

LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL WEST YORKSHIRE

LEEDS REVIEW

- REPORT TO COUNCIL 03 OCTOBER 2007

1. CONTEXT

As part of the Strategic Area Review in West Yorkshire, Cambridge Education produced a report in 2006 that focused on the 14-19 provision in the city. The report concluded that the current configuration of provision in the city did not meet the needs of learners and that the status quo was not an option for the Further Education (FE) sector moving into the future. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Council accepted this report and requested a formal Strategic Options Review of Further Education in Leeds to inform decision making on the way forward. This was completed in April 2007 and presented to Council on 4 May 2007.

1.1. *The resolution from the LSC Council On 4th May, as Minuted, is set out below:*

Item 5 The Leeds Review

Agreed by members

- A) LSC West Yorkshire Council accept the report and support Option Three : a Type A Merger between Joseph Priestley College, Park Lane College Leeds, Leeds College of Technology and Leeds Thomas Danby, with an agreement from Leeds College of Building to enter a formal federation with the new institution. Leeds College of Art and Design and Notre Dame Catholic Sixth Form College to be invited to act as partners.
- B) The Strategic Options Review report, produced by Jim Aleander, to be circulated as a consultation document subject to amendments to improve the robustness of the report's content.

1.2 The following points are extracts from the full FE Strategic Options Review:

Option One: A Federation of Colleges

In order to meet the demanding future circumstances outlined in this review and - more importantly - to respond better to the needs of learners and employers, one option is for all or most of the Leeds FE colleges to join a formal federation. (Para 84)

Option Two: Merger

This option would see Notre Dame Catholic 6th Form College remain independent, as a good specialist provider in an otherwise unsuccessful inner

Leeds sixth form environment. The College of Art and Design would also remain independent as it is close to becoming a HEFCE institution. (Para 88)

Option 3: Merger without the College of Building

The College of Building has made a case to be exempted from any city wide merger on the basis of three main considerations. One is its unique position as the only College of Building in England. The second is its success: it had a good inspection report in 2006, graded as good in all areas except Capacity to Improve, which was outstanding. Its overall success rates in 2006 were above the sector norm. The third, related to its first, is its specialism; its mission is to deliver a comprehensive range of high quality learning opportunities related to construction and the built environment- although it does make limited provision in other areas. It had a good inspection report in 2006, graded as good in all areas except Capacity to Improve, which was outstanding. Its overall success rates in 2006 were above the sector norm. (Para 104)

The review concludes by recommending merger for Joseph Priestley, the College of Technology, Park Lane and Thomas Danby. The College of Building, which is seeking to maintain its independence, should do so only if it will commit to a formal federated arrangement with the newly merged college in Leeds. This should extend to joint governance arrangements as made possible by the Further Education and Training Bill, to become law this year. Joint management arrangements should be developed for programme delivery, facilities, learner access and support, appropriate back office functions and other services as appropriate. These elements would be acted upon once a decision is made by the LSC and after the response by the College Corporations. (Para 122)

(Excerpts end here)

2. National Changes since May 2007

2.1. At the time the Strategic Options review was produced the subsequent changes to government departments could not have been forecast. In brief, with the change of Prime Minister came the division of education responsibilities into two Departments: the Department of Children, Schools & Families (DCSF) and the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). The former has all 0-19 education and welfare responsibilities except for apprenticeships. The latter has apprenticeships and all post 19 learning and skills. FE estate responsibilities rest with DIUS.

2.2. The implications of these national changes include:

- Funding as well as strategic responsibilities for 0-19 education will be with Local Authorities from 2010, moving resources from the LSC
- Curriculum changes 14-19 will therefore be implemented through a single planning and funding body, the Local Children's Services Authority, rather than two as is the case currently

