

**PROVISION FOR 14-19 YEAR-OLDS AND RECREATIONAL COURSES IN
DACORUM**

Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families

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Executive Member: Robert Gordon

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[Chairman], Nicholas Tiley [Dacorum Borough Councillor]

1. Purpose of the report

- To update members on the progress of the Topic Group established by the Scrutiny Committee and to report on more recent events at West Herts College which impact on developments.

2. Summary of the report

- 2.1. The Topic Group has held meetings on 11 July and on 22 October to take forward the issues arising from the Scrutiny Committee's deliberations on 18 June. The next meeting is planned for 7 January 2004 and an update on this meeting will be given to the Scrutiny Committee on 21 January 2004.
- 2.2. The meetings have been productive, and the college has made a firm commitment not to withdraw from adult recreational provision until such time as other providers have been identified. The college accepts that this could be a lengthy process. Full-time 16-19 provision at the Dacorum Campus has been transferred to Watford.
- 2.3. The programme run by the college for pupils at Key Stage 4 (The Increased Flexibility programme) continues to work well and will continue in September 2004.

- 2.4. To date, there has been limited progress in building collaboration at 16-19 with the college, but school-to-school collaboration is growing.
- 2.5. College staff in recent months have of necessity devoted much time and energy on the preparation for OfSTED inspection. The inspection took place over a two-week period towards the end of November 2003.
- 2.6. The OfSTED Inspection report, together with the earlier Tribal Consultancy report, will form the basis of the college's action plan. It is envisaged that this plan will have a clear focus on the needs of the learner, underpinned by sound finances.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1. Members are invited to note the progress since the last meeting of the committee, and to advise the Topic Group about further action.

4. Background

- 4.1. The earlier paper which the Committee considered on 18 June set out the college's proposals, together with the concerns of CSF about the possible impact of the proposals on learners in Dacorum. The Committee agreed to establish a Topic Group to investigate the issues further.
- 4.2. The Topic Group has held meetings on 11 July and 22 October, with a further meeting planned for 7 January 2004. In addition to group members and CSF officers, the meetings have been attended by college staff and by officers of Hertfordshire Learning and Skills Council.
- 4.3. The Hertfordshire LSC, in the context of the college's financial difficulties, commissioned Tribal Consultancy to carry out an independent review of the college's organisation. The report was completed in early September and presented to the College Corporation in late September. The consultants were required to address and advise on:
 - The breadth of the curriculum offered including opportunities for reduction, rationalisation and expansion of activities
 - The effectiveness of the delivery of that provision and how quality improvements may be made
 - The appropriateness of the college infrastructure and what changes may be considered to ensure a more appropriate and cost-effective environment
 - The current financial position and the impact of the proposed changes to ensure the college's long-term financial viability
 - The impact on learners of the proposed changes
- 4.4. Much of the college's energies in the Autumn Term were devoted to the preparation for a full OfSTED inspection which took place over a two-week period in late November. Inspectors will give their feedback to the college in early January and the final report will be published in February.
- 4.5. The college, working with the Hertfordshire LSC, will use the conclusions and recommendations from the Tribal Consultancy and OfSTED Inspection reports to produce a detailed action plan.
- 4.6. Andrew Bragg, the College Principal, has resigned from his post. Richard Boniface, the Deputy Principal, is now Acting Principal.

5. Progress to date

5.1. Adult learning provision

The college has maintained the position that it will not withdraw from further adult learning provision in the Watford and Hemel Hempstead areas until alternative providers can be identified. Meetings have taken place between the college, CSF/ACL, the local LSC and the Dacorum Learning Forum to develop an action plan in line with the college's Community Strategy to further develop first rung provision and maintain the leisure learning programme. The college will receive ACL funding for 2003/04 towards their provision. The group next meets on 19 January 2004 when it is expected that outcomes of the college's recent OfSTED inspection will inform next steps.

5.2. 14 – 19 Provision

5.2.1. The college continues to work with schools in West Hertfordshire to deliver the Increased Flexibility at Key Stage 4 programme. The programmes, which are all popular and fully subscribed, include:

- catering
- hairdressing
- electronics
- electrical installation
- motor vehicle
- sport and recreation
- practical crafts
- performance skills
- health and social care

Health and Social Care is provided on the Dacorum campus whilst all the other courses are provided in Watford.

5.2.2. The above courses, for Year 10 and Year 11 students, are for a whole day each week. Pupils either make their own way to the college or, in some cases, are transported in the schools' minibuses. The college pays half the costs of transport for pupils from Ashlyns School in order to reduce the costs of the much longer journey.

5.2.3. The college intends to continue this provision for Key Stage 4 pupils in September, with the possible addition of Childcare and Business.

5.2.4. Both collaborative groups in Hemel Hempstead:

- a) Hemel Hempstead; Cavendish; JFK; Kings Langley
- b) Adeyfield; Astley Cooper; Longdean

indicated in July that they were planning to work collaboratively with the college from September 2004 but at the time were not in a position to produce details of their plans. Schools were offered an extended period – to the end of October – to produce their detailed plans in order

to access further CSF funding. Meetings have taken place between college and schools' staff and it is likely that one group will be in a position to offer two AS courses to their students, provided by the college at a Watford Campus. Final details of the plans are still awaited.

- 5.2.5. Both collaboration groups in the town have embarked upon integrated post-16 provision. Adayfield, Astley Cooper and Longdean are now in their second year of collaborative post-16 timetabling, whereas Hemel Hempstead, Cavendish, JFK and Kings Langley began the process in September 2003, with more limited provision initially, but with plans for extension in September 2004.
- 5.2.6. The College has, as planned, discontinued full time 16-19 provision at the Dacorum Campus and has transferred these activities to Watford.
- 5.2.7. It is likely, following the Tribal and OfSTED inspection reports, that the college will want to review its curriculum provision and its sites strategy, driven by an analysis of the needs of the learners of West Hertfordshire, and underpinned by sound finances. CSF will want to work closely with the college to identify needs, to promote greater collaboration and to meet the needs of learners in their communities.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. There are no financial implications for CSF in the above report.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. Adult Learning Provision

The college has committed itself to "holding onto the baton" until other providers are able to take on responsibility for ACL provision. CSF will continue to work with the college to ensure that learners are not disadvantaged by any new arrangements,

- 7.2. 14 – 19 Provision

CSF will be keen to work with the college following publication of its Action Plan, to develop strategic collaborative plans which develop and enhance opportunities for 14 – 19 year-olds to have access to high quality local provision.

Background information used by the author in writing this report:

Minutes of the CSF Scrutiny Committee, June 2003
Minutes and reports of the West Herts College Topic Group