

The ERW Regional Education Service

Local authorities operate within a statutory framework that places upon them, amongst others, the following general powers:

- Local authorities must contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community by securing that efficient primary and secondary education is available to meet the needs of the people in its area
- Local authorities must secure that their education and training functions are exercised with a view to promoting high standards and promoting the fulfilment of learning potential.
- Local authorities must also secure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education are available for its area.
- Local authorities play a key role in the financing of schools.
- Local authorities have statutory duties to identify, assess and make provision for children's special educational needs.

Any collaboration or cooperation must respect these statutory responsibilities and where collaboration is enacted, it must be subject to local accountability and scrutiny, and assessed to add value.

Education in Wales is in the throes of unprecedented reform; stakes are high in terms of realising the intended outcomes and securing the delivery of the reform agenda.

Running parallel to this, are the immediate budget pressures faced by local government and challenges to sustain services.

The options developed by Directors of Education/Chief Education Officers must be considered within this context. Also, the options should be assessed in their effectiveness in delivering a self-improving system where peer review and strategic partnerships drive improvement.

Background

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

- Carmarthenshire
- Ceredigion
- Neath Port Talbot
- Pembrokeshire
- Powys
- 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.

In February 2011, as Education Minister, Leighton Andrews introduced a series of reforms in schools, in higher education, and student finance. He set out his schools' agenda in a speech, '*Teaching makes a difference*'. His 20-point plan became the focus of education reforms after the May 2011 Assembly elections. Andrews introduced banding of schools (since modified into a categorisation of schools), reforms of school governance, the

Literacy and Numeracy Framework accompanied by reading tests for years 2-9, and the review of Qualifications.

One of the priorities the Minister identified was about the structural management and leadership of education in Wales. He included the following direction to local authorities:

“We will expect local authorities to participate in consortia arrangements, including shared consortium services, or suffer financial penalties, including the withdrawal of Better Schools Funding. The consortia will identify system leaders, who will support and challenge the professional learning communities, which will have a focus on literacy and numeracy.”

As a consequence, local authorities had to formalise their various existing informal arrangements for working together into the four regional consortia that exist now. For South West and Mid Wales, the previous SWAMWAC model, originally designed to address the new arrangements for teachers’ workload, was the identified footprint for future collaboration between the councils. However, it has to be noted that regional consortia do not have a statutory basis.

It is difficult to find any logical or evidence-based argument set out at that time for this collaboration footprint to be the right footprint for the consortium-based approach going forward.

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.

DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

Following the previous Managing Director’s secondment to Welsh Government, Geraint Rees was brought in to lead a review of ERW and develop a revised structure.

Since the inception of ERW the service structure has evolved on a basis of need. During that time the changing operational environment, strategic priorities and operational needs

have changed considerably. These changes have placed an increasing strain on the structure to the point where the workforce structure was not fit for purpose.

In September 2018, a widespread engagement exercise was undertaken with the 6 Local Authorities' education department leads and subsequently with the wider headteacher community across the region.

Due to the feedback received from the engagement exercise it became evident that an evaluation of the organisational structure needed to take place. The evaluation has shown that the introduction of a clearly defined central staffing structure was required to enable ERW to work in partnership with the 6 Local Authorities and provide an effective and efficient model to provide leadership and co-ordination of a self-improving system.

The case for change

- Notice of withdrawal from ERW issued by Neath Port Talbot (27-03-19)
- Internal Audit reports
- Internal evaluation and intelligence
- Welsh Government expectations
- Future regional responsibilities
- Grant conditions
- Estyn reports
- Schools below regression line.
- Vulnerable pupils not supported consistently
- Value for Money
- Duplication
- Inter LA variation
- School Variation
- Accountability
- Feedback from schools
- Quality of support to schools
- Pace of progress only adequate
- Self-evaluation

GR worked with Directors on this review and a revised 'Mission Statement' and new business priorities were developed-

AIM- 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.

Priorities-

- **Developing and delivering a transformational curriculum**
- **To develop a high-quality education profession**
- **To develop inspirational leaders and to facilitate them working collaboratively to raise standards.**
- **To develop strong and inclusive schools that are committed to excellence and wellbeing.**
- **To develop robust assessment, evaluation and accountability processes that support a self-improving system**

The new priorities agreed are crucial to the improvement journey that we are embarking upon. In addition, a revised staffing structure was presented to and ratified by the Joint Committee.

