



ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group

Date: 1 March 2021

Time: 2.00pm

(The meeting will be held remotely via Teams)

Agenda

1	Apologies for Absence
2	Declarations of Interest
3	Letters and notes arising from the ERW Councillor Group on 26 November 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Response Letter from ERW Joint Committee Chair b) ERW Councillor Group letter to the ERW Joint Committee c) Notes of the meeting
Please refer to ERW Joint Committee Papers 9 February 2021	
4	Updates from Lead Director – Gareth Morgans <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Lessons Learnt Review (b) Changes to ERW and future plans
5	Updates from Chief Officers of ERW – Ian Altman/Greg Morgan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Ongoing effects of Covid 19 on work of ERW (b) Estyn Review (c) Any other items on 9 February ERW Joint Committee
6	Discuss points for the letter to Chair of ERW Joint Committee arising from this meeting

If you require simultaneous Welsh to English translation please dial in on your telephone 0330 777 2413 at the beginning of the meeting. It will ask for your access code which you will find in the meeting request/email that this agenda is attached to.

Eich cyf / Your ref:

Gofynner am / Please ask for:

Fy nghyf / My ref:

Llinell Uniongyrchol / Direct Line:

01267 224050

Dyddiad / Date:

E-bost / E-mail:

15th February 2021

EDole@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Councillor Darren Price,
Chair of ERW Scrutiny Committee
(by email only)

Dear Cllr. Price/ERW Scrutiny Committee,

Thank you for your letter dated 17th December 2020.

I'm pleased that Gareth Morgans, Lead Director and Greg Morgan and Ian Altman, ERW's Chief Officers were able to attend your November meeting and respond to your questions.

It is clear that ERW has continued to make progress and ESTYN's recent report, **Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19** highlights the effective practice e.g. ***Cameo: Supporting science teaching***

ERW subject teams shared clear and helpful guidance which reassured and supported science teachers in the region. For example, the ERW science team gave examples of online sites that included video demonstrations of experiments, and useful and engaging resources that teachers could use for distance learning.

Officers in ERW provided a series of webinars for primary, secondary and special schools and PRUs that give an overview of the tools available through Hwb to support blended and distance learning, complementing their earlier work...

...ERW commissioned Professor Robin Banerjee to deliver professional learning to develop staff understanding of self-efficacy and connection as key to supporting wellbeing.

It would be appropriate for the Scrutiny Committee to consider this report and the Estyn Letter which outlines ERW's specific response.

In respect to ERW's future, discussions are on-going, and we will take on board your comments in regard to commissioned services being viable and cost effective for the Consortium.

The proposal on the table is that a future partnership will be based on the City Deal footprint with Powys and Ceredigion developing their own models to deliver Welsh Government's expectations. We are well aware of the need to protect and ensure that the current staff complement are looked after and safeguarded and that any new model which involves delivering for others is at no detriment to the current partners- ultimately this approach could be an income generation one.

Currently Directors are finalising the required core functions of a new partnership which will dictate the type of staffing structure require to deliver those functions. It is clear that servicing 4 Local Authorities will have an impact on the size of the core team.

We will aim to get as much funding directly to schools, if appropriate, in order that they can develop solutions locally or procure support from other schools or ERW. Unfortunately, not all schools are mature enough yet to solve their own issues and will need a central resource to support their improvement journey.

However, it is clear that we will need to retain sufficient funding centrally to support the core team and deliver the core functions as agreed.

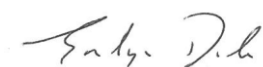
The Lessons Learnt activity was proposed by Internal Audit as part of the ERW CONSORTIUM ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2019-20-

Lessons Learned Review- Consideration should be given to undertaking a Lessons Learned review to establish the failings of ERW to ensure sustainability of the future consortia.

This has not progressed as a discrete piece of work however discussions between Leaders, Chief Executives and Directors of education have articulated the challenges with the current model and which will be addressed as we develop our new approach.

