

From: **Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform**

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To: **Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 22 March 2017**

Subject: **Kent Wide Area Review 2016/17**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary:

This report provides an overview and summary of the Area Review process.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the progress to date of the Kent Area Review.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The government is seeking to reform post-16 education through a programme of area reviews, intended to cover all FE and Sixth Form colleges, some of which are likely to face closure or merger as a result. The reform is expected to produce fewer, larger and more specialized providers, including a network of new Institutes of Technology.
- 1.2 Each area review is led by a local steering group, composed of a range of stakeholders including local authorities, Local Education Partnerships (LEPS), chairs of governors, and the FE and Sixth Form College Commissioners. Each review will proceed through a number of phases, from an analysis of the current economic and educational situation, to a consideration of options for reform.
- 1.3 The Kent area review began in December 2016. Kent is in the final wave of the national review programme and it is anticipated that this will be completed by April. Currently the Kent review is half way through the process set out in Section 4 of this report; the next meeting of the Steering Group will be identifying and debating potential options.

2. Purpose of the Area reviews

2.1 Each area review should establish the best institutional structure for the locality to offer high quality provision based on the current and future needs of learners and employers within the local area. Reviews should deliver:

- Institutions which are financially viable, sustainable, resilient and efficient, and deliver maximum value for public investment. This is likely to result in a rationalised curriculum; fewer, larger and more financially resilient organisations; and, where practicable, shared back office functions and curriculum delivery systems.
- An offer that meets each area's educational and economic needs. This will mean (a) Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and local authorities setting out their economic vision for the area and the skills base it will require to succeed; and (b) each area considering how existing provision and delivery structures can be adapted to deliver provision more effectively and efficiently. The reviews will provide a foundation for more effective joint local working, including with the development of local outcome agreements, and with greater devolution of responsibility for adult skills to local areas.
- Providers with strong reputations and greater specialisation. Providers should focus on what they can deliver effectively and to a high standard. An important outcome of each review will be the establishment of clear progression routes to higher level skills. In a number of areas, there is work being undertaken to look at the potential role of Institutes of Technology (IoTs).
- Sufficient access to high quality and relevant education and training for all, including 16-19 year olds, adults and learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), both those with high needs and those with moderate and low levels of SEND.
- Colleges well equipped to respond to the reform and expansion of the apprenticeship programme. The government's reform and growth aims for apprenticeships will position these as the biggest part of the vocational market. There is an expectation that further education colleges will take a greater share of the apprenticeship training market, alongside other types of providers.

3. Governance of Area Review: Role of the Local Steering Group

3.1 Each review is led by a local steering group composed of a range of stakeholders within the area. Members will include the chairs of governors of each institution (supported throughout the whole review process by their principals or chief executives), the Further Education

(FE) and Sixth Form Colleges (SFC) Commissioners, local authorities, LEPs, the funding agencies and Regional Schools Commissioners (RSC). The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department for Education will also be represented, either through or alongside the funding agencies, reflecting government's responsibility for protecting students.

- 3.2 The chair of the local steering group has to be someone who is independent from the providers involved in the review.
- 3.3 The local steering group oversees and steers the review work within the national framework. They will be able to call on wider expertise such as the Commissioner's advisers in curriculum and financial matters, as well as experts in areas such as special educational needs and disabilities. The steering group has a critical role in ensuring the coherence of the overall outcome for the locality – including alignment between institutions, with clear professional and technical progression routes that reflect local education and economic need, and are easily understood by young people and adults.
- 3.4 It will be for the governing bodies and LA members in the case of Community Learning and Skills of each individual institution to decide whether to accept the review's recommendations, reflecting their status as independent bodies. Governing bodies therefore are expected to engage proactively in the review process, and in particular to ensure that the analysis covers the options they would wish to be considered, taking account of their legal responsibilities.

