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**GwE JOINT COMMITTEE  
25.02.15**

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

Councillors:                Ieuan Williams, Gareth Thomas, Wyn Ellis Jones, Chris Bithell.

**Co-opted Members (non-voting):** Diane Chisholm (Primary Schools representative), Jonathan Morgan (Special Schools representative), Alison Fisher (Governors representative)

**Officers (non-voting):** John Davies (Wrexham County Borough Council), Arwyn Thomas (Gwynedd Council), Dr Gwynne Jones (Isle of Anglesey County Council), Richard E Owen (Conwy County Borough Council), Karen Evans (Denbighshire County Council), Ian Budd (Flintshire County Council)

**Also present:** Huw Foster Evans (GwE Managing Director), Susan Owen Jones (GwE Business and Finance Manager), Rhys Howard Hughes (GwE Head of Support and Brokerage), Dafydd L. Edwards (Host Authority Head of Finance – Gwynedd Council), Eiliw Alwyn (Host Authority Project Manager – Gwynedd Council), Siôn Huws (Senior Solicitor, Host Authority Legal Services - Gwynedd Council), Geraint Rees and Martyn Gray (Welsh Government representatives) and Glynda O'Brien (Host Authority Members Support Officer – Gwynedd Council).

**Apologies:** Mrs Annwen Morgan (Secondary Schools representative), Mohammed Mehmet (Denbighshire County Council) and Iwan Evans (Host Authority Legal Services Manager – Gwynedd Council)

1.        **DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST**

No declaration of personal interest was received by any Members present

2.        **MINUTES**

The Chair signed the minutes of this meeting, held on 17 December 2014, as a true record

2.1      **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

In response to a query by a member, it was ensured that a first meeting of the Advisory Board would be arranged before Easter.

**It was decided to: accept and note the above**

### 3. **ALIGNING THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR REGIONAL WORKING WITH THE WELSH GOVERNMENT NATIONAL MODEL FOR REGIONAL WORKING**

(a) A report was presented, summarising some of the principles agreed upon in accordance with the six work-streams involved in the alignment of the arrangements for regional working with the National Model. The Joint Committee's approval was sought with regard to the way forward, but it was noted that additional elements will be included in the business plan, which will be presented to the Joint Committee in due course. It was noted there are astounding changes in the pipeline with direct grants for schools along with implications for the region and for the six work-streams in particular. It was further noted that discussions are underway within sub-groups about the six areas, putting procedures in place and making them consistent in accordance with the National Model. It was acknowledged that there is much more work to accomplish during the year.

(b) The following points were highlighted during the subsequent discussion:

- a number of work areas need to be developed, ICT in particular. As a result of the Donaldson report on developing a new curriculum, it was asked whether some of the work areas should be prioritised.
- Discussions continue between the relevant officers and the Unions to decide the role of GwE and the authorities with regard to providing human resources support. It is envisaged there will be more information with regard to this as part of the business plan.
- Mr Geraint Rees, Welsh Government, added:
  - parts of the work are to be completed at different rates
  - it was acknowledged there is challenge with regard to TUPE implications as a result of changing the working model of individuals. It was however noted there are options that do not involve moving staff around and a request to safeguard a regional standard.
  - the Welsh language is at the core of the National Model and that regional bodies have a role in maintaining and improving the quality of teaching and learning
- With regard to input from Governors, it was noted there has been some discussion in the User Group meeting, but no specific consultation has been held; this would be done following this Joint Committee's seal of approval on the preferred strategic options.
- It was noted that recruiting Governors is problematic due to the requirements and training that is now expected of them and are such arrangements sustainable for the future.
- There was agreement with the above comment. It is a national problem and there is a review underway at present by Welsh Government. The need to take into account Governor expectations was emphasised and to ensure they have relevant information to support and advise them.
- It must be remembered that Headteachers have a key role in supporting Governors and that they see them as a critical friend.

**It was decided to: (a) accept and note the content of the report**

**(b) approve:**

- (i) the general direction of work with regard to aligning the arrangements for regional working with the Welsh Government National Model for 2015-2016 in the face of the new Welsh Government regional Education Improvement Grant.**
- (ii) one can work towards solutions that are of a more regional nature following 12 months implementation of the Education Improvement Grant and more detailed business planning for 2016-17**

#### **4. REGIONAL BUSINESS PLAN 2014-15 – MONITORING REPORT**

The GwE Managing Director presented a report to update the Joint Committee on the progress against the 2014-15 Business Plan and he drew specific attention to the following points:

- (a) 2015 GCSE / PISA Project – the Managing Director expressed his thanks to the schools for their part in holding workshops and the materials will be uploaded onto the GwE platform. A conference will be held on 26 March at Venue Cymru, Llandudno. Thanks were expressed to all who have undertaken the arrangements and members were encouraged to attend.
- (b) 28 schools have taken part in the PISA tests. There was considerable criticism from Welsh Government that not more schools took part, but schools had valid reasons for not doing so, such as the timing of the tests and that Year 11 pupils have very different priorities. In response to a query about feedback from other regions, Mr Geraint Rees (Welsh Government) noted that numbers varied.
- (c) Literacy and numeracy – the national support programme will come to an end due to its success. The work will continue in a different form due to TUPE changes. In response, a Member asked for an evaluation from Welsh Government, noting which elements of the programme have been successful so as to learn from them.
- (d) It was noted there are quite some changes in expectations with regard to standardisation and moderation and thanks were expressed to Mrs Eleri Jones, who is on secondment to GwE, with regard to this work. It was further noted that the Joint Committee has discussed standardisation and moderation in detail in the past.
- (e) In response to a tender from Welsh Government for national verification work and work on assessment and standardisation, the Managing Director noted that the 4 regions had come together and, under the leadership of Mr Steve Davies, submitted a bid to work across Wales in order to ensure consistency. It was noted that this is an important and timely step for local authorities and the regions as a result of Professor Graham Donaldson's report. It was also felt that this is a positive step for the 4 regions to work together; it is hoped that the bid is successful so as to ensure much needed consistency in assessment. Several members reinforced the importance of leadership on such strategic matters and developing the validity of teacher assessment. Whilst acknowledging there are inconsistencies, one Member felt they were not negative inconsistencies and that the needs of the learner is the main concern. The importance of ensuring a focus on this was emphasised and that accurate assessment leads to information about learners' levels of attainment. It

was also added that transition assessments between KS2 and KS3 should be continuous.

**It was decided to: accept and note the contents of the report**

**5. GwE BUDGET 2014-15 – THIRD QUARTER REVIEW**

A report by GwE Managing Director and the Host Authority Head of Finance on the latest financial review of GwE budget for the 2014-15 financial year was presented.

The Head of Finance noted a net underspend of £18,000 against the budget compared to a net underspend of £67,000 in the second quarter review; the decrease is due mainly to using the underspend on a specific project within the School Effectiveness Grant.

Reference was made to the financial variances and Joint Committee Members were given an opportunity to question any elements of the report.

**It was decided to: accept and note the report**

**6. NEXT MEETING OF JOINT COMMITTEE**

It was requested that the date of the next Joint Committee meeting be changed from 11 June 2015 to 15 July 2015, so as to allow the accounts to be presented at the meeting

**It was decided to: approve that the next meeting of the Joint Committee be held on Wednesday, 15 July 2015 at 1.30 p.m.**

The meeting started at 9.30 a.m. and concluded at 10.40 a.m.

**CHAIR**