I would be happy for officers to attend a future meeting to share progress and test some of the ideas.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Emlyn Dole
ERW Joint Committee Chair



To:
Cllr. Emlyn Dole
Chair of the ERW Joint Committee

Please ask for: **Scrutiny**
Scrutiny Office Line: **01792 637256**
e-mail: scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk
Date: **17 December 2020**

Dear Councillor Dole

ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group – 26 November 2020

The Scrutiny Councillor Group would like to thank Gareth Morgans, Ian Altman and Greg Morgan for attending our meeting, for presenting the information we requested and answering our questions. I am writing to you to reflect on the views from that meeting.

We were pleased to hear about the positive support ERW has provided the region over recent months, particularly in terms of online as well as blended learning and the sharing of good practice. It was pleasing to note that take-up of online training resources had been well-received by school leaders and teachers and we felt that this form of support should be taken forward and developed further in any new regional model.

We discussed the potential future model/s of ERW, including the concept of commissioning activities. We feel that those Local Authorities that will make up the core of any future joint agreement should not necessarily be left out of pocket in terms of setting up of central and ongoing core costs when potentially providing commissioning services to other Local Authorities. It was felt that any local authority commissioning services from a future regional consortia should pay a fair amount for the services, which should contribute towards meeting the core costs of any new regional body.

We would like to see some clarity concerning what substantial changes to any future Joint Committee or framework, one based on the City Deal footprint for example, would have on the core ERW team and core ERW budgets. We would also like to understand whether it will deliver the sort of saving that some Local Authorities like Neath Port Talbot and Ceredigion have asked for. We recognise that 90% of the current ERW funding does go directly to schools but would like to know how any future consortium would increase that. Failure to increase the percentage and level of direct funding to schools would surely fail to satisfy 'value for money' claims which have been put

forward previously. We would be interested in understanding how moving from a 6 member consortium, to possibly a smaller consortium can deliver that.

We would like to see the evidence base for any new proposals so we can understand the key motivation, with a clear focus on school improvement. We were told that a lessons learnt piece of work is currently underway, which will outline the challenges that have faced the ERW consortium. We would welcome sight of this once it is available.

Given that this agenda is fast moving and uncertain, the Group agreed that we may call an additional meeting over the coming months, in order to contribute to the discussions around the development of any new model. Early receipt of the lessons learnt review will therefore be pivotal, and appreciated.

We look forward to your reply giving your thoughts on the contents of our letter.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Darren Price
Chair of the ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group & Carmarthenshire Education and Children Scrutiny Committee
daprice@carmarthenshire.gov.uk



ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group Notes – 26 November 2020

In attendance:

Cllr Darren Price, Carmarthenshire (Chair)
 Cllr Paul Rapi, Pembrokeshire
 Cllr Lyndon Jones, Swansea
 Cllr Peter Black, Swansea
 Cllr Endaf Edwards, Ceredigion
 Cllr Wyn Thomas, Ceredigion

Michelle Roberts (Scrutiny Officer supporting the meeting, Swansea)
 Lisa Evans (Scrutiny Officer, Ceredigion)
 Michelle Evans Thomas (Scrutiny Officer, Carmarthenshire)
 Lydia Evans (Scrutiny Officer, Pembrokeshire)

Invited to attend:

Gareth Morgans, Lead Chief Executive
 Greg Morgan, Interim Managing Director ERW
 Ian Altman, Interim Managing Director ERW

Apologies received:

Angela Davies (Powys), Cllr John Davies (Pembrokeshire), Cllr Sandra Davies (Powys),
 Cllr Edward Thomas (Carmarthenshire)

Item	
1.	Declarations of Interest None
2.	Notes of, Letter to and response from the Chair of the ERW Joint Committee arising from the ERW Councillor Group on 27 January 2020. Letter and notes accepted.
3.	Implications on and impact of Covid-19 on ERW Ian Altman/Greg Morgan (Interim Managing Directors of ERW) and Greg Morgan (Lead Chief Executive for ERW) attended the meeting and outlined the key issues, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current organisational structure for ERW • The ERW Activity Report during lockdown • The ERW Activity Report Autumn 2020 onwards • ERW Professional Learning Offer 2020/21 • ERW Business Plan 2020/21 including Strategy Groups and monitoring/evaluation/review. • The ERW Budget • Communication with others and tools used