4. Kent Wide Area Review Steering Group

4.1 Membership of the Kent Steering Group

The Kent wide area review is being led and over seen by a local steering group. The members of the local steering group are as follows:

- FE Commissioners and review team
- FE Principals and Chairs of governors from the Hadlow Group, Canterbury, East Kent, Mid Kent and North Kent Colleges
- KCC Community Learning and Skills
- Kent and Medway local authorities
- SELEP
- SFA (Skills funding agency) and EFA (Education funding agency)
- Regional Schools Commissioner

The Steering Group is chaired by the FE Commissioner as he is independent from the providers involved in the review.

- 4.2 The first phase of the Area review began with an analysis of Kent's current economic and education profile. This included economic priorities, demand for education and training at age 16; progression routes from school to other

education and training; and an overall assessment of funded provision in the area including quality and outcomes. At the first meeting of the Steering group members were asked to put forward data and views on the profile of provision and how this matched to local economic priorities. The data shared with stakeholders includes:

- Population characteristics (economy activity, unemployment, those Not in Employment, Education or Training, levels of higher education, basic skills needs, students with special education needs and disabilities).
- Key local employment sectors and their 'direction of travel' in terms of replacement demand, jobs growth and skill levels needed.
- Any acute skills shortages and skills gaps reported by employers which are relevant to the work of the review.
- 'One-issue' forecasts which are relevant (for example, major construction projects within the region which might impact on demand for skills, business relocations, closures and inwards investment).
- Their overview of the post 16 provider base and the extent to which they see it is meeting current skills needs and able to meet future priorities.

4.3 During January and February 2017 the FE Commissioner's review team undertook field work to provide an analysis of the current post 16 provision including schools and HEIs including local capacity, the quality and outcomes of each institution and relevance to economic need. The Commissioners have also analysed the position of Kent Colleges and KCC's Community Learning and Skills in terms of their quality, curriculum offer, finances and estates. It is not possible to provide details of this field work as this is commercially sensitive information and the review process is still to be completed.

4.4 The next meeting of the Steering group will consider and assess the options for the future. These may include:

- Curriculum options including opportunities for greater specialisation
- New forms of collaboration between colleges, schools and other partners
- Continued Support for the merger of East Kent College and Canterbury College
- Changes to local working practices, commissioning arrangements and the planning of post 16 provision.

These options will then be evaluated by the review delivery team and then formulated into a set of recommendations. Governing Bodies and in the case of Community Learning and Skills KCC Members will be ultimately responsible for deciding whether to accept or agree recommendations in relation their institution. Based on the current plan, for the review will be completed by the end of March 2017.

4.5 Once the recommendations have been agreed, the Steering Group will oversee the implementation and long term detailed monitoring will be undertaken by the funding agencies. The Steering Group will be encouraged to agree how implementation will be monitored locally. It is

intended that the LEP and Local Authorities retain their focus on driving improvements in education and skills and assessing how the

implementation of the recommendations are contributing to improvement in local economic performance.

5. Conclusion: Options for Kent

- 5.1 Details of the delivery options for Kent are still under consideration; therefore it is not possible to provide Members with more information at this stage. However, it is unlikely there will be any new recommendations for structural changes other than the ongoing proposal to merge East Kent and Canterbury Colleges.
- 5.2 The process to date has been extremely positive in developing stronger collaborations with Colleges, by providing a more robust strategic approach to the planning and commissioning of post 16 skills, provision and engaging employers in the process through the LEP.
- 5.3 Further updates will be brought to this Committee at the end of the review process which is anticipated to be mid-April 2017.

6. Recommendation(s)

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the progress to date on the Kent Wide Area Review.

7. Background Documents

- District Data
<http://www.kelsi.org.uk/skills-and-employability/14-to-19-25-curriculum-pathways/district-data-packs>
- Area reviews of Post 16 education and training institution October 2016
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ecSDDisplay.aspx?NAME=SD5078&ID=5078&RPID=12964868>

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