



PARTNERIAETH

Annual Governance Statement 2022-23

Partneriaeth Context and Provision

Partneriaeth services the three Local Authorities in South West Wales, namely Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Swansea. Partneriaeth recognises the value of working collaboratively with the approach based on a vision of a partnership working on behalf of the local authorities and contributing to the improvement in the performance of its schools and the education of its children and young people. The regional collaborative arrangement is designed to promote excellence in all of Partneriaeth's school.

Partneriaeth has three Senior Strategic Advisers who are directly linked with one of the Local Authorities to ensure effective support for schools in each Local Authority. This reflects an agile approach and relies on high-quality collaboration between Partneriaeth Senior Strategic Advisers and Local Authority Senior Officers outlined below.

 Senior Strategic Adviser: <i>Greg Morgan</i>	 Senior Strategic Adviser: <i>Gwennan Schiavone</i>	 Senior Strategic Adviser: <i>Cressy Morgan</i>
PEMBROKESHIRE Chief Executive: <i>Will Bramble</i> Director: <i>Steven Richards-Downes</i> Senior Improvement Adviser: <i>Elin Fry</i>	CARMARTHENSHIRE Chief Executive: <i>Wendy Walters</i> Director: <i>Gareth Morgans</i> Strategic Lead for School Effectiveness: <i>Elin Forsyth</i>	SWANSEA Chief Executive: <i>Martin Nicholls</i> Director: <i>Helen Morgan-Rees</i> Principal School Improvement Adviser: <i>David Thomas (Interim)</i>
SCHOOLS Primary: 52 Secondary: 8 Special: 1	SCHOOLS Primary: 94 Secondary: 12 Special: 2	SCHOOLS Primary: 77 Secondary: 14 Special: 2
LEARNERS (2021-22) 17,230	LEARNERS (2021-22) 27,460	LEARNERS (2021-22) 35,900

Partneriaeth's Aims

Partneriaeth strives to deliver a consistent school improvement service, which is focused on challenge and support strategies which improves teaching and learning in classrooms leading to improved pupil attainment and progress in all schools.

Partneriaeth's aim is to build school capacity through support, challenge and intervention, so that schools become self-improving, resilient organisations. Partneriaeth facilitates school led support and intervention programmes at a peer-to-peer, department-to-department and school-to-school level according to the area of need that has been identified within the school.

Partneriaeth will build school capacity through continuing support, challenge and intervention to become self-improving, resilient organisations which continually improve outcomes for learners. The regional strategy for a self-improving system is underway and is firmly founded in the principles of school-to-school improvement.

Partneriaeth is committed to the Welsh Language and its prosperity, with the language being an integral part of all of the administrative procedures of the organisation. Partneriaeth considers Welsh to be a central element of the identity of the region, and will continue to do as much as possible to promote the language and its use.

The three overarching aims for Partneriaeth are;

1. To lead schools and settings to design, develop and deliver a curriculum with equity and excellence at its core;
2. To support schools and settings to become ambitious, self-improving learning organisations; and
3. To provide professional learning and opportunities for collaboration in order to develop strong and supportive partnerships.

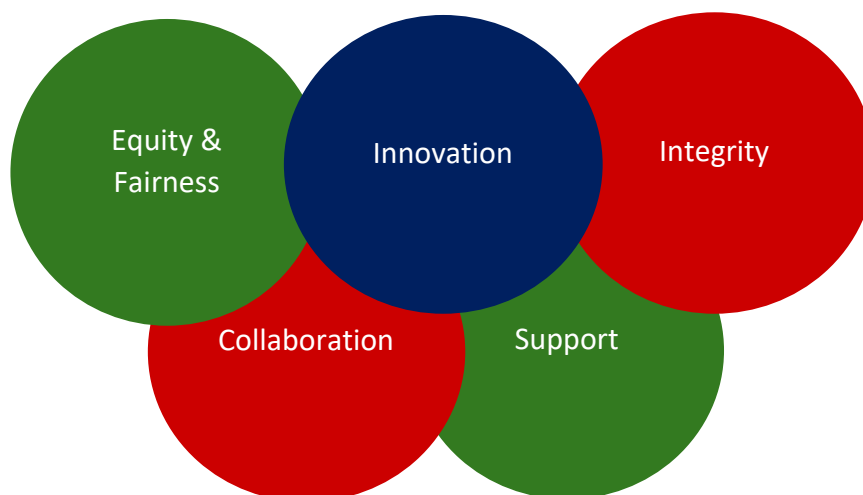
Partneriaeth's Values and Principles

Effective partnerships and collaboration only become truly effective when they are underpinned and enclosed by shared values and principles. They allow trust and mutual understanding to develop within a safe environment.

