

PARTNERSHIP AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 9 February 2021

- PRESENT:** Councillor Gwilym O Jones (Chair)
Councillor Glyn Haynes (Vice-Chair)
- Councillors T LI Hughes MBE, K P Hughes, Vaughan Hughes, R LI Jones, Alun Roberts, Dafydd Roberts, Margaret Murley Roberts and Nicola Roberts.
- Mr Dyfed Wyn Jones – Parent Governor – Primary Schools Sector;
Mrs Llio Johnson – Parent Governor – Secondary Schools Sector and ALN;
Mr Keith Roberts – Roman Catholic Church.
- Councillor Llinos M Huws – Leader of the Council (for item 5);
Councillor R Meirion Jones – Portfolio Holder (Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth) (for item 4);
Councillor Dafydd R Thomas – Portfolio Holder (Corporate Services).
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Director of Education, Skills and Young People (for item 4),
Interim Head of Regulation and Economic Development (for item 5),
Chief Planning Officer (for item 5),
Senior Manager – Special Educational Needs & Inclusion (FE) (for item 4),
Senior Manager – Welfare (GMH) (for item 4),
Senior Manager – Primary (OD) (for item 4),
Scrutiny Manager (AD),
Scrutiny Officer (SR),
Committee Officer (MEH).
- APOLOGIES:** Chief Executive,
Deputy Chief Executive,
Portfolio Holder for Planning – Councillor Richard Dew.
- ALSO PRESENT:** Ms Catrin Roberts, Mrs Sharon Vaughan, Mr Rhys Williams – GwE (for item 4).
Ms Heledd Jones – Team Leader, Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Planning Policy Unit (for item 5).
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1 APOLOGIES

As noted above.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the following meetings were confirmed as correct:-

- Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October, 2020.
- Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November, 2020.

4 PROGRESS REPORT GwE - FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC

- **Progress Report GwE 2020/21 : support to schools during the Covid 19 pandemic**

Submitted – a progress report - GwE 2020/21 : support to schools during the Covid 19 pandemic.

The Portfolio Holder for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth said that the report refers to the work that has been undertaken between GwE and the local authority in order to support schools during the pandemic. He expressed that there has been a willingness between the organisations to discuss, to share ideas, adapt to achieve the vision of the support to schools and pupils. He said that as Portfolio Holder he wished to express his appreciation to the staff of the Education Department (Team Môn), GwE and Estyn for their work over the difficult situation as regards to the pandemic and the effect on schools.

The Director of Education, Skills and Young People reported that GwE and the local authority have adapted their work in order to continue to provide effective services and support for all their school communities during the pandemic. There has been a need to ensure that the well-being of school leaders, their staff and learners is paramount to the decision making and ensuring that the right level of support, operational or professional, can be directed accurately by the service. Regular contact with school leaders has been well received and has contributed to Head teachers feeling that they could turn to a professional colleague to share challenging issues and to find solutions to address day to day issues. He further said that whilst virtual schooling is not as effective as having children in schools, every effort has been undertaken to provide the best education possible for the pupils.

Mrs Sharon Vaughan, GwE reported that the reported presented to this meeting is how the regional consortium, in partnership with the Local Authorities, has evolved and adapted to support schools during the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic, collaboration between the Education Department, GwE and schools has been effective, open, transparent and constructive. A summary of the work undertaken was attached to the report as follows:-

- Phase 1 – Pre-lockdown
- Phase 2 – Supporting schools at the beginning of the lockdown
- Phase 3 – Distance Learning
- Phase 4 – Supporting schools to re-open
- Phase 5 – Blended Learning
- Phase 6 – Accelerating Learning/Recruit, Recover and Raise Standards
- Phase 7 – Deepening collaboration and developing robust networks

Mrs Sharon Vaughan gave a brief summary of the Appendix 2 to 5 attached to the report to the Committee.

