

**ERW Joint Committee**  
**Monday, 17th July, 2017**  
**Y Llwyfan, College Road, Carmarthen**  
**2.00 - 3.50 pm**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn [Chair]

Councillor Emlyn Dole	Carmarthenshire County Council
Councillor David Simpson	Pembrokeshire County Council
Councillor Rosemarie Harris	Powys County Council
Councillor Jennifer Raynor	City and County of Swansea
Councillor Peter Rees	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Councillor Myfanwy Alexander	Powys County Council
Mr Mark James	Lead Chief Executive – ERW
Ms Bronwen Morgan	Ceredigion County Council
Mr Ian Westley	Pembrokeshire County Council
Mr Jeremy Patterson	Powys County Council
Mr Aled Evans	Lead Director – ERW
Ms Betsan O’Connor	Managing Director - ERW
Mr Jonathan Haswell	Pembrokeshire County Council (ERW S151 Officer)
Ms Elin Prysor	Ceredigion County Council (ERW Monitoring Officer)
Mr Ian Budd	Powys County Council
Ms Chris Sivers	City and County of Swansea
Ms Jo Hendy	Pembrokeshire County Council (ERW Head of Internal Audit)
Mr Ian Eynon	Pembrokeshire County Council (ERW Deputy S151 Officer)
Mr Steve Davies	Welsh Government
Ms Katie Morgan	ERW
Ms Catherine Gadd	Carmarthenshire County Council (Democratic Services)



## 1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

Agreed that:

- (i) Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn be appointed Chair;
- (ii) Councillor Emlyn Dole be appointed Vice Chair.

## 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rob Jones (Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council), Councillor Rob Stewart (City and County of Swansea), Mr Steven Phillips (Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council) and Mr Phil Roberts (City and County of Swansea).

## 3. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

There were no declarations of personal interests. Members of the Joint Committee were provided with forms to update their personal interests and the Managing Director of ERW requested that the completed forms be returned to ERW.

**AGREED that Members of the Joint Committee return their completed Personal Interests Forms to ERW.**

## 4. MINUTES - 20TH FEBRUARY 2017

**AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2017 be signed as a correct record.**

## 5. 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. It was noted that the risk register would be reformatted to make it clearer for future meetings.

The Managing Director of ERW highlighted the two key risks identified in the Central Risk Register. Firstly, the region's capacity to respond to the potential requirements of the revised National Model and White Paper – Reforming Local Government. Secondly, the letters received from Welsh Government outlining expectations on how ERW should be using its Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) 2017-2018: Support for looked after children, within the spirit of the terms and conditions, as detailed within the report.

It was noted that the risk register for Ceredigion was missing from the report. Officers would ensure it was circulated to the Committee and included in future papers.

**AGREED that the risk register be received and approved.**

## 6. LEAD DIRECTOR AND MANAGING DIRECTOR UPDATE



A verbal update on activities was provided to the Joint Committee by the Lead Director and Managing Director of ERW. The Chair requested a written report for future meetings. It was noted that detailed information on feedback from Headteachers was included in a later report.

The Managing Director of ERW updated the Committee on the national developments to improve PISA scores. Each region had a representative on a national group that was leading on this work. It was highlighted that schools had been made fully aware of the resources available to them in the preparation for PISA tests. It was highlighted that these resources were also useful in preparing for GCSEs as they were the same skills set. It was noted that two Headteachers from the region had been appointed by Welsh Government to support this work. Jackie Parker, Headteacher of Crickhowell in Powys to support all schools in ERW; and Heather Lewis of Ysgol y Strade to support Welsh medium schools specifically across Wales, as the data suggests that there could be some anomalies in PISA data for Welsh schools. It was confirmed that the First Minister of Wales was still committed to the targets for PISA.

An update was provided on the arrangements for drafting the new National Model. It was explained that due to elections and other sets back that the work on this project had been delayed and would not commence until the autumn term.

