

PARTNERSHIP AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the special meeting held on 16 February 2017

PRESENT: Councillor Alun Wyn Mummery (Vice-Chair in the Chair)

Councillors T LI Hughes MBE, Carwyn Jones, R LI Jones, G O Jones, Dylan Rees and Dafydd Rhys Thomas.

Mr. Keith Roberts – The Roman Catholic Church representative.

Other Members of the County Council invited to the meeting

Councillors Lewis Davies, R.A. Dew, John Griffith, T. Victor Hughes, K.P. Hughes, Llinos M. Huws, R. Meirion Jones.

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive,
Assistant Chief Executive (Partnerships, Community and Service Improvements),
Head of Learning,
Economic Development Manager (APD),
Scrutiny Officer (GR),
Committee Officer (MEH).

APOLOGIES: Councillors Jim Evans, Richard O. Jones (Members of the Committee)

Ms. Anest Gray Frazer – Church in Wales representative.

Councillors Aled M. Jones, H. Eifion Jones, Ieuan Williams.

ALSO PRESENT: Mr. Elfyn V. Jones, GwE - Senior Challenge and Support Adviser (in respect of item 4),

Mr. Vaughan Williams – Estyn (Observer) (in respect of items 4 and 5),

Mr. Iwan Thomas – Regional Programme Manager – Skills & Employment (North Wales Economic Ambition Board) (in respect of item 6).

The Vice-Chair in the Chair said that the Chair, Councillor Jim Evans was absent from the meeting due to personal reasons.

Councillor G.O. Jones was appointed Vice-Chair for this meeting only.

1 APOLOGIES

As noted above.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 January, 2017 were confirmed.

4 SCHOOLS STANDARDS PROGRESS REPORT

Submitted – a report by the Head of Learning in relation to the above.

The Head of Learning reported that the main purpose of the report is to discuss the schools standards progress 2015/16 academic year. It is expected that Anglesey should rank 10th out of the 22 local authorities in Wales with regard to performance indicators set out by Estyn.

Mr. Elfyn V. Jones, GwE - Senior Challenge and Support Adviser gave an overview of the performance with regard to the whole of the National Curriculum for Wales key stages of the local authority.

Foundation Stage Assessment

The main indicator for the Foundation key stage is disappointing as Anglesey has fallen below the target in each category in comparison to National performance levels; this places the local authority significantly lower than expected for the 2015/16 academic year. However, he noted that during the Estyn Inspections to various schools these target levels were not highlighted as concerns.

The Chief Executive referred to the data presented to the Committee which stated that Anglesey Schools, in the foundation stage was 21st out of 22 local authorities with regard to the Welsh language. He expressed concern regarding the validity of the assessment. He said that every effort should be made to ensure that end of foundation phase assessments were valid and reliable.

Key Stage 2 Assessment

The key stage 2 performance is lower than in 2015 but is still 2.7% above the targets set with Anglesey 9th of all the authorities in Wales.

Key Stages 3 and 4 Assessment

The key stage 3 performance is higher in Anglesey than the Wales benchmark set by the Welsh Government.

There are positive aspects with regard to the performance of key stage 4 performance on Anglesey but the Senior Challenge and Support Adviser expressed disappointment overall as the secondary schools are in a slightly lower position in most of the key indicators as the national increase has been higher. None of the 5 secondary schools on Anglesey have achieved the 70% threshold above the main indicators set by Welsh Government however 3 secondary schools achieved this in Welsh, English and Mathematics.

