

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Date 14 March 2007
Subject London West Learning & Skills Council
Location Central House, 3 Lampton Road, Hounslow
Time 13.30 – 16.00
LSC office London West
Publication intent Internal

Present **Rod Kenyon** (RK) – Chair, London West LSC
Clare Arnold (CA) - Area Director, London West LSC
John Hensley (JH) - Councillor LB Hillingdon
Geoff Crispin (GC) – Vice Chancellor, Thames Valley University
Jeremy Crook (JC) – Director, Black Training and Enterprise Group

In attendance Erin Whittaker - secretariat

LSC staff **Ellen Quaye** (EQ) - Partnership Director for Hillingdon & Hounslow, London West LSC
Neil Roberts (NR) – Partnership Director for Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, London West LSC

Apologies Apologies have been received from:
Vijay Amin - Managing Director, ABi Associates Ltd
Saeed Gillani - Principal Accountant, Gee Kay Farrah
Rachel Davies - Principal, Uxbridge College
Frank Wingate - Chief Executive, West London Business
Andrea Berkeley - Former Headteacher of Preston Manor High School
Sue Ferns - Head of Research and Specialist Services, Prospect
Javed Khan - Director of Learning Services, LB of Harrow
Paul Raina - Managing Director, Training and Assessment Services Ltd
Brian Noble - Network Manager, Business Link for London
Angela Chiswell - Head of Connexions & Out of School Learning, LB of Brent
Pravin Parmar - Senior Property Adviser LSC
Abs Malik – Partnership Director for Brent & Harrow (as of 2nd April 2007)

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed and thanked all attendees with particular mention to NR for whom this was his first council meeting.
- 1.2 The Chairman expressed his disappointment at the low attendance from Council members, resulting in the meeting not being quorate. He noted the council will not be able to make decisions during the course of the meeting.
- 1.3 The Chairman stressed the need to continue as a fully functioning council despite the likely replacement of the Local Councils with a Regional Council. He also noted the importance of London West representation on the new Regional Council and requested Council members maintain their interest. If any council members were interested on serving on the new Council they should advise him.

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising from the meeting held on 30 January 2007

- 2.1 The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.
- 2.2 CA addressed the discussion held at the last meeting regarding investment in preventative measures and the changing funding ESOL provision. She noted the issue is currently in the political eye and that a significant meeting is taking place in regards to the issue today. She suggested the topic would be better discussed at the next Council meeting on the 22nd May 2007. This was agreed.
- 2.3 CA noted the capital application from Twyford Church of England School to extend its sixth form centre has been accepted by the Capital Committee.

Item 3. Capital Application from West Thames College

- 3.1 The Chairman invited members to express any initial thoughts or concerns.
- 3.2 The following items were raised in discussion:
 - CA pointed out that this was a unique application in that it is for two sites, one of which is for vocational learning funded by the FE process. She noted similar applications are usually funded outside FE funding.
 - GC noted the importance for a Skills Centre in Feltham but asked if the proposed site was the most appropriate and whether the Skills Centre fitted into the Hounslow Council plan. CA responded that the proposed site was owned by the Hounslow Council who were supportive of the development plans. She also noted West Thames College had looked at alternative sites with the local authority without success.
- 3.3 The Chairman invited the two representatives of West Thames College to present their capital application. Thalia Marriott, Principal, West Thames College and Kulbir Sethi, Director of Finance, West Thames College, joined the meeting.
- 3.4 The Chairman advised that due to the inquoracy of the Council, a decision could not be made today. He assured them this would not affect the timing or process of the capital application.

