

**MINUTES**

**Date:** Wednesday 18 June 2003

**Time:** 9.30am

**Venue:** Committee Rooms 3 & 4 , National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay

**Attendance:**

**Members**

Peter Black (Chair)  
Jane Davidson (Minister)  
Leighton Andrews  
Jeff Cuthbert  
David Davies  
Mark Isherwood  
Irene James  
Denise Idris Jones  
Helen Mary Jones  
Owen John Thomas

**Constituency**

South Wales West  
Pontypridd  
Rhondda  
Caerphilly  
Monmouth  
North Wales  
Islwyn  
Conwy  
Mid and West Wales  
South West Central

**Officials**

Richard Davies Director, DfTE  
Elizabeth Taylor Head, Schools Management  
Mike Harper Head, Teaching and Leadership  
Derek Adams Head, Higher Education  
Judith Cole Central Support Unit  
Catherine Dixon Teaching and Leadership

**Also in Attendance:**

Professor John Andrews Chair, General Teaching Council  
for Wales (GTCW)  
Gary Brace Chief Executive, GTCW  
Mal Davies Deputy Chair, GTCW

**Committee Secretariat**

Chris Reading Clerk  
Holly Pembrige Deputy Clerk

**Item 1: Introduction, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest**

1.1 The Chair welcomed Members and the public to the first meeting of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee of the second session of the National Assembly for Wales. The Chair thanked the predecessor Committee and its Chair, Gareth Jones. The Chair also welcomed new Committee Members, the new Assembly Members and those who served on the predecessor committee. The Chair introduced the Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Richard Davies, Director of the Department for Training and Education.

1.2 There were no apologies.

1.3 There were no declarations of interest relevant to standing order 4.5.

## **Item Two: Minister's Report (9.35am-10.20am)**

### **Paper: ELL(2) 01-03(p.1)**

2.1 The Chair invited the Minister to introduce her report and to update the Committee on any additional information. The Minister explained that information concerning her commitment to review testing and assessment at Key Stages 2 and 3 had been inadvertently omitted from her report but had subsequently been sent to Members. The Minister said that she was pleased to announce that Professor Richard Daugherty had been appointed as independent Chair of the Reference and Review Group and that the Committee would be kept informed of the developments.

2.2 The Minister said that the schedule of secondary legislation would be updated regularly and appended to every ministerial report. The Chair asked Members to notify the Clerk of any items on the schedule they felt should be considered by the Committee.

2.3 The Chair invited Members to request topics for future ministerial reports via the Clerk.

2.4 The Minister undertook to append a list of ministerial engagements to subsequent reports.

2.5 In response to comments and questions from Members, the Minister made the following points:

### **National Council-ELWa**

- In response to a question from David Davies, the Minister undertook to write to the Chair (copied to Committee Members) regarding the date that the Chair of the National Council (Enid Rowlands) announced that she would not be seeking re-appointment.
- The Minister undertook to ask the National Council to submit an appropriate version of the agreed recovery plan to the Committee. The Minister stated that the National Council had met or exceeded most of its targets.

### **Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)**

- The Minister undertook to write to David Davies clarifying the term "fruitless payments" in the recently published HEFCW Annual Report 2001-2002, and the reason for the increase in fruitless payments and cost of bought in services.

### **Early Years**

- In response to a question from Owen John Thomas, the Minister undertook to write to the Chair (copied to Committee Members) clarifying whether support for National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 would continue next year.
- In addition to the 11 integrated centres already established, local authorities and their partners planned 14 more centres. The Minister praised the work of the centres.
- The Minister stated that a statement would be made to plenary in due course outlining further details of the proposals for primary school breakfasts.
- The Minister emphasised the importance of family numeracy and literacy schemes and stated that Princess Anne had said recently that Wales was outstripping the rest of the UK in improving basic skills.
- The Minister agreed to submit a digest of responses to the Foundation Phase consultation to the Committee.

- In response to a question from Owen John Thomas, the Minister undertook to write to the Chair (copied to Committee Members) clarifying the funding arrangements for 'Iaith Pawb'.

### **Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

- Members generally welcomed developments such as the establishment of a SEN tribunal in Wales and financial assistance.
- The Minister stated that a consultation on speech and language therapy would be launched on 3 July.

