

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Date 15 February 2007
Subject County Durham Local Council Meeting
Location County Durham LSC
Time 16:00
LSC office County Durham
Publication intent Internal

Present James Ramsbothan
John Widdowson
Janice Bray
John Poland
Keith Hodgson
John Reilly O'Donnell

LSC staff Linda Bailey
Liz Cook
Micheal Gilbey
Hannah Smithson

Apologies Apologies have been received from:
Tom Crompton
Diane Morton
Dave Pebbles
Peter Cook
Prof. John Anstee
Brian Walker
Mervyn Blades
Gloria Wills

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and reiterated the importance of reviewing and agreeing the Annual Plan.

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting

2.1 **Business Planning** This item is included on today's agenda for discussion.

2.2 **Audit Committee** Members were informed that Mervyn Blades has been identified as the Durham Council deputy representative for the Regional Audit Committee.

Item 3. Declarations of Interest

3.1 There were no declarations of interests at this point.

Item 4. Chairs' Remarks

- 4.1 The Chair updated members on the process of moving forward towards a Regional Board. We hope to have more information following the second reading in the Commons.
- 4.2 Also attendance at the DfES event for non-executive LSC Members at the Guildhall was discussed. Members were advised that John Widdowson would be attending to represent Durham Council.
- 4.3 Members were also advised that there will be a regional Thank You event organised in September 2007 for all Council Members in celebration of all that the local councils have achieved over the years.

Item 5. Directors Report

- 5.1 **Annual Planning Review** The main points within the report were discussed with members. It was clarified that the LSC now engages with Local Authorities to identify priorities to set improvement indicators for schools with Sixth forms for improving outcomes and quality. This work will start to progress in September 2007. Members felt this was a welcome change and a positive move.

Members were advised of the change in process for carrying out this year's annual planning review with colleges and providers. The difference in the process is the introduction of minimum levels of performance, which will mean that 10% of Area South's provision will go out to open and competitive tendering by 2008. The LSC are currently going through a rigorous process with regard to implementing the new methods. The new benchmark for FE institutions is below 50% and below 40% for Work Based Learning (WBL) providers. There is an expectation that the benchmarks will increase year on year. Local circumstances are taken into consideration when reviewing individual institutions performance.

There has been a significant increase in WBL success rates from 2004/05 to 2005/06. Entry to Employment positive progression rates have increased by 3% overall to 50%, which is above regional and local averages.

The process within Further Education differs from WBL. Where an institution falls below the 50% benchmark, a notice to improve will be issued which identifies improvement indicators. Also Partnership Advisors may look to withdraw poor quality provision from individual areas of learning within programmes/courses. The existing curriculum offer across the county would be taken into consideration before any courses where withdrawn.

Further discussions took place amongst members regarding presentation of data within the report. Members felt this could be broken down further. It was suggested breaking down the data against priority areas or sector subject areas. It was agreed that this would be helpful and would be compiled for the next meeting.

ACTION: L.BAILEY

5.2 Joint Area Review The County Durham Joint Area Review (JAR) will be taking place in May 2007. This is an external evaluation of how children's services are working together and contributing to the well-being of children and young people, with a focus on vulnerable groups.

A self assessment is currently taking place which will be submitted to the inspectorate on 19 March 2007. The LSC will be involved with inspection and evidence gathering. The Council aim to demonstrate improvements taken place since the 14-19 inspection.

Item 6. Business Planning

6.1 The Regional Commissioning Plan The Regional Commissioning plan was published on the 17 January 2007 and is available on the regional website to be downloaded. The plan sets out the regional priorities for the coming year and the commissioning strategy. Members were informed that following lengthily discussions with National Office it was felt that there was no need for a lengthily plan and that a shorter more concise document written. This format also impacted on the local plans being shorter and sharper in keeping with national guidelines. Even though the plan is reduced, key points are still included.

6.2 County Durham Annual Plan 2007/08 The local context is not hugely detailed however all issues are evidenced. The LSC Priorities were discussed and summarised individually and members were asked to comment.

Priority 1 Comments

Current issue with quality of provision at Derwentside, work is being carried out this year to address this.

Also members were advised that the Diploma gateway panel are due to meet in March 2007 to review applications.

Members commented that the NEETs issues tend to be focused around 16 year olds but the main target group should be 17 year olds.

Priority 2 Comments

The focus of this priority is to align provision to increase participation and retention of Skills for Life courses.

It was also commented that IAG is a concern across the County as the quality of this service is insufficient.

Discussions took place regarding progression routes from WBL and vocational courses into Higher Education. It was commented that these issues would be highlighted in the measures of success within the plan.

Further comments were made regarding migrant workers and what work was being carried out to identify these learners. Members were advised that regional colleagues have commissioned some work to look into these issues across the North East. Linda agreed to investigate this further and feedback to members.

Priority 3 Comments

Members were advised that FE Colleges within the county were attracting low levels of fee remission.

Bishop Auckland and East Durham and Houghall College's have submitted capital applications.

Priority 4 Comments

Through this priority we will ensure an alignment of our work with JCP. Also ensuring the Durham's issues are included in the city region plans.

All members approved plan in principle.

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Item 7. Demand Led System

The focus of the plan is how we implement the FE White Paper, Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances. This means moving away from the traditional planning role that exists to delivering through a demand-led system. The speed of implementing depends on the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

The future FE system will deliver more opportunities for adult learners, devolving purchasing power to them so they can determine where they use their entitlement through Learner Accounts. Learner Accounts are designed to give learners ownership of their own learning and it is planned that the account will be in use longer than simply the term of the current learning programme to support and encourage progression to higher levels of learning. These accounts will be trialled in 2007/08.

There are three funding models for 2008/09 designed to support this wider reform programme;

- 16-18 model
- Adult learner – responsive model/learner account
- Employer responsive model/Train to gain

Members were advised that there are consultation events for partners in March 2007. Further details and joining instructions can be found on the LSC website.

Discussions took place regarding possibly responding to this consultation as a local council. Members felt that this could possibly be done through email if needed. Regional colleagues confirmed that a regional LSC response is being completed by Tony Jones.

Item 8. Any other business

8.1 No further business was discussed and the meeting closed.

Item 9. Date of next meeting

9.1 The next meeting of the local council will take place on 12 April 2007.

Meeting chair	James Ramsbothan
Minute taker	Hannah Smithson
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