

Regional Collaboration

Benefits of Regionalisation

1. Background

1.1 The Auditor General included a section in the Scotland's Colleges Report 2018 on the benefits of regionalisation.

1.2 The key message for the Lanarkshire Board in the 2018 report was as follows:

"...the benefits of regionalisation in Lanarkshire have come about mainly through the merger of colleges to create New College Lanarkshire. Under the regional structure, New College Lanarkshire and South Lanarkshire College are working together to meet core statutory requirements, but the regional arrangements are not delivering any significant regional benefits."

1.3 The follow-on recommendation in the report was as follows:

"The Lanarkshire Board should develop a clear plan for improving collaborative working across the region." (P7)

1.4 In looking at the report it is clear that a number of areas of progress listed for the UHI and the GCRB have also been undertaken by the Lanarkshire Board. These areas are as follows:

With regard to UHI

- Colleges are now more willing to share best practice and services to generate greater efficiency
- Delivering significant increases in foundation apprenticeships and pilot graduate apprenticeships by planning and delivering apprenticeships on a regional basis through its work-based learning hub
- Using data better to help it report more effectively against its plans.
- Its audit committee and financial and general purposes committee now both look in detail at the performance of all individual colleges across a range of measures. As a result, committee members are better informed about long-and short-term performance issues and about the colleges' financial sustainability.
- UHI agreed a funding model for allocating further education credits between colleges in a way that maintains financial stability at individual colleges and meets the regional targets agreed with the SFC.

With regard to GCRB

- GCRB launched Glasgow's Regional Strategy for College Education in October 2017
- Supporting Glasgow's colleges to develop individual college and regional science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) strategies. The colleges now work together with employers and higher education partners to develop effective ways for school pupils to go to college and university and into jobs.
- Developing the young workforce (DYW) and student data systems.
- Distributing capital funding to colleges against an agreed set of criteria, linked to regional priorities.
- Monitoring and scrutinising colleges' finances and performance on an ongoing basis.

2. Benefits and Progress

2.1 The Regional College and Regionalisation

New College Lanarkshire (NCL) is the product of a successful regionalisation process which saw the merger of three of the four Lanarkshire Colleges. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) merger review highlighted the success of this process and NCL has made major strides in harmonisation between its three main campuses and in bringing about the cultural change to create one single cohesive entity. In addition, South Lanarkshire College (SLC) performs well and has a relatively healthy financial position. It provides information to the Regional Strategic Body for review and monitoring purposes and also has responsibilities associated with delivering activities out with the scope of the Regional Funding arrangements.

2.3 Inclusion and Collaborative Working

Inclusive cultural change takes time and measurement of success has to include influencing factors and operation that is smooth and collaborative. The Lanarkshire Board is working in an inclusive and collaborative way with its assigned college and each Board is as aware of the challenges as they are of the opportunities. Six Members of SLC's Board of Management, including the Regional Chair, are full members of The Lanarkshire Board, emphasising the strong commitment to joint working.

SLC Board members are members of the Regional Curriculum and Student Affairs and Outcomes (CSAO) committee, while the SLC Senior Management Team attend the CSAO meetings, the Resources and General Purpose Committee (R & GP) and the Finance and Audit Committees as outlined in the Financial Memorandum. Additionally, they are also consulted and contribute to the setting of the agenda for each meeting of the Lanarkshire Board, attend the Lanarkshire Board strategic events and engage fully in the evaluation and planning processes of the Board.

2.4 A recognised regional platform

The Lanarkshire Board, as the Regional Strategic Body (RSB), is a platform in itself for discussion at both regional and national level. The Chair of the Board is a member of key college sector committees including Colleges Scotland Good Governance Group and is a Board member of Colleges Scotland.

2.5 The Regional Strategic Body and its role in other Regional Partnerships and its socio economic role

The RSB is a key strategic body in Lanarkshire and as such is a member of a number of key regional partnerships across three local authorities. The regional college is also a key player in the delivery of education and training in Lanarkshire to address key strategic priorities such as access for those from deprived post code areas and the delivery of skills which are key to the local economy.

