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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Lynne Neagle AM
Chair
Children, Young People and Education Committee

12 November 2018

Dear Lynne

Thank you for affording us the opportunity to attend Committee as part of its general scrutiny on FE and HE issues on 10 October. This letter is in response to further information you requested during the session.

Firstly, we agreed to share with the Committee the targets under the SLAs the Welsh Government has with private apprenticeship providers. Apprenticeship delivery in Wales is procured through an open, competitive, tender. The Welsh Government currently contracts with 19 lead providers for the delivery of the Apprenticeship Programme. These include Further Education Institutions, Private Training Providers and Third Party Organisations.

All providers are required to ensure that their apprenticeship delivery (including delivery of Higher Apprenticeships) meets with the requirements detailed within the Work Based Learning Programme Specification and associated documentation. The minimum required framework achievement rate for Higher Apprenticeships is 75%. Providers are closely monitored to ensure that they deliver quality programmes in line with contractual requirements. Where the quality of provider's delivery is deemed to be unsatisfactory i.e. below the required performance threshold, they are required to make necessary improvements. Where improvements do not occur, or do not occur within a reasonable timeframe, the Welsh Government reserves the right to terminate the contract with no less than 60 days' notice.

Secondly, you asked for a copy of the Independent Report on the Governance of Regional Skills Partnerships in Wales (Dr John Graystone, March 2018) which we have enclosed with this letter.

Thirdly, we agreed to provide the timescales by which we'd expect the work with HEFCW and the individual universities on their action plan and strategic approach to mental health to be concluded and implemented.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

All Welsh universities already have in place a range of mental health and wellbeing interventions and initiatives to support students and staff. During 2018-19 HEFCW will be announcing funding for regional, collaborative projects to enhance institutions' approaches to supporting mental health, including the identification of effective practice.

HEFCW's work to develop its Strategic Approach to well-being and mental health is ongoing. The approach will be underpinned by related action plans, the first being on supporting students with mental health. The Approach is currently in draft form and will be considered by its student experience committee, SOAC, later this month after which we will have a clearer idea of their publication timescale. The strategic intentions, as currently drafted, include to:

- ensure a long-term commitment to sustaining well-being and health in higher education;
- inform higher education's progress and performance with evidence-based advice and strong partnership working;
- promote continuous improvement and effective practice in well-being and health in higher education; and
- promote higher education's contribution to well-being and health in higher education.

The draft, co-created action plan is being developed in consultation with Universities Wales, NUS Wales, AMOSSHE Wales, representatives from the Future Generations healthy universities and colleges group and Public Health Wales.

HEFCW is also developing a case study publication on healthy universities as part of its HE Nation series, to be launched in spring/summer 2019, and is planning a healthy universities summit in Spring 2019 bringing together universities, students and other interested parties to address issues of well-being and health, including mental health. Their 2020/21 fee and access plan guidance, which will be published early next year, will also highlight the importance of promoting healthy universities and supporting students with mental health to secure equality of opportunity and the promotion of HE.

We hope the above is sufficient, but please let us know if you require any further information on these issues.

Yours sincerely



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Independent Report on the Governance of Regional Skills Partnerships in Wales

Dr John Graystone, March 2018

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Section 1 – Executive summary and recommendations

Executive summary

1. An internal review of Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) carried out by the Welsh Government (WG) recommended that the WG should ‘carry out a review of RSP governance arrangements whilst recognising their existing independent arrangements’.....and ‘there should be a strengthening of the accountability of each RSP to WG, whilst maintaining independence’. (WG, 2017c).
2. As a result, I was asked to consider the following:
 - (i) *Review the governance structures of the three Regional Skills Partnerships (North Wales Economic Ambition Board - RSP; Learning Skills and Innovation Partnership (LSkip) and Regional Learning and Skills Partnership (RLSP)) and their alignment with City Deals / Growth Bid structures, including Growing Mid Wales (GMW), and identify how the accountability of each RSP to Welsh Government (WG) could be strengthened (if appropriate).*
 - (ii) *Consider the remit and terms of reference of each RSP, including any Memorandum and Articles of Association with regional partners.*
 - (iii) *Review the co-operation between the three RSPs, particularly regarding issues that are pertinent across Wales.*
 - (iv) *Consider operating procedures such as frequency of meetings, membership and their accountability to senior structures (such as Economic Ambition Board).*
3. This report describes the governance and work of each of the three RSPs and Growing Mid Wales (GMW), comments on their governance arrangements and makes recommendations. These recommendations while aimed at WG are also directed at RSPs and GMW with the intention of improving their governance. It is of course up to WG whether some or all of these recommendations are conveyed to RSPs/GMW.
4. GMW is not an RSP and its skills priorities are the responsibility of the RSP for South West and Mid Wales. However GMW has an active board and is seeking to be established as a separate regional skills partnership. In this report when I am referring to all four bodies I have used the terminology ‘RSPs/GMW’. When the word RSPs is used, it refers only to the three voluntary partnerships in South West and Mid Wales, South East Wales and North Wales.
5. Those working for the RSPs were very enthusiastic about the contribution of RSPs in identifying and helping to meet skills priorities. There was general acknowledgement from all parties that RSPs had achieved a huge amount given their very tight resources and low levels of staffing. If increased

responsibilities are delegated to RSPs, careful consideration needs to be given to the resources available to RSPs. At present WG allocates £150k in three instalments in arrears annually for each of the three RSPs to the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA). The WLGA passes on this funding to Carmarthenshire County Council (CC) for SW Wales and to Gwynedd CC for North Wales and acts as the accounting authority for SE Wales.

6. The governance arrangements of the three RSPs/GMW have evolved differently but there are a number of common features. For example, each is a voluntary partnership with a private sector chair (in GMW there is a local authority chair) and with representation from employers although this is often through business representative organisations. There is no appetite for RSPs/GMW developing a more formal legal structure or for a more standardised approach to governance.
7. Without the support of the RSP's managers/advisers, I would have found it a challenge to find detailed information about the work of each RSP, a point echoed by several stakeholders. A number of recommendations are therefore made about improving openness and transparency. Thus RSPs/GMW should draw up a publicly available schedule of meetings and RSP/ GMW board members should sign terms of reference which incorporate the Nolan standards of public life, as is currently done in RLSP and GMW. No proposal is made about the size of boards which varies from 21 to 33. It is recommended that RSPs/GMW continue to prioritise the appointment of the right calibre of Board members.
8. There is a relatively high turnover of members and the number of those sending apologies to meetings averages around one-third. RSPs/GMW should therefore review the timing and frequency of meetings. Recommendations are also made on the importance of ensuring translation and bilingual facilities at meetings. WG officials are sometimes observers and sometimes full members of RSP and GMW boards. Their status should be consistent across all RSPs.
9. Many public bodies regularly assess their own performance. It is proposed that each RSP and GMW board should carry out an annual self-assessment to include, for example, attendance, contribution of individual members and the role of cluster or equivalent groups. The aim should be to test how well boards have met their responsibilities and how they could do things better.
10. The names of current RSP members and their roles and responsibilities are not always easy to find. It is proposed that each RSP should publish their membership, minutes and agendas (excluding commercially sensitive material) as is done by GMW and the names and background of Board members. The same recommendation is also directed at the Wales Employment and Skills Board.
11. Respondents were asked to state to whom RSPs/GMW were accountable. There was no consistency in responses. RSP members were clear of their responsibilities but less clear about their accountability. Accountability has generally been 'giving an account for actions taken' rather than 'being held to

account for those actions' (Skelcher and Davis, 1995). There is also some confusion between 'vertical accountability – to government and funders – and 'horizontal accountability' – to local stakeholders (Learning and Skills Improvement Service, 2012). A key question is who gets the blame if things go wrong. It is suggested that the WG issues clear guidance explaining the lines of accountability and reporting arrangements. This will be opportune as governance arrangements are changing as a result of City and Growth Deals. It is also proposed that the RSPs chairs are more closely involved in the appraisal of RSP managers/advisers.

12. A strong argument was put forward that regional employment and skills plans should be biennial or even triennial. At present as soon as a plan is complete, the next plan has to be started without an opportunity to assess its validity. In addition planning tended to be short term and it was hoped that the introduction of City and Growth Deals will encourage longer term planning.
13. Several respondents pointed out that the WG needed to speed up their response to submitted plans and suggested that the priorities letter sent to further education colleges and school sixth forms should be formally copied to RSP chairs.
14. There is regular contact between the three RSP managers/advisers and increased contact between the three RSP chairs. There is little formal cooperation though GMW now has representation from a council in North Wales. Links between RSPs and equivalent organisations across the border in England are being expanded. It is suggested that opportunities for sharing good practice be developed.
15. The new Tertiary Education and Research Commission is due to be established by 2020 or 2021 and will take over the regulation of higher education (HE) institutions and the funding of further education (FE) colleges, work-based learning (WBL) and adult and community learning (ACL) and possibly school sixth forms. It is suggested that RSPs should be kept informed of developments, with representatives serving for example on working groups considering the transition to the new body.
16. Finally, to bring together a number of recommendations, it is proposed that WG and RSPs/GMW work together to develop a national assurance framework drawing on that developed in England for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), setting out the roles and responsibilities of WG, basic rules about membership, guidance on TORs and openness and transparency.
17. The key focus of the recommendations is to ensure that RSPs/GMW are well governed and meet the standards of good governance. This will be achieved if there is clarity over roles, accountability and transparency; and if board members are of the right calibre, act with integrity and ensure their RSP is well run.

List of recommendations

Support to Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) and Growing Mid Wales (GMW)

Recommendation 1: If more responsibilities are to be given to RSPs/GMW as a result of WG initiatives and particularly in the light of City and Growth Deals, careful consideration needs to be given by each region and by WG to the resources (financial and people) available to RSPs/GMW.

Governance structure

Recommendation 2 - The current arrangements under which RSPs/GMW are voluntary partnerships appear to be effective and should continue. There appears to be no benefit in RSPs having a more formal legal structure.

Recommendation 3 – Each RSP/GMW should draw up a publicly available schedule of meetings for the year ahead, setting out which decisions are required and when. This will help board members understand what to expect from meetings and assist stakeholders understand the operation of boards.

Recommendation 4 – Terms of reference (TORs) based on those used by the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership and Growing Mid Wales and which incorporate the seven principles of public life should be signed by all RSP members and prominently displayed on relevant websites. These TORs should emphasise the fact that individuals serve on RSPs to represent their sector and not their own institution. An example of the RLSP TORs which could be used as a model is attached as **Appendix 2**.

Recommendation 5 – It is up to each RSP/GMW to determine the appropriate composition and size of its board. But in doing so, RSPs/GMW should continue to prioritise the appointment of the right calibre of Board members from business and providers and encourage good attendance from members and more stability in membership to reduce turnover. RSPs/GMW should continue to review the times of meetings and their frequency. Translation and bilingual facilities should be available at meetings to encourage first language Welsh speakers. RSPs/GMW should also ensure diversity in membership.

Recommendation 6 – There should be consistency over the position of WG officials attending RSP/GMW meetings. In some cases they attend as full members and in others as observers.

Recommendation 7 - Following good practice in governance, RSPs/GMW should carry out an annual self-assessment of board performance involving the whole board and covering, for example, the contribution of board members, attendance at board meetings and the role of cluster or equivalent groups. The aim would be to determine how well RSPs/GMW have met their responsibilities and how they could do things better.

Openness and transparency

Recommendation 8 - Each RSP/GMW should publish their meeting agendas, minutes (excluding commercially sensitive material) and papers through their websites and social media and explore ways of developing their means of communication. Such openness will help widen understanding of, and trust in, the work of RSPs/GMW. The use of social media should be expanded and records kept of the success of social media communication by, for example, tracking the retweeting of RSP/GMW messages.

