

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee ELL(2) 14-04(min)

Minutes

Date: Wednesday 10 November 2004

Time: 9.15am to 12.22pm

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

Members	Constituency
Peter Black (Chair)	South Wales West
Jane Davidson (Minister)	Pontypridd
Leighton Andrews	Rhondda
Jeff Cuthbert	Caerphilly
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

Richard Davies	Group Director, Department for Training and Education
Neil Thomas	Head, Lifelong Learning Division
Elizabeth Taylor	Head, Schools Management Division
Mike Harper	Head, Teaching and Leadership Division
Elizabeth Williams	Head, Youth and Pupil Participation Team
Marcus Hill	Youth and Pupil Participation Team
Judith Nedin	Business Systems Division
Judith Phillips	Business Systems Division

In Attendance:

Steve Case and Eddie Isles Interactive Feedback - University of Wales, Swansea

Committee Service

Chris Reading	Clerk
Holly Pembridge	Deputy Clerk
Joanest Jackson	Legal Adviser

Item One: Introduction, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

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

1.2 There were no apologies or substitutions.

1.3 Some Members made declarations of interest in accordance with Standing order 4.5. Leighton Andrews stated that he was a council member of Cardiff University and that his wife was a council member of Bangor University; Denise Idris Jones stated that she was a council member of Bangor University; and the Chair stated that he was a council member of Swansea University.

1.4 The Chair thanked Jeff Cuthbert and Mark Isherwood for their report of the recent SNAP Cymru conference - paper to note ELL(2) 14-04(p.6). The Chair acknowledged the report's main recommendation that young people should be directly involved in further stages of the Special Educational Needs policy review.

1.5 Members were informed that the reports of the Committee's rapporteur group visits to education and training bodies to date were papers to note. It was anticipated that after all visits were completed, there would be a substantive agenda item to discuss the findings of the visits in the spring term.

Item Two: Minister's Report

Paper: ELL(2) 14-04(p.1) and Annex A

2.1 The Chair invited the Minister to introduce her report. The Minister stated that, in addition to the content of her written report, she wished to inform the Committee of the following:

- 4 November - launched Free School Breakfast initiative with First Minister;
- 5 November - visited primary and secondary schools in Barcelona to develop Welsh-Catalan relations;
- The General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) Additional Functions (Amendment) (Wales) (Order) 2004 would provide the GTCW with the authority to recognise and determine the applications of teachers qualified in the European Union (EU);
- Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) grants - a revised background note would be reissued to Assembly members;
- Cwricwlwm Cymreig - delivered a keynote speech at a recent conference organised by ACCAC in Llandrindod Wells. The purpose of the conference was to enable schools to make the best use of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig. 64 schools across 19 local authorities were represented at the conference.

2.2 The Chair then invited Members to raise questions and the Minister gave the following responses:

2.3 General Teaching Council for Wales (Amendment) (Wales) (Order) 2004

- The Minister explained the use of executive procedure in this instance. Joanest Jackson, Legal Adviser, clarified that the use of executive procedure would disapply steps normally made under Standing Order 29.4; and
- The Minister undertook to write to Committee outlining the arrangements for teachers trained in the European Union undertaking their induction year in Wales.

2.4 Sexual Health Education/Personal and Social Education

- The Minister undertook to ascertain how much curriculum time was allocated to sexual health education and to write to the Chair; and
- Contraception advice for young people came under the remit of the Minister for Health and Social Services. The Minister agreed to write to the Chair regarding policy on this matter, with particular reference to pupils under sixteen years of age and the confidentiality of the advice given.

2.5 Outdoor Learning/Education Outside of the Classroom

- The Minister agreed that the quality of education was important in settings other than the school, e.g. hospital and home tuition and undertook to clarify what settings Estyn inspected and bring this information to Committee.

