

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **THURSDAY, 14TH FEBRUARY 2013**

REPORT OF: **DIRECTOR OF LIFELONG LEARNING**

SUBJECT: **INCIDENTS OF ARSON, VANDALISM, AND
BURGLARIES IN FLINTSHIRE SCHOOLS**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.01 To provide Members with an update on the implementation of the Recommendations submitted to, and approved by the Executive early in 2006, regarding the review of measures taken to reduce and/or prevent arson, vandalism and burglaries to Flintshire schools

2.00 BACKGROUND

- 2.01 The Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on 24th October 2006, and it was recommended that further progress reports be presented to the Committee on an annual basis.
- 2.02 This report sets out the progress which has been made since that meeting in implementing a number of measures in consultation with the School Security Group, and schools. The commentary below refers to specific recommendations where further developments have taken place.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 Caretaker Training

A half day training session was held on Friday 13th July 2012, in the Council Chamber at County Hall. Thirty eight Caretakers attended, and found the interactive format useful and informative. This year, for the first time, there was a presentation on Legionella Awareness by representatives from Hertel. All the attendees were sent a thank you letter in the Autumn term, enclosing a Certificate of Achievement, and some useful publications.

Observers from Wrexham County Council also attended, with a view to establishing similar training of their own.

3.02 **Multi Agency Approach**

The School Security Group has continued to meet on a regular basis. Again, the excellent work of the Neighbourhood Wardens makes a significant contribution to Operation Gingerbread. The contribution of other Community Safety Partners is detailed below.

3.03 **Flintshire Neighbourhood Watch**

This organisation plays a vital role in making our schools safer, through a number of initiatives:-

“OWL” (Online Watch Link) – communication system

Frequent, direct communications, from North Wales Police, Fire and Rescue, and other Agencies. Alerts of local crime involving schools, sharing new types of crime patterns, sending updates on incidents, such as metal theft.

In November 2011, an additional element of the OWL system was put in place, and extended to those who chose not to be part of a watch scheme. Currently, 357 households in Flintshire are registered into the database.

A recent snapshot survey has demonstrated the value of OWL/Watch as a community safety tool for all:-

- Public confidence in the Police has been significantly increased.
- Fear of crime has been reduced.
- Increased levels of awareness and vigilance have reduced the risk of burglary among Watch members.

3.04 **School/ Cocoon watch**

This is where students, parents, teachers, staff and neighbours work with Community Safety Partners, to keep the school and the students safe. Its purpose is to reduce criminal damage to school property and buildings, reduce anti-social behaviour and bullying, increase the sense of ownership and promote good citizenship.

The OWLSchoolWatch database has 114 addresses and an additional 29 Caretakers that are linked, and receive the communications

3.05 Y-Factor Youth Programme

The Programme, through its mobile unit, involves young people in voluntary work to help their community. During the year, a number of work placements have been provided to Flintshire schools, enabling students to spend a week learning, and engaging with, Community Safety Agencies. School visits have promoted the Schoolwatch scheme, and encouraged young people to care for their school and the environment.

A new service is currently in development under the Y-Factor Youth Programme, called "Teen Messaging" – this is an initiative to extend the "OWL community messaging element of the system to young people. Connah's Quay High School and Deeside College have agreed to pilot this scheme, commencing early in 2013.

3.06 Funding

As in previous years, the School Security Group, assessed which schools were suffering most from crime and anti-social behaviour, and therefore in need of grant funding. In July 2012, the following "Target Hardening" Bids were submitted to the Welsh Government:-

- Ysgol Merllyn Bagillt - £30,000 (Contribution to perimeter fencing)
- Ewloe Green C.P. School - £22,890 (Perimeter fencing)
- Ysgol Croes Atti Flint - £30,000 (CCTV system)

At the request of the Welsh Government, the Ysgol Merllyn Bid was subsequently reduced to £15,000, but as yet they have not advised us of their decision on any of our submissions.

3.07 Schools to Maintain Good Housekeeping

This message is continually reinforced through Caretaker Training, and the surveys carried out by the County's insurers Zurich Municipal. In the past year, through its Y-Factor Youth Programme, Flintshire Neighbourhood Watch has played an increasing role in this area.

Colleagues from Building Control are continuing with an exercise which will eventually result in every Flintshire School receiving a Fire Safety Risk Assessment. Funding is being made available to address those issues which are viewed as the highest priority.

3.08 **Arson Costs**

2005/06	2006/07	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/2011	2011/2012
£131,615	£89,257	£6,297	£4,785	NIL	NIL	£685

There has been just one deliberate fire at a Flintshire School, in the current financial year. This was at Ysgol Gronant, where the costs amounted to £3,410.

3.09 **Vandalism Costs**

The figure for Primary Schools in 2011/12, fell again, for the third consecutive year, to £3,488.

The Secondary Schools figure, at £5,378, was the lowest ever recorded

3.10 **Burglary Costs**

Lead thefts amount to just over £12,500 in the current financial year, although none have been reported since the summer holidays.

At the last meeting of the School Security Group in November 2012, P.C. Hazel Goss M.B.E. reported that North Wales Police now have a dedicated Metal Thefts Officer, working proactively to reduce this type of crime.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 Members are asked to note the developments so far, in implementing the Recommendations agreed by the Executive, and that a further progress report is presented to this Committee in twelve months time.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 The Local Authority will continue to bid for available grants to assist schools in addressing the need for security measures around their sites.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 None arising directly from this report

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 The effects of arson and vandalism have a detrimental effect on pupils, staff and the wider community. The aim is to minimise the opportunities for occurrence such as these.

8.00 EQUALITY IMPACT

8.01 None arising directly from this report.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None further than reported.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None arising directly from this report.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 The LEA consults and works closely with a number of key Community Safety Partners, through the School Security Group, which Members will be aware was formed early in 2007.

12.00 APPENDICES

None.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

N/A

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