

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Minutes of meeting

Date	17 th June 2005
Subject	London Regional Board
Location	Centre Point
Time	9.00 – 11.00
LSC office	London North
Publication intent	Internal

Present	Rod Kenyon (LW – Chairman) Jacqui Henderson (RD) Verity Bullough (ROD – LC) Peter Pledger (LW) Philippa Langton (LN) Vivien Cutler (LE) Richard Carter (LS) Jay Mercer (LS)
In attendance	Sue Coan (LN - note-taker) Brian Godbold (RFD) Clair Passelle (work shadowing Jacqui Henderson) Ruth Bullen (National Office) for the final item on the agenda.
Apologies	Yvonne Thompson (LC) Peter Lyne (LN) Ken Coello (LE)

Item 1. Action points from the previous meeting

RC asked that the minutes from the last meeting be further clarified to include his request for a summary on the regional budget.

Action: Doug Norris (DN) to re-circulate the minutes with the addition.

All other actions from the previous meeting had been completed or were itemised on the agenda.

Item 2. Performance

The papers agreed at the previous meeting had been circulated. VB reminded those present that some of the figures would not be current due to the data collections timetable. It was noted that PSA apprenticeship starts for the London Region were currently at 92% of the annual target as at 31st May, with 2 more months still to count. This is good news for London and JH pointed out that **all** offices have worked extremely hard. One cautionary note from DN's commentary

is that this is not reflected in the rest of the country, but it is seen as the most important national target.

VB pointed out that London still trails on success rates and bucks the national trend. JH noted that all offices should be working with providers to ensure that best practice is adopted in completing Apprenticeship key skills up front. PP suspected that the drive to move more WBL into FE colleges has worked against the London Region and programme managers need to develop strategies to increase the number of employer direct contracts.

All agreed that DN's paper was extremely useful and noted that Andy Holt (new regional lead officer for M.I) will be providing future reports for LRB.

ACTION: VB to investigate whether there are any options for accessing more up-to-date information for the Board to review.

ACTION: VB to include a 1-page summary sheet of key facts with future reports.

PL added some comments on Skills for Life. This is the first area of learning where the LSC is specifying what changes are required. In particular providers have been told how the delivery of 'other' provision should be used to achieve SfL objectives. A paper is being prepared and will be submitted to the Cabinet Committee in mid July.

RC asked for more information on paragraph 6 of the performance paper; RK agreed that this point should be picked up at the end of the meeting.

Item 3. Budgets

BG had circulated a paper in response to the request received at the last meeting. Although 'pinch points' had not been identified by each local office, they had been captured regionally.

Table 1 of the paper identified that there has been a substantial increase in 6th form funding with a decrease in LIDF. Although administration appeared to have a small increase, this is due to additional items of expenditure being moved to the budget from national office. The pressure will increase in 06/07 and, although 07/08 figures had been included, it should be noted that they are only indicative and could change before they are confirmed. The impact of the funding priority of growth in FE allocations will be apparent in the first 4 months of 05/06.

The main pressure points are participation funding for adults and the reduction in Learner Support. There is a flat budget for administration, with a real term increase in costs and a £10m national decrease planned for next year.

BG pointed out that the Grant Letter is agreed in November, but over the year the Department may release further funds for specific purposes. However, the additional funds do not generally bring with them any flexibility.

RK asked what the real impact of the administration budget would be. BG said that this had not yet been quantified. In real terms this year there is a reduction of roughly 10%, with an even greater impact next year. Each local office has been asked to keep more jobs unfilled while EDs consider the scope for regional economies of scale.

RC said that he was happy with the paper; although it is marked as confidential, it was **agreed** that Chairs could discuss it with their local Councils.

JH confirmed that there is a lot of noise in the network about Learner Support. Each Council should expect some negative college feedback about the lateness in confirming the programme budgets and the apparent reduction in adult numbers and Learner Support.

VC commented that wherever possible pressure should be applied to reduce the length of the process next year. BG responded that NO is aspiring to improve the timing, but it is dependent on the outturn information being available from the learner returns.

JM noted that the decrease in the Learner Support budget is due to money being deflected to the EMA programme and any response to criticism should take account of this. JH confirmed that budgets had been squeezed and the situation needs to be managed very carefully.

BG anticipated that more analysis needs to be done in looking at specific college budget lines.

PP asked the Board to note that, as the impact starts to be felt, some politically sensitive knee-jerk reactions are likely, with other priorities emerging and budgets requiring manipulation.

PP also noted that the final allocations for WBL have not been notified and, although the budget is known, the rates have not been confirmed, which means that local offices do not yet know how much they will be able to purchase.

RC contended that the LSC is at least 2 months too late with confirming budgets.

Item 4. Quality

VB presented a paper compiled by Mary Vine-Morris, the regional quality lead. Generally London performs less well than other regions, except in Equal Opportunities. The picture is improving as a 'zero tolerance' approach is being taken with WBL providers who cannot deliver the required outcomes.

College inspections have improved and there is now an improved focus on achievement and retention. There is a need to look at the detail beneath the headlines, college by college, in particular sectors and areas of learning. Success rates are a worry. However, the combined approach is developing and being held up as good practice within OfSTED and ALI. An action plan is now being developed from the draft strategy.

VC asked whether the data had been revised in accordance with local office feedback. VB confirmed that it was based on the information that was available from the initial source at the time of putting the paper together.

