

Complete Agenda



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Meeting

GWE JOINT COMMITTEE

Date and Time

1.30 pm, WEDNESDAY, 14TH JULY, 2021

Location

Virtual Meeting - Zoom

Contact

Natalie Lloyd Jones

NatalieLloydJones@Gwynedd.Llyw.Cymru

GwE JOINT COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE

Voting Members

Councillors

Councillor Julie Fallon	Conwy County Borough Council
Councillor Meirion Jones	Isle of Anglesey County Council
Councillor Huw Hilditch-Roberts	Denbighshire County Council
Councillor Ian Roberts	Flintshire County Council
Councillor Phil Wynn	Wrexham County Borough Council
Councillor Cemlyn Rees Williams	Gwynedd Council

Co-opted Non-voting Members

Rosalind Williams	Church of Wales
Claire Armitstead	Secondary School Representative
Richard Collet	Primary Schools Representative
Jonathan Morgan	Special Schools Representative
Alison Fisher	Governor Representative

Non-voting Officers

Dr Lowri Brown	Conwy County Borough Council
Claire Homard	Flintshire County Council
Garem Jackson	Gwynedd Council
Rhys Howard Hughes	Isle of Anglesey County Council
Karen Evans	Wrexham County Borough Council
Geraint Davies	Denbighshire County Council

Officers in Attendance

Dafydd L. Edwards	Host Authority
Sion Huws	Host Authority
Susan Owen Jones	GwE Business Manager
Annwen Morgan	Isle of Anglesey County Council
Arwyn Thomas	GwE Managing Director
Alwyn Jones	GwE Assistant Director
Gareth Williams	GwE Advisory Board Chairman

Observer

A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

To receive any declaration of personal interest.

3. URGENT ITEMS

To note any items that are a matter of urgency in the view of the Chairman for consideration.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4 - 8

(copy enclosed)

5. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2020/21

9 - 49

To submit the Statement of Accounts, in the 'statutory' format, duly certified, but subject to audit.

6. GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

50 - 62

To accept and approve the Annual Governance Statement.

7. ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

63 - 94

To present the GwE 2020-2021 Annual Report to the Joint Committee.

8. STRATEGY TO SUPPORT PARENTS/ CARERS

95 - 97

To update Joint Committee members regarding our strategy and the support available to help parents and carers on how best to support their children's learning.

9. TEDXGWE INITIATIVE

98 - 101

To provide an overview of the TEDxGWE Initiative to Joint Committee members.

GWE JOINT COMMITTEE - 26/05/2021

Present:

Councillors: Phil Wynn (Chair - Wrexham County Borough Council), Julie Fallon (Conwy County Borough Council), Meirion Jones (Anglesey County Council), Huw Hilditch-Roberts (Denbighshire County Council), Ian Roberts (Flintshire County Council) and Cemlyn Williams (Gwynedd Council).

Co-opted non-voting Members: Jonathan Morgan (Special Schools' Representative), Richard Collet (Primary Schools' Representative)

Non-voting Officers: Rhys Howard Hughes (Anglesey County Council), Dafydd Ifans (Wrexham County Borough Council), Geraint Davies (Denbighshire County Council) and Lowri Brown (Conwy County Borough Council).

Officers present: Dafydd Edwards (Head of Finance, Gwynedd Council, Host Authority), Sion Huws (Senior Lawyer - Corporate, Gwynedd Council, Host Authority), Susan Owen Jones (Business Manager, GwE), Alwyn Jones (Assistant Director, GwE), Gareth Williams (Chair of GwE Advisory Board), Hywyn Jones (Group Accountant, Gwynedd Council, Host Authority), Gwion Jones (Senior Accountant, Gwynedd Council - Host Authority), Bethan Eleri Roberts (Performance Management Manager, GwE), Lowri Jones and Natalie Lloyd Jones (Democracy Team Officers, Gwynedd Council, Host Authority).

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies received from the following: Annwen Morgan (Chief Executive, Anglesey County Council), Claire Armitstead (Secondary Schools' Representative), Garem Jackson (Gwynedd Council), Claire Homard (Flintshire County Council), Arwyn Thomas (GwE Managing Director) and Karen Evans (Denbighshire County Council).

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declaration of personal interest was received.

3. URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent matters.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was confirmed that the record presented appropriately reflected the meeting on 24 February, 2021.

Reference was made to a comment under Item 11 of the minutes. Members were updated that GwE is working with an adviser as regards engaging with parents to promote the supporting of learning. It was elaborated that a regional group has been established to develop bilingual resources that will be available to schools after half term.

5. GWE ACCOUNTS 2020-2021 - REVENUE OUT-TURN

DECISION:

- a) To note and accept the Income Account and Revenue Expenditure for 2020/21 presented in Appendix 1 as the final financial situation.
- b) The Joint Committee approves a financial transfer to earmark underspend from 2020/21 (£83,326) to GwE's reserves.

DISCUSSION:

The Head of Finance, Gwynedd Council, Host Authority presented the report noting a revenue out-turn at the end of the 2021/21 financial year.

It was noted there is an £83,000 underspend, mainly due to savings from travelling expenses. It was recommended the underspend be transferred to GwE's reserves. Reference was made to the report in order to further explain the expenditure and underspend during the year.

It was added that GwE's current financial situation is lean and prudential at the end of the financial year.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Joint-Committee, was grateful for the comprehensive report, and GwE Assistant Director corroborated this.

6. GWE BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2022

DECISION:

To approve GwE's Regional Business Plan for 2021-2022.

DISCUSSION:

The Business Plan was presented by GwE Assistant Director noting it outlines the vision, values and behaviour of the service, as well as regional priority areas for improvement.

In addition, the Business Plan addresses the strategic priorities of Welsh Government and the Local Authorities, which are within the remit of GwE.

These priorities are supported by the detailed plans of the service, and each Local Authority also has a detailed business plan.

Progress against the Regional Business Plan is reported on a quarterly basis to the Joint Committee.

7. RISK REGISTER

DECISION:

- a) To note and accept the content of the report.
- b) The Joint Committee will be briefed on the Risk Register during the next discussion in relation to correlating risks associated with the recruitment of leaders, and also the recruitment of qualified bilingual staff.

DISCUSSION:

The latest risk register was presented by the GwE Business Manager who explained its purpose, which is to formalise the process of identifying risks and take subsequent action. GwE's risk register is a working document and is regularly reviewed. It is presented to the Joint Committee annually, and when new risks are identified and there is a need for the Joint Committee to be aware of them. Reference was made to the pack noting that the risks have been updated and highlighted in red for the information of the committee.

Comments arising from the discussion:

- Risks regarding the recruitment of Headteachers as a result of the pandemic were highlighted. It was asked whether there is an update on this within the region.
- It was noted that a few leaders are choosing to retire early and it is therefore important to consider this as a higher risk.
- It was requested that Headteachers' workload and their extended responsibilities be taken into consideration. It was added there is a need to look at the reasons why recruitment is a concern, offering that it is due to the range of responsibilities and accountability on Headteachers.

In response to the comments, GwE Assistant Director noted:

- NPQH numbers have been strong in recent years; however, not everyone who gains the qualification takes up a Headship.
- The need to ensure the well-being of Headteachers as a priority was highlighted.

8. ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS: SUMMER TERM 2021

DECISION:

To accept the report.

DISCUSSION:

The report was presented by GwE Assistant Director for information purposes in order to note that the assessment situation reflects the situation in 2020 i.e. that there is no expectation for teachers to undertake assessment or moderation. In addition, it was noted that KS4 results will not be published at a school level, only at national level.

It was added that schools do not have to conduct literacy and numeracy tests, however, schools are encouraged to conduct them if possible for internal assessment purposes.

9. THE REFORM JOURNEY: THINK PIECES

DECISION:

- a) To accept the report.
- b) The intention is to share developments with Elected Members and the wider community in order to raise awareness of GwE'S ongoing work in ensuring the success of the new curriculum in 2022.

DISCUSSION:

The report was presented by GwE Assistant Director noting that a collection of papers has been jointly produced by GwE team members who have been working with guidance and support from Professor Graham Donaldson.

The Think Pieces aim to encourage discussion and support schools with their preparations for the Curriculum for Wales. It was added that these have been shared with schools in a series of webinars and that they are useful to stimulate discussion about what needs to be put in place for the new curriculum.

Comments arising from the discussion:

- GwE officers were thanked for their work on the new curriculum, and pride conveyed in relation to the close relationship with Professor Graham Donaldson.
- Pride in the work was expressed and an enthusiasm from the opportunities that arise from the curriculum as a way of putting Wales on the map.
- It was indicated that these need to be shared with education scrutiny committees and on a wider scale in order to raise awareness of the work undertaken.
- This was corroborated, noting the need to get the message out to parents and local authorities as regards the big change that is in under way and the opportunities arising in light of the curriculum.
- It was noted that the pandemic has cast a shadow on this work, and the importance of the work being brought to light at this time was expressed.

In response to the comments GwE Assistant Director noted:

- The work is recorded as webinars, therefore the work may be shared with joint committee members, parents and governors so as to highlight this work.

10. ESTYN THEMATIC REVIEW: RECOMMENDATIONS

DECISION:

- a) To note and accept the content of the report.
- b) Joint Committee members will be briefed in the autumn on the steps taken to meet the recommendations within Estyn's thematic review.

DISCUSSION:

GwE Assistant Director presented the report noting a list of recommendations has been received from Estyn as a result of the review.

It was noted that Estyn has already visited the authorities and GwE to discuss progress against the recommendations, and reference was made to the report which outlines this progress to date.

As there was only a short space of time between the publication of the report in December/January and the recent visits, it was suggested that the Joint Committee be updated in the autumn on the steps taken to deliver against the recommendations noted in Estyn's thematic report.

Comments arising from the discussion:

- It was noted that the report is useful in that it indicates practice across the region.
- It was asked whether there is more work to be done to deliver against the recommendations, and if so, the need to update the joint committee in the autumn was proposed.
- It was stated that the recommendations are appropriate and that they highlight the excellent work undertaken by the 6 Local Authorities and GwE.
- Other members of the joint committee expressed their gratitude for the work undertaken by GwE, LAs and schools.

The meeting started at 10.30am and concluded at 11:20am.

CHAIR



MEETING	GwE Joint Committee
DATE	14 July 2021
TITLE	The Joint Committee's Final Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021
PURPOSE	To submit the Statement of Accounts, in the 'statutory' format, duly certified, but subject to audit
RECCOMENDATION	To receive and note the information
AUTHOR	Dafydd L Edwards, Head of Finance, Gwynedd Council

1. STATUTORY FINANCIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- 1.1 There are specific accounting and audit reporting requirements for Joint Committees.
- 1.2 Section 12 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004 states that a joint committee of two or more (local) authorities is a local government body, and Section 13 of the Act requires such bodies to maintain accounts subject to audit by an external auditor approved by the Auditor General for Wales.
- 1.3 Although they are not independent legal entities, for the purposes of keeping accounts and being audited, a joint committee is separately subject to the same regulations as other local councils.
- 1.4 Gwynedd Council is the host Council responsible for meeting the accounting responsibilities and reporting on the financial matters of GwE's Joint Committee.

- 1.5 The Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 require all Joint Committees to prepare year-end accounts. Where the turnover exceeds £2.5million, a statement of accounts must be prepared in accordance with the CIPFA code for the Joint Committee.

2. ACCOUNTS FOR 2020/21

- 2.1 Simple summary “outturn” report regarding the 2020/21 accounts were presented to the Joint Committee on 26 May 2021. That report was more useful for internal / management purposes, while the Statement of Accounts is more suited for external / governance purposes.
- 2.2 The final net underspend for 2020/21 is (£83,326). The “outturn” report presented to the Joint Committee on 26 May 2021 detailed the reasons for the net underspend and outlined the intended use of the balance.
- 2.3 **The Statement of Accounts for 2020/21 (subject to audit) is submitted herewith as Appendix A, duly certified** by Dafydd L Edwards, the Statutory Finance Officer for the Joint Committee. This statement is in a standard statutory format and is essential from a “governance” perspective.
- 2.4 The Statement of Accounts is already subject to an audit by Audit Wales, Gwynedd Council’s external auditors appointed by the Auditor General for Wales. Due to the crisis, Welsh Local Government audits will not be finalised until the Autumn. With regards to GwE’s Accounts, the auditors will then produce an “ISA 260” report, detailing Audit Wales’ main findings, and issued by the Wales Audit Office in the Auditor General’s name, to be presented to the GwE Joint Committee on 22 September 2021.

3. RECCOMENDATION

- 3.1 The Joint Committee is asked to receive and note GwE’s Statement of Accounts for 2020/21 (subject to audit).

OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Nothing to add from a propriety perspective.

Statutory Finance Officer:

Author of the report.

GwE Joint Committee
(Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd,
Anglesey and Wrexham Councils)

STATEMENT OF
ACCOUNTS
2020/21
(Subject to Audit)

Finance Department
Gwynedd Council
www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru

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NARRATIVE REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE) has been established in partnership between the six North Wales authorities, being Conwy County Borough Council, Denbighshire County Council, Flintshire County Council, Gwynedd Council, Isle of Anglesey County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council, to be accountable to the Councils and undertake the statutory function of the Councils in respect of school improvement and effectiveness. This includes the duty to monitor, challenge, provide support services for curriculum continued professional development and management of schools, and in addition provide services that can be commissioned by schools and local authorities.

Gwynedd Council has been appointed as host authority in implementing and maintaining the service, and the Joint Committee of all the partners oversees the management of the service.

The GwE Joint Committee accounts for the year 2020/21 are presented here on pages 8 to 35. The Statements of Accounts are prepared in accordance with CIPFA's *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21*.

The Statement of Accounts consist of:

- **Expenditure and Funding Analysis** – Whilst this is not a statutory statement, it shows how annual expenditure is used and funded in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices.
- **Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement** - This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. The income and expenditure has been split between the six councils as follows for 2020/21 :

Conwy	15.30%
Denbighshire	15.30%
Flintshire	22.68%
Gwynedd	17.63%
Anglesey	10.15%
Wrexham	18.94%
Total	100%

- **Movement in Reserves Statement** – This statement shows the movement in year on the different reserves held by the Joint Committee, analysed into 'usable reserves' and 'unusable reserves'.
- **The Balance Sheet** - Sets out the financial position of the Joint Committee on 31 March 2021.
- **The Cash Flow Statement** - This statement summarises the flow of cash to and from the Joint Committee during 2020/21 for revenue and capital purposes.

These accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis and are supported by this Narrative Report, the Accounting Policies and various notes to the accounts.

GwE's Vision and Priorities

GwE's vision states that they we will have:

“Outstanding schools naturally collaborating and jointly identifying direction for improvement which will deliver excellent standards and wellbeing for their pupils”.

GwE's Business plan identifies objectives set to meet its priorities, and is available at:

<https://www.gwegogledd.cymru/about-us/key-documents/?lang=en>

The Covid-19 crisis emerged at the end of March 2020 and continues to have far-reaching effects on our lives. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic GwE has repurposed its work in order to continue to provide effective services and support to its school communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The service in its entirety has changed course several times during COVID so as to meet the needs of the range of stakeholders, addressing the following aspects:

- Support the well-being and development of school leaders, their staff and their learners
- Develop guidance, support and learning resources for schools on distance learning and blended learning
- Support schools to reopen - collaborate with LAs to ensure a consistent regional approach to developing a supportive framework to ensure that all regional schools have the appropriate policies in place along with a comprehensive risk assessment in order to create a safe environment to welcome pupils back to school.
- Support schools to evaluate the quality of their blended learning and distance learning provision.
- Provide a range of meaningful professional learning with a focus on 5 main areas: Well-being, The Reform Journey, Developing the Workforce, Accelerating Learning and Digital Learning.
- Continue to facilitate cluster working to support the development of Curriculum for Wales, ALN Transformation and the Welsh language.
- Provide a range of guidance documents to support schools to improve parental engagement, including sharing good practice.
- Utilise an accelerating learning approach regionally.
- Work closely with Bangor University and regional staff to ensure a range of high quality resources to support physical and emotional well-being as well as literacy and numeracy.
- Blended support for schools and LAs - establish the GwE Support Centre.
- Provide opportunities for schools to form alliances or to work in clusters so as to address the gaps in provision and offer other delivery approaches in order to meet any lockdown situations in the future.
- Collaborate with Professor Graham Donaldson to develop a range of think pieces to support schools to implement the new curriculum, integrating the Curriculum for Wales naturally into current practice.

Financial Strategy

The Joint Committee's Financial Strategy and 2020/21 Budget adopted by the Joint Committee's at its meeting on 26 February 2020 sets out the foundation for us to achieve the improvement priorities, whilst also trying to meet the continuous increase in demand for our services. The Financial Strategy is unavoidably dependent upon these priorities. The strategy is available at:

<https://democracy.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/documents/g2787/Public%20reports%20pack%2026th-Feb-2020%2010.30%20GwE%20Joint%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

The changes in response to the Covid-19 pandemic will also affect the medium term financial position of the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee like other councils in Wales has worked with Welsh Government to respond to the situation in the best way possible.

2020/21 Performance

GwE reports quarterly on the performance of the service in delivering the service functions and key aims. The Annual Performance Report is available at:

<https://democracy.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/documents/g4373/Public%20reports%20pack%2026th-May-2021%2010.30%20GwE%20Joint%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

2020/21 Financial Performance

- The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on page 9 shows that the Joint Committee's gross revenue expenditure on 'cost of services' level was £13,583k during 2020/21, with a net position of £236k.
- The financial out-turn position for 2020/21 was reported to the Joint Committee at its meeting on 26 May 2021. Joint Committee Members' approval was sought to transfer the (£83k) underspend to an earmarked reserve.
- The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the Movement in Reserves Statement on pages 9 and 10 detail the analysis in movements for the year.

TABLE 1 - Budget and Actual Comparison Summary (Net)

Table 1 provides a budgetary performance comparison at a summary level, which is detailed further in Table 2.

	Budget £'000	Actual £'000	Variance £'000
Expenditure on Operations	13,344	13,264	(80)
Income			
Council Contributions for the core service:			
Conwy	(637)	(637)	0
Denbighshire	(637)	(637)	0
Flintshire	(944)	(944)	0
Gwynedd	(734)	(734)	0
Anglesey	(422)	(422)	0
Wrexham	(789)	(789)	0
Other Income	(9,181)	(9,184)	(3)
Net (Underspend)/Overspend	0	(83)	(83)

TABLE 2 –Transposition movement between 'Budget and Actual Comparison Summary (Net)' (Table 1) to the Income and Expenditure format

	Performance Report (Out-turn) £'000	Transposition Adjustment £'000	Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund £'000	Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis £'000	Income & Expenditure Statement £'000
Expenditure	13,264	(17)	13,247	336	13,583
Income	(13,347)	0	(13,347)	0	(13,347)
Net Cost of Services	(83)	(17)	(100)	336	236

Transposition Adjustment - Adjustments in the transposition column relate to the net contribution to and from reserves.

Material Items of Income and Expenditure

Related Items include :-

- £3,541k on pensions, being the annual remeasurement of the net defined benefit liabilities relating to pensions, in line with Gwynedd Pension Fund's Actuary's assessment (Note 16).
- £13,347k in grants and contributions and equivalent expenditure (Note 21).

