

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Minutes of meeting

Date	4 July 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, David Cheetham, Christopher Edwards, Peter Slee, Morven Smith, Michael Stephenson, Judith Woodruff.
Observers	Kevin Turner - Jobcentre Plus Michael Howard - Connexions Tyne and Wear Joe Swinburn – Government Office North East
Staff	John Wayman, Michael Johnston, Dorothy Smith, Anthea Pratt, Ken Coulson.
Apologies	Apologies have been received from: Gill Hale, Kami Kundi, Graham Randell Dan Brophy, Maggi Hunt.

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 23 May 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Item 3. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman reported that the National Chairs day had taken place 6/7 June. An important focus had been Agenda for Change. There had been time to consider some of the issues for the region.

Item 4. Regional Director's Update

Chris Roberts reported as follows:-

4.1 Agenda for Change

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- Mark Haysom had met with FE College leadership in the region concerning Agenda for Change. One outcome had been an agreement to work up some protocols to support to support what was otherwise expected to be a difficult next year. If three year funding for schools 6th Forms was introduced this may exacerbate the position for the FE budget during the transition.
 - A member commented that this year's timescale for notifying budgets had been impossibly short for colleges. It was important that this was addressed in future years.
 - It was noted that whilst the LSC had received an early flavour of the budget, it was the subject of negotiation, including with Association of Colleges and required Ministerial decision to release the figures to FE. Against the background of a previous funding uplift from £5.8 billion to £10.2 billion it was important that the FE sector demonstrated to Government a readiness to engage.
- 4.2 Offender Learning and Skills Contract: Newcastle College had been awarded the contracts for Northumbria and County Durham and would provide the new service to over 75% of prisoners and offenders in the region.
- 4.3 Gateshead College: a productive evening meeting had taken place with the Board of Governors of Gateshead College.
- 4.4 Regional CoVE Conference: an event had taken place on 20 June concerning the role of Centres of Vocational Excellence within the Skills Agenda. Over 100 people had attended the event engaging both national and local providers.

Item 5. Local LSC Main Programmes Performance Review

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

- 5.1 The report provided an overview of the qualitative and quantitative performance of key delivery measurables relating to the principle budget lines of Further Education, School Sixth Forms and Work Based Learning in Tyne and Wear.
- 5.2 A key context remained reducing the 20% in the NEET and Not Known Groups. E2E starts targets had been exceeded but funding had constrained achieving the internal target. In terms of progression Tyne and Wear remained below average but had made a significant impact on the NEET group. There was continued focus on hardest to help client group who were being accepted onto the programme.
- 5.3 Next year an ESF project that would support the hardest to help aiming to bring them up to the level of E2E. Evaluation of the project would be important to understand participation and progression of the client group. Moving clients into mainstream was still an issue and length of programmes would only mitigate rather than eradicate the problem.
- 5.4 There was an increasing challenge for the NE because of the budget drift south. It was expected that there would be a Government announcement concerning additional support.
- 5.5 The WBL Modern Apprenticeships PSA target had been achieved and it was expected to exceed the target by around 10%, it having increased by 15% year on year. Success rates were disappointing but were distorted by the significant changes being made to the provider infrastructure to ensure that it was responsive to demand. Within six months it was expected that performance would be ahead of regional/national average.
- 5.6 FE sector had achieved a significant 99% spend. There was a consistent improvement in FE success rates and combined with good inspection grades. It

presented a positive picture of FE performance closing the differential nationally by 50%. Within 2005/06 there was a planned 47% reduction in the percentage of budget deployed on purchasing other provision not counting towards targets.

- 5.7 There had been a positive performance in Sixth Form growth and achievement - a member said that in future it would be useful to see a breakdown of vocational achievement.
- 5.8 The Skills for Life PSA target had been achieved at December 2004. Future figures would be more meaningful now that baseline had been achieved. Capacity building should ensure a positive picture for the future.
- 5.9 FE Ofsted inspection grades were very good with strong leadership and management. WBL Adult Learning Inspectorate grades were showing some improvement. In future LSC provision deemed unsatisfactory by the Inspectorate at re-inspection would result in the LSC withdrawing provision both from FE and WBL.

Decision:

- a. the report be received;
- b. future reports to include vocational achievement in school sixth forms;
- c. note the expected announcement of Government support to support the hardest to help in NEET group.

Action: J Wayman

Item 6. Joint LSC/Jobcentre Plus Delivery Planning

Submitted: Report by Michael Johnston, Acting Director, Performance Planning, summarising work between the LSC and Jobcentre Plus on joint working in Tyne and Wear and commenting on work planned for 2005-06.

