

**ERW Joint Committee
Wednesday, 2nd November, 2016
County Hall, Carmarthen
2.00 - 3.40 pm**

PRESENT: Councillor

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jamie Adams (Pembrokeshire County Council), Councillor Emlyn Dole (Carmarthenshire County Council), Councillor Jennifer Raynor (City and County of Swansea), Councillor Rob Stewart (City and County of Swansea), Mr Jeremy Patterson (Powys County Council) and Ms Elin Pryor (Ceredigion County 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 16TH JULY 2016

It was requested that minute 9.3 – Annual Governance Statement 2015-16 be accepted – be amended to Annual Governance Statement 2015-16 be approved.

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16th July, 2016 be signed as a correct record, subject to the above-mentioned amendment

4. RISK REGISTER

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

The Managing Director outlined the key changes and updates to the Register, which included reducing the risks of schools causing concern. This risk had been addressed and there was a formula of what works well in the majority of schools. It was noted that it was not as effective in some smaller schools.

It was queried why item 1 – Failure to comply or act on Internal Audit recommendation – remained on the Risk Register and whether it remained a risk. The Managing Director explained that it was measured on a quarterly basis and there was a good automatic system in place, however, on occasion some



deadlines were missed. It was agreed that it was a general risk and was no longer required to remain on the Register.

AGREED that the report be received and accepted, subject to the above-mentioned amendment.

5. LEAD DIRECTOR AND MANAGING DIRECTOR UPDATE

A verbal update on activities was provided to the Committee, it was explained that the Executive Board had been held on 21st October 2016 and due to timescales it could not be presented as a written report.

The Committee was informed that the meeting with schools and hubs in the consortium had been very successful. Three clear messages had been given:

- It needed to be ensured that Funding from Welsh Government reaches the classroom.
- ERW listens and captures the views of the profession and schools needed to understand that ERW was there to help.
- School to school support has been a success and it had to become a discipline. It was noted that there was still room for improvement.

The Lead Director highlighted that the first official peer review was underway in Pembrokeshire. The review would result in a confidential progress report to Pembrokeshire County Council. The Chief Executive of Pembrokeshire Council informed the Committee that Pembrokeshire would be willing to share some aspects of the report with the other Local Authorities. It was noted that other areas would also be interested in undergoing a similar exercise, as it was part of a self-improving system that was relevant to both schools and Local Authorities. In addition, there would be an improvement conference in Pembrokeshire in January and this was a new concept developed by Estyn.

The Managing Director updated the Committee on the developments surrounding the Successful Futures, the new curriculum in Wales. The Welsh Government had taken on board concerns raised about its implementation and was working with partners and regions to restructure the programme. Concerns were raised regarding Welsh medium education fitting into the structure. The Lead Director highlighted that he had written to Welsh Government requesting a meeting as soon as possible to discuss their intentions in developing an all Wales strategy to address this issue.

It was noted that there had been some interesting developments in the Band B of the 21st Century Schools programme and it was suggested that Education Leads kept this on the radar.

Agreed that the report be received and accepted.

6. LETTER FROM SCRUTINY

The Joint Committee were informed that the Chairs and Vice Chairs of all six Local Authorities had held their bi-annual Scrutiny Councillor Group in Pembrokeshire,



on 27th September, 2016 and received their conclusions and recommendations from the meeting.

The topics discussed during the meeting included the Estyn Inspection of ERW and the ERW Business Plan. The Group also considered Elective Home Education and ALN transformation. It was recognised that these areas are outside of the scope of ERW, however, it was beneficial for the Group to work collaboratively in sharing experiences and good practice across the region.

The Group had thanked the Joint Committee for their response to the previous correspondence and had requested the following:

- Further clarification about the capacity of Challenge Advisors across the region.
- Further information about how the results of categorisation are provided for parents.

The Managing Director highlighted that the meetings were becoming increasingly useful. The Joint Committee recognised the contribution it was making to the improvement journey and thanked the Group for the valuable points raised.

Agreed

6.1 that the report be received;

6.2 that a response be drafted to the points raised by the Group.

7. LEGAL AGREEMENT

The Joint Committee was circulated with the proposed variation and recommended changes to the Legal Agreement, which had been in place since 2014.

The history of creating ERW as a Joint Committee and not a company with the commitment of Local Authorities to contribute support was outlined. It was recognised that at the time of inception the full extent of the support required was not known and some of that support now required further categorising and tightening. Some Services required SLAs to ensure that the providers and ERW were clear on the parameters and expectations.

It was noted that a significant amount of support was in kind and this support should also be costed to ensure there was an accurate and transparent picture for all Local Authorities. It was requested that further work was undertaken on the report to include this information and other minor amendments.

AGREED that the report be amended to include further details as outlined above and resubmitted to a future meeting.

