

ERW Joint Committee
Friday, 12th October, 2018
Y Llwyfan, College Road, Carmarthen
10.00 am - 11.00 am

PRESENT: Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn [Chair] Ceredigion County Council

Councillor Emlyn Dole	Carmarthenshire County Council
Councillor Rosemarie Harris	Powys County Council
Councillor Peter Rees	Neath and Port Talbot Council
Councillor David Simpson	Pembrokeshire County Council
Councillor Rob Stewart	Swansea City Council
Mr Phil Roberts	Lead Chief Executive – ERW & City and County of Swansea
Mr Eifion Evans	Ceredigion County Council
Mr Ian Westley	Pembrokeshire County Council
Councillor Jen Raynor	Swansea City Council
Mr Ian Budd	Powys County Council – Lead Director ERW
Mr Aled Evans	Neath and Port Talbot Council
Mr Gareth Morgans	Carmarthenshire County Council
Mr Geraint Rees	ERW Senior Leadership Team
Mr Jonathan Haswell	Pembrokeshire County Council (ERW - S151 Officer)
Mr Ian Eynon	Pembrokeshire County Council (Deputy S151 Officer)
Ms Elin Prysor	Ceredigion County Council (ERW-Monitoring Officer)
Mr Chris Llewellyn	WLGA
Ms. Ruth Conway	Welsh Government
Mr Ceri Davies	Pembrokeshire County Council
Ms Rhona Edwards	ESTYN
Mr Martin S. Davies	Carmarthenshire County Council (Democratic Services)



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND PERSONAL MATTERS

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Rob Jones [Neath Port Talbot Council].

The Chair congratulated Chris Llewelyn on his recent appointment as Chief Executive of the WLGA

2. DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTERESTS

There were no declarations of personal interest.

3. MINUTES - 16TH JULY 2018

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on the 16th July 2018 be signed as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Minute 7.2 – Statement of Accounts 2017-18 & WAO ISA 260 Report

Councillor Peter Rees referred to his query recorded in the above minute relating to the significant increase in Consultancy fees and commented that the subsequent information he had received had not answered his concern as to why the fees had increased so much. The SI51 Officer explained that there had not been a material change in the fees but the financial coding had been reclassified. Councillor Rees responded that he remained unhappy with the explanation and wished to have his concern recorded in the minutes.

5. LEAD CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE AND ACTION LOG

The Joint Committee received an updated Assurance Report which included a table containing an action plan, progress and responsible officer details.

The Lead Chief Executive advised that he and the Chair would be appearing before the ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group in January 2019 [see also minute 6.3 below] and a copy of their presentation would be forwarded to members of the Joint Committee in due course.

The Lead Director ERW and Chair thanked all who had been involved in the formulation of the Business Plan

AGREED that the Lead Chief Executive Update report be received.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

6.1. WELSH GOVERNMENT - REVIEWS OF EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT GRANT AND PUPIL DEVELOPMENT GRANT

The Joint Committee had been circulated with a letter dated 18th September 2018 from Steve Davies, Director of Education, Welsh Government, regarding reviews proposed in all 4 consortia with regard to the Education Improvement Grant and the looked after children element of the Pupil Development Grant. The Lead Director NPT commented that the reviews should also look at the quality of what was provided by ERW and consider ESTYN reports. The Chair endorsed this



comment and added that each consortium should be judged on the basis of how it had helped improve the performance of children.

The Chair enquired as to the availability of the report following the value for money audit undertaken by Rod Alcott, requested at the last Review and Challenge meeting. In response Ruth Conway agreed to ascertain the position as there had been no feedback.

NOTED.

6.2. WELSH GOVERNMENT - REGIONAL CONSORTIA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT [RCSIG] 2018-19

The Joint Committee had been circulated with a letter dated 14th September 2018 from Welsh Government, setting out its revised offer of £40,971,102.00 for the RCSIG grant for 2018-19. The S151 Officer stated that a letter of acceptance of the funding had been forwarded to Welsh Government but to date no funding had been received. One of the funding pre-conditions had required confirmation of the proposed dates on which the payments would be made by all 6 local authorities and officers were still looking to resolve the issue relating to Neath Port Talbot C.B.C.s contribution, as raised at the last meeting [minute 7.4 thereof refers].

NOTED.

