

Council Meeting: 23 January 2008

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Paper	LSC 05/2008

Background and introduction

1. On 30 November 2007 Bill Rammell, Minister for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, published a consultation document *Improvement in the Further Education Sector: A consultation prospectus for a new sector owned organisation*. The consultation document announces the setting up of an organisation that will be sector owned and formed by the merger of the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) and the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL). The LSC was invited to respond by the closing date of 25 January 2008.
2. Essentially the new body will be similar to QIA and CEL in that it will focus on the gathering and sharing of improvement intelligence and be a commissioner of value for money products and services and promote good practice. The most significant difference is that it will be designed and steered by the sector itself with direct power through member's voting rights to nominate and elect a proportion of its Board. The body will be a charitable body funded through membership subscriptions and commissioned work.

Purpose

3. For the Council to contribute its views to the consultation proposals.

Recommendation

4. That the Council approves the draft response for submission by the Chief Executive later this month.

Key points/issues

5. The LSC was provided with a brief opportunity to comment on the draft consultation document before publication. Key concerns at that stage was that the draft did not take sufficient account of the Self Regulation agenda or the development of the Framework for Excellence. These concerns were accommodated in the published version and Sir George Sweeney, Chair of the Self Regulation Group, was a joint signatory to the letter announcing the consultation document alongside the Minister and the Chairs of QIA and CEL. Further points are made in the draft LSC response about the need for the new body to support providers in implementing the Framework.
6. All regions and national directorates were invited to comment and contribute to a single LSC response by 21 December. Responses were received from; 5 regions (NE, EM, SW, NW and East of England) and the Strategy & Communications and Learning Group Directorate.
7. The draft response is framed against the 17 questions posed in the consultation document. In summary the main issues for LSC, which are set out in the draft response are that:
 - broadly, LSC supports the move for greater sector ownership of improvement activity.
 - the new body continues to support the sector to deliver our priorities to eliminate underperformance and failure; implement the Framework for Excellence and supports improving performance and growth in Train to Gain and Apprenticeship Provision and the implementation of qualification reform.
 - the new body is properly representative.
 - the practical operation of its activities is simple and transparent and can operate and respond to the changes to the Machinery of Government.
 - the new body supports providers to respond to regional; learner and employer needs.

Clearance

8. The draft response has been cleared by the Management Group.
9. It is proposed that, subject to clearance, the single LSC response is sent by Mark Haysom, on the Council's behalf to meet the consultation deadline of 25 January 2008.

Legal implications

10. This paper has been cleared by the Council's solicitor and there are no direct legal implications for the LSC.

Financial implications

11. This paper is concerned with the constitution of another organisation and there are no direct financial implications for the Council.

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