

Democratic accountability and scrutiny

Purpose:

This document sets out arrangements for strengthening democratic accountability and scrutiny of the school improvement function in the central south Wales consortium.

The paper seeks the agreement of the consortium's joint committee to put these arrangements in place.

This paper proposes to deepen the consortium's relationship with the scrutiny function on a regional level by establishing a 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.

"..collaborative scrutiny should only be undertaken where it is likely to add value for all potential contributors and should not be practiced for its own sake. The added value, it was argued, needs to be evident not only to scrutiny teams but also to the leadership of local authorities, other elected members, senior officers, those being scrutinised and the general public." (Excerpt from *Developing a culture of collaborative scrutiny: an evaluation of practice and potential*. Cardiff Business School report 2013)

A research paper published by Cardiff Business School in 2013 found that a coordinated model of this kind could offer:

- 1 A clearer specification of the accountability role that joint local scrutiny could perform in scrutinising collaborations and partnerships (versus inspectorates and regulators), and how elected members best contribute to this role
- 2 The presentation of a clear rationale for regional service delivery and regional scrutiny to elected members
- 3 Further clarity on the governance and service delivery configurations of Welsh public services
- 4 Sufficient resource and capacity to deliver collaborative scrutiny
- 5 Guidance to partnerships, consortia and other collaborations

*(Extract from *Developing a culture of collaborative scrutiny: an evaluation of practice and potential*. Cardiff Business School report 2013, quoting the view of scrutiny officers)*

Proposed model:

That the working group consist of the chairs of education scrutiny in each of local authorities (or a nominated person other than the chair), supported by a nominated scrutiny officer in each case.

Meet three times a year shortly after each joint committee meeting

Consider standing items such as:

- 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

The group would also:

- Report annually to the relevant committee in each local authority (and/or feedback to the next meeting of the relevant scrutiny committee in each local authority?)
- Make recommendations to the joint committee and receive a response to these from the joint committee