JM felt that the London Region should also collate school inspection result reports.

JH agreed that the next stage is to agree the Action Plan with the Standards Unit and AoC. RK suggested that each local Council should be given a copy of the report to read.

VB wanted the Board to note that there are some extremely good colleges in the London Region.

Item 5. Skill City

The report had been circulated and its contents noted. Packs have now been sent out.

ACTION: JH to ask Julie Dixon to ensure that packs are sent to all local Council members.

It was noted by the Board the Julie Dixon has worked hard to achieve the LSC recognition on the packs.

Item 6. Council Members' event feedback

RK noted that there were only two chairs present to feed back from the event. This raised the question whether another member of each Council should attend as a deputy if the Chair was unable to get to LRBs. It was confirmed that the constitution allows for a named substitute to attend the LRB.

Action: All local offices to notify DN of the details of nominated deputies for future meetings.

All present agreed that the event had been well attended, there had been a great deal of networking, and the content had been challenging. Requests for more regional events had been made.

JH considered that Council members want to be more actively involved. A follow up questionnaire has been drafted. She had picked up that some comments to

Chris Banks appeared negative but wanted to use this as an agenda for moving forward.

RC commented that he would be using the July Council awayday for South London to take forward some of the issues raised. He hoped to get non-executives more involved, and not necessarily within their own expertise. He believes that there must be a strong regional identity but would like more clarity on how LSC will be taking this forward, as Council members could and should be encouraged to contribute regionally.

RK commented that a structure has emerged and a better definition should now be implemented. JH repeated that one of the themes that had emerged was whether there should be 1 or 5 Councils in the capital. Mark Haysom has stated his commitment to the local role and presence, along with the need to move forward to be more effective and efficient.

RC felt that he did not want to be involved in making the decision but needed to know how to direct his local Council. Maintaining local Councils means that there is a requirement for local resource to support non-executive members. The argument for maintaining each local Council is supported by the number of key partners that could not be supported at a regional level given the pace of change.

JH clarified that there is no intention to have only one regional council, but agreed that there is currently inadequate administrative support available.

ACTION. JH to circulate draft questionnaire for comment.

ACTION. JH to share with the LRB at the next meeting her plans for revising the structure, including what will be delivered at regional level and what local functions/resources will have to be shed.

RK will be attending the Chair of Chairs meeting with Chris Banks and will collate comments and thoughts on the regional perspective. The advantage of the London Region is that it is fairly cohesive, although somewhat complicated and large.

Action: All to send comments to RK as quickly as possible.

RC recommended that the regional office structure needs to be fairly small and light on its feet. JM commented that there needs to be a regional development plan for Council members.

Item 7. Academies

Ruth Bullen joined the Board to explain government strategy for 16-19 academies. She made it clear that this item did not include Skills Academies. Her role is to liaise between National Office and the Department on issues around Academies

and to act as broker with local LSC offices. She noted that in some areas the concept of Academies is working well and not so well in others.

She was appointed in April as a response to Mark Haysom wanting the LSC to be seen as a positive/innovative supporter of 16-19 Academies. It is recognised that there are issues to be reconciled. Initially the Academies' Unit first approach was with local authorities, but this is changing and LSC's are being brought in to discussions much earlier. An example is where there has been much re-thinking of the London West proposals since discussions have taken place with the local office.

There are two priorities included in the secondment. The first is to develop the protocol which attempts to describe responsibilities and expectations. This needs to be updated. The main elements are engagement, planning and implementation. There is now an agreement that the LSC local offices will contribute to briefings before the local authority is approached. The Aide Memoire will be revised to include local LSCs.

The second secondment priority is to liaise with London partners and try to find positive solutions to the development of Academies. RB wants to work pro-actively with Academy heads and bring them together with the existing 14-19 strategic groups as a resource for helping to gather evidence of need, feedback and ideas.

VC asked whether the LSC was expected to engage with those existing 11-16 academies aspiring to develop a 16-19 offer. In many areas LSCs may not have identified that there is room for additional 16-19 provision.

PP suggested that it is not only capacity but quality that must be considered. The LSC does not have the option to close 6th forms, but Academies can set themselves up in competition to existing provision. More clarity is required on how Academies fit with the current range of provision in London.

RB agreed that there are several policies that have not yet been integrated. It is an aspiration that LSC is involved at very beginning of the process. JM proposed that the London region is best placed to be influencing ministers on the policies and reminded the Board that one of the LSC initial priorities was collaboration.

RC asked for a simple breakdown of the objective of Academies; RB responded that the main objectives are to raise standards, particularly in inner cities, and to focus on social inclusion and deprivation targets.

RC questioned whether Academies should be dealt with as competitors or collaborators; PP responded that the LSC should not look at academies as competitors but as another partner in the arena of delivery of learning.

JH commented that there must be a strategy to avoid unnecessary overcapacity and VC asked where the planning guidance is; RB responded that the guidance

fell victim to the re-shuffle and then purdah. There is currently tension between the guidance, the 5-year strategy and the manifesto. She was not optimistic about an early release of the guidance.

RC considered that there was a case for not spending time on mediation but to allow the institutions to compete.

Item 8. AOB

There were no items raised.

Item 9. Date of next meeting

9.00am - 11.00am, 13th September 2005, Centre Point.

Meeting chair	Rod Kenyon
Minute taker	Sue Coan
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