

# ERW Consortium

## Consolidating a vision for the regional school improvement service

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## **1.0 Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to offer a clear rationale for, and proposed structure for a reformed regional partnership to deliver school improvement across ERW. There has been extensive dialogue with the professional leadership of the 6 authorities' education departments and a widespread engagement with the headteacher community across the region. It is intended that a reformed ERW will provide clarity of roles between the regional consortium, local authorities, joint working across 2 or more authorities and schools themselves.

A mature ERW partnership must facilitate an effective model of a self-improving system – that is a system where every component part understands what excellence looks like, can identify its own strengths and weaknesses effectively, and can share strengths confidently and seek solutions to weaknesses. These principles should apply to schools, groups of schools and to local authorities.

Decisions taken after consideration of this report should be seen as important steps to build such a system – with a clear focus on self-improvement through shared curriculum planning, professional learning and leadership development and a deepening of inter-authority working to support these aims and the provision of more consistent support and challenge to schools.

The implementation of this report should not be seen as the completion of the regional journey. Reviewing the functions and appropriateness of design of ERW on an annual basis should be expected. Additionally it is proposed that every 5 years there should be a full external evaluation of the fitness for purpose of the organisation, in order for the Joint Committee to be able to consider next steps for the region.

## **2.0 Background**

The National Mission for education in Wales aims to develop:

- A new curriculum for all learners in Wales
- A high-quality education profession
- Inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards
- Strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equality and well-being
- Robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system

The need for an effective regional service is compelling. The scale of the national mission requires unprecedented levels of new curriculum preparation, professional learning for teachers and leadership development for current and future leaders. The join-up required between our universities and our schools is critical, to ensure that a lost partnership in Welsh education is re-established as a matter of urgency. Every teacher across the region needs to be supported with preparing for the new curriculum, and school leaders (including governors) are entitled to know that their schools receive support and challenge in a way that is consistent with other schools in similar circumstances, using the best methods possible. Currently ERW is not well-placed for supporting the reform, but a re-framed ERW can fulfil these obligations and play a fuller part in developing education across West and Mid Wales. This can be achieved in an effective and efficient way ensuring that schools benefit from a greater level of devolved funding.

The existing regional approach across ERW has become fractured. There is a need to rebuild relationships, define a scope and purpose for the organisation, define clear central staffing structures, and identify coherent financial, accountability and governance models. Structures and working cultures need to be put in place in order to support the delivery of the National Mission in all of our schools, or learners and teachers in the ERW region will be disadvantaged as they work to deliver a reformed curriculum.

Conventionally school improvement services provide functions such as:

- The monitoring and intelligence gathering role in order to ensure appropriate support and challenge to schools that are then accountable for their own performance.
- Supporting the building of capacity of school staff through facilitating effective professional learning and leadership development.
- The building of institutional knowledge across the system to support collaborations across schools themselves, LA's, Higher Education, Welsh Government and other partners in order to strengthen schools.
- The brokering of support to be given to individuals or institutions when their performance causes concern.

From our current situation, we should plan a different system. In that system, schools will take more responsibility for their own, and for each other's performance and the resource and support should be given to them to achieve that. Across Wales (and in ERW), there are excellent examples of schools supporting each other to resolve difficulties, sharing both capacity and effective practice for the benefit of learners beyond their own school gates. The new ERW should embed such an ambition in its mission, in the context of a clearer partnership between the local and the regional.

### **3.0 Aims of ERW**

Partnership, collaboration, trust and shared accountability will be the key features of a future Welsh education system. Teachers will fail if they seek to develop the new curriculum in isolation. We must promote collaborative units that can share within and across such units and it is important that local authorities model such behaviours.

To achieve those aims it is suggested that ERW sets itself ambitious goals as follows:

***ERW is a regional partnership designed to promote excellence in all schools through a self-improving system. This will be achieved through collaborative planning for the new curriculum and the provision of professional learning and leadership opportunities that can develop all as individuals, learners, citizens and contributors.***

The ERW partnership must strive to be acknowledged as one of excellence, led by high level specialists on a regional basis, who are able to provide leadership and support for local, hub and other sub-regional groupings.

In terms of delivery, the main building blocks will be schools working within clusters, LA s and Hubs with effective coordination and quality assurance across the region.

