

GWE JOINT COMMITTEE WEDNESDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2018

Present-

Councillors: Gareth Thomas - Chair (Gwynedd Council), Phil Wynn - Vice-chair (Wrexham County Borough Council), Huw Hilditch-Roberts (Denbighshire County Council), Ian Roberts (Flintshire County Council) and Meirion Jones (Anglesey County Council).

Non-voting Officers: Claire Homard (Flintshire Council), Ian Roberts (Wrexham County Borough Council), Garem Jackson (Gwynedd Council)

Officers present: Iwan G Evans (Gwynedd Council), Dafydd L Edwards (Gwynedd Council), Alwyn Jones (GwE Assistant Director), Bethan Roberts (GwE), Sion Wyn Evans (GwE), Annes Sion (Host Authority Members' Support Officer - Gwynedd Council).

1. APOLOGIES

Councillors Garffild Lloyd Jones (Denbighshire County Council), Rita Price, Arwyn Williams (Anglesey County Council), Dr Lowri Brown (Conwy County Borough Council), Dr Gwynn Jones (Anglesey County Council), Steve Vincent (Welsh Government), Haf Williams (Primary Schools representative), Arwyn Thomas (GwE Managing Director), Karen Evans (Denbighshire County Council).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

3. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent matters.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2018 as correct.

5. THE JOINT COMMITTEE'S FINAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2018 AND RELEVANT AUDIT

DECISION

To accept, note and approve the information and authorise the Chair to endorse the letter.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, and it was noted that the accounts were presented in the previous meeting on 4 July 2018. It was added during this meeting that Deloitte would undertake an audit of the accounts. It was stated that the Auditor General for Wales has presented the 'ISA260' report, detailing the main findings of Deloitte. An unconditional audit report on the financial statements will be published as soon as the Joint Committee

has provided a Representation Letter.

The Auditor confirmed that the accounts were correct. It was added there were no misstatements that had not been corrected, and no corrected misstatements. It was noted that no changes are necessary and that recommendations have been noted in the report. The Host Authority Head of Finance stated there are recommendations for information technology systems, but it was confirmed that these are not for GwE but for Cyngor Gwynedd systems.

Staff were thanked for their good work.

6. GWE BUDGET 2017/18 - QUARTER 1 REVIEW

DECISION

To accept the report

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and it was noted that the report is for the first quarter of the year. Attention was drawn to the financial variances evident in the budget. It was noted that a Secondment for an Assistant Director from 1 June has led to a one-off underspend, financing savings yet to be seen. But it was emphasised that this will only be temporary. It was added there was nothing extraordinary in the budget and that an update on the budget will be presented in the next meeting.

Comments arising from the discussion

- A member asked about GwE's budget for next year; will contributions to GwE be reduced with so many financial cuts facing Local Authorities? The fate of GwE depends on the Draft Settlement for Local Authorities, which will be announced by Welsh Government at the beginning of October. It was stated there may be flexibility, but there has been discussion with the GwE Managing Director on the impact of a 1%, 2% or 3% reduction in the budget.

7. 2018-19 RISK REGISTER - QUARTER 1 REVIEW

DECISION

To accept the report

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and it was noted that it is a regular report which identifies risks and follow-up mitigating actions. It was added there had been discussion during the last meeting in July and that not many changes have been made during the summer months.

Attention was drawn to updates for 3 risks - numbers 5, 11 and 17. It was added that all three risks have now been mitigated, but there is need for further discussion on English GCSE results. It was stated there will be more changes to the risk register and further discussion during the next Joint Committee meeting.

Comments arising from the discussion

With so many changes afoot for schools, it was asked whether GwE and schools are ready. Concern was noted regarding the risks to schools, particularly small schools and secondary schools. It was stated that work is being done. It was

added that GwE has held workshops to assist schools with the changes.

8. 2018-19 BUSINESS PLAN - QUARTER 1 MONITORING

DECISION

To accept the report

DISCUSSION

The report was presented for the first quarter of the year. It was noted that the report was produced before the summer results - there is need for further discussion on the results in the next Joint Committee meeting in November. It was added that monitoring quarter two is being undertaken during the next fortnight.

It was confirmed that the report shows the Level 1 Business Plan to be on track.

Comments arising from the discussion

It was noted that teachers' pay rise was announced immediately after schools closed for the summer and that this was very poor timing. It was confirmed that this had been a worry for Headteachers over the summer in terms of budgets and financing this pay rise. It was emphasised that Headteachers' wellbeing needs to be taken into account.

9. INITIAL REPORT ON THE REGION'S PERFORMANCE

DECISION

To accept the report and to place trust in the Chair to write a letter to Qualifications Wales on behalf of the Joint Committee.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting there had been discussion in the Management Board on the region's performance, but it was confirmed there is need for further discussion following publication of KS4 results during October. It was added there is need for further discussion on the region's performance in the Joint Committee meeting in November.

It was added that KS2 and KS3 performance is strong, and there is priority for the Foundation Phase. It was added that KS4 data is raw at present, and a fall was noted in English. It was noted that this is seen on a national level, and that GwE has written to Qualifications Wales asking for an investigation into why the results of schools that did not enter pupils early seem lower than those schools that used early entry examinations in June and November 2017. It was stated that the results of the investigation are due today. It was noted that the main problem is that WJEC grade boundaries had risen by 20 marks. It was stated there is a need for justification as to why this has occurred, as the performance of schools that have historically performed close to targets is lower than usual this year.

Gareth Thomas was asked to write officially to Qualifications Wales on behalf of the education portfolio holders to ask for an explanation.

10. SHIRLEY CLARKE PROJECT

Stella Gruffydd delivered a presentation on the work undertaken in the Shirley Clarke Project, which focuses on Assessment for Learning and improving the quality of teaching and learning. It was stated that Tier 1 of the project is drawing to an end and that Tier 2 will commence in November.

Attention was drawn to GwE's commitment to the project and that Bangor University will evaluate and measure its impact. During the recent inspection of Ysgol Cefn Coch, Penrhyndeudraeth it was noted that the work of the project is successful. It was added that the project will run for three years, and thanks were expressed to staff and teachers for their work.

CHAIRMAN