



## REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

23 NOVEMBER 2022

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**Report by:** Arwyn Thomas, GwE Managing Director

**Subject:** Intention to review current operating arrangements and staffing structure

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### 1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To inform Joint Committee members regarding the intention to review current operating arrangements and staffing structure.

### 2.0 Background

2.1 Staff in the Local Authorities and GwE adapted their work in order to continue to provide effective services and support for all their school communities during the COVID pandemic. During this time, GwE 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 remained at the heart of the work with schools and partners. The service in its entirety had to re-focus several times during the COVID 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, had significant impact on organisational behaviour and external perception. As we continue to support schools in the wake of the pandemic, it is timely to review the current operating arrangements and staffing structure to ensure that we continue to evolve and develop in order to effectively support schools post COVID.

2.2 As we undertake national reform and continue to support schools to implement the new curriculum, it's clear that we are in a different place to the one that we imagined when the guidance for the Curriculum for Wales was published. We recognise that some of the

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preparation time for the curriculum will have been devoted to managing the impact of the pandemic over the past few years. On the other hand, with an even stronger focus on well-being and significant investment in teaching and learning, the values under-pinning the curriculum have been at the heart of how schools have been working. GwE is fully committed to supporting schools and PRUs to maintain this momentum to ensure that every learner in North Wales is offered provision of the highest quality. We have recognised that our Professional Learning will need to evolve to offer a more limited centrally delivered provision with an enhanced school to school (and cluster to cluster) professional learning offer. We see the following areas as our key regional Professional Learning Offer over the next few years: Improving Learner Skills; Improving the Learner Experience; Pedagogy; Equity and Wellbeing; '*Y Gymraeg*'; Assessment and Learner Progression and Leadership Development. Professional learning will be key in supporting schools to implement and move forward their School Development Plan priorities. A support plan will be agreed with every school and setting in line with the requirements of the School Improvement Guidance (June 2022).

**2.3** The new national 'School Improvement Guidance (June 2022)' provides a point of reference for schools, pupil referral units, local authorities, diocesan authorities, regional consortia and Estyn, which outlines the Welsh Government's expectations of them in contributing to school improvement, in the context of their wider legal duties. The overarching purpose of school improvement is to help schools give learners the best possible learning experiences and outcomes, whatever their background, in order to achieve high standards and aspirations for all. Under the Curriculum for Wales, a fundamental part of this will be ensuring that schools support every learner to make progress, contributing to the four purposes. The guidance supports that objective by setting out a framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability that will deliver sustainable school improvement and drive behaviours and practices that are required by the new curriculum and assessment arrangements. To be successful, it is crucial that all aspects of the school system are aligned with and support the new curriculum and its underlying principles. The Welsh Government plans to update the guidance, building on learning in 2022/23 and 2023/24, and to issue it as statutory guidance to come into force in September 2024. It is therefore timely that GwE reviews its operational arrangements and staffing structure to ensure that it can effectively address the requirements of the guidance.

### **3.0 Matters for consideration**

**3.1** A review of the current operating arrangements and staffing structure is needed to ensure that the regional school improvement service is suitably structured to:

- ensure that schools are effectively supported post COVID to address the impact of the pandemic on learners' progress and wellbeing;
- ensure that schools are effectively supported to implement the new curriculum and all aspects of the reform journey;
- address national expectations for school improvement as outlined in the recently published 'School Improvement Guidance (June 2022)'; and to
- build upon the strong foundations of a collaborative way of working that has been established regionally as we move towards a self-improving system.

### **4.0 Recommendations**

**4.1** The Joint Committee is asked to note the content of the report and permit the service to move forward to review current operating arrangements and staffing structure.

### **5.0 Financial implications**

**5.1** There are no financial implications arising from this report. Any new operating model will be funded via existing and future resources.

### **6.0 Equalities Impact**

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

### **7.0 Personnel Implications**

**7.1** GwE will follow Host Authority procedures in any restructuring of the service.

### **8.0 Consultation undertaken**

**8.1** GwE staff will be fully consulted during the review process if the Joint Committee agree to proceed.

### **9.0 Schedule**

**9.1** Operational during the first quarter of the next financial year.

## **OPINION OF STATUTORY OFFICERS**

### **Monitoring Officer:**

The intention to review the staffing structure is noted and I confirm that approving the GwE staffing structure is one of the functions of the Joint Committee itself.

### **Statutory Finance Officer:**

I welcome the intention to review GwE's operating arrangements and staffing structure in the context of an ever-changing situation. Officers from Finance services will assist GwE with this work as required. I note that part 5 of the report confirms that there are no financial implications arising from the report, and that GwE will operate within their current financial resources when undertaking the review.