Recommendation 9 – Each RSP/GMW should publish on their websites the names and background of Board members possibly with photographs (subject to individual agreement).

Recommendation 10 – In line with Recommendation 8, the membership, meeting agendas and minutes of the Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB) should be published (excluding commercially sensitive material) in a similar way to those of the Council for Economic Development (CED). This would help clarify the relationship between RSPs/GMW, WESB and CED and show the progress of regional employment and skills plans.

Accountability

Recommendation 11 - WG, after consultation with RSPs/GMW, should issue clear guidance outlining to whom RSPs/GMW should report and who should hold them to account. This will enable each RSP to clarify its own lines of accountability. This guidance will be particularly significant at a time when the City and Growth Deals are leading to new responsibilities, changes in reporting arrangements and funding from the UK Government and the private sector.

Recommendation 12 – Each RSP chair should discuss with the relevant accounting body how best the annual appraisal of RSP managers/advisers and other staff seconded to the RSP should be carried out, subject to the HR procedures used by each employer. For example, the RSP chair might attend the appraisal interview or at the very least send in detailed comments on performance.

Identification of skills needs

Recommendation 13 – Employment and skills plans should be produced biennially or even every three years, thus providing the opportunity for a full assessment of the previous plan. The results of such an assessment should be fed back into the next round of planning, leading to more accurate and robust plans. I understand that a decision to do this has been made but not communicated widely. RSPs/GMW therefore should be able to devote more time to assessing future skills needs based on sustained feedback from business, providers and WG. RSPs/GMW should also be encouraged to develop longer term plans so that future skills needs can be addressed.

Recommendation 14 – A time period should be agreed within which WG must send comments to an RSP after receipt of its skills and employment plan.

Recommendation 15 – The WG should ensure that the priorities letters sent by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and the Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning to college principals and to head teachers of schools with sixth forms are copied to RSP/GMW chairs. The letters refer to education and skills priorities and it is sensible that RSPs/GMW should know formally the skills direction set by WG for FE colleges and school sixth forms.

Cooperation between RSPs

Recommendation 16 – RSPs/GMW should continue to develop links with each other. Subject to time constraints, some board members and managers/advisers, for example, could be encouraged to attend and address meetings in other regions and regularly share good practice with the aim of all RSPs/GMW improving their performance. Liaison with LEPs, chambers of commerce and other relevant bodies in England should continue, particularly where there are significant cross border employment flows.

Tertiary Education and Research Commission

Recommendation 17 – The WG should ensure that RSPs/GMW are updated on progress with respect to the setting up of the new Tertiary Education and Research Commission with particular reference to the implications for the work of the RSPs and the City and Growth Deals. RSPs/GMW should actively engage in any relevant working groups and consultations over the functions and structure of the proposed Commission.

A National Assurance Framework

Recommendation 18 - This report has made a number of recommendations to improve decision-making, openness, transparency and accountability. To take these forward, RSPs/GMW and WG should work together to develop a publicly available national assurance framework based on that used for local enterprise partnerships in England but adapted to the Welsh context. Each RSP/GMW should agree and sign off a local assurance framework setting out the roles of WG and relevant bodies such as UK Government, basic rules about the membership of RSPs/GMW (such as having private sector chairs – not in the case of GMW); having a certain proportion of business members and providers; strong support for Welsh language; and a commitment to diversity and the standards of public life covering the expected conduct of members). It could also include guidance on TORs; emphasise openness and transparency in respect to minutes, papers and agendas; and clarify accountability.

Growing Mid Wales

Recommendation 19 - GMW wishes to become an RSP in its own right (see paras 59-60). It is beyond the remit of this report to make a recommendation on this matter. However if the WG decided that GMW should become an RSP, then the recommendations in this report aimed at RSPs should apply also to GMW.

Section 2 – Introduction

Welsh Government's policies on skills

18. The Welsh Government (WG) Policy Statement on Skills (2014a) focused on post-19 skills and identified four key priority areas: skills for jobs and growth; skills that respond to local needs; skills that employers value; and skills for employment.
19. After consultation, the WG (2014b) later published its Skills Implementation Plan identifying policy actions to develop a 'sustainable skills system for the future'. The Plan set out a series of skills performance measures and aimed to achieve an integrated employment and skills programme. Regional skills delivery was seen as making a key contribution. The Plan stated that regional skills partnerships needed to become 'more inclusive and industry-aligned' and work in tandem with City Regions and Enterprise Zones'. A key focus was on expanding and developing traineeships and apprenticeships.

Aims of RSPs as set out by the Welsh Government

20. The stated aims of two RSPs and GMW are attached as **Appendix 1**. The aims of the two RSPs broadly reflect the four key aims for RSPs set out by WG (2014b). Those of GMW which focus on economic development do not mention skills.
 - *to produce and analyse local management information (LMI) aligned to economic intelligence to inform the skills requirements in the regions and inform our future priorities for funding linked to our co-investment policy*
 - *to provide a mechanism to review regional skills provision and advise the Welsh Government on future prioritisation of skills funding in line with regional employment and skills needs*
 - *to act as a strategic body effectively representing regional interests to inform a demand-led and sustainable skills system, ensuring that this is informed by strong industry engagement and takes into account the level of skills utilisation in the region*
 - *to act collectively and strategically to maximise future available funds acknowledging the likely reduction in public funds over the coming years covering the production and analysis of LMI to inform future priorities for funding.*
21. The Action Plan was silent on the structure of regional partnerships. The implication was that governance arrangements were to be determined at regional level.

22. The WG saw RSPs as playing an important role in understanding the skills needs and demand across Wales, identifying priorities and involving providers – FE colleges, training providers and HE institutions – in responding to these. These responsibilities were particularly significant in respect to the allocation of future WG funding for traineeships and apprenticeships. Strong regional collaboration between employers and providers was also envisaged to deliver the skills that employers needed (WG, 2017a) and to promote economic development (WG, 2017b).

Structure of the report

23. This report sets out what is good governance; describes the governance arrangements of each of the RSPs and GMW and the impact of the new City and Growth Deals; identifies some strengths and weaknesses in governance and some similarities and differences; and makes recommendations as to how governance may be strengthened. It does not directly address the performance of RSPs in analysing skills or delivering skills plans or on the effectiveness of their labour market information, although some comments are inevitably made about these areas.
24. I am very grateful to those who gave of their time to discuss with me the governance of the RSPs. A list of those consulted is **attached**. Given the tight time constraint, I was unable to speak to many members of RSPs, whose views would have been valuable.
25. I should add that the enthusiasm and passion of those who work for the RSPs were readily apparent.
26. This small scale review has been funded by the Welsh Government (WG). The content of this report and its recommendations are the author's own.

Methodology

27. The review comprised desk based research including the reading of relevant documents, telephone or one-to-one interviews with some key personnel in the RSPs/GMW and related organisations, and the drawing up of a final report.

Effective Governance

28. The three RSPs/GMW are voluntary partnerships and differ therefore in their governance arrangements from, for example, companies limited by guarantee or charities or non departmental public bodies. They are not subject to Companies or Charity legislation. However there are general principles of good governance which can be applied to RSPs/GMW which have an important strategic role, receive indirectly public money and influence regional and national policy.
29. The Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services (2004) set out the following key areas for effective governance, surprisingly missing out challenge and support:

- focus on an organisation's purpose and on outcomes for citizens and service users
 - perform effectively in clearly defined functions and roles
 - promote values for the whole organisation and demonstrate the values of good governance through behaviour
 - take informed, transparent decisions and manage risk
 - develop the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective
 - engage stakeholders and make accountability real.
30. The Humphreys (2011) review of governance of FE colleges identified four 'pillars' of governance - clarity of purpose; capacity and effectiveness; ownership and scrutiny; and accountability.
31. The Griggs Review in Scotland defined governance as:
- 'the framework of rules and practices by which a Board of any form ensures accountability, fairness and transparency in an organisation's relationship with its stakeholders and shareholders to ensure they are bought into what the organisation does.'*
32. The Charity Commission (2015) identified the six key duties of a trustee as to:
- ensure your charity is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit
 - comply with your charity's governing document and the law
 - act in your charity's best interests
 - ensure your charity is accountable
 - manage your charity's finances responsibly
 - act with reasonable care and skill
33. It might be argued that if management is about running a business, governance is about ensuring that it is run properly (Graystone, 2000).
34. Analysing these approaches to good governance, a number of themes emerge which can be used as the basis for the current study.
- The purpose and role of RSPs/GMW and of their members need to be clear.
 - RSP/GMW members therefore need to be clear to whom they are accountable.
 - The appointment of RSP/GMW members should be open and transparent.
 - RSPs/GMW need to be open and transparent in how they operate.
 - RSP/GMW members need to be of the right calibre and right type so that they can provide sufficient challenge and support to their officers and WG.
 - RSP/GMW members need to act with integrity, declaring any conflicts of interest.
 - RSP/GMW members need to ensure their organisation is run properly.

Section 3 - Description of key regional and national skills organisations

City and Growth Deals

35. The future direction of the RSPs/GMW is influenced by City Deals in the Cardiff City Region and Swansea Bay Area, the Growth Bid in North Wales and the possibility of a Growth Bid in Mid Wales.
36. The Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee (2017) described the three Deals. Cardiff Capital Region City Deal was agreed by the UK Government, WG and the ten local authorities in March 2016. 'There will be a £1.2bn Investment Fund of which £734m will be allocated to the South Wales Metro and £495m to other projects to support economic growth'.
37. The Swansea Bay City Deal was agreed in March 2017 by the UK Government, WG and Swansea Bay City Region Board. 'It will provide £1.3bn of funding over 15 years of which £637m is from the private sector, £241m from the Welsh and UK Governments and £396m from other public sector organisations'.
38. The Chancellor of the Exchequer in the UK Government's March 2017 Budget stated that the UK Government looked forward to receiving the proposals for the North Wales Growth Deal. In December 2017, the six North Wales Councils announced a new body, The North Wales Growth Board, to finalise the Growth Deal and manage its delivery once agreed with the two Governments. The new body is a Local Authority Joint Committee with representatives of key partners: the North Wales and Mersey Dee Business Council, universities and FE colleges. The proposals would enable investment of £1.3billion in the North Wales economy from Growth Deal monies of £328m capital and £55.4m revenue, totalling £383.4m.
39. The Committee noted that there was currently no proposal for a Growth Deal for the GMW partnership. However in March 2018 a Growth Deal had been offered to GMW which was taking active steps to respond to this initiative..
40. Clearly these developments have considerable significance for the identification of skills priorities and each region has responded by making changes to the structure of their RSPs. The changes in North and South East Wales will be implemented from April 2018. This report cannot comment meaningfully on developments that have not yet taken place but reference is made to their impact.
41. There are three RSPs in Wales, all of which may be described as voluntary partnerships. Each has a separate accounting body able to receive public funds. All are undergoing or have undergone changes in their governance structures. In addition, GMW is a local authority led economic partnership which for the analysis of skills falls within the remit of the RSP for the South West and Mid Wales.
42. The three RSPs/GMW have stated aims which are broadly in line with the aims set out by WG (see para 20 above). These aims are set out in **Appendix 1**.

