

COMMITTEE : Special Educational Needs Joint-Committee

DATE: 4 July, 2014

TITLE OF REPORT: Annual Governance Statement

ACTION: To accept the Annual Governance Statement

Background :

The Accounts and Audit Regulations (Wales) (Amended) (2010) require that every Joint-Committee produces a Statement of Internal Control and to this end, an Annual Governance Statement has been prepared.

The Joint-Committee is asked to approve the statement which it is intended will be combined with the Joint-Committee's accounts to form one composite document to be presented to the Joint-Committee for approval at the end of September, 2014.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

This statement meets the requirement to produce a Statement of Internal Control pursuant to Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulation 2005.

Part 1: SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

The Special Educational Needs Joint Committee was established by Gwynedd Council and Isle of Anglesey County Council in 1996 for the purpose of providing a special educational needs service by discharging the functions detailed in a service level agreement between the Joint Committee and the authorities.

The Special Educational Needs Joint Committee is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Special Educational Needs Joint Committee is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, and which includes arrangements for the management of risk and adequate and effective financial management.

Part 2: THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Special Educational Needs Joint Committee is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authorities that are part of the Special Educational Needs Joint Committee to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Special Educational Needs Joint Committee's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The governance framework described above has been in place at the Special Educational Needs Joint Committee for the year ended 31 March 2014 and up to the date of approval of the statement of accounts.

Part 3: THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

3.1 Membership

The Special Educational Needs Joint Committee has been established in accordance with requirements set out in the Local Government Act 1972 under section 101, section 102(1) (b) (power for two or more authorities to appoint a joint committee), section 103 (expenses incurred by a joint committee defrayed between the authorities), section 104 (disqualification for membership of a joint committee as per normal local authority rules) and section 105 (disability for voting on account of interests in contracts etc.).

Membership of the Joint Committee consists of 7 elected members of Gwynedd Council and 7 elected members of Isle of Anglesey County Council. Members are appointed by the Authority in accordance with the rules of political balance relevant to that Authority. In addition, membership of the Joint Committee will include 1 member nominated by the Bangor Diocesan Board of Finance with a right to vote, 1 member nominated by the Catholic Church with a right to vote, and one member nominated by the free churches with no right to vote.

The term of Membership, as well as arrangements for the appointment of a Chair and Vice Chair, are defined within the Constitution.

The Joint Committee is a permanent arrangement, and in accordance with the Constitution, if either authority desires to withdraw from the Joint Committee twelve months' notice must be given terminating at the end of the financial year.

3.2 Functions

The Special Educational Needs Joint Committee fulfils the following on behalf of Gwynedd Council and Isle of Anglesey County Council:

- Providing a special educational needs service by discharging the functions detailed in a service level agreement between the Joint Committee and the authorities.

3.3 Structure, Roles and Responsibilities

A Constitution is in place for the Joint Committee, dated 30 January 2004. The Constitution outlines the following roles:

- All activities of the Joint Committee are in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules of Isle of Anglesey County Council.
- Administrative and secretarial facilities shall be provided by Director of Legal Services for Isle of Anglesey County Council; the cost being shared between the two authorities.
- Staff are jointly employed by the two authorities for the purposes of discharging the functions delegated to the Joint Committee. Staff are employed in accordance with the conditions of service of Isle of Anglesey County Council together with any additional conditions imposed by the Joint Committee. The Constitution defines the Joint Committee's power to act in relation to all matters regarding staff employment.
- A personnel service is provided for the Joint Committee by Isle of Anglesey County Council; the cost being shared between the two authorities.
- The financial rules of Gwynedd Council are relevant to all of the joint committee's financial activity. The Joint Committee must report to the two authorities annually upon its financial position.
- All financial services are provided to the Joint Committee by the Head of Finance of Gwynedd Council; the cost being shared between the two authorities.

- The Joint Committee has the right to establish one or more sub-panels and to delegate some of its functions to the Sub-panel(s) provided that that delegation does not prevent the Joint Committee’s own ability to exercise those functions.

Part 4: EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The Special Educational Needs Joint Committee has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the executive managers who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, any reference within the head of internal audit’s annual report, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

- In accordance with the Constitution of the Joint Committee, all of its activities are in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules of Isle of Anglesey County Council. As a result, therefore, reviews of the effectiveness of the Local Code of Governance, the Constitution and the system of internal control of that authority will also incorporate the basis of the Joint Committee’s governance.

We have been advised on the implications of the result of the **review of the effectiveness of the governance framework** by the Special Educational Needs Joint Committee, and that the arrangements **continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework**.

Part 5: SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The processes outlined in previous sections of this statement describe the methods used by the Council to identify the most significant governance issues that need to be addressed.

The Special Educational Needs Joint Committee does not believe that any such issues have arisen during the assessment of its governance arrangements that warrant attention in this Annual Governance Statement.

Part 6: OPINION

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

DEWI R. JONES
 Head of Education, Gwynedd Council

Councillor CAERWYN ROBERTS
 SEN Joint-Committee Chairman

Date: _____

Date: _____

DR GWYNNE JONES
 Director – Lifelong Learning, Anglesey County Council

Date: _____