

Culture, Recognition and Sustainability

Purpose: Effective governance depends on people.

People are more likely to remain involved when expectations are clear, support is available, contributions are recognised and development is encouraged. Regular assessment and recording of culture, induction process and succession planning supports future planning.

TOOL 5.1: Governance Culture Health Check

Score each question:

No = 0

Sometimes = 1

Usually = 2

Question	Score
All members contribute	
Challenge is constructive	
Contributions are recognised	
New members are supported	
Meetings are inclusive	
Communication is effective	
Different views are welcomed	
Governance is respected and valued	

Results

Score	Rating	What does it mean for us?
12–16	Green - Low	Positive governance culture
7–11	Amber - Moderate	Areas for improvement
0–6	Red - High	Culture review recommended

Example:

Total Score = 9

Rating = Amber

Action:

- Improve participation.
- Review induction.
- Strengthen recognition.

Case Study Snapshot

Challenge: During a period of school improvement, governors needed to maintain appropriate challenge while supporting school leaders and each other.

What helped: Ensuring all governors had opportunities to contribute and maintaining focused, respectful discussions.

Impact: Improved governance effectiveness, clearer challenge and a positive governance culture.

Related Toolkit Tool(s): Tool 5.1 Governance Culture Health Check and Tool 5.7 Building Culture Through Governance Practices.

TOOL 5.2: Recognition Matters

Do we:

- ☐ Thank people for contributions?
- ☐ Recognise collective achievements?
- ☐ Celebrate milestones?
- ☐ Acknowledge volunteer commitment?
- ☐ Recognise governance professionals / clerks?

Simple Recognition Practices

During Meetings

- ☐ Thank contributors
- ☐ Recognise / acknowledge achievements

Annually

- ☐ Celebrate governance successes
- ☐ Recognise service and commitment

Informally

- ☐ Personal messages
- ☐ Positive feedback

Recognition should be genuine: avoid token gestures that feel artificial

TOOL 5.3: NEW GOVERNOR INDUCTION CHECKLIST

Before First Meeting

- ☐ Agree who will be responsible for induction
- ☐ Welcome conversation
- ☐ Role description
- ☐ Key governance information
- ☐ Meeting schedule

First Meeting Checklist

- ☐ Introductions completed
- ☐ Mentor identified
- ☐ Key processes explained
- ☐ Questions encouraged

First Term Plan:

Month 1 - Induction

Month 2 - Meeting participation

Month 3 - Development discussion

TOOL 5.4: New Governor Engagement Check-In

Ask:

Do you feel able to contribute?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you understand the board's priorities?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Is your contribution valued?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you wish to remain involved?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Participation Review Tool

Review:

- attendance;
- contribution;
- engagement;
- development.

Board Reflection: What helps people remain involved in governance here?

TOOL 5.5: Governance Succession Planning Template

Why Succession Planning Matters

Dependency on one individual creates governance risk - effective governance requires resilience and continuity. Sharing responsibility, spotting talent and encouraging participation all remove barriers governor/trustee willingness to volunteer/step up.

Area	Detail
Key Role	
Current Post Holder	
Potential Successors	
Development Required	
Review Date	

Key Role Risk Assessment

Role	Low	Moderate	High
Chair	☐	☐	☐
Vice Chair	☐	☐	☐
Governance Professional / Clerk	☐	☐	☐
Committee Chair	☐	☐	☐

Handover Checklist:

- ☐ Key documents identified
- ☐ Knowledge transferred
- ☐ Successor briefed
- ☐ Support available

TOOL 5.6: Are We Sustainable?

Annual Governance Sustainability Review

- | | |
|---|--|
| Is workload reasonable? | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| Is responsibility distributed fairly? | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| Is anyone carrying too much responsibility? | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| Are key roles dependent on one individual? | ☐ Yes ☐ No |
| Are people confident in their roles? | ☐ Yes ☐ No |

Sustainability Scorecard

Area	Low	Moderate	High
Workload			
Support			
Retention			
Succession			
Development			

Improvement Planning template

Issue	Action	Owner	Review Date

Case Study Snapshot

Challenge: Governance responsibilities became concentrated amongst a small number of volunteers due to vacancies and differing levels of availability.

What helped: Reviewing workload distribution and considering succession and recruitment planning.

Impact: Highlighted the importance of sustainability and reducing reliance on key individuals.

Related Toolkit Tool(s): Tool 5.5 Governance Succession Planning and Tool 5.6 Are We Sustainable

TOOL 5.7: Building Culture Through Governance Practices

Governance Behaviours Framework

Expected Behaviours

- Respect;
- Preparation;
- Constructive challenge;
- Collaboration;
- Accountability.

Unhelpful Behaviours

- Personal criticism;
- Dominance;
- Disengagement;
- Poor preparation.

Meeting Norms

We will:

- listen respectfully;
- focus on evidence;
- challenge ideas, not people;
- encourage participation.

Shared Commitment: We will contribute to a culture that supports effective governance and sustainable participation.

TOOL 5.8 NAGAS Board Workload and Wellbeing Charter

As a board you may wish to adopt the NAGAS Board Wellbeing Charter. The charter brings together the key principles of effective governance, workload management and wellbeing promoted throughout this toolkit. It provides a simple set of commitments that boards can use to strengthen governance culture, support sustainable participation and reduce avoidable workload pressures.

On the next page, we have provided an example that boards may wish to adapt and adopt.

Choose any 6-10 statements that best reflect your board's priorities and agree them collectively at a board meeting.

Tip: Revisit the charter mid-year and celebrate one positive change or wellbeing improvement achieved as a result.

Insert Governing Board name

Workload and Wellbeing Charter



Good governance works best when workload is manageable, people feel supported and responsibilities are shared. These commitments help us work together in a way that is effective, sustainable and respectful of everyone's time.

- We keep meetings focused, useful and on time.
- We keep agendas and papers clear, manageable and easy to prepare for.
- We avoid unnecessary last-minute pressures and allow enough time for people to prepare.
- We make sure everyone knows what has been agreed and who will do what next.
- We focus on the bigger picture and avoid getting involved in day-to-day management.
- We make roles, responsibilities and expectations clear.
- We respect people's time and do not expect replies outside agreed hours.
- We listen to each other, respect different views and challenge constructively.
- We pay attention to the wellbeing of everyone involved in governance.
- We talk about workload and wellbeing before problems become bigger.
- We make sure our Governance Professional or Clerk has the time and support needed to do their role well.
- We say thank you and recognise the contribution people make.
- We create meetings where everyone feels comfortable speaking and contributing.
- We give new governors a warm welcome and the support they need to get started.
- We share responsibilities fairly and avoid relying too much on one person.
- We support learning, development and future governance leaders.