

ITEM

MEETING	Council
DATE	13 May 2010
TITLE	School Holidays 2010/11
PURPOSE	Report based on further consultation
REPORT BY	Dewi R Jones, Head of Education
RECOMMENDATION	For approval
PORTFOLIO HOLDER	Cllr Liz Saville Roberts

Background

At the Council meeting held on 21 January 2010, Cllr John Pughe Roberts' proposal that the LEA's schools Summer Term 2011 closure date be changed from Wednesday 20 July to Friday 16 July so as to enable pupils, parents, teachers and others from the schools' workforce wishing to attend the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show held at Builth Wells without any hindrance, was discussed.

I presented a report that set out the procedure that was followed when deciding on school holiday dates for the next six years through joint consultation with North Wales LEA's, the schools and teaching unions.

Respecting the measures taken by education officers and members of North Wales Inter-authority Task Group when co-ordinating school holiday dates in the region, elected members agreed on an amendment to the original proposal, requesting that the education officers review all the discussions so as to implement the Council's wishes and enable parents and children within the County to attend the Show in 2011. We were also asked, via the Association of Directors of Education Wales, to contact the Welsh Assembly Education Minister and request him to provide school holiday arrangements that would apply throughout Wales, and would take events of national importance into account.

Further action

With regard to the above, I took the following measures:

- i. I contacted the Officer who co-ordinates arrangements and policy for the Association of Directors of Education Wales and asked him for the background to the discussions in this field, the links with former Education ministers and future intentions. He provided the following information:
 - Setting school holiday dates is at LEA's discretion.
 - Over recent years, there had been a gradual shift towards regional arrangements.
 - The next step would be to try and establish a national pattern. This will involve considerable discussion.
 - The need to consider changing the school calendar year to six terms.
 - (Therefore this is the current situation as regards discussions at a national level between Wales Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Education Wales).

- ii. I held further consultations with the following groups:
- The County's secondary school Headteachers.
 - The County's primary and special schools headteachers Advisory Group.
 - The County's primary and special schools Headteachers.
 - Teachers Unions Forum.
 - The North Wales Consortium Association of Directors of Education Wales.

None of these groups wished to see any change in school holiday term dates.

I also requested school headteachers to discuss the issue with their governing bodies, and send me any significant comments. I received comments from two Governing Bodies and my response was that I would present further comments to the full Council during the Summer Term.

Comments

Although comments presented in my previous report are reiterated, I again mention them in the interest of convenience:

- It would be problematic to find three school days to replace the days lost in July.
- A local solution could be found through a combination of reclaiming days by holding evening hours INSET sessions, parents using their entitlement to request additional holidays under alternative arrangements, and schools to consider organizing trips to the show.

In my discussions with headteachers, I noted that an individual school could apply to the LEA for the annual holidays to be varied so as to facilitate its own arrangements. We could support such a request if an individual school and its Governing Body accepted responsibility for organizing three school days in place of the additional annual holidays in July.

Conclusion

May I thank you as members for providing an opportunity for me to hold another consultation that in itself is a recognition of our procedure in dealings with our stakeholders.

I therefore ask that you consider the comments in the previous sub-section and reach a decision on that basis.