

# Minutes



Leading learning and skills

**Date** 15 January 2007  
**Subject** Council Meeting  
**Location** Centre Point  
**Time** 16:00 - 18:00  
**LSC office** London Central  
**Publication intent** Internal

**Present** Geoffrey Copland, University of Westminster  
David Congalton, Emprise Services Ltd  
Cllr Keith Cunningham, RBKC  
Satnam Gill, Working Men's College  
Keith Faulkner, Working Links  
Chris Heaume, Connexions  
Peter Ibbetson, Natwest (retired)  
Roy Lockett, Bectu (retired)  
Jill Lowery, LSCLC  
Janet Morrison, Education Consultant  
Sue Rimmer, South Thames College (part Item 5)

**In attendance** Catherine Davies, LSC Regional Office  
Lesley De Courcey, South Thames College (part Item 5)  
Alaistair Grindlay, LSC National Office  
Simon Tolaini, LSC Regional Office  
Chris Tremellen, Consultant for South Thames College (part Item 5)

**LSC staff** Buki Oni, Secretariat  
Joyce Roberts, Partnership Manager  
Chris Wright, Partnership Director

**Apologies** Apologies have been received from:  
Steve Bagley, LSCLC  
Richard Bell, LSCLC  
Jon Fairclough, Government Office for London  
Rob Grover, Business Link for London  
Mick Hickey, JobCentre Plus  
Amanda Howells, Youth Crime Consultant  
Angela McConville, Vital Regeneration  
Raymond Madden, ICAEW  
Su Thomas, PACE

## **Item 1. Welcome and introductions**

- 1.1 Yvonne welcomed Catherine Davies, Regional Property Advisor, Simon Tolaini, Director Provider Financial Management and Alastair Grindlay, Capital Programme Manager and Joyce Roberts, Partnership Manager for Wandsworth.

## **Item 2. Declarations of interest**

- 2.1 Satnam Gill asked for the minutes of 15 December to note that Working Mens College works with Westminster Kingsway College.
- 2.2 It was noted that Sue Rimmer as principal of South Thames College would be present only for part of Item 5.

**Action: Buki to amend minutes of Council meeting held on 15 December to reflect Satnam Gill's declaration**

## **Item 3. Minutes of the 3 November 2006 Meeting and Matters Arising**

- 3.1 These minutes were brought for approval at this meeting due to time constraints at the December 15 meeting.
- 3.2 The following amendment was proposed by JM, thereafter the minutes were approved: that the first sentence in item 5.7 on page 4 should read "JM noted that schools find that where there are 6<sup>th</sup> Forms within a school, they find it easier to attract more qualified staff."

## **Item 4. Minutes of the 15 December 2006 Meeting and Matters Arising**

- 4.1 Revised minutes were tabled with an amendment to item 4.19 where the LSC capital grant support should read 25% as opposed to 58% in the earlier draft.
- 4.2 The following amendments were proposed by JM, thereafter the minutes were approved: that item 4.9 on page 3 should start with "Concerns were raised as opposed to "A concern was raised" and also that the second sentence in item 4.20 on page 5 should read "The project costs have increased since approval was given for the in-principle application"

## **Item 5. South Thames College Capital Project**

- 5.1 CW introduced a paper on the capital project application from South Thames College to redevelop its Wandsworth High Street site. The LSC approved the project in-principle in 2005 and the application was for detailed approval for the scheme. It was noted that the project costs had significantly increased since the first approval. However the LSC property assessment was that the project costs were consistent with other schemes in London and the South East.

### **Comments and Questions on the Project**

- 5.2 Council members stated their concerns about additional costs of £25.50m and the extent to which these had been challenged by the LSC.
- 5.3 KC asked whether refurbishment would have provided a value for money alternative option and whether there was any evidence to prove that better learning outcomes arose from new buildings.
- 5.4 Other concerns included the involvement of the project management team and the VAT options available to the College.
- 5.5 JL reported that the LSC was concerned with the increase in costs and had held discussions with the College and its advisors. The LSC was satisfied that the project was the right scheme for the College and local area.
- 5.6 AG said the LSC has spent a lot more time on this project than would normally be the case. The length of time between the in principle approval and the detailed application had added to the overall costs, and this problem was being experienced by a number of colleges. This had led the LSC nationally to propose supporting Colleges in the detailed project development stage so that costs would be clearer at the in principle stage.
- 5.7 In the case of this project, there was a need to change the procurement approach during this phase in order to reduce the level of risk that would fall to the college. This change added to the increase in costs. It was noted that the project specification does fulfil the LSC minimum specification for new build and is not over specified. Refurbishment would have been a comparatively expensive option because of building regulations being introduced. The LSC had reviewed project costs in London and the South East and the scheme was in line with other projects. It was noted that the current London construction market has led to significant building cost inflation.
- 5.8 JM said the LSC should insist on indemnity cover and AG assured her the College had been notified.

