

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Date 3 April 2006
Subject Local Council
Location
Time 16:30
LSC office Tyne and Wear
Publication intent Public

Present Ashley Winter (Chairman), Chris Roberts, David Barker, David Cheetham, Mohammad Farsi, Gill Hale, Graham Randell and Judith Woodruff.

In attendance Diane Hedley - Jobcentre Plus
Dan Brophy - Business Link Tyne and Wear
Maggi Hunt - Connexions Tyne and Wear

LSC staff Linda Bailey, Michael Johnston, Dianne Smith, Dorothy Smith, Pauline Watson, Ken Coulson

Apologies Apologies have been received from:
C Barwick, C Edwards, M Smith, P Slee, M Stephenson, M Zarraga. Also: J Swinburn.

Item 1. Declaration of Interest

- 1.1 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

- 2.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
Arising:-
- 2.2 Members had been advised that a rescheduled Council meeting on 25 September would replace the two meetings on 11 September and 16 October.

Item 3. Chairman's Remarks

- The Chairman reported:-
- 3.1 Diana Bourke had resigned from the Council due to business commitments.

- 3.2 The Chairman's performance check had been circulated. Members were thanked for their input.
- 3.3 Regional Board had met on two occasions recently:
- Sir Bruce Liddington, DfES Academies Group had given a presentation concerning the Academies programme. An announcement around the 2010 target of building 200 Academies was expected by September.
 - Local Plans had been well received nationally. John Merry, the National Council member paired with the NE, had been very supportive. National members had demonstrated an understanding of the issues relating to NEET group to be addressed in the region.
 - A Regional Audit Committee was to be established, to be chaired by Jackie Axelby. Chairs considered that there was a continuing role for local audit committees as part of the internal control regime giving confidence to the Regional Director.
- 3.4 Capital Sub Group had and had endorsed the Local Capital Plan and the Regional Capital Strategy.

Item 4. Regional Director's Update

Chris Roberts reported:-

- 4.1 Agenda for Change theme 7 continued and new band 5 directors had been announced. Band 4 appointments would be announced week commencing 24 April.
- 4.2 Tyne and Wear travel remained an issue of great concern. Up to 10k young people were to lose the subsidy for travel to education and there was great concern that this would negate the positive impact of EMAs and limit young people travelling to their college of choice. Members commented that this issue was a great concern for students and colleges alike and could result in young people being in learning in the wrong place or result in them dropping out of learning. LSC and other agencies had been engaged in seeking a solution with the ODP. There were issues around whether the LSC had powers to fund travel. If such a proposition was put to the LSC there would be a need to consult Council.
- 4.3 A National IAG Conference had taken place in the NE with over 250 attending.
- 4.4 A 'Worklessness' conference had taken place around joint agency working to ensure that unemployed people were trained for employment. It had been well attended by employers.
- 4.5 An event had been held with chairs/principals of Colleges concerning the White Paper, and including the issues around future governance of FE. A subsequent meeting had taken place with Principals.

Item 5. 14-19 Developments/Area Inspections

- 5.1 Submitted: Paper by Dorothy Smith, Head of Learning Policy.
- 5.2 Area Wide Inspections would not continue although all five area of Tyne and Wear had made considerable improvements at 14-19 and were narrowing

the gap against the national benchmark. It was clear that the 14-19 policy paper recognised 14-19 remained a top priority. Joint Area Reviews would take this forward.

- 5.3 Gateshead was the first area in Tyne and Wear to undergo a Joint Area Review assessing the integrated service for young people 0-19. Currently the documentary analysis was taking place which would inform the fieldwork in May. Post 16 performance had been identified by the LSC as an issue requiring attention.
- 5.4 A member commented that the lack of numeracy and literacy skills amongst students coming into FE from school was a key contributory factor affecting post 16 performance e.g. inclusion of Maths and English in the new GCSE A*- C performance tables from next year would significantly change Gateshead's positioning in the tables and unmask some of the issues.
- 5.5 14-19 collaborative work in Tyne and Wear had been recognised, and the involvement in 6 key development areas of the 14-19 Implementation Plan were highlighted in the report.

Decision: That the report be received.

