

Annwyl John

Thank you for your letter dated 24th of June from the ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group. I am pleased that Geraint and Osian were able to report favourably (and accurately) on the growing sense of collaboration and purpose that we now have, and that there will be a continued drive to develop ERW to support schools with delivery of their significant challenges.

Since the meeting of your group, there have been further appointments into the leadership of ERW. Andi Morgan, Head of Education Services at Carmarthenshire Council will take over from Geraint for the coming months to consolidate the reforms that have been put in place. Additionally, some excellent school leaders from across the region have agreed to join ERW on a one-term in the first instance arrangement, in order to embed the key functions of the new ERW – (supporting schools with the planning of the new curriculum, build up teacher and support staff expertise and develop leadership capacity across all schools). Those individuals are

Tracy Senchal
Karen Lawrence
Anna Bolt
Jonathan Roberts

In response to some of the other key points that you raise, it would be good to draw your attention to the following points.

1. ERW Governance – during the challenging times that we have just been through, it was agreed that we would not tinker with the governance arrangements for ERW. These matters will now be addressed. You rightly point out to the 3,2,1 approach which will give headteachers a significant voice in the future direction of ERW. As a clearly defined 'support body' it is only appropriate that they have a stronger voice in shaping the support that their schools receive. Beyond that, it is our intention to review the approach to governance. Discussions have already taken place regarding how Executive Members for education can take a more active role, and the fleetness of foot needed between various accountability tiers. Kate Evan Hughes (Director, Pembrokeshire) and Gareth Morgans (Director, Carmarthenshire) will engage with Elin Prysor (Ceredigion lead on ERW's legal services) to bring forward proposals. They will need to reflect the key areas of clarity, appropriate delegations, transparency, flexibility and fleetness of foot. We will ask them to bring forward some proposals for the autumn. We will also work with Andi Morgan as soon as he is in post to ensure that there is clarity in terms of a scheme of delegation. Our recent audit report on the year's work makes clear that governance has improved, but there are still issues outstanding that need to be resolved.



2. You are not alone in raising concerns around the effectiveness of and the perceptions around categorisation. It had been expected that a new national approach to evaluation and accountability would by now be put in place. That has not been the case, and it is now expected that we continue with categorisation of schools into 2020. Our representatives on national groups have made their feelings known, and the frustration that is being caused by delays to the reform of the accountability model. However, we are committed to working with Welsh Government to help bring forward proposals that will better reflect our shared belief that a collaborative education system is what we need to underpin the scale of reform that is underway.
3. The matter of a void in leadership development has been a long-standing deficit in the Welsh education system. Over the last year, the 4 regions have created a team to work extensively with the National Academy for Education Leadership to build up a national portfolio of leadership development opportunities for teachers. Tom Fanning, a highly experienced headteacher from Ceredigion, has been working in this group as ERW's representative, and much progress has been made. There will be a suite of leadership development programmes available for teachers in ERW from September. This should grow annually, and I'm very pleased that our universities in Wales are now playing a far more active role in the development of leadership programmes.
4. The Joint Committee was very pleased to commend this year's business plan. As you say, it provides clarity and alignment, and can be built upon over the coming years. The allocation of funding for all streams and for all activities and schools is now entirely transparent, and all directors are able to access all spending that passes through ERW. Sharing the key parts of the business plan's spending plans can easily form part of the new interim MD's work with you as a scrutiny group, now that reporting systems have been generated for such transparency.
5. I apologize for the difficulty that occurred with your last correspondence. We conducted 3 Joint Committee meetings between February 8th and the end of May. Matters relating to the reform of ERW were progressing very quickly, and we should have responded to you at a point during that time. Osian and Geraint are already working on proposed dates for all meetings for next year, which will enable effective synchronicity between Joint Committee, Scrutiny, Executive Board, Headteacher Board, Trades Unions and others. We hope that this ensures that we do not have the disjoin that happened during recent months.

Yours Sincerely,