The Managing Director of ERW provided feedback on GCSE results. It was noted that it was anticipated that the new requirements for GCSE curriculum would result in a new data set that would not be comparable with previous years. Another variable that was discussed was early entry of pupils for exams. Members queried why this had an impact on results as pupils should only be entered early if they were ready to sit the exams. It was explained that far more year 10 pupils were being entered early, which affected the attainment of the cohort. It was highlighted that the best possible outcomes for learners was a priority and entering early for an exam could result in pupils receiving a lower grade than if they had completed the full course. In addition, those pupils that received a grade C were not always being re-entered for the exam in order to get the best possible outcome. The Lead Director explained that there had been discussions with Directors of Education and Further Education institutions regarding this issue. Concern was expressed about Estyn making judgements on schools during this period and not taking the changes in standards into full account. It was noted that no formal conversations had taken place but Estyn were aware of this discrepancy. It was agreed that a report on early entry, including regional data, would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Managing Director of ERW informed the Committee that the Self-Assessment would be completed by the end of the month. The report was an annual process drawing together the main findings of many sources of evaluation and quality assurance activity during the year. It was noted that the main themes would include:

- The variation in the work of Challenge Advisers from Local Authority to Local Authority.
- The differentiation between Local Authorities in the way they delivered aspects of support to schools.



- The duplication of work of the ERW Central Team by Local Authority Staff on key national priorities and this affected value for money.

It was highlighted that ERW had arranged briefings with Members from the six Local Authorities to provide an update on the work of the consortium, which would be particularly beneficial to new members. It was noted that good communication across the region was a key factor in ERW working effectively.

Regional collaboration with other regions was noted as an area strength. There were two key pieces of work highlighted in particular, the Leadership Academy and a campaign to reduce teacher workload. The Lead Director explained that leadership and professional development in the region was being addressed and the Leadership Academy was a national programme to ensure there was coherent and consistent support available across all four regions. Members raised concerns about differences in the quality of support provided and preventing duplication. It was explained that the Leadership Academy would provide more consistency to support leadership at a range of levels and it would be licensed to ensure it was the right standard. It was clarified that the timescale for developing this work was that a common offer for aspects of leadership would be available in all regions by September 2017 and a full programme in place by September 2018.

It was noted that Estyn would be inspecting ERW the week commencing 13<sup>th</sup> November 2017. Briefings would be available to Members in the week commencing 18<sup>th</sup> September 2017.

**AGREED that:**

- (i) the report be received and accepted;
- (ii) a report, including regional data, on Early Entry and Key Stage 4 Performance would be presented to a future meeting of the Joint Committee.

**7. LETTER FROM SCRUTINY**

The Joint Committee was informed that the Chairs and Vice Chairs of scrutiny, from all six Local Authorities, had held their bi-annual meeting in Ceredigion, on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2017. The Committee received the conclusions and recommendations from the meeting.

The topics discussed during the meeting included Performance Management, School Categorisation, Estyn Inspection of ERW, the campaign to recruit teachers, Elective Home Education and School Governance. It was noted that the Group would welcome a response to any of the points raised. In particular, they highlighted that they would like to receive a response from the Joint Committee in relation to why some local authorities were not at the agreed full quota of Challenge Advisors and what was being done to address this?

Members of the Joint Committee requested a report on the quota of Challenge Advisors to be presented to the Committee, before responding to that particular query.

**AGREED that**



- 7.1 the report be received;
- 7.2 a report on the quota of Challenge Advisors to be presented to the next meeting of the Joint Committee.
- 7.3 that a response be drafted to the points raised by the Group.

## 8. ERW STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2016-17

The Section 151 Officer for ERW explained that the Welsh Audit Office had not yet produced the Audit of Financial Statements Report (ISA 260) and therefore the report had to be withdrawn from the meeting. It was noted that the Statement of Accounts were required to be signed off by 30th September 2017 and it was requested that an additional meeting of the Joint Committee be held in September to consider this report.

### Agreed that

- 8.1 the report be withdrawn from today's meeting;
- 8.2 an additional meeting of the ERW Joint Committee be arranged for September 2017.

## 9. ERW FINANCIAL UPDATE - QUARTER 1 2017-18

The Committee received the updated financial position for the year 2017-18. The report detailed the draft indicative budgets for 2018-19 and 2019-20 financial years, reserves available to the ERW region over the next 3 years, expected level of Welsh Government grant funding for the 2017-18 financial year and information on the number, roles and cost of seconded staff from the constituent Local Authorities and schools. The number of secondments was highlighted as a risk to the effective organisation of the regional central team.

It was explained that there had been a change to Service Level Agreements to ensure that they were a true reflection of the cost of ERW and there was now full cost recovery. It was noted that the roles of the lead officers were still provided free of charge from the regions.