### **Estyn - Collective Worship**

- David Davies raised the issue concerning a school that had broken the law by not organising collective worship. The Minister confirmed that the school and local education authority had implemented the action plan set out by Estyn.

### **Assembly Learning Grant (ALG)**

- In response to Members' concern about low take-up of the ALG by students in Further Education (FE), the Minister said that she wished to see an improvement. The Minister undertook to write to all local authorities in Wales to remind councillors of the eligibility criteria.
- David Davies referred to a constituency case concerning eligibility for the ALG and the Minister advised him to write to her regarding this matter.

### **Funky Dragon**

- In response to a question from David Davies, the Minister undertook to write to the Chair (copied to Committee Members) regarding the availability of the last audited accounts for Funky Dragon.

### **Higher Education**

- The Minister undertook to ascertain whether any research had been undertaken into how students viewed the Wales/UK market for higher education.
- The Chair asked how the recent UK Government Cabinet reshuffle would affect discussions concerning devolved powers and other matters relating to higher education in Wales. The Minister stated that she would report to Committee on this issue in July but that the reshuffle had not affected the Secretary of State's commitment to assisting the Assembly in its negotiations with DfES.

### **Consultation on School Budget Forums**

- The Minister confirmed that, subject to Assembly approval, regulations would require school budget forums to be in place by the end of November 2003.

### **Narrowing the Gap in the Performance of Schools**

- The Committee agreed that the Chair should represent them on the steering group for Phase 2 of the Narrowing the Gap Study.

### **Action Points:**

- **Ministerial engagements schedule to be appended to every ministerial report.**
- **Minister to write to the Chair (copied to Committee Members) regarding the date when Enid Rowlands announced that she did not wish to seek re-appointment as Chair of the National Council-ELWa.**

- **Minister to ask National Council to submit an appropriate version of their recovery plan to the Committee in due course.**
- **Minister to write to the Chair (copied to Committee Members) clarifying the meaning of the term “fruitless payments” in the HEFCW Annual Report 2001-2002.**
- **Minister to provide the Committee with a digest of responses to the Foundation Phase consultation.**
- **Minister to write to the Chair (copied to Committee Members) regarding the period covered by the £7m funding for ‘laith Pawb’.**
- **Minister to write to the Chair (copied to Committee Members) regarding the availability of audited accounts of Funky Dragon.**
- **Minister to write to local authorities to remind them of the eligibility criteria for the Assembly Learning Grant.**
- **Minister to report to Committee on whether any research has been carried out into how students in Wales view the HE markets in Wales and the UK.**

### **Item Three: Consideration of Draft Strategic and Draft Detailed Forward Work Programmes (10.20am-10.45am)**

**Paper: ELL(2) 01-03(p.2) and ELL(2) 01-03(p.3)**

#### **Ministerial Reports**

3.1 The Minister confirmed that she would provide a ministerial report at every meeting (45 minutes).

#### **Strategic Forward Work Programme**

3.2 The Committee approved the strategic forward work programme, subject to minor textual amendments. The Committee resolved to develop a closer working relationship with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and also the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC). The Chair noted these comments and undertook to discuss further with the Minister and party spokespersons.

#### **Optional Additional Meeting**

3.3 The Chair proposed that an extra meeting be held on the afternoon of Thursday 17 July. This was an optional additional meeting in the periodic timetable. Some Members expressed concern that they had made previous commitments. After some discussion, it was agreed to hold an additional meeting for two hours to consider progress reports on Extending Entitlement and the Foundation Phase.

#### **Detailed Forward Work Programme (Summer Term and Autumn Term 2003)**

3.4 The Committee adopted the detailed forward work programme for the summer term 2003.

3.5 The Committee broadly approved the detailed forward work programme for the autumn term 2003. Helen Mary Jones stated that she would have liked the Committee to hold an inquiry into recent problems at the National Council-ELWa but accepted that this was not possible due to time constraints and pressure of other business. Helen Mary Jones was pleased that two sessions with the National Council would be held in the autumn. Jeff Cuthbert stated that he was confident that the internal audit process would result in necessary improvements to financial procedures in the National Council.

