

**ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group. 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2019**

On Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> June Liz Patterson, Cllr Sandra Davies & Angela Davies attended a meeting of the ERW scrutiny Councillor group in Haverford West.

**Attendance:** 2 representatives from each member county scrutiny group & Scrutiny officers (Powys, Ceredigion, Carmarthen, Pembrokeshire, Swansea & Neath Port Talbot)

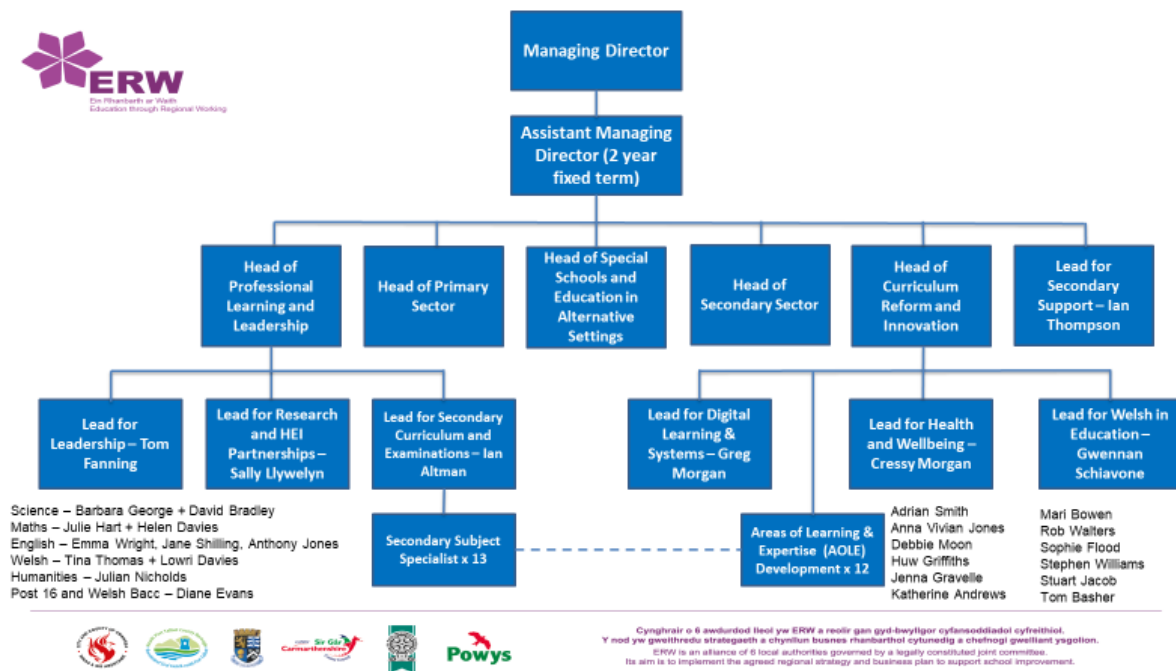
Geraint Rees & Osain Evans from ERW.

**Chair:** Cllr John Davies, Pembrokeshire CC (the host county)

The bulk of the meeting was a briefing rather than a scrutiny session - Cllr John Davies invited Geraint Rees (interim Managing Director of ERW) to give a “State of the Nation Briefing”. Geraint explained that a huge amount of work had been undertaken to restructure the organisation.

We received a copy of the new ERW business plan 2019-2020 – a document not too dissimilar to a school development plan.

We also a presentation about the new staffing structure, which has a managing director, an assistant managing director, and a number of layers of staffing, each with specific area of responsibility:



This is being financed by a 400% increase in fees into the pot – some members were concerned about the level of increase in fees others recognised that this was still far less money than the fees paid by LA’s in the other three consortia regions – no mention was made of VALUE for money.

Unfortunately, despite going to advert – many of the key posts remain vacant including the post of managing director and assistant managing director – (Geraint Rees finishes as interim MD in July 2019). He did not offer an explanation as to why he is not staying in post until a new MD is secured.

It is alarming that some posts received no applicants and others did not have applicants of a high enough calibre. Welsh language is an essential requirement and a question was asked if this was restricting the pool of potential applicants. There was concern that the “negative reputation” of ERW was detrimental to filling these posts. There are a number of unresolved issues ‘hanging over ERW’

- Neath Port Talbot had given notice that they may withdraw from ERW (they have paid the fees for the years 2019/20 but have yet to make a firm decision)
- an unresolved employment issue.

Geraint stated that ERW needed a change of mindset and of culture if the organisation was to move forward. He said that there was much distrust within the regions and recognised the need to build confidence in ERW, the regions needed to work together and ERW need to ensure there was equity and consistency of standards across the member counties and across the Welsh Regions.

**Other items discussed:**

- Self-improving – not improving by your self – peer to peer working / school to school and even region to region across Wales.
- The development of an ‘open’ digital platform of resources that any schools in the region or even across Wales could tap into for free, to promote good practice & good ideas.
- Sharing of good practice across school and across counties and across the whole region.
- Need to change the mindset and culture so that schools welcome support and ERW need to develop a “House style” for challenge advisors etc.
- 5 middle managers with area of responsibility, (learning leadership, Primary schools, Special schools & other, High schools and reform and Innovation)
- next layer is for 3 leaders of Professional learning and 3 heads of curriculum.

Angela Davies June 2019