



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

27 NOVEMBER 2019

Report by: GwE Managing Director

Subject: GwE review of progress – Steve Munby report

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To present 'GwE Review of progress' report by Steve Munby to the Joint Committee.

2.0 Background

2.1 In September 2018, Steve Munby – an education consultant on leadership and system reform - reviewed GwE's current practice and direction of travel. The report concluded that:

The direction of travel that GwE has adopted is exactly the right one. Much is now in place to move things forward strongly – leadership, clear direction, culture, mission and focus, relationships, credibility with schools and local authorities, systems, quality assurance, data. Above all GwE should hold its nerve and keep doing what it is doing.

I am coming away from these two days feeling positive about the prospects for success in North Wales, in spite of the numerous challenges. The quality of the GwE team is high and the strategies are impressive. The direction of travel is the right one and the team are open to external challenge whilst determined to do the right things for the schools and the children in North Wales.

2.2 Steve Munby recently re-visited the region to help us further evaluate the service and shape our future direction. A copy of the report is enclosed.

3.0 Considerations

3.1 Since the last review, Steve Munby notes that progress has been made on all nine of the recommendations. In September 2018, GwE was already making strong progress in its agreed direction of travel, but since then, the progress has either been significantly accelerated or has, at the very least, continued steadily.

3.2 The areas of strength were identified as:

- **Leadership and culture.** The development of an open and listening culture in GwE is very marked. Headteachers and other stakeholders speak of GwE's flexibility, openness and responsiveness.
- **Peer engagement, clusters and peer review.** Significant progress is being made in the development of collective efficacy through school clusters.
- **Reduced workload and bureaucracy.** The further development of the G6 instrument is having a very positive impact in reducing workload for schools and for SIAs.
- **Scrutiny** - a move towards scrutiny becoming more workshop-based, more about individual schools and more hands-on, with scrutiny members visiting schools and, indeed, shadowing the work of SIAs.
- The provision of **differentiated and credible support** that is based on need - more responsive and bespoke approach to meeting the needs of schools and local authorities.
- GwE plays an important role in helping to provide **coherence** to the various national policies and to help schools to make sense of them at local level. This is particularly the case for the ALN transformation work and also when it comes to support for the development of the curriculum for Wales.

3.3 There was no aspect of the work investigated where there was no progress, though a number of challenges remain. The challenges/concerns were identified as follows:

- **Overlap and duplication between GwE and local authorities** - encouraging to see that there is a genuine partnership approach being developed between GwE and local authorities and that the relationship with local authorities is at least as good as it was last year, if not better.
- **Funding issues** continue to provide a challenge for the region.
- **Recruitment and retention of leaders and teachers.** This remains a very big issue in many schools, in the secondary sector, smaller schools and especially Welsh medium.

3.4 Steve Munby concludes in his report that:

I am, frankly, deeply encouraged by the progress I have observed a year after my last visit. My expectations have been met and in some cases exceeded. Now is not the time to lose your nerve but to renew your efforts and to tap into the undoubted excitement and enthusiasm that exists in schools. "This is the best time that I can remember in all my years in education. I really feel that we can move things forward across Wales"

4.0 Recommendation

4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to note the content of report.

4.2 Determine if there are any aspects of the report that they wish to discuss further at a future meeting.

5.0 Financial Implications / Risks

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.0 Equalities Impact

6.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Personnel Implications

7.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

8. Consultation Undertaken

8.1.1 Representation of: Headteachers (primary and secondary), Education Portfolio holders, GwE Management Board and GwE staff.

OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Nothing to add from a propriety perspective.

Statutory Finance Officer:

Section 3.3 of the covering report regarding Steve Munby's review identifies that: "*funding issues continue to provide a challenge for the region*". Of course, GwE's Joint Committee members will already be fully aware, as Steve Munby commented in paragraph 2 on the fourth page of his review, that: "*schools too are struggling ... while tight budgets are in place*" and "*local authorities are also under pressure to continue to deliver services.*" However, generally, the review's report appears to conclude positively regarding GwE's impact from the limited resources available.