

Report to: Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 27th September 2012

Lead Officer: Head of Housing & Community Development

Report Author: Strategic Regeneration Manager

Title: Review of Higher Education in North East Wales

1. What is the report about?

To provide observations to the Panel tasked with undertaking the review of Higher Education provision in North East Wales

2. What is the reason for making this report?

To engage with an important review with a view to influencing future provision of Higher Education in North East Wales

3. What are the recommendations?

To consider how to respond to the Panel in order to influence the outcome of the Review in the best interests of the residents and communities of Denbighshire

4. Report details

In July 2011 the Minister for Education and Skills published the Higher Education Council for Wales' (HEFCW's) advice on the recommended structure of the higher education sector set out in the *Future Structure of Higher Education in Wales* report. This report contained the recommendation that Glyndwr University should develop strong structural relationships with a range of further education colleges within a group structure led by Aberystwyth and Bangor Universities.

After considering the issues raised during the subsequent written engagement exercise, the Minister made a statement to the Assembly on 29 November informing Members that he had not accepted HEFCW's advice with regard to North Wales. In keeping with the arguments expressed by a number of stakeholders, he considered that there was a case for considering more closely the existing pattern of provision in North East Wales and for examining further the options for securing greater regional coherence in the delivery of further and higher education.

An independent Review Panel was established under the Chairmanship of Professor Sir Adrian Webb to undertake a review of Higher Education Provision in North East Wales. The objectives and timescale for the Review and details of the membership of the Review Panel are set out in the Annex to the report.

The Vice Chancellor of Glyndwr University, Professor Mike Scott, has kindly agreed to make a presentation to the Committee about the University and its role in North East Wales.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

The decision would contribute towards the proposed corporate priority for economic ambition. The proportion of Denbighshire residents educated to NVQ level 4 is lower than the equivalent figure for Wales and for neighbouring authority areas in England. Improving the educational attainment, employability and earnings of the county's residents ought therefore be a key outcome for any strategy which is developed for addressing this priority. The availability of Higher Education provision in the sub-region will be critical for achieving such an outcome and influencing future provision by responding to the current Review make a major contribution to the proposed corporate priority.

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

Not applicable

7. What consultations have been carried out?

The Review Panel has already held meetings with the Leader/Lead Member for Economic Development, the Deputy Leader/Lead Member for Education, the Corporate Director for Customers and the Strategic Regeneration Manager. The Chair of the review panel has been made aware of the committee's interest in this matter and has confirmed that any recommendations made will be considered as part of the review.

8. Chief Finance Officer Statement

Not applicable

9. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There is a risk that if the committee did not provide observations to the Review Panel, its recommendations to the Minister may not fully take into account the Council's views about the future arrangements for the provision of Higher Education in North East Wales.

10. Power to make the Decision

Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 gives the Council the power to do anything which it considers is likely to promote or improve the economic well-being of the area.

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