(i) Regional Skills and Learning Partnership for South West and Mid Wales

43. The first RSP to be set up was the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership (RLSP) in 2007 - the RSP for South West and Mid Wales. Initially it was public sector led with provider and Third Sector involvement but no private sector representation. There was some funding from providers. It had a strategy and an operations group. Following encouragement from the WG and a review by SQW of its future structure and purpose (Pringle and Duggett, 2016), a shadow board was set up with private sector involvement and, based on its recommendations, a new reconstituted board established.
44. The reconstituted RLSP covers six local authority areas and is linked to the Swansea Bay City Region, two enterprise zones and the Growing Mid Wales Partnership.
45. Information on Board membership is readily available with names and photographs available on the RLSP's website. The Board now has 22 members (including two WG representatives) who provide oversight and leadership in relation to the skills requirements and demands of industry. Thirteen (59%) are male and nine (41%) female. The Board is chaired by Paul Greenwood from Teddington Engineered Solutions with Barry Liles, principal of Coleg Sir Gâr and chair of the Provider Cluster Group, serving as vice-chair. The Board has eight employers and includes providers - FE, HE, training providers, Third Sector - careers service, local authorities, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and WG. WG are full members of the Board.
46. The RLSP is supported by eight industry cluster groups, the chairs of whom, drawn from the relevant sector, sit on the Board. These cluster groups cover Advanced Materials and Manufacturing; Energy; Constructions; Creative Industries & Professional Services; Food, Farming & Environment; Health and Social Care; Tourism, Leisure & Retail; and Providers.
47. The Board has clear terms of reference (TORs) covering its mission, objectives, membership, structure and responsibilities, operation and accountability and which declare that there should be an annual self-assessment of performance. The TORs also state that Board members should conform to the seven principles of public life. Members are required to sign the document. A copy is attached as **Appendix 2**.
48. There are also TORs for the cluster groups setting out their functions. These state that members should act as a conduit between their cluster group and colleagues and/or networks and it is implied that they should not represent their particular company. Members of the cluster groups are also required to adhere to the seven principles of public life.
49. Administration and premises are provided by Carmarthenshire CC and the WG funds are allocated by WLGA to the Council as the accounting body. The RLSP also runs a regional learning and skills observatory providing local data and intelligence for the labour market. A newsletter is published outlining up to date developments. Information is also disseminated through Twitter. By early

March 2018, 3650 messages had been sent out and there were almost 1,000 followers.

50. Meetings of the RSLP take place around every six weeks and last 2-3 hours. Minutes and agendas are not readily available and are not on any websites. There is a schedule of business meetings and a timetable for key decisions. The last two meetings were attended by 18 and 17 respectively with seven and 10 apologies.
51. The RLSP is also the recognised skills arm of the Swansea Bay City Region and is leading on the Skills and Talent Intervention project for the City Deal. The project will provide an integrated regional approach to delivering skills, focusing on specific sector skills required in order to meet the demand of the Swansea Bay City Region City Deal. The RSP Board will oversee delivery of the project and report to the City Deal Joint Committee and Economic Strategy Advisory Board to ensure that all activities meet with, and deliver, the core aims of the City Deal. The Board will also be responsible for assuring and disseminating performance information and monitoring the impact of the City Deal project on an ongoing basis.

(ii) Growing Mid Wales

52. The RLSP provides the skills support for Growing Mid Wales (GMW), which is the local authority-led economic partnership for Ceredigion and Powys County Councils (CCs).
53. The first meeting of the Partnership took place on 30 March 2015. It was agreed the chair and vice chair of GMW would alternate between the leaders of Ceredigion CC and Powys CC annually.
54. Meetings take place every three and four months, usually in the morning and lasting 2-3 hours. They alternate between venues in Ceredigion and Powys. The minutes of ten meetings that took place up to 28 July 2017 have been published and are available on the Powys local authority website. Minutes of the planned meeting on 30 Nov 2017 have not yet been published..
55. There are 22 bodies listed as serving on the GMW Board. They cover the two local authorities; WG, organisations representing small businesses; farmers; tourism; health; FE and HE; growth zones; the RLSP; and voluntary organisations. At its last recorded meeting (28 July 2017) there were 26 attendees. Six councillors, five local authority officers including one from Gwynedd, five from WG, and the RLSP manager attended. There was a 50:50 gender split.
56. The average attendance including members of GMW and 'those in attendance' is just over 24, ranging from 17 to 29. Apologies averaged just over eight per meeting. The minutes identify individual contributions. Meetings are bilingual. Substitutes are allowed at meetings.

57. Meetings are attended by the RLSP manager. The RLSP Employment and Skills Plan was considered in meetings, during its development and after its completion.
58. There have been discussions with The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership to explore cross border issues and with the NWAB.

TORs, agreed at the second GMW meeting in June 2015, set out roles and responsibilities, membership and conduct of members, standing orders and language status. They are available on the Powys CC website. The TORs also draw attention to the voluntary status of GMW, stating that the Partnership 'is neither a legal entity nor a separately incorporated body and therefore decisions reached will need to be agreed formally by each partner organisation. Decisions made by the Partnership will not be binding upon individuals and partner organisations, allowing organisations to retain their responsibilities and independence of action.'

59. GMW because of its unique economic and social status wishes to become a separate regional skills partnership. The Mid-Wales region, it is argued, has a number of unique features that make growing its local economy a challenge. These are listed as deep rurality, over-dependence on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and peripherality. The view is that the RLSP regional plan is too focused on the Growth Deal in Swansea Bay. Mid Wales is losing many young people who are migrating away from the area and 'we need to grow our own'.
60. GMW is arguing for the same resources as the three RSPs. It is planning to have a Joint Committee involving the two local authorities and South Gwynedd with an executive board comprising employers and providers to respond to the potential Growth Deal initiative.

(iii) North Wales RSP

61. The NWEAB comprises the six North Wales local authorities, the two universities, the two FE colleges, the North Wales Business Council, the Mersey Dee Alliance and the chairs of the Snowdonia, Anglesey and Deeside enterprise zones (NWEAB, 2017a).
62. The Skills and Employment work stream of the NWEAB was recognised by WG as an RSP to inform and drive the skills agenda in North Wales. The NWRSP was set up in 2012 and brings together employers, providers - FE, HE, training providers and Third Sector - local authorities, DWP. WG attends as observers. It has a membership of around 33. Only two private companies attend meetings, one of whom, Sasha Davies from Horizon Nuclear Power, is chair. The preference is for business representative organisations to serve. The vice chair is Sioned Williams, head of economic development at Gwynedd CC, who previously served as chair. .

63. In its evidence on City Deals and the Regional Economies of Wales to the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee, the NWEAB reported that ‘the Ambition Board is the Learning and Skills Partnership for North Wales’ (NWEAB, 2017a). This was clarified in a summary briefing stating that ‘the established Skills and Employment work stream of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB) has been adopted and recognised by Welsh Government as one of the three Regional Skills Partnerships’ (NWEAB, 2017b).
64. The NWRSP espouses a ‘team North Wales’ approach. Gwynedd CC is the accounting body which receives WG funding via the WLGA. By early March 2018, the RSP had 1,200 Twitter followers, having sent out over 3,600 tweets. A translator is available at meetings and some presentations have been through the medium of Welsh.
65. The NWEAB has a website. However while this has extensive information which is aimed at helping business, it says little about what NWEAB is or who makes up its Board.
66. There is no fixed office for staff. The programme manager has a ‘hot desking’ arrangement in various locations. The other full-time member of staff, seconded from Careers Wales, is able to have access to the Careers Wales facilities.
67. Board members represent their sectors and are not meant to serve the interests of their own organisations. The Board meets around four times in a year, each meeting lasting around 2-3 hours. At its meeting on 17 November 2017, 27 attended (including WG and NWRSP staff) with six apologies. On 18 January 2018, 23 attended including four RSP staff and two from the WG, with nine apologies. At that latter meeting, two were directly from the private sector and two from business organisations. and one from local authorities. Three of the apologies were from business organisations. 13 of those attending (57%) were female.
68. The NWRSP does not have cluster or equivalent groups. Its preference has been to work with existing networks such as Creative North Wales which represents the digital creative sector across the region. In terms of governance, the RSP is currently accountable to the NWEAB. The RSP is viewed as fully independent from WG and owned by the NWEAB.
69. At its 18 January 2018 meeting, the NWRSP agreed to set up an FE sub-group to discuss matters affecting the sector.
70. Changes are taking place from April 2018. The NWEAB drew up a North Wales Growth Bid and Growth Deal “heads of terms” are to be agreed by March 2018. The RSP will become a sub-group of the new North Wales Growth Board Joint Committee which will replace the NWEAB. The Joint Committee will bring together the leaders and CEOs of the six local authorities with non-voting representatives from the FE colleges and universities in North Wales, the North Wales Business Council and the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Some providers have expressed concerns that the increased role given to local authorities might cut across the autonomy of

institutions. If the region is successful in securing a Growth Deal, the RSP will have a focus on devolved and non-devolved employment and skills issues.

(iv) Learning, Skills and Innovation Partnership (LSkIP)

71. The Learning, Skills and Innovation Partnership (LSkIP) for South East Wales, the last RSP to be formed, was established following a stakeholder event on 24 September 2014. As of August 2015, it had 15 members plus two WG observers and the LSkIP adviser- 11 male and four female (LSkIP, 2015). These comprised six business representatives covering business organisations such as CBI, FSB, and enterprise zones, three providers (university, FE college and training provider), Wales Trades Union Congress (WTUC), and local government regeneration and education.
72. A core working group was initially set up to take forward detailed work. The core group was replaced by a number of work streams on which sat at least one board member. The secretariat was provided by the WLGA with the WLGA acting as accounting body. By the time of the first newsletter in February 2015, the Board had met four times.
73. Three newsletters were published in 2015 which were widely available and provided an update on developments. The first announced the launch of LSkIP at a stakeholder event in September 2014 and listed the LSkIP Board members; the second covered a stakeholder event held in June 2015, announced its website and the launch of its observatory and provided updates on publications and board membership. The third (and final) newsletter in December 2015 described the third stakeholder event, summarised key points from a Demand/Supply assessment and provided an update on the development of the Cardiff Capital Region. Newsletters were not published after that date. LSkIP uses Twitter with early March 2018 figures showing a total of almost 2,300 tweets sent and over 500 followers.
74. LSkIP has now been reconstituted with an Employment and Skills Board chaired by Leigh Hughes, from Bouygues UK. The Regional Skills and Employment Board supports the delivery of the RSP agenda for Welsh Government.
75. On the Board, there is representation from across industry bodies (CBI Wales, FSB) and priority sector representatives, enterprise zones, Cardiff Capital Region cabinet including City Deal, education (FE, HE, training providers), Third Sector, WTUC, the Regional Engagement Team and Local Authorities. Employer engagement has been further extended through five cluster groups, representing each of the priority sectors and covering ICT Digital; Construction; Human Foundation Economy (health, social care, education); Financial and Professional Services; and Advanced Materials and Manufacturing.

