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## EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 21/03/19

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

**Councillors:** Freya Bentham, Aled Evans, Alwyn Gruffydd, Judith Humphreys, Elwyn Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, Cai Larsen, Dewi Roberts, Elfed Roberts, Mair Rowlands, Cemlyn Williams and Gareth Williams.

**Co-opted Member:** Dilwyn Ellis Hughes (UCAC).

**Ex-officio Member:** Councillor Edgar Owen.

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

**Present for item 5 below:**

Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member for Education)  
Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department)  
Ffion Edwards Ellis (Senior Manager - ALN and Inclusion)

**Present for item 6 below:**

Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member for Education)  
Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department)  
Debbie A.W.Jones (Education Corporate Services Officer)  
Owen Owens (Senior Manager - Schools)  
Diane Jones (Gwynedd Area Education Officer)

**Present for item 7 below:**

Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member for Education)  
Garem Jackson (Head of Education Department)  
Debbie A.W.Jones (Education Corporate Services Officer)  
Owen Owens (Senior Manager - Schools)  
Diane Jones (Gwynedd Area Education Officer)  
Ffion Edwards Ellis (Senior Manager - ALN and Inclusion)

**Present for item 8 below:**

Councillor Dyfrig Siencyn (Council Leader)  
Iwan Trefor Jones (Corporate Director)

**Present for item 9 below:**

Councillor Ioan Thomas (Cabinet Member for Economic Development)  
Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department)  
Hugh Edwin Jones (Events Manager)

Councillor Dewi Roberts was welcomed to his first meeting of this committee.

Councillor Cemlyn Williams was congratulated on his new role as Cabinet Member for Education from April onwards. The current Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Gareth Thomas, was thanked for his willing cooperation over the past few years and he was wished well in his new role as the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Community. The current Cabinet

Member for Economic Development, Councillor Ioan Thomas, was also thanked and wished well in his new role as the Cabinet Member for Finance.

The current Cabinet Members thanked staff for all their support over the years.

## **1. APOLOGIES**

Councillors Selwyn Griffiths and Dewi Owen.

Dylan Davies (Meirionnydd Parents / Governors' Representative), Anest Gray Frazer (Church in Wales) and David Healey (ATL)

## **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 24 January, 2019 as a true record.

## **5. CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS CODE AND THE PROPOSED REGULATIONS**

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Education summarising the main principles of the Draft Additional Learning Needs Code, the planning work for the changes and the risks to the authority.

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

The main conclusions of the discussion were as follows:

- That the committee appreciated the comprehensive report that had been prepared by the Senior Manager - ALN and Inclusion in response to the consultation.
- Despite the Government's assumption that changes would be cost-neutral, that the committee fully accepted the explanation provided by the Senior Manager - ALN and Inclusion, and which was reiterated by the Head of Education Department, that it was not cost-neutral, especially given that the age would be extended from 0-25, and included pre-school children and young people who had left school.
- There was concern regarding capacity, not only in terms of additional costs but also in terms of the number of staff with expertise and sufficient resources etc.
- That concern had also been expressed, especially by the unions' side, but also by the Department regarding work pressures on coordinators, given that the headteacher was the coordinator undertaking the additional work in many small schools.
- That members agreed with the direction in terms of early intervention as this improved the situation for the child and ensured that problems were dealt with early.
- That concern had been expressed regarding Education Tribunals and continuing to review support for coordinators had to be ensured, and facilitating matters electronically would assist in this.

- It had to be ensured that collaboration took place, especially with the Health Board ensuring clarity regarding roles and responsibilities. Concern was expressed that no designated education clinical lead officer had yet been appointed as this was a strategic and key post.
- There was a need to address the shortage of education psychologists who could undertake the work through the medium of Welsh. Concern was expressed that an insufficient number were currently being trained in Cardiff University and it was suggested that Bangor University should be contacted to try to encourage Welsh-speaking Psychology students to consider a career as education psychologists.
- The additional requirements on the authority in terms of children in independent schools were noted, and especially children who were home-schooled as it was difficult to reach them.
- That members shared the concerns of the Service regarding the proposed changes and supported officers in their efforts to present the committee's viewpoint to the Assembly.
- There were concerns that the changes would potentially go against what was being done in Gwynedd, and it was very much hoped that it would be possible to find some middle ground that was acceptable by everyone.

## **6. EDUCATION AREA OFFICES - PROJECTS TO REDUCE WORKLOAD**

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Education inviting the observations of the committee on:

- The direction of the Area Education Offices from 2018/19 onwards;
- The definition of the purpose of education in the context of Ffordd Gwynedd;
- The projects to reduce the workload of headteachers.

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

The main conclusions of the discussion were as follows:

- The fact that support continued in order to identify ways of reducing the workload of headteachers was welcomed, and it was challenged whether or not other areas could be improved or to reduce the workload further.
- That there was a financial challenge to ensure that the arrangements of area offices were self-sustaining, but the Department was confident that this could be ensured.
- It appeared that there was slight vagueness regarding the current role of the area Education Scrutiny Boards, and there was room to improve this and to improve members' understanding of this.
- A composite report was required on the main messages, the responses of the Authority and what difference was made by the Area Education Scrutiny Boards.

## **7. EDUCATION ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18**

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Education enclosing the Education Annual Report 2017/18.

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

The main conclusions of the discussion were as follows:

- That the Annual Report enabled members to receive an update on a number of items and to scrutinise what occurred in the fields of ALN, TRAC and language, and standards to an extent, and hope was expressed that further information would be available on this next year.
- That scrutinising attainment was exceptionally difficult at present and it was enquired whether there was room to enable scrutiny committee members to receive further information to be able to scrutinise and for scrutiny to be an appropriate intervention by the Authority via GwE?

## **8. NORTH WALES GROWTH DEAL BID**

Submitted - the report of the Leader providing an update on the North Wales Growth Deal and presenting the Draft Implementation Plan.

The Leader and the Corporate Director expanded on the content of the report, and also responded to questions / observations from the members.

The main conclusions of the discussion were as follows:

- It was appreciated that work was progressing and the opportunity to challenge from the Authority's perspective to ensure accountability for Gwynedd was welcomed.
- An understanding of the current situation in terms of the accountable body was provided, and that Gwynedd held this role at present. Therefore, it was possible to ensure that Gwynedd principles, e.g. procurement arrangements and keeping the benefit local were being addressed.
- It was seen that the programme was ambitious. It was suggested that perhaps there was room for better engagement with projects that had recently failed and there was also scope to seek funding beyond the Growth Deal, e.g. lagoon project across the north Wales coast.
- There was a need to connect the Seren Network with the type of schemes and type of requirements / skills that derived from these schemes in order to bring the business and education worlds closer together.
- That clarity was needed regarding how to secure Shared Prosperity Fund funding and other funds for smaller / other projects in future.
- That a response to Brexit was required, whatever would happen in due course.
- It was greatly hoped that it would soon be possible to proceed with the Growth Deal, without any further delay, as it was anticipated that exciting opportunities would arise.

## **9. THE EFFECT OF EVENTS IN GWYNEDD**

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development demonstrating the effect of events supported by the Council on Gwynedd.

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

The main conclusions of the discussion were as follows:

- That the report was very interesting and showed that the £50,000 of resources that had been allocated to support events during 2019 had gone very far.
- It was very encouraging to see that events were being held across the county.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 3.00pm.  
(with a one-hour lunchbreak).