

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Date 23 November 2007
Subject Regional Board
Location Moongate House, Gateshead
Time 09:00
LSC office North East Region
Publication intent Public

Present Ashley Winter (Chairman), Terry Dabbs, James Ramsbotham, Chris Roberts
In attendance Tom Crompton, Gillian Miller, Dorothy Smith, John Smith, John Wayman. Liz Cook, Ken Coulson.
Apologies Apologies have been received from:
Jackie Axelby

Item 1. Declaration of Interest

1.1 The Chairman reminded members of the opportunity to declare an interest on any matter on the agenda.

Item 2. Minutes

2.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Item 3. Regional Board Decision Making and Member Briefings

3.1 These matters would be the subject of a written report to the next meeting.

Action: C Roberts

Item 4. Chairman's Report

4.1 A further meeting of Regional Chairs would take place during December.

Item 5. Machinery of Government Update

5.1 The joint Secretaries of State letter was imminent; this was expected to set parameters sufficiently broad to enable solutions to emerge from consultation.

a. Post 19

5.2 The LSC was the only organisation interested in developing the detailed arrangements. The basis of LSC funds for Business Link brokerage from

April 2009 was under discussion with RDAs. There had also been debate around the deployment of some HEFCE funding.

5.3 The business view on proposed arrangements would be important during the consultation period; in particular it needed to be understood how employer needs could be articulated.

5.4 Final proposals were expected in April/May.

b. Pre 19

5.5 Discussions were continuing to develop a coherent system for 14-19 funding to colleges and training providers who work with pre/post 19 funding including how this was performance managed. Planning, commissioning and accounting was expected to be based around local accountability but the debate continued on how there could be equity for those who accessed both pre and post 19 funding. The models under discussion would need to take account of the Sub National review.

5.6 Questions remained concerning whether there would be local flexibilities in the national funding methodology, how to deliver a single source of data and whether there should be a more formalised role for 14-19 partnerships.

c. Staffing

5.7 Turnover was still relatively stable, although one director was moving into a position in FE.

d. Regional Council Recruitment

5.8 This was due to being in January but the basis of moving forward on this was unclear. Members recruited may only have tenure of two to three years.

Item 6. Regional Commissioning Plan 2008/09

6.1 Submitted: Paper by Liz Cook concerning the preparation of the 2008/09 plan. This was an externally facing document primarily aimed at the provider network and partners and set out LSC strategy concerning volumes to be delivered via existing providers and those subject to competitive tendering.

6.2 The commissioning profile was not yet available although the document would need to be published by 19 December. An annex to the paper set out the key challenges and actions for the North East in line with the following priorities:

- Priority 1: Creating demand for learning and skills
- Priority 2: Transforming the FE system to meet demand
- Priority 3: Delivering better skills, better jobs, better lives

6.3 There were some shifts in emphasis around employment and skills, and also social inclusion (targeting priority groups, disadvantaged and marginalised).

6.4 Arising from discussion it was noted that:

- there were still around 30% of people of working age without a Level 2
- WBL providers were concerned that that they were only able to make a limited offer around 2nd Level 2s compared to colleges, ESF was to be utilised to broaden the offer via TTG

- Apprenticeship strategy under performance against target was a concern across the country. The key issue appeared to be the reluctance of employers to offer employed status. A national matching service was to be established but it was not clear that this would be effective in the NE where there was an over supply of young people v employers.
- Level 2 performance by age/gender may be worth exploring in greater depth.

Decision: That

- a. The challenges presented and the proposed response (in annex 1), be approved as the fundamental strategic direction;
- b. Arrangements be made to circulate the full plan to board members in December, for endorsement.

Action: Liz Cook

Arising:-

- c. Arrangements be made to present a paper to the next meeting concerning the Train to Gain 'Plan for Growth'.

Action: G Miller

Item 7. East Durham College: Capital Bid for Sports

- 7.1 Submitted: Paper by Julian Chambers concerning a proposal by the College to increase borrowing to extend the existing Sports Hall and provide a grounds maintenance building at a cost of £1.39m.
- 7.2 The proposal was within LSC guidelines although not without risk. It was expected that the college's strategy for Houghall campus would help to mitigate this risk, although details had not yet been provided.

Decision: That

- a. approval be given to the proposed expenditure;
- b. approval be given to an increase in borrowing of £1.4m by the college for the abovementioned purposes (subject to any grant);
- c. arrangements be made to further explore the opportunity to secure LSC funding, or funding from other sources in support of the project;
- d. the college be requested to provide details of their strategy for the rationalisation of the Houghall campus.

Action: T Crompton/J Smith

Item 8. Newcastle College: Proposed Acquisition of Training West Lancashire

- 8.1 Submitted: Paper concerning a proposal by Newcastle College to acquire the assets and liabilities of Training West Lancashire, with a view to running the business through a wholly owned subsidiary of Newcastle College (TWL Training Ltd).
- 8.2 It was confirmed that this was within the powers of the college; they had provided a letter describing how they had met the criteria to operate the subsidiary.

8.3 It was clarified that the power to give permission for this acquisition now lay with the Regional Director. LSC North West had been advised of the proposal.

Decision: That

- a. the Regional Director be recommended to confirm to Newcastle College that they can operate Training West Lancashire as a subsidiary;
- b. arrangements be made to seek clarification that appropriate controls are in place to minimise risk to the college's core business and that any deficit would not result in increased borrowing requirement.

Action: C Roberts/J Wayman

Item 9. Regional Quality Improvement Framework

9.1 Submitted: Paper by David McCabe concerning the regional quality improvement framework/quality improvement strategy; version 6 of the framework was tabled.

Decision: That

- a. The Regional Quality Improvement Partnership's decision to adopt the framework format be endorsed;
- b. The framework be adopted regionally as the main driver for quality improvement;
- c. The team be congratulated on the structure and content of the document.

Item 10. Business Update

10.1 Directors provided a business update, as follows:-

Area North

10.2 Newcastle College:

- joint venture company proposal with another provider required Governing Body to provide a financial guarantee. The issue of whether this was legally possible was being explored.
- A formal proposal was being sought from the college concerning an interest in land in Gateshead.

10.3 Northumberland: LSC representatives had attended the County Council's Education Scrutiny Committee.

Area South

10.4 Tees Valley colleges were continuing to explore the opportunity for much closer working.

10.5 Stockton Riverside/Bede 6th Form application for 90% capital grant had been approved by national Capital Committee.

10.6 New College, Durham were seeking a capital grant to extend facilities.

10.7 NEET: Connexions service in Tees Valley were proposing a different way of counting NEET and 'Not Known' figures which may cause a problem from the LSC.

10.8 Teesside University were to open a facility in Darlington adjacent to the FE college.

Item 11. Audit Committee

a. Minutes

11.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2007 were received.

b. Membership

Decision: That Wayne Brown, PricewaterhouseCoopers be appointed to the Audit Committee.

Action: J Smith

Item 12. Next Meeting

12.1 A forward timetable was circulated, for reference. The next meeting would be held on 23 January 2008.

Signed: -----

Chairman

Date: -----

Publication no.

Meeting chair

Ashley Winter

Minute taker

Ken Coulson

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