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## SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 16/03/17

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**Present:**

**Councillor Beth Lawton (Chair)**  
**Councillor Eirwyn Williams (Vice-chair)**

**Councillors:** Alan Jones Evans, Aled Evans, E. Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd, Elin Walker Jones, Eryl Jones-Williams, Dewi Owen, Hefin Williams and R. H. Wyn Williams.

**The Catholic Church:** Rita Price

**Teachers' Unions:** Dilwyn Ellis Hughes and David Healey

**Officers:** Arwel Ellis Jones (Senior Corporate Support Manager), Gareth James (Member Support and Scrutiny Manager) and Glynda O'Brien (Member Support Officer).

**Also in attendance:**

**For Items 4 and 5 below:**

Councillor Gareth Thomas, Cabinet Member for Education  
Arwyn Thomas, Head of Education Department  
Garem Jackson, Area Education Officer  
Bethan Eleri Roberts, Performance Management Officer

**For Item 6 below:**

Councillor Mair Rowlands, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People  
Aled Davies, Head of Adults, Health and Well-being Department

**Apologies:** Councillors Linda Ann Wyn Jones, Peter Read and Gareth A. Roberts, Ann Williams, W. Gareth Roberts (Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being).

### 1. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (a) The Head of Education was congratulated on his recent appointment as Director of GwE, noting that it would be a great loss for Gwynedd but wished him every success for the future.
- (b) The Chair thanked her fellow members and officers for their support and commitment to the work of this Scrutiny Committee.
- (c) Best wishes were relayed to everyone who would be standing for election in May.

### 2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

Gareth James, Member Support and Scrutiny Manager stated an interest in Item 5 - the Education Service's Annual Report, because his daughter was a Foundation Phase teacher at Ysgol Bethel, Caernarfon.

The officer was of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest, and he withdrew from the Chamber during the discussion on the item in question.

### 3. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of this Committee held on 26 January 2017 as a true record subject to the following amendments:

#### (a) Item 2 (a) - Statement from the Chair

Councillor Alwyn Griffith stated that the minutes should specifically refer to the fact that the Head of Education had been appointed to manage GwE on a temporary part-time basis, in addition to referring to the work of investigating GwE's organisation.

#### (b) Item 6 - Welsh-Medium Education Scrutiny Investigation - Progress Report

Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd expressed:

- (i) his wish to include the fact that he had noted in the previous meeting, when discussing references and different observations in the report by Mr Alun Charles, an external Consultant, deriving from his investigation into the Council's language policy, "that it was ridiculous that Welsh-medium education was available from the Foundation Phase up to a degree in Cardiff but that this was not the case in Gwynedd."
- (ii) his dissatisfaction with using the word "approve" in the decision and the report being "accepted" would be most appropriate because the above investigation had not extended the argument at all but, rather, justified the "status quo".

In response, the Senior Corporate Support Manager noted that his understanding was that the Committee had expressed gratitude for the report and had approved the recommendations apart from one recommendation, namely 9.1, regarding defining Gwynedd secondary schools by the language of the education under one category, namely bilingual schools - and that further work was needed in this field. This had been tested with the Scrutiny Committee on the day and the report's content had been approved.

An opportunity was given to the Chair and Scrutiny Committee Members to respond to the above observations and, if different proposals were not submitted, the previous meeting's decision on this matter was accurate and in accordance with the Scrutiny Committee's decision on that day.

Following a further discussion, the Scrutiny Committee confirmed that the record was correct.

#### (c) Item 6 (ii) point (i)

To remove the words "It was felt that Popdy - Bangor Language Centre ....." and to change the wording of the comment made to explain it to read as:

"That the role of Popdy - Bangor Language Centre, was to develop a community language initiative to address the language in all types of contexts. It was noted that the purpose of the discussion was that an Immersion Centre involved with education was needed in Bangor."

### 4. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EDUCATION SERVICE

Submitted - the Education Service's annual report by the Education Cabinet Member, drawing attention to the following main points:

## (i) Performance

- Significant increase in the TL2+ indicator
- Improvement in the performance of Free School Meals pupils and the gap had reduced between pupils receiving FSM / not receiving FSM
- The performance of learners at the end of key stage 3, especially in the core subject indicator
- Increase in learner attendance in secondary and primary

In terms of performance development, it was noted that it was necessary to:

- Give immediate attention to the Foundation Phase
- Improve performance in the Welsh language at every key stage
- Improve performance of Free School Meals learners
- Improve performance of post-16 learners in specific courses

## (i) Education Provision

- Promote the well-being and safety of pupils
- Support leaders and managers
- Leadership models that would offer conditions to remove the enormous pressure placed on Headteachers
- Profile of surveys had highlighted an improvement with no schools in a statutory category
- Submit a Modernising Education programme at good pace
- The County's Language Policy - ensure resources to extend the Language Charter into the secondary sector
- Further improve ICT infrastructure
- Performance Data - tracking was all important in identifying pupils who were falling behind
- Support governors to be effective

