping your board drive forward school improvement?'
- 1.3.4 We set challenging and stretching targets for customer satisfaction and our levels are improving.**

A target to achieve 4.5 out of 5 ratings for training courses has been achieved, with a stretch target to increase this still further over the next 12 months. For the Clerking Service there has been a shift from good to excellent for all seven questions. The overall 'outstanding rating' now stands at 60%, with the overall score for 'outstanding and good' standing at 95%. Again there is the desire to increase these still further.
- 1.3.5 We have made positive changes to services as a result of analysing customer experience, including improved customer journeys.**

Several improvements to customer journeys have already been mentioned in this report. Other examples include the creation of a virtual one stop shop for services by integrating a digital offering with the GovernorHub system. Customers now only need a single password to access services - 'They can move seamlessly between the GovernorHub system and our website. In addition, the booking process for training has been improved through the introduction of a simple online form. Access to the Moodle learning platform prior to courses has also been introduced.

2 - THE CULTURE OF THE ORGANISATION

2.1 Leadership, Policy and Culture

- 2.1.1 There is corporate commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery and leaders in our organisation actively support this and advocate for customers.**

Governor Services' ethos mirrors the approach taken by Hampshire County Council to put customers at the heart of service delivery. The Service Plan reflects this corporate vision. The CSE Standard has been used since its inception to drive and validate excellent services. Staff feel the organisation puts customers first - 'They are at the heart of everything we do'. Customer confirmed this too - 'We know we are their number one priority'.
- 2.1.2 We use customer insight to inform policy and strategy and to prioritise service improvement activity.**

Through using SRGs (Service Review Groups), Governor Services obtain insight which shapes services such as a recent Governor recruitment campaign. Discussions with Chairs help shape the design of services. A Chair's networking event also led to the creation of academy resources.
- 2.1.3 We have policies and procedures which support the right of all customers to expect excellent levels of service.**

This Element is Compliance Plus. (See Summary of Strengths).

● **2.1.4 We ensure that all customers and customer groups are treated fairly and this is confirmed by feedback and the measurement of customer experience.**

The policies and procedures outlined in Element 2.1.3 are designed to uphold fairness. In addition, the Quality of Service Questionnaire includes a question - 'Do staff treat you courteously, fairly and with sensitivity?' Governor Services also ensure fairness by ensuring access to face-to-face training, online training and e-learning. This has been confirmed by several testimonials from customers - 'Training enables everyone to receive the same info at the same time'.

● **2.1.5 We protect customers' privacy both in face-to-face discussions and in the transfer and storage of customer information.**

In the interests of confidentiality, training courses delegate lists only contain information which is already available in the public domain. Ground rules on confidentiality are also covered in all online and face to face courses. For example, delegates are asked not to share any confidential information about their schools. All staff are bound by confidentiality, which is covered as part of their induction training. Mandatory data protection training is included in induction and is required as a regular refresher course. As a result, staff know when and how to report a data breach, and how to use encrypted memory sticks.

● **2.1.6 We empower and encourage all employees to actively promote and participate in the customer focused culture of our organisation.**

This Element is Compliance Plus. (See Summary of Strengths).

2.2 Staff Professionalism and Attitude

● **2.2.1 We can demonstrate our commitment to developing and delivering customer focused services through our recruitment, training and development policies for staff.**

'A focus on excellent services is threaded throughout staff recruitment, induction and ongoing training processes'. Customer focused questions are used in all recruitment interviews, and the induction process has a strong focus on customer service excellence. In addition, training and development includes customer focused themes. Various levels of leadership and management training have been undertaken. All incorporate some aspect of customer service - 'We want them to have a collective ability to meet customer needs'.

● **2.2.2 Our staff are polite and friendly to customers and have an understanding of customer needs.**

The Quality of Service Questionnaire includes a question - 'Do staff treat you courteously, fairly and with sensitivity?' The most recent feedback on this questions reveals 100% of respondents are satisfied. In addition, staff tend to be drawn from governors and clerks, and therefore have a good understanding of customer needs. Governor Services also receive regular testimonials from customers which confirm both the politeness of staff as well as their ability to identify and meet customer needs.

