

Charities and Trusts Committee – 15th June 2021
Stafford 14-19 Partnership: Updated Business Plan 2019-2024

Stafford 14-19 Partnership (formerly known as Stafford Collegiate) previously had its central administration based on Trust land known as the Chetwynd Centre until August 2017 when it relocated to Stafford Manor High School, as a result of the Trustees authorising the sale of the Chetwynd Centre.

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) and 2020/21 Partnership Update report – copies attached.
2. consider for approval the funding request to the Staffordshire Education Centre Charity (registered number 528604) as set out in the Business Plan for 2021/22 and 2022/23 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 2021/22 academic year this will be a sum of £169,029 as set out in the Business Plan (page 24), this is a reduction of £22,265 on the amount (£191,294) approved in principle by the Trustees at the 9th September 2020 Committee meeting. This reduction is due to a reduced level of support for the shortfall in teaching costs and the 2020/21 financial year ending with a surplus due to activities that were unable to take place due to Covid 19 restrictions and additional income or savings on 'usual activity' along with an un-touched contingency fund.
 - 2.2 For 2022/23 academic year the Stafford 14-19 Partnership is requesting an estimated sum of £176,319 as set out in the Business Plan (page 25). This level is required to meet the continued anticipated shortfall on income due to lower pupil numbers accessing central Partnership courses as explained at the 2019 Committee meeting, figures are detailed on page 12 of the Business Plan. Funding request continue to include elements 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 2020/21 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. 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 2021/22 academic year this will be a sum of £169,029 as set out in the Business Plan (page 24), this is a reduction of £22,265 on the amount (£191,294) approved in principle by the Trustees at the 9th September 2020 Committee meeting. This reduction is due to a reduced level of support for the shortfall in teaching costs and the 2020/21 financial year ending with a surplus due to activities that were unable to take place due to Covid 19 restrictions and

additional income or savings on 'usual activity' along with the untouched contingency fund.

- For 2022/23 academic year the Stafford 14-19 Partnership is requesting an estimated sum of £176,319 as set out in the Business Plan (page 25). This level is required to meet the continued anticipated shortfall on income due to lower pupil numbers accessing central Partnership courses due to the dip in the size of overall student cohorts and the continued expansion of gifted and talented programme and 14-16 alternative provision.
- 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:

Alison Matthews, Skills and Employability Team, Staffordshire County Council.