- 3.5 Thalia advised she would be presenting the education case and Kulbir the financial case of the capital application.
- 3.6 Thalia gave a presentation outlining the project which involved the redevelopment of the existing campus in Isleworth and the rebuild of the Skills Centre in Feltham. The presentation also outlined how the project will help West Thames College achieve efficient, appropriate and ecological buildings that will enable the achievement of college targets, improved success rates, expansion and the ability to better meet the needs of employers.
- 3.7 Kulbir outlined the cost of the preferred option to be just under £58 million. He asked that the LSC contribute 82.3% (£44,977,920) and stated a £11 million bank loan will also be sought.
- 3.8 The following discussion took place:
- The Chairman raised his concern for the financial health of West Thames College. Kulbir stated the College will sit within Category C for some time during the development but will move to a Category B within three years of completion.
 - JH noted that the operational problems such as wasted space and the threat of vandalism he knew to exist at West Thames College would be addressed by this project.
 - The Chairman questioned the rules governing the development of old buildings and their surrounding in reference to the Georgian Grade II listed house at the Isleworth main campus. Thalia stated the College had sought the advice of the governing authority. She stated they were happy with the project plans as they will improve the visual access to the Georgian building.
 - The Chairman asked if other schools were supportive of the project plans. Thalia responded in the affirmative, stating West Thames College work closely with its partners. She ensured the board that the project plans fit with the plans of their partners and that they had full support from all.
 - JC asked if employers were supportive of the project plan. Thalia responded in the affirmative. She expressed the project would be particularly positive for employers who used the conference room as this would be updated.
 - JC further asked if any employers were willing to contribute financially to the project, as a way of expressing their support. Thalia responded in the negative.
 - GC put forward two questions:
 1. Did West Thames College look at other sites?
 2. In regards to the difficulties in developing on a site currently in use, how did West Thames College expect to undertake the project while maintaining the business?In response to the first, Thalia stated that West Thames College had an area within which they looked for an alternative site. Some issues

were raised however, including size, short leasing periods, the suitability of sites for the age group of students and the impossibility of moving the entire organisation.

In response to the second, Thalia stated that it would be difficult. She noted they would need to find alternative facilities, such as a theatre, to use during developments and that they would have to keep the building across the road until completion of the project (at which time they would sell it). She stated that despite these issues, it was manageable.

- GC then noted that borrowing £11 million for regeneration is “tough” and questioned whether the Hounslow borough would be able to make a financial contribution to alleviate the pressure. He stated that Hounslow has a large regeneration project but he is not convinced local authorities are contributing enough. The Chairman and CA agreed that even if the borough were to make such a contribution, this would not affect the LSC contribution. However, CA will investigate this point.

Action: CA

3.9 The Chairman thanked Thalia and Kulbir for their capital application.

3.10 The Chairman asked if the capital application was consistent with the LSC formula. All agreed that it was.

Decision: Council members unanimously endorsed the capital application, although due to the quorum issue this decision could not be finalised. CA to send letter requesting council members not present to ratify by Wednesday 21st March.

Action: CA

Item 4. Annual Plan 2006/07 Update

4.1 EQ gave an update on achievements towards key actions. The following points were highlighted:

- 1.1: The regional e-prospectus was successfully launched on the 28th February. A link to the young people’s website is included for council members to view: www.yourlondon.gov.uk/choice

Action: Council members

- 1.4: BEARS were unable to deliver a contract to engage young men of black and ethnic minorities. However, a new partnership has been formed between Head to Head Training and Boyz to Men.
- 2.1: Train to Gain (T2G) continues to under-perform. One to one discussions will be held to address problems and help individual colleges reach their targets. GC noted it is hard to access and deliver T2G. He questioned whether problems related to the absence of the provider or suitable trainees. EQ agreed to investigate this point. CA stated she will talk to David Boyer, Partnership Manager for Hillingdon & Hounslow.

Action: EQ & CA

- 2.4: EQ identified this as a key area of development in the next few months. To bring forward at next meeting 22nd May.
- 6.1: EQ highlighted the importance of “weeding out” providers receiving FE funding with low success rates. She explained the process of giving providers a ‘Notice to Improve’ and noted the focus will be on long courses. It was noted by the council that the LSC is undertaking a transition of focus from traditional Adult Education; short courses, leisure learning etc to Young Education; apprenticeships.

4.2 Council members noted the updates.

Item 5. Local Plan 2007/08

5.1 CA pointed out that the Local Plan was not significantly different to that considered on the 30th January 2007. She stated only one set of comments were received from Hillingdon. She also stated the funding allocation process was still being completed but the plan should be finalised by the end of March.

5.2 The Chairman noted that the use of the word “specialised” in reference to diplomas should not be used. Therefore, diplomas will not be called “specialised diplomas” or “vocational diplomas”, just “diplomas”.

