Scottish Government Review of Regional Improvement Collaboratives – Verbal update noted etc.

6 With reference to the minutes of 12th September 2023 noting an update regarding the Scottish Government (SG) Review of Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs), the committee noted a further verbal update on progress of the review by Mark Ratter, Regional Lead Officer, highlighting

(1) that all 4 elements of the review had now been completed and the West Partnership (WP) had been well represented in the focus groups by local authority colleagues and, in addition, Professor Chapman, Robert Owen Centre (ROC) had also been part of one of the focus groups;

(2) that initial feedback from SG via the clarification meeting had highlighted a number of areas including:

(a) the scale of the WP benefits - Improving Our Classrooms, West Online School;

(b) the ownership and belief and sense of teacher agency; and

(c) the positive links with the ROC;

(3) that more broadly, additional feedback from SG had mirrored those themes and highlighted that

(a) RICs had continued to strengthen their support to pupils and practitioners, deepen collaboration within their regions and across the system, and ensure that regional resources and supports were prioritised by robust evaluation of the needs of pupils and practitioners;

(b) RICs had robust processes in place to evaluate their work; and

(c) RIC supports were evaluated strongly by participating practitioners, and that regional programmes and supports had continued to evolve in response to identified needs and circumstance, including current regional focus on absence, on strengthening support for learning, teaching and assessment, and on the provision of more cohort and session-long supports to deepen and embed learning for practitioners and pupils;

(4) that overall, the review had made it clear that RICs were engaging with approximately 30% of schools whilst accounting for 0.1% of education spending in Scotland;

(5) that the SG had not yet provided a timeline for when the final report would be published;

(6) the statement to the Scottish Parliament on 7th November 2023 when the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills had indicated that it had been

decided, in light of the review, that the funding for RICs would be tapered, repurposing this funding to better support teachers in our classrooms, whilst the plans around the Centre for Teaching Excellence were not yet clear, however, funding for the RICs would reduce in 2024/25 and then stop;

(7) that given the significant impact that RICs, and the WP in particular, made for learners and practitioners this was very disappointing, and whilst at this stage, there was no additional detail about what the reduced funding would look like in 2024/25, an update would be provided to Committee when further information was available; and

(8) that at this stage, a range of scenarios were being explored and the SG had been asked for an early decision on the RIC funding for 2024/25.

After consideration, the committee

(i) thanked Mark for the update; and

(ii) noted

(A) Members' concerns around the uncertainty of 2024/25 RIC funding; and

(B) that a further progress update would be provided to the next meeting in March 2024.