76. Each member of the Employment and Skills Board attends as a representative of their sector or network rather than as an individual. The Board supports both the delivery of the RSP agenda for WG and acts as an advisory board to the Cardiff Capital Region Cabinet and City Deal. The local authority leader from Newport, acts as the lead on skills and is invited to Board meetings.
77. A constitution to be signed by board members sets out the vision, mission and objectives of the Board, core principles of public life, membership, and operational procedures. I haven't seen a copy.
78. At meetings, action points rather than formal minutes are taken and record the attendance and decisions made. They are not publicly available. Meetings take place in the afternoons every six to eight weeks and last between 2-3 hours.
79. The meeting of 23 November 2017 had an attendance of 13 including the LSKIP adviser and nine apologies including from WG. The previous meeting on 5 October 2017 had an attendance of 12 and 10 apologies. The total of 22 possible attendees on the November meeting included three from WG, three from LSKIP, four directly from business, three from business representative organisations (construction, financial and professional services, and ICT sectors), three from local authorities and four from providers. Of those attending the meeting, ten were male and four female. If apologies are included, 12 were male and 10 female.
80. The Cardiff Capital Region Board, established in November 2013, created a transition Board to promote joint future working, manage transitioning governance, advise on other regional developments and continue the work of the previous Board in respect of developments such as the City Deal (Barry, 2015).
81. A Joint Cabinet, bringing together the leaders (voting) and chief executives (non-voting) of the ten local authorities, has been established. The Regional Skills and Employment Board will report directly to the Cabinet together with the Regional Business Council and the Regional Economic Growth Partnership (REGP). LSKIP will no longer exist. From 1 April 2018, the LSKIP adviser currently seconded from WLGA will be seconded to the Cardiff Capital Region. The Cabinet will have the status of a Joint Committee and be the ultimate decision making body in the governance structure. Cardiff City Council will act as the accounting authority for the £1.2bn City Deal funding.
82. The REGP's membership has been agreed and members of the Regional Business Council's membership were recently announced (Palmer 2018).
83. A comprehensive agreement will be drawn up between the participating authorities, which will bind and commit each individual local authority and any successor authority (in the event of local government re-organisation) for such duration as is necessary to deliver the City Deal. The Cardiff Capital Region has committed to reviewing the City Deal governance and exploring the future options for moving to even stronger

and effective governance that is legally binding. The review will include consulting the Welsh Government and the UK Government to identify actions needed to take forward future governance options.

(v) Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB)

84. WESB was first established as an independent advisory body in 2008. It was chaired by the Wales Commissioner who sat on the now abolished UK Commission for Employment and Skills and later by the relevant Skills Minister. It has now been reconstituted. The membership of WESB 'has been 'refreshed to provide strategic input and robust challenge to shape future skills, apprenticeships, HE and lifelong learning' (Council for Economic Development, meeting (2017).
85. WESB serves as an independent employer-led body to advise WG 'on all matters relating to post-16 employment and skills policy to ensure delivery is better aligned to the needs of employers and individuals across Wales....It will provide the strategic input and robust challenge to shape future skills, apprenticeships, higher education and lifelong learning policy (WG 2018d)'. It reports directly to the Council for Economic Development (CED) on employment and skills matters. WESB has a role in overseeing the regional priorities put forward by RSPs through their annual regional employment and skills plans and alignment of activity to City and Growth Deals.
86. This new working arrangement should provide WG with an enhanced strategic perspective on skills and strengthen links with business, social enterprise and trade unions to influence policy across a number of areas relevant to skills and the wider economy.
87. The Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning attends in an observer capacity.
88. Each RSP Chair is a full member of WESB. At the WESB meeting on September 2017, the Board agreed that the three RSP employer Chairs would chair WESB on a rotational basis, with each hosting a regionally focused meeting. This will serve to further strengthen employer engagement across the regions. WESB meets three times per year.
89. The core membership of WESB is comprised of the three RSP chairs; employers; WTUC; and representatives from HE, FE, WBL, Careers Wales, Qualifications Wales, CBI; FSB, Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC), National Health Service (NHS) Confederation. The membership of 20, comprising eight women and 12 men, is set out in **Appendix 4**. Minutes and agendas are neither published nor widely available.

(vi) Council for Economic Development

90. The First Minister chairs the Council for Economic Development (CED) which meets three times a year. At the 26 January 2017 meeting, the decision to change its name from the Council for Economic Renewal to the Council for Economic Development was announced. The Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure stated that the purpose of the Council was to provide Council members with the opportunity to inform and influence the WG approach; benefit the WG through challenge and advice; and provide a channel through which WG can keep members informed on latest developments (Council for Economic Renewal, 2017a).
91. CED is made up of a range of business, social enterprise and trade union representatives. Agendas and minutes are published and easily available. Its importance to the WG is underlined by the presence at its meeting on 19 July 2017, attended by 17 people, of the First Minister, two Cabinet Secretaries and one Minister. In addition, ten WG officials attended for some or all of the meeting. There were eight apologies (CAD, 2017b).
92. Each of the three meetings in 2017 discussed developments impacting on skills.

Section 4 – Comment and recommendations

(i) Similarities and differences between the three RSPs/GMW

93. The governance arrangements of the three RSPs/GMW have evolved differently. Membership of the four based generally on records of recent meetings is attached at **Appendix 4**. There are some things in common.
- a) Each board is a voluntary partnership working with an agreed accounting body which is a legal entity able to receive and account for public funds.
 - b) The board structure has been established at regional level to reflect the views of stakeholders.
 - c) Each board now has a private sector chair (from Spring 2017).
 - d) Employer membership has widened with representation from key sectors. However there is still a shortage of employers directly serving on the RSPs.
 - e) Each RSP receives annual funding of £150k from Welsh Government via a relevant accounting body.
 - f) RSPs are not directly accountable for how WG funding is spent; this is the responsibility of the relevant accounting body.
 - g) RSPs/GMW are changing or have recently changed their governance arrangements. Further changes are taking place in the light of City and Growth Deals.
 - h) Board meetings take place between 3-6 times per year and usually last around 2-3 hours.
 - i) Written records of Board meetings are kept – formal minutes in three cases including GMW and in one case action points.
 - j) These records are not easily available through websites, except in the case of the GMW.
 - k) Apologies in recent meeting of the RSPs/GMW were relatively high at an average of around 33%, ranging from 18% to 45%.
 - l) There has been a high turnover of members.
 - m) Substitutes are allowed where necessary.
 - n) The WG attends meetings of all three RSPs/GMW.
 - o) Each Board chair sits on WESB and takes it in turn to chair WESB meetings.

94. The differences are:

- a) Each Board is configured differently.
- b) Membership and size of the boards vary.
- c) Not all RSPs have clear terms of reference (TORs) and not all members have signed a TOR or have signed up to follow the seven principles of public life.
- d) Each RSP/GMW has a different relationship with its stakeholders.
- e) Some have cluster or equivalent feeder groups; others prefer to work with existing networks.
- f) There is some confusion about the respective role of various bodies involved in skills policy and delivery.

95. The table below shows the similarities and differences between the three RSPs and the GMW.

Table: Comparison between RSPs in respect to membership and attendance* (drawing where possible on recent minutes and public documents)

	RLSP	GMW	North Wales RSP	LSkip
Legal status	Voluntary partnership	Voluntary partnership	Voluntary partnership	Voluntary partnership
Accountable body	Carmarthenshire CC	Ceredigion CC and Powys CC	Gwynedd CC	WLGA then Cardiff LA from 1 April 2018
Size of Board	21	Avg 24	33	22
Chaired by private sector	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Total no. of business representatives on board**	8	8	5	4
No. directly from private sector on board	7	1	2	4
No. of providers on board	5	2	6	6
Welsh Governance attendance	As members	As members	As observers	As observers
Minutes publicly available	No	Yes	No	No
Apologies at recent meetings	10 (most recent meeting)	Avg 8	7-8 (last two meetings)	9 (most recent meeting)
Terms of reference	Yes	Yes	Not seen	Not seen
Annual self assessment carried out	Yes (as set out in TOR)	No	No	No
Gender balance	59% male/41% female	50% male/50% female	47% male, 53% female	55% male, 45% female
Substitutes allowed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

*Figures are based where appropriate on attendance at recent board meetings.

(ii) Support to Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) and Growing Mid Wales (GMW)

96. Those working for the RSPs were very enthusiastic about the contribution of RSPs in identifying and helping to meet skills priorities. There was general acknowledgement from all parties that RSPs had achieved a huge amount given their very tight resources and low levels of staffing. The RLSP had four full time staff, NWRSP two full-time and LSkip two full-time. This compares with a median of eight in LEPs in England.

Recommendation 1: If more responsibilities are to be given to RSPs/GMW as a result of WG initiatives and particularly in the light of City and Growth Deals, careful consideration needs to be given by each region and by WG to the resources (financial and people) available to RSPs/GMW.

(iii) Governance structure

97. Each RSP acts as a strategic partnership for their region, on a voluntary basis. The WLGA receives funds from WG in three instalments in arrears to support RSPs. This funding is then allocated to Carmarthenshire CC for the RLSP, Gwynedd CC in the case of NW RSP and retained by WLGA for South East Wales. The local authority or the WLGA acts as the accounting body. RSPs do not deliver services. They do not have a direct contract with WG so are not directly accountable to WG.
98. Although several respondents stated that they would prefer a clearer legal structure with the RSP being given a separate legal identity, there was not an appetite generally for this approach. The evidence from the LEPs in England, where almost one half are companies limited by guarantee with the rest being mainly voluntary partnerships or unincorporated bodies, is that there is no difference in performance between the two models (National Audit Office 2016 and **Appendix 3**). It should be noted that LEPs in England are allocated funding for capital projects, the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund.

Recommendation 2 - The current arrangements under which RSPs are voluntary partnerships appear to be effective and should continue. There appears to be no benefit in RSPs having a more formal legal structure.

99. Each RSP/GMW has developed different governance arrangements, taking account of local circumstances and context. As such, they have evolved different ways of working. For example, LSKIP and RLSP draw on specially convened cluster or sector groups whereas the NWRSP prefers to work with existing networks.
100. This regional variation is a strength in that local stakeholders can continue to influence the shape of the governance structure. The weakness is that there is no standardisation in the way they operate although, as shown in the table above, there are similarities in the way they work. Some national providers have to deal with more than one RSP. They pointed out that the lack of standardisation between RSPs/GMW hinders effective interaction.
101. Meetings of RSPs/GMW last around 2-3 hours and take place in intervals of around 6-8 weeks. Respondents stated that there was some form of schedule of meetings published at the beginning of each accounting year setting out the decisions to be required during the year. I did not, however, see any examples.

Recommendation 3 – Each RSP/GMW should draw up a publicly available schedule of meetings for the year ahead, setting out which decisions are required and when. This will help board members understand what to expect from meetings and assist stakeholders understand the operation of boards.

102. The RLSP has terms of reference (TORs) which have to be signed by members. These cover vision, mission, objectives and membership. They also covers core structure and responsibilities (which include the seven principles of public life) and accountability. These were not displayed on the website. The GMW TORs are also signed and are prominently displayed on the website of Powys local authority.
103. I was told NWRSP and LSkIP had TORS but these are not readily available and I did not see copies.
104. Although I was informed that individual Board members represent their sector and not their individual companies and organisations, I am unsure of the effectiveness of the reporting back mechanisms. The role of representatives serving on GMW was clearly laid out in the TORs with members being expected to give an annual report to their constituents. In the RLSP TORs, representatives are expected to ‘communicate information about any work or development to their sector’. Some respondents reported that business representatives on RSPs sometimes had difficulty in separating out the interests of their own businesses from those of the sector they were representing.

Recommendation 4 – Terms of reference (TORs) based on those used by the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership and Growing Mid Wales and which incorporate the seven principles of public life should be signed by all RSP members and prominently displayed on relevant websites. These TORs should emphasise the fact that individuals serve on RSPs to represent their sector and not their own institution. An example of the RLSP TORs which could be used as a model is attached as Appendix 2.

105. The number of people attending meetings of RSPs/GMW boards ranged from 21 to 33 members.
106. There is no ideal size for a board. Large boards ensure representation from a wide range of stakeholders but might make it more difficult for individuals to participate and inhibit decision-making. One study showed that the optimum size for the effectiveness of a group is seven and that effectiveness of decision-making falls by 10% for every one person added to the group (Blenko et al, 2009). On the other hand a small board excludes key stakeholders and responsibilities and duties are shared between a reduced number of members.

