

Public Document Pack

DONCASTER METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 5TH OCTOBER, 2017

A MEETING of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE was held at the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICE, DONCASTER on THURSDAY, 5TH OCTOBER, 2017 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

Chair - Councillor Kevin Rodgers

Councillors John Healy, Neil Gethin and Paul Wray

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

DMBC:

- Damian Allen - Director of People (Learning and Opportunities: Children and Young People/Adult Health & Wellbeing Directorates)

Other:

- Anne Tyrrell, Interim Joint Chief Executive
- David Reeve, Interim Director of Finance
- Kathryn Brentnall, Assistant Principal Curriculum and Quality
- Debbie Hilditch, Governor
- Dan Fell, Chief Executive Officer (Doncaster Chamber) and
- Krysia Woofinden, Senior Economic Policy and Delivery Manager (Sheffield City Region)

		<u>ACTION</u>
21	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.</u>	
	Apologies were received from Councillor Jane Kidd.	
22	<u>TO CONSIDER THE EXTENT, IF ANY, TO WHICH THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ARE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MEETING.</u>	
	None.	
23	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY.</u>	
	There were no declarations of interest made	
24	<u>MINUTES FROM THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD</u>	

	<u>ON 1ST SEPTEMBER, 2017</u>	
	The minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on the 1st September 2017 were agreed as a true record.	
25	<u>PUBLIC STATEMENTS.</u>	
	There were no public statements made.	
26	<u>DONCASTER AND NORTH LINDSEY COLLEGE MERGER.</u>	
	<p>A report was provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee to consider the Doncaster and North Lindsey College Merger. A presentation was provided which highlighted the following areas: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response to Consultation • University in Doncaster • Doncaster College in Partnership • Ambitious for Doncaster • Strengthening Partnerships and Impact across Doncaster • Next Steps <p><u>Background</u> – It was explained that the two colleges worked across a number of Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) regions, the Sheffield City Region and also the Greater Lincolnshire and Humber LEP. It was felt important that this worked across regions whilst maintaining a strong local presence and was able to connect communities in a number of different ways.</p> <p>In respect of what the merged college would look like, it was outlined that from the 1st September 2018, students wouldn't feel any difference and not be travelling across sites. It was explained that the aim was to enhance provision through the excellent facilities and specialist courses made available at either Doncaster College or North Lindsay. It was added that students would be prepared to travel further afield to access this more specialised provision.</p> <p><u>Why Merge?</u> – Members expressed concerns about the reasons behind the merger and were reassured that although it provided financial assurances, it had never been driven by financial reasons. Members were told that it was about providing sustainability and resilience whilst providing the ability to invest in the future.</p> <p><u>Impact on Skills and Doncaster's Economy</u> – Member and Partners both acknowledged the benefits Doncaster has to offer and opportunities presented from a growing local economy and major regeneration developments. It was felt that the nature of the local economy was becoming more and more reliant on new business start-</p>	

ups where an entrepreneurial skill was required.

Members were pleased to hear that the ethos of North Lindsay College included seeking to increase and develop skills, address skills shortages, tackle unemployment and ensure that local organisations were better equipped and robust during more challenging times. Members also listened to how the merger would aim to achieve success through quality, reputation and growth through Higher Education and Apprenticeships, social mobility and aspiration an agenda that is shared between the Council with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and endorsed by the Committee.

Members were told how time had been spent engaging with key employers in the Borough and concerns had been listened to. It was outlined that a vast array of career options and choices had been presented along with different avenues of learning.

Social Mobility – Members were told how the merger presented many positive benefits whilst jointly tackling the skills gaps and social mobility. An example was demonstrated of a partnership between Doncaster College and Doncaster Knights in relation to Level 3 and degree courses.

Strengthening Partnerships and Impact across Doncaster – Members were satisfied to hear that North Lindsay College was committed to developing partnerships for the benefit of Doncaster and the wider region. It was recognised that a great deal had been achieved through a number of partnerships already created including those with CAST, the National High Speed Rail College, the proposed Doncaster University Technical Centre and the potential from the new Teaching Hospital. It was shared that partnering needed to build new learning pathways across Doncaster to fill gaps where skills were lacking.

