

Local Members' Interest
N/A

Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee – 15th December 2016

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Review of Post-16 Further Education and Training Institutions

Recommendations

1. That the Committee are aware of the outcomes and recommendations of the Post-16 area review.
2. That the Committee comment on and scrutinise the anticipated impact on Staffordshire residents as a result of the recommendations.

Report of Cllr Ben Adams, Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills

Summary

What is the Select Committee being asked to do and why?

3. A presentation will be given to committee following introduction of the report to provide more details of the outcomes of the review in meeting skills priorities.

Report

Background

4. The Government's Productivity Plan 'Fixing the Foundations' sets out the ambition for a professional and technical education system that provides clear, high quality routes to employment. This can only be delivered with strong Further Education institutions, which have the high status and specialism required to deliver credible routes to employment and progression in the labour market. The institutions also need to be more efficient to ensure stability and to make the best use of diminishing resources.
5. In July 2015 the Government published a policy statement which set out how they intended to facilitate the restructuring of the post-16 education and training sector, through a series of Area Based Reviews of provision which are led on behalf of the Government by the FE Commissioner. The Review commenced in Staffordshire in February 2016 and the final report was published at the end of November. The implementation of Review recommendations will be supported by a national restructuring fund of £570million which institutions can access provided they meet the published criteria.

6. The aim of the review was to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to meet the needs of students and employers in the area and to take steps to improve the financial sustainability of colleges in the future. At the time of the review both Stafford College and Stoke-on-Trent College were subject to Financial Notices of Concern from Skills Funding Agency. The review covered both FE and Sixth- Form Colleges, but did not include School Sixth Forms.

The Review

7. A steering group, chaired by the FE Commissioner, Sir David Collins was convened to oversee and steer the review's work. Membership included representatives from the LEP, Local Authorities, DfE and DBIS, Chairs of Governors from each institution in scope for the review. However, the approach taken by the FE Commissioner across the Country was to seek consensus on any recommendations with the governing bodies of individual institutions required to sign off the final recommendations.
8. Colleges included in the scope of the review were:
 - a. **Burton and South Derbyshire College** offer a wide range of technical studies for post-16 students over 2 campus. Has particularly strong links with employers in 5 areas including design and manufacturing, signage and printing, construction, health and wellbeing, and enterprise.
 - b. **Newcastle-under-Lyme College** is the only general FE college to offer a comprehensive programme of A level options aimed at school leavers and the biggest A level provider in Stoke and Staffordshire. Technical education specialisms include, sport, foundation learning, health and social care, and a wide range of accountancy programmes, including those leading to the full professional qualifications of the accountancy bodies.
 - c. **South Staffordshire College** offer a wide range of technical studies for post-16 students over 4 campus with a range of specialisms. This arts and creativity at Lichfield, automotive and engineering in Lichfield, retail and commercial activity, IT and music at Cannock with agriculture, STEM and specialist provision for SEN students at Futures.
 - d. **Stafford College** offer a wide range of classroom-based technical studies for post-16 students including some land based courses. Proposes to expand and develop all areas of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) provision.
 - e. **Stoke-on-Trent College** offer a wide range of classroom-based technical studies for post-16 students over 2 campus. Highlight a specialist focus in advanced manufacturing, motor trade courses, including vehicle accident repair, and specialist science and pharmaceutical.
 - f. **Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College**, their major catchment area is the city of Stoke on Trent. The college's offer includes 30+ A level options and a range of BTEC diplomas and certificates at level 3, with a growing programme of provision at level 2, and a small volume of higher level work in sport.

9. At the start of the review both local authorities and the LEP set out their priorities, to the Steering Group, that provision in the area should:
 - a. provide a coherent and collaborative skills offer and create a financially sustainable local FE system
 - b. improve in quality, to ensure that all colleges are at least good and that success rates for students are above national average
 - c. meet local priorities and emerging skills needs, including specialist technical skills and provision in advanced manufacturing, tourism and leisure, professional and business services, digital and creative at levels 3 and 4
 - d. be flexible in delivery to meet employer needs
 - e. deliver appropriate training or learning that improves people's chances of being competitive in the labour market
 - f. deliver high quality and appropriate curriculum through the required technical education qualifications.

