
GWE JOINT COMMITTEE 6/07/16

Present: Councillor Eryl Williams (Chair)
Councillor Michael Williams (Vice Chair)

Councillors: Chris Bithell and Gareth Thomas.

Co-opted Non-voting Members: Diane Chisholm (Primary Schools Representative) and Eithne Hughes (Secondary Schools Representative).

Non-voting Members: Ian Budd (Lead Director – Chair of Management Board (Flintshire Council)), John Davies (Wrexham County Borough Council), Julian Molloy (Denbighshire Council) and Delyth Molyneux (Anglesey Council).

Also Present: Rhys Howard Hughes (GwE Assistant Director (Support and Brokerage)), Alwyn Jones (GwE Assistant Director (Standards)), Susan Owen Jones (GwE Business and Finance Manager), Claire Rundle (Welsh Government Representative), Dafydd Edwards (Host Authority's Head of Finance – Gwynedd Council), Sion Huws (Host Authority's Senior Solicitor – Gwynedd Council), and Eirian Roberts (Host Authority's Members Support Officer – Gwynedd Council)

Observer: Gareth Jones (Chair of GwE Advisory Board).

Apologies: Councillors Kenneth P. Hughes and Wyn Ellis Jones; Rosalind Williams (Diocese of St. Asaph), Jonathan Morgan (Special Schools Representative), Alison Fisher (Governors Representative), Arwyn Thomas (Gwynedd Council), R. Ellis Owen (Conwy County Borough Council), Karen Evans (Denbighshire Council), Iwan Evans (Host Authority), Geraint Rees (Welsh Government) and Huw Foster Evans (GwE Managing Director).

1. ELECTING A CHAIR

IT WAS DECIDED to elect the Councillor Eryl Williams (Denbighshire Council) to be Chair of the Joint-committee for the year 2016/17.

2. ELECTING A VICE CHAIR

IT WAS DECIDED to elect the Councillor Michael Williams (Wrexham county Borough Council) to be Vice Chair of the Joint-committee for the year 2016/17.

3. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declaration of personal interest was received by any Members present.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of this Joint-committee's previous meeting, held on 24 February 2016, as a true record.

5. REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE NORTH WALES CONSORTIUM

A report by GwE's Lead Director / Chair of the Management Board and GwE's Managing Director was presented updating the Joint-committee members on the report on the quality of the school improvement services provided by the North Wales Consortium.

The Lead Director / Chair of the Management Board referred to the conclusions and recommendations of the Estyn inspection published on 30 June. He noted that two areas in particular needed to be addressed:-

- 1) The work undertaken to promote higher standards in schools, especially in key stage 4.
- 2) Matters relating to value for money and business processes, as well as the question of the effectiveness of the programme's delivery and consistency across the region.

The Assistant Director provided details on the recommendations individually and on the work of drafting an initial action plan in response to those recommendations.

The Assistant Director further stated that they welcomed the positive elements in the report, and accepted the accountability on the service.

The Lead Director / Chair of Management Board noted that he was confident that the steps of action would ensure that the lines of accountability were completely clear.

The Assistant Director thanked the Lead Director / Chair of the Management Board for his support during the period of the inspection.

During the ensuing discussion, the following points were highlighted:-

- Criticism on measuring value for money was a common theme in Estyn / WAO inspection reports on each of the 4 Welsh consortia, and is an aspect on which the regions will collaborate in order to achieve in the future.
- The steps outlined in paragraphs 3.8 and 3.9 of the report did not concern GwE and directly involved the local authorities. The Lead Director / Chair of Management Board responded that he welcomed the clarity from 2017 forwards, but that it was ultimately the local authorities who had statutory responsibility for these aspects.
- It would've been beneficial for members to see a draft of the action plan prior to this meeting. The Assistant Director (Support and Brokerage) responded that attention was being given to the plan at the moment, but that he could assure the member that the work was being undertaken. The Assistant Director (Standards) added that the draft was likely to be available before the Joint-committee's September meeting.
- Even though GwE is completely accountable for improving performance across the North, it is not responsible for the regional networks (which are responsible for implementing specific elements of the National Model), and it was emphasised that this needed to be looked at carefully with regards to accountability and value for money. In response, the Lead Director / Chair of Managing Board referred to the different structures noting that the intention was to hold workshops on quality and the scrutiny of work programmes.