6.3. ERW SCRUTINY COUNCILLOR GROUP

The Joint Committee had been circulated with a letter dated 4th October 2018 from the Chair of the ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group detailing issues raised at a meeting of the ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group held on the 10th September 2018. It was noted that the letter referred to the invitation extended to the ERW Chair and Lead Chief Executive to attend the meeting of the Scrutiny Councillor Group scheduled for January 2019 [minute 5 above also refers].

NOTED.

7. BUDGET REPORT

The Committee received the updated financial position for the year 2018-19 which provided specific detailed information in relation to:

- 2018-19 Central Team Budget
- Service Level Agreements
- 2018-19 Grant Allocations
- 2018-19 Grants – LAC PDG
- 2018-19 Grants – Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant (RCSIG)
- 2018-19 ERW Business Plan Priorities
- ERW Review and Reform Programme
- Risks
- Reserves.

The S151 officer reiterated that Neath Port Talbot C.B.C. had yet to pay its contribution of £40k and if it was not forthcoming the Joint Committee would need to consider how to achieve a balanced budget. The Lead Director NPT advised



that the Leader of NPT CBC had written to the other Leaders within the consortium outlining his concerns appertaining to management and the business plan, transparency of funding, deployment of resources, accountability, and the lack of progress in terms of improvements in governance. He added that it was the view of the Leader, the Chief Executive and himself that Neath Port Talbot would be unable to sanction its contribution unless there was improvement in these areas. The Lead Chief Executive commented that although he had some sympathy with Neath Port Talbot's analysis of the situation he considered that its current reluctance to contribute could have a negative effect on ERW and those which it was tasked with helping. The Joint Committee endorsed the comments of the Lead Chief Executive and expressed the view that no party to the agreement, which was built around joint working, should withhold its contribution. The Chair expressed the positive view that recent developments, with the assistance of Welsh Government whom she thanked, had paved the way forward and it was hoped that NPT CBC would see itself in a position to make its contribution soon.

AGREED

- 7.1 to note the Central Team budget for 2018-19 and the anticipated future additional accommodation and facilities costs;**
- 7.2 that a further report be submitted to determine what action can be taken in the event of Neath Port Talbot County Council not paying its share of the £250k Local Authority Contribution for 2018-19;**
- 7.3 to note the revised 2018-19 (Annex 2) grant allocations and current issues in meeting some of the RCSIG terms and conditions;**
- 7.4 to note the provisional allocation of the RCSIG to the ERW Business Plan 2018-19 priorities, and the fact that further work will need to be undertaken;**
- 7.5 to approve the allocation of the remainder of the £250k Welsh Government funding for the Review and Reform Programme;**
- 7.6 that the determination of how to replenish the ERW Reserves be not considered at the present time.**

8. ERW BUSINESS PLAN

The Joint Committee considered the revised ERW Business Plan 2018-19 which had been co-constructed by the ERW Directors, Local Authority Principal Challenge Advisers, and ERW Senior Leadership Team following the last meeting [minute 6.7 thereof refers]. The Plan focused on four key objectives which cascaded from the Welsh Government National Mission:-

- Developing a high-quality education profession;
- Ensuring that inspirational leaders work collaboratively to raise standards;
- To support our schools to be strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and well-being;



- Ensure robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system.

AGREED to endorse the redrafted Business Plan for circulation.

9. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER (THREATS) 2018-19

Further to minute 8 of the last meeting the Joint Committee received the draft Corporate Risk Register for 2018-19 which had been redrafted following advice from the Section 151 Officer. The changes included content and reporting format with a focus on the Central and Finance Register. It was noted that there were significant risks, many of which were long standing and which had not yet been mitigated despite activity.

AGREED that the tolerance levels be endorsed and the redrafted risk register be received.

10. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

The Joint Committee received the ERW 2017-18 Internal Audit Report with an update on the management responses.

The Chief Executive of Ceredigion CC wished to place on record his unhappiness with the 'Management Response' to the 'Expected Arrangements (Controls)' relating to the operation of the purchase card. The S151 Officer advised that the issue was not rated 'red' in the Recommendation Gradings but fell within the 'Partially adequate and effective' Action Rating though he acknowledged that there were internal control issues which needed to be addressed. The Lead Director reminded members that the recent review of ERW had highlighted the fact that responsibility for expenses was a matter of concern. The Chair emphasised the importance of accountability for any spending.

AGREED that the report and revised Management Responses be noted.

CHAIR

DATE

