

PARTNERSHIP AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 15 October 2024

PRESENT:

Councillor Dylan Rees (Chair)
Councillor Gwilym O Jones (Vice-Chair)

Councillors Non Dafydd, Jeff M Evans, John Ifan Jones,
Euryr Morris, Pip O'Neill, Derek Owen, Margaret Murley Roberts,
Ken Taylor and Sonia Williams

Mrs Gillian Thompson – Parent Governor (Primary Schools
Sector);

Mr John Tierney -The Roman Catholic Church

Portfolio Members

Councillor Gary Pritchard – Leader of the Council & Portfolio
Member for Economic Development;

Councillor Dafydd Roberts – Portfolio Member for Education and
the Welsh Language)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive,
Director of Education, Skills and Young People (for item 5 only),
Head of Regulation and Economic Development (for item 4 only),
Head of Democracy,
Scrutiny Manager (AD),
Scrutiny Officer (EA),
Committee Officer (MEH),
Webcasting Officer (FT).

APOLOGIES:

Deputy Chief Executive

ALSO PRESENT:

Portfolio Members

Councillor Neville Evans – Portfolio Member for Leisure, Tourism
and Maritime;

Councillor Carwyn Jones – Portfolio Member for Corporate
Business and Customer Experience;

Councillor Alun Roberts – Portfolio Member for Adults' Services &
Community Safety;

Councillor Nicola Roberts – Portfolio Member for Planning, Public
Protection & Climate Change;

Councillor Dafydd Rhys Thomas – Portfolio Member for Highways,
Property & Waste;

Councillor Robin Williams – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Member
for Finance & Housing.

Mr Dafydd Gruffydd – Managing Director , Menter Môn (for item 4 only).

Mrs Gwenno Jones, Mrs Sharon Vaughan, Mr Rhys Williams – GwE representatives (for item 5 only).

The Chair announced that the order of business would be varied with item 5 – GwE Annual Report for the Isle of Anglesey : 2023/2024 being moved to the last item on the agenda to allow, if discussion progressed, requiring the meeting to be undertaken in private session.

1 APOLOGIES

As noted above.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 September, 2024 were confirmed as correct.

Arising thereon

The Chair referred to the ‘actions’ required following the last meeting and noted that Members of the Committee have received, as requested, reports as regards to ‘Overview of work undertaken by Anglesey County Council to raise awareness regarding the Cost of Living, together with a ‘follow-up’ report by MônCF following questions at the meeting held on 12 September, 2024. He noted that the report on ‘Bus Routes in Rural Areas’ is still awaited.

4 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP - MENTER MÔN

The Chair welcomed Mr Dafydd Gruffydd, Managing Director – Menter Môn to the meeting to present an overview of the services provided by Menter Môn.

The Chair sympathised with the staff of Menter Môn who have lost a valued member of staff recently.

Mr Dafydd Gruffydd, Managing Director – Menter Môn said that Menter Môn was established by the County Council in 1995, and a decision was undertaken to establish the company as a ‘not for profit’ company in 1996 to deliver the EU LEADER programme, which sought to develop solutions to challenges faced in rural areas. Projects in the early years included the Ynys Môn Red Squirrel project, the restoration of Swtan Cottage, the establishment of Gwyl Cefni and the development of the coastal path and Lôn Las Cefni. The company has developed over the years, delivering regional and national projects, but the range and emphasis of work on Ynys Môn has remained constant. Schemes such as Menai

Rivers, which protect the Water Vole, the work of the Menter Iaith, maintaining Aberlleiniog Castle, supporting Anglesey Youth Theatre and organising Gwyl Cefni. The company now employs 85 staff, who work on projects and contracts ranging from business support, renewable energy, to environmental conservation and SMART technology. He further said that most of the work carried out regionally and nationally are through contracts, with any surplus retained within the company to support its various projects as noted within the report. One of the largest project is Morlais, which aims to add value to the tide and bring benefits to Ynys Môn by creating jobs, supporting supply chains and generating income for community project. Mr Gruffydd further said that Brexit posed a significant threat to Menter Môn as the EU was the main source of funding for most of the company's projects. As a result of this uncertainty the company expanded its portfolio, with exploring new areas and developing income generating activities. Menter Môn has revisited the aims of the company and consider the main areas to unlock the potential of people and resources to secure the future of communities. The aims are to support and nurture people; strengthen the economy; enhance the environment and celebrate our culture. However, the uncertainty is ongoing especially within community activities. The SPF funding continues possibly until March 2025 and ARFOR funding also until March 2025 with a possible extension; these schemes employ 25 staff.