Mr Rhys Williams GwE reported that the welfare and wellbeing has been paramount to the joint working with the local authority and GwE over the difficult period of the pandemic. During this difficult period GwE supported the local authority by introducing and supporting Risk Assessment procedures and producing guidance for using Live Streaming in classes. The Anglesey Team working principle is fundamental to the clear approach and lines of communication between everyone. As a result, specific support has been tailored to the needs of every school and subsequent actions are very robust. GwE Advisors have been in regular contact with individual Head teachers to offer support as required. He further reported that attempting to ensure that the Welsh language does not lose ground has been at the forefront during this period, and both GwE and the Learning Service have endeavoured to support schools. There are numerous examples of schools supporting non-Welsh speaking parents in order to ensure that pupils continue to be exposed to the language over the period. These examples include sharing good practice through purposeful videos with school staff reading stories and sharing videos to support the Welsh language oral development via Google Classroom.

Mr Williams further reported on the Primary Sector and noted that collaboration structures amongst nearly all of the Island's schools have been successfully developed over the period of the pandemic. In co-operation with GwE, groups of primary Head teachers and school management teams in several catchment areas in Anglesey have been collaborating on writing and driving an urgent priority and long-term priorities in areas such a Well-being, Welsh orally and Curriculum for Wales' preparations. Not only does this ensure the sharing of good practices amongst schools, it also ensures that the education system continues to develop capacity for self-improvement. Primary schools in one catchment area in the northern part of the Island have been trialling 'Live Streaming' techniques over the lockdown. Supported by the Learning Service and GwE, they went on to produce a guidance protocol for all schools. This is regarded as successful practice to be shared across the Region and they have since created a Webinar to provide guidance to all schools in North Wales. Primary Schools have been making effective use of the 'Accelerated Learning' resources in order to develop their basic skills after a period of not being able to access regular formal education. All School's on Anglesey have been successfully developing their staff to use technology to continue with learning.

Mrs Sharon Vaughan reported on the Secondary Sector reported that there has been an intense focus across every secondary school on upskilling staff for

them to have the appropriate skills to get pupils to engage in effective digital learning. This has been done formally via training days, informal and voluntary training. There has been a staggering improvement in the digital skills of staff across the five secondary schools on the Island, and an impressive amount of work has been undertaken in a relatively short period. Some schools choose to stream some lessons live to groups of pupils others have used a more blended approach with some live lessons, some non-simultaneous learning via pre-recorded videos or PowerPoint presentations and tasks through the virtual classroom. Attendance in lessons have been monitored in the five secondary schools through SIMS or Class Charts and parents have been contacted in the case of pupils' non-attendance.

Mr Rhys Williams reported on the Special Education Service on Anglesey and said that the Authority has responded successfully to the diverse needs of the children and young people in their care. Based on careful and comprehensive risk assessments, they have set the wellbeing of learners, their families, staff and the wider school community as a main priority and have successfully acted to support them. The extra commitment shown during weekends and school holidays has been a feature of this support and is best practice within the ALN sector. Curriculum revisions and other revisions have continued at a sensible pace during the period, and current improvement plans reflect a set of honest and achievable aspirations in the context of the pandemic.

Mrs Catrin Roberts, GwE reported on the development of the Welsh language to the Committee. She expressed that there is concern within schools as to the effect on the Welsh language even in areas that the language is strong due to the pandemic and pupils not within the school environment. There is a need to increase the use of the Welsh language formally and informally. Teachers plan and prepare bilingual instructions for pupils with voice overs so that pupils can hear the Welsh language, listen to and follow instructions. It is important to ensure that teachers have access to the best resources for promoting distance learning and blended learning and to ensure opportunities for pupils to hear and to speak the Welsh language. Digital guidance is shared and training for teachers is afforded on how to use Hwb software, such as Goggle Classroom, Screencastify, Adobe Spark, Flipgrid and webinars for their professional development. She further noted that there are bilingual tasks set out for parents to support children in learning and understanding the needs of the tasks.