- 6.1 Within the agreed national policy context joint working locally would address the following areas:
- Information, Advice and Guidance
 - Apprenticeships and Entry to Employment
 - Sector Approaches and Routeways
 - Employer related approaches including 'No Wrong Door' referrals
 - Contracting and performance management
 - Skills for Life
- 6.2 Jobcentre Plus was going through a period of great organisational change but were seeking to ensure that this did not impact significantly outside of the organisation. Joint working was essential against a background of tightening of resources for both organisations despite their different drivers.
- 6.3 Discussion took place around the work relating to Welfare to Work. A member commented that a fundamental inhibitor was the limited ability to reinstate incapacity benefits for those would had voluntarily chosen to work but who then became unable to do so. It would be important that this was addressed as a policy issue.
- 6.4 Reference was made to the opportunity for the LSC and Jobcentre Plus to pursue a joint bidding round for ESF Co-Financing together.

Decision: That the report be received.

Item 7. Consultation on the Updated Regional Economic Strategy (RES)

Submitted: Report by Michael Johnston, Acting Director, Performance Planning, briefing the Council on the updated Regional Economic Strategy Consultation "Leading the Way".

- 7.1 Members were invited to comment on the document with a view to a coordinated response to the RES consultation being submitted from the LSC in the North East.
- 7.2 A member commented on the importance of all public agencies ensuring that they had a sense of ownership of the RES and contributed to it in a way that ensured that the region owned it.
- 7.3 The RES was a strategic document that all public bodies in the region needed to get behind, at the moment there were elements that were quite general and the LSC would need to shape it, particularly around Level 2, Basic Skills and the NEET Group, and with reference to CoVEs and Skills Academies. Arrangements were also being made to ensure coherence in the capital investment strategy.
- 7.4 Reference was made to the importance of ensuring that there were no funding gaps in the strategy.
- 7.5 A mechanism was required to engage schools in view of their key economic role in respect of 14-19 activity. There was an issue to be resolved about who represented the views of the schools sector.

Decision: that

- a. the report be received;
- b. arrangements be made to consult members on drafts of the consultation response on several occasions as the coordinated response was developed.

Action: M Johnston

Item 8. Employee Perception Survey 2005

Submitted: Report by Michael Johnston, Acting Director, Performance Planning who gave a presentation concerning the results of the survey and the ways in which the LSC was responding locally. This included the establishment of a People First Group.

Decision: That the report be received.

Item 9. Addition of a Sixth Form at Venerable Bede Church of England (Aided) Secondary School, Sunderland

Submitted: Report by Dorothy Smith, Head of Learning Policy in response to a formal proposal by the Governing Body of the abovementioned school to establish a sixth form.

- 9.1 In response to an informal consultation issued by the school, the LSC had communicated that it was unable to support the proposal, as it was not consistent with the Sunderland 14-19 strategy. This was as set out in a letter to the Chair of Governors dated 18 February 2005. The responses of the Local Authority and Sunderland Learning Partnership were also noted.
- 9.2 The 14-19 strategy had been developed following an Ofsted area wide inspection carried out in May 2002, one outcome of which was the development of joint school-college sixth forms which were able to offer a broad academic and vocational curriculum and take advantages of economies of scale in relation to staffing, capital investment, curriculum planning and delivery, while also ensuring continuity of pastoral care and support at transition.

9.3 The outcome would impact on deployment of LSC resources including future capital investment plans. In considering the proposal members indicated that it was important to clarify that the basis of the decision was solely on the grounds outlined.

Decision: That

- a. The recommendation that the proposal for the addition of a sixth form to The Venerable Bede CofE (Aided) Secondary School is not supported, be confirmed on the grounds that an additional sixth form is not justifiable in the City of Sunderland based on LSC analysis of curriculum, demographic trends and student numbers, and on this basis only;
- b. Arrangements be made to circulate the draft response to Council members, for comment;
- c. The Executive Director be requested to communicate the decision to the City Solicitor and Secretary to the School Organisation Committee, and subsequently ensure that the LSC votes against the proposal at the School Organisation Committee meeting.

Action: C Roberts/D Smith

Item 10. Sector Development: Rail Sector Issues

Submitted: Report by Anthea Pratt, Senior Workforce Development Officer concerning the issues being addressed in the sector development of the rail industry. This included

- a Multi-skilling project utilising Objective 3 co-financing
- Developing competency and piloting NVQs
- Training on the Right Lines
- Developing the Rail Training Consortium

10.1 The decision of NEXUS to make track training available to others would considerably assist local delivery.

10.2 Reference was made to the qualified migrant workers who were coming into the region as bus drivers. This would need to be considered by factored into consideration by the respective agencies seeking to support the hardest to help.

Decision: That the report be received.

Item 11. Audit Committee

Minutes of the Audit Committee held on 23 May 2005 were confirmed.

Item 12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee would take place on 12 September 2005.

Signed: -----
Chairman

Date: -----

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