Mr Gruffydd referred to Menter Môn's commitments on Anglesey and how they align with the Council's Plan 2023-2028. These align with strategic objectives set out within the Council's Plan, and particularly the Welsh language, the economy and climate change as set out within the report. He further referred that Menter Môn consistently engages with a range of groups and communities across the Island. Menter Môn does not receive core funding and therefore all activities, including engagement, must relate to a contract or grant scheme. Nevertheless, Menter Môn is keen to build a stable relationship with communities and improve communication. He proposed that information will be circulated to all elected members by November 2024 i.e. information will include the company's vision, an overview of current projects, contact details of senior staff and an outline of future plans. Secondly, a meeting will be arranged with elected members of electoral wards over a period of 12 months. This will be an opportunity to outline an overview of the company's work, highlight relevant plans in their areas, and discuss the opportunities and concerns.

The following were points of discussion by the Committee:-

- How can improved collaboration with the County Council and other local bodies maximise local benefits. The Managing Director - Menter Môn responded that discussions have been undertaken recently with the Council to put a structure in place to improve collaboration and regular meetings will be undertaken between Senior Officers of Menter Môn and the Council. Comments were made that whilst it is accepted that collaboration between Senior Officers of Menter Môn and Executive Members are undertaken, engagement needs to be undertaken with other elected members to inform them of community benefits. The Chief Executive agreed that collaboration needs to be improved, and yearly engagement framework will be arranged within electoral wards to inform the elected member as to the opportunities is taking place within these wards. He

noted that this collaboration process will ensure that elected members can inform their local communities and Town/Community Councils.

- As highlighted within the report that Menter Môn was established by the Council to deliver projects on the Island. What assurances are there that Menter Môn's focus is on work and delivery on the Island and what else can be achieved in terms of engagement if resources were available. Mr Dafydd Gruffydd responded that the report highlights the work undertaken by Menter Môn. He said that it is anticipated that the Morlais project will generate income to reduce the dependency on grant funding and short-term grants. However, if Menter Môn had a similar source of funding, as was available at the beginning of the establishment of the company, more community projects could be achieved. Further questions were raised whether both the UK Government and Welsh Government will afford funding that was similar to the previous EU funding. Mr Gruffydd responded that due to uncertainties with resources available it is impossible to gauge as to the funding that will be available. However, he considered that the UK Government might afford similar funding as the SPF and Levelling Up grants or there will be an extension to the current programme delivery of the current projects.
- Questions were asked as to what extent is there enough collaboration with the Town and Community Councils and local alliances. Mr Gruffydd responded that engagement with different group is undertaken across the Island but if more funding was available more engagement and collaboration could entail. With the yearly engagement process with local members, it is hoped that it will help for information and feedback to the Town and Community Councils as to the activities and opportunities within the communities. Further questions were raised as to whether the work undertaken by Menter Môn overlaps the work of Medrwn Môn. Mr Gruffydd responded that there is a good working relationship between Menter Môn and Medrwn Môn. He said that Anglesey is fortunate that they have a range of alliances that support the communities of the Island.
- Reference was made to the proposed large solar parks in the North of the Island. Questions were raised as to how Menter Môn can respect the opinions of those for and against the proposals whilst having an interest in development. Mr Gruffydd responded that Menter Môn does not have a business interest in development and will not benefit from this proposed development in the North of the Island. He said that Menter Môn role is to facilitate the process and to ensure that the local communities benefit from such developments. Comments were made that whilst Menter Môn would not benefit financially from the proposed solar parks, questions were raised whether Community Group would be more beneficial to ensure that the local community benefit from the developments. Mr Gruffydd said that Menter Môn has established 'Ynni Cymunedol Môn' forum which is administered by Menter Môn. 'Ynni Cymunedol Môn' will have its own 'terms of reference' and has representatives from the County Council. He noted that local committees will be established within the communities that will be affected by the proposals and it will be these bodies that will decide how to distribute the funding created from these proposed solar parks for the benefit of the local communities. Further questions were raised as to how Menter Môn will be able to fund the work required to administer such a large project. Mr Gruffydd responded that Menter Môn has its own energy projects, and it is anticipated that the Morlais

programme will generate income in the next three years to enable to fund 'Ynni Cymunedol Môn'.

- Questions were raised as to the challenges of keeping the organisation sustainable due to uncertainty around public funding and short-term grants due to Brexit. Mr Gruffydd responded that Menter Môn is continuing applying for grants from different funding avenue to ensure that community projects are continuing.
- Questions were raised as to the benefit the Island will have from the Morlais and other energy projects. Mr Gruffydd responded that the role of Menter Môn is to ensure that there is local benefit from the energy projects. It is anticipated that a substantial income will be generated from the Morlais project in the next 10 to 15 years. Thereafter, a decision will be needed locally as to how to distribute the income for the benefit of the community.