The Committee considered the report and made the following points:-

- Questions raised as to how the Learning Service and GwE adapted their ways of working as a result of the pandemic to respond to the requirement of Anglesey's children and young people, and to provide them with the best possible education. It was expressed that there are pressures on parents who are having to work at home and with more than one child that needs to be encouraged to attend virtual lessons and completing work on-line; there have been concerns that some digital provision has been better in some schools. Mrs Sharon Vaughan, GwE responded that there are some inconsistencies nationally within schools due to the pandemic. GwE has

- been affording guidelines to support schools locally and since the lockdown. Within Anglesey there are strong links with the GwE Advisors in supporting schools and especially those schools which have requested support. Good practices have been shared between schools on Anglesey through meetings in the Primary and Secondary sectors and even though the professional learning programme has been reduced this year but it is still comprehensive and does meet the needs of the situation that is face due to the pandemic;
- Reference was made that hopefully that schools will be opening gradually in the near future. Questions were raised as to how the Learning Service and GwE will continue to monitor and evaluate the quality of learning provision on the Island. Mr Rhys Williams, GwE responded that in respect of monitoring the learning provision it is envisaged that blended learning will continue and schools have already addressed this issue. It has been a challenging situation with GwE been unable to visit schools and contact is made with Head Teachers and staff to support and guide them in matters that have been working well and not so well together with internal processes the schools have in place. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People said that there are strategic forums within schools which afford discussions and monitoring on issues faced by the schools. A Quality Board is currently operational aswell with challenging matters raised between Portfolio Holders, Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and GwE;
 - Concerns were raised as to the support for pupils with special needs and pupils who require additional educational support. Questions were raised as to the support afforded by GwE to standardise the support for these pupils. The Senior Manager – Special Educational Needs & Inclusion responded that a member of staff within each school has a role to raise any concerns as regards to any pupil that needs support. The Team within the schools afford support to pupils and parents as regards to distance learning. Support is also given as regards to mental health and wellbeing and speech and language provisions. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People said that there has been an increase in pupils who have now needed special education needs who may have not have require support before the pandemic and some children having difficulties in coping with the situation. He noted that work has been undertaken by the services of the Authority together with local businesses in affording children with IT hardware to enable them to engage with distance learning. However, if they are having difficulties in engaging with distance learning they are supported, together with their parents, in using the technology provided. The Senior Manager – Primary said that 130 laptops and 120 Wi-Fi units have been afforded to pupils and the IT service is continuing to refurbish available technology together with over 2,000 chrome books afforded through the Hub grant to support pupils;
 - Reference was made that some children are better in assimilating information than others and will prosper with virtual learning. Questions were raised as to how the Learning Service and GwE will be able to monitor and support pupils that have not been able to absorb distance learning and to enable these pupils to catch up with other pupils. Mr Rhys Williams, GwE responded that there is a ‘Fast-track’ system which looks upon basic skills in literacy and numeracy and the role of GwE is to support schools to identify

pupils that need additional educational provision when they return to school in future;

- Reference was made that there has been uncertainty for pupils who are to be taking GCSE's and AS and A level examinations and it seems that these pupils have lost faith in the educational processes. Questions were raised as to the support GwE and the Learning Services can be given to these pupils. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that the Anglesey Team wants to see the pupils back in school as it is safe to do so and there is a tracking system in place to monitor if the pupils are engaging in virtual learning and to able to learn and develop whilst the resources is afforded to them. Mrs Sharon Vaughan, GwE said that attendance of pupils in virtual learning is monitored by the schools. Secondary Schools will now have to gather evidence for examination boards on each pupil but there is still no guidance from WJEC nor Qualifications Wales. The Senior Manager – Welfare said that the Authority is engaging with activities outside educational spectrum and young people are unable to attend clubs and sports facilities at present.
- **An Estyn terms of reference report regarding the work of the Authority to support learning communities within schools since March 2020**

The Director of Education, Skills and Young People reported that this report refers to leadership and collaboration and it states that the Authority is effective in communicating with stakeholders and in supporting the welfare of staff and pupils at Anglesey Schools. He noted that Estyn has referred to 'Tim Môn' and noted that the team shares a strong vision which supports both autonomy and collaboration in schools to achieve the best for the pupils.

