
NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD 24/01/20

Present:

Voting Members - Councillors:- Llinos Medi Huws (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Ian Roberts (Flintshire Council), Sam Rowlands (Conwy County Borough Council), Mark Pritchard (Wrexham County Borough Council) and Dyfrig L.Siencyn (Gwynedd Council) (Chair).

Advisors – Dafydd Evans (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai), Maria Hinfelaar (Glyndŵr University), Prof. David Thomas (Bangor University), Steve Jackson (Coleg Cambria), Jim Jones (North Wales Mersey Dee Business Council) and Askar Sheibani (Business Delivery Board).

Chief Officers - Annwen Morgan (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Iwan Davies (Conwy County Borough Council), Judith Greenhalgh (Denbighshire Council), Ian Bancroft (Wrexham County Borough Council), Colin Everett (Flintshire Council).

Officers in attendance - Alwen Williams (Programme Director), Dafydd Edwards (Statutory Finance Officer), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), Jane Richardson (Chair of the Executive Officers Group) and Annes Siôn (Democratic Services Officer).

Alwen Williams was welcomed to her first meeting of the NWEAB as Programme Director

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Hugh Evans (Denbighshire Council), Prof Iwan Davies (Bangor University), Yana Williams (Coleg Cambria) and Dilwyn Williams (Gwynedd Council).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

A declaration of personal interest was received for item 9 - Chair of the Business Delivery Board from the following:

- Dafydd Evans (Grŵp Llandrillo Menai)
- Askar Sheibani (Business Delivery Board)

It was a prejudicial interest and they left the meeting during this item.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

None to note.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of the NWEAB held on 15 November 2019, as a true record.

5. PROGRESS UPDATE REPORT

The report was submitted by Jane Richardson - Chair of the NWEAB's Executive Officers Group.

RESOLVED

To note the information within the report.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The report was presented in order to give an update on progress by the Executive Officers Group. An update was received on the appointment of four members of staff to the Programme Office, including the Programme Director. Also, it was noted that a Governance workshop would be held on 14 February 2020, and an update was given on the work of the Chair of the NWEAB.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that considerable work had been done since the previous meeting. It was noted that a clear focus had been highlighted during the bridging period and the roles of the NWEAB, Programme Office and Executive Group were outlined. It was noted that the Programme Director would not be chairing the Executive Group for the time being, and that Jane Richardson would continue as Chair.

It was noted that a Governance Workshop had been arranged for 14 February. It was also noted that work had been done to strengthen the relationship with Welsh Government's Regional Team and discussions were being held on how it may be possible to work together on the Regional Economic Framework and revise the Growth Vision.

It was noted that one of the next priorities would be to create a communication strategy and to decide what the Programme Office wanted to introduce in North Wales. It was stressed that a narrative was needed for North Wales and an explanation on how the Growth Vision would tie into the narrative.

During the discussion the following matters were raised:

- A member noted that they were glad that there was better collaboration with Welsh Government. The importance of creating a joint framework and the same vision was noted.
- The Executive Group was discussed, specifically the chairmanship. The need for the Programme Director to be a member was stressed, as it would be difficult to present items and chair meetings.
- The need to sign the Heads of Terms by October was stressed. It was added that a discussion would be needed at a workshop in terms of how flexible the two Governments are with projects in the first phase and second phase. It was stressed that as projects were the root of the entire programme, there was a need to be flexible. It was noted that the Government needed to be entirely clear about when the projects move to be a programme.

6. REVENUE BUDGET 2019/20 - THIRD QUARTER REVIEW (DECEMBER 2019)

The report was submitted by Dafydd Edwards - Statutory Finance Officer.

RESOLVED

To receive the third quarter review of the NWEAB budget for 2019/20, and agree to transfer any underspend in 2019/20 to the earmarked reserve that will be available for future years.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

A report was given on the various budget headings that were overspending / underspending and it was noted that there would be an estimated net underspend of £117,424 at the end of 2019/20, which would be transferred to the earmarked reserve set up at the end of 2018/19.

In order to work effectively, the Joint-committee (NWEAB) must be aware of its expenditure situation to date and this year's spending projections against its annual budget.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted and it was noted that the budget for 2020/21 would be discussed at the next meeting. It was added that there had not been any major changes over the last quarter. Members were guided through the spreadsheet and it was stressed that the underspend had occurred due to the delay in appointing the Programme Director. It was noted that additional income had been added for the ESF grant if the grant was approved.

It was noted that the final position would be discussed in June, and it was accepted that any underspend would be transferred to the earmarked reserve fund.

During the discussion the following matters were raised:

It was highlighted that reserves were for any further costs and to reduce the workload and demand for funding from partners.

It was asked how much money would be transferred for this year and how much was in reserve, and it was noted that £117,424 would be transferred for this year which would bring the total to £453,000.

7. ESF APPLICATION

The report was submitted by Alwen Williams, Programme Director

DECISION

To approve the Staffing Structure for the Programme Office, and delegate the authority to the Programme Director in consultation with the Chief Executive of the Host Authority and the Statutory Finance Officer to amend the structure as required within the funding envelope.

To approve the appointment dates for the staff within the staffing structure, and appoint to the Programme Office prior to the Final Deal, where those posts are affordable within the core budget and the ESF budget (as listed in clause 4.2.5 of the report).

Subject to the matters set out in the report, to authorise the Programme Director to proceed with the creation of the posts and undertake the appointments process in accordance with the Host Authority's Policies and Procedures.

To delegate the authority to the Programme Director, in consultation with the Host Authority Chief Executive and the Statutory Finance Officer, to accept a WEFO grant offer based on 50% of the total project cost for the period July 2018 up until June 2023. To confirm that the NWEAB accepts that it will contribute match funding at 50%, primarily by a combination of capitalisation of project costs and core budget.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The ESF grant would provide funding to the region for the development and delivery of the Growth Vision, through the establishment of a Programme Office. The Programme Office will start with a core team of officers partly funded through the ESF grant.

In terms of the budget, it was noted that it would be more cost-effective to appoint officers rather than appoint consultants on freelance contracts. It was emphasised that no appointments would be made until confirmation of the funding had been received.

DISCUSSION

The report was submitted, noting that it was an update on the grant application. The posts which were part of the application were noted, as well as the dates for appointing and starting in post.

In terms of the budget, it was noted that it would be more cost-effective to appoint officers rather than appoint consultants on freelance contracts. It was emphasised that no appointments would be made until confirmation of the funding has been received.

During the discussion the following matters were raised:

- It was asked when confirmation would be given of whether or not the funding would be received. It was noted that the indications were that the application would be accepted and Conwy Council was thanked for the work of preparing the application.
- The difference between programme manager and project manager was discussed. It was stressed that these posts continued to be developed and adapted to ensure that there is no duplication, specifically when looking at the role of officers within the Regional Skills Partnership which is already operational in the region.
- In terms of receiving the funding, it was noted that once confirmation is received that funding is available, an application for back-payment would be made and then the funding would be claimed on a quarterly basis.

8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion on the following item.

9. BUSINESS DELIVERY BOARD CHAIR - SHORT LIST

DECISION

That four of the candidates are eligible for short-listing for interview.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Drawing up a short list of candidates was one of the key milestones in the process of recruiting and appointing an individual to this key post.

The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and concluded at 2.40 pm

CHAIRMAN