

Public Document Pack

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To: Cllr David Healey (Chairman)

Councillors: Janet Axworthy, Sian Braun, Bob Connah, Paul Cunningham, Gladys Healey, Joe Johnson, Tudor Jones, Dave Mackie, Ian Smith and Martin White

Co-opted Members:

Lynn Bartlett and Wendy White

10 September 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

NOTICE OF REMOTE MEETING
EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER, 2021 at 2.00 PM

Yours faithfully

Robert Robins
Democratic Services Manager

Please note: This will be a remote meeting and 'attendance' will be restricted to Committee Members and those Members of Council who have asked the Head of Democratic Services for an invitation. Such attendees may only speak at the Chair's discretion.

The meeting will be live streamed onto the Council's website. A recording of the meeting will also be available, shortly after the meeting at <https://flintshire-public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact a member of the Democratic Services Team on 01352 702345.

A G E N D A

1 APOLOGIES

Purpose: To receive any apologies.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

Purpose: To receive any Declarations and advise Members accordingly.

3 MINUTES (Pages 5 - 24)

Purpose: To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the joint meeting with Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on the 17th June 2021, and the Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 1st July 2021.

4 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING (Pages 25 - 34)

Report of Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator

Purpose: To consider the Forward Work Programme of the Education & Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee and to inform the Committee of progress against actions from previous meetings.

5 BUDGET 2022/23 - STAGE 2 (Pages 35 - 46)

Report of Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Education and Youth), Corporate Finance Manager - Cabinet Member for Finance, Social Value and Procurement, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education

Purpose: That the Committee reviews and comments on the Education, Youth and Culture cost pressures and overall budget strategy, and advises on any areas of cost efficiency it would like to see explored further.

6 SCHOOL RESERVE BALANCES YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2021 (Pages 47 - 54)

Report of Chief Officer (Education and Youth) - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education

Purpose: To provide the Committee with details of the closing balances held by Flintshire schools at the end of the financial year.

7 COVID-19 SCHOOLS OPERATIONAL UPDATE (Pages 55 - 60)

Report of Chief Officer (Education and Youth) - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education

Purpose: To provide the Committee with an overview of the revised Covid-19 measures for the safe operation of schools.

8 ESTYN THEMATIC REVIEW UPDATE (Pages 61 - 70)

Report of Chief Officer (Education and Youth) - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education

Purpose: To provide Scrutiny with assurances on the Education Portfolio's response to supporting learning and teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Please note that there may be a 10 minute adjournment of this meeting if it lasts longer than two hours

Procedural Note on the conduct of meetings

The Chair will open the meeting and introduce themselves.

The meeting will be attended by a number of Councillors. Officers will also be in attendance to present reports, with Democratic Services officers acting as hosts of the meeting.

All attendees are asked to ensure their mobile phones are switched off and that any background noise is kept to a minimum.

All microphones are to be kept muted during the meeting and should only be unmuted when invited to speak by the Chair. When invitees have finished speaking they should go back on mute.

To indicate to speak, Councillors will use the chat facility or use the electronic raise hand function. The chat function may also be used for questions, relevant comments and officer advice and updates.

The Chair will call the speakers, with elected Members addressed as 'Councillor' and officers addressed by their job title e.g. Chief Executive' or name. From time to time, the officer advising the Chair will explain procedural points or suggest alternative wording for proposals, to assist the Committee.

If and when a vote is taken, the Chair will explain that only those who oppose the proposal(s), or who wish to abstain will need to indicate, using the chat function. The officer advising the Chair will indicate whether the proposals are carried.

If a more formal vote is needed, this will be by roll call – where each Councillor will be asked in turn (alphabetically) how s/he wishes to vote

At County Council and Planning Committee meetings speaker's times are limited. A bell will be sounded to alert that the speaker has one minute remaining

The meeting will be live streamed onto the Council's website. A recording of the meeting will also be available, shortly after the meeting at <https://flintshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

**JOINT EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE AND SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEES
17 JUNE 2021**

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Joint Education, Youth & Culture and Social & Health Care Overview & Scrutiny Committees of Flintshire County Council held on Thursday 17th June 2021.

PRESENT: Councillor Mike Allport, Janet Axworthy, Marion Bateman, Sian Braun, Bob Connah, Paul Cunningham, Jean Davies, David Healey, Gladys Healey, Joe Johnson, Tudor Jones, Mike Lowe, Dave Mackie, Hilary McGuill, Michelle Perfect, Ian Smith, Martin White, David Williams and David Wisinger

CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Lynn Bartlett, David Hytch and Mrs Rebecca Stark

APPOLOGIES: Carol Ellis, Cindy Hinds, Mrs Wendy White

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Patrick Heesom attended as an observer

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Ian Roberts, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education; Councillor Christine Jones, Deputy Leader of the Council (Partnerships) & Cabinet Member for Social Services, Chief Officer (Education & Youth), Chief Officer (Social Services), Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression) for agenda items 5 and 8) Senior Manager (School Improvement) for agenda item 6), Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) and Senior Manager (Safeguarding and Commissioning) (for agenda item 7)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator, Democratic Services Officer and Democratic Services Support Officer

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

To appoint a Chair for the meeting

RESOLVED

That Councillor Hilary McGuill be appointed as Chair for the joint meeting

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None were received

3. RECOGNITION OF DAVID HYTCH AND REBECCA STARK

The Chair invited Members to pay tribute to the contribution made by David Hytch and Rebecca Stark to the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee, whose terms of office as Co-opted members of the Committee ended in June, 2021. She added that she had worked with David and Rebecca over a number of years and found them to be very knowledgeable people and thanked them for the contributions they had made.

Councillor Dave Healey thanked David and Rebecca for their involvement as active members of the committee long before he joined the Council. The Education Youth & Culture O&S Committee was a robust committee and lay members ensured it remained vigorous and effective in its challenge. He referred to the last meeting where Members had the opportunity to thank David for his contribution over the years especially as Vice Chair and he fully appreciated his support in that role. He then continued to thank Rebecca, as she was unable to attend that meeting, for her support and involvement over the years. Rebecca was always well informed, made valid contributions at committee and was helpful and supportive when called upon to assist with Estyn Inspections which was very much appreciated. The Chair thanked them both again for their valued contributions both at Education Youth and Culture and at the joint Meetings with Social & Health Care.

The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) was delighted to extend her thanks to David and Becky and said that it had been an absolute pleasure working with them. She paid tribute to their enormous support and challenge over many years on the Education Youth & Culture O&S Committee and School Performance Monitoring Groups and said that education services in Flintshire were in a better place because of the contributions which they both had made. She thanked them both on behalf of herself, the Senior Officer team, schools and the whole portfolio.

The Chair sought consent to move Agenda item 8 to follow agenda item 5. This was moved and seconded.

4. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN IN FLINTSHIRE

The Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression) introduced the report and explained the format was different because of the level of data available. The report provided an overview of the work and support provided for looked after children during the academic year 2019//20 which had been impacted by the pandemic.

She provided information on colleagues who supported looked after children, an update on the numbers of children requiring assistance within schools and those requiring specialist support in out of county placements. Information was provided on the number pupils who received Special Educational Needs (SEN) Statements and how this compared nationally. She referred to her involvement on the silver group within the Emergency Response which had enhanced the joint working with Education and Social Services to ensure the needs of looked after children and vulnerable children were identified and supported via the Resilience hubs. Laptops were distributed to this cohort quickly and together with the support provided by the

Vulnerable Learning Coordinator ensured children were able to access online education. She confirmed the services and processes with regard to SEN were quickly moved online to continue to support this cohort as they had a higher level of need.

The Senior Manager then referred to Section 1.06 in the report saying training was a real focus for education with sessions such as Trauma Informed Practice, Nurture and Attachment Theory provided. The authority had purchased the Boxall Profiling and Assessment Tool which identified the pupil's needs and ensured that the support was provided to enable them to progress with schools issued with licences and training supplied to use this tool effectively. The Senior Manager then referred to the Pupil Development Grant (PDG) which was allocated from Welsh Government (WG) via GwE together with an explanation on how schools worked in clusters to put forward bids to apply for the grant. Alternative forms of education with the focus on well-being were highlighted with a range of officer support available for children. She finished by providing information on the outcomes of year 11 pupils from last year who had all achieved what they needed to move on for their future aspirations.

Councillor Dave Mackie said that this was a very interesting report and asked the following questions:-

Firstly at point 1.07 on page 7 he understood how this money was spent but asked if the figure was sufficient and if not should this be better resourced?

Secondly at point 2.01 on page 8 with the changes in the legislation and the funding being allocated where the child lived, was information available on how many children the Authority was gaining or losing and was the situation the same in England with the authority being so close to the border.

In response to the first point the Senior Manager confirmed the Pupil Development Grant (DPG) allowance was fixed per pupil and funded by WG not Flintshire. With schools working in clusters to obtain a set amount of funding this provided a level of resource to pay for a member of staff to support pupils across their cluster of schools. The Chief Officer agreed saying they had more buying power working in clusters.

In response to the second point the Senior Manager referred to the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act and confirmed that information was still awaited from WG. With regard to the out of county numbers the figures were not to hand but she confirmed there were 126 pupils attending Flintshire Schools with the remaining, around 40 pupils, either placed with other authorities in Wales or England. She said there were implications with regard to the workload in Wales for officers with specific roles and responsibilities and that with regard to pupils sent to England there would be implications for the Council. For some there would be no impact at all with the English legislation providing the need for them but there was a cohort where the council would continue to have responsibility.

The recommendations, outlined within the report, were moved and seconded by Councillors Jean Davies and Mike Lowe.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the joint committee actively engaged as Corporate Parents for looked after children, promoting awareness and challenging provision within Flintshire educational settings.
- (b) That the joint committee actively encouraged all educational staff to promote the educational welfare of looked after children within Flintshire establishments at a 'whole school level'.

5. **ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS AND EDUCATION TRIBUNAL (WALES) ACT 2018**

The Senior Manager (Inclusion and Progression) introduced the report which provided an update on the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Wales Act (ALNET). The Act was due to come into effect in September 2020 but this had been delayed until September 2021. She provided information on the adjustments WG had made with regard to the conversion of the Statement of SEN into the Individual Development Plan and the implementation for Post 16 with the age range now 0 – 25 years. WG had identified children in specific year groups with SEN needs who would be moving onto the new system at a normal point of transition with the Statement of SEN remaining in place until the conversation took place.

Paula Roberts, the Senior Learning Adviser (ALN) had led on ALN Transformation for Flintshire and had ensured that schools and the local authority were ready for these changes. The operational code was published in April and further implementation guidance was still awaited from WG which hopefully would be received before the end of term and discussions were ongoing regarding responses to a number of questions. Schools were being supported with regard to the “person centred practice” which was core to this and Paula Roberts had been holding training sessions with regard to the code to ensure schools understood what was required of them.

As from the 1st January 2021 all schools were required to have an Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator (ALNCo) together with an Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer for Early Years within the Council and she confirmed that these posts were now in place. The Senior Manager provided an update on the ALNET multi agency work which included the Designated Clinical Lead Officer (DECLo) from Health. Information on the new system, the legal protection for children and grant funding which had been used to enable practicing ALNCos to support schools which had proved invaluable for them. The Senior Manager finished by saying that WG viewed this as a cost neutral process but there were implications for the authority who had expanded the level of officers that were needed to implement the processes from September.

The Chief Officer was grateful for the hard work carried out by the Senior Manager, the Senior Learning Adviser and the team who had worked so hard to support schools. It was because of this team effort that Flintshire was in a strong position with regard to this new Act.

Councillor Mackie agreed with the Chief Officer and said the committee should also thank the Senior Learning Advisor for the work that she has done getting the authority to the place we were now. Councillor Mackie asked the following questions:-

Firstly at point 1.03 in the report he raised concerns that WG had set the timetable for the implementation but local authorities were still waiting for the guidance to be provided to support this. The Senior Manager reported WG had worked hard to try and meet the deadline with pressure from schools and local authorities who were trying to push it back again. The process had commenced in 2007 to provide legal support for all children requiring Additional Learning Needs and that the valid questions raised by Paula Roberts from her prospective in the role had enabled review and discussion. She then provided information on the Commencement Orders with discussions taking place with the Minister to see if these could be revised. WG were listening to the concerns raised and wanted to ensure this was carried out correctly.

Secondly at point 1.08 Councillor Mackie asked for information on the IT system and asked if this was accessible for everyone. The Senior Manager confirmed that the IT system would provide an effective tool for schools to record all interactions with parents, children and young people from the beginning because of the possibility of legal challenge and said that this had not been in place previously. This would prove invaluable for the local authority and schools if cases were taken to tribunal as it recorded the level of intervention and support provided and ensured the Authority met its statutory responsibilities within the timescales set by the Act. Parents were also able to access this information.

Thirdly at point 2.01 Councillor Mackie raised concerns about the last line “the expected increase in legal costs to respond to the anticipated level of legal challenge” He asked for more information on this. The Senior Manager reported on the situation in England which changed its system in 2014 and was now a legalised system around Special Educational Needs. With these changes the legal protection commenced at the point where a child may or may not be identified as having additional learning needs with the recourse to appeal by the child or parent from that point. This had been raised with the Chief Officer and legal colleagues as there was a potential for a lot of legal activity because this was a new system. The Chief Officer reported on the review by the Chief Officer team to identify the implications for the portfolio, finance and legal colleagues because of the Act. As a local authority legal advice had been sought to ensure it was in the best position to advise and support schools to make sure they were ready for any potential challenges. Support within the legal team would need to be factored in to ensure that capacity was in place.