The underlying values that Partneriaeth have adopted are;

- Inclusivity – Partneriaeth needs to ensure that all Councils are involved in the decision making, accountability and performance management process of regional working;
- Accountability – Robust quality assurance and accountability processes must be established, including a value for money element. Accountability is the responsibility of all partners and processes should ensure that every director is equally involved. This leads to collective responsibility and should secure high quality provision;
- Be open and honest, promoting transparency, agility and subsidiarity; and
- Promote mutual trust, which is not unravelled by individuals or groups of individuals.

In addition, to achieve Partneriaeth's vision of 'Partnership working to achieve excellence for all', a set of defined principles were created to guide the work undertaken by Partneriaeth. These include;



Review of Governance Arrangements

What is Governance?

Partneriaeth is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with laws, regulations and its ethical standards. The governance framework is the process, culture, values and systems by which this is achieved.

To deliver good governance in local government, both Partneriaeth and its Officers must try to achieve Partneriaeth's priorities whilst acting in the public interest at all times. Acting in the public interest implies primary consideration of the benefits for society, which should result in positive outcomes for learners and other stakeholders.

Review of Effectiveness

Partneriaeth has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness for 2022-23 was informed by the work undertaken during the Internal Audit review, which included a follow-up of the implementation of Significant Governance Issues and Priorities for Improvement identified in 2021-22. Additional assurance was provided by the Head of Internal Audit Assurance Opinion based on the work undertaken by Internal Audit in 2022-23, along with the minutes from the Partneriaeth Joint Committee.

The Internal Audit review for 2022-23 focused on;

- Governance Arrangements – specifically focusing on the Legal Agreement, Local Code of Governance, Roles and Responsibilities, Decision Making Arrangements, Register of Business Interests and Working Arrangements with Authorities who have exited the partnership;
- Business Planning Arrangements – including the approval and implementation, costing, monitoring, providing value for money and progress reporting;
- Financial Management Arrangements – including funding arrangements, budgetary setting and control, financial control and grant funding arrangements;
- Risk Management Arrangements – including the Risk Register development, monitoring and control, and compliance with the UKGDPR and the Data Protection Act.

The Internal Audit review gave a 'moderate' assurance rating on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, internal control, risk management and financial management arrangements in place. Areas requiring further improvement have been included within the Priorities for Improvement of the Annual Governance Statement 2022-23 Action Plan.

Assurance has also been received on the effectiveness of key financial systems used by Partneriaeth from the work undertaken by Pembrokeshire County Council's Internal Audit Reviews. The diagram on the page 10 outlines what assurances were available under the

current Governance Structure, the sources of assurances provided and the areas for improvement identified.

Partneriaeth Governance Framework

The [Partneriaeth Business Plan for 2022-23](#) was approved by the Joint Committee on 07 October 2022. The Partneriaeth Business Plan aligns and reflects the aspirations and enabling of objectives of the National Mission, whilst reflecting on local and regional priorities. These priorities are;

- **Curriculum and Assessment** – supporting a national curriculum with equity and excellence at its core that sets high standards for all learners;
- **Developing a high-quality education profession** – improving the teaching and learning in our schools;
- **Leadership and Career Pathways** – supporting inspirational leaders working collaboratively to raise standards, include future leadership and professional networks;
- **Strong and Inclusive Schools** – committed to excellence equity and wellbeing;
- **Supporting a self-improving system** – supporting a system in which the education profession have the skills, capacity and agency to continually learn and improve their practice; and
- Ensure that Partneriaeth has strong governance and effective business and operational support that provides value for money.

The Partneriaeth Business Plan however does not detail the value for money framework in which it will operate, nor were milestones, key performance metrics or success criteria included by which outcomes could be measured. This is an area within the governance framework which needs to be strengthened and enhanced for accountability of Partneriaeth to deliver improved educational outcomes to the pupils of the three Local Authorities.

In addition, since the creation of Partneriaeth a Local Code of Governance has not yet been developed which would strengthen existing governance arrangements. This has been included as a Priority for Improvement within the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan.

Joint Committee

The [Partneriaeth Joint Committee](#) met three times during the 2022-23 financial year, and comprises of the three Local Authority Leaders, who are supported by the three Cabinet Members for Education and three Chief Executives, with the Joint Committee being advised by Lead/Statutory Officers, the Strategic Group and external school improvement experts.

The Joint Committee has ultimate responsibility and accountability for decisions taken in relation to the operation of Partneriaeth. Under the Joint Committee's remit, there are a number of functions which they are responsible for. These include implementing

appropriate governance structures for Partneriaeth, developing and implementing the strategic planning for Partneriaeth to include approval and adoption of the Business Plan, responsibility for performance monitoring, and approving the annual budget and statement of accounts.

