

Minutes of College/Council Strategic Liaison Group
26 September 2011 – CWA, King's Lynn Campus
10.00 am

Present: ***The College of West Anglia***
 Roger Ward Acting Chair (on behalf of Peter Dixon)
 David Pomfret Principal
 Arlene Clark Executive Director, Curriculum and Learning

King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council
 Cllr Nick Daubney Leader of the Council
 Debbie Gates Executive Director, Central Services
 (on behalf of Ray Harding, Chief Executive)

In Attendance:
 Rochelle Woodcock Clerk to the Corporation, CWA

1 Apologies

 Peter Dixon, Chair
 Ray Harding, Chief Executive
 Cllr Elizabeth Watson (apologies received during meeting)

2 Minutes of the Last Meeting – 4 April 2011

 The Minutes of the meeting of 4 April 2011 were agreed as an accurate record.

3 Matters Arising

 There were no matters arising.

4 College Corporate Issues

 The Principal provided a verbal update on College issues, as follows:

(i) Restructure

 The restructure had been successfully implemented. Approximately 100 staff had been affected, with 30 staff having left and a significant majority assimilated into new posts, leading to a £1m reduction in pay costs.

(ii) Accommodation Developments

 Extensive upgrading, development work and asbestos issues in the Tower Block (9000²m of teaching space) had required a decant from this building into temporary accommodation. The decant presented a good strategic opportunity leading to a partnership approach to finding solutions. The sensitive conversion of the facility at Lynn Sport and an agreement which allows long term flexibility has been one positive solution.

 The former Alderman Jackson School buildings have been redeveloped, to accommodate a Social Care and Childhood Studies campus, of approximately 100 staff and students. Dialogue has been held with the local Residents Association and Planners.

Two temporary buildings have also been erected on site. There has been a positive reaction to all the temporary facilities from both staff and students.

In addition, backlog maintenance, including roof improvements and building refurbishment has been ongoing. There was a delay to the start of term by one week, but there has been no indication that this has adversely affected intake or publicity. Extensive communication, via the media, has been undertaken.

(iii) Tower Block Refurbishment

Proposals are currently being drafted regarding the scope of what needs to be achieved in the Tower Block. A new competitive capital funding opportunity from the SFA (potential £2.1m) has been announced, with bids to be submitted by mid November 2011 and a decision to be made in December 2011. The Tower Block refurbishment meets the criteria but a successful bid is not guaranteed. The college is currently exploring possibilities of further third party support to assist with contributions to refurbish this building to the required standard.

(iv) STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)

Growth in HE numbers needs to be aligned to the STEM agenda, as these are key sectors. The college was recognised as the regional centre for STEM last year and has a STEM Champion. A national evaluation has recommended funding for a further year, based on the quality of work being done at the college.

(v) King's Lynn Academy

This was an initiative supported by the Strategic Partnership. Governors met recently to evaluate where the Academy was and where to go next. Strong results were achieved this year, representing a 100% improvement on the previous year's results of the former Park High School. Results for 5 A*-C (including Maths and English) rose from 21% to 42%, bringing the Academy off the bottom of the West Norfolk league table. Results for 5 A*-C (excluding Maths and English) were 80% and brought the Academy into the top quartile in the county and the highest ranked West Norfolk school. The 42% is still below county averages, but is a good result for the first year.

Governors meet again, tomorrow, to review accommodation plans. There are currently two contractors competing in the procurement process with a decision to appoint due in October, on what is a £10.5m capital improvement project. Building should commence in late March 2012 with the building due for completion by September 2013.

King's Lynn Academy will be a catalyst for wider strategic change in West Norfolk.

(vi) Student Mix

In terms of the wider skills agenda, the college is optimistic that it will meet its target, despite the less positive national FE picture that is emerging. Adult participation will be challenging, with the decimation of funding and the change in eligibility criteria, which will lead to a narrowing of participation for adults.

Apprenticeships look more positive, despite the expectation that employers should contribute more. Engineering is particularly positive, signifying growing confidence from employers. The success rates for Apprenticeship frameworks last year improved by 4%-5% on the college's previous best result to 77%.

The Executive Director, Curriculum and Learning added that the college is confident that it will meet its target for HE numbers, capped at 129, this year. There is to be a graduation ceremony in two weeks with 176 students graduating, which is very positive.

