

Item 8

BUSINESS CASE FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE, BLACKDOWN SCHOOL, DEEPCUT – BID FOR FUNDS

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S LOCAL COMMITTEE IN SURREY HEATH

2nd December 2004

KEY ISSUE:

To establish the case for using some pooled funds from the Members' Allocation to fund the development of a business case for a vocational training centre at Blackdown School, Deepcut.

SUMMARY:

The report explains the rationale for contributing £3,000 from the pooled allocation to fund the development of a business case for converting the present vacant school building at Deepcut into a vocational training centre, as proposed by the Surrey Heath Community Learning Partnership.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the report be noted, and the bid considered in the context of other bids put forward in Item 9 on Members' Allocations.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. The Surrey Heath Community Learning Partnership (CLP) comprises representatives of the principal parties engaged in specifying and procuring adult learning for Surrey Heath. The CLP is chaired by Linda Piercy the County Council's Head of Adult and Community Learning. The CLP has been considering the possibility of using the redundant Blackdown School building as a vocational skills centre – providing courses in practical subjects like plumbing, car mechanics, electrics, brick laying, beauty therapy, hairdressing etc.
2. The possibility of providing the funding - £3,000 towards work that might cost £5,000 –£6,000 was raised at the last Local Committee meeting, but Members asked for more information on that occasion before making a decision.

3. The text that follows has been provide by the CLP.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

4. The **Surrey Heath Community Plan 2004-2014** has the following objectives among its themes:

EDUCATION

- 1) To improve the way partners work together
- 2) To support schools in addressing the needs of their communities
- 3) To improve school attendance amongst pupils
- 4) To improve vocational educational opportunities**
- 5) To improve the health and well-being of schoolchildren

HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT

Employment Issues

- 1) To promote careers where there are basic skills shortages**

Young People

5. Provision in secondary schools for vocational training is as follows:

- Four Secondary Schools, all with sixth form, and one special school with an age range 2-19.
- 66% of young people achieve 5 GCSE's A*-C in Surrey Heath.
- There is no vocational learning available within the Borough, which prevents the schools from offering a truly increased flexible curriculum; the young people have to travel relatively long distances within short periods of time, due to timetabling constraints.
- There is no doubt that if an integrated 14-19 academic/vocational offer which is being encouraged by national debate was available in Surrey Heath, there would be improved engagement by 14-16 year olds, and drop-out rates of 16-19s would be lowered.
- There are currently 107 16-18 year olds in Surrey Heath described as NEET (not in education, employment, or training).
(Source: Surrey Connexions figures for January 2004)
- There is no Pupil Referral Unit within Surrey Heath.

Occupational Needs

6. The nature of employment need and provision in the Borough is as follows:

- All people aged 16 – 74 in employment – 64,984
- Percentage of people employed in the bottom socio-economic employment categories in Surrey Heath:
 1. Small employers (7.2%)
 2. Lower supervisory and technical occupations (5.8%)
 3. Semi-routine occupations (9.5%)
 4. Never worked and long-term unemployed (2.1%)

- Activity rates have gone down since 2001, but self-employment has increased. There are 5,985 self employed in the borough.

Source: Labour Market Trends Sept 2003

7. It is estimated that 52,400 or 17.9% of 16-60 year olds, have poor Literacy Skills in Surrey Heath and 16.5% have poor Numeracy skills. Individuals who have problems with basic skills experience a continuing, adverse effect on their lives, some of which are listed below:
 - Qualifications and type of Job
 - Amount of workplace training
 - Promotion
 - Wage levels
 - Family life
 - Social Participation
 - Financial Exclusion - In the past, research has indicated a link between poor literacy and financial difficulties. Those with poor basic skills do own financial products and may need appropriate help from institutions.

Learner Survey 2003

8. Surrey Heath Community Learning Partnership was particularly interested in the views about learning and training in Surrey Heath of groups of adults identified as under-represented in learning. In the event, 57 adults who conformed to at least one of the following descriptors took part:
 - young adults aged 19 to 25 years,
 - part-time women workers on a low income,
 - registered unemployed adults,
 - adults in receipt of health or social care,
 - adults aged 50 to retirement age on a low income,
 - residents of areas identified by the LSC as an area of relative disadvantage, adults who worked for companies with fewer than 50 employees.
9. Much of the feedback from the respondents supports the hypothesis that learning within one's own community provides caring, welcoming and relevant learning that people wish to join. Anecdotal evidence suggests that people engaged in this sort of learning, tend not only continue in learning but that more progress to other levels. To access accredited learning, adults must cross borough borders.

Lack of Vocational Training

10. There is a lack of vocational training within the borough, due not only to its lack of Further Education Institution, but the low level of take up of Modern Apprenticeships, which is also replicated throughout Surrey.

CONSULTATION

11. This proposition comes from discussions within the CLP, which has included representatives of three secondary schools in the Borough. These discussions have been informal until now, but the CLP will be having further discussions with the three Principals shortly. Part of the funding of the development of the business case would be to conduct formal discussions with the key partners – Connexions, the Learning and Skills Council, the Army, FE Colleges and the secondary schools.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12. The request is for £3,000, and the opportunity would then be taken to secure additional funding from other sources.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

13. There would be a need to arrange transport to a vocational skills centre although there is a bus service down Deepcut Bridge Rd.

CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

14. Any direct impact would be hard to discern, but in principle the provision of additional learning opportunities would have a beneficial impact in reducing the risks of disorderly behaviour.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

15. These would again be hard to discern, but would provide those with difficulties in accessing job opportunities because of poor academic skills to find jobs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Surrey Heath Local Committee notes the report, and considers the bid in the context of other bids put forward in Item 9 on Members' Allocations.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Mike Abbott

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01276- 702504

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

Number of Annexes: None