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**REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEE ON  
30 OCTOBER 2019**

**SUBJECT: NORTHERN ALLIANCE: PHASE 3 REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT  
PLAN**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND  
ORGANISTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 To update Committee on progress to date with the Northern Alliance Phase 2 Regional Improvement Plan and outlines the priorities which are to be taken forward in the Phase 3 Regional Improvement Plan.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Council in terms of Section III (D) 1 of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to exercising the functions of the Council as an Education Authority.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is recommended that Committee:-**

- (i) note the progress made in the Phase 2 plan; and**
- (ii) endorse the Northern Alliance Phase 3 Regional Improvement Plan.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 Each RIC has 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]. The Phase 3 Regional Improvement Plan for the Northern Alliance was submitted to Education Scotland on 2 September 2019.

3.3 The Phase 3 Regional Improvement Plan was approved by the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Forum and will be presented to the Northern Alliance Convention of Convenors at their meeting on Friday 11 September.

#### 4. Discussion

4.1 The Northern Alliance Phase 3 Regional Improvement Plan can be accessed at **Appendix 1** and the Phase 3 Plan also includes a summary of progress made throughout the Phase 2 Plan.

4.2 The Phase 2 Plan was significant in scale and ambition and the challenges of recruiting people to lead on specific work streams was significant given that we did not receive our funding allocations from Scottish Government until December 2018. Given time for adverts to be placed and interviews to be held, leads were not identified for all areas of work until March 2019 and the progress report on the use and impact of the funding had to be submitted to Scottish Government by 31 July 2019. This had an impact on the Northern Alliance's ability to truly add value as a collaborative, although there have been some significant successes in areas such as Emerging Literacy and Learning Estates where really positive collaborative working has been demonstrated and where real value is being added to the work of individual local authorities.

4.3 The geography of the Northern Alliance and the lack of ability to release staff from schools to work together due to staffing constraints have also had an impact on the pace of improvement and whilst technology has been used to great effect across the Alliance, it has not always proved reliable. Furthermore, some of the local authorities within the Alliance have different permissions with regards the IT systems which can be used. For example, not all local authorities allow the use of Office 365, which offers key tools for collaboration.

4.4 At a meeting of the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Forum in June 2019, it was agreed that the Phase 3 Regional Improvement Plan needed to be more streamlined and more focused on what would make a clear and demonstrable difference to individual teachers and schools and be more closely aligned to the National Improvement Framework (NIF). A questionnaire was sent to all teachers across the Northern Alliance to ask what areas of support they would be looking for from the collaborative in order to add value to their work. A copy of the survey responses can be accessed at **Appendix 2**. Furthermore, an analysis of each of the eight NIF plans from the constituent local authorities was undertaken to look for the areas of greatest commonality where the Northern Alliance could add the greatest value.

4.5 The Northern Alliance Phase 3 Regional Improvement Plan will have four key workstreams, which are:

- Curriculum
- Raising Attainment and Closing the Gap
- Sustaining Education
- Leadership

- 4.6 The Northern Alliance has also submitted a funding request to the Scottish Government for additional resource to support the collaborative activity to be undertaken.
- 4.7 Education Scotland has been restructured and the support/development functions of the agency have been split from the scrutiny side. The support/development functions have been aligned to the RIC areas and a Northern Team is in place, led by a Senior Regional Advisor. This team will work with the Northern Alliance local authorities to deliver the Phase 3 Plan. The Education Scotland Northern team will also be available to provide bespoke support for individual local authorities as required.

## 5. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

(a) **Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

This report relates the priority 'Provide a sustainable education service aiming for excellence' from the Corporate Plan and to 'Building a better future for our children and young people in Moray' from the LOIP.

(b) **Policy and Legal**

None arising from this report.

(c) **Financial implications**

None arising directly from this report as covered.

(d) **Risk implications**

The risks lie with the Alliance and the ability to get leads for each workstream and to implement all aspects of the plan.

(e) **Staffing implications**

The staffings implications are that work stream leads need to be identified and put in place for each of the four work streams and additional staff will be required to lead on specific areas of development and improvement across the Alliance.

(f) **Property**

There are no property issues arising directly from this report.

(g) **Equalities**

None arising directly from this report

(h) **Consultations**

Chief Executive, Education and Social Care SMT, Quality Improvement Officers, Education and Integrated Children's Services officers, the HR Manager, Paul Connor, Principal Accountant, Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer, and the Equal Opportunities Officer have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report as regards their respective responsibilities.

## 6. **CONCLUSION**

### 6.1 **This report updates Committee on the latest version of the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan.**

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Background Papers: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/education-bill-policy-ambition-joint-agreement/>

<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/EmpoweringSchoolLeadersFinal.pdf>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/devolved-school-management-guidelines-draft/pages/4/>