

Meeting: Council

Date: 23 February 2017

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title: Proposed loan to South Devon College to support the development and construction of a new Hi Tech Skills Centre

Is the decision a key decision?

When does the decision need to be implemented? As soon as possible

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Supporting Officer Contact Details: Anne-Marie Bond, Assistant Director Corporate and Business Services, anne-marie.bond@torbay.gov.uk

1. Proposal and Introduction

- 1.1 South Devon College is looking to construct an exciting new, purpose built hi-tech and digital centre to meet the skills demands from employers, to encourage and retain local talent, develop and grow high level sustainable jobs for Torbay students and support economically and strategically important local and regional sectors. The building is scheduled to open in September 2019.
- 1.2 The College is seeking loan support from Torbay Council because of the significant positive economic and community benefit the new hi tech skills centre will bring. This will also allow South Devon College to access borrowed funds at a cost effective and fixed rate which forms part of the College's long term strategy for a financially secure organisation. This sustainable financial strategy allows it to continue to grow, develop and improve, to best serve its local community and to seek to maximise the potential to develop an Institute of Technology and University potential at South Devon College.

2. Reason for Proposal

- 2.1 To consider the request from South Devon College to provide them with a loan to enable them to develop and construct a new hi tech skills centre.

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision

- 3.1 That the Council provide South Devon College with a loan on terms set out in exempt Appendix 1 to the submitted report to enable them to develop and construct a new hi tech skills centre.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Financial details of proposed loan to South Devon College (Exempt)

Supporting Information

- 4.1 This project will create approximately 5000m² of exciting new high quality, education and skills facilities at South Devon College. It will replace low quality short term leased premises, safeguarding current provision, with an outstanding higher level skills and high tech facility directly designed to meet identified local and regional skills needs at Level 4 and Level 5 in the growing hi-tech sector, and increased population through local housing and employment growth in Torbay.
- 4.2 It will create the step change that is required in the area, both in developing Higher Education provision and meeting the demands of local employers, to continue to stimulate and sustain economic growth in this key sector offering new professional and technical education that provides individuals with high quality routes to local employment. This supports the current Economic Strategy of the Council.
- 4.3 Torbay and South Devon has a nationally significant and growing hi-tech cluster that has the potential to make a huge economic and social impact on the area. Increased Higher Education provision through the creation of a dedicated Hi-Tech Skills Centre will ensure the opportunity to meet the needs arising from this.
- 4.4 The sector includes international companies based in Paignton and South Devon such as Spirent Communications, Oclaro, Gooch & Housego, Alpha Engineering and Ltech who are all supportive of the developments. In addition, assistive and medical technologies (including the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Unit owned by the local NHS Trust) are strongly growing sectors locally and will benefit greatly from high quality local higher level skills development in this area.
- 4.5 The centre will support skills in key specialist areas such as electronics, photonics, advanced engineering and manufacturing, mechatronics, electrical engineering, engineering science, 3-D printing, CNC technology, computer programming and coding, cyber security and data analytics ("Big Data"). This will sit alongside related and integrated curriculum in the creative digital industries. This will allow new curriculum developments to meet key growth sectors and local skills needs in Torbay and South Devon, particularly in the higher skills, hi tech industries, health and social care sectors with associated research and development, supporting innovation and business start-up. The new and re-designed curriculum will also include Higher Level and Degree Apprenticeships with standards designed to meet employer requirements allowing Torbay to be at the forefront of the delivery of these vital new higher qualifications.
- 4.6 New technology skills are increasingly in demand from both the creative and digital sector, including business start-ups through the Torbay Innovation Centres. The Hi

Tech and Digital Centre will support and compliment the new EPIC building, on which construction is soon to start, building on strong partnership work.

- 4.7 The Hi Tech Skills Centre is a significant local project which aligns with Torbay vision, wider corporate, economic and strategic plans including complimenting and supporting the new EPIC building adjacent to the College's Long Road campus.