

## **EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE**

### **DRAFT REPORT TO PLENARY UNDER STANDING ORDER 9.9**

#### **MAY 2001 TO APRIL 2002**

### **1 Introduction**

1.1 This report summarises our activities from May 2001 to April 2002.

Copies of our reports, agendas, papers, minutes and transcripts of meetings can be found on the National Assembly website <sup>1</sup>.

### **2 Membership**

2.1 Our current membership is: Gareth Jones (Chair), Jane Davidson (Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning), Lorraine Barrett, Mick Bates, Cynog Dafis, Janice Gregory, Jonathan Morgan, Helen Mary Jones, Huw Lewis and Alun Pugh.

2.2 There were several changes to our membership during the reporting period:

- Mick Bates replaced Eleanor Burnham on 16 October 2001;
- Helen Mary Jones replaced Pauline Jarman on 21 March 2002; and
- Gareth Jones replaced Cynog Dafis as Chair on 21 March 2002.

### **3 Remit and Responsibilities**

3.3 Our remit is based on the portfolio of the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning. This portfolio embraces education and lifelong learning and includes, amongst other things, the national curriculum and qualifications, all aspects of schools administration and organisation, further and higher education, supply side of employment policy - including the New Deal - and the work of the employment service, career services and work related training.

3.4 Responsibilities of subject committees are set out in standing order 9.

### **4 Priorities**

4.1 We have sought to develop a strategic approach to our work. We have focused on three key priorities during the reporting period. We completed policy reviews of The Supply of School

Places and Higher Education in July 2001 and January 2002 respectively and are currently undertaking a review of The Welsh Language in Education.

4.2 We are committed to making our proceedings more accessible to the people of Wales. To this end, in January 2002, we met at the Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth and also launched our higher education report at the Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff.

## **5 Work and Achievements to Date**

5.1 During the reporting period we met 18 times. Our principal achievements were as follows:

## **6 Policy Development - *standing order 9.7 (i)***

### **Policy Review of the Supply of School Places**

6.1 We inherited this review from the now defunct Pre-16 Education, Schools and Early Learning Committee. Our report was published and presented to Plenary on 10 July 2001<sup>2</sup>.

6.2 The Welsh Assembly Government has accepted the committee's recommendations and has established a joint working group with District Audit and the Association of Directors of education Wales (ADEW), to devise a new methodology for measuring school capacity. Also, as a consequence of the report, additional funding has been made available to local education authorities to address this issue.

### **Policy Review of Higher Education**

6.3 We completed our policy review of higher education. This policy review began during the last reporting period (November 2000) and was completed in January 2002. The report was launched at the Welsh College of Music and Drama on 15 January<sup>3</sup>. In the report, we set out our vision for higher education in Wales and made recommendations to the Assembly Minister. The study took account of national, European, and wider international issues, together with the teaching, research and economic missions within the sector.

6.4 We undertook fact finding visits to the Scottish Parliament and also the Northern Ireland Assembly, where we held a formal committee meeting with members of the Northern Ireland Higher and Further Education, Training and Employment Committee.

6.5 In response to this review, the Welsh Assembly Government recently published a strategy for the higher education sector in Wales - *Higher Education and the Learning Country*. The Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning has set out a number of important proposals based on the report and has undertaken to keep the committee informed of progress.

## **Policy Review of the Welsh Language in Education**

6.6 We are in the process of undertaking a review of the Welsh language in education. The Culture Committee is currently undertaking a policy review of the Welsh language in the round and our committee will provide the education contribution.

6.7 We will seek to define the benefits of bilingualism and education in achieving the National Assembly's vision of fostering Wales' unique and diverse identity. The Committee will suggest a strategy to help achieve that vision.

6.8 We also contributed to key policy developments being taken forward by the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning <sup>4</sup>.

## **7 Review of Expenditure and Administration – *standing order 9.7 (ii)***

7.1 The Minister presented a report to the committee each month on policy initiatives, consultations, budget issues and other matters. The topics to be covered in each report were discussed and agreed in advance by the Chair and the Minister. The committee scrutinised the Minister on her report and, when necessary, further clarification was sought on particular issues.

