Cabinet

08 October 2020

Warwickshire Education Strategy Update and Refresh

Recommendation

To note the updates on the Warwickshire Education (WE) Strategy and endorse the recommendations to refresh it as set out in Appendices 3 and 4

1.   Executive Summary

1.1   Following an internal annual review of the Warwickshire Education (WE) Strategy 2018-2023 (see **Appendix 1**) and the subsequent collection of stakeholder feedback concluded in the 2020 spring term, changes are proposed to the strategy (see **Appendix 2**) to address the areas identified in need of development and to increase the strategy's overall impact.

1.2   It is proposed that the strategy is refreshed and relaunched with two key documents: a refreshed Education Strategy statement of priorities leaflet (see **Appendix 3**) outlining the framework and the ambitions of the strategy alongside a 'You said, We did' document (see **Appendix 4**) to explain the rationale and directly link the amendments made to the feedback received from stakeholders.

1.3   Feedback from education system stakeholders in Warwickshire suggested that broadly the strategy highlights the priority aspects of education and therefore any refresh should only involve minor modifications rather than a major change or entirely new strategy.

1.4   A key point for development was a clarification of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) priority. Stakeholders were clear that significant change in this area is much needed for resilience. The significance of the SEND change programme was recognised across all phases of education and specifically there is a support for the principle and benefits of delivering an inclusive education system and an increasing appetite for the change projects securing this.

1.5   Stakeholders identified a more ambitious approach to early years education and the benefits that early learning can offer in relation to family resilience and improved learning outcomes. Additionally, there is a strong desire amongst the education community for a change of approach to curriculum development

and education safeguarding as these were flagged as areas that were perhaps more under-developed than they should be.

1.6   Considering this feedback, it was made a priority of the refresh to reconfigure WE2 so that all messaging around SEND is as clear as possible whilst also taking the opportunity to emphasise our commitment to supporting a broad, empowering and creative curriculum and the importance of an inclusive education for learners with SEND and other additional needs.

1.7   It is proposed that the emphasis of WE2 will shift away from curriculum to SEND and vulnerable groups to emphasise the theme of inclusion and reflect the growing level of demand in this area. Meanwhile, curriculum development will become a part of the WE3 Family of Schools priority and a workstream for the Education Challenge Board providing the accountability needed to drive forward this area of work.

1.8   The visual layout of the leaflet has been altered to draw attention to the SEND and Inclusion priority as a key theme that features across all priority areas as we support children throughout their journey from infancy to adulthood.

1.9   Addressing feedback on safeguarding, the statement; "Safeguarding and promoting the welfare and well-being of learners is paramount in all areas of work", has been moved to the main body of the strategy leaflet to emphasise from a visual point of view that this is not something forgotten about when you turn the page, but a value that is embedded across all priorities in the strategy. Additionally, the opportunity has been taken to inform stakeholders of a widening of support for schools on this subject in the 'You Said, We Did' document.

1.10   It is also proposed that the 'WE' abbreviations are removed from the Education Strategy statement of priorities leaflet and anywhere else they appear in the strategy, as these have previously been identified as a potential barrier to engagement, particularly to those new to the strategy.

1.11   The wording of each section has been amended so that it succinctly summarises the contents of, and directly links to the sub strategies that underpin each of the priorities which are the main vehicles for achieving the objectives stated. These are: 'Securing the Best Start to Life', 'Supporting Inclusion for Learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Including Vulnerable Groups, 'Celebrating Warwickshire's Family of Schools' and 'Championing Employability'.

1.12   A graph that links the priorities with the relevant sub strategy can be found on our website and will be updated following the approval of the amendments in this paper.

2.   Financial Implications

2.1   The funding of Education Services resource capacity to enable the continued delivery of the Warwickshire Education Strategy is dependent on both an annual budget setting process and inclusion in the WCC MTFS 2020-2025.

3.   Environmental Implications

3.1   Sustainability initiatives will be encouraged where appropriate within the Education Strategy.

4.   Supporting Information

4.1   A frequently mentioned topic from headteachers attending the spring term heads conference was the challenges they are facing with support for children with additional needs, explaining that they are "struggling to meet the needs of some children" calling for more specialist places in Warwickshire. The existing SEND & Inclusion strategy on the other hand encourages an inclusive education with a key outcome of getting more children with SEND into mainstream settings as the vast majority of children benefit academically, socially, in confidence and self-esteem from education in community mainstream schools rather than in what are often described as more "specialist" settings.

4.2   Such feedback highlights that the WE2d (SEND) section of the strategy in its current form is either not effective in its promotion of an inclusive education and/or that, regardless of the message, not enough support is available for mainstream settings to sufficiently cope. As one headteacher put it: "the rise of need within SEND (low level and complex needs) needs to be captured in a refreshed way within the strategy."

4.3   Further feedback also indicated that the narrative of WE2 (An Empowering Curriculum) as a whole, is not clearly understood. It was shown that there is not enough evidence of a broad and balanced curriculum or offerings of opportunities for headteachers to educate themselves on curriculum development - "we want to broaden our horizons."

4.4   Other comments highlighted the foundation of Early Years as "essential from as early an age as possible if we are going to support our most vulnerable families", supporting our view that securing the best possible start to life is critical for a child's development and for making progress across several priories in this strategy.

4.5   Another frequent source of comment from leaders highlighted the importance of education safeguarding, particularly following recent Ofsted inspections across the county. Although a statement on safeguarding exists on the front page of the existing strategy leaflet, and work is ongoing to deliver more resilient support for education safeguarding, there is perhaps an opportunity to

reiterate our commitment to the statement and detail progress made in this workstream.

4.6   Youth Parliament told us they want to see more careers education and guidance highlighting a need to engage with this group more as part of the employability priority.

4.7   The matter was considered by the Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 14th July 2020 with no comments from the members present against the proposals.

5.   Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

5.1   It is proposed to relaunch the refreshed strategy with approval in September 2020.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Annual Review Autumn 2019
Appendix 2: Warwickshire Education Strategy Leaflet as is
Appendix 3: Warwickshire Education Strategy Leaflet to be
Appendix 4: You Said, We Did

Background Papers

None

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The report was previously shared with the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee