

**Date:** Wednesday 1 October 2003

**Time:** 9.30am - 12.30pm

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

**Members**

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

**Constituency**

South Wales West  
Pontypridd  
Rhondda  
Caerphilly  
Monmouth  
North Wales  
Conwy  
South Wales East  
South West Central

**Officials**

Richard Davies	Director, Department for Training and Education
Neil Thomas	Head, Lifelong Learning Division
Mike Harper	Head, Teaching and Leadership Division
Derek Adams	Head, Higher Education Division
Judith Cole	Central Support Unit

**In Attendance  
National Council -  
ELWa**

Dr Peter Higson	Interim Chief Executive
Shelia Drury O.B.E.	Designate Chair
Richard Hart	Interim Director of Learning
Grenville Jackson	Director of Strategy and Communication
George McKenchnie	Special Adviser to the Chair and Chief Executive
Rob Rogers	Interim Director of Finance and Risk

**Committee  
Secretariat**

Chris Reading	Clerk
Holly Pembridge	Deputy Clerk

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

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

1.2 The Chair noted an apology from Helen Mary Jones. Jocelyn Davies substituted.

1.3 The Chair informed the Committee that a verbatim record would be taken of the fifth item of the meeting: National Council-ELWa by the Record of Proceedings.

1.4 There were no declarations of interest in accordance with standing order 4.5.

**Item Two: Draft Forward Work Programme**

**Paper: ELL(2) 04-03(p.1)**

2.1 The Chair invited the Committee to ratify the forward work programme for the Autumn Term. He suggested one minor amendment: to move National Council-ELWa's scheduled appearance from 19 November meeting to the 10 December meeting. NC-ELWa would discuss the Planning and Funding Framework with the Committee at this date. The Committee agreed to this proposal.

2.2 The Chair also asked the Committee to confirm whether it was content to take up the optional additional meetings on 16 October and 6 November 2003, as allowed for in the Assembly's periodic timetable, to gather information for the Special Educational Needs Policy review.

2.3 The Committee agreed without a vote to use the optional slot on 6 November to make an informal visit to North Wales, for the purpose of gathering information for the policy review.

2.4 The Committee was however, divided on the issue of whether to take up the meeting on 16 October. Jeff Cuthbert stated that gathering information for the policy review should be accommodated within the regular timetable. The Chair stated that there had been previous discussion on this matter and proposed a vote on the following motion:

*"The Committee resolves to hold an additional meeting on the afternoon of 16 October 2003"*

The result of the vote was:

**For**

Peter Black (Chair)

David Davies

Jocelyn Davies (Substituting for Helen Mary Jones)  
Mark Isherwood  
Owen John Thomas

***Against***

Leighton Andrews  
Jane Davidson (Minister)  
Jeff Cuthbert  
Irene James  
Denise Idris Jones

2.5 The Chair used his casting vote, in accordance with the Presiding Officer's Guidance on Motions and the Disposal of Business (Casting Vote) in Committee to support the motion. When casting his vote, the Chair explained that this guidance had been discussed and agreed at the Panel of Chairs' meeting, the previous evening. The Chair stated that he was using his casting vote in order to facilitate completion of Committee business.

2.6 Jeff Cuthbert objected to the Chair's interpretation of the guidance and stated that he felt the Chair should have used his casting vote to defeat the motion, on the basis that there was not a majority in favour of the motion. The Chair noted his concerns but declared that he was satisfied that his use of the casting vote was in accordance with the guidance. The Chair suggested that Jeff Cuthbert should raise his concerns with the Presiding Officer.

**Item Three: Minister's Report**

**Paper: ELL(2) 04-03(p.2) and Annex of Secondary Legislation**

3.1 The Chair invited the Minister to introduce her report and then invited Members to raise questions and the following issues were raised in discussion:

**Merger Proposals - Higher Education**

- There was some concern regarding the proposed name of 'Cardiff Metropolitan University', for the new institution created by the proposed merger of University of Wales, Institute Cardiff (UWIC) and the University of Glamorgan. Some Members felt that the proposed name did not reflect the important contribution to education and lifelong learning made by the valley communities. The Minister advised Members to write to her, the boards of the existing institutions, the Secretary of State and the Privy Council. The Committee agreed that the Chair could write on behalf of the Committee to urge the relevant institutions to reconsider the naming of UWIC and the University of Glamorgan.
- The Minister advised Members to contact institutions directly about specific merger proposals. Provided proposed mergers would enhance learning

opportunities, cut down on administration costs and raise local profiles. Then money would be made available for reconfiguration.

- Positive discussions were underway between the University of Bangor and the North East Wales Institute (NEWI) regarding plans for amalgamation.

### **School Closures**

- In response to a question concerning decisions for school closures in Abergavenny, the Minister explained that the Department for Training and Education scrutinised all aspects of guidance relating to school organisation before any decision was arrived at. The Minister also stated that she read all letters of objection and that officials undertook to deliver decisions as soon as appropriately possible.

### **Devolution of Student Support**

- Reference was made to an incorrect section of the minutes of 17 July meeting, which stated that student support system had already been devolved to Wales. The Minister confirmed as per her written report, that the Welsh Assembly Government would seek these powers, subject to an appropriate financial settlement. The Clerk undertook to correct the minutes of 17 July meeting.