2.6 The RSB and Fundable Body Status

The Lanarkshire Board achieved fundable body status after an extensive review by the SFC and it is part of the duties of the RSB to have regard to the importance of ensuring that funds made available to it by SFC under the 2013 Post 16 Education Act are used as economically, efficiently and effectively as possible. The Lanarkshire RSB has the appropriate mechanisms in place to allocate and monitor the use of funds. It has smooth and well- functioning mechanisms to discuss and agree the Regional Outcome Agreement (ROA) submission, a regional finance working group and it has been the first to prepare consolidated accounts. Reports on the working of the SLC Audit and Finance Committees are

brought to the Lanarkshire Board committees and the Lanarkshire Board internal auditors have in built a regional overview into their audit schedules which includes a review of key SLC financial returns. Additionally, a review of regional finance structures is under discussion currently. There is clear past evidence of both the regional and assigned colleges having worked together to ensure student bursary funding was appropriately and adequately resourced across the region, as the RSB took the view that the needs of the Lanarkshire students had to be supported from a regional perspective, not solely an individual college one. Subsequent discussions have continued in this vein and it is considered that this collaborative approach has served the Region well.

2.7 Collaboration in the Regional Support for the Lanarkshire Board

The Lanarkshire Board is the Board of the Regional College NCL as well as the RSB. The administrative support for the Board includes dedicated staff but also calls on the resources of NCL in a number of support functions. Both colleges commit significant senior staff time to the successful operation of the regional arrangements. The costs of the running of the Board are shared between the two colleges 60:40 and this is an excellent example of the collaboration between the colleges and the support for running the Lanarkshire Board.

2.8 Strategic Specialisation

There are clear specialisations in both college campuses and this is the result of staff examining in detail regional economic development and internal statistics reports which are reported the CSAO committee e.g. SLC has a national profile in construction and NCL a national profile in dental education. The STEM strategies are looking at this in more detail as they come on stream and will be further informed by representation from the Lanarkshire Board on the national STEM committee. A Regional STEM committee has been set up which includes representation from NCL and SLC, head teachers from a local secondary and primary schools with the support of the local authorities.

2.9 Performance Monitoring

There are reports at each meeting of the RSB's R & G P and CSAO Committees and these form part of the RSB's monitoring responsibility. There are performance monitoring reports to the CSAO committee on the delivery of education to the student body and on a range of performance measures. The two Student Association Presidents also report to this committee and the student experience is embedded into the work of the committee.

Internal auditors, Wylie & Bisset has undertaken a review of strategic planning at NCL. The opinion is that the strategic planning process is strong and they state the following in the executive summary:

“The College’s Strategic Plan is that of the Lanarkshire Region. This is prepared by the Vice Principal: Strategy and Corporate Performance in conjunction with South Lanarkshire College. The current Regional Strategy is for the period 2016-19. The Vice Principal: Strategy & Corporate Performance is responsible for facilitating Strategic Management within the College and is assisted by the Assistant Principal: Systems and the Assistant Principal: Business Development. The Strategy is reviewed annually to ensure the objectives are still relevant and address the needs of the College and the Region. The annual review begins in August each year and if any changes are to be considered then a draft is presented and approved by the Board of Management in June. The Regional Strategic Plan sets out the strategic priorities and strategic objectives of the Region which ensures the College can meet the key priorities of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) as set out in the Regional Outcome Agreement.”

2.10 Regional Strategies and Collaborative Working. The RSB receives a number of Regional Strategy related documents for consideration, including:

- The Regional Strategy itself;
- The Regional Outcome Agreement , updates, monitoring and annual review/evaluation;
- The Regional Financial Memorandum and Regional Finance Strategy;
- Regional Financial Statements were prepared to 31st July 2017 and submitted to Audit Scotland and the SFC. Lanarkshire was the only multi-college Region to do this. Effective planning by aligning the Financial Policies and Procedures of NCL and SLC made this a much smoother process;
- Regional Vision statement supported by the regional overview and report by the Lanarkshire Board's internal auditors;
- The Regional Value for Money Strategy incorporating joint procurement in areas such as waste management and catering;
- The Regional Risk Strategy and Register;
- The Gender Action Plan; and
- Annual quality evaluative reports and enhancement plans

And regional processes:

- A joint GDPR officer has been appointed through APUC who will work across both colleges;
- Alignment of Health and Safety procedures and monitoring of these;
- Collaboration between the Student Associations;
- Joint curriculum development in specific curricular areas;
- Credits transfer across Lanarkshire as appropriate; and
- Collaboration of student recruitment- if a student applies and is accepted by one college the other college does not make an offer which ensures that places are not blocked.

2.11 Joint Training

There is joint attendance at the Lanarkshire Board strategic events. Both colleges are opening training events as far as possible to each other's staff and examples of best practice are being captured and exchanged – e.g. the FESH system used by NCL in recording Health and Safety information. This has been adopted by SLC.

3. 0 Next Steps

While confident in its own abilities, the Lanarkshire Board invariably aims for continuous improvement and, in so doing, recognises the value and potential benefits of engaging with others and adopting/adapting better practice. This is a default position.