

ERW JOINT COMMITTEE

16TH JULY 2018

CORRESPONDENCE TO SCRUTINY COUNCILLOR GROUP

Purpose:

The Scrutiny Councillor Group have sent a letter outlining some queries and questions they have for the Joint Committee.

A draft response has been formulated for the Joint Committee's agreement, and that during the discussion it is proposed that the Joint Committee consider the draft response.

RECOMMENDATIONS / KEY DECISIONS REQUIRED:

The Joint Committee agree a letter of response

REASONS:

Maintaining Scrutiny arrangements, good practice

Report Author:	Designation:	Tel No.
Cllr Ellen ap Gwynne	Chair of Joint Committee	E. Mail:



**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
ERW JOINT COMMITTEE
16TH JULY 2018**

CORRESPONDENCE TO SCRUTINY COUNCILLOR GROUP

BRIEF SUMMARY OF PURPOSE OF REPORT

The Joint Scrutiny Councillor Group have outlined 3 main lines of inquiry in their letter to the Joint Committee that warrant a response:

1. Inform us as a matter of urgency about the timeframe for making the decision to move forward with the ERW Reform Programme?
2. Timescales for progression of the implementation of those changes?
3. What work is planned over the coming year to increase the numbers of teaching applications in the areas of Mathematics and those who can teach in Welsh across the whole curriculum?

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES



IMPLICATIONS

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications
NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE	YES/NONE

CONSULTATIONS

N/A

**Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information
List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**

THERE ARE NONE





To: **Cllr. Ellen ap Gwynn**
Chair of the ERW Joint Committee

Please ask for: Scrutiny

Scrutiny Office Line: 01792 637256

e-mail: scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

Date: 09 April 2018

Dear Councillor ap Gwynn,

1. ERW SCRUTINY COUNCILLOR GROUP – 9 MARCH 2018

The Chairs and Vice Chairs of all six local authorities' Education Scrutiny Committees came together in Carmarthen for their bi-annual Scrutiny Councillor Group. I am writing to you with their views, conclusions and recommendations from this meeting on the 9 March 2018.

Review and Reform Programme

We are extremely concerned that progress with the reform programme has stalled and that this has resulted in a lack of movement in terms of improvements that are necessary for ERW to progress effectively. We urge members of the Joint Committee to put aside their differences and work together to reach an agreement which will best serve all pupils across our region.

We heard that currently there is not consensus across all the local authorities within ERW and within the Joint Committee on the way forward. We understand that one local authority has concerns about the moving of direct responsibility for the education improvement aspects to a central pool, which they feel will result in a reduction of accountability and responsiveness to local needs.

The majority view of the ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group is supportive of the way forward, as set out in the Review and Reform Programme, including the centralisation of the education improvement services to ERW (which will be accountable to each local authority through the Managing Director of ERW and the Joint Committee). One Local Authority Scrutiny representative did not agree with this way forward at this time. This objection was based on concerns that the proposed centralisation would put at risk the relationship of trust and knowledge between advisors and schools, make the service less responsive to local needs, and divorce management responsibility from the bodies with statutory responsibility for school standards.

It was felt by the majority that the Reform Programme as outlined to the Group is the best way forward for ERW. This was agreed after hearing about the 'case for change' for ERW and the need to move forward and address current and future challenges. We



believe that the evidence for progressing down this route was clear and much of this can be seen within how the other three Consortiums in Wales are working. We also would like to reiterate the importance of ensuring that Challenge Advisors have the knowledge, experience and training to be able to give a consistent level of support across all schools in the region.

The Cabinet Secretary Kirsty Williams attended our meeting and gave her views on regional working in education and the way forward in Wales. Her view was that ERW is not where it needs to be, and is in danger of letting down the children of the region unless improvements start to be made. We heard that it is possible for the consortium to improve quickly and she gave the example of the GwE Consortium, which has improved at a fast pace from an originally low threshold, once a clear plan to move forward was agreed. She stated that no one wants to see this region left behind. The Cabinet Secretary stated that she had discussed this matter with you, including the results of the Estyn report and the ERW self-evaluation, and was given assurances by you that action will take place. She expressed her concern that she had not been informed of any action arising as yet.

What we would like to see happen now?

We would like to see a decision made by the Joint Committee urgently and a way forward clearly established. We would like you to let us know the time frame for making a decision and also the plan then moving forward, as soon as possible.

Although the Review and Reform Programme dominated the meeting we did also look at Poverty in Rural Wales and the most recent educational outcomes across the region. From these discussions the issues of recruitment and retention of teachers, in particular Mathematics and those who teach in Welsh across the whole curriculum were highlighted. We heard that some work had taken place over recent years with Trinity St David's to increase the numbers but felt that more work is needed with local colleges and schools to increase the numbers of people who are applying for these positions.

We would welcome your views on any aspect of this letter, but would particularly ask that you respond in writing to the following matters, responding to points 1 and 2 by as soon as possible.

1. Inform us as a matter of urgency about the timeframe for making the decision to move forward with the ERW Reform Programme?
2. Timescales for progression of the implementation of those changes?
3. What work is planned over the coming year to increase the numbers of teaching applications in the areas of Mathematics and those who can teach in Welsh across the whole curriculum?

