

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

Minutes (ELL2-03-05mins)

Meeting date: Wednesday 9 March 2005

Meeting time: 9.00am -12.30pm

Meeting venue: Committee Rooms 3&4, National Assembly, Cardiff Bay

Assembly Members in Attendance

Assembly Member	Constituency
Peter Black (Chair)	South Wales West
Christine Chapman (Deputy Minister)	Cynon Valley
Jeff Cuthbert	Caerphilly
Jane Davidson (Minister)	Pontypridd
David Davies	Monmouth
Mark Isherwood	North Wales
Irene James	Islwyn
Denise Idris Jones	Conwy
Janet Ryder	North Wales
Owen John Thomas	South West Central

Officials in Attendance

Name	Job title
Richard Davies	Group Director, Department for Training and Education (DfTE)

John Howells	Head, Higher Education Division
Lynne Hamilton	Higher Education Division
Catherine Roberts	Schools Management Division
Carrie Moss	Schools Management Division

Committee Service

Name	Job title
Chris Reading	Clerk
Holly Pembridge	Deputy Clerk
Gareth Davies	Support Officer
Joanest Jackson	Legal Adviser

Item 1: Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions, Quorum and Declarations of Interest

1.1 The Chair welcomed Committee Members and members of the public.

1.2 The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, congratulated Careers Wales Online on winning the technical and social innovation award at the recent BAFTA craft awards.

1.3 Culture Committee had invited ELL Committee Members to its evidence gathering session 'Education in dance in Wales' as part of its policy review. The meeting would be held at the Riverfront Arts Centre, in Newport on 16 March.

1.4 There were no apologies.

1.5 There were no declarations of interest.

Item 2: Minister's Report

Paper: ELL2-03-05(p.1) and Annexes

2.1 The Minister made a brief introduction:

- Teachers' Pay and Conditions - the Committee had been supplied with a written update to item 10

of the ministerial report. The update outlined that since the 14th Report of the School Teachers' Review Body (STRB) had been issued, the Assembly Government had concluded that it should propose to introduce regulations which would require schools in Wales to review their staffing structures. The written update detailed these proposals;

- Wales Youth Agency - the Assembly Government had consulted with the Board of the Wales Youth Agency with a view to bringing it in-house into the Assembly Government. Having discussed the issues with the Board, it had now been determined that the Agency would come in-house to the Youth and Pupil Participation branch of the Department for Training and Education from January 2006. The new branch would have enhanced responsibilities to support and develop youth work and support youth workers. A consultation period to include all partners would be underway and it was hoped that the Committee would contribute to this process;
- Induction for Newly Qualified Teachers - a consultation exercise was launched on 18 February to seek views on how statutory induction for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) could be made more flexible and accessible. Two major proposals were: that NQTs should be allowed to work as short-term supply teachers for a maximum of five years from the date of gaining qualified teacher status; and LEAs should be provided with discretionary powers to determine whether a period of teaching which was not for a full term or two consecutive half terms (disregarding school holidays) could count towards an NQT's induction period;
- "Ein Geiriau Ni" - a corpus of children's literature in the Welsh language was launched in Swansea. The project was a good example of the Welsh Assembly working in partnership with a local education authority and schools across Wales, for the benefit of a large number of pupils;
- Careers Wales - the Minister endorsed the Chair's congratulations.

2.2 The Chair invited questions from Members and the Minister gave the following responses:

2.3 Teachers' Pay and Conditions

- It was intended to seek to disapply the procedures of standing order 24.27 (i)-(iii) in the making of the proposed regulations in order to ensure that schools and teachers in Wales were not disadvantaged. The Assembly Government would consult publicly before making the regulations and ensure that they are considered in the Committee.

