
**GwE JOINT-COMMITTEE
24.02.16**

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

Councillors: Chris Bithell, Kenneth P. Hughes, Wyn Ellis Jones and Gareth Thomas.

Co-opted Non-voting Members: Eithne Hughes (Secondary Schools Representative), Jonathan Morgan (Special Schools Representative)

Non-voting Members: Ian Budd (Lead Director – Chair of Management Board (Flintshire Council)), John Davies (Wrexham County Borough Council), Karen Evans (Denbighshire Council), Delyth Molyneux (Anglesey Council), R. Ellis Owen (Conwy County Borough Council) and Arwyn Thomas (Gwynedd Council).

Also Present: Huw Foster Evans (GwE Managing Director), Rhys Howard Hughes (GwE Assistant Director (Support and Brokerage)), Alwyn Jones (GwE Assistant Director (Standards)), Susan Owen Jones (GwE Business and Finance Manager), Geraint Rees (Welsh Government Representative), Dafydd Edwards (Host Authority's Head of Finance – Gwynedd Council), Iwan Evans (Host Authority's Head of Legal Services – Gwynedd Council), and Glynda O'Brien (Host Authority Member's Support Officer – Gwynedd Council)

Apologies: Diane Chisholm (Primary Schools Representative), Delyth Molyneux (Anglesey Council)

A special welcome was extended to Mrs Eithne Hughes, Secondary Schools Representative, who was attending her first meeting of the Joint-committee as a successor to Mrs Anwen Morgan who is now the Chief Executive's Deputy in Anglesey 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 27 January 2016, as a true record.

The Councillor Gareth Thomas (Gwynedd Council) noted that a matter had been raised in the previous meeting which had not been included in the minutes. Nonetheless, he wished to explain the situation and brought Gwynedd Council's internal procedures in relation to advertising specific positions to attention. He went on to express his discontent at the fact that another county's Education Portfolio Member had sent an e-mail with regards to the issue following the meeting. The Councillor Thomas felt that no member of the joint-committee should have raised the issue and any concerns should be directly

referred to the appropriate person. He trusted that he would not have to raise the matter again.

The Councillor Michael Williams explained that the letter sent was self-explanatory, and expressed the importance of collaboration on any matters relating to GwE. He felt that the matter discussed had implications for GwE and contradicted the National Model.

In response, the Host Authority's Head of Legal Services explained that the matter had not been included in the minutes since it did not feature in the previous meeting's discussion agenda, and neither was it on the agenda for this meeting.

3. 2015-18 REGIONAL BUSINESS PLAN – LOCAL AUTHORITY ANNEXES

GwE's Managing Director presented a business plan discussed by the joint-committee on 12 November 2015 which established the three-year vision, objectives and priorities for improvement across the region. Reference was made to the annexes of the Business Plan which reflected local priorities and local accountability within the authorities. It was confirmed that GwE's teams in the three hubs had discussed the priorities with the Education Directors, and that Headteachers had played a fundamental part in providing these priorities.

In response to an enquiry made with regards to ensuring consistency in scrutiny arrangements across the 6 authorities, the Chair of the Management Board (Flintshire Council) assured that a mechanism was in place for Scrutiny Officers to consider topics from the different authorities and beyond, which will lead to a shared programme.

It was decided to: (a) **Accept and note the report's content.**

(b) **Approve the Business Plan's Local Authority Annexes subject to corrections in Annex 6 (English language), where Anglesey is referred to rather than Wrexham Council under the "GwE Aims" column, prior to their final publication.**

4. 2015-16 GwE BUDGET – 2015 AUTUMN TERM REVIEW

(a) GwE's Managing Director and Gwynedd Council's Head of Finance presented a report updating the joint-committee on the most recent financial review of the GwE budget for the 2015/16 financial year. The report focused on the significant financial changes along with Annex 1 which provided financial information in full.

(b) Gwynedd Council's Head of Finance went through the report with the joint-committee, drawing attention to the financial changes. The situation over the year was shown to be rather stable and a total fund of £271,486 is expected for the end of 2015/16.

