

Charities and Trusts Committee – 13th June 2023
Stafford 14-19 Partnership: Updated Business Plan 2019-2024

Recommendations:

The Trustees of the Charities and Trusts Committee to:

1. review and approve the updated Stafford 14-19 Partnership Business Plan 2019-2024 (hereinafter called the Business Plan)

- 1.1 The updated business plan this year includes a section showing achievements against the previous year’s operational plan (page 18), as well as a further section detailing the 2023/24 operational plan (page 29).

2. consider for approval the funding request to the Staffordshire Education Centre Charity (registered number 528604) as set out in the Business Plan for 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years. If approved the release of funds will be from the charitable income, interest from the capital investment of the permanent endowment, from the Staffordshire Education Centre Charity:

- 2.1 For 2023/24 academic year the sum requested is £172,528 as set out in the Business Plan (page 34&38), this is a reduction of £5,733 on the amount (£178,261) approved in principle by the Trustees at the 14th June 2022 Committee meeting.

In previous years savings have usually been possible during the academic year to reduce the request from SECC more significantly, however the expected increase in the cost of salaries has reduced the savings possible.

A summary of the items funding support is requested for, are:-

Spend Type	Description	Funding Request
Central Teaching Costs	Enabling the central delivery of minority subjects for the partnership	£31,180
Raising Aspirations at Key Stage 4	Enabling the provision of activities for those at risk of NEET and to further challenge those who are gifted and talented	£40,000
Central Partnership team and resources	Enabling the delivery of the partnership offer across all schools and the actions identified in the operational plan	£101,348

- 2.2 A new five year Business Plan will be developed throughout the next year, however for the 2024/25 academic year the Stafford 14-19 Partnership is,

if sufficient funds are available, making a request for funding support of £188,580 as set out in the Business Plan (page 39). This level is required to continue to offer the partnership courses centrally delivered and the management to enable the partnership to operate offering collaborative delivery enabling students to access a broad curriculum across the partner schools. This funding request continues to include an element to support activity to challenge Gifted and Talented students and engage those at risk of NEET or exclusion.

3. Approve Staffordshire County Council's Assistant Director - Skills and Employability to continue to be authorised to approve the release of funds set out above subject to the successful delivery of the 2023/24 element of the Business Plan.

Staffordshire County Council's role as a Charity Trustee:

4. Trustees have and must accept ultimate responsibility for directing the affairs of a Charity, ensuring that it is solvent, well-run and delivers the charitable outcomes for the public benefit for which it has been set up.
5. Local Authorities are well suited to be a Charity Trustee as they are:
 - rooted in the local community;
 - open and transparent in their dealings;
 - highly accountable for their actions; and
 - have the high standards of public conduct embedded in the way they work.
6. Charity Trustees have a duty to act solely in the best interests of the Charity and its beneficiaries with a view to furthering its charitable purposes and for no other purpose whatsoever. They must also ensure that any charitable assets are managed independently and prudently in accordance with their charitable purpose and any restrictions in the charity's governing document.

Background to the Stafford Education Centre Charity:

7. Staffordshire County Council (the Council) is the sole administrative trustee of the Stafford Education Centre Charity (SECC - registered number 528604) and is responsible for the general control, management and administration of the Charity. The Council discharges its obligations through the Charities and Trusts Committee.
8. SECC is governed by the revised Scheme approved by the Trustees at the Committee meeting held on the 17 November 2015. The Charity Commission gave final approval of this revised Scheme on 11 March 2016. The revised Scheme sets out the object of the Charity which is "the promotion of education of persons between the ages of 14 and 19 years who are resident in [or being educated in] Stafford in such ways as the trustee thinks fit."

9. The Chetwynd Centre built in 1860, a grade 2 listed building, was the permanent endowment of the SECC and the Council held the land and buildings on trust status. The Trustees approved the sale of the Chetwynd Centre and the sale was completed in early 2018. The funds from the sale have been added to the endowment investment.

