

Isle of Anglesey County Council	
Report to:	The Executive
Date:	February 18th, 2025
Subject:	Terminating the GwE Partnership Agreement
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr. Dafydd Roberts
Head of Service / Director:	Marc Berw Hughes Director of Education, Skills and Young People
Report Author: Tel: E-mail:	Marc Berw Hughes marchughes@ynysmon.llyw.cymru
Local Members:	n/a

A –Recommendation/s and reason/s

Recommendations:

1. That the Executive approves the termination of the agreement to work in partnership with other North Wales local authorities in the context of the regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE) on the 31 May 2025 and subsequently dissolve the requirement for the GwE Joint-Committee.
2. If there is slippage in the timetable, the Executive Committee gives the right to the Director of Education, Skills and Young People, in collaboration with the Education Portfolio Holder, to decide on a suitable date to terminate the agreement.
3. That the Executive confirms its contractual commitment in relation to ending the arrangement.

1. Decision sought:

The Executive is asked to approve the recommendation to terminate the current collaboration agreement and thereby confirm that GwE, including the GwE Joint Committee, will cease on the 31st May, 2025.

2. The reason why the Executive must make the decision:

Following a review of the responsibilities of Education partners in Wales, there is an expectation from Welsh Government to move from a wider regional way of working to a more local model of working.

To that end, the Transition Board has been established to oversee the arrangements for transferring GwE services back to the local authorities in North Wales.

A –Recommendation/s and reason/s

In order to formalise the change to the partnership arrangement, all six authorities must agree to end the current agreement (GwE Services) as well as abolish the GwE Joint-Committee in order to bring GwE to an end.

3. Introduction and Rationale

3.1 Background / Introduction

GwE was established by agreement between the six Local Authorities in North Wales dated 18 February 2013.

It was agreed to establish a Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service which would be accountable to the six Councils and which would fulfil the statutory functions of the Councils in relation to the effectiveness and improvement of schools i.e. monitoring duties, challenge, provide supportive services for continuous professional development through the curriculum and manage schools as well as provide services that can be commissioned by schools and local authorities.

The councils agreed to appoint Gwynedd Council as the Host Authority for implementing and maintaining the Service by forming a Joint Committee, to keep an overview and give guidance as required, in accordance with Section 101(5) and 102(1) Local Government Act 1972 and Section 20 of the Local Government Act 2000.

3.2 The rationale and justification for recommending the decision

On 31 January 2024, the then Minister for Education and the Welsh Language published a written statement referring to a review of the roles and responsibilities of Education partners in Wales as well as current school improvement arrangements. The statement made it clear that there was an expectation by Welsh Government to move away from the wider regional model for supporting school improvement with a view to establishing partnerships between more than one authority at a more local level. This led to confirmation that GwE would cease to exist as a regional consortium.

As a result of that statement, a Transition Board has been established to oversee the arrangements for transferring GwE services back to the local authorities in North Wales and structures have been developed to provide support to schools at individual local authority level.

A – Recommendation/s and reason/s

However, the agreement, to work together in partnership in this context, needs to be formally concluded. In order to do that, all six Councils need to agree in writing to terminate the current agreement. The Executive is therefore asked to approve the recommendation to terminate this collaboration agreement and thereby confirm that GwE will end on May 31, 2025.

It should be noted that terminating the agreement does not affect accumulated rights or the commitments that have already been agreed upon. Those commitments are detailed in the agreement made between the six Authorities in 2013 (see Appendix 1).

When reaching a decision regarding the recommendations, it should be noted that some uncertainty remains regarding the following:

- Actual pension costs of redundancies
- The final amount of funding promised by the Welsh Government to assist with transitional costs.
- The final balances in the GwE accounts that can be used as transitional costs.

B – What other options did you consider and why did you reject them and/or opt for this option?

Following a national review it was decided to dissolve all consortia across Wales. Due to this, no other option could be considered.

C – Why is this a decision for the Executive?

Authority to establish and withdraw from partnership arrangements is an Executive function pursuant to paragraph 4.8.6.4.1 of the Council's Constitution and therefore within YMCC this decision rests with the Executive.

Ch – Is this decision consistent with policy approved by the full Council?

Approval by the Full Council will not be required.

Ch – Is this decision consistent with policy approved by the full Council?

D – Is this decision within the budget approved by the Council?

The decision to terminate the GwE Partnership Agreement may result in a number of one off costs including the redundancy payments to staff, payments into the Pension Funds to allow the early release of pension for staff over 55 who are made redundant and the potential for a termination payment to the Local Government Pension Scheme as a result of GwE no longer being an Scheduled Body to the Gwynedd Pension Fund.

As the details of staff transfers have yet to be completed, it is not possible to quantify the value of the one-off costs. Any remaining reserves held by GwE and any grant funding from the Welsh Government will be used in the first instance to fund these costs, but if this funding is insufficient, then any balance will have to be funded by the 6 partner authorities in accordance with the terms of the partner agreement.

If there is once again a change to the termination date, the Council has the budget to pay if the contribution to GwE needs to change.

Dd – Assessing the potential impact (if relevant):

1	How does this decision impact on our long term needs as an Island?	Due to this decision, one central team will be created in order to respond to the local needs of Anglesey.
2	Is this a decision which it is envisaged will prevent future costs / dependencies on the Authority? If so, how?	In the long term the change allows the Council to offer the service at a lower cost and gives the Council more control over the

Dd – Assessing the potential impact (if relevant):		
		service, working in partnership with schools.
3	Have we been working collaboratively with other organisations to come to this decision? If so, please advise whom.	IACC has collaborated with the Welsh Government and North Local Authorities.
4	Have Anglesey citizens played a part in drafting this way forward, including those directly affected by the decision? Please explain how.	N/A
5	Note any potential impact that this decision would have on the groups protected under the Equality Act 2010.	N/A
6	If this is a strategic decision, note any potential impact that the decision would have on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.	The decision is a strategic one and will not impact on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage
7	Note any potential impact that this decision would have on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.	No impact

E – Who did you consult?		What did they say?
1	Chief Executive / Senior Leadership Team (SLT) (mandatory)	The Leadership Team had input into the report
2	Finance / Section 151 (mandatory)	See Section D of the report above
3	Legal / Monitoring Officer (mandatory)	The Senior Legal Officer had input into the report
4	Human Resources (HR)	n/a
5	Property	n/a
6	Information Communication Technology (ICT)	n/a
7	Procurement	n/a
8	Scrutiny	n/a
9	Local Members	n/a

F - Appendices:
Partnership Agreement entered into between the six Authorities in 2013

--

Ff - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):
--

Welsh Government - School improvement guidance: a framework for evaluation, improvement and accountability
--