

Report To: Performance Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 20th February 2014

Lead Member / Officer: Lead Member for Education/
Head of Customers and Education Support

Report Author: Lead Member for Education

Title: Modernising Education Programme – Gateway Review

1. What is the report about?

To advise Members of the findings of the Gateway Review of Denbighshire's Modernising Education Programme and to receive an overall update on the current progress of the individual projects.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To provide assurance to Members of the progress against this key Council Priority.

3. What are the Recommendations?

To comment on the findings from the Gateway Review and provide observations on the overall progress against this key Council priority.

4. Report details.

Introduction

4.1 As part of the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan the workstream for the priority of improving performance in education and the quality of our school buildings has been developed into a clear programme of work. The current projects which form part of this workstream include the major capital projects and the school organisation proposals. Discussions with the Welsh Government identified the benefits of undertaking a Gateway Review on this workstream to provide a degree of assurance regarding the measures in place to manage this programme.

Gateway Review

4.2 A formal Gateway Review was undertaken of Denbighshire's Modernising Education Programme between the 16th and 18th September. An independent Gateway Review team, commissioned by the Welsh Government, interviewed a range of key personnel involved in the Modernising Education Programme.

4.3 The review system provides five categories of judgement ranging from Green, Amber / Green, Amber, Amber / Red and Red. The overall delivery confidence assessment from the review was Amber / Green - Successful delivery appears

probable however constant attention will be needed to ensure risks do not materialise into major issues threatening delivery.

Findings and Recommendations from the Review

4.4 The review (see Appendix 1) commented in summary as follows:-

“Denbighshire County Council is committed to continuing to raise educational standards in the County and to making the required investment. The composition of the Modernising Education Programme Framework (MEPF) reflects the results of a series of structured area reviews of education provision in the County. Decisions follow extensive informal and formal consultation and engagement. Costs and timescales are tightly controlled, although both timing and affordability are affected by the Welsh Government decision making process.

Programme and project governance are in place (although the former is not yet fully mature). Programme management is taken seriously by the Denbighshire County Council and there is experience, capacity and expertise in the present senior team. The education team, working closely with the Programme is committed to developing and skilling the schools workforce.

The uncertainty of future funding is the biggest single risk to the Programme and, as elsewhere, the Denbighshire schools programme has been affected by different decisions on the amount, timing and nature of Welsh Government financial support. Looking forward, local government funding is likely to be reduced further and Denbighshire is considering how it might mitigate the effect of this on its school investment programme.

There are clearly set out policy objectives for the Programme but an overall vision statement, setting out what the future will look like would be useful. Although the area reviews provide a sound basis for the Programme, there is as yet no clear articulation of how the findings from the individual areas- and the vision for each that will be derived from that work- will be reflected at programme level. While hard and soft benefits have been identified at project level, the work to bring these together at programme level is still being developed. In particular, there is a need to capture indicators of the Programme’s contribution to educational outcomes in the County.

4.5 The review made four main recommendations which are copied below:-

Ref. No.	Recommendation	Critical/ Essential/ Recommended
1.	The Programme Definition document needs to include a vision statement and clear statement of scope and timescale. The document should be reviewed regularly and updated.	Essential. By March 2014
2.	The Programme should ensure that there is a comprehensive and consolidated benefits measurement matrix, building on the project level work and weaving benefits through area and programme level. In addition, the work to identify, capture and track linkages between Programme benefits and educational outcomes should be a priority area for the next phase of the Programme.	Essential. By March 2014
3.	The Programme level risk register should be developed to become the principal risk management tool for the Programme Board.	Essential. By end October 2013
4.	The Programme should establish a process for evaluating the results of the area reviews.	Essential. By March 2014

4.6 Overall the findings of the review suggest that the Programme is in a strong position to deliver its intended outcomes. In terms of recommendation 3 an updated Programme level risk register was presented to the Programme Board meeting in October 2013. For the three remaining recommendations the Programme Manager will be tasked with leading on these pieces of work and the progress against them will be reported to the Modernising Education Programme Board in March.

Overall Progress against the Programme

4.7 The current progress against the Programme is presently being assessed both through internal challenge processes such as the Quarterly Performance Reports and the Modernising Education Programme Board. To provide the Committee with an understanding of the range of the current programme Appendix 2 provides a summary of the current scope and progress of the individual projects.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

This workstream contributes directly to the priority within the Corporate Plan to “Improving Performance in Education and the Quality of our School Buildings” This commitment included funding proposals to invest approximately £96million in to the school estate to improve the quality of school buildings.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The overall cost of delivering the Programme is expected to be approximately £96m. Of this £73.4 will be funded as part of the 21st Century Schools Programme which 50% of this will be provided directly by the Welsh Government.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision? The completed EqIA template should be attached as an appendix to the report.

The report is for information.

8. What consultations have been carried out with Scrutiny and others?

The report has been produced following discussions with the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs Group and at this no stage further consultation has been undertaken.

9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

The risk that the availability of the Welsh Government's match-funding contribution towards Band A of the 21st Century Schools programme is not in line with the timescales for Denbighshire's work programme is currently being managed as part of the overall Corporate Risk Register. The service based risk register for Customers and Education Support also includes a number of risks and mitigating actions for the wider Modernising Education Programme. A risk register is also maintained at the Programme Board and individual projects also manage project level risk registers. These are both reviewed regularly.

10. Power to make the Decision

Article 6.3.4(b) of the Council's Constitution outlines scrutiny's powers with respect to scrutinising performance in relation to policy objectives.

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