10. The key issues in relation to this review that were considered and deliberated during steering group meetings, are:
 - a. resolving the position of Stoke-on-Trent College, and seeking to ensure that all colleges in Staffordshire are on a strong, sustainable financial footing
 - b. rapidly improving quality at Stafford College and ensuring that planned changes at Burton and South Derbyshire College deliver improvements in time for their next Ofsted inspection
 - c. growing apprenticeship provision, and responding to the LEP and employers in relation to need for higher level skills, improved work-readiness, and better quality of information, advice and careers guidance
 - d. supporting the LEP and the local authorities in ensuring a good match between post 16 provision and the identified skills needs, job opportunities and future growth in priority sectors
 - e. boosting the educational levels of residents and the economic success of Stoke-on-Trent
 - f. to consider how colleges can increase and improve provision for high needs students, in response to the needs identified by Staffordshire local authority, specifically the needs of learners with social, emotional and mental health and severe learning difficulties, and to develop an offer based around employment focussed, internship type provision.

11. In each area review, 4 nationally-agreed criteria are used for the process of assessment of recommendations. These are:
 1. meets the needs of current and future students and employers
 2. is feasible and generates financial sustainability
 3. raises quality and relevance of provision, including better outcomes
 4. achieves appropriate specialisation.

12. Below are listed the six recommendations were agreed by the steering group at their meeting in June 2016 and a view on their potential impact.

Ref.	Review Recommendation	Position
1.	Newcastle-under-Lyme College and Stafford College to merge to form a single college	NuLC is a leading college in the Country. The merger has already taken place and has resulted in significant investment. This is a positive outcome given the issues and challenges faced at Stafford College
2.	City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College to pursue academisation	Potentially supports financial health due to VAT implications
3.	Burton and South Derbyshire College to remain stand-alone	The College has a distinct catchment and good employer links. But it needs to address issues in its last Ofsted inspection.
4.	South Staffordshire College to merge with Walsall College to form a single college	Walsall are one of best performing colleges in the UK, potentially a positive solution for communities/businesses of Staffordshire, need to understand the plans for change as they emerge
5.	Stoke-on-Trent College to develop an appropriate option to secure sustainability, in collaboration with local partners, by end of October 2016	There is a concern that as yet an appropriate option has not been shared. Approximately 500 learners from Staffordshire access provision at Stoke-on-Trent College
6.	The formation of a new strategic forum involving the LEPs, local authorities and colleges to monitor progress and provide oversight of the implementation of the review's recommendations.	Provides a positive step towards devolution and further joint working to address priorities for the County

13. Stoke and Staffordshire LEP already has an education trust in place. It proposes that the trust should form a group with the other LEP, local authorities and colleges to take forward the recommendations and to help address 4 key issues:

- a. supporting the colleges in providing a coherent and collaborative skills offer and creating a financially sustainable local FE system
- b. improving quality, to ensure that all colleges are at least good and that success rates for students are above national average

- c. ensuring that the curriculum offered meets local priorities and emerging skills needs, including specialist technical skills and provision at levels 3 and 4
 - d. providing access to learning for all young people and adults to equip them with the full range of employability skills.
14. Primary responsibility for implementation of recommendations relating to individual colleges rests with those institutions however this new group would include representatives from SFA and EFA who will formally monitor progress towards the Area Review recommendations. From a local perspective both authorities and the LEP also wish to ensure that progress is made with regard to these recommendations but also plan to use this group as the vehicle to further develop mechanisms for ensuring that the skills needs of the economy are met by the skills providers in the area.

Conclusion

15. In conclusion, having been engaged in the review process from the outset, despite the aims of the review being wide ranging, the capacity of the review to address many of the priorities outlined by the LA's and the LEP has been limited.
16. However it is felt that the recommendations provide the building blocks for improvement and sustainability of skills provision in the area with greater partnership support and oversight. There remains a concern, however, that an appropriate option has not been confirmed for Stoke-on-Trent College.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Area Review Final Report November 2016

Appendix B – Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Area Review College Annex November 2016

Appendix C – Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Area Review Data Annex November 2016

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