Retaining Local Provision and Serving our Regions – It was clarified that the proposed merger of the two colleges would look to build capacity and capability to realise the ambitions of the area at both a regional and local level. It was shared that the college's strategy was to drive a skills infrastructure to support economic opportunities across the east-west economic corridor and therefore its location was key. Members were pleased to learn that the merger would look to raise attainment and develop specialisms in employability skills (including technical and professional skills). Members were also informed that the college was very keen to take an active role in the forthcoming Post-16 review, considered to be of key importance to improve the offer to Doncaster's young people and support the agenda of Doncaster going forward through a whole life approach. From a Sheffield City Region perspective, it was shared that they were keen for working groups to address local and regional issues.

Apprenticeships – The College explained that it viewed apprenticeships as one of the biggest potential growth areas which Members felt was encouraging. It was added that the college's income originated from students, apprenticeships and Higher Education growth (higher level and degree apprenticeships). It was explained that work was being undertaken with major partners such as DMBC and the NHS, larger businesses to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). It was added that applicants of all ages were expressing an interest in apprenticeships.

Members were informed that the majority from the private sector wanted to see growth set within a college provision. It was stated that this alongside increased competition with private providers was welcomed by the Sheffield City Region.

Doncaster Obtaining University Status – Members were informed that Doncaster becoming a University City would potentially develop a real brand for the town, something that could only strengthen what was already there.

Funding – It was explained that there were many different funding levels available. In terms of the number of students attending college, it was reported that this reduced slightly in the first few weeks of term and would act as a base for following year for funding opportunities. Members were told that the college was looking to increase the numbers of Higher Education students by approximately 25%.

It was continued that there had been a downturn in Post-16 numbers and that with an increasing growth in secondary school numbers an additional 3500 in secondary sector would potentially be going through onto Post-16.

Governance Arrangements – Members heard how governance arrangements were currently being progressed and welcomed the transparency provided and commitments made at the meeting. It was explained that steps were being undertaken to see what the new governance arrangements will look like. Members were told that expressions of interest were being received and that opportunities may arise for new Governors to join the board. Members recognised that a significant amount of work needed to take place for the planned date of the 1st November 2017 and that a period of transition will follow. In order for the new governance arrangements to settle in and the structure of local boards to be developed, it was anticipated that arrangements will be in place by December and the board will be in place by the 31st July 2018.

Assurances were provided that the good governance and leadership that was in place last year was still there. It was explained that although the Interim positions in place of the Joint Chief Executive and Director of Finance may lead to some concerns, the quality of

leadership was still high.

Damian Allen, Director of People (Learning and Opportunities: Children and Young People/Adult Health & Wellbeing Directorates) commented that given the background to, and nature of the merger, that greater confidence would be gained from the appointment of an Independent Chair of the re-vamped governing body. The Committee requested that they be provided with the new governance arrangements once they have been finalised and published.

Reference was made to the make-up of board members and Members learnt that an Officer of the Council had previously been one, although this was no longer the case.

IT – Members were informed that the online remote delivery of learning through ‘apps’ was part of the plan and that the University Centre was already delivering online and distance learning courses. It was explained that it was about being able to stream engagement and inspire students through technology. It was clarified that there had been some challenges presented around the IT infrastructure following the move from High Melton to Doncaster Hub.

Responses to Consultation – Members were informed that there had been widespread support from all stakeholder groups who viewed the merger as a positive move. That the majority of respondents strongly agreed that far more could be achieved together compared to two separate independent colleges. In response to the 89 responses received, Members were told that this figure was high compared to other consultation undertaken of a similar nature.

RESOLVED That

- I. The committee noted and supported the proposed merger of Doncaster and North Lindsey College.
- II. Consideration be given to an appropriate representative from Doncaster Council becoming a member of the board following the proposed merger.
- III. The Council should endeavour to further explore an opportunity of working with the new college and the Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

This page is intentionally left blank