Mrs Bartlett referred to the enormous responsibilities of the ALNCo role in schools and asked if schools had been given guidance on whether this was a paid role and was this consistent across schools. The Senior Manager agreed this was a very comprehensive role and confirmed that an exemplar job description was issued to schools with a recommendation from WG and the authority that this post should sit with a senior member of the leadership team within the school because of the complexity and importance involved. As regards a salary the authority had provided

advice when asked and she then reported on the different ways schools were providing this with some Head Teachers in the role and some having a number of staff working together with one designated person in that role to ensure the processes were in place.

Mrs Stark referred to the new IT system and asked if it was the ALNCo who had responsibility for inputting information for their school or would more staff be trained to do this. She was concerned as there were legal ramifications if the information was not inputted correctly. The Senior Manager confirmed that training initially would be provided for the ALNCo's and agreed that there would need to be close monitoring of the information inputted onto the system to ensure it was accurate if taken to tribunals. An IT System Administrator had been appointed to support the system which was called ECLIPSE and it was proposed a pilot would be launched in September. This system had been purchased by four North Wales Authorities and there had been significant officer involvement to ensure it was working correctly and fit for purpose. The Administrator would be delivering training on the system and supporting schools and it was hoped this would be in all schools by October.

The recommendation, outlined within the report, was moved and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey and Mrs Rebecca Stark.

RESOLVED:

That Committee received and considered the report on the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018.

6. SAFEGUARDING IN EDUCATION

The report was presented by the Senior Manager (School Improvement) and provided an update on the discharge of statutory safeguarding duties in schools and the Education portfolio with the format different this year because of the pandemic.

Information was provided on how schools were looking at safeguarding and the challenges in lieu of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, Keeping Learners Safe Guidance and requirements from Estyn. She praised the way pupils and teaching staff had adapted to the different ways of learning both in the classroom and virtually with teachers maintaining contact with children and parents which was a huge area of concern and responsibility for schools. She reported on the close working relationship with colleagues in Children's Services and the Silver Tactical Group and said schools had different challenges every year with safeguarding at the forefront.

The response to Covid 19 and the ALN Act had resulted in the new procedures for safeguarding and appropriate training was provided to support this. She referred to the challenges with remote and blended learning with children having access to the internet and social media and confirmed a detailed report would be brought to the next meeting of Education Youth & Culture O&OC.

The Senior Manager then provided detailed information on the updated Wales Procedures, Update of the Schools Guidance, virtual training and professional

support for Head Teachers, Governors and schools. She confirmed Claire Sinnott had co-ordinated this and provided an overview of the Safeguarding in Education Panel and its links with the Corporate Safeguarding Panel. The Panel met regularly to ensure schools had the processes in place, were supported, monitored and held to account around safeguarding which was something which never stood still and was always changing. She reassured members that this was constantly challenged and moving forward. The Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) praised the positive working between schools, education and social services with children at the forefront and that this was reinforced with the work of the Silver Tactical Group which he felt privileged to be a part of. The Chief Officer valued the contribution from the Senior Manager (Children and Workforce) which enabled robust responses to support vulnerable children and young people throughout the pandemic.

The Deputy Leader of the Council (Partnerships) & Cabinet Member for Social Services referred to the work covered within the Corporate Safeguarding Panel which ensure all children were supported and received the best care but that this had been carried out differently. During the pandemic Education and Social Care especially ensured all the families were monitored virtually and in person to ensure they received the support they needed. She was really proud of the way Flintshire responded to safeguarding and were always proactive developing new procedures, training and the great partnership working for children and adults. The Chief Officer (Social Services) added that he co-chaired the Safeguarding Panel with the Chief Officer (Education & Youth) and that with the support of the Cabinet Members for Social Services, Cabinet Member for Corporate Management & Assets this had solidified the corporate safeguarding approach over recent years. Safeguarding was always changing and this required constant challenge, learning and development and that the new procedures were a significant step in Wales and colleagues across the council had managed this well to ensure it moved forward.

Councillor Gladys Healey referred to children who were home schooled and asked who monitored these children to ensure they were well cared for. She also asked who paid for children who were home schooled. Flintshire had a duty of care for these children and she had concerns unless a parent was a teacher how could they follow and teach the curriculum. The Chief Officer (Education & Youth) responded to say the issue of home elective education was an entirety in itself and suggested that this item be included on the Forward Work Programme for the Education Youth & Culture Committee for this cycle. The report would contain the processes that the local authority undertook, its statutory responsibilities and monitoring of the quality of education provided. The Chief Officer stated that these children sat outside of the authority's systems as those parents had chosen to take them out of school and they were their responsibility. The authority did not receive funding for these children but monitored the quality of curriculum provided. She added that the challenge was the level of intervention powers the authority had and that this would be outlined within the report. She continued to say that if a child was unable to attend school because of particular reasons then the Inclusion and Progression Service would be able to provide suitable provision. In cases where the parent's first choice school was full she confirmed that parents would be offered other places in schools but it would be their choice to accept that alternative place or elect to home educate their child. The Chief Officer suggested that the report be

circulated to both the Education Youth & Culture and Social & Health Care Committees which was agreed.

Councillor Tudor Jones commented that this was an excellent report which had achieved so much prior to impact of the pandemic. He asked the following questions:-

- Under consultation in the report it stated “none required” he asked in view of what had been happening of the last few months should a consultation be considered.
- At point 1.06 in the report it stated that it was an updated document October 2020 but since then there had been an enormous amount of information about inappropriate use of e-communications amongst children with bullying and sexting now moving online with children highlighting the consequences which had happened to them. He asked if this document was the place that this could be addressed
- At point 1.04 he referred to the bullet points and asked if this was where we responded quickly to what had been revealed by the children in the last few months as widespread vindictive and damaging bullying. Was this the place to address these issues and add to the document which would strengthen our actions on how we keep safe these children who were victims? He was distressed to read that a school had suggested its girls should wear cycling shorts under their skirts to prevent up-skirting by mobile phones and he felt that this was making the victims responsible for what was happening to them and that the authority should be intervening with whoever was perpetrating these offences.

In response the Senior Manager shared the concerns of Councillor Jones at the reports from our young people and welcomed the WG and Minister’s response to ask Estyn to investigate this and look at the culture that some of our young people find themselves in. She reassured members that the authority would be working with Estyn and schools and must never be complacent. She referred members to the Keeping Learners Safe section on Hwb which was the WG platform for school resources and provision which also provided supporting documentation for those issues available for schools and practitioners. The team at WG had been coordinating a range of resources and documentation together with guidance for schools with keeping learners safe guidance updated regularly and this was promoted to schools. She confirmed specific advice had been provided to schools regarding inappropriate images shared on social media. She provided information on the UK Council for Internet Safety and the work of Education Working Group but the challenges were that the digital world moved so quickly and that this needed to be responsive to need. This was a social issue as well as school issue and governing bodies should be involved in asking questions and that this was on the agenda for the next meeting. She continued to provide information on the support and advice given to schools through training, links with Children’s Services and enhanced support for the designated staff at schools and the plan moving forward.

Mr Hytch referred to the Office for Standards and Education report and the website everyonesinvited.com which allowed incidents to be reported and said that half of Flintshire secondary schools had incidents reported on there including sadly a couple of primary schools. The Children's Commissioner felt that this could be the tip of the iceberg and has called for an Estyn Review. He asked the following questions:-

Firstly with regard to inappropriate enquiries by local media he asked if there were strategies in place to field these without exposing individuals and schools.

Secondly would a more in depth view of how to combat issues which were wider than schools, the authority and governing bodies who had to play their part in protecting youngsters. This culture was more widespread than the pre-digital age and he hoped that the Education Youth & Culture Committee would be able to look at this in detail.

The Chief Officer referred to the email communications between herself and Mr Hytch and reassured him that if a school received a press enquiry they were to direct it to the Council's press office who would work with the school to make appropriate statements. She referred to the website and the schools identified and advised that officers were working with those schools. This was on the agenda for forthcoming portfolio and corporate safeguarding meetings. She also reported on the engagement with schools and Secondary Heads Federation meeting.

Councillor Marion Bateman thanked the officers for all their dedication and hard work. She referred to an incident which was brought to her attention (not in Flintshire) of a 6 year old child who was participating in a remote learning lesson in lockdown where the teacher was at home. The 6 year old was left in the care of older nephew who, once they logged onto the lesson, left the child alone in the house. This became clear to the teacher during the course of the lesson. Councillor Bateman asked if that were to happen in Flintshire what action would the teacher take and would it be carried out immediately.

In response the Chief Officer confirmed that the teacher would follow the school's child safeguarding procedures and raise it as a concern to the Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer who would take the appropriate action and speak to Children's Services for this to be investigated. She felt very confident that because of the level of training on this that no member of staff would feel reticent about this. The Senior Manager confirmed clear guidance had been provided to schools at the start of the pandemic together with the national guidance from WG. There should always be two members of staff on screen to enable the Designated Safeguarding Officer to be contacted and that there was always someone in school who could action this immediately.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services referred to Councillor Healey's point on home educated children saying that she had been pressing WG for a register for children who were home schooled for a number of years. The Cabinet Member and Chief Officer (Social Services) had met the new Police & Crime Commissioner who had agreed to add his support and hopefully he would be able to progress this further.

Mr Hytch fully supported the comments made by Councillor Jones regarding online bullying with evidence supporting an increase during the pandemic. He referred to the stance the Education Youth & Culture committee made not to make hostile comments online which was backed by Full Council and it was hoped that this could be carried through to schools at assemblies to change the culture. Unfortunately this was not the schools responsibility as this was happening at home in children's bedrooms but schools received the blame however they could change the behaviour.

The recommendations, outlined within the report, were moved and seconded by Councillors Janet Axworthy and Ian Smith

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the content of the safeguarding in education report be noted.
- (b) That the positive work undertaken by Flintshire schools to safeguard children and young people during the pandemic be noted.

7. MULTISYSTEMIC THERAPY

The report was presented by the Chief Officer (Social Services) and Deputy Leader of the Council (Partnerships) and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Senior Manager (Children and Workforce). The report included an update on the multi-agency service to provide intensive therapeutic support to young people. He congratulated the North East Wales Multisystemic Therapy Team (MST) who had received an award for "Whatever it takes" which went above and beyond what was recognised throughout the MST Programme and was given to individuals within the MST community who had demonstrated outstanding and meritorious service. He explained that this team was planned, initiated, delivered and succeeded throughout the pandemic from scratch.

The Senior Manager introduced the report which provided an overview of the team's partnership approach and that North Wales had secured WG funding to look at creating partnership projects to transform the way Children's Services worked. The money was regional but came in via a local Health Board footprint for Wrexham, Flintshire and BCUHB. The project had just received an interim evaluation from Oxford Brooks University in terms of an evidence base about this service. What had shone through was the positive partnership working with Education, Social Services and Schools to provide intensive support for children and families who were on the edge of care. This enabled intensive, preventative support to avoid the need for children to become looked after and ensured that they could safely remain with their families.

The presentation included detailed information on:-

- Baseline Assessment - What works? - Common features - Objectives
- Why MST? - About MST - MST Therapist aim to:
- Implementation
- Support to date
- Evaluation - Evaluation Findings
- Key Findings
- Phase 2

The Chair found this so refreshing in particular the staff who were working 24/7 and asked the Senior Manager to take back the committee's praise to them for their work stepping in to support the parents.

Councillor Mackie commented that if these families were supported to achieve real change as regards parenting this would hopefully filter through into the next generation and so on which was so important. He was very pleased to note 1.08 regarding the team "Whatever it takes" which was very positive.

He referred to page 34 the Analysis the last paragraph on Family History and asked if the authority had got it right in the past when working with these families as regards interventions and would moving to this new system break the cycle.

In response the Senior Manager explained that the behaviour of some of the families they were working was entrenched and generational and that with the child protection work it focused the mind of families to bring around change. Once the children came off the Child Protection Register working with Social Services became voluntary and could not be enforced. This service would provide a more therapeutic model from CAMHS colleagues to address the underlying issues for the parents and children and show how they could achieve change themselves. He said issues such as substance misuse and low mental health required time to work through and previously social workers were not able to devote that amount of time because of workload. This service brought all of the expertise together looking at the whole family to ensure sustainable change. He referred to the strong Early Years, Flying Start services supporting parents from 0 – 7 years but when the teenage years were reached the offer was not as good as it should be and that this project highlighted where the authority wanted to go with our services and offer for families.

The Chair referred to Where We Go Next in the report and suggested that a service similar to Mockingbird providing an all family environment where they could go when they needed help be considered.

Councillor Cunningham referred to page 40 in the report "Out of Hours Support 24/7" which proved that the excellent service was working and said he did not think the authority got it wrong in the past it just maybe did not work for them.

The Chair felt the authority was learning all the time and that this could work but was worried about the number of people that were turned away because the staff or capacity was not available for everyone.

The Senior Manager referred to the Council's ambition on delivery of in house residential care which was discussed at the council seminar. As we moved forward it was realised that it was not about the building it was the care, support, assessment and therapy that happened in that building that was important. MST Fit which was on residential care and as it expands there would be an MST Fit team in place to work with those children. He added that the aim was where it was safe and appropriate to do so, children would return home or move onto foster care and that Flintshire's approach to Out of County was building on the learning through MST and how we brought those initiatives together.

