Summary

This formal report to governors on the outcomes of the public consultation on our proposed merger with the Capital City College Group is part of the statutory duty of the Corporation under the Further Education Corporations (Publication of Proposals) (England) Regulations 2012.

Introduction

Governors will recall that the plan is for the merger to be implemented through dissolving the CONEL Corporation and transferring all our undertakings to the Westminster Kingsway City & Islington College Corporation on the 1st November. As the dissolving Corporation, it is our duty to conduct the public consultation. The regulations require us to publish a detailed proposal and rationale which must be circulated to:

- Local colleges and secondary schools
- Local Authorities in which the college is situated and MPs in whose constituencies the college operates
- Any other interested parties.

We are required to take account of any views in any representations we receive and to offer the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) an opportunity to comment. Finally, we must publish a summary of the consultation and its outcome within 2 months after the consultation closes and make the summary available free of charge to any person who requests it. This report has been prepared to fulfil this requirement and will be made available as required.

The Consultation Process

The consultation was launched on 27th June and the deadline for responses was noon on August 4th. The merger proposal was published in a merger proposal document, prepared in consultation with the Capital City College Group (CCCG) and was sent out to all statutory consultees by post and to all partners by e-mail. The document was also published on the college website and on the website of the CCCG. Copies of the document were made available in the reception areas of the Enfield and Tottenham Centres.

The proposal went to:

- Local MPS – David Lammy (Tottenham), Catherine West (Hornsey & Wood Green), Joan Ryan (Enfield) and Kate Osamor (Edmonton)
- The Leaders and Chief Executives of the London Boroughs of Haringey, Enfield, Hackney & Waltham Forest
- All Enfield and Haringey Local Councillors
- All secondary schools and colleges in Enfield, Haringey, Hackney and Waltham Forest
- A wide range of employers and other partner organisations, including universities
- All college governors and staff
- The SFA

In addition, four staff open meetings were held, two at the Enfield Centre and two at the Tottenham Centre; and the Principal had face to face meetings with David Lammy MP and Joan Ryan MP to discuss the proposal in detail.

The College issued a Press Release and notified the Association of Colleges’ London office.

**Issues Raised at Staff Meetings**

Staff primarily focused on issues of practical concern and asked questions about the potential for any redundancies as a result of merger, whether there were any management changes or relocation of staff planned and the details of any changes to terms and conditions of employment or to pension benefits in the short or long term. As far as was possible, reassurances were given and it was emphasised that the merger was part of our ambition for growth and development, with no cut backs of courses or staff envisaged except as part of our normal business planning.

**Consultation Responses**

There were 9 formal responses, including two MP’s, the London Borough of Haringey, a Haringey Councillor, a partner school, a private provider partner, an employer, a member of staff and a learner. Respondents generally supported the aim of offering a broad local curriculum while developing specialisms. There was agreement over the importance of increasing financial strength and greater ability to influence London’s skills strategy. One respondent considered merger would “give the colleges further ‘clout’ within the FE and skills sector for resources and specifically in the post BREXIT political environment”. LB Haringey welcomed the merger as an opportunity to “broaden the student offer.” David Lammy MP recommended the management team of the new college should look at the American Community College model, specifically the way large multi-campus colleges operate in the New York area.

One respondent emphasised the need to ensure the new merged group retained a strong sense of “community values”, a focus on the “differences of students’ culture and background”, and employed “good teachers from different cultures”.

One respondent cautioned against expecting early savings from the rationalisation of back office services, warning that a shared service model “can take longer and if not done with proper investment can cause problems”.

Joan Ryan MP was concerned that the Enfield Centre would be at the periphery of a central London college group and that over time the needs of the Enfield community might become marginalised if there was not a strong policy commitment to ensure a continued strong offer in Enfield. Two respondents drew attention to the potential risk of CONEL “losing its independence and ability to lead its own projects”, leading potentially to “loss of skilled individuals”.

**The Haringey Council Response**

In a detailed written response, Haringey Council commented: “It is clear that the merged institution will need an agile governing body to support strategic decision making, and this has the risk of limiting local representation. We would welcome an early discussion on governance structures to ensure Haringey interests are properly represented at strategic level.”

They also wanted to “explore how Capital City College Training’s employer-focused model could be developed to augment/enhance the offer to Haringey-based organisations.”
Haringey’s letter also sought assurance over the following specific issues:

- Maintaining a consistent entry level offer across all centres, to allow learners to achieve minimum English and Maths standards required for entry to Level 2 study
- Proactive marketing programmes to highlight the new range of opportunities to students
- Wayfinding advice and visits/tours to inform students about the new centres’ locations and facilities
- Ensuring Haringey students can fully benefit from opportunities across the travel to learn and work catchment area that Capital City College will cover.

Follow-up to Consultation

Senior Managers from CCCG and CONEL were invited to a formal meeting with the ESFA by Adesina Okuboyejo, the ESFA Intervention Manager for London & South East Territory, on 6th September. At this meeting we reviewed a number of technical issues and it was agreed that a copy of this report will be forwarded as confirmation of a successful consultation exercise.

In response to the letter from Haringey, we have issued an invitation for myself and the Principal of CCCG to meet with senior representatives from the Council to discuss the governance issue and other concerns. We have also proposed that our Director of Employer engagement, Jackie Chapman, should accompany the new Managing Director of Capital City Training to meet colleagues from Haringey’s Economic Development Team. Stewart Cross gave a presentation on the merger to Haringey’s Employment & Skills Board on 7th September, which was positively received.

Conclusion

The muted response to the public consultation exercise is in my view an indication of a general acceptance of the rationale for merger presented. Outside the formal process there have been no indications of any major anxieties or concerns and this is reflected in the responses we received during the consultation. The main focus of the respondents is the potential opportunities of merger and the main theme is how best to ensure we turn the benefits envisaged into a reality.

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| Recommendations |

   i) That the Corporation discuss and note the report.