



REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION, LEARNING AND SKILLS

POST 16 AREA BASED REVIEW

Purpose of the Report

1. This report seeks endorsement by the Committee of the outcomes of the Post 16 Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Area Review (Post 16 AR). A copy of the Review report is available as a Background Paper.
2. The report also seeks Committee's endorsement of the proposal to invite the Principals of Further Education (FE) Colleges to work in partnership with the Council to ensure that the quality of provision and the Post 16 curriculum supports skill shortage areas within the County.
3. This report also updates Members on the Government's proposals to introduce new technical pathways at Post 16 and seeks the approval of Committee to commission a preliminary review of outcomes of pupils at the end of Key Stage 5 with a view to developing a stronger partnership between schools, colleges and employers.

Information and Advice

4. In 2015, the Government announced a programme of approximately 40 local area reviews with a focus on the financial resilience of the further education and sixth form colleges in England. The review focussed on the long term financial viability of the institutions to efficiently meet the needs of students and the demands of employers.
5. The D2N2 Post 16 AR was undertaken between November 2016 and March 2017 and was chaired by the Further Education Commissioner. The steering group met on five occasions during the review period supported by additional targeted meetings as deemed necessary by the Commissioner. The colleges in scope were visited by the Commissioner's team of reviewers and were required to undertake robust financial scrutiny.
6. Nottinghamshire County Council was a key strategic partner throughout and presented five key issues on behalf of the county at the scoping phase of the review. The Council requested that consideration would be given to:
 - 1) the poor outcome of learners at the end of Key Stage 5 which limits access to university and high quality employment and training
 - 2) the variable quality of careers advice and guidance resulting in too many learners making inappropriate choices at Post 16

- 3) the need for improved provision at Post 16 for SEND learners to secure greater independence, access to Further Education (FE) provision and/or employment
 - 4) the lack of incentives to ensure successful employers, particularly from the eight sectors identified in the D2N2 Skills Strategy, to participate in the coproduction of the FE curriculum to ensure that vocational pathways Post 16 meet the needs of the sector.
7. The core purpose of the review from the perspective of the government was to ensure that colleges were on a strong financial footing to better meet the long term economic and educational needs of students and employers. However, all Local Authority representatives participating in the review consistently raised concerns about the quality of the Post 16 provision to meet employer and economic priorities within the area. Whilst all the colleges, with the exception of Bilborough 6th Form College (Requires Improvement) are deemed by Ofsted to be Good, the outcomes for groups of learners remain a concern.
8. In spite of improvements witnessed at Key Stage 4 in GCSE and equivalent qualifications over the past years, this has not fed through to improved outcomes at Key Stage 5. Outcomes for students in Nottinghamshire sixth forms and colleges continue to be below the national average. Provisional figures for 2016/17 academic year show 3,648 students completing their studies in sixth form settings and a further 1,337 in colleges. The average point score per entry for all Nottinghamshire students in 2016/17 was 31.04 which is just above a grade C at full A Level. Nationally the figure for all providers was 33.01, almost a fifth of a grade per entry higher. Against all local authorities nationally, Nottinghamshire is placed 100th (out of 150, where 1st is best).
9. In addition, the percentage of young people attending a Nottinghamshire school at age 16 years who are qualified to Level 3 (2 or more passes at A-Level or equivalent) by age 19 years remains low. Latest data for young people aged 19 years at the end of the 2015/16 academic year shows 52.0% attained this threshold. Nottinghamshire is at the bottom of its statistical neighbours (the local authority placed first on this measure achieved 59.4%) and against all authorities nationally is placed 116th (out of 151, where 1st is best). This is a significant cause for concern and it is disappointing that the Area Review did not sufficiently focus on student outcomes.
10. Feedback from the D2N2, local authorities and business representatives are summarised on the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) web site as follows:
- employers see local colleges as highly responsive but also “difficult to penetrate”, with the quality of service impacted by staff changes.
 - schools generally consider the offer from colleges to be good, especially in and around urban areas, but that more rural and isolated areas identify travel as a limiting factor.
 - greater collaboration between further education providers, higher education institutions and employers to develop higher level apprenticeships would be welcomed by businesses.
 - local authorities want the offer for students with special educational needs and disabilities to provide improved opportunities for employment and independence
 - there is a need to develop pathways which focus on improving young people’s English and maths skills, employability skills, work experience and support programmes.
11. The report makes nine recommendations and each recommendation is fully expanded on in the report:

