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## EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 23/01/18

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**Present:** Councillor Beth Lawton - Chair  
Councillor Nia Jeffreys - Vice-chair

**Councillors:** Freya Bentham, Steve Collings, Aled Evans, Alwyn Gruffydd, Judith Humphreys, Elwyn Jones, Cai Larsen, Dewi Owen, Paul Rowlinson, Cemlyn Williams and Gareth Williams.

**Co-opted Members:** Rita Price (Catholic Church), Dylan Davies (Meirionnydd Parent Governors Representative) and Dilwyn Elis Hughes (UCAC).

**Officers present:**

Vera Jones (Members' Manager - Democratic Services) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support Officer).

**Present for item 5 below:**

Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn (Council Leader)  
Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Director)  
Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department)  
Sian Lloyd Roberts (Senior Executive Officer)

**Present for item 6 below:**

Councillor Craig ab Iago (Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure and Culture)  
Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department)  
Catrin Thomas (Senior Manager Community Learning)  
Nia Morris (Youth Service Manager)

**Present for items 7 and 8 below:**

Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member for Education)  
Garem Jackson (Head of Education)  
Debbie Anne Jones (Area Education Officer)

**1. APOLOGIES**

Councillors Menna Baines, Selwyn Griffiths, Huw Wyn Jones and Keith Jones; Anest Gray Frazer (Church in Wales) and David Healey (Teachers Unions).

**2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

No declarations of personal interest were received from any members present.

**3. URGENT ITEMS**

The Chair noted that she had received a request from Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd to raise an urgent item relating to transport. Councillor Alwyn Gruffydd expressed his concern that it appeared that children in the county had been travelling on buses without any kind of insurance cover. The Chair explained, having received legal advice, that she could not allow the matter to be discussed at this meeting. Therefore, she would raise the matter at the informal session with the members to be held after this meeting to see whether or not this was a matter to be scrutinised.

**4. MINUTES**

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 13 December, 2017, as a true record.

## **5. NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL BID - PROGRESS REPORT**

Submitted - the report of the Council Leader noting the progress with the development of the North Wales Growth Deal Bid, and identifying some matters which required consideration.

The Leader and the Director expanded on the content of the report, and also responded to questions / observations from the members.

The Chair summarised the main conclusions of the discussion as follows:-

- All members were encouraged to attend the Growth Deal Scheme workshop on 15 February to understand the field and what the projects were, and to also consider the need for more sessions.
- There was general support for the ambition of ensuring economic growth across north Wales, but it would be a significant challenge.
- There was a clear message of support for the Growth Scheme in mid Wales also, especially in relation to the Meirionnydd area, and there was a need for strong input and collaboration with that project, and collaboration with Ceredigion and Powys also at the same time, given also the importance of securing projects across Gwynedd.
- There was a need to secure the status of the Welsh language in this work and to use the North Wales Growth Board as a driver to promote it.
- A clear message to learn from past lessons and to ensure that best use was made of resources; and when challenging schemes, a need for those schemes to be thoroughly challenged.
- There was a need to develop the element of challenge and scrutiny in relation to Gwynedd to ensure a clear understanding of the arrangements and to consider how members could have general input in the proposed projects and influence them in good time.
- This committee should receive regular feedback.

## **6. REMODELLING THE YOUTH SERVICE**

Submitted – the report of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure and Culture outlining the steps taken to identify the preferred option for Remodelling the Youth Service and inviting the scrutiny committee's observations on the plan to submit them to the Cabinet on 13 March, 2018.

The Cabinet Member and officers expanded on the content of the report, and also responded to questions / observations from the members.

During the discussion, there was considerable emphasis on the fact that the four options outlined in the report involved cutting/reducing the annual grant given to the Urdd, Young Farmers', the Guides and the Scouts, and that these organisations would be supported in a different way.

Proposed and seconded - a motion not to cut grant for the voluntary organisations on the grounds that they did excellent work in their communities.

In response, it was explained to the members:-

- That such a recommendation would lead to much less being available for the young people of Gwynedd as it would involve asking the Cabinet to create a different option to that of the four options already under consideration that would retain the £76,000 element for voluntary organisations, but would reduce the budget for the rest of the Youth Service.
- There were a number of other voluntary organisations in the county, such as rugby clubs, that did not receive any grants from the Council.

A vote was taken on the proposal. Six members voted in favour and six members against. No casting vote was taken. There was not a majority in favour, therefore the committee did not have a recommendation to submit to the Cabinet Member.

The Chair summarised the main conclusions of the discussion as follows:-

- It was acknowledged that the situation was very difficult for everyone, as the budget had already been cut and no one liked change. However, the status quo was not an option.
- The scrutiny work had shown that there was a differing opinion among committee members in terms of whether the preferred option for remodelling the Youth Service was fair to all young people in Gwynedd, offered value for money, and was sustainable in future, and this was because of concern regarding the effect of the budget cut on young people.
- The number of respondents to the questionnaire was very positive and showed that there was a lot of interest in the field.
- The committee supported the idea of looking to establish clubs in the community and to assist those clubs to set-up. Also, that the committee sent a strong message to the Department to contact the community councils to see how they could be assisted to hold activities and projects on behalf of the Youth Service.
- There was concern regarding the impact on those young people who live in deprived areas, specifically in terms of accessing the service, and concerns also regarding the impact on the language.

## **7. POST-16 EDUCATION PROVISION PROJECT**

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Education inviting observations or questions from members of the scrutiny committee on a draft brief for commissioning a consultant to undertake an independent assessment of the current post-16 education provision in Gwynedd.

The Cabinet Member and officers expanded on the content of the report, and also responded to questions / observations from the members.

The main conclusions of the discussion were as follows:-

- The work of assessing the language medium of the courses should get to the root of the situation, rather than depend on the figures that the organisations will provide.
- The assessment was expected to consider that the performance baseline for A Level was different to the GCSE performance baseline.
- There was a need for the assessment to look at the evidence that young people selected subjects that do not involve travelling between sites during the day because of convenience.
- It was agreed to submit the report on the findings of the research to this committee in September (subject to delivering the work within the original set timetable) to understand the current situation before identifying a way forward.

**8. POSSIBLE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPACT OF NEW BUILDING DEVELOPMENTS FOR SCHOOLS ON THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

Submitted – the report of the Chairman asking the committee to adopt the principle of holding an investigation into the "impact of new building developments for schools on the quality of education" and identify five members to be part of the investigation.

**RESOLVED**

- (a) To support the principle of undertaking an investigation into the "impact of new building developments for schools on the quality of education".**
- (b) To identify Councillors Steve Collings, Cai Larsen and Paul Rowlinson to be part of the investigation and to contact all committee members to see who else would be interested.**

**9. 2017/18 SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

Submitted - the scrutiny work programme, as it currently stood.

The work programme was accepted with the updates noted in bold print as below:-

17 April 2018	Annual Report of the Education Service <b>(or Special Education)</b> The Foundation Phase Report <b>Healthy Living Centres - scrutinising the agreement</b>
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The meeting commenced at 10.00 am and concluded at 1.20 pm

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**CHAIRMAN**