ERW staff should be able to work across the sub-regional groups and with national and other regional organisations and higher education institutions bringing the best international learning to our region in order to influence positively our teachers and leaders through providing effective leadership to professional learning. Ensuring consistency of access to high quality professional learning and opportunities for developing the new curriculum will be important, as well as ensuring consistency in terms of support and challenge to schools and effective support for schools that are causing concern.

#### **What is meant by a self-improving system?**

A self-improving system is one in which school leaders and teachers have the skills, capacity and agency to continually learn and improve their practice so that every child achieves their potential and is prepared for life in an increasingly complex world.

Over recent years schools have become better at sharing their best practice for the benefit of all learners. Our self-improving system needs every professional and institution to become aware of their own strengths and areas for improvement, and with this knowledge seek support for their own improvement and offer support for others to improve.

ERW should reasonably expect all parts of the regional education system to become participants in this model, so that strengths are shared across the system, and areas for improvement are tackled through peer engagement and support. In achieving this we will ensure that our education professionals can thrive in a supportive and collaborative environment to raise standards and ensure that every young person can fulfil their potential.

#### **4.0 The Local/Regional Partnership for effective School Improvement: the delivery model**

ERW's centrally employed team and its constituent LA s will work together in planned, coherent and consistent ways across LA boundaries in order to secure the appropriate support and challenge for school improvement and delivery of curriculum reform. By securing effective co-ordination and sharing, the delegation of funding to schools should be maximized so that the resource reaches those who impact most upon our learners. All partners in the region will collaborate to provide intelligence, verify excellence, set climate and strategic direction and help co-ordinate such working.

#### **Section 4**

**This is an early draft of Section 4 which will be developed fully through a workshop in February involving regional, LA and school-based staff.**

## Regional Working: A Collaborative Approach

***The proposed new aims for ERW are as follows: “ERW is a regional partnership designed to promote excellence in all schools through a self-improving system. This will be achieved through collaborative planning for the new curriculum and the provision of professional learning and leadership opportunities that can develop all as individuals, learners, citizens and contributors.”***

For this to become a reality, it is essential that there is a clear understanding of the responsibilities and functions undertaken by members of the partnership. The following table, based on the emerging discussion around the purpose of regional partnership, provides a summary of the key roles of schools, Local Authorities and the Region in delivery of the National Mission. Maintaining an effective balance between what can be usefully pooled on a regional or sub-regional basis, the statutory responsibilities of LA s and the day to day expectations of schools needs to be agreed across the region.

**Ultimately, an effective self-improving system requires schools and groups of schools to be provided with the resources and be afforded the planned capacity to implement curriculum transformation.**

### **DRAFT TABLE – TO BE DEVELOPED FURTHER WITH REGIONAL, LA AND SCHOOL-BASED PRACTITIONERS**

#### **Planning to deliver a new curriculum, provide professional learning and develop inspirational leadership**

The Region will:	The Local Authorities will:	Schools will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage actively with WG, the other regions, HEIs and the LAs to develop and pool intelligence around the national reform journey, and then communicate that clearly to all partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through focused engagement with schools, other authorities and the region, ensure that all professionals are actively engaging in educational reform and ensure that curriculum development is placed within a local and national context allowing schools to understand the demands of further education, higher education and the world of work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with other schools and key partners to enable their staff to be active participants in educational reform. Lead curriculum development and implementation in order to realise the four purposes of curriculum reform.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be honest and open in their self-evaluation so that there is clarity around strengths and weaknesses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support a culture of honest self-evaluation for improvement, using local intelligence in order to support schools in becoming full partners in a self-improving system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be honest and open in their self-evaluations, and acting on those findings, in order to secure improvement and be clear as to where they are able to provide and receive support</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with key partners on curriculum development, communicating clearly the emerging narrative, including milestones around the new curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure effective join up between LA and regional staff to ensure that schools are well supported to achieve their new curriculum milestones. Commission support for schools as deemed necessary and in agreement with senior school leaders.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commit to achieving milestones as they prepare for the implementation of the new curriculum &amp; commit to cluster working in order to secure continuity and progression in curriculum delivery.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that there is a varied and accessible offer for all practitioners in the region to develop their teaching and leadership skills to support sustained school improvement and leadership capacity, underpinned by the principles of the self-improving system and developing schools as learning organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build capacity within their own organisations in order to facilitate continuous improvement, modelling the principles of the self-improving system and learning organisations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commit to professional learning using the Professional Teaching and Leadership Standards and the Schools as Learning Organisation Model to improve the quality of provision and build future capacity</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with the Higher Education sector and others to facilitate the generation and sharing of education research to inform practice and generate approaches that enable teachers and school improvement professionals to be active partners in research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that relevant research informs local and regional school improvement approaches, and ensure that local school improvement practitioners are research informed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commit to developing the capacity of the school as both a user of and partner in research</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate the development of the new curriculum and professional learning and leadership opportunities so that they embed the principle of inclusive schools committed to the wellbeing of all learners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and coordinate local services to support schools with their ambition to be inclusive and effective supporters of learners' wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commit to develop the new curriculum, and professional learning opportunities so that they embed the principles of inclusive schools, committed to the wellbeing of all learners and staff.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Champion and create structures for effective peer engagement and the cross fertilisation of effective practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Champion the principles of peer engagement and actively encourage the cross fertilisation of effective practice. Commit to ADEW / WLGA peer review process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in peer engagement and facilitate the cross fertilisation of effective practice</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide dedicated support to develop AOLEs and What Matters statements within clusters and for individual schools in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the curriculum reform agenda and hold the consortium and schools to account on its implementation.</li> </ul>	<p>Report to governing bodies on curriculum reform and implementation and facilitate scrutiny of pupil progress.</p>

