

# Minutes



Leading learning and skills

**Date** 3 July 2006  
**Subject** Local Council  
**Location** Board Room, Moongate House  
**Time** 16:30  
**LSC office** Tyne and Wear  
**Publication intent** Public

**Present** Ashley Winter (Chairman), Chris Roberts, Carol Barwick, Christopher Edwards, Mohammad Farsi, Graham Randell, Peter Slee, Morven Smith, Michael Stephenson, Judith Woodruff, Michael Zarraga.

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

**LSC staff** Ken Coulson, Barbara Cooper, Simon Lindsay, Anthea Pratt, Dorothy Smith, Pauline Watson, John Wayman

**Apologies** Apologies have been received from:  
David Barker, David Cheetham, Gill Hale

## **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 3 April 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **Item 3. Streamlining of LSC Accountability**

3.1 Submitted: Note from Chris Banks, National Chair issued to Local Chairs concerning proposals for streamlining of LSC accountability.

3.2 The Chairman reported that going forward the Regional Board would have a strengthened membership enabling it to fulfil a role as the key decision making body in the region. Changes in arrangements were expected to take 12 months to set in place. Local structures were still in the process of being defined.

- 3.3 The Local Council had two vacancies and there were now no immediate plans to fill these. However, it would be essential to maintain the decision making capacity of the Local Council until such time as new arrangements were in place. This required maintaining a minimum of 12 members. Carol Barwick had agreed to serve a further 12 months when her current term expired in November and there may be a need for similar conversations with other members over time. Local Council in Northumberland had considered the issues and committed to maintaining business as usual.
- 3.4 Establishing a Regional Board would coincide with ONE North East and the Regional Skills Partnership and there would be a need to address some of the potential overlaps.
- 3.5 The Minister was considering the changes which would require legislation and implications would also be considered in the comprehensive spending review.
- 3.6 James Ramsbotham had been appointed Chief Executive of the NE Chamber and was intending to stand down as Regional Chairman.

#### **Discussion**

- 3.7 Members commented that it was essential that the Local Council was seen to be leading and supporting change by holding together through this period. However, it was important that going forward there was a clear blueprint with an integrated local role. Not doing so was to risk disillusionment/disinterest. The local role needed to be seen to be adding value if it was to continue to recruit members.
- 3.8 It remained important that the strategic level checked out and engaged a range of local views when addressing very local issues and demonstrated local accountability e.g. issues affecting people with a black and ethnic minority background.
- 3.9 It was noted that the view as to how local arrangements should be addressed varied from region to region e.g. South east preferred everything to be at the regional level. The Minister would consider a range of views when proposing a way forward.
- 3.10 Regional Chairs would meet again on 27 July. Arrangements would be made to keep members informed as further information was received.

**Action: Chair/C Roberts**

#### **Item 4. Council Members Regional Event: 27 September, Auckland Castle, Bishop Auckland**

The Chairman reminded members of the event and encouraged members to attend, which would include dinner at this outstanding venue.

#### **Item 5. Regional Director's Update**

Chris Roberts reported as follows:-

- 5.1 Themes 1-6: The Regional Roadshow with Mark Haysom had been held. College Principals had:

- acknowledged that the planning process had gone well, and had been open and honest
- been very supportive of Mark Haysom's reservations that if real time funding was only made available in response to employer demand it would be very difficult for institutions to manage.

#### 5.2 Theme 7:

- Members recorded their congratulations to John Wayman who had been appointed as Area Director North
- Remaining appointments were due to be announced. It had been a protracted process for staff. College Principals' were very pleased with the way that staff had performed throughout this period.

5.3 A senior local authority delegation had presented the City Region proposal for Tyne and Wear to Ruth Kelly. The Minister had made it clear that if new powers relating to transport, land and economic development were to be granted there must be robust governance arrangements set in place.

5.4 The Ministerial end of year review had taken place with the LSC. It had been acknowledged that the LSC was one of the few Government bodies to have met most of its targets. There was recognition that NEET remained a challenge for the region and needed to be recognised in the Comprehensive Spending review.

5.5 The new facility at Gateshead Stadium jointly funded by Gateshead College and the English Institute of Sport had recently been opened.

5.6 LSC and ONE NE had jointly procured the Train to Gain Service which would be delivered by 'Coalition for Ambition' (the Business Links excluding Durham, plus NE Chamber and Durham County Council). The new organisation would deliver both the brokerage and all Business Link branded services. Appreciation was expressed that the LSC had ensured a well managed process.

5.7 The Celebration of Learning Event for young and older learners had recently taken place at Hardwick Hall. The event celebrated those achieving for the first time or for those who had been out of learning for up to 30 years. It was regarded as a successful and important event.

#### **Item 6. City of Sunderland College: Proposed St Peter's Sixth Form Centre**

6.1 John Wayman reported that following debate, the Capital Development Members Sub Group had supported an application to National Capital Committee for a grant of 35% of eligible expenditure to fund development of the St Peter's Sixth Form Centre.

6.2 The LSC's normal intervention rate was 10% but the application recognised that if the proposal had come from a school it would have attracted 100%. National Capital Committee had not been persuaded and had eventually agreed 20%. The Committee had been fully supportive of the educational argument.

6.3 College Governors were due to consider the matter in the light of the decision although there was an expectation that they would proceed. Any future development by the College would require a higher intervention rate.

#### **Item 7. LSC Performance: Tyne and Wear**

7.1 Submitted: Paper by John Wayman providing an outline of performance up to April 2006 relating to delivering the 14-19 agenda and the Skills Strategy.

