

# Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

## Minutes (ELL2-01-05mins)

Meeting date: Wednesday 19 January 2005

Meeting time: 9.00am- 12.20pm

Meeting venue: Committee Rooms 3 & 4, National Assembly for Wales Building

### Assembly Members in Attendance

Assembly Member	Constituency
Peter Black (Chair)	South Wales West
Leighton Andrews	Rhondda
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)
Alan Lansdown	Head, Pupil Support Division

Elizabeth Taylor	Head, Schools Management Division
Judith Nedin	Business Systems Unit
Sue Lovell	Teaching and Leadership Division
David Clayton	Teaching and Leadership Division
Tony Peters	Teaching and Leadership Division
Catherine Roberts	Teaching and Leadership Division
Lisa Clarke	Teaching and Leadership Division
David Stone	Teaching and Leadership Division
Ruth Cox	Wales Office
Catrin Huws	Office of the Counsel General

### Others in Attendance

Name	Representing (if applicable)	Agenda item(s)
Rt Hon Don Touhig MP	Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Wales	Item 5

### Committee Service

Name	Job title
Chris Reading	Clerk
Holly Pembridge	Deputy Clerk
Ruth Hatton	Committee Support Officer
Joanest Jackson	Committee 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 In accordance with standing order 4.6, Jeff Cuthbert declared that he had recently become a governor at Trinity Fields Special School, Ystrad Mynach. (This was in relation to item three.)

## **Item 2: Minister's Report**

### **Paper: ELL2-01-05(p.1) and Annexes**

2.1 The Minister made a brief introduction:

- National Headship Development Programme - an additional £1.55m had been made available for the programme for 2005-06. The National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) was fully subsidised in Wales. This was not the case in England. The programme was available for all headteachers that were eligible. A quinquennial review of the programme was due to be launched;
- SEN policy review - the Minister would issue a written statement by 26 January in response to the Committee's report;
- Careers Wales Online - had been nominated for a British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) award;
- Welsh-medium teaching materials - £500,000 had been made available for 2004-05;
- Deputy Minister - Christine Chapman had been appointed Deputy Minister for Education with specific responsibility for the 14-19 agenda. She would attend the next meeting;
- Erratum - under the section entitled 'NPFS and Welsh/Bilingual Learning' - the weighting should read 2.5 as opposed to 2.

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

### **Section 1: ACCAC and ELWa Merger - Progress Report**

- The consultation document on the merger had been launched today;
- ACCAC had asked the Assembly Government if it could come into the Government at the same time as ELWa;
- Elements of ACCAC's regulatory functions would need to be retained at arm's length. ACCAC had given its assurances that this would be possible;
- The advisory structure e.g. advisory specialists would be external to the Assembly Government's education department and the specialists would contribute to curriculum development.

### **Section 2: GTCW Teacher Recruitment and Retention Action Plan - Progress Report**

- The Assembly Government had identified £400,000 to contribute to the training of learning support assistants. More information would be brought to the Committee in February/March;
- Annex B (paragraph 17) laid out the work of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) in relation to Wales. Wales benefitted from the UK-wide advertising campaigns;
- The purpose of the Welsh Medium Incentive Supplement was to assist individuals who did not feel confident enough to use their existing Welsh language skills to teach. Martin Rolph had been

asked to consider the scheme in its entirety as part of the review;

- The Minister invited Owen John Thomas to write to her regarding specific statistics for recruitment and retention for those teachers teaching through the medium of Welsh;
- The review report would hopefully be published by the end of March and be made available to the Committee.

### **Section 3: Accreditation of New Qualifications**

- The reaction of higher education institutions (HEIs) in England to the Welsh Baccalaureate had been extremely positive. Officials responsible for registration in HEIs had attended a recent conference in Wales. They had indicated that the Universities' and Colleges' Admission Services (UCAS) allocation of 120 points equivalent to 'A'-level had been helpful;
- Wales as a small country needed an education and training system that was transferable. Issues would be contributing to the UK Government white paper;
- The Minister had met with the Confederation of Business and Industry (CBI) Wales and the Sector Skills Agency who had been broadly supportive of this agenda.

