

SECTION 2: STATEMENT OF NEED

1 Introduction

1.1 LSC Essex's Strategic Area Review which concluded in Spring 2005 determined that current Further Education provision in South Essex was not meeting the needs of learners, local communities or employers. The 16-19 Competition is one of a number of co-ordinated responses from LSC Essex designed to tackle the low aspirations prevalent in the Thurrock area.

1.2 In summary, LSC Essex seeks proposals for a minimum 300 new places for 16-19 learners in Thurrock in three areas of learning:

- Creative and Cultural Skills
- Retail and Customer Service
- Construction and Built Environment

There is potential for significant further growth to 2010/11 and beyond.

The geographical area for the competition is the Unitary Authority of Thurrock.

1.3 This statement provides the rationale for the 16-19 Competition in Thurrock, it contains:

- a) The LSC's vision for the area and a summary of LSC targets
- b) A short profile of Thurrock
- c) The need for change; including:
 - A summary of the findings of the South Essex Strategic Area Review
 - Key education and training statistics for Thurrock
 - An overview of the FE Review of South Essex and Thurrock (2005-2006)
- d) The Competition parameters

2 LSC Vision

2.1 The LSC aims to transform post-16 learning in Thurrock and south Essex to give all learners and employers access to a wide range of high quality local post 16 learning opportunities. The LSC and its partners are determined to achieve the national target of engaging 90% of all 16-18 year olds in Thurrock and south Essex in structured learning

by 2015 and to match national attainment rates for Level 2 and Level 3 achievement at age 19.

2.2 The creation of a comprehensive framework for 14-19 learning opportunities that provides for seamless progression routes (up to and into HE) is key to achieving the aspirations of learners, employers, strategic partners and the LSC.

2.3 This vision is based on the following underpinning principles:

- The needs of the learner and employer are paramount
- Learning and skills will drive regeneration
- There will be a bespoke solution for Thurrock
- There will be a Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) curriculum offer that encompasses Thurrock, Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford and Southend on Sea

3 LSC Targets

3.1 The LSC nationally is responsible for meeting the following Public Service Agreement (PSA) target: *'Increase the proportion of 19 year olds who achieve at least a Level 2 by three percentage points between 2004 and 2006 and a further two percentage points between 2006 and 2008; and improve attainment at Level 3.'*

3.2 Supporting this PSA target is a performance indicator: *'By 2007/08 increase the numbers completing Apprenticeships by three quarters compared to 2002/03'.*

3.3 The LSC is aiming for at least 90% of 16-18 year olds to be participating in some kind of formal learning by 2015. In the East of England this translates into a participation target for 2008 of 88% participation at age 16 and 78% participation at age 17.

4 Thurrock in Context

4.1 Thurrock is a key growth location in the Thames Gateway, with the potential to become an important centre for international trade and enterprise. This potential is underpinned by excellent communication links: the M25 London Orbital Motorway, the high speed rail links leading to the Channel Tunnel; the local railway line providing direct access to Central London, the Port of Tilbury and the City of London Airport.

4.2 Thurrock has a population of approx. 143,000 (2001 census), representing 9% of the population of Essex. Projections to 2011 estimate total population growth to approx. 160,000. The 15 – 19 year old population is projected to rise sharply and plateau in 2009 (Experian, 2004).

4.3 Approx. 78,000 people in Thurrock are economically active (2001 census). Just over half (59%) of Thurrock people work in the area, while 24% travel to London (LSC, 2004). The claimant count, expressed as a percentage of the economically active population was estimated in February 2006 to be 3%, slightly higher than the Essex rate of 2.4%

4.4 There are just over 4,000 businesses in Thurrock, accounting for 6% of the total businesses in Essex. A high proportion of Thurrock businesses (65%) employ less than 5 employees. In terms of industry sector the highest proportion of businesses (31%) are in distribution, hotels and restaurants; with banking, finance and insurance (21%) as the second highest. Other industry sectors represented include, manufacturing (7%), construction (14%), transport and communications (11%), public administration, education and health (7%), and other services (6%).

5 The Need for Change

5.1 South Essex Strategic Review of Learning and Skills

5.1.1 Between 2002 and 2004 LSC Essex undertook a review of learning and skills in South Essex as part of the county wide Strategic Area Review (StAR) process announced by the Secretary of State for Education in *Success for All*, published in November 2002. The StAR was segmented into five geographical areas.

5.1.2 The key findings for the Thurrock and Basildon area pertinent to this competition are:

- i. 14-19 vocational education is not supported by a curriculum framework and delivery strategy; initiatives are adhoc and reliant on arrangements between institutions or an institution's capacity to respond.