Yours sincerely,

CLLR DARREN PRICE

Chair ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group

DaPrice@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group Scrutiny Support provided by Swansea Council

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Cyng. Darren Price
Cadeirydd Grŵp Cynghorwyr Craffu ERW

Annwyl Gynghorydd,

Hoffwn i, a'r Cyd-bwyllgor, ddiolch i chi am eich gohebiaeth, yn ogystal â chydabod gwaith gwerthfawr Grŵp Cynghorwyr Craffu ERW wrth gyfrannu at atebolrwydd democrataidd ERW. Cyn mynd i'r afael â'r cwestiynau a godwyd yn eich llythyr ar gyfer y Cyd-bwyllgor, hoffwn yn gyntaf fynd i'r afael ag amseriad yr ymateb hwn. Yn anffodus, roedd y cyfnod byr rhwng cyfarfodydd y Cyd-bwyllgor a Grŵp Cynghorwyr Craffu ERW ym mis Mawrth yn golygu nad oedd yn bosibl i'r papurau gael eu paratoi mewn da bryd ar gyfer eitem swyddogol ar agenda'r Cyd-bwyllgor. Fodd bynnag, rydym wedi achub ar y cyfle cyntaf posibl i gyflwyno'r eitem hon i'w thrafod, ac i lunio ymateb.

1. Amserlen Rhaglen Adolygu a Diwygio ERW

Pan ddaeth gohebiaeth gan y Grŵp Cynghorwyr Craffu i law Cyd-bwyllgor ERW, nid oedd yr un papur ffurfiol wedi cael ei gyflwyno mewn cyfarfod o'r Cyd-bwyllgor mewn perthynas â Rhaglen Adolygu a Diwygio ERW. Nid oedd Tîm y Rhaglen, sy'n cynnwys Cyfarwyddwyr Addysg ERW, eto wedi dod i gytundeb ar gynnwys eu papurau yr oedd angen i'r Cyd-bwyllgor ei gymeradwyo. Felly, penderfynwyd na allai'r tîm gyflwyno darn o waith i'r Cyd-bwyllgor nas cytunwyd arno'n llwyr.

2. Cynnydd ac Amserlen Rhaglen Adolygu a Diwygio ERW

Mae'r mater hwn yn hanfodol gysylltiedig â'r pwynt uchod – bydd y cynnydd a'r amserlen ar gyfer gweithredu unrhyw gam/dasg yn cael eu nodi yn dilyn cytundeb digonol ar lefel swyddogion, ac yn dilyn y gymeradwyaeth angenrheidiol gan yr Aelodau Etholedig. Fodd bynnag, mae cynnydd y Rhaglen Adolygu a Diwygio wedi'i gysylltu'n agos â'r gwaith o ddiweddarau'r Model Cenedlaethol Newydd, ac mae'r Cyd-bwyllgor yn betrusgar o ran ymrwymo i unrhyw newidiadau ar raddfa fawr na fyddant, o bosibl, yn cydymffurfio â'r model newydd ar gyfer gweithio'n rhanbarthol.

3. Mae Tîm Canolog ERW yn gweithio gyda'r tri rhanbarth arall ar yr ymgyrch #DarganfodAddysgu, a gynlluniwyd i recriwtio a chadw athrawon.



To Cllr Darren Price
Chair ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group

Dear Councillor,

The Joint Committee and I thank you for your correspondence, as we all recognize the valuable work of the ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group in contributing to the democratic accountability of ERW. Before addressing the questions raised in your letter to the Joint Committee, I would firstly like to address the timing of this response. The unfortunate short turnaround between meetings of the Joint Committee and Scrutiny Councillor Group in March meant that papers could not be prepared in sufficient time for an official Joint Committee agenda item. We have however taken the earliest possible opportunity to table this item for discussion and to formulate a response.

1. ERW Review and Reform Programme Timeframe

At the point the ERW Joint Committee received correspondence from the Scrutiny Councillor Group, no formal papers regarding the ERW Review and Reform Programme had been presented at a Joint Committee meeting. The Programme Team, which includes the ERW Directors of Education had yet to reach an agreement on the content of their papers that required Joint Committee approval, therefore it was decided they could not submit a piece of work to the Joint Committee that was not wholly agreed upon.

2. ERW Review and Reform Progression and Timescales

This matter is inherently linked to the above point – the progression and timescales for implementation of any action/task will be set following sufficient agreement at officer level, and following the necessary approval by Elected Members. However, progression of the Review and Reform is heavily linked to the updating of the New National Model, and the Joint Committee is hesitant to commit to any large scale changes that risk non-conformity to the new model for regional working.

3. The ERW Central Team are working with the other three regions on the #DiscoverTeaching campaign which is designed to recruit and retain teachers.



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Supporting / Additional information from ERW Executive Board

Chair of Joint Committee authorised the draft after Executive Board meeting, therefore Executive Board did not have an opportunity to consider.

Supporting / Additional Information from ERW Advisory Board

Propose expanding on point 3 of the letter -

“We have also undertaken a programme of promotional activity nationally, and there is a comprehensive programme plan for the project.”

