

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 23RD OCTOBER 2017

REFERENCE FROM LEARNING AND CULTURE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:
18TH SEPTEMBER 2017

“279 CO-ORDINATED SCRUTINY OF THE CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM
JOINT EDUCATION SERVICE (MD) –

The Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer presented the report, advising that it proposed arrangements for strengthening democratic accountability and scrutiny of the School Improvement function in the Central South Consortium Joint Education Service. As Committee was aware, the Central South Consortium was responsible for school improvement on behalf of five Local Authorities, Bridgend, Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Merthyr Tydfil and the Vale of Glamorgan. The scrutiny of the Consortium was currently undertaken on an annual basis by the relevant Scrutiny Committee in each Local Authority and the representatives of the Consortium invited to attend meetings when necessary on an ad hoc basis.

The accountability of the Consortium and the scrutiny structure was critically important since the statutory responsibility for the performance of schools resided in individual Local Authorities. Therefore, a joint Working Group was proposed to be established from representatives of the five Local Authorities and constituted with the Chairmen of the above respective Scrutiny Committees and Scrutiny Support Officers with the view to considering proposals to deepen the Consortium's relationship with the scrutiny function and to consider regional performance and share best practice and information.

It was intended that the Working Group would offer an element of co-ordinated scrutiny with a specific focus on regional working. A research paper published by Cardiff Business School in 2013, found that a co-ordinated model of collaborative scrutiny could offer:

- A clearer specification of the accountability role that joint local scrutiny could perform in scrutinising collaborations and partnerships and how Elected Members best contribute to this role
- The presentation of a clear rationale for regional service delivery and regional scrutiny to Elected Members;
- Further clarity on the governance and service delivery configurations of Welsh public services;
- Sufficient resource and capacity to deliver collaborative scrutiny;
- Guidance to partnerships, Consortia and other collaborations.

It was proposed to establish a Working Group consisting the Chairmen of the Education Scrutiny Committees in each of the Local Authorities (or a nominated

representative of the Scrutiny Committee) supported by a nominated Scrutiny Officer in each case.

The Working Group's terms of reference would be to consider standing items such as:

- (i) The Consortium's progress against its three-year Business Plan on a regional basis;
- (ii) Regional performance trends;
- (iii) The sharing of best scrutiny practice across the region;
- (iv) The Group to also report annually to the relevant Scrutiny Committee in each Local Authority and / or feedback to the next meeting of the relevant Scrutiny Committee in each Local Authority;
- (v) To share a note of its meetings with the Joint Committee and to receive a response to these from the Joint Committee.

The Central South Consortium model had been based on a similar model to the Regional Education Consortium serving the west of Wales and Powys model, which had been held as an example of good practice by the Wales Audit Office. The Forward Work Programme had been developed by the Working Group, and a copy of that document was attached at Appendix A to the report.

The previous Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee advised that he had also been involved in a number of meetings of the Working Group and that all five Counties' Scrutiny Chairs had supported its establishment, together with the Central South Consortium.

The current Chairman advised that she had attended her first meeting of the Group in July 2017.

Following consideration of the report, it was subsequently

RECOMMENDED – T H A T the proposed arrangements attached at Appendix A to the report be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

Reason for recommendation

So that the proposed arrangements as detailed in the report and attached at Appendix A to the report be recommended to Cabinet for approval.”

Attached as Appendix – [Report to Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee: 18th September, 2017](#)