The staffing structure was designed to offer an effective and efficient school improvement service. Most of the positions would be employed on a permanent basis within ERW via Pembrokeshire County Council on either Soulbury or Teachers Terms and Conditions. New job descriptions were developed for the positions and evaluated according to Pembrokeshire's evaluation process. Remuneration for each position was evaluated by Finance Department to ensure cost effectiveness and affordability.

Staff have been permanently appointed to the majority of the agreed posts and secondments were offered to suitably experienced practitioners to posts which did not attract suitably experienced applicants. Since September 2019 the new revised model has been operational. (Appendix 1)

The structure created a permanent Regional Strategic Team under the leadership of a Managing Director.

The Regional Strategic Team consist of 7 individuals:

- Managing Director (*Secondment*)
- Assistant Managing Director (*Fixed-term contract*)
- Head of Primary Sector (*Vacant at 01-01-20*)
- Head of Secondary Sector (*Secondment- 0.5*)
- Head of Special Schools and Education in Alternative Setting (*Permanent- 0.6*)
- Head of Professional Learning and Leadership (*Vacant at 01-01-20*)
- Head of Curriculum Reform and Innovation (*Secondment 0.8*)

The following positions provide support to the Regional Strategic Team:

- Secondary Support Lead (*0.6 until March 2020*)
- Lead for Leadership (*Full time*)
- Lead for Research and HEI Partnerships (*Full time*)
- Lead for Secondary Curriculum and Examinations (*Full time*)
- Lead for Welsh in Education (*Full time*)
- Lead for Digital & Systems (*Full time*)
- Lead for Health and Wellbeing (*Full time*)

In addition, it was proposed to continue the work in the following positions to ensure complete coverage for curriculum reform and Professional Learning:

Secondary Subject Specialists to support middle leadership and provide support through curriculum and examination reform (11 posts in total working under the Lead for Secondary Curriculum and Examinations).

- English
- Welsh
- Mathematics
- Science
- Humanities
- Technology

- Modern Foreign Languages and **Pedagogy and AOLE specialists** to provide leadership across the region for the development of pedagogical approaches and appropriate integration across the 6 AOLEs, with a focus on primary education and transition (12 posts in total).
- Expressive Arts

Funding

The majority of ERW’s funding is secured through Welsh Government grants. In addition, there is core funding provided by each partner local authority based on a total contribution of £250,000 split according to PLASC Pupil numbers.

<i>Local Authority</i>	<i>Current contribution</i>
Carmarthenshire	53,167
Ceredigion	18,691
Neath Port Talbot	40,713
Pembrokeshire	33,895
Powys	33,535
Swansea	69,998
TOTAL	250,000

As part of the review there was a requirement, as from the start of the 2020/21 financial year, to increase contributions from partner authorities to fund the new structure agreed at the Joint Committee.

For 2020/21 an additional £733,050 is required. It was proposed to transfer grant funding to the value of £410,263 to local authorities, to be passported back to ERW, leaving a deficit of £322,787 to be met by additional contributions from each local authority.

However, although the structure was agreed, Neath Post Talbot continue to state that they will not increase their financial contributions to ERW. It seems Swansea are also unwilling to pay any additional contribution and are advocating a ‘commissioning model’ i.e. only buying the services they require.

Directors were tasked with slimming down the core staffing model and develop proposals for a future ERW configuration. Workshops have been held to examine each option and to articulate the positives and negatives of each proposal.

Possible Options

1. The status quo
2. Transfer to a model based on the City Deal and Growing Mid Wales Partnerships
3. Dyfed Powys and West Glamorgan footprints
4. To operate school improvement as individual councils (those councils who wish to continue collaboration continue to do so)

1. Status Quo	
A continuation of the current footprint of 6 LAs and the revised structure.	
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERW provides a critical mass and economies of scale • The revised structure already in place that includes high-quality and respected individuals in key posts. • There is now a better understanding of ERW's responsibilities and structure. • There is better face-to-face communication between ERW and school leaders • There is the ability to build on current effective practice e.g. Middle Leaders programme, school to school work • There is effective support for secondary schools following inspections (e.g. Powys/ Pembrokeshire) • There is evidence of effective support for schools causing concern • Our Challenge Advisers know each other well and work across region • Lack of capacity in some authorities to continue to meet responsibilities and therefore dependent on ERW 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still a lack of trust in the organisation being able to deliver • Still a lack visibility • Less connection to local issues • Lack of link to key officers in the local authority e.g. Education Welfare Service (EWS) • Too far removed from schools/LAs (geographically) • Risk to capacity as people do not want to work for ERW • Could be seen as a regional bureaucratic industry when school budgets so stretched • Support for secondary schools has been variable • Model not agile enough to meet needs/not responsive enough • Perception that ERW that does not provide value for money/impact of ERW • LA contributions do not meet the core costs. • Lack of flexibility for using grant funding terms and conditions. • Large land mass and geography of region poses significant logistical challenges • Diverse nature of the region, the socio-economic profiles of LAs and linguistic makeup make it difficult to provide a service that meets the needs of all school communities. • A lack of clarity on exact nature of ERW's role and relationship with LAs. • Disconnect between Welsh Government and Local Government.

