A number of recommendations which will support everyone involved in education in Peterborough to work together to raise attainment levels has been published as part of review undertaken by Councillor Lynne Ayres, cabinet member for education.

The detailed appraisal was commissioned by Peterborough City Council leader Councillor John Holdich in December 2016 to understand whether anything further could be done to improve the education offered to children and young people and to test whether the challenges identified to exist in Peterborough, such as the movement of children between schools in year, are accurate.

The review was commissioned against the context of changing national legislation in relation to the provision of education generally and which, in particular, reduces the city council’s role and responsibility in relation to the management of schools and its ability to intervene in the running of schools.

The review was also commissioned because of the publication of Key Stage 2 results which placed Peterborough 151st out of 152 local authorities in England.

In her report, Cllr Ayres concludes that Peterborough does face what can only be described as a unique set of challenges, meaning 'schools face more of a challenge than their counterparts in other areas of the country to achieve expected standards for pupils'.

Her view is supported by Nullam Group, which was tasked by Cllr Ayres as part of her review to consider the challenges in our education system and to confirm if they had been identified correctly.

Cllr Ayres also makes a number of recommendations, including better joint working to tackle the challenges (local authority, schools, Teaching Schools, Regional Schools Commissioner’s office, Ofsted, wider children and adult services and other education providers), which she believes can be addressed by the establishment of a Strategic Board for Education, Further Education and Skills.

Her recommendations also include a focus on improving the recruitment and retention of teachers and on narrowing the gap between free school meal and special educational needs students and students in all schools and a co-ordinated effort to increase the number of Teaching Schools that offer support and training to other local schools.

Cllr Ayres said: "My very thorough review has led me to conclude that there is real ambition from everyone involved in education in the city to provide the very best education possible for every student. No one should underestimate the hard work that is already underway or how much time and effort is being devoted to an unrelenting focus on all our challenges.

"That said, I do believe that there are fundamental ways we can all work differently and more effectively. Crucially there is a need for us all to unite and work together to address the issues that we face and to ensure a bold educational strategy across the whole authority area .

"Only by coming together can we agree to one common commitment and vision for education in Peterborough because given its role in education today, the council cannot achieve the success that our children and young people deserve on its own. However we can work as part of a united system to achieve the improvements in attainment that are so critical.

Councillor John Holdich, leader of the council, said: "Last December we were faced with the highly unusual scenario of being one of the best areas of the country for the number of schools judged good or outstanding by Ofsted, yet attainment being one of the weakest. This is the reason I commissioned the review, to try and understand this better and to see whether there was anything we, the schools and anyone else involved in education could do to change this."
‘Councillor Ayres’ review makes very interesting reading and I thank her for her considerable time and efforts carrying out the review and support her recommendations fully. The benefits of working together more closely cannot be denied and with the council’s role in education far reduced, and reducing all the time, never has it been more crucial.

“I have visited many schools across Peterborough in recent years and therefore I know that there is a huge amount of talent and commitment to providing a great education for our children and young people.

“It's for this reason that I look forward to working with schools and all our partners to carry forward Cllr Ayres' recommendations as I believe that together we can provide an education system that works for all children in Peterborough.”

Members of the city council’s Children and Education Scrutiny Committee will consider the report at their meeting on Thursday 7 September 2017 at 7pm.

The full report written by Cllr Ayres, as well as an executive summary and the scrutiny committee papers can be viewed on our democracy site (http://democracy.peterborough.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=656&MId=3958&Ver=4).