

# Minutes



Leading learning and skills

**Date** 13 November 2008  
**Subject** Regional Council  
**Location** Moongate House  
**Time** 16:00  
**LSC office** North East Region  
**Publication intent** Public

**Present** James Ramsbotham (Chair), Mary Dunning, Graham Henderson, Sharon Oliver, Graham Randell, Sarah Robinson, Chris Roberts, Kate Welch, Ashley Winter.

**In attendance** Jackie McHanwell - Government Office  
Jan Thirlaway - Jobcentre Plus

**LSC staff** Gillian Miller, John Smith, Dorothy Smith, John Wayman, Julie Calvert, Ken Coulson, Linda Bailey, Liz Cook, Tony Sacco.

**Apologies** Apologies have been received from:  
David Barker, Kevin Rowan, Paul Watson, Oliver Wood.

## Item 1. Chairman's Remarks

- 1.1 Sarah Robinson was welcomed to her first meeting.
- 1.2 Chris Banks would attend Regional Council on 27 January.
- 1.3 The Regional Chairs meeting on 28 October had focussed on:
  - Machinery of Government changes
  - the Education Maintenance Allowance issue
  - Apprenticeships: Chairs had given feedback concerning the importance of ensuring that employer opportunities were available before launching the portal to enable young people to search for an Apprenticeship. The appointment of a Chief Executive to the National Apprenticeship Service was imminent.
- 1.4 Regional Audit Committee would meet on 24 November.

## LSC North East Region

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## **Item 2. Declaration of Interest**

- 2.1 The Chairman drew attention to the register of interests printed on the agenda and reminded members of the opportunity to declare any potential conflict of interest in any business on the agenda.
- 2.2 The following interest was recorded: Sarah Robinson in all capital applications insofar as she is Principal of Darlington College.

## **Item 3. Minutes: 16 October 2008**

- 3.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **Arising:-**

- 3.2 Newcastle College Land Acquisition: National Capital Colleagues had advised that a second valuation be obtained before the proposal was considered by the Chief Executive.
- 3.3 Newcastle College 6<sup>th</sup> Form Provision: National Capital Committee had had a very robust debate and had deferred taking a decision to endorse the application pending:
  - a. a detailed consultation with partners within whose footprint a substantial number of the learners would come from;
  - b. an exploration of an option to provide the sports centre elsewhere on the site.
- 3.4 Bishop Auckland College Phase 3 (Spenymoor): this proposal had been approved by National Capital Committee and members' comments had been fed back to the college.

## **Item 4. Regional Capital Strategy**

- 4.1 The Chairman commented that the Regional Capital Committee would meet early in the New Year and requested that arrangements should be made to consider the Regional Capital Strategy prior to it being considered by Regional Council.

**Action: D Smith**

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

Chris Roberts reported:

- 5.1 Machinery of Government: A document concerning the Skills Funding Agency and Young Persons Learning Agency would soon be considered by the DIUS/DCSF Joint Board. Thereafter, considerable work by the two departments would lead to decisions quite quickly in the New Year. Given the downturn in the economy there has been considerable discussion about continuity of services for business at this time and the impact of the Machinery of Government changes.
- 5.2 Education Maintenance Allowance: it was expected that there would soon be a resolution to the problem which had arisen due to the failure of IT systems.
- 5.3 There had been considerable volume of activity during the week in support of businesses taking a break in production and investing in training.

## **Item 6. Regional Commissioning Statement 2009/10**

- 6.1 Submitted: Paper by Liz Cook together with the draft statement.
- 6.2 There would be an opportunity for detailed discussion of regional priorities at the next meeting by when it was hoped to have the national statement of priorities (including the Grant Letter).
- 6.3 The statement was not a legal document as opposed to the formal plan of previous years although it still needed Council agreement to the direction of travel rather than a formal 'sign-off'.
- 6.4 The 14-19 elements of the plan had been informed by detailed planning discussions at the local level. The statement was a regional document and would only make reference to local activity by exception.
- 6.5 The statement did not require expression of commissioning volumes (which would only be available early 2009). It set out the direction of travel for broad areas of commissioning in the 'commissioning intentions' section, as a signal for providers and partners.
- 6.6 This was the beginning of a process which ended when all funding was in place at 1 August. Funding allocations were expected to be known in mid Spring.
- 6.7 In response to members' questions it was indicated that:
  - it was not expected that there would be a need for significant redrafting of the statement but that there would be a need to incorporate details of activity relating to the economic downturn that would impact on the adult agenda.
  - The Regional Capital strategy would be a separate document available in the New Year and which would take account of the Treasury CSR settlement.

### **Decision:** That

- a. the report and draft statement be received noting that this would be the subject of detailed considered at the next meeting;
- b. for ease of reference arrangements be made to highlight significant amendments in the next draft of the statement.

**Action: L Cook**

James Ramsbotham left the meeting at this point. In accordance with standing order 7 Ashley Winter was appointed to chair the remainder.

