

**Minutes of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee**

**Date:** 17 October 2001

**Time:** 2.00pm

**Venue:** Committee Room 2, National Assembly Building

**Attendance:**

**Members**

Cynog Dafis, Chair	Plaid Cymru	Mid and West Wales
Jane Davidson, Assembly Minister	Labour	Pontypridd
Lorraine Barrett	Labour	Cardiff South and Penarth
Mick Bates	Liberal Democrat	Montgomeryshire
Janice Gregory	Labour	Ogmore
Pauline Jarman	Plaid Cymru	South Wales Central
Gareth Jones	Plaid Cymru	Conwy
Huw Lewis	Labour	Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney
Jonathan Morgan	Conservative	South Wales Central
Alun Pugh	Labour	Clwyd West

**Committee Secretariat**

Chris Reading	Clerk
Holly Pembridge	Deputy Clerk

## **Officials**

Richard Davies	Director, National Assembly Training and Education Department
Elizabeth Taylor	Head, Schools Management Division
Keith Davies	Head, Standards and Performance Division
Mike Harper	Head, Teaching and Leadership Division
Elizabeth Williams	Head, Youth Policy Team
Sue Lovell	Teaching and Leadership Division
Alun Huws	Teaching and Leadership Division
Tony Widdrington	Office of the Counsel General

## **Apologies**

None

## **Substitutions**

None

## **Declarations of Interest**

Cynog Dafis Registered Teacher

Jane Davidson Registered Teacher

Huw Lewis Registered Teacher

Mick Bates Qualified Teacher, Member of GTC, wife is Headteacher

Lorraine Barrett School Governor

Pauline Jarman Member of Court of Governors, University of Cardiff; and Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council

Gareth Jones Registered Teacher; and Member of Conwy County Borough Council

## Public Session

### Chair's Opening Remarks

- The Chair hoped that members had enjoyed a productive break during the summer recess and welcomed Mick Bates AM (Liberal Democrat - Montgomeryshire) as a new member of the Committee. Mr Bates replaced Eleanor Burnham AM (Liberal Democrat – North Wales). The Chair thanked Eleanor Burnham for her contribution to the work of the Committee.
- The Chair asked the Committee whether it was content for its consideration of the draft report of the Higher Education Policy Review, to be held in closed session. Mick Bates questioned the need for this. The Chair explained that the previous evaluation sessions had been held in private, so that members could discuss contentious issues freely, without generating false expectations or fears within the sector. The Chair went on to explain that the Post-16 Committee had set the precedent of considering the draft report of their culture policy review in closed session. Lorraine Barrett stated that as all the evidence for the Review had been heard in public sessions, it would appear appropriate for the Committee to continue deliberating upon the draft report in closed session.
- *After some discussion, the Committee resolved, in accordance with Standing Order 8.21(vi), to undertake its consideration of the draft report for the Higher Education Review in closed session. The Chair noted Mick Bates' concerns regarding this decision.*

### Item One: Minister's Report (45 minutes)

#### ***Papers: ELL 14-01(p.1) Minister's Report***

1. The Minister presented her monthly report to the Committee. The Chair noted that the Minister had made lots of information available in her report and encouraged members to choose topics carefully, so that they could be scrutinised in detail. The Minister stated that she wanted the Committee to be fully up-to-date with developments that had occurred since the recess period and highlighted some key issues of her report. These included:
  - ELWa had published its Corporate Strategy. The Minister encouraged members to look at it. The Minister felt that it was important that funding decisions followed strategies already in place.
  - There would be an evaluation of the services provided by the Corus Debt Relief Counselling.
  - The Consultation on the "Learning Country" document was due to end on October 31<sup>st</sup> 2001 and the Minister emphasised that it would be helpful if members fed in their comments during the discussion of her report at this meeting.
  - The UK government Education Bill was expected to be published around mid to late November; it would be subject to consideration by the Legislative Programme Committee at Westminster. The Minister told the Committee that a Bill team from the National Assembly's NATED division was working closely with Westminster colleagues and that she would receive updates on the process.
  - The Minister said she was pleased to have launched the Welsh Baccalaureate Information Pack at

Coleg Gwent on 27 September. She reported that nine schools/colleges had already shown a positive interest in piloting the Welsh Baccalaureate.

