

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Date 12 September 2005
Subject Local Council Meeting
Location Board Room
Time 16:30
LSC office Tyne and Wear
Publication intent Public

Present Ashley Winter (Chairman), Chris Roberts, Carol Barwick, David Cheetham, Christopher Edwards, Gill Hale, Morven Smith, Michael Stephenson, Judith Woodruff, Mike Zarraga.
In attendance Terry Dabbs (Chair LSC Tees Valley), Maggi Hunt, Susan Oliphant.
LSC staff Michael Johnston, Pauline Watson, Ken Coulson, Michelle Harrison, David Jackson, Chris Ord, Tony Sacco, Walter Kemp.
Apologies Apologies have been received from:
Diana Bourke, Peter Slee, Michael Stephenson.

Item 1. Welcome

Terry Dabbs, Chair LSC Tees Valley was welcomed to the meeting.

Item 2. 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 3. Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. Arising:-

- 3.1 Consultation of the Regional Economic Strategy – members had been consulted on the LSC's local response and regional response.
- 3.2 Addition of a Sixth Form at Venerable Bede School, Sunderland – the response advising that the proposal was not supported by the LSC had been developed with members support and sent to Sunderland Council.

Item 4. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman reported that:

- 4.1 He had recently attended events both at Newcastle College and Tyne Metropolitan College, the latter being the opening of the new college by the Prime Minister.

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- 4.2 Regional Chairs had met on 22 July.
- 4.3 There had been a useful debate at the City Summit event involving David Miliband, Minister of Communities and Local Government.
- 4.4 Arrangements were being made to carry out a performance assessment of all Local Council Chairs. The assessment included:
- self assessment questionnaire completed by the Chair
 - assessment questionnaire completed by the ED
 - assessment questionnaire completed by members/observers
- All members/observers were encouraged to complete the questionnaire.
- 4.5 Kami Kundi had taken up a position with Business Link Northumberland.
- 4.6 Morven Smith was to take up a new position in Hartlepool.

Item 5. Regional Director's Update

Chris Roberts reported as follows:-

- 5.1 The Prime Minister's visit to open Tyne Metropolitan College had been his first to an FE college. In the context of raising the reputation of FE there was value in taking action to heighten the profile of FE.
- 5.2 Phil Hope, DfES Minister for Skills had recently visited prisons in the region and the Construction centre of excellence.
- 5.3 A regional event for all Council members would take place in approximately six weeks time and would focus on Agenda for Change.
- 5.4 Work was taking place on the new planning cycle with a group of College Principals.
- 5.5 A joint presentation with Sunderland Council would be made to the next meeting concerning the proposed Academies in Sunderland.

Action: D Smith/L Brown

- 5.6 Work was taking place with Sector Skills Councils concerning promoting new skills academies. There were plans to locate hubs in the North East for Engineering/Manufacturing and Construction and a decision was expected by October.

Item 6. Agenda for Change

Chris Roberts gave a presentation concerning the Agenda for Change:

- 6.1 It had been developed and was being led personally by Mark Haysom. It had developed from the 2004 Roadshows with Colleges/Providers and was focussed on addressing barriers to the 14-19 agenda. A series of working groups, including College Principals, were scoping out the work to address barriers and action required. The 2005 Roadshows had been taken as an endorsement of the Agenda for Change. The prospectus had been published on 5 August.
- 6.2 There seven work streams were:
- Funding – radical simplification of funding methodology and allocation process. Making it more transparent and more responsive to changing needs. Will involve LSC purchasing a plan from providers. Consideration would also be given to schools funding and the disparity of funding mechanisms between schools and FE. Proposals would be considered with DfES in the Autumn.
 - Skills for Employers – working together to create colleges valued by employers as the partner of choice for developing the skills they need. A key issue would

be whether the focus was on the accreditation of courses or institutions and how to get the funding flow in line with employer choice.

- Quality – working together to improve the quality of provision, funding excellence and promoting the very best to serve as beacons to others. This would include encouraging self assessment and developing protocols to make it clear how to deal with unsatisfactory provision.
- Data – sweeping away the complexity that causes colleges to divert resources to collecting data of variable benefit. Emphasis would be on ‘collect once, use lots of times’. The issue of sharing information between LSC, QCA, DfES, HE and would re-emphasise the importance of unique learner number.
- Business Excellence – developing LSC capital investment strategy to free back-office resources and support improved management systems e.g. a collaborative approach on procurement.
- Reputation – working with colleges to identify ways in which they can secure their reputation as pivotal to delivering the education and training needs of the UK.
- Transformational Change within LSC – internally focussed, a logical part of agenda for change in order to deliver the strategic change expected from partners, work on which would start soon. This would be the subject of a briefing at the next meeting.

