

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

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

DATE: **THURSDAY, 26TH MARCH 2015**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER (EDUCATION AND YOUTH)**

SUBJECT: **NATIONAL MODEL FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To provide members with an update on the alignment of working arrangements in North Wales with regard to the National Model For School Improvement.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 Welsh Government Guidance document 126/2014 issued in February 2014 outlined the vision of regional school improvement consortia as well as the relative roles of each tier (schools, local authorities, and regional consortia) within the education system.

2.02 In the Spring of 2014 the Cabinets of the 6 partner Councils resolved:

- to approve the National Model for Regional Working in Wales in relation to School Improvement; and
- to adopt the National Model for Regional Working on School Improvement and develop a business plan with the intention that the additional services listed in the Model be incorporated into the GwE regional model, in phases, subject to a satisfactory business case for each and a supporting transition plan to ensure service continuity and performance.

2.03 The areas of work to be addressed in order to be in alignment with the National Model for Regional Working were:

- a) Governor Advice and Support
- b) Foundation Phase
- c) 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Offer
- d) Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Welsh in Education Grant
- e) Regional co-ordination of ICT Strategy
- f) Effective HR support

- 2.04 An audit of the current regional arrangements with respect to all of the above areas of work was undertaken by a seconded Officer from the Host Authority and generic strategic options were presented to the Directors of Education Strategic Group in February 2015.
- 2.05 All preferred strategic options must demonstrate regional working that is in alignment with the National Model and all consortia business plans have to be approved by the Welsh Government.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.01 Each of the areas identified in 2.03 above should be considered to be developed under a regional approach as identified below. These options have been considered by the Joint Committee for the joint service in March 2015. The recommendations are:

3.02 Governor Advice and Support

- a) All staff to remain within their respective Local Authorities as per current arrangements where responsibility for delivering governor support will remain.
- b) GwE Challenge Advisors will continue to secure appropriate oversight and responsibility for quality assurance and consistency of effective school governing bodies across the region (definition of 'appropriate oversight' to be agreed).
- c) GwE will commission an external consultant to routinely audit the governor support (including training services within individual local authorities). The performance data will be used by GwE and the Education Departments in order to share best practice and to drive improvements in service.
- d) Mandatory Training will continue to be delivered through the Education Departments alongside non-statutory training (e.g. Child Protection).
- e) Quality Assurance of the training provision will continue to be undertaken by GwE by way of the Challenge Adviser Team.
- f) However, as budgets continue to reduce, GwE and the Education Departments will continue to identify local and regional priorities alongside the development of cross-hub training solutions (e.g. opening up the Local Authority Member Training programme to other governors).

3.03 Foundation Phase

- a) For maintained settings, current arrangements for challenging performance (through GwE termly school visits 1, 2 & 3) and the Foundation Phase team are considered robust and fully aligned with the National Model for Regional Working.
- b) However, it is acknowledged that an independent challenge of performance within non-maintained settings is currently not within GwE's remit. Further work on this issue is ongoing as part of GwE's 3 Year Programme (coordinated by Claire Homard) and therefore falls outside the scope of the North

Wales response to the National Model for Regional Working. It is also worth noting that the Welsh Government guidelines do not make it clear that they intend for a challenge to non-maintained setting performance to be included within the regional model.

With regard to the need to Foundation Phase Training:

- a) Education Departments and individual maintained settings will continue to identify training needs and to provide training opportunities for Foundation Phase staff.
- b) GwE will continue to give challenge to Education Departments on how the Departments identify training needs and deliver training opportunities
- c) However, as a result of the new disbursement arrangements and planned reductions in Foundation Phase Grant levels for 2015/16, GwE and the Education Departments will develop and deliver a joint programme of statutory training opportunities.

3.04 14-19 Learning Pathways

- a) The regional 14 – 19 planning network will remain in place with officers from each Local Authority remaining responsible for planning and delivery of the national 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Offer.
- b) A GwE representative will be a member of the regional group and will have lead responsibility on group so as to provide a regional strategic overview of the said area of work.
- c) There will be a clear reporting mechanism from the sub-group to GwE Management Board and Joint Committee.
- d) GwE will include the 14 – 19 Learning Pathways Offer in Business Plan by means of a report from the regional sub-group.
- e) A pragmatic approach will be taken to alignment with the National Model for Regional Working due to implementation of the new Education Improvement Grant that comes into force in April 2015.
- f) There is more regional construction possible from 2016 onwards in light of new Education Improvement Grant and three year school improvement business planning.

