

PARTNERSHIP AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 7 February 2023

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

Councillors Non Dafydd, Jeff M Evans, T LI Hughes MBE,
Pip O'Neill, Derek Owen, Margaret M Roberts and Ken Taylor.

Members of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee (invited to attend)

Councillors Robert LI Jones (Chair), Glyn Haynes, Jackie Lewis,
Llio A Owen, Keith Roberts.

Portfolio Members

Councillor Llinos Medi (Leader of the Council); Councillor Gary Pritchard (Portfolio Member for Children's Services – Social Services and Youth Service); Councillor Alun Roberts (Portfolio Member for Adults' Services – Social Services); Councillor Dafydd R Thomas (Portfolio Member for Highways, Waste and Property).

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive,
Deputy Chief Executive,
Director of Education, Skills and Young People,
Senior Manager (Secondary Sector) (AE),
Scrutiny Manager (AGD),
Committee Officer (MEH).

APOLOGIES: Councillors John Ifan Jones and Euryrn Morris (Members of the Partnership & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee).

Councillors Geraint Bebb and Dyfed W Jones (Members of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee)

Councillor Nicola Roberts (Portfolio Member for Planning, Public Protection & Climate Change); Councillor Ieuan Williams (Portfolio Member for Education and the Welsh Language).

ALSO PRESENT: Mr Arwyn Thomas (Managing Director GwE).
Ms Gwenno Jones (Ynys Môn Core Leader – GwE)

Reference was made to the horrific tragedy of the earthquake on the border between Turkey and Syria and the loss of thousands of lives. A minute's silence was undertaken by Members and Officers as a mark of respect.

1 APOLOGIES

As noted above.

2 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 17 January, 2023 were confirmed as correct.

4 GWE ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE ISLE OF ANGLESEY 2021/2022

Submitted – the GwE Annual Report for the Isle of Anglesey 2021/2022.

The Leader of the Council, in the absence of the Portfolio Member for Education and the Welsh Language, said that GwE's Annual Report highlights the work undertaken in 2021/2022. She also noted that the report refers to the work programme and the support the schools received during the pandemic by the local authority and GwE to reduce the effect on pupils. The Leader wished thank the representatives from GwE for the support and guidance they give the schools on a daily basis.

The Portfolio Member for Children's Services (Social Services) and Youth Services said that there is an overlap between the Education Portfolio and the Children's Services Portfolio as regards to children in care and their educational needs. He noted that the report discusses the awareness of trauma and with three primary schools identified as trauma informed schools. He further said that there has been a close working relationship with GwE for nearly 10 years and the report highlights not only the education elements but also the welfare issues sustained during the pandemic.

The Director of Education, Skills and Young People reported 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 strengths and building capacity. The partnerships working has been highlighted within the Estyn inspection report on the Anglesey County Council's Learning Service held in June 2022. He noted that during the inspection, Estyn noted two recommendations for the Local Authority to implement which was to strengthen processes for evaluating the effect of the Learning Service's work and to develop and strengthen formal scrutiny arrangements. The Learning Service's work (including GwE's work) is regularly scrutinised by the Education Scrutiny Panel. However, to strengthen the scrutiny process, and to respond to Estyn's recommendations, the Learning Service and its partners' work is scrutinised annually through this Committee. He further reported that the education service is going through a period of substantial changes, with a new Curriculum and the new

Additional Learning Needs legislation together with the financial issues, staff recruitment and post-covid response. As part of this reform, the accountability process is evolving, including reporting on and scrutinising education, which includes school performance and effectiveness. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People further referred to the new School Improvement Guidance published by Welsh Government, which will be statutory from September 2024. The guidance will strengthen accountability systems, with schools held directly accountable by their governing bodies and Estyn for the quality of provision and the progress of learners. In addition, the guidance clearly notes that each partner is part of the process, with clear accountability on the support services such as the Learning Service and GwE. Close collaboration will be required between Anglesey Local Authority and GwE to provide support based on the improvement priorities of each school's school development plan. The Scrutiny Committees will be able to scrutinize the effectiveness of collaboration between the Local Authority and GwE and to monitor and improve schools that are causing concern.

The Managing Director of GwE reported that the Annual Report 2021/2022 outlines how GwE staff have repurposed their work appropriately over the last two years to continue to deliver effective services and support schools during the pandemic. The report also describes how GwE has continued to support schools in their preparations for the Reform Journey and new Curriculum for Wales and in improving the quality of teaching and leadership, wellbeing and the Welsh language. He noted that it is accepted that the Annual Report by GwE needs to be submitted earlier within the work programme of the Authority's scrutiny process.