Item 6. Education and Inspections Bill 2006

- 6.1 Submitted: Paper by Dorothy Smith, Head of Learning Policy.
- 6.2 Publication of the Education and Inspections Bill in March 2006 aimed to secure legislation that would take forward 14-19 collaborative working. Key features of the related policy papers were:
 - Determination to get vocational education right – including engagement of employers in the design, delivery and support for young people, early recruitment building on workbased learning, the need for a partnership approach to delivering the content of the 14 specialist diplomas at 3 levels. It was expected that the Regional Skills Partnership and SSCs would have a role in approving the readiness of partnerships to deliver.
 - Retention of GCSE and A level – including greater stretch/challenge at A level.
 - Level 2 as a platform for further/higher learning and employability – this included the increased focus on numeracy and literacy in attainment tables.
 - Autonomy and collaboration – this included the provision for schools to become Trusts, competitions for new/replacement schools and the enabling power for FE/maintained schools to collaborate through joint governance.
 - Role of Local Authorities/Children's Services authorities – including the changing role of local authorities from providers to commissioners of education; duties and powers to ensure fulfilment of every child's educational potential; and the outlawing interviewing or selection by ability.
- 6.3 A member expressed concern around the implications for funding of post 16 learning in this environment and considered it likely that schools would seek

to retain young people. It appeared to signal instability for the post 16 sector and an uncertain future for FE Colleges in their current form. Also concern that headroom to invest was being withdrawn and that FE capacity may diminish accordingly.

- 6.4 It was noted that a funding and organisational pilot was considering these issues; increasingly schools were seen as purchasers of provision. The pilot would consider learner choice, independent IAG, and focus on collaboration - no one school would be able to offer full diplomas and there would be a need to involve a range of providers. Changes in 14-19 provision could be expected.

Decision: That the report be received.

Item 7. FE Reform White Paper: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances

- 7.1 Submitted: Briefing on the White Paper outlining a series of initiatives that would transform the life chances of young people and of the skills of the workforce. A series of related supporting documents had been circulated.
- 7.2 The Foster Review and the White Paper highlighted that the LSC needed to change radically and Agenda for Change positioned the LSC strategically and gave confidence concerning its organisational structure to respond.
- 7.3 Key challenges were around post 16 strategy and addressing the needs of adults without qualifications. Proposals included:
- Encouraging innovation through competition bringing new providers to the market
 - Reducing bureaucracy at every level
 - High performing colleges focussed on employability
 - Specialisation of colleges would continue with considerable focus on achieving standards of vocational excellence
 - Meeting learner needs through entitlement to free training to Level 3 for all aged 19-25 from 2007, with budget support to deliver it
 - Introduction of new learning accounts from Autumn 2007
 - New apprenticeship qualifications with recognition on completion of the qualification
 - Demand led approach to meeting the needs of employers through Train to Gain with enhanced funding and employer choice
 - National strategy for better teaching and learning including a single Quality Improvement Agency.
 - Spreading success and eliminating failure via a new integrated inspectorate, each institution would receive a single quality rating.
 - Legislative change, providing for powers available to the schools sector to be applied to FE - LSC would have stronger powers of intervention to tackle failing provision where improvements were not delivered – to be used sparingly.

- Funding and Capital included an emphasis on working with Local Authorities on the 14-19 agenda aligning with Building Schools for the Future
- Agenda for Change Theme 7 would ensure a single point of contact at each local authority level and a named lead person with each provider
- There would be a new powerful role for non executives and the re-configuring of LSC governance to deliver integrated regional/local arrangements.

Discussion

- 7.4 With regard to the non executive role, Chris Banks had made it clear that the LSC was still delivering locally and there would be a need for local committees. Debates were taking place elsewhere in the country where mergers were being proposed. There was an opportunity to consider the issue prior to the National Chair's meeting.
- 7.5 A member was concerned that an outcome of the White Paper would be a substantial reduction in the number of general FE colleges over the next 5 years. Some colleges would see this as an opportunity to expand through offering high quality services.
- 7.6 A member commented that the issue of training organisations profiting from public funding required appropriate safeguards. It was considered that the main measure would be the delivery of high quality provision. There would be opportunities for FE to move into work based learning. Train to Gain had resulted in new providers coming into the market and the focus for all providers needed to be the quality of provision.
- 7.7 A member commented on the need to consider how refugees' qualifications which were not currently transferable could be recognised. It was noted that a project involving LSC/JC+ was considering competency accreditation.

Decision: That the report be received.

Item 8. Tyne and Wear City Region Proposal

- 8.1 Linda Bailey, Director of Regional Policy reported on the business case submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) for a Tyne and Wear City Region.
- 8.2 Key proposals were around spatial planning; economic development; education, skills and employment; and transport and connectivity. ODPM had expressed interest in proposals relating to transport, the potential of the river Tyne and a land bank proposition.
- 8.3 LSC would lead at the City region level on issues relating to:
- Raising the aspirations of young people/reduce those not in education, employment or training
 - Enabling the development of higher-level skills to support business growth
 - Tackling worklessness through the establishment of an integrated, employer led approach to employment and skills

- 8.4 Proposals would require the LSC, Job Centre Plus, Local Authorities and others to work together to support employers needs. This would include a targeted approach to those on benefit. It would require greater cohesion at the City Region level and employer leadership. A City Employment Board would seek an integrated approach and hold the public sector agencies to account for delivery of job ready recruits.
- 8.5 A statement by the Minister concerning the timing for taking this forward could be expected in the coming weeks. Targets and timescales remained the subject of debate. Geography would be variable depending on the task.
- 8.6 It was noted that the Department for Work and Pensions Green Paper had the same direction of travel – a pipeline effect – requiring alignment of funding to deliver the demand-led end outcome. It would be important to influence the Green Paper to ensure that there was consistency.