Other Issues

- There are financial risks with the global economy and the Joint Committee has taken the circumstances into account in its financial plans, whilst maintaining a prudent level of reserves.
- Continued economic uncertainty following the termination of the UK's membership of the the European Union and this may effect some factors and financial decisions by the Joint Committee.
- The current Covid-19 crisis remains a financial challenge for the Joint Committee in the short and medium term.

Provisions and Reserves

The Joint Committee has provisions of £3k and earmarked reserves of £811k. These are detailed in the Balance Sheet, Movement in Reserves Statement and in Notes 9 and 14.

Pension Fund

The Joint Committee (as an employer) has a net liability from its share of the assets and liabilities of the Gwynedd Pension Fund, which has been calculated in accordance with International Accounting Standard 19. The Balance Sheet contains an assessment by the Fund's Actuary, Hymans Robertson, of the Joint Committee's share of the Pension Fund liability. This net liability has increased by £3,889k to £12,373k in 2020/21. Refer to Note 25 for further information.

The net pension liability is a position at one point in time. Market prices can move substantially up or down in the short-term and it is therefore not possible to quantify the long-term effect such movements in market prices will have on the Pension Fund. The last valuation was at 31 March 2019, with the next taking place at 31 March 2022.

Governance

GwE is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk. Further information is included within the Annual Governance Statement.

Accounting Policies

The accounting policies adopted on behalf of the Joint Committee comply with all relevant recommended accounting practices and are fully explained in the Accounting Policies set out in Note 1 of the Accounts commencing on page 13.

Changes in Accounting Policies and to the Accounts

The Joint Committee's existing accounting policies have been amended to reflect only the changes required in accordance with proper accounting practices, following adjustments for the 2020/21 financial year to the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

Further Information

The Statement of Accounts is available on Gwynedd Council's website www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru.

Further information relating to the accounts is available from:

Ffion Madog Evans
Senior Finance Manager
01286 679133

or

Hywyn Lewis Jones
Group Accountant
01286 679145

Finance Department
Gwynedd Council
Council Offices
Caernarfon
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

This is part of the Council's policy of providing full information relating to the Council and the Joint Committees' affairs. In addition, interested members of the public have a statutory right to inspect the accounts before the audit is completed. The availability of the accounts for inspection is advertised on the Council's website at the appropriate time.

GwE JOINT COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

THE JOINT COMMITTEE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Gwynedd Council as host authority bears the responsibility for the arrangements and administration of the Joint Committee's financial affairs.

Gwynedd Council is required to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In Gwynedd Council, that "Section 151 Officer" is the Head of Finance. It is the Joint Committee's responsibility to manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of its resources, to safeguard its assets, and to approve the Statement of Accounts.

THE HEAD OF FINANCE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The Head of Finance is responsible for the preparation of the GwE Joint Committee Statement of Accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom* ("the Code").

In preparing the statement of accounts, the Head of Finance has selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently; has made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent and complied with the Code.

The Head of Finance has also kept proper accounting records which were up to date, and has taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER'S CERTIFICATE

I certify that the Statement of Accounts has been prepared in accordance with the arrangements set out above, and presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the GwE Joint Committee at 31 March 2021 and the Joint Committee's income and expenditure for the year then ended.



Dafydd L. Edwards B.A., C.P.F.A., I.R.R.V.
Head of Finance, Gwynedd Council

26 May 2021

EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

2019/20				2020/21		
Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis (see Note 7)	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement		Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund	Adjustments between the Funding and Accounting Basis (see Note 7)	Net Expenditure in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement
£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000
4,364	907	5,271	Employees	4,808	336	5,144
288	0	288	Property	153	0	153
199	0	197	Transport	15	0	15
1,611	0	1,611	Supplies and Services	826	0	826
7,721	0	7,721	Third Parties	7,445	0	7,445
0	71	71	Non-distributed Costs	0	0	0
(14,551)	0	(14,551)	Income	(13,347)	0	(13,347)
(370)	978	608	Cost of Services	(100)	336	236
0	225	225	Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	0	199	199
(370)	1,203	833	(Surplus) / Deficit on Provision of Services	(100)	535	435
(341)			Opening General Fund Balance	(711)		
(370)			(Surplus)/Deficit on General Fund in Year	(100)		
(711)			Closing General Fund Balance	(811)		

COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

This statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing the Joint Committee service in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices.

2019/20				2020/21		
Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure	Note	Gross Expenditure	Gross Income	Net Expenditure
£'000	£'000	£'000		£'000	£'000	£'000
5,271	0	5,271	Employees	5,144	0	5,144
288	0	288	Property	153	0	153
197	0	197	Transport	15	0	15
1,611	0	1,611	Supplies and Services	826	0	826
7,721	0	7,721	Third Parties	7,445	0	7,445
71	0	71	Non-distributed Costs	0	0	0
0	(14,551)	(14,551)	Income	0	(13,347)	(13,347)
15,159	(14,551)	608	Cost of Services	13,583	(13,347)	236
225	0	225	Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	199	0	199
15,384	(14,551)	833	(Surplus) / Deficit on Provision of Services	13,782	(13,347)	435
		(1,800)	Remeasurement of the net pension defined benefit liability/(asset)			3,541
		(1,800)	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			3,541
		(967)	Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			3,976

MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT

The Movement in Reserves Statement shows the movement from the start of the year to the end on the different reserves held by the Joint Committee, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure) and other 'unusable reserves'. The Statement shows how the movements in year of the Joint Committee's reserves are broken down between gains and losses incurred in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices and the statutory adjustments required to return to the amounts chargeable to council tax (via the Councils' contributions). The Net Increase/Decrease line shows the statutory General Fund Balance movements in the year following those adjustments.

		Movement in Reserves Statement		
	Note	Total Usable Reserves	Unusable Reserves	Total Joint Committee's Reserves
		£'000	£'000	£'000
Balance 31 March 2019 carried forward		(341)	8,993	8,652
<u>Movement in reserves during 2019/20</u>				
(Surplus)/Deficit on provision of services		833	0	833
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		0	(1,800)	(1,800)
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		833	(1,800)	(967)
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations		(1,203)	1,203	0
Net (Increase)/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves		(370)	(597)	(967)
(Increase)/Decrease in 2019/20		(370)	(597)	(967)
Balance 31 March 2020 carried forward		(711)	8,396	7,685
<u>Movement in reserves during 2020/21</u>				
(Surplus)/Deficit on provision of services		435	0	435
Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		0	3,541	3,541
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure		435	3,541	3,976
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations		(535)	535	0
Net (Increase)/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves		(100)	4,076	3,976
(Increase)/Decrease in 2020/21		(100)	4,076	3,976
Balance 31 March 2021 carried forward		(811)	12,472	11,661

BALANCE SHEET

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Joint Committee. The net assets of the Joint Committee (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Joint Committee. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first category of reserves is usable reserves, i.e. those reserves that the Joint Committee may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and any statutory limitations on their use. The second category of reserves is those that the Joint Committee is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses (for example the Revaluation Reserve), where amounts would only become available to provide services if the assets are sold; and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement line 'Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations'.

31 March 2020 £'000		Note	31 March 2021 £'000
0	Long-term Debtors		0
0	Long-term Assets		0
476	Short-term Debtors	11	509
2,557	Cash and Cash Equivalents	12	5,959
3,033	Current Assets		6,468
(1,909)	Short-term Creditors	13	(4,114)
(3)	Short-term Provisions	14	(3)
(502)	Grants Receipts in Advance	21	(1,639)
(2,414)	Current Liabilities		(5,756)
(8,304)	Pension Liability	25	(12,373)
(8,304)	Long-term Liabilities		(12,373)
(7,685)	Net Assets		(11,661)
(711)	Usable Reserves	15	(811)
8,396	Unusable Reserves	16	12,472
7,685	Total Reserves		11,661

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Joint Committee during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Joint Committee generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating and investing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the Joint Committee are funded by way of grant income or from the recipients of services provided by the Joint Committee. Investing Activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Joint Committee's future service delivery.

2019/20	Note	2020/21
£'000		£'000
833	Net (Surplus) / Deficit on the Provision of Services	435
(518)	Adjustments to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements	(3,837)
315	Net cash flows from Operating Activities	(3,402)
0	Investing Activities	0
315	Net (Increase)/Decrease in cash and cash equivalents	(3,402)
(2,872)	Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	(2,557)
(2,557)	Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	(5,959)

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

NOTE I – ACCOUNTING POLICIES

I.1 General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Joint Committee's transactions for the 2020/21 financial year and its position at the year-end of 31 March 2021. The Joint Committee is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018, in accordance with proper accounting practices. These practices primarily comprise the *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21*, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

The accounting convention adopted in the Statement of Accounts is historical cost, modified by the revaluation of certain categories of non-current assets and financial instruments. The accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis.

The Joint Committee's practice is to operate on the basis that all items of expenditure are treated as revenue in the first instance. Should any items of a capital nature (e.g. IT equipment, furniture) prove to have a material significance on the true and fair presentation of the financial position then the items would be treated according to proper practices.

The nature of the Joint Committee's transactions is limited and only the relevant policies can be seen below.

I.2 Accruals of Expenditure and Income

Activity is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when cash payments are made or received.

- Revenue from contracts with service recipients, whether for services or the provision of goods, is recognised when (or as) the goods or services are transferred to the service recipient in accordance with the performance obligations in the contract.
- Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed – where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and their consumption, they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet.
- Expenses in relation to services received (including services provided by employees) are recorded as expenditure when the services are received rather than when payments are made.
- Where revenue and expenditure have been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Where debts may not be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that might not be collected.

I.3 Cash and Cash Equivalents

The Joint Committee does not have its own bank account and cash is administered by Gwynedd Council within its own accounts.

I.4 Employee Benefits

I.4.1 Benefits Payable during Employment

Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled within 12 months of the year-end. They include such benefits as wages and salaries, paid annual leave and paid sick leave for current employees and are recognised as an expense for services in the year in which employees render service to the Joint Committee. An accrual is made for the cost of holiday entitlements (or any form of leave, e.g. time off in lieu) earned by employees but not taken before the year-end that employees can carry forward into the next financial year. The accrual is charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services, but then reversed out through the Movement in Reserves Statement to the accumulated absences account so that holiday benefits are charged to revenue in the financial year in which the holiday absence occurs.

NOTE I – ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

1.4.2 Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Joint Committee to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept redundancy voluntarily and are charged on an accruals basis to the service in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement at the earlier of when the Joint Committee can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the Joint Committee recognises costs for a restructuring.

Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, statutory provisions require the Joint Committee fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Joint Committee to the Pension Fund or pensioner in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, appropriations are required to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for pension enhancement termination benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the Pension Fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end.

1.4.3 Post-employment Benefits

Employees of the Joint Committee are members of one pension scheme:

- The Local Government Pensions Scheme, administered by the Gwynedd Pension Fund at Gwynedd Council.

The scheme provides defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions), earned as employees when they worked for the Joint Committee and their previous employers.

1.4.4 The Local Government Pension Scheme

All other staff, subject to certain qualifying criteria, are entitled to become members of the Local Government Pension Scheme. The pension costs charged to the Joint Committee's accounts in respect of this group of employees is determined by the fund administrators and represent a fixed proportion of employees' contributions to this funded pension scheme.

The Local Government Scheme is accounted for as a defined benefit scheme.

The liabilities of the Gwynedd Pension Fund attributable to the Joint Committee are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method - i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions such as mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc., and projections of earnings for current employees.

Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a discount rate of 2.0% calculated as a weighted average of 'spot yields' on AA rated corporate bonds.

The assets of the Gwynedd Pension Fund attributable to the Joint Committee are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value as determined by the Fund's Actuary.

The change in the net pensions liability is analysed into the following components:

NOTE I – ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

Service cost comprising:

- Current service cost – the increase in liabilities as a result of years of service earned this year – allocated in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement to the service for which the employees worked.
- Past service cost – the increase in liabilities arising from current year decisions whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years – debited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as part of Non-distributed Costs.
- Net interest on the net defined benefit liability/(asset), i.e. the net interest expense for the Joint Committee – the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability/(asset) that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement – this is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period to the net defined benefit liability/(asset) at the beginning of the period – taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit liability/(asset) during the period as a result of contributions and benefit payments.

Remeasurements comprising:

- The return on Plan assets – excluding amounts included in net interest on the net defined benefit liability/(asset) – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
- Actuarial gains and losses – changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
- Contributions paid to the Gwynedd Pension Fund – cash paid as employer’s contributions to the Pension Fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Joint Committee to the Pension Fund or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the Movement in Reserves Statement, this means that there are appropriations to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the Pension Fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end. The negative balance that arises on the Pensions Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact to the Joint Committee of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits are earned by employees.

International Accounting Standard (IAS) 19 governs how the long-term liabilities which exist in relation to pension costs should be reported. Local Councils (including Joint Committees) in Wales and England are required to produce their financial statements in accordance with IAS 19.

1.4.5 Discretionary Benefits

The Joint Committee also has restricted powers to make discretionary awards of retirement benefits in the event of early retirements. Any liabilities estimated to arise as a result of an award to any member of staff (including teachers) are accrued in the year of the decision to make the award and accounted for using the same policies as are applied to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

NOTE I – ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

1.5 Events after the Reporting Period

Events after the balance sheet date are those events, both favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the end of the reporting period and the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue. Two types of events can be identified:

- those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts is adjusted to reflect such events; and
- those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period – the Statement of Accounts is not adjusted to reflect such events, but where a category of events would have a material effect, disclosure is made in the notes of the nature of the events and their estimated financial effect.

Events taking place after the date of authorisation for issue are not reflected in the Statement of Accounts.

1.6 Prior Period Adjustments, Changes in Accounting Policies, Estimates and Errors

Prior period adjustments may arise as a result of a change in accounting policies or to correct a material error. Changes in accounting estimates are accounted for prospectively, i.e. in the current and future years affected by the change and do not give rise to a prior period adjustment.

Changes in accounting policies are only made when required by proper accounting practices or the change provides more reliable or relevant information about the effect of transactions, other events and conditions on the Joint Committee's financial position or financial performance. Where a change is made, it is applied retrospectively (unless stated otherwise) by adjusting opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period as if the new policy had always been applied.

Material errors discovered in prior period figures are corrected retrospectively by amending opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period.

1.7 Government Grants and Other Contributions

Grants and contributions relating to capital and revenue expenditure are accounted for on an accruals basis, and recognised immediately in the relevant service line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as income, except to the extent that the grant or contribution has a condition that the Joint Committee has not satisfied.

1.8 Overheads and Support Services

Charges for services provided by the Central Support Departments within Gwynedd Council are derived from a combination of pre-determined fixed charges, actual recorded staff time, transaction logging and pre-determined formulae.

1.9 Provisions

The Joint Committee sets aside provisions for specific obligations which are likely or certain to be incurred but the amount of which cannot yet be determined accurately. Provisions are also made for doubtful debts. Known uncollectable debts are written off against the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee classifies these provisions as long-term or short-term liabilities as appropriate according to the nature of each provision.

1.10 Reserves

Specific reserves are created to set aside amounts for future spending schemes. This is done through transfers out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

Certain reserves, namely "unusable reserves", are kept for the technical purpose of managing the accounting processes for non-current assets, financial instruments and employee benefits. These do not represent the usable resources of the Joint Committee.

NOTE 1 – ACCOUNTING POLICIES (continued)

1.11 Value Added Tax

Only in a situation when VAT is irrecoverable will VAT be included or charged as ‘irrecoverable VAT’. Since the Joint Committee has not registered for VAT, the VAT is recovered through Gwynedd Council’s VAT registration.

1.12 Debtors and Creditors

The Joint Committee’s Accounts are maintained on an accruals basis in accordance with the Code of Accounting Practice. The accounts reflect actual expenditure and income relating to the year in question irrespective of whether the payments or receipts have actually been paid or received in the year.

An exception to this principle relates to electricity and similar quarterly payments which are charged at the date of meter reading rather than being apportioned between financial years, and certain annual payments such as insurance. This policy is consistently applied each year and therefore does not have a material effect on the year’s accounts.

1.13 Long-Term Contracts

Long-term contracts are accounted for on the basis of charging the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services with the consideration allocated to the performance obligations satisfied based on the goods or services transferred to the service recipient during the financial year.

1.14 Joint Operations

Jointly controlled operations are activities undertaken in conjunction with other venturers that involve the use of the assets and resources of the venturers rather than the establishment of a separate entity. The GwE Joint Committee has been categorised as a Joint Operation.

Joint operations are arrangements where the parties that have joint control of the arrangement have rights to the assets and obligations for the liabilities relating to the arrangements. The activities undertaken by the Joint Committee in conjunction with other joint operators involve the use of the assets and resources of those joint operators. In relation to its interest in a joint operation, the Joint Committee as a joint operator recognises its share of assets, liabilities, revenue and expenses.

NOTE 2 – CHANGE IN ACCOUNTING POLICY

The Joint Committee’s existing accounting policies are amended only insofar as to reflect the guidance in the 2020/21 CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.

NOTE 3 – ACCOUNTING STANDARDS THAT HAVE BEEN ISSUED BUT HAVE NOT YET BEEN ADOPTED

The CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom requires the expected impact of any accounting standards that have been issued but not yet adopted to be disclosed. This applies to the following new or amended standards within the 2021/22 Code:

Definition of a Business: Amendments to IFRS 3 Business Combinations

Interest Rate Benchmark Reform: Amendments to IFRS 9, IAS 39 and IFRS 7

Interest Rate Benchmark Reform – Phase 2: Amendments to IFRS 9, IAS 39, IFRS 7, IFRS 4 and IFRS 16.

The Code requires implementation from 1 April 2021 and therefore there is no impact on the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts, and none of the new or amended standards within the 2021/22 Code are expected to have a material impact on the information provided in the financial statements.

NOTE 4 – CRITICAL JUDGEMENTS IN APPLYING ACCOUNTING POLICIES

In applying the accounting policies set out in Note 1, the Joint Committee has had to make judgements, estimates and assumptions relating to complex transactions, those involving uncertainty about future events and also the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources.

The judgements, estimates and associated assumptions applied are based on current proper practices, historical experience and other factors that include historical and current assumptions and projections, and actual future projections, professional assessment, current trends, and local factors that are considered to be relevant.

In recent years there has been some uncertainty about future levels of funding from Welsh Government relating to grants. This issue forms an important part of the Joint Committee's continually revised financial strategy, and where all known and forecasted factors are given due consideration. Continued economic uncertainty following Britain leaving the European Union remains. Whilst the effects of the Covid-19 crisis remains a financial challenge for the Joint Committee in the short and medium term. However, the Joint Committee has determined that this uncertainty is not yet sufficient to provide an indication that the assets of the Joint Committee might be impaired.

All available and related information is sourced and applied in assessing and determining the position, which is particularly critical when considering such matters as actuarial valuation of pension fund assets and liabilities, earmarked reserves, provisions and contingent liability. However, because these issues cannot be determined with certainty, actual results may subsequently differ from those estimates. The estimates and underlying assumptions are continually reviewed.

NOTE 5 – ASSUMPTIONS MADE ABOUT FUTURE AND OTHER MAJOR SOURCES OF ESTIMATION UNCERTAINTY

The Statement of Accounts contains estimated figures that are based on assumptions made by the Joint Committee about the future or that are otherwise uncertain. Estimates are made taking into account historical experience, current trends and other relevant factors. However, because certain balances cannot be determined with certainty, actual results could be different from the assumptions and estimates.

