

EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE TUESDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER 2017

Present: Councillor Beth Lawton - Chair
Councillor Nia Jeffreys - Vice-chair

Councillors: Menna Baines, Freya Hannah Bentham, Steve Collings, Aled Evans, Evan Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd, Judith Humphreys, Elwyn Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, Cai Larsen, Dewi Owen, Jason Wayne Parry, Paul Rowlinson, Cemlyn Williams and Gareth Williams.

Cabinet Member:- Councillor Craig ab Iago - Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure and Culture (Item 4)
Councillor Gareth Thomas - Cabinet Member for Education (Item 5 and 6)

Also in Attendance: Vera Jones (Members' Manager), and Sioned Williams (Member Support Officer).

Item 4: Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department), Ian Jones (Senior Corporate Support Manager), Robin Evans (Project Manager), Iwan Evans (Monitoring Officer), and Dewi Morgan (Senior Manager - Revenue and Risk), and Anest Gray Frazer (The Church in Wales).

Item 5: Elen Arfona Williams (GwE - Key Stage 3 and 4) and Sioned Hywel Thomas (GwE - Primary Stage).

Item 5 and 6: Garem Jackson Williams (Head of Education), and Debbie Jones (Area Education Officer).

Apologies: Councillor Keith Jones, Dilwyn Ellis Hughes (UCAC), David Healy (Teachers' Unions), Karen Vaughan Jones (Parents' Representative - Dwyfor Area Governor).

1. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

2. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 29 June 2017 as a true record.

4. PROVISION OF LEISURE FACILITIES - ESTABLISHING A COUNCIL CONTROLLED COMPANY

Submitted - report of the Senior Corporate Support Manager outlining the basis for recommending establishing a Council Controlled Company to provide leisure facilities within the County. The series of questions/observations from individual members in relation to the following were responded to:-

- Loss of democratic control by establishing the new company.
- Lessons learnt from other councils that had adopted a similar model.

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- The importance of considering the risk of conflicts as the directors would be accountable to the Company's act and to Gwynedd Council.
- Concern regarding the status of the Welsh language within leisure centres and the importance of the Council's role in safeguarding the language from further decline.
- The Company's intention to support centres which were a financial failure.
- Building management arrangement.
- Staff savings.
- The Council's right to appoint members to the Company's Management Board.
- Ensure that the Company would not follow the same path at CCG, where the Welsh language was not essential to the post of the director.
- Importance of appointing a dynamic and proactive leader with a strong developmental vision.
- Ensure an innovative vision to develop the service.
- The company's commitment to working towards the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The Chair summarised the main conclusions of the discussion as follows:

- Option six should be recommended, namely to establish a council-controlled company.
- Members of the Committee needed to further scrutinise as the work to develop the details of the company were received.

RESOLVED: Recommend option six.

5. SUMMER RESULTS 2017

Submitted - report from the Cabinet Member for Education and Head of Education presenting information at an early stage to elected members on performance at end of key stages for the 2016/2017 school year. The series of questions/observations from individual members in relation to the following were responded to:

- Concern that assessing the Foundation Phase through the medium of Welsh was putting the Council at a disadvantage.
- The Free School Meals measurer was misleading and suggested that Gwynedd was one of the richest counties nationally, whilst there were areas within the county that had gained access to European structural funds because of their poverty.
- Suggestion to differentiate between the performance of children from Welsh speaking homes and children from non-Welsh speaking homes in order to be able to compare with other counties.
- Disappointment was expressed that literature was not a subject included as one of the main KS4 measures.
- Bridge the 'arm's length' policy which existed between Headteachers and Foundation Phase practitioners to dispose of both learning cultures in schools.
- GwE intervention in KS3.
- The impact that sitting exams earlier was having on KS4 results.

During the discussion about the contributing factors towards the results of the Foundation Phase, the GwE Primary Phase Representative noted the following points:

- There were problems in regards to teacher assessments and GwE had worked with Headteachers to set out pupil standards, standards of provision and expectations from the perspective of the Headteachers and the senior education management team.
- It was very difficult to gain consistency regarding the definition of 'best fit' whilst assessing any child. It was noted that six Regional Education Directors had worked with GwE to publish a regional statement, which set out that any teacher assessment was based on the teacher's professional opinion, and there were clear guidelines explaining how to reach that judgement.
- There was an additional challenge in the Foundation Phase this year. Children at the end

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of the phase would be assessed against a set of new revised outcomes, which would include more challenging elements than the previous year. As a result of this change, GwE was running a new training programme for teachers in order for schools to meet the additional requirements and expectations.

During the discussion about Key Stage 4 results, the following was noted:

- There had been a fall in KS4 results in Gwynedd, and across Wales. It was emphasised that the specifications had changed drastically this year, especially in the main measures, which is Mathematics, Science, and Welsh (Language) or English (Language). The main changes had been that Mathematics had been split in two, namely numeracy and mathematics, and Welsh and English literature did not count towards the TL2+. Due to these changes, it was not possible to compare between this year's KS4 results and results of previous years. Therefore, Gwynedd's situation in the region and nationally should be reviewed, and Gwynedd was currently in first place regionally and fifth nationally.

Resolved:

- **To accept, note and thank the officer for the report.**
- **The Committee to review the work which is in the pipeline in the Foundation Phase to ensure that they get to the root of the problem.**
- **The Committee to receive the schools' and collages' figures in full once they have been validated.**

6. SECONDARY SECTOR LANGUAGE STRATEGY

A report was submitted, along with a draft version of the Gwynedd Secondary Sector Language Strategy, which addressed many of the questions submitted by the committee members in advance. The series of questions/observations from individual members in relation to the following were responded to:-

- Opportunity for the Language Committee to scrutinise the strategy.
- To what extent could the authority intervene in schools where the Welsh language was deteriorating?
- The cost of Language Immersion Units and who paid for them, in the context of Wylfa B.
- The importance of schools' role to arrange Welsh 'gigs' to promote socialising through the medium of Welsh.
- The importance of School Councils role to enable pupils to take ownership of the strategy.
- How does the Council promote the Welsh language as a work skill?
- Importance of concentration and encouraging young people to digitally communicate through the medium of Welsh.

Resolved:

- **To accept, note and thank the officer for the report.**

The meeting commenced at 10:45 and concluded at 15:00

CHAIRMAN