



## **REPORT TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE**

**12 NOVEMBER 2015**

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**Report by:** GwE Lead Director / Chair of the Management Board

**Subject:** Scrutiny Arrangements

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### **1.0 Purpose of the Report**

Report on proposed scrutiny arrangements in response to the recommendation from Wales Audit Office “develop joint scrutiny arrangements of the overall consortia as well as scrutiny of performance by individual authorities, which may involve establishment of a joint scrutiny committee or co-ordinated work by local authority scrutiny committees”.

### **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 In their June 2015 report “achieving improvement in support to schools through regional education consortia – an early view” the Wales Audit Office concluded that scrutiny and audit functions are developing but are not yet fully established.
  - 2.2. The report concluded that “each local authority undertakes scrutiny of the regional consortia in relation to their individual local authority’s performance. The level of scrutiny between local authorities, both within each regional consortium and nationally, is inconsistent. Scrutiny has typically been high-level, had little focus on financial information and value for money and in most cases has been on a reactive rather than proactive basis. However, some regional consortia are developing common scrutiny processes. For example, ERW is working with Scrutiny Officers from each local authority to establish a timetable detailing a set of mutual topic areas for each local authority to scrutinise, and the related data that the consortium will provide. This should provide reassurance to each local authority that they are scrutinising the key areas, and enable the consortium to better plan its use of resources.
  - 2.3 None of the regions is undertaking scrutiny on each regional consortium as a whole. Chairs of the relevant local authority scrutiny committees were unlikely to have met each other. Regional working is intended to spread best practice across each region. An effective joint scrutiny function could consider the overall impact of regional working and whether the performance of individual authorities and the region as a whole is improving”.
  - 2.4 WAO’s subsequent recommendation was that Consortia “develop joint scrutiny arrangements of the overall consortia as well as scrutiny of performance by individual authorities, which may involve establishment of a joint scrutiny committee or co-ordinated work by local authority scrutiny committees”.
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2.5 Scrutiny forms an integral part of the work of the Management Committee, Advisory Board, Joint Committee, Regional Leadership Board and Ministerial Stocktakes as well as formal Scrutiny Arrangements. Alongside inspection work, there is a strong argument for accountability and scrutiny arrangements to be streamlined over time.

2.6 Work has been undertaken to coordinate formal scrutiny arrangements across the region, reported to Joint Committee. Given the clear statutory responsibility of each Local Authority for securing school improvement it is important that there is clear accountability for this within each Authority. There is a key role for scrutiny functions in each Authority for ensuring that children and young people’s learning entitlement is secured and that local provision offers value for money. Individual Chief Education Officers are the key accountable officers on school improvement responsibilities to local authority and are able to represent the work of GwE in their role as members of the GwE Management Board. However, they may also be supported as appropriate by members of the GwE leadership teams on generic or thematic reports where there is a key contribution to developing practice to be made.

2.7 There is scope for more collective learning and innovation to take place across the region from greater coordination and sharing of scrutiny work programmes and thematic outcomes. Scrutiny chairs and officers are forming a new network to share learning

### 3.0 Model

Example reports to be considered in all Authorities’ forward work programmes (with outcomes and learning shared across Authorities)

Autumn	Spring	Summer
Learning from School Improvement Interventions	Learner Outcomes (including Attendance & Exclusions)	Local Improvement Plan
	Self-evaluation of LAESCYP	
	Self-evaluation of GwE	
	Individual LA Commissioning document for GwE	

Areas of work identified for scrutiny by an individual Authority’s scrutiny function (with outcomes and learning shared across all Authorities:

- work of the GwE Associate Partners;
- GwE Development Programmes;
- challenge & Support offered to Amber and red schools/process/impact;
- budgeting/risk management of the service;
- new model of working; and

- pioneer school implementation.

#### **4.0 Recommendations**

4.1 That the GwE Management Board and Senior Leadership Team work with the relevant local authority scrutiny committees to operate a co-ordinated work programme in relation to school improvement.

#### **5.0 Financial Implications**

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

#### **6.0 Equalities Impact**

6.1 There are no new equalities implications arising from this report.

#### **7.0 Personnel Implications**

7.1 There are no new personnel implications arising from this report.

#### **8.0 Consultation Undertaken**

8.1 The GwE Management Board have been consulted during the development of the document.

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### **OPINION OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS**

#### **Monitoring Officer:**

The report recommends the establishment of formal scrutiny arrangements with individual authorities to provide for an overview of the performance of the service. In developing such arrangements it is also of importance that channels for reporting back on the conclusions of individual scrutiny committees are established. This should serve to assist and support the Joint Committee and Officers in their own role of leading and contributing to the management of the service and their own overview of the performance of GwE.

#### **Statutory Finance Officer:**

Although the new scrutiny arrangements will mean additional work, I understand that the intention is to fulfil those arrangements within existing resources.