



Partneriaeth Joint Committee

Tuesday, 16 July 2024

Virtual Meeting - 10.00 - 11.30 am

CHAIR: Councillor G. Davies, Cabinet Member for Education & Welsh Language,
(Carmarthenshire County Council) - Voting Member

Voting Members	
Councillor Robert Smith	Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning, (Swansea Council)
Councillor Guy Woodham	Cabinet Member for Education & Welsh Language, (Pembrokeshire County Council)
Chief Executives	
Mr Martin Nicholls	Swansea Council (Lead Chief Executive)
Directors of Education	
Mr Steven Richards-Downes	Pembrokeshire County Council (Deputy Lead Director)
Ms. Helen Morgan-Rees	Swansea City and County Council (Lead Director)
Officers	
Mr Ian Altman	Partneriaeth Lead Officer
Mr Steve Murphy	Monitoring Officer (Carmarthenshire County Council)
Mr Matthew Holder	Partneriaeth Head of Internal Audit (Pembrokeshire County Council)
Mrs Sarah Edwards	Deputy S151 Officer (Pembrokeshire County Council)
Mr Jon Haswell	S151 Officer (Pembrokeshire County Council)
Ms Elin Forsyth	Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness (Carmarthenshire County Council)
Ms Carys Bates	Senior Auditor (Audit Wales)
Mr Jeremy Saunders	Audit Manager (Audit Wales)
Miss Emma Bryer	Carmarthenshire County Council (Democratic Services, note taker)
Mrs. Siwan Rees	Carmarthenshire County Council (Translation)
Mr. Martin Runeckles	Carmarthenshire County Council (Webcasting)
Observer	

Cllr Lyndon Jones

Scrutiny Chair of Councillor Group

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Darren Price (Carmarthenshire County Council), Councillor Rob Stewart (Swansea City Council), Councillor Jon Harvey (Pembrokeshire County Council), William Bramble (Chief Executive, Pembrokeshire County Council), Wendy Walters (Chief Executive, Carmarthenshire County Council), Gareth Morgans (Director, Carmarthenshire County Council), Keren Newby-Jones (Estyn), Alex Ingram (Welsh Government).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE PARTNERIAETH MEETING HELD ON THE 2ND FEBRUARY 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Partneriaeth meeting held on 2nd February, 2024 be signed as a correct record.

4. TO SIGN AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF EXTRAORDINARY PARTNERIAETH JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THE 19TH APRIL 2024

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Extraordinary Partneriaeth Joint Committee meeting held on 19th April, 2024 be signed as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

6. LETTER FROM CHAIR OF THE PARTNERIAETH SCRUTINY COUNCILLOR GROUP

The Joint Committee received a letter from the Chair of Scrutiny Councillor Group, reflecting on the views following the last meeting of the Partneriaeth Scrutiny Councillor Group held on the 26th February 2024.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the letter, as attached in this report, be received.

7. AUDIT WALES 2023 AUDIT PLAN - PARTNERIAETH

The Joint Committee received the Audit Wales 2023 Audit Plan for Partneriaeth, outlining the work to be undertaken by Audit Wales in discharging their statutory duties.

The plan detailed:

- Financial statements' materiality
- Significant financial statements' risks
- Areas of focus
- Financial statements audit timetable
- Statutory audit functions
- Fee and audit team
- Audit quality

It was noted that audit planning had identified a significant financial statement risk – Management override of controls. Other areas of audit focus were identified as Related party disclosures and senior officer remuneration and ensuring quality in the production of the 2022/23 draft accounts.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Audit Wales 2023 Audit Plan be approved.

8. AUDIT ENQUIRIES TO THOSE CHARGED WITH GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Joint Committee considered the response to Audit Wales in respect of the Audit Enquiries to those charged with governance and management for 2022-23.

Audit Wales are required to conduct their financial audit in accordance with the requirements set out in International Standards on Auditing on an annual basis. The considerations are relevant to both Partneriaeth's senior management and those charged with governance which for the purpose of the audit of the financial statements is deemed to be the Partneriaeth Joint Committee.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the response to Audit Wales for 2022-23, as contained within the report, be approved.

