

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

*Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families*

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**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 to take forward the issues arising from the Scrutiny Committee's deliberations on 18 June 2003. The meetings have been productive.
- 2.2. The college has maintained the position not to withdraw from further adult learning provision in the Watford and Hemel Hempstead areas until alternative providers can be identified. The college accepts that this could be a lengthy process.
- 2.3. Full-time 16-19 provision at the Dacorum Campus has been transferred to Watford.
- 2.4. The Increased Flexibility programme for Key Stage 4 pupils continues to work well and will continue in September 2004.
- 2.5. School-to-school collaboration continues to strengthen. Further progress with 16 – 19 school-college collaboration will take time, and will be linked to the College's wider Recovery Plan.

- 2.6. The West Herts College inspection took place over a two-week period towards the end of November 2003 and the OfSTED report has been published.
- 2.7. The college's action plan is yet to be published. The main priorities will be to restore the college to solvency and make it an effective organisation.

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 No further meetings of the Topic Group are planned. Further work in relation to West Herts College and 14 – 19 provision and Adult Learning will be picked up through CSF Scrutiny Committee reports relating to Strategic Area Review.

#### **4. Background**

- 4.1. The earlier paper which the committee considered on 18 June 2003 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, 22 October, 7 January and 17 May 2004. In addition to group members and CSF officers, the meetings have been attended by college staff, by officers of Hertfordshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and by headteachers.
- 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. The final report was published in February 2004.
- 4.5. The college, working with the Hertfordshire LSC, are using 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, resigned from his post and Tony Pitcher has been appointed Principal for the foreseeable future. Richard Boniface, the Deputy Principal, and Howard Moxon, Director of Learning, General and Community Education have left the college and senior appointments are being made to the college's new staffing structure.

## **5. Progress to date**

### **5.1. Adult learning provision**

- 5.1.1. 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.
- 5.1.2. The West Herts College Working Group which was convened to tackle the issues of continuing recreational provision, is to become a Standing Group. Representatives comprise the college, CSF/ACL, the local LSC and the Dacorum and Watford Learning Forums.
- 5.1.3. The Group is looking closely at the curriculum offered to adult learners in the south west of the county, in particular hard to reach groups. The aim is to provide a strengthened and expanded community based programme offering progression routes for all learners.
- 5.1.4. The principle of 'passing on the baton' i.e. not withdrawing courses until other provision is available, was being maintained, with the college providing regular Community Strategy position statements, enabling provision to be tracked.

### **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 2003 that they were planning to work collaboratively with the college from September 2004.
- 5.2.5. Both collaboration groups in the town have embarked upon integrated post-16 provision. Adeyfield, 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 significant extension in September 2004. The group expects there will be in excess of 80 students accessing courses in other institutions. The college is offering AS Photography and Law to post 16 students and both courses are well subscribed.
- 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. There is limited post 16 provision for less academic students. Headteachers are involved in preliminary discussions with the LSC about how provision might be developed for September 2005. They are keen to work with West Herts College to take this forward.

## **6. West Herts College Inspection**

- 6.1 Following the Tribal and OfSTED inspection reports, the college's main priorities are to restore the college to solvency and make it a more effective organisation. It is not expected that the college will offer the same range of provision as in the past. The College's view is that further education in Dacorum cannot be regarded as secure until there is a restructuring of Post 16 provision through the Strategic Area Review process. CSF will want to develop strategies for working with the college to ensure all learners' needs are met. It is acknowledged that further collaborative working has to be seen in the context of the College's key priority to restore financial viability.
- 6.2 The Topic Group has requested that Members would want to see the College's Recovery Plan and OfSTED Action Plan when they are available.

## **7. Strategic Area Review**

- 7.1. All Learning and Skills Councils are required to carry out Strategic Area Reviews (StAR) of 16 – 19 and Adult Learning provision. The process involves dialogues with stakeholders and a formal consultation process which starts in November 2004. The deadline for preferred options is March 2005. The Topic Group has asked the local LSC that Members are involved early in the StAR process and that StAR should be on the

agenda for the meeting of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee in October 2004.

## **8. Financial Implications**

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

## **9. Access To Services**

9.1. Adult Learning Provision

The decision by the college to retain provision at the Dacorum site means that there will be no diminution in the access to services for adult learners.

9.2. 14 – 19 Provision

The decision to transfer full-time provision for 16-19 year-olds from Dacorum to Watford makes access more difficult for young people in Dacorum.

## **10. Conclusion**

10.1. 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.

10.2. 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.

10.3. Strategic Area Review

CSF will pursue further work in relation to West Herts College 16 + provision through the processes of Strategic Area Review.

*Background papers used by the author in writing the report*

*Minutes of the West Herts College Topic Group*