

# Minutes



Leading learning and skills

**Date** 18 September 2008  
**Subject** Regional Council  
**Location** Moongate House  
**Time** 16:00  
**LSC office** North East Region  
**Publication intent** Internal

**Present** James Ramsbotham (Chair), David Barker, David Butler, Mary Dunning, Graham Henderson, Sharon Oliver, Graham Randell, Chris Roberts, Kevin Rowan, Kate Welch, Ashley Winter, Oliver Wood.

**In attendance** Jackie McHanwell - Government Office NE  
Fred Foster - Jobcentre Plus

**LSC staff** Gillian Miller, Dorothy Smith, John Smith, Julie Calvert, Ken Coulson, Steve Wright (part).

## Item 1. Chairman's Welcome and Remarks

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed members to the inaugural meeting.
- 1.2 Observers were welcomed:
  - Jackie McHanwell on behalf of Sue Houston, Government Office
  - Fred Foster on behalf of Jan Thirlaway, Jobcentre Plus.
- 1.3 Interviews had taken place to recruit an FE Principal and a senior Local Authority member to the Council. This was now subject to National Appointments Committee approval.
- 1.4 Arrangements were being made for the next meeting on 16 October to be held at Wynyard Hall, to be followed by dinner.
- 1.5 Remaining meetings in 2008 to be held on 13 November and 11 December at 4pm (venues to be confirmed).

## Item 2. Cycle of Meetings 2009

- 2.1 Arrangements be made for Council meetings to be held on a two-monthly basis during 2009 having regard to the dates of national Capital Committee.

### LSC North East Region

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NB: Preferred date Tuesday, 3 meetings to be held at Moongate House, 1 to be held at Area South offices, 2 to be held at newly built colleges.

**Action: K Coulson**

### **Item 3. Standing Orders**

3.1 Submitted: Standing Orders prepared by the Council's Solicitor and based on those of National Council. It was noted that:

- Regional Council must always comprise not less than 10 members
- Quorum is not less than 5 members
- A member must not be absent for more than 6 months without permission
- Chair can exercise casting vote
- Members and other attendees should declare any direct or indirect interest in any matter to be considered at a meeting of the regional council. The member shall not participate in discussion, or voting, and shall not be counted in the quorum for that item. Other members will determine whether the interest is such that the member should withdraw from the meeting.

**Decision:** That

- a. the standing orders be adopted;
- b. arrangements be made to attach a list of members declared interests to the papers for each Council meeting.

**Action: K Coulson/All members**

### **Item 4. Members Code of Conduct**

4.1 Submitted: the national code of corporate responsibility and code of conduct for members.

4.2 In particular this dealt with the requirements on members to regularly declare potential conflicts of interest in the register of interests and to declare the interest at any meeting where the matter was to be discussed.

**Decision:** That the code be noted.

### **Item 5. Declaration of Interest**

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

5.2 It was noted that Teesside University's investment in Hartlepool College did not represent a conflict of interest for Graham Henderson as he has had no input into the decision.

### **Item 6. Delegation of Functions from National Council**

6.1 Submitted: Paper 45/2008 to National Council formally establishing regional councils and specifying the functions to be carried out in the region.

**Decision:** That

- a. The paper be noted;

- b. Arrangements be made for an extended meeting (probably December) to consider the regional commissioning statement following receipt of the national statement of priorities and grant letter.

**Action: K Coulson/M Gilbey**

### **Item 7. Regional Audit Committee**

- 7.1 Submitted: Paper by Ken Coulson recommending the establishment of a Regional Audit Committee in line with Internal Audit guidance.

**Decision:** That

- a. Approval be given to the appointment of a regional audit committee to:
- oversee and consider activities and objectives recorded within the terms of reference and advise the Regional Council and Regional Director accordingly,
  - seek any information that it requires from any employee of the LSC;
- b. Membership of the committee to comprise Graham Randell (Chair), David Barker, Kevin Rowan and Oliver Wood, plus one member (to be appointed);
- c. The committee be authorised to consider:
- whether to co-opt an external, non-executive member with specific relevant experience and expertise
  - whether to appoint a deputy chair.

