

Report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 16 July 2019



Subject: Scrutiny of External Organisation - Epping Forest College

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Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Committee note the decision of the Joint Principal of the Epping Forest and Redbridge Campuses of New City College, that New City College not engage with the Council's proposed approach to external scrutiny of the ongoing improvement of further education services at the Epping Forest College Campus;**
 - (2) That, in light of recommendation (1) above, the proposed external scrutiny of Epping Forest College be removed from the work programme for the Committee for 2019/20; and**
 - (3) That the Service Director (Community and Partnerships) make appropriate arrangements with the Joint Principal of the Epping Forest and Redbridge Campuses of New City College, for members to be advised of the progress of improvements at Epping Forest College by way of a member briefing or visit to the College.**
1. Members will recall that the former Principal of Epping Forest College attended the meeting of the Committee held on 27 February 2018, to report on the detailed plans for improvement of the College arising from a report of Ofsted (November 2016) on its 'inadequate' judgement of the quality of service provision at the College, particularly in terms of the implications of the findings of Ofsted for the further education requirements of residents of the Epping Forest District. The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 February 2018 are available at:

<https://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/documents/g9151/Printed%20minutes%2027th-Feb-2018%2019.30%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf?T=1>
 2. In August 2018, Epping Forest College merged with New City College. As part of its work programme for 2019/20, the Committee has previously agreed that the new Principal of Epping Forest College be invited to attend a future meeting to report to the Committee in connection with the progress of the implementation of relevant improvement plans by New City College and to respond to the concerns of members with regard to curriculum matters and the future intentions of New City College with regard to its landholdings within the Epping Forest District.
 3. On behalf of the Chairman of the Committee, an invitation was recently extended to Janet Smith, the joint Principal of the Epping Forest and Redbridge Campuses of New City College, to attend the meeting of the Committee to be held on 3 September 2019.

4. In response, Ms. Smith has indicated that she does not consider it to be appropriate for New City College to report to the Council in this way, as the College is an incorporated organisation, answerable to its own governing body. Ms. Smith has advised that, as the College is open and transparent in its dealings with the public, but is not accountable to the Council, she will therefore not be attending the meeting of the Committee as she feels that it is an inappropriate vehicle for the College's communications with the Council.
5. However, Ms. Smith has further advised that, as the College has a very positive story to tell about its improvement since the recent merger, she would be happy to meet with members on an informal basis to discuss this, either at the Civic Offices or by way of invitation to visit the College to see the improvements in action. Ms. Smith has confirmed that she will keep members informed regarding the development of the new wellbeing and leisure centre at the College and hopes that the Council and New City College can work together productively for the benefit of the local community.
6. In the circumstances, it is recommended that the external scrutiny of Epping Forest College be removed from the work programme for the Committee for 2019/20 and that the Service Director (Community and Partnerships) be requested to make appropriate arrangements with the joint Principal of the Epping Forest and Redbridge Campuses of New City College, for members to be advised of the progress of improvements at Epping Forest College by way of a member briefing or visit to the College.

Resource Implications:

The recommendations of this report seek to enable scrutiny activity to more effectively meet work programme requirements.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The Council's constitution sets out rules for the management of its overview and scrutiny responsibilities. Although external organisations are not generally required by legislation to attend before the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it is hoped that most would be willing to engage constructively with the Council's scrutiny activity when invited to do so.

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

There are no implications arising from the recommendations of this report in respect of the Council's commitment to the Climate Local Agreement, the corporate Safer, Cleaner, Greener initiative, or any crime and disorder issues within the district.

Consultation Undertaken:

This report seeks the identification of overarching themes and specific issues to be subject of the external scrutiny of New City College.

Background Papers:

None

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

The Council's constitution sets out rules for the management of its overview and scrutiny responsibilities.

Equality:

There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations of this report.