2.6 ELWa's Review on Work Placed Learning

- Careers Wales, particularly the Careers Wales Online facility would enable learners to build up a personal profile, thus offering a flexible approach to choosing learning opportunities;
- All pupils in school would have access to structured interviews from Careers Wales staff who would consider both the needs of learners and employers;
- The 14-19 Pathways learning coaches would also be able to guide individuals according to their needs;
- It was the Minister's understanding that all Community Consortia for Education and Training (CCETs) had representation from businesses. The Minister said that she would ask ELWa to provide a list of all CCETs' membership;
- The report of ELWa's consultation into work placed learning was available on ELWa's website;
- The Welsh Assembly Government had also had a broad consultation on the Skills and Employment Action Plan. Evidence from the Sector Skills Councils also supported evidence produced by the Future Skills Wales survey; and
- The Minister acknowledged that it was important to be clear on the definition of 'informal learning' and how such learning would be assessed.

2.7 School Transport Bill

- The Bill would enable a series of pilots to inform potential fundamental changes;
- There had been strong support in the consultation for changing statutory walking distances;
- The Minister acknowledged that currently there were inconsistent arrangements for provision between local authorities for those pupils outside the statutory age limits;
- Most of the issues raised by Committee Members could be addressed in the accompanying prospectus - which would be guided by the legislation from the Bill and the outcome of the Committee's policy review into school transport. The Bill provided an opportunity to address concerns through piloting arrangements; and
- Arrangements for free school breakfasts and school transport would be taken into account in discussions at local authority level.

2.8 Review of Assessment Arrangements for 11 and 14 year olds

- External marking would only be used on the basis that schools continued to optionally use the existing SATs material. As the SAT material changed, there would not be SAT material to externally mark;
- Following the Daugherty Report, ACCAC had been charged with developing the arrangements; ACCAC would take equity of assessment and equity of moderation into account;
- In terms of moderation, the Daugherty Report had suggested cluster arrangements between primary and secondary schools and also at local authority level; and
- The outcomes from the Daugherty Report and ACCAC's work would enable Wales to assess pupils across the broad curriculum, whilst maintaining firm assessment arrangements.

2.9 Assembly Learning Grant

- The Minister pointed out a typing error in paragraph six of her report. The "academic year 2002-03" should read "academic year 2003-04".

2.10 Devolution of Student Support and Higher Education Act 2004

- The Minister said that she shared the Committee's concern that the Student Loans Company had not been able to deliver a

satisfactory bilingual service to students in Wales and had raised and assured the Committee that she would continue to raise this matter with the Department for Education and Skills;

- When the student support powers were devolved to Wales from 2006, a fully bilingual mechanism would be in place;
- The Minister had been aware of some initial administrative problems with the issue of student loans but understood that this had now been resolved. The Minister invited Members to write to her with specific cases for her attention.

2.11 Truancy

- The overall target to reduce absenteeism was initially set by the Welsh Office. The target also included unauthorised absence;
- There was a variation in the recording of absences as authorised or otherwise by local authorities;
- There was still some way to go in reducing unauthorised absenteeism, the overall aim was to eliminate this phenomenon;
- A letter had been issued to all schools for the attention of parents indicating that it was disruptive to remove children from school during term time to go on holidays, as it could result in classes never being full;
- New attendance codes had been issued and primary truancy data was being gathered;
- The Welsh Assembly Government was hoping to benchmark attendance levels. Neath and Port Talbot LEA was managing absenteeism effectively. Merthyr Tydfil LEA was also seen by the Audit Commission as one of the most effective local authorities in the UK for managing truancy;
- There was a close link between deprivation and truancy. Free School Meals (FSM) indicators would also assist with benchmarking;
- £6m funding would be made available over the next three years to invest in electronic attendance packages for schools across Wales;
- The Minister acknowledged that there was a need to raise the awareness of parents; and
- The Committee would be kept informed of the benchmarking exercise and of effective initiatives by Neath Port Talbot LEA.

Item Three: Extending Entitlement - Progress Report

Paper: ELL(2) 14-04(p.2)

3.1 The Chair welcomed Steve Case and Eddie Isles from Interactive Feedback and Elizabeth Williams (Youth and Pupil Participation Team). Eddie Isles and Steve case made a PowerPoint presentation, which can be accessed via the Committee's webpages at www.wales.gov.uk

3.2 The Chair then invited Members to raise questions and presenters made the following responses:

3.3 Baseline Survey

- The evaluation was the first level of work in ascertaining effectiveness. The process involved a culture shift.