2. Model based on the City Deal and Growing Mid Wales Partnerships	
This would be a partnership of 4 (Carmarthen, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire and Swansea) and 2 (Ceredigion and Powys)	
+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The geography is more manageable • Geographical advantages and in line with emerging footprints • There is already a degree of political support for this pattern of working • It will enable us to better link the education agenda with skills, apprenticeships and employment pathways in the key sectors we want to support. • It allows us to disband current structures and re-create new ones and therefore address the brand, governance and structure issues • Smaller scale could ensure improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current structure not suitable/sustainable leading to redundancies etc. • Continue to be unsure of accountabilities • Consistency in CAs performance • Tension between region and local authority • Could still be faceless to schools • Still could be issues of perceived quality • Could be very challenging for 2 relatively small LAs to deliver a

<p>consistency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to build on current strengths • School leaders value local response from Challenge Advisors • Could realise clearer communication • Could realise clearer division of functions • Improved tackling of under-performance • Better perception of model with local face • Easier to build positive relations with schools and build reputation • More agile to deliver local/national priorities • Greater control of apportioning of resource • Small enough to function in a timely way to support schools • Not seen to be fattening a middle tier • Greater autonomy for schools on funding 	<p>comprehensive school improvement service (19 secondary schools across the 2 LAs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a sustainable region • Significant differences in socio-economic footprint within the different partnerships • Issues in delivering Welsh language support as there are different priorities and expectations in each LA.
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<p align="center">3. Dyfed Powys / West Glamorgan footprints</p>	
<p align="center">This would be a partnership of 4 (Carmarthen, Ceredigion Pembrokeshire and Powys) and 2 (Neath Port Talbot and Swansea).</p>	
<p align="center">+</p>	<p align="center">-</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The geography is more manageable • It allows us to disband current structures and re-create new ones and therefore address the brand, governance and structure issues • Improved consistency • Building on current strengths • Heads appreciate local response from Challenge Advisors (CAs) • Clearer internal communication • Clearer division of functions • Tackling under-performance • Better perception of model with local face • Easier to build positive relations with schools and reputation • Geographical advantages • More agile to deliver local/national priorities • Greater control apportioning of resource • Return to pre-LGR footprint of West Glamorgan and Dyfed Powys • Small enough to function in a timely way to support schools • Greater autonomy for schools on funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current structure not suitable/sustainable leading to redundancies etc. • Could continue to be unsure of accountabilities • Consistency in CAs performance • Tension between region and local authority • Could still be faceless to schools • Still could be issues of perceived quality • Losing advantage of working with diverse authorities. • Not aligned to the Swansea City Deal (CCC+ Pembs) • Risk if CCC does not sign up to the DP and impact on the 3 partners- viability? • Redundancy issues

4. Operate school improvement as individual councils	
Each local authority to operate separate improvement and support services with commitment to collaborate. (ERW could cease to exist or LAs could agree to commission a central team to provide specific support to deliver key aspects of the national reform agenda, e.g. curriculum development)	
+	-
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The geography is more manageable • School leaders appreciate local response from Challenge Advisors (CAs) • Clearer internal communication • Clear division of functions • Clarity of role and responsibility • Current governance and scrutiny arrangements are in place and robust • School improvement service sits with the body which has the statutory responsibility. • Ability to commission from a wider range of providers and in line with LA priorities. • LAs can collaborate according to strategic priorities. • Each LA can commission what it needs and therefore more funding could reach front line services. • Services provided more bespoke to individual LA's needs • ERW could provide critical mass, economies of scale and broker support required. • The revised structure is already in place and high-quality and respected individuals in key posts. • There would be a better understanding of ERW's responsibilities and structure. • There is the ability to build on current effective practice e.g. Middle Leaders programme, school to school work • Lack of capacity in some authorities to continue to meet responsibilities and therefore dependent on ERW • Market forces would drive ERW to improve its performance and quality of support offer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current structure not suitable/sustainable leading to redundancies etc. • Consistency in CAs performance • Does not meet Welsh Government expectations • Does not align with the Wellbeing of Future Generation Act. • Danger of isolation for LAs/ schools/ leaders • Possible capacity issues from providers • Lack of capacity in some authorities to continue to meet core statutory responsibilities to intervene in school/deliver school reorganisation • HR challenges- redundancy/challenges • Not a consortium- need to start again • Two local authorities in Estyn's serious concern category; senior leadership experience and capacity in both authorities is challenged. • ERW unable to sustain a core structure without core funding • Current structure not suitable/sustainable leading to redundancies etc. • Risk to capacity as people do not want to work for ERW • Success to date has been variable • Model not agile enough to meet needs/not responsive enough • LAs could commission from outside ERW. •