### **Section 4: Widening Participation in Further Education**

- With regard to the National Planning and Funding system (NPFS), ELWa was ensuring that there was a safety net in place for schools. From August 2004-05, funding calculations would be made under the existing arrangements. Between August 2004-06 and onwards, calculations would be made using the new NPFS;
- Longer term, statistical information would be delivered through the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) data system. There had initially been a few problems with the data but ELWa was in dialogue with local education authorities to resolve the matter;
- There had never been a 50% target for widening participation in higher education in Wales because the Welsh Assembly Government believed in developing the skills agenda and encouraging participation in vocational education/training. The Sector Skills Council was content with this approach;
- The Minister would write to the Committee with statistics on student recruitment and retention rates in Wales, including information concerning the number of students that dropped out early of higher education.

### **Section 5: Business Planning for Higher Education (HE) Funding**

- The Minister would write to the Committee with the timing for the publication of the report from the 'Providing a bilingual support system' - task and finish group;
- It would be illegal to charge retrospective fees;
- The Minister acknowledged that there had been a low response rate to the consultation prepared by the Rees Group.

2.3 The Committee agreed that the item on School of the Future would become a substantive agenda item on the forward work programme to enable Members to have a progress update.

2.4 Some Members requested that the ministerial report item be extended to a regular hourly slot. The Chair said that this would be discussed at the next party spokespersons' meeting.

## **Actions**

- The Minister would write to the Committee with statistics on student recruitment and retention rates in Wales, including information concerning the number of students that dropped out early of higher education;
- Minister to write to the Committee with the recommendations of the report from the 'Providing a bilingual support system' - task and finish group;
- Clerk to programme School of the Future progress update into the forward work programme;
- Clerk to raise timing of the ministerial report at party spokespersons' meeting.

## **Item 3: Policy Review - Special Educational Needs (Stage 2)**

### **Paper: ELL2-01-05(p.2)**

3.1 The Chair invited the Clerk to introduce the paper setting out the proposed terms of reference and programme of work for the second stage of the review: statutory assessment and statements.

3.2 After some discussion, the Committee:

- Ratified the terms of reference for the review, subject to amending the terms of reference to reflect the fact that Welsh medium provision is thematically reflected in this stage and all other stages of the review of special needs;
- Resolved to undertake a fact-finding visit to Scotland to identify areas of best practice. The visit would include engagement with government officials and user groups;
- Resolved to ascertain ways of meeting with young people and parents directly to gather information for the review;
- Resolved to continue to seek the views and advice of the existing reference group;
- Approved the piloting of an e-democracy online consultation, which would run concurrently with a written consultation;
- Identified the need whilst evidence gathering, to invite organisations/individuals to submit written evidence prior to the Committee meeting and engage in question and answer sessions, as opposed to providing lengthy presentations to Committee.

3.3 David Davies asked for groups campaigning against false allegations against teachers to be included on the reference group. The Chair suggested that alternatively, he might wish to request that this topic be included in a future ministerial report to Committee

3.4 The Chair said that on behalf of the Committee, he was content for the Clerk to proceed with arrangements for commencing the review.

## **Actions**

- Clerk to amend the terms of reference accordingly and initiate arrangements for commencing the review

## **Item 4: Notes of Visits to Education and Training Bodies**

### **Papers: ELL2-01-05(p.3-7)**

4.1 The Chair introduced the item and explained that this was an opportunity for Members to feedback their views on the usefulness of visits to ELWa, HEFCW, GTCW, Estyn and Careers Wales to discuss their performance on meeting their strategic objectives. The notes of the visits had provided an opportunity for the Committee to decide whether it wished to invite organisations into Committee for further discussion on specific issues.

4.2 The visit to ACCAC was due to be scheduled shortly. Janet Ryder, Denise Idris Jones and Jeff Cuthbert expressed interest in attending the visits. Detailed arrangements would be put in hand.

4.3 The Chair noted the following feedback:

- Members had broadly found the visits to be a worthwhile exercise, especially as discussions with the organisations could feed into the Assembly's budget planning round. The Chair suggested that future visits be programmed in before the autumn budget planning round;
- Such visits would help inform new Committee Members as part of their induction process.

4.3 The Committee agreed to invite the following organisations to Committee to discuss specific issues:

- GTCW - to discuss the Assembly Government's review of initial teacher training, how its bursary system and three year funding cycle links in to this and the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Action Plan;
- HEFCW - to discuss its role in taking the strategic agenda forward whilst recognising the autonomy of higher education institutions (HEIs);
- Careers Wales - to discuss learning opportunities for adults/the post-25 agenda.