9. PARTNERIAETH STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2022-23

The Joint Committee considered the Partneriaeth Statement of Accounts for 2022-23 and the Audit Wales Audit of Accounts Report and Audit Opinion (ISA 260).

The Partneriaeth total gross expenditure for 2022-23 totalled £49.820m, which included £41.434m of grants being passported directly to the three constituent Local Authorities.

It was noted that the Partneriaeth Joint Committee had received two budget monitoring reports and financial updates on 29 April 2022 and 3 February 2023 and were updated on additional grant resources as they became available. The Partneriaeth Joint Committee approved the Budget for 2023-24 and the Draft Medium Term Financial Plan for 2023-24 to 2026-27 at their meeting on 23 June 2023.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that :-

- 9.1 Partneriaeth Statement of Accounts for 2022-23 be approved.**
- 9.2 ERW Statement of Accounts for 2022-23 be signed by the Partneriaeth S151 Officer and the Chair of the Partneriaeth Joint Committee.**

10. PARTNERIAETH FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2023-24

The Joint Committee was provided with a financial outturn for 2023-24 which included:-

- Service Level Agreements
- Local Authority Contributions
- Outturn 2023-24
- Grant Income for 2023-24
- Risks and Opportunities
- Reserves

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Financial Report Outturn 2023-24 be approved.

11. PARTNERIAETH REVISED DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2024-25

The Joint Committee received for consideration and endorsement of the Partneriaeth revised draft budget for 2024-25

The Partneriaeth revised draft budget for 2024-25, included:

- Service Level Agreements (SLA's)
- Local Authority Contributions
- Assumptions and Estimates
- Revised Draft Budget for 2024-25
- Working Balance and Reserves
- Draft MTFP 2025-26 to 2027-28
- Risks and Opportunities

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that :-

11.1 the revised Draft Budget for 2024-25 and MTFP 2024-25 to 2027-28 be approved.

11.2 the revised contribution from reserve for 2024-25, be approved.

12. PARTNERIAETH ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2023-24

The Joint Committee received Partneriaeth's Annual Internal Audit Report 2023-24 for approval.

The Internal Audit review provides assurance that Partneriaeth has adequate governance, internal control, financial management and risk management arrangements in place, which are operating effectively and assisting it to achieve its objectives.

The Internal Audit Scope for 2023-24 covered the following key areas:

- Governance arrangements, including compliance with the Legal Agreement; Meeting Schedule, Forward Work Programme and Meeting

Attendance; Code of Corporate Governance; and Decision Making Protocol and Record of Decisions.

- Business Plan, including Approval and Implementation; Business Plan Objectives and Costing; and Business Plan Monitoring Arrangements and Progress Reporting.
- Financial Management arrangements, including Budgetary Control and Monitoring; Use of Journals; and Financial Sustainability.
- Grant Management, including Arrangements for Utilisation, Monitoring and Management of Grant Funding retained by Partneriaeth.
- Risk Management arrangements, including Risk Register Monitoring and Risk Scoring Methodology

It was noted that the Internal Audit report had determined an audit assurance rating of 'reasonable'; meaning that there was generally a sound system of governance, internal control, financial management and risk management in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.

The report highlighted three key recommendations to strengthen existing arrangements and Management had accepted these recommendations. The recommendation will be followed up by Internal Audit during 2024-24 to ensure that they have been implemented.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the 2023-24 Annual Internal Audit Report be approved.

13. PARTNERIAETH HEAD OF INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL ASSURANCE OPINION 2023-24

The Joint Committee were provided with the report of the Partneriaeth Head of Internal Audit's annual assurance opinion on the effectiveness of Partneriaeth's Governance, Internal Control, Risk Management and Financial Management Arrangements for 2023-24.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Partneriaeth Head of Internal Audit's annual assurance opinion for 2023-24 be noted.

14. PARTNERIAETH ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023-24

The Joint Committee considered the findings from the annual review of governance arrangements for Partneriaeth for 2023-24.

The Internal Audit review gave a 'reasonable' assurance rating on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, internal control, risk management and financial management arrangements in place. Areas requiring further improvement had been included within the Priorities for Improvement of the Annual Governance Statement 2023-24 Action Plan.

