



Minutes of the **Partneriaeth Regional Scrutiny Councillor Group**

Held Remotely via MS Teams

Monday, 19 June 2023 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillor L R Jones (Chair) Presided

Councillor(s)

Cllr Lyndon Jones (Convener Swansea Education Performance Scrutiny Panel)
Cllr Peter Black (Chair of the Swansea Scrutiny Programme Committee)
Cllr Huw Murphy (Chair Pembrokeshire Schools and Learning Scrutiny Committee)
Cllr Carys Jones (Chair Carmarthenshire Education and Children Scrutiny Committee)
Cllr Sue Allen (Vice Chair Carmarthenshire Education and Children Scrutiny Committee)

Officer(s)

Ian Altman	Lead Officer Partneriaeth
Helen Morgan-Rees	Lead Director and Director of Education in Swansea
Gwennan Schiavone	Partneriaeth Strategic Adviser
Steven Richard-Downes	Director of Education Pembrokeshire
Michelle Roberts	Scrutiny Officer (Swansea)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Gareth Morgans, Director of Education Carmarthenshire

19 Declaration of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

20 Minutes and Letter/s arising from last meeting

The minutes and letter arising from the meeting on the 19 June 2023 were accepted.

21 Outline of Partneriaeth Joint Committee Agenda held on 23 June 2023

Lead Director Helen Morgan Rees outlined the agenda items on the Partneriaeth Joint Committee to be held on the 23 June 2023. The following was noted:

- The Partneriaeth Joint Committee will meet three time per year. The following will be discussed at the next meeting:

- The letter from the Chair of Partneriaeth Scrutiny Councillor Group on 13 February 2023.
- Partneriaeth draft budget for 2023-24 and draft medium term financial plan for 2023-24 to 2026-27
- Partneriaeth performance 2022/23
- Partneriaeth Strategic Plan/Business Plan 2023-24; and
- The Partneriaeth Risk register

22 Chair of the Joint Committee and Directors from each Council

The Partneriaeth Legal Agreement says that the Chair of the Joint Committee and the 3 Directors of Education should attend the Partneriaeth Scrutiny Councillor Group at least once per annum.

The Panel welcomed Cllr Darren Price, the Chair of the Partneriaeth Joint Committee to the meeting, who also spoke for Gareth Morgans, Director of Education at Carmarthenshire in his absence. They also thanked Helen Morgan Rees, Director of Education in Swansea and Steven Richard-Downes, Director of Education for Pembrokeshire for attending.

Chair of the Partneriaeth Joint Committee

The Panel firstly, invited Cllr Price to give a view on how he believes things are progressing and to discuss and provide the Cllr Group with reassurance that Partneriaeth is operating according to the Legal Agreement, its Business Plan and its timetable is being managed effectively. Councillor Price said:

- Prior to development of Partneriaeth 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 Partneriaeth will be part of that.
- The current Business Plan and 6 priorities were developed jointly 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 also based upon local objectives.
- The Risk Register is reported to both the Joint Committee and the Scrutiny Councillor Group as a standing item.
- I am therefore confident that the Partneriaeth is operating in accordance with the Legal Agreement, its Business Plan and that it is operating to its timetable. But there will always be room for improvement and I would like to see the following developed:
 - Measuring of impact of Partneriaeth that shows output and value for money clearly.
 - For schools have the opportunity to express their views on its effectiveness. This then used in future planning.

Directors of Education

Each Director was asked to give views on how it is going for their Council, what 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.

Helen Morgan Rees (Director of Education Swansea)

The challenges from Swansea perspective include:

- How to make the best use of funding coming in, including sharing resources so no under expenditure
- Evaluating performance, so the impact and output is identified.
- Getting everyone together.
- Literacy and numeracy, the need to consider an inclusive comprehensive pack to improve these skills.
- Gaining the views of customers and using this to plan in the future.

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

Steven Richard-Downes (Director of Education Pembrokeshire)

Pembrokeshire 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, this is as a key area.
- 'Pupil independence and evaluation of their own work' has been a theme in recent Estyn inspections, so we need to weave that into the Business Plan.
- Must make sure that funding is well used and in the best interests of schools. Need to resolve any issues around the duplication of resources.
- New Curriculum an ongoing challenge.
- Shear range of initiatives on offer and the relentless push for Welsh Government in relation to initiatives. Must consider this carefully otherwise we will continue to have workload issues. Must consider how we manage what comes over the horizon from Welsh Government in this period of already huge change, so school are not overloaded.
- The effectiveness and impact of Partneriaeth directly in the classroom needs to be measured.

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

The Councillor Group were pleased to hear that it is currently a positive picture for Partneriaeth, recognising that many challenges do still exist for both them and each of the three local authorities. Councillors, from this discussion, felt reassured that Partneriaeth is operating in accordance with the Legal Agreement, its Business Plan and that's its timetable is being managed effectively.

23 Updated Risk Profile

Ian Altman updated the Councillor Group on the current risk profile and informed them that it is based on the 2022/2023 Business Plan. The risk profile will change slightly based on the new Business Plan shortly and will reflect the priorities of that. The issue of timeliness of Welsh Government grant funding was raised again. Councillors heard the grant often comes in some way into the quarter it is funding.

The Group asked about the clarity of the role of Partneriaeth, hearing that this risk is an historical one and that Partneriaeth now has a very clear function set out in the new Business Plan including four priority areas.

These Partneriaeth 4 high-level strategic priorities for 2023-2026 include:

1. Support all schools and settings to design and deliver their own high quality equitable curriculum.
2. Embed principles and processes which underpin educational equity in all schools and settings.
3. Support schools and settings to develop a range of research and enquiry skills as a key part of their professional learning.
4. Provide career pathways for leaders, practitioners and support staff at all levels of the system.

The Cllr Group were told that success will depend upon Collaboration, Engagement and Evaluation.

24 A look at Performance of Partneriaeth Priority 2 - Developing a high-quality education profession - improving the teaching & learning in our schools

The Councillor Group agreed, as part of their work programme, to look at the performance of a different one of the original six Partneriaeth priorities at each meeting. The Councillor Group therefore welcomed Gwennan Schiavone, Partneriaeth Strategic Adviser to the meeting. A report was provided that outlined progress with regards to Priority 2: Developing a high-quality education provision – improving the teaching and learning in our schools.

The following points were covered in the discussion:

- Professional learning, enquiry and research to realise 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.

The Councillor Group raised the following points:

- What are the National Professional Enquiry Projects (NPEP). Councillors heard that they are schools doing their own piece of research, working with the Universities and Partneriaeth. The outcome of these is also shared on Hwb so wider benefit can be had. The Cllr Group asked to see some of these and they

will be scheduled into the Councillor Groups work programme from February 2024 onwards.

25 Partneriaeth Scrutiny Work Programme

The Partneriaeth Scrutiny Councillor Group agreed its work plan for the next 12 months with the amendments to align it to the new Partneriaeth Business Plan priorities and the inclusion of a NPEP research and inquiry project at each meeting.

26 Discuss points for the letter to Chair of Partneriaeth Joint Committee arising from this meeting

The Scrutiny Councillor Group agreed to include their views on the items discussed at this meeting in a letter to the Chair of the Partneriaeth Joint Committee.

The meeting ended at 11.00 am