

**CENTRAL SOUTH CONSORTIUM - SHARED  
EDUCATION ADVISORY SERVICES**

**EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS (COUNCILLOR SARAH  
MERRY)**

**AGENDA ITEM: 3**

---

**Reason for this Report**

- 1 The purpose of this report is for Members to consider the recommendation of the Central South Consortium Joint Committee to continue to deliver shared educational advisory services in partnership with the other four councils in the region for at least the next three years.

**Background**

- 2 In the autumn of 2018, the five Education Cabinet Members of Central South Consortium Joint Committee (Bridgend, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Vale of Glamorgan) made the decision to commission an independent review of the Consortium to ensure it was fit for purpose and financially viable for the foreseeable future.
- 3 The ISOS Partnership was commissioned to undertake the review. Their report, attached as Appendix A, considered potential alternative delivery arrangements for education improvement services in the region. The alternatives considered were:
  1. Local Authorities take back all school improvement functions and end any form of regional arrangements
  2. Local Authorities take back some school improvement functions but retain a regional delivery function to support national priorities
  3. Identify a Lead Local Authority to take responsibility for delivery of all school improvement functions on behalf of others
  4. Formal mergers between Local Authority education services so joint LAs undertake all school improvement functions
  5. A more formalised shared services company model where LAs commission and hold it to account but don't oversee the governance
  6. A merger with another regional school improvement service
  7. Re-modelling of the current Consortium model
- 4 They recommended option 7, re-modelling of the current Consortium model, as the one which builds most logically on present arrangements,

and would provide certainty and stability to schools during a period of significant change in education in Wales. The report also said: "We do not see this as an easy option. It will require a significant commitment and investment of time and effort to rebuild the commitment from schools and Local Authorities to the Consortium."

- 5 The report identified a number of aspects of the Consortium which would need to be strengthened or revised as part of this 're-modelling'. These included:
  - Improving the consistency and quality of delivery.
  - Re-shaping roles and responsibilities, including the roles of Challenge Advisers and Senior Challenge Advisers.
  - Strengthening governance by modifying committee structures, reviewing and revising the role of the Joint Committee, and strengthening the connection between clusters of schools, local heads groups and the Consortium.
  - Strengthening the relationship between the Consortium and Local Authorities, and links with Welsh Government.
- 6 The ISOS review report was considered at a meeting of Consortium the Joint Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019. Following the presentation of the review findings the Joint Committee agreed to support the ISOS recommendation and requested a detailed implementation plan to be presented at the December 2019 Joint Committee meeting to take forward the recommendations.
- 7 At their meeting on 19 December 2019 the Joint Committee agreed that the ISOS report is shared with the Cabinets of the five Local Authorities to the Consortium before the end of February 2020, and the five councils consider and restate their commitment to a joint approach to school improvement through the Consortium. A copy of the report to the Joint Committee is attached at Appendix B.

### **Reason for Recommendations**

- 8 Following the review carried out by ISOS into the current delivery arrangements for school improvement services by the Central South Consortium, the five constituent Councils of the Consortium are asked to consider the recommendation of the review report with regard to the future delivery of these services.
- 9 The current Consortium arrangements have been in place since 2013. In November 2019, the Welsh Government also set out proposals in the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill for local authorities and Welsh Ministers to establish Corporate Joint Committees (CJCs) that would support collaborative working on a regional basis. The Bill provides the powers for local authorities to request the establishment of CJCs covering any functions. The Bill also provides Ministerial powers to establish CJCs specifically in the functions of economic development, strategic planning, transport and school improvement. These proposals

could therefore have potential future implications for the Consortium's existing operating model.

- 10 Current arrangements have been in place since 2013. Against a background of significant change in education policy in Wales, the Cabinet are asked to consider the outcome of the review for Cardiff Council and Cardiff schools for the future.
- 11 If the five Council Cabinets confirm their continued support for the delivery of the shared educational advisory services, the Directors of Education and the Acting Managing Director of the Consortium will move forward with:
  - Plans to remodel the current Consortium as advised by ISOS;
  - Three year budget proposals for consideration by the five councils;
  - Opportunities to ensure that the vast majority of grant funding continues to go directly to schools, but that the relevant overheads of delivering WG Curriculum support are appropriately financially supported by the WG grants.

### **Financial Implications**

- 12 There are no financial implications or new expenditure commitments arising directly from this report. The Council makes an annual contribution, from within its revenue budget, towards the operational costs of the Central South Consortium and all costs of delivering, and reviewing, the service are to be funded from within the combined local authority contributions. The outcome of the review, and associated financial implications, will need to be carefully considered by each local authority, as it is important that any opportunities to increase value for money, maximise the use of grant funding or reduce local authority contributions are taken.

### **Legal Implications**

- 13 If a Council wishes to withdraw from the Central South Consortium the legal agreement states:

*“Any Party proposing to withdraw from this Agreement must notify each of the other Parties by giving not less than 2 years notice in writing of its intention to withdraw expiring on 31st March in any given year”.*
- 14 Therefore, the earliest any Council could withdraw from the agreement is 31st March 2022.
- 15 This report seeks to confirm a previous decision of each of the five Councils to collaborate and deliver joint educational advisory services. The decision will meet national and local priorities and comply with the five ways of working set out in the Well-being of Future generations Act.

## **HR Implications**

- 16 There are no HR implications to Cardiff from this report. RCT would provide CSC with any employment related advice in its role of lead authority and employer.

## **Property Implications**

- 17 There are no property implications for this report

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. note the contents of the ISOS report.
2. agree to support the recommendation of the Central South Consortium Joint Committee to continue to deliver shared educational advisory services in partnership with the four other Councils in the region for at least the next three years.

<b>SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b>	<b>NICK BATCHELAR</b> <b>Director of Education &amp; Lifelong Learning</b>
	14 February 2020

*The following appendices are attached:*

Appendix A - Report to CSC Joint Committee Dec 2019, ISOS report "Review of Central South Wales Consortium" Apr 2019

Appendix B- Central South Consortium Joint Committee report 19 December 2109