The Leader of the Council said that it is evident that there is a close link between the Authority and Menter Môn. Menter Môn is strongly embedded in the Island with successful projects within the communities. Due to the current financial climate the collaboration between the Council and Menter Môn is more important than ever to enable projects to be undertaken in communities across the Island.

The Committee thanked Mr Dafydd Gruffydd from Menter Môn for the presentation.

ACTION : There were no additional actions.

5 GWE ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE ISLE OF ANGLESEY : 2023/2024

Submitted – a report by the Director of Education, Skills and Young People for consideration by the Committee.

The Chair welcomed Mrs. Gwenno Jones, Mrs Sharon Vaughan and Mr Rhys Williams from GwE to the meeting.

The Portfolio Member for Education and the Welsh Language said that this is the GwE's Annual Report for the Isle of Anglesey : 2023/2024. He said that the Local Authority works in a close and effective partnership with GwE. GwE is the regional education consortium for North Wales and works in partnership with Anglesey's Learning Service in terms of improving schools, sharing good practice, knowledge and skills, increasing local strengths and building capacity. The reports highlight the main strengths of schools in Anglesey and priorities that need to be further developed. He noted that there has been good work undertaken within the schools regarding the Curriculum for Wales. He further said that a review of the 'middle tier' roles and responsibilities of the education system in Wales was undertaken between July 2023 and December 2023. The review looked upon the role of the regional consortia, local authorities and the National Academy for Educational Leadership, with the aim of clearly identifying their roles and responsibilities and funding streams. It has been noted that there will be a move away from existing arrangements for regional support to a partnership between local authorities which will allow for more local approaches. In light of this, GwE will come to an end as a service from 1 April, 2025. He noted that joint working between local authorities is

undertaken to ensure that the transitional arrangements are in place to ensure that schools receive suitable support during this period.

The Director of Education, Skills and Young People reported that there has been close collaboration between the Education Authority and GwE. The Annual Report before this Committee refers to the work undertaken in 2023/2024.

In considering the report, the Committee discussed the following main matters:-

- In light of the new Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability Framework, what are the best approaches to education scrutiny. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that this is a partnership in terms of the Framework and a Senior Officer from the Education Authority has been facilitating and chairing the regional partnership. He noted that the new Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability Framework is not currently statutory, however, good work has started within the Authority's schools. As part of the Framework's guidance the scrutiny process can hold to account the Portfolio Member for Education as regards to the standard of education and the services to support schools within the authority. He further said a Work Programme has been established to gauge the work undertaken within schools and Estyn reports are viewed to ensure that their recommendations are carried out. He considered that there are a several avenues that the scrutiny process can be undertaken and Governors in school are also part of the process.
- Questions were raised as to whether the Portfolio Member was confident that the transitional arrangements are in place to ensure that schools receive suitable support when GwE as an entity comes to an end. The Portfolio Member for Education, Skills and Young People responded that Officer's will be employed by the Authority to ensure that schools receive suitable support. The Chair suggested that a Member's Briefing Session be arranged to inform and update the Elected Members on the process for the transitional arrangement following GwE as an entity comes to an end. The Chief Executive agreed that a Member's Briefing Session can be arranged, and he noted that reports will be submitted to the Executive in due course and the scrutiny arrangements will also be followed.
- Questions were raised as to what the main challenges Anglesey schools and the Learning Service face in are moving forward. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that the work undertaken in the Authority's school is commendable. He referred specifically to challenges within the Additional Learning Needs and especially with regard behavioural and inclusion issues. He further said that over the years a lot of children who are starting school without communication and social skills and with special needs. Class numbers are rising, and resources are strained which can put added pressure on individual schools. Exclusion from schools is rising as is seen nationally together with attendance issues and especially since the pandemic. He said that changes within the educational systems is challenging with the new Curriculum in Wales with schools having to adapt to the requirements within this curriculum. The retention and recruitment of staff is a challenge across Wales, but Anglesey is fortunate at present with several staff applying for posts as Headteachers. The representatives from

the GwE reiterated the comments by the Director of Education, Skills and Young People and noted that pressures will also be on secondary schools with the new GCSE's grading system in Wales. This new system is designated to differentiate between students of different abilities and reflect the new curriculum. The new system is expected to be introduced in Wales from 2025. It was also noted that Secondary Schools have expressed challenges as regards to Welsh language vocabulary in pupils. Comments were made that there is a system in place to address the literacy and vocabulary issues within the schools and it hoped that this will be progressed to address this issue and that each child when leaving education has the required Welsh and English vocabulary standards.