#### **Off-Site Meetings**

3.6 The Committee agreed in principle to meet outside Cardiff, subject to sufficient notice.

#### **Action Points:**

- **Clerk to seek approval from Business Committee for additional meeting on 17 July 2003.**

- **Clerk to amend strategic forward work programme; noting frequency of ministerial reports.**

#### **Item Four: General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) - Corporate Plan 2003-2006**

4.1 The presenters explained the GTCW's role, key objectives and achievements. The following issues were raised in discussion:

##### **Qualification Date**

- Concern was raised that some individuals who obtained the PGCE qualification since 1974 (or in some subjects, since 1989) were employed in schools but did not have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The Committee felt that there was a need for urgent discussion between the Council and Welsh Assembly Government officials to seek ways to resolve this matter so that their position could be regularised.

##### **Gender Breakdown**

- The Committee noted that there was almost an equal split between male and female headteachers in primary and secondary schools. However, in the teaching profession as a whole, the split was 75% female to 25% male. The GTCW considered that the issue was partly about attracting more males into primary teaching - and its report on recruitment and retention would address this issue.

##### **Investors in People**

- The Council was encouraging schools to take up the Investors in People (IiP) scheme.

##### **Excessive Teacher Workload**

- The Council strongly endorsed the changes to the teachers' contract reducing the number of administrative tasks teachers should undertake. The Council believed that there was already good practice in many schools and would be happy to help spread this good practice.

##### **Equivalence of PGCFE and QTS**

- The Minister explained that the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) had started work on establishing equivalence between PGCFE and QTS. The Minister said that she had authorised her officials to have discussions with the GTCW. The Minister referred to the schedule of secondary legislation and noted that regulations concerning the QTS were programmed in for the autumn term.

##### **Take-up of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Opportunities**

- The Council monitored take-up of CPD opportunities in each year of piloting. The second phase report would show a break down of take-up by local education authority (LEA). This would be available in due course on the Council's website.

##### **Time Requirement**

- A large majority of the funding available for CPD opportunities was used to provide supply cover thereby releasing the teacher for CPD.

##### **Performance Management**

- Some Members were concerned that some headteachers had been reluctant to implement performance management in some schools. The Council said that there was a need for constructive dialogue between headteachers and staff concerning performance management and CPD, as both these issues were important and should be promoted as a right for teachers.

4.2 The Chair thanked presenters for their informative presentation.

#### **Item Five: Public Appointments - Confirmation of Committee Nominees**

5.1 The Committee agreed that the Chair and Jeff Cuthbert should represent the Committee on the Public Appointments Panel.

#### **Item Six: Options for Future Policy Reviews**

5.2 After some discussion, the Committee resolved to undertake a policy review on Special Educational Needs. This would begin in the autumn term with a consultation period taking place during summer recess.

5.3 The Clerk had identified four possible policy areas:

- Early identification/intervention;
- Transition between primary and secondary school;
- Welsh-medium provision; and
- Issues raised in a recent report by the Audit Commission report

5.4 The Chair suggested that the Committee undertook four small reviews focused on these issues. The Committee broadly welcomed this approach and it was agreed that the Clerk would prepare draft terms of reference and a programme for consideration at the next meeting.

5.5 The Minister said that officials would also provide an issues paper on SEN for the autumn term.

#### **Narrowing the Gap/Value-Added**

5.6 The Committee also agreed that it considered Narrowing the Gap work to be a priority.

#### **School Transport**

5.7 It was suggested that the Committee undertake an investigation into school transport. The Minister suggested that the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Children and Young People might be an appropriate means of developing policy in this area. It was agreed that the Chair would write to the Chairs of Economic Development and Transport Committee and Local Government Committee to explore the possibility of joint working on this topic. The Committee agreed that a representative from the WLGA should be invited to take part in this review.

#### **Action Points:**

- **The Clerk to prepare draft terms of reference and a programme for a policy review of SEN consideration at the next meeting.**
- **The Minister's officials to prepare a position paper on SEN for the autumn term.**
- **The Chair to write to Chairs of EDT and LG Committees regarding school transport.**

#### **Any Other Business**

The Chair stated that XL Wales (a science based voluntary education organisation from Swansea) had invited the Committee to nominate a Member to sit on an advisory panel to explore ways of expanding throughout Wales. Members expressed support for XL Wales but were concerned that other organisations might also wish Committee Members to sit on similar advisory committees and this could become unmanageable. The Committee reserved its position on this matter.

The Chair thanked Members for their constructive participation and closed the meeting at 12.25pm.