

Driving collaboration in Swansea

[Andrew Falvey](#), DVLA's Commercial Director, tells us all about the work he's been doing to foster better networking relationships within the public sector in Swansea.



Before I joined DVLA in 2010, I worked at Swansea Council as a Head of Service. At the time I often pondered that I knew very little about the place, even though I'm from Swansea and it was literally just up the road. I'd never been there, and I didn't know anyone in a senior position that I could call up. I was told that there was a large commercial team there, for example, surely we've some things in common? Why weren't we talking? This seemed like a missed opportunity to me.

Making the first move

Fast forward a few years, and I'm a director in DVLA, wondering if there is a way of improving communication and collaboration between Swansea's largest public sector employers. Throughout my career I've always been wary of being too inward looking – I think it's important to share best practice and learn from others, this helps organisations flex and adapt to challenges and opportunities.

So I emailed a few senior people in other local public sector bodies, some that I knew personally and some names plucked from the internet, and asked if they would be interested in forming some kind of group. Despite my cold calling, to my delight I had very positive responses and before long the Swansea Large Employers Forum was born.

Who we have on board

We've top level representation from [ABMU Health Board](#), [Swansea Council](#), [Swansea University](#) and [University of Wales Trinity St David](#), plus of course DVLA. Between us, we employ around 40,000 staff. When you add on the local supply chains that support our organisations, it adds up to a huge impact on the working population of the Swansea area.

Why these organisations? Well, there was nothing scientific in our approach, we simply looked at public sector organisations in Swansea that employed over 1,000 people. We've kept it to the public sector as there are similarities in our working practices and legal frameworks that we operate under. We don't

ignore the progress and best practice that the private sector brings, so this often influences our conversations.

Given the ongoing work on the [Swansea Bay City Deal](#), the forum provides a really useful opportunity for members to consider how we can work together in support of the Deal, for example around the skills agenda.

Taking the time to meet

We meet 4 times a year for a couple of hours – not a huge time commitment, but enough to provide a regular chance to catch up, and we always seek to take away actions that we can work on. It's no surprise that when we meet we often have the same business challenges: skills shortages, recruitment, retention of staff, transport and parking. We also discuss how we work with local businesses, both in partnership and as part of a supply chain.

The forum has met several times, and we're seeing the increasing value of sharing our views. We're all from large and complex organisations to those outside, and the ability to be able to email or pick up the phone to someone who can advise, or simply help you to navigate to the correct person or team, is hugely helpful.

The group has also spawned some topical sub-groups. The ones that have already met are Cyber Security, Cloud, Human Resources, [GDPR](#), and IT Strategy. These groups are introducing people with similar expertise to each other, often for the first time. The knowledge sharing and the willingness to co-operate has been great to see.

I'm grateful to my colleagues on the forum who continue to bring enthusiasm and ideas to our meetings. We all share a common purpose and that is to find ways we can improve public services, while supporting local people and businesses.

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