

PARTNERSHIP AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 20 September 2021

- PRESENT:** Councillor Gwilym O Jones (Chair)
- Councillors T LI Hughes MBE, K P Hughes, R LI Jones, Alun Roberts, Dafydd Roberts and Margaret M Roberts.
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive,
Deputy Chief Executive,
Director of Social Services,
Director of Education, Skills and Young People,
Head of Democratic Services,
Committee Officer (MEH).
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Glyn Haynes, Vaughan Hughes and Nicola Roberts.
Mrs Anest Frazer (The Church in Wales).
- ALSO PRESENT:** Leader of the Council – Councillor Llinos M Huws (in respect of Item 4);
Councillor Carwyn Jones – Portfolio Holder for Major Projects and Economic Development (in respect of Item 4);
Councillor R Meirion Jones – Portfolio Holder for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth (in respect of Item 5).
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The Chair said that Mrs Sioned Rowe, the Scrutiny Officer has recently given birth to twin girls. Members of the Committee extended their congratulations and best wishes to Mrs Rowe and the family.

In the absence of the Vice-Chair, Councillor K P Hughes was elected Vice-Chair for this meeting only.

1 APOLOGIES

As noted above.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

3 MINUTES

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

- Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June, 2021;
- Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June, 2021.

4 NORTH WALES ECONOMIC AMBITION BOARD PROGRESS REPORT - QUARTER 1 : 2021/2022

Submitted – a report by the Chief Executive in relation to the above.

The Leader of the Council said that the Quarter 1 performance report provides an overview of progress on the Growth Deal programmes and projects. However, she noted that whilst it is not evident within the report, considerable work has been undertaken in the background with regards to governance procedures and arrangements to ensure the success of the Growth Bid. This quarter saw the first Outline Business Case considered and approved by the North Wales Economic Ambition Board and the assurance process for the project has since been approved by Welsh Government. The Morlais Tidal Energy Project run by Anglesey social enterprise Menter Môn will now move to the next phase and submit a Full Business Case for consideration once the consenting process has been completed.

The Chief Executive said that processes are put in place by both the UK Government and Welsh Government are stringent to assure that the projects within the Growth Bid are scrutinised as significant financial resources have been afforded by both Governments. She was pleased that the first project to be approved was a project on the Island - the Morlais Tidal Energy Project.

The Deputy Chief Executive reiterated the comments of the Chief Executive as to the Morlais Tidal Energy Project. He further said that two further Outline Business Cases – the Glynllifon Rural Economy Hub led by Grwp Llandrillo Menai and the Digital Signal Processing Centre led by Bangor University have started the approval process. Both these projects have completed their independent Gateway Reviews and will be reported formally within the Quarter 2 progress report to this Committee. The majority of the programmes are currently reporting as Amber following revising the business case development timetables resulting in a delay compared to the timetable outlined in the Portfolio Business Case. This is primarily due to the processes taking longer than originally estimated due to complexity as regards to planning permission, financial consideration, governance and procurement process. He further said that the North Wales Economic Ambition Board has appointed a new strategic communications partner – Ateb Cymru – to support communications and marketing activities whilst Hatch Regeneris has been appointed to provide general business case consultancy to the Portfolio Management Office. Wavehill has also been commissioned to support the development of an economic case for the Smart Local Energy Project and Real Wireless to deliver a scoping study to support the Connected Corridors project within the Digital Programme. The Deputy Chief Executive further said that the priority is to see as many of the projects within the Growth Bid implemented and capital works in place as soon as possible.

The Portfolio Holder for Major Projects and Economic Development said that a substantial amount of work is required to move forward the Growth Bid and he was pleased that the Morlais Tidal Energy Project has now moved forward to the next stage. He further said that both UK and Welsh Governments, private businesses as well as the Ambition Board are involved in moving forward the projects within the Growth Bid.

