



## ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group Notes – 1 March 2021

### In attendance:

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

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

### Invited to attend:

Gareth Morgans, Lead Director  
 Greg Morgan, Chief Officer ERW  
 Ian Altman, Chief Officer ERW

### Apologies received:

No Councillor apologies received.

Item	
1.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b> None
2.	<b>Notes of, Letter to and response from the Chair of the ERW Joint Committee arising from the ERW Councillor Group on 27 January 2020.</b> Letter and notes accepted but it was felt that the response from the Chair of the Joint Committee did not fully address the issues raised at the last meeting. These issues will now be addressed in the letter to the Chair of the Joint Committee again following this meeting.
3.	<b>Updates from Lead Director</b> Gareth Morgans (Lead Director for ERW) attended the meeting and outlined the current position with regard to changes to ERW and future plans.  The Lessons Learnt activity was a proposal by Internal Audit as part of the ERW Consortium Annual Governance Statement 2019/20: <i>Consideration should be given to undertaking a Lessons Learned review to establish the failings of ERW to ensure sustainability of the future consortia.</i> This has not progressed as a

discrete piece of work due to officer capacity and also additional costs 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. These include: ability to respond to local issues/priorities, geography/size of the region, governance of the consortium, clarity in regard to roles and responsibilities and communication. Some of these have been addressed e.g. Communication due to work of Greg/Ian and Welsh Government developing school improvement guidance which would address the roles and responsibilities issue.

### **Changes to ERW and future plans**

- In the recent ERW Joint Committee on the 9 February 2021 it was agreed to extend current consortium arrangements until the end of August 2021 to enable a new partnership to be developed. Several comments were made welcoming the extension of the implementation date to 31 August 2021 to minimise financial risks and provide stability during the pandemic. ERW therefore will continue with 4 partners- Swansea, Pembrokeshire, Powys and Carmarthenshire.
- In the Joint Committee Members were advised that Directors had agreed a draft mission statement including key principles, core aims and values for the new partnership model.
- The meeting was advised that Ceredigion County Council would not be joining the new model but was looking to commission services in the future.
- Carmarthenshire County Council and Swansea Council would temporarily rescind their notice to leave the Consortium to facilitate an extension of the new implementation date to 31 August 2021.
- Legal officers were developing a draft legal agreement for the future arrangements.
- The Lead Director has requested all LAs to confirm what services would be required at a local level, whether the LA intended to join the new Consortium and what commissioned services would be required if they did not wish to join the new Consortium.
- Neath Port Talbot have now written to Chair of the Joint Committee noting their intentions (On 13<sup>th</sup> November 2020, the ERW Joint Committee approved proposed changes to the ERW Legal Agreement, allowing Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to purchase a limited number of services, namely the national leadership programmes, from the consortium during 2020/21). They have said
  - Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council wishes to extend the current arrangements until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 (or on the dissolution of the existing consortium, if earlier) on the current terms and subject to a formal contractual agreement.
  - NPT priority during 2021/22 will be on supporting learners to catch up following a significant loss of face to face learning during the last academic year and also on supporting schools with their recovery. As we work through these issues, we will clarify future collaborative arrangements from our perspective, in particular how these might shape/be shaped by the new collaboration vehicles being established by the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021.
  - Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council is committed to working in partnership where such arrangements improve outcomes for our learners.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent legal advice was being sought from public procurement specialists in relation to commissioning and potential implications on statutory responsibilities for school improvements.</li> <li>• Three potential partners now having discussions in regard to a new partnership- Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Swansea.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Updates from Chief Officers of ERW – Ian Altman/Greg Morgan</b>  Ian Altman/Greg Morgan (Chief Officers ERW) attended the meeting and outlined the key issues using a presentation that was including in the Agenda pack, they covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ERW Activity Report Spring 2021</li> <li>• Estyn Thematic Report and ERW letter - “LA and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19”</li> <li>• ERW Professional Learning Offer 2020/21</li> <li>• Curriculum for Wales</li> <li>• Secondary Curriculum support</li> <li>• Online learning guidance</li> <li>• Equity and Wellbeing</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Digital skills</li> <li>• ERW Business Plan 2020/21 including Strategy Groups</li> </ul>
5.	<p><b>Discussion on what should be contained in the letter to the Chair of the ERW Joint Committee</b>  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"> <li>1. The letter did not fully answer our questions especially around clarity, we do recognise that it is a difficult time and we are at a crossroads. We do need to understand how it will work for those in and those out of ERW moving forward. Including <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How it will deliver VFM</li> <li>b. How will it add value to those in it</li> <li>c. Clarity on funding and the funding model including commissioning</li> <li>d. Confidence and political buy in in the new model</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. We were still not clear about where we go from here in the longer term, especially how the evidence base has been used because each LA in the consortium has come to a different conclusion and therefore a decision based on that same evidence. Can we see the summary of local authorities from both in and out of the new model want from the new model and also the areas that are proving to be problematic?</li> <li>3. We still had concerns around concept of LA’s commissioning activities. Why should LAs be part of consortium if they can just buy the services they need and not have to commit to and pay for the costs of the running the regional body.</li> </ol>

**6.**

**Date and items for the next meeting**

The next meeting of the ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group is to be arranged after the next ERW Joint Committee on the 4 June. Items for the next meeting will include:

- Update on progress establishing the new model and the winding down of ERW in current form
- How scrutiny will be carried out and fit into the new model.
- Update on items outlined in ERW Joint Committee on 4 June.