The Chief Officer commented that the national media was full of stories on Children's Services and challenges about the high numbers of looked after children in Wales compared to other parts of the UK. He added that the service was continually learning and MST had shown how to refresh and improve further the spectrum of services. There were so many positive initiatives in Flintshire around Children's Service which were encouraging including Mockingbird, MST, Residential Care wing, workforce approaches and Early Help Hub. He paid tribute to Craig, Jenny Frost and Peter Robson for taking forward the service in a very challenging period for all public services over the last 18 months.

Councillor Mackie said he was very impressed with the number of initiatives which were brought to the Social & Health Care Committee which made his job of scrutiny very difficult because he was seeing good projects coming forward which were intended to have positive affect on everything that was going on.

The recommendations, outlined within the report, were moved and seconded by Paul Cunningham and Jean Davies.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee endorsed the work to safely reduce the numbers of children in need of care through the provision of intensive targeted MST support for families.
- (b) That the Committee supported the establishment of a local authority Children's Residential Care as part of an approach to rebalance care provision for children, with a focus on ensuring an affordable and sufficient range of local high quality placements.

8. MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There was no members of the press or public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.03 pm)

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Chairman

EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1 JULY 2021

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Education, Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee of Flintshire County Council held on Thursday 1st July 2021.

PRESENT: Councillor David Healey (Chair)

Councillors: Janet Axworthy, Sian Braun, Bob Connah, Paul Cunningham, Gladys Healey, Joe Johnson, Dave Mackie, Ian Smith and Martin White

CO-OPTED MEMBER:

Lynn Bartlett

APOLOGIES: Councillor Tudor Jones, Mrs Wendy White and the Chief Officer (Education & Youth)

SUBSTITUTION: Councillor Patrick Heesom (for Councillor David Williams)

CONTRIBUTORS:

Councillor Ian Roberts, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education and Senior Manager for School Improvement

Mr. Martyn Froggett, Secondary Core Lead for Flintshire, Mr. David Edwards, Primary Core Lead for Flintshire (For agenda item 5)

Learning Advisor (Health Wellbeing & Safeguarding) (For agenda item 6)

Strategic Policy Advisor and Benefits Manager (For agenda item 7)

Senior Manager (Business Change and Support) (For agenda item 8)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator, Democratic Services Officer and Democratic Services Support Officer

06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING DECLARATIONS)

None.

07 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 18 March and 14 June 2021 were received.

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021 were approved, as moved and seconded by Councillor Dave Mackie and Councillor Paul Cunningham.

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2021 were approved, as moved and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey and Councillor Paul Cunningham.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved as a correct record.

08 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING

The Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator presented the report and confirmed that all future committee dates had been included in the Forward Work Programme for the Committee following the AGM in May. The regular reports together with an additional item for September on the Archive Service had been added and she confirmed that the Forward Work Programme would be populated prior to the September meeting. An item on Home Schooling, as suggested by Councillor Gladys Healey, would also be included and said if members wished to add any additional items on the Forward Work Programme they could do so by contacting her. All actions on the Action Tracking report had been completed

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved and seconded by Councillor Gladys Healey and Councillor Bob Connah.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Forward Work Programme be noted;
- (b) That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises; and
- (c) That the progress made in completing the outstanding actions be noted.

09 ANNUAL REPORT FROM REGIONAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SERVICE, GWE

The Senior Manager for School Improvement introduced the report which provided an overview of the support afforded by the Regional School Improvement Service (GwE) and their annual report on the work across North Wales. She referenced the work carried out during the pandemic which included remote and blended learning, support and guidance to schools and also the national reform and new curriculum and thanked them for the dedicated support that they had provided to Flintshire schools.

The report and presentation were provided by Mr. Martyn Froggett, Secondary Core Lead for Flintshire, Mr. David Edwards, Primary Core Lead for Flintshire from the Regional School Improvement Services (GwE) and included an update on the support provided and its impact on schools.

The presentation contained detailed information on:-

- The general support provided for schools and the local authority since January
- Support provided to schools following the Estyn Recommendations on completion of the thematic review
- Planning and support for schools for Curriculum for Wales in September

Councillor Mackie thanked officers for the report. He commented on the content of the report and information, such as, the number of school visits but asked for information on the purposes for the visits. He also asked for generalised feedback from people who had taken courses, information on professional learning and the number of Flintshire officers taking part with their feedback and comparisons with other authorities in North Wales to see how Flintshire's professional training programme was developing.

In response, the Senior Manager said that this was the North Wales Annual Report from GwE and agreed some elements of the report had been to committee previously but that the slides provided positive information on the more recent situation in schools. As all performance measures, national reporting and examination system results had been suspended and the focus was on support to ensure that provision was in place.

The Secondary Core Lead understood the comments made by Councillor Mackie but said that the usual data was not available to present and that well-being had been at the heart of their approach to schools. He confirmed data was available on the uptake of the courses provided and what was happening in Flintshire. He agreed that moving forward to include this information in the reports from a Flintshire and comparative basis and added information on the participation of the Curriculum for Wales' workshops would be available soon and could also be included. The Primary Core Lead agreed with the comments made and said the robust data was missing at the moment because of the pandemic but that this would be included when more firmer data was available. He reported on the new admin role for leadership programmes who would dis-aggregate the data for each Local Authority to enable this to be presented to committee. Support had been provided to Head Teachers around self-evaluation reports as Schools had been working under so much pressure with Head Teachers not having the time to reflect on the positives and areas for improvement.

The Chair praised the efficient way in which GwE had rolled out support for schools and said that he was pleased to see positive changes in education with well-being at the core, which he felt was important to ensure schools got the right support.

Councillor Gladys Healey asked if there was information available on how many Head Teachers and teaching staff had contracted Covid and were also suffering with Long Covid as North Wales did not have a Long Covid clinic. The situation in schools was unpredictable and Councillor Healey felt that all pupils should be vaccinated to enable them to return to the classroom.

In response, the Leader of the Council said that this was a matter for the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). He confirmed that Head Teachers, GwE and the Council had fully supported schools and that the rise in cases was probably as a result of events happening outside of school. He praised the way GwE and Flintshire officers had supported schools throughout the pandemic which had enabled them to continue to perform to a high standard.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved and seconded by Councillor Martin White and Councillor Ian Smith.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee accept the Annual Report from GwE; and
- (b) That the positive impact on the regional service in supporting Flintshire schools during the pandemic and in their ongoing preparations for the implementation of the new Curriculum for Wales be noted.

10 SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET SAFETY

The report was presented by the Senior Manager for School Improvement and Learning Advisor (Health Wellbeing & Safeguarding) and provided Members with an update on the Portfolio's Social Media and Internet Safety policy with the focus on Safety and Well Being of learners. Technology had enabled education to continue during the pandemic which, whilst being a huge benefit, there has also been harmful behaviour online and content which would put learners at risk if appropriate strategies were not in place. She confirmed that this responsibility was taken seriously by the Authority and schools.

The Learning Advisor (Health Well-being and Safeguarding) presented the report which had been brought to reassure committee that children and young people were receiving appropriate levels of support in relation to social media and internet safety with the report highlighting what the authority had undertaken together with the national guidance. Social media platforms had enabled schools and the authority to communicate quickly with children and parents but there were advantages and disadvantages with the same challenges faced by adults using these platforms as young people. The report contained data and guidance provided by UK Government and Welsh Government (WG) which was now being followed locally. Information on the Digital Competency Framework, Schools Health Research Network (SHRN) was provided and it was confirmed that the next survey would take place in the Autumn this year.

The Learning Advisor drew Members attention to the Online Safety Bill, Action Plan, Guidance and Curriculum for Wales. Information on the remit of the All Wales School Liaison Core Programme was outlined together with the programme "Getting on Together" which looked at challenging extremism. In conclusion, she outlined the new Estyn Inspection Framework with a pilot for this commencing in spring 2022.

Councillor Mackie welcomed the report and the inclusion of links which provided accompanying online documentation for Members to view. He asked as a school governor what questions should he be asking of his schools and were the schools aware of the report.

In response, the Learning Advisor explained that the authority had a duty to provide appropriate training and advice and that this was already in the portfolio's forward ward programme. She added that it was hoped that the Trainer who had

provided training for the schools programme could hold a session for school governors who would be given questions to ask their governing body.

Councillor Martin White referred to point 1.08 where it stated 68 out of 78 schools had registered for 360 Degree Safe Cymru and asked what could be done to encourage the final 10 to register. In response the Senior Manager said that this was an important tool but said schools could be using other tools which were available but agreed it would be beneficial if all schools could register. This would be encouraged in the new academic year.

The Chair commented on the pupil to pupil cyber bullying figures which were down to 20% of learners reporting this compared to 23% when surveyed in 2017, but said that this remained higher than the average of 18%. He referred to the Notice of Motion which went to Council in 2019, where all Members signed up to a pledge that they would not themselves engage in social media in ways which denigrates other individuals. He asked how Members could re-affirm this pledge.

The Learning Advisor supported the Chair's comments and suggested that this and online bullying could be promoted to form part of the new academic year and included in schools newsletters, twitter, websites etc. The authority's communication team could promote this further to make a stance on cyber bullying which was very important. This suggestion was supported by the Committee.

Councillor Axworthy paid tribute to the late Councillor Kevin Hughes' championing of stopping cyber bullying. She commented that this was a hugely important subject and she welcomed the upcoming governor training and steps to move this forward.

Councillor Gladys Healey asked if primary schools could be included as well as high schools as younger children had their own phones and used social media. Councillor Healey felt that if they were taught at a very young age to respect each other and follow the no bullying policy by the time they reached secondary schools this would assist in reducing the issue.

In response, the Learner Advisor confirmed that the survey was currently only carried out in secondary schools but a pilot was being undertaken with some year 6 pupils. The primary school pilot had been delayed due to the pandemic with no timeframe set for this at present but the key messages on online safety were taught in the curriculum from foundation phase.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved and seconded by Councillor Janet Axworthy and Councillor Sian Braun.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee feel assured around the level of assurance about the education offer to schools in relation to online safety, including social media.

11 **COMMENCEMENT OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

The Strategic Policy Advisor and Benefits Manager introduced a report on the Council's preparations for the commencement of the socio-economic duty. This was a statutory requirement upon relevant public bodies to have due regard to the need to reduce inequalities of outcomes resulting from socio-economic disadvantage.

The Strategic Policy Advisor and Benefits Manager gave a joint presentation covering the following:

- What is the Socio-economic Duty and what does it do?
- Key terms
- Inequalities of outcomes
- Examples of poverty
- Demonstrating due regard - audit trail
- Meeting the duty - what we are doing
- Better outcomes
- Case study

The presentation highlighted the broader examples of poverty which linked to one of the priorities within the Council Plan. The report was being shared with all Overview & Scrutiny Committees to raise awareness of the new obligations. Amongst the actions, the inclusion of Integrated Impact Assessment outcomes on committee reports would help to demonstrate consideration of potential impacts of poverty in strategic decision-making.

The Chair referred to the Education portfolio and the food poverty aspect with the provision of free school meals helping to address this. In recent times digital poverty had been highlighted with remote and blended learning with the provision of devices to ensure these children were able to carry on learning. He asked if there were other ways education and schools could assist with aspects of poverty. In response the Strategic Policy Advisor said that when building new schools or planning new strategies, consideration should be given to the poverty aspect and the children and families affected. Also ensuring all information was provided to enable families to obtain the support and benefits they were entitled to.

The Senior Manager added that poverty was high on the agenda for the Education portfolio with the Chief Officer leading on that work. Schools were already looking at the needs of their learners and families and providing support. She reported that digital inclusion was forming part of the Digital Strategy moving forward with the new theme of Learning and Culture to bring that forward. The Education portfolio welcomed the framework to open the debate more widely to support the needs of learners and families.

Councillor Cunningham thanked the officers for the presentation and commented that poverty had been exacerbated due to the pandemic. He said that poverty affected a range of people and it was pleasing to hear that the Council was doing all it could to alleviate that.

The recommendations, as outlined within the report, were moved and seconded by Mrs Lynne Bartlett and Councillor Paul Cunningham.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the requirements of the Socio-economic Duty be noted; and
- (b) That the Committee is assured of the Council's preparedness in meeting the new duty

12 END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

The Senior Manager (Business Change and Support) introduced the report which provided an overview of the levels of progress in the achievement of activities, performance levels and current risk levels as identified in the Council Plan. The key performance targets for attendance, exclusions or not in education or employment for the last council year had been unable to be collected due to schools being closed. The Senior Manager was pleased to highlight the three performance targets which had moved to green and yellow which included the youth justice system which had met a reduction for first time entrance into the youth justice system.

The Senior Manager (Business Change and Support) referred to Councillor Mackie's earlier comments around support for school governors and advised that information on safeguarding, access to 360 training and questions that governors could ask were available through Governors Cymru which schools could access. She suggested that this be included as an action from the meeting to remind governors that they had access to this very helpful resource website.

Councillor Mackie referred to the exceptions reporting format which was clear and easy to read especially the notes at the bottom and welcomed the ability for Members to fully understand the data that was being presented.

The recommendation, as outlined within the report, was moved and seconded by Councillors Gladys Healey and Ian Smith.

RESOLVED:

That the End of Year Performance Monitoring Report be noted.

13 MEMBERS OF THE PRESS IN ATTENDANCE

There were no members of the press and public in attendance.

(The meeting started at 2.00 pm and ended at 4.16 pm)

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Chairman



EDUCATION YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 16 th September 2021
Report Subject	Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking
Report Author	Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview & Scrutiny presents a unique opportunity for Members to determine the Forward Work programme of the Committee of which they are Members. By reviewing and prioritising the Forward Work Programme Members are able to ensure it is Member-led and includes the right issues. A copy of the Forward Work Programme is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration which has been updated following the last meeting.

