



City and County of Swansea

## Notes of the **Scrutiny Inquiry Panel – Regional Working**

Committee Room 5 - Guildhall, Swansea

Friday, 26 January 2018 at 10.30 am

**Present:** Councillor L R Jones (Convener) Presided

**Councillor(s)**  
C A Holley  
M Sykes

**Councillor(s)**  
M H Jones

**Councillor(s)**  
B J Rowlands

**Officer(s)**

Chris Sivers	Director Social Services
Helen Morgan Rees	Hub Head School Improvement
Sara Harvey	Programme Director Western Bay
Michelle Roberts	Scrutiny Officer

**Apologies for Absence**

Councillor(s): J A Hale, O G James and T M White

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**1 Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.**

None

**2 Notes from the previous meetings on 30 October and 13 November 2017**

Notes accepted by Panel

**3 Regional Working: Social Services Directorate and the Public Service Board**

Chris Sivers (Director, Social Services), Helen Morgan Rees (Hub Head Education Improvement Service and Sara Harvey (Programme Director Western Bay) provided a report outlining the regional working within this Directorate along with information on the Public Service Board. This included information on

- Education through Regional Working (ERW)
- Western Bay Health and Social Care
- Western Bay Regional Contest Board
- Public Service Board
- Community Cohesion Programme

Potential Future Risks to collaboration have been identified:

- Changes to Health Board footprint (for example the removal/moving of a partner and the impact that has on the projects and respective financial contribution)
- Population profiles (urban deprivation vs rural sparsity, BME populations)
- Potential loss of locality focus and/or duplication (must have local assurance)
- Resilience and size of local authority to carry out functions

Key points for regional working inquiry taken from the resulting discussion have been noted as follows:

#### ERW

- Must consider local needs and context within regional partnerships. For example with ERW a business plan is developed where national directives and common objectives across the region are supported but it includes each local authorities local objectives. This is important because each local authority will have a different context and therefore different needs and also when each local authority needs to hold ERW to account at a local level. Working across the region with a close alignment with local priorities can be the best of both worlds.
- Differing priorities can be a risk for a region as can be example in the ERW footprint where the majority of the region is rural particular issues can predominate and this can be reflected in the allocation of funding across the region.
- Difference between SWAMWAC the previous regional education partnership and ERW. ERW has a legal collaborative arrangement with an associated governance structure.
- One of the roles of ERW and potential positives is local authority's helping each other. The panel heard that sharing of skills and expertise across authorities is working well for example we have helped Pembrokeshire and are assisting Powys schools and we have had assistance ourselves. This is also good for breaking down barriers between local authorities. This works as long as one authority is not in detriment by the arrangement.
- The panel asked if ERW was a tier of organisation that is still relevant and needed. The Panel heard that it has been particularly positive and has brought about real benefit in adopting a national model which has brought about better consistency in the work of challenge advisors and headteachers. It has also enabled wider and more consistent training opportunities for schools and education staff across the region. Working much more closely with for example Neath Port Talbot to learn and share good practice has been very beneficial. Although there is the recognition that because we are one of the strongest performance areas it is likely we will be doing more for others.
- ERW is currently being revised and remodelled. Phil Roberts, Swansea's Chief Executive is the lead officer and there is a new council Leader from Ceredigion and it is envisaged that there will be a new updated approach moving forward.
- Have we learnt anything from the other Welsh Consortia? The Panel heard that ERW have worked with other consortia on things where they are further down the line with development, as they have with ERW.
- ERW has a well formed governance structure with an associated scrutiny arrangement.

- The Panel heard that there has been some contention between schools perception of ERW. With ERW carrying out the role of looking at/challenging performance in for example leadership and schools feeling that it causes increased work. ERW has worked with Welsh Government to help develop information for schools around reducing workloads.

#### Western Bay

- Welsh Government is increasingly directing funds via regional partnerships so are oiling the wheels of collaboration, but partners must prove they are working together.
- Western Bay has a good track record of delivery so an increasing number of initiatives are being initiated through this partnership arrangement.
- All regional working under Western Bay must be clearly underpinned by (Part 9) of the [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)
- Monies are pooled to resource a team that is hosted by Swansea.
- A large part of the funding comes from the Integrated (was Intermediate) care fund which mainly related to services for older people.
- Panel members asked why there was not a regional scrutiny arrangement in place. Councillors heard that most partners involved in the partnership are keen to develop a scrutiny arrangement but one partner currently does not. All partners have to agree any developments through their individual Cabinet Committees. The panel felt it was important and appropriate for there to be a regional scrutiny arrangement built into the governance arrangements for Western Bay and agreed that this could be a recommendation arising from their inquiry.
- Decision making for Western Bay can be long and drawn out because the Joint Committee cannot make a decision they can only recommend and then each Local Authority within the Partnership along with ABMU have to go back and take the recommendation through the Cabinet. The Panel asked whether these governance arrangements should be remodeled and simplified so decisions can be made in a more efficient and timely manner. It was felt that this could also be a possible recommendation for the Panel.
- Early intervention youth justice services have been hugely beneficial. Must be conscious of what is working well when we make changes regional to ensure that good practices are not lost.
- When working across the region it is important to be clear about each local authority's priorities.

#### Public Services Board

- Some members of this partnership are keen for the PSB to move to a regional model around a larger footprint like that of Western Bay. The benefits for some partners of this are clear for example, no more multiple attendance at different LA's.
- Wales Government encouraging working on a regional basis.
- Swansea currently working on its Wellbeing Plan but discussion around regional working will resume once this is complete. The focus is the plan at the moment but regional working is seen by some as a natural way forward.
- Potential initial learning points from Swansea PSB experience of developing the Wellbeing plan with partners include:

- Agreement on vision and long-term thinking, drawing on where passion and interest lies can really help drive partnership working.
- It remains a challenge to retain ownership and drive across all partner organisations.
- Fundamental to strong partnerships is the development of relationships based on trust. So much depends on the individuals involved and their personal approach to the partnership.
- It remains a challenge to retain focus on achieving a smaller number of top priorities, and not get dominated by detail.
- There is an appropriate balance between bottom up and top down approaches that needs to be struck in terms of agreement on delivery.
- Governance arrangements help to provide assurance but do not guarantee successful outcomes.

#### Other partnerships

- Important to ensure the right people are involved in a partnership arrangement. The Panel had a discussion around Fire and Ambulance Services not being involved in the Contest Board and whether this was appropriate or not.

## **4 Project Plan Work Programme**

At the next two meetings on the 2 and 16 February the Panel will meet with Partner Organisations.

The meeting ended at 11.50am