Background and Context:

10. The Charities and Trusts Committee agreed at the 16 July 2015 Committee meeting that the preferred option was the disposal of the Chetwynd Centre through sale and the Committee agreed to:

- a) ensure arrangements were stabilised to provide continuity for the Partnership, including producing an annual Business Plan and budget approval process;
- b) implement the preferred option that sought permission to amend the objectives of the SECC removing the requirement on Trustees to retain the Chetwynd Centre;
- c) instruct officers of the Council from Legal, Finance, and Skills teams to continue to work with the collaborative of 14–19 education providers in Stafford to develop and implement appropriate and timely mechanisms for the submission and approval of a Business Plan to the Committee as the application process for the use of the available charitable funds in the future. The Business Plan must set out how the Stafford 14-19 Partnership will meet the educational objectives of the SECC and provide assurance to the Committee on how the endowment funds requested will be deployed.

11. At the 12th June 2018 Committee meeting Trustees approved in principle to the Stafford 14-19 Partnership to be supported by the Staffordshire Education Centre Charity with financial contributions on a rolling five-year basis subject to the production of a Business Plan being produced and approved by the Trustees.

12. Progress to date:

- a) Council Officers have continued to have ongoing dialogue with the Stafford 14-19 Partnership to consider the implications of further developing the wider collaborative approach across all 14-19 providers in the Stafford district. This is reflected in the refreshed Business Plan for 2019-2024 that is being presented to the Committee. The existing partners are committed to working collaboratively to improve and develop the delivery of 14-19 education in Stafford and to broaden the Partnership to work with other educational providers to ensure the best outcomes for young people across Stafford. Collaborative working is a key thread throughout the Business Plan.

- b) Council Officers have supported the developments of the Stafford 14-19 Partnership including the production and update of this latest Business Plan that is attached for the Trustees approval and this sets out plans for the operational delivery of the Partnership as well as progress on the operational plan. The Plan clearly identifies the objectives of the Partnership and it sets out the case of how the endowment funds requested will be deployed and it requests that the Committee continues to approve financial support. The Trustees are being asked to approve the allocation and release of funds from the charitable income, interest from the capital investment of the permanent endowment, from the SECC (registered number 528604). The Stafford 14-19 Partnership is requesting the following contributions that are set out the Business Plan:
- For 2023/24 academic year this will be a sum of £172,528 as set out in the Business Plan (pages 34&38), this is a reduction of £5,733 on the amount (£178,261) approved in principle by the Trustees at the 14th June 2022 Committee meeting. In-year savings and further income generation achieved during 2022/23 have negated much of the increased forecast salary rises for 2023/24 resulting in a small reduction in the request being made.
 - For 2024/25 academic year onwards a new 5 year business plan will be developed. The Stafford 14-19 Partnership is making a request, should funds allow, for an estimated sum of £188,580 for 2024/25 as set out in the Business Plan (page 39). This level is required to continue to enable the central partnership minority course subjects to run due to lower pupil numbers, the continued delivery of a gifted and talented programme and 14-16 alternative provision and the ongoing costs of the central management team enabling the operation of the partnership.
- c) The Council Officers will continue to work with the 14-19 Partnership to promote good financial management and the agreed approach to managing the delivery of the Business Plan. Colleagues from the Partnership will continue to attend the Committee on an annual basis to present progress against the Business Plan and to demonstrate the positive action and outcomes from receiving the financial contribution from the SECC.

Equalities Implications:

13. None identified.

Legal Implications:

14. The Committee (in its capacity as Trustee of the SECC) is legally obliged to ensure that the SECC is managed in accordance with its objectives and to prevent any conflicts of interest between the administration of the SECC and of the Council.

Resource and value for Money Implications:

15. The Committee may apply the income and capital of the SECC in meeting the proper costs incurred when administering the Charity and managing its assets.

Risk Implications:

15. Decisions made by the Committee must be made in the capacity as Trustee only and must ensure that any decisions are made in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 and Charity Commission guidance.

Report Author:

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