2.4 Educational Provision for Profoundly Deaf Children

- Wales-only provisions had been made in the Education Act 2002 to develop regional services in Wales. The provisions would allow for increased working with local authorities to consider the management and delivery of cross-county services;
- Guidance would be issued for delivering services for pupils with sensory impairments, alongside

standards of excellence;

- Regular contact was made with the all-party group and the Minister said that she would be content to consider early development intervention work;
- Schools in Wales were not statutorily obliged to teach British Sign Language (BSL) but a number of schools did teach sign supported English. There was a shortage of BSL interpreters able to deliver services through the medium of Welsh and this had been highlighted by the 2003 audit;
- It was possible in Wales to gain the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP) certificate in BSL: levels 1 and 2. Schools could teach courses leading to these qualifications at key stage 4;
- There was no specific information for the lack of take-up of courses at University College of Wales, Newport but the Welsh Assembly Government was actively considering alternative, flexible routes for gaining these qualifications.

2.5 School Transport

- Local education authorities (LEAs) would be able to bid for piloting school travel schemes under the School Transport Bill. They would be able to operate the pilots, if bids were successful, from 2006. Ceredigion County Council and Carmarthenshire County Council had expressed interest in the pilots. The Welsh Assembly Government was currently devising a prospectus and would invite authorities undertaking the pilot schemes to look at scope for offering transport for the under 5s, taking into account that siblings often travelled together. Currently, only Merthyr Tydfil County Council had transport arrangements in place for children in pre-statutory education;
- The Education Act 2002 stipulated that LEAs should compile transport statements for 16-19 year olds. A copy of the Assembly Government's guidance to LEAs would be circulated to Committee;
- LEAs were not obligated to fund post-16 transport arrangements however, there were a number of discretionary arrangements in place, made on a college basis. Transport statements were vitally important so that young people were aware what transport and subsidy arrangements were in place. For socio-economically disadvantaged students, the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was available.

2.6 Revised Guidance to Local Authorities on School Organisations Plans

- In response to the Iaith Pawb report, the Assembly Government had undertaken to ensure that there was more coherence between the Welsh Education Schemes (WES) and School Organisation plans (SOPs);
- The Welsh Language Board had published revised guidance on planning school places;
- After the consulting on guidance for successor plans in the summer, the intention was to write to LEAs to stress the importance of having the appropriate tools in place to plan for Welsh medium provision and alerting them to the intention to recommend a survey of parents. It was important to plan using evidence at local level and reinforcing the structures between the statutory bodies. It was anticipated that this topic would be considered in Committee at a later date;
- A bid from the Welsh Assembly Government and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to rationalise planning requirements had received all-party support.

2.7 ELWa's Welsh Language Policy

- The Welsh Language Board had agreed ELWa's Welsh Language scheme. It was important that ELWa had a scheme in place prior to it being absorbed into the Assembly Government. Information concerning the intended cost benefit analysis would be circulated to the Committee as and when it was available;
- Outcomes from the public consultation on the draft scheme could affect the Welsh Language scheme;
- Members would receive further information regarding ELWa's scheme in the context of updates on merger arrangements.

2.8 Promoting Additional Provision for Welsh Medium Higher Education

- The Assembly Government's intention was to expand opportunities surrounding Welsh Medium Higher Education across Wales. There was however a deficit in the number of lecturers available to deliver provision through the medium of Welsh. The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) had a number of exciting schemes in place, which catered for dramatic expansion.

2.9 ACCAC and ELWa Merger: Progress Report

- Staff from ACCAC and ELWa could contribute to the planning of delivery before and after the merger through responding to the public consultation on the merger process. The closing date would be 15 April.

2.10 Higher Education - Business and Community Interaction Survey

- Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Wales were to be congratulated on their achievements on the basis of the survey; they were continuing to outperform other parts of the UK. The interim Rees Report also alluded to collaboration between employers and students;

2.11 DfES White Paper on 14-19 Education and Skills

- In spite of the decision in England not to move ahead with the baccalaureate/diploma agenda, the Minister said she was keen for the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification to be rolled out through Wales. It had proved popular with students in Wales. Particular success had been gained at level three but the most impact had occurred at level two. An increasing amount of institutions in Wales and the UK were recognising the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification;
- The Welsh Baccalaureate had given young people a flexible qualification and would broaden their education experience;

