
**GwE JOINT COMMITTEE
08.07.13**

Present: **Councillor Eryl Williams (Chair)**
 Councillor Siân Gwenllian (Vice-chair)

Councillors Ieuan Williams (Isle of Anglesey Council), Wyn Ellis Jones (Conwy County Borough Council), Chris Bithell (Flintshire County Council), Michael Williams (Wrexham County Borough Council)

Co-opted Members without a vote: Jeremy Griffiths (Primary Schools' Representative).

Officers without a vote: John Davies (Wrexham County Borough Council), Dr Gwynne Jones (Isle of Anglesey Council), Dewi R Jones (Gwynedd Council), Geraint James (Conwy County Borough Council).

Also Present: Iwan Evans (Gwynedd Council Legal Service Manager), Huw Foster Evans (GwE Chief Officer), Elwyn Davies (GwE Interim Chief Officer), Susan Owen Jones (GwE Business and Finance Manager) and Glynda O'Brien (Gwynedd Council Committee Clerk)

Apologies: Jonathan Morgan (Special Schools' Representative), Carole Burgess (Diocese of St Asaph), Karen Evans (Denbighshire County Council), Dafydd Edwards (Cyngor Gwynedd).

1. WELCOME

The Chairman extended a warm welcome to Mr Huw Foster Evans, GwE Chief Officer, to his first meeting of the joint committee.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

3. URGENT ITEM

(The following item had not been included on the Agenda as the information was received after the Agenda had been sent out, however, the Chairman agreed to consider it under Section 100 (4)(b) Local Government Act 1972 in order to proceed with the interviews).

The GwE Interim Chief Officer reported that one of the GwE Senior System Leaders had accepted a post with Anglesey Council and interviews for a successor would take place on Wednesday, 24 July 2013 and it was necessary to appoint Members for the Interview Panel.

Resolved: To nominate the following on the Interview Panel:

Cllr. Wyn Ellis Jones to represent the Elected Members with Cllr. Michael Williams in reserve.

Mr Jeremy Griffiths to represent the Heads

Dr Gwynne Jones to represent the Directors with Karen Evans proposed as a reserve

and to give the Chairman the right to agree on substitutes if required.

4. MINUTES

The Chairman signed the minutes of the meeting of this committee held on 20 February, 2013, as a true record.

5. PROGRESS REPORT

A report was submitted by the GwE Chief Officer (Interim) outlining the progress with developments and the introduction of GwE.

The GwE Interim Chief Officer reported that he had cooperated closely with Mr Huw Foster Evans who was appointed GwE Chief Officer, and he gave a tribute that was full of praise to the Senior System Leaders and the GwE Business and Finance Manager for their work. He expanded on four functions that GwE is expected to achieve namely:

- Supporting local authorities to undertake their statutory roles in terms of school effectiveness;
- Provide support to local authorities and schools with school improvement activity;
- To specifically undertake the responsibility for implementing the National Action Plan (in the context of the core GwE functions)
- Make provision to develop, maintain and review regional frameworks on the grounds of commission

together with the considerations when undertaking the above service. Reference was made to monitoring visits, training and specifically consortia trajectories compared with the national trajectories up to 2014 as summarised by the Welsh Government Standards Unit. The category steps were explained as follows:

Step 1 – Excellent
Step 2 – Good
Step 3 – Satisfactory
Step 4 – Unsatisfactory

During the ensuing discussion the following points were highlighted:

- (a) That it would be beneficial to receive background information in future in terms of schools on Step 3 / 4 in order to understand what is happening across the region.

