

Education Scrutiny Committee

9 September 2008

Feasibility Report on 14–19 Diplomas

Summary

1. This feasibility report presents information on 14–19 Diplomas and asks Members to consider whether they wish to carry out a scrutiny review of this topic.

Background to the Review

2. At the meeting of Education Scrutiny Committee in July 2008, Members received an information pack made up of a number of reports (previously presented to the Executive Member for Children’s Services) on the post-16 provision of education in the City. The pack also included a copy of a draft topic registration form previously submitted by Cllr Aspden.
3. At an informal meeting of the Committee held in August 2008, Members discussed the information provided and having agreed a number of changes to the topic registration form, the topic was formally submitted – see Annex A.

Criteria

4. In regard to the eligibility criteria, Cllr Aspden believes that the topic fits with the following:
 - Public Interest – At the age of 14, the decision to move from the traditional qualification route to pursue a diploma is one of the most important decisions that a learner and his/her parents will make. Therefore, it is crucial that another robust 14–19 strategy is developed following on from Learning Without Walls 2005–08, and in line with statutory requirements, to ensure the successful introduction and management of 14–19 reforms across the city.
 - In keeping with the Corporate Strategy – A review of this topic would support the following priorities for improvement:
 - ‘Improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the city’
 - ‘Increase people’s skills and knowledge to improve future employment prospects’

- National/Local/Regional Significance – The topic is of local significance in that work on implementing the 14–19 reforms in York has commenced and will affect the choices being made by pupils. Parents need to be fully informed of the options available to enable their children to receive the right type of education/training best suited to the personal needs, thus ensuring their future prospects.
5. Both the Executive Member for Children’s Services and the Assistant Director of School Improvement & Staff Development, agree that this topic fits with the eligibility criteria identified above.

Background to the 14–19 Reforms

6. The 14–19 reforms being rolled out over the next five years, are designed to equip young people for the fast-changing world they are growing up in by unlocking their talents and aspirations and enabling them to achieve the higher levels of skills, experiences and knowledge needed for the 21st century, and to achieve their economic well-being.
7. At the heart of the reforms is a new national curriculum and qualifications entitlement enabling young people to choose a qualifications pathway that suits them and that can be the basis for progression to further learning, training, higher education and employment. This suite of qualifications will be underpinned by a Foundation Learning Tier and will run alongside A levels/GCSEs and Apprenticeships.
8. Every young person will receive a sufficiently broad education to be able to progress further in learning, training and into employment and there will be a choice of routes for achieving this, which are currently still under development at national level.
9. There will be 14 sets of Diplomas, at three levels up to advanced level, covering the occupational sectors of the economy. Additionally, there will be three linked to Science, Humanities and Languages. Though the design of the qualifications is employer-led, they are not intended as a direct preparation for an occupation – they require young people to develop good basic skills, to develop the broader skills employers want and are a basis to make further progress in learning. They will often contain GCSEs and A levels within them. Young people succeeding at level 2 (the equivalent of five A*–C GCSEs) will be fully prepared to go on to level 3 Diploma courses, A levels or an Apprenticeship. Those succeeding at level 3 will likewise be prepared for higher education or for occupationally-specific training.
10. The first five Diplomas will be available in 2008/09, the next five the year after and the final four in 2010/11. Following a three year programme of evaluation, the national entitlement will be introduced in 2013/14. By then, young people, wherever they are in England, will be legally entitled to take any one of the Diplomas.

11. Whichever route young people are on, they will all be expected to achieve the functional skills: the ability to use basic English, Maths and ICT in a range of practical settings. It is very likely that these qualifications will be incorporated within the new Diplomas and within GCSEs in English, Maths and ICT - so that passing these functional skills qualifications will be a requirement for achieving a grade C or better. Young people will therefore have to master the functional skills in order to achieve any Diploma at level 1, 2 or 3, or an Apprenticeship. The functional skills qualifications have been piloted nationally from 2007/08, for introduction as part of Diplomas from 2008/09 and for all KS4 and post 16 learners from 2010/11.
12. Local Authorities will have to work closely with employers to develop new qualifications combining classroom education with practical workplace experience.
13. Delivering the entitlement will require significant change in the education system. It will require diverse and autonomous institutions to work in collaboration and partnership to achieve more together than any single school, college or training provider can achieve on its own.

