
GWE JOINT COMMITTEE 23/09/15

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

Councillors: Kenneth P. Hughes, Wyn Ellis Jones and Gareth Thomas.

Co-opted Members with no vote: Annwen Morgan (Secondary Schools Representative), Jonathan Morgan (Special Schools Representative) and Rita Price (Wrexham Diocese)

Officers with no vote: Ian Budd (Lead Director – Chair of Management Board (Flintshire County Council), John Davies (Wrexham County Borough Council), Karen Evans (Denbighshire County Council), Delyth Molyneux (Isle of Anglesey Council), R. Ellis Owen (Conwy County Borough Council) and Arwyn Thomas (Cyngor Gwynedd).

Also present: Huw Foster Evans (GwE Managing Director), Susan Owen Jones (GwE Business and Finance Manager), Rhys Howard Hughes (GwE Assistant Director (Support and Brokerage), Alwyn Jones (GwE Assistant Director (Standards), Geraint Rees and Claire Rundle (Welsh Government representatives), Dafydd L. Edwards (Host Authority Head of Finance - Cyngor Gwynedd), Amanda Hughes (Wales Audit Office), Siôn Huws (Host Authority Senior Solicitor – Cyngor Gwynedd) and Glynda O’Brien (Host Authority Members Support Officer - Cyngor Gwynedd)

Apologies: Councillor Chris Bithell (Flintshire County Council), Diane Chisholm (Primary Schools Representative), Alison Fisher (Governor representative) and Iwan Evans (Host Authority Head of Legal Services - Cyngor Gwynedd).

1. **WELCOME**

The Chair extended a welcome to Mrs Rita Price of Wrexham Diocese to her first Joint Committee meeting

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 15 July 2015, as a true record.

4. **FINAL ACCOUNTS OF JOINT COMMITTEE FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2015 AND RELEVANT AUDIT**

A report by the Head of Finance, Cyngor Gwynedd outlined a statement of the post-Audit Accounts, a report by the Wales Audit office along with a representation letter

The Wales Audit Office representative reported that the context for the accounts is set out in the report and attention was drawn to a summary of amendments made to the draft financial statements. The attention of the Joint Committee should be drawn to these.

Details were provided on the accounts and Joint Committee Members had an opportunity to ask questions

It was decided to: (a) accept, note and approve the information in the

- (i) **ISA260 report by the Wales Audit Office**
- (ii) **Statement of 2014/15 accounts (post-audit)**

(b) **ask the Chair and the Cyngor Gwynedd Head of Finance (as the statutory GwE Financial Officer) to certify the Representation Letter**

5. GwE PROGRESS REPORT

Statistics were presented to the Joint Committee outlining results, main outcomes and issues for consideration

The GwE Managing Director led the Joint Committee through the report, noting as follows:

(a) Foundation Phase

- **GwE performance is the lowest of all the regional consortia. However, national steer has highlighted the need for a plateau in performance along with a robust process of standardisation and verification across Wales.**
- **teacher assessment continues to be a matter of concern**
- **there has been progress in the performance of FSM pupils in 4 authorities since 2014, significantly so in Gwynedd and Môn.**
- **there has been progress in performance since 2014 across all indicators on the higher level. However, regional progress in Welsh is less than national progress.**
- **some schools have performed below the median of FSM benchmarks in key indicators over a rolling three year period and these schools need to be robustly challenged**

In response to a query, it was confirmed that the above issues are expected.

(b) Key Stage 2

- **there has been progress in GwE's performance; however, as in the Foundation Phase, national steer has highlighted the need for a plateau in performance across Wales and a robust process of standardisation and verification**
- **teacher assessment continues to be a matter of concern**
- **there has been progress in the performance of FSM pupils; however, there was a slight decline in performance in Gwynedd and Môn**
- **there has been progress in performance since 2014 across all indicators on the expected level, and progress is above the national average for every core subject**
- **the above is in line with expectations, but, again, some schools are performing below the national average and need specific attention as part of the system of challenge**

The following points were highlighted during the subsequent discussion:

- (i) how firm is Welsh Government regarding inconsistency in teacher assessment and do the Teachers' Unions challenge the Government on this?

In response, Mr Geraint Rees, Welsh Government explained that an agreement was put in place for the 4 regions to work together this year as the process is in place for the first time. It was noted there is considerable variance between the 4 regions in Key Stage 2. With regard to KS4, it was reported that the gap is closing. It was further noted that the categorisation process requires strong implementation and the next step would be to tighten moderation of teacher assessment. The process must take place and, as a result, lack of confidence will have to be eradicated.

- (ii) Are Unions in agreement and are some Counties facing problems? If so, would a discussion with the Minister for Education be beneficial?

In response, it was noted that a meeting with the Trade Unions is imminent so as to gather input on how things are progressing. In addition, there will be an opportunity for the Chair of the Joint Committee to raise the matter with the Minister in a meeting arranged for 16 October.

- (iii) Lack of confidence creates uncertainty amongst learners and teachers and there needs to be a discussion on the importance of consistency with regard to moderation.

The GwE Managing Director noted that the final report would be available in November, providing comparative figures with other Counties; nevertheless, the sample is small and, as a result, will not provide the full picture. Categorisation of primary schools is a national process and is proving to be a challenge this year as Phase 1 of the categorisation highlights variances.