The Executive Board are requested to provide officers with a steer in regard to future partnership arrangements.

Appendix 1- ERW Staffing Structure

Appendix 2- ERW- KEY PRINCIPLES

Appendix 3- ERW- KEY DELIVERABLES

Appendix 4- ERW- CORE VALUES

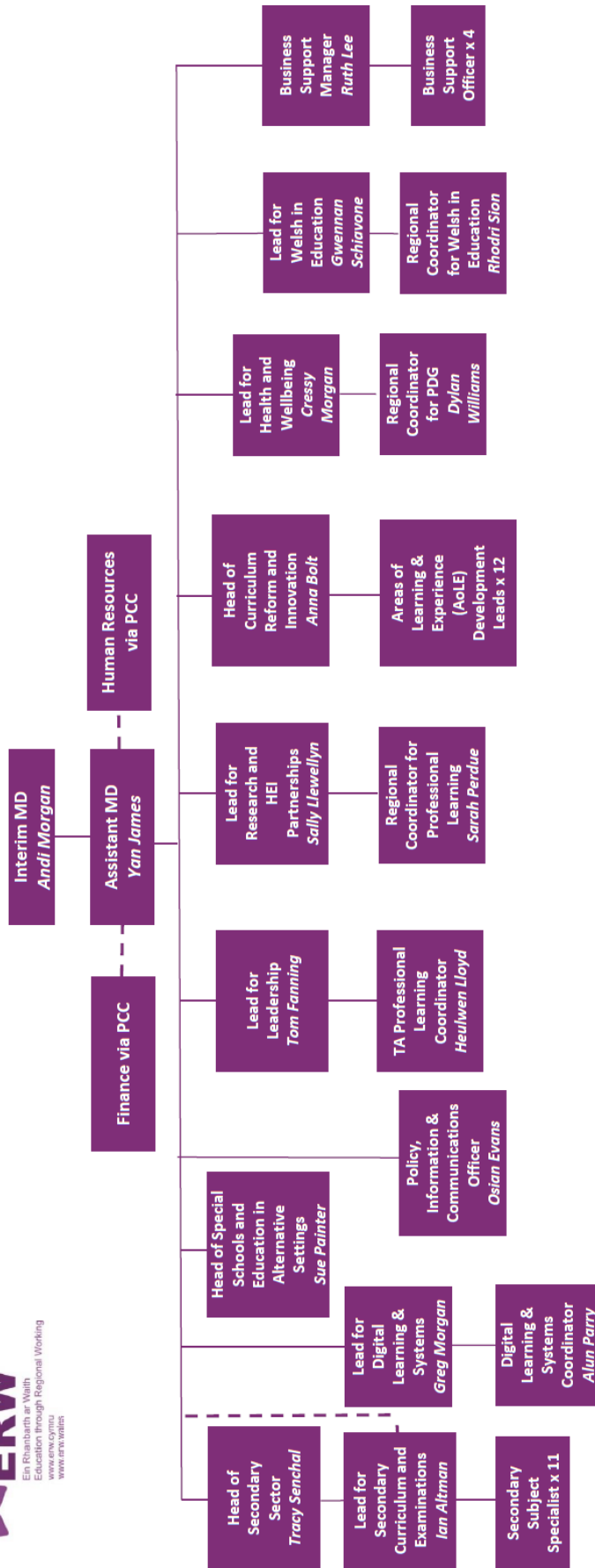
Appendix 5- ERW- What do we do?