Consultation

14. These changes are called the Machinery of Government and within them, the LA has the key lead and strategic role. Currently, discussions are taking place at regional and sub-regional level to implement the structural elements of this reform.
15. The work is being co-ordinated through the 'Learning City York' Partnership, as per DCSF guidance. The Partnership is now working on an updated 14–19 Strategy for York. A breakdown of the Learning City York Partnership structures is attached at Annex B.
16. In order to inform Members on the ongoing work of the Partnership and the Machinery of Government changes, the Assistant Director of School Improvement & Staff Development and the 14–19 Partnership Manager will give a presentation at this meeting, which will cover:
 - i. Context – local, regional and national – including city-wide strategy
 - ii. Planning diplomas, including match with city economic drivers, delivery of diplomas, Functional Skills, the future for diplomas in York
 - iii. Machinery of Government changes and the role of the LA
 - iv. Outcomes

Options

17. In considering the information provided within this report and the presentation, Members may choose to:

- i. Not proceed with a review of this topic in light of the ongoing work of the Learning City York' Partnership. Instead the Committee could request regular update reports. As 14–19 reform and Machinery of Government changes are progressing at a rapid pace, such updates would keep the Committee informed at a time of significant change.
- ii. Defer the decision on whether to carry out a review of this topic until such time as current national, regional and sub-regional changes are clarified and confirmed, eg by April 2009. In the meantime, the Committee could receive 14–19 updates as changes take place.
- iii. Agree a remit and commence the review now. The Committee will need to consider the work of the 'Learning City York' Partnership and agree how a scrutiny review of this topic could best support current 14-19 ongoing work in order to ensure that there is no duplication of effort. For example, a review could focus on how the council can support the development of diplomas so that diplomas are part of the overall corporate priorities, informing and being informed by other directorates, eg employer engagement, workforce development, facilities, capital projects. A focus on Machinery of Government changes would also keep the Committee fully abreast of the proposals for and the impact of national, regional, sub-regional developments on York.

Conduct of Review

18. If a decision is taken to proceed with this review a remit will need to be agreed and this will inform how best to conduct the review. Once Members have received the presentation they will be in a better position to agree who should be consulted and what supporting information they require. Whatever the remit agreed, it is suggested that a timeframe of 3–6 months for completion of the review be set, in order that the review remains focused.
19. What is certain at this stage, is that the 14–19 Partnership Manager would be the appropriate officer within the School Improvement & Staff Development team to support any scrutiny review of this topic. Any decision to proceed with the review at this time, will need to take into account that in the next six months he will be playing a key role in implementing the 14–19 reforms and will be involved in a range of essential activity linked to the significant and rapid reforms to be introduced this year. These include:
 - Participation in meetings of the interim Regional Planning Forum regarding Machinery of Government Changes and the transfer of post 16 funding from the LSC (Learning and Skills Council) to the LA.
 - Shadowing the LSC's commissioning of post 16 provision for 2009/10 in order that the LA is able to lead this process for the following year.
 - Leading the compilation of the York submission to deliver five more Diplomas from September 2010 (Sept – Dec 08).
 - Engage with Government Office 14-19 Progress Check (Sept – Oct 08).

- Complete work on 14-19 Strategy to succeed “Without Walls” (Sept 08 – Jan 09).
20. This is in addition to ongoing work within the partnership structure addressing NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training), further development of the Area Prospectus, completion / revision of provision maps and significant planning and development for the introduction of 6 Diplomas in September 2009.
 21. Therefore, the Assistant Director of School Improvement & Staff Development has confirmed that supporting this review at this time would only be possible if the demands on the 14-19 Partnership Manager’s time could be quantified in advance and extra capacity, able to support this high level activity, could be found and funded.

Implications

22. Other than the resources issues highlighted above, there are no financial, HR, legal, equalities, or other implications associated with the recommendation in this report.

Risk Management

23. There are no known risks associated with the recommendation in this report.

Recommendations

24. In consideration of the information within this report and the rapid reforms to be introduced in York this year, it is recommended that the decision on whether to proceed with a review of this topic be deferred for six months to enable the essential activity to be completed thus allowing the Committee to better identify their specific areas of concern and therefore enabling a robust remit to be agreed for a review.
25. In the meantime it is recommended that Members request an update report on the progress made in implementing the reforms, in three months time.

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Feasibility Report



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Wards Affected:

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers: None

Annexes:

Annex A – Topic Registration Form

Annex B – Learning City York 14–19 Partnership Structures