

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee ELL 18-02(min)

MINUTES

Date: Thursday 5 December 2002

Time: 9.00am

Venue: Committee Room 3, National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay

Attendance	Members	Constituency
	Gareth Jones (Chair)	Conwy
	Jane Davidson (Minister)	Pontypridd
	Lorraine Barrett	Cardiff South and Penarth
	Mick Bates	Montgomeryshire
	Rosemary Butler	Newport West
	Cynog Dafis	Mid and West Wales
	Janice Gregory	Ogmore
	Helen Mary Jones	Llanelli
	Huw Lewis	Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney
	Jonathan Morgan	South Wales Central
	Officials	
	Richard Davies	Director, DfTE
	Elizabeth Taylor	Head, Schools Management

Mike Harper

Head, Teaching and Leadership

Fforwm

Dr John Graystone

Chief Executive

Caroline Lewis

Board member and Principal, Neath Port Talbot College

David Mason

Vice-Chair and Principal, Coleg Gwent

National Council-ELWa

Enid Rowlands

Chair

Steve Martin

Chief Executive

GTCW

Professor John Andrews

Chair

Mal Davies

Deputy Chair

Gary Brace

Chief Executive

Also

Professor Stephen Heppell

Director, Ultralab, University of East Anglia

Martin Williams

Teacher, St Cenydd Comprehensive, Caerphilly

Committee Secretariat

Chris Reading

Clerk

Holly Pembridge

Deputy Clerk

Item 1: Introduction, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

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

2. The Chair noted apologies from Alun Pugh, the Deputy Minister and welcomed Rosemary Butler as a substitute for the latter part of the meeting.
3. The Minister expressed her deepest sympathy to the family of Stuart Cunningham-Jones who died as a result of an accident involving a school bus near Cowbridge on Tuesday 3 December. Stuart was a pupil at Cowbridge Comprehensive School. The Vehicle Inspectorate was currently carrying out an investigation and would report back in due course. The Vale of Glamorgan Council would keep the Minister informed of developments and she undertook to make a further statement in due course. The Chair thanked the Minister and expressed his sympathy and that of the Committee.
4. The Chair asked Members to make any declarations of interest in accordance with standing order 4.5. There were none.
5. The Chair reminded the Committee that he would be appearing before the Richard Commission on 12 December. The Chair asked the Committee to approve a factual note, which outlined areas where the lack of the Assembly's legislative powers had constrained policy aspirations. This was approved, subject to a minor amendment. The Chair stated that he would be giving evidence based on his own experience but pointed out that Members could make their own views known to the Commission before the end of February.
6. The Clerk had attended a seminar on assessment and motivation at the Nuffield Foundation, in London. The seminar marked the launch of a pamphlet entitled "Testing, Motivation and Learning", by the Assessment Reform Group: copies had been ordered for Members. The Chair stated that this topic would be included in the work programme for the spring term as part of the School of the Future policy review.
7. The Chair informed the Committee that Huw Lewis, Alun Pugh and Jonathan Morgan had met with NGfL Cymru, to review progress on the implementation of the ICT strategy. NGfL Cymru had agreed to make a presentation to the Committee in January.

Item 2: Further Education (FE) Sector: Staff Recruitment and Retention – Presentation by fforwm

Paper: ELL 18-02(p.1)

Additional Funding

2.1 fforwm welcomed the additional funding recently announced by the Welsh Assembly Government to increase pay in the FE sector over the next three years, which should eliminate the

pay differential with school teachers and help to alleviate recruitment problems.

Retirement

2.2. Presenters referred to statistics in paragraph 12 of their paper. Members asked how this compared with the situation in secondary schools and were told that the retirement 'bulge' was common throughout the public sector. School teachers tended to start their careers at a younger age, **in their early to mid twenties**. Whereas FE lecturers were usually some ten years older and were recruited from business, industry or other professions.

Salary

2.3 Members asked how the salary and conditions of a head of department (HoD) in a FE college would compare to that of a head of HoD in a school. Members were told that there was a 14-year pay scale in FE and that the top of this scale did not correlate to the top of the scale of school teachers' pay.

