
EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 20/09/18

Present: Councillor Beth Lawton (Chair).
Councillor Paul Rowlinson (Vice-chair)

Councillors: Freya Bentham, Steve Collings, Alwyn Gruffydd, Elwyn Jones, Cai Larsen, Dewi Owen, Elfed Roberts and Gareth Williams.

Co-opted Members: Dylan Davies (Meirionnydd Parent / Governors Representative) and Dilwyn Elis Hughes (UCAC).

Officers present: Vera Jones (Members' Manager – Democratic Services) and Eirian Roberts (Member Support Officer).

Present for item 5 below:

Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn (Council Leader)
Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member for Economic Development)
Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department)
Dylan Griffiths (Economic Development Programmes Manager)

Present for item 6 below:

Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member for Education)
Garem Jackson (Head of Education)
Debbie A.W.Jones (Education Corporate Services Officer)
Paul Matthews-Jones (Core Leader – Secondary - GwE)
Geraint Evans (Core Leader – Primary – GwE)

Present for item 7 below:

Sion Owen (Council Business Support Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Councillors Menna Baines, Aled Evans, Judith Humphreys, Huw Wyn Jones, Mair Rowlands and Cemlyn Williams; Anest Gray Frazer (Church in Wales) and Rita Price (Catholic Church).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

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

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 21 June 2018, as a true record.

5. GWYNEDD COUNCIL'S ACTIVITY IN RELATION TO BREXIT

Submitted – a report by the Leader (in his capacity as Lead Member for Brexit) and the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, outlining the Council's activities in response to the UK's decision to leave the European Union (Brexit).

The Leader, Head of Department and Manager expanded on the content of the report, and also responded to questions / observations from members.

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

- The observations reflected the fact that it was a confusing and uncertain period, and that the situation was extremely difficult, mainly due to a lack of information.
- Concern had been expressed that the timetable was tight, but that it was not possible to prepare due to the lack of information.
- Committee members were grateful for confirmation regarding the situation of the current European funding projects.
- There was a need to ensure that Gwynedd continued to participate in the regional discussions in order to be prepared for any funding that might be received, through whatever sources.
- Another report should be submitted to committee when further information became available, especially in relation to funding for small businesses, and how the Council could assist those businesses to access the funding.
- The Welsh Local Government Association should be invited to give a presentation to the committee, or to all members of the Council, on the nature of its input to the discussions.

6. REPORT ON THE SUMMER 2018 RESULTS

Submitted – the report of the Cabinet Member for Education on the draft summer 2018 results.

The Cabinet Member, Head of Department and GwE representatives expanded on the content of the report, and also responded to questions / observations from members.

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

- The main emphasis of the discussions had been on the significant fall in the results of Key Stage 4 English (GCSE); the committee understood that the Head of Education had already contacted Qualifications Wales expressing dissatisfaction about the significant and unexpected increase in the threshold level between grades 'B' and 'C'. Subject to the response, the Cabinet Member proposed to further raise the matter on a political level.
- There was agreement that the Cabinet Member should update the Chair and Vice-chair when a response was received from Qualifications Wales, as many of the committee's observations were dependent upon that response.
- Concern had also been expressed about the possibility of a significant change, without notification, to the grade thresholds of other subjects in future and, subject to a response to this from Qualifications Wales, the Cabinet Member should update the Chair and Vice-chair so that the committee knew what was happening.
- The Committee had noted a specific concern due to the impact of the unexpected and significant change in the English grade thresholds on individual pupils, and on their career prospects in due course, and especially for the 7%-8% that did not succeed in reaching their expected target of a 'B' or 'C' grade as a result of the change in the threshold.

- Concern had also been expressed about the possible negative impact on teachers, the improvement journey within schools and the tracking work etc. that had been developed over recent years.
- There was some nervousness among members about the changes to the arrangements for reporting on performance measures, with less emphasis on comparative data and greater emphasis on self-evaluation, etc. There was scope for members to keep an eye on this through the work of the committee, their work as school governors, and the rolling data from year to year.
- It was agreed that a further report should be submitted to the committee in January 2019 on the Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 final data, which would also include information about examinations through the medium of Welsh / English.

7. SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPACT OF NEW BUILDING DEVELOPMENTS FOR SCHOOLS ON THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Submitted – the report of the Chair, inviting the committee to adopt the brief and confirm the membership of the scrutiny investigation.

It was noted that the list in paragraph 5 of the prospective schools to be studied should be amended to include Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn.

RESOLVED

(a) To adopt the brief (included as an appendix to the report).

(b) To confirm that the members of the investigation would be the Chair, Councillor Beth Lawton, and Councillors Steve Collings, Cai Larsen and Paul Rowlinson.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 12.45 pm

CHAIRMAN