- 19+ learning and skills is with DIUS, with a primary focus emerging on skills for the economy and employer engagement
- The consultation on demand led funding has led to a confirmed implementation plan for 16-19 funding which will result in a common system for school and college learner finances from 2008, along with a demand-led model for adult learning, against priorities
- The Leitch Implementation Plan was published in July and confirms an approach to meeting skills needs based on priorities and incentives for learners and employers, with the Train to Gain model being endorsed and the accreditation of company training schemes being planned
- Confirmation of the raising of the participation age to 18 by 2013 will require integrated school, college and WBL provision in the 14-19 phase
- An expansion of Foundation Degrees and vocational HE will require more and better progression routes from L2 to L4/5, linking the new Specialised Diplomas to HE in a new schools/FE/HE interface
- The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) settlement is due by the end of October 2007. This will inform the new national LSC Statement of Priorities directly and this will be published soon after. Taking these together, there are expected to be fewer and more focused objectives for the use of public funding in FE. A continuing impact on funded adult learner numbers may be expected (these have already reduced), with more emphasis on the collection of fees. Both these are risks to FE in Leeds, which has a high level of subsidised adult learning.
- There is a new focus on the English regions with Ministers named for each of the regions, whose responsibilities will include aspects of the work of the Regional Development Agencies
- The Further Education and Training Bill is expected to become law during October 2007: it returns to the House of Lords on 11th October. It may be modified, but powers for greater formal collaboration between FE Corporations are expected to remain as planned currently; these complement the powers of schools to enter into Trust arrangements which were subject to law in 2006
- Plans are being developed nationally to enable and support “new models of delivery” to benefit 14-19 learners in particular; essentially these are formal collaborative arrangements between institutions and providers across sectors which are currently subject to their own separate planning, funding and inspection regimes

3. LSC Actions since May 2007

- 3.1. Following the acceptance of the Strategic Options Review by LSC West Yorkshire Local Council in May the report has been the subject of an informal consultation process involving all of the colleges within Leeds and its bordering authorities and key partners and stakeholders within the city and beyond. Hard copies of the report were widely distributed and the report has also been made available on the LSC West Yorkshire website.
- 3.2. The Chair of LSC West Yorkshire Council, the Regional Director for Yorkshire and the Humber, senior members of LSC West Yorkshire staff and the author

of the report have all made themselves available to discuss the findings of the report and the implications of the options included within it. The offer was made to attend any meetings as and when required with any interested party in the city to ensure clarity and to answer any questions that would assist partners and stakeholders to respond to the informal consultation process.

- 3.3. Briefings have been provided to Leeds MPs and local Councillors to ensure they are fully apprised of the findings included within the report and to clarify the process for arriving at a final decision of the reconfiguration of FE provision in the city.
- 3.4. Presentations have been made to each of the five College Corporations in scope, the Leeds Skills Board, the 14-19 Strategy Group, Leeds Secondary Heads and the Executive Board of Leeds City Council. Individual meetings have taken place with Yorkshire Forward, representatives of the Church of England and Catholic Diocese, the then Department for Education and Skills, individual departments of the Local Authority, Education Leeds and two of the Universities within the city.
- 3.5. The Regional Director has held individual meetings with the Chairs of the College Corporations and the Chair of the LSC Council, supported by LSC Officers, has held a number of meetings of the Chairs as a group to enable open and frank discussion on the issues they felt needed to be addressed to inform decision making.
- 3.6. In order to ensure there was no misinterpretation in press interest in the Review a meeting was held with a senior journalist from the Yorkshire Evening Post.
- 3.7. There has been a heartening amount of public interest in this review and support for a programme of action. In summary - the details are reported elsewhere - all those responding have supported the view that the status quo is not an option; either change must happen to the configuration of FE colleges through large-scale merger (the majority view) or the LSC must use different contractual procedures to commission or purchase provision closer to its requirements and to the needs of learners, employers and the wider community.
- 3.8. None of the direct evidence provided in the Options Review has been challenged, although there has been some disagreement with the conclusions drawn. This is to be expected in a situation whereby the LSC was proposing re-configuration rather than this coming from the colleges themselves, collectively.
- 3.9. All interested parties were required to respond in writing to the LSC by 14th of September 2007. A full overview of the responses is included in Appendix 1, however, in summary:

OPTION 1

There were not any responses in favour of Option 1 'A Federation of Colleges'

OPTION 2

From the 25 respondents there were 7 (28%) that expressed support for Option 2 'Merger'. The highest number of responses in support for this option came from FE Colleges (43%). However it should be noted that key partners and stakeholders including Leeds Skills Board, Yorkshire Forward and Education Leeds were in favour of Option 2.