4.	<p>Changes to ERW and Future Plans</p> <p>Greg Morgan (Lead Chief Executive for ERW) attended the meeting and outlined the current position with regard to changes to ERW and future plans.</p> <p>The following was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the July ERW Joint Committee (JC) meeting the appointment of the new Chair of the Joint Committee Cllr Emlyn Dole from Carmarthenshire and Vice-Chair is Cllr Rosemarie Harris from Powys were endorsed. Gareth Morgans was also confirmed as Lead Director in that meeting. • The current position is that Neath Port Talbot left the Consortium at the end of March 2020 and Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Swansea have issued Notices of Withdrawal stating that they intend leaving ERW at the end of March 2021. Powys and Pembrokeshire have not issued notices. • In the Joint Committee meeting in July there was a commitment from Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Swansea and in principle from Neath Port Talbot (NPT) to develop a new partnership based on the Swansea Bay City Region footprint. Ceredigion and Powys advised that they would be developing alternative approaches to providing school improvement support. • Since NPT have left the Consortium each partner authority's contribution has had to increase to address the shortfall. There were challenges around the allocation of funding to ERW by the Welsh Government due to Neath Port Talbot's withdrawal. This was not resolved until the end of August. • In July the Joint Committee discussed a request from Neath Port Talbot that ERW continue to deliver some key national programmes for their schools. These included a range of leadership, professional development and curriculum support programmes. • The JC agreed to this request, but on the grounds that there would be no financial detriment to ERW. To enable this to happen and to satisfy Welsh Government requirements a Deed of Variation to ERW's Legal Agreement would be required. • Due to pressures on Lead Officers due to the pandemic and supporting schools it was agreed that an additional resource would be required to support the proposed changes to ERW. To that end, Mr Ceri Davies, Pembrokeshire's Head of HR has been seconded into ERW to support officers with delivering on the Joint Committee's decisions. Ceri is now in post and providing valuable advice and guidance. • The Joint Committee's most recent meeting was on the 13th of November. At that meeting some key decisions were made- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. ERW's Business Plan and associated monitoring processes were approved. b. The proposed changes to the Legal Agreement to enable ERW to provide services to NPT Schools was agreed and it was decided that a separate agreement be developed between ERW and NPT around this. c. The JC agreed to make a recommendation to each partner authority to in accordance with Variation clause (Clause 25) of the ERW Joint Legal Agreement that changes are made to the Legal Agreement, to:
----	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Facilitate dissolution/termination of the ERW Consortium;</i> ○ <i>Address any subsequent liabilities/indemnities of all present (and former) Authorities; and</i> ○ <i>Facilitate a reduced notice of withdrawal period of three months;</i> <p>This would clarify issues around drawing the current partnership to a close and reduce the notice period to 3 months to enable those who have not issues notice to do so if they wished so that an end of March 2021 termination could be implemented if that was the decision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every partner has been contacted and it is understand that they are all taking reports to their Cabinets/Executive Boards to progress these actions. The Heads of Legal from each Local Authority are developing the variations to the Legal agreements. In the meeting the issue of the date of bringing the current consortium to an end was discussed and is proposed that August 31st, 2021 rather than the end of March would be far more manageable due to the workload on staff, the associated HT processes we would need to follow and it would coincide with the end of a school year. • There were other reports in regard to budget and audit and one recommendation from the Head of Internal Audit as part of the Annual Governance Statement was to implement a Lessons Learned Review to establish the failings of ERW and incorporate any recommendations into the future consortia arrangements to ensure sustainability of the future consortia. Hopefully this can be discussed in December 2020 and implemented prior to setting up a new partnership. • The ERW Risk register has been updated and a couple of new risks identified namely one around the 2021 qualifications aspect and responding to the impact of Covid. Other risks have been reviewed and the scoring reduced due to mitigation e.g. communication with schools, clarity on functions and complying with grant regulations.
5.	<p>Discussion on what should be contained in the letter to the Chair of the ERW Joint Committee</p> <p>The following issues will be included in the letter from the ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group to the Chair of the Joint Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pleased to hear about the positive support ERW has provided the region over recent months, particularly in terms of online as well as blended learning and the sharing of good practice. 2. Potential future model/s of ERW, including the concept of commissioning activities. It was felt that those Local Authorities that will make up the core of any future joint agreement should not necessarily be left out of pocket in terms of setting up of central and ongoing core costs when potentially providing commissioning services to other Local Authorities. It was felt that any local authority commissioning services from a future regional consortia should pay a fair amount for the services, which should contribute towards meeting the core costs of any new regional body. 3. The Scrutiny Group would like to see some clarity concerning what substantial changes to any future Joint Committee or framework, one based on the City Deal footprint for example, would have on the core ERW team and core ERW budgets. The Group would also like to understand whether it will deliver the sort of saving that some Local Authorities like Neath Port Talbot and Ceredigion have asked for. They recognise that

