



PARTNERIAETH



GWEITHIO MEWN PARTNERIAETH I SICRHAU RHAGORIAETH I BAWB
PARTNERSHIP WORKING TO ACHIEVE EXCELLENCE FOR ALL

To:
Cllr Glynog Davies
Chair of Partneriath Joint Committee

Please ask for: **Scrutiny**
Scrutiny Office Line: **01792 637732**
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Date: **02/08/2024**

Dear Councillor Davies

Partneriath Scrutiny Councillor Group – 24 June 2024

The Scrutiny Councillor Group would like to thank you, officers and school staff for attending our meeting, for presenting the information we requested and answering our questions. I am writing to you to reflect on our views from the meeting.

Partneriaeth Priorities

We agreed as part of our work programme to look at the performance of each of the Partneriaeth priorities, we therefore welcomed the update report on Priority Four: Provide career pathways for leaders, practitioners and support staff at all levels of the system.

The Partneriaeth Strategic Lead for Leadership, Rob Phillips, outlined the purpose of Priority 4. We heard about the aim of the priority and it how provides development opportunities for teaching assistants, newly qualified teachers, middle leaders, senior leaders and aspiring leaders.

We asked whether there was a pathway for teaching assistants (TAs) to become qualified teachers. It was understood that they cannot do a PGCE without a degree. So, we were interested to explore how those TAs who aspire to be teachers can achieve their goal. We heard that the financial situation that local authorities and schools face at the moment does not help this position. The Higher-Level Teaching Assistant qualifications do count as an accreditation towards a degree.

We agreed that it was an excellent and varied programme of training and development and we asked whether the majority of training offered was held in the school day or in addition to it. We were also interested to explore whether there is an issue with providing cover for teachers when they wish to attend. We were told that training is predominately within the school day. With regard to cover, we heard that it can be bit of a mixture across schools.

We asked if there had been any evidence of people finding that they are not able to progress their career because they have not been able to get on courses due to there being a cover issue for example. We were told that there had not been any specific research which has been able to define any trends in that way, although they do hear of isolated incidents where people have said that there was so much happening in

their school that they could not do the programme at a particular time. They sometimes come and join the programme at a later stage.

We were pleased to hear from Mr Stonham from Ysgol Gynradd Tycroes about his experience of the aspiring leaders programme. Some of what he told us included that these programmes have been fundamental in developing him as a leader and he was grateful for the opportunity to have attended them. He told us that the three courses he had attended had inspirational leaders. Hearing stories of real-life leadership, their successes as well as their experiences was really refreshing because it made him realise that you do not have to be perfect as a leader to be a successful leader. He said that he has collected various gems of knowledge over the courses which have helped him significantly in his leadership roles, whether that be through the implementation of different projects, team building or just simple examples like self, well-being and motivation.

You told us that it was important that there is strong leadership in schools across the region and that you appreciate this programme of work and would encourage practitioners to attend where they can.

We thanked Mr Phillips and Mr Stonham for the update. We have found the work being completed in this area to be both excellent and inspiring.

Chair of the Joint Committee and Directors from each Council

We invited you and the three directors from across the Partneriaeth region to feedback your views to help provide assurance that Partneriaeth is operating according to the Legal Agreement, its Business Plan and that its timetable is being managed effectively. We do this annually as per the Legal agreement, which states that Directors of Education of each of the Councils shall all attend together and that the Chair of Joint Committee shall attend, at least once per annum.

Thank you for attending our meeting and providing us with feedback. You told us that it is important to realise that Partneriaeth is still relatively new and is on a journey. You said you were happy and confident that what is happening ties in with the Business Plan, the Legal Agreement and that it is strengthening the links between the three councils.

We heard from the Director of Education in Carmarthenshire who said there is a wide range of courses being delivered, but the challenge in schools can be the ability to supply cover to release practitioners to attend. Also, there are regular discussions with directors to make sure Partneriaeth is adding value and helping individual local authorities to meet their objectives. Good work is being completed in relation to research, it is important to share that good practice. He said he is positive about where money is being spent in Partneriaeth and that it's processes are transparent.

The Director of Education in Swansea said she echoed what the director in Carmarthenshire said and would also outline some of the general improvement areas which included: the use of Partneriaeth brand not to be used unnecessarily by Human Resources, less theory in development programme to enable teachers to do practical things in the classroom which are of use and value to teachers. She highlighted that the developing of future high-quality leaders must continue as it is vital in supporting our schools in future. Also, that School Improvement Officers in

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local authorities have also been key to improving teaching and learning in our schools.

We were interested to explore the difference in how Partneriaeth is working in comparison to the previous partnership ERW. We heard that:

- Partneriaeth is a much more collaborative process, where the organisation is listening to stakeholders, is open, transparent and, importantly, giving a purposeful response to issues raised.
- The size of the organisation is now much smaller which makes it much easier to manage. It is adapting and changing to meet local need. There is informal and formal dialogue with Directors each month.
- There is a real focus on pupils skill progression which has been valued by teachers and leaders. Having expertise within Partneriaeth i.e. a focus on literacy, numeracy, science etc. has really given confidence across the system and that is really valued. Underpinning the curriculum is good teaching and the 'teach for purpose' programme has been successful in getting back to basics and really making sure that good pedagogy is leading to good pupil progress. The support for secondary schools has further strengthened and has become even more tailored and bespoke.

We asked whether we are taking all teachers with us on this journey to introduce the new curriculum. You told us it is a very interesting curriculum, but in the past teachers were given a plan to follow and that is very different now, but you have been getting excellent reports about progress. We were also told the close working relationships between officers and Partneriaeth officers has developed over the past couple of years and this has resulted in the provision being far more bespoke and more relevant to individual schools. Also, there has been a shift from high level support to a more tailored approach to meet the needs of individual schools and teachers.

Updated Risk Profile

The Partneriaeth Lead Officer gave an overview of the risk profile of the region. He said the heat map indicates the following risks as scoring Medium Probability and High Impact risk:

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

We heard that the Risk Profile is based on the 2023/24 business plan. It has been updated to reflect the recommendations from the audit last year. All the Welsh Government funding has been received for this financial year, including any expected variations. This means that the financial risk regarding the timeliness of Welsh Government funding has been reduced.

We were told that it will look slightly different moving forward with funding being via a local authority grant coming to them via the partner local authorities rather than a regional grant. So, this risk indicates once again that there is a medium probability and high impact of lack of clarity regarding the functions of Partneriaeth. We agreed it is therefore really important that Partneriaeth is clear on its core delivery particularly in the light of the restructuring so it has good alignment of messaging with its partner local authorities.

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The Councillor Group highlighted that the restructuring creates uncertainty for the staff at Partneriaeth and that this is therefore a risk because some of those staff could very well leave for more secure employment. The Lead Director said that they are mitigating this risk by being very open with staff about this change and the timetable moving forward. All staff are now aware of where they will be in September.

Update on Curriculum for Wales

We thanked the Partneriaeth Lead Officer who gave us an update on the regional support and delivery for Curriculum for Wales during 2023-24. It was useful to hear details about the challenges facing schools with regard to curriculum support, progression and assessment.

We would welcome your thoughts on the contents of this letter, but on this occasion do not require a formal written response.

Yours sincerely,

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