## **8 Assembly Sponsored Public Bodies - *standing order 9.7(iii)***

8.1 We scrutinised ELWa - National Council on their draft corporate strategy and funding review, following their creation earlier in the year.

8.2 ACCAC (the curriculum and assessment body for Wales) also appeared before the committee to discuss their corporate plan for the period 2002/03-2004/05.

8.3 We also received a presentation from Estyn concerning their annual report for the academic year 2000 - 2001. Following her presentation, the Chief Inspector for Education and Training was scrutinised by the committee concerning the findings of the report and the consequent policy implications. Estyn is not an ASPB but works closely with the Assembly in providing evidence and advice, upon which to develop and monitor education policies. We therefore take a keen interest in Estyn's work.

8.4 In April, the General Teaching Council for Wales will present its corporate plan for 2002 - 2005 to the committee and provide a progress report on achievements over the past year.

## **9 Legislation – *standing order 9.8 (i)***

9.1 We considered and reported to plenary on the Inspection of Education and Training (Wales) Regulations 2001, the Financing of Maintained Schools (Amendment) (Wales) Regulations 2002 and the Education (Budget Statements) (Wales) Regulations 2002. We are also currently considering a schedule of relevant, forthcoming secondary legislation. This schedule covers the period from the present up until the end of Summer Term 2002<sup>5</sup>.

9.2 We have also had the opportunity to discuss the Education Bill, which is about to go to report stage in the House of Lords, on two occasions during this reporting period. At one of these sessions, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Don Touhig MP) joined the Assembly Minister in informing the committee of the provisions of, and progress with, the Bill. This was very constructive and the committee would hope to have further such opportunities for dialogue with parliamentary colleagues.

## **10 Budget – *standing order 9.8 (ii)***

10.1 Our budget preferences were set out in the summer, and we commented on the draft budget in the autumn term<sup>6</sup>.

## **11 Complaints – *standing order 9.8 (iii)***

11.1 No complaints were received during the reporting period.

## **12 Public Appointments – *standing order 9.8 (iv)***

12.1 Our public appointments nominees<sup>7</sup> were consulted on numerous appointments<sup>8</sup> to public bodies during the reporting period.

## **13 Forward Programme**

13.1 Looking to the future, we have produced a strategic work programme for 2002-03 and detailed forward work programme for May to July 2002<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> See [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk) pages for Education and Lifelong Learning Committee at the following address [www.wales.gov.uk/keypubassemedlearning/index.htm](http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubassemedlearning/index.htm)

<sup>2</sup> See [www.wales.gov.uk/keypubassemedlearning/content/ellpolicy.html](http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubassemedlearning/content/ellpolicy.html) for copies of our report.

<sup>3</sup> See [www.wales.gov.uk/keypubassemedlearning/content/ellpolicy.html](http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubassemedlearning/content/ellpolicy.html) for copies of our report (ISBN 0 7504 2790 6).

<sup>4</sup> Reducing bureaucratic burdens in schools, National Economic Development Strategy/Skills, GEST programme 2002-03, Extending Entitlement (Direction and Guidance) and Substance Abuse Education.

<sup>5</sup> ELL 05-02(p.7) March 6 2002 see [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

<sup>6</sup> See [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk) budget and strategic planning pages for copies of our responses.

<sup>7</sup> Current nominees are Gareth Jones, Jane Davidson and Lorraine Barrett. During the reporting period Cynog Dafis was present rather than Gareth Jones.

<sup>8</sup> Higher Education Funding Council (Chair and Member), ACCAC (Member), Council for Education and Training (Member) and Wales New Deal Advisory Taskforce (Members).

<sup>9</sup> See [www.wales.gov.uk/keypubassemedlearning/content/ellforward.html](http://www.wales.gov.uk/keypubassemedlearning/content/ellforward.html)