**Action: Audit Committee**

### **Item 8. Regional Capital Committee**

- 8.1 Submitted: Paper by Ken Coulson recommending the establishment of a regional capital committee to advise on capital matters and, as the committee cannot make decisions, requesting the Regional Council to delegate authority to the Chairman to take urgent decisions on capital matters.

**Decision:** That

- a. Approval be given to the appointment of a regional capital committee to advise the Regional Council on:
- Regional capital priorities and regional capital strategies
  - Capital proposals for approval by the Chief Executive, National Capital Committee, and National Council
  - Proposals for the establishment or dissolution of Further Education Corporations
  - Proposals to change the organisation of a school with regard to school sixth form provision
- b. Membership of the committee to comprise David Butler (Chair), Mary Dunning, Graham Henderson, Ashley Winter, plus one member (to be appointed): quorum 3 members;
- c. As part of its work the Regional Capital Committee to consider visiting some of the sites which require a rebuild;

- d. The Regional Chairman be authorised to decide on certain capital proposals where a decision is required before a meeting of the Regional Council in order to meet the deadlines for the National Capital Committee:
- the delegation only to be exercised when for reasons of urgency it is not possible for the proposal to be considered by the Regional Council at its next meeting
  - the delegation being exercised in consultation with the Regional Director
  - any exercise being of the delegation being reported to the next meeting of the Regional Council
- e. in his absence the Chairman may delegate his authority to act on these matters to the Chair of the Regional Capital Committee.

**Action: Chairman/C Roberts**

### **Item 9. Newcastle College – Land Acquisition Request**

- 9.1 FE Colleges were required to seek LSC approval to purchase land if the acquisition is in excess of £1.5m. This remained the case even when the college was using reserves or borrowing from a financial institution to fund the purchase.
- 9.2 Newcastle College was now formally seeking LSC permission to acquire a site to enable them to unlock their capital strategy. The decision was within the LSC Chief Executive's delegated powers but he would require a view from the Regional Council because the land value was over £10m.

**Decision:** That in the event that an urgent decision was required the Chairman be authorised to exercise his delegated authority in consultation with the Regional Director, and having regard to the views of the Regional Capital Committee.

**Action: Chairman/C Roberts**

### **Item 10. Minutes**

- 10.1 Minutes of the last meeting of the Regional Board held on 10 July 2008 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **Item 11. Regional Director's Update**

- 11.1 Chris Roberts reported on progress in implementing the Machinery of Government changes timed for September 2010 to establish:
- the Skills Funding Agency for post 19 activity and within it the National Apprenticeships Service (to be operational April 2009)
  - the Young People's Learning Agency and the related transfer of 14-19 responsibilities to Local Authorities
- 11.2 The NAS was to be operational from April 2009 and to date 30 staff were engaged in associated development work.
- 11.3 Outline agreement was expected from DCSF and DIUS concerning the size, shape and structure of the two new organisations during the autumn and it was expected that a bill would be laid before Parliament in early 2009.

#### 11.4 Key issues

- Post 19 arrangements were more complex because of the move to a demand-led system with the introduction of new approaches with employer engagement via the Sector Skills Councils. The intention was that it would be a funding rather than a planning body and this raised significant questions as to how the system would operate.
- For staff there was continuing uncertainty and it was expected that it would become more personal for individuals in the New Year as the new structures emerged. It would be important to manage staffing and systems in a way that when it was transferred no-one was disadvantaged.
- The region had a reputation for high performance nationally and would face major challenges to maintain levels of performance, particularly in Train to Gain and Apprenticeships in this changing environment.
- Pre 19 work with Local Authorities was becoming much clearer. The relationship with other bodies, particularly Local Authorities was critical to ensure a smooth transition as changes in funding methodology would affect institutions and it was important that this was precise.
- Other key relationships were with the RDA because of the transfer of the brokerage service and Jobcentre Plus around the integration of employment and skills over the next two years.

