



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Dyddiad/ Date 25 February 2021
Rhif Ffôn/ Direct Line 01639 763309
Ebost/ Email leader@npt.gov.uk
Cyswllt/ Contact
Eich cyf / Your ref
Ein cyf/ Our ref RGJ.AP

Leaders – ERW Consortium

Dear Emlyn,

ERW Consortium – 2021/22 Provision of Services to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council ('The Council') withdrew from the consortium on 31st March 2020 having served notice of its intention to do so in March 2019. On 13th November 2020, the ERW Joint Committee approved proposed changes to the ERW Legal Agreement, allowing Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to purchase a limited number of services, namely the national leadership programmes, from the consortium during 2020/21.

We had understood that it was the ERW Joint Committee's intention to dissolve the consortium by 31st March 2021. However, we understand that the ERW Joint Committee agreed at its meeting on 9th February 2021 to continue with arrangements until at least the end of August 2021. Given that is the case, I am writing to confirm that Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council wishes to extend the current arrangements until 31st March 2022 (or on the dissolution of the existing consortium, if earlier) on the current terms and subject to a formal contractual agreement. I would be grateful if you could confirm that this is acceptable to the consortium.

Our priority during 2021/22 will be on supporting learners to catch up following a significant loss of face to face learning during the last academic year and also on supporting schools with their recovery. As we work through these issues we will clarify

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future collaborative arrangements from our perspective, in particular how these might shape/be shaped by the new collaboration vehicles being established by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021. It would be helpful if we could establish clear lines of communication with the consortium over the next period. In particular, we have been advised that there is a potentially significant financial liability attached to the dissolution of the current arrangements. Officers have already asked for details of these potential costs and associated legal and HR advice, however, to date we have not received the information requested. I therefore formally request such information together with the plans that the ERW Joint Committee has approved to minimise the risk of these costs materialising.

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council is committed to working in partnership where such arrangements improve outcomes for our learners. For the Council to deepen collaboration in the region beyond the limited number of services it is currently commissioning, significant assurances would need to be evidenced regarding the extent to which proposed arrangements are fit for purpose in the new Covid-19 context as well as providing assurances that Council's previous concerns about governance, value for money and effectiveness have been fully addressed. I am sure you will agree that these are not trivial issues to be dealt with at pace but to be worked through in a measured way and on the basis of equal partnership.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Rob Jones', with a horizontal line extending to the right and a small arrowhead at the end.

Councillor Rob Jones
Leader of Neath Port Talbot Council

Cc

Leaders and chief executives of authorities within the ERW consortium