



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE EDUCATION ACHIEVEMENT SERVICE (EAS) COMPANY BOARD HELD IN LLANWERN HIGH SCHOOL, NEWPORT ON WEDNESDAY 14TH OCTOBER 2015

PRESENT:

Councillor Mark Whitcutt (Newport City Council) - Chairman
Councillor David Hardacre (Caerphilly CBC)

Councillor R Passmore (Caerphilly CBC)
Councillor (Monmouthshire CC)
Councillor D Wilcox (Newport City Council)
Councillor D Yeowell (Torfaen CBC)
Councillor K Bender (Blaenau Gwent CBC)

Together with:

Steve Davies, Kevin Palmer, Debbie Hartevelde and Geraint Willington (EAS), Paul Matthews (Monmouthshire CC), James Harries (Newport City Council), Keri Cole (Caerphilly CBC), Graeme Harkness, Roger Guy and Owain ap Dafydd (Non-Executive Members), John Griffiths (UHY)

Also in attendance:

Karl Napieralla (Welsh Government), Sharon Lear (Torfaen CBC)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Hackett-Pain (Monmouthshire CC), Sarah McGuinness (Monmouthshire CC), Lynette Jones (Blaenau Gwent CBC), Councillor R Greenland (Monmouthshire CC), Councillor R Clark (Torfaen CBC) and Sarah Fulthorpe (Welsh Government)

2. MEETING TO CALL ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5.30pm.

3. ESTABLISH QUORUM

Confirmation was received that the meeting was quorate as 4 JEG members were present.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS AGM 24TH SEPTEMBER 2014

The minutes of the AGM held on 24th September 2014 were confirmed as a correct record. There were no matters arising.

5. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Steve Davies, Managing Director EAS, presented the report which outlined progress on the work of the EAS across the SEWC region over 12 months September 2014 to September 2015. The report summarised challenges and activities over the year, and included significant events which related to the structure and how responsibilities had been fulfilled.

The report provided evidence of the progress made in the key areas of implementation of the EAS's work within the SEWC region. These included:

- Reviewing progress within the EAS 2014/15 Business Plan
- Responding to the Welsh Audit Office (WAO)/Estyn report on the Remit visits to School Improvement Consortia, published in June 2015
- Formulating, agreeing and delivering a Service Business Plan for the Education Minister which outlined how services will deliver the requirement of the new National Model and established the priorities for improvement and the associated action plans to deliver these improvements
- Identifying the key risks facing the effective delivery of EAS services with the associated mitigation actions

Performance outcomes for 2014/15 were outlined at all key stages. Regionally outcomes tended to be above the National average with Foundation Phase and KS2 showing large percentage gains. In KS3 despite a large percentage gain the gap was not closing quick enough and schools still had work to do for FSM learners. Only provision data was available for KS4 which showed improvement in Maths, static performance in English but a decline in Welsh. Discrepancies in predicted performance would be addressed with schools who were significantly below target. A policy had been agreed with Directors that would also be used Nationally to tackle low achievement in schools at KS4. Debbie Hartevelde explained that the process completed with schools and LAs to set pupil led data and that Education Improvement Boards met every six weeks to discuss progress against targets. Councillor Willcox explained that Newport held a summit for all headteachers, SMT and chairs of governors where progress was discussed and remedial action set. It was recommended that this model be used by the EAS for all schools. Steve Davies stated that schools did improve using the current EAS system but that some did not perform as well as predicted. In Key Stage 4 groundwork was required to develop middle management leaders and train them to challenge data. Councillor Wilcox was pleased that the system worked but that in Newport there had been surprises in performance which had to be justified. The EAS system was rigorous in that the School, EAS and LA knew what actions were required in each school.

The review of the business plan showed the success of:

- the EAS quality cycle to ensure that self assessment was linked to performance reviews to ensure value for money in all teams.
- National Categorisation
- School to School work

- The business support function had been integrated to include learning intelligence, finance and business planning.
- A significant investment of resources in MySid now assisted with grants monitoring and expenditure
- Harmonisation of HR policies

Schools Challenge Cymru had faced criticism over responsibility for the appointed of staff as there were concerns that often the officers were not the best fit for the school they were allocated. Although appointed by the Minister these officers were employed by the EAS.

Key messages from the Estyn visit highlighted the need for

- Improved performance management planning,
- consistent Challenge Adviser evaluations
- clearer strategies to address the impact of deprivation on outcomes
- improving support for schools
- more involvement of diocesan authorities in strategic planning

The WAO said that further clarification was required on the nature of consortia, medium term planning and more collaboration as regions. An action plan to address these areas was in place and had been discussed in previous meetings.

