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13th October 2017

Mayor Ros Jones
Doncaster Council
Floor 4
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Dear Ros,

Doncaster and North Lindsey College Merger

Further to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on the 5th October 2017, Members gave consideration to the Doncaster and North Lindsey College Merger.

In reaching its conclusions, the Committee received information from a range of attendees on behalf of the college including Anne Tyrrell, Interim Joint Chief Executive, David Reeve, Interim Director of Finance, Kathryn Brentnall, Assistant Principal Curriculum and Quality and finally Debbie Hilditch, Governor. The Committee was also able to ask questions to Dan Fell, Chief Executive Officer from the Doncaster Chamber and Krysia Woofinden, Senior Economic Policy and Delivery Manager from the Sheffield City Region.

The Committee supported the merger and during the discussion a number of areas were highlighted as follows;

- 1. Impact on Skills and Doncaster's Economy** – Member and Partners both acknowledged the benefits Doncaster has to offer and opportunities that are fast emerging from a growing local economy. Members were pleased to hear that the ethos of North Lindsay College was to seek 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, apprenticeships, social mobility and aspirations. An agenda that is shared between the Council with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPS) and endorsed by the Committee.

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- 2. Strengthening Partnerships and Impact across Doncaster** – Members were satisfied to hear that North Lindsay College are 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 the National High Speed Rail College and the proposed Doncaster University Technical Centre. It was shared that partnering needed to build new learning pathways across Doncaster to fill gaps where skills were lacking.

The Committee identified that the Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust may benefit from partnership working with potential university in the area and recommended that along with the new college, the Council should endeavour to further explore this opportunity.

- 3. Retaining Local Provision and Serving our Regions** – Members were informed how the proposed merger of the two colleges will look, and that its intentions are 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 is to drive a skills infrastructure to support economic opportunities across the east-west economic corridor. 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 which was 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.

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 to protect schools whilst providing the ability to invest in the future.

- 4. Governance Arrangements** – Members heard how governance arrangements were currently being progressed and welcomed the transparency provided and commitments made at the meeting. Members recognised that there is a significant amount of work to undertake before the planned date for the legal merger takes places on the 1st November 2017 and that a period of transition will follow. **The Committee requested that they be provided with the new governance arrangements once they have been finalised and published.**

Page 3.

Reference was also 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 was therefore recommended that consideration should be given to an appropriate representative from Doncaster Council becoming a member of the board following the proposed merger.**

A full set of minutes from this meeting will be found in due course on our website pages through the following link;

<http://doncaster.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=2595>.

I would finally like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who attended and would be grateful for a response by no later than the 13th November 2017.

Kind regards,



Councillor Kevin Rodgers
Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

cc: Jo Miller, Chief Executive
Cabinet Members
OSMC
Simon Wiles, Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Damian Allen, Director of People (Learning and Opportunities: Children and Young People/Adult Health & Wellbeing Directorates)
Anne Tyrrell, Interim Joint Chief Executive