



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

15 SEPTEMBER 2020

Report by: Arwyn Thomas - GwE Managing Director

Subject: Gwynedd Council Audit Report – GwE Travel Expenses

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To give the Joint Committee assurance that GwE complied fully with Gwynedd Council's policy for reimbursement of travelling expenses, whereby officers will claim reimbursement only for the number of business miles travelled over and above the number of miles travelled from home to work / work to home, after consultation and full agreement with Gwynedd Council's HR department. In addition, to provide assurance that GwE have addressed the mitigating action from the Internal Audit Report, which was to 'Remind managers to review travel expenses claims'.

2.0 Background

2.1 Gwynedd Council is the host authority of GwE and is the legal employer of GwE staff. GwE staff are therefore subject to the employment terms and conditions of Gwynedd Council.

3.0 Considerations

3.1 GwE recognises its responsibility to achieve value for money (VFM) from all its activities, however they may be funded. GwE is committed to the pursuit of economy, efficiency and effectiveness as part of its strategic and operational work. GwE will seek to adopt good

practice and incorporate VFM principles in all its activities, and undertake reviews at suitable frequencies to ensure that VFM is demonstrated.

- 3.2 VFM is a term used to assess whether, or not, an organisation has obtained the maximum benefit from the services it both acquires and provides, within the resources available to it. Some elements may be subjective, difficult to measure, intangible and misunderstood. Judgement is, therefore, required when considering whether VFM has been satisfactorily achieved or not. It not only measures the cost of services, but also takes account of the mix of quality, cost, resource use, fitness for purpose, timeliness, and convenience to judge whether or not, together, they constitute good value. Achieving VFM is also often described in terms of the 'three Es' - economy, efficiency and effectiveness:
- (i) economy - minimising the cost of resources for an activity ('doing things at a low price');
 - (ii) efficiency - performing tasks with reasonable effort ('doing things the right way');
 - and
 - (iii) effectiveness - the extent to which objectives are met ('doing the right things').
- 3.3 The proposed arrangements were fully consulted upon and agreed by our host authority's HR senior managers. No member of staff claims any mileage from home, but from one of the bases identified.
- 3.4 These arrangements were also discussed and agreed by the GwE Management Board, who offered the extra bases in order to allow the regional service to function more effectively by ensuring that there was a GwE presence in each local authority, particularly since the dissolution of the sub-regional hub model. Without this agreement in place, which allows the service to work on a full regional platform, GwE would also have found it very difficult to be both efficient and effective in appointing future staff.
- 3.5 The new policy has impacted on all staff's ability to claim travel expenses from home.
- 3.6 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change – Voluntary Cancellation Certificate. 'Climate Neutral Now' was launched by the United Nations in 2015 to encourage everyone in society to take action to help achieve a climate neutral world by 2050, as enshrined in the Paris Agreement. GwE have already completed this process for the travel

undertaken by the service. We are proud to say that we now offset 77 tonnes of our carbon footprint and are looking at ways of reducing this within the service. We hope that by taking the lead we can raise awareness and drive further sustainability efforts in schools across the region.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to confirm that it is assured that GwE is:

- following Gwynedd Council policy change as of July 2018; and
- supporting managers to review travel expenses claims

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 All staff claims are from a designated normal work location. This significantly reduces the claim from home that was allowed for travelling to schools and on other GwE business pre July 2018. The previous policy noted that staff could claim their complete business journey if the journey started and finished at the employee's home. For the majority of GwE staff, this resulted in the full mileage being claimed from home to school / GwE business on most days. No member of staff has their home denoted as their usual place of work. This has resulted in a reduction in regional travel expenses claimed against core budget.

5.2 Consideration to the significant increase in support WG national work programme and the need to travel extensively outside the region during this period of Educational Reform makes it very difficult to specifically note the financial impact on the budget.

5.3 GwE staff have increased by 8 to support WG Reform agenda.

5.4 GwE has continuously underspent on the core travel budget.

5.5 In managing the annual budget and ensuring a comprehensive regional service, travelling expenses has not been an area which has been targeted by the Joint Committee when asking GwE to make budget savings.

