

# **PARTNERSHIP AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 14 April 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 M Roberts and Nicola Roberts.
- Portfolio Holder for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth.
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive,  
Deputy Chief Executive,  
Director of Education, Skills and Young People,  
Head of Democratic Services,  
Senior Manager Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion (Gwynedd & Anglesey) (FEE),  
Scrutiny Officer (SR),  
Committee Officer (MEH).
- APOLOGIES:** None
- ALSO PRESENT:** None

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Following the death of the HRH the Duke of Edinburgh recently the Committee observed a minute silence as a mark of respect and sympathy.

### **1 APOLOGIES**

None received.

### **2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

No declaration of interest received.

### **3 ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS AND INCLUSION PARTNERSHIP**

Submitted – an update report by the Director of Education, Skills and Young People on the progress of the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Partnership's work.

The Senior Manager Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion (Gwynedd & Anglesey) reported that the integrated Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Service has been operational since September 2017. In terms of Legislative context, the new Additional Learning Needs Act and Welsh Tribunal Legislation (2018) will come into force gradually from September 2021. The final Code has been ratified in the Senedd on March 23, 2021.

The report is in 3 Parts:-

### **Part 1 – External Appraisal of the Service**

During January/February 2021, Mrs Caroline Rees an External Inspector for Estyn was commissioned to undertake a review of the Anglesey and Gwynedd Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Inclusion Strategy. The review took place over a four week period. As part of the review, Mrs Rees met with a number of team members and stakeholders from schools and the local authority. A comprehensive report outlining actions was provided. A summary of the report was included within the report to the Committee together with important areas for further development of the Service.

### **Part 2 – Support during the COVID period (March 2020)**

The lockdown periods since March 2020 have created significant challenges for children and young people, and for the whole of the education workforce. The ALN & I Service has reviewed the delivery model in a very short period to respond to this over the past year. The statutory duty to provide service in accordance with the SEN Act (2002) has continued, and the transition work for the new Legislation has also continued. There has also been consistent collaboration between the ALN Service, Children's Services and Health Agencies to gain coherence with this work.

During the Autumn Term, Estyn undertook a Thematic Inspection of the Welsh Authorities' response to the pandemic in the context of Vulnerable Learners. The ALN&I Service received praise for the areas of delivery with the report submitted to the local authority.

### **Part 3 – Summarising**

The Service's progress in the context of individual Team Improvement Plans over the past year, the External Appraisal Report, and Estyn's Thematic Inspection, with the following highlighted themselves as key strengths and priorities/areas of development:-

#### **Strengths –**

- An electronic Individual Development Plan system has been developed, and is now in use by all schools, following a successful piloting period. The system significantly facilitates the work of schools and the service;
- Nurturing Schools Project continues to be implemented and demonstrates positive outcomes within primary and secondary education;
- View 2 of the Strategic Review, which relates to Legislative Transformation, is making good progress and continues to ensure that Anglesey is ready for the new ALN legislation in September 2020;
- The Service's Training Strategy has been set and training delivered. This is now an integral part of the role of each team;
- Use of TOMs (Therapy Outcome Measures) is further extended to enable wider reporting of children's progress, as demonstrating the progress of children and young people with ALN requires holistic approaches;

- Arrangements for monitoring ALN provision and resource use are in place as part of the rationalisation of ALN Finance use. This is also part of the ongoing work of View 2;
- The number of tribunals remains very low, with tribunals involved in provision within Anglesey schools being extremely low compared to the national scale in terms of the Authority (i.e. confirming that suitable provision is being introduced);
- School capacity indicators continue to emphasise that Anglesey schools are extremely inclusive – the level of exclusions, the number of pupils in alternative provision, the numbers of elective home education and attendance, give a very inclusive picture compared to national scales.

The Senior Manager Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion (Gwynedd & Anglesey) highlighted the priorities for the next period as follows:-

- Continue to contribute to the Covid recovery plan;
- Implementing the ALN Legislation from September 2021, which will focus on:-
  - The quality of Individual Development Plans, and ensuring that the child is central to the process;
  - Consistency in school provision, and the role of the ALN Co-ordinator;
  - Strengthening and simplifying the pathways of 0-3 and 16-25 provision;
  - Delivery plans for the other groups changing in terms of Authority responsibility (e.g. learners educated at home, learners in independent institutions);
- Continue with the adaptation and development of Secondary Inclusion Provision for September 2021;
- The Services will also continue to priorities of School and Staff Training Strategy and approaches to tracking the progress and effectiveness of interventions within the online IDP.

