

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Date 14 March 2006
Subject Council Meeting
Location Castle Marina
Time 17:00
LSC office Nottinghamshire
Publication intent Internal

Present Keith Stanyard
Elaine Clark
Milton Crosdale
Chris Hasty
Roger Hursthouse
Barbara McKenna
David Sadler
Mick Storey
Mike Syms
Deborah White
Pat Woodfield

In attendance Jean Pardoe
LSC staff Louise Benson
Mick Brown
Verity Bullough
Nigel Jackson
Terry Laws

Apologies Apologies have been received from:
Stuart Anthony
Graham Chapman
Jon McLeod
Tom Stockwell
Peter Ward

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 The Chairman welcomed LSC East Midlands Regional Director Verity Bullough to the meeting.

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be a true and accurate record.

Item 3. Matters arising

- 3.1 **Best Practice Visit:** Terry Laws circulated a recently published table illustrating 16-19 distance travelled by local LSC area. Nottinghamshire is close to the middle of this table and, with the exception of Leicestershire, adds more value to the cohort it inherits at 16 than any other LSC office in the East Midlands. Tees Valley continues to head the table and Terry Laws advised that he would contact the LSC office in that area to discuss a visit. Verity Bullough stated that Humberside also performs extremely well and suggested that, given the similarities between the challenges faced in that area and many parts of the East Midlands, a visit to Humberside may also warrant consideration. **Action: Terry Laws to provide update in April**
- 3.2 **Agenda for change working group:** Louise Benson advised that Stuart Anthony, Elaine Clark, Deborah White and Pat Woodfield had offered to join the *agenda for change* working group. The Council members approved the membership of the working group and endorsed the recommendation that Deborah White should act as group Chair. Draft terms of reference, included with the circulated papers, were also approved.
Decision: working group membership, chair and terms of reference approved. **Action: Louise Benson to convene first meeting**
- 3.3 **Core Cities:** the Chairman confirmed that the Council meeting on 24 July, hosted by Gordon Mitchell at the Council House, will focus on the Core Cities agenda. The Chairman advised that LSC national Chair Chris Banks CBE has been invited to attend, a development welcomed by the Council.
- 3.4 **Theme 7:** the Chairman confirmed that the assessment and selection process for Band 5 posts had now been completed, with announcements expected shortly. The Chairman thanked David Sadler for his support in this matter.
- 3.5 **Youth Unemployment in Nottinghamshire:** Jean Pardoe advised the Council that, further to the discussion at the February Council meeting, she was now working closely with Terry Laws on apprenticeship participation and framework completions to lever in additional funding through achievement of the County Council's stretch target.
- 3.6 **Impact of the introduction of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) on Entry to Employment:** further to the concerns raised at the last Council meeting, Terry Laws confirmed that he had contacted National Office and had been informed that research into the potential impact of EMA had mainly focused on its financial implications. A hardship fund is being set up to support learners adversely affected by the transition.
- 3.7 **14-19 Developments:** Mick Brown advised that, following approval from the DfES, the LSC Nottinghamshire is now leading a pilot on funding and organisation, which will be delivered in partnership with Nottingham City Council. The Chairman reminded the Council that at the last meeting it had

been agreed to organise a session with each of the Local Authorities to focus on 14-19 developments and the transition from pre- to post- compulsory learning. Given the structural changes to education delivery resulting from the introduction of foundation schools and the forthcoming Education White Paper, it was agreed that the Council would benefit from a morning 'development session' focusing on these changes followed by a visit to Eastwood school to look at the 14-19 curriculum in practice.