RW stated that he was encouraged at the increase in Apprenticeship numbers as a lot of them were in the small engineering firms that predominate in the local area.

ND added that it was important to recognise the importance of this sector in West Norfolk and to think of the future of young people and their training. He was delighted at the steps that had been taken through partnership working.

The Principal's report was noted.

5 Borough Council Corporate Issues

The Leader of the Council gave a verbal update on Borough Council issues, as follows:

(i) Developments – NORA and Town Centre

The Borough Council is in advanced discussions with different organisations to develop the South Lynn area and it is likely that development will begin within the next few years.

Despite the downturn in the economy there is a lot of development interest in keeping the town centre buoyant. Shopping centres need to adapt to meet the changing needs of customers in terms of leisure, entertainment etc. The Council has been working with private companies and developers and recently opened the Arts Trust.

(ii) Local Enterprise Partnerships

The Council is involved with both the Anglia Partnership and the Greater Peterborough Partnership, which are meeting this evening. The Council intends to be a full partner and play a role to ensure the LEP's are a success.

The Council has recently published site specific allocations, under the local development framework, for potential house building. These are indicative of the opportunities available to help the area grow.

The Principal asked what confidence developers had currently.

ND advised that the confidence is there and developers are optimistic that opportunities are available. Funding has changed drastically but he intends to fight for West Norfolk and the rural communities. It is important to find better ways of doing things to service the area. Tourism, particularly in King's Lynn, is important for the local economy in terms of jobs and expenditure and more emphasis will be placed on this in the future.

The Principal noted that the SFA were offering a capital funding opportunity in terms of £100m grant. He suggested that it might be good to consider statements from the Borough Council in support of their investment in the regeneration of the area and the positive impact this would have locally.

ND noted the positive partnership working over the past few years between the Borough and the college and it was agreed to explore the possibility of sharing non front-line activities to reduce costs.

Action Principal/Exec Dir Central Services

(iii) Enterprise Centre

This is moving forward and will be achieved within the next year or two.

The Principal noted that it would be important to link the enterprise activities in the Academy to the new centre.

The Executive Director, Central Services continued the Borough update, as follows:

(iv) West Norfolk Strategy Group

The West Norfolk Strategy Group had set the agenda for partnership activity. A data pack was being prepared that separated West Norfolk profiles and compared them with Norfolk and national averages.

The Principal commented that it was important that County recognised the level of underperformance in West Norfolk and provided the necessary support.

DG added that the Local Authority needs to be onboard to drive through change in the area. The data pack is critical to identifying problems and taking positive steps.

(v) Shared Services

A number of savings have been achieved through shared services such as:

- joint refuse contract with North Norfolk
- shared audit control
- car park management with North Norfolk
- joint care and repair agency with Breckland
- revenues and benefits partnership with North Norfolk
- shared IT facilities.

also looking at:

- engaging with DWP for front line office provision
- sharing Lynn Sport office space
- sharing office space in King's Court (possibly Police and GP Commissioners).

ND noted that West Norfolk had not followed the trend to merge management teams but, in day to day terms, is finding successful ways to share services.

DG confirmed that there is a lot is going on at ground level and there is huge potential to share back office facilities locally, eg HR.

The Principal noted that, should more schools become academies, funding will go directly to the academies to purchase their services. There would be potential to explore the provision of locally shared support services to them.

DG added that initial discussions had indicated that savings could potentially be maximised through the development of a Local Authority Leisure Company. This would be a wholly Local Authority owned company, rather than a Trust.

The Principal asked the current situation regarding the incinerator proposal and the supermarket developments.

ND advised that the incinerator was to be paid for by Private Finance Initiative and currently sits with the Secretary of State. It was likely that the PFI would be awarded. Caroline Spellman had asked for more evidence of local support for the waste strategy. A judicial review on the procurement still had to be heard. A seminar was being held locally, this week, to look at exploring other ways to dispose of waste.

Both supermarket developments had received planning permission, highways issues had been answered and legal actions had been dropped, so both developments could now proceed.

The report from the Borough Council was noted.

The Acting Chair, Roger Ward, confirmed how important it was to the Board of Governors that partnership working within West Norfolk was strengthened.

6 Any Other Business

There was no other business

7 Date, time and venue for next meeting

Monday, 2 April 2012 at 10.00 am, Council Offices.

The meeting closed at 11.05 am