● **2.2.3 We prioritise customer focus at all levels of our organisation and evaluate individual and team commitment through the performance management system.**

The performance management process include the setting of targets for all staff - 'All staff targets have a customer focused element'. An example of a target is - 'Deal with enquiries, at the point of contact, achieving high levels of customer satisfaction'. Associate tutors do not participate in the formal performance management process. However, there are regular 1:1s where their quality of customer service is discussed. Performance management for Clerks incorporates self-analysis, which includes customer focused criteria. The self-analysis is discussed with a Chair, with outcomes recorded such as - 'She is a very important member of the Governing Body team and we benefit enormously from the high quality service we receive from her'.

- **2.2.4 We can demonstrate how customer facing staff insights, and experiences are incorporated into internal processes, policy development and service planning.**
This Element is Compliance Plus. (See Summary of Strengths).
- **2.2.5 We value the contribution our staff make to delivering customer focused services, and leaders, managers and staff demonstrate these behaviours.**
The performance management process allows Clerks to receive recognition from Chairs. (See Element 2.2.3). In addition, Special Recognition payments are available for staff who exceed targets. The CEO of Hampshire County Council also produces a blog which praises staff for their performance with regard to providing excellent services. Governor Services Head of Service has demonstrated customer focused behaviours by giving a presentation on Customer Care Quality of Delivery - 'This shows how our head of service prioritises and values customer service'.

3 - INFORMATION AND ACCESS

3.1 Range of Information

- **3.1.1 We make information about the full range of services we provide available to our customers and potential customers, including how and when people can contact us, how our services are run and who is in charge.**
The website provides comprehensive information on the range of services and how to access them. The website features tiles for different services, such as for prospective governors. There is also a You Tube link to a video on services. Information has also been presented to new Headteachers at induction events. Pre-course information is also issued to delegates covering joining instructions, course content and objectives.
- **3.1.2 Where there is a charge for services, we tell our customers how much they will have to pay.**
Governor Services charge for their different services. For example, AST (Advice Support & Training) is charged based on the number of pupils within a school. Page eight of SLAs covers the costs, as well as the methods and timescales for payment. The costs of training courses are contained in the Training Directory and are available on a pay as you go basis. Charges for the Clerking Service are based on an agreed meeting cycle and the number of hours a school wishes to purchase.

3.2 Quality of Information

- **3.2.1 We provide our customers with the information they need in ways which meet their needs and preferences, using a variety of appropriate channels.**
Governor Services provide information in a variety of ways. These are; via the website, email, phone calls, newsletters, fortnightly Advice and Support Updates, meetings, briefings and the GovernorHub system. The latter uses a message board and a resources archive. The Quality of Service Questionnaire asks customers if methods of communication meet their needs. Service Review Groups are also used to review how information can be best provided. This mechanism was used to determine the best method for communicating information on a blended learning programme.
- **3.2.2 We take reasonable steps to make sure our customers have received and understood the information we provide.**
Through establishing the preferred communication method for customers, Governor Services feel this increases the chance that it will be read and understood. Delegates on training courses receive advance information so that they know what to expect from a course in terms of content and learning objectives. In the content for courses, a recap session is used to check understanding. Clerk support meetings are also a way of following up with Clerks to see if they have received and understood information.

- **3.2.3 We have improved the range, content and quality of verbal, published and web based information we provide to ensure it is relevant and meets the needs of customers.**
The website is continually reviewed and updated. For example, for the creation of dedicated tiles for specific services. Two managers have the responsibility for an ongoing strategic overview of the website - 'To check the relevance of content, and to standardise our use of governance terminology'. The range of courses on offer is regularly reviewed, with new information released where appropriate. Work has also been undertaken to streamline content and frequency of information so as to avoid overload from the newsletter, fortnightly updates and training updates.
- **3.2.4 We can demonstrate that information we provide to our customers is accurate and complete, and that when this is not the case we advise customers when they will receive the information they requested.**
The steps outlined previously in Elements 3.2.1, 3.2.2 & 3.2.3 are all designed to ensure information is accurate and up to date. For a complex enquiry, Governor Services will inform the customer that they are taking legal advice so as to ensure any response is accurate. There are specific questions to check the accuracy of advice to customers. For one question, 100% agreed the information they received was clear and accurate.