OPTION 3

There were 14 respondents (56%) in support of Option 3. Employers constituted more than half of the responses that were in favour of this option (64%) with all bar one of these being from the construction/building industry.

4. Estates

- 4.1. A unique opportunity exists now to create the best modern, integrated 21st century FE estate of any city in England. This is because the LSC's National Capital Strategy has a once in a generation resource and a plan to meet the needs of all priority learners. Leeds is recognised as requiring a huge investment in the renewal of college facilities across the city, to be based on a unified FE plan to meet the needs of learners, employers and communities.
- 4.2. The National LSC Capital Strategy has been updated since the May Council meeting (at the National Council in July 2007). It covers the period 2007 to 2011. The following quotes from the strategy set the context relevant to Leeds:

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is implementing a major programme of capital investment. This programme will further accelerate the modernisation and renewal of the further education (FE) estate, provide new places in colleges for 14-19 learners and adults, new places in leading schools for 16-19 yr olds, and assist other post-16 providers to increase their levels of capital investment. Over the four year period to 2010-11 the LSC expects to invest over £2 billion in capital projects and promote £4-5 billion of development by colleges, schools and other providers. If the annual level of capital funding currently projected to 2010-11 continues into future years the modernisation and renewal of the FE estate would be substantially complete by 2014-15. (Para 1.2)

The LSC strongly believes that all learners should experience teaching and learning in modern, fit for purpose, learning environments appropriate to the learning paths they are following. The LSC has a duty to help ensure that learning opportunities are maximised through the investment of capital funds, in order to raise the participation, retention and attainment of young people. (Para 1.3)

The FE White Paper, *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances*, published in March 2006 set out a comprehensive programme to transform the FE system into an efficient and effective powerhouse for economic prosperity and social mobility. Capital investment is, therefore, a vital part of implementing the key reform principles and outcomes set out in the FE White Paper to develop a further education system that is focused on equipping people with the skills needed for employment and in which institutions are more specialised. (Para 1.4)

4.3. Priorities for the Capital Strategy are as follows:

The LSC believes that its capital strategy as described in these pages will achieve its strategic priorities (Para 1.7):

- Priority 1 –Raise the quality and improve the choice of learning opportunities for all young people to equip them with the skills for employment, further or higher learning, and for wider social and community engagement.
- Priority 2 —Raise the skills of the nation, giving employers and individuals the skills they need to improve productivity, employability and social cohesion.
- Priority 3 –Raise the performance of a world class system that is responsive, provides choice and is valued and recognised for excellence.
- Priority 4 –Raise our contribution to economic development locally and regionally through partnership working.

The primary role of the LSC in this context, therefore, is to invest capital funds to support Government priorities and objectives for 14-19 and adult learners. But capital investment in schools and colleges also contributes to the achievement of wider Government objectives and often acts as a catalyst for regeneration and encourages others to invest in that community. The LSC believes that its strategic priorities for investment in educational premises and equipment reflect the range of challenges set out in both the FE White Paper and the Leitch report. (Para 1.8)

A principal action will be increasing the rate of renewal and modernisation of the FE estate. The capital programme will also contribute to the outcomes of other important initiatives such as the FE Review, Agenda for Change and the Framework for Excellence. (Para 1.9)

The substantial increase in project volumes and changes outlined in this document may require changes to the LSC as an organisation, in order to deliver an enlarged capital programme. The following changes are likely during 2007-08 (Para 1.10):

- a more strategic role for the LSC's National Capital Committee in overseeing capital policy, the implementation of the National Capital Strategy and determining very large capital applications;

- delegation to the proposed Regional Councils, possibly via dedicated regional capital committees, to approve the majority of capital project applications;
- changes in due course to management lines for regional property resources –moving to regional line management and functional/professional management from the National Office; and
- enhanced policy development and programme management capability combined with increased major projects’ management resource at National Office. This would better support those regional and area teams dealing with very large projects requiring specialist input and better address infrastructure policy issues and a programme to enhance colleges’ client capabilities.