- A report on the consultation exercise to review the publication of Performance Tables had been provided for Members. The Minister had been unable to make a statement in Plenary at the end of last term.
- From September 2001, teachers across the board could bid for funds which could be used to support a range of individually orientated Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities.
- The Consultation on the draft General Teaching Council for Wales (fees) Regulations 2001 was underway and if members wished to comment they should send comments to the Clerk by 9 November 2001.
- The Minister said she would send Committee members a written note regarding the UK joint consultation exercise on the future of the National Training Organisations (NTO). The Chair said he would welcome this. Today, the UK government would be announcing a policy statement. With regard to the NTO situation in Wales, the Minister was looking for a made-in-Wales solution. This would also tie in with the discussion on NEDS/Skills scheduled for 14 November Committee meeting.
- The Minister announced that with the introduction of the new performance management arrangements for teachers in Wales, the proposals should not prevent teachers from obtaining post-threshold awards.

## 1.2 The Committee then discussed the following issues:

- Some members were concerned that there had been no update from the Minister on the implementation of the initial stages of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) strategy; it had been agreed by the Committee in its report that three bodies were to be established by Spring 2001. Jonathan Morgan and Huw Lewis registered their concern and called for a greater sense of urgency on this matter. Jonathan Morgan stated that there had been a delay of about a year within a sector that can change on a monthly basis. The Minister responded that issues surrounding public appointments and procurement had proved more problematic than had been anticipated due to operating within separate procedures. The Minister pointed out that she shared Members' frustration on this matter. Keith Davies (an official in the Assembly's Training and Education Department) was invited to respond and stated that various bodies had been invited to nominate representatives to the Advisory Panel. Individuals with particular experience or expertise would also be invited to join the Panel. The Advisory Panel was due to have its first meeting in November 2001. Adverts for the ICT Task Force and NGfL Cymru had been placed in the Official Journal of the European Communities (OJEC). The OJEC process was subject to a set timetable. Current indications were that it was unlikely that the ICT Task Force and NGfL Cymru would be established before February 2002 at the earliest. Part of the Advisory Panel's function would be to take a view on the bids put forward by those organisations wishing to take on the roles of the ICT Task Force and NGfL Cymru.
- Members asked whether the procurement process was new. Keith Davies replied that the OJEC process and its related timetables were well established: the implementation of the Committee's recommendations on ICT had been caught up in the procurement timetable. The Minister highlighted that these matters did not impede the ICT Learning Strategy: there was a commitment to getting all schools online by September 2002. As soon as the Panel was appointed, progress could be made. The Minister told the Committee that she had been working closely with Andrew Davies AM, the E-Minister and Edwina Hart AM, the Minister for Finance and Communities. The Chair mentioned that the Committee would be hopefully considering ICT in schools in November, as outlined in the Forward Work Programme.

