

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

Reconfiguration And Collaboration Fund: Assessment Process

1 Background

1.1 Funding allocations for reconfiguration are made from the Council's Reconfiguration and Collaboration Fund. Allocation procedures and processes derive from those applied to other large-scale initiatives operated by the Council over a number of years. They are presented in diagram form at the end of this description.

1.2 Terms used in the description are defined as follows:

minor proposals: feasibility studies, options appraisals etc, usually, but not exclusively, preparatory work for action of a substantial nature such as merger.

major proposals: mergers, substantial structural change falling short of merger, subject rationalisation etc.

delegated authorities: in the context of the Council, further specified action and/or approvals, including financial approvals within the agreed limits for the Chief Executive (£250k) and the Chairman (£500k).

2 Process

2.1 For the first allocations in 2002/03, a call for proposals based on Ministerial guidance and including criteria for assessment of proposals and details of arrangements for assessment (Circular W02/48HE) was published on 26 July 2002.

2.2 Assessment by an advisory panel (the Reconfiguration and Collaboration Panel) with constitution, membership and terms of reference agreed by the Council.

2.3 Council consideration of the panel's recommendations, leading to decisions - support; support subject to conditions; defer; refer; reject - and delegated authorities as appropriate to the proposals concerned.

2.4 Formal notification of outcomes to institutions, and, in due course, general publication.

2.5 Discussion and negotiation between the Executive and institutions to refine proposals as necessary to meet conditions for funding stipulated by the Council. Discussions based on a checklist designed to assist institutions in refining/formulating their proposals and the Council in assessing them.

For minor project proposals:

2.6 Officer scrutiny of documentation and progression through delegated authorities (see 2.3 above)

For major proposals:

- 2.7 Scrutiny of documentation by an Executive group comprising the Director of Higher Education; Director of Finance; Head of Risk Assurance; Head of Estates; Head of Funding and Research; and Senior Strategic Projects/Development Manager.

Scrutiny by the group takes the form of selective testing of institutions' own processes for arriving at conclusions, including financial estimates. Costs are benchmarked against those of comparable undertakings elsewhere in the UK where these are known.

- 2.8 The group's analysis, with accompanying documentation, referred to the Chief Executive and then to the Reconfiguration and Collaboration Panel for consideration.

- 2.9 Panel conclusions referred to Council for final decision on funding support.

For all proposals

- 2.10 For purposes of subsequent monitoring and evaluation and managing risk, the Executive agrees targets and deliverables for each stage of the project with institutions, and also agrees a payment profile. The profile has regard to the schedule of agreed deliverables. The Executive will specify an approach to evaluation having regard to the nature of each project. This will always include a review of an evaluation prepared by the institution/s at each monitoring point. For major proposals, it will always include supplementary evaluation, for example post-merger evaluation, on a timescale appropriate to the case in point. This evaluation will be undertaken by the Council Executive or by agents commissioned by the Executive.

- 2.11 All details – total funding allocation; targets and deliverables; arrangements for monitoring and evaluation; and profile of payments – confirmed to institutions in writing.

- 2.12 Progress reports to the Council at each meeting. These reports will include an analysis of monitoring and evaluation reports at the appropriate stages for each project.

3. **Evaluation at programme level**

- 3.1 In due course, there will be an overarching evaluation by the Executive, or agents commissioned by the Executive, of the reconfiguration programme as a whole. This will be reported to the Council.

DIAGRAM OF ASSESSMENT PROCESS