7.2 Overall, performance had been very positive and the approach of pursuing a long term strategy at the expense of short term performance was beginning to produce results with performance moving consistently in the right direction.

- NEET/Not known numbers continued to fall but remained significant
- Level 2 achievement at 19 was improving although there was still a long way to go
- Education Maintenance Allowances continued to be successful ahead of regional and national averages
- Young people participating in a full Level 2 was still low, but numbers were increasing ahead of regional/national averages
- Work based learning performance continued to be mixed, but the local strategy to improve quality and responsiveness was expected to produce improved performance in coming years
- Entry to Employment strategy was addressing recruitment and retention but the progression target remained challenging, particularly provision not contributing to the Skills for Life target
- Adult success rates in FE and full Level 2 continued to improve.
- Employer Training Pilot had maintained its strong performance
- All capital projects had resulted in 'state of the art' facilities.

#### **Discussion**

7.3 There was now much better understanding of the NEET Group, it was very transient with only 1% of this in that group at age 16 still there at age 18. Connexions had developed an understanding of NEET as a 'revolving door'. Adult guidance was seeking to provide holistic support where worklessness was the norm drawing on individual records.

7.4 Comparisons were being made with East Midlands NEET Group which was 50% less than in Tyne and Wear, apparently due to the much larger base of unskilled/low paid jobs. In the NE, employers wanted skilled people with qualifications for similar jobs.

7.5 Comment was made about the issue of whether good performance at Level 2 and Level 3 could be equated with raising standards for employers. It was important to consider how far this approach was assisting people to think and to learn.

**Decision:** That the report be welcomed noting that:

- a. sustained improvement in local performance will be supported through:
  - delivery of actions in the local Annual Plan for 2006/07;

- implementation of the business cycle
- b. performance will continue to be monitored through:
  - the LSC's performance scorecard
  - Annual Plan monitoring
  - the 6 monthly process of reviewing performance with Mark Haysom
- c. members will continue to receive updates on progress through local reports.

**Item 8. Proposal from The Venerable Bede Church of England (Aided) Secondary School for the addition of a sixth form**

8.1 Submitted: Paper by Dorothy Smith reporting that:

- the abovementioned proposal for capital funding had been assessed against the LSC's published criteria for approval of capital funding and does not meet them
- Furthermore, the proposal does not offer any significant benefit to learners to justify the LSC exceptionally providing funding for a proposal which does not meet its criteria.

8.2 All voting groups at the Sunderland Schools Organisation Committee had opposed the proposal (except the Anglican Diocese) and the Schools Adjudicator had subsequently determined not to approve the proposal primarily on the grounds that there was no guarantee of capital funding, noting that there was no lack of post-16 places, and that the arguments for the sixth form were based on choice.

8.3 It was noted that subsequently there had been a number of Freedom of Information requests associated with this matter.

8.4 Members expressed their support for the recommendation.

**Decision:** that the recommendation be confirmed.

Arising:-

8.5 It was noted that a meeting was to take place with representatives of Church House at the end of August. At that meeting the opportunity would be taken to express members wider concerns that establishing a 400 place sixth form may result in reduced provision in other institutions; and that there appeared to be no case made by the school to demonstrate whether or not the sixth form would be able provide a broad curriculum. It was commented that it may be appropriate to publish all sources of information.

**Action: C Roberts/D Smith**

**Item 9. Equality and Diversity Support Programme**

9.1 Submitted: Paper by Barbara Cooper reporting on the outcome of a LIDF funded programme with key providers through a bespoke programme of support aimed at developing and encouraging best practice in equality and diversity.

9.2 This was considered to be a very effective programme with successful outcomes that over time would contribute to the success of EDIMS targets. It

was proposed to disseminate the outcomes of the project to the whole Provider Network.

**Decision:** That

- a. the report be welcomed;
- b. arrangements be made to:
  - work with Mohammad Farsi to consider how the work could be disseminated to the Black and Ethnic Minority community
  - discuss with Diane Hedley whether there were possible links to work being undertaken with Jobcentre Plus.

**Action: B Cooper**

### **Item 10. Voluntary and Community Sector**

10.1 Submitted: Paper by Anthea Pratt reporting on the progress made by the Working Together Tyne and Wear Learning Consortium aimed at developing the capacity of the voluntary sector as a provider, employer, source of expertise and as a communication channel.

10.2 Activity to date was outlined, including progress in developing the Learning Consortium to plan for contestability e.g. there was potential to contribute to LSC targets at level 3 and beyond, and for hard to reach learners.

10.3 Members commented on the considerable potential of the voluntary sector as an employer requiring staff with high level qualifications, also the potential to engaging volunteers with potential for Level 2.

**Decision:** That the report be received.

### **Item 11. Minutes**

11.1 Minutes of the following meetings were received/confirmed, as appropriate;-

- Audit Committee: 22 May 2006
- Capital Development Committee: 22 May 2006
- Regional Board: 25 May 2006

### **Item 12. Future Meetings**

**Decision:** That

- a. recognising the priority of the Joint Members event at Auckland Castle on 27 September arrangements be made to cancel the Council meeting scheduled for 25 September;
- b. the Chairman be authorised to convene meetings of the Council or its sub committees to address urgent business at short notice;
- c. The next regular meeting be held on 27 November.

Signed: -----

Chairman

Date: -----

**Publication no.**

**Meeting chair**

**Minute taker**

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Ashley Winter

Ken Coulson

4 July 2006

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