
GwE JOINT COMMITTEE

20/02/2019

Present:

Councillors: Gareth Thomas - Chairman (Gwynedd Council), Phil Wynn - Vice Chairman (Wrexham County Borough Council), Ian Roberts (Flintshire County Council), and Meirion Jones (Isle of Anglesey County Council).

Non-voting Officers: Karen Evans (Denbighshire County Council), Ian Roberts (Wrexham County Borough Council), Garem Jackson (Gwynedd Council), Dafydd Ifans (Conwy County Borough Council)

Officers in attendance : Arwyn Thomas (GwE Managing Director), Sion Huws (Host Authority - Gwynedd Council), Dafydd Edwards (Host Authority Head of Finance – Gwynedd Council), Dr Gwynne Jones (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Susan Owen Jones (GwE Business and Finance Manager), Rhys Howard Hughes (GwE Assistant Director), Alwyn Jones (GwE Assistant Director), Bethan Roberts (GwE), Sion Wyn Evans (GwE), Annes Sion (Host Authority Members' Support Officer – Gwynedd Council)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Coun. Garffild Lewis (Conwy County Borough Council), Coun. Huw Hilditch-Roberts (Denbighshire County Council), Alison Fisher (Governors' Representative), Arwyn Williams (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Claire Homard (Flintshire County Council), Iwan Evans (Host Authority Monitoring Officer – Gwynedd Council) and Steve Vincent (Welsh Government).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

3. URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent matters.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chairman signed the minutes of this committee held on 28 November 2018 as a correct record.

5. GwE Budget 2018-19 - QUARTER 3 REVIEW

DECISION

To accept the Report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented noting that GwE was keeping within the core budget for 2018-19, and that the estimate noted a net underspend of £994.

Comments arising from the discussion:

- A discussion was held on the frequency of Estyn inspections, specifically in some primary schools.

- It was stated that much of the funding that comes to GwE was delegated directly to schools.
- Attention was drawn to an increase in travelling costs, and it was stated that this was because so many meetings were held in Cardiff. It was noted that the matter needed to be raised with the Government, and possibly to suggest that meetings are arranged in other locations as well.

6. BASE BUDGET 2019/20

DECISION

To adopt the base budget for 2019/20 as presented in Appendix 2 of the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the GwE budget was continuing to develop. It was noted that the financial effect of inflation/price increases had been estimated and included in the base budget, including salary increases and an increase in CPI. It was added that the budget reflected the decision of the North Wales Leadership Board to include a savings target corresponding to a reduction of 1% in financial terms, in the core contributions of the 6 authorities; it was stated that in real terms there was an increase of 3.19% in costs.

It was added that, with the increase in costs, the need for a permanent plan for 2018/19 savings and annual expenditure in Supplies and Services that it will be necessary to find a cumulative total of £206,485 for 2019/20.

Comments arising from the discussion

- It was inquired whether the increase in the salaries and pensions of teachers on secondments at GwE had been included in the budget. It was noted, in terms of the teachers who are on GwE employment lists, these have been included.
- It was noted that grants had reduced during recent years, and that intensive discussions had been held and are ongoing regarding education budgets.
- Dr Gwynne Jones and Dafydd Edwards were thanked for their support.

7. MEDIUM TERM FUNDING PLAN 2018/19 – 2021/22

DECISION

To accept the Report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that there have been minimal changes to the Plan. It was added that it was difficult to foresee what would happen in the future as much depended on the Government's decisions, which also created a great deal of uncertainty. The importance of looking at savings in readiness for the future was emphasised.

Comments arising from the discussion

- It was noted that it was difficult to submit a three-year medium term financial plan due to the budget being so uncertain, but the importance of the plan was emphasised.

- It was stated that discussions were needed with Welsh Government Ministers to discuss whether enough funding was available for schools. It was added that more clarity was needed regarding the role of GwE when changes to the curriculum take place; it was noted that there was a need to raise this with the Welsh Local Government Association.

8. BUSINESS PLAN 2018-19 – QUARTER 3 MONITORING

DECISION

To accept the Report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the main priority was Key Stage 4, as concerns had arisen regarding the English examinations.

Attention was drawn to section 3 of the Plan – Leadership – specifically improving departmental leadership in core subjects in secondary schools. It was added that good work was being done in partnership with the schools.

Attention was also drawn to section 4 of the Plan – Well-being – the need to continue to look at plans to support looked after children and children receiving free school meals was noted.

9. LEVEL 1 BUSINESS PLAN – 2019-20 PRIORITIES

DECISION

To accept the Report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that the main improvement priorities had been identified. The priorities were noted, which included improving performance in the secondary sector, transformational curriculum, well-being, leadership development programmes and the peer engagement model. It was agreed to present a copy of the Business Plan in the next meeting.

10. GwE RISK REGISTER

The report was submitted noting that the GwE risk register was a live document that was regularly reviewed. It was stated that all the risks had been reviewed and updated and that 9 risks had been amended, namely risks 2,5,6,8,12,13,14,15 and 17.

11. THE WELSH LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION – REMIT

It was decided to defer discussion of this item to the next meeting.

12. NATIONAL CATEGORISATION

DECISION

To accept the Report.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted noting that categorisation was a continuous process. It was stated that the Minister for education had noted the possibility that the process could be adapted.

It was noted that every secondary school has a support plan with discussions held regarding the level of support for schools.

It was noted that the report was one regarding the process only. It was noted that 35 schools had been selected from the six authorities for Regional Moderation, and robust discussions had been held during moderation. It was noted that no changes had been made to the schools during the process and no enquiries had been received from the Welsh Government following submission of the sample to them.

13. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2019/20

It was decided to accept the dates for the coming year.