- The new funding formulae for post-16 education would widen opportunities for those in post-16 education. Additional monies would be announced later in the week;
- The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) would be asked to work alongside their fellow regulatory authorities in the other parts of the UK to ensure that developments take account of the needs and circumstances in other parts of the UK and were compatible with the structures there;
- Guidance concerning learning coaches set out the differences between the role of learning coaches in Wales compared to England. The Deputy Minister said that she had visited a number of organisations, where there had been examples of excellent practice. The main challenge was to ensure that best practice was being shared amongst partners. The Assembly Government was in dialogue with the Sector Skills Councils and it was hoped that more employers would become involved in the agenda. There was also a need for employers and work based trainers to be as visible as further education (FE) colleges.

Actions

- The Minister to make available to Committee the joint statement issued with Board of the Wales Youth Agency concerning the proposal to bring the Agency into the Welsh Assembly Government;
- The Minister to make available to Committee guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government regarding transport statements for 16-19 year olds;
- The Minister to circulate results of the cost-benefit analysis of ELWa's Welsh language scheme, when it becomes available;
- The Committee to be aware of a proposed consultation on school organisation successor plans consultation (Clerk to note - summer term);

Item 3: Rees Review - Student Support: Interim Report

Paper: ELL2-03-05(p.2)

3.1 The Chair welcomed Professor Teresa Rees, Rob Humphreys and Kenneth Richards to the meeting. Professor Rees introduced her report and the Chair then invited questions from Members.

3.2 A verbatim record of this item is being prepared and will be available on the Assembly's website in fifteen working days - www.wales.gov.uk

Action

- The Committee to consider final Rees Report in June 2005 - Clerk to include this in the forward work programme;

Item 4: European Union Forward Work Programme

Paper: ELL2-03-05(p.3)

4.1 The Chair invited Anna Daniel, European Policy Analyst from Members' Research Service, to introduce her paper. Anna Daniel briefly explained her role and invited the Committee to note the contents of her paper.

4.2 The Committee noted the paper.

Item 5: Estyn Annual Report 2003-04

Paper: None

5.1 The Chair welcomed Susan Lewis, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, and her colleagues. The Chair invited the Chief Inspector to introduce her annual report. The Chair then invited questions from Members.

5.2 A verbatim record of this item is being prepared and will be available on the Assembly's website in fifteen working days - www.wales.gov.uk

Item 6: School Transport Policy Review - Draft Report

Paper: ELL2-03-05(p.4)

6.1 The amendments agreed at the last meeting had been marked as track changes. The Chair invited Members to go through the report, page by page, one final time before ratification. The Committee then ratified the report.

6.2 Owen John Thomas stated, for the record, that he did not feel that the recommendations in paragraphs 2.47 and 2.72, concerning 3 year olds and 16-18 year olds respectively, were sufficiently robust. The Chair noted his comments.

6.4 The Chair informed Members that the Clerk had applied for a plenary debate on a Tuesday towards the end of April. The report would be officially launched on the same day.

Actions

- The Clerk to make arrangements to translate and publish the report, and to prepare for the launch and plenary debate.

Item 7: Secondary Legislation Forward Look

Paper: ELL2-03-05(p.5)

7.1 The Committee noted the schedule of forthcoming legislation and agreed to send any suggestions for future scrutiny to the Clerk.

Item 8: Minutes of the previous meeting

Paper: ELL2-03-05(min)

8.1 The Committee ratified the minutes of the meeting of 9 February 2004.

Papers to note:

Paper: ELL2-03-05(p.6)

The Committee noted the draft forward work programme for the summer term

Paper: ELL2-03-05(p.7)

The Committee noted the Clerk's proposed Internet page for the e-democracy pilot for part two of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) policy review

Paper: ELL2-03-05(p.8)

The Committee noted ministerial correspondence to Alun Cairns AM.

Paper: ELL2-03-05(p.9)

The Committee noted the report of its consideration of the Education Bill.