The Partneriaeth Annual Governance Statement contained two Priorities for Improvement with the planned actions to be followed up as part of the Annual Internal Audit review of Partneriaeth for 2024-25.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Partneriaeth Annual Governance Statement 2023-24 be approved.

15. TRANSFER OF LEASE OF OFFICES FOR PARTNERIAETH STAFF FROM POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL TO CARMARTHENSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

The Joint Committee considered an update on the completion of transfer of lease from Powys to Carmarthenshire signalling a conclusion to any liabilities linked to the ERW legal agreement.

It was noted that when finalised the agreement would be presented to each of the individual Council's cabinets for approval and subsequent endorsement by the Partneriaeth Joint Committee once established.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that:-

- 15.1 the transfer of lease for offices at Y Llwyfan, Carmarthen concludes matters legally for Powys in terms of costs and liabilities associated with the lease holder within the historic ERW agreement. All costs and liabilities for the lease of offices for Partneriaeth staff are included within the Partneriaeth FY2024-2025 budget with Carmarthenshire acting as the lease holder for Partneriaeth be noted.**
- 15.2 the reduction of office footprint proportionately with reduction in staff number when lease is next renewed in October 2024 be approved.**

16. STAFFING UPDATE

The Joint Committee considered an update and an overview of the timeline and rationale for change as well as an overview of the staffing structure from September 2024.

It was noted that the rationale for restructure of Partneriaeth staffing was presented to Joint Committee in April 2024 with the following key dates agreed as part of the process:

- 23rd April – consultation with staff begins
- 8th May – consultation ends
- 14th May – consultation feedback
- 21st/22nd May – interviews
- 1st September – implementation of new structure

As a result of the consultation, an additional three posts were added to the structure to provide support from a Lead Adviser as well as two officers to cover support for Welsh Language through to qualifications. These additions to the structure were agreed by Strategic Group and to be funded by additional contribution from the LAEG. It was noted that this restructure would represent a reduction of 32% in staffing for Partneriaeth from September 2024.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Partneriaeth Staffing Update be noted.

17. ANNUAL REPORT AND BUSINESS PLAN SEPTEMBER 2024

The Joint Committee received an update on the following reports:

- Annual Report 2023-24 – summary of service delivery.
- Net Promoter Survey – responses from attendees at professional learning and those receiving bespoke support.
- Draft Business Plan September 2024 – reflects the priorities of Partneriaeth from September 2024.

It was noted that the two priorities of the business plan cycle were:

- Support all schools and educational settings to design and deliver their own high quality provision in commissioned subjects/AoLEs.
- Provide career pathways for leaders, practitioners and support staff at all levels of the system.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED to note the update and that the Partneriaeth Business Plan for 2024-25 be approved.

18. RISK REGISTER

The Joint Committee received the overall risk profile of the region. The report outlined the overall risk profile of the region which had been updated to reflect recommendations from Audit 2022-23 and also to take into consideration that Welsh Government funding had been received by Partneriaeth, including all expected variation awards.

The Joint Committee noted that the heat map indicated the risk scoring as Medium Probability and High Impact due to:

- Lack of clarity regarding functions of Partneriaeth
- Partneriaeth found not to provide value for money

It was noted that the register would be updated for September 2024 in line with the delivery of the new Business Plan in line with the LAEG funding and that this would be presented in the autumn Joint Committee.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the report and risk profile be noted.

19. CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE and SCHEME OF DELEGATION

The Joint Committee received the Code of Corporate Governance and Scheme of Delegation report.

The report was split into the following Core Principles:

- Core Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
- Core Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

*(NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO CONFIRMATION BY THE SHADOW
JOINT COMMITTEE AT ITS NEXT MEETING)*

- Core Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.
- Core Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.
- Core Principle E: Developing Partneriaeth's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
- Core Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
- Core Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED that the Code of Corporate Governance and Scheme of Delegation be approved as detailed within the report.

20. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT BY REASONS OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THE CHAIR DECIDES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY PURSUANT OF SECTION 100B (4)(B) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

The Chair noted that there were no other items of business that should be considered as a matter of urgency.

CHAIR

DATE