negotiation with LAs and senior school leaders. Support pupil assessment / moderation in relation to the new curriculum.	Report to elected members on curriculum reform and implementation and facilitate scrutiny of pupil progress.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate the identification and sharing of effective practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate the identification and sharing of effective practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate the identification and sharing of effective practice.</li> </ul>

### **Core delivery and Additional Commissioning**

ERW's primary functions around preparing schools for the new curriculum, building professional capacity and leadership development across the region will be ongoing with the six authorities committed to working with shared approaches. The business plan should outline how this is done as a regional service partnership in order to ensure equality of access to provision and support across the region.

There will also be times when the partnership can collectively provide useful additional bespoke services for LAs or to schools. Whilst ERW as a central body will retain a limited number of staff, the evolving self-improving system and the commitment to partnership working should ensure that LA staff, ERW staff and, crucially, school-based practitioners can be commissioned in future to support the delivery of additional services. The procurement of third party services can also be deployed if/when needed.

The annual ERW financial model should therefore include a notional retained sum that can be utilized for work in addition to ERW's core functions, providing LAs with the assurance that there can be timely responses to unanticipated requirements. ERW's central SLT and the Directors through their ongoing professional discussions should be able to identify needs that arise, and within the financial envelope available should be able to identify solutions as required. LAs should agree during the business planning cycle what that allocation should be, and there should be a formal agreement around the process of requesting input and the release of resource.

### **Relations with Higher Education**

The region has 3 higher education institutions, all now with an active interest in school education. ERW should provide the lead in engaging with these HEIs so that they become active partners in raising institutional and individual professional capital in schools, through the provision of research opportunities, professional learning and accreditation (where appropriate). The work is currently underway, and should become a priority area of work for the new ERW. Those HEIs could also become

partners in the evaluation and improvement processes for schools as well as being professional learning partners for the region.

## 5.0 Staffing Structure

Proposed staffing structures outlined below offer a sound basis for a coherent, efficient and effective School Improvement Service. The purpose of all regional posts will be to secure the best outcomes for learners through effective planning for the new curriculum, professional learning and leadership development for schools' staff, in the context of a self-improving system. Most school improvement posts will be held locally, with delivery increasingly on a cross-authority basis. Embedding effective performance management systems will be crucial for the emerging organization.

### Regionally Employed Staff

Under the leadership of an MD, strategic direction can be provided by a centrally employed Regional Strategic Team.

The senior team should consist of 5 individuals to work with the MD – 3 bringing with them experience of highly successful leadership, either in headship or senior local authority/regional school improvement functions in the following areas:

- Primary Education Lead (3 year secondment or Soulbury permanent)
- Secondary Education Lead (3 year secondment or Soulbury permanent)
- Special Schools and Education in Alternative Settings Lead (Part time post, 3 year secondment or Soulbury permanent)

They will be able to provide expert leadership across the region and support processes relating to accountability, fostering the self-improving system, securing effective regional business planning, project oversight, alignment of approaches, interface with significant partners, engagement with the profession, and other strategic responsibilities that need to be worked up before presentation of the model.

In addition to the 3 sector leads, there should be two specialist leads, one leading on Professional Learning and Leadership across the region and the other leading on Curriculum Reform and Innovation.

- **Leader of Professional Learning** with a team that will consist of a
- Head of Leadership, support for leadership and a
- Leader of Initial Teacher Education, Education Research and Induction
- Additionally, the teams outlined below for secondary support, subject support and AOLE leads will be expected to work with the Leader of Professional Learning to establish a full offer of professional learning to teachers across the regions, working with highly effective teachers and schools to support the growth of the self improving system.

- **Curriculum Reform and Innovation Lead** (Soulbury permanent) who will oversee a team that will consist of a Secondary specialist team across the AOLEs and current core subject and AOLE leads who will work across the region with schools to develop the new curriculum. 3 areas require unique support because of the scale of change anticipated in their domains, and the need for ongoing engagement at national level to secure the best progress for the reforms. They are in Welsh, digital learning and health and wellbeing. A key strategic post in each of those domains is proposed.
- Welsh Lead (Soulbury permanent)
- Digital Learning and Systems Lead (Soulbury permanent)
- Health and Wellbeing Lead (Soulbury permanent)

During the period of reform, it is proposed that an Assistant Managing Director should be employed on a contract of only 2 years, to ensure a smooth transition to new ways of working.

The cross fertilization between Curriculum Reform and Professional Learning will be significant, and the entire team will need to work seamlessly to provide highly effective support. Key teams will be required to work across the region to ensure such a join-up.

**It is proposed that in the new approach, ERW re-defines the work of its current teams.**

### **Secondary Subject Specialists**

Schools and their LA s could/should continue to benefit from the work of the Secondary Subject Specialist Leaders of Learning team - currently available to provide support to schools in English, Welsh, Mathematics, Science and Post-16 quality. LA s can request activity from them as and when needed and the model could be developed to allow additional commissioning if capacity is over-stretched. Headteacher responses in every authority have been enthusiastic about the value added by members of the current team, and the team provides, in most ERW authorities, the only specialist secondary curriculum provision.

**Additional consideration should now be given to widening the regional secondary curriculum team to cover the following areas to support professional learning and curriculum planning for 2022.**

Humanities  
Technology  
Modern Foreign Languages  
Expressive Arts

This should provide complete coverage for professional learning for the emerging curriculum and all key aspects of the current accountability models. The secondary specialist team should provide ongoing support across the region and additionally liaise with WJEC, Qualifications Wales and WG in response to changes to examination specifications or assessment models as well as developing the skills of middle leaders in terms of their roles in raising standards. Supporting Challenge Advisers in gathering appropriate clusters of schools to share curriculum innovation should also be a valuable function of the team.

**The Secondary Support Team (The group of headteachers sometimes referred to as ‘The Schools Causing Concern Team’)**

Currently ERW deploys 12 highly experienced school leaders in response to LA requests to support schools causing concern. There is significant positive feedback around this team’s work, and there are strong grounds for maintaining it and growing the model to be able to involve more school leaders over the coming years to be available to provide support. These should be viewed as either secondment or daily contracts, providing the flexibility to deploy as and when required. A more substantive post should be kept to co-ordinate and lead the work – but working to the Strategic Lead for Secondary Education. Consideration could be given at sub-regional level to the gathering of similar teams to serve across the Primary or Special sectors, unless LA’s wish to consider the commissioning of a similar arrangement to the current secondary arrangement.

**The Cluster Leaders of Learning: Moving towards specialist leaders in Areas of Learning and Experience (the AOLES of the new curriculum)**

There is concern that the Cluster Leaders of Learning model is not sufficiently well-developed and does not currently carry the confidence of local authorities or schools on a consistent basis. There are outstanding examples of work being carried out, but currently that is not deemed to be widespread enough to merit an expenditure of circa. £2.5m per annum. The project is run through secondments, and it is proposed that as those secondments end, they should not be extended by ERW.

