

CABINET

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PROPOSAL FOR MEDWAY UNIVERSITY TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Les Wicks, Children's Services

Report from: Rose Collinson, Director of Children and Adults

Author: Malcolm Staunton, Head of 14-19 Planning and Commissioning

Summary

This paper updates Members on the proposal to develop a University Technical College (UTC) in Medway and makes recommendations for the next stage.

The DfE announced the second round of applications for University Technical Colleges (UTCs) in November, with a closing date of **17 January 2012**. In collaboration with The University of Greenwich and Mid Kent College we are developing an application for a Medway UTC. The DfE will announce the outcome of the second round in May 2012. If the Medway UTC application is approved a Diversity Impact Assessment will be completed.

We have commissioned a feasibility study to assess potential sites and gather evidence of demand from employers, young people and parents. This study will include an assessment of the potential impact on local schools.

In order to submit an application for a UTC, a Trust has to be established as a company limited by guarantee. It is intended that the founding members will include the University of Greenwich, Mid Kent College, Medway Council and employers such as BAE Systems. The DfE recommendation is that local authorities are offered up to one place on the Trust.

The Trust will need to be established in early January, in time to meet the closing date for applications, and an urgent decision is therefore required regarding Medway Council's support of the application for a Medway UTC and its participation in the UTC Trust.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 This proposal is consistent with the Children and Young People's Plan and also the School Organisation Plan.
- 1.2 Paragraph 4.43 in the School Organisation Plan outlines Medway Council's intention to prepare a business case for the development of a University Technical College in Medway.
- 1.3 The Cabinet is asked to consider this matter as urgent and not subject to call in as any delay would weaken the proposal for a UTC, because the University of Greenwich, Mid Kent College and its partners would need to submit the application to the DfE without the explicit support of Medway Council. In addition, the application must be made to the DfE by 17 January 2012.
- 1.4 The Chairman of the Children and Young People O&S Committee has agreed that the taking of these decisions cannot be reasonably deferred, in accordance with Rule 16 (Special Urgency) of the Access to Information Rules (Part 2 of Chapter 4 in the Constitution).
- 1.5 Additionally and in line with rule 16.11 of Chapter 4, Part 5 of the Constitution, call-in can be waived where any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the Public's interests. The Chairman of the Children and Young People O&S Committee has agreed that the decisions proposed are reasonable in all the circumstances and to them being treated as a matter of urgency and to waive call in.

2. Background

- 2.1 University Technical Colleges (UTCs) are all-ability and mixed gender state funded schools, independent of Local Authorities. They are new 14-19 Academies, typically with 500-800 pupils, specialising in subjects needing modern, technical, industry-standard equipment, such as in engineering and construction. These specialisms are taught alongside a broad, general education, including business skills, in a timetable that replicates that of the workplace.
- 2.2 The second round of applications for University Technical Colleges was announced by the DfE on 16 November, with a closing date of 17 January 2012. We are working in partnership with the University of Greenwich and Mid Kent College on the application for a Medway UTC. In this round the DfE is seeking applications offering an opening date during 2013.
- 2.3 A condition of the application is that a company is formed, referred to as an Academy Trust, constituted specifically for the purpose of establishing and running a school. This must be set up as a company limited by guarantee. It is intended that the founding members will include the University of Greenwich, Mid Kent College, Medway Council and employers such as BAE Systems and the Royal School of Military Engineering.

- 2.4 19 UTCs have already been approved, mainly specialising in engineering and construction. Up to 9 additional UTCs may be approved in the second round. At present there is no commitment to further rounds during the life of this Parliament, which means that the second round will be very competitive. However, the long-term aim is to build up the number of UTCs to over 100.
- 2.5 The site of most interest as a potential Medway UTC is the Rodney Block at Brompton Barracks. This building offers about 4,200 sq metres on three floors and is currently unused apart from some storage space on the ground floor. However, the RSME is currently reviewing its estate and is unable to make any commitment until the review is complete, which is unlikely to be before January 2012.
- 2.6 We have visited two other potential sites. The first is at Kitchener Barracks, opposite the Council's buildings in Gun Wharf. This has many advantages in term of space and location but is owned by the RSME and so subject to the same review. The site will be in use by the RSME until October 2014. In addition, the MoD has valued the building at £5m. For these reasons it is unlikely to be in scope.
- 2.7 The second building is a large storeroom in Chatham Historic Dockyard, which offers 6,000 sq metres. Bill Ferris, Chief Executive of the Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, approached Mid Kent College to suggest this as a potential venue for the UTC. However, whilst there would be advantages in the UTC being based in the Dockyard there are some disadvantages that would need to be overcome, such as low ceilings and wooden floors. For this reason we are continuing to seek alternative sites.
- 2.8 Whilst it is not an absolute requirement for a site to be identified in the application for a UTC, the Baker Dearing Trust (which is leading the UTC initiative for the DfE) has made it clear that our application would be in a weak position if it did not identify a potentially viable site.
- 2.9 We have commissioned a small feasibility study to examine the buildings and also to investigate demand. This is helping the partners to collate supporting evidence, establish the catchment area and assess the potential impact on local schools.

3. Options

- 3.1 Given that there will be very strong competition within the second round of UTC applications, we need to build a very robust case for the Medway UTC.
- 3.2 The Rodney Block at the RSME can be listed as the first option but we will need to identify alternatives in case this building does not become available or the obstacles prove insurmountable.
- 3.3 We are seeking additional options for sites, located near to both the University of Greenwich and Mid Kent College – in order to enable students to share facilities. Students will also need access to playing fields, such as

Medway Park or the RSME's playing field. Around 5,000m² will be needed in the UTC building for 600 students. For this reason an extension to the Rodney Block would be required if this building is made available.

