

# Cabinet

07 December 2021

## Outdoor Education and Learning Strategy

### Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. considers the recommendations made by Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 16th November 2021 (attached as appendix 1); and
2. approves Warwickshire County Council's Outdoor Education and Learning Strategy (attached as appendix 2).

### 1.0 Key Issues

- 1.1 In November 2020, Cabinet supported the development of an Outdoor Education and Learning Strategy.
- 1.2 Warwickshire County Council recognises the value and positive impact the 'outdoors' has on children and young people's development. Outdoor learning experiences contribute to personal growth and social awareness and develops skills for life and the world of work.
- 1.3 Outdoor education and learning is more than the use of one facility or approach, it is about engaging in a wide spectrum of experiences and providing opportunities for children and young people to participate in activities to develop skills from early years into adulthood.
- 1.4 The Covid pandemic with the many lockdowns and restrictions in social contact has had an impact on our children and young people. At the same time among the population there has been a greater appreciation of outdoor space for exercise, leisure, health and well-being. The post-covid pandemic recovery period brings an opportunity to strengthen our support to education providers delivering outdoor education and learning to children and young people in Warwickshire.

## 2.0 Options and Proposal

- 2.1 The strategy intends to develop an approach to outdoor education and learning which is both sustainable and relevant in a post-covid pandemic environment.
- 2.2 The purpose of the strategy is to support our wider education system to confidently deliver and/or access a range of outdoor opportunities, with the aim that all children and young people in Warwickshire can engage with high quality outdoor education and learning, appropriate for their age, ability and experience, throughout their development journey.
- 2.3 We recognise the role of education providers to plan, deliver and embed the use of the outdoors in their learning activities for children and young people.
- 2.4 The strategy identifies how we will work with early years, schools, post-16 and other education and skills settings to promote, support and embed a culture of continual access to outdoor education and learning in an integrated and sustained way.
- 2.5 The following engagement activities took place during the development phase of the strategy: -
- detailed desktop research was conducted and identified an evidence-base of national approach and best practice;
  - engagement with education settings (0-25) across Warwickshire via an on-line survey and dedicated focus group meetings, and;
  - a multi-disciplinary officer group (with contributions from Country Parks, Education, Fire & Rescue, Forestry and national sector leading bodies).
- 2.6 The engagement activities provided an understanding of education settings' pre-covid outdoor education and learning offer, the challenges faced, and how Warwickshire County Council might assist settings in enhancing their offer.
- 2.7 Feedback from education settings tells us that they already effectively plan for and engage in activities that enable high quality outdoor education and learning to happen, and that there are a variety of providers offering valuable outdoor learning venues, activities and experiences for children and young people. When considering the planning of outdoor activities, some settings indicated that training may be required by their lead staff.

- 2.8 Education settings indicated the support they would most value from Warwickshire County Council would be:
- an online directory of outdoor education and learning venues and providers,
  - a website or dedicated webpages providing or signposting information about outdoor education and learning,
  - the offer or signposting of training for Leads of Outdoor Education and Learning,
  - facilitating relationships with local providers of outdoor activities venues.
- 2.9 The objectives set out in the Strategy arise from the evidence base and feedback received from stakeholders and outline what we will do to promote, support and enable the delivery of outdoor education and learning.
- 2.10 The strategy will be supported by a Delivery Plan detailing how we will achieve the objectives and identify how we will measure the impact of the strategy.
- 2.11 We recognise that measuring the impact of outdoor-learning on the lives of children and young people is complex and through the Delivery Plan we will seek to establish base-line data.
- 2.12 The proposed measures of success include:  
Education leaders report:
- they have engaged with the support available to them through the strategy,
  - they feel better equipped to deliver outdoor education and learning,
  - they have strengthened their outdoor education and learning offer,
  - children and young people, including disadvantaged children are developing the skills they need to flourish in life through the outdoor education and learning opportunities education settings provide,
  - children and young people have the opportunity to be heard and their views contribute to developing outdoor learning.
- Children and young people report:
- they have increasing opportunities to learn outdoors,
  - they have increased positive experiences from engaging in outdoor activities and opportunities.
- 2.13 Our intention is to review the strategy in 2024/2025 to take account of the learning and progress against the Delivery Plan.

### **3.0 Member Engagement**

- 3.1 Two cross-party Member working groups supported the development of the Strategy.
- 3.2 The first group was formed in December 2020 and met three times, providing valuable feedback and contributions. The second group was formed in September 2021 and have also met three times, this group provided feedback and considered outdoor provision for disadvantaged pupils. The final draft version of the strategy incorporates both working groups' contributions.
- 3.3 The draft strategy was presented to Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 November 2021. Members welcomed the strategy and passed the following three resolutions:
1. Requests that in approving the strategy, Cabinet acknowledges its high priority.
  2. Requests that a performance report that sets out progress against the strategy's objectives be produced annually for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
  3. Requests that officers identify ways in which the strategy can be made more concise.
- 3.4 Resolution two will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee through the setting of its future work programme. Resolution three has already been addressed. The draft presented to Cabinet is a more concise version than presented at Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 It is not anticipated that the delivery of the strategy will create significant revenue funding implications for the Council however any implications arising will be considered through the MTFS process as necessary.

### **5.0 Environmental Implications**

- 5.1 None directly. The strategy will support raising awareness about climate change.

## 6.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 6.1 Subject to the decision taken by Cabinet the next steps will be:
- Finalise the Delivery Plan
  - Put in place arrangements for implementing and monitoring the Delivery Plan.
  - Launch, promote and distribute the strategy to education settings and stakeholders during the Spring term.

## Appendix

1. Link to the minutes of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16th November 2021:  
<https://democracy.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/g3249/Printed%20minutes%20Tuesday%2016-Nov-2021%2010.00%20Children%20Young%20People%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf?T=1>
2. Draft Warwickshire's Outdoor Education & Learning Strategy.

## Supporting Documents

1. Report to Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16TH November 2021  
<https://democracy.warwickshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=269&MIId=3249&Ver=4>

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): N/A

Other members: N/A