

EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 1 st February 2024
Report Subject	Revision of Post-16 Strategy
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education, Welsh Language, Culture and Leisure
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been developed to provide an overview of the work to review and revise the post-16 strategy for Flintshire learners in light of national reforms to post-16 learning.

In January 2020, the then Minister for Education, Kirsty Williams, announced that the reform of the post-compulsory education, training and research sector would be part of the bigger national mission to reform education in Wales. The ambition set out was to bring for the first time, higher education, further education, mainstream sixth form provision and work-based learning under the auspices of one organisation.

The Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act became law on the 8 September 2022 and established the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, (CTER) a new Welsh Government sponsored body, and will dissolve the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) once operational.

In preparation for this anticipated reformed way of working in the post-16 sector, the local authority has been working with all providers in the sector, including the six schools who offer sixth form provision, to ensure that we continue to deliver a sustainable strategy for post-16 education in Flintshire, underpinned by robust, inclusive and aspirational provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Members confirm they have received an appropriate level of assurance regarding the work of the Education & Youth Portfolio in supporting schools with sixth provision to be able to meet the requirements of the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	Explaining Revision to Post-16 Strategy
1.01	<p>The Commission for Tertiary Education and Research will be established in September 2023 and will be operational in April 2024, when it will become responsible for the strategy, funding and oversight of the following sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• further education (FE), including colleges and school sixth-forms• higher education (HE), including research and innovation• adult education and adult community learning• apprenticeships and training <p>This will be the first-time funding, planning and regulation of post-16 education and research will be managed and coordinated by one body. As part of the change, the Commission will take over functions from many post-16 education areas currently within the Welsh Government, and all the functions of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW).</p> <p>CTER's new framework for this broad sector will contribute to the goals set out in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A future proof framework equipped to strengthen Wales' economic and social foundations in changing times.• A flexible framework which responds to learner interests and employer needs for high quality education and training, research and innovation.• A framework embedded in, and adding value to the communities it serves whilst being international in its outlook, contributing to the civic mission you have heard me speak of so often. <p>CTER working closely in partnership with the sector will have the tools to help create a highly skilled society. One which is equitable, that produces excellence and one where background, geography or circumstances do not determine your future.</p>
1.02	Responsibilities of the Commission <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take a whole system approach to research and innovation funding with an ability to provide funding to a wide range of HE and FE institutions.• Protect the interests of learners, ensuring vocational and academic learning are equally valued.• Align education and training more closely with the needs of employers.• Monitor performance and governance whilst protecting the academic freedom of institutions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and promote improvement in education and training providers. • Increase the availability of Welsh-medium tertiary education and to encourage individuals to learn through the medium of Welsh. <p>The Chair of the Board was appointed in December 2022 and a Chief Executive took up post in September 2023.</p> <p>The Commission will be operational from April 2024 with a transitional phase applying. During this time, it will be building capacity and culture and working relationships with significant bodies across the sector.</p>
1.03	<p>CTER Strategic Vision</p> <p>'Working together, we will deliver a more engaged, excellent and equitable Tertiary Education and Research (TER) sector in Wales that prioritizes the interests of learners and contributes to national prosperity. We wish to see a joined up TER system in Wales that is easy for all learners to navigate, is valued by the public, creates a highly skilled society, tackles inequalities, is globally renowned for excellent education, training, research and innovation, and has a civic mission at its heart. Our approach will enable learners to move seamlessly from compulsory to tertiary education, building on our national mission for education reform.'</p>
1.04	<p>CTER is currently working on its Statement of Priorities, a high level, strategic set of priorities that will shape the operational workings of the Commission. Throughout 2024/25, there will be various points for the sector to be engaged and to influence those priorities.</p>
1.05	<p>Flintshire Context</p> <p>There are six high schools in Flintshire with sixth forms and one further education college with a dedicated A level centre. Two high schools work in partnership for their sixth form provision.</p> <p>Across Wales, approximately two-thirds of secondary schools have their own sixth forms. In Flintshire, 58% of schools have a sixth form.</p>
1.06	<p>Flintshire Post-16 Network exists to ensure all post-16 learners have the very best opportunities and outcomes. The network consists of headteachers from schools with sixth forms and senior representation from Coleg Cambria. The network provides strategic direction and local support and monitoring for Post-16 provision in Flintshire. The focus is on ensuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sustainable post-16 strategy is developed. • Partnership working with GwE in developing and sharing good practice (teaching and learning) across the regional post-16 sector is supported. • Analysis on progression, recruitment and retention from KS4 to KS5 • Advice and guidance for post-16 learners is up-to-date and appropriate. • Concrete partnership working between post-16 providers, Higher Education Institutions, industry and learners utilising the Ambitions North Wales intelligence.
1.07	<p>'A review of the current 16-19 curriculum in Wales', Estyn October 2022</p>