3.3 Access

- **3.3.1 We make our services easily accessible to all customers through provision of a range of alternative channels.**
Access to services can be via a wide range of channels. For example, advice and support services are accessible via the website, email, phone calls, newsletters, fortnightly Advice and Support Updates, meetings, briefings and the GovernorHub system. Training courses are available face-to-face via online webinars and e-learning. In addition, bespoke advice and support can be provided with an agreed range of access channels to suit the customers needs.
- **3.3.2 We evaluate how customers interact with the organisation through access channels and we use this information to identify possible service improvements and offer better choices.**
This Element is Compliance Plus. (See Summary of Strengths).
- **3.3.3 We ensure that where customers can visit our premises in person, facilities are as clean and comfortable as possible.**
Governor Services do not routinely meet customers at their offices. Most support meetings now take place virtually. If face-to-face meetings with customers are required, staff will either travel to meet the customers at their school, or will arrange to meet them in an accessible, clean and comfortable Hampshire County Council venue. Training courses may be delivered within schools or at selected venues which comply with requirements for accessibility, including options for any delegates who may have mobility issues.

3.4 Co-operative working with other providers, partners and communities

- **3.4.1 We have made arrangements with other providers and partners to offer and supply co-ordinated services, and these arrangements have demonstrable benefits for our customers.**
Two partners sent in testimonials regarding working with Governor Services. An external partner, PLR Advisory Ltd, deliver training on behalf of Governor Services. They feel the benefit to Governor Services customers is having access to a credible trainer with extensive relevant experience. EFS (Educational Financial Services), an internal customer within the County Council, see the benefits as being able to offer Governor Services financial expertise when assisting with School Improvement Plans - 'Financial management of the school's delegated budget'.

- 3.4.2 We have developed co-ordinated working arrangements with our partners that ensure customers have clear lines of accountability for quality of services.**

The two partners confirmed how they agreed responsibilities for service delivery with Governor Services. PLR say Governor Services are very clear on the standards they expect from course delivery, including content and objectives. EFS say that very clear terms of reference are agreed around the quality and timeliness of any training or support. Both partners commented on very positive, cooperative and collaborative working with Governor Services.
- 3.4.3 We interact within wider communities and we can demonstrate the ways in which we support those communities.**

Through the very nature of their work, Governor Services interact with a large number of schools, which impacts on pupils and their parents. They are also committed to delivering policies on behalf of the wider Council. For example, the Children and Young People Plan and the Serving Hampshire Plan. Within Governor Services own Service Plan there are links to objectives such as 'People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment'. Governor Services also work across communities through work with the Catholic and Anglican dioceses.

4 - DELIVERY

4.1 Delivery Standards

- 4.1.1 We have challenging standards for our main services, which take account of our responsibility for delivering national and statutory standards and targets.**

The Service Plan includes standards and targets which relate to national and statutory targets. These include improving schools to a 'Good' Ofsted rating, and supporting governing boards to meet their statutory responsibilities. Governor Services are also required to meet the standards prescribed by the Department for Education to deliver The Professional Clerk programme.
- 4.1.2 We monitor and meet our standards, meet departmental and performance targets, and we tell our customers about our performance.**

Progress with regard to the objectives within the Service Plan are monitored regularly, with feedback given by the Head of Service at management team meetings. Most of the objectives are of a qualitative nature, but one relates to a quantifiable target - 'Monitor quality of service and customer satisfaction ratings'. The target for training course ratings is 4.5, and this is currently being met. Similar scores for the Clerking Service and Quality of Service are on target. Performance is reported to the Service Review Group, and is also published in the newsletter.
- 4.1.3 We consult and involve customers, citizens, partners and staff on the setting, reviewing and raising of our local standards.**

Governor Services are represented on the Hampshire Governors Association. This is a forum for consultation with partners and helps determine strategy and policy. The SRG (Service Review Group) includes customer representation, and is also a forum for consulting on policies and procedures - 'We routinely share our business plan with SRG, and we take forward ideas for improving services'. Clerking service staff have been involved in setting the standards for identified improvements.