The recommendations regarding ensuring the highest possible standards at every key stage were referred to, and attention was drawn to what GwE was required to do on behalf of the education authority with regard to the education provision, additional learning needs and inclusion strategy and school leadership and management.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were made by individual Members:

- (i) From recent experience by Elected Members shadowing GwE Challenge Advisers, evidence was seen that schools received much assistance and support from GwE. It was further noted that the experiences had been very beneficial to Members and in maximising their understanding of the work and arrangements of GwE
- (ii) By avoiding using the word "challenge", it was seen that schools were willing to collaborate and the importance of continuing to improve the relationship between GwE and the schools was noted
- (iii) That the county's teachers were to be congratulated for the high standards.

Clarification was requested for on some of the points below, which also needed further attention, and the Head of Education responded to them:

- (iv) The comprehensive report was welcomed and the progress made was praised, but there was concern that some schools were in the red category and an enquiry was made about the steps taken to support these schools.

- *That the report's culture identified strengths and also identified room for improvement in terms of the process, so that the development work could address these matters that need improvement. Findings were seen here that would form the specification for a business plan between the authority and GwE for the coming year*

- *That the report identified the Service's strengths and set a firm foundation to work as a team and in partnership. It was further noted that Members of this Scrutiny Committee had added value by challenging and scrutinising effectively.*

- *Whatever the procedure would be, there would always be good schools, and schools that needed additional support and it was noted that the authority and GwE's procedures had worked well to this end. However, the achievement was to develop middle managers to be good leaders.*

- (v) There was concern about the role of the governors in light of the changes and demands placed on them for the Future.

*It was recognised that the role of governors was challenging as it was, and that there was a need to highlight the elements needed to support them, not only locally but regionally. It was noted that the existing consultation for the governors' duties and arrangements created concern that not enough attention was given to the rural element, and should the element of local democracy be waived, this would leave a gap.*

- (vi) What plans were in the pipeline by the Education Department to improve the Foundation Phase?

*There was concern regarding the performance of the Foundation Phase regionally and a number of elements were noted in terms of responding to what could be achieved, such as:*

- *Regularly assessing children*
- *Assessing the standards*
- *Leadership*

*It was further noted that there were examples of excellence in the Foundation Phase with the performance being consistent in the highest quartiles and that it would be an idea to investigate excellence beyond the county.*

- (vii) Importance of responding to pupils' behaviours, especially following the loss of the Brynffynnon Centre provision, where benefit was seen from the centre's function

*It was trusted that the concern could be addressed soon regarding the behaviours' support.*

(viii) Whilst acknowledging that School to School collaboration happened, the situation must be faced that schools competed against each other for pupils

*In the context of budgets, the Cabinet had approved a temporary bridging scheme to assist the secondary sector.*

(ix) In the recent Gwynedd Schools' Governors' Federation, it was noted that post-16 learners from the Meirion/Dwyfor area had to pay £100 per term for transport to the educational organisations and that learners from the Arfon area received free transport.

(x) Gwynedd had too many policies within the County which, consequently, made it difficult for scrutinisers to be able to scrutinise effectively, e.g. one school within the Meirion/Dwyfor area offered sixth form provision and the rest did not.

*Policies across the County were quite consistent but that the infrastructure was different in terms of sixth form and further discussions would be required in terms of post-16 education quality in the new Council.*

(xi) Welsh Language - it was noted in the report that Ysgol Bro Idris would be an all-through catchment school for 3 - 16 years old, but in the Berwyn catchment area, it was noted that the school would play a key part in promoting the Welsh language. It was asked why the circumstances had changed?

*It was agreed that the Welsh Language was a corporate matter. It was further noted that clarity was needed nationally regarding the role of education to promote the Welsh language, and a discussion was needed about who was taking ownership. It must be completely clear that the Welsh Language was financially part of the corporate strategy.*

(xii) The Welsh Language Charter - it was noted that one of the Charter's successes was that the Council and the Government had taken ownership from the beginning, and that the money for appointing other officers should not come from the education budget.

(xiii) In light of changes to the new GCSE specifications, it was asked how confident the Education Service was that the schools had sufficiently planned for the amended specifications and that the results would be as good as last summer's results.

There was concern that discussions were not taking place widely with Heads of Education regarding the specifications.