- ii. There is a need to bring greater coherence to the development of partnerships and collaboration, to reduce bureaucracy, overlapping partnerships and duplication of effort.
- iii. The impact of local economic and skills needs upon the curriculum is more limited than it could be.
- iv. Employer engagement can be patchy and employers rarely collaborate with providers in curriculum planning and delivery.
- v. The number of young people in the NEET Group is above the Essex, Region and England average.
- vi. There is unequal access to impartial IAG for post 16 decision making, differentiated by provider.

Source: Strategic Area Review Consultation Document Essex. November 2004.

5.2 Education and Training in Thurrock

5.2.1 There are ten 11-16 schools in the Thurrock area plus Palmers Sixth Form College. The area is served by Thurrock and Basildon College and a network of Workbased Learning Providers.

5.2.2 Learning needs in Thurrock are stark; low participation in learning post-16; the lowest participation rate in the country at the age of 17; low achievement and poor progression into HE. The following paragraphs examine a number of factors that support the need for change.

5.2.3 Qualification levels are generally low in Thurrock compared to Essex. Only 3% of the population in Thurrock are currently studying above Level 3 against a national average of 8%.

Qualification levels of the Thurrock Population (NVQ equivalent)

	No quals	NVQ Level 1	NVQ Level 2	NVQ Level 3	NVQ Level 4/5	Other / Level unknown
Thurrock	34%	22%	20%	6%	10%	8%
Essex	29%	20%	21%	8%	15%	8%

Source: 2001 Census of Population, Office for National Statistics

5.2.4 A larger proportion of people in Thurrock have poor literacy and numeracy skills than in Essex as a whole.

Adult Literacy and Numeracy (Thurrock)

	Total poor literacy		Total poor numeracy	
	Number	%	Number	%
Thurrock	19,931	24.5	20,634	25.3
Essex	210,883	22.1	207,062	21.7

Source: Basic Skills Agency, 2001

5.2.5 A relatively low proportion of Thurrock year 11 pupils achieve 5+ GCSEs at A*-C grade compared to Essex. Performance levels at A level and AVCE are also low in comparison to figures for Essex and England.

% 5+ A* - C Passes

	Thurrock	Basildon	Southend	Essex
% pupils achieving 5+ A*-C	50%	52%	63%	57%

Source: DfES 2005.

GCE (A Level) and AVCE Results (2004 /05)

District	Number of students aged 16-18		Number entered	Average point score per student	Average point score per examination entry
Thurrock	2005	3923	642	99-235	46-74
	2004	3806	640	123-227	57-74
Basildon	2005	866	303	144-324	60-75
	2004	836	333	186-305	65-76
Southend	2005	4684	978	149-432	50-96
	2004	4255	1032	151-428	55-98
Essex LA	2005	23394	6524	283	77
	2004	22683	6673	274	76
England	2005			278	80
	2004			269	79

Source: DfES School and College (Post 16) Achievement and Attainment Tables 2004/2005

5.2.6 FE Success Rates (16-18) are below the Essex average but Success Rates for Apprenticeships (Levels 2 and 3) are above the county average.

FE and Apprenticeship Success Rates

	Thurrock		Essex	
	2004/05	2005/06	2004/05	2005/06
FE 16-18 Success Rates	68.84%		71.83	
Apprenticeship Success rates (Level 2 & 3)	26.7%	55.6%	36.4%	47.1%

Source: LSC East of England Share Point

5.2.7 Connexions Year 11 destination figures (2005) show that approx. 73% of Year 11 leavers continue in full time education or training into Year 12 (age 16). Destination data for the other thirteen areas in Essex for the same period ranges from 63% to 85% remaining in full time education.

5.2.8 Thurrock has the lowest rate of participation in education and Work based Learning in the country at the age of 17 (74% at Year 12, reducing to 63% at Year 13) [DfES 2006].

5.2.9 Thurrock has a large proportion of young people recorded as long term NEET (not in employment, education or training), 71% of 2005 leavers who were NEET had been NEET for 30+ weeks compared to an Essex average of 43% [Connexions, 2005].

Destination of Year 11 Leavers (Basildon and Southend included for comparison)

	% destination of young people over 16 (2005)		
	Thurrock	Basildon	Southend
Remaining in full time education	73%	67%	77%
Work based training (non employed status)	2%	5%	4%
Full time employment (incl. Apprenticeships and other employed status WBL)	4%	5%	2%
Full time employment no structured training	6%	12%	5%
Voluntary / Part Time activity	1%	2%	1%
NEET (active in the labour market)	10%	7%	7%
NEET (not active in the labour market)	1%	1%	1%
Moved out of contact	0%	1%	1%
Total unknown	3%	1%	2%

Source: Connexions Activity Survey 2006.

5.2.10 In 2005 58.4% of the Thurrock population aged 19 had achieved a qualification at Level 2. This represented an improvement of 5.8% compared to 2004, but Thurrock

continues to have the second lowest percentage of 19 year olds with a Level 2 in the county. The county average is 71.9% (LSC 2007).

