

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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

DATE: **31st MARCH 2014**

REPORT OF: **DIRECTOR OF LIFELONG LEARNING**

SUBJECT: **INCIDENTS OF ARSON, VANDALISM, AND BURGLARIES TO 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 9th July 2013, in the Council Chamber at County Hall. Forty two Caretakers attended, and there were presentations on Counter Terrorism and the new Keyholding Service for County Buildings. The Chief Officer of Flintshire Neighbourhood Watch gave an overview of Community Watch Schemes, and colleagues from the Neighbourhood Wardens and North Wales Arson Reduction Team also made valuable contributions.

3.02 Caretakers also took part in a “workshop” discussing problems on school sites, and their solutions.

3.03 **Multi Agency Approach**

The School Security Group has continued to meet on a regular basis. A representative from Wrexham C.B.C. has been attending, and at the next meeting in April the intention is to put this joint working approach on a more formal basis.

3.04 **Flintshire Neighbourhood Watch**

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

3.05 **“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.

3.06 The number of alerts sent out has risen from 30K in April 2013 to 80K in December 2013.

3.07 OWL/Watch continues to maintain the following values, 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.

3.08 **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.

3.09 The OWLSchoolWatch database now has 134 School addresses, 180 School members, and 36 Caretakers registered. Flintshire tops the “league table” of the six North Wales Counties in these categories.

3.10 **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 School Watch scheme, and encouraged young people to care for their school and the environment.

3.11 The “Teen Messaging” Scheme has been extended to Ysgol Cae’r Nant, where it will act as a conduit for parents. Flint, John Summers, and Hawarden High Schools have also expressed an interest in it.

3.12 **Funding**

The “ Target Hardening” Bid for Ysgol Merllyn Bagillt submitted to the Welsh Government in July 2012 was approved, and the funding contributed to a fencing scheme at the School. Unfortunately the Bids for Ewloe Green C.P. School (Perimeter fencing) and Ysgol Croes Atti Flint (CCTV System) were not successful.

3.13 Further funding was announced by the Welsh Government in December 2013, and two Bids were submitted later that month for Ysgol Bro Carmel (Fencing) and Ysgol y Waun Gwernaffield (CCTV System). However, neither was successful.

3.14 **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 have played an increasing role in this area.

3.15 **Arson Costs**

2006/07	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
£89,257	£6,297	£4,785	NIL	NIL	£685	£3,410

There have been no deliberate fires at Flintshire Schools, in the current financial year.

3.16 **Vandalism Costs**

The figure for Primary Schools in 2012/13, at £6,186 represented an increase of £2,698, on the previous year but the Secondary figure, at £4022, was again the lowest ever recorded.

3.17 **Burglary Costs**

Burglary costs at schools amounted to just under £15K in 2012/2013, but no lead thefts have been reported for a number of months.

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 as a direct 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 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 None as a direct result from this report.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None as a direct result of this report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None as a direct result of this report.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 The local authority 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

12.01 None.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS N/A

Contact Officer: Tom Davies
Telephone: 01352 704011
Email: tom.davies@flintshire.gov.uk