

## IMPROVEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on 28th February, 2013 (11:00 am)

- PRESENT:** Commissioner Alex Aldridge (Chair)  
Commissioner Mick Giannasi  
Chief Executive
- Executive : Councillors W.J.Chorlton; K.P.Hughes; R.LI.Hughes;  
T.Lloyd Hughes; Bryan Owen; G.O.Parry, MBE; R.G.Parry, OBE.
- Scrutiny Chairs : Councillors Lewis Davies; Selwyn Williams.  
Deputy Chief Executive; Director of Sustainable Development;  
Director of Lifelong Learning; Head of Function (Resources);  
Children Service Improvement Programme Manager (JD)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Committee Services Manager; Project Manager
- ALSO PRESENT:** Mr.Steve Pomeroy (Welsh Government); Messrs. Andy Bruce  
and Huw Lloyd Jones (Wales Audit Office); Professor Mel  
Ainscow (Chair of the Anglesey Education Recovery Board).
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors Keith Evans; O.Glyn Jones; Commissioner Byron  
Davies; Mr.Mark Roberts (CSSIW); Director of Community.

The Chair extended a warm welcome to Professor Mel Ainscow, Chair of the Anglesey Education Recovery Board and to Ms.Danielle Edwards newly appointed Project Manager and wished her well in her new post.

The Chief Executive explained to the Board that as the Programme Board structure was not quite in place, it had not proved possible to provide exception reports for today's meeting. The proposed three Programme Boards, consisting of members and officers would work together to formulate policies in relation to the improvement and effective operation of the Council's workstream. Any matters arising from these Programme Boards would report to this Sustainability Board, which would take a general overview on performance and set the direction for the Council's performance. The day to day running of the Council's business would happen at these Programme Boards. Once this procedure had been established, then the procedure of reporting up and exception reporting would work effectively.

### 1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None to declare.

### 2. APOLOGIES

As above.

### 3. MINUTES

Submitted and confirmed as a true record, the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement and Sustainability Board held on 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2013.

### 4. TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY – STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT) EVALUATION OF PROGRESS REPORT

Reported by the Deputy Chief Executive – That in order to focus between now and May 2013, Welsh Government Commissioners had requested that we focus improvement activity in two 90 day cycles. Work had been undertaken by the SLT in conjunction with the Commissioners and Hay to map out a number of key components to get the transformation started and these were outlined in two 90 day cycles of work that the SLT had set out and agreed.

Overall, solid progress was being made in all areas. Since the last meeting, the Interim Programme Manager had been collating information, developing terms of reference including membership and looking at the programme management approach. A Manager's Conference had been held earlier this week with 45 middle managers in attendance discussing the transformation plan and the efficiency agenda. It had been very positive and encouraging with individuals volunteering to lead on the 6 key themes.

A Development day had also been held recently with the Heads of Service to progress and prepare for the new corporate plan and the efficiency strategy, for approval by the new Council in the Autumn of 2013.

The Deputy Chief Executive was then afforded the opportunity of providing a summary of progress made since the last meeting of this Board for each of the 16 theme areas that needed to be progressed as part of the two 90 day cycles of work. For each of those 16 areas of work, there was a summary which identified progress made to date and some of the areas which would be worked upon next.

The Leader of the Council referred to how things were now improving in the Council and he took the opportunity of congratulating the Housing Service and the Housing Portfolio Holder in that two years ago this Council was within the lower quartile performance by local authorities for prevention of homelessness and by now was the second best performer in Wales.

The Chief Executive acknowledged that a huge amount of work had been undertaken, bearing in mind the capacity problems that the Authority had and he thanked the Service for their work in this respect. He went on to confirm that he had also attended the very positive meeting with middle managers this week. He considered that it had been one of the most important meetings he had attended as part of the transformation agenda, and it was important that the momentum continued.

Councillor G.O.Parry, MBE stated that it was clear that numerous meetings were taking place with Council staff at all levels and he considered that it would be advantageous for Portfolio Holders to be aware of when these meetings were taking place, their intentions, aims and objectives. These meetings might be discussing matters which the Portfolio Holders were not aware of and it would be useful to have knowledge of officers response to certain issues within the Authority.

The Chief Executive in response stated that it would be an indication of failure if Portfolio Holders were not part of discussions and it was very important that they had a strong grasp of their portfolios. Members and officers would in future be working side by side on the three

Programme Boards and it was vitally important that Scrutiny members and backbenchers were also part of that transformation journey.

Commissioner Mick Giannasi stated that in 3 months time the Minister had a critical decision to make as to whether or not he was going to end the intervention. One of the things Commissioners had committed to was to base their assessment on progress made against the first 180 day cycle of the transformation plan. He sought assurance from the Deputy Chief Executive as to whether the Authority could deliver by the 31<sup>st</sup> April and whether or not there were any risks or barriers emerging which could affect delivery?