Decision: That the report be received.

Item 9. Local Area Agreements

- 9.1 Submitted: Paper by Michael Mc-Dade concerning the development of Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and the implications for the LSC and local partners.
- 9.2 LAAs were three year agreements between central government and a local area. They were intended to give local authorities more control over finances and greater freedom to be more innovative. Agreements covered four funding blocks – Children’s and Young People and Economic Developments being of particular interest to the LSC.
- 9.3 Gateshead had been an early pilot beginning April 2005 and the LSC was involved in working with Children’s Services by aligning funding and collaborative activity to achieve greater flexibility at a local level around 16-18 activity, Level 2, and Skills for Life.
- 9.4 South Tyneside and Sunderland LAAs would begin in April 2006 with other areas to follow in 2007.
- 9.5 Activity was focussed on specific targets to ensure that strategic direction was aligned right down to local level, delivering priorities locally. It would require synergy between activity at the City Region level and the LAA. It would be important that decision making authority was also at the local level. It was noted that the ODPM was seeking clarity regarding the activities at each level.

Decision: That the report be received.

Item 10. Public Administration Briefing Paper

- 10.1 Submitted: Paper by Dianne Smith concerning work in the public administration sector on workforce planning and development. Within Tyne and Wear there had been a particular focus on Local Government.
- 10.2 Current LSC activity was in support of the Employers Organisation avoiding duplication by focussing on liP, eQ8 and Apprenticeships.
- 10.3 To date three local authorities had established workforce plans which as yet remained at the broad headline level. The LSC would seek to influence the

Local Government progression strategy for developing workforce capacity, and provide funding supporting for a pilot skills audit toolkit, liP activity and through Train to Gain provision.

Decision: That the report be received.

Item 11. Review of Learning and Skills needs in the Public Sector in Tyne and Wear

- 11.1 Submitted: Paper by Andrew Rowell presenting key recommendations from the review of learning and skills in the Public Services Sector. This included outsourced activity.
- 11.2 The sector represented 28% of jobs in Tyne and Wear but one third of those in that workforce lacked a Level 2 qualification. The research was intended to provide a comprehensive picture of future learning and skills needs in the sector, and to assess the extent to which the current mix of local provision met these needs.
- 11.3 Interim recommendations included addressing shortages in basic skills tutors, supporting basic skills audits in the sector, promoting Train to Gain and other flexible and responsive workforce development support, developing brokerage, addressing recruitment and retention issues for an ageing workforce, and young people and residents' skill levels to enable entry into the workforce.
- 11.4 Collaborative working with sector stakeholders and engagement with providers in support of staff workforce development would be essential.
- 11.5 A member commented on the value in reflecting a service design approach in line with the 'modernising' agenda. Local Government needed to focus on its role as an employer with significant issues to address in respect of workforce development.
- 11.6 Members commented on the difficulties faced in seeking to driving a proactive approach to learning and skills development through huge organisations' with both structural and attitudinal issues needing to be addressed. Reference was made to the possibility of making influencing the children and young people's workforce strategy in relation to this agenda.

Decision: That the report be received.

Item 12. Local Capital Project

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

Decision: That

- a. Authority be delegated to the Capital Development Sub Group to assess the City of Sunderland capital project prior to 14 April 2006;
- b. The Executive Director be authorised to make the final recommendation to the LSC National Capital Committee.

Action: J Wayman/K Coulson

Item 13. Minutes

- 13.1 The following minutes were received/approved, as appropriate:

- Regional Board of 27 February 2006
- Audit Committee of 27 February 2006
- Capital Development Members Sub Group of 10 March 2006

Item 14. Next Meeting

David Barker would chair the meeting on 22 May 2006.

Signed: -----
Chairman

Date: -----

Publication no.	
Meeting chair	Ashley Winter
Minute taker	Ken Coulson
Date created	4 April 2006
Document ref.	G:\Corporate Services\Local Council T&W minutes\Local Council 2006\3 April 2006\tyn-localcouncil-publicminutes-03apr2006.doc