## **Item 7. Northumberland College – AIP Capital Consent and Capital Grant Application, Central Campus, Ashington**

- 7.1 Submitted: Paper by Tony Sacco concerning the development of the first phase of a major regeneration of the college estate, the central campus in Ashington.
- 7.2 A presentation concerning the development was given by Rachel Ellis-Jones, College Principal, Chris Saint, Acting Finance Director, and Ian Lambert from Lambert Property Solutions.

## Questions

7.3 In response to members questions the following matters were discussed:

- Partnership working with schools across the county was still not as strong as it might be. However, partnership working was a high priority and there were some excellent examples e.g. the partnership in Berwick had been shortlisted for a Beacon award.
- Projection of 14-19 activity indicated expected levels of growth of 15%. There had been growth in 16-19 activity over two years and it was expected that this would continue. An overall growth profile of 15% was seen as realistic given current trends and the draw of an iconic new building. Many adults had been deterred by the introduction of fees and affordability was seen as an issue by some mature students.
- There was an expectation of growth in Level 4 and the college worked with three HE partners.
- The land swop arrangement with English Partnerships had proved to be an excellent arrangement for the college and was not dependent upon a capital receipt. It included an option to acquire the existing site, and heads of terms had taken into account the abnormalities. It did mean that the land value could not be taken account of in the affordability analysis, but it would be reflected in the Kirkley Hall application which would follow.
- S106 and S278 costs related to a pedestrian crossing, a slight junction widening and traffic calming.
- The senior management team was being restructured and strengthened to take account of the project and Governors had established a New Build Committee.

7.4 At this point college representatives withdrew from the meeting.

## Discussion

7.5 Members very were supportive of the application but commented on the need to strengthen the business case to include the following matters:-

- the NPV appeared to indicate that the preferred option was only marginally better than doing nothing; it needed to be reviewed.
- Absolute numbers appeared to include HE provision, this would be appropriate if only small numbers were involved, but it was not consistent with table 46.
- The 15% growth needed to achieve financial category A looked stretching at a time when students were also being attracted towards other colleges. There was a need to better understand growth plans and the assumptions on 14-16 and on 16-18.
- It was very important for the college to make the most of opportunities to engage with employers on 19+ activity.
- The importance of very robust project management arrangements was emphasised.
- It was noted that the local authority was very supportive of the proposal and saw this as an opportunity to regenerate the town. There was a need

for the college to maximise the opportunity presented by a new development.

- The site appeared to be very tight for public access and it was important that there were opportunities for expansion incorporated into the other sites that were part of the college's wider plans.

**Decision:** That

- a. National Capital Committee be recommended to approve AIP consent for the building of a new campus in Ashington at an LSC grant intervention rate of 83.5%;
- b. Arrangements be made to:
  - i. strengthen the paper to explain why the college is not seeking maximum borrowing.

**Action: J Smith**

- ii. ensure that the college is briefed on the issues to be addressed.

**Action: T Sacco**

### **Item 8. New College Durham, Application in Principle for Capital Grant Support, Phase 2**

8.1 Submitted: Paper by Linda Bailey concerning an in principle application from New College Durham to provide a further 5477 sq.m. of accommodation on their current site following rapid growth in student numbers since completion of its new campus in 2004.

8.2 A presentation was given by John Widdowson, College Principal and Ian Walton, Finance Director.

#### **Questions**

8.3 Members congratulated the college on its success in achieving considerable growth. In response to members questions the following matters were discussed:

- The college was achieving good growth in numbers continuing into HE and substantial growth in TTG and employer responsiveness.
- There was continuing expansion of 16-18 provision through close collaboration and an 'open book' approach with school 6<sup>th</sup> forms. There was the potential for continued growth arising from addressing the NEET group and raising the age of participation to age 18.
- Proposals had been discussed with other Colleges via the Principals' Group and there was a letter of support from Bishop Auckland College.
- The proposals not only had regard to known plans for continued growth but would deliver a flexibility that was responsive to changes in demand.

8.4 At this point college representatives withdrew from the meeting.

8.5 Members commented on the success of the college in terms of leadership and management. An issue for the LSC to consider was how that best practice was shared.

**Decision:** That the project be endorsed, with capital grant support at 74.7% for consideration by National Capital Committee.

**Item 9. Marketing and Communications**

9.1 Julie Calvert reported that:

- City of Sunderland College/Usworth 6<sup>th</sup> Form College had been a joint winner and, Darlington College a finalist in the RIBA/LSC Innovation by Design Excellence Awards 2008.
- Auditions and award nominations were now taking place for the COLAS Awards which would take place on 3 April 2009.

**Item 10. Next Meeting: 11 December 2008 , Middlesbrough College**

10.1 Arrangements had been made with the college for a tour of the campus at 2.15pm and the meeting at 3pm. A festive buffet will be prepared and served by the college's learners.

<b>Publication no.</b>	
<b>Meeting chair</b>	James Ramsbotham
<b>Minute taker</b>	Ken Coulson
<b>Date created</b>	14 November 2008
<b>Document ref.</b>	\\sc.local\sites\$\TYW\Site\RONER\Regional Office Support\Governance\Regional Council\Council Meetings\13 November 2008\ner-regionalcouncil-publicminutes-13nov2008.doc