
GWE JOINT COMMITTEE 27/11/19

Present:

Councillors: Phil Wynn (Chair - Wrexham County Borough Council), Meirion Jones (Anglesey County Council), Julie Fallon (Conwy County Borough Council), Huw Hilditch-Roberts (Denbighshire County Council), Ian Roberts (Flintshire County Council) and Cemlyn Williams (Gwynedd Council).

Non-voting Officers: Ian Roberts (Wrexham County Borough Council) and Garem Jackson (Gwynedd Council)

Officers present: Arwyn Thomas (Managing Director, GwE), Sion Huws (on behalf of Gwynedd Council Monitoring Officer, Host Authority), Hefin Owen (on behalf of Gwynedd Council Head of Finance, Host Authority), Hywyn Jones (Gwynedd Council Senior Accountant, Host Authority), Susan Owen Jones (Business Manager, GwE), Annwen Morgan (Chief Executive, Anglesey Council), Alwyn Jones (Assistant Director, GwE), Gareth Williams (Chair of GwE Advisory Board), Annes Sion (Gwynedd Council Democracy Team Lead, Host Authority) and Bethan Roberts (Performance Management Manager, GwE).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Haf Williams (Primary Schools' Representative), Claire Armisted (Secondary Schools' Representative), Jonathan Morgan (Special Schools' Representative), Rhys Howard Hughes (Anglesey Council), Dr Lowri Brown (Conwy County Borough Council), Karen Evans (Denbighshire Council) and Claire Homard (Flintshire 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 previous meeting held on 11 September 2019 as correct.

5. REPORT ON OUTCOMES 2019

DECISION

It was decided to accept the report as a model for reporting to scrutiny committees in terms of regional context and local performance.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, and it was noted that the principles of how GwE will report on performance have already been approved. It was added that the report outlines the background and context as regards national changes to reporting on performance, and that it explains the matters raised in the joint statement between Welsh Government, WLGA and Estyn.

It was expressed that it gives a regional overview of GwE outcomes, but a local analysis will also be undertaken for each authority. It was noted that the data is not as yet in its final form and that work will be done to complete this by January.

Comments arising from the discussion

- The new format of the report was welcomed.
- The need to ensure that information is shared with everyone and that it is used correctly was emphasised.
- It was also emphasised that this is a shift in culture and a journey of focussing on pupils rather than on results. It was added that this needs to be emphasised, and that further work remains.
- It was noted it needs to be ensured that consistent messages are shared across the region.

6. RESOURCES AND GWE SCOPE

DECISION

The report was accepted.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, and it was noted that its purpose is to initiate discussion. It was expressed that it highlights two elements to the budget - the core element and the Welsh Government agenda. The report explains the work of GwE and the wide range of grants that GwE receives. It was explained that all grants go through a monitoring process and that discussions with Welsh Government is needed to re-visit this.

Comments arising from the discussion

- The report is an eye opener and gives people an idea of what exactly is the work of GwE.
- It was noted that perhaps figures are needed with some of the grants in order to provide better understanding.
- The need to look at the grants and their monitoring was emphasised - there will need to be further discussion on this.

7. GWE BUDGET 2019-20 - QUARTER 2 REVIEW

DECISION

The report was accepted.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, and it was noted that not much has changed since the first quarter of 2019/20. The main change is the savings to be found as the Joint Committee has now approved a permanent strategy to confirm savings. A net overspend estimate was noted against the budget, but GwE balances may be used to counterbalance this by the end of the financial year.

8. 2019-20 BUSINESS PLAN - QUARTER 2 MONITORING

DECISION

The monitoring report for quarter 2 was accepted. A further discussion was requested on the use of the G6 platform and its culture.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented and members were directed to the GwE objectives and priorities. In terms of Strategic Objective 6, it was noted that GwE is awaiting the draft settlement before moving on to undertake a review of the budget and workforce.

9. WELSH REGIONAL STRATEGY

DECISION

The document 'Developing Welsh in Education in the North Wales Region' was accepted.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, and it was noted that planning a strategy for the north Wales region poses a considerable challenge as there is significant variance in the region. It was corroborated that the strategy sets out objectives, courses of action and direction.

Comments arising from the discussion

- The report was welcomed, and support for the 6 priority areas was noted. It was asked what would arise from the strategy, and how it will develop.
- It was explained that it will be a difficult process as there is such variance across the region and the need to avoid duplication was emphasised. It was added that the strategy is a long term strategy, and the question was asked whether there are enough Welsh teachers.
- Ensuring parents' support will be crucial, so that they will be aware of the importance and advantages of using the language.

10. PDG / LAC - UPDATE

The report was noted and accepted.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, and it was noted that GwE has responsibility for the overall administration and co-ordination of the grant. It was expressed that the process is transparent, and that the report clearly shows how funding is allocated.

The report notes the process, together with grant requirements, conditions and guidance. It was noted that the budget is £970,000.

11. GWE REVIEW OF PROGRESS - STEVE MUNBY REPORT

DECISION

The report was noted and accepted.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, and it was noted that Steve Munby conducted a review of the direction of GwE 12 months ago. He re-visited the region recently to further evaluate the service.

On looking at the improvements presented last year, it was added that progress had been made in terms of developing the culture of GwE to work for the benefit of everyone in the system. It was expressed that it had been a difficult and challenging time, but that the report is encouraging.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.15 pm

CHAIRMAN