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

- Reference was made that the Economic Ambition Board has appointed four consultants to support the work of the Board. Questions were raised as to whether the Board will appoint further consultants in due course. The Deputy Chief Executive responded that expertise in different aspects of the projects needs to be appointed to ensure that projects add value and support the regional team;
- Reference was made that the timetable for the development of some of the Business Cases has slipped up to six months in some cases. It was noted that the Portfolio Management Office has put arrangements in place to ensure that Business Cases are of a required standard. Questions were raised as to why this process was not put in place at the beginning of the Growth Bid process. The Chief Executive responded that lessons have been learnt during the first project that has been progressed to the next stage. The Gateway Reviews have taken longer than expected with regard to the Outline Business Case but the new timetables produced are more realistic to be able to realise the projects within the Growth Bid. The Deputy Chief Executive said that the governance processes set by both UK and Welsh Governance are stringent processes to comply with the release of major funding towards the projects within the Growth Bid;
- Reference was made that it is noted within the report that some projects are currently reporting as Red due to either risks to the project scope or significant delays to project timetables. Concerns were raised that funding towards the projects within the Growth Bid may not materialise and specifically reference was made to the Holyhead Gateway (Land and Property Programme) that the scope of the project is under review due to concerns regarding the cost of the project and the commercial case. The Deputy Chief Executive responded that the Holyhead Gateway is an important project within the Growth Bid and both Governments are in consultation with Stena with regard to the re-building works required to the Breakwater at Holyhead and the increase in capacity within the Holyhead Port to increase the economic growth of the Port. He noted that arrangements can be made to update the elected members for the Holyhead area as regards to this project in due course;
- Questions were raised whether both UK and Welsh Government were collaborating with the regards to the Growth Bid as the costs of affordability has increased as construction costs have increased significantly recently. The Leader of the Council responded that due to the substantial financial resources afforded by both Governments towards the Growth Bid they are part of the Bid and Officers from both Government are present during meetings with Officers of the Regional Board;
- Reference was made to the Full Fibre at Key Sites and Connected Campuses (Digital Programme) which notes that the business case development timetable has been pushed back to allow programme capacity to focus on initial two Portfolio Management Office projects. Questions were raised whether there is capacity within the Regional Team to manage all the projects. The Deputy Chief Executive responded that the Growth Bid is a project of 10 years and the recruitment process within the Regional Teams is increasing with experienced Officers appointed to move the projects within the Growth Bid.

It was RESOLVED:-

- **To note the progress made during Quarter 1 – 2021/22;**
- **That a letter be sent to the North Wales Economic Ambition Board expressing concerns as regards to the financial resilience to allow the projects within the Growth Bid to materialise.**

ACTION : As noted above.

5 SCHOOLS' PROGRESS REVIEW PANEL - PROGRESS REPORT

Submitted – a progress report on the work of the School Progress Review Panel.

The Chair said that it was decided to introduce a temporary programme during the pandemic with the initial focus on scrutiny of the Learning Service's response to the Covid 19 and the arrangements put in place during the emergency period. The work to monitor the standards of individual schools is well established, and continues to develop. He referred that an update on the Welsh Language within the Anglesey's Education System was afforded by the Primary Senior Manager to the Panel. Reference was also made to the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan which is a 10 year plan with 7 outcomes which was outlined within the report. The Chair further referred to the Self-Evaluation of the Panel's work undertaken and it has been noted that the Panel's work has had a very positive impact and has held schools to account, challenge and assist in their continued development and improvement. In terms of the areas for further development, it was felt that adequate follow-up did not occur after Panel Members visited individual schools. It would be advisable to arrange a follow up visit approximately six months after the original visit to see if any developments or improvements have been implemented.

The Chair further said that a verbal report was presented to the Panel on the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018 focusing on the implications of the act locally. The main changes were outlined in that the age has now extended from 0-25 years, and that there is a 7 week period to determine whether an individual has Additional Learning Needs, which is much sooner than the requirements of the previous act. Reference was made to the innovative work in that the Council has an IDP system, with every school on the Island having access to the system, which means that the data is live and current. It was noted that Anglesey and Gwynedd are the only two counties in Wales that have such a system and therefore lead the way in that regard. The Chair noted that a letter has been sent to Welsh Government to express concern that there is a lack of Welsh Psychologist from North Wales being trained currently, which will lead to a staff shortage in the years to come. Furthermore, the Panel received input from two Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinators and the points raised during their presentation was noted within the report. It was noted that the Panel will receive regular updates to monitor the progress against the requirements of the Act.

The Portfolio Holder for Education, Libraries, Culture and Youth said that the Panel has received important reports as regards to the Additional Learning Needs Service and the Welsh Language within the Anglesey's Education System recently. He wished to thank the Panel for their work but the priorities of education is continuing

to change and especially during the pandemic. The Portfolio Holder challenged the Panel to demonstrate as to how it has developed since it was established over 8 years ago. The Chair responded that firstly he considered that the Schools' Progress Review Panel has convinced Head teachers that they are critical friends rather than seen as a group that was there to criticise the education within schools. However, the existence of the Panel proves that there is accountability and a clear structure in terms of reporting and it is important that the Panel continues to challenge the schools to improve standards within the Islands schools. The Committee considered the report and made the following main points:-

- Reference was made whether the priorities of the Schools' Progress Review Panel needs to be reviewed following its work to improve the standards with schools and especially during the pandemic. The pandemic has raised issues of the welfare needs of pupils having to receive their education digitally from home. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that it is imperative that the work of the Panel continues towards the journey of excellence within schools. He noted that the priority is to be able to afford the best education for the pupils of the Island;
- Reference was made that the aim is to see the schools on the Island achieving excellence. Questions were raised as to what procedures can be put in place to achieve that all schools on Anglesey are recognised by Estyn as reaching 'Green' and that no school is classified as 'Red'. The Chief Executive said that she agreed that the aim is to see the schools on Anglesey achieving excellence but she emphasised that the definition of excellence by Estyn will entail that the Council needs to demonstrate that it will be able to lead other counties;
- Reference was made that the Panel has considered that the well-being of the pupils is paramount and especially that the 'voice of the child' is listened to;
- The Chief Executive said that the Education Service will receive a visit from Estyn in the near future and she questioned whether the Schools' Progress Review Panel will be viewed as a sector leading in respect of excellence in schools. The Director of Education, Skills and Youth expressed that the education services is striving to achieve excellence within the schools on Anglesey. He noted that Estyn representatives have met with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Schools' Progress Review Panel to discuss the work achieved in the improvements of schools. The Director of Education, Skills and Youth further said that it is imperative that the work programme of the Schools' Progress Review Panel continues prior to the pandemic. He noted that the visits to the schools needs to be resumed to review the work achieved within the schools and to report back to the Panel on specific areas of work that needs to be addressed;
- Reference was also made to the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan which is a 10 year plan with 7 outcomes which was outlined within the report. Questions were raised as to whether the Schools' Progress Review Panel was to receive a progress report on the outcomes as regards to the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. The Chair responded that the outcomes from the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan will be discussed at a future meeting of the Panel;
- Reference was made that the pandemic has had an immense effect on education and especially pupils in Years 10, 11, 12 and 13 with GCSE and A level education been affected. It was expressed that it is imperative to gauge the pupils education levels and that pupils are given support with regards to any

shortfalls within their education and to make sure that they succeed in their examinations if they are to take place next Summer.

It was RESOLVED to note:-

- **The progress to date with regard to the work of the School Progress Review Panel in terms of achieving its work programme which includes to robustly challenge the performance of individual schools;**
- **The areas of work that were given attention through the new arrangements made as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic;**
- **The robustness of the Panel's monitoring work to date.**

ACTION : As noted above.

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Submitted – a report by the Scrutiny Manager.

It was RESOLVED:-

- **To agree the current version of the forward work programme for 2021/22.**
- **To note progress thus far in implementing the forward work programme.**

The meeting concluded at 3.35 pm

**COUNCILLOR GWILYM O JONES
CHAIR**