107. A comparison with other bodies shows that the average size of NHS Trusts is 12.9 and of clinical commissioning groups 14.3 (Sealy, 2016); that of FE governing bodies is 17.3 (Graystone, 2015) and that of universities 18 to 20 (Schofield, 2012). Humphreys recommended an FE governing body of 8-12, albeit with a larger membership group to scrutinise the board (Humphreys, 2011). RSPs are very different from these legal entities. A more relevant comparison might be with LEPs where the average size is 15 with a range of 10-27 (Ward, 2017).
108. There has been a relatively high turnover of Board members. For example, 26 attended the first GMW meeting in March 2015. Only eight of these attended the July 2017 meeting. Of the 17 members of LSKIP listed in 2015, only five attended the meeting in November 2017. Figures were not available for the other RSPs. The changes taking place as a result of the City and Growth Deals will further impact membership.
109. Attendance at meetings is patchy. As noted in the table above, apologies at RSP/GMW meetings analysed averaged around one-third, ranging from 18% to 45%. Attendance is influenced by many factors. These might include pressures on the diaries of senior managers, the frequency of meetings, where meetings are held and the timings of meetings.
110. There is also a different pattern with respect to WG attendance. WG officials are entitled to attend RSP/GMW meetings (although this is not made explicit). However, in North Wales and LSKIP they are listed as observers whereas in the RLSP and GMW they are full members.
111. The gender ratio - female membership of RSPs/GMW ranged between 41% to 53% - was healthier than in many public bodies (Sealy, 2016, Graystone, 2015). The number and proportion of Welsh speakers are not recorded though meetings of the NWRSP and GMW have translation facilities to enable contributions though the medium of Welsh. There are no figures for disabled and others with protected characteristics.
112. The importance of ensuring the right calibre and type of RSP member was raised by several respondents. While some felt that the right people and the right organisations were involved as members, others argued that RSPs were not attracting the high calibre of businessmen and businesswomen able to challenge officials and think strategically. At least one RSP preferred to go for HR directors rather than managing directors. Others felt that this favoured large companies at the expense of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In addition the use of substitutes meant that attendance at meetings of RSPs/GMW was not consistent.
113. Dorger argued that effective boards needed to have a balance of professional expertise to help with strategic priorities; diversity requirements in terms of age, ethnicity, or gender; and representational requirements in terms of business and provider stakeholders (Dorger Consulting, 2011). These categories can usefully be applied to RSPs/GMW.

114. Many boards of public bodies regularly assess their own performance, usually on an annual basis. The purpose of self-assessment is to enable a board to assess specific issues, benchmark against other boards, ensure it is doing its very best and aspiring to be outstanding, and to demonstrate leadership (Association of Colleges, 2014). The RLSP TORs state that the Board should undergo an annual self- assessment to 'assess the effectiveness of the Board, including its future continuation'. Self-assessment is used by Estyn when inspecting education institutions and by many boards of public bodies. The overall aim is to encourage self-reflection and, building on points arising, continually to improve performance. Such an approach can be applied to RSPs/GMW.

Recommendation 5 – It is up to each RSP/GMW to determine the appropriate composition and size of its board. But in doing so, RSPs/GMW should continue to prioritise the appointment of the right calibre of Board members from business and providers and encourage good attendance from members and more stability in membership to reduce turnover. RSPs/GMW should continue to review the times of meetings and their frequency. Translation and bilingual facilities should be available at meetings to encourage first language Welsh speakers. RSPs/GMW should also ensure diversity in membership.

Recommendation 6 – There should be consistency over the position of Welsh Government (WG) officials attending RSP/GMW meetings. In some cases they attend as full members and in others as observers.

Recommendation 7 - Following good practice in governance, RSPs/GMW should carry out an annual self-assessment of board performance involving the whole board and covering, for example, the contribution of board members, attendance at board meetings and the role of cluster or equivalent groups. The aim would be to determine how well RSPs/GMW have met their responsibilities and how they could do things better.

(iv) Openness and transparency

115. RSPs/GMW have websites of varying quality. All use social media including Twitter. However, only GMW publishes agendas, minutes and papers. This compares with LEPs where two-thirds make their minutes publicly available (Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) and FSB, 2014). Making such information more widely available might assist understanding of the work of RSPs and promote transparency. Clearly in some meetings there is a need for commercial sensitivity and quite rightly such discussions and decisions must be treated as confidential.

116. In some cases, it is difficult even to find out the current names of those serving on RSP boards and their roles and responsibilities. Some list the names of organisations but not the individual members. Information on the skills and expertise of RSP/GMW members could help show the range of experience on boards and help identify any skill gaps. The RLSP website has photographs of board members. It would be relatively easy to display the names of RSP/GMW members on websites, their photographs (subject to individual agreement) and a short resume of their background and skills. Such practice is common in education and skills organisations.
117. The means of communication from boards to stakeholders is not always apparent. The RLSP uses newsletters which are included on websites. LSKIP no longer issues newsletters electronically. All use stakeholder events which help shape skills plans and policy documents.
118. As with other education and skills bodies, RSPs have not always succeeded in attracting SMEs to serve on their boards or on their cluster or equivalent groups. However the FSB which represents 10,000 SMEs in Wales is involved in all RSPs/GMW and reported satisfaction in at least one RSP at the positive involvement of FSB in key decisions. And a detailed survey anglicising the skills needs of SMEs across priority sectors was conducted by Cardiff and Vale College on behalf of LSKIP (Scorey and Jones-Evans, 2017) However, those running micro-businesses do not have time or resources to commit to meetings. The use of social media should be actively encouraged to reach SMEs. Twitter accounts of the three RSPs total almost 3,000 followers. This is tiny compared to the 236,500 SMEs in Wales, of which 225,500 are micro-businesses (Barry, 2016).
119. A number of respondents were unclear of the role of WESB. It is now chaired in turn by the chairs of the three RSPs and is attended by the RSP officers. This helps liaison with RSPs. The agendas, papers and minutes of CED are widely available through the WG website. This is not the case for WESB.

Recommendation 8 - Each RSP/GMW should publish their meeting agendas, minutes (excluding commercially sensitive material) and papers through their websites and social media and explore ways of developing their means of communication. Such openness will help widen understanding of, and trust in, the work of RSPs/GMW. The use of social media should be expanded and records kept of the success of social media communication by, for example, tracking the retweeting of RSP/GMW messages.

Recommendation 9 – Each RSP/GMW should publish on their websites the names and background of Board members possibly with photographs (subject to individual agreement).

Recommendation 10 – In line with Recommendation 8, the membership, meeting agendas and minutes of the Wales Employment and Skills Board (WESB) should be published (excluding commercially sensitive material) in a similar way to those of the Council for Economic Development (CED). This would help clarify the relationship between RSPs/GMW, WESB and CED and show the progress of regional employment and skills plans.

(v) Accountability

120. The WG review of RSPs stated that the purpose of funding was to support RSPs to identify skills needs and advise the WG. The contract between WG and WLGA set out agreed targets and outputs which are subject to a 'robust monitoring process' (WG, 2017c).
121. RSP members appear to be clear about their responsibilities but perhaps less clear about their accountability. There was a variety of views as to whom Board members were currently accountable. Some felt they were accountable to WG especially in the light of the financial support from WG for RSPs and the WG's commitment to working increasingly through the regions. Others felt they were accountable to the accounting body that received public funds or to a higher level board within their region (for example the NWEAB in North Wales and in future to Joint Committees) or to any body that contributed funds or related expenses including accommodation. Others felt a responsibility to their own sectors. In the case of GMW accountability was to the local authorities.
122. There was similar confusion in England with respect to the LEPs (CLES and FSB, 2014). Less than half the LEPs felt that they were clear lines of accountability to the local electorate (NAO,2017). The review of the governance of enterprise and skills in Scotland attempted to draw up clear lines of accountability (Crerer, 2017) but this was rejected by the relevant Minister (BBC Scotland, 2017).
123. Accountability for RSPs/GMW has generally been 'giving an account for actions taken' rather than 'being held to account for those actions' by their local communities (Skelcher and Davis 1995). The former involves explaining actions through the use of data and other information; the latter requires clarity over where the buck stops. The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) in discussing the accountability of FE colleges in England drew attention to the tension between 'vertical accountability' – to government and funders – and 'horizontal accountability' – to local stakeholders. LSIS could equally been discussing RSPs/GMW.

124. In answer to the question - who takes the blame if things go wrong? - there are no clear answers. An example might be a regional employment and skills plan. Let's say that as a result, an FE college or training provider closes some courses which had recruited, replacing them with courses in areas identified as regional priorities. But few if any students take up the opportunities available. The college/training provider thus loses crucial income and is forced to shed staff. The relevant governing body might blame the chief executive; the chief executive might blame the RSP; in its turn, the RSP might blame the WG for not scrutinising its skills plan effectively; and the WG might blame the region for not having robust plans in place and possibly the WLGA which receives the funding. The RSP might blame the college or training provider for poor marketing of the relevant courses. And so on.
125. Each RSP/GMW is going through further changes as a result of the City Deals in Cardiff and Swansea Bay and the Growth Deals in North Wales and potentially in Mid Wales. It is too early to comment on the effectiveness of the new arrangements. However those I spoke to felt that the new arrangements run the risk of the already confusing skills agenda becoming more complex. Who will make the ultimate decisions about skills priorities in a region? Will the higher level skills needs of the City and Growth Deals take precedent over those of, for example, those not in education, employment or training (NEETs) who might benefit, initially at least, from provision in lower skills areas?
126. An Assembly Committee considering the impact of City Deals on the regions expressed concern at the risk of another bureaucratic layer being added and recommended that the new arrangements should ensure decision-making is streamlined (Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee, 2017). The Committee also recommended that the governance of Growth Deals should enable proper scrutiny to ensure clarity over who makes the decisions, how money is spent, who is accountable for outcomes and who is responsible if targets are not met.
127. Two RSP managers/advisers are seconded to the relevant local authority (Carmarthenshire and Gwynedd) which receives public funds and acts as the accounting body. The third is currently employed by WLGA in a similar capacity. The annual appraisal of performance of all three is subject to the internal HR procedures of their employer. Although it is for each employer to determine how they appraise the performance of their senior managers, it seems sensible that the chairs of each RSP are involved in some way in this process, either attending the appraisal interview or sending in their detailed comments. And consideration should be given to the appraisal of others seconded to the RSP.

Recommendation 11 - WG, after consultation with RSPs/GMW, should issue clear guidance outlining to whom RSPs/GMW should report and who should hold them to account. This will enable each RSP/GMW to clarify its own lines of accountability. This guidance will be particularly significant at a time when the City and Growth Deals are leading to new responsibilities, changes in reporting arrangements and funding from the UK Government and the private sector.

Recommendation 12 –Each RSP chair should discuss with the relevant accounting body how best the annual appraisal of RSP managers/advisers and other staff seconded to the RSP should be carried out, subject to the HR procedures used by each employer. For example, the RSP chair might attend the appraisal interview or at the very least send in detailed comments on performance.