The following item in the Joint Committee's Balance Sheet at 31 March 2021 may be considered to be a significant risk (in terms of certainty in estimation of value), with the possibility of material adjustment in the forthcoming financial year:

Pension Liability – The Pension Liability position as contained within the accounts is based on a number of complex assessments and judgements and varying profiles such as discount rate used, projected salary levels, changes in retirement ages, mortality rates and expected returns on Pension Fund assets, as provided by Actuaries engaged by the Pension Fund. Further details are contained in Notes 24 and 25.

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted global financial and property markets. As a result of the volatility in market conditions, year-end valuation reports provided to the Gwynedd Pension Fund on 31st March 2020 included a statement that there was material valuation uncertainty related to the UK property funds managed on behalf of the Fund. However, no material uncertainties in property valuations are being reported as at 31 March 2021.

NOTE 6 – MATERIAL ITEMS OF INCOME AND EXPENSE

Related items include:-

- £3,541k on pensions, being the remeasurements of the net pension defined benefit liabilities relating to pensions, in line with Gwynedd Pension Fund's Actuary's assessment (Note 16).
- £13,347k in grants and contributions and equivalent expenditure (Note 21).

NOTE 7 – NOTE TO THE EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN FUNDING AND ACCOUNTING BASIS				
2020/21	Adjustments for Capital Purposes £'000	Net change for the Pensions Adjustments (i) £'000	Other Differences (ii) £'000	Total Adjustments £'000
Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement amounts				
Employees	0	329	7	336
Property	0	0	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0
Supplies and Services	0	0	0	0
Third Party	0	0	0	0
Unallocated Costs	0	0	0	0
Income	0	0	0	0
Cost of Services	0	329	7	336
Other Operating Expenditure	0	0	0	0
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	0	199	0	199
Taxation and non-specific grant income	0	0	0	0
(Surplus) / Deficit on Provision of Services	0	528	7	535

ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN FUNDING AND ACCOUNTING BASIS				
2019/20	Adjustments for Capital Purposes £'000	Net change for the Pensions Adjustments (i) £'000	Other Differences (ii) £'000	Total Adjustments £'000
Adjustments from General Fund to arrive at the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement amounts				
Employees	0	904	3	907
Property	0	0	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0
Supplies and Services	0	0	0	0
Third Party	0	0	0	0
Unallocated Costs	0	71	0	71
Income	0	0	0	0
Cost of Services	0	975	3	978
Other Operating Expenditure	0	0	0	0
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure	0	225	0	225
Taxation and non-specific grant income	0	0	0	0
(Surplus) / Deficit on Provision of Services	0	1,200	3	1,203

NOTE 7 – NOTE TO THE EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS (continued)

(i) Net Change for the Pensions Adjustments

Net change for the removal of pension contributions and the addition of IAS 19 *Employee Benefits* for pension-related expenditure and income:

- For **Services**, this represents the removal of the employer pension contributions made by the Joint Committee as allowed by statute and the replacement with current service costs and past service costs.
- For **Financing and investment income and expenditure**, the net interest on the defined benefit liability is charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

(ii) Other Differences

Other differences between amounts debited/credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and amounts payable/receivable to be recognised under statute:

- For **Services**, this represents an adjustment for accumulated absences earned but not taken during the year.
- For **Financing and investment income and expenditure**, the other differences column recognises adjustments to the General Fund for the timing differences for premiums and discounts.

NOTE 8 – ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN ACCOUNTING BASIS AND FUNDING BASIS UNDER REGULATIONS

This note details the adjustments that are made to the total comprehensive income and expenditure recognised by the Joint Committee in the year in accordance with proper accounting practice to the resources that are specified by statutory provisions as being available to the Joint Committee to meet future expenditure.

2020/21		
ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN ACCOUNTING BASIS AND FUNDING BASIS UNDER REGULATIONS	Usable Reserve General Fund Balance	Movement in Unusable Reserves
	£'000	£'000
Adjustments primarily involving the Pensions Reserve:		
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited/credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (Note 25)	(1,336)	1,336
Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	808	(808)
Adjustment primarily involving the Accumulated Absences Account		
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(7)	7
Total Adjustments	(535)	535

2019/20		
ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN ACCOUNTING BASIS AND FUNDING BASIS UNDER REGULATIONS	Usable Reserve General Fund Balance	Movement in Unusable Reserves
	£'000	£'000
Adjustments primarily involving the Pensions Reserve:		
Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited/credited to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (Note 25)	(1,796)	1,796
Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	596	(596)
Adjustment primarily involving the Accumulated Absences Account		
Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(3)	3
Total Adjustments	(1,203)	1,203

NOTE 9 – TRANSFERS TO/FROM EARMARKED RESERVES

The note below sets out the amounts set aside from the General Fund in earmarked reserves to provide financing for future expenditure plans, with a net increase of £100k.

Earmarked Reserves

	GwE Joint Committee Reserves £'000
Balance 31 March 2020	711
<u>Transfers:</u>	
In	100
Out	0
Balance 31 March 2021	811

NOTE 10 – FINANCING AND INVESTMENT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

2019/20		2020/21
£'000		£'000
225	Net interest on the net pension defined benefit liability/(asset)	199
225	Total	199

NOTE 11 – SHORT-TERM DEBTORS

	31 March 2020	31 March 2021
	£'000	£'000
Trade Receivables	91	60
Prepayments	70	75
Other Receivable Amounts	315	374
Total	476	509

NOTE 12 – CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

The Joint Committee does not have its own bank account and cash is administered by Gwynedd Council within its own accounts. The figure shown in the table each year is the net cash sum held on behalf of the Joint Committee within the Gwynedd Council amounts.

	31 March 2020 £'000	31 March 2021 £'000
Cash in Hand	2,557	5,959
Cash and Cash Equivalents	2,557	5,959
Total	2,557	5,959

NOTE 13 – SHORT-TERM CREDITORS

	31 March 2020 £'000	31 March 2021 £'000
Trade Payables	430	568
Other Payables	1,479	3,546
Total	1,909	4,114

NOTE 14 – PROVISIONS

The Joint Committee sets aside provisions for specific obligations, the amount or timing of which cannot be determined accurately. It is not permitted, under accounting conventions, to make provisions for uneven patterns of expenditure. However, earmarked reserves may be established and are included in Note 9.

	Balance at 31 March 2020 £'000	(Addition) / Reduction / Transfer £'000	Used during the year £'000	Balance at 31 March 2021 £'000
Short-term Provisions				
Green Car Scheme Provision	(3)	0	0	(3)
	<u>(3)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(3)</u>

Green Car Scheme Provision – provision relating to staff leased car scheme requirements.

NOTE 15 – USABLE RESERVES

The Movement in Reserves Statement details the movements in the Joint Committee's usable reserves.

NOTE 16 – UNUSABLE RESERVES

31 March 2020		31 March 2021
£'000		£'000
(8,304)	Pensions Reserve	(12,373)
(92)	Accumulated Absences Account	(99)
(8,396)	Total Unusable Reserves	(12,472)

Pensions Reserve

The Pensions Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post-employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions. The Joint Committee accounts for post-employment benefits in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement as the benefits are earned by employees accruing years of service, updating the liabilities recognised to reflect inflation, changing assumptions and investment returns on any resources set aside to meet the costs. However, statutory arrangements require benefits earned to be financed as the Joint Committee makes employer's contributions to pension funds or eventually pays any pensions for which it is directly responsible. The debit balance on the Pensions Reserve therefore shows a substantial shortfall in the benefits earned by past and current employees and the resources the Joint Committee has set aside to meet them. The statutory arrangements will ensure that funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

2019/20		2020/21
£000		£000
(8,904)	Balance 1 April	(8,304)
1,800	Re-measurements of the net pension defined benefit (liabilities) / assets (Note 25)	(3,541)
(1,796)	Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement	(1,336)
596	Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	808
(8,304)	Balance 31 March	(12,373)

NOTE 16 – UNUSABLE RESERVES (continued)

Accumulated Absences Account

The Accumulated Absences Account absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the General Fund Balance from accruing for compensated absences earned but not taken in the year, e.g. annual leave entitlement carried forward at 31 March. Statutory arrangements require that the impact on the General Fund Balance neutralised by transfers to or from the Account

2019/20		2020/21
£000		£000
(89)	Balance 1 April	(92)
(3)	Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements	(7)
(92)	Balance 31 March	(99)

NOTE 17 – CASH FLOW STATEMENT: ADJUSTMENTS TO NET SURPLUS OR DEFICIT ON THE PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR NON-CASH MOVEMENTS

2019/20		2020/21
£'000		£'000
512	(Increase)/Decrease in Creditors	(2,205)
211	Increase/(Decrease) in Debtors	33
(1,200)	Pension Liability	(528)
(41)	Other non-cash items charged to net surplus/deficit on the provision of services	(1,137)
(518)		(3,837)

NOTE 18 – EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

The Statement of Accounts was authorised by the Head of Finance on 26 May 2021. Events taking place after this date are not reflected in the financial statements or related notes. Where events taking place before this date provided information about conditions existing at 31 March 2021, the figures in the financial statements and notes have been adjusted in all material respects to reflect its impact.

NOTE 19 – OFFICERS’ REMUNERATION

19a. The Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 require the Joint Committee to disclose the following information relating to employees appointed as Senior Officers, and whose salary is between £60,000 and £150,000. In compliance with the defined requirements, the pensionable pay, employer’s pension contributions and other employer costs are included below (including termination benefits), but the employer’s national insurance contributions are excluded. The remuneration paid to the Joint Committee’s senior officers directly employed by GwE is as follows:

2019/20				Chief Officers	2020/21		
Employer’s		Other			Employer’s		
Salary	Pension	Employer	Total		Salary	Pension	Total
£	£	Costs	£		£	£	£
100,896	22,803	0	123,699	Chief Officer	103,545	23,815	127,360

19b. Other Joint Committee employees receiving more than £60,000 remuneration for the year (excluding employer’s pension and national insurance contributions) were paid the following amounts. Termination benefits are to be included in the figures; however, there were no cases in 2020/21 or 2019/20.

Number of other employees who received more than £60,000 and includes remuneration and termination benefits:			
Number in 2019/20		Number in 2020/21	
Total		Total	
8	£60,000 - 64,999	5	
3	£65,000 - 69,999	6	
1	£70,000 – 74,999	4	

NOTE 20 – EXTERNAL AUDIT COSTS

The Joint Committee has incurred the following costs relating to external audit.

2019/20		2020/21
£'000		£'000
11	Fees payable to the auditor appointed by the Auditor General for Wales with regard to external audit services	11
11	Net Fees	11

NOTE 21 – GRANT INCOME

21a. The Joint Committee credited the following grants, contributions and donations to the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement:

	2019/20		2020/21	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Grants and Contributions Credited to Services				
Welsh Government -				
Pupil Development Grant (PDG) - Looked After Children	970		1,029	
PDG – Strategic Adviser	100		97	
PDG – Consortia Led Funding	0		142	
Other	153		115	
		1,223		1,383
Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant - Welsh Government (excluding the EIG)		5,824		4,561
Education Improvement Grant (EIG)				
Welsh Government	1,836		1,587	
Match funding from Councils	1,165		1,283	
		3,001		2,870
Other Government Grants and Contributions -				
Sports Council for Wales	1		0	
Education Workforce Council	251		276	
Arts Council for Wales	5		0	
		257		276
Other Grants and Contributions				
Councils' Contributions towards the Core Service				
Conwy	625		637	
Denbighshire	622		637	
Flintshire	937		944	
Gwynedd	720		734	
Anglesey	417		422	
Wrexham	772		789	
		4,084		4,163
Other Grants and Contribution		162		94
Total Grants and Contributions Credited to Services		14,551		13,347

NOTE 21 – GRANT INCOME (continued)

21b. The Joint Committee has received grants, contributions or donations that have yet to be recognised as income as they have conditions attached that could require the monies to be returned to the giver. The balance at the year-end are as follows:

	31 March 2020 £'000	31 March 2021 £'000
Grants and Contributions Received in Advance		
<u>Short-term</u>		
Newly Qualified Teachers Programme	493	631
Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant	0	997
Other	9	11
Total	502	1,639

NOTE 22 – RELATED PARTIES

The Joint Committee is required to disclose material transactions with related parties – bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the Joint Committee or to be controlled or influenced by the Joint Committee. Disclosure of these transactions allows readers to assess the extent to which the Joint Committee might have been constrained in its ability to operate independently or might have secured the ability to limit another party's ability to bargain freely with the Joint Committee. To conform to the requirements, this is done by Members and Senior Officers completing a personal declaration, as defined in the CIPFA Code of Practice.

Function of the Joint Committee

The Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE) has been established in partnership between the six North Wales authorities, being Conwy County Borough Council, Denbighshire County Council, Flintshire County Council, Gwynedd Council, Isle of Anglesey County Council and Wrexham County Borough Council, to be accountable to the Councils and undertake the statutory function of the Councils in respect of school improvement and effectiveness. This includes the duty to monitor, challenge, provide support services for curriculum continued professional development and management of schools, and in addition provide services that can be commissioned by schools and local authorities. Summarised below are the payments and income between the Joint Committee and the Local Authorities for the the 20/21 financial year

Local Authority	Expenditure £'000	Income £'000
Conwy County Borough Council	1,298	643
Denbighshire County Council	945	638
Flintshire County Council	1,736	968
Gwynedd Council	1,746	749
Isle of Anglesey County Council	741	423
Wrexham County Borough Council	1,191	790

Members

Members of the Joint Committee have an influence over the Joint Committee's financial and operating policies.

Members have declared an interest or relationship (as defined) in companies or businesses which may have dealings with the Joint Committee. A breakdown of the payments made to these companies under this heading during 2020/21 and balances as at 31 March 2021 is as follows:

Payments made	Amounts owed by the Joint Committee	Amounts owed to the Joint Committee
£'000	£'000	£'000
153	11	0

The figures are based on information received in respect of Councillors' returns.

Officers

The Joint Committee's Senior Officer has declared as required and where appropriate an interest or relationship (as defined) in companies, voluntary, charitable, or public bodies which receive payments from the Joint Committee. During 2020/21 no payments were made or owed by the Joint Committee for the related bodies.

NOTE 23 – EXIT PACKAGES

There were two exit packages during 2020/21, the staff in question were on temporary contracts, but had service carried forward from their previous employment, there were no exit packages during 2019/20.

Exit package cost band (including special payments)	Number of compulsory redundancies		Number of other departures agreed		Total number of exit packages by cost band		Total cost of exit packages in each band	
	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21
£							£'000	£'000
0 - 20,000	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	8
20,001 - 40,000	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	34
Cyfanswm	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	42

NOTE 24 – PENSION SCHEMES ACCOUNTED FOR AS DEFINED CONTRIBUTION SCHEMES

There are no teachers employed by the Joint Committee that are members of the Teachers' Pension Scheme.

NOTE 25 – PENSION COSTS

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers and other employees, the Joint Committee makes contributions towards the cost of post-employment benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until employees retire, the Joint Committee has a commitment to make the payments. These need to be disclosed at the time that employees earn their future entitlement.

GwE participates in two post-employment schemes:

- a) **The Local Government Pension Scheme** administered locally by Gwynedd Council. This is a funded defined benefit scheme based on final salary for service up to 31 March 2014 and based on a career average salary from 1 April 2014. The Joint Committee and the employees pay contributions into the fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pensions liabilities with investment assets.
- b) **Arrangements for the award of discretionary post-retirement benefits upon early retirement.** This is an unfunded defined benefit arrangement, under which liabilities are recognised when awards are made. However, there are no investment assets built up to meet these pension liabilities, and cash has to be generated to meet actual pensions payments as they eventually fall due.

The Gwynedd Pension Fund is operated under the regulatory framework for the Local Government Pension Scheme and the governance of the scheme is the responsibility of the Pensions Committee of Gwynedd Council. Policy is determined in accordance with the Local Government Pensions Scheme Regulations. In the past the investment managers of the fund have been appointed by the Gwynedd Pension Fund Committee. As the investments are transferred to the Wales Pension Partnership (WPP) the managers will be appointed by the partnership.

The principal risks to the Joint Committee from the scheme are the longevity assumptions, statutory changes to the scheme, structural changes to the scheme (such as large-scale withdrawals from the scheme), changes to inflation, bond yields and the performance of equity investments held by the scheme. These are mitigated to a certain extent by the statutory requirements to charge the amounts required by statute as described in the accounting policies note to the General Fund.

Transactions Relating to Post-employment Benefits

The Joint Committee recognises the cost of retirement benefits in the reported cost of services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the charge it is required to make against Council Tax (via the Councils' contributions) is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of post-employment/retirement benefits is reversed out of the Joint General Fund via the Movement in Reserves Statement. The following transactions have been made in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement and the General Fund Balance via the Movement in Reserves Statement during the year.

NOTE 25 – PENSION COSTS (continued)

Change in the Fair Value of Plan Assets, Defined Benefit Obligation and Net Liability	Period ended 31 March 2020			Period ended 31 March 2021		
	Assets	Liabilities	Net (liability) /asset	Assets	Liabilities	Net (liability) /asset
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Fair Value of Plan Assets	17,783	0	17,783	17,622	0	17,622
Present Value of Funded Liabilities	0	(26,687)	(26,687)	0	(25,926)	(25,926)
Present Value of Unfunded Liabilities	0	0	0	0	0	0
Opening Position at 1 April	17,783	(26,687)	(8,904)	17,622	(25,926)	(8,304)
Prior period pension adjustment**				(180)		(180)
Adjusted Opening Position at 1 April	17,783	(26,687)	(8,904)	17,442	(25,926)	(8,484)
Service Cost						
Current Service Cost*	0	(1,500)	(1,500)	0	(1,137)	(1,137)
Past Service Costs (including curtailments)	0	(71)	(71)	0	(0)	(0)
Total Service Cost	0	(1,571)	(1,571)	0	(1,137)	(1,137)
Net interest						
Interest Income on Plan Assets	433	0	433	408	0	408
Interest Cost on Defined Benefit Obligation	0	(658)	(658)	0	(607)	(607)
Total Net Interest	433	(658)	(225)	408	(607)	(199)
Total Defined Benefit Cost Recognised in Profit/(Loss)	433	(2,229)	(1,796)	408	(1,744)	(1,336)
Cash flows						
Plan participants' contributions	273	(273)	0	279	(279)	0
Employer contributions	599	0	599	797	0	797
Contributions in respect of unfunded benefits	0	0	0	0	0	0
Benefits Paid	(433)	433	0	(453)	453	0
Unfunded Benefits Paid	0	0	0	0	0	0
Expected Closing Position	18,655	(28,756)	(10,101)	18,473	(27,496)	(9,023)
Remeasurements						
Change in demographic assumptions	0	1,036	1,036	0	(434)	(434)
Change in financial assumptions	0	2,480	2,480	0	(7,950)	(7,950)
Other experience	0	(686)	(686)	0	264	264
Return on Assets excluding amounts included in net interest	(1,033)	0	(1,033)	4,770	0	4,770
Total remeasurements recognised in Other Comprehensive Income (OCI)	(1,033)	2,830	1,797	4,770	(8,120)	(3,350)
Fair Value of Employer Assets	17,622	0	17,622	23,243	0	23,243
Present Value of Funded Liabilities	0	(25,926)	(25,926)	0	(35,616)	(35,616)
Present Value of Unfunded Liabilities**	0	0	0	0	0	0
Closing Position at 31 March	17,622	(25,926)	(8,304)	23,243	(35,616)	(12,373)

* The current service cost includes an allowance for administration expenses of 0.5% of payroll.