(c) During the ensuing discussion, the following main points were highlighted:

- Whilst aware of the background to the underspend, the question was raised as to whether there were plans to spend it, considering schools were consistently judged for retaining substantial balances.
- Reference was made to the grants received by Welsh Government, particularly the Schools Challenge Wales Grant, and the importance of avoiding a disproportionate system and variation across the 4 regions, ensuring value for money for schools.
- The question was raised as to whether it would be possible in future to receive an outline of the provident sum to be retained in terms of underspend.

(d) In response to the above comments, it was explained:

- That £271,486 was not a particularly big underspend since reserve elements were required for situations that may arise e.g. authorities could be forced to make more cuts, dismiss staff etc.
- That balances of no more than 5% - 10% had been set locally. Underspend was discussed with Chief Executives across the North and the decision was taken not to establish levels since the situation could change for the following year.
- The variation in grant levels across the 4 consortia was acknowledged, but it is hoped that there will be more collaboration between consortia in future.

It was decided to: Accept and note the report's content.

5. 2016/17 BUDGET

GwE's Managing Director and Gwynedd Council's Head of Finance presented to the joint-committee GwE's base budget for 2016/17, including authorities' financial contributions.

Members of the joint-committee were talked through the budget, and their attention was drawn to the £59,092 decrease in the financial allocation from authorities. Further reference was made to how GwE must deal with the financial implications of inflation and savings which signify a £131,180 decrease in the proposed spend for 2016/17, and it was noted that a report would be presented early in June reflecting this figure.

It was decided to: Accept and adopt the base budget for 2016/17 as outlined in the report.

6. PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (AUTHORITIES AND SCHOOLS)

(a) GwE's Managing Director presented, for members' information, the Partnership Agreement between the six local authorities of the north and their schools, highlighting the importance of the joint-committee's awareness of the document. The agreement was amended in 2015 to reflect the changes which took place. The document was shown to

explain many elements such as principles of action and the school categorisation process which is an integral part of the partnership between GwE and schools. It was also mentioned that the categorisation process was being refined consistently. Annex 3 of the agreement was referred to, which outlines the powers of intervention in place for the local authorities as statutory bodies.

(b) During the ensuing discussion, the following points were highlighted by individual Members:

- A footnote on page 46 of the documentation stated that local authorities had asked GwE to undertake some of the responsibilities in relation to governors' training and roles – the question was raised as to whether these responsibilities should be listed.
- Some matters within the agreements were rather evident, but on the other hand some uncertainty could arise as to who would provide support on some matters.
- It was proposed that, with regards to the agreement, it could be useful to include an annex for each local authority as in the regional business plan.
- In terms of safeguarding children, should the responsibilities of schools, authorities and GwE be clearly identified?

(c) In response to the above comments:

- The Lead Director – Chair of the Management Board (Flintshire Council) explained that it was the duty of the Management Board to provide a continuous service for schools, and that it was their view that one document would be appropriate. However, the Management Board intended to hold a review during the summer term.
- Whilst accepting that each county was different, it was explained that work in each classroom was to be similar.
- It was explained that there were some similar elements across the region, but that capacity, which can have an impact on the nature of the agreement, should be taken into consideration.

It was decided to: Note the contents of the Partnership Agreement and the need to receive an update on generic and local responsibilities in the next meeting of the joint-committee.

7. COLLABORATION BETWEEN CONSORTIA

GwE's Managing Director reported that ESTYN expected regions to collaborate on developing and improving processes within schools.

A presentation was given by GwE's Assistant Director (Support and Brokerage) on developments thus far, noting that the aim was to provide the most effective challenge and support possible for schools in Wales. The immense pressure on schools to collaborate was underlined, and more importantly for consortia to also collaborate.

In terms of developments to date, it was explained that:

- The 4 regions' directors often meet
- They are sharing good practice
- They are identifying collaboration opportunities
- They are coming to an agreement on a specific work programme

Further detail was provided on the collaboration areas, which are:

- The agreed National Development Programme for Challenge Advisers
- The National Categorisation Quality and Standardisation Group (one member from each consortia given the task of moderating and ensuring better consistency)
- Creating a diverse Development Programme for career development by collaborating with other consortia
- Implementing the enterprises of the Digital / New Deal / Successful Futures Pioneer Schools and Creative Lead Schools (work is underway to promote a National Group for collaboration and it was explained that Welsh Government are part of this collaboration)
- Sharing good practice in relation to PDG in each sector, providing clear evidence of the impact
- Ensuring a better understanding of the effective use of funding and grants on national level
- Risk / value for money assessments in order to verify / evaluate

To conclude, it was noted that the work was developing and that collaboration was proving useful.