(vi) Identification of skills needs

128. There was general support from business representatives and providers for the regional planning of skills and a recognition that the WG was looking to devolve more responsibility to the regions. However most of the providers felt that the plans needed further development and that the data collected must be more accurate for the providers to have confidence in the plans. In addition there was lack of clarity as to whom the plans were aimed at – business, providers, learners or WG.
129. Some providers felt that they were not fully involved in regional planning and their views were not sufficiently taken into account in preparing plans. Some national providers drew attention to the challenge of having to work with three separate RSPs, each with their own distinctive approach. However others recognised that they needed to be more proactive in working with the RSPs. It was suggested that RSPs could increase the number of consultative and feedback workshops throughout the year to ensure the involvement of a wider range of stakeholders.
130. Providers recognised that regional plans were improving but could be marketed better throughout the region. They argued that plans needed to be carefully assessed. Based on feedback from business and providers, the collection of labour market information will inevitably continue to improve. And stakeholders can then have more confidence that the priorities set out in regional plans reflect skills needs in their areas. It was also pointed out that ways should be explored to more fully involve schools with attention drawn to the relatively low literacy and numeracy levels of many school leavers who join the job market. There is an opportunity for increased involvement with schools following the phased implementation of the Donaldson curriculum reforms (Donaldson, 2015). And schools are now running more vocationally relevant courses.

It should be noted that two RSPs include a director of education on their board.

131. Some FE colleges and training providers pointed out that they provide courses (for example level 1 and level 2 vocational courses) which might not fit into regional priorities. These courses provide an opportunity for young people and adults to gain confidence to enable them to progress on to those courses which might more readily address skills priority areas. However if the opportunity to take advantage of such level 1 and level 2 courses is taken away, many of the youngsters are at a high risk of becoming NEETs. This point is made in para 125 above and, more eloquently, by WTUC which sees raising skills levels as playing a key role in bringing about a more equal society.

“Investment in skills and infrastructure are of course central to boosting prosperity. These must achieve measurable outcomes for people affected by low wages, precarious work, unemployment and wider social disadvantage. In practice that means infrastructure and skills development being specifically designed and planned to support the creation of a more equal and sustainable economy”.
(Mansfield, 2017)

132. SME representatives pointed out that regional skills priorities should not ignore the skills needs in traditional trades such as plumbing and car mechanics. With the focus often on higher level skills; these are sometimes ignored or given low priority.
133. A number of college principals raised concerns about the risk to their NPISH (non profit serving households) status being undermined if RSPs became too interventionist and referred to concerns over ‘micro-management’ of college courses.
134. Some respondents drew attention to the planning cycle. Employment and skills plans had to be produced annually. As soon as one plan was completed, another plan had to be started. This gave no time to learn the lessons from the previous plan. It was felt that RSP boards could devote more time in analysing feedback from one plan which could be fed into the next planning cycle. Thus plans should preferably be drawn up biennially or even every three years.
135. Another point made was that because of the way RSPs/GMW are funded, the focus of plans is on the short term rather than the longer term in respect to skills priorities. It is hoped that the City and Growth Deals will encourage the analysis of skills needs over a longer time period.
136. Several of the above points are outside the scope of the present study but are included as useful background.

Recommendation 13 – Employment and skills plans should be produced biennially or even every three years, thus providing the opportunity for a full assessment of the previous plan. The results of such an assessment should be fed back into the next round of planning, leading to more accurate and robust plans. I understand that a decision to on this has been made but not communicated widely. RSPs/GMW therefore should be able to devote more time to assessing future skills needs based on sustained feedback from business, providers and WG. RSPs/GMW should also be encouraged to develop longer term plans so that future skills needs can be addressed.

137. Several respondents commented on the need for WG to speed up its responses to RSP plans. Often the response came too late as plans had already been published or colleges and training providers had already planned their provision for the following year.
138. It was pointed out that the priorities letters, sent by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and the Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning to principals of FE colleges and headteachers of schools with sixth forms, have not been copied to chairs of RSPs. These set out priorities for the period ahead and ‘provide a framework which will help shape your future strategies and operational plans’ (Williams and Davies, 2016). Although RSPs chairs receive these letters by circuitous routes, it is suggested that formally copying in RSP chairs would help underline the WG’s commitment to regional planning.

Recommendation 16 – A time period should be agreed within which WG must send comments to an RSP after receipt of its skills and employment plan.

Recommendation 17 – The WG should ensure that the priorities letters sent by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and the Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning to college principals and to head teachers of schools with sixth forms are copied to RSP/GMW chairs. The letters refer to education and skills priorities and it is sensible that RSPs/GMW should know formally the skills direction set by WG for FE colleges and school sixth forms.

(vii) Cooperation between RSPs

139. There is little formal cooperation between RSPs as far as Board members are concerned. GMW has representation on the RLSP and this arrangement is reciprocated. There is liaison between the three managers/advisers who organise and administer the three RSPs. I was told that there is some sharing of good practice and ‘healthy competition’ between the three. The three RSP chairs meet two or three times per year and have at least an annual appointment with the Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning. The three chairs sit

on WESB and now in turn chair its meetings. The Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning attends these meetings. This has inevitably improved cross-RSP and Ministerial links.

140. RSPs liaise with equivalent organisations in England. For example the NWRSP includes the North Wales and Mersey Dee Business Council and the West Cheshire and North Wales Chamber in its membership and GMW several times discussed its relationship with The Marches LEP.
141. There are examples of good practice that could usefully be shared between the RSPs/GMW and with organisations across the border.

Recommendation 18 – RSPs/GMW should continue to develop links with each other. Subject to time constraints, some board members and managers/advisers, for example, could be encouraged to attend and address meetings in other regions and regularly share good practice with the aim of all RSPs/GMW improving their performance. Liaison with LEPs, chambers of commerce and other relevant bodies in England should continue, particularly where there are significant cross border employment flows.

(viii) Tertiary Education and Research Commission

142. The new Tertiary Education and Research Commission is due to be established in 2020 or 2021, following the WG acceptance of the recommendations of the Hazelkorn Review (2016). The Commission will replace the Higher Education Funding Council Wales. Current arrangements for funding FE colleges, WBL and ACL and possibly school sixth forms will be transferred to the Commission..
143. The 2017 WG consultation showed general support for the proposed new body (Williams, 2017). Further consultations are taking place. Some respondents suggested that the RSPs needed to be kept closely informed of the implications for the regional planning of employment and skills developments and that RSPs/GMW should contribute to any working groups set up to take forward the proposals .

Recommendation 19 – The WG should ensure that RSPs/GMW are updated on progress with respect to the setting up of the new Tertiary Education and Research Commission with particular reference to the implications for the work of the RSPs/GMW and the City and Growth Deals. RSPs/GMW should actively engage in any relevant working groups and consultations over the functions and structure of the proposed Commission.

(ix) National Assurance Framework

144. The final recommendation incorporates a number of the recommendations already made and sets out a way to move forward. It proposes a national assurance framework. This reflects the recommendations of the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee (2017), the national assurance framework developed for LEPs (Department for Communities and Local Government 2016) and the expanding and developing responsibilities accorded to RSPs by the WG.

Recommendation 18 - This report has made a number of recommendations to improve decision-making, openness, transparency and accountability. To take these forward, RSPs/GMW and WG should work together to develop a publicly available national assurance framework based on that used for local enterprise partnerships in England but adapted to the Welsh context. Each RSP/GMW should agree and sign off a local assurance framework setting out the roles of WG and relevant bodies such as UK Government, basic rules about the membership of RSPs/GMW (such as having private sector chairs – not in the case of GMW); having a certain proportion of business members and providers; strong support for Welsh language; and a commitment to diversity and the standards of public life covering the expected conduct of members). It could also include guidance on TORs; emphasise openness and transparency in respect to minutes, papers and agendas; and clarify accountability.

(x) GMW

Recommendation 19 - GMW wishes to become an RSP in its own right (see paras 59-60). It is beyond the remit of this report to make a recommendation on this matter. However if the WG decided that GMW should become an RSP, then the recommendations in this report aimed at RSPs should apply also to GMW.

Section 5 - Conclusions

145. This small scale review has described the governance arrangements of the three RSPs and the GMW in Wales.
146. RSPs produce regional employment and skills plans to analyse and influence the provision of skills based on regional economic need, to support growth and key infrastructure projects in each region. On the basis of these plans, RSPs make recommendations to Welsh Government to influence the prioritisation and deployment of skills funding. The WG intends that the plans will reach a far wider audience in coming years, expanding their influence across Welsh Government and the skills delivery infrastructure. To achieve this ambitious agenda, RSPs (and GMW) need to be well governed.
147. As set out in para 34 above, a number of criteria were identified for effective governance. These covered the following:
- The purpose and role of RSPs/GMW and of their members need to be clear.
 - RSP/GMW members therefore need to be clear to whom they are accountable.
 - The appointment of RSP/GMW members should be open and transparent.
 - RSP/GMW members need to be of the right calibre and right type so that they can provide sufficient challenge and support to their officers and WG.
 - RSPs/GMW need to be open and transparent in how they operate.
 - RSP/GMW members need to act with integrity, declaring any conflicts of interest.
 - RSP/GMW members need to ensure their organisation is run properly
148. The 19 recommendations aimed at RSPs/GMW and at WG are intended to meet these criteria.

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People interviewed (either face to face or by telephone)

Jayne Roberts and Meurig Thomas, Welsh Government
Jane Lewis, RLSP manager
Karen Higgins (Skills and Capacity Adviser, LSKIP
Iwan Thomas, Regional Programme Manager, NWEAB-RSP
Martin Mansfield, General Secretary, Wales TUC (by telephone)
Ian Price, Director, CBI Wales
Kieron Rees, Policy Adviser, Universities Wales
Dafydd Evans, Barry Liles, Mark Jones, Guy Lacey, David Jones (all by telephone)
(college principals)
Mike Leamond by telephone and Joshua Miles, Robert Basini, FSB
Sasha Davies, Paul Greenwood, Leigh Hughes, chairs of the three RSPs, seen
together
Eluned Morgan, Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning and Huw Morris,
Welsh Government (by telephone)
Steven Williams, Senior Regulation and Strategy Manager, Higher Education
Funding Council for Wales (by telephone)
Operations Management Group of the National Training Federation for Wales (17 in
attendance)
Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, Leader of Ceredigion County Council and chair of GMW
(by telephone)

Initialisms and acronyms used in report

CBI: Confederation of British Industry
CC: County Council
CED: Council for Economic Development
CLES: Centre for Local Economic Strategies
FE: Further Education
DWP: Department for Work and Pensions
FSB: Federation of Small Businesses
GMW: Growing Mid Wales
HE: Higher Education
LEP: Local Enterprise Partnership
LMI: Labour Market Information or Local Management Information
LSKIP: Learning Skills and Innovation Partnership (RSP covering SE Wales)
NAO: National Audit Office
NTFW: National Federation of Training Providers
NWEAB: North Wales Economic Ambition Board
NWRSP: North Wales RSP
RLSP: Regional Learning and Skills Partnership (for South West and Mid Wales)
RSP: Regional Skills Partnership
SME: Small Medium Enterprise
TORs: Terms of Reference
WESB: Wales Employment and Skills Board
WBL: Work Based Learning
WG: Welsh Government
WLGA: Welsh Local Government Association
WTUC: Wales Trades Union Congress

Appendices

Appendix 1

Stated aims of two RSPs and GMW

Regional Learning and Skills Partnership for South West and Mid Wales

Its mission, set out in terms of reference, is described as follows:

The Board will act as a stakeholder group engaging and consulting with specific sectors, industries and regions:

- A. To identify and respond to the economic and social skills needs of South West and Mid Wales.*
- B. To engage with employers and other stakeholders to identify current and future skills needs and plan accordingly.*
- C. To align activity to future demand and stimulate innovation through learning and employment.*
- D. To enable an inclusive regional response to Welsh Government policy and initiatives.*
- E. To align activity with the skills requirements of the Swansea Bay City Deal Board and the Growing Mid Wales Partnership.*

Growing Mid Wales sets out its aims as being:

- encourage interaction with businesses, higher and further education, and with public and private sector stakeholders*
- identify key themes and sectors, and priorities for investment.*
- support business led innovation, enterprise and investment in Mid Wales.*
- support the delivery of Powys Local Growth Zones, SIROLI and the Teifi Rural Growth Zone concepts.*
- engage with the Central Wales Economic Forum and the Mid Wales Regional Tourism Forum.*
- secure wider collaborative and transformational working with key partners organisations and the business community*
- agree roles, responsibilities and improved delivery arrangements in the promotion of economic development.*

LSkip's mission set out in January 2015 was and still is:

- a. To identify and respond to the social, economic and skills needs of South East Wales.*
- b. To engage with employers and other stakeholders to identify current and future skills needs and plan accordingly.*
- c. To align activity to future demand and stimulate innovation.*
- d. To enable an inclusive regional response to Welsh Government Policy and initiatives.*

The aims of RLSP and LSkip are broadly in line with the aims suggested for RSPs set out by the WG (2014b) (see para 20) although there is no reference to maximising future income. Those of the GMW are more focused on economic development and do not refer to skills.