** Adjustment to 2019/20 figures, following receipt of a revised report from Hymans for 2019/20.

NOTE 25 – PENSION COSTS (continued)

The Major Categories of Plan Assets as a Percentage of Total Plan Assets

The actuary has provided a detailed breakdown of Fund assets in accordance with the requirements of IAS19. This analysis distinguishes between the nature and risk of those assets, and to further break them down between those with a quoted price in an active market, and those that are not quoted. The asset split for Gwynedd Council is assumed to be in the same proportion to the Fund's asset allocation as at 31 December 2020. The split is shown in the table below. The actuary estimates the bid value of the Fund's assets as at 31 March 2021 to be £2,510m based on information provided by the Administering Authority and allowing for index returns where necessary. Only a portion of the Fund is relevant to the GwE.

Fair Value of Employer Assets

The asset values below are at bid value as required under IAS 19.

Asset Category	At 31 March 2020				At 31 March 2021			
	Quoted Prices in Active Markets	Prices not quoted in Active Markets	Total		Quoted Prices in Active Markets	Prices not quoted in Active Markets	Total	
	£'000	£'000	£'000	%	£'000	£'000	£'000	%
Equity Securities								
Consumer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Manufacturing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Energy and Utilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Financial Institutions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Health and Care	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Information Technology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Debt Securities								
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Private Equity								
All	0	1,103	1,103	6	0	1,445	1,445	6
Real Estate								
UK Property	0	1,729	1,729	10	0	1,843	1,843	8
Overseas Property	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
Investment Funds and Unit Trusts								
Equities	0	11,760	11,760	67	0	14,892	14,892	64
Infrastructure	0	400	400	2	0	410	410	2
Other	0	2,536	2,536	14	0	4,519	4,519	19
Cash and Cash Equivalents								
All	92	0	92	1	134	0	134	1
Total	92	17,530	17,622	100	134	23,109	23,243	100

NOTE 25 – PENSION COSTS (continued)

Basis for estimating assets and liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, life expectancy and salary levels. Life expectancy is based on fund-specific projections called VitaCurves with long-term improvement assumed to have already peaked and converging to 1.5% per annum.

Both the Gwynedd Pension Scheme and Discretionary Benefits liabilities have been estimated by Hymans Robertson, an independent firm of actuaries. Estimates for the Gwynedd Pension Fund were based on the latest full valuation of the scheme as at 31 March 2020. The significant assumptions used by the actuary in the following table have had a significant impact on the values of the assets and liabilities as follows:

	31 March 2020	31 March 2021
Financial Assumptions	% p.a.	% p.a.
Pensions Increase Rate	1.9	2.85
Salary Increase Rate	2.2	3.15
Inflation Rate	1.9	2.85
Discount Rate	2.3	2.0
Long-term expected rate of return on all categories of assets	2.3	2.3
Take-up option to convert annual pension into retirement lump sum		
for pre-April 2008 service	50	50
for post-April 2008 service	75	75
Mortality assumptions	Years	Years
Longevity at 65 for current pensioners		
Men	21.3	21.5
Women	23.4	23.9
Longevity at 65 for future pensioners		
Men	22.2	22.7
Women	25.1	25.9

The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out in the table above. In order to quantify the impact of a change in the financial assumptions used, the actuary has calculated and compared the value of the scheme liabilities as at 31 March 2021 on varying bases. The approach taken is consistent with that adopted to derive the IAS 19 figures provided in this note.

To quantify the uncertainty around life expectancy, the actuary has calculated the difference in cost to the Joint Committee of a one-year increase in life expectancy. For sensitivity purposes this is assumed to be an increase in the cost of benefits of broadly 3-5%. In practice the actual cost of a one-year increase in life expectancy will depend on the structure of the revised assumption (i.e. if improvements to survival rates predominantly apply at younger or older ages).

NOTE 25 – PENSION COSTS (continued)

The figures in the table below have been derived based on the membership profile of the Joint Committee as at 31 March 2020, the date of the most recent actuarial valuation. The approach taken in preparing the sensitivity analysis shown is consistent with that adopted in the previous year.

Impact on the Defined Benefit Obligation in the Scheme Change in assumption	Approximate increase to Defined Benefit Obligation	Approximate monetary amount
	31 March 2021	31 March 2021
	%	£'000
0.5% decrease in real discount rate	11	3,915
0.5% increase in the salary increase rate	2	534
0.5% increase in the pension increase rate	9	3,290

The principal demographic assumption is the longevity assumption (i.e. member life expectancy). For sensitivity purposes, we estimate that a one-year increase in life expectancy would approximately increase the Employer's Defined Benefit Obligation by around 3-5%. In practice the actual cost of a one-year increase in life expectancy will depend on the structure of the revised assumption (i.e. if improvements to survival rates predominantly apply to younger or older ages).

Impact on the Joint Committee's Cash Flows

One of the objectives of the scheme is that employer contributions should be kept at as constant a rate as possible. Gwynedd Council has agreed a strategy with the fund's actuary to achieve a funding level of 100% over the next 17 years. Funding levels are monitored on an annual basis.

The contributions paid by the Joint Committee are set by the Fund Actuary at each triennial valuation (the most recent being as at 31 March 2019), or at any other time as instructed to do so by the Administering Authority. The contributions payable over the period to 31 March 2021 are set out in the Rates and Adjustments certificate. For further details on the approach adopted to set contribution rates for the Joint Committee, please refer to the 2019 actuarial report dated 31 March 2020.

Information about the Defined Benefit Obligation

	Liability Split	
	31 March 2021	
	£'000	%
Active Members	21,713	61.0
Deferred Members	4,036	11.3
Pensioner Members	9,867	27.7
Total	35,616	100.0

The above figures are for funded obligations only and do not include unfunded pensioner liabilities. The durations are effective at the previous formal valuation as at 31 March 2019.

NOTE 25 – PENSION COSTS (continued)

Impact in Future Years

The total contribution expected to be made to the Local Government Pensions Scheme by the Joint Committee in the year to 31 March 2022 is £798k.

As the Actuary's report is based on estimates and due to timing issues, an adjustment of £191k has been made in 2020/21, which contains an adjustment of £180k which relates to the previous year (£3k in 2019/20) to bring the deficit in the Scheme based on the Actuarial figures in line with the liability related to the defined benefit pension schemes in the Balance Sheet. This variance has been treated as Actuarial Gains and Losses on Pension Assets and Liabilities and therefore has been included in the Liability related to the defined benefit Pension Schemes in the Balance Sheet.

Glossary

Actuarial Gains and Losses – For a defined benefit pension scheme, the changes in actuarial surpluses that arise because events have not coincided with the actuarial assumptions made for the last valuation (experience gains and losses) or the actuarial assumptions have changed.

Asset – Items of worth that are measurable in terms of value.

- A current asset will be consumed or will cease to have material value within the next financial year.
- A non-current asset provides benefit to the Council and to the services it provides for a period of more than one year.

Balances (or Reserves) – These represent accumulated funds available to the Council. Some balances (reserve) may be earmarked for specific purposes for funding future defined initiatives or meeting identified risks or liabilities.

Capital Expenditure – Expenditure on the procurement of a non-current asset, which will be used in providing services beyond the current accounting period or expenditure that adds to, and not merely maintains, value of an existing non-current asset.

CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting) – The Professional Institute for accountants working in the public services.

Creditors – Amounts owed by the Council for work done, goods received or services rendered, for which payments have not been made by the end of that accounting period.

Current Service Cost – The increase in the present value of a defined benefit pension scheme's liabilities expected to arise from employee service in the current period.

Debtors – Amount owed to the Council for works done, goods received or service rendered within the accounting period, but for which payment has not been received by the end of that accounting period.

Defined Benefit Scheme – A pension or other retirement benefit scheme other than a defined contribution scheme.

Defined Contribution Scheme – A pension or other retirement benefit scheme into which an employee pays regular fixed contributions as an amount or as a percentage of pay, and will have no legal or constructive obligation to pay further contributions if the scheme does not have sufficient assets to pay all employees benefits relating to the employee Service in the current and prior periods.

Fair Value – The price that would be received to sell an asset, or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date.

Financial Instruments – Any contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another. The term covers both financial assets and financial liabilities, from straightforward trade receivables (invoices owing) and trade payables (invoices owed) to complex derivatives and embedded derivatives.

General Fund – This is the main revenue fund of the Council and it includes the net cost of all services financed by local taxpayers and Government grants.

International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) – A suite of accounting standards used across the world. They must be applied by all reporting entities to all financial statements in order to provide a true and fair view of the entity's financial positions, and a standardised method of comparison with financial statements of the other entities.

Inventories – Amounts of unused or unconsumed stocks held in expectation of future use. They are categorised as goods or other assets purchased for resale, consumable stores, raw materials and Components, Products and Services in intermediate stages of completion and finished goods.

Investment Property – Property that is held solely to earn rentals or for capital appreciation, or both.

Liability – Amounts due to individuals or organisations which will have to be paid at some time in the future.

Provision – A liability that is of uncertain timing or amount which is to be settled by transfer of economic benefits.

Related Parties – Parties are considered to be related if one party has the ability to Control the other party or exercise significant influence over the other party in making financial or operating decisions.

Reserves – An amount set aside for a specific purpose in one year and carried forward to meet future obligations.



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

14 JULY 2021

Report by: GwE Managing Director

Subject: Annual Governance Statement for the Joint Committee

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To accept and approve the Annual Governance Statement.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 sets fixed requirements on public bodies that operate partnership management arrangements through formal joint committees.

2.2 Section 5 requires the Joint Committee to review and approve annually a statement of internal control. To comply with this requirement the Annual Governance Statement has been prepared. The document has been produced to offer a framework to the Joint Committee's operation.

3.0 Recommendations

3.1 The Joint Committee is asked to accept and approve the Annual Governance Statement.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

5.0 Equalities Impact

5.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

6.0 Personnel Implications

6.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

7.0 Appendices

7.1 Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

I am satisfied that the Statement provides an appropriate description of GwE's governance arrangements.

Statutory Finance Officer:

I am satisfied that this statement is a fair reflection of GwE governance arrangements for the year 2020/21, and that arrangements for accountability are appropriate. The statement meets the requirement to describe GwE's governance framework, and to assess how effective it is operating. I shall support GwE as necessary as it gives attention to the matters noted in Part 5 of the statement.

During the period under consideration the members of the Joint Committee (Councillors and Chief Education Officers of the 6 local authorities in north Wales, together with the Managing Director of the Service) have continued to work together to ensure that GwE continues to fulfil the responsibilities effectively.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

This statement meets the requirement to produce a Statement of Internal Control pursuant to Section 5 of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014 (as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018).

Part 1: SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

1.1 GwE was established as a Joint Committee to be a regional school effectiveness and improvement service by the 6 North Wales local authorities in 2013 by undertaking the functions that are detailed in an agreement between the Joint Committee and the authorities. In the agreement, the Councils have agreed to work together in a partnering relationship to establish a Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service to be accountable to, and undertake the statutory functions of the Councils in respect of school improvement and effectiveness.

1.2 The vision was to establish a Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement service to be accountable to, and undertake the statutory responsibilities of, the six local North Wales Authorities in respect of the duties to monitor; challenge; provide support services for curriculum continued professional development and management of schools, and in addition provide services that can be commissioned by schools and local authorities.

1.3 GwE is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

1.4 In discharging this overall responsibility, GwE is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, and which includes arrangements for the management of risk and adequate and effective financial management.

Part 2: THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which GwE is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authorities that are part of GwE to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.

2.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.

2.3 The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of GwE's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

2.4 The governance framework described above has been in place at GwE for the year ended 31 March 2021 and up to the date of approval of the 2020/21 statement of accounts.

Part 3: GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

3.1 The GwE Management Board monitors matters of governance continuously in a disciplined manner, raising a wider awareness of these, and promoting a wider ownership of the Annual Governance Statement.

3.2 To demonstrate good governance, GwE must show that it is complying with the core (and supporting) principles contained within the Framework for Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (CIPFA / Solace, 2016). This statement has been prepared in accordance with those principles.

3.3 An outline is given of the Governance Areas and GwE’s arrangements to deal with these, and the effectiveness of these arrangements, in the remainder of this section of the Annual Governance Statement.

3.4 For each governance principle, an evaluation has been made based on a combination of:

- A review of relevant reports & documents prepared during the year;
- The review of progress made against the Business Plan;
- Discussion with and based on comments received from officers, SLT & the Management Board.
- Continuous reflection on the effectiveness of the work, both internally & externally, i.e. Estyn, Steve Munby, Education Development Trust.

3.5 Since March 2020, to the date of publication of the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts, GwE has been responding to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. Where this has had a significant and visible impact on GwE’s governance arrangements, this has been noted below.

Principle A	Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law
Assessment	Assured

How we do this:

- GwE follows the host authority (Gwynedd Council) operating rules, which details how decisions need to be made and the procedures to be followed to ensure they are efficient, transparent and available to local people.
- The GwE Inter Authority Agreement have agreed to the following principles of good governance:
 - Openness and Trust
 - Commitment and Drive
 - Skills and Creativity
 - Effective Relationships
 - Developing and Adaptive
 - Reputation and Standing
 - Reasonableness of Decision Making
 - Necessary Consents
 - Members and Officers’ Commitments

- The voting members of the GwE Joint Committee are governed by the Code of Conduct of their relevant Council. The Codes of Conduct for Councillors and employees within the Constitution of the host authority are built upon the principles of openness, transparency and honesty.
- As part of the Regional Business Plan the following service and personal values are embedded within the service and have been set to enable the service to achieve the vision & objectives for delivery. These include:
 - Trust
 - Show no bias
 - Fairness
 - Respect diversity
 - Supportive and collaborative
 - Bilingual
 - Objectivity
 - Demand high standard
 - Integrity
- GwE, supported by the host authority, has procedures in place to ensure the Joint Committee meetings are conducted effectively and decision making is effective.
- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all meetings of the Joint Committee during 2020/21 have been held virtually via Zoom. Guidance was produced for Members in relation to Attending Virtual Meetings.

Principle B	Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
Assessment	Assured

How we do this:

- The Joint Committee meetings are open meetings and all papers are published on the host authority (Gwynedd Council) website & the GwE website.
- The Joint Committee meetings have a forward calendar of meetings set out for the year ahead.
- GwE is a partnership organisation, especially with the Local Authorities and even more so during the pandemic and in moving forward.
- Full stakeholder engagement via various forums both within & outside the formal governance structure.
- During 2020/21, GwE have worked effectively with Welsh Government on policy and continuity of learning. GwE has also worked consistently with the other regions and with Estyn in preparing guidance and resources for distance and blended learning and to provide advice on formative and continuous assessment. It has also strengthened the working relationship between those parties with positive professional exchanges, ensuring that the stakeholders are getting quality advice and resources.
- GwE encourages stakeholder engagement and feedback via a broad range of communication and engagement methods. Examples include: attendance at Headteacher Federation meetings; cluster groups; weekly bulletin; social media etc.

- One of the main strengths of work across North Wales has been the consistent messaging from the six local authorities through their political education portfolio holders and directors working with GwE to have one common message for the schools in North Wales. This consistency of messaging has been not only welcomed by schools but also by teacher unions and non-teaching unions who welcomed the clarity of messaging and support for their staff.
- GwE have produced a series of reports that we have shared with the Management Board and the Joint Committee during the year. These reports include the views of schools, staff and local authorities on the effectiveness of regional practice. Each report describes the quality of the provision and identifies areas for improvement to drive the learning agenda forward.
 - Effective collegiate and collective regional approach between the six local authorities and GwE.
 - Joint working has ensured strong governance and regional consistency in support, messaging and guidance given to schools.
 - Establish clear lines of communication with key stakeholders.
 - Reports for the Joint Committee
 - Weekly meetings with Management Board and Education Portfolio Holders - key strategic and political decisions.
 - Share regular updates and ensure contact and support.
 - Share information, key messages and work streams with LAs / Elected Members.
 - Update key stakeholders on various GwE matters.
 - Share regional information and ensure consistent messages.
 - Ensure consistency as regards national and regional information.
 - Ensure effective communication.
 - Prepare and co-ordinate regional meetings, for example the Management Board and Joint Committee.
 - Liaise with key stakeholders.
- Teamwork, joint working and collaboration has also been at the heart of the work with schools. All schools in the region are part of a cluster or a forum where they can come together to discuss operational issues as well as sharing best practice regarding distance and blended learning. This joint work facilitated by GwE staff has been very successful and sets a very strong infrastructure in place for future work and working relationship across the region.

Principle C	Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
Assessment	Assured

How we do this:

- GwE's overall vision is reflected in the 3 year business plan & is further strengthened in the annual business plan.
- The regional priorities and areas for improvement are based firmly on the findings of our internal self-evaluation processes, external reviews on our current practice and direction of travel, and through consultation with headteachers and the Local Authorities. The Business Plan also addresses Welsh Government and the Local Authorities strategic priorities that fall within the remit of the work of GwE. Each Local Authority has a detailed business plan agreed upon by the head of service and the core adviser
- The clear and robust accountability framework in a key strength in GwE. Detailed business plans on all levels of planning address all aspects of the work of GwE, and clearly note the contribution of the service to the transformation agenda. Plans are fully costed, with clear success criteria and milestones for delivering objectives.

- There are detailed self-evaluation arrangements. Plans are reviewed on a quarterly basis, evaluating progress and impact. Staff on all levels fully understand their responsibility for continued improvement and accountability. Progress towards agreed outcomes on a local authority level is monitored on a quarterly basis and discussed regularly in meetings between the lead adviser and Local Authority. Ongoing issues are referred to GwE Senior leaders in a timely manner.
- Self-evaluation is a strong feature in GwE and the self-evaluation process is cyclical and ongoing. Great emphasis is placed on accountability and continuous review, and there is consistent emphasis on progress in line with priorities.
- A robust financial analysis supports the work of delivering the business plan. A medium term financial plan and workforce plan are both aligned with the business plan. Through increasingly effective use of data to identify key priorities, the link between the business planning process and decisions regarding financial planning is strengthened as the work streams that underpin the business plan clearly note the resources to be used.
- A formal framework is in place to assess the wider value for money provided by GwE. The judgement is consistent across all stakeholders on how to measure the value for money of GwE activities within the structure and objectives of the business plan.