6.0 Equalities Impact

6.1 Implementing the new policy (for reimbursement of travelling expenses whereby officers will claim reimbursement only for the number of business miles travelled over and above the

number of miles travelled from home to work / work to home) through reviewing the official work location for staff, has given due regard to:

- the travelling required to undertake the regional nature of roles within GwE;
- not restricting future recruitment opportunities for potential candidates due to their proximity to base locations.

7.0 Personnel Implications

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

8.0 Consultation Undertaken

8.1 Consultation with Gwynedd HR, GwE Staff and the GwE Management Board.

9.0 Appendices

- Appendix 1 The draft report prepared for Joint Committee 22/05/2019
- Appendix 2 Gwynedd Local Authority Internal Audit Report

OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

It is appropriate for this report on GwE's actions in response to Gwynedd Council's Audit Committee's recommendations to come before the Joint Committee for consideration

Statutory Finance Officer:

GwE have implemented the agreed action from the Internal Audit report, to 'remind managers to review travel expenses claims', which is clearly useful to mitigate the risk of errors being processed. This report from the Managing Director provides the Joint Committee with assurance regarding GwE's travel claim arrangements and staff's designated normal work locations, which reflect the nature of their specialist roles within GwE.



REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

22/05/2019

Report by: GwE Managing Director

Subject: GwE staff work base locations

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To present to the Joint Committee the GwE staff work base locations for approval

2.0 Background

2.1 Gwynedd Council is the host authority of GwE and is the legal employer of GwE staff. GwE staff are therefore subject to the employment terms and conditions of Gwynedd Council.

3.0 Considerations

3.1 As part of a modernisation and amendment of the local conditions of service, the following amendments have been made:

3.1.1 *Abolish the hourly supplement of 20% (1/5th) to the salary of staff who are working between 8:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. in the evening. As a consequence, the only additional payment for working unsocial hours within the Council will be to those individuals who work night shifts i.e. after 10:00 p.m. in the evening.*

3.1.2 *Amend the Financial Detriment Scheme (Salary Protection) from three years of 100% protection to;*

- i) First year at 100% protection*
- ii) Second year at 50% protection*

3.1.3 *Amend the policy for reimbursement of travelling expenses whereby officers will claim reimbursement only for the number of business miles travelled over and above the number of miles travelled from home to work / work to home.*

3.1.4 Reduce the payment for being 'on duty' outside of normal working hours i.e. the higher of the two rates – this from the current £265.88 per week to £200 per week.

3.2 GwE staff are affected by amendments 3.1.2 and 3.1.3.

3.3 In preparation for the implementation of the changes in July 2018, staff work bases were confirmed and approved by Gwynedd Council. This was after close collaboration with and seeking advice from Gwynedd Human Resources. A list of locations can be seen below:

- Colwyn Bay
- Bangor
- Caernarfon
- Dolgellau
- Llangefni
- Pwllheli
- Ruthin
- Mold

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 The Joint Committee is asked to approve the report

6.0 Financial Implications

5.1 Due to the nature of the regional work programme and the need to travel to Cardiff more and more during this period of Educational Reform, it is very difficult to specifically note the financial impact on the budget.

5.2 In the 2019-2- Business Plan, GwE will undertake a review of administration arrangements and value for money. In addition, our Medium Term Financial Plan reviews on a regular basis the variables to address when planning and profiling our budgets.

6.0 Equalities Impact

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

7.0 Personnel Implications

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

8.0 Consultation Undertaken

8.1 The Human Resources Service of Gwynedd Council conducted discussions with representatives of the recognised unions from October 2015. They also corresponded with more than 6,000 members of staff to directly consult with the workforce and invite them to contact the Human Resources Service with any enquiries or comments in relation to the amendments.

8.2 GwE staff have been consulted.

8.3 The GwE Management Board have been consulted.

8.4 Gwynedd Council have approved the work base locations

OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

Monitoring Officer:

Statutory Finance Officer:

Appendix 2 Gwynedd Local Authority Internal Audit Report



GwE Travelling
Expenses Internal Au