3.4 Measuring the Impact of Young People's Partnerships (YPPs)

- The Estyn inspection framework would play a major role in measuring the effectiveness of the Young People's Partnerships (YPPs). A pilot inspection had been undertaken in the Rhondda Cynon Taff authority area and a full inspection in Torfaen authority area. This information could be made available to the Committee.

3.5 Young People's Access to Information

- Young people accessed information from a wide variety of sources, some formal and informal. Information had to be owned by adults but accessed by young people. The documentation was appropriate for the age of the target audience (aged nine years and above).

3.6 Impact of Extending Entitlement

- It was important to consider what the Extending Entitlement agenda was trying to achieve - the agenda was fairly long-term but it was hoped that a significant difference could be made to young people's lives e.g. health advice, supporting skills of young people and nutrition etc. In the short-term, individual projects at local level could make a difference. Throughout the evaluation, customer surveys could be accessed; and
- From interviews conducted by the six pilot YPPs, there had been an indication of agencies working more closely with one another. There had also been examples of cross funding of posts to deliver strategic objectives.

3.7 Sharing of Information/Quality Assurance

- YPPs needed support and there was a need to abstract information on good practice and disseminate it amongst all 22 YPPs. The Welsh Assembly Government was looking to develop quality assurance mechanisms across all YPPs; and
- Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales) would assist in identifying effective, quality services.

3.8 Focus of Resources

- Extending Entitlement was geared to universal entitlement/provision. It was important to set specific targets but not at the cost of diluting universal services; and
- YPPs provided holistic provision. Amongst other specific target services, YPPs offered support from education, health, environment and social services.

3.9 Media Partners

- There had been a reliance on local organisations and word-of-mouth but a communications strategy would now be initiated; and
- A scoping paper containing proposals on how to raise awareness was currently being considered by local and national partners. It was also important to address the adult function - adults also had to be reached.

3.10 Factor Analysis

- Factor analysis of statistics would highlight the phenomena that shaped the perception of entitlement;
- Research patterns would take years to embed but any information should be fed back quickly to young people quickly and they should be involved in any discussion of the findings, via the curriculum other means.

Item Four: Budget Planning Round - Draft Budget for Education and Lifelong Learning Paper: ELL(2) 14-04(p.3) and Annexes

4.1 The Chair welcomed Judith Nedin, Business Systems Division to the meeting and asked the Minister to introduce her paper.

4.2 The Chair invited Members to seek points of clarification. After some discussion, the Chair summarised the Committee's budget priorities which would be conveyed to the Minister for Finance and Local Government:

4.3 Further Education

- Further clarification on the future level of revenue funding for the FE sector, over and above that committed to harmonising pay and conditions between college lecturers and teachers in school sixth forms;
- Funding to promote widening access is particularly important;
- Proposed funding for ELWa increases by only some 2% between 2007/08 and 2006/07 - this implied a cut in real terms; and
- Committee noted a significant increase in funding for '14-19 Learning in Wales' in 2007/08 compared with fairly modest levels in the first two years, and would welcome an explanation of the basis for this allocation.

4.4 Higher Education

- Adequate funding for student support was important and the Committee looked forward to discussing the initial findings of the report on this issue, being prepared by Professor Teresa Rees and her working group;
- The Committee welcomed the proposed funding for reconfiguration within the HE sector, in accordance with the 'Reaching Higher' strategy, and wished to be kept informed of progress; and
- The Committee wished to know the likely cost of supporting HE institutions in 2006/07, given the Assembly Government's pledge not to introduce variable fees during the life of this Assembly and understood that this additional cost would be met from contingency reserves.