#### 11.5 In response to members' questions:

- Discussions were ongoing with Directors of Children's Services concerning the transfer of pre 19 responsibilities. Proposals concerning the configuration of new arrangements around travel to learn groupings needed to be formally with Government Office by 26 September. It was expected that they would propose four sub regional groupings. There would then be a process of consideration during which the Government Office would enter into discussions around governance, conflict resolution and staffing related to the proposals.
- Government Office would be looking for a consensus regional view on the regional groupings; travel to learn would be very important, as would the ability to deliver the curriculum across the region. Government Office would also comment on the fit with other regional plans. Once initial proposals were approved by DCSF in late October/early November it would be possible to engage in a more detailed planning process to enable more detailed local authority plans to be prepared during January to April 2009.
- LSC would be asked to comment on the proposals at a meeting on 30 September, which would also involve Government Office, Local Authorities, ONE NE, and to which Association of Colleges, Schools NE and Association of Learning Providers would be invited to attend. Officers would welcome a mandate on how to comment on the proposals.
- It was considered that the proposed groupings made sense in the context of travel to learn patterns. Durham had strong relationships both north

and south. With regard to Northumberland there was recognition of a need for arrangements to have regard to the close relationship with Newcastle College, only one college and tight budget allocations and to understand how problems would be resolved.

**Decision:** that:

- a. at this stage the emerging proposals appeared to be acceptable but it would be important to have the opportunity to comment on the issues highlighted at the next stage;
- b. consideration of matters relating to the Machinery of Government changes to be a matter for consideration by Regional Council;
- c. Officers attending the meeting on 30 September to have regard to members' comments.

11.6 Further issues :-

- It was confirmed that the Government's proposals for 14-19 and Post 19 accommodated all key areas of responsibility associated with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As yet it was not agreed how these responsibilities would be discharged in detail.
- A key decision for the Skills Funding Agency would be the extent to which there would be a regional presence to undertake contracting and stakeholder relationship management and the possibility of a phased approach to a new model. Members indicated that this was a matter on which the Regional Council would wish to express a view.
- ESF was of significant value to the region and it would be important to understand how it would operate in the region under the new arrangements (it would be split YPLA 15% and SFA 85%).
- The SFA depended upon having a successful set of Sector Skills Councils in place; the Employment and Skills Boards were not yet fully designed, nor were they statutory. There was a need for greater consistency on these matters in order to deliver the new arrangements.

**Decision:** that arrangements be made to invite the Rt. Hon. Nick Brown MP, Minister for the NE to meet with the Regional Council to discuss these and other issues later in 2008/early 2009.

**Action: C Roberts/K Coulson**

## **Item 12. Hartlepool Sixth Form College – Campus Redevelopment**

12.1 Submitted: Paper concerning detailed Council consent and capital grant support for the redevelopment of the college's campus.

12.2 Rick Wells, College Principal and colleagues were welcomed to the meeting and gave a presentation concerning the proposed redevelopment.

12.3 In response to members questions:

- Additional student numbers was as a result of increasing numbers of international students and increasing numbers of local young people achieving the qualifications and with the aspirations to come to the college.

- Land release of part of the site to offset costs was not acceptable to Sport England because of the loss neither of playing fields, nor to the local authority as they were part of the town green belt.
- Steps had been taken to minimise disruption to learning and the impact on residents during the development.
- To date there had been limited employer engagement but the college was looking to the capability fund to build links. There was extensive community engagement linked to performing arts, media and sport.
- There was potential for future expansion of the site, by 2012 it was envisaged that there may be in excess of 1000 more students.
- Accessibility issues had been carefully considered.
- The college was fully engaged in diploma development in Hartlepool and in marine college technology.

**Decision:** That the proposal be endorsed at a capital grant support rate of 89.1%, with authorised College borrowing of £2.1m long term and a short term borrowing facility of up to £6m, for consideration by National Capital Committee;

Arising:-

- 12.4 Members commented that there appeared to be scope for closer working between the two colleges in Hartlepool for the benefit of learners and would wish to encourage this in future.

### **Item 13. Regional Induction Pack**

- 13.1 Members were provided with an induction pack, intended to provide background concerning key stakeholders.
- 13.2 A concise key issues briefing paper was tabled. It was intended that this would be issued to members on the day before each meeting.
- 13.3 A member indicated that it would be helpful to have a briefing on the diploma pilots at a future meeting.

**Action: C Roberts**

Signed: -----

Chairman

Date: -----

<b>Meeting chair</b>	James Ramsbotham
<b>Minute taker</b>	Ken Coulson
<b>Date created</b>	22 September 2008
<b>Document ref.</b>	G:\RONER\Regional Office Support\Governance\Regional Council\Council Meetings\ner-regionalcouncil-minutes-18sep2008.doc