Action: Louise Benson to organise

Item 4. Executive Director's Report

- 4.1 The Executive Director advised that Theme 7 of *agenda for change*, focusing on the LSC's organisational capacity and structure, continues to unfold. The process is time consuming and will inevitably have some impact on core business delivery. Mike Syms, who has contact with a number of LSC officers in his capacity as a college Principal, congratulated the Executive Director and his team for their professionalism and commitment during a period of significant change and uncertainty. Thanking the Principal, the Executive Director confirmed that he would share this positive feedback with staff. **Action: Mick Brown to feedback to staff**
- 4.2 The Executive Director advised the Council that a number of developments related to learning provision, particularly in the 14-19 phase, are currently in train across the Conurbation. Mick Brown briefed the Council on a meeting that had taken place earlier that day between NCN (represented by the Principal, Corporation Chair and Corporation Deputy Chair) and the LSC (represented by the Chairman and Executive Director). It had, he reported, been a constructive discussion covering a number of issues including curriculum rationalisation; the College's financial recovery plan; and estates strategy.
- 4.3 Activity supporting the delivery of the Core Cities agenda is taking place on a number of fronts, with a particular focus on adult skills and employability. A member of staff with from the LSC Nottinghamshire will be co-located with Jobcentre Plus to move this work forward.
- 4.4 The Executive Director reported that he and the Chairman have invited key representatives from partner organisations (including Nottingham City Council, the Greater Nottingham Skillsboard, Greater Nottingham Partnership, Nottinghamshire County Council and Jobcentre Plus) to a meeting to discuss the establishment of a leadership group within Greater Nottingham. The Chairman reported that changes to the remit of both Skillsboards are planned to simplify the partnership map and that a note on this will be brought to the next meeting. **Action: Henry Inman**
- 4.5 The Executive Director advised that two further Young Apprenticeship proposals involving Nottinghamshire providers, including Empower Training, have received national approval from the LSC and DfES. Nottinghamshire now has the most Young Apprenticeship places, across the widest range of occupational areas, in the East Midlands. This is very welcome, as Young Apprenticeships are one of the key interventions to tackle attainment levels at key stage 4, which are particularly low in Nottinghamshire.

4.6 Mick Brown confirmed that the Local Annual Plan for Nottinghamshire for 2006/07 had been approved by the Regional Board at its meeting on 27 February. The Executive Director thanked the Council members for their contribution to the development of the plan.

Item 5. Regional Update

5.1 Regional Director Verity Bullough advised that her presentation aimed to provide an overview of the key strengths and challenges in the East Midlands, plus a summary of indicative budgetary allocations for 2006/07.

5.2 The Regional Director summarised the key strengths thus:

- At 49%, the region has the highest apprenticeship completion rate in the country.
- The strong performance of the e2e programme, especially in terms of progression rates, has had a positive impact on the number of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The Regional Director acknowledged that, through the work of the Connexions Service and the LSC, Nottinghamshire is one of the top performing areas nationally in NEET reduction.
- In general, Further Education across the region also performs well. Only two colleges are currently assessed as inadequate under formal inspections and, at 74 per cent, success rates across the sector as a whole are the highest nationally. The sector has also benefited from significant capital investment with a number of iconic developments in train or completed across the region. The Regional Director stated that further work needs to be done in Nottinghamshire to upgrade the FE estate.
- The region enjoys a good reputation for enterprise and innovation. The success of the two Employer Training Pilots in Leicestershire and Derbyshire provides a strong foundation for the roll-out of Train to Gain and regional innovations in 14-19 are also recognised nationally.
- Regional strengths in partnership working are acknowledged nationally, with the Employment, Skills and Productivity Partnership (esp) held in high ministerial regard. The priority for the partnership now is to demonstrate real added value as it moves toward the end of its first operational year. The Core Cities agenda is of particular relevance to Nottinghamshire and the City Region initiative is also gaining momentum.

5.3 Although the East Midlands region has a number of strengths, there are also important challenges:

- The East Midlands ranks lowest of the nine regions in respect of the level 2 at 19 target. Although nationally it now appears likely that the target will be met due to strong performance in other regions, the East Midlands will fail to deliver its share of the target. The Regional Director advised that this could have implications for funding levels moving forwards and emphasised the importance of delivering step change improvements in the number of young people across the region achieving a level 2 qualification in 2006/07.

- Nationally, the targets for adult level 2 attainment are extremely challenging, with the publication of Lord Leitch's final report on Skills likely to raise the political profile of this target. A national action plan will be put in place, and the Regional Director emphasised the stretch factor involved for the East Midlands, where attainment levels are adrift of the national average.
- Although FE performance, in terms of learning outcomes, is generally strong across the region, there are concerns about the financial health and stability of a number of Colleges, including some in Nottinghamshire. Careful plans are being put in place to manage this challenge.
- In the East Midlands the mix of Skills for Life provision needs to be adjusted to meet the target of 80 per cent leading to a countable outcome and 20 per cent 'first steps'. Verity Bullough reported that the region is on track to achieve this by September 2007.
- In terms of progression to Higher Education, the East Midlands has the third lowest success rates in the country, with the Nottingham North constituency the lowest overall.
- The East Midlands lacks the cohesion and identity characteristic of some other regions, which impacts on its profile nationally. This may have implications for the amount of funding levered into the region.