The Portfolio Holder for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth reported that the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion service has been challenged and review and overall the provision of ALN and Inclusion is robust.

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

- Reference was made that whilst the report highlights strengths within the ALN service it also refers that work is required within the Inclusion perspective of the service. The Senior Manager Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion agreed that further work is required within the Inclusion perspective of the service and the need to develop provision for behaviour in year 9 and key stage 4 including an improved model for Pecyn 25;
- Questions were raised that it has been noted within the report further development of communication with schools is required whilst it can be seen that contact with schools/families of children with IDP/Statement is taking place. The Senior Manager Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion responded that the weekly contact was undertaken through the pandemic with a member of staff from the service contacting

the schools to review the provision for children especially those who are IDP Statement. Moderation Panels have continued and information, requirements of the child/young people is fed through the electronic Individual Development system which is now in use by all schools. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People said that the Senior Manager Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion is now part of the Senior Leadership Team of the Education Department together with representation on the primary and strategic forums. Representation from the ALN & I service are also part of the Catchment Area meetings with schools;

- Questions were raised as to the effect of the pandemic on the service as it has been stated within the report that the review of the ALN & I service took place at the beginning of the pandemic. The Senior Manager Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion responded that as education was afforded through different format the ALN & I service prioritised support for the children/young people as regards to welfare and wellbeing and support for families if required. She noted that the service afforded to the children/young people is now fully functional since the autumn term. Operational functions of the service is carried out virtually to convene Moderation Panels and meetings with schools. The ALN & I staff are now working within the schools rather than working virtually but there are different challenges for the children/young people due to the effect of the pandemic on education and it is important to afford support and settling pupils back to a normal routine of attending school;
- Further questions raised whether the changes forced on the ALN & I service due to the pandemic will continue. The Senior Manager Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion responded that best practice established was that a one link co-ordinator from ALN and I service deals with the any enquiries from schools and discussions are undertaken on a weekly basis as regards to any concerns. The Co-ordinator thereafter is able to escalate any problems and any additional support to the ALN & I service;
- Questions were raised as to how the work of the ALN & I Service can be further strengthened. The Senior Manager Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion responded that the ALN & I Partnership between Gwynedd and Anglesey has prioritised the Inclusion provision of the service and work will be undertaken with the Children's Service and it is anticipated that it will strengthen the service for children and young people. In accordance with the new Additional Learning Needs Act the specialist service will be strengthened with opportunities for people to training as Educational Psychologist for hearing and visual impairment teachers; it will be a pathway to recruit local and bilingual staff in these areas together with speech and sign-language specialist;
- Questions were raised as the ALN & I Service is able to monitor home schooling children. The Senior Manager Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion responded that an increase was seen in September 2020 when parents de-registered children from the local authority education service due to the pandemic. Parents who de-register their children will have to take responsibility for the education of their children. She noted that in September 2022 statutory guidelines will come into force to monitor the education of home schooling pupils. Virtual conference has been afforded for parents of home schooling pupils which was well attended and another virtual conference will be afforded before the end of this school term;
- Reference was made that it is still taking a lengthy process to identify a child additional needs and neurodevelopmental needs. Questions were raised as to the current waiting period for a child to be diagnosed with learning needs and neurodevelopmental needs to have access to educational psychologist. The Senior Manager Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion responded that the Psychologist Team work closely with the schools and they do not have a waiting list to see children. The neurodevelopmental needs is dealt with by the local health board and discussion have taken place for children to be seen earlier. She noted that better communication with the ALN & I team is now taking place with the neurodevelopmental department in terms of

accessing and identifying the needs of the child. Members requested that examples of case studies be afforded to this Committee when an update report on the ALN & I service is submitted;

- Reference was made that the ALN & I service has not seen cases of legal challenge on Anglesey during the pandemic. Members expressed that most parents do not have the experience of challenging such a service. The Senior Manager Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion responded that support can be afforded through SNAP Cymru for statutory assessment of children.

