

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Minutes of meeting

Date	11 April 2005
Subject	Council Meeting
Location	Board Room
Time	16:30
LSC office	Tyne and Wear
Publication intent	Public

Present Ashley Winter (Chairman), Chris Roberts, David Barker, Carol Barwick, Diana Bourke, David Cheetham, Chris Edwards, Gill Hale, Graham Randell, Peter Slee, Judith Woodruff, Mike Zarraga

In attendance Andrew Lewis - Government Office
Dan Brophy - Business Link Tyne & Wear
Kevin Turner - Jobcentre Plus

LSC staff Michael Johnston, Pauline Palmer, John Wayman, Susan Collins, Dorothy Smith, Gill Forth, Ken Coulson

Apologies Apologies have been received from:
Members: Morven Smith, Michael Stephenson.
Observers: Maggi Hunt, Vince Robinson

Item 1. Declaration of Interest

The Chairman drew attention to the aide memoir reminding members of the opportunity to consider whether they needed to declare an interest in any business on the agenda.

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Item 3. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman reported as follows:-

Item 4. General items

4.1 Regional Board

The Chairman drew attention to the terms of reference adopted by the Regional Board. Members had adopted lead roles as follows:

- James Ramsbotham: Regional Skills Partnership and budget issues

- Terry Dabbs: Capital Issues
- Jackie Axelby: Performance

4.2 Staff Event

The Chairman had participated in the recent 'topic tables' event for staff presenting an insight into the Council's role.

Item 5. Regional Director's Update

Chris Roberts reported as follows:-

5.1 Annual Plan 2005/06

National Council had now approved the plan. It was recognised as a very good plan and appreciation was recorded to Michael Johnston's team for their work.

5.2 Sector Skills

A meeting had taken place with Jack Matthews Chief Executive of Improve Sector Skills Council (Food and Drink Manufacturing) who was now the representative for the region.

5.3 Investors in People Recognising Excellence Awards

This had been a successful event. Appreciation was recorded to Dan Brophy and also to Carol Barwick for her support.

5.4 Talent Management

Senior staff had participated in this challenging event concerned with future career development in the LSC and related organisations. Some staff had now joined a development programme.

5.5 General Election

Members were reminded of the need to avoid public comment to ensure that the LSC maintains total impartiality in the run up to the election.

Item 6. Budget Update

NB: Judith Woodruff declared an interest in respect of FE budgets.

- 6.1 Negotiations were continuing on the FE element of the budget circa £250m. It was expected that the indicative budget for next academic year would be received during the week. Discussions with FE would take place during April. There was an expected reduction of 3%-4% but in the context of a real terms growth of 24% in recent years.
- 6.2 Administration budget included no inflation growth. The financial and HR aspects arising would be managed. A report would be presented to the next meeting. An update on LIDF would also be given.

Item 7. 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper

Submitted: Report by Dorothy Smith, Head of Learning Policy:-

- 7.1 The 14-19 White Paper, the recent Skills White Paper and an anticipated third White Paper relating to Youth issues (which would deal with the future of the Connexions Service and IAG) were complementary documents.
- 7.2 The education sector generally had expected more focus on implementing the outcomes of the Tomlinson Report of the Curriculum Reform Group. This was not explicit but it was apparent that the Tomlinson agenda had not been ignored and may follow.

- 7.3 A 'back to basics' emphasis was apparent with functional skills in English and Maths as a key component throughout. This was reflected in changed performance indicators for schools. There would be a new General GCSE Diploma at Level 2 with GCSE and 'tougher' AS/A Levels as the "cornerstone of 14-19 Learning" intended to challenge and stretch the most able.
- 7.4 There was a strong commitment to 14+ young people receiving a more realistic vocational learning experience through a series of specialised vocational diplomas that would have regard to the employability skills identified by the Sector Skills Councils.
- 7.5 The needs of the NEET group and also those learners with learning difficulties/disabilities were being addressed through a 'baby brother' to the Entry to Employment programme and there was also support for those in the 'hardest to help' category.
- 7.6 There were potential tensions between institutional autonomy and effective partnership. There was a need to collaborate, working through partnerships to ensure the totality of the curriculum offer with the right mix across sectors.
- 7.7 There was a national approach to Sector Skills Councils developing Skills Academies, one per sector, operating on a hub and spoke model with specialist schools and CoVEs. It would be important for the North East to ensure appropriate linkages.
- 7.8 Reference was made to the missed opportunities to deliver Tomlinson. The 'bridges' required between universities and schools would be difficult. For schools, there were tensions associated with delivering funding to colleges to deliver 14-16 vocational activities at the expense of the viability of the school, as there were no associated funding mechanisms.