Principle D	Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
Assessment	Assured

How we do this:

- GwE has an agreed Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) that sets out clearly how the Joint Committee operates and how decisions are made and procedures need to be followed to ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability.
- The Joint Committee is a joint committee constituted by the Councils under section 101(5) and 102(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 and section 20 of the Local Government Act 2000. Meetings of the Joint Committee are subject to the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 including the provisions on access to information and meetings held in public.
- Members of the Joint Committee and the public have the full benefit of access to the Joint Committee papers and supporting information.
- The Joint Committee meets a minimum of three times a year.
- The IAA identifies the following two categories of decisions together with the means by which they will be taken:
 - ‘Joint Committee Matter’ – being a matter which is to be decided upon at a quorate (3 voting members) meetings of the Joint Committee by those present and entitled to vote and any such decision will be binding on all the Councils;
 - ‘Matter Reserved To The Councils’ – being a matter which will have to be referred to each Council for decision and, for the avoidance of doubt, any such matter will not be dealt with by the Joint Committee (as the case may be) until the matter has been determined by all of the Councils. If the Councils fail to reach the same decision in respect of such matter then the matter shall be referred under Dispute Resolution as a dispute for resolution.
- The terms of reference and delegated powers of the Joint Committee are to promote joint working in the delivery of the Service through:
 - facilitating constructive partnership working;

- engaging with key interested bodies and stakeholders when appropriate;
 - carrying out such other activities calculated to facilitate, or which are conducive to the successful delivery of the Service;
 - to oversee the management of the Service and ensure that the Service is provided and performs in accordance with the expectations of the Partner Authorities as reflected in the Full Business Case, Inter Authority Agreement and agreed Annual Business and Commissioning Plans;
 - to approve the budget for the Service on an annual basis;
 - to approve the business plan for the Service on an annual basis;
 - to monitor and manage the risks associated with the Service;
 - to ratify requests from the Service for additional budget funding from individual Councils;
 - to approve the staff structure of the Service;
 - to appoint the Managing Director of the Service;
 - to decide on disciplinary action against the Managing Director;
 - where required, to determine or arrange for the determination of appeals in relation to Human Resources matters.
- The Joint Committee is supported by a Management Board with the following terms of reference:
 - Co-construct the annual Business Plan, including the individual appendices to identify specific requirements at individual LA Level;
 - Monitor progress against the priorities and outcomes identified in the Business Plan on a regular basis;
 - Have arrangements in place to make sure that GwE financial controls and systems are robust;
 - Provide professional advice to the joint committee with regard to the appointment of the Managing Director;
 - Regularly report to the joint committee.
 - During the COVID period GwE has continually reflected on the effectiveness of the work. Both internal and external resources have been used to ensure that we have a balanced perspective on the quality of the work. This has included working with the Education Development Trust and Steve Munby to develop the organisation and plan our future infrastructure.

Principle E	Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
Assessment	Assured

How we do this:

- GwE has re focused several times during the Covid-19 pandemic in order to meet the needs of the range of stakeholders.
- During the Covid-19 pandemic, communication & engagement within the leadership structure of GwE has been regular and clear. Daily meetings of the Senior Leadership Team were supported by weekly meetings of the GwE Management Board and Education Portfolio Holders.
- This enabled key strategic and political decisions to be made with clarity and confidence. This resulted in consistent messaging from the partner authorities through their political education

portfolio holders and directors working with GwE to have one common message for the schools in North Wales. This consistency of messaging has been not only welcomed by schools but also by teacher unions and non-teaching unions who welcomed the clarity of messaging and support for their staff.

- The Education Portfolio Holders have been given numerous briefings & kept up to date on all developments via reports & verbal updates. They have also been given the opportunity to access webinars & resources.
- Staff in GwE have adapted their work over the last year in order to continue to provide effective services and support for all their school communities during the COVID pandemic. During this very difficult period, GwE have kept true to their vision and values as an organisation that is continually learning.
- The OECD's transversal themes of Trust, Thinking together, Time and Technology have remained at the heart of the work with schools and partners.
- The service in its entirety has re focused several times during this period to meet the needs of the range of stakeholders. The ability to be flexible and agile and to work effectively together in different teams, often cross sector, has had significant impact on organisational behaviour and external perception. At the heart of the refocusing has been the need to ensure that the well-being of school leaders, their staff and learners is paramount to the decision-making and ensuring that the right level of support, operational or professional, can be directed accurately by the service.
- Weekly staff meetings have contributed to a consistency of approach in ensuring common messages to school teachers and leaders. There has been a strong emphasis on modelling appropriate and supportive behaviour throughout the period.
- GwE has worked on the strengths of individuals within the team and redeployed them where they have provided the maximum impact in their roles in supporting individual local authorities, schools, clusters, subject and phase networks. This bespoke provision of support based on strong principles of collaboration, exchanging and sharing and developing the best practice is a key learning principle that we will continue to develop in the next stages of evolving the service.
- The consistency and quality of challenge and support to schools is good. Regular training, support and discussions ensure that Supporting Improvement Advisers' knowledge and understanding of national and local developments, and the implications of this on their roles, is good.
- Quality Assurance processes continue to develop and evolve in line with national developments and principles. The annual Professional Review process has continued during the year.
- Messages and information are communicated clearly and on a regular basis to all employees. Generic, purposeful and effective support programmes are offered. Full and sector team meetings offer regular opportunities for collaboration, consultation and contributing to discussions and decisions regarding GwE's direction of work during a period of considerable change.
- GwE has also worked on a weekly basis from the beginning of spring 2021 with Professor Graham Donaldson to develop its own staff to effectively support schools with the new curriculum.

Principle F	Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
Assessment	Assured

How we do this:

- The clear and robust accountability framework in a key strength in GwE. Detailed business plans on all levels of planning address all aspects of the work of GwE. Plans are fully costed, with clear success criteria and milestones for delivering objectives.
- There are detailed self-evaluation arrangements. Plans are reviewed on a quarterly basis, evaluating progress and impact. Staff on all levels fully understand their responsibility for continued improvement and accountability.
- Each Local Authority has a detailed business plan agreed upon by the head of service and the core adviser. Progress towards agreed outcomes on a local authority level is monitored on a quarterly basis and discussed regularly in meetings between the lead adviser and Local Authority. Ongoing issues are referred to GwE Senior leaders in a timely manner.
- The self-evaluation process is cyclical and ongoing. Great emphasis is placed on accountability and continuous review, and there is consistent emphasis on progress in line with priorities.
- The consortium has effective financial management processes in place. Communication and consultation on financial arrangements is effective, and GwE staff, the host local authority and Joint Committee all review the core funding and grant expenditure on a regular basis.
- A robust financial analysis supports the work of delivering the business plan. A medium term financial plan and workforce plan are both aligned with the business plan. Through increasingly effective use of data to identify key priorities, the link between the business planning process and decisions regarding financial planning is strengthened as the work streams that underpin the business plan clearly note the resources to be used.
- A formal framework is in place to assess the wider value for money provided by GwE. The judgement is consistent across all stakeholders on how to measure the value for money of GwE activities within the structure and objectives of the business plan.
- There are rigorous and comprehensive arrangements in place to accurately identify and manage risks on a local, regional and national level. The risk register is a live document, which is updated on a regular basis in order to identify increasing risks or risks which are no longer deemed as high level. It is reviewed every month in a senior leadership meeting and the Management Board and the Joint Committee review the register on a quarterly basis.
- Through effective management of risks to the region, GwE is able to support the region's objectives, make effective use of resources and meet the outcomes as intended.

Principle G	Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability
Assessment	Assured
Future actions	The Joint Committee will be given an opportunity in a future meeting to consider and adopt an Internal Audit Charter, as is required under the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

How we do this:

- The Joint Committee meetings are open meetings and all papers are published on the host authority (Gwynedd Council) website & the GwE website.
- GwE has annual accountability to various stakeholders throughout the year as can be seen in the following diagram.



- GwE is a 'relevant body' which must maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and system of internal control. In order to comply with these statutory requirements, the internal audit service of the host authority is provided to GwE in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards ("PSIAS"). The Standards are relevant to every internal audit service provider for the public sector, whether internal, shared service or external.
- During the year & at the request of the Joint Committee, the GwE Managing Director, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer & Head of Finance in Gwynedd Council, reviewed the internal audit arrangements. As a result, the following process for identifying the need for internal audit and acting on the recommendations was agreed:
 - Identify the need for audit in specific areas. This work plan will be developed where possible through consideration of risk registers, performance reports, business plans etc.
 - Meeting between the host authority's Audit Manager and GwE's Managing Director.

- To agree the audit program for the year with the Management Board.
 - Content of the programme to be shared with the Joint Committee.
 - The Audit Unit of the host authority to conduct the audits.
 - Share draft audit reports with relevant GwE management for accuracy and agree actions to address any risks.
 - The host authority's Audit Unit to send audit reports to GwE's Managing Director and relevant managers.
 - Relevant GwE officers to act on agreed actions (administrative issues not requiring Joint Committee input).
 - GwE Managing Director to share individual audit reports with Management Board.
 - The host authority's Audit Manager submits an annual report to the Joint Committee on any audits carried out during the year.
 - Relevant GwE officers to act on Joint Committee decisions.
 - GwE officers to report progress as necessary to the Joint Committee.
- GwE has succeeded in managing and evaluating itself regularly and as a result external accountability bodies opinions have been positive.

Part 4: SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

4.1 The above assessment indicates that there are no issues which are a significant governance issue.

4.2 Each of the areas of governance has been reviewed in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and we are satisfied that GwE has been able to modify its working arrangements in order to cope with the crisis.

Part 5: GOVERNANCE MATTERS IDENTIFIED

5.1 Progress on Identified Governance Matters 2019/20

The table below provides an update on progress for those proposals for improvements identified during 2019/20:

Core Principle	Proposal for improvement	Responsible Officer	Update on progress
Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.	Ensure the governance review is finalised.	Host authority / Managing Director	Teamwork, joint working and collaboration has been at the heart of the service during the last 12 months. This joint work facilitated has been very successful and sets a very strong infrastructure in place for future work and working relationship across the region.

<p>Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership & the individuals within</p>	<p>That staff development continues & is built upon during the next year ensuring that staff receive any new support requirements / developments as a result of Covid-19.</p>	<p>Managing Director</p>	<p>During this very difficult period, GwE has kept true to its vision and values as an organisation that is continually learning. Staff have received significant professional learning during the year.</p>
<p>Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</p>	<p>That the value for money framework is enhanced during the year in order to demonstrate further the prioritisation of resources.</p>	<p>Managing Director</p>	<p>GwE has continued to provide value for money & has worked within its budget again this year. The Mid Term Financial Plan including the value for money framework will be reviewed during 2021/22.</p>

Part 6: OPINION

We are of the opinion that the governance arrangements described above offer assurance that our governance arrangements work well overall. However, we intend to take measures to deal with the matters noted above during next year in order to improve our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these measures will deal with the need to improve as identified in the effectiveness review, and will monitor their operation as part of the next annual review.

GwE Lead Officer

Date: _____

ARWYN LLOYD THOMAS

GwE MANAGING DIRECTOR

GwE Chairman

Date: _____

COUNCILLOR PHIL WYNN



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

14 JULY 2021

Report by: Alwyn Jones, GwE Assistant Director

Subject: GwE Annual Report 2020-21

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To present the GwE 2020-2021 Annual Report to the Joint Committee.

2.0 Background

2.1 As is stated in the GwE Inter Authority Agreement, GwE will report annually on the performance of the service in delivering the service functions and key aims.

2.2 This year's GwE Annual Report outlines how GwE have repurposed several times during the COVID pandemic to provide effective services and support for all their school communities and how it has responded to Estyn recommendations provided to local authorities and regional consortium in their thematic report. It also describes how schools are been supported to implement the reform journey and prepare for the new curriculum, and identifies strategic and regional priorities for 2021-22.

3.0 Considerations

3.1 Staff in the Local Authorities and GwE have adapted their work over the last year in order to continue to provide effective services and support for all their school communities during the COVID pandemic. During this very difficult period, GwE have kept true to their vision and

values as an organisation that is continually learning. The OECD's transversal themes of Trust, Thinking together, Time and Technology have remained at the heart of the work with schools and partners. The service in its entirety has re focused several times during this period to meet the needs of the range of stakeholders. The ability to be flexible and agile and to work effectively together in different teams, often cross sector, has had significant impact on organisational behaviour and external perception.

3.2 Enclosed is the annual report which provides an overview of the following areas:

- Background and context
- GwE work programme
- Main impact of GwE work during Covid-19 Pandemic
- Estyn Thematic Review: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19
- GwE response to Estyn recommendations from thematic report
- Support during the pandemic that has provided growth points in
- Preparation for the new curriculum
- Business matters
- Business plan priorities for 2021-2022

3.3 Our strategic objectives reflects the current regional and national priorities and the main areas for development were identified through the service's self-evaluation process. The overarching priorities for 2021-2022 were agreed with the Joint Committee on the 24 February 2021. The business plan was formally agreed by the Chief Education Officers of each Local Authority, the Joint Committee and the Lead Chief Executive at the Joint Committee meeting on 26 May 2021.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to approve and accept the Annual Report for 2020-2021.

4.2 Determine if there are any aspects of the report that they wish to discuss further at future meetings.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. GwE will operate within the current financial resources.

6.0 Equalities Impact

6.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Personnel Implications

7.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

8.0 Consultation Undertaken

8.1 Consultation with County Quality Boards, Headteachers Strategic Forums, GwE Management Board and Joint Committee.

9.0 Appendices

9.1 GwE Annual Report 2020-21.

OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

I confirm that that the GwE Managing Director is required, in accordance with the inter authority agreement, to present an annual report on the performance of the service to the Joint Committee and the Councils.

Statutory Finance Officer:

Section 5 of the report clarifies that “there are no financial implications arising from this report” as “GwE will operate within their current financial resources”. Consequently, I have no observations to add from a financial propriety perspective.



GwE Annual Report

2020-2021



CONTENT

1. Background and context
2. GwE work programme
3. Main impact of GwE work during Covid-19 Pandemic
4. Estyn Thematic Review: Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19
5. GwE response to Estyn recommendations from thematic report
6. Support during the pandemic that has provided growth points in preparation for the new curriculum
7. Business matters
8. Business plan priorities for 2021-2022

Supporting Documents:

- Appendix 1: Estyn report: 'Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19'
- Appendix 2: Estyn letter: 'GwE's work to support schools and PRUs: March-August 2020 / From September 2020'
- Appendix 3: 'Journey to 2022' which was published in October 2020 and co-created by Estyn, the 4 regions and Welsh Government
- Appendix 4: Curriculum for Wales Professional Learning Timeline
- Appendix 5: The Reform Journey – Think Pieces

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The response to COVID-19 has dramatically changed our lives. In this challenging context, the education system and schooling has been significantly disrupted. On 23rd March 2020, schools were re-purposed to support children of key workers and some vulnerable learners whilst also supporting all learners to stay safe and keep learning at home.

On June 3rd 2020, the Welsh Government (WG) announced that there would be a phased opening of schools from 29th June, 2020 to give all pupils the opportunity to “check in, catch up and prepare.” Welsh Government published their Learning Guidance [<https://gov.wales/keep-education-safe-guidance-learning-over-summer-term>] to provide advice on learning and teaching taking place in schools and settings for the remainder of the summer term and to support practitioners as they prepare for the autumn term.

On July 9th, 2020 the Education Minister confirmed that all pupils would return to school in September, and that schools were required to return to full capacity by September 14th. Welsh Government published further learning guidance [<https://gov.wales/guidance-learning-schools-and-settings-autumn-term-covid-19>] for the autumn term that gave schools and supporting partners a common set of priorities for learning, regardless of the level of operations in response to COVID-19.

During the Autumn Term, the level of disruption to schools varied considerably across the region, with some schools regularly having whole year cohorts self-isolating at home for an extended period, to others that were able to open to all pupils throughout the term.

On January 4th 2021, schools remained closed to all children except those of key workers and some vulnerable learners following the introduction of a second lockdown period, with schools providing remote learning for most of the spring term.

In the week commencing 22nd February 2021, under 7s in the foundation phase started back at schools, with other primary school children and older secondary students (Years 11 and 13) returning back on 15th March 2021. From 12th April 2021 primary, special and secondary schools and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) returned to provide onsite provision for all learners.

This year’s GwE Annual Report outlines how GwE have repurposed several times during the COVID pandemic to provide effective services and support for all their school communities and how it has responded to Estyn recommendations provided to local authorities and regional consortium in their thematic report. It also describes how schools are been supported to implement the reform journey and prepare for the new curriculum, and identifies strategic and regional priorities for 2021-22.

2. GwE WORK PROGRAMME AND SUPPORT TO SCHOOL DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC

Staff in the Local Authorities and GwE have adapted their work over the last year in order to continue to provide effective services and support for all their school communities during the COVID pandemic. During this very difficult period, GwE have kept true to their vision and values as an organisation that is continually learning. The OECD's transversal themes of Trust, Thinking together, Time and Technology have remained at the heart of the work with schools and partners.

The service in its entirety has re focused several times during this period to meet the needs of the range of stakeholders. The ability to be flexible and agile and to work effectively together in different teams, often cross sector, has had significant impact on organisational behaviour and external perception. At the heart of the refocusing has been the need to ensure that the well-being of school leaders, their staff and learners is paramount to the decision-making and ensuring that the right level of support, operational or professional, can be directed accurately by the service. Regular contact with school leaders has been well received and has contributed to Head teachers feeling that they could turn to a professional colleague to share challenging issues and to find solutions to address day-to-day issues. These included operational discussions on opening school safely as well as professional discussions regarding remote and blended learning.

Weekly staff meetings have contributed to a consistency of approach in ensuring common messages to school teachers and leaders. There has been a strong emphasis on modelling appropriate and supportive behaviour throughout the period. This has included very regular contact with headteachers to ensure that they get the appropriate support to operate effectively and also as a sounding board to support their own well-being. Further support for senior leaders well-being has been provided through a series of workshops and webinars which will support their resilience during this difficult period. GwE staff also conducted face to face pastoral visits on behalf of the Local Authorities during the autumn term and also when schools reopened in spring 2021 after the second lockdown period.

GwE sees itself as a partnership organisation, especially with the Local Authorities and even more so during the pandemic and in moving forward. GwE have worked effectively with Welsh Government on policy and continuity of learning. It has also worked consistently with the other regions and with Estyn in preparing guidance and resources for distance and blended learning and to provide advice on formative and continuous assessment. It has also strengthened the working relationship between those parties with positive professional exchanges, ensuring that the stakeholders are getting quality advice and resources.

One of the main strengths of work across North Wales has been the consistent messaging from the six local authorities through their political education portfolio holders and directors working with GwE to have one common message for the schools in North Wales. This consistency of messaging has been not only welcomed by schools but also by teacher unions and non-teaching unions who welcomed the clarity of messaging and support for their staff. One such example is the operational group of local authority and regional staff working on and developing risk assessments policy, advice and guidelines, and creating a regional dashboard which is a strong foundation for all schools to be able to reopen with risks being identified and locally managed and supported.

The six local authorities and GwE have taken a collegiate and collective regional approach to supporting schools throughout the COVID pandemic. This was clearly demonstrated in the consistent regional approach in developing

a supportive framework to ensure that all regional schools had the right policies in place together with a comprehensive risk assessment in order to create a safe environment to welcome the children back into schools.

The framework included resources to support planning for:

1. Health and safety requirements
2. Site and facilities arrangements
3. Transport
4. Staffing arrangements
5. Blended teaching and learning
6. Inclusion and pupil support
7. Key management tasks.

Teamwork, joint working and collaboration has also been at the heart of the work with schools. All schools in the region are part of a cluster or a forum where they can come together to discuss operational issues as well as sharing best practice regarding distance and blended learning. This joint work facilitated by GwE staff has been very successful and sets a very strong infrastructure in place for future work and working relationship across the region.

One noteworthy aspect of the work has also been the bespoke nature of support for teachers and schools. GwE have worked on the strengths of individuals within the team and redeployed them where they have provided the maximum impact in their roles in supporting individual local authorities, schools, clusters, subject and phase networks. This bespoke provision of support based on strong principles of collaboration, exchanging and sharing and developing the best practice is a key learning principle that we will continue to develop in the next stages of evolving the service.

