

ERW Joint Committee
Wednesday, 21st March, 2018
Y Llwyfan, College Road, Carmarthen
10.30 am - 1.20 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn [Chair]	Ceredigion County Council
Councillor Myfanwy Alexander	Powys County Council
Councillor Jennifer Raynor	City and County of Swansea
Councillor David Simpson	Pembrokeshire County Council
Councillor Rob Stewart	City and County of Swansea
Mr Stephen Phillips	Lead Chief Executive ERW (City & County of Swansea)
Mr Gareth Morgans	Carmarthenshire County Council
Mr. Eifion Evans	Ceredigion County Council
Mr Ian Westley	Pembrokeshire County Council
Ms Betsan O'Connor	Managing Director - ERW
Mr Ian Budd	Powys County Council – Lead Director
Mr Jonathan Haswell	Pembrokeshire County Council (ERW - S151 Officer)
Ms Elin Prysor	Ceredigion County Council (Monitoring Officer)
Mr Chris Llewellyn	WLGA
Mr Steve Vincent	Welsh Government
Mr Kevin Thomas	Carmarthenshire County Council (Democratic Services)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor E. Dole (Carmarthenshire County Council), Councillor Rosemarie Harris (Powys County Council), Councillor Rob Jones (Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council), Mr M. James (Carmarthenshire County Council), and Mr Steven Phillips (Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council)

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

There were no declarations of personal interests.



3. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE HELD ON THE 1ST DECEMBER 2017.

Reference was made to the correction recorded in minute 3 i.e. “establish clear plans to secure and maintain effective communication with and engagement of the six Directors of Education” Views were expressed that the minute was incorrect, and the reference to the six Directors of Education should be retained.

It was also noted that whilst engagement with Head Teachers would form part of the review process, they were not nominated as members of the review panel.

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting of the meeting held on the 1st December, 2017 be signed as a correct record subject to the first part of the resolution to Minute 3 being amended to include reference to the six Directors of Education i.e:-

- **“establish clear plans to secure and maintain effective communication with and engagement of the six Directors of Education, Head Teachers, throughout the process and secure consistent implementation of the Business Plan”**

Matters Arising from the minutes:-

1. Minute 3 – Minutes – 21st September, 2017

Reference was made to the closing comment within Minute 3 on the G.C.S.E results and clarification sought on why that report had not been included on the agenda for the meeting that day, as agreed by the Joint Committee.

The Managing Director confirmed that a copy of the results could be forwarded direct to the Joint Committee Members and an item thereon placed on the Agenda for the next meeting.

Arising from the above, Mr Gareth Morgans suggested that it may be beneficial for a report to be submitted to a future meeting of the Joint Committee on the Welsh Government’s consultation on future directions and moving to new accountability standards/measures based on the best nine GCSE Results. The Chair, expressed the view that a report should be submitted to the next meeting on level 2 performance and trends in order to ensure clarity on ERW’s future direction

AGREED:

1. **that members of the Joint Committee be provided with a copy of the G.C.S.E results and an item thereon be agendaed for consideration at the next meeting of the Joint Committee**
2. **that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Joint Committee on the Welsh Government’s consultations on moving to new accountability standards/measures based on the best nine GCSE results**
3. **that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Joint**



Committee on level 2 performance and trends

2. Minute 5 – Letter from Scrutiny

Reference was made to the letter received from the Scrutiny Councillor Group and to the Group's meeting held on the 9th March, 2018 where it received a presentation from the Programme Manager. Clarification was sought on how that presentation had been made without having first been made to the Joint Committee.

The Managing Director advised that the presentation was made at the request of the Councillor Group.

AGREED that copies of the presentation to the Scrutiny Councillor Group be circulated to the Joint Committee and that the same presentation be made to the Committee at its next meeting.

3. Minute 6 – ERW Financial Update – Quarter 2 2017-18

Reference was made to resolution 6.4 and clarification sought on whether letters had been sent to Mr Mark Drakeford A.M. and Kirsty Williams A.M. The S151 Officer advised that whilst he was not aware if the letters had been sent, a meeting had subsequently been held with the Minister where it was confirmed previous difficulties encountered with the grant processes were being addressed and new measures would be in place for the 18/19 grant awards.