Shortage Subjects

2.4 There was some concern that the general problem of recruiting lecturers in shortage subjects would be even more difficult to resolve in the Welsh heartland. Presenters confirmed that it was extremely difficult to recruit and indeed retain bilingual teaching and administration staff. Members were told that more students were choosing to pursue qualifications in vocational subjects, such as plumbing and construction, in which there was an UK wide deficit of skills. This was welcomed but presenters felt it could lead to problems caused by the pay differentials needed to attract experienced practitioners to teach these subjects.

Marketing/Raising Profile

2.5 There was some discussion concerning a possible marketing campaign to raise the profile of careers in FE. Presenters stated that fforwm did not have sufficient funds to mount a campaign but would be delighted to work in partnership with the Assembly and ELWa-National Council.

Centres of Excellence

2.6 Members were interested to know to what extent FE colleges had been forming links with industry to form 'centres of excellence'. fforwm told the Committee that such links were being developed.

Flexible Working

2.7 Members felt that the various types of flexible working arrangements, including part-time and job-share, was a positive advantage that should be emphasised when recruiting. The presenters agreed.

Perceptions

2.8 There was some concern that memories or perceptions of past problems, such as gender imbalance, pay inequalities and an aggressive management culture still persisted and so affected recruitment into the FE sector. Presenters said that these problems were indeed in the past but conceded that there were still problems of gender imbalance in senior management. Presenters felt that a previously underfunded sector had created a tension between managers and employees. Once the pay issue had been addressed then work could begin on structural issues.

Bureaucratic Burdens

2.9 Members asked what could be done to ease bureaucratic burdens on FE lecturers. Members were told that fforwm had established its own working group on this issue and would like to involve National Council-ELWa and the National Assembly.

Relationship with the General Teaching Council for Wales (GTCW)

2.10 Members asked if there was any formal relationship between fforwm and the GTCW. Presenters said that there was no formal relationship at present but that was an issue that needed to be addressed.

Minister

2.11 The Minister stated that it was important to reward all kinds of achievement: parity of esteem had to be all stakeholders' goal. The Minister congratulated the FE sector on the excellent outcome of the Further Educational National Training Organisation (FENTO) survey of FE staff's qualifications in Wales and congratulated fforwm members for the amount of Beacon Awards achieved this year.

2.12 The Chair thanked the presenters for their paper and the subsequent discussion.

Item 3: National Council-ELWa (NC-ELWa)

Paper: ELL 18-02(p.2)

3.1 The Chair and the Chief Executive made a PowerPoint presentation covering the draft corporate plan 2003-06, the planning and funding review and other major achievements. There is a link to this PowerPoint presentation on the Committee's WebPage. The following issues were raised in discussion.

Voluntary Sector

3.2 There was some concern that the corporate plan did not feature the role of the voluntary

sector prominently. Presenters told Members that the voluntary sector was central to the learning network and confirmed that it would play a key role in delivering NC-ELWa's agenda. This would be most evident in the development of community learning accounts. Members were told that NC-ELWa would produce an action plan in due course.

Funding Streams

3.3 Members raised concerns that some schools, especially in rural areas, felt there was a lack of clarity concerning the various existing funding streams. Members felt that this could affect the way in which LEAs managed the supply of school places. Presenters acknowledged these concerns and stated that the Council had consulted widely on the funding review. These concerns would be taken into account and reflected in NC-ELWa's proposals to the Minister. **Presenters stressed that the needs of learners were paramount.**

Informal Learning

3.4 Members asked how priorities for informal learning opportunities could be supported and validated. The Committee was told that informal learning was not well understood in the UK and that more work **was needed to develop a better understanding in this area.** Adult and continuing education was growing and needed further support.

Relationships with Training Providers

3.5 Presenters were asked if they recognised power differential between partners. Members felt that there was low morale amongst some training providers. Presenters told the Committee that schools, colleges and training providers had been **widely** consulted, resulting in the modification of the Council's plans. They agreed that the proposed changes might make some organisations uncomfortable.