- 3.4 UTCs are all-ability and the DfE does not permit any form of selection. The admissions policy must be in accordance with the School Admissions Code, the School Admissions Appeal Law and admissions law as it applies to maintained schools. We will need to agree the criteria to be used to prioritise places if the UTC is over subscribed.
- 3.5 The plans for the UTC will take into account the potential impact on local schools, informed by the feasibility study. This will be used to assist in planning the catchment area and the student numbers for the UTC.
- 3.6 In order to ensure financial viability, it is likely that the Medway UTC would need to recruit students into Year 10 and Year 12 during the first year of opening.
- 3.7 A UTC Trust will need to be established before the application is submitted. The DfE requires that the university and employer members must comprise the majority on the Trust but Local Authorities can be members.

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1 The proposal is unlikely to proceed without the support of the Council.
- 4.2 The benefits to Medway of submitting a successful bid include:
 - Wider range of options for 14-19 year olds
 - Increased participation and attainment amongst young people who prefer a more vocational route
 - Increased progression of young people to HE, FE and apprenticeships
 - Increased availability of skills for local businesses
 - Strengthening of our partnerships with FE, HE and businesses
 - High profile contribution to the local economic strategy

5. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Impact on local schools	<p>Local schools may object to the proposal on the grounds that their pupil numbers will be adversely affected, as has happened in other UTCs.</p> <p>This risk is rated C2.</p>	<p>Research has been commissioned to assess the likely impact on local schools, taking into account the catchment area for the UTC, travel to learn patterns, the raising of the participation age and demographic changes.</p>
Gender stereotyping	<p>A UTC specialising in engineering and construction may attract mainly boys.</p> <p>This risk is rated C2.</p>	<p>Within the curriculum offer we will seek to establish a broad range of options and our marketing will take into account lessons learned from other UTCs about gender imbalances.</p> <p>Collaborative work with primary schools and girls' schools will be very important.</p>
Suitability and availability of premises	<p>1) The Rodney Block at RSME may not be available at all or, if released, within the required timescale for an opening in 2013.</p> <p>2) We may be unable to find a suitable alternative</p> <p>These risks are rated C2.</p>	<p>We have written to Brigadier Steve Hodder (Commandant at the RSME) and Lord Baker, asking for support.</p> <p>We are seeking to identify at least one alternative site as a contingency.</p>

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Within the application to the DfE we need to show evidence of informal consultations with prospective students, parents, schools and employers. We are currently making preparations for this.
- 6.2 We also need letters of support from employers, explaining their specific roles, such as helping to design and deliver the curriculum, providing problems to solve and projects for students to work on, offering work placements and mentoring.

6.3 If the application is successful, we will be required to conduct formal consultation, in line with legislation concerning the establishment of new schools.

7. Financial and legal implications

7.1 In preparing a full application with its partners, the main commitment is in terms of Medway Council staff time, particularly within the Schools' Commissioning & Traded Services Team, School Organisation Team and Finance Team.

7.2 A budget of £94,000 has been made available from the brought forward modernisation grant, which can be used to support the costs of additional expertise for specific aspects of the application, should this be required.

7.3 The application for a UTC will include a proposal for a capital project to refurbish a building or for a new build. The average being funded per project for the first round of UTCs is £8.6m, with a range from £4m to £10m.

7.4 If the application is successful the DfE will commission project managers to support the capital project and assist with curriculum development. The DfE would meet these costs and would also fund the costs of employing a Principal for two terms during this pre-opening phase. Revenue funding for the UTC would be paid by the Young People's Learning Agency, as with other types of academy.

7.5 A University Technical College is an Academy within the meaning of the Academies Act 2010 but existing schools cannot convert to become an UTC.

7.6 The application requires a company limited by guarantee to be established. The model UTC Articles of Association require at least 3 members to sign the Memorandum of Association. The members of the UTC Trust company would have a strategic role in running the UTC. The members appoint the directors of the company who are the same as the governors. The directors/governors are responsible for the day to day management of the school. Company members are not always directors but in some cases will undertake both roles.

8. Recommendations

8.1 That Medway Council supports the application for a Medway UTC.

8.2 That Medway Council participates in the company limited by guarantee which needs to be established as part of the application process by nominating a councillor to become a member of the Medway UTC Trust

8.3 That Cabinet recommends to the Chief Executive that he exercise his delegated authority to appoint Councillor Wicks to be a member (and if required also a director) of Medway UTC Trust (noting that the Chief

Executive can make new appointments to outside bodies under his delegated authority).

- 8.4 That Cabinet approves the virement, as set out in paragraph 7.2 of the report, to support the costs of additional expertise for specific aspects of the application, should this be required.

9. Suggested reasons for decision

- 9.1 The above actions are recommended in order to strengthen the application for a Medway UTC and to enable Medway Council to work with its partners in planning the establishment and running of the new school.

Lead officer contact

Malcolm Staunton, Head of 14-19 Strategy & Commissioning
Children and Adults-learning & caring directorate
malcolm.staunton@medway.gov.uk; Telephone:01634 334040

Background papers

Information on UTCs from the Baker Dearing Education Trust website:
<http://www.utcolleges.org/>.