5.2.11 In Thurrock only 13% of young people progress into higher education against a national average of 29.9%. The Essex average is 28%.

5.3 FE Review of South Essex and Thurrock (2005-2006)

5.3.1 In August 2005, LSC Essex established a Joint Review Group (JRG) comprising Corporation Board Chairs and Principals of the three colleges located in Thurrock and South Essex, to oversee the review and any subsequent changes in the arrangements for FE funded provision.

5.3.2 Between October 2005 and February 2006, DTZ Piedad Consulting undertook a Strategic Options Appraisal (SOA), followed by a further review of one of the options. The original timetable anticipated a structural reconfiguration that would see the incorporation of new colleges in April 2007 with students enrolling into the new institutions from September 2007.

5.3.3 During the Review the JRG agreed that the end result should incorporate:

- a new General Further Education (GFE) college in 'South Central Essex' (the present SEEVIC College plus the Basildon Campus of T&BC);
- a new GFE in Thurrock based on the present Thurrock Campus of T&BC;
- a new and binding collaboration between the new Thurrock College and Palmers College to guarantee joint planning which might evolve into a federal arrangement as envisaged by the FE White Paper 2006;
- close links with adult and higher education to reduce duplication and dysfunctional competition, and build effective progression routes from FE to HE, especially in the LSC priority areas.

5.3.4 Following the Review there was agreement amongst the JRG that change was needed but no consensus could be achieved on the way forward. As a result, and following consultation with partners, LSC Essex took the decision to run two separate 16-19 competitions, one in Thurrock and one in Basildon.

6 Defining the Competition

6.1 LSC Essex seeks proposals for a minimum additional 300 places from Entry Level to Level 3 for 16-19 learners in Thurrock in three areas of learning; considered by LSC Essex and the Thames Gateway Education and Skills Commissioning Board as important for the Thurrock economy.

- Creative and Cultural Skills
- Retail and Customer Service
- Construction and Built Environment

6.2 Creative and Cultural Skills

Creative and cultural skills is a growth sector in Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE). The area is poised to benefit from the relocation of the Royal Opera House's fabrication facility to Grays town centre and also the expectation that a National Skills Academy for the sector will be set up in Thurrock. In a press release (January 2007) the Arts Council said:

'Our vision is that over the next few years Thurrock will become synonymous with excellence in creative and cultural technical skills. It will become renowned throughout the UK and beyond for training the highest quality of craftspeople to work on the world's finest stages and major live events.'

6.3 Retail and Customer Service

Retail and leisure is a key sector in TGSE. Current skill shortages will be compounded in the future by the large number of new retail and leisure job opportunities to be created through the regeneration of the area. The sector absorbs a large number of young people from the Thurrock area who have low aspirations and take up employment without training (NET). The higher level skilled jobs in the sector which offer training tend to go to young people from out of the area. Young people in Thurrock need opportunities to explore a broader range of careers within the sector and take up jobs at higher levels that offer continued training.

6.4 Construction and Built Environment

The current skills shortages in this sector are impacted further by the London Olympics and the regeneration of the area. In this context there is a critical shortage of technical skills within the industry, e.g. surveying. It is believed that increasing technical opportunities will also help to address the current gender imbalance within the sector.

6.5 The geographical area for the competition is the Unitary Authority of Thurrock. A map defining the competition area is contained in Appendix 1.

6.6 Proposals must demonstrate specifically how they would:

- increase the participation of school leavers in post 16 full time education, and in delivery of work based learning (including the participation rate at 17)
- engage with NEET learners
- achieve an optimal balance between learning at all levels (Foundation to Level 3)
- increase learning opportunities within the three sector skills areas, through the establishment of new vocational pathways
- engage with partners to achieve these outcomes
- deliver and maintain high quality provision in the area

6.7 LSC Essex vision is that by 2010-2011 the successful applicant will be an integral part of the FE infrastructure in South Essex, offering a choice of innovative, high quality and diverse provision to the local community, whilst developing a reputation as a centre of expertise for level 3 provision in the three skills areas, attracting learners from across the sub-region. Ideally, from 2010-11 the competition winner will be located in part of a planned new town centre HE/FE campus.

6.8 The proposal must demonstrate how innovative approaches to learning delivery will be used to overcome negative attitudes to learning, raise the aspirations of local communities and meet the needs of employers for flexible delivery at a time and place that suits them.

6.9 It is anticipated that by 2010-2011 there will be a need for significant expansion beyond the initial 300 additional places, possibly growing to 700 – 800 places. Growth is likely to be into other occupational areas as determined by employers' needs and the competition winner must be responsive to requests from LSC Essex to extend provision in the event of market failure.

6.10 In view of the above the proposal is likely to be in two stages; stage 1 an interim solution offering approx. 300 places across the three skills areas, and stage 2 outlining future expansion to 2010-2011.