It was highlighted that the delay in confirmation and payment of grants was a risk to the region. The Section 151 Officer explained that there were still significant final instalments of 2016-17 grants from Welsh Government outstanding, which put additional financial pressure on the lead banker for the region at a time when Local Authorities were under increasing financial pressure. It was noted that if ERW had its own bank account it would have run out of funds. It was explained that there had been a significant restructure of the Education Department within Welsh Government, which included finance. Such changes should improve the situation for timely payment of grants and the Committee could judge next year whether improvements had been made.

It was highlighted that forward planning was difficult without an indication of the allocation of grant money over a longer period. It was noted that Welsh Ministers were aware of these concerns and were looking at how to address them.



The Section 151 Officer explained the position in regards to reserves and that the projected budget for the next three years would result in reserves being depleted. The Committee agreed for a financial review to be undertaken.

**AGREED that**

- 9.1 the report be received and the ERW financial update Quarter 1 2017-18 be noted;
- 9.2 the changes to the ERW Central Team Revenue Budget and ERW reserves for 2017-18 and future years be approved;
- 9.3 the significant amount of grant income the region is to receive this financial year be noted but concern was expressed that final offer letters remain outstanding;
- 9.4 the significant risk to the region given the uncertainty that continued to surround the approval of several grant funding streams be noted;
- 9.5 the significant risk to the region given the amount of core funding it receives and the effect on the region's reserves over the medium term be noted;
- 9.6 that a full financial review be undertaken of both grants and core funding.

**10. ERW CONSORTIUM HEAD OF INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL ASSURANCE OPINION 2016-17**

The Joint Committee received the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Assurance Opinion 2016-17 on the effectiveness of ERW's governance, internal control, risk management and financial management arrangements. It was noted that the Internal Audit Plan for 2016/17 had been delivered in accordance with the schedule agreed by the Committee. The quality assurance and improvement programme confirmed compliance with mandatory requirements. Substantial assurance was given on the adequacy and effectiveness of arrangements in place. It was noted that there were opportunities for improvement that were further expanded upon in the Internal Audit Report.

**AGREED that the Head of Internal Audit Annual Assurance Opinion 2016-17 be noted.**

**11. ERW CONSORTIUM ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2016-17**

Officers explained that the report was linked to the revised Regional Code of Corporate Governance and, as further work was required to the Code, it was requested that this item be withdrawn from the meeting. It was agreed that the report would be presented at the additional meeting of the Joint Committee in September 2017.

**Agreed that the report be withdrawn from the meeting and presented to the additional meeting of the Joint Committee.**

**12. ERW CONSORTIUM INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2016-17**



The Joint Committee considered the ERW Consortium Internal Audit Report 2016-17, which gave assurance on the effectiveness or governance, internal control, risk management and financial management arrangements. The Head of Internal Audit informed the Committee that substantial assurance can be given on the adequacy and effectiveness of the arrangements in place. However, there were a number of opportunities for improvement to the adequacy and effectiveness of existing arrangements. It was highlighted that an action plan had been produced to address the areas of improvement identified in the review.

It was explained that with regard to support for schools the support provided was not always in line with the improvements identified and targets were not always met. It was noted that the Committee had already requested information on the deployment of Challenge Advisers and agreed that the report be extended to include the quality and performance of Advisers. The Managing Director of ERW explained that she would report back with the information they had available on the performance of Challenge Advisers and the standards expected. It was noted that other regions could progress this work faster as Challenge Advisers were directly line managed by the consortia and this was not the case for ERW.

It was noted in the report that support between schools was not being developed consistently. It was highlighted that the sharing of good practice between schools was very useful and several examples were provided. It was clarified that feedback was also provided to those schools that were sharing their good practice.

**AGREED that**

**12.1 the ERW Consortium Internal Audit Report 2016-17 be noted;**

**12.2 the report on the quota of Challenge Advisers be extended to include the quality, performance and deployment of advisers and support staff and recommendations as to how to respond to the risks identified in the Internal Audit Report.**

**13. REGIONAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

It was noted that the Regional Code of Corporate Governance required further work and it was requested that the report be withdrawn from the meeting. It was agreed that it would be presented to the additional meeting of the Joint Committee being arranged for September 2017.