Councillor T LI Hughes MBE said that he considered that a press release should be afforded to highlight the good work achieved by the Learning Services with the support of GwE and Estyn in achieving the best possible education for the pupils of the schools on Anglesey.

The Leader of the Council said that she and the Portfolio Holder for Education have been pressurising the examination boards for clarity as regards to examinations for pupils this year and next year. She considered that it would be beneficial that a letter expressing these concerns be sent to Welsh Government.

It was RESOLVED to approve:-

- **GwE's progress report for 2020/21;**
- **Estyn's terms of reference report regarding the Authority's work in supporting its learning communities in schools since March 2020.**
- **That a letter be sent on behalf of the Committee to Welsh Government expressing disappointment and concerns that there is no plan in place as regards to GCSE's and A Level examinations for the Summer of 2022.**

5 SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE - FACILITIES AND ACCOMMODATION (CONSULTATION REPORT)

Submitted – a report by the Team Leader, Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Planning Policy Unit Service in relation to the above.

The Leader of the Council in the absence of the Portfolio for Planning said that the role of this Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is to give detailed advice on special policies linked to tourism in order to ensure that they are implemented effectively and consistently across the Plan area and to support Planning Officers when application are submitted. Following the original consultation process in 2018 and as a result of the comments received, it was considered to be appropriate to undertake a further amendments to the Guidance. A draft version of this SPG was approved for public consultation by the Joint Planning Policy Committee on 4 September, 2020. The SPG thereafter has been subject to a public consultation from 16 October, to 27 November, 2020. She noted that there is recognition that tourism is important for the Island and it can be seen within the SPG that there is a balance for support for the tourism sector and there is also a recognition the need to safeguard local communities moving forward.

The Interim Head of Regulation and Economic Development reported that tourism sector is important to the economy of the Island. It is hoped that a gradual easing of the lockdown will see the tourism sector reopening when it is safe to do so and in a sustainable manner. The SPG gives clear policies for the planning authority on the quality, environment and the Welsh language when dealing with planning applications.

The Chief Planning Officer said that tourism is important for the Island and in general the planning policies in general do promote development of such tourism subject to that they are sustainable and of high standard.

The Team Leader, Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Planning Policy Unit reported that the SPG has been produced to support the policies with the JLDP. During the Joint Local Development Plan Panel meeting held on 22 March, 2019 the Consultation Report on this further consultation was presented, which noted that no further amendments to the Guidance was necessary as a result of the observations received during the consultation period, and a request was made to the submit the Guidance to a meeting of the Joint Planning Policy Committee for adoption. Since the meeting the guidance was submitted to Gwynedd Council's Communities Scrutiny Committee on 4 April, 2019. As a result the discussion at that meeting, it was considered that it would be appropriate to make a minor amendment to the working of the Guidance. Furthermore, a recent appeal decision in relation to considerations linked to assessing 'over-provision' of holiday accommodation has highlighted the need to further amend the Guidance. A draft version of the SPG was approved for public consultation by the Joint Planning Policy Committee on 4 September, 2020. This draft was prepared in consultation with the relevant Officers of both Authorities. The SPG was subject to a public consultation from 16 October to 27 November, 2020. It was noted that the main amendment to the Guidance that led to the third consultation period related to undertaking a further amendment of

the definition linked to the over-provision of holiday accommodation. By now, the definition as is seen at section 4.6 of the Guidance in Appendix 2 attached to the report, includes a specific threshold in terms of when there is an over-provision of self-catering holiday accommodation within a specific area. In accordance with the amended direction within the Guidance, favourable consideration will not be given to applications for self-catering holiday accommodation when a combination of holiday accommodation and second homes have already reached the threshold of 15% of all the housing stock. It is considered that setting a definitive threshold will make it easier for Officers to assess 'over-provision' in the context of the requirement noted in Policy TWR 2 of the JLDP.

