

Report to	Cabinet
Date of meeting	25 March 25
Lead Member / Officer	Cllr Diane King (Lead member for Education, Children and Families)
Head of Service	Geraint Davies (Head of Education)
Report author	Geraint Davies
Title	Ending the Regional School Improvement Service

1. What is the report about?

- 1.1. The report is in response to the review of the roles and responsibilities of the 'middle tier' of the education system in Wales that was carried out between July 2023 and December 2023.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

- 2.1. To provide Cabinet with the relevant information regarding the changes required and proposed way forward to undertake school improvement statutory functions following the closure of GwE.

3. What are the Recommendations?

- 3.1. That this Council approves the termination of the agreement to work in partnership with other North Wales local authorities in the context of the regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service (GwE) on the 31 May 2025 and subsequently dissolve the requirement for the GwE Joint-Committee.
- 3.2. That this Council confirms its contractual commitment in relation to ending the arrangement.
- 3.3. That the Committee confirms that it has read, understood and taken account of the Well-being Impact Assessment (**Appendix 1**) as part of its consideration

4. Report details

- 4.1. GwE was established by agreement between the six Local Authorities in North Wales dated 18 February 2013. **(Appendix 2)**
- 4.2. It was agreed to establish a Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service which would be accountable to the six Councils and which would fulfil the statutory functions of the Councils in relation to the effectiveness and improvement of schools i.e. monitoring duties, challenge, provide supportive services for continuous professional development through the curriculum and manage schools as well as provide services that can be commissioned by schools and local authorities
- 4.3. The councils agreed to appoint Gwynedd Council as the Accommodation Authority for implementing and maintaining the Service by forming a Joint Committee, to keep an overview and give guidance as required, in accordance with Section 101(5) and 102(1) Local Government Act 1972 and Section 20 of the Local Government Act 2000
- 4.4. On 31 January 2024, the then Minister for Education and the Welsh Language published a written statement referring to a review of the roles and responsibilities of Education partners in Wales as well as current school improvement arrangements. The statement made it clear that there was an intention to move away from the wider regional model for supporting school improvement with a view to establishing partnerships between more than one authority at a more local level. This led to confirmation that GwE would cease to exist as a regional consortium.
- 4.5. As a result of that statement, a Transitional Board has been established to oversee the arrangements for transferring GwE services back to the local authorities in North Wales and structures have been developed to provide support to schools at individual local authority level.
- 4.6. However, the agreement, to work together in partnership in this context, needs to be formally concluded. In order to do that, all six Councils need to agree in writing to terminate the current agreement. The Cabinet is therefore asked to approve the recommendation to terminate this collaboration agreement and thereby confirm that GwE will end on May 31st, 2025.

4.7. It should be noted that terminating the agreement does not affect cumulative rights or the commitments that have already been agreed upon. Those commitments are detailed in the agreement made between the six Authorities in 2013

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

5.1. This area of work contributes towards making Denbighshire a healthier and happier place where young people want to live and work and have the skills to do so. It also contributes to make Denbighshire a place where young people can learn and make good progress in their skills, learning in a fair and safe environment. This will help ensure all learners have the best start in life and can realise their full potential.

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

6.1. The on-going, annual revenue costs post GwE are included in the Education Service Budget. Cost certainty is difficult as TUPE arrangements are yet to be decided therefore actual staff costs are impossible to predict.

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

7.1. The proposal to terminate the service will overall have a neutral impact on Denbighshire. Moving forward as Denbighshire moves into the delivery phases there will be opportunities for benefits to emerge.

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

8.1. Consultation and discussions held with Officers, Estyn, Welsh Government, CEO, Corporate Director, Head Teachers and Lead Member. The work of GwE has been scrutinised regularly by Performance Scrutiny.

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

9.1. The exit from GwE and the one-off costs are yet to be determined. The formal consultation process opened in December 2024. WG have indicated there will

be a £2m transition budget for the whole of Wales. Allocations to each Authority to be announced in the new year.

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

- 10.1. The transition of the new school improvement model from a regional model to a local authority model is taking place during a time of significant Education reform in Wales including a new curriculum, new GCSE qualifications and new Additional Learning Needs Bill. The overarching accumulation of so much change in the system needs to be carefully planned and managed, in particular this delivery change of school improvement to ensure continuity of support to all schools and to enable all schools and learners to continue to succeed.
- 10.2. The current financial climate is a significant challenge to all schools and local authorities. As a local authority, we are working consultatively with stakeholders to map our new school improvement model and processes to meet the needs of schools across Denbighshire, however budget allocations are yet to be confirmed nationally. Working to build in sufficient capacity to support school improvement at both school to school level and at local authority level whilst working to deliver cost savings does bring some risk.
- 10.3. It is recognised that further discussions will need to continue beyond this transitional period on the broader aspects of the functions currently carried out by GwE, for example, professional learning. This may be across a phased approach as we develop school to school working and as part of this, Denbighshire will engage with the six local authorities in North Wales and with the national offer from Welsh Government.
- 10.4. During this transition a detailed risk register will be managed to ensure key areas of risk whether arising from regional or local working are considered appropriately and if required mitigating actions are taken.

11. Power to make the decision

11.1. Section 101(5) and 102(1) Local Government Act 1972

11.2. Section 20 of the Local Government Act 2000