Members raised the following matters:-

- Questions referred to the fact that the Corporate Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held in February, 2016 were assured that processes for the assessment of children in schools and standardising data would be put in place together with training being afforded for teachers to raise standards in the Island schools. The Senior Challenge and Support Adviser responded that Challenge Advisors are now working differently in schools to improve standards within the various key stages. These individuals are currently training teachers and have been empowered to visit schools more frequently to tackle problems that have been identified. Discussions have been undertaken with Headteachers with regard to the expected targets that have been set out this year and a more robust challenging programme has been set up to improve the performance in the key stage levels. The Head of Learning also pointed out that improvement is incremental and that schools and Headteachers, and elected members in their role as governors are also responsible for ensuring that standards improve in schools.
- Questions were raised as to the size of classes and whether teachers are afforded adequate time to plan/prepare for lessons and whether there is a lack of capacity within the management team within the Island schools to allow for forward planning. The Head of Learning responded that workload can be more challenging to manage for Headteachers that have little non-contract time in smaller schools, and where they also teach two or three year groups taught within a classroom. The Head of Learning further said that there is an expectation within teachers' working terms and conditions that every teacher received 10% PPA 'non-contact hours' for Planning, Preparation and Assessment and that they should be afforded this facility every week; she was not aware that this was not afforded at any school on the Island;
- Questions were raised whether best practice is shared between better performing schools and other schools who are not necessarily achieving the performances expected. The Head of Learning said that there is a mechanism in place for staff of underperforming schools to share the best practise of better performing schools within a training and coaching programme; brokered through GwE;
- Questions were raised as to the difficulties experienced by most local authorities to appoint leadership/Headteachers in schools and how this authority is addressing this issue. The Head of Learning said that discussions have taken place with GwE representatives to recognise individuals who have shown potential and talent to become leaders of schools when the situation arises. Individuals within schools have already been identified as having potential and the local authority is at present drawing up a programme in order to mentor these

individuals on the required management and leadership skills in collaboration with GwE;

- The Portfolio Holder for Education said that as Governors of schools there is a responsibility to make sure that the best education is afforded to pupils and governors must also be willing to challenge performance of schools. He questioned how GwE is addressing the issues to make the schools more proactive in tackling underperformance. The Head of Learning stated that 3 schools who were underperforming had utilised 40% of the GwE school improvement resources in the last academic year, and the Senior Challenge and Support Adviser gave an example of the working programme put in place by GwE for 3 schools that were identified within the red/amber of the new Welsh Government categorisation system, which the scrutiny committee had examined in October 2016. GwE afford training programmes, presentations to Headteachers, scrutinise the work of the schools and invite schools who perform well to share good practice across the Anglesey and Gwynedd GwE hub. He extended a welcome to any elected member to accompany a Challenge Advisor to attend schools that needed support.

It was RESOLVED to note the report.

ACTION: As noted above.

5 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SCHOOL PROGRESS REVIEW GROUP

Submitted – a report by the Head of Learning in relation to the above.

The Head of Learning reported that a School Progress Report Group was established in November 2012 which arose from recommendations made by Estyn on the quality of Education services for children and young people on Anglesey. The aim of the Group is to assist the Education Service in improving the performance of schools on the island by increasing and developing local accountability for school performance and furnishing local members with the knowledge about key performance drivers and challenges that face schools on Anglesey. The Review Group identified schools which they would like to review and the Head Teachers, Chairperson of the Governors and the relevant GwE (Regional School Improvement Service) Challenge Adviser were invited to attend to discuss attainment standards, inclusion issues, attendance and the management of resources which includes financial and management aspects.

The main messages from the School Progress Review Group for 2016 were as follows :-

- Schools worked well with GwE and were complimentary about the quality of support provided. All schools had evidence of using development/improvement plans to address areas of weak performance and prioritise actions to improve performance;
- Schools worked well with other schools on the island in order to share good practice, but one school expressed disappointment at the effectiveness of the local scheme;

- Under the Welsh Government's colour-coded school ratings ranking system, some schools were categorised better than others, but all are committed to improve educational standards for all learners;
- School representatives that attended the Review Group were open in identifying weakness in school performance and were able to provide a cogent explanation of why this was the case e.g., increase in the cohort numbers who have identified special needs, pupils with less developed Welsh language skills or vacant posts that needed to be filled;
- Schools referred to recruitment difficulties in finding experienced teachers and head teachers to fill vacant posts. Some schools had reservations concerning the possible introduction of a national recruitment agency to fill temporary posts, but others considered that the recruitment process was not at fault but was more of a reflection of a national problem concerning the limited pool of experienced teachers willing to fill vacant temporary posts and head teacher posts, particularly through the medium of Welsh;
- Schools are well regarded in their community;
- There remains support of religious education and its importance in developing positive social and behavioural values.

