

Meeting
1/2/2008

Agenda Item
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Reference No
HEFCW/08/01

1 Issue

- 1.1 This paper attaches a copy of *Promise and Performance: The Report of the Independent Review of the Mission and Purpose of Further Education in Wales in the context of the Learning Country: Vision into Action*, which is the final report of the Webb Review, and invites members comments.
- 1.2 The report was discussed at the meeting of Learning and Teaching Committee on 18 January and an oral report on LTC views will be given at the meeting.

2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper

- 2.1 The Corporate Strategy and Corporate & Operational Plan 2007-10 includes an action to 'Work closely with the HE sector to contribute to the Assembly Government's response to the independent review into the mission and purpose of FE (the Webb Review). This paper attaches the final report of that review.

3 Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 The Council is invited to comment on the report of the Webb Review.

4 Timing for decisions

- 4.1 There is no formal consultation on the report recommendations but there will be an opportunity for input into the Assembly's deliberations on the report outcomes at seminars in February, which will include HEFCW officer representation.

5 Council members' interests

- 5.1 No conflicts of interests have been declared in advance of the meeting.

6 Further information

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7 Background

- 7.1 The independent review of the mission and purpose of further education in Wales in the context of *The Learning Country: Vision into Action* was chaired by Sir Adrian Webb, previously Vice Chancellor at the University of Glamorgan. The terms of reference for the Review noted that it would be holistic in its approach, looking at education from 14 onwards, including work based learning, vocational programmes and the progression to higher education. It would be the Assembly Government's responsibility thereafter to finalise its policies in response.
- 7.2 The Review was discussed at the Council meeting in March 2007 in the presence of the then Minister, Jane Davidson (HEFCW/07/16 refers). Members received the minutes of a joint meeting of the Learning and Teaching and Third Mission Committees to discuss both the Webb and Leitch Reviews. Some possible principles to inform responses to the reviews were also discussed. A copy of the formal HEFCW response to the Webb Review was given to Council at its meeting in May 2007, together with information about a further submission (HEFCW/07/CE2 refers). In addition to officer meetings with the Panel, further written information was requested on a more informal basis at the request of the Panel during the period of its work.
- 7.3 As noted above, there will be no formal consultation on the Review recommendations. The Welsh Assembly Government is planning four seminars in February and March at locations across Wales to allow interested parties to comment. We would also expect to feed in to our sponsor division's response to the recommendations.

8 'Promise and Performance'

- 8.1 The review report was published in December 2007. It includes 136 recommendations, three of which relate directly to higher education and which are addressed to the Welsh Assembly Government's Department of Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills:

Graduate-level apprenticeships

The report recommends that 'the department should:

R37 work with HEFCW to develop a funding model for apprenticeships at Levels 4 and 5.'

Third Mission

The report recommends that 'the department should:

R48 allocate £5 million per annum as a Further Education Institutions' Services to Employers Fund to operate on similar lines to the current HEFCW Third Mission funding and expand the HEFCW Third Mission funding to enable joint funding of collaborative services to employers with FEIs.'

Foundation Degrees:

The report recommends that 'the department should:

R84 working with HEFCW, establish and fund a programme of new Foundation Degrees in key areas of the economy. These should be developed and delivered by consortia of employers, HEIs and FEIs, with an employer chair, and

R85 as appropriate, consider and consult upon the granting of Foundation Degree awarding powers to the FEI sector.’

- 8.2 It will be necessary, if HEFCW is required to take any or all of these recommendations forward, for closer working with Fforwm, FE institutions and with employers on these aspects. There is also a suggestion that HE and FE institutions should actively work with partners in England. Whilst there are effective partnership arrangements between HE and FEIs in some areas, for example in franchise arrangements related to course provision, these recommendations could include new approaches to working arrangements, which may need to be implemented in a short timescale if the recommendations are approved.
- 8.3 Other recommendations cover the areas of Basic skills; Welsh medium, bilingual and Welsh language; English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); 14 – 19 Learning Pathways; Employer-led training; Adult and Community Learning (ACL) and meeting the needs of the disadvantaged; Working more effectively at a regional level; Commissioning consortia; Schools; FE institutions; Work-based Learning Providers; Careers advice and guidance; Information Learning Technology; Governance; Reducing bureaucracy and increasing effectiveness; Quality; Funding; and National governance.
- 8.4 There are a number of other aspects of the report and its recommendations which may have implications for HE. These include:
- The impact of reconfiguration of FEIs including the proposal for a Cardiff Metropolitan College and the potential impact on HE/FE franchising (**R80-R82**);
 - The nature of HE engagement with the regional commissioning consortia (**R65-R75**)
 - The impact on HE arising from the direction of funding from the post 19 spend through employers (the Employer Entitlement Fund) (**R47**) and the proposal that FEIs should become the recognised skills driver for an area (**R79**);
 - The continuation of Welsh for Adults Centres (most currently based in HEIs) and the proposal for research to be commissioned into the impact of different strategies on the level of usage of Welsh by learners as they progress to further and higher levels of learning (**R16/18**)
 - The impact of proposals which might change the nature of learners applying to HE: a proposed review of 11 – 16 education (**R76**); a focus on the development of the Welsh Bac as a coherent philosophy of education (**R27**); a national strategy for improving participation and performance in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (**R41**); a strategy for more able and talented learners of all ages, similar to that already in place in England (**R44**); and a strategy for the international dimension of post-14 education (**R45**);

- A refocus of public funding for Adult and Community Learning on those who have not achieved level 2 qualifications; belong to low participation population groups and/or live in areas of marked educational disadvantage (**R56**);

Members are invited to comment on the report.

9 Next steps

- 9.1 The Welsh Assembly Government published its new draft Skills and Employment Strategy on 18 January. This Strategy refers to the Webb Review but also notes that the Review recommendations are being considered carefully. With regard to the three areas of recommendations for HE in 8.1 above, reference is made to strong partnerships between FEIs, HEIs and business but no mention is made of graduate level apprenticeships. Whilst the value of foundation degrees is recognised, no expansion is planned in this route at the expense of other types of provision (eg HNDs) which have strong employer recognition. Council's views on the Webb Review will be fed in to next month's seminars.

10 Financial implications

- 10.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the paper. Were HEFCW to be asked to take forward the relevant recommendations, we would expect these to be fully funded, including, for the Foundation Degree recommendation, additional student places.

11 Communications implications

- 11.1 There are no communications implications at this stage.

12 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

- 12.1 This paper has no implications for age, disability, gender, race, religious belief, sexual orientation or the Welsh language. Chapter 2 of the Report includes a discussion of Welsh-medium, Bilingual and Welsh Language Learning. Chapter 5 of the Review report includes a consideration of the needs of the most disadvantaged.

13 Risk Assessment

RISK	ACTION TO ADDRESS RISK
That the Welsh Assembly Government takes forward the recommendations without appropriate consultation with HEFCW or sufficient funding.	HEFCW officer attendance at consultation seminar(s) and liaison with Assembly officers.
That expectations may be	Dialogue with Assembly officers.

raised about Foundation Degrees, in a context where no provision is made for additional student numbers and funding	
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