

Special Educational Needs Joint Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2016

- PRESENT:** Councillor Llinos Medi Huws (IOACC) (Chair)
Councillor Beth Lawton (Gwynedd Council) (Vice-Chair)
- Gwynedd Council**
- Councillors E. Caerwyn Roberts, Eirwyn Williams
- Isle of Anglesey County Council**
- Councillors Gwilym O. Jones, R. Meirion Jones
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Principal Educational Psychologist (Mr Gareth Payne)
Senior Inclusion Manager (Gwynedd Council) (Mr Gwern ap Rhisiart)
ALN Education Officer (IOACC) (Einir Thomas)
Committee Officer (IOACC) (Ann Holmes)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Annwen Hughes, Elin Walker Jones (Gwynedd Council), Councillor Trefor Lloyd Hughes (IOACC)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Councillor Kenneth Hughes (Portfolio Member for Education, IOACC)
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1 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declaration of interest was received.

2 MINUTES OF THE 24TH JUNE, 2016 MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Special Educational Needs Joint Committee held on 24 June, 2016 were presented and confirmed as correct.

3 THE SEN JOINT-COMMITTEE'S FINAL ACCOUNTS AND EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT

It was reported that the External Auditor did not have any significant changes to report with regard to the Joint Committee's accounts and therefore there was no reason to re-submit them to the meeting today.

It was resolved to accept and note the information.

4 UPDATE ON THE NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR ALN AND INCLUSION SERVICES IN GWYNEDD AND YNYS MÔN

Documentation relating to Gwynedd and Anglesey's Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Strategy was presented as it had been presented to the Gwynedd Council Cabinet in its meeting on 13 September, 2016 and the Isle of Anglesey Executive in its meeting on 19 September 2016.

The Gwynedd Council Senior Inclusion Manager reported that the Gwynedd and Anglesey ALN and Inclusion Strategy had been subjected to the democratic processes of both counties and had been approved by the Gwynedd Council Cabinet and Isle of Anglesey County Council Executive in their meetings held earlier in the month. As a result, work can now start on implementing the strategy in both counties and the discussions that have taken place hitherto will now focus on implementation. Further agreement has been reached with regard to 14 different services covering a number of

areas across additional learning needs and inclusion which will be consolidated under the Strategy. The new ALN and Inclusion Service will be hosted by Gwynedd Council but both councils will monitor the provision through ALN&I monitoring boards reporting to the Gwynedd and Anglesey Education Partnerships Executive Board which will in turn feed into both counties' scrutiny procedures and then the Cabinet in relation to Gwynedd and the Executive in relation to Anglesey.

The Officer said that the governance model being proposed is relatively complex (Appendix 1 in the documentation) and that further fine tuning is needed to ensure that the voice of elected members is heard sufficiently throughout the structure, particularly with regard to the quality of the provision. The next step will be to write to the Joint Committee's staff and staff of both the individual authorities who are involved in the areas under consideration to formally inform them of the advent of the new arrangements that will replace the present Joint Committee establishment and the jobs therein with a consultation period with staff to follow therefrom. Therefore, it is possible that elements of the Strategy will change as a result of that process.

Amongst the main drivers of the new strategy has been the need to strengthen the monitoring and scrutiny arrangements of the additional learning needs and inclusion services across both counties. They are expensive provisions and the value of the provisions needs to be demonstrated more clearly, as well as the difference they make to those receiving the services and the impact they have on the children's progress. The new system will also have a stronger element of accountability. Additionally, the strategy addresses the new requirements in the wake of the Additional Learning Needs Measure and the Education Tribunal (Wales).

The Chair referred to a preliminary meeting that she and the Vice-Chair had attended prior to the Joint Committee's formal meeting and said that the meeting had highlighted some considerations that she wanted to bring to the Joint Committee's attention and for which she sought its support. She reported on the main issues as follows -

- That further attention should be given to strengthening the governance model and that the Joint Committee's Chair and Vice-Chair, on behalf of both counties, should be involved in the discussions to ensure that the arrangements meet both counties' needs.
- That the implications for schools and governing bodies need to be considered and that the changes should be communicated positively.
- That there is some concern regarding the transfer steps; it is acknowledged that scrutiny has been an aspect that the Joint Committee could have strengthened in terms of value, quality and the pathways resulting from special educational needs services but there is no wish to see the Joint Committee's work ending abruptly, and it has a role in supporting the changes. It is therefore suggested that the officers look at the propriety of establishing a shadow committee in the interim period until the final governance model is in place.
- It is suggested that an annual report on the implementation of the services within the strategy is presented to the relevant scrutiny committees in both counties and that they then select areas to be examined in greater detail.
- That the strategy should highlight the importance of Welsh medium training as an element that has been important to the Joint Committee and one that it has sought to promote. The expertise and understanding that the Joint Committee has developed during its period of operation should not be lost and there is also a need to ensure that the core team continues to be strong linguistically.
- That further discussions are needed with regard to the provision for 16-25 year olds as an area where the responsibilities have not been set out clearly within the new legislation. It is believed that a shadow committee or similar could set a direction in this regard. Similarly, attention should be given to the early years and it is felt that this work should be led from the centre initially before transferring it to the council for scrutiny on an individual basis.
- That it should be conveyed clearly that the reasoning behind the changes and the end of the Joint Committee is to strengthen the ALN provision for the children and young people of both counties.

It was resolved to note the ALN and Inclusion Strategy documentation as presented and to support the Chair's comments regarding the aspects it is wished are addressed moving forward.

ACTION ENSUING:

- **Officers to take action in accordance with the points noted above.**
- **Update on progress to be presented at the next meeting.**

**Councillor Llinos Medi Huws
Chair**