Appendix 6- ERW Business Plan

Appendix 7- Proposal for the future of ERW on behalf of Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Powys LAs

Appendix 1- ERW Staffing Structure

ERW Team Structure



- Regional working will be underpinned by the principles of transparency, shared leadership, clear communication, robust quality assurance, accountability and integrity.
- The regional support service will be resourced and staffed in accordance with its remit and status. It will have a Head of Service and a dedicated team of experts who will add value to the regional approach to the national reform agenda.
- The regional school support service will commit to providing all aspects of support bilingually in line with expectations of the Welsh Standards.
- Current regional governance structures will continue.
- Regional working will be underpinned by the principle of working towards developing a self-improving system where peer review and strategic partnerships drive improvement.
- Regional working should strengthen the role of School Clusters (depending on theme/focus).
- Regional working will be guided by the aim of ensuring that all schools are at least good and that all pupils benefit from a high-quality education.
- Regional working will commit to support local authority capacity and ability to provide education services of the highest standard across all areas of its responsibility.
- That we strengthen relationships between the local authorities, the consortium and Welsh Government.

REGIONAL

The agreed regional support service priorities are-

- Developing and delivering a curriculum for Wales
 - Developing a high quality education profession that has a positive impact on learners' progress and standards
 - Ensure Inspirational leadership has a positive impact on provision and standards
 - Develop strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and well-being
 - Develop robust assessment, evaluation and accountability arrangements supporting a self-improving system
- The regional school support service will lead on pedagogy, leadership development and moderation and standardisation.
 - The regional support service will engage on behalf of LAs with ITT institutions to ensure that local needs are shared.
 - Regional governance systems will relate to the performance and management of the regional support service.
 - The regional improvement service will contribute to governor training when appropriate and within remit.
 - The Business Plan will be informed by local priorities and steered through the Strategy Groups.
 - The regional improvement service will provide a directory of specialisms.
 - We will have an agreed model of resource deployment to secure improvement and to avoid duplication.
 - We commit to re-launching and re-invigorating our regional commitment to a self-improving system.

LOCAL AUTHORITY

- Accountability and statutory responsibility lies with local authorities (LA), therefore school improvement resource and workforce will remain in each LA to be determined by local priorities and be subject to local scrutiny.
- Challenge Advisers will be responsible for support visits, annual reports on performance and progress and brokerage of support for schools.
- The LA CAs and school improvement resource will be available to work across the region in accordance with current legal agreement.
- Local scrutiny arrangements will apply to the performance of schools and the standards attained by pupils.
- ALN is a local authority responsibility.
- LAs will be accountable for schools causing concern by their individual systems, however all local authorities will commit to providing support and challenge to each other in addressing issues of underperformance.
- The delegation of the Welsh element of the Regional School Consortium Improvement Grant (RCSIG) to each LA needs to be considered in order to support individual LA Welsh in Education Plans (WESP). Opportunities to secure economies of scale will be actively pursued.

Self-Improving School System

- School leaders and teachers have the skills, capacity and commitment to continually learn and improve their practice by collaborating.
- Schools are 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.
- Schools become participants so that strengths are spread across the system and areas for improvement are tackled through peer engagement and support.
- Schools will thrive in a supportive and collaborative environment to raise standards and ensure that every young person can access excellent education.
- Schools have a strong vision for why, how and what children and young people learn.

Appendix 3- ERW- KEY DELIVERABLES

Performing

- Improved pupil and school performance.
- Effective use of data and deployment of high-quality resources to ensure effective interventions and support to deliver improved pupil outcomes
- Improved school categorisation and more positive Estyn school inspection reports in all partner Local Authorities

Accountable

- Establishment of a coherent regional school Improvement structure which promotes high performance.
- Clear accountabilities, streamlined and integrated services delivering monitoring, support and challenge to achieve a positive impact and provide genuine value for money.

Self-Improving

- Development of a culture of self-improvement which is reflective, collaborative and based on positive professional relationships.
- Issues and challenges addressed honestly and transparently in an environment which encourages innovation, demonstrating high trust and effective communication.
- An agile, responsive workforce with the skills to respond as required.

Strategic

- Effective management and use of data and other intelligence to provide improved knowledge of all schools, enabling the strategic deployment of high-quality resources to meet current and emerging needs of schools, local authorities and the region.

Talented

- Effective structures and arrangements to recruit, retain and develop high quality staff.
- A positive employment culture which builds capacity and expertise, motivating and valuing individuals to excel within systems which are clear, consistent and supported by effective performance management.