The Team Leader, Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Planning Policy Unit further reported that the Guidance provides direction on relevant consideration linked to assessing sustainable tourism of the highest quality and the effect on the Welsh language and the natural environment. She said that one controversial issue that emerged when preparing the SPG was as to how to define as to the level of number of tourism accommodation which is in line with specific planning policy TWR 2 of the JLDP. Having received appeals and comments as regard to the lack of direction with the Guidance it was appropriate to set a limit on self-catering accommodation when planning permission is considered. While the guidance refers that when 15% of all the housing stock is reached within local communities favourable consideration will not be given to planning application for self-catering accommodation but Gwynedd Council has set a limit of 10%.

The Committee considered the report and made the following points:-

- Reference was made to the development proposal at Newry Beach in Holyhead for 350 dwellings as part of the Marina site which the economic sector was in favour of such a development. An appeal was submitted and the developer has now submitted an application for 250 dwelling on the site for holiday homes. Questions were raised as to whether the SPG – Facilities and Accommodation will be robust in limiting such development that will be afforded at the Newry Beach. The Chief Planning Officer responded that it is not appropriate nor timely to discuss specific planning applications. He noted that if the SPG is adopted it will be a consideration when discussion are undertaken on any planning application in the future as part of the wider context of planning considerations;
- Reference was made to the over provision of holiday accommodation especially within coastal area. Questions were raised as to whether the SPG is robust in limiting such over provision which can affect local communities. The Team Leader, Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Planning Policy Unit responded that it is hoped that adopting the SPG will assist when planning applications are submitted for holiday accommodation. She noted that there are concerns as to over provision of holiday accommodation in coastal areas and that there is limited capacity for such provision. It is hoped that setting out a 15% limit will help the planning process. She further noted that detailed attention has been given whilst preparing the SPG to the effect on house prices due to homes been converted into holiday accommodation and work also has been undertaken to gauge other local authorities such as the Lake District which show examples of limiting the amount of housing stock into tourism accommodation;

- Reference was made that a limited amount of responses was received to the consultation on the SPG – Facilities and Accommodation. Questions were raised as to whether consideration needs to be given as to how consultation is undertaken in the future. The Interim Head of Regulation and Economic Development responded that the pandemic has raised the need to consider consultation digitally and there is a need to encourage people to take advantage of technology in the future. The Team Leader, Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Planning Policy Unit said that correspondence has been undertaken with Town and Community Councils, Elected Members together with web page of the local authorities. Social media has also been a tool for encouraging the public to submit comments regarding the SPG in general;
- Concerns were raised that properties are being afforded as Air B+B's together conversions of garages. The Interim Head of Regulation and Economic Development responded that when planning application are submitted full consideration is given to all the planning policies locally and nationally to come to a decision on the application;
- Comment was made that the planning policies are more relevant than supplementary planning guidance as has been shown during planning appeals. The Team Leader, Gwynedd and Anglesey Joint Planning Policy Unit responded that the planning guidelines are a relative planning consideration when making planning decisions and planning appeals give due consideration to planning guidelines and support planning policies within the JLDP.

It was RESOLVED to accept the report with regard to the Supplementary Planning Guidance: Tourist Facilities and Accommodation and the associated consultation report.

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2020/21

Submitted – a report by the Scrutiny Officer.

It was RESOLVED to note the Work Programme from September 2020 to April, 2021.

The meeting concluded at 12.10 pm

**COUNCILLOR GWILYM O JONES
CHAIR**