4.2 Staff Professionalism and Attitude

- 4.2.1 We agree with our customers at the outset what they can expect from the service we provide.**

This Element is Compliance Plus. (See Summary of Strengths).

- 4.2.2 We can demonstrate that we deliver the service we promised to individual customers and that outcomes are positive for the majority of our customers.**

All customers interviewed were extremely complimentary about the services they were receiving. Comments include - 'Indispensable. Couldn't do my job without them'. One Chair of a new school commented - 'Amazing service'. With regard to the Clerking Service - 'It is an excellent service. When Clerks step in it is a seamless service'. The responsiveness and professionalism of staff were also commented on. New Chairs and Governors were extremely grateful of the support they receive - 'Its a tough job with a steep learning curve. I couldn't have got up it without their help'. These comments complement the quantitative satisfaction scores reported on previously in this report.
- 4.2.3 We can demonstrate that we benchmark our performance against that of similar or complimentary organisations and have used that information to improve our service.**

Governor Services utilise forums such NECOGS (National Co-ordinators of Governor Services) and SECOGS (South East Co-ordinators of Governor Services) to benchmark services and statistics. For the latter, Governor vacancy statistics are benchmarked, with a view to improving the way Governors are recruited. Benchmarking has also been recently undertaken with Hampshire Highways to compare approaches to obtaining customer feedback.
- 4.2.4 We have developed and learned from best practice identified within and outside our organisation, and we publish our examples externally where appropriate.**

Governor Services utilise forums such NECOGS and SECOGS to share best practice. An example shows how a group was set up within NECOGS to share best practice on the GovernorHub. Governor Services have also published an article about best practice for safeguarding in an Advice and Support Update for customers.

4.3 Deal effectively with problems

- 4.3.1 We identify any dips in performance against our standards and explain these to customers, together with action we are taking to put things right and prevent further recurrence.**

There have been no significant dips in performance over the last 12 months. However, one issue, although out of Governor Services control, is causing concern. This is the national shortage of school governors. As a result, Governor Services have created a recruitment tool-kit and run webinars on this issue.
- 4.3.2 We have an easy to use complaints procedure, which includes a commitment to deal with problems fully and solve them wherever possible within reasonable time limit.**

There is a complaints procedure, which includes a commitment to deal with problems fully and to solve them wherever possible within a specified time limit. Complaints can escalate to Hampshire County Council's complaints procedure. How to raise a complaint is promoted to customers on the website, and is covered within SLAs. Customers' awareness of how to raise complaints is monitored through the Quality of Service questionnaire. 89% of customers who responded knew how to raise a complaint.
- 4.3.3 We give staff training and guidance to handle complaints and to investigate them objectively, and we can demonstrate that we empower staff to put things right.**

As part of customer care training, all staff receive training on handling complaints - 'We want them to handle complaints objectively'. Training is also given to all new starters at induction. Any refresher training given also covers complaints handling. A Clerking Introductory Handbook also provides guidance to staff on how to try and resolve any issues locally when they arise.