**Agreed that the report be withdrawn and presented to the additional meeting of the Joint Committee.**

**14. VALUE FOR MONEY**

The Joint Committee received an update report on the scheduled work programme for value for money reviews for 2017-18. Officers outlined that the framework that had been previously agreed by the Committee covered seven key aspects and the report contained an update of progress on two specific strands, which were comparison with other regions and increased use of digital working.

It was explained that several different working groups had been established and were working on an inter-regional collaborative level to compare strategies, learn



from one another and produce regional positive outcomes. For example, the finance group had met to discuss structures, resources, funding models and best practice. The sharing of best practice and the formation of a common framework had ensured that the consortia could maintain an effective attitude towards change whilst minimising the individual use of resources and limit duplication. A Consortia Project Manager had been appointed, which further improved ERW's ability to compare with other regions and work collaboratively. It was noted that there had been a greater level of consistency when dealing with Welsh Government and the aim was to continue to secure regular meetings between the group and Welsh Government representatives. Some concern was raised that it would encourage Welsh Government to consider the group as a national organisation. It was clarified that the group understood its role in joint working and there were clear regional strands. It was noted that it was important to recognise what worked effectively.

It was highlighted that there had been increased use of the digital working on travel, subsistence, stationary and administration. Examples were provided of the positive impact of this work which had resulted in improved capacity and integrated processes.

**AGREED that the update on value for money be noted and that the scheduled work programme for value for money be noted.**

## 15. HEADTEACHERS EVALUATION REPORT

The Joint Committee considered the Headteachers Evaluation report, which analysed interviews and online questionnaire with the region's Headteachers as to how they perceive ERW and the role it is playing in their day to day school life.

The Managing Director of ERW explained that the Headteacher questionnaire in previous years had been providing an improving picture of feedback but this had not been consistent with ongoing discussions with Headteachers and other stakeholders. ERW had commissioned an independent more in depth evaluation to support the findings of the questionnaire.

The feedback from this work had demonstrated that key areas of the region's work were not improving as a sufficient pace.

The key messages were:

- Inconsistency in quality of support and challenge from Challenge Advisers.
- The turnover of Challenge Advisers for each school was a hurdle to continuity.
- The inconsistency in perceptions across the region as to what ERW's functions were, specifically when Local Authority employed advisers were engaging with schools.
- As a region, ERW was not moving along the school improvement continuum fast enough. Leading to greater need for sharing good practice and school to school work.

It was noted more consistency was required for school to school support and in building confidence of schools in school improvement services.





It was explained that by September ERW Central Team had prepared the following improvements to communication:

- A new website that should result in better communication with schools.
- Specific information to be emailed to Headteachers.
- More general information would be circulated via the ERW newsletter.
- All schools would have a menu of support and professional learning was available to ensure needs were better matched and there was improved preparation for core visits.

Members noted the quotes and comments in the report that highlighted the demands on Headteachers and the increased amount of paperwork. It was highlighted that the four regions were collaborating on a Reducing Teacher workload resource for September.

**AGREED that the Headteachers Evaluation Report be received.**

## **16. CLUSTER MODEL**

The Joint Committee received a report on key developments necessary to deliver the ERW Business Plan and Strategy and respond to key government priorities and improve the quality of teaching and learning in the region. The report provided an update on a key delivery mechanism to delivering support to and between schools.

The Committee was informed that ERW would fund each cluster to employ a Leader of Learning to support all schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to also enhance the capacity of leadership throughout the cluster. It was noted that the work builds on best practice from current Leader of Learning secondary work and the work of other regions in funding collaboration.

Members queried the risks associated with increased cost for cluster work and it was clarified that the risks were from secondments in future years and delayed confirmation and payment of grants. Concern was raised about meeting linguistic requirements in some clusters and it was confirmed that the allocation of skills would meet need. In addition, it was noted that the support needs of each cluster had been mapped against needs and that a link Headteacher had been identified to support each network.

It was asked if there was the capacity to fill the posts for Leaders of Learning, as the region was struggling to recruit challenge advisers. It was noted that there had been interest from eager and highly skilled teachers who seemed to be of the right calibre and who view the curriculum changes as a good opportunity. It was also noted that recruitment of Challenge Advisers was undertaken by Local Authorities not ERW centrally.

**AGREED that**

**16.1 the Cluster Model Report be received;**

**16.2 the development of Teaching and Learning networks of schools across the region be approved.**



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CHAIR

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DATE