5.4 The Regional Director advised that the East Midlands is the second smallest region, with the current funding allocation for 2006/07 standing at just under £520 million. There will not be significant additional funding for post-16 education and the Regional Director advised that it will therefore be important to use the budgets carefully and create some 'headroom' to provide flexibility to meet regional needs.

5.5 In the ensuing discussion, Roger Hursthouse questioned how effectively the LSC was engaging with the business community and, in particular, whether there was scope to meet employer demand for adult apprenticeships. Verity Bullough replied that the LSC is working to align funding with government priorities, which currently focus on the 16-19 cohort and first level 2 and Skills for Life qualifications for adults. The introduction of Train to Gain provides real scope for closer engagement with employers and offers an opportunity for work based learning providers, as well as the FE sector, to develop customised solutions to meet business needs.

5.6 On behalf of the Council, the Chairman thanked the Regional Director for her informative presentation.

6. Outline Merger Proposal from Newark & Sherwood and Lincoln Colleges

6.1 Introducing this agenda item, Nigel Jackson stated that the outline merger proposal is a well considered and structured document, which addresses the seven criteria stipulated by the Secretary of State. The outline proposal includes a draft timeline, which indicates that the merger will take effect from January 2007. Keith Stanyard advised that the LSC Nottinghamshire FE Committee, which had met ahead of the Council, had considered the outline proposal in some depth and recommends it for approval by the full Council.

- 6.2 Milton Crosdale questioned the evidence to support the proposal's assertion that the merger will enhance learning options for Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LLDD). It was agreed that this matter needs to be addressed in more detail in the final proposal.
- 6.3 Nigel Jackson advised that the outline proposal is advisedly cautious in its assessment of the estates and curriculum rationalisation likely to be afforded by the merger given the physical distance between the two institutions. The Council agreed that the final proposal should include more information about how the planned merger will contribute to the reconfiguration of the post-16 learning offer in Newark and that recommendation 3 in the LSC's supporting paper should be strengthened accordingly.
- 6.4 In response to a question from Elaine Clark, the Chairman advised that a meeting with West Nottinghamshire College has taken place and that the College may be interested in pursuing merger discussions with Newark & Sherwood if the Lincoln merger does not come to fruition. With an interim Principal now in place pending the arrival of the new Principal Asha Khempka, the College currently has other priorities to address including its own capital plans.
- 6.5 Councillor Mick Storey questioned Lincolnshire College's commitment to Newark and its learners. Nigel Jackson replied that further evidence of this will be sought from the final proposal but reminded the Council that the report prepared by Hale Consultancy recommended Lincoln College as the merger partner best positioned to deliver an improved learning offer to the Newark community. Councillor Storey also questioned the "unique all-age provision at Dukeries in Ollerton" referred to in the proposal.
- 6.6 Barbara McKenna questioned whether, given that Newark & Sherwood College has completed a job evaluation exercise, Lincoln College should be encouraged to do likewise. Mick Brown responded that, as independent corporations, FE colleges are responsible for their own HR practices and that, whilst an integrated job evaluation scheme may be something the new college may wish to consider post-merger, the lack of such a scheme in Lincoln College currently is not a material factor impacting on the LSC's assessment of the seven merger criteria.
- 6.7 Drawing the discussion to a close, the Chairman requested the Council to consider the three recommendations contained in paper 02036. Subject to recommendation 3 being strengthened as agreed above, the following recommendations were approved unanimously and the Council agreed to:
- 1. Approve the outline proposal for the merger of Newark & Sherwood College and Lincoln College;**
 - 2. Invite the two colleges to develop the proposal for wider consultation;**
 - 3. Advise the two colleges that in preparing the full proposal they present a clear vision and SMART objectives for the merger, as well as further detail about the curriculum offer in Newark and the proposed governance and management structure.**

Item 7. Capital Application from Broxtowe College – Toyota Academy

- 7.1 The Executive Director advised that, since the Council papers were sent, the financial information in the paper has been revised, resulting in a proposed increased contribution from the LSC. Given the strategic importance of this proposal, which is being developed in partnership with emda and Nottingham City Council, the Executive Director, with the support of the Chairman, proposed that a short additional Council meeting be convened to consider the revised capital application. The Council members agreed that this was the appropriate course of action and, after a show of hand to ensure quoracy for the proposed date, it was agreed that the Council would convene at 17.30 on 3 April 2006 at Castle Marina.

Decision: additional Council meeting to take place on 03 April

Action: Louise Benson to confirm arrangements with Council members.

