

**Meeting:** Haringey Strategic Partnership

**Date:** 26 February 2009

**Report Title:** Briefing on the Proposed Merger of the College of North East London (CONEL) and Enfield College

**Report of:** Paul Head, Principal CONEL

**Purpose**

To brief the HSP on the current progress with the proposed merger of the College of North East London (CONEL) and Enfield College.

**Summary**

The public consultation on the proposal took place from 5 December 2008 and complete on 19 January 2009. There were forty-two formal responses to the consultation document. The governors of both colleges have agreed that, on the basis of their consideration of the outcomes of due diligence reports and responses from public consultation, we will continue to prepare a full proposal for submission to the Learning and Skills Council for the merger of Enfield College with the College of North East London.

The Colleges are now undertaking the detailed preparation of the full merger proposal for consideration by governors in early April and then by the LSC Regional Council. If the proposal is approved by the Governors and Regional Council it will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills for consideration and decision. The target date for merger is 1 August 2009.

**Legal/Financial Implications**

None for the HSP.

**Recommendations**

Note the report.

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## **Background**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to update the Haringey Strategic Partnership (HSP) about developments current progress with the proposed merger of the College of North East London (CONEL) and Enfield College.

### **Current Position**

### **The Proposal**

The public consultation on the proposal took place from 5 December 2008 and complete on 19 January 2009.

A summary of the public consultation document is attached.

The proposals aim to create for the future a vibrant college in the Upper Lea Valley, serving the area from Stamford Hill to the M25. We believe that this offers a unique opportunity to make a major contribution to the regeneration legacy of the 2012 Olympics. The vision is for a new college to benefit learners and communities as the best means to enhance learning for individuals and develop and deliver skills for businesses throughout the Upper Lea Valley.

Together as a merged institution, the two colleges would be stronger than they can be individually. The merger creates opportunities for investment at both sites and we will look to add new facilities, creating greater choice for individuals, for communities and for employers. These developments would be of particular benefits to communities in the east of Enfield and Haringey.

The merger would build on our existing strengths and pool our resources to create a brand new college, one that is designed to serve the needs of generations of Enfield and Haringey learners in the long term.

### **Public Consultation**

Public consultation followed agreement by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) London Regional Council and Ministerial approval from the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS).

Consultation on merger proposals is a statutory requirement placed on the LSC. It requires the following documents to be produced:

- the statutory Draft Proposal; a short two page document providing key details about the reorganisation proposal as prescribed by regulations;
- the statutory Summary of the Draft Proposal; which is the public notice summarising the draft proposal; and
- the Consultation Document, which describes the reorganisation proposal in detail.

The LSC arranged for the public notices to appear in the local press in week commencing 1 December 2008 and copies of the notices to be displayed in public libraries and at the two colleges' premises. The LSC sent out 271 copies of the consultation document to the agreed list of recipients and the document was published on the LSC website on 5 December 2008. Press releases were sent out by the LSC and by the colleges. The two colleges also briefed their staff about this stage in the merger process and circulated brief summaries of the consultation document to staff and over 1,000 other key stakeholders in Enfield and Haringey.

The public consultation started on 5 December 2008 and completed on 19 January 2009. An allowance of two additional weeks was made for the Christmas break.

The responses were addressed to the LSC, who have sent copies to the colleges for response, where necessary. The LSC keeps the responses and additional correspondence (such as local LSC replies, college responses, action taken, etc.). When the full proposal is forwarded to the Secretary of State, the responses and additional correspondence will be included in supporting documentation.

The LSC had received 42 formal responses to the consultation document during the period 5 December to 19 January. A further 2 responses were received after 19 January. Responses have been received from:

- 5 colleges
- 2 providers
- 3 higher education organisations (2 universities, 1 private provider)
- 1 school
- 4 unions (3 employer, 1 student)
- 2 Local Authorities (Haringey and Enfield)
- 6 representative organisations
- 7 voluntary/community organisations
- 1 member of staff
- 5 employers
- 1 collective student response (summary of 330 CONEL student responses)
- The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)
- Metropolitan Police.

These responses were considered by the Governors Joint Steering Group at the end of January and then at a joint meeting of the full Governors of both Colleges in February. Separate Governing Body meetings also had the opportunity to consider the responses.

There were no responses that raised any fundamental issues to prevent a merger proposal proceeding to the next stage of consideration. However, the following issues that were raised by a number of respondents will require a response:

- The reaction to the proposed name
- Concerns about traveling time and travel costs
- Partnership working and concerns about the potentially adverse impact on recruitment of learners by surrounding post-16 educational organisations
- Concerns about the implications of merger for staff
- The implications of the current economic climate and increased unemployment on the merger proposal
- Arrangements for the planning and funding of 14-19 provision in Enfield and Haringey

The LSC will write to all respondents providing a response where appropriate or informing the respondent that the colleges will be writing to them to address their questions or concerns. In addition a general response to the themes raised by external stakeholders that will be published on the college websites to keep local communities and all other stakeholders informed about the outcomes of the consultation. This will also be circulated to all of the organisations sent the original summary proposal in December. Responses will also be made to the issues raised by staff and students. Issues raised by respondents' concerns in the final proposal.

### **2.3 Due Diligence**

In parallel with the public consultation, the colleges undertook financial and legal due diligence on each other. The reports from the external auditors and the legal advisors were again considered by each college and by the joint meeting of the full governors of both colleges and then by separate Governing Body meetings. There were no factors identified by due diligence that raised any fundamental issue to prevent the merger proposal proceeding to the next stage of consideration.

### **2.4 Governors' Decision**

The governors of both colleges have agreed that, on the basis of their consideration of the outcomes of due diligence reports and responses from public consultation, we will continue to prepare a full proposal for submission to the Learning and Skills Council for the merger of Enfield College with the College of North East London.

## **3. Next Steps**

As noted above we will respond to the issues raised in the public consultation and finalise issues identified in due diligence. The Colleges are now undertaking the detailed preparation of the full merger proposal for consideration by governors in early April and then by the LSC Regional Council. If the proposal is approved by the Governors and Regional Council it will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills for consideration and decision.

The formal merger process to date has been:

- Agreement by each college to draft an Initial Outliner Proposal (IOP) to merge – completed April 2008
- Approval by each college of the draft IOP and submission to the LSC – completed September 2008
- LSC approval to consult publicly – completed 20 November 2008
- Public consultation – completed January 2009
- Completion of due diligence reviews for each college – completed January 2009

Next steps are:

- January / February 2009: Consideration of responses to the consultation and responses to consultees
- March 2009: Completion of the full merger proposal
- April 2009: Consideration of full proposal by the Governing Bodies of both Colleges
- April 2009: Submission to LSC of the full merger proposal
- May 2009: Submission to the Secretary of State for approval
- 1 August 2009          Target date for merger

Paul Head  
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February 2009

## **Appendices**

1. Summary of Consultation Document attached

The full consultation document can be viewed at:

<http://www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/London/News/reorganisationproposals/conelenfield/>