

MEETING:	CABINET
MEETING DATE:	13 November 2014
TITLE OF REPORT:	Strategic Plan for Education
REPORT BY:	Assistant Director Education and Commissioning

Classification

Open

Key Decision

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the county.

NOTICE has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in Connection with Key Decisions) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To approve the Strategic Plan for Education in Herefordshire.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

(a) the Strategic Plan for Education in Herefordshire be approved.

Alternative options

- 1 Continue to carry out statutory duties without a cohesive approach driven by a strategic plan. This would not provide a clear direction from the council, not enable strategic developments to take place to benefit children and young people in Herefordshire and not enable due governance to take place.

Reasons for recommendations

- 2 To enable the council to set a clear strategic direction for the next three years and to develop it with partners. Herefordshire will be able to build on the strengths in education across the county; to address areas that need to be improved and to deliver our aspiration to have a vibrant, high performing education system that improves the lives of children and young people, is valued by communities, and supports economic growth.

Key considerations

- 3 The council has made protecting children and giving them a great start in life one of its key priorities. A successful education system plays a critical role in achieving this priority. Our goal for children and young people in Herefordshire is for national top quartile performance by 2016/7. By having high expectations and aspirations for every child and young person their prospects for adult life will be enhanced.
- 4 The proposed strategic plan enables the council and partners including communities, schools and settings (such as early years providers, colleges), the Diocese of Hereford, and the Archdiocese of Cardiff, to clearly address priorities, creates opportunities for investment and provides clarity about the role of the council at a time when the national policy agenda has established new bodies with a role in education.
- 5 There are many positive features of education provision in Herefordshire; most notable the high percentage of children that attend good or outstanding schools, the commitment of leaders and staff working in education, and the individual achievement of some children and young people. There has been a range of good results and progress over the past year. A clear strategy going forward will build on these achievements and provide a united focus for further improvement
- 6 The priorities of the strategy are to work with children and young people, parents / carers, schools and settings to:
 - Improve the quality of leadership and management, including the quality and availability of governors
 - Improve the progress and achievement of all pupils which includes all pupils who are at risk of not making better than their expected levels of progress throughout their education, from early years to Key Stage 5.
 - Improve the achievement and progress of pupils who are looked after
 - Increase the numbers of pupils who have access to good or outstanding schools and settings in Herefordshire.

- Develop a strategic approach to ensure the sustainability of high quality educational provision in Herefordshire
 - Play an active part in contributing to economic development in Herefordshire, including the development of higher education
- 7 The role of the local authority has undergone significant change during the period of the present national government. There has been an emphasis nationally on developing more autonomy for individual schools and groups of schools, with a significant acceleration in the conversion of schools to academy status. There has also been the opportunity for free schools to be created, as has happened in Herefordshire.
- 8 The role of the local authority is principally to be a champion of children, parents and communities. This means setting high expectations so that all children achieve well and attainment gaps are closed, to enable and develop partnerships so that there is the context for a culture of collective improvement, and to be a maker and shaper of effective commissioning so that there are sufficient high quality early years and school places where families need them and there are courses and opportunities available for young people to make the most of their post 16 education, training and employment. The proposed Strategic Plan for Education enables the local authority to take this agenda forward over the next three years.
- 9 There are c.40,000 0-20 year olds in Herefordshire, with c.22,000 in primary and secondary age schools. Outcomes for children and young people in Herefordshire can be outstanding. Overall, Herefordshire has delivered outcomes broadly in line with average national performance for a number of years. Within this overall picture there have been vulnerable groups that continually do not achieve as well as their peers. The gap in progress between certain groups, including those eligible for free school meals is too wide and occurs at the different points of measurement in a child's life, from early years to accessing good universities or being in education, training or employment.
- 10 Over the past year there have been improvements in the number of children achieving a good level of development at foundation stage. Key stage 2 results have showed a marked rate of improvement compared to the national change, but are broadly still below the national average. Some of the gaps between vulnerable groups and their peers have narrowed. The number of young people not known has reduced significantly and is now amongst the lowest nationally for 16 and 17 year olds. A' level students perform among the best in the country – but a significant number of these, who drive future economic growth, leave the county to pursue higher education which has a very restricted offer within the county. The percentage of pupils attending good or outstanding schools in Herefordshire at both primary and secondary age has increased over 2013/14, with primary increasing markedly. The initial results overall for Key Stage 4 in 2014 are encouraging. There are a range of strengths that will be built on.
- 11 Herefordshire has recognised the primary role of communities to determine the future of individual schools. The strategy recognises this whilst also establishing a policy framework and programme for considering the future of education provision in local areas, taking into account the economic development plans and also the condition and suitability of the current schools and the resources that are available. Whilst there are a number of good quality school buildings there remain a significant number of schools in building stock which needs enhancement. The development of an

estates strategy forms part of the proposed Education Strategy and will be ready for the new council to consider in June 2015.

- 12 Building upon the council's drive to maximise the use of digital technology the strategy and actions will exist on the council's website. The Education Strategy portal will provide one route into the different aspects of the strategy and enable interested parties to explore what the strategy means for them, how they can contribute and also what progress is being made.
- 13 The strategy will develop over the period as initiatives take place and our approach is enhanced through the involvement of children and young people, parents, carers, settings and schools, governors, members and other interested parties. Updates to information and actions will take place on the website and through the use of the portal.
- 14 There is now an Ofsted inspection regime in place to assess the effectiveness of a local authority's arrangements for supporting school improvement. A clear, accessible strategy with tangible actions that demonstrate impact will be a critical success factor for any inspection.

Community impact

- 15 The proposed Education Strategy encompasses the actions set out in the council's corporate plan for 2014/15 and contributes to the wider Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Actions within it will contribute to the emerging Herefordshire Economic Master Plan, the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership plans, and also the Local Plan. Businesses, economic developments, and families moving into Herefordshire will all be attracted by highly successful educational provisions and outcomes for Herefordshire's children and young people.
- 16 Children and young people play an important part in community life and their successes in education directly contribute to wider economic, social, community and health outcomes within Herefordshire and to the wider society. Individuals and communities have a continued interest in the success of schools and settings and also their role in the wider community, making the provision of high quality places an important issue within a rural community and economy.

Equality and human rights

- 17 The proposed Strategic Plan for Education encompasses a vision and set of principles that pay due regard to protected characteristics and promote a particular focus on vulnerable and potentially disadvantaged groups. An impact assessment has been undertaken and is attached at appendix 2. Actions from the plan, including the closing the gap initiative address issues of underperformance amongst vulnerable groups at risk of not making expected progress. Individual actions will have an equalities impact assessment carried out to ensure that they have due regard to the need to -

eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct ... prohibited by or under this Act;

advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Financial implications

- 18 There are significant budgets involved directly in the education of children and young people in Herefordshire. The proposed Strategic Plan for Education contains actions where the local authority has direct control over budget spend, but also areas where the finances are delegated directly to settings and schools. This delegation has increased in emphasis over the life of this current government, included within the promotion of academies and free schools. As part of the Education Plan work is taking place to clarify areas of financial risk, particularly in relation to capital.
- 19 Education is funded from a number of government grants and council budgets. Funding for direct service provision by schools and early years settings is predominantly from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), which is often supplemented by additional government grants for sixth form provision and national education policies such as the pupil premium. Given the mixed economy of locally maintained, academy and free schools not all such grants are directed through the council.
- 20 Education services provided by the council are funded partly by the Education Services Grant (see para 23 below). Statutory SEN services, school transport, youth services and adult education are funded directly by the council at a cost of £5.9m (including £4.7m on school transport).
- 21 In 2014/15 Dedicated Schools Grant was £111m which was budgeted as follows
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|--------------------------------|--------|
| a. Locally maintained schools | £53.7m |
| b. Academy schools | £37.2m |
| c. High needs schools & pupils | £13.3m |
| d. Early years settings | £6.8m |
- 22 Of these amounts, £0.2m is retained from the schools block to fund schools forum, admissions and licences funded nationally by the DfE; £0.35m is retained for early years advice services and £1.8m on high needs central services provided to schools and pupils.
- 23 The government has announced an increase in DSG for 2015/16 of £2.7m for Herefordshire as part of a fair funding initiative for low funded authorities. Additionally, a further £1.8m will be added to DSG to fund free schools and non-recoupment academies as all funding for all schools in a local authority area will in future be distributed through DSG. Adjustments are made to DSG throughout the year to reflect academy conversions.
- 24 Education Services Grant is used to fund council services such as statutory and regulatory education services, school improvement and asset management. The grant for 2014/15 for the statutory services provided on behalf of all pupils is £15 per pupil, i.e. £ 0.34m. The remainder of the grant is shared pro-rata between the council and academies, the council receiving £1.7m and academies receiving £1.2m. As with DSG, adjustments are made throughout the year to reflect academy conversions.

- 25 There are a variety of funding streams to support capital works at schools. The national schools funding formula means all schools receive a relatively small devolved capital allocation to support minor works and maintenance. Schools may convert revenue budgets to capital to make improvements. Bigger maintenance works like the replacement of a roof, a new heating system or windows are funded through a central maintenance grant awarded to the council or via the academy capital maintenance scheme. Denominational schools are given a separate grant to support works. There is also a Basic Need fund to address school places. The total maintenance and basic need funding for 2014/15 is £4m.

Legal implications

- 26 There are no specific legal implications surrounding the implementation of the Education Strategy, however implementation of this Strategy would demonstrate how the Council is meeting its legal duty under Section 13A of the Education Act 1996 to promote high standards and the fulfilment of potential in relation to all its education functions and specifically to ensure that all its education functions are (so far as they are capable of being so exercised) exercised by the authority with a view to:
- (a) promoting high standards;
 - (b) ensuring fair access to opportunity for education and training; and
 - (c) promoting the fulfilment of learning potential by every person under the age of 20 (or persons aged 20 or over but under 25 who are subject to learning difficulty assessment.)

Risk management

- 27 The risk in Cabinet not agreeing the Strategic Plan for Education is that the administration does not have a clear strategic approach to education which enables it to deliver on the vision for the council or the actions set out in the corporate plan. There is a risk to the council's reputation that by not having a plan in place the wider learning community is unclear of the strategic approach to education and unable to align their own activities and contribute. This could lead to insufficient progress in improving attainment and achievement for the children and young people in Herefordshire.
- 28 The plan contains actions to strategically develop local approaches to high quality education provision, in partnership with local communities and particularly governors of all schools. Herefordshire has not progressed sufficiently in defining and enabling high quality provision to be developed and the education landscape is now more complex with the wide variety of organisations that can now directly run individual and groups of settings and schools. Failure to provide a cohesive long term plan will potentially disadvantage Herefordshire's local communities who may not benefit from funding opportunities when they arise either from the Department for Education (DfE) or as part of wider economic development.
- 29 These risks will be addressed through the adoption of the strategic plan.

Consultees

- 30 The draft plan has been discussed with a range of school headteachers, with the Strategic Education Board, and with councillors through a members seminar. The ongoing development of the strategy and implementation will be carried out through further consultation and involvement with settings and schools, governors, leaders of education, and communities. This will form a very necessary part of the development and implementation of the strategy, which reflects the leadership and enabling role of the council. Schools and settings would welcome greater clarity on the strategic direction in Herefordshire and the role of the local authority.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Strategic Plan for Education

Appendix 2 Equality Impact Assessment

Background papers

- Consultation presentation used to discuss the approach