

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **CABINET**

DATE: **TUESDAY 12 JUNE 2012**

REPORT BY: **DIRECTOR OF LIFELONG LEARNING & CHIEF
EXECUTIVE**

SUBJECT: **REPORT ON THE AMALGAMATION OF DEESIDE
COLLEGE & YALE COLLEGE**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To INFORM Cabinet of the response to the consultation over the proposed amalgamation of Deeside College and Yale College. The response was agreed by the Leader and Cabinet Member due to the need to respond by the deadline of 24 May 2012.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The Governing Bodies of the Further Education Corporations of Deeside College and Yale College have agreed to propose to the Welsh Assembly Government that the two colleges should merge. The Governing Bodies have issued a consultation document which sets out the context, rationale and anticipated benefits of the proposed merger. The document is intended to draw informed comment from key partners, learners, employees, employers and the local community. The Colleges are committed to being sensitive to matters raised during this process and will seek to reflect them in the merger proposal to be submitted to the Welsh Government.

2.02 Both Governing Bodies believe that the proposed merger will provide for a more comprehensive, flexible and responsive curriculum offering for the merged College with the potential to improve access and increase choice for a broader range of students at all levels, to improve progression routes and enable greater course viability. It is also intended that the resulting merged College will provide an enhanced curriculum offer in a more economical, cost effective and viable way than at present.

2.03 The Governing Bodies consider that the proposed merger provides an exciting opportunity to shape the future of education, training and skills in North East Wales. Both Governing Bodies believe that the proposed merger is in the best interests of all its stakeholders, including the staff and students of both colleges.

2.04 The Governing Bodies agree that a merger may best be achieved by

dissolving the existing Corporations and creating a new institution. There is a commitment within both colleges that the merger will be carried out in a collaborative spirit and take advantage of the strengths of all partners. The operative date would be 1st August 2013.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

The Colleges' Vision and Rationale for the Merger Proposal

- 3.01** The overarching aim of the proposed merger is to secure and further develop an excellent post-16 education, training and skills infrastructure in North East Wales in partnership with the 14-19 Networks of Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham. In summary, the Governing Bodies believe that creating a new expanded College will:
- ensure excellence in teaching and learning, training and learner support;
 - ensure and further enhance learning opportunities and choice within a reasonable travel distance;
 - improve links with employers in Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham building on the strength of existing relationships;
 - create a more strategic, stable and resilient Further Education sector in the areas covered;
 - create a more cost-effective and viable financial base and delivery model;
 - build a critical mass which is sustainable and capable of attracting further investment in the learning infrastructure; and
 - be responsive to the Welsh Government's vision and policies.

3.02 The Council's Observations

Whilst supportive of the principles underpinning the merger proposal, there are some key areas in which the Council will expect and need clarification and involvement as both a key partner to the college and as a 'champion' on behalf of learners. Key risks include:

Profile of the Merged College

- Corporation and local site governance arrangements must be effective and inclusive of local partners and communities including Flintshire County Council. Early engagement with partners on this is important.

Meeting Local Priorities

- Early involvement is needed to ensure that a combined college is fully focused on delivering local educational and economic priorities, including those set out in Council and Local Service Board Strategies. Flintshire County Council has a key involvement and interest in:
 - governance and priority setting;
 - joint planning on capital allocations to sites;

- investments in vocational and apprenticeship schemes in support of the regeneration strategy

Curriculum and Quality of Service

- The Colleges have a key role in delivering expansion in vocational and work related learning, working collaboratively with local employers and the local authority as an 'engine for growth' in employment and expansion of apprenticeships. Engagement with partners in development of a renewed programme to address current economic development needs is key to training, employment and community prosperity.

Linking with Partners

- The commitment to working in partnership with local 14-19 networks and Councils is welcome. More detailed joint working on local priorities including 14-19 transformational change, sixth form provision, and economic development would be welcome. Early discussion on localised curriculum delivery for post 16 learners and transport entitlement would be welcomed. Further discussion on strategies for growth of adult and community learning programmes would also be welcomed.

Resources and Facilities

- Additional joint planning needs to be undertaken on resource planning for local 14-19 educational transformation, including the specific commitments made in relation to tertiary/sixth form provision. This needs to include joint revenue and capital funding. The consultation document contains little information on efficiencies or capital investment proposals.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01** The response notes that the Council supports the principle of the merger of the two Colleges, however, there are also key risks to be addressed.

(A copy of the response is attached at Appendix 3)

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01** The two colleges are primarily funded through the Welsh Assembly Government and each generates additional income from tuition fees and a range of income generating training, consultancy and commercial trading activities.

- 5.02** The merger proposal provides for the creation of a financially robust College able to invest in providing an outstanding learning environment.

5.03 The merged College will maintain a policy of rigorous financial control. The financial strategy will ensure that the merged College provides the maximum educational value from its annual resources.

5.04 In preparing full proposals the colleges are required to undertake a full due diligence exercise and prepare a risk management framework to support strategic and financial planning. This will support the management of risk leading up to the merger and the implementation of the merger.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 There are no poverty implications directly arising from the report.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 The merged College would continue to operate on its existing sites, thereby ensuring continuity of academic, vocational and land based activities.

7.02 Providing a quality learning environment is a key aspect of achieving the aims and vision of the merged College. A review of the estate and premises will take place to identify the condition and efficient use of the facilities.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 Both colleges are committed to the principle of education provision within the community and the new merged College will continue to maintain and enhance the level of service currently provided within the community served by the two colleges. Local access to higher education will enhance opportunities for progression within Flintshire.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 The College Corporations intend that the merged College will build on the best employment practices of the two colleges and provide a rewarding and stimulating working environment for its employees. The professionalism and effectiveness of staff is central to the success of a merged College. The corporations commit that any changes to staffing structures that result from the merger will be designed to minimise disruption and maximise the quality of the learning experience for the learners.

9.02 The College Corporations intend that any merged College will honour its legal obligations to staff. The contracts of employment of staff transferring from Deeside and Yale Colleges would have effect as

originally made. Communication with staff and the recognised trade unions and full consultation will be undertaken before any changes are made.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 Consultation is being undertaken by the Colleges' Governing Bodies

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 The Council response is part of the Colleges' stakeholder consultation.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 **Appendix 1** – A copy of the College profiles for both Deeside and Yale.

Appendix 2 – A copy of the Twelve Commitments from the colleges.

Appendix 3 – A copy of the consultation response.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Contact Officer: Ian Budd
Telephone: 01352 704010
Email: ian.budd@flintshire.gov.uk