
**GwE Joint Committee
30.04.14**

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: Mr Rhys Howard Hughes (Primary Schools Representative), Mrs Annwen Morgan (Secondary Schools Representative), Mr Jonathan Morgan (Special Schools Representative)

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

Also present: Mr Huw Foster Evans (GwE Chief Officer), Mrs Susan Owen Jones (GwE Business and Finance Manager), Mr Iwan Evans (Host Authority Legal Service Manager - Cyngor Gwynedd Council), Mr Hefin Owen (Host Authority Finance Manager - Cyngor Gwynedd Council), Ms Sandra Evans (Host Authority Senior Human Resources Adviser - Cyngor Gwynedd Council), Mr Geraint Rees (Welsh Government representative) and Glynda O'Brien (Host Authority Members Support Officer - Cyngor Gwynedd Council).

Apologies: Mr Ian Budd (Flintshire County Council), Mr Dafydd Edwards (Host Authority Head of Finance - Cyngor Gwynedd Council)

Councillor Wyn Ellis Jones apologised for his absence from the last Joint Committee meeting

1. CHAIR ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (a) A welcome was extended to Councillor Gareth Thomas, who is Councillor Siân Gwenllian's successor to the post of Cabinet Member for Education - Cyngor Gwynedd Council
- (b) Reference was made to a bereavement suffered recently by Mrs Annwen Morgan and deepest condolences were expressed to her in her loss.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declaration of personal interest was received by any Members present

3. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of this meeting, held on the following dates, as a true record:

6 November 2013

12 March 2014

4. **PROGRESS REPORT**

The GwE Chief Officer presented a report updating the Members of the Joint Committee on GwE progress and developments.

It was noted that the report has been prepared for some time now. It was prepared for the last Joint Committee meeting but due to an insufficient quorum the meeting had to be postponed. The Chief Officer took advantage of the opportunity to thank the GwE team for their work during the last six months, which has been crucial work of a high standard.

The GwE Chief Officer led the Members through the report, making reference to:

- GwE continues to work in accordance with the original Service Level Agreement agreed by the six Authorities
- the Chief Officer has represented GwE in national discussions with regard to developing the National Model for School Improvement
- System Leaders' programme of work
- data collected by the Service on primary and secondary school outcomes following Visit 1 during the autumn term of 2012 and Visit 3 during the summer term of 2013. A significant change has been noted since the situation in the autumn term of 2012 in that there has been an increase, from 26% to 32%, in the percentage of primary schools judged as adequate or unsatisfactory and a decrease, from 11% to 6%, in the percentage of primary schools judged as excellent.
- an increase, from 38% to 52%, in the percentage of secondary schools judged as adequate or unsatisfactory although the percentage of unsatisfactory secondary schools has fallen from 13% to 5%.
- an increase, from 9% to 15%, in the percentage of secondary schools judged as excellent. The most significant change with regard to the secondary sector was the decrease, from 53% to 33%, in the percentage of schools judged as good.
- the above changes are to be expected as the tool used for coming to judgement is more familiar by now; also, the Service Level Agreement itself means that schools must be in one of the two lower categories in order to qualify for additional support by the Service
- GwE continues to conduct moderation activities across the region as well as conducting joint visits
- schools' feedback to Visit 1 questionnaire with a good percentage of positive responses
- an update on literacy and numeracy noting that one of GwE's Senior System Leaders continues to work as the region's main link with the National Support Programme
- update on pupil outcomes 2013
- the future, referring specifically to the development of the National Model and the Business Case, which has by now been presented to the Minister for Education, Welsh Government. It was noted that it is

important for the Service to be responsive to the National Model with new expectations for consortia. To this end, it is necessary to develop capacity to address the developments in the Business Case and attention was drawn to an example of the current staffing structure of the EAS Service in South East Wales.

Before proceeding to discuss structures and appointments, Mr Rhys Howard Hughes left the meeting as he had expressed an interest in one of the posts discussed below.

The Chief Officer went on to note that the Headteacher of Ysgol Uwchradd Alun, Flintshire, has been appointed to the role of Senior System Leader to pertain to quality. The Chief Officer is keen to appoint a Head of Support and Brokerage, from GwE's current resources, to develop the supporting capacity of the Service to assist schools in special categories. The need to move on with this appointment was noted and the Joint Committee's approval was sought with regard to this.

Arising from the report, the following points were highlighted:

- (i) In response to a Member's enquiry about KS2 targets, the Chief Officer explained that the problem is a national problem with regard to variations in interpretation and guidance regulated by the Welsh Government. He intends to discuss the matter with the GwE Management Team, which takes place in the next few days.
- (ii) With regard to GwE monitoring the implementation of the literacy and numeracy tests, the Chief Officer noted that GwE had been requested to undertake this task on behalf of the six Authorities and that the results this year would note the progress score in line with the Government's requirement.
- (iii) Schools expect to receive support and it was felt that this support is key. It is hoped that the Joint Committee will approve the principle of appointing a Head of Brokerage to develop this support.
- (iv) Concern about assessments and school categorisation and, specifically, if the progress score is going to be more important than the raw score how this will impact ESTYN inspections. In response, the Chief Officer strongly believes that the categorisation processes must coincide with ESTYN procedures. If this does not happen, it will be a challenge for the GwE service. The Welsh Government representative added that the 4 regions should take ownership of the Model and create consistency across the regions.
- (v) In response to the above, it was felt that it is the role of the Welsh Government to lead on this and ensure guidance that is more robust and firm, as it is very open-ended at present.
- (vi) The GwE Chief Officer reported that Professor Graham Donaldson from Glasgow University is undertaking a review of the educational curriculum from the Foundation Phase to the Secondary along with assessment in Wales.
- (vii) In response to a Member's enquiry about how those schools that are performing at the top can be maximised, the Chief Officer noted there is a role

for schools to improve on every level and the hope is to create a family of schools that can work and improve together. It is intended to prepare a development plan for school-to-school working by the end of September.

