

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE SUBJECT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1

14 SEPTEMBER 2017

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – OPERATIONAL AND PARTNERSHIP SERVICES

CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM COORDINATED WORKING GROUP

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to present arrangements for strengthening democratic accountability and scrutiny of the school improvement function in the Central South Wales Consortium.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives / Other Corporate Priorities

2.1 This report and the establishment of a Coordinated Scrutiny Working Group for the Central South Consortium assists in the achievement of the following Corporate Priority:

- a) **Supporting a successful economy** – taking steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Central South Wales Consortium is responsible for school improvement on behalf of five local authorities: Bridgend, Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil and the Vale of Glamorgan.
- 3.2 The Consortium is accountable to the local authorities through a Joint Committee comprising the relevant Cabinet Member for each Local Authority.
- 3.3 The Consortium's performance is scrutinised on an annual basis by the relevant Scrutiny Committee in each Local Authority who examine the detail of the latest school performance results and business plan. These meetings focus on data and activity relevant to the individual local authority rather than performance in the region overall.
- 3.4 This accountability and scrutiny structure is critically important since the statutory responsibility for the performance of schools resides in the individual Local Authorities.

- 3.5 Consortium officers have met regularly with the five Scrutiny Committee Chairs in the Central South Consortium, as a group. Officers representing/working for the five local authorities have also attended.
- 3.6 Part of the discussion has been around developing a 'regional' element to scrutiny work in addition to the current individual local authority scrutiny programme outlined above.
- 3.7 The group's discussion included consideration of the findings from a Cardiff Business School study on coordinated Scrutiny as well the Erw model of coordinated scrutiny, (Erw: the regional education consortium serving the west of Wales and Powys). The Erw model consists of the Chairs of education scrutiny in each of Local Authorities (or a nominated person other than the chair) and has been identified as an example of good practice by the Wales Audit Office. They meet termly with the Consortium considering and discussing items such as pupil performance data (pre and post verification), progress against business plan, consortium governance and School categorisation.

4. Current Situation / Proposal

- 4.1 Using the Erw model, the group proposed to establish a formal working group to consider regional performance and share best practice and information. The working group would offer an element of coordinated scrutiny with a specific focus on regional working.
- 4.2 Appendix A provides detail of the proposal including how many meetings to be held and the following standing items to be considered by the group:
 - i. The consortium's progress against its 3-year business plan on a regional basis
 - ii. Regional performance trends
 - iii. Sharing best scrutiny practice across the region
- 4.3 In addition to this the group have proposed further items for consideration such as the Consortium's value for money, Governor training and support, the Free School Meal attainment gap and the impact from recent changes to the Pupil Deprivation Grant, focusing each time on the regional and national perspective.
- 4.4 It also proposes that the group would report annually to each relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee in each LA and provide recommendations to the Consortium's Joint Committee.
- 4.5 It is proposed that the attached document containing the group's approach and Terms of Reference be presented to each Local Authority for agreement, following which it will be presented to the CSC Joint Committee for final approval at their meeting in December 2017.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules

5.1 The work of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees relates to the review and development of plans, policy or strategy that form part of the Council's Policy Framework and consideration of plans, policy or strategy relating to the power to promote or improve economic, social or environmental wellbeing in the County Borough of Bridgend. Any changes to the structure of the Scrutiny Committees and the procedures relating to them would require the Bridgend County Borough Council constitution to be updated.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no equality implications attached to this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications attached to this report.

8. Recommendations

8.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- a) Agree the proposal attached at Appendix A to establish a Scrutiny working group to consider regional performance and share best practice and information;
- b) Agree to forward the attached proposal to full Council for approval prior to submission to the CSC Joint Committee.

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Background documents

None.