

IMPROVEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on 26th November, 2013

- PRESENT:** Councillor Ieuan Williams (Chair)
Chief Executive
- Executive: Councillors R Dew, K P Hughes, Aled M Jones,
J A Roberts, Alwyn Rowlands.
- Director of Sustainable Development
Director of Lifelong Learning
Director of Community
Service Improvement Manager, Childrens' Services (JD)
- ALSO PRESENT:** Mr. Andy Bruce (Wales Audit Office)
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Committee Services Manager (JG)
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors H E Jones and R. Meirion Jones; Mr. Marc Roberts
(Local Authority Inspector, CSSIW).

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None to declare

2. APOLOGIES

As noted above.

3. MINUTES

Submitted and confirmed as a true record, the minutes of the meeting of the Improvement and Sustainability Board held on 23rd October, 2013.

4. UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ANGLESEY EDUCATION RECOVERY BOARD

Submitted - A report by the Director of Lifelong Learning updating Members on progress against the post-inspection action plan. It was reported that a computer based system (Sycle) had been developed in conjunction with officers from the Performance Unit to performance manage progress. The report from the Sycle system detailed the actions taken and their effect was a substantial document. A summary of that report, matched to the priorities noted in the Action Plan and to the priorities scrutinised by Estyn during their November visit on 7/8th November, 2013 was detailed at Appendix 1 of this report.

During that visit, Estyn concentrated on recommendations 1,2 and 5. The Director believed that pleasing progress had been made in that respect but acknowledged that there was further work to be done. It was expected that the conclusions of Estyn's visit would be reported back to the Authority within the next 3 weeks.

The first two recommendations noted by Estyn referred to revising standards in all key stages, improving functional literacy by the end of Key Stage 2 and improving school attendance rates. Appendix 2 of the report was additional supportive information outlining the Authority's current performance in these key areas.

Members thanked the Director for his report and it could be seen from the evidence provided that matters were progressing in a positive manner.

Councillor K.P.Hughes enquired as to whether Estyn had cast its net further to ascertain what other countries were doing in raising educational standards?

The Director in response stated that in the next few weeks a report would be published showing where Wales stood in comparison to other countries in terms of education. One of the things the Welsh Government had done was to look at the research in other countries and what had succeeded in those countries. What was important was that we adopted what could be seen as good practice, in other authorities and countries, and apply them and adjust them to meet the requirements locally in Anglesey and across North Wales. Welsh Government had carried out a lot of research in this respect and had been looking specifically at what had been achieved in Canada.

The Improvement and Sustainability Board noted that pleasing progress was continuing to be made in relation to all Estyn recommendations.

5. UPDATE ON PROGRESS IN CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Submitted - a progress report by the Service Improvement Manager against the Service Delivery Plan.

Reported - That the Service continued to focus on maintaining the improvements in service delivery in the face of a return of pressures on the workforce due to staff turnover (including a senior practitioner and Team Manager). As indicated in the last report to the Board, this third quarter was likely to be critical in establishing the extent to which improvements in the last year had become embedded.

Details of notable progress made were referred to at Para 2 of the report and remaining areas of concern and challenges were referred to at Para 3 of the report.

The evidence, confirmed in the recent Annual Letter from CSSIW indicated that the service had achieved and was sustaining change. The basic framework of the management team was largely in place, along with improved processes and procedures and on the whole an enthusiastic workforce. However, risks to service performance remained with problems of turnover within the workforce, including the managers.

The general confidence, reported on at the last meeting, remained that problems could be identified and managed, and that any dips in performance were dips and were not indicators of longer term decline. The management team were able to anticipate many of the issues and, even with limited resources or capacity, plan actions to address problems in a way that not only maintained the cohesiveness of the Service but also ensured that managing and meeting performance requirements continued effectively. The Head of Service continued, with senior managers, to monitor the position closely and would keep the Director of Community up-to date with developments.

Councillor K.P.Hughes, Portfolio Holder for the Department thanked the team for the progress being made and was appreciative of their efforts and contribution to that

progress. He again stressed the importance of continued improvement and it was his aim to become the best service in Wales.

The Leader mentioned that he had visited the Unit last week in the company of the Portfolio Holder and that he had been pleased to hear that staff morale was good.

The Improvement and Sustainability Board noted the contents of the report and the progress being made.

As an aside, Councillor K.P.Hughes enquired as to whether there was still a requirement to convene these Board meetings on a monthly basis as opposed to bi-monthly?

The Chief Executive in response stated that it was by now obvious that the Board had surpassed the urgency to meet every month since there was not that much to report upon. Once the Authority had reached a certain level of progress, then further progress was a more gradual matter over a longer period of time.

This Board was established originally by the Commissioners because of concerns in three areas, namely Corporate Governance, Education and Social Services. Commissioners felt at the time that they needed to keep an eye on performance on a monthly basis. But since then, a new system had been established for the Programme Boards and there was a specific Programme Board in place for Service Excellence, where more or less duplication now existed with the workings of this Board.

The intention when Commissioners left was to keep this Board for a certain period and review in 6 months as to whether the work should be subsumed within the work of the Programme Boards. However, the Authority had been forewarned yesterday by WAO that Anglesey had been selected as one of 6 Authorities in Wales to receive a corporate governance assessment by WAO in the new financial year.

Since there would not be a lot to report upon to the next scheduled meeting on 19th December, the Chief Executive considered that the meeting should be postponed until January and by then the Authority would have received confirmation by WAO as regards the assessment. The meeting in January could then consider how the Authority was going to deal with that assessment and it could also give consideration as to whether or not the education and social services' aspects be transferred to the Programme Boards. He would wish to discuss that scenario with the SLT next week. As a result of a corporate governance report, this Authority went into special measures. This Authority did not want to find itself in that kind of predicament again and priority must therefore be given to meeting the requirements of that assessment from early in the new year.

The Chief Executive stated that it was his intention to discuss at the next SLT meeting the propriety of convening monthly meetings of the Improvement Board. He was of the opinion that sufficient progress had been made since the establishment of the Board by Commissioners and that the significant improvements in the Education recovery plan and in children's services were now being reported on a regular basis to the Programme Boards. He considered that it might therefore be more advantageous to hold these Board meetings on a bi-monthly basis in future.

Mr.Andy Bruce, WAO stated that both he and Huw Lloyd Jones had asked for Anglesey to be placed into the latter part of the next financial year and the assessment could be as late as February 2015. The assessment would be thorough and robust

and there would be some 6 key areas to evaluate. He would prefer a late assessment so as to allow progress to continue on Anglesey in the meantime. He had found the meetings of this Improvement Board to have been very helpful and agreed that there had to be a review of the usefulness and frequency of the meeting. He felt that the Council had certainly improved over the course of the last 12 months.

The Improvement Board noted the intention to review the frequency of meetings and that the next scheduled meeting on 19th December, 2013 be postponed until January 2014. That meeting would give consideration to the WAO corporate assessment.

The meeting concluded at 11:40 am

**COUNCILLOR IEUAN WILLIAMS
CHAIR**