Item 8. Capital Application from Dukeries College

- 8.1 Speaking to paper 040306, Nigel Jackson advised that the proposal requests LSC Adult and Community Learning funding to develop construction training facilities at the Dukeries Community College in Ollerton. Construction is a priority sector for the LSC, and the bid will provide training facilities for adult learners in a former coalfield community.
- 8.2 Councillor Mick Storey questioned whether Nottinghamshire County Council, as the land owner, had given planning permission for the proposed development. He also questioned the validity of some of the travel to learn information contained in the application. Nigel Jackson replied that the proposal had been signed off by a senior officer from Nottinghamshire County Council and, indeed, the proposal was submitted by the County Council on behalf of the Dukeries rather than by the College direct.
- 8.3 Elaine Clark stated that, in her view, the proposal failed to offer adequate evidence of employer demand. Mick Storey stated that locating the proposed development within the Energy Village rather than on the Dukeries campus may have supported clearer employer links, but this was not an option included within the proposal.
- 8.4 Drawing the discussion to a close, it was agreed that Nigel Jackson should review the capital application in the light of the points raised by the Council and bring a revised version back to the Council meeting on 04 April.

Action: Nigel Jackson to submit revised proposal for consideration by the Council on 04 April.

Item 9. Proposed LIDF priorities for 2006/07

- 9.1 Introducing this agenda item, Mick Brown explained that the proposed allocation for LIDF in 2006/07 aligns discretionary spend with the priorities contained in the LSC Nottinghamshire's Local Annual Plan. This approach will ensure that discretionary funding is targeted at areas of greatest need and maximum impact rather than simply being 'rolled over' from year to year to support a range of enabling activities and partnerships.

- 9.2 Keith Stanyard questioned why the proposed regional LIDF allocation has increased by 257 per cent to £1million. Verity Bullough replied that this had been done to create the 'headroom' referred to in her earlier presentation. The funding will enable the region to respond quickly and flexibly to emerging issues and will also be used to support structural developments, such as mergers.
- 9.3 The Council members unanimously approved the proposals for Nottinghamshire LIDF priorities for 2006/07.

Decision: Priorities approved

10. Audit Committee Matters

- 10.1 The Chairman advised that, since paper 060306a had been produced, he had received a communication from the Regional Director requesting notification of the LSC Nottinghamshire representative to sit on the regional audit committee by 31 March. The Chairman stated that it was therefore important for the Council to agree the nomination at the current meeting and, having ascertained the willingness of Roger Hursthouse to represent Nottinghamshire, formally moved that the LSC Nottinghamshire audit committee Chair be approved as the representative to the new regional body. This was approved unanimously.

Decision: Roger Hursthouse's nomination approved

Action: Louise Benson to confirm with Verity Bullough

- 10.2 Roger Hursthouse explained that paper 060306b provides additional information, requested by the Council at its last meeting, on the Audit Committee's concerns regarding arrangements for the delivery of the Provider Financial Assurance function in the East Midlands. The Audit Committee Chairman explained that in November 2005 the PFA plan for 2005/06 was subject to in-year downwards revision due, in the main, to reductions in staffing levels within the function, a position which will be exacerbated by Theme 7 of *agenda for change*. The Committee members are concerned that, with a reduced staffing complement, the function will become increasingly reliant on third party assurance managed, in some instances, by the providers themselves, a potentially high risk strategy in the Committee's opinion. In response, Verity Bullough advised that staffing levels for the function under Theme 7 have been determined by a national formula and that the concerns expressed by the Nottinghamshire Audit Committee may well be replicated elsewhere. She advised that the appropriate course of action was for Roger Hursthouse to write to National Audit Committee Chair Bryan Gray and requested that she receive a copy of the letter. The Council endorsed this proposed course of action.

Action: Louise Benson and Roger Hursthouse to liaise on letter.

- 10.3 The minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 10 February 2006 were noted.

Item 11. Any other business

11.1 Pat Woodfield expressed a concern that there is, on occasions, insufficient time available at Council meetings to debate important items for decision. She requested that the timing and/or frequency of meetings be reviewed to allow greater time to discuss important items. Louise Benson advised that *agenda for change* will result in greater synchronicity between the work of local Councils and the Regional Board and agreed to canvass the views of Council members and observers about future meeting arrangements.

Action: Louise Benson

Item 12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 03 April 2006 at Castle Marina at 17.30 and will take Capital Proposals as its focus.

Meeting chair	Keith Stanyard
Minute taker	Louise Benson
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