Appendix 2

Regional Learning and Skills Partnership Board: terms of reference

1. Name

- 1.1 The name and current working title of the Board shall be the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership (“the Board”) for South West and Mid Wales, Partneriaeth Dysgu a Sgiliau Rhanbarthol De Orllewin a Canolbarth Cymru.

2. Vision

- 2.1 The vision of the Board is to be a strategic partnership that will contribute to the economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being of the South West and Mid Wales regions, supporting people and businesses to deliver high performing prosperous regions.

3. Mission

- 3.1 The Board will act as a stakeholder group engaging and consulting with specific sectors, industries and regions:

A. To identify and respond to the economic and social skills needs of South West and Mid Wales.

B. To engage with employers and other stakeholders to identify current and future skills needs and plan accordingly.

C. To align activity to future demand and stimulate innovation through learning and employment.

D. To enable an inclusive regional response to Welsh Government policy and initiatives.

E. To align activity with the skills requirements of the Swansea Bay City Deal Board and the Growing Mid Wales Partnership.

4. Objectives

- 4.1 To provide strategic focus for learning and skills across the region.

- 4.2 To improve the collection and sharing of regional employment and skills data, and intelligence.

- 4.3 To collectively identify and develop a response to the regional strategic priorities to:

a. Identify the needs of businesses and the current and future workforce in the regions.

b. Encourage innovation to meet these needs by optimising the assets and resources and thereby maximising the impact of provision and raising performance.

- 4.4 To produce an Employment and Skills Plan for the region.

- 4.5 To ensure the regions have learning and skills infrastructure that meets their economic and social needs.

5. Membership

- 5.1 The interim membership of the Board shall be determined by nomination from each of the following stakeholder groups, with each invited to submit a representative for one seat.

Seat	Sector	Nomination mechanism
1	Further Education	ColegauCymru, SW& CW Principals Group
2	Higher Education	Agreement between Vice Chancellors
3	Training providers	National Training Federation for Wales
4	Local Government Regeneration	SW & C W Regeneration Directors Group
5	Local Government Education	Education through Regional Working (ERW)
6	Third Sector	Nomination from CVC's in SW & MW
7	Industry/Employers	Swansea Bay City Deal Board
8	Industry/Employers	Growing Mid Wales Board
9	Industry/Employers	Haven Enterprise Zone Board
10	Industry/Employers	Neath & Port Talbot Enterprise Zone
11	Industry/Employers	Cluster Group Chair Advanced Material and Manufacturing
12	Industry/Employers	Cluster Group Chair Energy
13	Industry/Employers	Cluster Group Chair Health, Social Care & Life Sciences
14	Industry/Employers	Cluster Group Chair Construction
15	Industry/Employers	Cluster Group Chair Tourism, Leisure & Retail
16	Industry/Employers	Cluster Group Chair Creative Industries & Professional Services
17	Industry/Employers	Cluster Group Chair Food & Farming
18	Industry/Employers	Cluster Group Chair Mid Wales
19	Training Providers	Provider Cluster Group Chair
20	Careers Wales	Careers Wales
21	DWP/Job Centre Plus	Job Centre Plus
22	RLP Manager	RLP
	Observers	
	Welsh Government	Welsh Government

- 5.2 Observer members and co-opted experts may be invited as needs arise
- 5.3 The Board shall exist for 1 year and then be re-nominated. Members shall be eligible for re-nomination.
- 5.4 The Board shall appoint a Chair and Vice-Chair at its first meeting and then

bi-annually. If it is necessary for the Board to appoint an Interim Chair, the appointment will be reviewed every 3 months.

- 5.5 Failure to attend three consecutive Board meetings will result in a new nomination being sought to represent the sector/stakeholder group.
- 5.6 The Secretariat function will be fulfilled by the officers employed to undertake the work of the Regional Learning and Skills Partnership.
- 5.7 Members may appoint substitutes to represent their sector when necessary, all names of nominated substitutes to be sent to the Administrator in advance of the meetings.

6. Core Structure and Responsibilities

- 6.1 Members of the Board shall be expected to work on the basis of mutual support, shared values and a culture of joint working and collaboration.
- 6.2 Members of the Board commit to the following principles:
 - 6.2.1 Integrity – members should avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work.
 - 6.2.2 Objectivity – Members should act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit and for the widest benefit of others.
 - 6.2.3 Accountability – Every Member will act on behalf of the stakeholders or groups they represent, and it is expected that every Member will ensure that reasonable arrangements are in place to report back on their work.
 - 6.2.4 Openness – Members should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner.
 - 6.2.5 Confidentiality – Every Member should respect confidentiality, and where relevant ensure that confidential material is protected and that it is not used without permission from the Board (as a collective) or for private purposes.
 - 6.2.6 Accountability – every member is accountable to the public for their decisions and must submit themselves to scrutiny if necessary.
 - 6.2.7 Honesty – every member should be truthful.
 - 6.2.8 Declarations – Every Member should declare any interest that could influence discussions or decisions taken by the Board, and they will be recorded by the secretariat.
 - 6.2.9 Promoting equality and respect for others – Every Member should undertake their responsibilities with due regard to the need to promote equal opportunity for all and demonstrate respect and consideration towards others.
- 6.3 Members of the Board are expected to:
 - 6.3.1 To co-operate strategically on behalf of stakeholders across the South West and Mid Wales region.
 - 6.3.2 To attend regular meetings of the Board.
 - 6.3.3 To prepare thoroughly for all meetings by reading the minutes and accompanying papers as well as to contact and discuss any matter that is relevant to the work of the Board with others they represent as required.

- 6.3.4 To be prepared to contribute to meaningful discussions at Board meetings and to listen, give due consideration to and respect the opinions and views of others.
- 6.3.5 To communicate information about any work or development relevant to their sector.
- 6.3.6 To convey and promote the decisions of the Board within their sector and report, on a regular basis, the work of the Board.
- 6.3.7 To recognise and respect the worth and contribution of each Member.
- 6.3.8 To represent the Board effectively on other groups, forums and partnerships as required and to ensure that the views of the Board are conveyed clearly and firmly on all occasions.
- 6.3.9 To participate in meetings, events and other activities organised by the Board from time to time.

7. Operational Procedures of the Board

- 7.1 The Regional Learning and Skills Partnership host organisation (Carmarthenshire County Council) will fulfil the administrative and financial functions of the Partnership and shall be responsible for providing secretariat functions to the Board.
- 7.2 Meetings of the Board are to be scheduled on a bi-monthly basis will be reviewed as necessary; however it shall be a requirement for the Board to meet at least once every quarter.
- 7.3 The Chair shall be responsible for calling meetings of the Board with the support of the secretariat.
- 7.4 The secretariat shall provide written notice of the time, date and location of the Board meeting to all members at least 10 working days before the date fixed for the meeting.
- 7.5 If a member of the Board wishes to include an item on the agenda of the Board meeting, they should notify the secretariat at least 5 working days prior to the date of the meeting. The Chair and secretariat shall agree the final content of the agenda for the Board meeting.
- 7.6 If a member of the Board wishes to present a written report to the Board, they should ensure that the secretariat receives an electronic version of the report at least 7 working days before the date of the meeting. The Chair has the discretion to take any items that are of an urgent or informative nature that would benefit the discussion at the meeting.
- 7.7 The secretariat shall distribute the final agenda and reports for the Board meeting electronically at least 5 working days before the date of the meeting.
- 7.8 For Board meetings, 6 Members (including the Chair or the Vice-Chair in their absence) shall comprise a quorum.
- 7.9 The Board shall conduct its business in an open and transparent way and in a spirit of consensus and mutual respect. Therefore, the Board shall endeavour to arrive at a decision on matters by consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, the Chair shall ask for a vote and a simple majority shall carry the vote. If necessary, the Chair shall ask for a second vote or shall use their casting vote.
- 7.10 It shall be expected that decisions of the Board will be implemented. However, where executive authority is required, decisions shall be referred to the decision making bodies of individual authorities/stakeholders for consideration

and the outcomes of these considerations shall be reported back to the Board.

7.11 The secretariat shall be responsible for keeping minutes of the Board and distributing them to members of the Board.

7.12 Copies of these minutes shall be made available by the secretariat on request.

7.13 The Welsh and English languages have equal status and the RLSP will work to the Carmarthenshire County Council Welsh Language Standards.

8. Accountability and Resources

8.1 Carmarthenshire County Council as host will monitor and be accountable for the financial management of the Partnership to ensure that the funder's and financial guidelines of the Authority are followed.

8.2 Scrutiny of the RLSP will be undertaken through the Democratic process of Carmarthenshire County Council and through regular updates to the Local Authority representative groups (Chief Executives; Regeneration and Education Directors).

9. Amending the constitution

9.1 The Board shall undertake an annual self-assessment to assess the effectiveness of the Board, including its future continuation.

9.2 The Board shall review the Terms of Reference on an annual basis and amend it as necessary.

9.3 The Terms of Reference and any subsequent amendments will be referred to the governing decision making bodies of individual member organisations for consideration and the outcomes of these considerations shall be reported back to the Board.

9.3 Members of the Board shall have the right to propose improvements to the Constitution on the condition that they are submitted to the secretariat in accordance with Section 7 of this Constitution.

10. Commitment

10.1 Each Member shall sign a copy of the Board's Terms of Reference on behalf of the organisation they represent, as a sign of their support and commitment to the vision, mission and objectives of the Regional Learning & Skills Partnership for South West and Mid Wales, Partneriaeth Dysgu a Sgiliau Rhanbarthol De Orllewin a Canolbarth Cymru.

Signed: _____

On behalf of: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 3

Identifying skills priorities in the other UK countries

England

The Government has introduced a training levy on large employers to fund an increase in apprenticeship numbers and is passing increasing responsibility to regions for determining skills needs and supporting economic development. There are currently 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in England – reduced by one after a recent merger – which replaced the nine Regional Development Agencies wound up in March 2012. The approval of the first 24 LEPs was announced in a White Paper published in 2010 (BIS 2010). In March 2014, all LEPs submitted strategic economic plans to negotiate Growth Deals with funding awarded from the Single Local Growth Fund.

The National Audit Office (NAO) report on LEPs pointed out that the UK Government did not stipulate the form that LEPs should take. The most common corporate structure form is the company limited by guarantee (51%) followed by voluntary partnerships between private sector representatives and local authority leaders (41%). The others have a variety of unincorporated arrangements and committees. LEPs which are not corporate bodies nominate a local authority or combined local authority to act as their accountable bodies (NAO, 2016).