Moving forward it is proposed that there should be a focus given instead to deploying a model that can support full transition to a curriculum based on the 4 purposes and the 6 AOLES. A team should be based across the region who can then work in partnership with each local authority to support the development, implementation and resourcing of the new curriculum. It is proposed that ERW adopts one of two possible models:

**AOLE Option 1:** there should be 3 secondees or permanent appointments into each of the 6 AOLEs (one of whom should provide a lead role, and 2 of which will need to be able to work in both English and Welsh medium settings). The 18 (instead of the current 56 LOLs) would secure a release of resource to schools to enable them to be able to engage effectively across the 6 AOLEs. By having 18 AOLE specialists, funding would be available to ensure that schools and/or individual teachers can provide AOLE leadership at a more local level – to help build the self-improving system. The AOLE specialists would work together to ensure the spreading of excellence across the entire region, and help avoid duplication of work.

**AOLE Option 2:** Instead of appointing 3 AOLE leads for each of the 6 AOLEs (as in Option 1), seek to appoint only 2. Use the funding for the third appointment instead in order to secure the contribution of 4 or 5 schools on a day per week in an AOLE to develop the work across the region. This work to be coordinated then by the 2 who are appointed full time into the role. This might help with ensuring quality in those appointed, and underline our commitment to a school led system. It would also reduce financial risks for the region, should we seek a change in structure at a later date and would help establish a modus operandi in the AOLEs. If, during the first year, it is found that only 2 full time staff per AOLE cannot offer the coverage needed, we could bolster it in the second year of operation. We still have over 3 years to full curriculum implementation.

Whichever option is adopted, the alignment with the Challenge Adviser team would be essential to their effective operation locally, along with regional alignment of their work to secure total new curriculum coverage across the region.

### **Challenge Advisers (under a new name)**

It is proposed that we work with the other three regions to re-align the work of Challenge Advisers. They can be re-defined, but would benefit from being part of a national change, in order to support the emerging national Evaluation and Improvement Framework.

As a body, they are crucial to securing effective approaches to school improvement. In a mixed regional/hub/local model, they would be key to ensuring that the region is kept well informed of the specific needs of schools and that appropriate support is brokered or commissioned. Challenge Advisers will therefore continue to be locally employed, deployed across boundaries, with regional training and effective sharing of good practice across the region. They, and their Senior Challenge Advisers become the key to securing consistency and effective deployment of regional expertise, and by moving more towards hub deployment, there could be an opportunity to embrace more consistent regional approaches and help spread effective practice, build stronger inter-authority relationships and more easily build capacity within the CA team.

In the new system, we will have 4 types of practitioners playing a key role in school improvement, and their collaboration needs to be significant



Likewise, should a local authority deploy other staff in support of school improvement, their collaboration across the region will be essential to secure the most effective outcomes.

### **Quality Assurance and Consistency across the region**

As with all other working practices in this model, agreed processes of quality assurance will be essential. Teachers have a right to expect a consistency of support for their own professional learning. Schools have a right to expect the avoidance of wasteful duplication of services and maximum delegation of funding.

Each sub-regional grouping (or hub) should have an agreed team of officers and Headteachers who serve as a monitoring group. On a cyclical basis, they should be participants in the self- evaluation and peer review of their authorities/hubs, providing feedback on the quality and efficiency of services that are offered. Additionally, cross hub learning and monitoring needs to be facilitated. A collegiate approach to growth is essential if ERW is to prosper.

### **6.0 Accountability and Governance Model**

Wales has an ambitious programme to nurture learners who are:

- Ambitious, capable learners who are ready to learn throughout their lives
- Enterprising, creative contributors who are ready to play a full part in life and work
- Ethical, informed citizens who are ready to be citizens of Wales and the world
- Healthy, confident individuals who are ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society.

Delivering such an ambitious agenda will require more effective joint working across the region – between schools and schools, effective joint planning of services across authorities and with external agencies, and an effective cross authority school improvement service. The governance of such a system should support both the philosophy of school improvement and the wider implications for local government responsibilities.

An agreed Business Plan should form the basis for the activities of ERW, and in effect, a joint committee signed off Business Plan will be the commissioning document for activities for the coming year. ERW staff and local authority teams should be held to account for the delivery of the agreed plan, across the region.

There should be clear accountabilities for each tier of the system, with the highest tier (Joint Committee) taking responsibility for the regional service, it's budgeting and planning, and ensuring the integrity of inter-authority working – essentially reflecting the current role of JC. In keeping with previous discussions, consideration should be given to the joint committee becoming more of a focus for the work of cabinet members of education rather than council leaders.