It was **RESOLVED** :-

- **To note the progress of the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Partnership's work;**
- **To note the response of the Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Partnership to the recommendations noted by the External Adviser as part of the recent external evaluation.**

**ACTION** : As noted above.

#### **4 SCHOOLS PROGRESS REVIEW PANEL - PROGRESS REPORT**

Submitted – a progress report by the Scrutiny Officer on the Schools Progress Review Panel.

The Chair said that the report refers to the last 4 meetings of the Schools Progress Review Panel and covers the period November 2020 to March 2021. He noted that monitoring of individual school standards is well established and continues to develop. Following discussion in October 2019 regarding the programme for monitoring standards in individual schools, there was strong evidence of action on the decision in terms of further developing scrutiny. However, the work has currently been affected by the result of the pandemic and the Panel intends to revisit these visits when conditions permit. The Panel will therefore need to adapt the way it works and scrutinise the performance of individual schools, and there is scope for the Panel to undertake this work virtually in the future.

The Chair referred that the Panel has considered the following matters:-

- The Council's Response to Covid-19 (Part 3) : Support for Vulnerable Children and Holyhead Project;
- Welfare Provision;
- GwE Progress Report 2020/21 : Supporting Schools during the Covid-19 pandemic;
- The Welsh language;
- Special Schools;
- Next Steps;
- Estyn: support of local authorities and regional consortia for schools and PRUs to respond to Covid-19;
- The Journeys of two Secondary Schools on the Island;
- Update on the developments of the Gwynedd and Anglesey Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Partnership;

- Digital support for schools and general developments regarding the Welsh language.

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

- Questions were raised as how the Panel can develop so that the voice of the child/pupils can be heard. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that the Education Service is encouraging pupils to express their view as part of the school activities and education. He noted that School Council afford pupils the opportunity to raise issue of concerns and enables for ideas/vision the children may have to improve the work focus of the schools;
- Questions were raised whether the actions taken by the Panel is robust enough and whether the rate of the work undertaken is appropriate and if matters need to be escalated to the Scrutiny Committee. The Chair responded that the Education Officers attend the Panel together with representatives from GwE. He further expressed that the association with GwE is advantageous to the Panel so as to enable issues are addressed and share information. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People said that discussions within the Panel are able to discuss issues that may in the future be a problem with educational spectrum; representation of the Panel is able to challenge the Officers from the Education Service and GwE. He noted that an invitation has also been afforded to Estyn to attend any meetings of the Panel.
- Questions were raised whether the Panel has evidence that it is adding value to Education service. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that significant preparatory work is undertaken for the Panel and minutes and reports are available. He noted that the Education Service has benefited from the work of the Panel with Heads of primary and secondary schools being invited before the Panel together with members of the Panel visiting the school. The support of GwE and Estyn has also been effective to the work of the Panel. The Chief Executive said that the strengths of the Schools Progress Review Panel is that it has been able to evolve around the challenges within the education service. She noted that the Panel is been recognised by Estyn and GwE and nationally as good practice. The Chief Executive raised that the Panel needs to consider if it was announced that no external examinations will be held in the next 5 years for the generation of pupils that are in schools at present; the Panel will need to discuss as to how it will challenge the schools in their performance in this respect. The Chair responded that a letter was sent to the Minister for Education, Mrs Kirsty Williams MS on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee to ascertain clarity in respect of GCSE's and A level examination for pupils in the future. The Chair read out the response by Mrs Kirsty Williams MS to the meeting.

The Portfolio Holder for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth said that the School Progress Review Panel has delivered robust challenges to the performance of schools on the Island and it is evident that the standards of schools on the Island has made significant improvement and progressed over the last few years.

It was **RESOLVED** :-

- To note the progress to date the work of the School Progress Review Panel in delivering its work programme which includes robust challenge of individual schools' performance;
- To note the areas of work addressed through the new arrangements introduced in shadowing the Learning Service and GwE.
- That the Scrutiny Committee approve the robustness of the Panel's monitoring to date.

**ACTION :** As noted above.

## **5 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

Submitted – a report by the Scrutiny Officer.

Councillor T LI Hughes MBE requested that an invitation be extended to the Chief Executive of the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to attend this Scrutiny Committee.

**It was RESOLVED :**

- to note the Work Programme from June 2021 – November 2021.
- that an invitation be extended to the Chief Executive of the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to attend a future meeting of this Scrutiny Committee.

**COUNCILLOR GWILYM O JONES  
CHAIR**