- *The Head of Education was of the opinion that the level TL2+ threshold was going to continue to carry weight and power. However, when introducing any new procedure, it was very difficult to anticipate and see what the pattern would be. From the preparatory viewpoint for the amendments to the specifications, it was understood that teachers had been running both specifications. The Head of Education highlighted concern about the changes in the context of the proposal that would be available for vulnerable learners and learners with the least ability and that the specifications summarised a series of qualifications towards children with average ability and higher ability. It was anticipated that the specifications did not offer appropriate suitable qualifications for young people who played an important part in the communities, and there was a possibility that the changes made schools very difficult places to attend.*

- *In terms of training for teachers regarding the change to the specifications, it was ensured that discussions were ongoing between the consultants and heads of school*

*departments regarding examination paper tiers but that it was difficult at the moment until specifications were seen, and another set of results would need to be able to be analysed in order to see the exact detailed preparatory elements.*

(xiv) The ICT network needed to be improved in the secondary sector. It was understood that the supply of computers for pupils in the primary sector was very good but there was no follow-up when they moved to the secondary sector.

*The infrastructure of the ICT network must be considered corporately and the Committee was reminded that the Scrutiny Investigation - Education Support Services was investigating the CYNNAL provision and that a wider investment was possibly needed for the infrastructure, and whether the provision / systems were sufficiently up-to-date to be able to provide the relevant skills for young people for the future.*

(xv) There was no reference to able and talented children in the report. The importance of keeping schools from slipping was noted, but at the same time, an ambition should be reached for, and improvement sought.

*It was noted that this was the service's challenge and to strengthen the A\* and A performance, and to prepare schools to be the best.*

(xvi) The importance of looking forward to the future, and the challenge for Members was cuts to school budgets along with a lack of teachers across North Wales. If this was not addressed, it was anticipated that more schools would be in the red category in 4 / 5 years.

- *It was recognised that there were a lack of teachers, and it was ensured that discussions were ongoing with Bangor University and Glyndwr University to attract prospective teachers.*
- *In addition, it was noted that 22 authorities in Wales had launched a website as a method of attracting more teachers into the system.*
- *It was suggested that a model that would "accumulate staff" where they could bridge between more than one school needed to be considered and looked at.*
- *The challenge was to attempt to get schools not to look internally, and to collaborate in partnership.*

(xvii) There was concern about the size of classes, and an example was referred to by a Member locally, where there were 37 children in one class, and this was not sustainable.

*In response, it was noted that the above was part of a local discussion, and it was recognised that budgets were tight and once classes reached a specific figure, it was difficult for teachers and it meant that, in some circumstances, there was another group of pupils within a class. It was added that the empty spaces policy had received national attention.*

(xviii) It was welcomed that the Foundation Phase was going to receive further attention, and the need to provide structural opportunities.

(xix) In response to a question regarding pupils leaving school with no qualifications, it was noted that the forecasts for this year were significantly lower.

(xx) The importance of the definition of the Immersion Centre being completely clear and that this type of Centre was extremely important for Bangor

(xxi) From the viewpoint of home schooling, the report referred to children who could not attend school, and children with physical / medical illnesses. In the context of the cohort of children who were not able to attend school, it was noted that a discussion was needed between the Health Service in order to change the wording of the statements.

(xxii) Children with additional learning needs should not be deprived of the opportunity to be bilingual and reduce the opportunities for them within communities.

**Resolved: To accept, and express thanks to the Education Service's annual report that noted strengths in the education provision, along with areas to develop further.**

The Cabinet Member took the opportunity to sincerely thank the Head of Education for his commitment and commendable work on behalf of the Education Service over the past two and a half years, and from the comprehensive report that was submitted, it was obvious that the Service had moved on, with the Head having built a strong team within the Service and schools. He was wished every success in his new post with GwE.

## 5. GwE REVIEW

Submitted – a report on the review of the findings commissioned on GwE's operational procedures.

The Head of Education explained that the departure of GwE's previous Managing Director had offered an opportunity to revise the effectiveness and consistency of the current procedure in terms of improving the region's schools and also to investigate into how fit for purpose the leadership and governance procedures were.

From the evidence, it was seen that there was:

- Uncertainty in terms of GwE's strategic direction
- Uncertainty in terms of the current accountability on officer level
- Inconsistency in the performance of individual authorities
- A change was needed to the current model for the secondary sector to focus on KS4
- Inconsistency in teacher assessments across local schools and authorities
- A clear strategy was needed for working with the sector of Special Schools and Pupil Referral Units

In response to enquiries from individual Members, the Head of Education noted as follows:

- That some processes in terms of the recommendations were easy to achieve and the bulk of the work was in addressing the inconsistencies
- The importance of sharing good practice between authorities was noted
- In terms of the capacity of GwE, consideration needed to be given to what would be needed to support schools, and the local authority must secure a team of individuals who could deliver priorities.

