**Associate Members**

 **Roles and Responsibilities**

Associate members are persons invited to attend meetings of the governing body because of the expertise and/or specialist knowledge that they bring to the governing body meetings. They are not governors and do not form part of the constitution of the governing body. Associate members can be members of staff, parents or other members of the community. In order to fulfil the requirements of a school audit, you should ask associate members to complete a declaration of eligibility and a register of business interests, as you would a new governor. It is up to the governing body whether they require an associate member to complete a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

Associate members are appointed by the full governing body onto one of its committees (in line with the skills that they bring) and should be given a term of office by the governing body at the time of appointment of between one and four years.

They are expected to attend the meetings of the committee onto which they have been appointed and, provided they are aged eighteen or over, may vote, however voting rights should be agreed by the governing body at the time of appointment. Associate members do form part of the quorum for the committee onto which they have been appointed. There are currently no restrictions on what an associate member can and cannot vote on at committee meetings.

Associate members are entitled to attend full governing body meetings and receive a copy of the agenda and paperwork. They are not entitled to have a vote at full governing body meetings.

In line with governors, associate members should make declarations of interest at any meeting they attend. Unlike governors however, a meeting of the full governing body or any of its committees may exclude an associate member from any part of its meeting when the business under consideration concerns an individual and identifiable member of staff or pupil.

When their term of office expires, associate members may be re-appointed by the governing body for a further term of office if appropriate.

Governing bodies should not delegate any of their functions to an associate member as an individual under the rules of delegation.

An associate member may be removed by the governing body at any time.

Associate members should not hold the office of chair or vice chair of the governing body as these roles are to be undertaken by governors. There is nothing in the regulations that prevents associate members from chairing committees, however, the governing body should carefully consider whether this is best practice and how this might impact on succession planning for the future leadership of the governing body. It should also be noted that where an associate member is chairing a meeting they do not have a second or casting vote in the event of a tied vote.

Guidance from the DfE in May 2014 contains the following statement: *the need for governing bodies to establish committees, including for exclusions or disciplinary matters, does not in itself necessitate a large governing body. Committees of the governing body can be established specifically for these purposes to which new associate members may be appointed.* Therefore, notwithstanding any of the points above, it would appear that associate members can be appointed to committees which deal with pupil exclusions, complaints, staffing matters etc.

Associate members may be paid allowances and travel expenses if the governing body has a policy allowing such payments to be made to governors.

Finally, the governing body should remember that it remains accountable for any business undertaken on its behalf and associate members do not form part of the accountable body.