Schools who were causing concern prior to lockdown have had access to clear and targeted support to help them through this difficult period. This has been at several levels including network support, support to senior leadership and middle management in those schools and support with provision of distance and blended learning. Schools that have found the lockdown and post lockdown period difficult due to staff having to self-isolate have been supported in various ways. This has included modelling of exemplar materials, webinars, shared materials and resources. Also, GwE staff directly leading, directly teaching in schools or providing distance learning to learners.

A lot of time and energy have been put in place to contact international experts and to research international practice to learn and establish the principles of effective distance and blended learning. Discussions with international colleagues including the OECD have also deepened thinking within the organisation. GwE have provided practical support for leaders to enable them to consider their whole school strategic planning of provision for remote and blended learning, refine and evaluate their evolving provision and consider planning for various scenarios where pupils may be in school and / or at home during the academic year. This has supported schools to have a better strategic overview of their provision.

GwE has also supported schools in evaluating the quality of their blended learning and remote learning provision, sharing local examples and case studies of effective provision to reduce variation where it exists. Live streaming developed well and enhanced the blended learning experience. Schools soon realised that COVID will be with them for an extended period and are now planning more strategically and effectively. As schools and settings have become more confident with the delivery of remote learning, they are better able to adapt their self-evaluation processes and tools to monitor, evaluate, review and revise if appropriate, the provision.

School leaders acknowledge that one of the greatest challenges to the delivery of blended and remote learning

has been and continues to be ensuring that staff and pupils have the necessary skills' set and resources available to them. There has been a rapid pace of upskilling for some staff to move to digital platforms. Schools have undertaken a range of planned professional learning offered by regional consortia around the use of digital technology to support learning. This has also proved to be an opportunity as a greater number of practitioners are now able to confidently use an increasing range of technology to support learning.

Many schools acknowledge that parental engagement has been a key factor in securing effective remote/blended learning. GwE and the Local Authorities have provided a range of guidance to support school in improving parental engagement, including the sharing of good practice.

Many schools also acknowledge that there are ongoing operational challenges that change on a day-to-day basis, where a range of scenarios have to be planned for including cohorts of learners self-isolating or individual / small groups of learners and staff self-isolating. There are many examples of how schools are managing these complex situations well, having clear whole school strategies. GwE and the Local Authorities continue to support schools, using clusters and networks of schools to support each other and share resources and strategies.

GwE have also adopted a regional approach to accelerating learning, working on a tri-level approach which includes universal support led by the consortium, targeted support jointly led by the consortia and the local authority, with the acute being the responsibility of the local authority. This work has been developed on an evidence base approach working closely with Bangor University and regional staff to ensure a range of high-quality resources to support physical and emotional wellbeing, literacy and numeracy, these being made available to all learners across, all age range in all schools. The impact of this work will be captured through a regional dashboard which will include all grants made available to schools by Welsh Government during this financial year.

During the current academic year, GwE have provided opportunities for schools to form alliances or to work within developed clusters to address gaps in provision and alternative ways of delivery to meet any future lockdown scenarios. This work has included:

- Identifying, developing and sharing blended learning resources within the cluster/alliance and with other regional clusters/alliances;
- Ensuring all identified and developed resources are submitted through their Supporting Improvement Adviser to be included on the GwE Support Centre;
- Supporting schools within the cluster with their provision to meet any future 'lockdown scenarios';
- Prioritising additional support for the secondary sector in preparation for the awarding of examination grades in the summer 2021.

Schools in the GwE region have a significant collection of resources for each age group. Resources can be accessed through the GwE Support Centre:

<http://cefnogaeth.gwegogledd.cymru/?lang=en>

The GwE Professional Offer for this academic year has been rationalised and concentrates on 5 main areas: Wellbeing, The Reform Journey, Developing the Workforce, Accelerating the Learning and Digital Learning. In addition, GwE will continue to facilitate cluster working to support the development of Curriculum for Wales, ALN Transformation and the Welsh Language.

<https://www.gwegogledd.cymru/professional-learning/?lang=en>

3. MAIN IMPACT OF GwE WORK DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The main impact of GwE work during the pandemic is outlined below:

- Effective collegiate and collective regional approach between the six local authorities and GwE.
- Joint working has ensured strong governance and regional consistency in support, messaging and guidance given to schools.
- Strengthened collaboration between peers at a cluster/forum level has ensured effective co-constructed strategic thinking and direction.
- Clear regional and local approach in place for effective repurposing of both the service and its schools.
- Schools are well informed and confident that effective support is available should any needs arise.
- School leaders' wellbeing supported through regular and clear communication.
- Clear guidance given on how to prioritise and structure both remote and blended learning.
- Schools provided with coherent guidance and resources to effectively support vulnerable learners with their wellbeing, engagement and learning.
- Best practice being shared across schools and clusters, i.e. engaging with reluctant learners and families, digital platforms and communication systems, blended learning models, etc.
- Schools and settings have built upon several growth points in preparation for the new curriculum and generally have:
 - a more adaptable and skilled teaching profession;
 - greater focus and emphasise on both learner and staff wellbeing;
 - improved digital competency amongst staff, pupils and parents;
 - a more blended approach to teaching and learning;
 - improved partnerships with parents.

Other outcomes and impact include:

- Effective communication provided via single point of contact (Supporting Improvement Adviser)) for school leaders and ease of access to support.
- Schools have been able to remain open to key workers in the event of staff shortages.
- Schools are well informed and confident that support is available should any needs arise. School leaders' wellbeing is supported through regular communication.
- Shared understanding of the importance of the welfare of pupils, parents and staff
- Clear guidance given on how to prioritise and structure both Distance and Blended Learning.
- Schools having access to a wealth of quality resources for reference as they plan for and deliver distance and blended learning.
- Comprehensive distance and blended learning models available for schools to adopt, adapt or refer to. This has in turn ensured strengthened leadership and improved balance of work that can be completed at home.
- Co-ordinated approach to supporting schools which has led to greater consistency and quality of remote and blended learning across the region.
- Best practice being shared across schools i.e. engaging with reluctant learners and families, digital platforms and communication systems etc.
- Strengthened use of ICT to enable effective communication between schools, within schools and with school

stakeholders.

- School staff being upskilled through the use of a digital platform for professional development.
- Information shared with the LA is up to date and timely support is given to any School.
- In conjunction with the LA, ensured that the process of appointing school leadership candidates is appropriate and fair.
- Consistent messages disseminated to schools by GwE / LA officers.
- Strengthened collaboration between peers at a cluster level through digital means ensuring co-constructed strategic thinking.
- Strengthened collaboration between local authority officers and GwE.
- Clear regional and local approach in place for adapting schools for different purposes.
- Effective cascading of key messages to school staff to ensure consistency and clarity.
- Increased collaboration between regions and other stakeholders.
- Increased understanding of key messages and work streams.
- Stronger awareness amongst school leaders of effective strategies to ensure continuation of school business.
- Quality Professional Learning developed in readiness for future needs.
- Newly Qualified Teachers having clarity regarding completing their induction year.
- Strong partnership work with Bangor University to ensure initial teacher training students have clarity on the appointment system for next year.
- Strong partnership working with Caban to ensure increased research opportunities and recognition of excellence by School staff.

4. ESTYN THEMATIC REPORT ON LOCAL AUTHORITY AND REGIONAL CONSORTIA SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS AND PRUs IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

During the early autumn term, the Welsh Government asked Estyn to undertake a review of local authorities and regional consortia's work in supporting their learning communities in schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) during the period from March to October 2020.

In January 2021, Estyn published a thematic report titled 'Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19'. The full report is included in Appendix 1.

In addition, GwE received a letter outlining the outcome of this work in the region. The letter is included in Appendix 2.

The Estyn recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers were to:

R1: Urgently address barriers to learning at home, particularly where this is due to a lack of access to suitable computers or adequate connectivity;

R2: Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs;

R3: Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals;

R4: Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils;

R5: Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design.

5. GwE RESPONSE TO ESTYN RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THEMATIC REPORT

During the spring term (January 2021 – April 2021), GwE have addressed the Estyn recommendations outlined in Section 4 above. A summary of the work is outlined below.

R1: Urgently address barriers to learning at home, particularly where this is due to a lack of access to suitable computers or adequate connectivity

Local Authorities have worked with schools to enable all learners to access remote education during this period. Access challenges for learners have largely been met by the commitment, creativity and persistence of schools. Schools have loaned significant numbers of laptops/Raspberry Pis/wireless dongles to learners who do not have them at home from their own resources and have accessed grants or used donations to help fill gaps when needed. They have also recalibrated their expectations around timetables to support asynchronous/recorded approaches to allow access to a single device by more than one user in a household. Where necessary, paper copies of work have been delivered to households throughout lockdown. These approaches have had a significant impact of the engagement of some learners.

R2: Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs

Remote and blended learning provision

- GwE have supported schools to make effective use of blended learning and recovery curriculum guidance to plan retrieval practice and new learning when returning to face-to-face teaching and learning.
- Regular meetings with head teachers (individually) and through head teacher forums have initiated and prompted reflective practice and the sharing of practice and ideas.
- Individual support has been given to a number of senior leaders and heads of department – particularly where leaders are new - and to teachers in the authority, including NQTs. Networking meetings – Foundation phase teachers/ Literacy and Numeracy leads/ curriculum leaders/ heads of subject/ heads of VI Form – have been well received and proved mutually supportive. Coaching support is also being provided for a number of leaders in schools.
- All schools received guidance documentation regarding Remote and Distance learning to support Head teachers and teachers in planning remote learning as part of provision for learners, to assist schools in managing parental and stakeholder expectations, supporting schools to make best use of live learning and to enable schools to evaluate remote learning practices and when reporting to stakeholders including governing bodies.
- All schools received guidance for parents on remote and distance learning. These documents were co-created between schools and GwE / LA officers.
- Weekly discussions with Head teachers in a pastoral role included discussions around blended and distance learning.
- The collaborative sharing of blended learning materials allowed resources to be seen by SIAs and enabled

feedback to be given on the quality of the work.

- Some SIAs received invitations to attend live lessons with learners.
- GwE have reported to the Joint Committee and to various LA scrutiny committees throughout the period, bringing together an evaluation on the provision during the period.
- The GwE Supporting Improvement Advisor work programme from March 2021 has been based around co-evaluating the provision during the lockdown period, return to school and identifying development needs that have arisen from the period.

Strengths and shortcomings in the provision of remote and blended learning for pupils

- The strengths that have been noted include the use of digital technology in allowing the learning to take place, collaboration including sharing of resources and practices, partnerships with parents and development of different types of pedagogy over the period.
- Collaboration within the schools and across the schools has also been a major strength over the period. Despite having to make considerable adaptations to operational practices due to Covid, schools continue to be very reflective on their own plans and actions and are fully embracing and adapting parameters in order to improve further. Alliance / Cluster working and Peer Review involvement are all a demonstration of the commitment schools have in looking to draw down good practice and develop a stronger foundation for an approach as learning organisations and self-improving schools.
- Secondary Alliances have identified Teaching and Learning as a priority – collaborating to develop effective classroom pedagogies; intelligent technologies and engagement in both online and face to face learning; and feedback and assessment. GwE facilitate the T&L forum meetings and to date schools have shared effective practice / resources and identified next steps to develop the collaboration and provision in schools. This collaboration has ensured more consistency in provision across the authority.
- Areas that schools have found difficult include the consistency of learner engagement. This has been variable both within schools and across schools and has limited learner progress where engagement has been low. IT equipment, both software and hardware has also limited provision and progress in some cases. Where provision has been inconsistent, SIAs have worked with the school to ensure teachers are well equipped to provide an education for learners.
- Engagement levels have increased over the second lockdown period.
- Where things that haven't been as successful, consistency, capacity of the infrastructure, ensuring continuity of feedback.

Supporting schools to develop teaching and learning strategies that build the resilience of pupils' learning and develop their independent skills

- During this period, more than ever, schools have had to ensure continuous learning opportunities for all staff in order to ensure that they are able to deliver effective distance learning and to use technology creatively in order to facilitate this distance learning. Through the Professional Learning Grant teachers have engaged in relevant and timely professional learning during the last year to ensure that they have a firm understanding of what effective distance learning should look like. In some schools this has included weekly cluster meetings, head teachers' forums, subject specific training and developing remote learning models within teams or across clusters.
- During lockdown, there were opportunities for schools to work as learning organisations to strengthen and develop the 4 transversal themes of Time, Thinking Together, Trust and Technology. There has been the

promotion of team learning and collaboration among schools and staff to ensure that schools are able to deliver effective distance learning to all their students.

- Professional Learning has continued during the period. Examples of this have been PL given by the Foundation Phase Team which has included:

NQT training on Language, Literacy and Communication with the main focus of session on reading

- How do we teach reading?
- Strategies to engage the 'Love of Reading'
- What are higher order reading skills?
- Ideas for challenging reading tasks in the enriched and continuous provision

And further professional learning on developing mathematical, numerical and numeracy skills across all areas of learning and provision delivered on request from clusters and high risk/ schools in statutory category/Estyn follow up. Further professional learning included 'The Role of the Adult' aimed at practitioners facilitating the learning in the FP. This focused on:

- Effective questioning e.g. Blank levels of questioning to encourage children to reflect and to develop their higher order thinking and oracy skills
- Effective strategies to promote and develop independent learners

- Whilst there is still a focus on current logistical challenges, Headteachers have been keen to keep developing aspects of teaching and learning. 'Secondary Alliance' and Primary Cluster Plans have been finalised and networking in this way has been a valuable strategy for sharing best practice. School SLTs have found the EDT SPP Peer Review training also extremely valuable in supporting evaluation.
- As a Consortium we have ensured that we have promoted the use of Remote Asynchronous Learning Design through our weekly bulletin. We have also tasked several our subject advisors to work with secondary schools to delve deeper into the RALD Modules and develop effective practice examples which will be hosted on our new website. We have 25 resources thus far which include PowerPoints, videos, Podcasts and Vodcasts from teachers and students alike.
- We see asynchronous and synchronous learning design as an integral part of teaching and learning moving forward and will endeavour to upskill one practitioner from every catchment area who can then cascade the learning to all schools.

Coping with any future periods where blended and distance learning may be necessary

- In the primary sector, Supporting Improvement Advisors have worked closely with their link cluster, facilitating collaboration around effective classroom pedagogy, feedback and assessment and the use of technology to enhance provision during this time. Schools have evaluated that they were in a far stronger position to provide an education during the second lockdown period and that if at any time they have to return to a period of lockdown, they have processes and resources in place to do this effectively.
- Alliances and Clusters have mutually shared resources in blended learning, initially within alliances and clusters and then via the regional resource. This sharing was also supported by a full exchange of ideas around progress in blended learning, approaches to teaching and learning in the pandemic including assessment and experiences of agile and effective approaches to professional learning. These resources can be accessed in the school to school resource section of the Regional Support Centre - Regional Support Centre. GwE have regular meetings with schools to support schools to evaluate provision and their quality assurance activities – identifying strengths, areas to develop and planning PL opportunities for staff. Schools have captured good practice and shared across the school e.g. resources on shared drive, staff website on online learning, every teacher to

create a case study of best practice, weekly drop-in sessions for teachers to share good practice and challenges, designing INSET to develop staff digital skills and confidence.

- The following resource centre data has been made available up to the end of April:

	PUBLISHED RESOURCES	UNPUBLISHED RESOURCES
FPh	35	56
KS2	75	73
KS3	52	14
KS4	75	41
KS5	5	2

- Number of page views since launch - 20,000
- Number of resources downloaded since launch - 3,400
- Most visited page - KS2 School to School resource

R3: Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals

Advice and guidance provided to schools to support their use of additional funding to support pupils whose skills have been affected by the pandemic

The consortia additional PDG funding has funds on support for schools/settings in three categories:

- Teaching and whole-school strategies
- Targeted support to accelerate learning and supporting key groups of learners
- Wider strategies (including supporting parents and carers)

The above model focused on both universal and targeted approaches (using the FMS/LAC data as source for targeting schools/settings).

- Production of literacy resource materials and translation of High Frequency Word strategy/Rapid Reading strategy for all learners.
- Numeracy Catch Up - Transfer of key stage 2 SAFMEDS cards onto CRAM app for accessibility for all learners across the region / transfer of key stage 3 Mathematics materials into SAFMEDS cards and CRAM app.
- Universal I Literacy Catch Up Programme - see targeted support
- Universal Health and Wellbeing resources and programmes
- RADY Pilot - We targeted schools in areas with high numbers of FSM/Vulnerable Learners.
- All schools/settings have access to Thinking Differently about disadvantaged learners as part of the professional learning offer

Wider Strategies

- SEAL** - In regards to universal Health and Wellbeing we purchased the SEAL license for all settings and LA's across the region. Most schools have accessed this.
- Trauma / ACE Informed Schools** – over 1500 attended the session and we currently have our Cohort 5 10-day

Diploma. We also have 1 school with the highest number of FMS working towards the TIS benchmark /award.

3. **Talk boost** – we have up skilled both SIA's and LA staff in regards to Early Years Interventions for the development of Speech and Language via the TA's.
 4. **ELSA** – we have also increased the ELSA training from our regional ALN/Inclusion group to target settings who have had no staff trained / or increase capacity, this will cover the training, resources in both languages and ongoing supervision by the Education Psychology Team in each of the LA. All schools and settings via the LA have accessed the offer.
- In many schools the RRRS grant has been allocated to support pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Additional staffing achieved through the RRRS grant have been given the opportunity for smaller groups or further targeted interventions across all Key Stages. Schools have appointed additional Teaching Assistants to work with learners on their literacy and numeracy and to support the vulnerable learners attending hubs in school. Small intervention groups are identified, and targeted support is offered through extraction groups. Literacy and Numeracy catch-up programmes delivered by trained TAs have been increased to encompass more pupils (focusing on standardised scores). Attempting to deliver this remotely has proved more difficult than whole class teaching. Learner and parental feedback strongly indicate that this additional provision is being warmly received.
 - Schools have attended a range of Professional Learning opportunities, including live remote sessions and online webinars introducing a range of strategies and resources. A cohesive support package has been in place for schools to help them improve the quality of teaching and maximise learner outcomes, especially of vulnerable learners. These resources focus on improving the following aspects:
 - ✓ Basic reading and reading fluency
 - ✓ Reading comprehension and vocabulary skills
 - ✓ Basic numeracy and numeracy fluency skills
 - ✓ Improving pupils and learning and revision strategies
 - ✓ Some of the strategies and support materials were designed to be used in school and by parents at home to support their child's learning
 - This has ensured well informed School Leadership Teams knowing how best to support Teaching and Learning in supporting literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils. It has also ensured that Teaching/support staff have been upskilled in the identification of literacy and numeracy needs of every learner and/whilst promoting independent learning. These resources can be found on the regional support centre - [GwE Support Centre](#)
 - GwE have supported schools that have completed national tests during the autumn term to analyse the data and plan evidence based practice.
 - Secondary Alliances and Primary Clusters have shared effective practice on developing pupils' interaction and social skills during live-streamed lessons e.g. interactive digital tools, effective use of breakout rooms, whole school campaign 'switch your camera on'.

Specific schools or cohorts of pupils disproportionately affected

We have worked closely with each LA to ensure all Looked After Children (LAC) have access to digital resources with evidence of ongoing dialogue with WG and its impact. The LAC PDG individual bursary was made available to support any identified gaps / additional support required. In addition, many non-teaching staff (such as Social Workers/ ESW'S) attended some of the professional learning offer in regards to trauma informed practise. The cluster LAC PDG model was flexible in regards to how schools/cluster used the grant and some of the funds has been used to increase 1:1 and Play Therapy sessions/ELSA/Friends. We also adapted our professional learning offer to Designated Teachers

to support the remote learning and transition back to school.

