

EDUCATION & YOUTH OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING

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| Date of Meeting | Thursday 28 th April 2016 |
| Report Subject | Improvement Plan 2016/17 |
| Cabinet Member | Cabinet Member for Education |
| Report Author | Chief Executive Chief Officer – Education & Youth |
| Type of Report | Strategic |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Improvement Plan for 2016/17 has been refreshed and updated to reflect the key priorities of the Council for next year. The structure of the plan is retained with the eight priorities and the sub-priorities. Five of the eight priorities continue with a refresh of longer term projects or ambitions, whereas the remaining three have been reviewed to reflect local circumstances and priorities.

There is also a new section within each sub-priority which references national issues which have the potential to impact upon achievement of the priorities. These issues will also be referenced, where relevant, in the next refresh of the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2016-2020.

Following presentation of the initial draft to Cabinet on 19th April 2016, relevant sections of the Improvement Plan are now being presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committees for consultation and input, along with the proposed targets for the national performance indicators.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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| 1 | To review and comment on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The content of the Improvement Plan and 'How we measure achievement' document for the Priority 'Skills & Learning'. ii. The proposed targets for the national performance indicators. |
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REPORT DETAILS

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| 1.00 | Explaining the Improvement Plan and Target Setting |
| 1.01 | It is a requirement of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 (the Measure) to set Improvement Objectives and publish an Improvement Plan. It is a statutory requirement for the County Council to adopt the Improvement Plan. |
| 1.02 | Improvement Objectives and an accompanying Improvement Plan were first set and adopted by the Council in 2011. For 2013/14 the Council thoroughly reviewed the priorities to streamline them and reset them with clearer outcome based aims. A revised set of eight priorities supported by a structure of sub-priorities was adopted. |
| 1.03 | The Plan presentation also changed providing detail for each of the priorities which were to have the most impact during the year. This has helped the organisation to concentrate on the outcomes where most immediate attention was needed. |
| 1.04 | In recent years the Plan has been effective in setting priorities and achieving outcomes. This has been validated by the Wales Audit Office (WAO) as below. |
| 1.05 | <p>The WAO in its Corporate Assessment report of March 2015 said that <i>“the Council has established a wide-ranging set of clearly-stated priorities that have a broad base of support within the Council and among partners”</i>.</p> <p>In addition the report commented on: <i>“The Council sets out its vision clearly within its Improvement Plan, as required by the Local Government Measure 2009 (the Measure). For 2014-15, the Council’s coherent set of eight strategic priorities is underpinned by more detailed sub-priorities, some of which are identified clearly as areas of particular focus during the year. Though wide-ranging, the Council’s vision demonstrates a clear commitment to continuous improvement, reflected by targets for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its services, particularly those associated with its in-year Improvement Objectives.”</i></p> <p>The format and content of the Plan was also commented upon: <i>“The Council has worked hard to improve the quality of this key plan and the Improvement Plan for 2014-15 is a clear and accessible document that sets out far more clearly than before what the Council plans to do and how its success might be measured and evaluated.”</i></p> |
| 1.06 | <p>For 2016/17 a review of the current priorities and sub-priorities has been undertaken to set: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • priorities that continue into 2016/17 for sustained attention; • activities that can now be removed as completion of a time-limited piece of work e.g. Universal Credit preparation, use of the National Procurement Service; |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • priorities which could be broadened to include more strategic issues e.g. ‘Creating jobs and growing the local economy’, the care home market; • sub-priorities which could be merged e.g. Fuel Poverty and Maximising Income; • emerging priority activities for 2016/17 e.g. Improving chances for Looked after Children, mental health. <p>Sub-priorities have also been set to take into account Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny priorities, priorities of partners, public views and service demands and national policy and legislation.</p> |
| 1.07 | <p>For each sub-priority which continues to be high profile for 2016/17 there has been a review based on: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the reasoning for the priority status; • what we will do and how we will measure achievement; and • the risks that will need to be managed. <p>In addition there is a section on national policy issues which may impact our ability to deliver and achieve.</p> |
| 1.08 | <p>The Improvement Plan in totality is presented as 2 documents that are inter-related; firstly the ‘public’ version of our statements of intent around the 8 priorities and secondly the document that describes the targets and milestones on which achievement will be measured. This is the document that is used by Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committees to monitor progress during the year.</p> <p>Appendix 1 is the draft Improvement Plan priority ‘Skills and Learning’, including the ‘How we will measure achievement’ extract for this priority.</p> |
| 1.09 | <p>The ‘Skills and Learning’ priority consists of two sub-priorities, ‘Apprenticeships and Training’ and ‘Modernised and High Performing Education’.</p> <p>The ‘Apprenticeships and Training’ sub-priority focuses on activities to: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend and improve the available education, employment and training opportunities. • Improve the employment prospects of local people to meet the needs of local employers. • Help young people take the step from education to employment. • Reduce barriers to engagement, ensure equality of access and participation opportunities for all children and young people. <p>The ‘Modernised and High Performing Education’ sub-priority focuses on activities to: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise resources effectively to achieve the best possible educational outcomes. • Support the national Welsh Government priorities to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes and reduce the impact of poverty |