The Deputy Chief Executive in response stated that she was fairly confident that the Authority was on target in terms of delivering within the 180 day cycle. There may however, be slippages in some areas such as the commissioning model, but progress was clearly being made on that area. In terms of the workforce and people strategy there was a requirement to undertake a staff survey to provide a base line. Basics such a performance reviews and sickness management would require resourcing over the next few months in order to ensure improvement by next year. Now that a Programme Manager had been appointed, she was much more confident that things would move at pace.

*The Improvement and Sustainability Board endorsed the progress being made in developing the Transformation Agenda and supported the direction of travel set out in the attached progress report.*

## **5. (a)UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANGLESEY EDUCATION RECOVERY BOARD**

Professor Mel Ainscow, Chair of the Anglesey Education Recovery Board, stated that the Board met monthly and consisted of himself, a primary and secondary headteacher from Wales, a colleague from the W.L.G.A. and a senior civil servant from Cardiff. The Board was co-ordinated by the Project Manager Ms.Tannis Cannick.

In the initial period, the Board had been trying to get a deeper understanding of the situation on Anglesey. The Estyn report was the starting point and was being used as the guide in the short term. However, a deeper understanding of the reality on the ground was required. To this end, discussions had taken place with officers of the Council, groups of headteachers and school governors and informally with some elected members as well. The Board considered that there were enormous reasons to be optimistic with some very positive features in the Anglesey Education system.

There was quite a lot of evidence of good practice in relation to many of the things identified in the Estyn report. Much of the knowledge and expertise needed was here on Anglesey but further value or experience could be added from elsewhere. His impression was that there was very good communication within the Anglesey community, people knew each other and were aware of what went on the Island. Visiting some schools on the Island, he thought it stunning the way teachers and pupils had this remarkable gift of being able to move between languages.

The concerns were that because everyone knew everybody so well, that when problems arose, people did not speak about them since it would soon become common knowledge and such a culture allowed difficulties to grow. There was a sense by the Board that 'satisfactory' was good enough. In that respect the bar needed to be raised since our children deserved more, and were capable of achieving more. The short term goals were to tick the boxes in relation to the 7 areas of improvement identified by Estyn. There was a sense of annoyance and irritation by some colleagues about some of the things mentioned in the report.

In the longer term, he did not see why Anglesey could not have an outstanding educational system which the rest of Wales could emulate. The role of the Board at the end of the day was to be accountable to the Minister in respect of progress in the short term. More importantly, the role of the Board was to get behind local people by adding ideas, energy and resources to what they were already doing. If the system was to improve, it would only do so if local people took charge of the agenda. A change in the culture was therefore required.

He had the impression that in some schools on Anglesey, senior management were waiting for somebody else to come in and improve the schools for them. Schools needed to improve themselves and also support and challenge one another to improve. That then had further implications upon the role of the Local Authority, because they also had to rethink and must not fall into the trap of giving the impression that they were there to improve the schools. Their job was to make sure that it happened and if it was not happening to question why.

He mentioned that a workshop had been held recently where nearly all the primary and secondary headteachers had been in attendance, together with some of the key officers from the Authority. At that workshop they had been requested to consider the implications of developing a strategy to use the best expertise, improve their own schools and support their colleagues to improve their schools. Discussion was also undertaken with the Local Authority officers requesting them to evaluate what that meant to them in practice.

Commissioner Mick Giannasi mentioned that he and the Chair had met with Professor Mel Ainscow last week in order to have a broad discussion as to how they would work together in future around such issues as asset management and estate issues, IT and community and customer focus. There were significant parallels between the educational challenge and the wider transformational challenge that the Council faced, in that the two matters were inextricably linked. It was important in his opinion to retain that relationship and that they should not be dealt with in isolation.

Submitted – A report by the Director of Lifelong Learning providing an update of developments in relation to specific aspects of the Estyn post-inspection action plan with regard to the following recommendations:-

- Raise standards in all key stages and make sure that all learners who can do so achieve functional literacy by the end of key stage 2;
- Plan more effectively with the relevant professionals to improve school attendance;
- Take action to reduce surplus spaces.

The Director of Lifelong Learning stated that the report was an internal opinion in relation to progress and that the views of the Recovery Board and Regulators were expected thereon. He was very grateful to Professor Mel Ainscow and to his Board for the work they were doing and in the way that they had gone about their work. It was a challenge to respond to Estyn but to also respond to the challenge to establish a system and an organisation which was sustainable for the future.

The seminar for headteachers had certainly raised awareness of what needed to be done but also set up a challenge at an Authority level to ensure that schools got to grip with this agenda and take the necessary steps forward in order to set up a system on Anglesey whereby schools can work together and also challenge each other.

The Chief Executive stated that he had been greatly encouraged as to how the Recovery Board could add value to what the Authority was currently doing. He considered that today's meeting had been provided with clear, robust and sound guidance. The intent of the Recovery Board was to share their expertise and develop good practice and to get our

establishment working together in order to help themselves and break the cycle of over-dependence on the centre.

*The Improvement and Sustainability Board thanked Professor Mel Ainscow for his attendance today noted the contents of his report and also the report of the Director of Lifelong Learning.*

## **(b)UPDATE ON PROGRESS IN CHILDRENS' SERVICES**

Submitted – A progress report by the Director of Community against the Service Delivery Plan. The Service Improvement Board monitored and scrutinised the Improvement Plan and reported to the Housing and Social Services Scrutiny Committee.

