
MEETING:	COUNCIL
DATE	21 JANUARY 2010
REPORT	SCHOOL HOLIDAYS
PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:	PROVIDE INFORMATION FOR NOTICE OF MOTION
REPORT BY:	DEWI R JONES HEAD OF EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

The notice of motion is given by Councillor John Pughe Roberts that schools in Gwynedd, like other schools in Mid and South Wales, should close on Friday, 16 July 2010.

In essence, notice of such a motion is given because children, parents and teachers as well as other workers in our schools, encounter difficulties when trying to attend the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show due to school holiday arrangements in Gwynedd and Conwy. In 2011, the former county of Caernarfon, namely a part of Gwynedd and a part of the County of Conwy, will sponsor the Royal Agricultural Show held at Builth Wells.

BACKGROUND

At a meeting of the NORTH WALES INTER-AUTHORITY TASK GROUP, (which is a group of Education Officers under the chairmanship of Conwy Head of Education Officer) held on 8 April 2008, a draft list of holiday dates for 2010-16 appeared on the agenda. That list was discussed, in accordance with the pattern that all North Wales authorities, including Gwynedd, Anglesey, Conwy, Denbigh, Flint and Wrexham had agreed on.

IMPLICATIONS:

CONSTITUTIONAL

If the Council were to amend the holiday arrangements, constitutional implications would require consideration. These apply to every County in North Wales. For instance, changing arrangements would undermine the criteria and agreement with other LEA's when setting dates, and that would involve several prioritised factors, e.g. using blocks of entire weeks; starting the school year on 1 September (or afterwards); having the school half-term holidays as close as

possible to the middle of the term as is possible. The criteria also takes other factors into account such as when to place the Easter holidays (if the Easter weekend was to fall early) and take the week when the Royal Welsh is held as the first week of the summer holidays if at all possible. Of course, there is also the requirement that schools remain open for 195 days during a school year.

The weeks during which the Royal Welsh will be held in 2011 and 2016 were discussed (where the dates of the Show and the final week of the school term clash) but Task Group members were not of the opinion that this merited special priority.

Following a meeting of the Task Group held on 8 April, 2008, a consultation period was held (which ended on 16 May 2008), and then all LEA representatives again convened and agreed on 2010-2016 school holiday dates. Following this meeting, the LEA's discussed the dates with the unions and headteachers during the further consultation period which ended on 10 July, 2008. The finalised information was shared with the schools soon afterwards.

It should be noted that the Council has given the Education Department Officers the task of discussing school holidays in co-operation with teaching union representatives. Any alternative course of action would undermine the established co-operation. This would also apply to the co-operation across LEA's.

(The above comments provide a summary of the procedure followed, and the consultations held when making decisions. The same procedure has been followed as that used when dealing with this matter in the past and is based on the same criteria).