4.5 Schools

- The Committee welcomed the investment in improving the condition of school buildings; some £139 million per year from 2005/06. The Committee sought clarification for the amount of capital funding to be provided directly by the Assembly Government for this purpose, and that to be provided by the private sector in Private Finance Initiative (PFI) projects; and
- The Committee welcomed the proposed funding for implementing the Teachers' Workload agreement, and wished to be kept informed of progress.

4.6 Iaith Pawb

- The Committee welcomed the funding for the Iaith Pawb strategy, particularly the support for teachers to extend their Welsh skills through sabbaticals, and wished to be kept informed of progress.

4.7 Special Educational Needs

- The Committee welcomed the £3 million funding over the next three years to develop joint commissioning and pooled budget arrangements between health and education bodies, for the delivery of speech and language services; and
- The Committee would launch the report of the first stage of its review of SEN later this month. It was hoped that the Minister would allocate additional funding for SEN to help implement the Committee's recommendations.

4.8 The Chair said that he would send a letter to the Minister, on behalf of the Committee, summarising the key points discussed. The Chair undertook to circulate the letter in draft to Committee Members, before despatch.

Item Five: Scrutiny of Secondary Legislation

Paper: ELL(2) 14-04(p.4) and (4a-f)

5.1 The Chair invited Members to comment on ELL 37-04 and ELL 38-04: The General Teaching Council for Wales (Functions) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2004 and The General Teaching Council for Wales (Additional Functions) (Amendment) (Wales) (Order) 2004. These had been identified for further scrutiny at the previous Committee meeting.

5.2 In response to a query from Janet Ryder, Mike Harper (Teaching and Leadership Division, DfTE) said that the regulations and order provided for the General Teaching Council for Wales to record the date that supply work began for newly qualified teachers in order to measure that against the four term limit. Extensions to the four term limit, were a matter for local authorities which could determine the criteria for any extension - possibly with regard to shortage areas.

5.3 The Minister added that the regulations and order were technical in nature and allowed the GTCW to monitor the four term limit on supply work before induction. The Welsh Assembly Government was looking to further review the arrangements for induction in the coming year.

5.4 No further comments were made concerning ELL 37-04 and ELL 38-04.

Item Six: Future Secondary Legislation

Paper: ELL(2) 14-04(p.5)

6.1 The Chair notified the Committee of a typing error on page 11 concerning ELL20-05. The legislation was due to be made in December 2004, not December 2005 as stated.

6.2 No items of secondary legislation were identified for further scrutiny. The Chair advised Members to notify the Clerk of any items they wished to select for further scrutiny.

Item Seven: Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Paper: ELL(2) 13-04(mins)

7.1 The Committee ratified the minutes of the meeting on 13 October.

7.2 In response to a query regarding the action points from Owen John Thomas concerning information on LEAs' post-16 transport policies, the Minister said that this would be provided for the Committee as soon as data had been made available.

The Committee noted the following papers:

Papers to note:

Report of the SNAP Cymru Conference by Jeff Cuthbert AM and Mark Isherwood AM

Paper: ELL(2) 14-04(p6)

Report of the Committee's rapporteur group visit to Careers Wales

Paper: ELL(2) 14-04(p7)

Report of the Committee's rapporteur group visit to Estyn

Paper: ELL(2) 14-04(p8)

Report of the Committee's rapporteur group visit to the General Teaching Council for Wales

Paper: ELL(2) 14-04(p9)

Action Points

- Minister to reissue revised background note concerning Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) grants to Assembly members
- Minister to write to the Chair concerning induction arrangements for those teachers qualified in the EU;
- Minister to write to the Chair concerning the Assembly Government's policy on contraception advice to young people under sixteen years of age, and the confidentiality of this advice;
- Minister to clarify Estyn's remit for inspection outside of the classroom and bring information to Committee;
- Minister to ask ELWa to provide membership details for every CCET;
- Minister to keep Committee informed of truancy/absenteeism benchmarking arrangements and examples of good practice in this area;
- Elizabeth Williams to make information available from the pilot and full inspection of YPPs in Rhondda Cynon Taff and Torfaen; and
- Clerk to circulate the Chair's draft letter on budget priorities to Committee Members, before despatch to the Assembly Minister.