3.05 Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Welsh in Education Grant

- a) The regional Language Sub-Group will remain in place and officers from each Local Authority will remain responsible for the planning and delivery of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans and Welsh in Education Grant.
- b) Gwynedd Council to remain as lead authority on regional level

- to co-ordinate regional delivery plan.
- c) Independent quality assurance is already in place as regional strategic plans scrutinised and approved by Welsh Government.
- d) Representatives from Local Authorities and GwE currently sit on the regional group.
- e) Regional quality assurance could be strengthened by scrutiny of plans by the Management Board and Joint Committee.
- f) A pragmatic approach (securing continuity of direct learner provision) will be taken to alignment with the National Model for Regional Working due to the implementation of the new Education Improvement Grant that comes into force in April 2015.
- g) Local Authority WESP and WEG staffing rationalisation possible for 2016 – 2017 following year of new Education Improvement Grant (terms and conditions not known to Local Authorities until 16 January 2015) and staffing cuts could result due to 10% cut in overall grant (some Local Authority posts partially and fully funded by Welsh in Education Grant). Local Authorities would need a year to plan ahead in view of new Education Improvement Grant
- h) Possible full transfer of responsibilities from Local Authorities to GwE pending further rationalisation work in time for 2016 – 2017 due to HR and TUPE risks and required timescale to implement changes in light of new Education Improvement Grant (although initially agreed in principle that planning and delivery should remain within individual Local Authorities and not within GwE)
- i) Far more regional construction possible from 2016 onwards in light of new Education Improvement Grant and the principle of three year business planning

3.06 Regional Co-ordination of ICT Strategy

- a) The remit and resourcing of the regional ICT Sub-group will be revised in the first instance.
- b) The group will set the baseline for development of the regional ICT strategy in collaboration with current GwE officers involved in school-to-school support and literacy and numeracy etc.
- c) The ICT sub-group will bring together over-arching regional strategy and options for implementation within the GwE three year business plan.
- d) There is commitment to developing further regional working options once baseline is set for development of strategy.
- e) GwE is planning its capacity to push forward in strategy implementation once the initial work has been undertaken by ICT Regional Sub-group.
- f) ICT group to bring together plan and timescale for the said piece of work.
- g) GwE considered that ICT could become a one-off focus of one school improvement visit.

3.07 Effective HR Support

- a) The All Wales Directors of Human Resources Group has created a document in response to the National Model in terms of the role of Human Resources teams in Education.
- b) The group has worked on an audit of capacity, skills and competencies which is present within Human Resources throughout Local Authorities in Wales in relation to working with schools. The group has drafted a development plan for human resources staff as well as providing a clear outline of what the expectation would be on HR officers when working with schools.
- c) Following this exercise, a draft document by the group will be submitted for observations and further consideration by Welsh Government officials.
- d) The GwE management board and joint committee have agreed that their intention is to adopt the national methodology developed by the Directors of HR under the oversight of WLGA.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 That members receive this report and support the direction of the work being undertaken to align Flintshire and other partner authorities in North Wales with the National Model in respect of the work streams identified above.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 There are no immediate financial effects. However, where regional working becomes a more efficient model it may result in some savings on staffing costs in individual authorities.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 No direct impact from this report. However, reducing the effects of poverty on educational attainment remains a national priority and influences the work undertaken in key areas, such as Foundation Phase and 14-19.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 7.01 None.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.01 No immediate equalities impact from this report.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.01 As some staff costs associated with these areas may be funded by grant, there could be implications from the reduction in the total of grant funding within the new Education Improvement Grant (EIG) when compared to the predecessor grants.
- 9.02 Further developments of regional working could result in efficiencies and potential for staff to be employed by the lead authority (Gwynedd) in the way that was the case for previous authority employees who transferred into GwE.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

- 10.01 None required at this stage.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

- 11.01 There has been input from staff working in the areas affected by this report.

12.00 APPENDICES

- 12.01 None.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None.

Contact Officer: Ian Budd
Telephone: 01352 704190
Email: ian.budd@flintshire.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Kevin Grandfield (Secondary)
Telephone: 01352 704018
Email: kevin.grandfield@flintshire.gov.uk

Contact Officer: Claire Homard (Primary)
Telephone: 01352 704019
Email: claire.homard@flintshire.gov.uk