



Leading learning and skills

Learning and Skills Council 16 to 18 Competition - Thetford

Summary of Applications Received

One application was received by the closing date of Friday, 28th January 2008

The application is summarised on the following pages.

A full copy of the application is available on request from
Marion.Nobbs@lsc.gov.uk or by calling Marion Nobbs on 01603 218859.

If you have any comments about this application for consideration by the Stakeholder Selection Panel please submit them in writing, by 5.00pm Friday, 28th March 2008 to:

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Graham Brough
Area Director
LSC Norfolk

One proposal in response to the Thetford 16 to 18 Competition Prospectus has been received from the Thetford Post-16 Providers Consortium which comprises Charles Burrell High School, Rosemary Musker High School, West Suffolk College and Easton College.

The delivery partners would be Mildenhall College of Technology, Thetford Grammar School, Connexions and Broadland Training.

Executive Summary

The Thetford Consortium proposes to improve both pre- and post-16 learning in Thetford, increase post-16 participation and improve outcomes by building on the work of an established network of providers.

There are three main strands to the submission which are: (i) raising aspirations and outcomes across the town (including adult learning); (ii) broadening learning pathways from an earlier age; and (iii) providing more local delivery of options, with greater student support.

The bid proposes that the current offer available in Thetford fails to motivate and attract some young people because:

- Whilst many of the courses on offer at the Thomas Paine 6th form are attractive to many students, the local offer for students wishing to follow practical or vocational courses is perceived as poor.
- Many young people have decided by the age of 14 to leave education or training - it would therefore be crucial to work with students at a young age to change perceptions.
- There is a tradition of low aspiration in the Town.
- In order to access practical or vocational courses learners have to commit themselves to travel to Bury St. Edmunds or Norwich. The potential learners currently **not** participating are amongst those least likely to do this.
- Training opportunities and work-based learning are under-developed.

The proposal will increase the offer for those young people currently not participating by:

- Broadening the range of learning pathways, particularly at levels 1 & 2.
- Increasing the amount of provision made locally - bringing the learning opportunity to the learner.
- Developing new courses in response to need, particularly around land-based and vocational courses.
- Enhancing our pastoral and welfare support, for example, by providing each young person with a named mentor
- Developing a greater range of work-based learning opportunities.

In order to achieve the above it is proposed that a new post 16 facility would be required in Thetford which would require a major capital investment. It is believed that a strong business case exists for this. It is also believed that such a facility would improve and support the local economy by providing a focal point for learning, including training facilities for local businesses.

As an area designated for significant future growth, it is proposed that investment in such a facility would help develop the skills of the current population and attract higher skilled (and therefore higher paid) employment in future years.

This bid sets out a commitment to Thetford and a passionate belief that education holds the key to social and economic regeneration.

Further Details

The proposal is one where providers would jointly develop and provide a wider range of courses at a new Post 16 Centre in Thetford. The Consortium partners would establish streamlined governance arrangements for the proposed new Post-16 Centre, with greater autonomy for the executive to respond to changing student need.

It is anticipated that the Centre would be the place where most post 16 learning would take place. However, where a course required highly specialist equipment, the Centre would become the hub from which young people travelled to alternative destinations.

It is believed that there would not be any adverse impact on existing successful provision. The proposal seeks to provide for those potential learners not currently engaged in education, employment or training; it would be concerned with broadening the local offer. To this end, it would require close working with Connexions to ensure independent IAG and would engage with other providers whose specialism and expertise it would not wish to match.

The partners combined expertise, it is suggested, would ensure a curriculum offering which was academic, applied and vocational from entry to advanced level and beyond. Where gaps were identified the expertise of other delivery partners would be used. The proposal would attract increased learner numbers by:

- Maintaining a core AS/A2 advanced level offer supported by access to Video Conferencing for minority subjects. It would be supplemented by Applied Advanced level subjects [e.g. BTEC/OCR Nationals].
- Providing high quality provision that reduced the number of learners leaving Thetford and attract 'outside' learners.
- Providing high quality vocational resources that would also be accessed by 14 to 16 learners, increase motivation, progression and participation rates and reducing net costs per learner. It would work closely with other partnerships to ensure coherence and planning.
- Participation rates, particularly in relation to retention from year 12 to year 13, would be improved by strengthening links with Connexions, through mentoring and an improved curriculum offer.

- Developing a partnership VLE and use of ICT to support high quality, flexible delivery of learning and IAG. There would be a partnership prospectus and application process.
- Increasing the applied/vocational offer at all levels including Business, Finance and IT, Construction, Engineering/Manufacturing, Retailing and Customer Service [including Hairdressing], Tourism and Hospitality.
- Reducing NEET by developing E2E / Princes Trust provision. The applied and vocational offer would be available to local PRUs.
- Developing a curriculum that combined academic, applied and WBL routes, providing the 17 lines of learning to meet local employer needs and offering progression pathways, including for those with learning difficulties / disabilities, that would meet individual needs.
- Providing personalised learning grounded in high quality IAG, tutoring and ILPs.
- Developing a highly skilled staff resource and organising joint staff development activities.
- Investing in world-class facilities that attracted and motivated students and staff, met the needs of employers and the wider community in a fast expanding 'Growth Point' town.
- Working closely with employers to inform curriculum planning and delivery, developing the skills of staff and students, providing relevant and exciting teaching and learning and meet skills gaps.

The support and involvement of employers would be crucial to the success of the proposals. Employers are represented in the partnership and on the partners governing bodies. There would be employer liaison boards for each line of learning overseeing their development which ensured relevance and quality.