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CASE STUDY

The Governor Support and Development Service (GSDS) – City of York Council





Client

The Governor Support and Development Service (GSDS) – City of York Council

Industry

Education

Project

Meetings & Board Management

About

63 publicly funded schools, including community and voluntary controlled schools as well as academies that are often run together within a group of academies called a Multi Academy Trust (MAT).



The Governor Support and Development Service (GSDS) – City of York Council

The Governor Support and Development Service (GSDS) in York is a service provider within City of York Council that supports compliance and effective decision-making within maintained schools and Multi Academy Trusts.

Governing boards can access advice and training alongside a full clerking package for meetings and sub-committees of Members, Board of Directors, Local Governing Committees and Full Governing Boards.





Challenges

As part of its provided services, the GSDS compiles agendas and supporting documentation for board meetings. Historically they would communicate with various members using email and send agendas and papers as collated PDFs. Though the agenda for any given meeting needed to be distributed seven days in advance, inevitably, documents would be submitted late, or last-minute changes would be necessary.

When that happened, the entire PDF would have to be reworked and redistributed, a time-consuming, menial task that interfered with the true mission of the organisation. Often, sensitive papers needed to be sent to a select group of board members, requiring additional separate emails. It was a cumbersome process that flooded inboxes and made it difficult for governors to keep track.

Additionally, since many governors used personal email addresses that were often shared with family members and Debra Wilcock, Governor Support and Training Manager, knew they faced a confidentiality crisis. The new GDPR regulations were looming and the current process was simply not adequate.

A time for change

Though the GSDS began by supporting maintained schools, over time many of those schools began converting to academies and joining multi-academy trusts. Debra was eager to find a meeting management solution that not only met GDPR standards, but also provided a secure portal to store and retrieve documents and to share resources effectively with other local boards.

The arduous, frustrating process of assembling PDF agenda packs and then inevitably having to rename and re-sort as changes were made, was exacerbating. Debra and her team resolved to find a solution to all of these problems and that process took nearly four months.



The solution

Debra's team requested the support of an internal information and communication technician, as well as a governor who had a background in IT, to help them choose between six different solutions that they had identified following extensive research. They needed a solution that did not rely on Wi-Fi access, as many schools struggled when visitors tried to access their network. The solution had to be secure, and it had to be easy to use.

“Meetings & Board Management was a clear winner because of how professional it looked, how easy it was to use and the fact that it could be accessed while offline. We were confident that it was tackling the issues that we were initially concerned about.”

Debra Wilcock, Governor Support and Training Manager

The outcome

The GSDS has now implemented Meetings & Board Management in over 39 schools (36 academies within six MATs and three maintained schools) with more implementations to follow.

“We promote the benefits of using Meetings & Board Management to governors by explaining that it keeps all of the papers and information in one place. They won't get multiple emails with attached agendas and documents that they have to keep up with. Six months later they won't be wondering where they put the paper meeting pack they need, which prior to the implementation of Meetings & Board Management happened all the time.”

The system has proven to be extremely easy to use. When documents need to be added they are simply uploaded to the individual agenda items. If a head teacher or chair needs to add a document, even at the last minute, they can upload it themselves instead of sending an email request to a clerk and waiting for them to make the change. In fact, 90% of head teachers and chairs are now making their own changes to agendas using Meetings & Board Management.



Meetings & Board Management overview

- Easy to use, highly intuitive software ensures adoption by the board.
- Well prepared and informed attendees delivers more engaged and productive meetings.
- Better focus due to the smooth running of meetings.
- Last minute changes are easy to incorporate so packs are distributed earlier.
- Reduced administration saving significant time for the meeting organisers.
- Exceptional training and support allowed for a seamless transition.

“Of all of the users that I personally have set-up across a MAT of 9 academies, its trust board and sub-committees, I’ve not had a single person come and say, ‘I can’t use this.’ Literally not a single one, and that ranges from people who are working in schools through to retired people who would class themselves as technophobes and don’t like using new things.”

Barbara Kybett, Governance Advisor



“Meetings & Board Management provides significant savings in terms of time for us and for headteachers and chairs. They no longer have to email multiple times saying, ‘Can this be added? Could you amend this? Yes, I’ve moved that. Is this the layout you want? No. Could you move that down?’ All of that is done on the Meetings & Board Management platform rather than via six or seven separate emails.”

Meetings & Board Management allows permissions to be set for specific people and specific documents. Debra says **“knowing that they can hide or share various documents for various people is hugely beneficial. Clerks no longer have to send out multiple emails, tweaking the address line each time.”**

“With Meetings & Board Management all my committees are already set up. I know that when I send the meeting notification email it’s going to the right people and I don’t have to think about that again next time. Obviously, things change. Governors come and go, but it’s easy to manage. If someone new joins the board you just simply add them as an attendee for all the meetings that are already in place,” says Barbara.

With Meetings & Board Management, making changes is simple. Changing a meeting date or adding a document can be done in seconds. After the change is made, you can choose whether or not to notify other members of the update.


Debra’s staff are now able to devote their energies to supporting the important work of school governance. Debra explains, **“It’s allowed them to use the time that they have for each setting and give greater support to the boards that they’re advising. Not having to duplicate administrative tasks means they can spend more time researching, supporting, and ensuring that boards are meeting their statutory requirements. We’re there to make sure that governors are undertaking what they absolutely have to do, and having more time to look into and prepare for future changes in legislation is huge.”**



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Want to know more about Meetings & Board Management?
Contact us or speak to your Account Manager.

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