The Committee is asked to consider, and amend where necessary, the Forward Work Programme for the Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The report also shows actions arising from previous meetings of the Education Youth & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the progress made in completing them. Any outstanding actions will be continued to be reported to the Committee as shown in Appendix 2.

RECOMMENDATION

1	That the Committee considers the draft Forward Work Programme and approve/amend as necessary.
2	That the Facilitator, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee be authorised to vary the Forward Work Programme between meetings, as the need arises.
3	That the Committee notes the progress made in completing the outstanding actions.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKING
1.01	Items feed into a Committee's Forward Work Programme from a number of sources. Members can suggest topics for review by Overview & Scrutiny Committees, members of the public can suggest topics, items can be referred by the Cabinet for consultation purposes, or by County Council or Chief Officers. Other possible items are identified from the Cabinet Work Programme and the Improvement Plan.
1.02	<p>In identifying topics for future consideration, it is useful for a 'test of significance' to be applied. This can be achieved by asking a range of questions as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Will the review contribute to the Council's priorities and/or objectives?2. Is it an area of major change or risk?3. Are there issues of concern in performance?4. Is there new Government guidance of legislation?5. Is it prompted by the work carried out by Regulators/Internal Audit?6. Is the issue of Public or Member concern?
1.03	In previous meetings, requests for information, reports or actions have been made. These have been summarised as action points. Following a meeting of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee in July 2018, it was recognised that there was a need to formalise such reporting back to Overview & Scrutiny Committees, as 'Matters Arising' was not an item which can feature on an agenda.
1.04	It was suggested that the 'Action tracking' approach be trialled for the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Following a successful trial, it was agreed to extend the approach to all Overview & Scrutiny Committees.
1.05	The Action Tracking details including an update on progress is attached at Appendix 2.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None as a result of this report.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	In some cases, action owners have been contacted to provide an update on their actions.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	None as a result of this report.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Draft Forward Work Programme Appendix 2 – Action Tracking for the Education Youth & Culture OSC.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Minutes of previous meetings of the Committee as identified in Appendix 2. Contact Officer: Ceri Shotton Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator Telephone: 01352 702305 E-mail: ceri.shotton@flintshire.gov.uk

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Improvement Plan: the document which sets out the annual priorities of the Council. It is a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to set Improvement Objectives and publish an Improvement Plan.

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CURRENT FWP

Date of meeting	Subject	Purpose of Report	Scrutiny Focus	Responsible / Contact Officer	Submission Deadline
Thursday 21st October, 2021 2.00pm Representative from CQ High to be invited	Elective Home Education School Holiday Enrichment Programme Review	To provide the Committee with an update on the levels of pupils being Electively Home Educated and the Council's oversight of this group of learners. To provide the Committee with an review of the SHEP Summer Programme and its contribution to the poverty priorities within the Council Plan.	Assurance Monitoring Assurance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Education & Youth) Chief Officer (Education & Youth)	
Thursday 2nd December, 2021 2.00pm Representative from CQ High to be invited	Mid-Year Council Plan Monitoring Report 2020/21 Supporting Service Children in Education Update	To review the levels of progress in the achievement of activities, performance levels and current risk levels as identified in the Council Plan. To provide the Committee with an update on how Flintshire schools are supporting service children.	Assurance Monitoring Assurance Monitoring	Overview & Scrutiny Facilitator Chief Officer (Education & Youth)	

EDUCATION & YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

APPENDIX 1

Thursday 3rd February, 2022 2.00pm	School Modernisation Update Learner Outcomes 2021 Learner Outcome Assesment Processes for 2022	To provide Members with an update on the School Modernisation Programme To provide Members with a summary of learner outcomes across primary and secondary schools for 2021 To provide Members with an overview of the examination and assessment arrangements for Summer 2022.	Assurance Monitoring Assurance Monitoring Assurance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Education & Youth) Chief Officer (Education & Youth) Chief Officer (Education & Youth)	
Thursday 24th March, 2022 2.00pm	Self Evaluation of Education Services 2021- 22 Community Asset Transfer Update School Attendance and Exclusion	To update Members on overall service performance. To provide an annual update on the Business Plan for Holywell Leisure Centre and Cambrian Aquatics. To provide the Committee with an update on learner attendance and exclusions for Flintshire Schools.	Assurance Monitoring Assurance Monitoring Assurance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Education & Youth) Chief Officer (Housing & Assets) Chief Officer (Education & Youth)	
Thursday 16th June, 2022 2.00pm					

Thursday 30th June, 2022 Joint meeting with Social & Health Care OSC 2.00pm					
Thursday 14th July, 2022 2.00pm	Annual Report from Regional School Improvement Service, GwE Social Media and Internet Safety	To receive an update on the support provided by the regional school effectiveness and improvement service, GWE and its impact on schools To provide Members with an update on the Portfolio's Social Media and Internet Safety policy and provision	Assurance Monitoring Assurance Monitoring	Chief Officer (Education & Youth) and Managing Director of GwE Chief Officer (Education & Youth)	

INFORMATION REPORTS TO BE CIRCULATED TO THE COMMITTEE

Item	Purpose of information report	Month
Health & Safety in Schools	Information report on accidents during the academic year and the actions taken to support schools in achieving healthy and safe environment	December

REGULAR ITEMS

Month	Item	Purpose of Report	Responsible / Contact Officer
	School Modernisation	To update Members on the progress made with School Modernisation	Senior Manager School Planning & Provision
February	Self-evaluation on education services	To update Members on overall service performance	Interim Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
April	Learner Outcomes – include attendance and exclusions in annual learner outcomes report	To provide Members with a summary of learner outcomes across primary and secondary school	Interim Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
June	Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE)	To receive an update on progress with the development of the regional school effectiveness and improvement service, to include a presentation from the Chief Officer of GwE.	Interim Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
December	School Balances	To provide the Committee with details of the closing balances held by Flintshire schools at the end of the financial year	Finance Manager
Annually	Learning from the School Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG)	To receive the annual report on progress and learning from the SPMG	Senior Manager – School Improvement;
Annually	Social Media & Internet Safety	To receive an annual report assurance/monitoring	Healthy Schools Practitioner
	Class Size Grant	To receive a regular update on how the Class Sizes Grant from Welsh Government was being used and how this aligned to the School Modernisation Programme	Senior Manager School Planning & Provision

ACTION TRACKING FOR THE EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Meeting Date	Agenda item	Action Required	Action Officer(s)	Action taken	Timescale
01.07.2021	4. Forward Work Programme and Action Tracking	It was reported that Cllr Gladys Healey had requested a report on home schooling during the recent joint Committee meeting. It was agreed that the Facilitator liaise with officers to add the item to the FWP for a future meeting.	Ceri Shotton	A report is scheduled to be presented to the 21 October meeting.	Completed
01.07.2021	5. Annual Report from Regional School Improvement Service, GwE	In response to suggestions from Cllr Mackie around the presentation of data in future reports, Vicky Barlow and Martyn Froggett said that they would consider how to build data for Flintshire on a comparable basis in future reports.	Vicky Barlow / Martyn Froggett	Will be picked up for future reports.	Will be picked up for future reports.
01.07.2021	6. Social Media and Internet Safety	Cllr David Healey referred to the Notice of Motion which went to Council in 2019, where all Members signed up to a pledge that they would not themselves engage in social media in ways which denigrates other individuals. He asked how Members could re-affirm this pledge. The Learning Advisor suggested that this and online bullying be promoted to form part of the new academic year and	Claire Sinnott / Ceri Shotton	Claire Sinnott is working on a council pledge on the Flintshire website and videos with pledges as an organisational wide concept. Working towards November time frame in line with anti-bullying week commencing 15 th November.	On-going

		included in schools newsletters, twitter, websites etc. and said the authority's communication team could promote this further to make a stance on cyber bullying which was very important. This suggestion was supported by the Committee.			
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EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 16 th September 2021
Report Subject	Budget 2022/23 – Stage 2
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, and Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement and Social Value
Report Author	Chief Executive, Chief Officer (Education and Youth), and Corporate Finance Manager
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As in past years, the budget for 2022/23 will be built up in stages.

The first stage was concluded in July where we established a robust baseline of cost pressures. The review by Overview and Scrutiny Committees throughout September and October will form Stage 2 with Stage 3 being the identification of the funding solutions to ensure a legal and balanced budget.

In July, Cabinet and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee received the updated position on the budget for 2022/23 which showed that we have a minimum additional revenue budget requirement of an estimated £16.750m. The cost pressures identified were referred to the respective Overview and Scrutiny Committees with a request that they all undergo a rigorous review.

The details of the cost pressures for the Education and Youth Portfolio – which fall within the remit of this Committee - are included within this report. The Committee is invited to review these cost pressures and risks, and to advise on any areas of cost efficiency it believes should be explored further and the reasoning behind the request.

A slide presentation will be made at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That the Committee reviews and comments on the Education and Youth Portfolio's cost pressures.
2	That the Committee advises on any areas of cost efficiency it believes should be explored further.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE BUDGET POSITION 2022/23																																				
1.01	The first stage for budget setting was concluded in July where we established a robust baseline of cost pressures. The review by Overview and Scrutiny Committees throughout September and October will form Stage 2 with Stage 3 being the identification of the funding solutions to reach a legal and balanced budget.																																				
1.02	In July, Cabinet and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee received the updated position on the budget for 2022/23 which showed that we have a minimum additional revenue budget requirement of an estimated £16.750m. The cost pressures identified were referred to the respective Overview and Scrutiny Committees with a request that they all undergo a rigorous review.																																				
1.03	The purpose of this report is to set out in detail of the cost pressures for the Education and Youth Portfolio that are included within the minimum budget requirement.																																				
1.04	Education and Youth Portfolio Pressures These are set out in the paragraphs which follow.																																				
1.05	<u>Table 1: Education and Youth Portfolio Pressures</u> <table><tr><th>Pressure Title</th><th>£m</th><th>Note</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Prior Year Decision/Approval</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) revenue costs</td><td>0.019</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Legislative/Unavoidable Indexation Pressures</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>GwE – Contribution increase</td><td>0.015</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Strategic Decisions</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Additional Learning Needs (ALN) - Reforms</td><td>0.200</td><td>3</td></tr></table>	Pressure Title	£m	Note				Prior Year Decision/Approval						Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) revenue costs	0.019	1				Legislative/Unavoidable Indexation Pressures			GwE – Contribution increase	0.015	2							Strategic Decisions			Additional Learning Needs (ALN) - Reforms	0.200	3
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Strategic Decisions																																					
Additional Learning Needs (ALN) - Reforms	0.200	3																																			

PRU new build – increased capacity	0.243	4
Outreach Provision – Plas Derwen PRU	0.154	5
Free School Meals – Increase in provision at secondary schools	0.087	6
On site Inclusion Centres	0.124	7
Provision within our Special Schools	0.243	8
Early Years Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal Act 2018 (ALNET)	0.050	9
New Posts		
Managing Learning Recovery	0.063	10
Support for Autism	0.063	11
Joint Archive Service	0.039	12

1. Revenue costs at Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) – The new building at Plas Derwen PRU is due to be completed this month part way through the 2021/22 financial year. The pressure relates to the full year additional costs of running the new building payable in 2022/23.
2. Contribution increase for GwE - An increase in the annual contribution to GwE the regional school improvement and effectiveness service supporting schools across north Wales.
3. Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reforms. The pressure is based on the Additional Learning Needs & Education Tribunal Act 2018 (ALNET) and a revised operational Code to accompany it due to be implemented in 2021/22. New systems will need to run in parallel with the existing legislation for a period of 3 years. All existing legal documents (Statements of Special Education Need) must be converted to Individual Development Plans (IDPs) within specified timescales. The Council has 853 Statements of SEN to convert to IDPs. To achieve this additional capacity will be needed across the Inclusion Service and in Schools.

The pressure shown is for;

- A statutory Additional Learning Needs Lead Officer (ALNLO),
- An additional Education Psychologist to respond to the extension of statutory duties,
- An additional post to write IDPs for looked after children from Flintshire. The operational Code allocates responsibility for the writing of all IDPs for looked after children to the home authority, irrespective of where the child resides. Currently Statements of SEN are written by the local authority team in which the looked after child resides.
- 2 additional sensory support team members to cover the pre-school and Post 16 requirements brought about by the Act; this is a regional service and the Council will need to fund a third of this total cost.

The pressure shown in Table 1 is the minimum additional pressure the new reforms are anticipated to cost the Inclusion Service alone. It is anticipated that schools will also incur additional costs as a result of the reforms due to the additional responsibilities placed by ALNET on the Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator in particular along with other relevant staff. Whilst difficult to calculate with any certainty due to the way different schools will choose to manage the additional workload, a high level estimate of £0.300m has been assumed.

