

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	6 September 2018
REPORT TITLE	Northern Alliance: Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2)
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/18/130
CHIEF OFFICER	Rob Polkinghorne
REPORT AUTHOR	Aisling MacQuarrie
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1, 1.1, 1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to highlight the work of the Regional Improvement Collaborative and present to Elected Members, the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee:

- 2.1 Note the content of the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2); and
- 2.2 Endorse the work of the Northern Alliance, Regional Improvement Collaborative.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Northern Alliance: Regional Improvement Collaborative

3.1.2 The Northern Alliance is a Regional Improvement Collaborative [RIC] between eight local authorities, across the north of Scotland: Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Argyll and Bute, Eilean Siar [Western Isles], Highland, Moray, Orkney Islands and Shetland Islands. The Northern Alliance is committed to improving the educational and life chances of children and young people.

3.1.3 Each RIC has been asked by a joint Steering Group, consisting of the Scottish Government, Education Scotland and Local Government to produce a Regional Improvement Plan. The Regional Improvement Plan is tasked with outlining how the RIC intends to reduce inequalities and target improvement in the four national priorities from the National Improvement Framework [NIF].

- 3.1.4 The development of the Regional Improvement Plan has been part of an ongoing iterative process. The first draft of the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan was submitted to Education Scotland for feedback on the 30th January 2018. Feedback was received from the Chief Inspector of Education/ Chief Executive on the 22nd February 2018. The Northern Alliance has sought to build on the comments received and incorporate this into the next phase of the Plan.
- 3.1.5 In terms of next steps following feedback from Education Scotland, the Northern Alliance was advised to engage all stakeholders and seek their views on the developing plan. Consultations and engagement sessions took place from mid-April to mid-June with a range of stakeholders: teaching staff, parents, children and young people, elected members and unions. It was agreed that each local authority was responsible for undertaking consultation and engagement sessions in their respective areas. An evaluation report of all the qualitative feedback gathered from across the region has been produced for the collaborative. The findings of which have been considered in the drafting of Phase 2 of the Plan.
- 3.1.6 In support of the delivery of the Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2) the collaborative has drafted a workforce plan, which will identify the resources available to ensure workstreams are effectively resourced. This workforce plan also considers resources from Education Scotland.

3.2 The Proposed Education (Scotland) Bill

- 3.2.1 The Scottish Government has set out a series of reforms in an Education (Scotland) Bill. Of the proposed reforms, the establishment of the RICs will promote and support improvement through close collaboration and partnership working between schools and associated partners and services. The RICs will provide high quality support and continuous professional development to make a difference to the lives of children and young people by ensuring that the professionals who work with them collaborate for improvement and impact. At this point in time, the Scottish Government has decided not to legislate for these changes but will monitor progress over the course of the academic year. The Scottish Government reserves the right to revisit this decision.

3.3 Regional Improvement Plan

- 3.3.1 The priorities outlined in the collaborative's Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2) are aligned to the aims of the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the NIF. However, while the priorities outlined in the Plan highlight the aims of the NIF, the activities and outlook of the Northern Alliance is far broader. The collaborative champions child and family-centred approach to address the achievement gap and to drive improvement. In support of realising the priorities, there are 13 workstream programmes. The collaborative seeks to work in a multi-layered way. Some of the workstream programmes are directed, for example, the Emerging Literacy, Numeracy and Maths Attainment and Modern Foreign Languages programmes contribute directly to improving attainment. A significant number of the workstreams outlined in the Plan (Phase 2) have cross cutting themes and contribute to the delivery of all four priorities. It is important

to note that not all schools will be involved in all improvement activities at any given time.

3.4 Aberdeen City – Northern Alliance Consultation

3.4.1 Feedback from the Aberdeen City consultation exercise found that the majority of those consulted were supportive of the Plan. For example: 89% of teaching staff agreed with the priorities outlined in the plan as did 99% of parents and guardians. Staff were asked if they were able to see clear links to their own School Improvement Plans and 95.5% agreed they could. Parents unanimously agreed that the child and family centred approach adopted by the Northern Alliance is the correct way to address the achievement gap and drive improvement.

3.5 Development of the Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2)

3.5.1 The development of Phase 2 of the Regional Improvement Plan has sought to identify how the collaborative will measure progress as well as refine existing measures. Several of the workstreams are beginning to embed and mature, whereas others are now emerging from the 'bottom up'. The workforce plan will ensure that resources are effectively deployed to support their delivery. To this end, the Northern Alliance seeks to build on its long-standing collaboration to effectively develop a robust plan with clear workstreams and implementation strategies.

3.5.2 A crucial step in developing Phase 2 of the Regional Improvement Plan has been consulting with stakeholders and evaluating feedback. The Northern Alliance is keen to develop distributive leadership at all levels and ensure that a practitioner informed approach shapes the collaborative's activities. The Northern Alliance is committed to learning from what works well and importantly listen to feedback and request from schools and teachers to aid their work with children and young people.

3.6 Resource

3.6.1 The amount of resource required from Aberdeen City will depend on which of the programmes the authority decides to participate in. This decision will be based on how the programmes benefit the city and its improvement agenda. It is important to note that some of the workstreams are still to mature. Therefore, the amount of the time required will vary across the year depending upon the level of engagement required.

3.6.2 The collaborative seeks to ensure that workforce planning is equitable across the eight authorities. This approach will ensure that all resources are apportioned fairly across the eight partners.

