

GWYNEDD COUNCIL CABINET



Report to the Cabinet

Meeting Date: 28 April 2020
Cabinet Member: Councillor Cemlyn Rees Williams
Contact Officer: Garem Jackson
Contact Number: 32489
Item Title: Application for Resources by the Education Department

1 DECISION SOUGHT

Adding Capacity to Support the County's Secondary Schools.

To commit £180,000 of funding up to the end of March 2022 to enable the Education Department to have additional capacity on secondment terms for a period of two years to target, support and offer an appropriate and timely challenge for secondary schools realising one of the commitments in the Council Plan so as to improve outcomes for children and young people.

2 REASON WHY DECISION IS NEEDED

Gwynedd has a total of 99 schools (83 primary, 12 secondary, 1 All-through School, 1 Lifelong School and 2 Special Schools).

There is a national matrix process for school categorisation. The colour of the categorisation notes the level of assistance required by the school - green, yellow, amber or red. (Schools in the green category require the lowest level of assistance, and those in the red category require the most intensive assistance.)

The Gwynedd primary schools' categorisation profiles are amongst the strongest in Wales, with all primary schools in the yellow or green category. Added to this, no primary school in Gwynedd is in any Estyn follow-on system.

The profile in terms of the secondary sector in Gwynedd is generally positive, but a minority of schools are subject to concern and require an intense level of assistance. Two out of the three secondary schools in the red category are also in an Estyn statutory category.

Secondary schools category	Green		Yellow		Amber		Red	
Number / Percentage	4	29%	6	43%	1	7%	3	21%

*Please note that Ysgol Bro Idris and Ysgol Godre'r Berwyn are included in the secondary schools'

data.

Currently, the Education Department has two Area Education Officers, one serving Arfon schools and the other serving schools in Meirion and Dwyfor. As part of their duties, both Area Education Officers are responsible for:

- timely support of those schools that cause concern and are a priority for the county;
- targeting, supporting and offering an appropriate and timely challenge at all levels in those schools in red and amber support categories and/or in Estyn statutory categories;
- providing appropriate challenge and support to ensure governance, leadership and effective management of all the county's schools;
- collaboration with all the county's schools to improve outcomes for children and young people.

The Area Education Officers are also jointly responsible for the Schools Business Centre based in Pwllheli. It was established in September 2019 and focuses on reducing the workload of headteachers, supporting effective management of Gwynedd schools as well as providing specific services via an agreement with primary schools.

The Area Education Officers also lead on the modernisation of the education system in Gwynedd, including leading on the 21 Century Schools Programme, reviewing the future of vulnerable primary schools with a low number of learners, as well as supporting schools with the process of appointing headteachers, acting headteachers and deputies.

These work commitments mean that the resources of the two Area Education Officers across the schools organisation are too limited to be able to give the deserved attention to the secondary sector, which is a priority, as well as realising some priorities within the Council Plan.

Consequently, the purpose of this bid is to ensure additional capacity for the Department's core team supporting schools, so as to enable the Department to realise its vision of strengthening leadership within our schools, as well as supporting collaboration in Meirionnydd – two priority fields that can be seen in the Council Plan. The Department has identified Meirionnydd as a key priority project due to the challenges facing the schools in the context of recruiting teachers, middle managers and leaders due to the size of the secondary schools. Ensuring a specific focus on supporting the secondary sector in Gwynedd will enable the realisation of the Department's vision in the Council Plan, and will free-up the time and resources of the current Education Officers to focus on supporting all aspects of the school organization.

4 REASON AND JUSTIFICATION BEHIND THE DECISION

Receiving additional resources from the Council would enable the Education Department to target, collaborate, support and offer an appropriate and timely challenge to those secondary schools that are in red and amber categories of support to improve outcomes for the county's children and young people, as well as the secondary schools in Meirionnydd in light of the challenges they face in recruiting teachers, middle managers and leaders; so as to improve the outcomes for children and young people.

5 NEXT STEPS & TIMETABLE

If the application for additional resources to support the county's secondary schools and realise one of the priorities in the Council Plan is approved by the Cabinet, it is proposed to appoint an additional resource for the Education Department's core team, initially on secondment for a period of two years.

6 ANY CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN PRIOR TO MAKING THE DECISION

n/a

Local Member: Not a local mater.

Comments by the Chief Finance Officer:

I believe that the financial sum in the report is a fair estimate of the relevant additional costs for the Education Department. There are sufficient funds in the Transformation Fund to finance the additional post, however it is not an unlimited source of money. As with all applications for funds, the Cabinet will have to deliberate whether the use of this resource fulfils its priorities, especially considering the significant financial losses facing the Council due to the Coronavirus constraints.

Comments by the Monitoring Officer:

The comments of the Finance Officer confirms that there are sufficient resources in the fund to address this request which is part of the Council Plan. The Chief Finance Officer also states that it is a mater for the Cabinet to deliberate releasing the funds according to this request.