8. SCHEME OF DELEGATION

The Joint Committee was circulated with an annex to the financial management and delegation arrangements for agreement.



The Lead Director explained that it was important that ERW was agile with grants to ensure that they were used to their full potential.

AGREED that the report be received and approved.

9. TRANSLATION SERVICE

The Joint Committee was circulated with the report on the translation service for ERW to decide on the future translation service.

It was explained that the translation service for ERW had been an item of significant discussion for some time. Following agreement by the Joint Committee all six Local Authorities within ERW had been invited to express an interest in providing translation services. Three Local Authorities had submitted an expression of interest, all of which had been significantly higher costs than the current supplier. In July there was a re-issue of the request for expression of interests to ascertain whether further efficiency could be obtained. The Managing Director of ERW provided the Committee with an update that only one Local Authority had presented a further expression of interest, which was still more costly than current arrangements. Based on this the most effective and efficient option would be to remain with the existing external provider.

AGREED

9.1 that the report be received;

9.2 that the translation service for ERW continue to be provided by the existing service provider.

10. IMPROVEMENT PLAN / ESTYN REPORT

The Joint Committee was circulated with the post ESTYN inspection Improvement Plan to bridge the current position and the new business planning cycle starting in April 2017. The plan covers the four main recommendations to ERW from Estyn.

The Managing Director of ERW outlined that there was significant work underway to improve business planning for next year and the short term plan ensured that swift progress was made in the interim. It was highlighted that progress had been made for all key recommendations from Estyn and there would be further feedback on the recommendations at the next meeting.

It was noted that there had been detailed information for portfolio holders of the six Local Authorities at Hub meetings, which reflected the message that had come through the inspection for more involvement. It was felt that it was beneficial for the portfolio holders from the different areas to collaborate and get a flavour of what was happening across the 6 Local Authorities.

AGREED that the report be agreed and accepted.

11. KEY STAGE 4 OVERVIEW



The Joint Committee was circulated with an overview of Key Stage 4, which included contextual and performance data.

The Lead Director took the Committee through the key aspects of the data and the positive outcomes across the region. It was noted that there continued to be an increase in Core Subject Indicators and there was a small amendment to chart 19 – Level 2 threshold including English/Welsh and Mathematics (L2+) – from 63.8% to 63.9%. It was highlighted that ERW was outperforming other consortia in regards to the performance of Free School Meal pupils with 37% attaining L2+. The data reflected the work that had been undertaken in the area and the effective use of the pupil deprivation grant. The results could further be improved through sharing good practice and utilising knowledge and understanding in a more dynamic way. It was highlighted that there was consistent performance at Key Stage 5, however, ERW had to aspire to improve further.

It was noted that across the board girls were outperforming boys and it was queried as to how ERW was addressing this issue. The Lead Director explained that these concerns had been addressed at a local level and compensatory work with boys was required, particularly around language and extended writing. It was highlighted that the GCSE syllabus for English was changing and a higher proportion of the grade would be assessed through exams rather than controlled assessment. Boys tended to perform better in assessment than exams and the changes could further impact on performance. There would also be more emphasis on spelling, punctuation and grammar and schools would find the changes challenging. Performance will need to be closely monitored during this time.

It was queried if ERW collated data on young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) as this data was not included in the report. The Managing Director confirmed that they did and would report this information to a future meeting.

AGREED that the report be received and accepted.

12. INTERNAL AUDIT WORK PROGRAMME

The Joint Committee was circulated with the 2016-17 Internal Audit Work Programme, which had been prepared in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

The Lead Director highlighted that the work programme had been discussed by the Executive Group and the group had felt that the areas proposed were appropriate areas to audit. However, it was requested for two items to be moved to a future work programme. Firstly, the preparation and compliance with the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015, as it was still early days and the analysis of need was still being undertaken. It required time to progress before an ERW perspective was taken on it. Secondly, the Compliance with Standing Orders.

AGREED

12.1 that the 2016-17 Internal Audit work programme be received;



12.2 that the 2016-17 Internal Audit work programme be approved with the amendment of Preparation and Compliance with the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 and Compliance with Standing Order be moved to a future work programme.

13. FINANCIAL UPDATE QUARTER 2 - 2016-17

The Joint Committee was circulated with the Financial Update Quarter 2 2016-17. The Managing Director of ERW highlighted that there had been one change, which was an increase of £5k for the website license charge. Further information would also be sought on the changes to grants.

AGREED that the report be received and accepted.

14. VALUE FOR MONEY

The Joint Committee was circulated with the scheduled work programme for value for money reviews for 2016-17. A brief summary was provided for the proposed areas for the reviews and opportunities to best utilise grants.

It was clarified that the Swansea Bay City Region was an economic development region and it was considering developing similar infrastructures to that of ERW.

AGREED that the report be received and approved.

CHAIR

DATE