4. Increased capacity at Plas Derwen PRU. The new building is due to be completed this month, and has been designed to increase the capacity by an additional 25 places. The budget pressure relates to the costs of additional employees and resources required to support the increased number of pupils on roll.
5. Outreach provision at Plas Derwen PRU. Early intervention is known to be successful in supporting children with a range of additional learning needs to maintain their placements in mainstream schools. Across Flintshire, there is increasing levels of disengagement and exclusion particularly at secondary level, however there is increasing evidence of pupils struggling within the primary sector. Early intervention is a current initiative delivered through Plas Derwen PRU where capacity allows but provision is limited. The focus is to maintain the placements within the school by offering coaching and guidance to staff regarding the development of nurturing approaches. Additional capacity within the service is required to support an effective roll out of a more flexible and responsive model.
6. Free school meals – an increase in provision at secondary school age. The current free school meal allowance for all sectors is £2.35 per day. This is just enough at Secondary to buy a sandwich, a piece of fruit and a bottle of water or a meal deal but feedback via the Children's Services Forum indicates that this is insufficient e.g. does not allow for breakfast or mid-morning snack. During the national lockdowns and school holidays Welsh Government are paying £2.90 for free school meals based on ranges of £2.30 to £2.90 being paid across Wales. Flintshire at £2.35 is at the lower end of this scale. Linked with the theme of reducing child poverty within the Council Plan, the proposal is to increase the amount a pupil receives to £2.75, to ensure they have enough for a nutritious lunch and snack to sustain their concentration throughout the school day.
7. On site Inclusion Centres. Directly linked to our response to the Estyn inspection recommendation to reduce exclusion and increase attendance at schools, the proposal is to pilot inclusion centres focusing on nurture training on 3 school sites in the first year and gradually increasing the provision.
8. Provision at our Special Schools. A review has been undertaken of the specialist provision for Flintshire children and young people. This has identified gaps in our current provision which is impacting on our level of commissioning out of county. Work is underway to map out the options in response to the shortfall of provision, with an extension

	<p>of existing provision in our special schools being anticipated, along with new facilities including provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, specialist KS5 vocational provision, secondary nurture centres, autism specific provision and residential provision. A feasibility study is underway to form the bid for a capital scheme, this will confirm associated revenue costs. Given the pressing need for provision in our specialist schools, consideration will be given to the early completion of elements of the projects and this request reflects a high level estimate of the anticipated revenue costs needed to support this.</p> <p>9. Estimated costs of ALNET for Early Years sector. The Act extends the statutory responsibilities of the Council to provide additional learning provision for children and young people from 0 to 25 and include a range of 'educational' settings including those for pre-school children and further education establishments; the current requirements cover statutory school age up to the age of 19 for young people who remain in a school. The Council currently uses a range of grant funding to support pre-school children with additional needs. Given the broadening of the remit to include a wider range of settings, it is anticipated that additional funding will be required to meet the cost of this additional provision which may not be covered in the terms and conditions of the grants currently available.</p> <p>10. Managing Learning Recovery. A new post reporting to the Senior Manager for School Improvement to facilitate strategic capacity, to focus on managing learning recovery post pandemic. The challenges of the last eighteen months have demonstrated how much schools are dependent on the Council's core portfolio officers to provide advice and support. It highlighted that there was insufficient operational capacity in the School Improvement Service to be able to manage these demands from early years / primary / secondary / post 16 and adult learning. Estyn's recent summary report on findings from their national thematic reviews draws together the key actions for local authorities moving forward. These include the recommendation that <i>Welsh Government work with regional consortia, local authorities, and other partners and providers to create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design</i>. Other key findings include <i>identifying in strategic planning actions on developing authority-wide initiatives to support schools to be effective community schools</i>, along with <i>strengthening cross-directorate working to plan ways of locating a range of services in schools</i> See also paragraph 1.08 for further background on the need to increase the organisations capacity.</p> <p>11. Support for Autism. The number of children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorders continues to increase. The Inclusion Services has a shortage in expertise to be able to provide advice and support to schools. Additional dedicated capacity needs to be increased in this area to avoid school placements breaking down</p>
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	<p>which can add lead to the young person needing to be educated out of county.</p> <p>12. Joint Archive Service. The Council’s share of the costs of the Service Manager employed by Denbighshire but who manages the newly formed joint service between Flintshire and Denbighshire – North East Wales Archives. This additional management capacity is an essential part of the transition into a single service which will bring resilience to this statutory service and also in the development of financial bids to support new capital investment for a purpose-built archive building that will be for both counties.</p>																																				
1.06	<p><u>Table 2: Pressures relating to the Schools Budget</u></p> <table><tr><th>Pressure Title</th><th>£m</th><th>Note</th></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>National Funding Requirement</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>NJC Pay Award at April 2021 – estimated full year impact in 2022/23</td><td>0.160</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>Teachers Pay Award at Sept 2021 – estimated full year impact in 2022/23</td><td>1.282</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>NJC Pay Award at April 2022 – estimated full year impact in 2022/23</td><td>0.455</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>Teachers Pay Award at Sept 2022 – estimated part year impact from Sept 22 – March 23</td><td>0.432</td><td>4</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Strategic Decisions</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Investment in Delegated School Budgets</td><td>1.000</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>ALN - Schools</td><td>0.422</td><td>6</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table> <p>1. NJC Pay Award at April 2021. An estimate of the costs of the in year NJC pay award from April 2021 for schools. This will have a full year effect on the 2022/23 financial year. This is still subject to negotiation and an increased offer has been made since the calculation of this pressure (from 1.5% to 1.75%). The pressure has been reduced by provision already made in the 2021/22 budget for posts under £24,000.</p> <p>2. Teachers Pay Award at Sept 2021. An estimate of the costs of the in year Teachers pay award from September 2021 for schools which has been agreed at 1.75%. This will have a full year effect on the 2022/23 financial year as no provision was made in the 2021/22 budget.</p> <p>3. NJC Pay Award at April 2022. An estimate of the costs of the April 2022 NJC pay award for schools calculated at 1%. This will have a full year effect on the 2022/23 financial year.</p>	Pressure Title	£m	Note				National Funding Requirement			NJC Pay Award at April 2021 – estimated full year impact in 2022/23	0.160	1	Teachers Pay Award at Sept 2021 – estimated full year impact in 2022/23	1.282	2	NJC Pay Award at April 2022 – estimated full year impact in 2022/23	0.455	3	Teachers Pay Award at Sept 2022 – estimated part year impact from Sept 22 – March 23	0.432	4				Strategic Decisions			Investment in Delegated School Budgets	1.000	5	ALN - Schools	0.422	6			
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1.07	<p><u>Table 3: Summary of Pressures</u></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Portfolio</th><th>Low (£m)</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Education & Youth</td><td>1.300</td></tr> <tr> <td>Schools</td><td>3.751</td></tr> <tr> <td>Total</td><td>5.051</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Portfolio	Low (£m)	Education & Youth	1.300	Schools	3.751	Total	5.051
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1.08	<p>Organisational Capacity</p> <p>The capacity of the organisation has been reduced over a number of years, in some areas of service management and operations, due to the need to reduce budget overheads to achieve our efficiency targets. The experience of managing the pandemic and endemic situation over the past 18 months has led to some increases in workload in certain areas, and the Council has set out some priorities which will require additional capacity in the Council Plan and through the leadership of the Council.</p> <p>The Chief Executive and Chief Officer Team have reviewed these capacity needs in depth. We have prioritised a number of requests for additional</p>								

	<p>posts to supplement operational teams for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as potential cost pressures for 2022/23 onwards. These requests are all supported by business cases. Our recommendation to Council will be that these requests are supported in order of priority. The extent to which this list of requests can be funded will depend on the financial “headroom” we will have when we are on the verge of setting the annual budget in the new year.</p> <p>From amongst this set of requests a small number have been prioritised for accelerated approval within 2021/22 and in advance of the annual budget setting. This accelerated approval will be the subject of a separate report to Cabinet in September.</p>														
1.09	<p>Budget Timeline</p> <p>An outline of the local budget timeline at this stage is set out in the table below:</p> <p><u>Table 6: Budget Timeline</u></p> <table> <tr> <th>Date</th><th>Event</th></tr> <tr> <td>September/October</td><td>Overview and Scrutiny Committees</td></tr> <tr> <td>20/21 December</td><td>WG Draft Budget/Provisional Settlement</td></tr> <tr> <td>14 December</td><td>Cabinet</td></tr> <tr> <td>18 January</td><td>Cabinet</td></tr> <tr> <td>15 February</td><td>Cabinet and Council</td></tr> <tr> <td>1 March</td><td>WG Final Budget/Settlement</td></tr> </table>	Date	Event	September/October	Overview and Scrutiny Committees	20/21 December	WG Draft Budget/Provisional Settlement	14 December	Cabinet	18 January	Cabinet	15 February	Cabinet and Council	1 March	WG Final Budget/Settlement
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Revenue: the revenue implications for the 2022/23 budget are set out in the report.</p> <p>Capital: there are no new implications for the approved capital programme for either the current financial year or for future financial years – the capital programme will be subject to a separate report</p>

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Member and Group Leader Briefings June/July 2021. Corporate Resource Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT														
4.01	The key risks are set out within the main body of the report.														
4.02	<p>Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact</p> <table> <tr> <td>Long-term</td><td>No change</td></tr> <tr> <td>Prevention</td><td>No change</td></tr> <tr> <td>Integration</td><td>No change</td></tr> <tr> <td>Collaboration</td><td>No change</td></tr> <tr> <td>Involvement</td><td>No change</td></tr> </table>	Long-term	No change	Prevention	No change	Integration	No change	Collaboration	No change	Involvement	No change				
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4.03	<p>Well-being Goals Impact</p> <table> <tr> <td>Prosperous Wales</td><td>No impact</td></tr> <tr> <td>Resilient Wales</td><td>No impact</td></tr> <tr> <td>Healthier Wales</td><td>No impact</td></tr> <tr> <td>More equal Wales</td><td>No impact</td></tr> <tr> <td>Cohesive Wales</td><td>No impact</td></tr> <tr> <td>Vibrant Wales</td><td>No impact</td></tr> <tr> <td>Globally responsible Wales</td><td>No impact</td></tr> </table>	Prosperous Wales	No impact	Resilient Wales	No impact	Healthier Wales	No impact	More equal Wales	No impact	Cohesive Wales	No impact	Vibrant Wales	No impact	Globally responsible Wales	No impact
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5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	No appendices.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>MTFS and Budget 2022/23 Cabinet Report 13th July 2021 Presentation to Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee July 2021 Summary Budget 2022/23 report to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee 16th September 2021. https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-report/summary-findings-our-national-thematic-reviews-20202021</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Liz Thomas – Strategic Finance Manager Telephone: 01352 702289 E-mail: liz.thomas@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS): a written strategy which gives a forecast of the financial resources which will be available to a Council for a given period, and sets out plans for how best to deploy those resources to meet its priorities, duties and obligations.</p> <p>Revenue: a term used to describe the day to day costs of running Council services and income deriving from those services. It also includes charges for the repayment of debt, including interest, and may include direct financing of capital expenditure.</p> <p>Budget: a statement expressing the Council's policies and service levels in financial terms for a particular financial year. In its broadest sense it includes both the revenue budget and capital programme and any authorised amendments to them.</p> <p>Budget Requirement: The amount of resource required to meet the Councils financial priorities in a financial year.</p> <p>Forecast: An estimate of the level of resource needed in the future based on a set of demands or priorities.</p> <p>Capital: Expenditure on the acquisition of non-current assets or expenditure which extends the useful life of an existing asset.</p> <p>Revenue Support Grant: the annual amount of money the Council receives from Welsh Government to fund what it does alongside the Council Tax and other income the Council raises locally. Councils can decide how to use this grant across services although their freedom to allocate according to local choice can be limited by guidelines set by Government.</p> <p>Specific Grants: An award of funding from a grant provider (e.g. Welsh Government) which must be used for a pre-defined purpose.</p> <p>Welsh Local Government Association: the representative body for unitary councils, fire and rescue authorities and national parks authorities in Wales.</p> <p>Financial Year: the period of 12 months commencing on 1 April.</p> <p>Local Government Funding Formula: The system through which the annual funding needs of each council is assessed at a national level and under which each council's Aggregate External Finance (AEF) is set. The revenue support grant is distributed according to that formula.</p> <p>Aggregate External Finance (AEF): The support for local revenue spending from the Welsh Government and is made up of formula grant including the revenue support grant and the distributable part of non-domestic rates.</p>

	<p>Provisional Local Government Settlement: The Provisional Settlement is the draft budget for local government published by the Welsh Government for consultation. The Final Local Government Settlement is set following the consultation.</p> <p>Funding Floor: a guaranteed level of funding for councils who come under the all-Wales average change in the annual Settlement. A floor has been a feature of the Settlement for many years.</p>
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EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 16 th September 2021
Report Subject	School Reserves Year Ending 31 March 2021
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education and Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overall level of reserves held by Flintshire schools was £6.902m at 31 March 2021, an increase of £6.790m compared with the previous year.

The uncertainties associated with the pandemic made financial management during the 2020/21 financial year challenging for Headteachers and Governors.

