

Report to	Performance Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting	28th September 2023
Lead Member / Officer	Councillor Gill German, Lead Member for Children and Young People / Councillor Emrys Wynne, Lead Member for Welsh Language, Culture & Heritage
Head of Service	Geraint Davies, Head of Education
Report author	James Curran and Marc Lloyd Jones
Title	Delivery of Welsh Medium Provision

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. To inform Members of the progress of the planning and implementation work undertaken to date with respect of securing the delivery of Welsh Medium Curricula and Non-Curricula provision in the County's Schools in accordance with the Welsh Government's vision.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. The report was requested by the Committee in September 2022 following discussion on a progress report in respect of amendments to school categorisation according to Welsh Medium Provision.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1 Scrutiny are invited to discuss the details of the report and to identify any issues that it may seek further updates on to ensure that the Council is progressing the actions of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

4. Report details

- 4.1. The Council has a ten year vision for increasing and improving the planning of the provision of Welsh-medium education in our area. This is articulated in the Council's [Welsh in Education Strategic Plan \(WESP\)](#). By September 2032 it is our aspiration that 40% of all seven year old pupils will attend Welsh Medium Education.
- 4.2. To achieve this vision the Plan sets out seven outcomes which will contribute towards this aspiration. The Council is required to submit an annual report to Welsh Government on the progress against this Plan and a summary of progress is provided as Appendix 1.
- 4.3. The main progress against the plan includes a clear vision and support to develop projects; an increase in the capacity for the Welsh Language Support team via WESP grant funding from Welsh Government; the implementation of sub groups to lead on individual outcomes within the plan; effective working with Headteachers regarding the planning to increase Welsh language provision and the progression of developments in pre-school settings to raise capacity.
- 4.4. The main area of concern is a reduction in the percentage of learners who received education in year 2 in 2022-23. This has reduced from the baseline in the plan of 28% in September 2020 to 26.4%. This reduction will make the ambitious target very far-reaching. An additional issue is the expectation around schools changing language category. At the time of developing the plan there was a greater expectation of the language outcome for schools transitioning from English to Welsh medium provision and it's unlikely that these pupils will contribute to this target now. Welsh Government are aware of the current position and this will be kept under regular review.
- 4.5. On a positive note over the summer of 2023 the Council were invited to submit business cases for capital funding of £5.8m for five projects to assist with Welsh Medium provision. The projects in 4 primary schools and for the development of an immersion provision in Ysgol Brynhyfryd, Ruthin will assist in progressing towards these targets.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want?

- 5.1. A learning and growing Denbighshire – The work in this area supports the aim to promote the learning and development of our children and young people by supporting schools to deliver against new standards such as the WESP and the expansion of provision via grant funding supports the aim of providing high quality buildings and facilities.
- 5.2. A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language – The work in this area will ensure Denbighshire plays a part in achieving one million Welsh Speakers in Wales by 2050, in particularly by supporting children and families during their early years to develop confidence in using the Welsh language.
- 5.3. A greener Denbighshire - Any proposed new build / refurbishments dependent on their size, will have a positive contribution to the Council becoming Net Carbon Zero by 2030. Welsh Government announced that from 1st January 2022 all new build projects will be required to demonstrate delivery of Net Zero Carbon in operation.

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

- 6.1. The Council receives a grant of £170k via the Local Authority Education Grant for the implementation of the WESP. This funding has been utilised to increase the capacity of the team to progress the implementation of the plan. The Council has also received notification of Capital funding to support the improvement of provision. Approvals will be sought to progress individual schemes via the Capital Strategy Group in due course.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Well-being Impact Assessment?

- 7.1. The report presented is an update report so accordingly a Well-being Impact Assessment has not been completed. The findings of the Impact Assessment when the Plan was approved in January 2022 was that the WESP has the potential to have a positive impact on a Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language, cohesive communities, a more equal Denbighshire and a more prosperous Denbighshire.

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

8.1. The progress against the Plan is regularly considered by the Welsh in Education Strategic Group. The Membership of the Group includes external stakeholders who Denbighshire work with to promote development of the Welsh Language.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1 The Council is facing huge financial challenges now and over the coming couple of years. This will impact the capacity to deliver on a number of services, projects and corporate priorities. These impacts are unknown at present but the overall financial position needs to be kept in mind when discussing all reports going forward. However, it is welcome that the direct funding for this initiative is currently coming from WG Grant.

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

10.1. The main risks to the delivery of the plan are around parental engagement and capacity to influence change. Strong retention of pupils in Welsh Medium schools throughout their education is key to delivery of the plan together with the expansion of provision either via re designation of the language category of schools or the development of new Welsh Medium schools where appropriate. To support this financial support for training programmes to ensure there is sufficient capacity for Welsh Medium teaching provision including enhancing the Welsh Language skills of current second language staff is key to deliver of the plan.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. The requirement to produce a new Welsh in Education Strategic Plan will ensure compliance with the provisions in relation to the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESP) in the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 ('the Act') and the regulations made under it.

11.2. Scrutiny's powers in relation to the above are set out in Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 and Section 7 of the Council's Constitution.