It was RESOLVED to accept the report and to continue with the work of the Schools Progress Review Group.

ACTION : As above.

6 REGIONAL SKILLS PLAN - NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITIONS BOARD

Submitted – a report by the Head of Regulatory and Economic Development in relation to the above.

The Economic Development Manager reported that the North Wales Economic Ambitions Board (NWEAB) was established to better co-ordinate strategic economic development activity on a regional basis in response to the pressures on public finances. The regional co-ordination and delivery of employment and skills programmes is one of the key priority areas for the NWEAB. The Skills and Employment Workstream of the NWEAB has been adopted and recognised by the Welsh Government as one of its three Regional Skills Partnerships across Wales.

The Chair welcomed Mr. Iwan Thomas, Regional Programme Manager – Skills and Employment from the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) to the meeting. Mr. Iwan Thomas gave a presentation to the meeting on the North Wales Regional Skills and Employment Plan. He highlighted that the aim of the NWEAB is to improve and upgrade the region's skills base and provide employment growth in North Wales. With the employment opportunities available on the island over the next ten years, employers will need to be further supported to drive a skills provision that respond to their needs. Those seeking work need the skills to access sustainable employment, whilst those already in work need to be further supported to develop their potential to be able to compete for employment opportunities in different large projects being established on the island i.e. energy & environment sector, advanced manufacturing and materials, construction, creative and digital

sectors, health and social care, tourism and hospitality and food & drink manufacturing.

Mr. Thomas highlighted the regional challenges for skills and employment as :-

- Addressing lack of succession planning by employers combined with ageing workforce in key sectors;
- Retaining young people into sustainable employment within the region on completion of their studies;
- Developing an adaptable regional skills brokerage model based on existing success delivered at North Wales Prison;
- Increasing the uptake and promotion of STEM related subjects and skills aligned to employer demands;
- Delivering regional skills solutions for transformative projects alongside promotion of local proximity;
- Supporting sustainable development and innovation in our growth sectors to provide attractive career pathways.

Members raised the following matters:-

- There is a need to encourage young people who have left the Anglesey to attend Universities and Colleges to return to potential employment opportunities afforded in North Wales and the Isle of Anglesey;
- Môn Communities First needs to be included in the list of key partners of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board;
- Job Fairs at secondary schools needs to be able to give advice to pupils as to the subjects they need to study to be able to compete for employment opportunities afforded in North Wales;
- Whilst young people need to be aware that STEM subject are important for large developers in North Wales, business subjects need to be highlighted aswell i.e., Human Resources, Administration, Legal, Health & Social Care Sector, Tourism and Hospitality;
- Local firms need to be protected when potential large projects will materialise in North Wales. It is inevitable that firms will lose skilled personnel to large employers.

It was RESOLVED :-

- **To support the recommendations contained within the Regional Skills & Employment Plan and to support the supply of skills needed for future economic growth on Anglesey and North Wales;**
- **That an update report be afforded to the Scrutiny Committee in twelve months on the performance of the Regional Skills Plan with regard to the benefits and impact on the residents of Anglesey;**
- **That young people need to be aware of business subjects in comparison to STEM subjects with regard to avenue employment opportunities that are available.**

ACTION : As noted above.

7 NEXT MEETING

To note that a special meeting of this Committee is to be held on 15 March, 2017 at 2.00 p.m.

The meeting concluded at 4.05 pm

**COUNCILLOR ALUN MUMMERY
VICE-CHAIR IN THE CHAIR**