LEPs were intended to be led by the private sector. They were required to have a private sector chair with the majority of members drawn from the private sector. In practice, the NAO shows that private sector board membership varied between 45% and 80%, with the average being 58%. The NAO report concludes that LEPs began as largely strategic partnerships advising on economic growth. With the setting up of the Local Growth Fund, LEPs have changed their remit and are projected to receive around £12bn between 2015-16 and 2020-21. LEPs are one of a number of means aimed at devolving responsibility for creating local growth to local areas. Interestingly the NAO report noted that LEPs reported that they were uncertain about their place in the wider devolved landscape and slightly less than half considered that there were clear lines of accountability between the LEP and the local electorate.

Much has been made by the UK government of the private sector representation of around 62% on the 38 LEPs in England. However a closer look at the 'private sector' chairs shows that 11 are former business people or retired, one is a current vice-chancellor, one from an accounting firm and another a regional director of a bank – all worthy people no doubt but hardly private sector leaders.

The average size of the LEPs is between 15-16 with a range of 10-27 (Ward, 2017). LEPs have a different role from that of the RSPs as they receive capital funding for their areas and have responsibility for the European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund.

Concerns over accountability have been addressed by a National Assurance Framework agreed between the UK Government and LEPs which cover the funding received by LEPs via their accountable body. Each LEP is required to agree and sign off its own local assurance framework. These frameworks cover membership, roles and responsibilities, commitment to diversity, conduct of members, cooperation with other LEPs, implementation and delivery of projects and relationship with local authorities.

Politically there is some consensus on the future with LEPs. For example, prior to the 2015 general election Labour stated that it would work to 'improve LEPs, not abolish them' while outlining concerns over their accountability and capacity to deliver' (Labour Party 2012 and Healy and Newby, 2014).

Scotland

The Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work announced in Phase 1 of the Scottish Government's Enterprise and Skills Review the setting up of a single strategic body to bring together and harmonise the work of the four Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs): - Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and the Scottish Funding Council (the Agencies) (Scottish Government, 2016). The Review aimed to provide stronger governance and to address concerns over the accountability of the four NDPBs. The Crerer review (2017) was set up to advise on how this new arrangement might work.

The Cabinet Secretary after consultation reversed his decision and Crerer's advice and decided instead that there should be an overarching strategic board with no statutory powers and that a fifth NDPB be set up in the South of Scotland with a similar role to that of the well respected HIE.

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has pursued a policy of 'quality' modern apprenticeships lasting typically three years and focused on specific high level growth occupations (British Council, 2017). It does not have regional skills bodies. The Department for the Economy in the devolved Northern Ireland Executive Government directly funds its six FE colleges and training providers to deliver courses geared to skills priorities. At present Northern Ireland is under direct rule from the UK government.

Appendix 4

Membership of the three RSPs, GMW, NWEAB and WESB

Regional Learning and Skills Partnership South West & Mid Wales RLSP Board (from website)

<p>Paul Greenwood, Chair, Teddington Engineered Solutions Barry Liles Vice Chair & Chair of Provider Cluster Group, Coleg Sir Gar Huw Matthias, Chair of the Advanced Materials & Manufacturing Cluster Group, Tata Steel Nicky Howells, Chair of the Energy Cluster Group, Valero Phil Lumley, Chair of the Construction Cluster Group, Cyfle Building Skills Louise White, Chair of the Creative Industries & Professional Services Cluster Group, DVLA Nigel Williams, Chair of the Food, Farming & Environment Cluster Group, Castell Howell Foods Tony Sawyer, Chair of the Health and Social Care Cluster Group, Park House Court Care Home Lucy Good, Chair of the Tourism, Leisure & Retail Cluster Group, Bluestone Resort Mike Shaw, Representing Growing Mid Wales Partnership, Ceredigion County Council</p>	<p>Sharron Lusher, Representing Haven Waterway Sharron L:usher, Haven Waterway Enterprise Zone, Pembrokeshire College Arwyn Watkins, Representing NTfW Cambrian Training Company John-Mark Frost, Representing DWP Department of Work and Pensions Mandy Ifans, Representing Careers Wales, Mark Jones, Representing Further Education, Gower College Swansea Judith James, Representing Higher Education, Swansea University Jayne Ireland, Adult Learning Wales Gareth Morgans, Representing Education through Regional Working, Carmarthenshire County Council Paul Griffiths, Representing the Regional Directors of Economic Development and Regeneration, Powys County Council Amanda Carr, Representing the Third Sector, SCVS Nigel Arnold, Welsh Government Kim Phelps, Welsh Government</p>
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Membership of Growing Mid Wales (from Terms of Reference on Powys CC website)

<p>Welsh Government Ceredigion County Council Powys County Council Trafnidiaeth Canolbarth Cymru Federation of Small Businesses Farmers Union of Wales National Farmers Union Cymru Mid Wales Regional Tourism Forum Mid Wales Health Collaborative Central Wales Economic Forum Mid Wales Manufacturing Group Powys Local Growth Zones;</p>	<p>Teifi Valley Local Growth Zone Stronger Communities Programme Board (Powys) Sustainable Futures - Ceredigion Regeneration Partnership Regional Learning Partnership for South West and Central Wales Aberystwyth University University of Wales Trinity St David Coleg Ceredigion NPTC Group: Brecon Beacons Campus / Newtown Campus Ceredigion Association of Voluntary Organisations</p>
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Attendance at GMW meeting 28 July 2017

<p>Councillor Ellen ap Gwynn, Leader of Ceredigion County Council (Chair) Councillor Rosemarie Harries, Leader of Powys County Council (Vice Chair) Ann Elias, Ceredigion County Council Ann Watkin, Welsh Government Bronwen Morgan, Chief Executive – Ceredigion County Council Carole Weller, Welsh Government Ceri Stephens, MWMG Chris Rowland, MDS Transmodal Claire Miles, Mid Wales Regional Engagement Cllr. Alun Williams, Ceredigion County Council Cllr. Gareth Lloyd, Ceredigion County Council Cllr. Liam Fitzpatrick, Powys County Council Cllr. Myfanwy Alexander Jane Lewis, RLSP</p>	<p>John Jones, Welsh Government Matthew Williams, FSB Mike Shaw, Ceredigion County Council Paul Griffiths, Powys County Council Rhian Williams, Gwynedd County Council Rhodri Llwyd Morgan, Aberystwyth University Rob Halford, Welsh Government Russell Hughes-Pickering, Ceredigion County Council Sandra Isaac, Coleg Ceredigion Susan Bolter, Powys County Council Val Hawkins, Mid Wales Tourism Vivienne Lewis, Welsh Government Felicity Llewellyn – Powys County Council (in attendance)</p>
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LSkip

(based on attendance at Employment and Skills Board October 2017 and November 2017)

NB These names were listed under attendance and apologies. Not all are full members.

<p>Leigh Hughes, Bouygues (chair), Richard Crook, local authority regeneration (vice chair) Dr Francis Cowe, USW, Higher Education Lynn Pamment, PWC Paul Davies, Airbus John Nash, TSW Training, National Training Federation for Wales Julian Morris , Circo, Enterprise Zone Environment and Regeneration Lynette Jones, South East Wales Directors of Education and Education Consortia Jon Williams, WRW construction, CBI Kathryn Robson, ALW, Third Sector Debbie Wilcox, local authority Professor Brian Morgan, Cardiff Capital Region</p>	<p>Roger Harry, Circle IT, ICT Denise Lovering, Glenside Commercials Ltd, SW Chamber of Commerce Guy Lacey, Coleg Gwent, SE FE principals Prof Brian Morgan, Cardiff Met Grant Santos, FSB Ben Cottam, FSB Lynne Jones Rachel Garside-Jones, Welsh Government Lisa Jones, regional engagement team Nick Lee, Welsh Government Caitlin Davies, Welsh Government (observer) Karen Higgins, Adviser, LSkip</p>
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North Wales RSP

(based on attendance and apologies at the meeting of 18 January 2018 (most recent minutes)

<p>Sasha Davies Horizon Nuclear Power(Chair) Iwan Thomas, Carwyn Jones-Evans, Ffion Jones, Katie Edwards - NWEAB, Jayne Roberts, Edwyn Williams Welsh Government Sioned Williams - Gwynedd Council Alice Williams - EPC's Christine Wynne- North Wales 14-19 Rhian Thomas -Careers Wales; Bev Lovatt – Department for Work and Pensions Dafydd Evans - Grŵp Llandrillo-Menai Julie Cowley - Glyndwr University – Ceri Jones – Construction Industry Training Board Sue Price - Coleg Cambria Bryn Jones - Bangor University Mike Learmond - Federation of Small Businesses</p>	<p>Alison Atkinson - North Wales Social Care & Health Workforce Board Sue Scott; - North Wales Training Gavin Jones - Airbus Gail Dervish - WCVA; Graham Nutt Engineering Education Scheme Wales – (observer) Apologies Arwyn Thomas - GwE Ashley Rogers - North Wales & Mersey Dee Business Council Colin Brew - West Cheshire & North Wales Chamber –; Cllr Garfield Lewis – Creative North Wales; Kevin Pascoe - Open University in Wales; Jim Jones - North Wales Tourism ; Catherine Miller - WCVA Nerys Bourne - Careers Wales Meurig Thomas - Welsh Government</p>
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North Wales Economic Ambition Board

The membership of the NWEAB comprises the six North Wales local authorities, , Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, Coleg Cambria, Bangor and Wrexham – Glyndwr Universities the North Wales Business Council, the Mersey Dee Alliance and the Snowdonia, Anglesey and Deeside Enterprise Zone Chairs. Ambition Board meetings are attended by Welsh Government Officials and a representative of the North Wales Voluntary County Associations.

Wales Employment and Skills Board

Chair

1. Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) Employer Chairs – on rotation

Employers

2. Six employers to be nominated by the Regional Skills Partnerships (each RSP to nominate two employers)
3. CBI Wales representative
4. Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) representative
5. Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC)
6. NHS Confederation

Trade Union

7. Wales TUC

Provider network

8. ColegauCymru
9. Universities Wales
10. National Training Federation for Wales
11. National Union of Students Wales

Other key stakeholders

12. Careers Wales
13. Qualifications Wales

Observers

14. Minister for the Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning

(The Cabinet Secretary for Education and the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport will be invited when matters relating to their portfolios are discussed.)

15. Regional Skills Partnership Managers x 3

Welsh Government officials

16. Huw Morris - Director SHELL Group

(SHELL Deputy Directors to attend when matters relating to their portfolios are discussed.)

Membership will be reviewed on an on-going basis.

Current membership of WESB (excluding observers and WG officials)*

<p>Martin Mansfield, WTUC Ben Cottam, FSB Ian Price, CBI Iestyn Davies, ColegauCymru Tom Hadley, REC Amanda Wilkinson, Universities Wales Sarah John, NTFW Debra Williams, Careers Wales Philip Blaker, Qualifications Wales Michael Fleming, Airbus</p>	<p>William McNamara OBE, Bluestone National Park Resort Paul Greenwood, Teddington Engineered Solutions (chair of RLSP) Sasha Davies, Horizon Nuclear Power Leigh Hughes, Bouygues Ltd Iwan Thomas, RSP manager, North Wales Karen Higgins, RSP manager, SE Wales Jane Lewis, RSP manager, SW Wales Denise Lovering, Glenside Commercials Ltd Ellen Jones, NUS Wales Richard Tompkins, NHS Confederation</p>
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*names supplied by WG