- 4.3.4 We learn from any mistakes we make by identifying patterns in formal and informal complaints and comments from customers and use this information to improve services and publicise action taken.**

A common issue was identified from three complaints that related to Whole Governing Body Training. The complainants felt the sessions had not been tailored to fully meet their needs. As a result, pre-meetings have been introduced to ensure that future sessions would be bespoke. It was also decided to continue with a blend of online learning and centre-based training courses as a result of three complaints about the availability of places on courses.
- 4.3.5 We regularly review and improve our complaints procedure, taking account of the views of customers, complainants and staff.**

Staff were asked for their views on the complaints procedure during a recent review - 'Is it fit for purpose?' As a result on non-escalation to the County Council's procedure, it was agreed that it was fit for purpose. The County Council were also of the view that their policy was fit for purpose.
- 4.3.6 We ensure that the outcome of the complaint process for customers, whose complaint is upheld, is satisfactory for them.**

There has been no escalation to the County Council's complaints procedure as a result of Governor Services containing complaints internally through speedy resolution. All complaints are followed up with a message to the complainant - 'I hope you are satisfied with the way we have dealt with your complaint. If there is anything further you would like to discuss, please don't hesitate to us know.'

5 - TIMELINESS AND QUALITY OF SERVICE

5.1 Standards for Timeliness and Quality

- 5.1.1 We set appropriate and measurable standards for the timeliness of response for all forms of customer contact including phone calls, letters, e-communications and personal callers.**

Governor Services have appropriate standards and targets for timeliness, and these are publicised in SLAs. For example, responding to all urgent enquiries, however they reach us, within three working days, and responding to all non-urgent requests within five working days. Standards for timeliness also exist such as to acknowledge all written complaints within five working days.
- 5.1.2 We set comprehensive standards for all aspects of the quality of customer service to be expected in all dealings with our organisation.**

Standards in relation to the quality of service are again contained within SLAs. In a section entitled Information, Advice and Support, there are a number of statements including - 'We will provide fast, reliable, responsive and friendly support' and 'We will provide knowledgeable, sensible advice'.

5.2 Timely Outcomes

- 5.2.1 We advise our customers and potential customers about our promises on timeliness and quality of customer service.**

In addition to SLAs, information on the timeliness and quality of service is also included in the Clerking Service Terms and Conditions, the Clerking Service booklet and the Training Directory.

- 5.2.2 We identify individual customers needs at the first point of contact with us and ensure that an appropriate person who can address the reason for contact deals with the customer.**

Enquiries from new customers about purchasing Advice and Support services are passed to the Head of Service or an Operational Manager. The Clerking team deal with enquiries from prospective new Clerking Service customers. Enquiries for training are dealt with by the training team. Governor applications made via the online application form are sent to the relevant district co-ordinator to identify a suitable placement. Chairs receiving ongoing bespoke support from the co-ordinator team have a named contact to help them, and they are provided with contact details for that member of staff.
- 5.2.3 We promptly share customer information with colleagues and partners within our organisation whenever appropriate and can demonstrate how this has reduced unnecessary contact for customers.**

For the Clerking Service, when a clerk finishes a contract and is replaced with a new clerk, staff ensure that there is a smooth handover of information. The GovernorHub is used to share information, with paperwork stored for easy access by governors. Appropriate information is shared with partner organisations within the County Council, who work with Governor Services on School Improvement Plans. This reduces duplication of effort and paperwork.
- 5.2.4 Where service is not completed at the first point of contact we discuss with the customer the next steps and indicate the likely overall time to achieve outcomes.**

Services cannot always be delivered immediately. For example, a Clerk cannot be instantly appointed, with Governor Services keeping the school informed on the likely date. A new system has also been introduced to enhance communications with customers seeking Clerking cover. Regularity of formal contact is also agreed with Chairs and Governors, although they can contact Governor Services at anytime.
- 5.2.5 We respond to initial enquiries promptly, and if there is a delay we advise the customer and take action to rectify the problem.**

Where there is a delay or a problem, Governor Services take action to rectify the problem and tell customers about this, either by email or through the message board facility on GovernorHub. For example, there was a delay in receiving the outcome of a policy on pay. Information was therefore put on the GovernorHub advising of the delay.