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| | <p>on educational attainment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve digital literacy and skills to enable access to modern employment and economic development opportunities. • Work collaboratively to develop national reforms to curriculum, assessment and professional development models. • Work effectively with partners across the region to secure efficiency and improved outcomes from educational improvement programmes. • Make more efficient use of education resources through School Modernisation. |
| 1.10 | <p>The final Improvement Plan will be available as a web-based document published on the website before the end of June following endorsement by County Council.</p> |
| 1.11 | <p>In addition to the performance measures in the Improvement Plan, the Council has a duty to collect and report annually on a number of statutory measures to Welsh Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Strategic Indicators (NSIs) • Public Accountability Measures (PAMs) <p>GwE now have responsibility for the target setting process with schools and have introduced a new methodology with a focus on targets being 'more realistic'. At Foundation Phase and Key Stage 2, the targets are no longer 'uplifted' as they were previously by the Local Authority but are now aggregated data from schools. This has resulted in some targets being below current performance levels. Caution has also been shown in schools for Foundation Phase targets for end of phase outcomes when the children are only in Year 1 and Reception and their development is so variable.</p> |
| 1.12 | <p>Targets are set for the current year and the next year based on historical trend, comparative performance and local circumstances e.g. ability of the cohorts for educational performance indicators. Such considerations are detailed in the 'rationale' for the target.</p> <p>Classifications are also set for each performance indicator and the rationale for the selection is stated: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement - current performance is poor and improvement is being targeted. • Incremental - current performance is fair but stepped, incremental improvement is being sought. • Maintenance - current performance is good and we are seeking to maintain that level. <p>Appendix 2 is a schedule of the national performance indicators for Education and Youth.</p> |

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| 2.00 | RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS |
| 2.01 | Resource implications have been considered during preparation of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and will continue to be monitored during the regular budget monitoring and financial planning arrangements. |

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| 3.00 | CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT |
| 3.01 | Following presentation of the initial draft to Cabinet on 19th April 2016, relevant sections of the Improvement Plan are now being presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committees for consultation and input, alongside the proposed targets for the national performance indicators. |

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| 4.00 | RISK MANAGEMENT |
| 4.01 | <p>Delivery of the plan objectives are risk managed as part of each of the sub-priorities of the Improvement Plan. They are monitored and reported against quarterly to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.</p> <p>The risks to the statutory requirements of the Plan include: not publishing the plan within statutory timescales (30 June) and not adhering to the prerequisite content. Both these risks are managed through adherence to well established procedures for i) publishing the Plan and ii) ensuring that the content of the plan reflects the requirements of the Measure.</p> <p>An additional risk is that Members do not endorse the Plan; consultation with Members both individually and as part of the Scrutiny process allows for full engagement.</p> |

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| 5.00 | APPENDICES |
| 5.01 | <p>Appendix 1 – Improvement Plan 2016/17: ‘Skills and Learning’</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Proposed national performance indicator targets for Education and Youth</p> |

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| 6.00 | LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS |
| 6.01 | <p>Contact Officer: Louise Mackie, Policy and Performance Support Officer</p> <p>Telephone: 01352 702154</p> <p>E-mail: louise.mackie@flintshire.gov.uk</p> |

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| 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 |

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| | 2009 to set Improvement Objectives and publish an Improvement Plan. |
| 7.02 | Corporate Assessment: in 2013/14 the Wales Audit Office (WAO) began a new four year cycle of Corporate Assessments of improvement authorities in Wales. An in depth Corporate Assessment reports on the Council's track record of performance and outcomes as well as the key arrangements necessary to underpin improvements in services and functions. Flintshire's first Corporate Assessment was conducted in late 2014 and the report on its outcomes was included in the Annual Improvement Report reported to Cabinet in March 2015. |
| 7.03 | Medium Term Financial Strategy: 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. |
| 7.04 | Wales Audit Office: works to support the Auditor General as the public sector watchdog for Wales. They aim to ensure that the people of Wales know whether public money is being managed wisely and that public bodies in Wales understand how to improve outcomes. |
| 7.05 | School Modernisation: the process by which the Local Authority ensures there are a sufficient number of high quality school places, of the right type in the right locations. |
| 7.06 | National Strategic Indicators (NSIs): a set of performance indicators that are used to measure the performance of local authorities at a national level. |
| 7.07 | Public Accountability Measures (PAMs): a set of "outcome focussed" indicators, which reflect those aspects of local authority work which are considered to be important in terms of public accountability. |
| 7.08 | Regional School Improvement Service (GwE): School Effectiveness and Improvement Service for North Wales, works alongside and on behalf of the Local Authorities to develop excellent schools across the region. |