- With regards to the long term, creating one service across the six authorities was not anticipated

**Resolved: To accept and thank the officers for the report, and to wish the Head of Education well for the future in his new post as the Managing Director of GwE.**

## 6. SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO CARERS' PROVISION

Submitted - the final report of the Scrutiny Investigation into carers' provision, and the Chair of the Investigation, Councillor R.H. Wyn Williams, took the opportunity to thank the following members and officers for their contribution to the comprehensive report:

Cllr E. Selwyn Griffiths  
 Cllr Siân Wyn Hughes  
 Cllr Linda Ann Wyn Jones  
 Cllr Eryl Jones-Williams  
 Cllr Ann Williams  
 Cllr Eirwyn Williams

Gareth James - Member Support and Scrutiny Manager  
 Bethan Adams - Member Support Officer

The Member Support and Scrutiny Manager elaborated that the work that had been undertaken by the Investigation was concise but, nevertheless, contained much useful information. Attention was drawn to the fact that 227 individuals had responded to the detailed questionnaire and that this helped give credibility to the findings of the Investigation. It was noted that the contribution of approximately 20 individuals who were interviewed had been very valuable and that the Investigation welcomed the opportunity to work with the Executive in terms of developing a policy that would contribute towards improving the provision for carers in the County.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People thanked the officers for the work that was achieved by the Investigation and she noted the following main points:

- (i) It was not completely clear whether all recommendations referred to two Cabinet Members, namely the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being.
- (ii) With regards to recommendation 1, whilst agreeing that there was much work to be achieved, she noted that work was being carried out in an attempt to identify hidden carers.
- (iii) In the context of recommendation 4, it was noted that a comment was needed in terms of the wider picture, it was questioned whether commissioning the work would achieve this. It was trusted that information could be shared / promoted more effectively and that, through this, we would have better arrangements for identifying the carers.
- (iv) In terms of engaging with everyone, especially the parents of disabled children, it was noted that more work needed to be done on this.

The additional points below were highlighted by individual Members:



- Although the investigation had been completed in a short period, more investigations of the same type were welcomed for the future.
- There was concern for the cuts to the vehicle service to transport individuals to respite care, and an example was noted, namely Plas Pengwaith Residential Home, Llanberis.
- Ensure that the service was bilingual, and it was possibly appropriate for the Council's Language Committee to carry out a further investigation to this end.
- The Department was thanked for the expenditure for the extension at Llys Cadfan, Tywyn for day care and respite service.
- Local colleges should be collaborated with closely to promote careers in the field of care.
- Early intervention was vital and agencies / authorities should be worked with in partnership so that arguments could be presented jointly to the Government to ensure that sufficient resources were available to respond to the situations.

In response to some of the above observations, the Head of Adults, Health and Well-being noted:

- (a) That the Department had looked at the effective use of the fleet vehicles and, by doing so, it was discovered that continuing to use some of them was not sustainable. Consequently, arrangements were changed in terms of vehicles, but it was hastened to note that the use of vehicles did not disrupt the ability of individuals to receive respite care.
- (b) In terms of the field of children, everyone was reminded that a respite care centre was going to be opened soon on the Ysgol Hafod Lon site, and it was ensured that an invite for the official opening would be sent to the Members following a confirmation of the registration.

The Head of Adults, Health and Well-being noted:

- From the adults' perspective, much work was to be achieved and an investigation had highlighted gaps that needed additional practical work or further research work.
- With regards to capacity to work on the recommendations, the Department would appreciate if there was an element of prioritising - but assurance was given that the Department would give attention to all of the recommendations through work that was already ongoing. He noted that the capacity speed to respond to the recommendations was going to vary.
- It was trusted that IAA work of the Children and Young People Department would be moving forward earlier than the work of the Adults, Health and Well-being Department, and if the IAA procedure could be achieved correctly, it would make such a difference not only to the users, but to the service also. We would have to learn through trial and error and ensure that information was shared in public locations so that individuals could self-service if possible, before contacting the Department.
- It was acknowledged that the mental health provision needed attention and was challenging, mainly due to a lack of clarity regarding the type of available service by the Health Board and the local authority. The integrating elements were not in place at present and that was a key step to be able to move on.

To follow, a discussion held place regarding the need to prioritise the recommendations and there was a consensus of opinion amongst Members to approve and prioritise them as follows:

Recommendation 4  
Recommendation 6  
Recommendation 8

Also, it was noted that recommendations 1 and 2 were important and were seen as a basis and a development of how to engage with young carers and it was asked how to develop methodology to connect with carers with whom contact had so far failed.

**Resolved: (a) To accept and approve all the recommendations but to ask the Cabinet Members to give priority to developing the following first:**

**Recommendation 4  
Recommendation 6  
Recommendation 8**

**(b) Monitor the developments of the recommendations.**

The meeting commenced at 10.00am and concluded at 1.00.