A summary of the position at the end of March 2021 is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1

Sector	B/f Balance 2019/20 (£)	% of Budget	C/f Balance 2020/21 (£)	% of Budget	Change Between Years (£)
Primary	1,919,956	4.0%	6,025,937	11.4%	4,105,981
Secondary	-2,094,302	-5.0%	472,112	1.1%	2,566,414
Special	286,303	7.5%	404,402	9.4%	118,100
Grand Total	111,957	0.1%	6,902,451	6.8%	6,790,494

The level of school reserves has increased across all sectors and is in part due to a number of additional grants being awarded to schools in recognition of the issues caused by the pandemic. These grants were awarded at a late stage during the financial year and inflate the level of school reserves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Note the level of school reserves as at the 31 March 2021.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING SCHOOL BALANCES																													
1.01	<p>The analysis of reserve balances for each school in Flintshire at the end of March 2021 is shown at Appendix 1 along with the total amount of additional grant funding each school received during March 2021.</p> <p>Overall, the total level of primary schools reserves increased by £4.106m, the total level of secondary schools reserves increased by £2.566m and the total level of special schools reserves increased by £0.118m. This is a reversal of trends seen in recent years, however the position as at 31st March 2021 is unusual and must be viewed in the wider context.</p>																													
1.02	<p>Additional Grants</p> <p>A number of additional grants totalling £3.851m were awarded to schools in March 2021 and are listed below in Table 2.</p> <p>Table 2</p> <table><tr><th rowspan="2">Sector</th><th colspan="4">Additional Grants - 2020/21</th></tr><tr><th>WLGA - Return to School Covid Grant (£)</th><th>Covid Response – RRRS ALP (£)</th><th>Revenue Maintenance Grant (£)</th><th>TOTAL (£)</th></tr><tr><td>Primary</td><td>91,740</td><td>949,708</td><td>1,416,791</td><td>2,458,239</td></tr><tr><td>Secondary</td><td>68,904</td><td>466,181</td><td>816,216</td><td>1,351,301</td></tr><tr><td>Special</td><td>1,586</td><td>13,297</td><td>26,404</td><td>41,287</td></tr><tr><td>Grand Total</td><td>162,230</td><td>1,429,186</td><td>2,259,411</td><td>3,850,827</td></tr></table> <p>All grants in table 2 are 2020/21 grants which, due to their notification dates of March 2021, displace expenditure already incurred in 2020/21 and act to release school allocations in 2020/21. This inflates the level of school reserves as at 31st March 2021, as the school allocations are carried forward into 2021/22 financial year to fund spending in 2021/22.</p> <p>The Recruit, Recover, Raise Standards: Accelerating Learning Programme (RRRS ALP) is additional funding to augment support already in place. Pre-existing Accelerating Learning Programme proposals should be updated and reporting should be combined on this additional funding with the pre-existing arrangements. School Governing Bodies must receive a report by end of the academic year 2020/21 on the use of the full RRRS fund including this additional allocation.</p> <p>The Revenue Maintenance Grant is to fund school revenue repair and maintenance costs.</p> <p>During the financial year the Welsh Government also announced that both the annual Pupil Deprivation Grant (PDG) and the Education Improvement Grant (EIG) can be spent over a longer time period from 1st April 2020 to 31st August 2021. There will therefore be an unknown element of both</p>	Sector	Additional Grants - 2020/21				WLGA - Return to School Covid Grant (£)	Covid Response – RRRS ALP (£)	Revenue Maintenance Grant (£)	TOTAL (£)	Primary	91,740	949,708	1,416,791	2,458,239	Secondary	68,904	466,181	816,216	1,351,301	Special	1,586	13,297	26,404	41,287	Grand Total	162,230	1,429,186	2,259,411	3,850,827
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	<p>these grants within the school reserves as at 31st March 2021. If expenditure were incurred equally across this 17 month period then the funding carried forward in school balances on a pro rata basis would equate to a further £2.666m on top of the £3.851m shown in table 2.</p>
.1.03	<p>Secondary Schools</p> <p>Despite a general increase across the secondary sector there were still 4 schools out of 11 in a deficit position compared with 6 the previous year. Deficits amounted to £1.912m and ranged from £0.120m to £0.814m. One schools deficit increased during the financial year despite the additional grant funding received.</p> <p>In line with the Protocol for Schools in Financial Difficulty school support and challenge meetings will be held and schools will be invited to a Financial Performance Monitoring Group (FPMG) meeting with senior members and officers and GwE representatives as necessary.</p> <p>Secondary school budgets continue to be under significant pressure. In general, the financial resilience of the secondary school sector in Flintshire is of concern. Despite the additional grant funding, the total level of reserves across the sector amounted to £0.472m which equates to 1.1% of secondary budgets.</p> <p>There are a number of factors which have contributed to the current financial position.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ongoing austerity measures over recent years have resulted in schools having to absorb inflationary increases in pay, pension and NI increases. • Demographic changes in the distribution of pupils across the primary and secondary sectors. In recent years, secondary pupil numbers have been declining whilst primary pupil numbers have been increasing and this has resulted in a redistribution of funding between sectors. However, this trend is now reversing and pupil numbers in the secondary sector are now increasing which will have a positive financial impact on the secondary sector going forward. • Smaller secondary schools with increasing deficits elicits the question as to whether the funding formula provides sufficient resource for schools to operate sustainably. • As part of the response to the Estyn recommendation initial work was conducted with secondary schools to review the funding formula. However, without additional funding for schools a revision to the current formula would not be feasible.
1.04	<p>Primary Schools</p> <p>The level of school reserves within the primary sector increased by £4.106m during the year.</p> <p>At the end of the financial year there was 1 primary schools in deficit compared with 9 in the previous year.</p>

	There were 43 primary schools with balances greater than £50k, compared with 16 schools in the previous year. 29 primary schools had balances over £100,000 compared with 2 schools in the previous year.
1.05	<p>Surplus Balances</p> <p>The School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010 require Authorities to have the following provisions in their Scheme for Financing Schools:</p> <p>The use that a governing body proposes to make of a surplus in the school balance which exceeds 5% of the school budget share or £100,000, whichever is the greater.</p> <p>A provision under which–</p> <p>(a) the authority may direct the governing body as to how to spend a surplus in the school balance for a funding period, if–</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(i) in the case of a primary school the surplus is £50,000 or more, and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(ii) in the case of a secondary school or a special school the surplus is £100,000 or more;</p> <p>(b) the authority may, if the governing body do not comply with such a direction, require the governing body to pay all or part of that surplus to the authority to be applied as part of their schools budget for the funding period in question.</p> <p>In accordance with the Regulations, the Authority's Scheme for Financing Schools requires a spending plan from schools as to the use that the governing body proposes to make of a school balance which exceeds the limits specified.</p> <p>Given the challenging circumstances that schools are operating within, and the complexity surrounding the analysis of school reserves that additional grants in March has caused, the Council will not be asking schools to complete the annual return on their planned use of school balances exceeding the limits specified this year.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The impact of continuing austerity measures on the financial resilience of schools is an area of concern.

3.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	As funding levels to schools decrease as a consequence of the austerity measures facing local government, there is a risk that more schools will slip into a deficit position. The Schools Accounting Team have developed a risk rating process to identify schools where the financial position is a cause for concern so that they can target their support.

3.02	To balance budgets schools may need to review their employment structures which may result in redundancies.
3.03	Continued pressure on school finances may result in increased class sizes, a reduced curriculum and falling standards.
3.04	There may be an adverse financial impact arising due to the Covid-19 pandemic and schools attention will be focused on delivery of education during this crisis.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
4.01	This report has been circulated to all Headteachers and the School Budget Forum in June 2021. It will also be reviewed by the Governance and Audit Committee in September.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - Final School Balances 2020-21.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Liz Thomas, Strategic Finance Manager - Schools Telephone: 01352 702289 E-mail: liz.thomas@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	School Reserves – Reserves are sums of money that schools carry forward from one year to the next. They arise from underspends and overspends against school allocations over time. Schools are responsible for managing their own finances. The level of reserves held by an individual school will depend on a number of factors. These will include the timing of receipt of income and of payments, and the level of contingency fund the school governing body considers appropriate and the particular plans each school has for expenditure.
	Flintshire County Council's Scheme for Financing Schools – The Scheme defines the financial relationship between Flintshire County Council and its maintained schools. The Scheme details the financial management arrangements to which the Authority and its schools are

	required to adhere. The framework for this Scheme is based on legislative provisions contained in sections 45-53 of the School Standards and Framework Act, 1998 and as further detailed in The School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010.
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School Reserves Analysis March 2021

Primary School		Reserves 31st March 2020	% of budget	Reserves 31st March 2021	% of budget	Total value of late grants	Reserves 31st March 2021 less late grants	% of budget
123	Brynford	5,342	1.6%	45,659	11.7%	17,255	28,404	7.3%
125	Westwood	7,775	1.0%	60,235	6.9%	42,949	17,286	2.0%
127	Southdown	37,155	3.0%	117,788	8.3%	68,409	49,379	3.5%
129	Mountain Lane	41,372	3.0%	169,246	11.0%	75,681	93,565	6.1%
134	Ysgol Yr Esgob	22,144	8.0%	9,944	3.3%	13,960	-4,016	-1.4%
135	Carmel	18,157	2.8%	46,608	6.9%	33,914	12,694	1.9%
145	Ysgol Y Foel	4,061	1.7%	22,804	8.9%	10,659	12,145	4.7%
151	Ysgol Parc Y Llan	28,668	6.4%	55,790	10.9%	21,089	34,701	6.8%
156	Bryn Deva	53,136	5.2%	100,021	8.8%	51,331	48,690	4.3%
159	Golftyn	49,242	3.6%	251,125	16.7%	73,302	177,823	11.8%
161	Wepre	72,831	6.6%	117,734	9.5%	56,100	61,634	5.0%
162	Cae'r Nant	62,729	5.2%	208,913	15.3%	67,041	141,872	10.4%
175	Drury	-17,971	-3.3%	32,385	5.7%	28,965	3,420	0.6%
181	Ewloe Green	111,815	9.3%	192,916	13.7%	64,606	128,310	9.1%
185	Bryn Garth	18,214	4.6%	30,395	7.2%	19,904	10,491	2.5%
186	Cornist Park	33,631	3.3%	107,937	9.8%	52,198	55,739	5.1%
187	Ysgol Croes Atti	3,315	0.5%	161,684	21.8%	47,395	114,288	15.4%
188	Gwynedd	69,321	4.1%	242,830	12.7%	90,416	152,414	8.0%
189	St Mary's	141,306	15.6%	175,425	16.6%	44,776	130,649	12.4%
201	Greenfield (Maes Glas)	59,085	6.2%	190,301	17.5%	43,367	146,934	13.5%
202	Gronant	52,834	17.8%	53,813	15.1%	13,332	40,481	11.4%
203	Gwernaffield	68,820	17.8%	100,301	20.4%	20,373	79,928	16.3%
204	Gwernymynydd	31,971	10.0%	47,123	12.5%	15,693	31,430	8.3%
209	Ysgol Gymraeg Mornant	17,681	7.6%	29,356	11.0%	12,750	16,606	6.2%
215	Hawarden Village	30,005	2.2%	129,418	8.7%	74,632	54,786	3.7%
218	Penarlwg	7,889	1.2%	39,311	5.4%	37,385	1,926	0.3%
221	Derwen Foundation	43,928	6.7%	108,462	15.1%	37,257	71,205	9.9%
225	St Winefride's	-16,366	-2.6%	30,638	4.4%	31,663	-1,025	-0.1%
226	Ysgol Gwenffrwd	83,127	12.9%	153,956	20.6%	34,726	119,230	16.0%
227	Ysgol Estyn	21,984	2.9%	120,355	14.3%	40,493	79,862	9.5%
245	Leeswood	-10,377	-2.1%	19,576	4.0%	22,298	-2,722	-0.6%
246	Lixwm	14,248	5.1%	36,155	11.6%	12,875	23,280	7.4%
287	Ysgol Glanrafon	24,741	2.3%	155,827	12.5%	60,436	95,390	7.6%
288	Bryn Coch	-89,691	-4.2%	94,101	4.1%	105,713	-11,612	-0.5%
289	Bryn Gwalia	83,502	12.6%	112,191	14.8%	33,966	78,225	10.3%
291	St David's	14,312	4.2%	69,354	17.3%	19,289	50,065	12.5%
292	Ysgol Bryn Pennant	30,743	6.1%	89,337	16.1%	24,174	65,163	11.7%
301	Nannerch	-17,638	-7.3%	-24,215	-9.6%	12,351	-36,566	-14.5%
302	Nercwys	17,808	8.5%	52,339	21.1%	10,091	42,248	17.1%
305	Ysgol Owen Jones	2,694	0.6%	22,928	4.6%	25,079	-2,151	-0.4%
306	Northop Hall	69,603	10.3%	143,782	18.8%	35,320	108,462	14.2%
327	Penyffordd	97,465	10.2%	170,474	14.1%	53,828	116,645	9.6%
331	St John the Baptist	-375	-0.1%	43,749	8.9%	21,866	21,882	4.4%
344	Queensferry	35,926	5.7%	120,175	16.9%	31,351	88,824	12.5%
355	Ysgol Rhos Helyg	54,168	10.1%	87,410	14.6%	26,879	60,531	10.1%
381	St Anthony's	16,115	3.4%	67,224	13.8%	22,829	44,395	9.1%
382	Saltney Ferry	18,072	3.4%	66,956	11.3%	23,216	43,740	7.4%
383	Wood Memorial	16,506	2.6%	66,915	9.6%	30,939	35,976	5.2%
384	Sandycroft	18,074	1.5%	116,432	9.0%	61,486	54,946	4.2%
385	Sealand	42,688	5.9%	151,004	19.4%	36,073	114,931	14.7%
386	St Ethelwold's	13,412	3.3%	47,085	10.5%	20,510	26,575	5.9%
389	Venerable Edward Morgan	91,883	10.4%	127,404	13.3%	44,278	83,126	8.7%
391	Ty Ffynon	35,806	3.2%	130,148	10.4%	49,806	80,342	6.4%
394	Sychdyn	27,901	4.5%	47,228	7.0%	31,848	15,380	2.3%
406	Trelawnyd	60,823	18.1%	72,709	17.9%	17,448	55,261	13.6%
407	Trelogan	42,316	12.6%	86,040	21.3%	16,653	69,387	17.2%
409	Ysgol Terrig	-8,057	-3.0%	12,702	4.3%	15,810	-3,108	-1.1%
421	Whitford	4,961	1.2%	48,028	11.0%	19,734	28,294	6.5%
422	Abermorddu	-2,201	-0.3%	43,317	5.6%	38,091	5,226	0.7%
423	Glan Aber	44,756	8.8%	94,677	16.6%	25,823	68,854	12.1%
424	Ysgol Merllyn	-63,933	-10.9%	3,860	0.7%	29,326	-25,466	-4.5%
425	Broughton Primary	21,495	1.2%	118,340	6.2%	90,511	27,829	1.5%
426	Ysgol Mynydd Isa	24,116	1.2%	221,898	10.3%	91,379	130,519	6.1%
428	Maes Y Felin	24,895	2.3%	158,317	12.7%	55,341	102,976	8.3%
Deficits		-226,608		-24,215			-86,667	
Surplus		2,146,564		6,050,152			3,654,365	
Totals		1,919,956	4.0%	6,025,937	11.4%	2,458,239	3,567,698	6.7%