Influential

- Establishing an influential and respected consortium which is authoritative and influential in shaping Welsh Government policies.
- Effective in representing the views of Local Authority partners to secure arrangements which deliver National priorities in a way which reflects the unique nature of the region whilst offering consistent support to Welsh language and cultural heritage.

Appendix 4- ERW- CORE VALUES

Effectiveness

- We lead by example and inspire confidence in others
- We promote and drive continuous improvement by asking how we could do this better
- We focus on longer-term outcomes rather than short-term goals.
- Barriers and challenges are resolved promptly and success is celebrated.

Commitment

- We take pride in the job that we do and we are ambitious for all of our schools and their pupils
- We are passionate about learning and ensuring that pupils reach their potential
- We make a difference for thousands of pupils every year

Integrity

- We are trustworthy and reliable
- We are able to adapt to changing priorities and seek to create a positive and healthy working environment.
- We stand by difficult decisions and openly acknowledge errors
- We challenge and confront poor performance

Innovation

- We inspire others and continuously seek innovative solutions.
- We effectively plan and anticipate change.
- We act on opportunities.
- We recognise problems and implement solutions.

Collaboration

- We engage and support each other by working together and developing a shared focus.
- We build effective relationships with all stakeholders and partners.
- We recognise people's contributions and achievements
- We talk about 'we' and not 'I'.

Appendix 5- ERW- What do we do?

What do we do for schools and their pupils?

- Develop capacity of all schools to become self-improving, resilient organisations who continually improve outcomes and wellbeing for pupils
- Provide high quality differentiated support to schools in line with the national categorisation system
- Enable useful opportunities for school to school working to develop the self-improving system

What do we do for teachers?

- Provide high quality curriculum support to support the development of high-quality pedagogy
- Provide useful resources to reduce teacher workload, improve wellbeing and support the developments of high impact strategies to improve pupil outcomes
- Provide high quality bespoke support to develop the high quality of teaching and learning in all schools
- To provide useful opportunities for professional networks to encourage the sharing of good practice and to develop the self-improving school system.

What do we do for school leaders?

- Support education professionals to fulfil current and future roles in a wide range of educational settings.
- Provide, broker and quality assure a range of approved programmes for our education system. For example, middle leaders, aspiring heads, NPQH and support for newly appointed headteachers.
- We will develop current and future leadership talent for the ERW region

What do we do for our employees?

- We lead with clarity and focus
- We provide professional learning opportunities that build confidence and competence
- We provide a good balance between autonomy and clarity
- We provide opportunities for our team to develop professionally and reinvest in a self-improving system

Appendix 6- ERW's Business Plan and Provision

ERW has five improvement priorities that match the enabling objectives of The National Mission:

- **Developing and delivering a transformational curriculum**
- **To develop a high-quality education profession**
- **To develop inspirational leaders and to facilitate them working collaboratively to raise standards.**
- **To develop strong and inclusive schools that are committed to excellence and wellbeing.**
- **To develop robust assessment, evaluation and accountability processes that support a self-improving system**

Business Plan Priorities

1. Developing and delivering a curriculum for Wales

The region will work with the education system to support the development of the new curriculum and associated assessment arrangements that will help raise standards for all pupils in the region. The region will ensure that high quality professional learning will enable schools to plan for the new curriculum and all associated assessment arrangements.

2. Developing a high-quality education profession that has a positive impact on learners' progress and standards

The region will support our teachers to be lifelong professional learners that reflect on and enhance their own practice to motivate and inspire the children and young people in their care. The region will support schools to develop pedagogy and practice in order to effectively prepare for 'A curriculum for Wales, a curriculum for life.' The region will support, challenge & intervene in schools by implementing a rigorous and consistent approach to ensure that all schools have a clear understanding of what constitutes consistently high-quality teaching and learning for all learners. The region will ensure that assessment information is used diagnostically to influence teaching, learning and learner progress and secure robust reliability procedures for end of key stage assessment

3. Ensure Inspirational leadership has a positive impact on provision and standards

The region will prioritise developing system leadership as a prime driver of education development across our schools. Promoting and supporting effective, collaborative leadership will therefore be central to our delivery. The region will develop effective school leadership and increase capacity across the region by developing universal and targeted support, challenge and intervention for current

and aspiring school leaders at all levels. The region will develop and implement a comprehensive programme of professional learning in order to promote high expectations and develop knowledge, skills, personal qualities, values and professional characteristics that will enable leaders to offer consistently high-quality education in all schools

4. Develop strong and inclusive schools committed to excellence, equity and well-being

All learners must be supported to be emotionally and physically ready to learn in a safe and supportive environment. Each learner must be respected and challenged to achieve the best that they are capable of, including our most able learners, while being supported to overcome barriers that inhibit their learning. The region is committed to delivering a fair and fully inclusive education system ensuring where schools across the region are equipped to support all learners in a manner which minimises obstacles and maximises the opportunities for reaching their full potential. The region will continue to develop the workforce so that schools can receive the necessary levels of support and challenge around inclusive practice.

