

Report on future collaboration within Partneriaeth

Basis for transfer from legal agreement to new collaboration agreement

1. Background

1.1 This proposal seeks to secure implementation of proportionate Partneriaeth governance to ensure that key commissioned workstreams (using pooled resources) are fulfilled to support local government education services in Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Swansea.

1.2 The current Partneriaeth workforce already approved by Joint Committee reflects the change management undertaken between April and August 2024 where staffing and business planning costs were reduced.

1.3 The current Partneriaeth legal agreement no longer aligns with national expectations to develop new collaborative arrangements between schools and between local authorities.

1.4 The July 2024 Joint Committee approved a new business plan for Partneriaeth, and this forms the basis of future collaboration.

1.5 The local authority education grant (LAEG) flows directly to each Council and an agreement to pool grant resources for the future commissioning of Partneriaeth work has been established.

1.6 This proposal seeks to establish a new collaboration agreement to replace the Legal Agreement, that is contingent upon approval within each Council.

1.7 The case for change is made on the basis that:

- each local authority has existing internal audit arrangements for considering grant expenditure;
- the resources required to support a regional service needs to reduce;
- informal joint scrutiny is no longer required because the school improvement function remains within each Council;
- a Joint Committee is no longer required as the Strategic Group is sufficient and proportionate for the revised workforce; and
- the staffing structure is sufficient to maintain key work streams commissioned by the local authorities.

2. A new collaboration agreement proposal

2.1 The collaboration agreement to replace the current legal agreement on 1 April 2025 is the preferred option based on strength of legal case, proportionate governance and cost efficiency. Other options have been considered but given the scale of future collaboration they are either disproportionate, costly or both.

2.2 The principles for collaborative delivery within the collaboration agreement are:

- (a) collaborate and co-operate. Establish and adhere to the new governance structure set out in a new collaboration agreement to ensure that activities are delivered and actions taken as required;
- (b) be accountable. Take on, manage and account to each other for performance of the respective roles and responsibilities set out in the collaboration agreement;
- (c) be open. Communicate openly about major concerns, issues or opportunities relating to Partneriaeth;
- (d) adopt a positive outlook. Behave in a positive, proactive manner; and
- (e) adhere to statutory requirements and best practice. Comply with applicable laws and standards.

2.3 The core Strategic Group (SG), comprising of Directors, Lead Officer of Partneriaeth and Lead Operational Manager of Partneriaeth will provide service governance of Partneriaeth in future.

2.4 Any matters that cannot be resolved by consensus within the Strategic Group will be referred to Chief Executives within each Council for resolution, including by mediation, if required.

2.5 The proposal assumes that normal engagement with stakeholders and lead school improvement officers continues as part of business as usual.

2.6 The proposed new collaboration agreement will no longer include joint scrutiny and Joint Committee as part of governance arrangements.

2.7 The new collaboration agreement would mean that the only services required to maintain a regional collaboration would be human resources (HR), finance and information technology (IT) support. New costings would be established to meet current workforce needs only.

2.8 Lease holding for Y Llwyfan would be the specific responsibility of Carmarthenshire County Council.

2.9 Employment of the Partneriaeth workforce would be the responsibility of Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC) with HR support to remain unchanged.

2.10 Invoices to be raised via PCC. Finance support provided to Partneriaeth via reduced SLA charged by PCC.

2.11 Internal audit of LAEG grant to be undertaken in each Council.

2.12 The Strategic Group will review SLAs and core contributions on an annual basis, including lease of premises.

2.13 New running costs would be paid via each Council's revised core contribution.

2.14 Redundancies linked to reduced running costs would be paid from the current Partneriaeth reserve.

2.15 The current staff structure and business plan, approved by Joint Committee, will form the basis for future collaboration. Any variation would need to be agreed within the Strategic Group.

2.16 The revised running costs detailed below will form the basis of future collaboration and will need to be agreed at Joint Committee.

Proposed SLA costs for 2025-2026 (all costs subject to agreement by Joint Committee):			Carms	Pembs	Swansea
1.	Finance (Pembrokeshire)	£60,000	£21,600	£13,200	£25,200
2.	Human Resources (Pembrokeshire)	£7,000	£2,520	£1,540	£2,940
3.	IT (Pembrokeshire)	£18,000	£6,480	£3,960	£7,560
Total Budgeted SLAs		£85,000	£30,600	£18,700	£35,700

LA Contributions 2025-2026

Carmarthenshire	Pembrokeshire	Swansea	Total
£40,680	£24,860	£47,460	£113,000

2.17 The percentage split for contribution of grants and core funding would remain unchanged in terms of formula and are detailed below

Individual Local Authority contributions are calculated based on PLASC figures (80%) and the number of schools within each Local Authority area (20%):

Carmarthenshire	36%
Pembrokeshire	22%
Swansea	42%

2.18 A Lead Director be appointed to Chair the Strategic Group. Rotation of Lead Director every two years.

2.19 A Lead Chief Executive Officer be appointed to convene a resolution meeting on an ad hoc basis should the Strategic Group fail to reach consensus. Rotation of Lead Chief Executive every two years.

Summary

The basis of a new collaboration agreement is noted above. Once finalised a new collaboration agreement will be taken to each Council for approval by the end of the calendar year.