



Prosperous Communities

Tuesday, 19 July 2022

**Subject: Further Education Taskforce**

Report by:

Director of Planning, Regeneration & Communities

Contact Officer:

Amanda Bouttell  
Senior Project and Growth Officer

[amanda.bouttell@west-lindsey.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.bouttell@west-lindsey.gov.uk)

Purpose / Summary:

To propose the creation of a Further Education Taskforce to bring together key stakeholders across the District to consider further education provision within the context of the wider education and skills agenda.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

1. That Prosperous Communities Committee resolve to establish a Further Education Taskforce for West Lindsey.
2. That Prosperous Communities Committee receive a quarterly update from the Further Education Taskforce.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Legal:**

The taskforce will operate as a working group with terms of reference. No legal body or agreement is required for this purpose. Should the taskforce require legal advice this shall be procured using existing council legal advice provision.

**(N.B.) Where there are legal implications the report MUST be seen by the MO**

### **Financial : FIN/57/23/SL**

There are no financial implications.

**(N.B.) All committee reports MUST have a Fin Ref**

### **Staffing :**

There are no direct staffing implications. The work of establishing and running the taskforce will be undertaken using existing officer resource within the council.

**(N.B.) Where there are staffing implications the report MUST have a HR Ref**

### **Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :**

The report has no direct implications on equality and diversity, however it will be an area of consideration for the taskforce. In particular changes to education provision may have an impact on different groups of people including those identified through protected characteristics such as age, gender and disability.

### **Data Protection Implications :**

The sharing of any data between members of the new taskforce will be compliant with data protection legislation. Existing data sharing agreements will be utilised and where required new agreements will be put in place to enable the effective sharing of data for the purpose of the taskforce.

### **Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:**

There are no specific climate related risks associated with this report. If climate related risks or opportunities are identified during the work of the taskforce, these will be presented to committee within regular reporting.

### **Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:**

There are no implications.

**Health Implications:**

There are no direct implications with this report, however the health and wellbeing of individuals may be impacted positively or negatively through changes to further education. Education, attainment, skills and learning can all play a key part of an individual's wellbeing.

**Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :**

Not applicable.

**Risk Assessment :**

Not applicable.

**Call in and Urgency:****Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

**Yes**

**No**

**Key Decision:**

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

**Yes**

**No**

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This report sets out a recommendation to create a Further Education Taskforce. The purpose of the Taskforce is to bring together key partners to consider and plan a way forward for further education in Gainsborough and West Lindsey.
- 1.2 The driver for this Taskforce has been the decision from Lincoln College Group to relocate all remaining Post-16 provision from the Gainsborough Campus to Newark or Lincoln and fully lease the Gainsborough site to Castles Futures, providing Alternative Provision to 11-16 year olds.

## **2 Strategic Context**

- 2.1 The West Lindsey Corporate Plan 2019-2023, sets out the long-term vision for West Lindsey to become “a great place to be where people, businesses and communities can thrive and reach their potential.” One of the key strategic aims is to facilitate the creation of a highly educated and skilled workforce, that meets the present and future needs of the local economy.
- 2.2 The Corporate Plan identifies the strategic objectives to achieve this:
  - Understand the skills needs of local employers.
  - Support local schools to improve attainment levels and employment prospects for young people.
  - Improve access to training and employment for residents.
- 2.3 The West Lindsey State of the District Report 2022 provides a summary position based on the latest available data. The report has revealed that across the district, the number of people holding at least a level 2 qualification (equivalent to 5 GCSE's) has fallen to 64.5% (35,900 people) down from 76.2% the previous year. Level 3 qualifications (equivalent to A Levels) have also fallen – down from 53.4% in 2020 to 51.2% (28,500 people) in 2021.
- 2.4 Lincolnshire County Council commissioned a Post-16 Further Education and Skills analysis in 2020 the report highlights that across West Lindsey physical access to further education is poor compared to the county average (78%) with only 69% of the resident population of relevant age within 30 minutes of a post-16 further education establishment (including sixth forms)
- 2.5 Both the Manufacturing and Construction sector provide more than 20% of total employment within the district. Employers have told us that they struggle to recruit locally and have voiced their concerns about losing provision and learners at a crucial time for the economy.