In considering the GwE Annual Report – Isle of Anglesey County Council 2021/22 the Committee discussed the following:-

- **Reference was made to the health and well-being of children and young people. Questions were raised as to why physical education is not identified as a core subject within the new curriculum.**

The Managing Director of GwE responded that the aims within the new Curriculum for Wales is for healthy and strong individuals and well-being of children and young people. The local authority and the schools are able to establish a local programme to meet the needs of the individual schools and its pupils. The GwE Ynys Môn Core Leader said that health and well-being is included within the six learning areas in the new Curriculum and staff within the schools are supported to highlight physical education. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People said that the Education and Leisure Services work closely to enhance the health and well-being of children and a Sub-Group has been established between both services to promote physical education within the schools across the Island. He also noted that there are opportunities for pupils to take part in after-school activities which promote healthy living and local sports facilities are also available i.e. football and rugby clubs who afford pupils the opportunity to play sports.

- **How do we know what the standards are in Anglesey schools?**

The Chair referred that there is reference within the Annual Report regarding self-assessments within schools but he questioned as to how objective the schools are when they conduct their own self-assessments. The Managing Director of GwE responded that representatives from GwE attend the schools regularly across the Island and since September 2022, the re-establishment of procedures within the schools has been undertaken following the pandemic. He noted that Anglesey has established 'clusters' which allow for schools to assess each other and scrutinise performance within the schools in the specific cluster. He noted that GwE collates the information with the Education Service to assess which schools needs specific support. He referred to the question as regards to how the standards of schools are assessed and noted that the standards of each individual school is assessed, together with data of examination results within secondary schools. The Deputy Chief Executive said that there is a need for schools to be self-sustainable and support is required for Head Teachers to achieve the best educational experiences. He said that collaboration with partner organisations and school governors is imperative to raise standards within the schools. He further said that he was glad that Estyn has recognised that the collaboration with partner organisations has been seen as a valuable support to the schools on Anglesey and also that the local authority has benefited due to the partnership with GwE to offer specific services and training in response to the needs of individual schools and their priorities.

- **Reference was made that the schools on Anglesey collate assessment data individually. Questions were raised whether there should be a standardised procedure undertaken to collect assessment data?**

The Managing Director of GwE responded that every school sets their own vision with regards to the new Curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils, however there are core assessments that are standardised within each school to monitor academic progress. He noted that the Curriculum range is for 3 – 16 years and the assessment is undertaken with the bridging of pupils from primary to secondary schools. The Senior Manager (Secondary Sector) said that there was an announcement recently for the creation of an eco-system to collate information in every school. Discussions are currently being undertaken nationally as regards the relevant data that needs to be collated and will afford Governors to monitor the progress within schools.

- **Following a negative Estyn report on one Anglesey primary school recently regarding concerns about the communication of the Welsh language within this specific school. Questions were raised as to whether GwE can support this specific school to improve the development of the Welsh language.**

The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that there is an intervention plan in place as regards to the primary school that has had a negative Estyn report. Discussions are currently taking place with GwE, the school's Governors and the school's staff to support an improvement package within the school. The School will have to provide progress reports against the specific recommendations to Estyn, the Authority and GwE.

- **Questions raised as to the support given to schools who have a high percentage of children from deprived backgrounds.**

The Director of Education, Skills and Young People responded that meetings are undertaken with the Children's Services on a regular basis and dedicated staff support the schools that have a high percentage of children from deprived backgrounds. He noted that there is a 'Free School Meals' programme in schools and this also helps to support families affected by the cost of living crisis.

- **Reference was made that following the results of the Census published recently there has been a decrease in the number of Welsh speakers on the Island. Questions were raised as to how GwE is working within the schools in response to the target set by Welsh Government to have a million Welsh speakers by 2050.**

The Managing Director GwE responded that the Welsh language is central to the work of GwE. He noted that due to the pandemic, in terms of children who come from English speaking homes, and especially the younger children, speaking the Welsh language has been affected as the children were at home and not hearing the Welsh language spoken on a daily basis. He said that GwE and the local authority have been working closely with Bangor University with regard to the 'Llais Ni' project. The first year of the project has been successful with good practices been recognised across North Wales. Welsh as a second language is also being developed across other regions to respond to the Welsh Governments' target of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050.

- **How can it be assured that each child on Anglesey has the same opportunities and education as other children in different clusters on the Island and in other areas in Wales?**

The Managing Director of GwE responded that there will be challenges when transferring from a National Curriculum process where there is uniformity in what is been taught to a new Curriculum. He noted that every school will have to publish their standards, provisions and their priorities in order to improve the standards of education afforded to pupils.