Internal Audit and Audit Wales report independently to the Joint Committee, providing assurance on the Governance, Internal Control, Financial Management and Risk Management arrangements in place within Partneriaeth. Meetings of the Joint Committee have been held virtually during 2022-23.

Strategic Group

The Strategic Group is made up of the three Directors of Education, the Partneriaeth Lead Officer and Partneriaeth Senior Strategic Advisers (as required according to business plan priorities). The Strategic Group meets on a fortnightly basis and acts as a reference point for Partneriaeth in terms of its interface with the Joint Committee and the Operations Group.

The Strategic Group enables Partneriaeth to plan strategically and efficiently for the delivery of key functions and strategic objectives as well as advising the Joint Committee on strategic plans, performance, resource and risk management in relation to the functions delivered by Partneriaeth on behalf of the three local authorities.

In addition, the Strategic Group are responsible for ensuring value for money within a costed business plan, evaluating performance against outcomes prescribed within the business plan, and ensuring that the collaborative partnership meets the needs of the three local authorities

Joint Scrutiny Councillor Group

The Joint Scrutiny Councillor Group consists of the Education Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs of the three local authorities. The purpose of the Joint Scrutiny Councillor Group is to seek reassurance and consider if Partneriaeth is operating according to the Joint Committee Agreement, its Business Plan, and whether it is being managed effectively.

In particular, the Joint Scrutiny Committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the Joint Committee's financial affairs; revising and assessing the Joint Committee's risk management, internal control and corporate governance arrangements, and reviewing and assessing the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which resources have been used.

During 2022-23, the [Joint Scrutiny Councillor Group](#) met twice to consider scrutiny work plans, with the Chair of the [Joint Scrutiny Councillor Group writing to the Chair of the Joint Committee](#) on 10 November 2022 outlining the work they considered and their findings.

Operations Group

Partneriaeth's Operations Group consists of the Lead Officer, three local authority Lead School Improvement Officers and Partneriaeth's Strategic Advisors. The Operations Group are the main driver for producing delivery plans for the strategic themes outlined within Partneriaeth's Business Plan. The Operations Group meet on a monthly basis.

Partneriaeth Central Team

All Partneriaeth Officers work in an agile way across all Local Authorities and deliver on a range of strategic priorities linked to the Regional Consortia School Improvement Grant. The Senior Leadership Team consisting of the Lead Officer and three Senior Strategic Advisers develop the high-level planning in conjunction with the Extended Senior Leadership Team which includes the three Lead Advisers. Members of the Extended Senior Leadership Team have oversight and responsibility for budget lines in the Business Plan and for leading operational delivery teams. All Central Team Officers are involved in the development of the Operational Delivery Plans.



Statutory/Lead Officers

The following Lead and Statutory roles are held by the following officers who provide consistency and stability for the partnership:

- Lead Chief Executive – Martin Nicholls (Chief Executive, Swansea)
- Section 151 Officer – Jon Haswell (Director of Resources, Pembrokeshire)
- Monitoring Officer – Linda Rees-Jones (Monitoring Officer, Carmarthenshire)
- Lead Education Director – Helen Morgan-Rees (Director of Education, Swansea)
- Lead Officer – Ian Altman

Consultation, Communication & Engagement

Partneriaeth works closely and collaboratively with its local authority partners, Welsh Government, Estyn and other stakeholders in support of the highest quality of blended learning and well-being provision for all learners.

The Lead Officer provides [termly update reports](#) which are presented to the Joint Committee, outlining the further communications and engagement activities that were undertaken during 2022-23 both within the region and nationally.

Internal Audit

Pembrokeshire County Council, as the lead Authority for Finance provides the Internal Audit Service to Partneriaeth. The role of Internal Audit is to provide independent assurance on the effectiveness of governance, internal control, financial management and risk management arrangements in place. To ensure that the Internal Audit plan is appropriately risk-based, it is agreed on an academic year and undertaken in the latter quarter of the financial year.

In accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, a risk-based internal audit work plan was agreed by the Joint Committee on 03 February 2023. The Head of Internal Audit's Annual Assurance Opinion concluded that overall 'moderate' assurance is placed on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, internal control, financial management and risk management arrangements in place. Management have agreed to implement the recommendations made following the internal audit review. The implementation of recommendations in an effective and timely manner will assist in strengthening the existing arrangements currently in place.

In accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, the Head of Internal Audit undertook a self-assessment of compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The assessment concluded that the Internal Audit Service conforms to the Code of Ethics and the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

External Audit and Regulators

Audit Wales are the appointed external Auditor for Partneriaeth. Estyn provide an independent inspection and advice service on quality standards in education and training in Wales. No reviews were undertaken during 2022-23.