A suggestion was made that in order to ensure decisions made by the Joint Committee were implemented that they be allocated to set officers to action.

AGREED that the Lead Chief Executive be requested to introduce arrangements to ensure implementation of the Joint Committee's decisions.

4. Minute 11 – Office Space

The Managing Director was asked to explain why the initial draft report stated the lease would lapse in late May, 2018 when there is in fact no lease in place? In response to a query regarding ERW's lease of office space at Y Llwyfan, the Managing Director confirmed that whilst no evidence of a lease could be found in respect of ERW's accommodation on the ground floor of the premises, on which it was paying rent, a sub-lease existed in respect of its occupation of three rooms on the first floor. She advised that as the premises had been operational for ten years, the occupation by the existing tenants was due for review and discussions in that regard were on-going with the landlord. It was confirmed that ERW's occupation of the premises was secure whilst those discussions were taking place.

The Monitoring Officer suggested that as those discussions were on-going, a report on their progress be submitted to the next meeting and that she be involved with those discussions.



The Managing Director advised that as part of those discussions, ERW had expressed Health and Safety concerns in relation to desk and other space areas and had commissioned work to be undertaken in that regard, the outcome of which could be submitted to the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

AGREED:

- 1. That an update report be presented to the next meeting of the Joint Committee on the discussions being undertaken on ERW's future occupation of Y Llwyfan and that the Monitoring Officer be involved with those discussions**
- 2. That the report to be submitted to the next meeting also include the outcome of the Health and Safety Survey.**

4. 2017-18 Q3 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT.

The Joint Committee received, for consideration, the Section 151 Officer's report on the 2017/18 Q3 Budget Monitoring.

The Section 151 Officer in presenting the report highlighted to the Joint Committee a grant award of £250k received from the Welsh Government towards the cost of ERW's Review and Reform Programme. He also referred to the work to be undertaken under that review and suggested that until such time as ERW had determined its future direction, the following two recommendations within his report be withdrawn:-

- The Joint Committee agree for ERW to seek their own insurance cover for the future,
- The Joint Committee agree to the recruitment of a Finance Manager on a fixed term contract, to be funded from Welsh Government Review and Reform Funding

In response to a question on the abovementioned Welsh Government Grant, the Managing Director confirmed it was time bound and allocated over a 13 month period and would therefore roll over into the 18/19 financial year.

Further reference was made to the review team and the confirmation detailed in minute 3 above that it should include all six Directors of Education. It was suggested that the Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and a HR representative should also be in attendance at those meetings.

In response to a question relating to the late receipt of grant funding, the Joint Committee was assured the Welsh Government was aware of the position and accepted it created planning difficulties. The Welsh Government was now looking at introducing early notification of grant awards which it was hoped would result in greater flexibility and an improvement on the current position.

Reference was made to the allocation of grant funding to the six authorities by ERW and an assurance sought they were being made in accordance with the Joint Committee's previously agreed funding formula (Minute 3 of the meeting held on the 11th March, 2015 regarding the distribution of the EIG refers). It was noted that



arrangements had been made for a meeting of the Education Directors to be held that week where discussions would be held on the funding formula. If appropriate, an additional meeting of the Joint Committee could be arranged to discuss any suggested changes to the formula for allocation of the 18/19 grants. Additionally, each director could examine the grant allocations to their authority to ensure they had been made in accordance with the formula.

The Section 151 Officer was asked to confirm that he had not been asked to include any exceptional reports relating to alternative funding distribution mechanisms used. The Section 151 Officer confirmed that to his knowledge no alternative distribution mechanisms had been used.

AGREED:

- 4.1 That the ERW Financial Update Quarter 3 for 2017/18 be noted;**
- 4.2 That the changes to the ERW Central Team Revenue Budget, Grant Allocations (subject to assurance the allocations have been made in accordance with the previously agreed funding formula) and ERW reserves for 2017-18 be approved;**
- 4.3 That the risks to the region given the amount of core funding it received and the effect on the region's reserves over the medium term, with anticipated changes to the ERW structure and operations, be noted;**
- 4.4 That, for the reason outlined above, the last two recommendations detailed within the report be withdrawn;**
- 4.5 That the Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and a HR Representative attend meetings of the ERW Review Team.**

5. 2018-19 BUDGET REPORT.

The Joint Committee received, for consideration, the Section 151 Officer's report on the 2018/19 Budget.

The Section 151 Officer, in presenting the report, drew the Joint Committee's attention to a letter received from the Welsh Government (circulated at the meeting) detailing the allocation of the School Improvement Grant to ERW for the period 1st March 2018 – 31st March 2019 totalling £40,971,102 which had been allocated against the 5 National Mission Priorities and incorporated within the Business Plan accordingly. Whilst that award, coupled with the Pupil Deprivation Grant of £29m equated to a total allocation of nearly £64m, the actual allocation to be received from the Welsh Government totalled £63.1m and clarification was being sought on that discrepancy. The total grant allocation was therefore in the region of £63-£64m, representing a reduction on the £71m received for 2017/18.

With regard to the £250k Local Authority Contribution towards ERW's core costs, he advised that Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council had expressed a decision to not continue with its contribution thereto for 2018/19 due to budgetary constraints and clarification would be required on that decision.

The Section 151 Officer, in concluding, referred to the four recommendations detailed therein and requested the withdrawal of recommendation (d) for the



appointment of a finance manager pending the outcome of the review being undertaken on ERW.

Concern was expressed at Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council's decision to not make its contribution to ERW's core costs for 2018/19 in the sum of £69,650 and that clarification should be obtained on that decision and on whether that Authority wished to remain a partner within ERW, having regard to requirements of the Legal Agreement establishing ERW.

In response to a question on the increased cost of Service Level Agreements, the Section 151 Officer confirmed it was attributable to ERW's previous decision that they be based on a full cost recovery basis. A suggestion was made that a full report on the SLA's be submitted to the next meeting.

Reference was made to the discussion in minute 4 above on the funding formula for the allocation of Welsh Government grant to the six authorities. A suggestion was made that a report on the methodology of its allocation for 2018-19 be submitted to the next meeting.

AGREED:

- 5.1 That the 2017-18 projected budget outturn be noted and the 2018-19 draft budget be approved,**
- 5.2 That the Section 151 Officer be authorised to make amendments to the budget, as necessary, dependent upon the decisions made to review ERW's structure**
- 5.3 That the Local Authorities pay their contribution to ERW's Core costs,**
- 5.4 That recommendation (d) be withdrawn for the reason detailed in minute 4 above,**
- 5.5 That clarification be sought from Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council on payment of its contribution towards ERW's core costs for 2018/19 and its future intentions regarding its membership of ERW, having regard to the requirements of the Legal Agreement establishing ERW,**
- 5.6 That a report on ERW's Service Level Agreements be submitted to the next meeting of the Joint Committee,**
- 5.7 The Joint Committee determine how the methodology for distribution of grants for 2018-19 is considered and approved.**

6. CATEGORISATION.

The Joint Committee received a report on the categorisation of schools within the ERW region detailing training for Challenge Advisors, moderation and quality assurance processes and the outcomes of the national process of categorisation of schools undertaken during the autumn term.

The Managing Director advised that whereas the central team traditionally became involved at the end of the qualitative assurance process, the six education directors within ERW had agreed the involvement could commence at an earlier stage. The Draft categorisation process had been undertaken in July 2017 and



completed at the end of December, 2017. She advised that whilst ERW was working with the other three education consortia within Wales on achieving consistency with moderation, it was likely changes would be introduced in the future on categorisation and self-evaluation and discussions in that regard were being undertaken nationally. However, firm proposals with regard thereto were awaited.

Mr Vincent confirmed the Welsh Government was working with Estyn on the development of a national self-evaluation framework and the introduction of a new range of performance indicators, a draft of which was proposed to be produced by September 2018 with interim performance measures being introduced during 2019. He confirmed that he would be prepared to present a report to a future meeting of the Joint Committee on feedback received on those proposals.

Reference was made to the initial purpose of categorisation being to identify levels of assistance needed by schools to secure improvements and not as a tool to identify bad schools. It was therefore important the message was conveyed to parents that schools categorised as red or amber were not failing schools, but required additional support to secure continued improvement.