- Reference was made to the increase in Mental Health problems in children and young people across Wales which influences their education. Questions were raised as to how this Council response strategically to the Mental Health problems. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that there are inconsistencies in schools as regards to the Trauma Informed practices. He noted that Trauma Informed practices is a priority within the Learning Service and to help and support schools to increase consistencies in each school across the Island. Further comments were made that Headteachers and Teachers do have concerns and worries as regards young children with Mental Health issues. Questions were raised as to the support afforded by the Local Education Authority to Headteachers and Teachers in having address Mental Health issues in children. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that there are continued discussions with Headteachers and Teachers with regards to welfare issues of children within schools. He noted that Well-being training sessions are afforded to Teachers and support staff. He further said that the collaboration with other schools is important for Headteachers and facilitating the collaboration is important to have discussions and to work together to share experiences.
- Questions were raised as to what extent has GwE's work had an impact on standards in the schools on Anglesey. The representatives from GwE expressed that it is the teaching staff that have the effect on the standards of schools and GwE's role is to support and assist the teaching staff to raise standards. Reference that GwE has been able to support schools following Estyn reports which has identified the need for intervention within specific areas.
- Reference was made within the report that several teachers in Anglesey have followed the National Leadership Programmes developing leadership capacity across the Authority at every level with twenty teachers having reached the standard to receive NPQH qualification. Questions were raised whether these teachers will progress to become Headteachers in the future. The representative from GwE responded that there are some who achieve the NPQH qualification that shows a willingness to progress to apply for head teaching roles. It was noted that the Local Authority is well placed with several young teachers appointed to senior roles.
- Reference was made within the report that GwE has been continuing to support every cluster to develop their bridging arrangements. With parents deciding to take their children to schools outside the catchment area questions were raised whether the bridging arrangements can be sustained.

The representatives from GwE responded that previously the bridging arrangements referred to the transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools allowing pupils to visit secondary schools. The bridging arrangements within its wider context means the continuation of schooling as part of the curriculum and that learning experiences blends from the primary into the secondary provision and build on the progress children have achieved.

- Reference was made that sixth form pupils from the 5 secondary schools on the Island are having to travel from one school to another or the local college when they have chosen a subject to study at higher level. Questions were raised as to how this can be continuing to be sustainable. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that the Local Education Authority has recent published its Strategic Outline Programme which refers that discussions will be undertaken within the next 3 years as regards to the post +16 educational provision. Initial discussion has already been undertaken with the secondary schools and data has been collected as to how sustainable the current provision is at present. The priority is that the education provision is the most effective for post +16 pupils and there are instances that specific subject may be taught with only one or two pupils having chosen that subject. He noted that consultation will be undertaken when it is appropriate.

As the GwE provision will come to an end in April 2025 the Chair and Members of the Committee wished the representatives of GwE best wishes for the future.

It was RESOLVED to accept the GwE Annual Report for the Isle of Anglesey : 2023/2024.

ACTION : That a Member's Briefing Session be arranged to inform and update the Elected Members on the process for the transitional arrangement following GwE as an entity comes to an end.

6 EDUCATION SCRUTINY PANEL : PROGRESS REPORT

The Chair of the Education Scrutiny Panel, Councillor Gwilym O Jones said that this is the fourth progress report of the Panel which covers the period February – October, 2024. He noted that the Panel met on five occasions during this period and considered the following matters :-

- Schools Improvement Guidance : Framework for Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability (Welsh Government);
- The Welsh Language;
- Measure the Impact of Leadership;
- Estyn Inspections – Welsh Government update;
- Digital Environment in Schools;
- GwE Anglesey Annual Report : 2023/2024;
- Schools Placed in Category, Estyn Follow-Up or Receiving Additional Support
- Scrutiny Panel work programme for the period April – October, 2024.

Councillor Euryyn Morris said that he appreciated that the Education Scrutiny Panel report is submitted to this Committee and noted that the Social Services Scrutiny Panel nor the Finance Scrutiny Panel reports on the work undertaken. He considered that it was important that both these Scrutiny Panels reports on their work so that other elected members, who are not on these Panels, are aware of the progress made.

The Chair said that the Finance Scrutiny Panel reports to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee. He noted that he would raise the issue in the Chairs and Vice-Chairs Forum at its next meeting.

It was RESOLVED to note the progress made during the last period in terms of the work of the Education Scrutiny Panel.

ACTION : As noted above.

7 COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2024/2025

The report of the Scrutiny Manager setting out the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee's indicative Forward Work Programme for 2024/2025 was presented for consideration.

It was RESOLVED:-

- **To agree the current version of the forward work programme for 2024/2025;**
- **To note the progress thus far in implementing the forward work programme.**

The meeting concluded at 4.00 pm

**COUNCILLOR DYLAN REES
CHAIR**