



PARTNERIAETH

To:
Cllr. Darren Price
Chair of Partneriath Joint Committee

Please ask for: **Scrutiny**
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Date: **10 July 2023**

Dear Councillor Price

Partneriath Scrutiny Councillor Group – 19 June 2023

The Scrutiny Councillor Group would like to thank you, Ian Altman Lead Officer, Gwennan Schiavone Strategic Adviser, Helen Morgan Rees Director of Education Swansea and Steven Richard Downes Director of Education in Pembrokeshire for attending our meeting, for presenting the information we requested and answering our questions. I am writing to you to reflect on our views from the meeting.

The Lead Director outlined the items on the agenda of the next Partneriath Joint Committee on the 23 June, which she explained will include the Partneriath draft budget for 2023-24 and draft medium term financial plan for 2023-24 to 2026-27, Partneriath performance 2022-23, the new Partneriath Strategic Plan/Business Plan 2023-24 and the latest risk register.

We firstly, invited you to give a view on how you believe things are progressing and to discuss and provide the Scrutiny Councillor Group with reassurance that Partneriath is operating according to the Legal Agreement, its Business Plan and its timetable is being managed effectively. You said, prior to the development of Partneriath the regional partnerships have been complex and inconsistent. Welsh Government has in the past asked for collaboration across local authorities which has resulted in a regional model. Although the Welsh Government has stated that the middle tier of support services for education will soon be reviewed nationally and Partneriath will be part of that.

You also said that the current Business Plan and its six priorities have been developed jointly with the three local authorities and are therefore based upon local objectives. The new Business Plan will be approved by the Joint Committee on 23 June and will have 4 key priorities which are also based upon local objectives and that the Risk Register is reported to both the Joint Committee and the Scrutiny Councillor Group as a standing item. You said you therefore felt confident that Partneriath is operating in accordance with the Legal Agreement, its Business Plan and that it is operating to its timetable. Although you said there will always be room for improvement and you would like to see the measuring of the impact, output and value for money more clearly evidenced and for schools to have the opportunity to express their views on the effectiveness of the Partnership.

We asked each Director to give their views on how Partneriaeth is operating for their Council and the challenges they face and to seek assurance from each council that they believe Partneriaeth is operating according to the Legal Agreement, its Business Plan and that its timetable is being managed effectively.

We firstly spoke to the Director of Education from Swansea and she outlined the challenges faced by Partneriaeth from a Swansea perspective, which included:

- How to make the best use of funding coming in, including sharing resources.
- Evaluating performance, so the impact and output is identified.
- Getting everyone together to be able to share and discuss issues.
- The need to consider an inclusive comprehensive pack to improve literacy and numeracy skills.
- Gaining the views of 'customers' and using this to plan in the future.

She believes the new Business Plan is clearer; with fewer but appropriate priorities and that it will intertwine well with the work of the local authorities. She is happy to see Partneriaeth developing and listening to the views of all stakeholders. From a Swansea perspective Partneriaeth is operating in accordance with the Legal Agreement, its Business Plan and timetable.

We then spoke to the Director of Education from Pembrokeshire who said they see many similar challenges as Swansea but he also mentioned:

- The range of support offered is useful but there is a need to further refine that offer.
- Further development regarding literacy and numeracy was key.
- 'Pupil independence and evaluation of their own work' has been a theme in recent Estyn inspections, so we need to weave this into the business plan.
- Must make sure that funding is well used and in the best interests of schools. Also resolve any issues around the duplication of resources.
- New Curriculum is an ongoing challenge.
- The sheer range of initiatives on offer and the relentless push from the Welsh Government in relation to this. We must consider this carefully otherwise we will continue to have workload issues. There is a need to consider how we manage what comes over the horizon from Welsh Government in this period of already huge change, so schools are not overloaded.
- The effectiveness and impact of Partneriaeth directly in the classroom needs to be measured.

He agreed that the Joint Agreement is working well and Partneriaeth is doing the right things for schools.

We were pleased to hear that everyone had a positive picture of Partneriaeth, whilst recognising that many challenges do still exist for both them and each of the three local authorities. From this discussion, we felt reassured that Partneriaeth is operating in accordance with the Legal Agreement, its Business Plan and that its timetable is being managed effectively.

Ian Altman updated us on the current risk profile and we heard that the profile would change slightly to align with the new Business Plan. The issue of timing of the Welsh Government grant funding was raised again.

We asked about the clarity of the role of Partneriaeth, hearing that this risk is an historical one and that Partneriaeth now has a clear function set out in the new Business Plan including 4 new high-level priority areas developed with all three local authorities. Also recognising success will depend upon collaboration, engagement and evaluation moving forward.

The Councillor Group agreed as part of their work programme to look at the performance of each of the Partneriaeth priorities, the Councillor Group therefore welcomed Gwennan Schiavone, Partneriaeth Strategic Adviser to report on Priority 2: Developing a high-quality education provision – improving the teaching and learning in our schools.

We heard about the

- Professional learning, enquiry and research to develop the curriculum (school led)
- Professional learning for developing practice and reflection.
- Literacy and numeracy grant/Primary Oracy Scheme for Wales.
- Regional support for modern languages / building capacity in the primary sector.
- Digital Competence Framework / coding and digital skills.
- Welsh in Education.
- Post-16 improvement.

We asked about the National Professional Enquiry Projects (NPEP) and heard that 59 schools across the region have taken part. These are schools doing their own piece of research, working with the Universities and Partneriaeth. The outcome this work is shared on Hwb so it has a wider benefit. An event to share good practice across the region has also been arranged for July 2023. We look forward to hearing more about some of these projects in our future meetings.

We would welcome your thoughts on the contents of this letter, but on this occasion do not require a formal written response.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Lyndon Jones
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