- One member pointed out that there had been a disappointing response to the consultation on performance management for teachers, as only nine Local Education Authorities (LEAs) had responded. The Minister emphasised that different consultations appealed to different audiences, especially if there was a grievance. Also, as this was a specialised consultation, many teachers would have relied on their professional associations to respond on their behalf. With regards to LEAs, many would have already accounted for/time-tabled extra INSET days for training. The quality of the response to the consultation had been very high and there had been support for the arrangements.
- Members asked the Minister to comment on what measures were available to assist schools in meeting the increasing costs of carrying out AS-Level Examinations. Richard Davies responded that the cost of examinations was one of the factors which were taken into account as part of the overall revenue settlement grant.
- There was some concern that some teachers who had received their threshold payments had encountered problems with the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW) in its lack of acceptance of their qualifications. The Minister commented that it was a requirement for both threshold payment and registration with the Council that the teacher had to have obtained Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Registration with the Council had highlighted a few cases where QTS had not been awarded for technical reasons. The minister was also asked whether the General Teaching Council would be including other qualifications for the purpose of awarding QTS and was there any timescale for doing so. The Minister responded that there was no firm timetable at present but that the types of cases being examined to see if changes needed to be made to the QTS legislation by the Assembly. The Minister commented that the process of registration was still underway.
- There was great concern amongst members concerning the Children's Commissioner's recent statement that schools were being built upon contaminated land. The Minister emphasised that she took this concern very seriously but it was not an education issue. It was a matter for Local Planning Authorities, the Health Authorities and Environmental Health Authorities. One member questioned who should be responsible within the National Assembly. The Minister replied that the responsibilities were laid out in law in this case. The Children's Commissioner had written to Local Authorities at Conwy and Newport – this situation was therefore for these two authorities to resolve. The Minister highlighted the importance of the presence of a Children's Commissioner, as issues relating to children could be raised in a serious way. It helped to ensure that the roles of the proper authorities were in no way diminished. Both the Chair and Minister felt that it was an inappropriate matter for the Committee to deal with. Another member commented that Conwy Council was committed to improving the state of school buildings.
- One member raised the issue of whether the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) for school projects counted as education capital spend and was as a result within the ambit of the responsibilities of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. The Minister explained that PFI was revenue funded through the local government revenue settlement and therefore a matter for Edwina Hart, Minister for Finance and Communities.
- The issue arose of whether the transfer of post-16 funding to ELWa-National Council would have a detrimental effect on pre-16 funding, as some LEAs had expressed concern on this issue. The Minister commented that negotiations were underway between the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the National Assembly on the final agreement of the transfer. It was in all interests to ensure that nobody lost out as a result of the transfer. The National Assembly was working in conjunction with its local government colleagues to ensure that there was minimal disruption.
- On the transfer of £1.3m to the GTCW for the piloting of continuing professional development (CPD) projects, a member questioned whether it was intended that the GTCW would manage all such projects in the future. Richard Davies responded that there had been a development in policy –

taking forward professional development for individual teachers and not just for groups of teachers. A scheme for individually tailored development for teachers was being taken forward by the GTCW on a pilot basis with these funds. The £1.3m had been transferred from the 'Performance Management for Teachers' Budget Expenditure Line (BEL) but that did not mean that the Council would assume responsibility for teachers' performance. One member asked if this investment would contribute towards capital spend. The Minister informed members that it would contribute towards revenue spend

- The Chair asked to what extent the Minister had tried to influence the form of the Education Bill: whether there would be a section for Wales or phrases/clauses outlining flexibility and freedom for Wales. The Minister emphasised that the Learning Country and Schools Achieving Success were obviously different documents. She had met with Estelle Morris (Secretary of State for Education and Skills), Stephen Timms (Schools Standards Minister) and Paul Murphy (Secretary of State for Wales) and was confident that the ambitions of Wales would be taken forward. The content of the Bill would not be known until the Legislative Programme Committee had considered the proposals and the Bill was published. The Minister highlighted the fact that the White Paper in England would focus on schools, hence the legislation was likely to be focused on schools. The Committee was assured by the Minister that she had spent a considerable amount of time working up the clauses for the Bill helping to ensure that the (concept of the) 'Learning Country' became a reality. Not until all the responses had been received from the consultation on the Learning Country would the agenda for Wales be totally clear.
- The Minister was asked to comment if the Learning Country document and strategy would be consistent with that of ELWa's Strategic plans, on ICT for example. The Minister pointed out that ELWa had responsibility for the overall strategy for post-16 education, the National Assembly's ICT strategy was focused on schools. If there were any inconsistencies to be found, the Minister said she would be grateful for any feedback from members. It was emphasised that the Learning Country was a big ambition which set out the strategy for education in Wales for the next nine years. This would drive education spend and other National Assembly spend over this period. Richard Davies added that ELWa's Corporate Strategy sat beneath the National Assembly's strategic plan – therefore consistency was imperative.
- The Chair asked if the UK Education Department had co-operated with the Minister in its willingness for the design of the Bill and in its acceptance of the realities of devolution. The Minister responded that there had been a great deal of co-operation. The two documents: The Learning Country and Schools Achieving Success had two different messages, yet they were published on the same day. This she felt, in itself, had been recognition and vindication of devolution, as issues in the two documents might not have been the same. The Minister had been heartened by the positive response. The Minister mentioned to the Committee that 12,000 copies of the Learning Country document had been requested.
- One member asked whether the aspirations of consultees to the Learning Country document would be taken on board in the Education Bill. The Minister informed the Committee that there were two ways of applying the legislation to Wales: through permissive provisions or Wales-only clauses. Since the Bill would focus on schools, some things which the Assembly wanted might not be included but there would be subsequent opportunity to bid for Wales-only legislation.
- The issue of arose of whether the Education Bill would include changes to the present provisions on school transport which dated back to the 1944 Education Act. The Minister stated that the content of the Bill would only be known when it had been agreed by the UK Government legislation committee and published.