	<p>This thematic review included a cameo of Flintshire’s post-16 network. The Flintshire post-16 network consists of headteachers from six local schools with sixth forms and a representative from Coleg Cambria. The network provides strategic direction and local support and monitoring for post-16 provision in Flintshire. For example, the group ensure that, through the regional school improvement service, there is support for developing and sharing good practice in teaching and learning across post-16 providers. The group analyses progression, recruitment and retention of learners between key stage 4 and key stage 5 to support strategic planning. The recommendations in this review, were that post-16 education and training providers should work together to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all learners have equitable access to vocational options, and that these options are valued as equally as general education options • Ensure that all learners have equitable access to Welsh-medium provision • Ensure that all learners in key stage 4 receive impartial information, advice and guidance that covers all post-16 options available in their local area
1.08	<p>Current funding arrangements</p> <p>Schools and Further Education (FE) colleges are funded differently. FE colleges and local authorities are funded directly by the Welsh Government for the learning programmes they provide to 16 to 19-year-old learners. Local authorities use their allocations to fund individual school sixth forms. The Welsh Government uses a common methodology to determine FE sector funding.</p> <p>Programmes are the main vehicle for funding, planning, delivery and monitoring under the Post-16 Planning and Funding Framework. Local authorities and further education colleges submit programme plans annually for approval. Each eligible programme attracts a funding value that is used to plan, monitor and account for the use of funds. Programmes are also being used to engage with Regional Skills Partnerships and external providers on the configuration of provision in Wales and strategies for the development of that provision to meet current and emerging needs.</p> <p>School sixth form plans are submitted to the local authority and analysed to ensure a breadth of provision that not only meets the learning and skills measure but is also responding to local, regional and national priorities.</p>
1.09	<p>16- 19 Curriculum</p> <p>The expectations for the current 16-19 curriculum are set out in legislation through the Learning and Skills Act (2000), the Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure 2009 and associated guidance. Within each local authority, a curriculum offer should contain a minimum of 30 eligible courses approved by Qualifications Wales at level 3 comprising of different elements but with a minimum of five general courses and five vocational courses from the following five learning domains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mathematics, science and technology

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • business, administration and law • services for people • arts, media, culture and languages • humanities, social sciences and preparation for life and work
1.10	<p>The Post-16 Learning Adviser has met with Flintshire headteachers of schools with sixth forms to evaluate current provision and assess future need. Work is currently underway on refreshing the Post-16 strategy. This will be finalised in line with the operational work of the new Commission. The focus remains on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring sufficient access to high quality and relevant education for all, including students with additional learning needs • Providing an offer that meets all needs including the needs of students and wider economic and employment needs • Building on strong reputations and specialisms within school sixth form provision • Ensuring Post-16 provision is sustainable, resilient, and efficient and delivers maximum value
1.11	<p>During 2023-24, headteachers, heads of sixth form and a sample of students are participating in a research project to gather first-hand evidence to inform the revised post-16 strategy. The research aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture the voice and aspirations of post-16 students including their knowledge of the local and regional economic developments. • Provide an analysis of post-16 entry requirements, geographical reach and travel to school, breadth of curriculum offers, level, and type (subject sector), class sizes, pastoral offer delivery methods, number of students on role, and destination of pupils. • Provide an analysis of the overall mix and balance of the curriculum offer across Flintshire schools with sixth forms.
1.12	<p>Welsh Education Strategic Plan</p> <p>Flintshire County Council is committed to supporting, expanding and promoting Welsh-medium education within the whole community, increasing the number and percentage of pupils receiving Welsh-medium education in compliance with the Welsh Government's 'Welsh-Medium Education Strategy' of developing learners who are fully bilingual (i.e. fluent in both English and Welsh). The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2022-2032, approved by Welsh Government following consultation, sets out how we will work towards achieving this goal.</p>
1.13	<p>To ensure there is an inclusive, sustainable and responsive post-16 sector, the LA works in partnership with Seren:</p> <p>Seren is a Welsh Government initiative dedicated to helping Wales' brightest state educated learners achieve their full academic potential and support their education pathway into leading universities in Wales, the UK, and overseas.</p>