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

Through the use of evidence-based approaches and co-construction, we will deliver a coherent assessment and evaluation framework that will ensure effective accountabilities so that schools, LAs and the region play a full part in delivering the best for our learners and their teachers. We will encourage and acknowledge schools that are collaborative and supportive of each other and will ensure that smaller and rural schools are better supported to play their full part in a collaborative self-improving school system.

Appendix 7- Proposal for the future of ERW on behalf of Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Powys LAs

Background

The ERW region's directors, chief executives, portfolio holders and council leaders have collectively invested significant energy over many years to secure effective regional working, since the inception of SWAMWAC. There have been times of clarity and times of challenge, but throughout there has been an unwavering commitment to securing the creation of a regional school improvement service to improve outcomes and experiences for all learners within the region.

The last few years have been particularly challenging, despite periods of optimism, as partners have struggled to honour a collaborative approach across all six authorities. Despite reaching agreement, the risk of fragmentation has always been high. At times, it has been argued that conforming to regional processes has limited local authorities' opportunities to innovate. Over time, different views and priorities within individual local authorities have impacted on the pace, effectiveness and influence of the regional school improvement service.

However, the undersigned authorities (*) express their full commitment to the principle of regional working. With our spread of rural and small-town schools, working across our two languages in areas of sparse population and often of rural deprivation, we have more in common than that which separates us. We are also more than aware of the risks that our schools can become isolated, with lack of exposure to practice and innovation from other areas of Wales and beyond.

The preferred option for each of our authorities would always have been to secure a successful 6-LA region. However, having made significant and sincere commitments to develop and sustain that model, our shared experiences now point toward a need to move on, at pace. There is now a strong feeling across our authorities that a new footprint is needed for our school improvement collaboration, and we propose that footprint to be organised as a Dyfed- Powys entity.

For this reason, we wish to move ahead in a spirit of open, committed collegiality to affirm a sustainable, collaborative and excellent regional service, where staff can engage professionally in an environment of safety and security, delivering crucial support for our schools and our learners. If that regional service requires a variation from its current geographical footprint, we as local authorities are prepared to engage collectively to build and embed a service based on a revised footprint. We can no longer be held back by the challenges that have inhibited our honourable ambitions over recent years.

Core Values

Each one of our authorities has high expectations of its regional school improvement service and will expect the following core values to be exemplified:

- excellent leadership, communication and relationships between the local authorities and the regional school improvement service, based on transparency, integrity and mutual trust
- exceptional quality, innovation and rigour in the delivery of agreed support services that provide good value for money
- a bilingual service that is led by the needs of schools and local authority priorities as they respond to our changing educational landscape
- a continued focus on getting resources to our classrooms by working collaboratively to avoid unnecessary duplication of services

Service Delivery

As a group of authorities, we need a regional school improvement service to deliver and add value to the local authority offer in a range of key domains. In particular, we wish to commit to a service that offers functions a)-d) noted below:

a) Leadership programmes at all levels throughout the schools' workforce

A service that provides a single regional administration and delivery of a growing range of programmes, that can act as a conduit for national collaboration through the National Academy for Educational Leadership and our universities to develop the full range of future leadership programmes.

- Middle leader development - development planning, monitoring and evaluation
- The National Professional Qualification for Headship
- New and acting headteacher programme
- Aspiring senior leaders
- Experienced headteachers
- Higher Level Teaching Assistant development, and support for pathways for teaching assistants.

b) Initial Teacher Education and career-long learning

The new national arrangements for Initial Teacher Education and the very recent developments (and anticipated growth) in part-time and work-based routes into teaching provide an opportunity to utilize a single regional approach to the promotion and partnership building needed for these programmes with schools and Higher Education Institutions. This can also apply to the standardization of induction and early professional learning of new teachers.

These priority areas will need to be supported by a comprehensive regional and local workforce development programme, with the Schools as Learning Organisations model at its core.