	<p>90% of the current ERW funding does go directly to schools but would like to know how any future consortium would increase that. Failure to increase the percentage and level of direct funding to schools would surely fail to satisfy 'value for money' claims which have been put forward previously. They would be interested in understanding how moving from a 6 member consortium, to possibly a smaller consortium can deliver that.</p> <p>4. The Councillor Group would like to see the evidence base for any new proposals so they can understand the key motivation, with a clear focus on school improvement. They heard that a lessons learnt piece of work is currently underway, which will outline the challenges that have faced the ERW consortium. They would welcome sight of this once it is available.</p> <p>5. Given that this agenda is fast moving and uncertain, the Group agreed that they may call an additional meeting over the coming months, in order to contribute to the discussions around the development of any new model. They said early receipt of this would be pivotal and appreciated.</p>
6.	<p>Date and items for the next meeting</p> <p>The next meeting of the ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group is to be arranged when the Lessons Learnt document is available for the Group review.</p>

ERW Scrutiny Councillor Membership List (2020/2021)

Local Authority	Councillor/member representatives	Member email addresses	Scrutiny Officers and other support
Swansea	Cllr Lyndon Jones (Convener Education Performance Scrutiny Panel) Cllr Peter Black (Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee)	Cllr.lyndon.jones@swansea.gov.uk cllr.peter.black@swansea.gov.uk	Michelle Roberts Michelle.roberts@swansea.gov.uk Brij Madahar Brij.madahar@swansea.gov.uk
Ceredigion	Cllr Wyn Thomas Cllr Endaf Edwards Chair and Vice Chair of Learning Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee	wyn.thomas@ceredigion.gov.uk endaf.edwards@ceredigion.gov.uk	Lisa Evans Lisa.Evans3@ceredigion.gov.uk
Powys	Angela Davies (Vice Chair Education Scrutiny Group and Statutory Co-optee) Cllr Sandra Davies (Member of Education Scrutiny Group)	angela.davies@powys.gov.uk cllr.sandra.davies@powys.gov.uk	Wyn Richards Wyn.richards@powys.gov.uk
Pembrokeshire	Cllr John Davies (Chair of Schools and Learning Committee) Cllr Paul Rapi (Vice Chair of Schools and Learning Committee)	Cllr.johnt.davies@pembrokeshire.gov.uk Cllr.paul.rapi@pembrokeshire.gov.uk	Lydia Evans Lydia.evans@pembrokeshire.gov.uk
Carmarthenshire	Cllr Darren Price (Chair of Education and Children Scrutiny Committee) Cllr Edward Thomas (Vice Chair of Education and Children Scrutiny Committee)	DaPrice@carmarthenshire.gov.uk EGThomas@carmarthenshire.gov.uk	Michelle Evans Thomas MEEvansThomas@carmarthenshire.gov.uk
Other	ERW	Ian Altman – Chief Officer Greg Morgan – Chief Officer Ruth Lee - Business Support Manager Lead Director – Gareth Morgans	ian.altman@erw.org.uk greg.morgan@erw.org.uk ruth.lee@erw.org.uk edgmorgans@carmarthenshire.gov.uk