4.4. *Relationship to Current Estates planning in Leeds:* LSC WY believes the revised national strategy is fully consistent with and supportive of the planned major investment in an integrated FE estate for the city. The following points are particularly relevant:

- The priorities: creating an estate to support young people’s learning and achievement, meeting skills requirements and enhancing the economy
- Investment to benefit 14-19 year olds and adults
- The link to regeneration
- The opportunity to renew and modernise the FE estate.

4.5. The strategy also notes that changes may be necessary to the working of the LSC itself, with growing regionalisation of decision making alongside growing project management capability.

4.6. LSC WY has been assured by managers responsible for the national Capital Strategy that its objectives for the FE review in Leeds can be supported by major investment. Resources have been earmarked for a single integrated capital strategy for the city. They will be allocated to Leeds on the basis of local and regional LSC approval of a learner-led education plan for the city linked to renewal and modernisation of its FE estate. This will take place in several stages. The LSC will approve a reorganisation plan for FE that seeks to align Corporations more effectively and efficiently with the learning and skills needs of learners, adults, employers and communities. Once this is done an application in principle can be made for LSC capital support, probably in spring/early summer 2008, based on an education case, outline estates strategy and financial plan for the major capital project. Once endorsed, this plan can be taken through formal procedures to the application in detail stage by early 2009. The intention will be to start some work on site(s) before the end of 2009 and have the new estate for FE in Leeds delivered in phased projects from 2011 onwards, with completion intended by 2013. Some priority projects may be funded in the interim.

4.7. This initial plan is also fully consistent with the revisions currently underway to the Regional Capital Strategy for Yorkshire and Humber, which will be the planning vehicle for delivery of the integrated FE estate in Leeds.

5. Moving Forward from the Review Options

5.1. The review options are laid out in section 1.2 above. The current position and context for the Council's decision is described from paragraph 5.5 onwards, below. However, it is important to recognise the principles and opportunities informing the decision about reorganisation of FE in Leeds. These were addressed in detail in both the Strategic Options Review of FE in Leeds (May 2007) and the Cambridge Education Post 16 Review (October 2006). They may be summarised as follows:

There are *requirements* to ensure that:

- Young people aged 14-19 have the best possible opportunity to optimise their learning and achievement based on excellent guidance and coordinated provision of outstanding school, college and work based programmes
- Adult learning meets the needs of priority groups, with a focus on skills for life and qualifications for careers
- Employers are able to utilise the right level of workforce skills to respond well to the challenges and opportunities of their sectors
- The economy becomes more competitive and sustains its success on the basis of knowledge and skills, nationally and internationally
- Communities benefit well from efficiently-resourced and available learning opportunities for life and work, promoting social cohesion
- The system for 14-19 and adult learning in Leeds is coherent and of excellent quality, with clear progression routes from schools to colleges, Higher Education and valued careers
- All provision is inclusive and is designed to promote equality of access and achievement, meeting the needs of priority groups
- Provision for Further Education is made in facilities that are inspirational for learners, staff and communities, attracting learners, enhancing learning and enabling achievement.

There are *opportunities* to ensure that:

- Provision made through Further Education colleges is entirely congruent with that made through schools from 11-19
- Learning programmes are integrated and pathways are progressive for 14-19 programmes, within and between types of institution and provider
- Disadvantaged individuals and communities receive substantial benefits from a reconfigured FE system and its modernised facilities
- Leeds develops as a learning city, with the primary, secondary and post 16 phases of learning planned, connected and resourced to maximise individual economic and community benefits
- Leeds meets and exceeds the objectives for L2 and L3 achievements set currently for young people and adults, with milestones at 2015 and 2020

In summary, the people of Leeds should be enabled by the Further Education system to celebrate learning for its own sake; to gain the best qualifications

they can; to enjoy good careers and be prized by their employers; and to enjoy living in cohesive communities.

