

ERW JOINT COMMITTEE

14 FEBRUARY 2020



ERW FOR THE FUTURE

Purpose: To set out a roadmap/options appraisal for any likely future ERW arrangements.

RECOMMENDATIONS / KEY DECISIONS REQUIRED:

- Joint Committee to provide an “in-principle” decision as to the preferred future footprint/model, from the list of four Possible Options provided, subject to the provisions of the Legal Agreement.
- Joint Committee to agree on an appropriate transition period (if the preferred model is not the status quo) subject to the provisions of the Legal Agreement.
- Joint Committee to authorise officers to develop the preferred model and ascertain impact of any changes (including legal, HR and financial), subject to the provisions of the Legal Agreement.

REASONS: At the request of the Joint Committee (December 9th, 2019) Directors were tasked with setting out a roadmap/options appraisal for any likely future ERW arrangements.

Report Author:

Directors of Education/Chief
Officers from each partner LA
and Interim Managing Director.

Designation:

Tel No.

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ERW JOINT COMMITTEE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 14 FEBRUARY 2020

AN ERW FOR THE FUTURE

The ERW Regional Education Service

On the 9th of December 2019, the Joint Committee tasked officers with setting out a roadmap/ options appraisal for any likely future ERW arrangements.

The ERW Consortium is currently a Joint Education Service for six local authorities:

- Carmarthenshire
- Ceredigion
- Neath Port Talbot
- Pembrokeshire
- Powys and
- Swansea

The Consortium acts on behalf of the six local authorities to deliver a service that supports schools to raise standards. There is much speculation at present regarding the future configuration and purpose of ERW. This is a matter of serious concern to our schools and education services.

Challenges

Since its inception ERW has struggled, due to numerous reasons, to function as an effective consortium. It has experienced a number of challenges-

- There have been several changes of political and managerial leadership and it has struggled to maintain a consistent strategic grip.
- The sheer size and diversity of the geographical area of the ERW footprint has presented operational and organisational difficulties
- School improvement has in many ways become compartmentalised and divorced from the broader learning, ALN and skills agenda. It has focussed on specific performance measures based almost exclusively on the traditional lines of attainment and attendance within schools and divorced from economic ambition.
- Different Local Authorities have different challenges and priorities and ERW has failed to address all of these successfully.
- There is sometimes conflict between accountability and provision of services.
- Some partners do not identify the added value that ERW provides and are not committed to making it work.

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?

YES

IMPLICATIONS

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities NONE	Legal YES	Finance YES	Risk Management Issues YES	Staffing Implications YES
1. Legal <p>If the current ERW footprint is changed there will be a requirement to amend the current (six-authority) Legal Agreement to take into account the withdrawal of the relevant Authorities.</p> <p>Changes to the Legal Agreement will require consultation with all Authorities. This will need to be agreed by respective partners and progressed through each partner's respective democratic processes.</p>				
2. Finance <p>The core staffing structure agreed by Joint Committee for 2020/21 is currently not fully funded and relies on increased contributions from each partner. Should partners withdraw from the consortium/not increase their contributions it will be difficult to deliver the agreed structure and ERW's Business Plan. Grant funding currently is delivered to partner LAs and schools via the consortium and should the footprint change we will need to work with Welsh Government on alternative arrangements.</p>				
3. Risk Management <p>ERW's Risk register reflects the current identified risks and associated remedial actions to reduce the risks.</p>				
4. Staffing Implications <p>There are key posts within the agreed structure which are vacant or removed due to Directors being charged with reducing core costs of the model. Removing staff to reduce has to be done in line with the employer's HR policies. Changes to the current structure could lead to significant redundancy costs.</p>				

CONSULTATIONS

If there are any changes to the current staffing structure/footprint we will need to consult and engage with ERW's core team in line with HT advice and guidance.

Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information

List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

THESE ARE DETAILED BELOW

Title of Document	File Ref No.	Locations that the papers are available for public inspection
The National Model for Regional Working		https://gov.wales/national-model-regional-working
ERW Joint Agreement		In each LA