Action: C Roberts

Arising:-

- A member commented on the opportunity missed to adopt a joined up approach to FE/HE by addressing it as a strategic continuum. It was noted that the HEFC NE representative was keen to engage in a joined up approach. The Regional Skills Partnership offered an appropriate route to engage. A member said that there was an opportunity to challenge HEFC to engage in a review of funding models together with LSC and would welcome the issue being fed back to Mark Haysom.
- Engagement with employers would take place via the Sector Skills Councils whom Government saw as leading. A number of SSCs were looking at the accreditation of colleges issue and a key debate was whether it would be better to focus on accrediting courses. Skillset was adopting an approach of course validation and this included courses which were not necessarily employer related
- Providers were involved in the design of the approach to plan purchasing. A key focus would be to reduce bureaucracy but the challenge would be to bring all funding streams into the funding cycle. In the current year plans had been issued in January but it had been after May before FE Colleges were finally notified.

Decision: That the report be received. Any member requiring a briefing to advise Chris Roberts.

Item 7. Employer Training Pilot, eQ8 North East

Submitted: Report by David Jackson, eQ8 Manager.

7.1 The pilot had continued to be a success in the last year:

- 718 employers engaged in Tyne and Wear, around 50% of the regional take up. 61% were small organisations. In the coming year the plan was to deliver to 70% small organisations, 20% medium and 10% large organisations.
- 9.5k learners had been engaged in Tyne and Wear, around 60% of the regional total. At one point the position had been stronger but over the last 2-3 months there had been a significant number of drop outs/non starters from employers.
- Consistently over the period of the pilot the Tyne and Wear office had had the highest achievement in terms of Level 2 (the only local office over 70%) and Skills for Life qualifications (the highest in the country).
- A significant element of the success was Business Link's support in identifying eligible learners.
- Phase 4 funding had yet to be defined and in preparation for the implementation of NETP a number of changes had been made to the eQ8 model. This approach included the blending of funding streams into one funding model in order to support more employers and learners than if the eQ8 budget stood alone.
- Post-tender negotiations were taking place with providers for outcomes to be delivered by spring/summer 2006. Arrangements were being made with FE/ACL providers to ensure that learning was able to take place promptly after the broker intervention. There was considerable emphasis on delivering what employers want and delivering what benefits business.

7.2 The principles of employers engaging through the broker to access high quality training would be carried forward through into NETP. In phase 4 there would be the opportunity to integrate key elements:

- placing more emphasis on full qualifications that continue contribute to PSA targets
- more emphasis on actual employer demand and not on what employers are able to deliver
- more emphasis on the integration of the principles of ETP into mainstream activity and ensuring that the NE model dovetails into NETP, integrating other funds into the eQ8 model to mirror the broader delivery through NETP.
- ensuring the continued success of eQ8.

In response to members' questions it was confirmed that considerable emphasis was being placed on getting the front end process right so that eligibility was clarified at the outset to ensure outcomes. There was a cap on numbers and the focus was on an approach that met the needs of small companies. A key issue going forward would be the role of the broker in understanding what was fully funded, what would be met by the public purse and what the employer would pay.

Decision: that

- a. the report be received;
- b. the team be congratulated on their excellent work to date.

Item 8. The "Youth Matters" Green Paper

8.1 Submitted: Report by Tony Sacco, Senior Manager, Learning Policy, together with a summary of the "Youth Matters" Green Paper intended to address the needs of teenagers and which sits alongside the White paper "14-19 Education and Skills" and the Every Child Matters developments. The period of the consultation on the Green Paper was until 4 November 2005.

8.2 Implications for the LSC were around:

- the need to consider how to maintain an adequate level of involvement with the 5 children's trusts in Tyne and Wear
- localisation of IAG and the expectation that arrangements for delivering Connexions provision could vary across the sub region/region
- the requirement for the LSC and Local Authorities to produce prospectuses showcasing the range of options available in the local area, building upon the work undertaken through 14-19 Action Plans.

