

LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL: STRATEGIC AREA REVIEW

PROGRAMME AREA RESPONSIBILITY: CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE; EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES; COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT; ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MARKETS AND PROPERTY

CABINET

16TH DECEMBER, 2004

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To receive a report on the Strategic Area Review Herefordshire and Worcestershire currently being conducted by the Learning and Skills Council and to respond to the formal consultation.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision

Recommendations

THAT in responding to the Consultation Document, Cabinet endorses the overall approach to the Strategic Review and in relation to paragraph 11 of the Consultation Document which identifies the significant strategic issues and options for Herefordshire:

- (a) Cabinet strongly supports the pursuit of Option (c) involving the double dissolution of Herefordshire College of Technology and Herefordshire College of Art and Design in order to create a new corporation which would receive the assets and liabilities from both founder organisations;**
- (b) Cabinet supports the local Learning and Skills Councils in its wish to work closely with the Pershore Group of Colleges on the future of the Holme Lacy Campus to ensure better integration of its facilities with this new institution;**

and
- (c) Cabinet supports the view expressed by the Learning and Skills Council that all three existing colleges on the Folly Lane Campus need to make even greater efforts to support the new proposed institution through better shared utilisation of resources including premises and common services and funding.**

Reasons

To enable the Council to respond to the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Strategic Area

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
N.M. Pringle, Chief Executive on (01432) 260044

Background - College Provision - Folly Lane, Hereford

1. As part of the Strategic Area Review of provision in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, the Learning and Skills Council Herefordshire and Worcestershire (LLSC) has undertaken a specific review of Herefordshire College of Technology and Herefordshire College of Art and Design in order to determine if the current structure meets the needs of individuals, employers and the wider community in the most cost-effective way.
2. KPMG, an independent consultancy, was engaged to undertake this work on behalf of the LLSC in 2002/03. As a result, the LLSC considered the potential alternatives and requested the Colleges to undertake a feasibility study into the dissolution of both institutions and the creation of a single new college. Unfortunately, despite ongoing discussion, no progress has been made in implementing this recommendation.
3. As part of the more recent Strategic Area Review activities, the LLSC has reconsidered the options and confirmed its original decision as its preferred option.

Strategic Options

4. The following strategic options have been considered:
 - A. Status quo
Continuation of separate colleges.
 - B. Wider collaboration
Both formal and informal.
 - C. Dissolution of Herefordshire College of Art and Design and Herefordshire College of Technology
Double dissolution of the two colleges, leading to a new corporation with a specialism in art and design and a higher education curriculum.
 - D. Dissolution of Herefordshire College of Art and Design and Herefordshire College of Technology.
Double dissolution of the two colleges leading to a new corporation with a specialism in art and design, but higher education programmes to be delivered by other providers.
 - E. Single dissolution and merger of one college with the other
Closure of either Herefordshire College of Technology or Herefordshire College of Art and Design, and activities transferred to the remaining institution.
 - F. Three way dissolution including Herefordshire College of Technology, Herefordshire College of Art and Design and Pershore Group of Colleges (Holme Lacy)
Three colleges are all dissolved leading to the creation of a new institution incorporating all further and higher education specialisms.
 - G. Tertiary solution.
Merger between Herefordshire College of Art and Design, Herefordshire

**College of Technology, Hereford Sixth Form College and Holme Lacy,
with 14+ and higher education collaborative links.**

Considerations

5. A summary of the benefits of the recommended strategic options and the reasons for the decision to support the double dissolution model as advanced by the LLSC are set out in Appendix 1.
6. Whilst the detailed information provided by the LLSC is important to the Council's consideration, the key strategic issue for the Council is to secure a high quality, sustainable offer of further education for all those Herefordshire students who wish to continue their further education in the County. That is a vital plank for the individual development of learners in Herefordshire but also has the capacity to support the Council's ambitions for the vibrancy of the local economy.
7. The Council also recognises the need for significant investment in the Folly Lane Campus if that ambition is to be realised.
8. It is not the intention of this report to detract in any way from the significant achievements of the individual colleges. The Council does, however, have to recognise that the site is currently occupied by three separate colleges which together with the Holme Lacy arm of the Pershore Group of Colleges seeks to provide further education to a population of 177,000. The Herefordshire College of Technology is considered to be a small to medium size college and the College of Art and Design a small college but as is indicated in the Appendix, both carry the fixed overheads of larger colleges. Even if the double dissolution was to be pursued, the new institution would still in national terms only be a medium sized further education college.
9. The Herefordshire College of Art and Design has sought to pursue a relatively high profile campaign for the retention of its institutional identity. Whilst it is possible to sympathise with the desire of individual institutions to continue in their current format, particularly where there is evidence of high quality work with their particular cohort of students, the Council has a wider responsibility to secure a viable future base for provision of further education. This needs to secure provision into the future and to ensure that a quality further education offer is available to the whole range of further education students.
10. That appears, at least in part, to be the key to securing future much needed investment in the Folly Lane Campus with the prospect, in the longer-term, of using that successful further education provision as a base for an extended higher education offering in the County.
11. This paper, whilst supporting the overall approach to the Strategic Area Review, concentrates on what are described as the significant issues and options for Herefordshire. There are other important recommendations in relation to the broader 14 - 19 agenda and particularly the role of sixth forms within our schools. These will be subject to continuing professional dialogue between the Council and LLSC. The more important issues will involve the relevant Cabinet Member.

Alternative Options

The strategic options are set out in the paper.

Risk Management

This is a consultation document and therefore only indirectly a specific risk to the Council. There is a wider risk, however, to the future stability of further education provision within the County.

Consultees

None.

Background Papers

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Strategic Area Review Strategic Issues and Options Consultation Document - Learning and Skills Council Herefordshire and Worcestershire November 2004.