### **South Thames College presentation**

- 5.9 Sue Rimmer, Lesley de Courcey and Chris Tremellen joined the meeting.
- 5.10 Sue Rimmer presented the College's priorities and identified the poor condition of facilities as a significant issue. The priorities for the College and the scheme were described. It was noted that further costs would be incurred if building works did not commence in March 2007. The slides from the presentation are attached to these minutes.

### **Questions related to the presentation**

- 5.11 KC asked for an example of how learners would benefit from the new building. SR said it is part of the LSC's remit to provide an FE environment which is fit for purpose and in order for the College to provide adequate learning facilities, the building needs to be improved and she gave examples

of areas where urgent attention is needed i.e. poor lightning, IT restrictions due to old building and noise pollution from the surroundings.

- 5.12 RL asked if the College sees the project as a precondition for developing a CoVE in Construction. SR said the College has 2 CoVES; Music which is at risk if it is not developed further due to inadequate building facilities and Healthcare which is situated at their Putney site. Healthcare labs will move to the new building once it is completed. The scheme will enable the College to develop construction. She also noted that the grades at the College's last inspection for teaching and learning were satisfactory and it is not able to move these to good/excellent in the current conditions. Most of the students come from deprived backgrounds and they should be able to expect better facilities than are currently available at the College.
- 5.13 CH asked how the improved building will address the new 14-19 Strategies. SR said students who fail their GCSEs enter the College at entry Level 1 for courses such as hairdressing. The College now proactively works with schools so that more young people will leave school with a Level 1 or Level 2 so that when they come to the College they continue at Level 2 or 3.
- 5.14 The South Thames College team left the meeting.

### **Discussion and Comments**

- 5.15 There was disappointment that the College presentation did not give the Council greater confidence in terms of the case for the project such as the benefits the new building would bring to learners, the contingency should approval not be given and the expected costs of future refurbishment.
- 5.16 PI wondered whether a new site could be secured elsewhere possibly outside the borough to build the College in another area. JL said that the need for the provision was in Wandsworth and site searches had taken place at the options stage.
- 5.17 KF noted concern about the Council's ability to provide the level of support needed for the project. He underlined the importance of ensuring there was sufficient experience in the project management team.
- 5.18 PI asked whether an independent project management facility could be established such as an LSC employed project manager to monitor the project. AG indicated that the LSC required colleges to engage the resource necessary to ensure that projects were effectively managed.
- 5.19 RL applauded the achievements of the College and teaching staff. He felt their track record of improvement made the project worth investing in.
- 5.20 In closing, AG said that the college had brought in new and additional project management resource, and that the LSC was now satisfied that an appropriate resource was in place and would insist on this being retained as a condition of funding. The property team had examined the proposals in detail and did not find the project to be excessive.
- 5.21 This is the first significant capital project in London since City and Islington College, which has seen significant growth in its learner numbers and its

success rates, and is being used as a case study to indicate the positive impact which capital projects can have.

5.22 This long process has made the LSC revise the way it handles in-principle and detailed capital applications. The LSC will provide more support in future at the in principle stage.

5.23 The Council felt that, despite concerns about the rise in costs, the length of time taken to bring the project to this stage and the management of the project, the project should be recommended for approval by the National Capital Committee.

### **Recommendation**

5.24 The Council recommended the South Thames College proposals for approval by the National Capital Committee, noting the concerns indicated above. The Council recommended that LSC funding should be conditional upon the college ensuring that sufficient and satisfactory project management resource is in place.

### **Item 6. Any Other Business and Date of the Next Meeting**

6.1 The date of the next Council meeting is Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2007.

<b>Meeting chair</b>	Yvonne Thompson
<b>Minute taker</b>	Buki Oni
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