

EDUCATION AND YOUTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 15 th December 2016
Report Subject	Welsh in Education Strategic Plan
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Education
Report Author	Chief Officer (Education & Youth)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act (2013) places a statutory requirement on local authorities to create and implement a Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP). The Act enables the Welsh Government (WG) to approve the plan or direct local authorities to make amendments before final approval. The previous plan covered the period 2014-2017 and was written in accordance with Welsh Government guidance. Flintshire's plan received approval from Welsh Government after minor amendments were required.

The WESP must be formally approved by the Council's Cabinet.

Flintshire's draft WESP 2017-2020 has to be submitted to WG by December 20th and is in its final draft stage before being issued for an eight week consultation with a prescribed list of stakeholders. Based on the consultation responses received and any feedback from Welsh Government, the Plan will then be amended. Once final approval has been received from WG, the Plan will be operational from April 1st 2017 and must be made available and published on the authority's website by June 1st 2017.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	Scrutiny receive the update on the changes in the guidance on Welsh in Education Strategic Plans.
2	Scrutiny consider and support the draft statutory Welsh in Education Strategic Plan

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE WELSH IN EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN
1.01	<p>The Welsh Government has launched a draft national strategy to achieve a million Welsh speakers by 2050. It wants to ensure that people of all ages have the opportunity to use the Welsh language and see it as a living language used at home, in the community, in schools, other learning institutions and in the workplace.</p> <p>According to the most recent Census in 2011 there were 562,000 Welsh speakers in Wales. On that basis, the aim of the WG strategy will be to almost double the number of Welsh speakers by the middle of the century. In order for that to happen, WG's have identified 6 key areas for action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Language planning and policy2. Normalisation3. Education4. People5. Support6. Rights <p>WG acknowledges that in order to meet its ambitious target and secure the use of the language in the longer term, children and young people in Wales must be given the chance to improve and extend their use of Welsh and is tackling this in a variety of ways. Key to this is improving learners' outcomes in Welsh and increasing the number of children accessing their education through the medium of Welsh where children will become totally bilingual. Welsh in Education Strategic Plans are one element of this national strategy 'A living language: A language for living.'</p>
1.02	<p>Over the last year, Welsh Government has undertaken a strategic review of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans to assess their effectiveness. This was undertaken in a number of ways including the commissioning a thematic review by Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Wales) and a report published by the Children, Young People and Education Committee's after consultation with local authorities and other relevant bodies. Flintshire was visited by Estyn as part of this review and received very positive verbal feedback from the Inspector about its WESP, the strength of its partnership working and its ambition for Welsh medium education. It also provided a formal response to the consultation. Having reviewed the evidence from this process, Welsh Government issued revised guidance to local authorities on the format and contents of the WESP documents to make the plan shorter, more accessible and to increase its effectiveness in achieving ambitious national targets in relation to the use of the Welsh language and the provision of Welsh medium education. The new guidance also sets out expectations that the WESP will strengthen its links to other key Welsh government policies and strategies including 'Rewriting the Future' (tackling deprivation); Successful Futures (curriculum remodelling); 21st Century Schools (school modernisation) and the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.</p>

1.03	<p>Estyn’s recent thematic review of Welsh in Education Strategic Plans makes a number of recommendations for local authorities:</p> <p>R1: ensure that the WESPs are a strategic priority</p> <p>R2: have systematic processes in place to measure the demand for Welsh-medium provision</p> <p>R3: work with schools to explain the advantages to pupils and parents of Welsh-medium education and of following courses through the medium of Welsh</p> <p>R4: work with schools to set targets to increase the proportion of pupils in key stage 4 who continue to study Welsh as a first language and follow specific subject areas through the medium of Welsh</p> <p>R5: make effective use of their Welsh-medium education fora to help to develop their WESP and to monitor progress</p> <p>R6: evaluate their Welsh-medium additional learning needs provision to identify any gaps</p>
1.04	<p>The strategic responsibility for producing the WESP sits with the Senior Manager for School Improvement within the Education and Youth Portfolio. However, the plan is the result of a very productive partnership approach between officers of the local authority, representatives from Welsh and English medium schools and other key organisations with an interest in promoting the Welsh language and Welsh medium education. This wide ranging group is known as the Welsh in Education Strategic Forum.</p>
1.05	<p>The Forum has the following remit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support council officers to develop the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) which includes challenging targets/performance measures to achieve success • Monitor the implementation of the WESP and evaluate its success in achieving its objectives • Ensure appropriate cross-referencing is made to other plans and strategies – locally, regionally and nationally • Provide support and challenge on the implementation of the WESP • Ensure regular assessments of the demand for Welsh medium education are undertaken to inform the priorities within the WESP within Welsh Government regulatory requirements • Provide feedback to the Council’s leadership and elected members through the appropriate means e.g. Cabinet, Education and Youth Overview & Scrutiny Committee • Receive evidence and advice from relevant bodies and partners to improve the success of the WESP in achieving its objectives • Provide a forum for information sharing and the sharing of best practice <p>The Welsh Strategic Forum provides effective support and scrutiny of the plan, monitors its implementation and evaluates its impact.</p>