3.6.3 On the 26 June 2018, the Deputy First Minister announced £10 million funding to enhance regional capacity for improvement. The Deputy First Minister has decided that for the current year funding will be provided on the basis of need and will be responsive to the particular circumstances of each RIC area and

emerging work plans. To this end, the Northern Alliance will submit a focused bid, which will support the delivery of the regional improvement plan. Each workstream will monitor the time allocated to collaborative working throughout 2018/19 to allow more accurate workforce planning arrangements to be made as we go forward.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications to Aberdeen City Council.

4.1.2 The Northern Alliance has secured funding from the Scottish Government of £385,000 for 2017/18 and 2018/19. The funding will enhance the work of the Northern Alliance to strengthen resources that support learning and teaching.

4.1.3 Regional Improvement Collaboratives will integrate resource bids with the submission of the Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2) and the Resourcing/Workforce Plans to access the available support from the Scottish Government RIC funding envelope for 2018-19. Regional Improvement Collaborative Funding is available for work which is aligned with the guiding principles and functions set out in the RIC Steering Group report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

	Risk	Low (L), Medium (M), High (H)	Mitigation
Financial	A financial risk is the financial pressures local authorities are current experiencing, which may limit the capacity of authorities to resource the collaborative improvement priorities.	L-M	The Northern Alliance has secured funding from the Scottish Government for 17/18 and 18/19. It is currently preparing a bid to access additional funds, which are available from the Scottish Government RIC funding envelope for 2018/19.
Legal	Legislative changes such as the introduction of the Education (Scotland) Bill may have	L	Monitor the national direction of travel. The Regional Improvement Plan is open and flexible document, which

	implications for the RICs current practice and working arrangements.		has the potential to accommodate new or additional duties that maybe placed on the RIC.
Employee	Lack of capacity to deliver the Regional Improvement Plan.	M	The collaborative will ensure equitable resource allocation across the region; develop protocols for joint working and the continuous review of workforce allocation
Customer	The Northern Alliance is committed to ensuring staff have access to the practical improvement support they require. A risk is this message is not clearly communicated to staff and there is a lack of understanding amongst schools regarding the role of the RIC.	L	The collaborative is redeveloping their website to ensure it is user friendly and profiles the work of the Northern Alliance. The collaborative has also devised a communications strategy to engage schools, Head Teachers, Teachers and other key stakeholders, including young people and their parents /guardians/carers.
Environment	No risk identified.		
Technology	The collaborative covers a vast area and utilises IT and digital technologies to overcome distance and reduce travel costs. There is a risk if the IT infrastructure is not effective it could hinder progress.	L	The Northern Alliance has conducted an options appraisal to evaluate the most appropriate collaboration platform. It is also working in partnership with Education Scotland to evaluate available platforms to support document sharing and storage as well as video/teleconferencing.
Reputational	Not supporting the Northern Alliance's work outlined in the Regional Improvement Plan could create a negative reputational risk. The Northern Alliance Regional Improvement	L	Adopt a collaborative approach to improvement based on consensus building and stakeholder engagement.

	Plan supports the delivery of the LOIP.		
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7. OUTCOMES

Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes	
	Impact of Report
Prosperous Economy	The implementation of the Regional Improvement Plan will contribute to breaking the cycle of deprivation and support the developing young workforce. The changes will positively impact on Aberdeen City's economy and prosperity.
Prosperous People	The Regional Improvement Plan will lead to improved outcomes for children, young people and their families. This will impact positively, particularly for those who are adversely affected by poverty.
Prosperous Place	The Regional Improvement Plan takes account of need and will have a positive impact on individual communities across the Aberdeen City. It also encourages the sharing of best practice across the region, which will be to the benefit of Aberdeen City.

Design Principles of Target Operating Model	
	Impact of Report
Customer Service Design	The Regional Improvement Plan will seek to close the poverty related attainment gap by providing the best support to schools and improve outcomes for children and young people.
Organisational Design	The Plan encourages the use of resources and the sharing of best practice.
Governance	The Northern Alliance adopts a robust, transparent and accountable internal governance model. Accountability for improvement in attainment sits within each of local authority and in the case of Aberdeen City will be overseen by Chief Officers and the Education Operational Delivery Committee.
Workforce	The Northern Alliance is committed to sharing best practice across organisational boundaries to add value as a collective and support improvement. The Regional Improvement Plan outlines the offer it is making to schools across the region.
Partnerships and Alliances	The Regional Improvement Plan and the Northern Alliance is committed to working with all partners (NHS, Further and Higher Education Institutions) and associated services for improvement in the outcomes for all our children and young people.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	<i>Required</i>
Privacy Impact Assessment	<i>Required</i>
Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty	<i>Applicable</i>

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

ECS/18/010 Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan
Aberdeen City Council, Education and Children's Services, 25 January 2018
https://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/s78681/ECS_18_010_Northern%20Alliance%20Regional%20Improvement%20Plan_Final.pdf

Regional Improvement Collaborative: Guidance on Developing Regional Improvement Plans [Scottish Government, December 2017]

Education Bill policy ambition: joint agreement [Scottish Government, 26 June 2018]
<https://beta.gov.scot/publications/education-bill-policy-ambition-joint-agreement/>

10. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Northern Alliance: Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2)

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

Name Aisling MacQuarrie
Title Project Officer, Northern Alliance
Email Address amacquarrie@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Tel 01224 523204