- **In the wake of the new Accountability Framework, what are the best methods of scrutinising education?**

The Senior Manager (Secondary Sector) responded that there is a role for School Governors to monitor the accountability of schools and to challenge the Head Teachers' of the schools. However, the role of an Elected Member is to challenge the Officers of the Authority, the Portfolio Member and GwE as to the monitoring of the effectiveness of schools within the new Accountability Framework.

It was RESOLVED to accept the GwE's Annual Report for the Isle of Anglesey 2021/2022.

ACTION : As noted above.

5 EDUCATION SCRUTINY PANEL PROGRESS REPORT

Submitted – an update report on the progress of the Education Scrutiny Panel. Councillor Gwilym O Jones, the Chair of the Education Scrutiny Panel said that this is the Panel's second progress report and it covers Q2 of the current administrative year. He noted that the membership of the Panel comprises of 2/3 of newly elected members since the May local government elections. It is therefore necessary for the Council to continue to create the conditions for all Members to fully participate in the Panel's scrutiny work e.g. skills for effective scrutiny, questioning, understanding of the Education system, raising awareness of national education work streams and it is the intention to make full use of the forward work programme to ensure appropriate and timely inputs to support members of the Education Scrutiny Panel. Councillor Jones further said that 5 meetings of the Panel were held during the period of Q2 and the following matters were considered:-

- Estyn Inspection Report for Anglesey County Council
- Curriculum for Wales
- Shadowing GwE
- Role and Expectations of the Regulatory Framework – Political Leadership and Scrutiny
- Terms of Reference and Context for the Panel's Work
- Schools' Improvement Guidance – Framework for Evaluation, Improvement and Accountability (Welsh Government)
- Role of Elected Members, School Governors and the process for schools causing concern
- Anglesey's Annual Report from GwE : 2021/2022
- Scrutiny Panel's work programme for the period September 2022 – April 2023

The Director of Education, Skills and Young People reported that the Panel has been supportive of the work of the Education Service and the development of children and young people's education is at the forefront of the work of the Panel.

In considering the Education Scrutiny Panel – Progress Report the Committee discussed the following:-

- **To what extent is the Scrutiny Committee satisfied with the initial direction of the Panel's work?**

The Chair of the Education Scrutiny Panel said that the Panel has been guided and supported by the Education Officers' and the Scrutiny Manager in their work. He noted that the Panel scrutinises the reports that are afforded to the Panel and further work will be undertaken in some areas within this academic year. He noted that representatives from Estyn and GwE have attended meetings to support the Panel's work.

- **What other areas does the Scrutiny Committee consider that the Education Scrutiny Panel needs to scrutinise?**

The Chair of the Education Scrutiny Panel said that as 2/3 of the membership of the Panel are new, discussions have been undertaken to afford a development programme to allow for the upskilling of Members as regards to the work of the Panel. The Scrutiny Manager said that in collaboration with the 3 Chairs of the Scrutiny Panels, a bespoke development plan will be put in place which will be targeted within the Education Scrutiny Panel in the first instance. She noted that financial expertise has been commissioned to the Finance Scrutiny Committee so as to enable the Panel to be able to scrutinise the Councils financial budgets etc. It is hoped that a similar programme of support will be afforded to the other 2 Panels in due course. The Leader of the Council said that there will be a requirement for the Education Scrutiny Panel to include within their forward work programme the new Curriculum for Wales and to gather information so as to ensure that the key stages are achieved to address literacy and numeracy within the schools and to report back to the Executive. The Director of Education, Skills and Young People said that the course of the education service is developing continuously and especially with the new Curriculum for Wales and the Additional Learning Needs Code. He noted that the Education Panel will be able to scrutinise the key stages within the Curriculum for Wales and to develop a better relationship with the schools on the Island and to invite leaders of the schools to address the Panel as to the process of addressing the new Curriculum.

It was RESOLVED:-

- **To note the initial progress to date regarding the work of the Education Scrutiny Panel;**
- **To support the intention to develop a revised scrutiny model for Education matters as a basis for the Education Scrutiny Panel and the two parent Scrutiny Committees as noted in Part 5, paragraph 2.7 of the report.**

ACTION : As noted above.

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The report of the Scrutiny Manager setting out the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee's indicative Forward Work Programme for 2022/23 was presented for consideration.

It was RESOLVED:-

- **To agree the current version of the Forward Work Programme for 2022/2023.**
- **To note the progress thus far in implementing the Forward Work Programme.**

The meeting concluded at 11.40 am

**COUNCILLOR DYLAN REES
CHAIR**