- (iv) More time to analyse the statistics presented would have been appreciated. Whilst acknowledging that there is concern regarding teacher assessment, authorities setting targets is questioned, as school targets can be very different in other Counties.

In response, the Managing Director explained that the process will have an impact and that a target setting process is operational regionally.

Mr Ian Budd (Lead Director – Chair of Management Board) noted that an early indicative analysis of KS4 performance is useful, but it will be possible to analyse further by the next Joint Committee meeting in November.

So as to be able to focus on consistency, it was added that a clear message must be conveyed to Welsh Government of the need for training, as it is clear there is much room for improvement.

- (v) Is there confidence in the tracking process as this is important in order to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses? Pupils should be encouraged to fulfil their potential and those who are not achieving as well should also be encouraged.

(c) Key Stage 3

- **GwE performance is the highest of all the consortia**
- **However, in the context of KS4 performance, concern arises about the reliability of teacher assessment**

(ch) Key Stage 4

- a slight improvement of +0.2% in the key indicator when compared to 2014. However, progress was significantly less than national progress of between +2>3% ; this is not acceptable
- on average, a +3.5% improvement in red/amber category schools when compared to 2014. Individual schools have seen significant improvements. This is indicative of the effectiveness of the intervention programmes in place in those schools. However, a small percentage of these schools are not performing as expected.
- disappointing performance in green and yellow category schools with significant underperformance in individual schools where performance has been historically good.
- the majority of north Wales schools have seen an oscillation in performance this year, with significant variance in some schools. Internal tracking processes are not robust enough in too many schools.
- performance in English and Mathematics continues to be a significant concern in schools across the region
- concern about performance in GCSE Science in the future as the BTEC will no longer be a measure of performance in 2017.

The GwE Managing Director noted there had been no progress on 2014 results and that the region is not keeping up with the pace of progress nationally. Whilst acknowledging that the cohort varies in individual schools and that progress cannot be expected every year, appropriate actions must be considered.

The following points were highlighted during the subsequent discussion:

- (i) thanks were expressed for the data and it was agreed that inconsistency with regard to teacher assessment must be addressed, but there is no certainty of what is intended with regard to the moderation process.
- (ii) should the business plan be adapted? And would it be possible to have information as to why there is progress in some regions and what happens in local schools?
- (iii) are the current model and resources suitable and appropriate
- (iv) prompt action must be ensured so as to address KS4 performance in Mathematics and English
- (v) there needs to be a much more robust analysis of the factors arising from KS4 performance. From the dialogue with schools, threatening schools needs to be stopped and there needs to be clarity on what happens in north Wales. A dialogue with Headteachers would be useful so that they can elaborate on the difficulties.
- (vi) on considering the messages of page 16/17 of the data, there is concern whether there is enough capacity to fill in gaps, especially when good teachers are lost to central posts and, as a result, lack of Headteacher/teacher recruitment.
- (vii) it was noted that some SCC schools have made astonishing progress and that progress in some schools has deteriorated
- (viii) using colours to indicate school categorisation is not useful to schools
- (ix) the standard of education must be the best possible for pupils and if schools are in difficulties then early support must be ensured for them

In response to the above comments, it was noted that the analysis process is underway along with the regional overview; but, it was acknowledged that the analysis needs to be authority specific and that, in this respect, the support will perhaps vary between one

authority and another. A further report will be presented to the Joint Committee in November.

It was decided to: (a) Accept and note the statistics presented along with the above comments

(b) Approve receipt of a further report in the next Joint Committee meeting in November

6. GwE 2015-16 BUDGET REPORT – SUMMER TERM

A report by the GwE Managing Director and the Host Authority Head of Finance on the latest financial review of GwE budget for 2015-16 financial year was presented.

Reference was made to Appendix 1 of the report that includes full financial information

Attention was drawn to the two underspend headlines:

- (i) “building”, which refers to the new GwE offices in Caernarfon and Conwy, due to a change in the date of moving to the new locations; and
- (ii) “travel”, which refers to the decision to reduce the budget for travelling costs to be closer to that of actual expenditure

It was noted that the report does not include consideration of possible savings in the management and administration element of some specific grants.

With regard to the underspend fund, the fund total at the start of the 2015/16 financial year was £266,829, with the GwE Joint Committee having already committed £135,000 to specific plans. On adding the 2015/16 underspend of £29,903, the estimated non-committed fund is £161,732.

Joint Committee members had an opportunity to question any elements of the report

The GwE Managing Director confirmed that the deprivation grant has been allocated to schools

It was decided to: Accept and note the report

7. DATES OF 2015-16 MEETINGS

A calendar of GwE 2015-16 Joint Committee meetings was presented

Ian Budd (Lead Director – Chair of Management Board) (Flintshire County Council) noted that the frameworks are operational and there would be further reporting on feedback and supplying information in the next Joint Committee meeting in November.

It was decided to: Approve the following dates for 2015-16:

DATE	TIME	LOCATION
12 November 2015	am	Conwy
24 February 2016	am	Conwy
6 July 2016	am	Conwy

The meeting started at 1.30 p.m. and concluded at 3.00 p.m.

CHAIR