### **3 Changes at Gainsborough College**

- 3.1 Gainsborough College is part of the Lincoln College Group which is a large General Further Education provider with 2 other campuses at Lincoln and Newark.
- 3.2 Over the last decade there has been a steady decline in the number of students signing up to Post-16 courses at Gainsborough. It's estimated that annually there are now just 40-60 students within Construction, Automotive and Engineering. The College told the Council that it was no longer financially viable to run the site as a stand-alone College and that part of the site would be leased if a suitable tenant expressed an interest.
- 3.3 During the COVID pandemic, the College were approached by Castles Futures which run two independent DFE registered, co-educational day schools in Lincoln and Scunthorpe. Due to increased demand, the school were seeking premises within the Gainsborough area to deliver alternative education provision for pupils aged 11-16.
- 3.4 Initially, Castles Futures only wanted to lease the main college building which could be secured with fencing to separate it from the remaining site and safeguard pupils. This would also have protected the remaining post-16 provision which is delivered from adjacent premises.
- 3.5 However, the Council has now been advised that Castles Futures want to lease the whole site from September 2022, so all remaining provision will have to be relocated to Lincoln or Newark at the end of this school year. The College are aiming to provide students with subsidised transport from Gainsborough.

### **4 Council Support**

- 4.1 The Council enabled the College to establish the Made in Gainsborough Engineering Apprenticeship programme which has supported almost 100 apprentices since 2018. This flagship programme aimed to support local engineering and manufacturing companies with a pipeline of talent for the foreseeable future. The Council contributed financially to the project and also secured funds from third parties, in order to for the project to go ahead.
- 4.2 The College are a key stakeholder in the West Lindsey Employment & Skills Partnership and through this network have the opportunity to work collaboratively with compatible organisations.
- 4.3 Senior Officers and Managers have met with the College regularly to explore commercial opportunities and other viable solutions to keep the site open. One example includes conducting some market research to assess demand for a community hub to be located at the site.

## **5      Further Education Taskforce**

- 5.1    The closure of the Gainsborough campus as a Further Education College has concerned residents and employers. A taskforce would seek to assess why the number of students has declined and what the impact such a loss will have on local employers, future students and the wider community.
- 5.2    Nationally the number of pupils attending local authority alternative provision has increased by nearly 3,000 (10%) to 32,436 in 2020/21. Most pupils are boys (74.6%). We understand that 30% of pupils that will be studying at Castles are from within the West Lindsey district. A taskforce would need to understand why this type of provision is needed and how it can benefit local residents and employers.
- 5.3    The overarching purpose of the taskforce would be to act as the designated, time-limited body responsible for the delivery of a respective action plan, and its associated objectives. This will be set out in terms of reference.

### **APPENDIX 1 – FET Terms of Reference v1.1 Draft**

- 5.4    It is also intended that the very process of forging new relations through this taskforce and working together to seek beneficial outcomes across the district, will in itself lead to new learning, insight and joint initiatives, and provide a useful platform and legacy for future action in its own right, as well as being a good reason to get involved.

## **6      Membership of Further Education Taskforce**

- 6.1    The membership will be made up of key stakeholder organisations and set out in the terms of reference. These are identified in the list below:
  - Leader of the Council
  - 1 x Ward Member for Gainsborough
  - 1 other member sought from nominations
  - Lincolnshire County Council
  - Secondary School Representatives
  - Greater Lincolnshire LEP
  - Higher Education Representatives
  - Further Education Representatives
  - Business Representatives

## **7      Timescales**

- 7.1    It is proposed to review the Further Education taskforce after 1 year.

## **8      Recommendations**

- 8.1    That Prosperous Communities Committee resolve to establish a Further Education Taskforce for West Lindsey.
- 8.2    That Prosperous Communities Committee receive a quarterly update from the Further Education Taskforce.