

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Minutes of meeting

Date	28 th April 2005
Subject	Council Meeting
Location	Learning & Skills Council
Time	16:00
LSC office	County Durham
Publication intent	Internal

Present

John Poland (Chair)
 Phil Hughes
 Kingsley Smith
 Brian Walker
 Keith Hodgson
 Mitch O'Reilly
 Paul Unger
 John Widdowson
 Diane Morton
 Peter Cook
 Gloria Wills
 Mervyn Blades
 Janice Bray
 Alison Hilton (for Graeme Wallace)
 John Reilly O' Donnell
 Rob Fallon

LSC staff

Tom Crompton
 Nick James
 Ann Jobson

Apologies

Apologies have been received from:
 James Ramsbotham
 Alan Bilsborough
 Graeme Wallace
 Val Goodrum

Action

1. Introduction and Chairman's Remarks

In the absence of the Chairman, John Poland took the Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed Alison Hilton.

JP highlighted that due to the forthcoming election, guidelines had been issued on purdah and certain restrictions were currently in place.

JP announced that following IIP assessment, LSC County Durham had been recommended to go forward for recognition at the next National panel. The Council requested their congratulations be passed on to all staff, and especially to Sharon Branch for leading the process. It was agreed a formal letter be written to SB on behalf of the Chair and Council Members.

**T. Crompton/
A. Jobson**

JP acknowledged the resignation of Len Davies, and instructed a gift and letter, formally thanking him, be sent on the Councils behalf.

**J. Ramsbotham/
A. Jobson**

2. Minutes of the previous meeting (17/03/05)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true record.

Matters arising:

- i) BW enquired about the progress of East Durham & Houghall Community College's consultation process relating to their capital bid. TC responded that he had received a very thorough consultation document and he was comfortable with their intended process, which included full presentations to some stakeholders. The proposal would be put forward to the Governors at the College meeting this evening.
- ii) Following the report at the previous meeting that County Durham had not achieved its targets on Skills for Life, TC advised Council that action was being taken. An event had been organised between College senior management and practitioners, together with data officers to explore new and innovative ways to improve targets. The event would take place on April 28th, and the outcome would be reported back at the next meeting.
- iii) TC reported that meetings had been held with the LEA and Diocesan, and a document drawn up outlining a joint protocol for capital expenditure. The report would be published after the election.

**N. James/
A. Jobson**

3. Executive Directors' Report

TC spoke to his paper. Activities were underway with staff at LG Philips, the Task Force was currently establishing the full picture of skills requirements. Rob Fallon added that 500 staff had already been interviewed.

JW commented that providers had still not had any communication from LG Philips, and needed to know the details of required courses in order to plan effectively.

TC reported that indicative funding allocations were currently being discussed with FE Colleges. He explained that although there had been a cash increase across the Country, provision was now more expensive.

The Colleges are facing a 3.5% reduction, and the LSC is in discussion to prioritise provision against the backdrop of skills needs. Final allocations will be confirmed at the end of May, and the impact on the region will be reported on at the next Council meeting in June.

**T. Crompton/
A. Jobson**

MO'R commented that this was difficult timing in view of the forthcoming Area Wide Inspection.

GW added that in addition, voluntary and community funding reductions are also underway. PH reported that a regional Voluntary Sector Task Force was currently looking at other funding possibilities.

TC added that the European Social Fund held significant funds, and would be used to complement LSC provision. Also, Single Programme Funds could be used to strategically match funding across streams and make an impact in a coherent way.

New College recently completed their Inspection with excellent results. The actual grading outcome remains confidential at this time. The Council congratulated New College.

This being the final of the four College Inspections, TC reported that all four results would greatly assist in the forthcoming Area Wide Inspection.

The AWI is due to take place for one week from June 6th. A Self Evaluation Report has been submitted with the stance being that in this County we have a clear understanding of the problems, and we can suggest ways to address these difficulties. Following the inspection, there will be a commitment to produce a clear action plan. MO'R highlighted that the AWI will be judged against backdrop of evidence of institutions collaborating.

At this point, it was noted that the Connexions Service had received a successful outcome to their inspection, and the Council wished to record their congratulations to Janice Bray.

4. Children's Act 2004

TC gave a brief outline of the Act stating that there will be significant changes for young people, and a need for all agencies to work together collectively. The Act cuts across the LSC's responsibilities for learning. All strategic plans will eventually be taken over by one coherent and comprehensive plan.

JB added that there was also to be a workforce reform for young people, with the establishment of a Children's Welfare Council.

5. Strategic Area Review

The draft StAR report would be available soon after the election, and the Area Advisory Groups were working actively to collaborate and plan.

JW commented that the boundaries of the Area Advisory Groups do not coincide with any other boundaries currently in place. TC responded that the four groups had initially been set up around logical 'travel to learn' areas, for the purposes of the first report, in an attempt to instigate collaboration between providers.

The LSC was willing to review the working groups as the StAR process progresses.

JW expressed concern that with the four groups the approach was fragmented, and that it would be difficult to aggregate the four plans into one.

Mervyn Blades, as a new member on the Council, requested more detailed figures behind the percentage increases. TC reported that there would be more detail in the text of the full report.

6. Feedback from Audit Committee

JP commended Steve Haley on his first report to the Audit Committee, which gave a clear and concise position of County Durham LSC. The report highlighted a £400k underspend. A more detailed paper will be prepared to the next meeting in June.

Dave Hedley – Regional Auditor – presented the results of his recent audit on Corporate Governance. The findings were good overall, with only small changes recorded.

Some discussion took place on the need for four local Audit Committee's, in relation to perhaps forming one Regional Committee. It was agreed this was a point for future discussion.

J. Poland

PH wished to record further congratulations to John Widdowson for the excellent grading of the Finance Management in New College, following the recent Inspection.

7. Capital Committee

Full Council ratified the decisions of the Capital Sub-Committee, and approved 'In Principle' the two Capital proposals for East Durham and Houghall Community College and Bishop Auckland College. Both will now be submitted to the National Capital Committee for formal approval.

8. Any Other Business

- i) GW raised the issue of lack of LSC representation on Local Strategic Partnerships. TC reported he was aware of the issue due to lack of local resource, and had arranged a joint meeting (6th May) with all Chief Executive's of District Council's to discuss mutually a beneficial way forward. The outcome will be feedback at a future Council Meeting.

**T. Crompton/
A. Jobson**

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 23rd June 2005, 4.00pm at County Durham LSC

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Minute taker Ann Jobson
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