Additionally, the Joint Committee has devoted much of its time over recent years to some operational matters that might be better suited for discussions at other levels. This should not require significant changes to the governance model – the impact should be felt in terms of agendas and the confidence of the joint committee that matters are analysed and considered fully prior to being brought to the JC.

The new MD and senior team should work with the Directors of Education, through the existing boards to ensure that there is effective alignment of plans, ongoing honest self-evaluation and effective partnership across the region. A clarity around relationships is essential – including a clear role for the lead Chief Executive on behalf of the community of CEX's. Avoiding ongoing conflict should be an immediate priority for all concerned, and it might be helpful if a member of the CEX group should join the regular meetings of the MD/Directors group during the period of transition and the new Managing Director to report directly to a CEX.

The MD and the Directors should continue to report to the Executive Board and a headteacher board, who will scrutinise the school improvement function, the quality of plans and the quality of delivery to schools, as is currently expected.

**In addition to the existing structures of governance, it is proposed that the following new groups are put in place to secure a focus on the key functions of ERW and support consistency of quality across the region:**

In order to help inform and support the work of school improvement there should be a clear line of sight between the daily users of school improvement services (teachers and school leaders and local authorities) and those providing strategic leadership roles in the key themes that will form the remit of the new ERW. This could work on two different levels – in addition to their current contribution through ERW's Headteacher Representative Board and Executive Board.

2 active levels of professional governance/partnership are proposed, designed to ensure effective delivery and lower levels of conflict:

### **Group 1 – Supporting the Strategic Specialists**

It is proposed that those leading on the regional strategic themes have an Operational Support Group of 6 people each, made up of 3 teachers (2 HTs and an expert teacher), 2 Senior (or highly experienced) Challenge Advisers and 1 Director of Education/Chief Officer. These groups should work alongside ERW leads in the areas of new curriculum, professional learning, leadership, Welsh, Health and Wellbeing and Digital strategy in order to build up the most effective, informed approaches to key areas of thematic work across the region, including ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the work at regional, sub-regional/local and school levels. For those being released from school, one or two days per half term should be delegated to their school budgets in order to ensure that they are able to contribute fully to the dialogue and planning process.

## **Group 2 – Ensuring equity and consistency across the region**

It is proposed that an Officers and HT group should be created wherever sub-regional activity is established. Heads from that sub-regional partnership should form a part of a sub-regional board that can help identify commissioning requirements, support QA processes around support for schools and the PL/Leadership offer, hold LA 's to account, focus on reducing wasteful duplication of services and driving for consistency of support across the region, and help generate the culture of trust needed for the embedding of the self-improving system. They could also assist with the peer reviewing of hub work across the region, which should form an essential part of the quality assurance and value for money work of the regional partnership, in keeping with the hub review model noted previously.

### **7.0 Financial Model**

The current financial model does not work and causes ongoing tensions. It is therefore necessary to put into place a financial model which can provide a secure central service and which can encourage excellent people to commit to ERW, enable grants to be delegated purposefully and provide higher levels of funding to reach schools as our key partners.

The funding received from WG for distribution by ERW is in excess of £70m per year – and the vast majority of that is delegated to schools and local authorities. However, in the current financial year, the range of activities supported by ERW – including the extensive Leaders of Learning network resulted in the spending on staffing by the region of £4.7m. (mainly working at a local level across clusters of schools).

The financial modelling for the revised ERW proposals shows that it could fulfil its agreed obligations with approximately £1.3m more being available to be devolved through ERW to schools and local authorities, subject to achieving the objectives of the grants.

Whilst the priorities identified for ERW's future role can secure the support of the partner authorities and align well with national priorities (and therefore with likely grant funding streams), the current (almost total) dependency on grant funding needs to be balanced with the needs for security and sustainability for the organisation.

Given that the revised operational model can be achieved whilst also making savings from current spend of approximately £1.3m, it is proposed that in January senior finance officers from the 6 local authorities work together to agree a viable underpinning model to ensure that ERW can deliver its part of the local/regional partnership, within financial parameters that can cement a way forward for the organisation – based on transparent, auditable and balanced contributions between core funding and grant funding, and clarity of grant distribution via each LA to secure the best outcomes for learners.

**29 / 01 / 2019**