References were made to the categorisation process and to those schools identified within the region as requiring support. A view was expressed that a report be presented to the Joint Committee detailing the intervention process and levels of intervention available to both ERW and the Education Authorities.

AGREED:

- 6.1 That the categorisation report be received,**
- 6.2 That a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Joint Committee detailing the intervention process and levels of intervention available to ERW and the Education Authorities.**

7. RISK REGISTER.

The Joint Committee was provided with a copy of the Risk Register which highlighted the main risks within the Corporate, Financial and School Improvement areas which enabled ERW to mitigate potential risks wherever possible.

The Managing Director advised that whilst there no changes to the register from that previously reported to the Joint Committee, it should be mindful of the probability of risks arising from ERW's Review and Reform Programme which would need to be examined and incorporated within the Risk Register, if appropriate. She reported that whilst responsibility for the central Risks lay with ERW's central team, each local authority was responsible for managing their own risks. In that regard, new processes had been introduced to achieve consistency in the manner in which the risks were recorded across each Local Authority. Training was also being provided as part of that approach.

The Managing Director was asked to confirm that the six Directors had signed off the risks identified centrally. It was confirmed this had not happened.



Reference was made to the format of the report and a view expressed on the need for the register to identify officers responsible for managing risk and detail any action plan/ time scale to address and mitigate risk. The Lead Chief Executive confirmed that he would raise the issue with appropriate officers.

AGREED that the risk register be received and approved with the exception of the central element. This is to be reviewed by the six Directors and resubmitted at the next Joint Committee.

8. BUSINESS PLAN.

The Joint Committee received for consideration the draft ERW Business Plan for the period 2018-2021 incorporating all strategic priorities that would lead the work of the regional school improvement service, was aligned with the Welsh Government's National Mission for Wales and also incorporated priorities identified by each of the six local authorities.

The Managing Director advised that further work was needed to be undertaken on the document having regard to new funding arrangements, outcomes and delivery of both local and the Welsh Government's 5 National Mission Priorities.

In response to a question on co-construction of the National Model, it was confirmed responsibility lay with the Welsh Government, which was liaising with the Lead Chief Executives and Managing Directors of the four regional consortia together with the WLGA. It was anticipated a first draft would be completed within the near future to be followed by a consultation purposes which would broadly follow the same approach adopted for the current national model.

Reference was made to the lack of detail within the business plan relating to delivery and action plans and the need to ensure those areas were identified within any revised draft prior to submission to the Joint Committee.

AGREED that the draft ERW Business Plan 2018-2021 be re-written.

9. THE REVIEW AND REFORM PROGRAMME.

The Lead Chief Executive reminded the Joint Committee of its previous decision to establish a project team to undertake a review and reform of ERW. He reported that subsequent to that decision, whilst ERW was aware of the current review being undertaken on the National Model, which could impact on the review and reform programme, the recent publication of a green paper by the Welsh Government on the reduction of the number of Welsh Local Authorities to 10 would have additional implications on that reform. However, it was noted that within the announcement, the Minister had stated existing collaborative arrangements were expected to continue.

The Lead Chief Executive also referred to a letter circulated at the meeting from Kirsty Williams A.M., Cabinet Secretary for Education requesting a progress report on ERW's plans for improving future Governance Arrangements and ensuring suitable structures were in place to enable it to respond to the Estyn Recommendations and on the preparation of action plan. He advised that a



meeting would be held with the Cabinet Secretary on the 24th April, 2018 and the Joint Committee's views were being sought prior thereto on the issues to be raised.

The Joint Committee in considering the matter, had regard to the need to demonstrate to the Cabinet Secretary progress being made on ERW's future direction, including providing examples of best practice and evidence on how it intended to improve the skills and outcomes for learners.

The Lead Chief Executive reminded the Joint Committee that it had previously agreed on the need for a meeting to be held to discuss the methodology of grant distribution for 2018-19 and suggested that, if possible, a report be presented to that meeting outlining the proposed points to be raised with the Cabinet Secretary on the 24th April.

AGREED that the update be received.

CHAIR

DATE

