



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT

Title: The Review of Further Education Governance in Wales

Date: 27 May 2010

By: Leighton Andrews, Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning

Since incorporation in 1993 the further education sector in Wales has become integral to the delivery of our economic, social and education and training policies and is in receipt of considerable public monies (£307 million in 2010/2011). Good governance within these organisations is central to the success of these policies, the effective management of the public resources and in providing accountability to the tax payer and government.

The Webb report into further education in Wales, *Promise and Performance*, published in December 2007, made a number of recommendations on a wide range of areas including governance. The report emphasised that governors needs to be accountable for the performance of the institutions and its contribution to networks. Building on this, the Welsh Assembly Government set out in *One Wales* its intention to make full use of this report and “to develop a system that is responsive to the needs of local communities, employers and the local and regional economy. A partnership approach will continue to provide the bedrock of our approach in this area.”

A recent stakeholder review into the governance arrangements in further education institutions identified recommendations to improve upon governance in key areas such as learner and stakeholder involvement. These recommendations were agreed by Cabinet on 15 March, as a model of good practice based on the current system. However, it is my view that we need to consider the whole environment before implementing these recommendations.

In particular, I want to look at the balance of work that further education institutions now carry out. Further education institutions have been very successful in offering 16-19 year

old students a range of course options. Many focussed on pathways into vocational provision such as apprenticeships. That capacity to widen the curriculum on offer to young people is vital for the success of our Learning and Skills Measure.

We need to consider the implications of further education institutions' increased 14-19 activity on their governance arrangements. Do the current arrangements sufficiently reflect the accountability to local communities for that activity – as well as reflecting accountability to local employers for the work-related training which further education also offers? This is the question of balance of accountability which I think we need to explore. For that reason, I intend to set up an expert panel to explore models of governance for further education. It will consider whether current arrangements for further education institutions, as set out in the Instrument and Articles of Government, are still relevant for the challenges and expectations that face the sector, to the wider economy in meeting future social and learning needs, and the current and future stakeholders of further education.

The review will also take account of the Assembly Government's commitment to social enterprise and co-operative solutions to service delivery. In the current economic climate these solutions and approaches have become more, rather than less, important. The review panel will look at the breadth of social enterprise models here in Wales and beyond, to see how they might enable the further education sector to continue to meet the needs of citizens and key stakeholders.

As the first stage, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Mr Rob Humphreys as Chair of the Review.

As the Director of the Open University, Wales, the world's leading distance learning provider of higher education, Rob brings with him an understanding of the world of education and lifelong learning. During his three years at the Open University, Wales, Rob has successfully led the embedding of the organisation within the Welsh higher education sector, so that the strengths of the Open University bear on the policy agendas of that sector. Rob also chairs the OU-UnionLearn Steering Group at UK level, which co-ordinates the Open University's educational partnership with the TUC. Prior to his role at the OU, Rob was the Director of NIACE Dysgu Cymru, thus bringing experience of working with a wide range of learners.

As a lecturer at Swansea University, Rob was the first Co-ordinator of the innovative and award-winning Community University of the Valleys project.

In 2008 and 2009, he held the post of Specialist Adviser to the Welsh Affairs Committee of the House of Commons during its Inquiry into Cross Border Services and was reappointed in 2010 when the Committee conducted a Follow-up Inquiry. Rob also participated in the Independent Review of Higher Education in Wales, the Rees and Grahams Reviews into HE and sits on the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales' Teaching and Learning Committee.

The panel will consist of no more than seven members in addition to the Chair. The members will be carefully selected to ensure expertise in the field of education is complemented with expertise in other areas such as industry, community and the

economy. I will issue a further statement on the members of the task and finish group when I have appointed them.

The review will be established before the summer recess and the Chair will report on recommendations by the end of the calendar year.

I want to congratulate further education institutions for the way in which they have responded to our agenda for change. They have supported skills development, broadened curriculum options for young people and offered learning opportunities to a huge range of people of all ages, background and experience. They have made an enormous contribution to our ambition to improve social justice and enhance the skills base of the Welsh workforce. I want to build on that success and ensure that further education institutions have governance arrangements that will continue the progress that further education has made since incorporation 17 years ago, and that will sustain that progress for the next 17 years.