- (b) That the performance percentage for Threshold Level 2+ was set at 59% for 2013, and it was trusted that this would be maximised in 2014. In response, the GwE Chief Officer explained that the information before them was based on school visits by the Standards Unit and that the forecast for 2015 was significantly lower than the 65% set by the former Minister for Education as a national goal.
- (c) In response to the comment made regarding keeping up in relation to other consortia, assurance was given that it was a matter of perception rather than reality that the north Wales Consortium was behind in terms of performance and reality was reflected in the fact that it was placed second best in the national league.
- (d) It was stressed that if the national goal was set lower and it was trusted that the north Wales consortia would not lose its ambition and that a high level of expectations should continue.
- (e) The need was also emphasised to consider the free school meals indicator across the north.
- (f) In response to concern regarding the implications on matters such as inclusion that derived from the Robert Hill Report, assurance was given that these issues would be discussed at a meeting that had already been organised for 6 September 2013 that would be attended by Chief Executives, Leaders of authorities, education portfolio holders and Directors of Education in the six authorities. From that meeting a draft report would be written on behalf of the region in response to the Robert Hill Report.
- (g) It was added that the new Minister for Education, prior to his appointment, had praised the work done on deprivation by the North Wales region.
- (h) That it would be beneficial for the Members of this Joint Committee to receive a profile of the System Leaders
- (i) It was added that it would be useful for the Members also to receive an occasional information bulletin regarding appointments in order to have a better understanding of the processes etc.

Resolved: (a) To note the GwE developments since its inception on 1 April 2013.

(b) To approve that the Senior Management Team prepares a forward programme of developments for the 2013/14 academic year.

(c) To request that the Business and Finance Manager sends a letter to the former Minister for Education to convey the thanks of the GwE Joint Committee for his commitment to education.

6. BUSINESS MATTERS

6.1 Chief Officer Line Manager

A report was submitted by the Lead Director (Chairman) of the Consortium presenting an application to consider the line management arrangements for the Chief Officer.

The Joint Committee was reminded of their terms of reference together with the attached considerations.

Resolved: (a) To approve:

- (i) That the Corporate Director of the host authority acts as an administrative line manager.**
- (ii) That a panel of the Joint Committee is set up for the formal and statutory processes of professional line management including performance management to include the following members:**
 - Chair of the GwE Joint Committee**
 - Vice-chair of the Consortium**
 - Head to be nominated by the Users Group**
- (iii) That the Lead Director (Chairman) of the Consortium undertakes the role of day to day line manager on behalf of the Joint Committee.**

6.2 Representation of Heads on the Joint Committee

A report was submitted by the Lead Director of the Consortium regarding a request received on behalf of the Representation of Headteachers on the Joint Committee.

The Lead Director of the Consortium gave an outline of the background and stated that it had been the subject of discussion for months and had been highlighted via the Users Group regarding the constitution of the Joint Committee. It was confirmed that legal counsel had been received regarding the matters highlighted and attention was drawn to that response.

The Chair noted the importance for the Users Group to meet often with attendance every time by representative of the six authorities to ensure consistency.

Resolved: (a) To note:

- (i) Concern raised in the statement of Claire Armistead**
- (ii) Concerns identified and considered by the Host Authority's Monitoring Officer and the Strategic Group of Directors of Education.**
- (iii) That the Joint Committee's constitution in its current form reflected the structure as set in the full Business Case approved by the Welsh Government and the six Local Authorities in north Wales.**

(b) Agree to consider reviewing the representation of Heads on the Joint Committee following 12 months in operation.

6.3 Calendar of Meetings

A calendar of meetings for the coming year was submitted.

Resolved: (a) To approve the calendar as outlined in Appendix A of the report.

(b) To authorise the Chair to make changes to the calendar of meetings if required.

7. A WORD OF THANKS

A reference was made to the fact that this would be the last meeting for Mr Elwyn Davies (Chief Officer GwE- Interim) and the Chair took the opportunity to thank him on behalf of the Joint Committee for his untiring work since GwE was established and until Mr Huw Foster Evans would take the over.

Anwen Williams was also thanked for her commendable work for the Consortium.

The meeting commenced at 9.30am and concluded at 10.30 am.

CHAIRMAN