## **Item Two: Detailed Forward Work Programme – Autumn 2001 and Strategic Forward Work Programme (15 minutes)**

***Papers: ELL 14-01(p.2) Detailed Forward Work Programme***

***ELL 14-01(p.3) Strategic Forward Work Programme***

2.1 The Committee was invited to consider the draft detailed forward work programme for the autumn term and also the strategic forward work programme, which covered the period to December 2002.

2.2 The following issues were raised in discussion:

- The Chair announced that the Business Committee had approved the additional Committee meeting scheduled for 8 November 2001.
- The Chair suggested (as outlined in the Minister's Report) that ELWa should appear before the Committee to discuss its Funding Review. It was suggested that it should be scheduled in for 14 November, this would replace the item on the Education Bill. The Chair pointed out that an item on the Education Bill was scheduled for 28 November. The Committee agreed to this proposal.
- Gareth Jones asked when there would be an opportunity to discuss the Welsh Baccalaureate in more detail. The Minister responded that she had reported on the Welsh Baccalaureate at this meeting in the Minister's Report, yet members had not raised any queries on the matter. There was a certain timetable associated with the Welsh Baccalaureate: the information pack had been launched in September and an opportune time to discuss it in the near future would be in January 2002 when schools and colleges would have signed up to pilot the Welsh Baccalaureate.
- Mick Bates queried whether the scheduled item on rural schools would include an examination of workloads in small schools. The Chair pointed out that this topic was scheduled for 31 October and would concern the policy framework for rural schools. The Minister added that she had agreed in Plenary to bring forward a consultation paper for the Committee in October. The Minister pointed out that she had been awaiting the WLGA report which was received a week ago.
- The Minister commented that the agenda for the 8 November meeting was relatively sparse. The Chair asked the Committee for its suggestions. Mick Bates suggested an item on Enterprise Education. The Committee agreed to include this topic in the forward work programme.
- Gareth Jones expressed concern that there was only one item on the Welsh Language Review programmed in for 12 December. The Chair reminded the Committee that, as outlined on the Strategic Forward Work Programme, the Review would run from December 2001 until June 2002.
- Lorraine Barrett pointed out that for issues to be considered for next term, it would be useful for Coleg Digidol to appear alongside Universities for Industry (Ufi). The Minister suggested an item alongside this from the BBC on their Digital Curriculum proposals.

## **Item Three: Minutes of 11 July Meeting**

***Paper: ELL 13-01(mins)***

3.1 The Committee ratified the minutes of the previous meeting. There were no comments.

## **Item Four: Paper to Note: Local Government and Housing Committee Paper – Review of Local Government Finance System**

***Paper: ELL 14-01(p.4)***

4.1 The Committee noted the paper.

***Private Session***

***The Committee then undertook its consideration of the draft report of the Higher Education Policy Review in private. This was resolved by the Committee in accordance with Standing Order 8.21(vi).***

**Committee Secretariat October 2001**