- Schools have adapted their provision and school timetable based on pupils and parents questionnaires. Further sessions have been arranged for pastoral tutors to meet with pupils in small groups to offer social interaction between peers and to discuss what has worked well and the barriers to online learning.
- In Secondary schools the use of data tracking and intervention has improved using the new 4Matrix data packs and data walls. Regular conversations about learners and their progress are taking place and allowing targeted intervention work.
- Where family / learner engagement has been low, learners from English speaking families who attend Welsh medium schools have made limited progress or have shown some regression. GwE have worked closely with LA colleagues to produce resources, provide support and to plan for recovery. This includes the appointment of a new 'Y Gymraeg' lead within GwE to ensure robust planning for recovery support and to strengthen collaboration between GwE officers and LA in supporting schools.
- Ensuring the needs of MAT pupils has stayed on school's agenda by contributing to cross-consortia info-posters with tips to help leaders, parents, practitioners and pupils themselves with blended learning. Small groups are targeted for after-school intervention to reach A*-A grades. This work has been done in conjunction with training from GwE. The introduction of Additional Maths for the most able has encouraged the development of the higher-level skills required for A*-A.
- Schemes of work in KS3 are under review to ensure engagement and challenge of all ability groups, adopting the new teaching and learning strategies highlighted in the GwE training.
- GwE have supported schools that have completed national tests during the autumn term to analyse the data and plan evidence-based practice.
- Strong structures in place to monitor pupil engagement during online learning – attendance, interaction and completing work. Schools are contacting families when there are concerns and supporting learners that have personal and social anxiety.

Specific skill areas affected

Through co-evaluation with schools, the impact on learner skills is seen to be variable across the region. Where learner engagement has been low, basic skills have been impacted upon as well as learner social skills and readiness for learning. The RRRS support for schools has been put in place to support schools in Literacy and Numeracy. The RILL (Remote Instruction of Language and Literacy) project has been established to support schools in re-igniting learning and developing basic skills, especially vulnerable learners. The project is fully bilingual and has been piloted with 15 primary schools across the region. There will be a regional roll out from this term with all primary schools, inviting engagement with their vulnerable learners. Two research officers will enable us to train all interested schools across the region and give them access to the programme, offer ongoing support and drop-in implementation sessions, provide additional support to target pupils/families over the summer holiday and to monitor and evaluate the impact of the programme.

Further support for schools in the core subjects include:

Mathematics

- Developed accelerating learning resources, guidance and support – focusing on evidence based strategies for improving fluency and recall in basic numeracy skills, and ensuring resources are accessible to all and suitable for a blended learning scenario.

- ✓ shared overview in Heads of Maths and Numeracy Coordinators meetings.
 - ✓ offered professional learning opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants in the form of online webinars.
 - ✓ bespoke 'One to one' school support to address specific needs.
- Half termly Heads of Maths meetings, where time has been used to share GwE's Blended and Distance learning guidance, including exemplar subject specific models of effective and strategic planning for a blended learning scenario, share best practice in the region and facilitate discussions on effective, practical strategies for T&L.
 - Additional professional learning opportunities has been organised for Mathematics teachers:
 - ✓ 'Teaching Mathematics to mixed ability classes' online workshop: focusing on sharing good practice, research findings, practical resources and strategies that focuses on differentiating and ensuring an appropriate level of challenge for all.
 - ✓ 'Distance learning in Mathematics' online workshop: delivered by a leading practitioner in the region, focusing on effective use of online platforms for asynchronous & synchronous teaching, sharing and modelling practical strategies for engaging all learners, and using assessment for learning to steer planning in the right direction.
 - Programme of support put in place to support newly qualified teachers during the pandemic.
 - Network meeting specifically for early career Mathematics teachers: focusing on sharing practical resources, guidance and additional CPD opportunities. Facilitated discussions on sharing good practice and planning for the future.

English

- Delivered subject specific training focussing on delivering elements of the English curriculum remotely – oracy and writing.
- Effective retrieval practice identified as an essential aspect in remote teaching in order to assess prior learning and make connections. Training session open to English teachers across the region and a forum to share best practice established.
- Bespoke support provided to schools in delivering key elements of the GCSE English/ Literature course remotely. This work has focussed on supporting the development of learning plans and teaching resources.
- Best practice case studies identified in English and shared regionally.
- Programme of support put in place to support newly qualified teachers during the pandemic. Seven week programme/ practical sessions focussing on effective teaching and learning particularly in remote settings.
- Literacy Intervention Programme developed based on the needs and feedback from secondary schools. Two tiered, comprehensive package of resources to support teachers and teaching assistants in developing the literacy skills of identified learners. Programme is used widely across the region /package of professional learning to support teaching assistants.
- Bespoke training provided to schools with high numbers of vulnerable learners focussing on accelerating literacy skills.
- Development of the Herio website and KS4 instructional videos to support learners. These can be accessed through an app or through the website
- Bespoke reading pilot introduced to 10 secondary schools across the region. Schools with our highest numbers of LAC/ FSM learners have been targeted. 'Building Reading Power' is a pilot which aims to improve the reading skills of struggling readers who also lack motivation and interest. Schools involved have been provided with the practical resources they need as well as a programme of professional learning which focuses on effective teaching of reading; building fluency; improving engagement and strengthening reading habits at home. As

well as upskilling classroom teachers, we are also working with TAs and Learning Coaches. Bangor University are working with GwE on this project to monitor and evaluate the impact of this pilot. If successful, this will be shared regionally.

Science

- Development of the blended learning guidance and modelled examples, which has been shared with all Heads of Science through network meetings and with individual departments.
- Development of GCSE booklets to support learners who cannot access digitally – shared with all departments.
- Modelling of online quizzes and knowledge organisers to assess pupil progress – with key departments.
- Co-construction of schemes of learning for online delivery.
- Further development of the www.tanio.cymru website and creation of resources that have been used by both teachers and pupils from across the region.
- Programme of support put in place to support newly qualified teachers during the pandemic
- Co-construction of resources and training plan with the literacy lead to develop reading and oracy in Science. These have been used in key schools to support development of skills.
- Differentiated work booklets for GCSE pupils, identifying the key knowledge, terminology etc. have been produced and shared.
- Development of accessible assessment material (reduced reading age and complexity) /exam questions to support learners with less developed skills – both numeracy & literacy.
- Development of supporting materials and modelled examples to develop numeracy Skills in Science have been shared with key departments and training has been provided to support teachers to differentiate and deliver the numeracy.

Welsh

- Specific workshops were held for Heads of Welsh departments in the region on the blended teaching and learning of language
- Workshop entitled ‘Datblygu iaith a’r meddwl creadigol trwy ddysgu ac addysgu’n gyfunol’ held as part of the GwE professional learning offer.
- A series of ‘Be’ sy’n bosib?’ (GwE) workshops were held to promote the use of Google for Education digital tools and others (on Hwb digital platform). These open workshops proved to be very popular with primary and secondary teachers alike across the region.
- Specific support provided for Welsh departments to develop their resources and their interactive use of their digital platforms so as to enable them to target specific cohorts of pupils quickly.
- Members of Welsh departments were encouraged to joint national KS3, KS4 and KS5 working groups to develop innovative teaching and learning resources to share nationally via the Hwb platform.
- ‘Dysgu Carlam – Y Gymraeg’ resources were created specifically in order to support whole school literacy interventions.
- ‘Y Gymraeg ar Garlam’ scheme was established so that literacy co-ordinators and Heads of Welsh departments in the region can share resources to support interventions that target the cross-curricular literacy skills.

In response to the need to support and develop learners’ oracy skills a successful bid was made to Welsh Government to develop the ‘Ein Llais Ni’ oracy scheme (based on the ‘Dy Lais Di’ scheme which was piloted locally), and this scheme will be disseminated and embedded across the region.

How we are addressing this issue in our longer-term plans and policies

In regards to Health and Wellbeing the key areas of evidence from schools/settings are:

- Re Connecting friendship groups and relationships.
- Structure and Routine
- Targeting Physical Health – some learners have done no physical activity
- Increase in learners who are anxious
- Sleep patterns and attendance
- Speech and Language in the early years
- Digital gap in regards to tackling pupil/family poverty
- Further engagement with parents / carers
- Developing independent learners.
- Further requests for school counselling and some schools stating the need to additional school-based counsellors and CAMHS.

There is a need to build the above in to the school curriculum and planning.

The 2021-2022 Business Plans show that this aspect is an important part of our strategic objectives and regional priorities (see Section 8)

R4: Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils

- GwE are ensuring that the Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental well-being is central to our work with schools. A recent meeting of the regional key partners agreed on the Governance and accountability for the framework moving forward.
- GwE have also been working closely with Wellbeing Leads/Healthy School across the region to ensure we are consistent in our approach in supporting schools. We are currently mapping the GwE/LA universal Health and Wellbeing across the region and this should be available before half term.
- A week of PDG workshops: Impact and Evidence based Practice - took place between March 22 and 26 and was well attended by school practitioners and educational partners. This learning and sharing week, was a week-long celebration and sharing of work from across Wales regarding provision and progress of disadvantaged learners through targeted PDG expenditure. It was designed to highlight the importance of aligning PDG to research-based interventions and development in Teaching and Learning practices to assist the disadvantaged learner and engage in face-to-face learning. During the week, consortia, schools and settings and professional partners put on a range of professional learning workshops, discussions and talks. This is available on the HWB platform with 18 hours of professional learning for schools/settings:

https://www.gwegogledd.cymru/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Rhaglen-GDD-_-PDG-Focus-Week-Programme.pdf

- The Directors of Education across the region have identified parental engagement as a regional priority. A regional group with representation from each authority has been set up to look at a strategy to help parents / carers support their child's learning. We have worked closely with Mike Gershon, author of more than 40 books

on teaching, learning and education, including numerous bestsellers in rolling out bilingual online teaching resources in supporting the role of parents / carers in helping their children to learn. The resources and website that Mike Gershon has developed is a strong starting point for supporting parents and we have been working with Mike to ensure that the website is bilingual and free to every parent in North Wales.

- GwE have also worked with an external partner (an expert in well-being, change and resilience) in running a series of wellbeing workshops 'Looking after myself' aimed at school and LA staff. The sessions explore the meaning of well-being and how we can create a balanced perspective about work and life. These workshops have been used in group situations or by individuals. As well as providing information and tips on wellbeing and resilience, they have been designed to give the workforce time and space to consider how well prepared they are to face the challenges of a rapidly changing external environment.

The four workshops focus on a different aspect of wellbeing:

Session 1: Understanding my Resilience and Reaction to Change - <https://youtu.be/tDkLAaEoFjs>

Session 2: The Keys to Resilience-Developing Vision and Purpose - https://youtu.be/nuRVRI_M7c8

Session 3: The Keys to Resilience-Developing Emotional Intelligence - https://youtu.be/vudqzc_jnMw

Session 4: Healthy Living - <https://youtu.be/37z5H73oelg>

Each workshop lasts between 45-60 minutes including time build in for personal / group reflection and they can be used as a series of workshops or you can use them discretely as single sessions.

- Several school leaders have been offered a 'reflective space' to engage with an external coach to discuss any aspect of their own wellbeing. A number of Head teachers from across the region have taken up this offer and have provided positive feedback regarding the process.

Impact of the pandemic on pupils' mental health

Schools and settings have used a range of wellbeing measures / surveys to gather evidence on the mental health of learners. LA's & Schools have used and accessed the Children's Commissioner Office Me and Coronavirus Survey in order to further target key areas within their curriculum. For example, some schools have used the Edinburgh Warwick mental Health scale. Other schools have implemented the Trauma Informed Schools I wish my Teacher Knew survey to get learners to reflect and move forward.

Some schools have used the 'Drawing and Talking' intervention with LAC as a meta emotion philosophy in regards to reflecting on feelings and developing emotional literacy. Another procured the service of a Drama Consultant to work with all learners from year 7-9 to discuss the impact of school lockdown on mental health via an art-based workshop.

GwE have also worked with the Mental Health UK Charity to support the implementation of the BLOOM mental Health school programme across the region. The curriculum resource is available in both Welsh/English - targeting learners at KS 4 and Post 16. More than half of the secondary schools attended the sessions with bespoke session in

Welsh. One school implemented the programme with the sixth form with focus on:

- Building Resilience
- Exam Stress and managing pressure
- Social pressures
- Friendships

Support provided to schools so far to help them address pupils' needs

GwE have supported individual pastoral staff in both primary and secondary schools, focus has been on up skilling staff in universal approaches to supporting health and wellbeing and mental health of learners. Examples include the increase in the number of school who have accessed the professional learning offer in Trauma Informed Schools/ Relational Play and also managing anxiety in children. We have also adapted our professional learning offer for Designated Person to include a section on effective strategies.

Schools have also accessed the SEAL resources in addition to our resources in the support centre.

The national PDG focus week was also about supporting vulnerable learners and strategies for schools to use.

GwE have also targeted 50 schools across the region to participate in the Adoption Cymru/WG pilot in regards to professional learning offer and membership for schools.

R5: Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design

During the COVID period GwE has continually reflected on the effectiveness of the work. Both internal and external resources have been used to ensure that we have a balanced perspective on the quality of the work. This has included working with the Education Development Trust and Steve Munby to develop the organisation and plan our future infrastructure. GwE have also worked on a weekly basis from the beginning of spring 2021 with Professor Graham Donaldson to develop its own staff to effectively support schools with the new curriculum.

Reports to GwE Joint Committee have included:

- Transition back into school
- Wellbeing
- Blended learning Resources
- Re-starting learning model for North Wales
- GwE work programme and Regional Priorities
- Qualifications
- Annual Report 2019-20
- Professional Learning - GwE offer to schools Summer Term 2020
- Accelerated Learning Programme
- ALN Transformation
- Schools in category
- Budget monitoring
- Annual Budget

- Supporting Schools
- Reform Journey & Professional Learning
- Distance / Remote Learning and parent / carer engagement
- Developing Accelerated Learning programmes for the Welsh language
- Estyn Thematic Review
- Governance Arrangements: Internal Audit
- Internal Audit Reports
- Risk Register

The current work programme for SIAs with every school involves working in partnership self-evaluating the school's provision during the past year. This includes evaluating the impact GwE's support during the period and also future support needs for schools and clusters. The regional priorities and areas for improvement are based firmly on the findings of our internal self-evaluation processes, external reviews on our current practice and direction of travel, and through consultation with headteachers and the Local Authorities (see Section 8 on 2021-22 Business Plan Priorities).

The lessons learnt from the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and to support schools with the new curriculum is addressed in Section 6 below.

6. SUPPORT DURING THE PANDEMIC THAT HAS PROVIDED GROWTH POINTS IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEW CURRICULUM

The response to COVID-19 has of course had a significant impact on schools and is likely to have disrupted some of their plans for preparation and implementing the new curriculum. However, the education reform programme in Wales, built around the new Curriculum for Wales (CfW), provides a positive way forward as we emerge from the restrictions of the last year. It has at its heart a number of guiding ideas:

- That the curriculum and associated teaching, learning and assessment should flow from four clear purposes agreed nationally and pursued locally.
- That those purposes should encompass helping all of our young people to become: **ambitious and capable learners; enterprising and creative contributors; ethical and informed citizens; and healthy and confident individuals.**
- That young people's learning should build progressively towards those four purposes across their time in school education.
- That teachers and schools should have greater freedom to realise those purposes in ways that can meet the needs and characteristics of the young people and the communities that they serve.

These basic ideas give rise to a number of important implications:

- That the national curriculum framework should establish necessary national consistency of purpose and approach but leave wide scope for local decision making about key aspects of learning and teaching.
- That curriculum making is a process that should involve collaboration amongst teachers, schools and wider interests.
- That accountability should not inhibit the quality or narrow the scope of learning. Wherever possible it should pursue quality enhancement rather than narrow quality assurance.
- The success of the reform programme should be judged against the extent to which it leads to better and more relevant learning for young people and to higher standards of achievement. Both the quality of the learning and the nature of standards should relate to the extent to which the agreed purposes are being realised in practice for all young people.

The impact of the pandemic has naturally influenced how schools and settings can move forward with the reform. They need to re-establish the relevance of its four guiding purposes for Wales's young people. In many ways the pandemic has made those four purposes more relevant than ever as schools seek to build the confidence of their young people and rekindle their desire to learn. Schools have had to think deeply about what matters in learning during periods of interrupted schooling and the four purposes of the new Curriculum for Wales stand up well to that examination. The pandemic has also required changes to the nature of the teaching and learning process, not least in the ways in which digital technologies can enhance possibilities for more independent learning.

How schools and settings will continue to be supported on their journey to implementing the new curriculum from September 2022

Our regional priorities for 2021-22 are a combination of improving school provision, leadership and outcomes, as well as delivering the reform journey and the new curriculum. Our approach to the reform journey has been integrated in all aspects of our work from the beginning. Not one element of the reform journey can stand alone. It is viewed from the need of learners and the baseline of individual schools and clusters to deliver change according to agreed expectations.

The four purposes outlined in the 'Curriculum for Wales' guidance should be the starting point and aspiration for schools as they prepare to design the new curriculum and support their learners to become:

- Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
- Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and
- Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

The regional priorities are aimed to support schools and settings as they work towards those four purposes. All regional work aligns with the document 'Journey to 2022' which was published in October 2020 and co-created by Estyn, the 4 regions and Welsh Government (see Appendix 3). This document identifies a series of phases that schools will undergo as part of their preparations for the new Curriculum for Wales and these include engagement, design, trialling and planning and finally evaluating and preparing for first teaching.

As part of the support to schools for the new Curriculum for Wales, GwE has worked with the other regional consortia to develop a national professional learning offer that integrates all aspects of the wider reform including Schools as Learning Organisations, Y Gymraeg (towards a million Welsh speakers by 2050) and the Additional Learning Needs Transformational Bill. This cross regional offer is aimed at supporting all school practitioners, and focuses initially on Senior Leaders with the following themes:

- Leading Change
- Leadership for the new curriculum
- Developing a Shared Vision
- Planning for Curriculum Change – to include curriculum design, progression and assessment
- Leading Pedagogy
- Time and Space for Professional Learning

This professional learning offer was originally scheduled to begin in spring term 2020, however was naturally paused due to the priorities of the Covid-19 pandemic. In discussions with Head teachers across GwE, the professional learning resumed virtually in January 2021 with the Leading Change session. The planned sequence of professional learning available to schools is outlined in Appendix 4. These sessions across the region are cluster-based and enable smaller groups of primary schools and their local secondary school to discuss the new Curriculum for Wales across the 3-16 learning continuum. Across the region, 832 Senior Leaders attended these Leading Change sessions. In recognition of the re-opening of schools to all learners in March and April, the Professional Learning sessions were again paused in March 2021.

Following discussions with the Directors of Education through the GwE Management Board, a series of consultative workshops were held in April 2021 in each Local Authority to listen to feedback from Head teachers on the professional learning offer and how best to re-engage. Over 300 Head teachers attended the consultations.

