



City and County of Swansea

Minutes of the **Scrutiny Inquiry Panel – Regional Working**

Councillor Meeting Room 235, Guildahall

Friday, 16 February 2018 at 10.30 am

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)
C A Holley

Councillor(s)
B J Rowlands

Councillor(s)
T M White

Co-opted Member(s)

Co-opted Member(s)

Co-opted Member(s)

Other Attendees

Sara Harvey

Western Bay Regional Programme Director

Alan Edwards

ERW Head of Teaching and Learning

Michelle Roberts

Scrutiny Officer

Apologies for Absence

Councillor(s): M H Jones and M Sykes

1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

None

2 Roundtable meeting with People Directorate related Partners

The Panel invited representatives from some of the Councils external partner organisations that fall within the People Directorate area to gain their views on issues relating to regional working and its partnership. The Panel spoke to Sara Harvey (Programme Director at Western Bay) and Allan Edwards (Head of Teaching and Learning at ERW). The following points have been noted:

Benefits of regional working for Swansea

Western Bay

- This is really why we do this...to improve services by working together.
- There have been some financial benefits with economies of scale, eradicating duplication of process and effort.
- Real improvements have been in quality. Use a regional quality frame work, which is a set of quality standards used by all across Western Bay care provider.
- Developed a Citizens Panel
- Encouraging the sharing of best practice across the region

- Reviewed processes and assessed services across the region providing challenge for one another
- Local Area Co-ordinators piloted in Swansea and are now being introduced in some other parts of the region.
- Brokerage process, larger organisations get better deals, can speak to providers on block.

ERW

- Improved influence due to scale at a national level. Four regions can have stronger influence when national policy is being developed.
- Resources can be targeted based upon need and being able to call on knowledge and expertise from across the region.
- Some efficiencies but not as much as the other regions just yet.
- Improved quality and consistency for example: challenge advisors
- Able to work together to develop resources and materials for schools that can be used across the region.

Questions from Panel

- How are care homes assessed and improvement assessed? Quality framework provides care providers with bronze, silver or gold based upon their quality and also the services they provide.
- How do you meet local priorities when situations very different in authorities like for example rural and urban influences? Each LAs Education Improvement Team tailor the services to the locally needs. The ERW Business Plan also has an Annex for each local authority to outline their priorities. There are some gains especially in schools supporting each other across the regions where there are identified common issues.
- Are the same issues flagged up across all six local authorities? There are many concerns that are similar across all and also differences.

Barriers to Regional Working

The barriers to greater integration for Western Bay include:

- Trade Unions important, there have been many different Terms and Conditions across the organisations integrated. This is not done yet with most staff in the partnership working under their original contracts which can cause resentment especially when pay and conditions for one are preferable to another.
- Differing ICT systems that cannot or difficult to share information across. New system being introduced which will improve and give capacity to look at data together. Health not yet on board. It will make a real difference when needing to share information.
- There can be concerns by some partners that the system is not serving them as well as others. Each LA serves and answers to its own citizens. This is why it is important that that each LA signs up to a joint plan identifying the regions priorities.
- The funding environment at the moment can make people far more introspective than outward looking but changes and relooking at how we run services can be positive and provide benefits in working regionally.
- Getting all six local authorities to use common working practices.
- Identifying common risks can be a challenge.

- There has been some issues around lines of accountability with staff not sure if they are working for the LA, the region or both (ERW)
- Governance structure is important especially in establishing clarity for all those involved.
- A common language across partners as things can mean different things in different organisations.

Scrutiny and Governance Arrangements

ERW

- Regional ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group is in place (it is an informal panel not formal committee) which scrutinises the work of the ERW Joint Committee. It is made up of the relevant Chairs and Vice Chairs of Education related scrutiny bodies across the region. The work of the scrutiny panel and the recommendations arising from it are sent via a letter from the Chair of the Group to the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee considers it at their meeting and then responds in writing back to the Group. It is proving to be successful and this model is being taken up by some of the other regions.
- ERW is also challenged through a number of other sources like for example Estyn and Audit (4 times a year)
- The ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group meets twice a year, prior to Joint Committee. The panel asked if twice yearly was enough and they heard that work currently but this will need to be continually monitored.

Western Bay

- Do not have a joint scrutiny arrangement at present, Neath Port Talbot Council did not wish to proceed with that at present although Bridgend and Swansea were keen. All four partners have to be signed up.
- Each individual local authority do scrutinise the aspects relating to them but the partnership as a whole not scrutinised.
- Do feel that when members can scrutinise the programme it provides good governance and also increases its visibility
- Currently each decision that needs to be made has to go through each council's cabinet and the health board before it can be taken forward. If there was a Joint Committee Arrangement this would make decision-making much quicker.
- Should the governance structure be revisited by the partnership, forming a Joint Committee and associated scrutiny arrangement...possible recommendation?

Key principles for effective joint working

- Strong leadership both officer and political
- Common systems across partnership (for example quality framework)
- Good communication at every level and with stakeholders
- Good, clear, visible governance and collective decision making
- Good relationship development and build trust in relationships
- Built in resilience (not easy requires particular skills)
- Champions, sponsors and leads in each partner organisation who can see bigger picture and maintain interest in the partnership

Clarity from Welsh Government and Mandation

- Mandation often needed so you can be really clear what the expectations are, we then also get clear statutory guidance. Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2012 a good example. Mandation brings about different challenges and not everyone will like it.
- Mandation does give more clarity of roles, for example partners not wanting to take part in certain aspects will have to reconsider.

Working with third and private sector

- Not working fully with third sector yet, will be looking to do this further where it is appropriate (ERW)
- Work with private sector around education and developing skills industry locally need (through Learning Partnership)

Is protectionism frustrating regional collaboration?

- Does and can have quite significant effects at some levels.
- Unnecessary as it should be about the learner/citizen.
- Panel asked how this could be addressed/improved? They heard by:
 - strong political and senior management leadership and direction (senior management play a pivotal role in shaping the ethos of the partnership)
 - Celebrate people on the ground and the work they are doing
 - Communication from top to bottom and particular in the block areas like middle management.
 - A common purpose and shared vision
- Transforming process and asking people to do things differently can be heard. Change is not easy and need careful positive management.

3 Inquiry Project Plan

The Panel will next meet on the 15 March where they will discuss their findings and start to conclude this piece of work.

The meeting ended at 11.30 am

Convener