

**GWE JOINT COMMITTEE
15.07.15**

Present: Councillor Eryl Williams (Chair)
Councillor Michael Williams (Vice-chair)

Councillors: Chris Bithell, Kenneth P. Hughes, Wyn Ellis Jones and Gareth Thomas.

Co-opted Members with no vote: Annwen Morgan (Primary Schools representative), Jonathan Morgan (Special Schools representative) and Alison Fisher (Governors representative)

Officers with no vote: Ian Budd (Lead Director – Chair of Management Board (Flintshire County Council)), John Davies (Wrexham County Borough Council), Karen Evans (Denbighshire County Council), Garem Jackson (Gwynedd Council) and Richard E Owen (Conwy County Borough Council)

Also present: Huw Foster Evans (GwE Managing Director), Susan Owen Jones (GwE Business and Finance Manager), Rhys Howard Hughes (GwE Assistant Director (Support and Brokerage)), Alwyn Jones (GwE Assistant Director (Standards)), Geraint Rees and Claire Rundle (Welsh Government Representatives), Dafydd L. Edwards (Host Authority Head of Finance – Gwynedd Council), Iwan Evans (Host Authority Legal Services Manager – Gwynedd Council) and Bethan Adams (Host Authority Members' Support Officer – Gwynedd Council)

Apologies: Diane Chisholm (Primary Schools representative), Rita Price (Wrexham Diocese) and Arwyn Thomas (Gwynedd Council)

1. ELECTING A CHAIR

It was decided to re-elect Councillor Eryl Williams as Chair of the Joint Committee for 2015/16.

2. ELECTING A VICE-CHAIR

It was decided to re-elect Councillor Michael Williams as Vice-chair of the Joint Committee for 2015/16.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declaration of personal interest was received by any Members present.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed minutes of this meeting held on 25 February 2015 as a true record.

4.1 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

It was reported that national verification and assessment and standardisation work has been completed by the 4 regions for national quality assurance purposes and that a draft report has been produced. It was noted that a report in the context of local information will be presented to the next meeting of the Joint Committee on 23 September 2015.

It was decided to: accept and note the above.

5. REGIONAL BUSINESS PLAN 2014-15 - MONITORING REPORT

The GwE Managing Director presented a report, updating the Joint Committee on the progress made against the 2014-15 Business Plan. The members were led through each priority in the report and a response given to comments. The main following points were made during the discussion:

- (a) Priority 4 – ‘Increase the uptake of, and raise standards in, Welsh as a First Language across the region’. Following the secondment of Mrs Eleri Jones coming to an end, it was noted that another individual will be undertaking the work and that the priority remains important.
- (b) In response to a question by a Member in relation to ensuring consistency both nationally and regionally, Mr Geraint Rees (Welsh Government) noted that Professor Donaldson’s report highlights Welsh medium education and that cohesive development is required in each region. He added that Gwynedd Council is a lead authority on Welsh medium education in the region and that deeper networking is required due to such variety across the region.
- (c) In response to a question by a Member regarding meetings to discuss the way forward with Welsh medium education in the region as the 6 authorities have a different strategy and work profiles, it was noted that it is very important have a discussion on the way forward.
- (d) Priority 6 ‘Establish and promote an effective regional model for school>school support’. It was noted there is strong evidence to show that schools are willing to collaborate but that some schools have a more traditional view. The need to ensure that it is a whole regional programme was emphasised.
- (e) Priority 7 ‘Develop quality leadership and teaching and learning on all levels’. A Member noted that developing leadership is very important and that value needs to be measured.
- (f) Priority 8 ‘Support schools to develop more robust and effective assessment, standardisation and moderation processes’. In response to a comment by a Member, the GwE Managing Director noted that steps are being taken to ensure a better balance between support and challenge following the publication of the Estyn annual report.
- (g) Priority 10 ‘Ensure the effective governance of GwE’.
With regard to scrutiny arrangements, Mr Geraint Rees (Welsh Government) noted that the Wales Audit Office (WAO) has expressed that scrutiny should take place regionally; but, now, a shift is to be seen towards the relevant Scrutiny Committees within the Authorities looking at thematic reports. It was noted that discussions are underway with regard to a cohesive system for scrutiny.

It was decided to: Accept and note the content of the report.

6. THE JOINT COMMITTEE’S FINAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2015

A report by the Gwynedd Council Head of Finance was presented outlining an outturn on the 2014/15 Revenue Income and Expenditure accounts along with an endorsed statement of accounts in statutory form, but pre-Audit.