	<p>It is a collaboration between the Welsh Government, schools, colleges, leading universities, Seren graduates, local authorities and third sector organisations to provide extensive national and regional activities.</p> <p>Seren is a fully funded programme available to year 8 to 13 learners from state schools and further education colleges across Wales, regardless of their economic background, personal situation, or location.</p> <p>The Seren Academy invites the most academically able learners in years 12 and 13 across Wales to join the programme. It offers interactive activities and unique study experiences to support ongoing learning, and expert guidance to help learners make informed decisions as they prepare to apply to leading universities.</p>
1.14	<p>The local authority also encourages providers to engage with E-sgol:</p> <p>E-sgol is a blended learning initiative to deliver online teaching and learning opportunities using direct, real-time and interactive learning approaches. Using the range of tools and services available through Hwb, E-sgol provides support to schools around the skillsets and the range of pedagogical approaches needed to maximise learner's experiences. The benefits of the project are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow schools to be able to offer Welsh medium, as opposed to bilingual, options at Post-14 • Enable schools and local authorities to retain learners at post-16 level, by supporting them to study the subject of their choice at Key Stage 5. • Enable staff to continue teaching at Key Stage 5, through sharing practitioners within given clusters and further afield. • Develop the skills of independent learning of the learners. • Support the Welsh Government's aim of 1million Welsh speakers by 2050, by enabling
1.15	<p>The North Wales Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) is also a key partner in supporting post-16 provision. The ambition of the RSP is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be confident and cohesive, focused on improving the region's economic, social and environmental well-being. • To see the region develop in a sustainable way, with opportunities for people to gain new skills for the future and develop rewarding careers. To see businesses grow and communities prosper. • To do this while being champions of our language, culture and heritage and in line with the well-being goals for Wales. <p>The Partnership brings together employers, skills providers and key local stakeholders to better articulate skills demand and challenges at a regional and local level. The partnership works to identify current and future regional skills needs, and uses this intelligence to ensure the most suitable and relevant provision is available for our future generations. Working closely with the Regional Skills Partnership, Flintshire ensures that planning is evidence-based and is responsive to the changing needs of the North Wales economy and its businesses.</p>

	Flintshire Education and Youth Portfolio is represented on the RSP Board.
1.16	<p>Flintshire Priorities for post-16</p> <p>Flintshire local authority is ambitious for all children and young people to have the very best provision and where children and young people are at the heart of decision-making. We recognise the importance of working:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively • Collaboratively • Strategically <p>Flintshire's current priorities for post-16 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor post-16 provision in the implementation of the work of CTER • Effective communication around new performance measures to key stakeholders • Converting AS outcomes into A level outcomes • Increase percentage of pupils achieving A*-A grades at A level • Further improve destinations of individual learners to ensure it is appropriate to ability • Maintain low levels of young people/adults Not in Education, Employment or Training • Increase opportunities for apprenticeship and employment and promote Science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects in schools • Establish concrete partnership working with Ambition North Wales and Regional Skills Partnership • Health and wellbeing agenda addressed in all sixth forms through collaborative working with the local authority, health and third sector organisations

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The Education and Youth Portfolio has increased capacity for post-16 support for schools alongside capacity for adult learning provision through the post of Learning Adviser for post-16.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>There are no specific risks arising from this report.</p> <p>The Council's Education Portfolio has a detailed risk assessment which outlines key risks related to the delivery of education services and method statements which describe how these risks are managed. These are regularly reported to the Education, Youth and Culture Overview Scrutiny Committee.</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	Regular discussions are held between Officers and the Flintshire Headteacher Federation and Post-16 Network. This information is used to inform the Portfolio's ongoing cycle of self-evaluation and improvement.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	There are no appendices to this report.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Implementing the new post-16 Framework https://www.gov.wales/implementing-new-post-16-framework</p> <p>Tertiary Education reform; background information https://www.gov.wales/tertiary-education-reform-background-information.html</p> <p>Estyn thematic review of the current 16-19 curriculum https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-report/review-current-16-19-curriculum-wales</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Vicky Barlow, Senior Manager for School Improvement Telephone: 01352 704054 Cymraeg/ Welsh 01267 224923 E-mail: vicky.barlow@flintshire.gov.uk</p> <p>Contact Officer: Dawn Spence, Post-16 and Adult Learning Adviser E-mail: dawn.spence@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>The Commission for Tertiary Education and Research(CTER) will become responsible for the strategy, funding and oversight of the following sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further education (FE), including colleges and school sixth-forms • higher education (HE), including research and innovation • adult education and adult community learning • apprenticeships and training

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