

NGA Briefing 080110

The NGA weekly news briefing is an essential document for any governor, clerk or governor support officer. The briefing gives details of new research, government consultation papers, policy announcements and legislation, together with a summary of recent education stories in the media.

All best wishes to NGA members for 2010. We hope that you are enjoying rather than enduring the current cold snap. We apologise to members if they have had difficulty ringing the office over the past week. We have suffered a technical glitch with our 'phone system and calls are not automatically switching to the answering machine during out of office hours, or in office hours when we are on another call. We are working to fix this problem and we apologise for any inconvenience caused.

Too much money?

Schools minister Vernon Coaker has released figures on school balances which reveal that more than nine out of ten schools held a surplus at the end of the last financial year.

Surplus balances were held by 91 per cent of schools, with 33 per cent holding an excessive balance, as defined by DCSF guidance as over 8 per cent of budget for primary and special schools and over 5 per cent of budget for secondary schools. These 'excessive' surpluses totalled £495 million. This matters of course because local authorities have the power to 'claw back' excessive balances.

"The NGA's policy statement on revenue funding can be found via the attached link <http://www.nga.org.uk/pol-funding.aspx> - on balances it states:

"While accepting that there may be legitimate projects that require governing bodies to hold reserve funds, the NGA believes that such reserves should be clearly identified and that the holding of excessive uncommitted reserves is not good practice. Schools Forums have an important role to play in ensuring that local funding is distributed on an equitable basis and are best placed to decide whether the level of an individual school's balances is acceptable."

The DCSF made it clear when it decided not to require LAs to institute a blanket 5% clawback on all balances (committed or uncommitted) that LAs and Schools Forums needed to take balances in hand at a local level and institute robust controls. If LAs and Schools Forums cannot demonstrate they are doing this then in the current financial situation the risk is that government will use the issue of surplus balances as evidence to justify budget cuts or standstills.

Individual governing bodies need to ensure that they have clear plans in place for the use of any surplus balances.

The ministerial statement and accompanying financial information can be downloaded [here](#)

And whilst on the subject

Last year the government brought forward money from 2010-11 budget and made it available to spend this year. Latest figures show that over a quarter of this money has yet to be spent. Local authorities were given money for their schools related capital programmes, but schools were also given money direct.

£390 million was allocated a year early direct to every school in the country – bringing

forward 40 per cent of all Devolved Formula Capital allocated for 2010-11 to 2009-10. This meant:

- a typical unmodernised primary school of 250 pupils received £47,950 this year, including £13,700 brought forward from their 2010-11 allocations. A primary newly built, rebuilt or refurbished in the last decade received £23,975, up from £17,125
- a typical unmodernised secondary school of 1000 pupils received £158,200, including £45,200 brought forward. A secondary newly built, rebuilt or refurbished in the last decade received £79,100 up from £56,500

Governors need to be sure that they have taken account of this additional funding in their spending plans.

Winter conference

We are receiving a steady stream of bookings for the [NGA Winter conference](#). The Conference will address major areas in the 21st Century Schools White Paper, ranging from the new role for school improvement partners to the new landscape for the children's workforce and the ways that local authorities can support the governors in their locality. This is not a NGA members' event and there are NO free places. We have however secured support which allows us to offer a £100 discount to NGA members and to governors. NGA associations are allowed three subsidised places.

NGA members have in the past been able to leave their bookings until the last minute and still be sure of a conference place. This is not true for this event. If you intend to attend we recommend that you make your booking as soon as possible

NGA Go East Conferences

The NGA is working with the government office for the east region (Go East) on two regional conferences with the theme – 'Facing the challenges of governing this year'. The conferences are free and are open to any governor. Governors have a choice of two venues:

- Wyboston Lakes Conference Centre in Bedfordshire on January 30th
- Imperial War Museum, Duxford, on February 20th

More details, including booking forms, can be found on the [events](#) section of the NGA website.

The newsletter

We are making slight changes to the newsletter format next week. In future NGA members will receive the email newsletter in the form of summary paragraphs which will link to the full newsletter on the website. This will allow us more flexibility in how we present the newsletter. The full newsletter can always be read by following the links on the [News](#) section of the NGA website.

Clare's Blog

The Chair's blog can be downloaded via the attached link - [Chair's Blog](#)

Contact NGA

by e-mail governorhq@nga.org.uk - or by phone at 0121-237 3780

This newsletter is distributed as a benefit of NGA membership.

We do **NOT** approve of NGA members forwarding the entire briefing to non-members, though we are happy for local authorities and associations to use extracts from the briefing in their own local newsletters

If you are receiving a copy forwarded by a governor colleague, local authority or local association you will find that some of the links will not work.

If you think this news briefing is a valuable resource you should consider becoming a NGA member - more information on membership can be found on the NGA website, or by following this [link](#)