### **Sixth Form Funding**

- The Minister explained that to enable change, the appropriate transition arrangements had to be in place. The principle of the National Funding system was to ensure a level playing field for all learners. In response to Members' concerns, the Minister said that she did not want to direct any money away from institutions that were providing for learners.
- Information to LEAs and schools would be provided on how the new system would impact in January 2004, as soon as the relevant data/information from schools was available.
- The Committee would have the opportunity to discuss the issue with representatives from NC-ELWa at this meeting and at the meeting of 10 December, when a substantive agenda item on the planning and funding framework would take place.
- The Minister had visited numerous, successful projects in rural Wales where students had been studying subjects via distance learning that had not previously been available.
- In response to concern that some further education institutions were finding it difficult to plan strategically, the Minister said that the new funding framework would help provide a clear strategy for post-16 education and learning.

## **Teachers' Workload**

- Members sought clarification on the purpose of the £3.0m and the £3.5m allocated for reducing teachers' workload. The Minister explained that there was a need to look at new ways of working, including sharing administrative support. The workload agreement was a three-year programme. After the first year, the Assembly Government would assess how appropriately monies had been used for tackling issues around improving administrative support for teachers.
- The Minister confirmed that the £3.5m was already in the budget and was allocated to small and rural schools to help provide administrative support, amongst other things. The £3.0m was additional money exclusively to help reduce bureaucratic burdens on teachers.
- The Minister confirmed that the small schools funding formula took account of small schools, rural schools and small valleys' schools.
- The Minister said that she had regularly met with the teaching unions who had expressed cautious optimism. They were concerned that LEAs, teaching and support staff unions should meet in local authority areas to discuss contractual agreements.
- In response to Members' concerns the Minister stated that schools were keen to see the workload agreement operate. By years two and three, visible changes would be evident. For example by year three 10% of teachers' time would be allocated for lesson planning and marking.

## **Welsh Baccalaureate**

- The Minister undertook to write to David Davies with a breakdown of the percentage of coursework in the Welsh Baccalaureate.
- The Clerk would contact the Welsh Joint Education Committee to acquire copies of the specifications of the Welsh Baccalaureate for Members.
- The Committee wished to record its strong endorsement for the Welsh Baccalaureate and the formal recognition of the qualification by the Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS). Students who successfully completed the Welsh Baccalaureate at advanced level would have the equivalent UCAS points score of an A grade GCE A level in addition to the points they earn from their optional studies.

## **Action Plan for the Welsh Language**

- The Minister would provide a note for Owen John Thomas on the breakdown of the additional £9.5m spent to support the role of education and training.

## **Visits**

- The Minister undertook to inform the Committee of any future overseas visits, to allow Members to suggest possible issues to be raised during the visit.

## **Special Educational Needs**

- It was felt that Special Educational Needs should be given high priority, particularly with regards to delivery. The Minister agreed and told the Committee that the Assembly Government had acted upon this, for example with provision for low-incidence needs, the SEN Code of Practice, the SEN Tribunal for Wales and that Wales-only powers had been taken for transition arrangements. The Committee would also be undertaking a thorough review on Special Needs.

## **Item Four: Budget Planning Round 2003**

### **Paper: ELL(2) 04-03(p.3) and Annex 1**

4.1 The Chair informed the Committee that this item provided an opportunity for Members to be updated on the Budget Planning Round and invited the Minister to introduce the paper. The following issues were raised:

- The Minister stated that she would take account of the Committee's budget priorities as set out in the Chair's letter of 16 July 2003 (Annex 1);
- Expenditure figures for 2002-2003 had become available on a resource basis for the Main Expenditure Group (MEG);
- On a resource basis there was underspend of less than 1% in expenditure in 2002-2003.

4.2 The Chair then invited Members to raise questions. The following issues were raised in discussion:

- It was felt that the headings were too general. The Minister explained that when the Assembly draft budget had been finalised, Members would receive a more detailed breakdown of budget headings at the meeting of 22 October;
- ELWa variations could be explained in the footnotes of page four of the paper;
- The Chair asked if money for schools' capital was rolled forward. Judith Cole confirmed that this was the case, as some year-ends ended in underspending or overspending.

## **Item Five: National Council-ELWa**

### **Paper: ELL(2) 04-03(p.4) Annex A and Annex B**

5.1 The Chair explained to the Committee and presenters that the Record of Proceedings staff would take a verbatim record of this agenda item.

5.2 A verbatim record of this meeting is currently being prepared and will be available on the Assembly's website in 15 working days.

### **Item Six: Minutes of the previous meetings**

#### **Papers: ELL(2) 02-03(min) and ELL(2) 03-03(min)**

6.1 Members ratified the minutes of the previous meetings of 9 July and 17 July, subject to the following amendments:

- Jeff Cuthbert wanted to record that he was content with the current arrangements for separate public bodies undertaking overlapping functions. This Committee agreed that this should be added to the minutes of 9 July meeting, page 5, at the end of paragraph 4.2.
- The Minister stated that paragraph 5.1; page 6 in the minutes of 17 July meeting was incorrect. The paragraph stated that Students fees had been devolved to Wales. The Committee agreed that it should have stated that it had been agreed that powers for student support and HE funding in Wales would be devolved to Wales.

6.2 The Clerk undertook to include the amendments.

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair confirmed that the Clerk would seek approval from Business Committee to hold the additional meeting on 16 October and the visit on 6 November.

### **ACTION POINTS**

- The Clerk to seek approval of Business Committee for additional meeting on 16 October and for a visit on 6 November.
- Chair to write on behalf of the Committee to the boards of University of Glamorgan and UWIC to express the Committee's concerns that the name of the new combined institution should reflect the important contribution made by the valleys communities.
- The Clerk to contact the Welsh Joint Education Committee to acquire copies of the specifications of the Welsh Baccalaureate for Members.
- The Minister to provide a note for Owen John Thomas on the breakdown of the additional £9.5m spent to support the role of education and training in the Action Plan for the Welsh Language.