



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 **01 February 2019**

Dear Councillor ap Gwynn

ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group – 10 January 2019

The Scrutiny Councillor Group would like to thank you, the Lead Director and the Interim Managing Director for ERW for attending our meeting to discuss progress with the ERW Improvement Plan and the National Mission. I am writing to you to reflect the views from that meeting.

As you are aware, at our meeting in September 2018, we expressed our concerns about the lack of progress made in relation to the reform of ERW. After discussing this with you, we now feel more reassured that progress is being made and in a timelier manner.

We recognise the role that the Interim Managing Director has played in building relationships and in driving the improvements required. We understand the appointment of a permanent Managing Director will be made shortly and were pleased to hear that the Joint Committee will be involved in this appointment. We would encourage you to ensure that sufficient time is taken to get a person that is of the highest calibre and who will be committed to taking the organisation in a positive direction following the ethos and principles that have now been identified.

We are pleased to hear that a set of proposals on the way forward for ERW have been developed in conjunction with key representatives from all six local authorities, and that this will be discussed at the ERW Joint Committee on the 8 February. We heard that these proposals will outline:

- The purpose for the future of ERW
- Leadership structure of ERW moving forward
- The wider staffing structure of ERW, including primary and secondary specialists and an ad hoc team that can be deployed as required
- Changing Challenge Advisor roles
- Planning of and support for operational delivery
- Developing operational and strategic delivery review mechanisms

- A new look at financing ERW with a focus on releasing £1m from the budget to work with schools, and ensuring transparency in the budgeting, process in particular in relation grant allocation.
- Next steps including: agreeing HR process and engaging key stakeholders, agreeing financial model, and securing levels of governance.

Following our detailed discussion, we would like to share our conclusions and recommendations with you on the matters below:

1. ERW must have a continued focus on building relationships with schools and, in particular, subject/classroom teachers. For the purposes of implementing the new curriculum, the importance of 'buy in' from classroom practitioners cannot be overemphasised. Prioritising the improvement of relationships with the frontline teachers is also essential to building trust in the regional consortium.
2. We believe ERW has an important role to play in the development of employability skills in our region. We would advise that this function should be officially recognised by embedding it in the staffing structure of ERW. We would suggest this could be achieved by including in the job description of one of ERW's officers a responsibility to work with Regional Skills Partnerships, where they exist, and employers around the region, to ensure that employment skills and experiences are better incorporated into our young people's education.
3. We note, and accept, that the debate surrounding the employment arrangements of Challenge Advisors has moved on from earlier discussions. In this context, we would suggest that it is important that the regional responsibilities of locally employed Challenge Advisors are properly formalised and monitored.
4. We strongly recommend that ERW develops clear timescales and milestones for both its own improvement journey and for the implementation of the new curriculum. Those relating to the consortium's own development should be shared and made available for local scrutiny/monitoring, as well as regionally by the ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group. Although we appreciate that further input is required from the Welsh Government regarding Donaldson, we feel it is important that schools and classroom teachers know in some detail, and well in advance, what resources and facilities will be provided by the consortium, and when they will become available. We believe this would go some way to achieving recommendation in paragraph 1.
5. We would appreciate it if ERW could provide greater clarity regarding the savings that the new model is expected to generate and the use to which they be put. Will these savings be passed on to the Local Authorities or schools, or will they be reinvested in the regional consortium? Whilst appreciating that the new model is still in its developmental phase, we would respectfully request that information be provided on this point at the next meeting of the Councillor Group.
6. We congratulate the Interim Director on his development of relationships with education stakeholders. We would recommend the focus on this continues both at officer and political level.

ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group Scrutiny Support provided by Swansea Council

Contact: Scrutiny Team, Gloucester Room, Guildhall, Swansea SA1 4PE

☎ 01792 637256

✉ scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk

7. We would like to see more proven and good-practice classroom resources made available on Hwb for sharing and use by all schools in the region. We would suggest that this should be a priority in the near future as it would, once again, be of benefit in achieving the outcome discussed in paragraph 1.
8. We believe that ERW must develop a consistent dialogue with the WJEC. We would hope that through this ERW could play a role in ensuring that schools receive essential information regarding changes to assessments at the earliest possible opportunity.
9. We would like to ask whether, as part of the work on the new model, the ERW Governance structures are still under review. If they are, the Councillor Group would request sight of any papers on this subject when they are available.

We thank you for your offer to attend our meetings as required in future. We will discuss this when we look at developing our future work programme at our next meeting in March.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. I. Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'I'.

Cllr Alex Thomas
Chair ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group
Cllr.a.i.thomas@npt.gov.uk