- 1) Bilborough Sixth Form College to continue to take short-term actions to improve its financial position pending completion of a structure and prospects appraisal within a year of the end of the review to confirm a sustainable long-term solution (including academisation or other structural change including merger), for implementation by December 2018.
- 2) Chesterfield College to stand-alone working with Derby College to create a joint venture company to cover a range of shared services and back office functions to achieve efficiencies and create opportunities for growth.
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- 4) Vision West Nottinghamshire College to stand-alone.
- 5) Central College Nottingham and New College Nottingham to continue to concentrate on the merger to form the Nottingham College as recommended by the Further Education Commissioner in the Nottingham Education Review in July 2015.
- 6) Portland College to stand-alone as a specialist provider for high needs students.
- 7) working with colleges and local authorities in the D2N2 area and the LEP, Portland College to establish and lead a local forum for improvement and increased coherence of the offer to high needs students locally and associated continuing professional development. The group to report into the new Strategic Forum.
- 8) the colleges in the D2N2 area should collaborate to consider establishing Institutes of Technology (IoTs) which meet specialist employer needs. All the colleges will work together across the D2N2 area to ensure that plans for IoTs deliver a coherent offer to employers.
- 9) the LEP to convene a forum to include the local authorities and colleges to allow a strategic dialogue to take place around skills provision and the needs of local employers supported by regular intelligence sharing to inform curriculum development. The group will monitor and support the delivery of the Area Review recommendations. (AR August 2017)

12. In addition to the nine recommendations, the report also captures the wider issues that have arisen throughout the process which are left as challenges for all strategic partners:

- increased volume and breadth of higher level and technical skills that better meet the needs of employers as a result of colleges working together to develop curriculum pathways against the eight LEP priority sectors and known skills gaps. This will be supported by the newly formed strategic group
- a more co-ordinated employer engagement function across the D2N2 area as a result of the agreement to continue the strategic dialogue between the LEP, the local authorities and the colleges through the strategic forum
- improved provision and better outcomes for learners with high needs, including better employment prospects, supported by the SEND/high needs working group
- more apprenticeships delivered locally; a commitment of all colleges in the review area
- ensuring the long term financial resilience of the colleges in the D2N2 area, through meeting the majority of key financial indicators, at or above national benchmarks by 2019
- the LEP, local authorities and colleges in the D2N2 review area working together to develop a more robust strategic dialogue and giving the colleges and the skills agenda a stronger voice in the local governance structure
- a co-ordinated approach to plans to develop a proposal for an Institute of Technology in the D2N2 area that will deliver against employer need
- The local strategic forum will share intelligence to inform curriculum development, including English and maths, acknowledging and understanding local variations

including rurality, and ensure better access for those seeking skills training. (AR August 2017)

13. Whilst the AR focussed on reviewing the financial sustainability of the colleges within scope, there was a clear challenge around the need for greater involvement of employers to work in partnership with the colleges on curriculum design to ensure that future employees have the necessary skills to meet employer demand. Employers were not formally represented on the Review Steering Group although their needs were advocated by all including the Chief Executive of the Local Enterprise Partnership.
14. The publication of the Review is timely given the announcement of the Secretary of State for Education regarding the first new T levels which are being developed in partnership with leading employers including EDF, Rolls Royce, Fujitsu, Lloyds, Morgan Sindall, Skanska and Morphy Richards, ensuring that they have real credibility. The first T Level pathways will be offered from 2020 (Digital, Construction, Education and Childcare) with a further introduction in 2021 of three further pathways (Legal, Finance and Accounting, Engineering and Manufacturing, Health and Science) with the final pathways to be introduced by 2022 (Hair and Beauty, Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care, Business and Administration, Catering and Hospitality, Creative and Design).
15. This Post 16 Area Review has no statutory power in that the institutions have been able to accept or reject the recommendations made by the Commissioner. To date, all stakeholders have committed to implementing the recommendations and the colleges are seeking closer partnerships with business partners to ensure that the economic priorities of the region are met. The continued challenge of outcomes at the end of Key Stage 5 suggests there continues to be a significant challenge for all Post 16 providers to ensure that all young people are able to secure the essential knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute positively through work based routes into employment and through higher education.

Other Options Considered

16. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

17. Nottinghamshire's outcomes for all learners at the end of Key Stage 5 continue to be a priority for improvement. Employers are also seeking access to a more skilled workforce at 19 years. As the County prioritises economic growth in its vision statement 'Your Nottinghamshire, Your Future' it is essential that young people are able to access high quality technical education in colleges, schools and through apprenticeships.

Statutory and Policy Implications

18. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That Committee:

- 1) endorses the recommendations and key issues raised by the Post 16 Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Area Review.
- 2) invites the Principals of Further Education Colleges to a formal meeting with the Chief Executive, the Corporate Directors for Place and Children's Services, the Chairman of the Children and Young People's Committee and the Chairman of Communities and Place Committee, to explore new ways of working to improve the outcomes of Nottinghamshire learners at the end of Key Stage 5 and strengthen the skill base of future employees in areas with skill shortages.
- 3) requests a further preliminary review of the 2017 Key Stage 5 outcomes working in partnership with schools and colleges where the performance of Nottinghamshire learners are a cause for concern.

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Constitutional Comments (LM 03/11/17)

19. The Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the contents of the report and that members consider whether there are any actions they require in relation to the issues contained within the report .

Financial Comments (SAS 06/11/17)

20. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

<http://www.d2n2lep.org/news/new-government-study-looks-at-state-of-further-education-in-d2n2-lep-area>

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