Secondary School		Reserves 31st March 2020	% of budget	Reserves 31st March 2021	% of budget	Total value of late grants	Reserves 31st March 2021 less late grants	% of budget
503	Buckley (Elfed High School)	-43,187	-1.1%	274,801	6.5%	132,094	142,708	3.4%
509	Connah's Quay High School	124,042	2.8%	428,538	8.4%	150,427	278,111	5.5%
515	Flint High School	32,031	0.9%	406,604	9.8%	118,452	288,153	7.0%
517	St.Richard Gwyn R.C. High School	-542,265	-16.7%	-303,921	-9.7%	112,268	-416,189	-13.3%
521	Hawarden High School	45,408	0.9%	274,905	5.3%	153,355	121,550	2.3%
523	Treffynnon	-761,298	-32.2%	-674,218	-38.5%	75,513	-749,731	-42.8%
525	Hope (Castell Alun High School)	1,072	0.0%	445,446	7.5%	179,329	266,118	4.5%
529	Mold (Alun School)	18,624	0.3%	255,359	3.7%	209,193	46,166	0.7%
531	Mold (Ysgol Maes Garmon)	-180,110	-6.6%	-120,234	-4.4%	83,529	-203,764	-7.5%
533	Mynydd Isa (Argoed High School)	-12,974	-0.5%	298,424	9.5%	82,319	216,106	6.9%
551	Saltney (St David's High School)	-775,645	-40.8%	-813,594	-67.3%	54,823	-868,417	-71.9%
Deficits		-2,315,478		-1,911,967			-2,238,101	
Surplus		221,176		2,384,079			1,358,911	
Totals		-2,094,302	-5.0%	472,112	1.1%	1,351,301	-879,190	-2.0%

Specialist School		Reserves 31st March 2020	% of budget	Reserves 31st March 2021	% of budget	Total value of late grants	Reserves 31st March 2021 less late grants	% of budget
601	Pen Coch	148,408	7.9%	170,836	8.1%	21,446	149,390	7.1%
602	Maes Hyfryd	137,894	7.0%	233,567	10.7%	19,842	213,725	9.8%
All		286,303	7.5%	404,402	9.4%	41,287	363,115	8.5%
All schools total		111,957	0.1%	6,902,451	6.8%	3,850,827	3,051,624	3.0%

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EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 16 th September 2021
Report Subject	Covid-19 Schools Operational Update
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education
Report Author	Chief Officer Education & Youth
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On August 7th, Wales moved to alert level zero. The Welsh Government's updated Coronavirus Control Plan outlined that whilst Covid-19 has not gone away and remains a health risk, harm from the virus is now less of a risk than the impact of continuing restrictions in the delivery of education for children and young people. This is in terms of both the academic progress and emotional health and wellbeing of learners.

The Education Minister advised all schools at the end of the summer term that the guiding principle for September is that they should operate as normally as possible including the provision of free breakfast and after school clubs, extra-curricular activities and practical subjects. This resulted in the removal of some key covid controls for the start of the new academic year including the cessation of the use of bubbles or contact groups, the return to the normal school day without staggered start or finish times and the relaxation of the use of face coverings in the classroom.

One of the major changes in response to a positive case is that pupils under the age of eighteen do not need to isolate if they are identified as a close contact. This ensures they can continue their education uninterrupted. Members of the education workforce who are double vaccinated do not need to isolate either if they are a contact of a positive case. Advice will be offered for these individuals to minimise any risks and stay safe.

The Test, Trace and Protect Service (TTP) is the lead organisation for checking contacts of a positive case and the demands for information from schools has been significantly reduced.

The detailed operational guidance for schools has been slimmed down and is being replaced by a Local Covid-19 Infection Decision Framework. The Framework enables interventions to be tailored to the level of local risk and schools are expected to transition to this new Framework by September 20th. Any

decision to escalate covid controls in response to a local outbreak will be taken jointly by local authority officers, public health officials and the school leadership team.

Schools continue to have detailed risk assessments in place to ensure a suitable hierarchy of controls and these are now being amended to align with the new Framework.

All Flintshire schools opened successfully at the start of the new academic year.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That Members note the arrangements for the safe return to schools as outlined in the revised Welsh Government Covid-19 Operational Guidance and Local Covid-19 Infection Decision Framework.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE COVID-19 SCHOOLS OPERATIONAL UPDATE
1.01	<p>In July, the First Minister published the updated Coronavirus Control Plan for Wales and on August 7th, Wales moved to alert level zero. The control plan outlined that whilst Covid-19 has not gone away and remains a health risk, harm from the virus is now less of a risk than the impact of continuing restrictions in the delivery of education for children and young people. This is in terms of both the academic progress and emotional health and wellbeing of learners.</p> <p>The context has also shifted significantly since earlier lockdowns, with the high percentage of the population in Wales, and locally in Flintshire, now having been vaccinated. There is also the medical evidence supporting the view that there is a relatively low risk of serious illness from the virus in children and young people.</p>
1.02	<p>Just before the end of the summer term the Education Minister, Jeremy Miles SM, sent a letter to all schools outlining the main changes for the start of the new academic year. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• no longer recommending the routine use of face coverings in classrooms• no longer recommending the use of contact groups/bubbles• resuming normal session times and ceasing the temporary legislation which enabled staggered start and finish times• secondary pupils and education workforce staff were encouraged to undertake lateral flow tests before returning to school <p>During the school holidays it was then confirmed that learners under eighteen years of age do not need to isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive case. Adults who have received two doses of</p>

	<p>the vaccine (and 14 days has expired since their second dose) also do not need to self-isolate if they are a close contact.</p> <p>It was also clarified that the Test, Trace and Protect (TTP) service would be the lead organisation for gathering information from positive cases to identify contacts and give the definitive advice to those contacts on whether or not they needed to isolate. The TTP service has access to the NHS vaccination database to be able to check the vaccination status of individuals. Schools will only be asked for further information in relation to a positive case if the TTP team needed it.</p>
1.03	<p>The guiding principle for the return to school is that they should operate as normally as possible including the provision of free breakfast and after school clubs, extra-curricular activities and practical subjects.</p>
1.04	<p>The main emphasis is on trying to stop the virus being brought into the school in the first instance. Secondary aged pupils and the education workforce are currently recommended to continue with the twice weekly testing regime that was in place in the summer term to quickly identify cases and isolate them. This approach is under regular review by Welsh government (WG).</p> <p>Parents are encouraged to be vigilant and not send their children to school if they are displaying any of the three main symptoms of Covid-19:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new continuous cough • fever or high temperature • loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste <p>The pupil should isolate immediately and it is recommended that they take a PCR test.</p> <p>This equally applies to the education workforce.</p>
1.05	<p>The use of a 'warn and inform' approach will be the main strategy when a positive case is identified in a school. This approach reinforces key messages about the risk to others from the virus e.g. being vigilant for symptoms, avoiding contact with vulnerable family and friends, avoiding hospital and care home visits for 10 days and seeking a test at the sign of any symptoms, however mild.</p>
1.06	<p>Schools are now very skilled in developing and monitoring risk assessments and adjusted them for the start of the new academic year. The key controls that still need to be in place are good ventilation, good hand and respiratory hygiene and regular cleaning.</p> <p>Where schools have used other effective control measures, e.g. use of one way systems, wearing of face coverings in communal areas, playground zoning etc. they can choose to continue to use them. This will be determined by each individual school based on their building and their operational model.</p> <p>Whilst face coverings are not recommended in classrooms, if any individual (pupil or staff) wishes to wear them they should not be</p>

	prevented. Face coverings are also still required on school transport for secondary learners.
1.07	Welsh Government have also advised that cleaning regimes need to be proportionate and in line with other communicable diseases. Schools do not need to set aside specific days for deep cleaning and should focus more on regular, quality cleaning and particularly in high touch areas. In the event of a confirmed case in a school then a deep clean of the area is still recommended to reduce transmission.
1.08	As part of the change to national alert level zero and to streamline the range of operational guidance in relation to COVID-19, WG has introduced a Local Covid-19 Infection Control Decision Framework and will scale back specific schools operational guidance. The Framework enables interventions to be tailored to the level of local risk and schools are expected to transition to this new Framework by September 20 th .
1.09	<p>The Framework is available under the List of Accessible Background Documents below, and sets out national risk ratings and descriptions of actions to be taken based on a number of key factors. It is designed to allow local decisions to be taken to escalate/de-escalate covid control measures. Schools would not be expected to make the decision to introduce greater controls – it would be a decision taken by local authority officers, public health officials and would be managed through the Council's Protection and Surveillance Group or an Incident Management Team in conjunction with the school. Head teachers and governing bodies have welcomed this joint approach to decision making in the event of a significant outbreak or cluster of cases.</p> <p>Welsh Government is in the process of refining the trigger points for moving between the control levels to ensure a consistent approach and we expect to receive this document shortly.</p>
1.10	Our Corporate Health and Safety Team, who have provided excellent advice and guidance to schools throughout the pandemic, have devised a refreshed risk assessment template to reflect the new national framework for schools to use.
1.11	In the event of a major outbreak of Covid-19 in a school then the Public Health Wales Disease Outbreak Plan will be followed. The TTP service will consider if the cases are linked and this may trigger an Incident Management Team to review the situation and consider invoking more controls as outlined in the Infection Control Framework. There would also be a suitable communication strategy developed for advising the school community.
1.12	Children and young people are no longer considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable with respect to Covid-19. However, there may be a small number who could be advised by their own specialists to isolate or reduce social contact because of their medical condition or treatment. In this case, the emphasis will always be to follow the advice of their medical practitioner.

	Staff who are considered as clinically extremely vulnerable should follow the guidance and discuss with their school how they will be supported. Expert advice is provided to schools through our Occupational Health Team on how to support these individuals.
1.13	Members of the education workforce who are 28 weeks pregnant or more should not undertake a public facing role and arrangements for these staff are agreed with Headteachers and advice, where necessary, is provided by our Occupational Health Team.
1.14	Schools manage visitors to their site in line with their risk assessment and will continue to encourage parents not to remain on the school site any longer than necessary when dropping off/collecting their children. In accordance with a recommendation from the Council's Recovery Committee, a letter was sent to all Head teachers and Chairs of Governors to support them in asking parents/visitors to the school site to continue to wear face coverings.
1.15	All Flintshire schools opened successfully at the start of the new academic year.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Revenue: there are no implications for the approved revenue budget for this service for either the current financial year or for future financial years.</p> <p>Capital: there are no implications for the approved capital programme for either the current financial year or for future financial years</p> <p>Human Resources: there are no implications for additional capacity or for any change to current workforce structures or roles.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>The Education Portfolio maintains a detailed risk register including the impact of Covid-19 on the education workforce and school operations. Schools manage their own individual risk registers.</p> <p>The risk register is reviewed on a monthly basis by the Portfolio's Senior Management Team and is reported on regularly to the Council's Recovery Committee.</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	N/A

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Local Covid-19 Infection Control Decision Framework</p> <p>https://gov.wales/local-covid-19-infection-control-decision-framework-schools-autumn-2021-html</p>

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Claire Homard, Chief Officer (Education & Youth)</p> <p>Telephone: 01352 704190</p> <p>E-mail: claire.homard@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Bubbles/contact groups – the organisation of discrete pupil groups that do not mix with other pupils as a control measure to minimise the spread of infection</p>



EDUCATION, YOUTH & CULTURE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Tuesday 16 th September 2021
Report Subject	Estyn Thematic Review Update
Cabinet Member	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education & Youth
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the autumn term of 2020, the Welsh Government asked Estyn to undertake a thematic review of the work undertaken by the education departments of each council in Wales to support their learning communities in schools and pupil referral units (PRUs) during the period from March to October 2020. Estyn made five key recommendations for the Welsh Government and councils to address.

Flintshire's first review letter, received in January 2021, was very positive and was included as part of the documentation relating to the Education Portfolio's annual self-evaluation process. This was reviewed by Cabinet and the Education, Youth and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier in the year.

During the summer term of 2021, Estyn conducted follow up reviews with all councils in Wales to consider the progress being made against their initial recommendations in the national thematic review. The evidence was gathered through meetings with senior managers of the portfolio and GwE core lead officers and triangulated with schools through Estyn's regular engagement meetings with Headteachers.

That review has now culminated in a second letter to the Chief Executive which provides a high degree of assurance that the Portfolio has continued to work effectively through its own resources, and through its support for schools in partnership with GwE, to ensure quality educational provision for learners, particularly those who are considered to be the most vulnerable. The letter contains feedback on the Council's response to the five recommendations.

