
GwE Joint Committee

28.11.2018

Present:

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

Co-opted non-voting Members: Jonathan Morgan (Special Schools' Representative).

Non-voting Officers: Arwyn Williams (Anglesey County Council), Karen Evans (Denbighshire County Council), Claire Homard (Flintshire County Council), Ian Roberts (Wrexham County Borough Council), Garem Jackson (Gwynedd Council) and Dafydd Ifans (Conwy County Borough Council).

Officers present: Arwyn Thomas (GwE Managing Director), Iwan G Evans (Host Authority Monitoring Officer - Gwynedd Council), Hefin Owen (Gwynedd Council), Alwyn Jones (GwE Assistant Director), Bethan Roberts (GwE), Marc Hughes (GwE), Sion Wyn Evans (GwE), Annes Sion (Host Authority Members' Support Officer - Gwynedd Council).

1. APOLOGIES

Dr Gwynne Jones (Anglesey County Council), Gareth Williams (Chair of GwE Advisory Board), Dafydd L Edwards (Host Authority Head of Finance) and Haf Williams (Ysgol Deganwy).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

3. URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent matters.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2018 as correct.

5. REPORT ON THE REGION'S PERFORMANCE IN 2017-18

DECISION

To accept the Report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, and it was noted that WG has made significant changes regarding how performance measures are reported. Consequently, there is no comparative information on neither local authority level nor consortia level for the Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

The discussion commenced with the Foundation Phase and it was noted that although performance has decreased regionally, the decrease is lower than the national decrease

across all areas. The main reason to account for this is that schools, for the first time, are using new outcomes for language and mathematics from the FPh framework for assessment. On looking at Key Stage 2 it was noted that performance is still strong in all subjects, and the region continues to be strong on both the expected level and higher levels. It was noted that GwE will continue to further strengthen cluster working in order to promote collaboration and sharing good practice. It was noted that the Estyn profile for primary schools continues to improve year on year, and there has been an increase to 13.2% in the number of schools receiving higher judgements. It was added there are only 3 schools in Estyn statutory category at present, which is 0.75% of the region's primary schools.

On looking at Key Stage 3, it was noted that performance is positive and that the region's performance continues to be above the national figure in the core subjects. The regional gender gap was discussed, and girls still perform better than the boys.

It was expressed that performance is disappointing overall in Key Stage 4. It was added that the Secondary Schools Improvement Strategy notes a direction for regional developments for the next three years. It was added that GwE has been working to improve the relationship with schools and that there is ongoing support. It was expressed that GwE is working to improve the effectiveness of middle leadership in terms of leading the teaching, assessment, tracking and robust evaluation, and it is hoped that these efforts will bear fruit in the coming years. It was added that work is ongoing to improve the performance of FSM learners by ensuring that schools receive clear guidance and support regarding effective strategies, learning and tracking.

It was noted that GwE is investing in KS3, which will roll out into KS4, and that there is a very strong relationship between GwE and secondary schools. It was added that steps have been taken, but that results are not evident as yet. FSM pupils were discussed, noting there will be a possible impact when the Universal Credit is introduced.

GCSE English results were discussed, and it was emphasised that it is difficult to move forward until there is an indicative explanation to what occurred. Inconsistent responses from Qualifications Wales was noted, and that pupils who have met the standard should be awarded a Grade C. Raising the bar in terms of the marks required to achieve a Grade C in the summer means that a significant number of learners in the region cannot pursue the post-16 courses they had wished to study.

It was expressed that Qualifications Wales has not managed the situation well, and that no apologies have been received. It was noted that Kirsty Williams has said that the Government cannot commission a consultation as it is an independent board.

On looking at KS5, it was noted that the delivery model varies within authorities and across the region. Nevertheless, an increase was noted in A2 and AS, and it was added that the region is at the forefront nationally in some indicators, but behind in other measures.

6. WELSH IN EDUCATION - REVIEWING THE PROVISION ACROSS THE REGION

DECISION

The proposals outlined below were approved so as to empower the Authorities and the Region to respond to and to deliver the vision of Welsh Government, namely to increase the number of Welsh speakers, as noted in:

- Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers
- Education in Wales: Our national mission - 2017-21 Action Plan

- Welsh in Education - 2017-21 Action Plan
- One language for all: review of Welsh second language at Key Stages 3 and 4

DISCUSSION

It was noted that the Welsh language Strategic Board leads, co-ordinates and manages the Welsh language regionally, and that it is accountable to the GwE Management Board. A recommendation was proposed, namely to review current provision so that the region fully responds to WG policy and ensures appropriate cohesion and capacity to provide a quality regional service in this area.

A question was asked regarding the time-scale of the review, and it was added that it is important to identify good practice across the region. It was added that the governance system will need to be mapped, as some of the matters arising will be matters for the Local Authority and its Cabinet rather than the Joint Committee.

7. GwE BUDGET 2018/19 - SECOND QUARTER REVIEW

DECISION

To accept the report

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that not much has changed since the first quarter review. Attention was drawn to a one-off underspend as the result of an Assistant Director secondment from 1 June.

Government grants were discussed, noting there was a cut in the Education Improvement Grant 12 months ago but that the expected cut this year has not occurred. It was noted that an announcement last week secures additional funding for Schools, but that government conditions will be relevant before allocation.

It was noted there needs to be clarity regarding grant conditions and how it may be spent. With GwE's support, it may be possible to create a timetable with Headteachers in order to make the most of the grant funding.

8. RISK REGISTER

DECISION

To accept the Report

DISCUSSION

It was stated there are not many changes in the risk register since the September meeting. It was added that risks 1,2,5,7 and 17 have been updated. The risks have been mitigated.

9. LEVEL 1 BUSINESS PLAN - QUARTER 2 MONITORING REPORT

DECISION

To accept the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that work is ongoing on standards and KS4. It was noted that adding the column 'Profile tracking and Q2 expenditure' is a useful addition in order to ensure that expenditure for a priority is on track. It was noted that the report reflects service standards and priorities. Discussions will need to be initiated on the GwE focus during the next academic year.

10. AUTUMN CHALLENGE AND REVIEW SESSION - FEEDBACK

The GwE Managing Director thanked Gareth Thomas and Karen Evans for their work. It was expressed that the presentation demonstrated how the Joint Committee collaborates regionally, and the maturity of the partnership. It was added that the autumn Challenge and Review session has set a high bar, demonstrating the political maturity of the Joint Committee.

It was noted that GwE had been presented with challenges in the early days, but that lessons have been learnt and that the region has been able to move forward.

11. THE REFORM JOURNEY - ALN

Margaret Davies gave a presentation on where we are on the Additional Learning Needs reform journey. It was expressed that it needs to be ensured that pupils receive the appropriate support during each phase. It was added there are approximately 22,000 ALN pupils in the region; thus, the required provision needs to be available.

The ongoing work and current priorities were noted. It was added that the new Additional Learning Needs Act will be operational in the next 18 months; consequently, it needs to be ensured that schools are aware of the necessary information and confident that they are meeting the requirements of the new act. It will possibly be a challenging time for schools. It was explained that staff will need to be aware of the legal steps.

Observations arising from the discussion:

- Communication was discussed - local authorities will have legal accountability.
- Pupils who are taught at home were discussed, and how support will need to be ensured for them as part of the new act.
- It was asked whether schools and GwE are ready for the new act - it was noted that it is a period of many changes. The capacity to deliver everything was discussed. It was expressed there are efforts to link everything together.
- The new partnership required with Colleges and Universities was discussed.
- The need to look beyond education only was noted. There is a need for further discussion on this matter in the future.