5.3 Achieved Timely Delivery

- 5.3.1 We monitor our performance against standards for timeliness and quality of customer service and we take action if problems are identified.**

Quality of Service Questionnaires are used to monitor the timeliness and quality of service for Advice and Support. A recent report revealed that the quality of response had dropped slightly since 2019. As a result, steps were taken to improve the inbox monitoring processes. The quality of training courses is monitored through post-course evaluation forms. Clerking Service evaluation is undertaken, as well as an annual Clerks' performance management process. These mechanisms are used to check the quality of Clerking Services.
- 5.3.2 We are meeting our current standards for timeliness and quality of customer service and we publicise our performance against these standards.**

Through using the monitoring mechanisms outlined in Element 5.3.1, Governor Services were able to show that all targets for the timeliness and quality of service are currently being met, and in some cases exceeded.

● **5.3.3 Our performance in relation to timeliness and quality of service compares well with that of similar organisations.**

It is difficult to compare the timeliness of service with similar organisations. As a result, a benchmarking exercise was undertaken with Hampshire County Council Highways Department, with results comparing favourably, although each service has different circumstances. Through the use of GovernorHub, it is felt that Governor Services get information to Governors much quicker than similar organisations.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no actions that require immediate attention and I am pleased to pass on to Assessment Services Ltd's Certification Committee my recommendation that you be certificated as meeting the Customer Service Excellence Standard. Certification is valid for three years from the Certification Committee's decision date and is subject to ongoing annual reviews as follows:

Annual Review Year 1 - January 2024

Annual Review Year 2 - January 2025

3-Year Review - January 2026

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your kind cooperation during this assessment.

Neil Potentier

CSE Assessor for Assessment Services Ltd.

29th January 2023

7. COMPLIANCE AGAINST THE CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE STANDARD

1 - Customer Insight

	Element	Accreditation
1.1	1.1.1	● Compliance
	1.1.2	● Compliance
	1.1.3	● Compliance
1.2	1.2.1	● Compliance
	1.2.2	● Compliance
	1.2.3	● Compliance
1.3	1.3.1	● Compliance
	1.3.2	● Compliance
	1.3.3	● Compliance
	1.3.4	● Compliance
	1.3.5	● Compliance

2 - The Culture of the Organisation

	Element	Accreditation
2.1	2.1.1	● Compliance
	2.1.2	● Compliance
	2.1.3	● Compliance Plus
	2.1.4	● Compliance
	2.1.5	● Compliance
	2.1.6	● Compliance Plus
2.2	2.2.1	● Compliance
	2.2.2	● Compliance
	2.2.3	● Compliance
	2.2.4	● Compliance Plus
	2.2.5	● Compliance

3 - Information and Access

	Element	Accreditation
3.1	3.1.1	● Compliance
	3.1.2	● Compliance
3.2	3.2.1	● Compliance
	3.2.2	● Compliance
	3.2.3	● Compliance
	3.2.4	● Compliance

	Element	Accreditation
3.3	3.3.1	● Compliance
	3.3.2	● Compliance Plus
	3.3.3	● Compliance
3.4	3.4.1	● Compliance
	3.4.2	● Compliance
	3.4.3	● Compliance

4 - Delivery

	Element	Accreditation
4.1	4.1.1	● Compliance
	4.1.2	● Compliance
	4.1.3	● Compliance
4.2	4.2.1	● Compliance Plus
	4.2.2	● Compliance
	4.2.3	● Compliance
	4.2.4	● Compliance
4.3	4.3.1	● Compliance
	4.3.2	● Compliance
	4.3.3	● Compliance
	4.3.4	● Compliance
	4.3.5	● Compliance
	4.3.6	● Compliance

5 - Timeliness and Quality of Service

	Element	Accreditation
5.1	5.1.1	● Compliance
	5.1.2	● Compliance
5.2	5.2.1	● Compliance
	5.2.2	● Compliance
	5.2.3	● Compliance
	5.2.4	● Compliance
	5.2.5	● Compliance
5.3	5.3.1	● Compliance
	5.3.2	● Compliance
	5.3.3	● Compliance