It was decided to: (a) Accept and note the contents of the report on the current GwE developments, thank the Chief Officer for the comprehensive report and all the work undertaken by him and his team during a busy period with regard to national developments.

(b) Approve:

- (i) the principle of appointing a Head of Brokerage, from current GwE resources, to develop the supporting capacity of the service in accordance with what is presented in the Regional Business Case;**
- (ii) to grant the Chief Officer permission to go ahead with the appropriate arrangements for appointing, in consultation with the 6 Authorities;**
- (iii) that the Chief Officer continues to work with the Education Directors of the 6 Authorities on implementing the requirements of the Regional Business Case and report back to the Joint Committee on developments.**

5. GwE BUDGET FINANCIAL REVIEW REPORT 2013/14

Presented: Report by GwE Chief Officer and Host Authority Head of Finance (Cyngor Gwynedd Council), which outlines the latest financial review of GwE budget for 2013/14.

(a) The Host Authority Head of Finance noted that the report focuses on 'significant' financial variations that have emerged, namely an increase in the £150,000 underspend, which means an estimated net underspend of £563,000 against the budget set as part of the Full Business Case to set up GwE.

(b) Attention was drawn to 'significant' financial variations between the reports of Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 that pertain to costs linked to Employees (Q2: £81k overspend; Q3: £2k overspend) as well as commissioning (Q2: neither overspend nor underspend; Q3: £52k underspend).

It was decided to: (a) Accept and note the contents of the report

(b) Confirm:

- (i) Earmark £70,000 towards the Welsh Government national training programme for System Leaders to be held in 2014/15**
- (ii) Earmark the remainder, that is £493,000, towards reinforcing the commissioning budget and to deliver the Regional Business Plan to implement the National Model 2014/15.**

6. BASELINE BUDGET 2014/15

Presented: GwE Chief Officer and Host Authority Head of Finance (Cyngor Gwynedd Council) report on GwE Baseline Budget 2014/15.

- (a) The Host Authority Finance Manager drew the Joint Committee's attention to the fact that the budget has been prepared using the final business case format with the impact of inflation/increase in costs estimated and incorporated into the budget (including pay rise, national insurance adjustments and consumer price index increase). In the Joint Committee meeting in July a progress report on developments will be presented, which will lead to responsibilities being transferred to GwE.
- (b) Concern was raised by many Members regarding the financial cutbacks facing local authorities and as a result GwE will have to show value for money for the service.

It was decided to: Adopt the 2014/15 baseline budget as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report

7. THE BUSINESS CASE AS THE REGION'S RESPONSE TO THE NATIONAL MODEL FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Presented: The Region's Business Case presented to the Welsh Government as a response to the National Model for School Improvement

- (a) Mr Geraint Rees, Welsh Government, reported that the Business Case presented is concise, fit for purpose and meets the requirements of the Welsh Government. The following are responses to observations made by Joint Committee Members:
- there needs to be a Central Team to support the GwE Chief Officer
 - it was accepted that the region is vast and that it is a challenge to ensure consistency in monitoring across the region
 - a model of school-to-school collaboration needs to be established and a framework and flexibility put in place to respond to schools' needs
 - the intention was not to create unnecessary work, but rather to secure a model for raising standards that will lead naturally in the long term to school leaders assisting each other
 - it would be beneficial for the Joint Committee to invite an international expert to share evidence and experience in the field
- (b) Varying views were expressed by Joint Committee Members with regard to realising the above, such as:
- it would be inevitable that a project plan with regard to governance arrangements along with a finance model would have to be prepared for September

- awaiting the legal opinion of the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) on the process
- the need for additional resources within the GwE Central team to be able to carry out the work
- it was suggested that during the next few weeks the Education Directors and the GwE Chief Officer discuss the way forward and report on progress in the next Joint Committee meeting in July
- it was felt that a period of stability is needed in order to be able to focus on improving standards rather than respond to constant changes by the Welsh Government

It was decided to: Accept and note the above and ask Mr Geraint Rees to convey the concerns of the Joint Committee to the Minister for Education with regard to monitoring and making regional assessment consistent.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

In response to the Chair's enquiry about the empty seat in the Membership of the Joint Committee, the Chief Officer reported that Ms Alison Fisher has accepted an invitation to represent the Governors on the Joint Committee

8. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Joint Committee will be held at 1.30pm on Wednesday 9 July 2014 at Venue Cymru, Llandudno.

The meeting started at 9.30 a.m. and concluded at 11.00 a.m.

CHAIR