1.06	<p>The forum is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Education & Youth, the Chief Officer is Vice-Chair and it meets at least four times a year. Its membership is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member • Chief Officer • Senior Managers for School Improvement, Inclusion & Progression and Integrated Youth Services • Pupil Services Manager Welsh in Education Team Manager • Headteacher representatives from Welsh-medium primary and secondary schools • Headteacher representatives from English-medium primary and secondary schools • Menter Iaith Sir y Fflint • Mudiad Methrin • Urdd Gobaith Cymru • Coleg Cambria • Parent Representative – RHAG/Syfflag • Governor Representative
1.07	<p>Section 1 of the WESP outlines a vision statement, principles and commitment of the local authority in supporting the Welsh language and Welsh medium education.</p> <p><u>Vision</u> “Flintshire County Council endeavours to increase the number of fluent Welsh speakers within its boundaries, with the aim of creating an increasingly bilingual county and country. Flintshire County Council aspires for people of all ages to improve their Welsh language skills and have the ability to use these confidently within their families, in their places of learning, in their workplaces and in their communities.</p> <p><u>Principles:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-school and early years Welsh medium provision is accessible across the authority to support and encourage parents to choose Welsh medium education for their children • Welsh medium education is available to all learners within a reasonable travelling distance of their home • Once in the Welsh medium sector, all learners transfer successfully at each point of transition e.g. family/toddler groups → playgroup → early education → part time nursery class → primary school → secondary school • Second language Welsh learners from English medium primary schools are supported and encouraged to access a Welsh medium secondary education through a dedicated immersion programme • Second language Welsh learners in English medium schools (primary and secondary) achieve the highest possible outcomes in Welsh • Effective joint working exists with other partners, agencies and services to promote and increase bilingualism • Learners with additional learning needs receive equal linguistic opportunity • All learners become proficient in Welsh and English

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress and commitment to developing the Welsh language across the all aspects of the Council is celebrated <p><u>Commitment:</u> Flintshire County Council is committed to supporting, expanding and promoting Welsh-medium education within the whole community, increasing the number and percentage of pupils receiving Welsh-medium education in compliance with the Welsh Government’s Welsh-Medium Education Strategy of developing learners who are fully bilingual (i.e. fluent in both English and Welsh).”</p>
1.08	<p>Section 2 of the WESP contains an action plan outlining how it will achieve the 7 key outcomes determined by Welsh Government. It describes the local authority’s current position, the processes and activities designed to achieve the outcomes and the progress expected. The outcomes are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More seven-year old children being taught through the medium of Welsh. 2. More learners continuing to improve their language skills on transfer from primary to secondary school. 3. More learners aged 14-16 studying for qualifications through the medium of Welsh. 4. More learners aged 16-19 studying subjects through the medium of Welsh. 5. More learners with higher-level Welsh-language skills. 6. Welsh-medium provision for learners with additional learning needs. 7. Workforce planning and continuing professional development.

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

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Publication of this report constitutes consultation but WG designated stakeholders will receive copies of Flintshire’s Welsh in Education Strategic Plan directly for comment e.g. Welsh Language Commissioner, Estyn, Head Teachers, Governors & School Councils of all Flintshire schools, local further education providers, neighbouring local authorities and other key organisations as appropriate.
3.02	The draft plan is considered by Scrutiny during the consultation period prior to finalisation.

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

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Link to Estyn Thematic Review https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/default/files/documents/Local%20authority%20Welsh%20in%20Education%20Strategic%20Plans%20-%20final_0.pdf</p> <p>Contact Officer: Claire Homard – Senior Manager School Improvement Telephone: 01352 704019 E-mail: claire.homard@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	Welsh medium education – where pupils are taught all subjects (except English) in Welsh as the main language of the school.
7.02	English medium education – where pupils are taught all subjects in English, where English is the main language of the school and Welsh is taught as a second language.