Staff Relationships/Rawlings Report

3.6 There was some discussion concerning the NC-ELWa's relationship with its staff. Presenters said that the agenda driven by policies from the Welsh Assembly Government was challenging but it was being addressed by NC-ELWa and the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCW). Presenters were pleased that the Minister had accepted the **broad** principles of the report.

Community Consortia for Education and Training (CCETs)

3.7 Members raised concerns about CCETs, in particular, a perceived lack of planning in some cases and an unhelpful bidding culture. Presenters informed the Committee that CCET representatives sat on the regional committees of NC-ELWa. Their role was to assist NC-ELWa in ensuring that appropriate learning networks were established throughout Wales.

Financial Management

3.8 Members were concerned that some training providers had reported not receiving payment by the due date. Presenters told the Committee that NC-ELWa had inherited six financial systems, which had been rationalised. Schools and FE colleges had been paid on time but payments to training providers might have been delayed by one or two days. NC-ELWa had increased staff resources to help clear the backlog.

Education Business Links

3.9 Members asked if there had been any initial conclusions drawn from the review of Education Business links. Presenters told the Committee that they would be publishing a report on this matter in the New Year and Members would be sent a copy.

Action Points

- National Council-ELWa to provide copies of a report on the review of education business links in the new year.

Item Four: Policy Review: School of the Future – Presentations

Paper: ELL 18-02(p.3) GTCW

4.1 The committee heard oral presentations from the GTCW on the role of the teacher; presenters referred to their paper.

4.2 Professor Stephen Heppell and Martin Williams then gave their perspectives on the role of ICT using PowerPoint presentations. The Chair congratulated Martin Williams on being selected as the secondary school teacher of the year at the recent UK teacher awards.

4.3 A brief overview of themes that emerged is given below:

Teaching

- Breaking the cycle of educational deprivation – parents may have had a negative experience of education and inadvertently pass this on to their children;
- Schools need to be at the centre of communities;
- Teachers' core activity is assessing the needs of learners;
- Teachers need to develop the role of a learning manager;
- Teachers need to develop skills as managers of resources and procurement;
- The need for greater trust in the professional judgement of teachers;
- Teachers as managers of other adults (e.g. in community schools);
- Teachers as learners and the importance of continuing professional development (CPD);
- In this way, the status of the teaching profession will be raised.

Curriculum

- The need for lengthy piloting and assessment when implementing substantial changes to the curriculum;
- The need to review methods and purposes of assessment when reviewing the curriculum;
- GCSE History lessons: evidence and interpretation - pupils planning and leading lessons and sharing ideas out of school hours.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

- Using today's ICT capabilities for tomorrow's classroom;
- The need for creativity - pupils being engaged with and driving the creative process;
- ICT as a medium for engaging pupils with special needs or talents, to the benefit of other learners;
- ICT as a medium for sharing pupils' work and achievements with parents and other learners in the community;
- ICT as a medium for raising the self-esteem of pupils and the status of the school within its local community;
- CPD made effective through ICT – an interactive process whereby teachers can share and learn from each other's experiences (both good and bad);
- The use of websites to inform parents of schemes of work, examining boards and coursework deadlines;
- Interactive whiteboards: work can be archived and sent to other schools;
- The use of music and video clips to enhance lessons and stimulate creative ideas, encouraging a different way of thinking;
- Physical design of the classroom – ways of facilitating group working and also providing space and a safe environment for quiet reflection.

4.4 The Chair thanked the presenters for their interesting and thought-provoking contribution to the policy review.

Item Five: Motion and Amendments on University Top-Up Fees

Paper: ELL 18-02(p.4)

5.1 The Committee discussed the motion and amendments set out in the paper.

5.2 After some discussion Helen Mary Jones agreed to withdraw her motion, on the understanding that the Minister agreed to provide a paper on student support at the earliest opportunity in the spring term.

Action Points

- The Minister to provide a paper on student support at the earliest opportunity in the spring

term.

Item Six: Minutes of the Previous Meeting for Ratification

Paper: ELL 17-02(mins)

6.1 The Committee ratified the minutes of the last meeting on 21 November 2002.

Paper to Note: Chair's Evidence to the Richard Commission

Paper: ELL 18-02(p.5)

The Committee noted the paper.