This feedback from Estyn does not need an official response from the Council as the work undertaken was a thematic review, not an inspection under the normal regulatory frameworks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Cabinet acknowledges the effective work of the Education Portfolio, in conjunction with the regional school improvement service GwE, in ensuring Flintshire learners continued to receive effective educational provision through the Covid-19 pandemic.
2	Cabinet notes the positive progress made against each of the five Estyn recommendations in the national thematic review by the Education Portfolio and schools.
3.	Cabinet requests that the assurance letter is considered by the Education, Youth and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE ESTYN THEMATIC REVIEW LETTER
1.01	<p>During the autumn term 2020, the Welsh Government asked Estyn to undertake a review of local authorities' work in supporting their learning communities, and particularly vulnerable learners in schools and pupil referral units (PRUs), during the period from March to October 2020.</p> <p>The evidence for this review was based on virtual meetings with officers, the Cabinet Member for Education, the Chair of the Education, Youth and Culture Committee and a sample of schools and PRUs. Estyn also considered the supporting documentation provided by the local authority and the feedback from surveys of school/PRU leaders, governors, teachers and support staff, parents and pupils. The feedback from the 22 local authorities culminated in a national report back to Welsh Government.</p> <p>The report focused specifically on two aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting learning – the quality of the learning offer and how has this been supported through further guidance and professional learning? • Supporting vulnerable pupils – how did the local authority targeted services and support to vulnerable pupils to support them to engage in learning? What barriers still exist? <p>The national report was published in January 2021 and a link to it is included within the list of accessible documents at Section 6 of this report.</p> <p>Each Council also received an individual letter outlining Estyn's view of its response to those two key aspects in the early stage of the pandemic. This letter was previously shared with Cabinet as part of the Portfolio's annual self-evaluation report.</p>
1.02	Within the national report, Estyn made five recommendations for the Welsh Government to work with regional consortia, local authorities and other partners and providers. These recommendations were:

	<p>R1 Urgently address barriers to learning at home, particularly where this is due to a lack of access to suitable computers or adequate connectivity</p> <p>R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs</p> <p>R3 Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals</p> <p>R4 Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils</p> <p>R5 Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design</p>
1.03	<p>During the summer term of 2021, Estyn conducted follow up reviews with all councils in Wales to consider the progress being made against their recommendations in the thematic review. The evidence was gathered through meetings with senior managers of the portfolio and GwE core lead officers and triangulated with schools through Estyn's regular engagement meetings with Headteachers.</p> <p>That review has now culminated in a second letter to the Chief Executive which provides a high degree of assurance that the Portfolio has continued to work effectively in providing support for schools and vulnerable learners, to ensure quality educational provision was delivered through the second stage of the pandemic.</p> <p>The letter sets out the Council's progress against each of the five recommendations and can be viewed at Appendix 1. The letter is a positive endorsement of the work of the Education Portfolio within areas for which it has strategic responsibility and also in its partnership approach to supporting schools with the regional school improvement service, GwE.</p>
1.04	<p>This feedback from Estyn does not need an official response from the Council as the work undertaken was a thematic review, not an inspection under the normal regulatory frameworks. There is no need for the production of any follow up action plan. The priorities outlined in the five recommendations will be absorbed now into the 'business as usual' for the Portfolio and schools when they reopen in September.</p> <p>The normal regulatory framework for the inspection of Local Government Education Services will restart from September 2021. Flintshire has already been inspected on this framework (June 2019) and the recommendations from that full inspection are embedded in the Council Plan and the Portfolio Business Plan.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	There are no specific resource implications arising from this report.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	N/A

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	N/A

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Estyn Letter.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	LA consortia support for schools and PRU.pdf

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Claire Homard Chief Officer Education & Youth Telephone: 01352 704190 E-mail: claire.homard@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	Estyn – Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

20.07.21

Dear Colin Everett

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with an overview of the progress you have made in relation to recommendations from the overarching thematic report we published in January. The narrative reflects the information and views you shared with our link inspectors during their engagements with you throughout the term,

The thematic identified five recommendations for the Welsh Government and recognised that a whole system approach was needed to address these. The first three recommendations were more immediate and urgent in nature, whilst the last two recommendations will take longer to address. From our discussions with you, feedback from learners and our engagement work with schools, it is clear that, through collaboration, progress was made across Wales in equipping schools and learners to provide better remote learning experiences during the second lockdown.

In line with our new approach for thematic reports, we will be writing to the Welsh Government in early 2022 to seek feedback on the work they have done to address the recommendations we made to them.

We hope you will find this summary a helpful affirmation of the work that you have done to support your learners and learning communities during the last six months.

R1 Urgently address barriers to learning at home, particularly where this is due to a lack of access to suitable computers or adequate connectivity

The local authority has continued to work with schools and partners to address barriers to digital learning. It has formalised its response to digital disadvantage through work with the Hwb Programme Board to ensure that there is a long-term focus on providing distance learning for all. This work has included the procurement and distribution of around seven thousand devices to learners in Flintshire. The local authority has also mapped out connectivity needs in response to phase one of a national strategy to improve digital provision in schools. This has enabled the authority to prioritise and address needs. For example, in one high school where there were connectivity issues, the bandwidth has been increased so that the school can now meet user demand. In addition, the Hwb Programme Board have agreed to continue to use funding from the Welsh Government grant for licenses for WI-FI dongles for disadvantaged learners for an extended period.

Flintshire staff continue to provide bespoke and flexible support for vulnerable learners in a variety of ways. For example, they have developed videos to support families of learners that are new to the English language to engage with digital learning. They have also worked with schools to ensure that onsite education is accessible to those for whom digital learning is not the most appropriate mode of delivery.

In partnership with GwE, the local authority has provided a package of training and support for schools to strengthen their capacity to provide distance learning through the use of digital technology. This contributed positively to a rapid and sustainable upskilling of the workforce. The local authority has provided funding for schools to collaborate to develop and share digital learning practice. Both the local authority and GwE believe that this strategy has been successful in reducing variability in the range and quality of provision.

The local authority has supported learners to engage in learning both in and out of schools through its youth work provision. For example, the authority's youth work immersion strategy which includes the deployment of trained youth workers within schools has enabled vulnerable learners to receive support both at schools and via its open access youth provision. This enables these learners to access support that they would not otherwise receive.

In partnership with school staff, the local authority identified the importance of the 'community' aspect of the immersion youth worker role. There is an appreciation that what happens in the community affects relationships and behaviours within the school environment. The knowledge that the immersion youth worker has of the needs of young people and wider contextual issues enables them to make connections to wider community resources and pro-social activities.

Generally, the local authority feels that levels of learner engagement have been positive in Flintshire throughout the pandemic. They also identify that variability in engagement levels span all types of schools and families from all types of socio-economic backgrounds. Estyn's engagement with schools suggests that, on balance, learners from disadvantaged backgrounds have found engagement with learning more challenging than their peers.

R2 Improve the quality of the distance and blended learning experiences for pupils by supporting more effective teaching across and within schools and PRUs

The local authority, in partnership with GwE, has provided useful strategic and practical support to help schools to offer distance and blended learning experiences. This includes a regional learning hub that hosts resources developed and quality assured by schools and regional officers.

Local authority and GwE officers liaise with schools about their processes to monitor provision and planning. In a few instances, officers have been able to sit in on digital lessons to get first-hand experience of the learning offer. In these instances, they have spoken positively about schools' work.

Over time, and particularly in the secondary sector, distance learning has moved increasingly towards live lessons delivered digitally. Local authority and regional officers feel that this has enabled teachers to monitor learners' progress more

effectively than at other points in the pandemic where monitoring tended to focus on levels of engagement. A few schools have engaged in shared, supportive observations through a 'chaperone' system. They have shared the outcomes of their work with school improvement advisers. There is a strong sense that education professionals have shown a commitment to sharing things that work well within and beyond their schools, for example through the development of agreed protocols for live lessons.

Overall, arrangements to monitor the provision of teaching and learning experiences have enabled the local authority to have a sound understanding of the blended learning offer provided by its schools. It remains a challenge to evaluate comprehensively the impact that distance learning has had on learners' progress. However, since Easter, school improvement advisers and other local authority service providers have begun to re-engage in face-to-face activities with schools. This engagement is beginning to support schools to evaluate the impact of their provision on learners' progress, for example a few schools have discussed the outcomes of their activities to monitor standards in pupils' books. During their face-to-face engagement with schools, improvement advisers and local authority staff also discuss arrangements to support learners that are reluctant to reengage in education.

R3 Develop a coherent approach to improve progress in literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example pupils eligible for free school meals

Many aspects of the local authority's response to recommendations one and two are part of their joined-up approach to the progress of pupils disproportionately affected by the pandemic. For example, the provision of suitable digital technology that ensures access to appropriate distance learning experiences. In addition, the local authority, in partnership with GwE, has focussed on providing a balance of bespoke support for schools and facilitating the dissemination of effective practice to support improved literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills of vulnerable pupils. It has also drawn upon the full breadth of its services to support learners to develop these skills, for example through its youth work provision.

The local authority has taken extensive measures to ensure that learning is accessible to those most disproportionately affected by the pandemic, for example by supporting vulnerable learners to attend school during lockdown. Through its monitoring activity, the local authority has identified the need to support early entitlement settings, particularly to provide help for learners with additional learning needs. It has introduced a commercial training package with twelve selected schools to support the development of learners' speaking skills. Plans are in place to expand this programme across a greater number of schools. The authority's Welsh in Education Team have produced additional resources to support oracy development to help learners reengage with the Welsh language. Additional plans are in place to

support crucial aspects of learners' wellbeing. These include work with resources from the School Health Research Network and plans for a school holiday enrichment programme.

Recently, officers from the local authority and GwE have restarted visits to schools. These engagements now include discussions about learners that did not engage well with schooling during periods of lockdown. They are working with schools to identify the best way forward for these learners. The local authority is also broadening its provision for education other than at school to support those key stage 2 pupils that are reluctant to return to school.

Local authority officers are keen to avoid terminology that emphasises a deficit model in pupils' learning and progress, for example 'catch-up' or 'lost learning'. Instead, they are promoting the positive learning that has occurred during the pandemic and looking to help schools to support all learners to move forward from their current position as well as they can.

R4 Establish strategies to monitor and address the long-term impact of the pandemic on the physical and mental health of pupils

Throughout the period of the pandemic, the local authority has worked strategically to support collaboration between education services and other departments and external services. This collaboration has been beneficial in many ways including helping local authority officers to keep all aspects of its provision for learners under regular review. For example, partnership work with GwE to map out local and regional interventions is helping the local authority to consider the impact that its work is having on supporting the mental health of pupils and to identify gaps in its current offer.

The local authority has established an 'Emotional Wellbeing Steering Group' to guide its work. This group draws on a range of evidence to inform decisions and practice. This evidence includes pupil, school and local authority level data. The authority is continuing to refine its data collection procedures in relation to pupils' physical and mental health. Through the development of its data management system, the authority is planning to identify emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) cases. It is organising training for the educational welfare team to help them to meet the needs of identified learners. In addition, arrangements are in place to monitor referrals for counselling, nurture provision and to gauge the impact of training that has been offered to schools for programmes such as those that support the development of pupils' emotional literacy.

The local authority is engaging positively with Welsh Government's framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing. This includes early exploration of an assessment tool that is being developed by Public Health Wales and investment in the National Nurturing School Programme which has an element of built in monitoring. Local authority officers are planning to work

with schools to trial a nurture screening tool that will provide them with an additional source of data. They continue to promote the use of the School Health Research Network across Flintshire's schools. There are firm partnership arrangements in place with AURA, the independent leisure provider for Flintshire, to support active learning through the provision of school-based lessons and out of school programmes.

Provision to meet the physical and mental health need of pupils appears to be central to the authority's strategic approach moving forward.

R5 Create opportunities to take stock and evaluate the impact of policies and practices developed since the start of the pandemic to inform future ways of working and curriculum design

The local authority has adapted its arrangements to evaluate its own work. It has undertaken an evaluation for each service area within the education portfolio, to identify what has worked well and opportunities for improvement. Each service has produced a report that identifies how it has responded and changed as a result of the pandemic. In turn, these service reports have been summarised in a composite document that has gone to the local authority's cabinet and education scrutiny committee for consideration and has informed the overall council plan as Flintshire moves forward. There is also a specific short-term recovery plan for the education portfolio. This suggests that there is an overall strategic approach to support the authority to evaluate policies and practices.

Specific evaluation work that is beginning to have an impact includes that of key policies and practices such as EOTAS (education other than at school) provision. As a result of this evaluation, the authority has identified the need to broaden its provision for education other than at school across key stage 2. It is taking steps to address this identified gap. As a result of a pupil behaviour review, the authority identified the negative connotations of referring to pupils as needing behaviour support. They have refined the tone of this provision by referring to it as 'nurture' provision which will be delivered under the guidance of the pupil referral unit.

The local authority plans to further develop arrangements to support staff wellbeing, particularly that of school leaders. The recent, regular digital interaction has been well received by school leaders overall. The local authority is planning for an autumn conference for school leaders as things return to more of a normal footing.

Both the local authority and GwE are very positive about gains made in relation to curriculum design, especially the general development in the capacity of schools and learners to work digitally. They are also very positive about increased levels of collaboration between schools and this is something they will continue to facilitate.

All schools are being asked to complete a written evaluation of the teaching and learning that has taken place through the pandemic period. The intention is to learn

and share lessons about strengths and areas for development that have emerged during the period of the pandemic.

Officers from the local authority and GwE feel that the use of stakeholder feedback has developed as an influential strength during recent times. It has enabled schools to make adaptations to their learning offer, for example to the organisation of the school day. Local arrangements provide a platform for school leaders to share this information with other schools.

Thank you for your work and for your ongoing professional dialogue with our inspectors.

Regards,



Jassa Scott
Strategic Director