- 5.2. In the context of these aims and an emerging consensus on the need for change, if not the details of its implementation, there would follow a new framework for FE in Leeds.
- 5.3. In order to promote coherence, the sector should establish a “Leeds standard” of excellence in provision, transform progression routes into and from colleges, maintain and enhance specialisms, and eliminate wasteful competition and unnecessary duplication. To ensure this, there should be a unified FE service operating under a new overarching Further Education Strategic Board for Leeds, which includes the elements set out in the Strategic Options Review. The unification would be brought about most effectively if supported by a reorganisation of provision, reducing the number of FE Corporations. The new configuration of colleges would then form the proposed Strategic Board. The existing colleges are acknowledged as operating competitively in the current climate in ways not directly inspired by benefits for learners. The new model of funding from 2008 may well increase such competition. Unlike competitive behaviour in the private sector, which is seen to improve service but is itself regulated, competition by publicly-funded FE Colleges often results in wasteful duplication whilst leaving some learner and employer markets poorly served.
- 5.4. A reorganisation of provision in Leeds would ensure that a larger FE entity was positioned to:
 - Meet the needs of learners of all ages and at all levels, from Entry to L3 and on to Higher Education
 - Promote diversity in access, learning and achievement, reducing stereotyping in choice of programmes by visibly making effective provision for all groups in campuses across the city
 - Complement the provision made by the city’s schools, which are themselves likely to be re-configured through the planning of Education Leeds
 - Resource learning for the most disadvantaged groups in the community
 - Meet the requirements of a funded FE market place which will be financed on the basis of core and commissioned provision in future, through national and regional priorities
 - Respond as “the voice of FE” in Leeds to demand in meeting the skills requirements of employers, with a comprehensive range of provision offered through comprehensive city and sub-regional networks
 - Plan more confidently for medium and long term innovative projects requiring either revenue or capital resources
 - Manage a major, integrated capital strategy for the city, renewing and modernising the Leeds FE estate to 21st century standards of delivery and sustainability: the most exciting opportunity to renew FE colleges anywhere in England.

5.5. On this basis it would appear that, subject to available resources, the larger the entity created by reorganisation the more effectively and efficiently these goals could be met. It has been recognised by previous studies that the College of Music and the College of Art & Design would not be expected to join a reorganisation through merger as they have substantial HE provision. The former is a designated HE institution and the latter has around half its provision as HE and could be re-designated within the current planning period. Nonetheless, these two colleges would be expected to join the city wide FE planning forum described here as a Strategic Board along with Notre Dame RC 6th Form College.

6. Working with Leeds City Council and Education Leeds

6.1. The main strategic responsibility for 14-19 provision, under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, is with Leeds City Council's Children's Services Authority (CSA). This responsibility, which includes an entitlement for learners, is managed through Education Leeds. It is expected that the City Council will have funding as well as strategic powers from 2010/11. Currently 16-19 funding responsibility resides with the LSC, which is implementing a significant national reform of revenue funding for colleges and school 6th forms from 2008.

6.2. The Strategic Options Review of May 2007 specifically left for later consideration the issue of whether another 6th Form College or Post 16 Centre should be established in Leeds. This followed the findings of the Cambridge Education Post 16 Review that a number of inner city schools should no longer operate 6th forms due to concerns about their quality, size and the narrow curriculum offered to young people. The reason that consideration of this matter was postponed was because Education Leeds was itself developing a reconfiguration plan that could include reducing the number of inner city 6th forms. There was, and continues to be, discussion about more Academies being established in Leeds. To date, Education Leeds has not concluded its discussions on either some form of schools reconfiguration or the creation of more Academies. In its response to the FE Review it supported Option 2 and noted the following:

“The Board would like to see the joint development of a number of Post 14 Centres between the LA/school sector and the LSC/FE sector to deliver significant elements of Post 14 vocational provision on a local basis.

The Board recognise that current Post 16 provision in many inner Leeds schools delivers below average outcomes and inadequate choice, largely due to the very low student numbers that in most cases are unlikely to ever reach viable levels. The Board are mindful of the imminent changes to post 16 funding arrangements for schools that means that current delivery arrangements in many inner Leeds schools will not be financially sustainable in future...