Decision: That the report be received.

Item 8. Children Act 2004 and Implications for LSC

Submitted: Report by Dorothy Smith, Head of Learning Policy:-

- 8.1 The 2004 Act was hugely significant for Local Authorities and the way in which the LSC would work with them through Learning Partnerships. Children's Trusts were not statutory bodies but was the generic name describing the multi-agency approach/partner model.
- 8.2 Each Local Authority was required to appoint a Director of Children's Services. Within Tyne and Wear there would no longer be separate Directors of Education and the new role encompassed both the Social Services and Education service. To date Gateshead MBC was the only Local Authority to have filled the role with an educationalist.
- 8.3 LSC had 'related agency' status along with others, bringing with it a duty to cooperate in a multi agency approach focussing on the needs of the child or young person. Area Wide Inspections would be replaced by joint area reviews (JARs) of all children's services, beginning with an annual self-assessment in May 2005, of which 14-19 delivery would be only one aspect. LSC would need to ensure a strong element for enhancing educational standards in Tyne and Wear.
- 8.4 Following a JAR the LSC would no longer have a role in action planning nor the funding to implement it. LSC would still need to be sufficiently engaged to pursue its strategic objectives. A key issue would be the appropriate sharing of information (within protocols to be established).

8.5 For the LSC there would be a reduced emphasis on inspection, aligning (not pooling) budgets through effective close working with Local Authorities Children's Services. There was a strengthened role for Government Office.

Discussion

8.6 Reservations were expressed about the complexity of the arrangements. There was no reference to individual schools responsibilities for its students and there would be a need to understand the implications of not having an educationalist in the director's role. The establishment of a database for all young people needed care.

8.7 Clarification was needed as to how Local Authorities would maintain independence as they had a duty of care when relating to a school but which did not extend to FE/providers. Similarly, the impact of 'pooling'/aligning of 14-19 funding needed to be understood as more than 80% of that related to FE, this in turn raised governance issues for FE. In response, it was noted that this would need to begin with an analysis of spending behind each of the key priorities of Government policy. For LSC this required alignment both locally and regionally.

8.8 Children and young people's integrated plans would follow on from the self-assessment and there was an expectation that for most these would appear by April 2006. To be effective they required a collaborative approach. It was expected that the Local Strategic Partnerships would have a key role.

Decision: That arrangements be made to keep members briefed on progress being made in working through the implications and application of the new legislation.

Item 9. Information Advice and Guidance

Submitted: Report by Gill Forth, IAG Manager.

9.1 Information Advice and Guidance had greatly increased in importance since the inception of the LSC. Government intended that by 2010 IAG would be an integral and valued part of adult learning. IAG was increasingly becoming embedded as a key component of motivating and encouraging adults by identifying skills requirements and potential.

9.2 IAG was learner-centred provision. LSC provided core funding for 'nextstep' provision and this would be supported by LIDF (and hopefully ESF Co-financing) in order to build capacity.

9.3 An LSC led local Strategic Board with wide representation would establish a strategic plan for the delivery and development of provision and establish integrated provision identifying gaps and avoiding duplication.

9.4 An audit had been undertaken to identify provision by ward and population of those without a Level 2 qualification. A bid by Tyne and Wear Together aimed at coherence and avoiding duplication in the local area had been considered.

Decision: That the report be received.

Item 10. Retail Sector: Presentation

Deferred.

Item 11. Proposal for Capital Developments at Gateshead and Sunderland Colleges

NB: D Cheetham declared an interest in this matter and took no part in the decision.

Submitted: Report by John Wayman, Director of Learning Provision concerning:

- 11.1 Gateshead College's revised proposal to relocate the main campus to the Baltic Business Park;
- 11.2 City Of Sunderland College's proposal for a new Sixth Form Centre to be built on the current site of Usworth School, Washington which, subject to approval, would begin development in early June to open in September 2006.

Decision: That:

- a. Authority be delegated to the Capital Sub Group to assess formal capital proposals from Gateshead College and the City of Sunderland College;
- b. The Executive Director be authorised to make the final recommendation to the LSC National Capital Committee.

Action: J Wayman/C Roberts

Item 12. Audit Committee

- 12.1 Minutes of the Audit Committee held on 28 February 2005 were adopted.
- 12.2 Susan Collins, Head of Finance and Contracting reported on a proposal by the Chief Internal Auditor concerning an expansion of the breadth of the Committee's role. The Audit Committee meeting on 23 May would consider the issues.

Item 13. New Integrated Offender Learning and Skills Service

A member commented that if there was interest from members in a prison visit this could be extended to include the Magistrates Courts.

Item 14. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 23 May 2005.

Signed: -----
Chairman

Date: -----

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