5.3 JH raised concerns that out of approximately 120 submissions to the 14-19 diplomas, fewer than 40 may be accepted. All agreed this is worrying, although CA stated that it was never anticipated they would all be accepted.

Decision: As the Local Plan was unanimously agreed on the 30th January, and only one set of comments was received the Local Plan 2007/08 was accepted.

Item 6. Harrow Collegiate Proposal Update

6.1 CA explained that since the approval of the Harrow Collegiate proposal on the 30th January 2007, two schools are looking at specialised options in addition to what was originally presented. The potential specialisms to be offered are IT/Engineering at Canons and Performing Arts/Social Care at Hatch End. CA stated she would appreciate acceptance from the LSC.

6.2 JH raised a concern in regards to the type of engineering to be undertaken and whether it would be considered a soft skill or hard skill. CA pointed out it is focused primarily on IT.

6.3 The Chairman asked if the updated proposal was consistent with the LSC rules. CA confirmed it was.

6.4 The Chairman then questioned what would happen if the LSC were to reject the proposal. CA stated that rejection would cause significant difficulties to the Harrow Collegiate, who were putting together a proposal in a challenging time when 14-19 rules are changing. She stressed that the Harrow Collegiate are trying to maintain the ethos of schools working with colleges.

6.5 GC asked if this proposal would need to be recommended to the capital committee. The Chairman and CA agreed that it would.

Decision: Council members agreed to support the proposal on education terms but that due to the quorum issue the council members not present would have to be consulted.

Action: CA

Item 7. Strategy Programme Led Apprenticeships in England

- 7.1 CA gave a presentation that outlined the strategy for Programme-led Apprenticeships. She explained that students would start their learning in FE colleges and gain recognition for their technical qualification as part of an apprenticeship. As vacancies became available then, students undertaking their technical qualification could move into them. CA stated that this would make the transition between college and apprenticeships smoother.
- 7.2 CA explained the following problems would be addressed by the strategy:
- Students are becoming technically qualified but not necessarily moving into jobs
 - This is not being tracked by FE Colleges at present, but the strategy gives them a tool to do so
 - Not all employers recruit in September
- 7.3 A concern was raised that the FE demand may not be there for the supply. If this strategy was pushed through, colleges may have to reject students to meet the demand of employers.
- 7.4 JH stated he believed there was an industry problem of attracting people into apprenticeships of the right calibre. The Chairman stated he believed there were not enough employers coming forward.
- 7.5 CA stated the work would start now to embed this strategy into the future plans of FE Colleges.
- 7.6 CA stated that as part of this strategy, NVQ's will only be assessed in the workplace and not through simulations.
- 7.7 CA asked the council members to act, where appropriate, as an ambassador for the strategy when in contact with colleges. She would like the strategy to be considered seriously and not just as another route to add to the confusion. The Chairman agreed.

Action: Council members

- 7.8 GC highlighted the challenges of Work Based Learning for training providers, particularly in regards to issues with Ofsted, Duty of Care and consistency of supervision, health & safety and assessment. He suggested getting providers together to discuss these issues.
- 7.9 The Chairman asked the council members to read the material given out by CA so that the strategy could be reviewed at the next meeting.

Action: Council members

- 7.10 CA stated she may have feedback from colleges in terms of planning by the next meeting on the 22nd May 2007.

Action: CA

7.11 GC questioned the funding of the new diplomas. CA stated the funding streams had not been looked at yet. The Chairman resolved he would look at this.

Action: RK

Item 8. Any other business

8.1 JC questioned the progress of an action point from the Council meeting held on the 21st November 2006. This action point was in regards to Connexions producing statistics for the 05/06 Ethnicity breakdown and the uptake of provision types by BMEs. CA explained no feedback had been received from Connexions to date, but undertook to ensure an update at the next meeting on the 22nd May 2007.

Action: CA

Item 9. Date of next meeting

9.1 The next London West LSC Council meeting will take place on **Tuesday 22nd May 2007**. The meeting will be held in Room 2 of the Heathrow Academy at Heathrow Airport. Lunch will be served at the Academy and it is proposed a tour of Terminal 5 will take place directly after the meeting. Further details will be forwarded closer to the date including a confirmed start time.

Meeting chair

Rod Kenyon

Minute taker

Erin Whittaker

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