
GWE JOINT COMMITTEE - 14/07/2021

Present:

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

Co-opted non-voting Members: Jonathan Morgan (Special Schools' Representative), Richard Collet (Primary Schools' Representative), Claire Armitstead (Secondary Schools' Representative)

Officers present: Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance, Gwynedd Council, Host Authority), Sion Huws (Senior Lawyer - Corporate, Gwynedd Council, Host Authority), Lowri Brown (Conwy County Borough Council), Garem Jackson (Gwynedd Council), Arwyn Thomas (GwE Managing Director), Karen Evans (Denbighshire County Council), Susan Owen Jones (Business Manager, GwE), Alwyn Jones (Assistant Director, GwE), Claire Homard (Flintshire County Council), Hywyn Jones (Group Accountant, Gwynedd Council, Host Authority), Gwion Jones (Senior Accountant, Gwynedd Council - Host Authority), Bethan Roberts (Performance Management Manager, GwE), Sioned Mai Jones and Natalie Lloyd Jones (Democracy Team Officers, Gwynedd Council, Host Authority).

Others who were invited: Gareth Williams (Chair of GwE Advisory Board)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from the following: Annwen Morgan (Chief Executive, Anglesey County Council), Rhys Howard Hughes (Anglesey County Council), Ian Roberts (Flintshire County Council).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declaration of personal interest was received.

3. URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent matters.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was confirmed that the record presented appropriately reflected the meeting held on 26 May, 2021.

5. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2020/21

DECISION:

To accept and note the GwE Statement of Accounts (subject to audit) for 2020/21.

DISCUSSION:

The Statement of Accounts was presented, in 'statutory' form and endorsed by the Statutory Finance Officer, for the information of the Joint Committee.

Reference was made to the figures reported in the previous meeting regarding underspend and the totals in each column.

GwE's financial situation was explained, noting there is £811,000 evident in the fund.

It was added that these accounts are just for information and that a post-audit version will be presented in the autumn to be accepted and adopted by the Joint Committee.

Comments arising from the discussion:

- Thanks were expressed for the team's professionalism in presenting the accounts in a timely manner.
- Members were asked whether they had any concerns regarding the accounts.
- The GwE Managing Director thanked the Head of Finance and the Accountants for their technical support. Thanks were extended to the Business Manager and the Business Team, who have ensured that the service corrects the budget from one year to the next.

In response, the Head of Finance noted:

- There are no concerns, and that there is evidence of robust management with any underspend or overspend within reasonable limits.

6. GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

DECISION:

To accept and approve the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement.

DISCUSSION:

Joint Committee members were led through the report, which includes information regarding principles and vision. It was explained that the statement is an overview of service behaviour and the next steps over the coming year.

Thanks were expressed to Dewi Morgan (Gwynedd Council) for his advice regarding governance when drawing up the Governance Statement.

Comments arising from the discussion:

- It was noted it is a useful document for reference, offering a high level of assurance to Joint Committee members.
- Thanks were expressed for the report.

7. ANNUAL REPORT 2021/21

DECISION:

To accept and approve the Annual Report for 2020/21 subject to the addition of a priority pertaining to a response to the impacts of post-Covid in relation to the service.

DISCUSSION:

GwE Assistant Director presented the report, and it was outlined how GwE has re-purposed during the pandemic. It was added that Joint Committee members have been updated on this work during the year and that this report is a summary of this.

It was highlighted that the report outlines how schools are supported to implement the reform journey and prepare for the new curriculum, and the strategic and regional priorities for 2021-2022 agreed upon in the previous meeting.

Comments arising from the discussion:

- Thanks were expressed to GwE Assistant Director and the team for their work during the past year.
- Reference was made to Point 8 - priorities for 21/22 and a gap was noted, that there is no reference to how GwE will respond to the impacts of post-Covid on Education.

In response, GwE Assistant Director noted:

- There will be an overview of plans that consider the impacts of post-Covid in the autumn term monitoring report.
- It was added that the impacts of Covid may be added as a part of the report, or added as priority 7.

8. STRATEGY TO SUPPORT PARENTS / CARERS

DECISION:

To note and accept the report and reinforce the strategy and support available to schools in relation to parent/carers engagement in north Wales.

DISCUSSION:

GwE Assistant Director presented the report, noting that one of the priorities in the business plan is to assist parents/carers to help their children to learn.

He added that a regional group has already been established, which has met twice to set a strategic direction to the work. Reference was made to a resource pack to help children aged 5-12 years old to learn, which has been shared with primary schools. It was noted there is a link in the on-line version should Joint Committee members wish to see the resources.

It was explained that Headteachers have already received a presentation on the resource, and that the regional group has identified a need for such resources for learners aged 13-16 years old. It was added that secondary Headteachers are supportive and keen to receive the resources, as well as resources for pupils with additional learning needs.

Comments arising from the discussion:

- One member noted there is a real need for this, and that the resource is appreciated.
- One member asked whether the resource is relevant for parents who do not speak Welsh and who have children in Welsh-medium schools.

In response:

- GwE Assistant Director noted that GwE needs to show their contribution to LA WESPs.
- He added that the issue of assisting parents who do not speak Welsh is an all Wales issue, and there is a need for discussions in the Management Board on how to fill the gap.

9. TEDXGWE INITIATIVE

DECISION:

To approve the report and the north Wales TEDxGwE Initiative, and look forward to an update in the autumn.

DISCUSSION:

An overview was given of the new initiative, adding that it will be ongoing work here in north Wales for years to come.

It was explained that GwE has registered and received a licence for TEDxGwE, where children will contribute to the discussion on how to address the climate change crisis and offer solutions. It was added that the views and the voice of children in north Wales may be taken to COP26 in Glasgow this year, and that schools have received information regarding this.

Comments arising from the discussion:

- It was asked whether there is a timetable for coming back to the Joint Committee with a further report on this initiative.
- It was agreed the initiative is very timely for the purposes of the new curriculum, and that schools could adopt the initiative every year.
- GwE was thanked for striving to secure this initiative, the only regional consortia to have done so.

In response, GwE Managing Director noted:

- His thanks, on behalf of the Joint Committee, to Gavin Cass for ensuring that the young people of north Wales are leading the field with these opportunities.
- It needs to be ensured that this initiative has a clear link to LA priorities.

Matters arising

To conclude, members said goodbye to the GwE Business Manager. Thanks were extended to her for all her work and contribution over the years since the inception of GwE. It was noted the service appreciates her contribution, deep intelligence and advice during her time with GwE.

The meeting started at 10.30am and concluded at 11:23am.

CHAIR