The content of the accounts was discussed and there were opportunities for Joint Committee members to ask questions.

It was reported that the accounts have been endorsed and sent to the WAO. They will be presented at the next Joint Committee meeting for approval.

The Chair and the GwE Managing Director signed the 2014-15 Annual Governance

Statement.

It was decided to: accept and note the content of the report and approve the management of the underspend as outlined in Appendix A '2014-15 Revenue Income and Expenditure Account' along with the 2014/15 Statement of Accounts (pre-audit) – Appendix B.

7. ALIGNMENT OF REGIONAL WORKING ARRANGEMENTS WITH WELSH GOVERNMENT NATIONAL MODEL

- (a) GwE's final business case was presented for approval, which summarises the present areas of work, assesses the possible options and recommends the most effective intervention for delivery.

Ian Budd (Lead Director – Chair of Management Board) noted that the business case was assessed against the following criteria:

- Does it make the best use of experience and expertise?
- In a time of financial constraints, is value for money ensured and is there flexibility to manage the decrease in funding?
- Is it easily understood so that it may be shared with stakeholders?

- (b) Mr Geraint Rees (Welsh Government) noted that the Local Authorities have kept the leading roles in these areas, therefore sufficient capacity needs to be ensured within the networks.

In response, Ian Budd (Lead Director – Chair of Management Board) noted that the Management Board has revised its remit and membership so as to comply with the national model.

- (c) The following points were highlighted during the subsequent discussion:

- the need to improve the Governing Body in schools
- in response to a comment from a Member, Ian Budd (Lead Director – Chair of Management Board) noted that a main officer takes the leading role on every network. He added that authorities could provide more resources to deliver a specific programme, but when GwE was established no individual authorities made specific requirements.
- accountability would be clearer when the Service Level Agreement is in place noting roles and responsibilities.
- the WAO report notes that a movement towards joint ownership should be seen rather than commissioning by an individual authority and that GwE is making great strides by producing a joint business plan.

It was decided to:

- (a) accept and note the content of the report**

- (b) approve the following interventions with regard to areas of work:**

- **advice and support for Governors (page 10 of the report)**
- **the Foundation Phase (page 10 of the report)**
- **Learning Pathways 14 – 19 (page 12 of the report)**
- **Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Welsh in Education Grant (page 13 of the report)**
- **regional co-ordination of the ICT Strategy (page 14 of the report)**

- **specialist human resources support (page 14 of the report)**

delegate the responsibility of planning and delivery of the interventions to the GwE Management Board.

8. GWE MAIN PRIORITIES

(a) The GwE Managing Director presented a report to update the Joint Committee on the main priorities of the service. It was reported that Estyn will conduct an inspection during the spring/summer of 2016 on a new framework that is yet to be published. It was noted there will be a consultation on the framework in the autumn of 2015 and consortia have been informed there should be evidence of no competition between them.

The GwE Assistant Director (Standards) gave a presentation on the support and challenge provided by GwE.

(b) The following points were noted during the subsequent discussion:

- in response to a question from a Member regarding confirmation of the category of a school, it was noted that GCSE results in August are taken into account and that the school's category is confirmed at the beginning of September
- in response to a query, it was noted that, with regard to secondary schools, it takes 1-2 years for a school to improve and come out of the red category
- the need to collaborate both within and across Local Authorities to improve schools
- some schools need intensive support with schools becoming independent in the long run.
- the colour analysis does not show the full picture; some schools are content in the yellow category and don't want to progress to the green; these schools should be challenged locally
- the main priorities will be shared with schools' Governing Bodies in the future and there will be understanding with regard to how to best implement the model

(c) The GwE Assistant Director (Support and Brokerage) gave a presentation on the leadership development programme.

In response to a query by a Member with regard to a long term evaluation, it was noted that the impact is assessed at the end of the academic year. It was noted that 4 individuals who took part in the middle leadership development programme have been promoted and all 4 stated that the programme had been useful.

It was decided to: Accept and note the content of the report.

9. BASE BUDGET 2015/16

A report by the GwE Managing Director and the Host Authority Head of Finance on the GwE baseline budget for the 2015-16 financial year was presented.

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The content of the report was discussed and Joint Committee Members were given an opportunity to ask questions about any elements in the report.

It was decided to: adopt the baseline budget for 2015/16 as presented in Appendix 1.

The meeting commenced at 1.30 pm and concluded at 3.50 pm

CHAIRMAN