4.4 The Chair also reminded the Committee that the GTCW's Teacher Recruitment and Retention Action Plan had recommended that the Committee to monitor implementation of the action plan. The Chair outlined three options:

- Pre-31 March 2005 - Committee could write to the Auditor General for Wales and suggest that he may wish to consider this for his forward work programme;

- Post-31 March 2005 - Committee could ask the Assembly to ask the Auditor General for Wales to undertake this work under his new remit;
- Committee to ask GTCW to monitor the implementation of the plan and report back to Committee at agreed intervals.

4.5 The Committee adopted the third option. The Clerk would inform the GTCW.

4.6 The Chair invited Members to raise any issues covered by the notes of the visits. The Chair invited the Minister to respond. In response to Members' questions, the Minister gave the following responses:

- Higher education research income - it was vital to build upon research income. The education sector was expanding in Wales;
- Variable Fees (HE)- The first Rees Commission had found that upfront fees deterred students. The recommendations of the first commission had argued that the state and the student should provide some element of student support: the students' contribution would be deferred until after the educational experience. Since 1999, tuition fees had generally not deterred students from taking up HE opportunities. The focus was on encouraging more students from non-traditional, low income backgrounds to participate in HE;
- Stability of FE sector - Wales funded its FE sector 6% above England outside of the local government settlement. The Welsh Assembly Government had undertaken to fforwm that if a significant increase in the anticipated take up of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) grants occurred then it would review the budget accordingly. The FE sector had indicated that there would be a change in course provision of around 10% each year to meet skills needs;
- Literacy and Numeracy - provision was free of charge up to level one.

## **Actions**

- Clerk to arrange ACCAC visit;
- Clerk to arrange future visits before the autumn budget planning round process;
- Clerk to schedule in/invite GTCW, HEFCW and Careers Wales in for further discussion;
- Clerk to notify the GTCW regarding monitoring the implementation of the action plan.

## **Item 5: Secondary Legislation Forward Look**

### **Paper: ELL2-01-05(p.8)**

5.1 The Committee noted the schedule of forthcoming legislation and agreed to scrutinise the following regulations at the next meeting to be held on 9 February.

- ELL-07-05 - The Education (Headteachers' Qualification and Registration) (Wales) Regulations 2005;
- ELL-29-04 - The Education (Admission Appeal Arrangements) Regulations 2005

5.2 Janet Ryder requested a copy of the summary report of the consultation for the ELL29-04 prior to the 9 February meeting. The Minister undertook to provide this to the Committee.

5.3 David Davies requested that subject to the outcome of the consultation on ELL-027-04 The Education (Objections to the Admission Arrangements) Regulations 2005, that the Committee consider scrutinising these in further detail. The Minister undertook to provide the Committee with details of the consultation date.

## **Actions**

- Clerk to inform Business Committee re ELL-07-05 and ELL-29-04;
- Minister to provide ELL-29-04 consultation summary report;
- Minister to inform Committee of consultation dates for ELL-27-04.

## **Item 6: Minutes of the previous meeting**

### **Paper: ELL2-16-04(min)**

- 6.1 The Committee ratified the minutes of the meeting of 1 December 2004.

## **Item 7: Education Bill**

### **Paper: ELL2-01-05(p.9)**

7.1 The Chair welcomed Rt Hon Don Touhig MP, the Under Secretary of State for Wales to the meeting. The purpose of the item was for the Under Secretary of State to outline the policy intent behind the Bill, its timing and to answer Members' queries.

7.2 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.gsi.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Actions**

- Clerk to prepare report for Business Committee/Assembly

## **Summary of action points arising from this meeting**

- The Minister would write to the Committee with statistics on student recruitment and retention rates in Wales, including information concerning the number of students that dropped out early of higher education;
- Minister to write to the Committee with the recommendations of the report from the 'Providing a bilingual support system' - task and finish group;



- Clerk to programme School of the Future progress update into the forward work programme;
- Clerk to raise timing of the ministerial report at party spokespersons' meeting;
- Clerk to amend the terms of reference accordingly and initiate arrangements for commencing the review Clerk to arrange ACCAC visit;
- Clerk to arrange future visits before the autumn budget planning round process;
- Clerk to schedule in/invite GTCW, HEFCW and Careers Wales in for further discussion;
- Clerk to notify the GTCW regarding monitoring the implementation of the action plan;
- Clerk to prepare report on the Education Bill for Business Committee/Assembly;
- Clerk to inform Business Committee re ELL-07-05 and ELL-29-04;
- Minister to provide ELL-29-04 consultation summary report;
- Minister to inform Committee of consultation dates for ELL-27-04.