Business Risk Management

Members and Officers are responsible for ensuring that risk is considered in the decisions they take and suitable arrangements are put in place to manage risk. The Joint Committee has responsibility for overseeing Partneriaeth's Business Risk Management arrangements. The table below is a summary of movement of risks in Partneriaeth's Risk Register for 2022-23.

Corporate Risk (Threat)	Residual Rating Oct 2022	Residual Rating Feb 2023
Failure to deliver the 6 priority areas of Partneriaeth's Business Plan	4	4
Failure to deliver against LA priorities included in Partneriaeth's Business Plan	3	3
Failure to support LA's in relevant areas during their engagement with Estyn	6	6
Data Protection	4	4
Partneriaeth found not to provide Value for Money	4	4
Timeliness of Welsh Government Funding	6	6
Failure to comply with RCSIG Terms and Conditions	4	4
Lack of clarity regarding functions of Partneriaeth	6	6
Lack of Communication with all Stakeholders	3	3
Partneriaeth Governance	4	4

**The Amber highlights the difference in rating with amber being considered medium risk to the organisation*

Review of ERW's Governance Arrangements for 2022-23

Assurance Required on

- Achievement of Objectives;
- Adherence to Ethical Standards;
- Compliance with laws, regulations, and internal policies and procedures;
- Standards of conduct and behaviour;
- Financial management, including achievement of value for money;
- Sustainability;
- Quality of Service Delivery;
- Management of Risk;
- Accountability

Sources of Assurance

- Partneriaeth Legal Agreement;
- Joint Committee;
- Strategic Group;
- Joint Councillor Scrutiny Group;
- Operations Group;
- Partneriaeth Business Plan;
- Financial Plans;
- Internal Audit Reports;
- Statutory Officers;
- HR Policies & Procedures;
- Partneriaeth Risk Register

Assurance Received

- Internal Audit Report;
- Head of Internal Audit Opinion;
- Joint Committee Minutes

Areas for Improvement

- Governance Arrangements;
- Business Planning

Annual Governance Statement 2022-23 Action Plan

Priorities for Improvement			
Current Position	Planned Actions/Key Milestones	Owner	Key Milestone Completion Dates
<p>Governance Arrangements Governance arrangements have been strengthened through the new Legal Agreement approved by the Joint Committee, however there is still the ability to strengthen arrangements further through the introduction of a scheme of delegation to ensure that there is a formal documented approach for decision making (including acceptance of grant awards).</p> <p>CIPFA recommends that all local government bodies develop a Local Code of Governance which sets out the framework within Partneriaeth conducts its business and affairs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Local Code of Governance to be developed and approved by the Joint Committee. • A Scheme of Delegation to be developed to strengthen existing governance arrangements to ensure that decisions are undertaken with formal authority. • Business Partnering Agreements to be put in place with Authorities who purchase services from Partneriaeth to ensure that there is clarity in the services provided and that the roles and expectations of each party are formally documented. 	<p>Partneriaeth Lead Officer</p> <p>Partneriaeth Monitoring Officer</p> <p>Partneriaeth Lead Officer/Monitoring Officer</p>	
<p>Business Planning The Business Plan for Partneriaeth does not currently include clear milestones and outcomes, therefore the delivery and effectiveness of Partneriaeth cannot be fully scrutinised by the Joint Committee. The use of SMART measures would and help benchmark performance of Partneriaeth throughout the academic year. In addition the Business Plan needs to be fully costed to ensure that it is deliverable within the available resources and ensure Value for Money.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMART outcomes to be identified within the Business Plan, with clear milestones to facilitate monitoring and evidencing of delivery and effectiveness. • The Business Plan to be aligned to the budget to ensure affordability and deliverability of priorities. There will be a focus on Value for Money included within the Business Plan. • Regular, evidenced based progress reporting to the Joint Committee against the SMART outcomes developed. 	<p>Partneriaeth Lead Officer</p> <p>Partneriaeth Lead Officer & S151 Officer</p> <p>Partneriaeth Lead Officer</p>	

Chair of Partneriaeth / Lead Chief Executive / Lead Officer

We have been advised on the implications of the results of the review and the effectiveness of the governance framework including the system of internal control and a plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the systems in place.

To the best of our knowledge, the framework identified above has effectively operated during the year.

The process by which the effectiveness of the governance framework including the system of internal control is reviewed will continue to be developed in the future taking account of the Code, experience, best practice, appropriate guidance and any changes in legislation impacting on the Annual Governance Statement.

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters to enhance further our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed by Chair of the Joint Committee

Signed by Lead Chief Executive

Name: Cllr. Darren Price

Name: Martin Nicholls

Date:

Date:

Signed by Lead Officer

Name: Ian Altman

Date: