
GwE Joint Committee

22/05/2019

Present:

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

Non-voting Officers: Jonathan Morgan (Special Schools' Representative), Karen Evans (Denbighshire County Council), Garem Jackson (Gwynedd Council), Dafydd Ifans (Conwy County Borough Council).

Officers present: Sion Huws (Host Authority - Gwynedd Council), Dafydd Edwards (Host Authority Head of Finance - Gwynedd Council), Dr Gwynne Jones (Anglesey County Council), Alwyn Jones (GwE Assistant Director), Gareth Williams (Chair of GwE Advisory Board), Bethan Roberts (GwE), Annes Sion (Host Authority Member Support Officer - Gwynedd Council).

Commentator: Delyth Gray (Estyn)

1. ELECTING A CHAIRPERSON

Coun. Phill Wynn (Wrexham Borough County Council) was elected as Chairperson for 2019/20.

2. ELECTING A VICE- CHAIRPERSON

Coun. Garffild Lewis (Conwy Borough County Council) was elected as Vice-Chairperson for 2019/20.

3. APOLOGIES

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting, especially Coun. Cemlyn Williams to his first meeting of the GwE Joint Committee, and Delyth Gray attending as commentator from Estyn. The Chair congratulated Coun. Ian Roberts on becoming Leader of Flintshire Council. Condolences were passed on to Arwyn Thomas, following a recent bereavement.

Apologies were received from Haf Williams (Primary Schools' Representative), Claire Homard (Flintshire Council), Ian Roberts (Wrexham County Borough Council), and Arwyn Thomas (GwE Managing Director).

4. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

No declaration of personal interest was received by any member present.

5. URGENT MATTERS

There were no urgent matters.

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair signed the minutes of the meeting held on 20 February, 2019 as correct.

7. GwE ANNUAL REPORT

DECISION

To accept the Report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that the majority of the information had been derived from GwE's Performance Management procedure. It was added that the report aims to strike a balance between GwE's performance over the year, and future steps. It was added that the priorities seen in the report are in GwE's Business Plan for 2019-20.

The issue of English results during GCSE examinations was raised. It was noted that discussions will recommence soon between the Chief Executive of Qualifications Wales, Philip Blaker and Heads of Denbighshire Secondary Schools, following a period of no engagement. Councillors were urged to discuss with other Secondary Heads in the region, and to contact Qualifications Wales in order to reopen the discussion. It was added that the Head of Education at Denbighshire County Council will report back after the meeting.

The Shirley Clarke project is ongoing and successful, and the 27 schools involved in tier 1 have been sharing their skills with tier 2 schools. It was added that the reform journey is ongoing and is embedded in all aspects of GwE's work. It was added that the reform journey has a key role in supporting the Welsh language. It was noted that the strategic priorities align with Welsh Government priorities.

Comments arising from discussion:

- Staff were thanked for the report, and it was noted that there is a very challenging time ahead for GwE.

8. LEVEL 1 BUSINESS PLAN 2019/20

DECISION

To accept the report.

DISCUSSION

The Business Plan was presented noting that it reflects both regional and national priorities. It was noted that the Plan aligns with the Government's expectations.

The priorities of the Business Plan were highlighted which include developing and improving provision with the main focus on high-quality middle leadership. It was stated that additional learning needs is a priority as well as the transformational curriculum.

Comments arising from the discussion

- It was said that the Local Authorities' financial situation poses the greatest risk at present - given the cutbacks in Local Authority budgets over the past few years, schools risk facing further cuts.
- In light of the major changes with the curriculum transformation, a number of teachers with years of experience are said to be leaving education. The need to produce a specific risk register for this in terms of its impact on teachers, parents and pupils, was expressed.

- This need for GwE to address the savings so as to secure a long term solution was noted. It was suggested that the budget and workforce review needs to be carried out before October, ready for March.
- The business plan was said to align with national objectives.

9. GwE ACCOUNTS

DECISION

To accept the report.

DISCUSSION

The report was presented, noting that the report notes the Revenue Income and Expenditure Account in 2018/19. Attention was drawn to the financial variances. It was noted that there is underspend in terms of the workforce mainly as the result of the Assistant Director secondment. It was added that there is an overspend against Buildings as a result of GwE not meeting its income target, and Supplies and Services due to rising translation costs following GwE not being able to appoint a translator.

It was noted that GwE's financial situation on 31/03/19 was very neat, however that permanent savings need to be found by October 2019.