Feedback indicated:

- Head teachers of both primary and secondary sectors recognise the importance of continuing to collaborate across the sectors to support the 3-16 continuum;
- All leaders recognise the importance of maintaining the momentum of the professional learning but acknowledge the challenge of timing given current pressures and challenges;
- Leaders are keen to work with GwE and to draw on the input of external experts where appropriate;
- Leaders recognise that flexibility in engaging with the professional learning offer is key to ensuring effective engagement.

To support re-engaging with the Curriculum for Wales work, a further leadership planning session has been planned for each individual cluster across the region to build capacity of clusters to collaborate across the requirements of the reform journey as a whole and form an agreed action plan for each cluster. As part of this, all Supporting Improvement Advisers have facilitated sessions where schools within a cluster have the opportunity to work collaboratively to strategically plan for the implementation of the curriculum. Adopting a flexible and sensitive approach to the timings of these sessions has been a key aspect of the discussions between GwE, the local authority and schools. Activities to support preparations for the new curriculum at school and cluster level have been identified within School Development Plans.

Examples of planned activities in schools include:

- identifying further opportunities for senior leaders to work on developing shared vision;
- collaborating across schools to develop common approaches to teaching and learning and share common language;
- identifying opportunities for teachers to collaborate to unpack and sense-make together within a specific *Area of Learning and Experience*.

The use of technology to collaboratively develop cluster plans and websites ensure that the dialogue is ongoing and Senior Leaders are able to continue this work, following discussions back at individual school level.

In addition to the Professional Learning offer, additional support from GwE is available to schools as they prepare for *Curriculum for Wales*. This support will be accessed at both cluster and individual school level, including tailored bespoke support where needed.

Further support available to schools also includes a series of 'Think-Pieces' which have been written by the GwE team as part of the weekly reform sessions with Professor Graham Donaldson. These papers, which cover key aspects of the curriculum reform journey including leadership, vision, pedagogy, assessment and curriculum design, have been shared and refined through consultation with wider partners in Local Authorities, Estyn and Bangor University. All senior leaders have been invited to attend a webinar in May 2021 to explain and share this work on the Think Pieces. These are included in *Appendix 5*.

A key aspect in moving forward will be supporting schools to develop networks across all six *Areas of Learning and Experience* (AoLE). As part of business plan priorities, GwE will invite and facilitate opportunities for school practitioners to engage with peers to consider planning and curriculum design within and across AOLEs to meet the needs of all learners to realise the four purposes of the new curriculum.

Working in collaboration with partners in Higher Education Institutes is a further priority for the region as GwE supports schools to develop the role of enquiry within the new *Curriculum for Wales*. This work is an important aspect of the wider work on developing effective teaching and learning, which in turn builds on the work of developing assessment for learning. For this purpose, GwE have worked with schools across the region over the last three years to develop and share effective practice in formative assessment using evidence based learning. There are 360 schools across the region participating in this work.

In supporting schools in their readiness for implementing the curriculum in September 2022, GwE are working with schools and wider partners to develop a wide range of qualitative indicators which will allow schools to reflect on how they are implementing the four purposes of the new curriculum. Furthermore, schools have access to a series of milestones within the regional information management system that allows them to reflect on their progress. Prior to the initial lockdown period in March 2020, over 90% of schools indicated that they were either partly on track or better in their knowledge and understanding of the new curriculum framework. Nearly all schools indicated that they were partly on track or better with their engagement and participation in cluster work for preparing for the new curriculum.

7. RISK REGISTER

Staff Development

The consistency and quality of challenge and support to schools is good. Regular training, support and discussions ensure that Supporting Improvement Advisers' knowledge and understanding of national and local developments, and the implications of this on their roles, is good.

Quality Assurance processes continue to develop and evolve in line with national developments and principles. Messages and information are communicated clearly and on a regular basis to all employees. Generic, purposeful and effective support programmes are offered. Full and sector team meetings offer regular opportunities for collaboration, consultation and contributing to discussions and decisions regarding GwE's direction of work during a period of considerable change.

Performance Management and Accountability

The clear and robust accountability framework is a key strength in GwE. Detailed business plans on all levels of planning address all aspects of the work of GwE, and clearly note the contribution of the service to the transformation agenda. Plans are fully costed, with clear success criteria and milestones for delivering objectives.

There are detailed self-evaluation arrangements. Plans are reviewed on a quarterly basis, evaluating progress and impact. Staff on all levels fully understand their responsibility for continued improvement and accountability.

Each Local Authority has a detailed business plan agreed upon by the head of service and the core adviser. Progress towards agreed outcomes on a local authority level is monitored on a quarterly basis and discussed regularly in meetings between the lead adviser and Local Authority. Ongoing issues are referred to GwE Senior leaders in a timely manner.

Self-evaluation is a strong feature in GwE and the self-evaluation process is cyclical and ongoing. Great emphasis is placed on accountability and continuous review, and there is consistent emphasis on progress in line with priorities. Consequently, GwE leaders accurately identify areas of good performance and areas for development, or areas where there is an element of risk in terms of improving experiences and educational outcomes for learners.

Value for Money

The consortium has effective financial management processes in place. Communication and consultation on financial arrangements is effective, and GwE staff, the host local authority and Joint Committee all review the core funding and grant expenditure on a regular basis.

A robust financial analysis supports the work of delivering the business plan. A medium term financial plan and workforce plan are both aligned with the business plan. Through increasingly effective use of data to identify key priorities, the link between the business planning process and decisions regarding financial planning is strengthened as the work streams that underpin the business plan clearly note the resources to be used.

A formal framework was produced to assess the wider value for money provided by GwE. The judgement is now consistent across all stakeholders on how to measure the value for money of GwE activities within the structure and objectives of the business plan.

Risk Register

There are rigorous and comprehensive arrangements in place to accurately identify and manage risks on a local, regional and national level. The risk register is a live document, which is updated on a regular basis in order to identify increasing risks or risks which are no longer deemed as high level. It is reviewed every month in a senior leadership meeting and the Management Board and the Joint Committee review the register on a quarterly basis.

Through effective management of risks to the region, GwE is able to support the region's objectives, make effective use of resources and meet the outcomes as intended.

8. BUSINESS PLAN PRIORITIES 2021-2022

The regional priorities and areas for improvement are based firmly on the findings of our internal self-evaluation processes, external reviews on our current practice and direction of travel, and through consultation with headteachers and the Local Authorities. The Business Plan also addresses Welsh Government and the Local Authorities strategic priorities that fall within the remit of the work of GwE.

Additionally, GwE will work in partnership with Local Authorities to support additional local priorities, as appropriate. It also takes into consideration the views and priorities of other middle tier partners such as Estyn, Qualifications Wales, WJEC, National Academy for Educational Leadership (NAEL), Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Education Workforce Council (EWC).

Our priorities are a combination of improving school provision, leadership and outcomes, as well as delivering the reform journey. Our approach to the reform journey has been integrated in all aspects of our work from the beginning. Not one element of the reform journey can stand alone. It is viewed from the need of learners and the baseline of individual schools and clusters to deliver change according to agreed expectations.

GwE has encouraged schools to collaborate through sharing practice and co-constructing areas that need improving and the challenges of the reform journey. We have invested in various cluster models and encouraged schools to find a range of appropriate partners to deliver improvement and changes. The region has also looked outward for good practice in terms of identifying effective peer review models as well as encouraging our schools to develop and evolve their own practice. GwE believe that peer engagement should closely complement the dimensions identified within the OECD publication *'What Makes a School a Learning Organisation'*.

Our focus is on support and on capacity-building for a self-improving system. Challenge Advisers have become 'Supporting Improvement Advisers' and this is more than a name change – it signals a determination to build trust with key stakeholders and to move away from a top-down approach to school improvement, developing a more long-term, supportive and sustainable strategy.

In partnership with stakeholders, GwE has developed a long-term supportive and sustainable strategy which is successfully building capacity across the region to meet the challenges of the wider reform. The integrated approach has focused on developing collaborative opportunities across clusters of schools. To further support schools, GwE has developed the concept of creating termly milestones through the information management system G6. These offer all schools an opportunity to reflect and through continuous professional dialogue with SIAs, activity and its impact along with identification of next steps are shared.

Professional learning will be central to ensuring that all school staff have the professional knowledge and skills to deliver on the education reforms that are well underway in Wales. Taking into consideration the system expectations and working in collaboration with partners, a clear framework for themes for professional learning has been identified for practitioners within schools.

Our **strategic priorities** for improvement for 2021-2022 are:

Our strategic objectives	
1.	Curriculum & Assessment - Supporting a national curriculum with equity & excellence at its core that sets high standards for all learners
2.	Developing a high-quality education profession - improving the teaching & learning in our schools
3.	Leadership - supporting inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards. Includes future leadership & professional networks
4.	Strong & inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity & well-being

Our strategic objectives	
5.	Supporting a self improving system - supporting a system in which the education profession have the skills, capacity & agency to continually learn & improve their practice
6.	Business - ensure that GwE has strong governance and effective business and operational support that provides value for money.

The four purposes as outlined in the *Curriculum for Wales* guidance should be the starting point and aspiration for schools as they prepare to design the new curriculum and support their learners to become:

- Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives;
- Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work;
- Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; and
- Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

Our **regional priorities for 2021-22** are outlined below are aimed to support schools as they work towards those four purposes.

These priorities are supported by the service's detailed plans, outlining how and when the aspects of each priority will be delivered and setting expectations for the next steps in delivering the reform journey. Also, each Local Authority has a detailed business plan agreed upon by the head of service and the core adviser.

1. Curriculum & Assessment - Supporting a national curriculum with equity & excellence at its core that sets high standards for all learners

1.1 - Reform Journey

- Provide professional learning and bespoke support and guidance to schools and settings to help them realise the Reform Journey and prepare for the new curriculum.
- Develop a regional qualitative framework for holistically capturing and evaluating progress in a school.

2. Developing a high-quality education profession - improving the teaching & learning in our schools

2.1 - Remote learning and Learning Design

- Support schools and settings to ensure that their remote learning provision is designed to provide a high quality learning experience for their pupils.
- Continue to share regionally developed exemplars – modelled approaches for teaching and learning as part of remote learning.
- Support schools and settings to evaluate current practice for remote and blended learning, identifying strengths and areas for development.
- Support schools and settings to evaluate pupil's progress and to identify the next steps for their development.

2.2 - Y Gymraeg

- Provide support for schools and settings who teach through the medium of Welsh as their first language to improve the Welsh First Language skills of their learners, and especially those from non-Welsh speaking homes.

3. Leadership - supporting inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards. Includes future leadership & professional networks

3.1 - Leadership

- Ensure that all learning organisations have the leadership capacity at all levels to inspire, coach, support, share practice and collaborate at all levels to ensure all learners' achieve their potential.
- Ensure that the principles of distributive leaderships are embedded in all learning organisations across the region.

3. Leadership - supporting inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards. Includes future leadership & professional networks
3.2 - Supporting the qualifications process ➤ Support schools and settings to implement the recommendations of the Design and Delivery Board for the awarding of qualifications in 2021 and 2022.
4. Strong & inclusive schools - committed to excellence, equity & well-being
4.1 - Wellbeing and Learning ➤ Continue to work closely in partnership with Local Authorities to provide wellbeing support for practitioners and learners in schools and settings. ➤ Continue to provide support to school leaders on the identification, engagement and support for specific groups of disadvantaged and vulnerable learners including those who have been disproportionality affected by school closures.
4.2 - Parental support strategy ➤ Develop a parental support strategy to help parents and carers on how to best support their child's learning.
5. Supporting a self improving system - supporting a system in which the education profession have the skills, capacity & agency to continually learn & improve their practice
5.1 - Incentivising collaboration to self-improve ➤ Further strengthen the culture, behaviour, systems and processes so that leaders and teachers are incentivised to adopt a collegiate approach to school improvement. ➤ Continue to work closely with schools and settings in order to continue to deepen the peer work already established, and to identify the aspects that schools could offer to other schools to develop specific aspects of Professional Learning. ➤ Provide professional learning to further develop peer review.
5.2 - Schools Causing Concern ➤ Intensively support secondary schools in statutory category, and those causing concern, to improve performance. ➤ Provide bespoke support to schools and settings in line with agreed school improvement priorities that reflect the current situation and positions of schools and settings.
5.3 - Schools developing and sharing successful practice ➤ Provide access to a range of regional and national professional learning, including access to coaching and mentoring, for all educational practitioners in schools and settings that is appropriate to their role and responsibility in line with professional standards. ➤ Continue to work with clusters/alliances in the region to collect, collate and make available blended learning resources as part of an online resource library. ➤ Continue to facilitate cluster/alliance working and peer to peer support to ensure the continuity of learning and sharing of effective practice and lessons learned from a range of schools and settings for remote and blended learning.
6. Business
6.1 - Ensure that GwE has strong governance and effective business and operational support that provides value for money.



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REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

14 JULY 2021

Report by: Alwyn Jones, GwE Assistant Director

Subject: Parent/Carer Support Strategy

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To update Joint Committee members regarding our strategy and the support available to help parents and carers on how best to support their children's learning.

2.0 Background

2.1 Many schools acknowledge that the engagement of parents/carers has been crucial in ensuring effective remote/blended learning. The Directors of Education and the Joint Committee have identified this as being a regional priority.

2.2 In response, GwE and the Local Authorities have provided a range of guidance documents to support parent/carers engagement, including developing resources and good practice.

2.3 In addition, a regional group has been established with representation from every authority to focus on a strategy to help parents/carers to support their children's learning. This group will oversee the regional strategy that needs to be developed to improve parent/carers engagement so that they can effectively support their children's learning throughout and beyond the COVID period.

3.0 Considerations

3.1 The regional group will set a strategic direction to the work of supporting parents/carers in GwE's region with their children's learning, overseeing the following aspects:

- Develop a comprehensive pack to support and help parents/carers to transform their understanding of learning and support for their child.
-

- Develop a comprehensive course for parents and carers that provides them with the resources, information and confidence to be able to help their children with their learning at home.
 - Provide written guidance including strategies and techniques that parents/carers can use to support their child's learning.
 - Provide practical strategies, activities and techniques that parents/carers can use to help support their children's learning.
 - Develop and adapt resources accordingly to meet the needs of specific groups of parents and carers.
 - Review the provision in place across the region in order to ensure that current resources fully support and meet local and regional needs.
 - Ensure appropriate cohesiveness and capacity to provide high quality regional resources in this area.
 - Ensure that expertise and good practice are disseminated across the region.
- 3.2 The region has been working closely with Mike Gershon, a best-selling author of over forty books on teaching, learning and education, on a project titled 'Help Your Child to Learn', i.e. a series of bilingual on-line teaching resources to support the role of parents/carers in helping their children to learn.
- 3.3 The resources and [website](#) developed by Mike Gershon provide a solid starting block for supporting parents, and we have been working with Mike to ensure that the website is bilingual, free and available to all parents in North Wales.
- 3.4 Mike Gershon has attended meetings of the primary heads' forums and GwE's Team of SIAs is currently sharing the information with clusters. Please find below a link to a bilingual presentation that will be shared at the cluster meetings - [Mike Gershon presentation](#).
- 3.5 As the next developmental step, Mike Gershon will be attending meetings of secondary head teachers' strategic forums to discuss their needs before presenting a further proposal to the regional group.
- 4.0 Recommendations**
- 4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to note and accept the report and to support our strategy and the support for schools in relation to parent/carers engagement in north Wales.
- 5.0 Financial Implications**
- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. GwE will operate within current financial resources.

6.0 Equalities Impact

6.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Personnel Implications

7.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

8.0 Consultation undertaken

8.1 Consultation took place with the regional Heads' Strategic Forums, representatives from the Local Authorities, Full Team, Management Board and the Joint Committee.

OPINION OF STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Nothing to add from a propriety perspective.

Statutory Finance Officer:

Part 5 of the report explains that "there are no financial implications arising from this report" as "GwE will operate within current financial resources". As a result, I have no comments to add regarding financial propriety.



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

14 JULY 2021

Report by: Arwyn Thomas, GwE Managing Director

Subject: TEDxGwE Initiative

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To provide an overview of the TEDxGWE Initiative to Joint Committee members.

2.0 Background

2.1 As a service we linked with the UN Climate Neutral Now scheme two years ago to offset GwEs emissions for travel. We further developed this relationship by supporting the '100 school challenge'. As we move closer to the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow during November 2021, we decided to take further action by developing the TEDxGWE Initiative.

2.2 TEDx is a global initiative to champion and accelerate solutions to the climate crisis, turning ideas into action. There will be a set of community led events hosted around the world; we have registered and have the licence for TEDxGWE.

2.3 The proposal is to hold a TEDxGwE event on 5th November 2021 for children and young people across north Wales. GwE will be the lead but we are currently developing a north Wales partnership and links with, Natural Resources Wales,

Wrexham Glyndwr University, Theatre Clwyd, Do Well Ltd, Tales to Inspire and RENEW Wales.

3.0 Considerations

3.1 In north Wales we want to use TEDxGWE as a catalyst to open up a conversation with leaders in public, private and third sectors, communities and our children and young people about the collective challenge we all face and turn the ideas from the children and young people in north Wales into action. Our mission is to unite our region to tackle climate change as we see this as a perfect vehicle to develop the Ethically Informed aspect of Curriculum for Wales.

3.2 We want to work with children and young people, using their voices to spark a region wide conversation to drive actions by bringing people together to understand the challenge and explore the most effective co created and evidence based solutions, ensuring we all rise to the challenge. The goal of global TEDx events is to answer five key interconnected questions that help inform a plan for a cleaner future:

- Energy - How rapidly can we switch to 100% clean power?
- Transport - How can we upgrade the way we move people and things?
- Materials - How can we re-imagine and re-make the stuff around us?
- Food - How can we spark a worldwide shift to healthier food systems?
- Nature - How do we better protect and re-green the earth?

3.3 Schools will be able to register for the event and submit a 60 second video using FlipGrid. The videos will be collated and shared with a wider audience. Schools will receive a resource pack to support participants in developing a TED talk so they can share their stories, issues, thoughts and actions needed to build a better future. RENEW Wales will fund the resource packs and mentors.

3.4 The timescales and key steps are as follows:

- July - Promotional videos and overview invitation to all schools.
- July – Information/Resource pack to be created by RENEW Wales in partnership with all partners. Support from community based Environmental Mentors and sign up process to be shared with Schools via GwE Bulletin and all networks and share event with wider partners.
- July / August - Summer break - Pupils will have the summer to work on projects and develop ideas.
- September - map environmental mentors to schools that are engaging with the project to support ideas development.
- October - submission of films from young people to the ‘panel’ to be agreed for live TEDx and those that will be collated for an audience with leaders.
- October – workshops and TEDx talk mini masterclasses for schools to help prepare schools and young people. This will be a mixture of in person and online support (WGU/Do Well Ltd/RENEW Wales/NRW and partners).
- 1st November - Live TEDx finals event with audience of key leaders, panel members at Theatre Clwyd.
- 5th November - stream the event for the COP 26 TEDx countdown.

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to approve the content of the report and the TEDxGWE Initiative for north Wales.

5.0 Financial implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. GwE will operate within current financial resources.

6.0 Equalities Impact

- 6.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

7.0 Personnel Implications

7.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

8.0 Consultation undertaken

8.1 Consultation took place with GwE Management Board and GwE Team.

OPINION OF STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Nothing to add from a propriety perspective.

Statutory Finance Officer:

I note that the commendable TEDxGWE initiative has been developed for children and young people across north Wales, and that GwE will lead thereon from within their current financial resources.