The Board is of the opinion that there is still a strong case for the creation of a state-of-the-art new Post-16 Centre to serve a number of inner Leeds schools and bring focus to the AS/A2 and general L3 provision currently delivered by the existing colleges. Any such Post 16 Centre could either be part of the new merged FE College, but with its own distinct identity, or be a separate institution.”

- 6.3. There are two issues here. The more significant strategically is the preference for a new Post 16 centre, with options for its status within or outside a merger (final paragraph above). The second is the suggestion of joint development of Post 14 centres. For both potential developments the guiding principle should be that decisions are taken in the best interests of learners. Regarding the new Post 16 centre, it is clear that such a centre could be created through both the reorganisation of FE in Leeds and the major capital investment to accompany it. The centre would accommodate GCE A level and all similar general education students (including the International Baccalaureate) from the contributing colleges. An example would be students from the Park Lane College 6th form centre if it is part of the reorganisation (in its response to consultation, Park Lane favoured a single FE institution for the city). If established within FE the centre could readily meet the need identified by Education Leeds, above. As a centre within a wider FE college it would also be ideally positioned to link general education and vocational programmes for the benefit of learners, in coherent progression pathways. For this to happen there would need to be further discussion with key stakeholders in the city, including the schools, City Council, Education Leeds and Notre Dame RC 6th Form College, which has a significant number of non-Catholic students. It also has a substantial group of vocational students.
- 6.4. With regard to Post 14 centres, it will be necessary to define these more clearly before decisions are taken. Questions would include whether they are intended to be 14-16, 14-19, or for all ages. Educationally, the best progression pathways should be developed, ideally, from 11-19 with 14+ being a milestone. Evidence from elsewhere suggests that free-standing vocational skills centres tend to be costly and have uncertain long-term education and business plans (see for example the University of Leeds research for the then DfES on 14-19 Pathfinders, published between 2003 and 2006). If the key requirement is for vocational provision made locally for the 14-19 age group then this could be made within the reorganised FE network, that is through the colleges but with an agreed governance and funding model that ensures their future financial and educational viability. One of the principles informing an integrated capital strategy will be a distributed model of campuses. These could accommodate Post 14 vocational provision in local centres.
- 6.5. In addition to its recognition of the FE Options Review, Education Leeds is also developing a plan for more Academies, to supplement the David Young Community Academy (DYCA). There have been indications from Education

Leeds that these could have vocational themes; the DYCA has a construction curriculum theme. The LSC is supportive of the wish of Leeds City Council to improve school performance and learning outcomes for young people by means of establishing additional Academies, probably from 2009. The LSC will work with the City Council and Education Leeds to clarify how any new Academies can best be integrated with provision made by the re-configured FE system for all schools in local areas.

- 6.6. The LSC will address proposals for additional Academies as these are ratified by the City Council and supported by government, via the new Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). In doing so the LSC will also work with the colleges in a reformed system to seek ways in which 14-16 vocational programmes can be developed in school-college partnerships. It will work similarly with all stakeholders to explore ways in which the new college system can support the delivery of 16-19 provision directly, in and for the Academies and their students.
- 6.7. The intention of the LSC is to work with the City Council, Education Leeds, schools and colleges to ensure that a genuine 14-19 phase of learning can be developed in Leeds so as to maximise the benefits of major 11-19 curriculum reforms for young people. This phase should be centred on the needs of learners rather than institutions and provide integrated 14-19 progression pathways within and across schools, colleges and other providers. In getting this right the partners involved will also strengthen progression to HE and serve the needs of the Leeds economy.
- 6.8. The LSC has sought to work closely with Education Leeds throughout the process of conducting both the Cambridge Education Post 16 Review, 2006, and the subsequent FE Strategic Options Review this year. It has always been accepted that the development of a new configuration of schools was a complex exercise predicated on learners' entitlements and needs.