Councillor Whitcutt queried whether a mechanism was in place to feedback on the work of SCC Advisers and Challenge Advisers. Steve Davies explained that systems were in place to ensure that the quality of service and capability of these staff was monitored at all levels and any issues addressed. It was agreed that the SCC leadership team would be invited to JEG meetings to respond to questions about the performance of the schools they supported.

The recent school survey had shown an improvement in the number of positive comments from schools about the work of the EAS. An action plan to address weaknesses highlighted by the survey would be put onto the EAS website. Estyn would also survey schools in January as part of the inspection scheduled for May 2016.

The strong scrutiny of the EAS was noted with the three levels of JEG, Board and relationships with Directors of Education to ensure that the focus remained on improving the achievement of learners in schools.

The service delivery focus for 2015/16 was outlined to include work on:

- the National strategy Qualified for Life
- the core programmes of Excellence in Teaching and Excellence in Leadership
- Leading the Standardisation of Teacher Assessment Programme
- Further projects being led by school to school work

At the next JEG/Board meeting the business plan will be discussed with sign off required following self evaluation. SEWC Directors were due to discuss the emerging plan for 2016/17 so that any financial pressures would be known in advance.

The key areas for the Challenge Advisers, Brokerage, Intervention and Support Services and Business Support Services were outlined. The following areas were discussed:

- Chairs of governors had been invited to attend training on governance
- The role of principle challenge adviser as a critical link to LA/members had been embedded
- A managed exit strategy would be required once the PLPS grant ended in March 2016
- School business managers would receive accredited training linked to the Masters qualification. There was a need for business managers to work across schools to share skills to relieve pressure from headteachers. This would be linked to the Value for Money model
- There was an increase in the number of grants being given to the EAS despite the grouping of 11 grants into the EIG

The group agreed to include JEG membership details and minutes on the EAS website and that JEG and Board members would be invited to EAS events and conferences

HR policies had been agreed with Trade Unions and circulated to staff for implementation. The Management of Change Policy had still not been agreed and without this policy there was a financial risk to the EAS if staff redundancies were required.

A risk register RAG rated to show risks to the EAS had been produced and was reviewed on a regular basis. Steve Davies explained that Debbie Harteveld had been appointed as Interim Managing Director until August 2016. Her current post would be backfilled. This process would not have any additional costs as they would be covered by savings from not filling Steve Davies' post on a permanent basis.

Councillor Whitcutt thanked Steve Davies for his indepth report and said that his reputation as an inspirational leader for the EAS and SEWC would be good qualities to take to his new role in the Welsh Government.

6. FINANCIAL STATEMENT – AUDITOR'S REPORT 2014/2015 (UHY)

John Griffiths, UHY, highlighted the following points within the report. In the Auditors' opinion the financial statements:

- Give a true and fair view of the state of the Company's affairs as at 31st March 2015 and of its surplus for the period then ended.
- Have been properly prepared in accordance with IFRSs as adopted by the European Union, and
- Have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Page 8 – key financial statements provided information for the full financial year for the EAS.

There had been a significant change to pension liability due to the state of the bond market by a loss of £2.2m after a gain in 2014.

Page 9 – income and costs were £9m with a surplus of £95,000 to be used for grant activities scheduled for 2015/16. The surplus had been affected by the pension issue with the EAS aiming for breakeven.

Councillor Passmore queried if LAs had underwritten the EAS pension liability. The EAS was part of the Greater Gwent Pension Scheme which has members from LAs and other companies. If the EAS was no longer operating then the LAs would have to underwrite costs. Steve Davies was hopeful that the Management of Change policy would be agreed shortly with Trade Unions so that arrangements would be in place if staff redundancies were required.

Councillor D Wilcox proposed that the financial statement be approved. This was agreed by the Board.

7. APPOINTMENT OF THE AUDITOR 2015/2016

John Griffiths left the meeting for consideration of this item.

It was confirmed that UHY, Chartered Accountants and Statutory Auditors, had been appointed as the Company's Auditor for 2015/2016.

8. ELECTION OF NEW DIRECTORS

It was noted that Councillors Keith Hayden, David Hardacre, Robert Greenland, Mark Whitcutt and Richard Clark had been appointed to the Board.

Councillor Wilcox queried whether the headteacher representatives should be mentioned as directors on the Board.

9. ANY SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS REQUIRING APPROVAL BY THE MEMBERSHIP

There were none.

10. MEETING ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7.20pm.

Approved and signed as a correct record at the next Annual General Meeting subject to any amendments made at that meeting.

CHAIRMAN