
EDUCATION AND ECONOMY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 24/1/19

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

Councillors: Freya Bentham, Steve Collings, Aled Evans, Selwyn Griffiths, Alwyn Gruffydd, Elwyn Jones, Huw Wyn Jones, Cai Larsen, Elfed Roberts, Mair Rowlands, Cemlyn Williams and Gareth Williams.

Co-opted Members: Dilwyn Ellis Hughes (UCAC) and David Healy (ATL)

Ex-officio Member: Councillor Edgar Owen.

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

Present for item 5 below:

Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member for Education)
Garem Jackson (Head of Education)
Paul Matthews-Jones (Secondary Core Leader - GwE)

Present for item 6 below:

Councillor Gareth Thomas (Cabinet Member for Education)
Garem Jackson (Head of Education)
Debbie A.W.Jones (Education Corporate Services Officer)

Present for item 7 below:

Councillor Craig ab Iago (Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure and Culture)
Iwan Evans (Legal Service Manager / Monitoring Officer)
Sioned Williams (Head of Economy and Community Department)
Robin Evans (Project Manager)

1. APOLOGIES

Councillors Judith Humphreys, Keith Jones and Dewi Owen
Anest Gray Frazer (Church in Wales)

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

The following declared a personal interest in Item 7 - Healthy Living Centres:-

- The Chair, Councillor Beth Lawton - because she was a Director of Cwmni Byw'n Iach. She was of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest, and she withdrew from the chair and left the meeting during the discussion on the item.
- Councillor Cemlyn Williams - because he was a Director of Cwmni Byw'n Iach. He was of the opinion that it was a prejudicial interest, and he withdrew from the meeting during the discussion on the item.

3. URGENT ITEMS

None to note.

4. MINUTES

The Chair signed the minutes of the previous meeting of this committee held on 22 November, 2018 as a true record.

5. FINAL SUMMER RESULTS 2018

Submitted – the report of the Cabinet Member for Education detailing the final summer results for 2018.

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

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

- That the main discussion on this matter had occurred in September last year when the core data was submitted to this committee, and only minor comments were made at this meeting.
- In relation to the Foundation Phase, there was an understanding that there had been a change in the assessment basis and that GwE was working with the schools in order to ensure good quality assessment and ensure support for that.
- In terms of Key Stage 5, though an explanation was received regarding the data and what was happening in Gwynedd and what support was available, considerable disappointment and concern was raised that the data was not public and there was a need to ensure that members could assist schools in their roles as governors to ensure that specific support was provided for specific subjects, as needed.
- In terms of the change in the English GCSE grades threshold level, the committee continued to support the Cabinet Member and the department to campaign in relation to the change which had occurred to the margin and expressed its disappointment that no solution had been found to date, particularly for those individuals who possibly did not succeed in gaining the expected C and B grades last year. Also, the committee wished to give a clear message that there was a need to ensure that this year's pupils would not suffer the same situation in any subject.

6. RESTRUCTURING OF LANGUAGE CENTRES

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Education seeking the opinion of the members on the options for restructuring the Language Centres as a result of the budget deficit from 2019/20 onwards, along with the observations submitted as part of the consultation.

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

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

- That the committee was grateful for the update regarding what had happened with the internal consultation and that there was a clear appreciation of the work undertaken by the language centres and their success.
- That there was no clear message from this committee regarding the solution to the financial deficit. However, there were clear messages to be presented for the department's attention in four fields, namely:-
 - Concern was conveyed by the committee that none of the principles included ensuring that the quality of the provision was maintained in the future and the committee stressed the need to hold an equality impact assessment on the preferred option, and that there may also be room to measure the quality and the impact of change on the provision from now on.
 - Some concern was noted regarding the possible change in the workload of those working in the language centres, but it was also noted that this concern applied to the entire range of services provided by the Education Department in all schools and that the pupil / teacher ratio in every class was also a matter that needed to be addressed. At the same time, there was emphasis on the need to have two teachers in the Secondary Unit.
 - Support was given to continuing with discussions in an attempt to persuade Welsh Government to continue to give more funding to support the Welsh language from now on.
 - It was accepted that the grant would be cut and although everyone would prefer if that were not the case, the committee encouraged the department to look at any other potential sources, whether additional grant funding or from whichever source. Nevertheless, it was fully accepted that the schools had taken substantial and continued cuts for some time now and, although it was an option, the committee did not wish to look to the schools to fund this. In addition, the risk regarding the possibility of what was going to happen in the future was raised, as GwE was looking further at this grant.

7. HEALTHY LIVING CENTRES

This item was chaired by the Vice-chair due to the Chair's interest in the matter.

Submitted - the report of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure and Culture updating the scrutiny committee on the progress made against the approved business case for transferring the healthy living centres to a Council-controlled company and offering an outline of the arrangements in place to address the observations made by this committee at its meeting on 26 September 2017.

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

The Vice-chair summarised the main conclusions of the discussion as follows:-

- That there was a better understanding of the developments following this item to the committee, particularly in terms of the agreement, the relationship with the Council, the governance arrangements and the financial side also.
- Responses were provided to a number of questions on specific issues in relation to the situation with libraries, schools, grants etc.

- A response was also given to the issues raised in September 2017 and the committee did not have any further specific observations to make.
- That the committee was of the opinion that a communication plan should be created in order to ensure that the residents of Gwynedd were aware of the forthcoming plans.
- Assurance was needed that the requirements in terms of the Welsh language were a part of the agreement and that it would be scrutinised by this committee.

The meeting commenced at 10.30am and concluded at 12.40pm.