Middle term funding was discussed. Gwynedd Council's Head of Finance noted that the decision for 2016/17 was to apply the same funding cut to GwE as was applied in the 6 authorities, but that currently there was uncertainty across all of the United Kingdom's Government departments in relation to 2017/18 and onwards. He added that he would be working with GwE's business and finance manager to seek more certainty before planning on the basis of continued funding for GwE on a proportional level to the six councils' settlement,

IT WAS DECIDED TO note the content of the report and consider the Post Inspection Action Plan in the September meeting.

6. THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES NETWORK

A report by the Head of Education, Wrexham County Borough Council, was presented updating the Joint-committee members on the Finance and Resources Network's activity.

It was noted that over £27 million (85%) of the total gross expenditure of the Education Improvement Grant for 2016/17 would be allocated to schools, and the importance of continuing to do this in future was emphasised.

The importance of ensuring that funding is effectively employed to have a positive impact was emphasised.

Gwynedd Council's Head of Finance thanked on behalf of the Finance officers working with the Head of Education of Wrexham County Borough Council.

IT WAS DECIDED TO note the content of the report.

7. FINAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING ON 31 MARCH, 2016

A report was presented by Gwynedd Council's Head of Finance which included:-

- The 2015/16 Income and Expenditure Revenue Outturn Report; and
- A statement of Accounts in 'statutory' form which had been endorsed, but which was subject to audit.

He referred to the income of £14,155,701 and expenditure of £13,950,651 in both papers.

It was noted that the date at the bottom of page 33 of the complete programme, underneath the Responsible Finance Officer Certificate, needed to be corrected to read '31 March, 2016'.

The Head of Finance explained that the £1.4m decrease in pension commitments was only valid 'on paper' and was not a resource to be used.

IT WAS DECIDED TO accept and note the information in the appendices to the reports, and confirm the following handling of the underspend -

- **The 2015/16 Income and Expenditure Revenue Outturn Report – Appendix A**
- **2015/16 Statement of Accounts in its statutory form (subject to audit) – Appendix B.**

8. GOVERNING STATEMENT

A report was presented by GwE's Managing Director inviting the Joint-Committee to accept and approve the Annual Governing Statement.

IT WAS DECIDED TO accept and approve the Annual Governing Statement.

The Chair and one of the delegates endorsed the document on behalf of GwE's Managing Director at the end of the meeting.

9. RISK REGISTER

A report was presented by GwE's Lead Director / Chair of Management Board and the Managing Director presenting GwE's most recent risk register to the Joint-committee.

Members of the Joint-committee were invited to revise the content of the report, deciding whether there were any risks they wished to bring to the attention of the Cabinet etc.

The importance of ensuring that matters identified were understood was emphasised.

IT WAS DECIDED to accept and approve the Risk Register.

10. 2016/17 MEETING CALENDR

A report was presented by the Business and Finance Manager asking the Joint-committee to agree on the meeting programme for the year to come.

IT WAS DECIDED to approve the below meeting programme for the year to come:-

MEETING	DATE	TIME	LOCATION
GwE Joint-committee	22/09/2016	9.00am	GwE Offices, Bryn Eirias, Colwyn Bay
GwE Joint-committee	25/11/2016	9.00am	GwE Offices, Bryn Eirias, Colwyn Bay
GwE Joint-committee	08/03/2017	9.00am	GwE Offices, Bryn Eirias, Colwyn Bay

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and concluded at 3.20 pm

CHAIRMAN