For secondary subjects (in particular core subjects) ERW's Secondary leaders of learning team has been an effective feature of the support and work provided by the region. They provide access to cutting edge practice and research and have been fully involved in supporting departments in secondary schools where there is underperformance. Each of

their appointments in summer 2019 were supported unanimously by directors and headteachers at appointments panels.

c) Support for the Curriculum for Wales

With the final version of the new curriculum published this week, the schools' sector can now move with some assurance from speculative future planning to more specific implementation planning. The regional service's new curriculum team from September 2019 exists to share information and embed key principles around the four core purposes and pedagogy. It is their work to support curriculum development and design, underpinned by a range of programmes to improve pedagogy and pupils' skills. Their work, through roadshows, engagement with Lead Practice Schools, networking opportunities and school to school support is crucial, and it is expected that the pace of engagement will now accelerate.

Whilst recognizing the local dimensions of the new curriculum, there is plenty of scope for local, regional, national and international learning to be brought to bear. The benefits of an agile team at a regional level to support innovative and creative curriculum design and content are clear.

d) Support for Schools Causing Concern (SCC) /schools at risk of causing concern

Across the region there are excellent examples of schools benefiting from leadership and curriculum support from highly accomplished leaders from neighbouring authorities – facilitated through the regional service. This has added value and complemented local authority led provision, for example, inclusion, ALN, Finance, HR. In some authorities there is compelling evidence that this practice has been beneficial and has brought about improved outcomes for pupils. The ability of the regional SCC team to work with the team of key secondary curriculum specialists and local authority challenge advisers has embedded new practices across some of our most challenging schools. It is the view of the authorities that wish to proceed with re-affirming our regional approach that this service should be maintained as a core service within the region. It should be needs-led and should be available at no additional cost to schools or their Local Authorities.

In addition to the core functions **a)-d)** noted above, there are other benefits (some planned, some derived) that have already accrued from joint regional working, and it would be beneficial for these to continue. Some of these include:

The regional leadership provided for moderation and standardisation of curriculum outcomes, the joint professional learning opportunities that exist for challenge advisers, contributions made to governor training and local authority scrutiny processes on matters relating to the agreed regional functions, the sharing of best practice and specialisms across the region, the development of the self-improving system through strengthened cluster and collaborative working, shared projects with universities and Welsh Government which add to regional knowledge for sharing across all schools (e.g. the Lyn Sharratt Project). These should continue to be developed under the existing governance

arrangements with delivery agreed in a shared regional business plan that can secure the timely drawing down of grants for the benefit of our schools.

Moving on and future arrangements

Our authorities are clearly in different places in terms of our school improvement journeys. However, we are all committed to either maintaining or securing high standards for all of our learners by working collaboratively across boundaries during this period of unprecedented change.

If there is to be a regional service, all future stakeholders in that regional school improvement service will need to be committed, engaged and positive regarding the value that such a collaboration can bring to all partner authorities. It is imperative that all partners share a vision and common goals for the region, and commit to behaviours that help achieve the best for our learners. Furthermore, there must be a clear duty on a regional service to enable all constituent local authorities to fully comply with their legislative obligations, such as Welsh Language Standards and the ambitions of Cymraeg 2050, through their WESPs.

Whilst the six authority model has the benefits of economies of scale and a wider talent pool, recent years have been challenging and we have not succeeded in building a regional service that can maximize the benefits to our learners, be a stable partnership for our school leaders, nor have we created an inspiring service in which to work.

If we are to secure the best support for school leaders and their staff, with resulting benefits for learners, it is now opportune to work to a footprint that can combine authorities that wish to commit to the same ambitions. If that is more possible by working in a partnership where authorities have similar socio-economic profiles as well as quite similar socio-linguistic and geographical patterns, we believe that we should set out to achieve that ambition.

We need to move on from debating processes, structures, budgets and accountabilities to work towards a common approach to educational infrastructure that can deliver excellence in teaching and learning. This would enable the region to maximise its resources to improve outcomes and experiences for learners.

Consequently, the undersigned authorities are expressing our joint commitment to securing a highly effective and collegiate new approach to regional working, underpinned by the functions and values outlined above.

Provisional Signatures for a reformed regional school improvement service to be instituted as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Cyngor Sir Ceredigion – Ceredigion County Council
Cyngor Sir Gaerfyrddin – Carmarthenshire County Council?
Cyngor Sir Penfro – Pembrokeshire County Council
Cyngor Sir Powys – Powys County Council