The following points were highlighted by individual Members:

- (i) The Welsh Government representative reported that the Quality Group's work had been highly praised, with individuals responding very positively in the dialogue
- (ii) Collaboration was welcomed and the importance of its development underlined
- (iii) In response to an enquiry made with regards to ESTYN inspectors' use of the Welsh language, it was confirmed that Welsh speakers would be used within the Inspection Teams.

It was decided to: Accept, note and thank for the presentation.

8. CHALLENGE ADVISER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

GwE's Managing Director explained the background of the following presentation, noting that there were high expectations on GwE's teams which had led to developing the development programme for Challenge Advisers.

GwE's Assistant Director (Support and Brokerage) explained that practitioners / headteachers placed emphasis on staff development to ensure quality and standards, and that GwE had a responsibility to develop its own staff.

A presentation was given by GwE's Assistant Director (Standards), who noted that the Challenge Adviser's role was changing in order to develop and

formalise a programme which would focus on national standards. He provided further detail on developments to date:

- Developing coaching and mentoring
- Sharing effective practice and lessons learned
- Workshops focusing on key skills e.g. how to work effectively with underachieving schools
- Statutory safeguarding training for each Challenge Adviser
- Presentations on effective practice by colleagues from other consortia e.g. effective techniques
- Providing opportunities to share good practice between the hubs for Challenge Advisers working with secondary schools in the red and amber categories
- Train the trainers for two Challenge Advisers working with the primary sector
- Developing Challenge Advisers' knowledge, understanding and skills to the level required to satisfy the national standards
- Improving quality
- Framework – ensure that Challenge Advisers work with schools / senior leaders / governors
- Ensuring a robust self-evaluation and improvement plan
- Arranging effective support and intervention
- Developing school leaders
- Focus on the quality and outcomes of teaching and learning
- Termly formal meetings for monitoring and evaluating improvements

Members' attention was drawn to the fact that the programme is currently under development and being piloted for the secondary sector, with the hope of expanding the programme to the primary sector. Individuals within GwE's team are encouraged to develop their own staff.

It was further reported that advertisements for new Challenge Advisers had recently appeared in the press and following appointments an induction programme will be developed for them.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions, and the following main points were highlighted:

- (i) No mention was made to how Challenge Advisers would keep in contact with the local authorities, who are ultimately responsible for the standards of teaching and learning

In response, GwE's Managing Director noted that a meeting was to be held on 15 March 2016 where extended discussions on the above matter would take place.

- (ii) Current inconsistencies in terms of quality were perhaps not necessarily related to training but rather more to do with organisation.

In response, it was explained that GwE had specific duties to provide a development programme as well as to manage the performance of individuals. It was noted that processes would have to intertwine and current inconsistencies were acknowledged, but this was identified as a matter for collaboration.

(i) In response to an enquiry with regards to training and collaboration with other consortia, GwE's Assistant Director for Standards explained that the intention was to provide a national package for sharing expertise.

(ii) The test for the development programmes will be how to measure their impact and their influence on individual schools, groups of schools, and summer examination results.

In response, it was acknowledged that these were long term developments and that it would prove difficult to measure their impact on this year's summer results.

(iii) GwE's Assistant Director for Standards added that strengths needed to be disseminated across the schools, and that the above programme should successfully raise standards and ensure improvements for individuals. In response to a further enquiry with regards to Challenge Advisers' failure to achieve in accordance with the expected standards, it was noted that guidance on capability procedures would be provided from the host authority.

(iv) There is a tendency to focus on schools in the red / amber categories and it needs to be ensured that schools in the green and yellow categories are not disregarded.

It was decided to: Accept, note and thank for the presentation.

The meeting began at 9.00 a.m. and concluded at 10.40 a.m.

CHAIR

At the end of the meeting it was announced that around 1,300 teachers had attended a national conference at Venue Cymru, Llandudno, on 12 March 2015. It gave great pleasure to note that so many had attended, showing the commitment of staff.