

## FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**REPORT TO:**           **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**DATE:**               **WEDNESDAY, 12 JUNE 2013**

**REPORT BY:**       **DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE MANAGER**

**SUBJECT:**           **ESTYN MONITORING VISIT**

### **1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.01 To inform the Audit Committee about processes in place in relation to the Estyn monitoring visit of the 4th to 8th February 2013.

### **2.00 BACKGROUND**

2.01 Paragraph 9.20 of the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Government in June 2012 states that Audit Committees should receive and consider reports from any regulators or inspectors. It goes on to say that the authority will need to ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication between the Audit Committee and any Overview & Scrutiny Committee in considering such reports. Following the briefing meeting held on the 22 February 2012 there was an understanding that where reports from external inspectors or regulators are considered by both Overview & Scrutiny and Audit Committee this is not an unnecessary duplication. The more detailed consideration of such reports by Overview & Scrutiny is assisting Audit by ensuring that any recommendations made by the external inspector or regulator are properly considered and appropriate action plans put in place.

2.02 Following Estyn's core inspection of education services for children and young people in October 2011 the authority was identified as requiring a follow-up through Estyn monitoring. A monitoring visit took place from the 4 to the 8 February 2013 and the full letter recording the outcome is attached as appendix 1.

2.03 Estyn concluded that the local authority has made good progress towards addressing the recommendations in the inspection report since publication. There were no new recommendations arising from the monitoring visit. They therefore concluded that the authority should be removed from Estyn monitoring.

2.04 The outcome of the monitoring visit was reported verbally to the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> March. A written report was received by Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> March and has been

prepared for the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2013. A verbal update will be given to the Audit Committee on the consideration by Lifelong Learning.

### **3.00 CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.01 In the letter, Estyn Assistant Director, Clive Phillips, wrote that the Council's administration had prioritised the need for change and improvement. He wrote that elected members and senior officers are "committed to taking difficult decisions to improve provision and make effective use of resources" and that members "understand well the priorities for improvement in the Council and support officers in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection".
- 3.02 The monitoring visit also found that the Council "has improved its arrangements to support and challenge schools." Estyn noted that the authority had worked well to develop and adopt projects aimed at reducing surplus places and to reduce school balances and deficits.
- 3.03 Estyn also commended the Council for its progress on developing a revised funding formula for schools, reducing school exclusions, improving school attendance and developing work with young people with additional learning needs who were at risk of needing "Out of County" school placements.
- 3.04 The Estyn monitoring visit was in effect a process whereby Estyn itself was checking to see the council was properly addressing the earlier recommendations it had made. It was satisfied and has therefore removed the council from future Estyn monitoring.
- 3.05 The Estyn improvement assessment letter (attached as appendix 1) provides an independent report on progress with the authority's post inspection action plan. Work will continue to fully implement the recommendations and progress will be reported and monitored in quarterly performance reports to Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet. Specific actions are included in service plans and the School Improvement Strategy
- 3.06 The Directorate Plan and Corporate Planning for 2013-14 will be the key focus for:
- a) simplification of performance planning arrangements; and
  - b) continuing to support school improvement.

3.07 The Audit Committee should be reassured by Estyn's own monitoring together with the council's internal processes that proper arrangements have been made to address the recommendations originally made by Estyn.

#### **4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.01 To note the processes in relation to the Estyn monitoring visit of 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

#### **5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.01 None as a result of this report.

#### **6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT**

6.01 None as a result of this report.

#### **7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

7.01 None as a result of this report.

#### **8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT**

8.01 None as a result of this report.

#### **9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

9.01 None as a result of this report.

#### **10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED**

10.01 None as a result of this report.

#### **11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN**

11.01 None as a result of this report.

#### **12.00 APPENDICES**

12.01 Appendix 1 – Monitoring letter from Estyn

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

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