8.3 Maggi Hunt said that at this stage it was not clear what the future arrangements would be across Tyne and Wear. By March 2008 the Connexions Budget would be with individual Local Authorities who would determine its allocation. Arrangements by each Local Authority to establish Children's Trusts were still in development. In Tees Valley there would be a pilot migration of Connexions service in Stockton during 2007 requiring the disaggregation of the partnership this financial year. There was an on-going debate around retaining the impartiality of IAG delivered in schools and colleges.

8.4 Members commented that:

- section 22 raised issues around voluntary activity and there was concern that the existing voluntary network in the region should not be disadvantaged.
- from 2008 there would be no ring-fencing of money related to IAG and there was concern that Government's minimum expectation of IAG was being set at a very low level.
- there was a need to highlight concerns regarding how Local Authorities/Children's Trusts and the post 16 network would ensure that young people received independent IAG
- improving outcomes for young people required a funding regime that resourced all young people received advice that differentiated between 6th Form and FE/other provision.

Decision: That the report be received and arrangements be made to take account of members comments in the LSC's response.

Action: T Sacco

Item 9. Themed Review of Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LLDD) in Tyne and Wear

NB: David Barker declared an interest as a Director of the Percy Hedley Trust and as Chair of the Stakeholder Group.

- 9.1 Submitted: Paper by Michelle Harrison, Provision and Relationship Manager, FE and Chris Ord, Acting Team Leader, Business and Strategic Planning updating on the review of LLDD provision, outlining the key issues and recommendations from the review, and setting out the next steps in taking the review forward.
- 9.2 Key issues were the rise in the number of individuals with needs on the Autistic spectrum, Educational and Behavioural Difficulties, complex needs and mental health problems, gaps in FE or specialist provision for complex needs 16-19, and limitations around 19+ provision. There were also matters to address around funding and a range of other issues.
- 9.3 A member commented that because of these issues FE was finding it increasingly difficult to preserve historic provision in an emotive area. The LSC would need to take careful account of the issues as there was a risk that in delivering the skills agenda it may have implications for LLDD.

- 9.4 The series of recommendations put forward by the review were detailed in the report and had been signed off by the LLDD Stakeholder Group.
- 9.5 A member commented on the very thorough nature of the review resulting in credible and robust recommendations.

Decision: That

- a. The report be received and staff associated with the review be congratulated on their work;
- b. The next steps to take forward the review (outlined in the paper), including the continuation of the stakeholder group with a revised remit, be endorsed.

Item 10. Aviation Sector Update

- 10.1 Submitted: Paper by Walter Kemp, Workforce Development Manager briefing the Council on the activities, achievements and future plans for the Aviation Academy.
- 10.2 Results to date had been good and there was an expectation that they would improve further as the facility became more widely known and selection improved along with the staff knowledge base.
- 10.3 There were plans to extend the Newcastle Aviation Academy with a new build facility on-site and the intention was to seek Centre of Vocational Excellence status or equivalent. Funding had become available to strengthen the Newcastle College component of the Academy. Plans were also in place to strengthen strategic and operational management.
- 10.4 Discussion had taken place around the challenge arising from a planned Aviation Academy at Doncaster and a note of understanding was being signed which should assure complementary provision rather than competition.

Decision: That

- a. the paper be received, noting achievements to date;
- b. the future plans of the Newcastle Aviation Academy be endorsed and supported.

Item 11. Marketing and Communications Update

Jane O'Keefe, Marketing and Communications Manager gave an update on work including,

- the development of an internal communications strategy
- communications with MPs
- events, including the Go Forward Event (Level 1) being planned nationally; and an event to facilitate better working between FE colleges and Business Links
- plans for regional marketing for adults which was led by Tyne and Wear.
- employer marketing to promote apprenticeships was being led by Northumberland. The intention was that it should be sector specific and involve direct mailing and telemarketing.
- LSC and Connexions cooperating on a work based learning event to be run by Connexions early in 2006.
- plans being made to promote Entry to Employment to employers.

Decision: That the report be received.

Item 12. Information Advice and Guidance Strategic Plan

Submitted: Paper by Pauline Watson, Director of Skills and Participation. The paper updated on the overall strategic approach to IAG developed with partners. This had largely resulted from the audit in the context of the partners' agreed priorities.

Decision: That the report be received.

Signed: -----

Chairman

Date: -----

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Ashley Winter

Minute taker

Ken Coulson

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