Progress to date had been significant, and that within a context of a significant increase in referrals, the LAC population and numbers on the CP Register. This progress had been expressed in the CSSIW Annual Review Letter and in the IST Final Report.

To sustain the improvement process, structural and strategic changes had been made, improved service governance and risk management, new file structure, updated policies/procedures, electronic filing introduced, a QA Framework developed and QA manager appointed, and mobile and flexible working explored. There had been improvements in staff levels with 12 new social workers appointed and a 55% reduction in agency staff, with a 50% reduction in days lost to sickness and improvement in staff retention rates.

Remaining areas of concern and challenges were referred to at Para 3 of the report.

In conclusion, considerable progress had been made over the last year in improving the Service, such that in several areas, the Authority was able to achieve the best results in Wales, and in most areas was now performing at, or well above, the all-Wales median. The programme of improvement had moved from immediate recovery and stabilisation, to one of sustaining and embedding those improvements and ensuring that improvements were qualitative as well as quantitative.

Portfolio Holder K. P. Hughes thanked the staff for their work in this respect. Significant progress had been made in the last 18 months with the Service now moving in the right direction.

Councillor Lewis Davies, a member of the Service Improvement Board praised the Service and the progress being made. He mentioned the praise in the local press this week regarding the improvement made in Children's Services.

Councillor G.O.Parry, MBE stated that children in care was a very important aspect and the Authority needed to ensure that these people had the best possible support and that they left the Council's care with an assurance that they possessed the right qualifications to be able to live independently with the necessary social and educational skills.

Mr. James Dawson in response stated that educational attainment was a priority within the Service and was regularly reported upon at meetings of the Corporate Parenting Panel.

*The Improvement and Sustainability Board noted the contents of the report.*

## 6. COMMISSIONERS 6<sup>TH</sup> PROGRESS REPORT

Commissioner Mick Giannasi reported that whilst previous reports had been published on a quarterly basis, this 6<sup>th</sup> progress report reflected developments which had occurred during a four month period from the beginning of October 2012 to the end of January 2013. This adjustment had been made with the agreement of the Minister in order to align the Commissioners' reporting cycle with the 90 day reporting cycle for the Organisational Development Plan which lay at the heart of the Council's longer term transformational change programme.

The report was significant in that it was the first assessment of progress since 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012, when the Minister scaled back the intervention in order to provide the Council with the opportunity to demonstrate that it was now capable of managing its own affairs and ready to assume autonomous responsibility for delivering longer term, sustainable recovery in the Council's performance.

Whilst there were still some significant challenges which remained to be addressed and some risks which needed to be monitored and mitigated, the Commissioners believed that the corner had been turned and the Council was now well on the road towards a long term sustainable recovery for reasons explained within the report.

Once the 180 day cycle of work had been completed and some substantial hurdles negotiated over the next 3 months (e.g. a very difficult budget settlement to be approved by Council; political and democratic challenges associated with the forthcoming election and the way the new Council bedded down in the first 2-3 weeks of its existence) and in the absence of unforeseen developments which might take the recovery process of track, Commissioners believed that there was sufficient progress against the Transformation Plan for them to say with a reasonable degree of confidence that they would be able to recommend to the Minister that he could consider bringing his formal intervention to an end when he reviewed the position on 31 May 2013.

The Minister would make his decision based on the views of the Commissioners, the assessment of the Auditor General, progress made by the Education Recovery Board, etc. Commissioners hoped that this would be their last quarterly report and the hope was that the Authority would now prepare the next report through a process of self-assessment. Commissioners would then in consultation with the WAO and other regulators quality assure that self-assessment and attach their own interpretation of it before presenting it to the Minister. It was vitally important over the next few weeks that we were absolutely clear what that self-assessment process was and what the outcome looked like. Commissioners would require that report by 25<sup>th</sup> April which would then be passed on to the Minister within 7 days.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Commissioners for the work they had carried out during their time at Anglesey. This had probably been the worst intervention faced by any authority in the country, but the way things had been turned around was of immense credit to the Commissioners. He firmly believed that the Council had been firmly recovered for the last 6 months and that recovery in the long term would be sustainable.

The Chair thanked the Leader for his comments and went on to state that his period on Anglesey had been one of the highlights of his political career. He had learnt so much from the SLT and the Members and Officers of the Council during his time here and it had been a delight to have had the opportunity of contributing to the Council's recovery.

Councillor G.O.Parry,MBE. wished to thank the officers of Committee Services and the Translation Section for their work in preparing the necessary paperwork for these meetings.

The Chief Executive was given authority to re-arrange the next scheduled meeting of this Board on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2013 should the Easter recess prove problematic for some members.

*The Improvement and Sustainability Board noted the contents of the Commissioners quarterly report.*

The meeting concluded at 12:50 p.m.

**COMMISSIONER ALEX ALDRIDGE  
(CHAIR)**