At the time of writing this report there is no clear picture of future plans for the city's schools although deadlines for submissions to both the City Council and the DCSF are imminent. The plan when finalised must inform at least three stakeholders: the City Council, the DCSF and the LSC. This has meant that the LSC has acted on the basis of the best knowledge of a policy which has yet to reach a conclusion but which will have within it key elements that impact on any reconfiguration. An example is the developing preferences for Academies in the city, which should be planned closely with the plans for colleges. Open discussion between the LSC and Education Leeds is necessary if the best interests of learners are to be served and it will be vital that regular clear communication channels are put in place to ensure the LSC is well informed of future plans and does not have to interpret for itself the implications of the developing Education Leeds views on a new 6th Form Centre and on Post 14 centres.

7. The Scale of Reorganisation

- 7.1. The scale of a reorganisation of FE is the wider strategic issue for the LSC, in terms of the number of colleges joining it. It has been noted already that, if one main aim is that of unifying FE 14-19 and adult skills provision in Leeds, then the more colleges in the reorganisation the better, subject to good governance and management. In the new climate of strategic commissioning of provision, a robust, high quality, well resourced entity with a single set of management overheads is attractive. Employers expect ease of access to the best workforce development. If a unified college can extend its specialist centres of excellence whilst resourcing and delivering general and vocational provision to a high standard, i.e. combine effectiveness with efficiency, then success and sustainability are likely. If a new college is to be established through reorganisation then it should be on this basis, which will position it well for the emerging national FE Framework for Excellence and, in due course, self-regulation.
- 7.2. The FE service in Leeds has centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs) and other specialist provision. It is either committed to the emerging National Skills Academies (already in Financial Sector and plans for a role in the 'virtual' Construction Sector) or will be, as these are extended nationally. It makes some provision outside the city (recently including Keighley), sub-regionally and nationally, with growing international links. It remains, however, strongly committed to the Leeds conurbation and the communities within it. Any reorganisation must therefore work for Leeds and "tick the boxes" of maintained services beyond the city, within a system of priorities.
- 7.3. At the time of the FE Options Review in May it looked as though the regional and national role of the LSC would allow it to promote the specialisms of the Leeds colleges across England, if there were client benefits. This particularly applied to the College of Building and was addressed in Option 3 of the Review. In the known policy environment of October 2007 this role looks much less likely. It is known that the LSC will not have responsibility for 16-19 learning after 2010/11. The LSC's future responsibilities for the skills needs of the economy are uncertain. The changes made to regional responsibilities, such as the establishment of Ministers in each English region along with regional skills planning, raise questions about the LSC's responsibilities longer term. With regard to adult skills these may increase, reduce or simply change. In any event, to plan a model of support for FE in Leeds which might require LSC activity out of the region now looks problematic.
- 7.4. In this context it should still be confirmed that an important criterion of any reorganisation would be its capacity to support and enhance specialist provision. This exists in all the FE colleges, although only one claims specialist status for the college as a whole, the College of Building. Although this college has sought to retain its independence in its response to consultation on the grounds of maintaining its specialism as a service to learners and employers, it should be emphasised that any model of reorganisation would set out to do this for the whole FE service in Leeds. Any other approach would be retrograde.

8. A Decision on the Further Education Service for Leeds

8.1. The Council is requested to consider its position on the Leeds Review in the light of:

- the requirements of learners and employers for excellent provision, meeting the needs of the 14-19 age group and priority adults
- the related factors evident in the planned reconfiguration of schools, particularly in the inner city
- the response to consultation
- LSC local and regional priorities
- the opportunities presented for a major integrated capital project to renew the FE estate in Leeds: the largest and most exciting investment opportunity for a grouping of colleges in England.

8.2. If a decision to reorganise provision is taken, subject to necessary procedures, then formal consultation would follow. The timeline identified in the report presented in May remains attainable but challenging. Formal consultation would need to lead to a final LSC decision by the end of the calendar year for a reorganisation to be feasible for August 2008. It is expected that the current regulations would pertain for a Leeds reorganisation if set in train formally from October. Any significant delay could make a reorganisation subject to new procedures arising from or supportive of the current FE and Training Bill as it becomes an Act, or other relevant legislation and/or regulation.

The Council is requested to decide the preferred way forward for the reorganisation of Further Education Colleges serving Leeds and the sub-region.

(ENDS)