

LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL CUMBRIA

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2004 AT THE WESTMORLAND HOTEL, TEBAY

Present:

Council:

Rob Cairns (Chair)
Mick Farley
Anne Diss
Cath Fare
Pat Glenday
Peter Irving
Chris l'Anson
Rob Johnston
Graham Lamont
Jack Stopforth
Mike Thorpe
John Weir

Observers:

Brian Lightowler
Pam Flynn
Siân Rees

In Attendance:

Lindsay Harford
Jon Power

Moira Tattersall, Principal, Carlisle College
Stephen Griffiths, Chair, Carlisle College
Anne Attwood, Acting Principal, Furness College
David Rhodes, Chair, Furness College
Graham Wilkinson, Principal, Kendal College
John Tisconia, Vice-Chair, Kendal College
Andy Fasilino, Chair, Lakes College-West Cumbria

David Williams, Robson Rhodes
Neil Wallbank, Robson Rhodes

Apologies:

Victoria Ashfield
Norman Burrow
Tricia Calway
Mick Carey
Mike Smith

	ACTION
<p>1. <u>Introductions</u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed Pat Glenday and John Weir to their first meeting as members of the Council.</p> <p>The Chair introduced the representatives of Robson Rhodes, and noted that feedback from stakeholders was available for perusal.</p> <p>The Chair outlined the purpose of the meeting which was to discuss the Extended Feasibility Study and to agree a way forward. He introduced the report and encouraged a transparent and honest discussion of the issues outlined therein.</p>	
<p>2. <u>Declarations of Interest</u></p> <p>Graham Lamont – Carlisle and Lakes College-West Cumbria Cath Fare- Kendal College Jack Stopforth – Kendal College</p>	
<p>3. <u>Extended Feasibility Study</u></p> <p>The full and open discussion about the study included the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study was generally welcomed as a comprehensive and carefully written document which clearly outlined the rationale for the recommended option. • It was agreed, however, that the details of any proposed new arrangements would need to be fleshed out. • The differences between ‘informal collaboration’ & ‘managed collaboration’ were debated. The view was expressed that while the former would involve a number of organisations working closely together on a range of issues, the latter assumed that systems would be developed and put in place – including an individual to lead the work – to ensure that actions happened within an agreed timescale. • It was acknowledged that considerable informal collaboration activity has happened over the last few years and that the current work on, for example, shared CIS systems has accelerated progress. It was noted that Principals work well together and that synergy and trust are already in place. • However, it was also recognised that such activities are time-consuming and that there is a danger that Principals would be diverted from their strategic leadership role in order to further progress collaboration. Managed collaboration would provide a named person to drive things forward, freeing College Principals to focus on their own institutions. • All agreed that the status quo cannot continue, that substantial funding has flowed to each of the four Colleges to provide, for example, cash protection when targets have 	

not been achieved and financial support for vital quality improvement, and that despite this, they remain financially vulnerable with little prospect of moving to a position where investment would be a real option.

- Reassurance was sought that finance was not the only driver for the preferred option. Council members and colleagues from Robson Rhodes confirmed that the potential benefits to learners was paramount. Principals and Chairs, at several times during the meeting, affirmed their commitment to learners and to their local communities. However, the view was expressed that the prospect of financial savings would be another benefit of managed collaboration.
- It was suggested that while managed collaboration would not necessarily provide a total solution to the issues facing the Cumbrian Colleges, it is practical, achievable and relatively simple and would demonstrate to the LSC at national level that Cumbria has determined to move things forward positively and in partnership. The fact that savings would be generated was considered an important factor, alongside improved services to learners.
- LSC Cumbria was acknowledged to be a vital fifth partner in any project and its remit to plan provision was recognised. Its likely role as one of the funders of any managed collaboration was also considered.
- Mick Farley drew the attention of all present to the landscape within which the Extended Feasibility Study had to be considered:
 - recent inspections of all four Colleges has found provision to be (mostly) satisfactory or good;
 - there is, therefore, good practice to share;
 - very substantial resources have been provided already to support all Colleges;
 - yet no College has a strong financial base;
 - the Government is interested in the delivery of its priorities and expects LSC Cumbria to do just that;
 - the emerging regional agenda – when for example, the LSC's Regional Directors can vire funding between sub-regions where there is under-performance;
 - he stated that unless Cumbrian Colleges perform well, funds will flow from Cumbria and a spiral of decline will continue. He was clear that the LSC and the Colleges need to find a way to secure the future of the economy and the people of Cumbria and that this may well involve doing things differently, as current ways have not worked fully enough. He confirmed that LSC Cumbria is fully committed to working with the Colleges to bring about positive change.
- It was generally agreed that change management is difficult and delicate and that communication of any

<p>decisions reached would need to be done carefully. Communications issues would be likely to differ in each College, but the message will need to be presented positively, with a common format and content.</p>	
<p>4. <u>Decisions Reached</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Principals and Chairs will recommend to their Governing bodies that managed collaboration should go ahead. • LSC Cumbria will send a draft common statement to the Principals of each College for their comment and agreement. • A working group, chaired by Graham Lamont, will meet on 29 March 2004 to take the project forward. 	<p>College Principals /Chairs</p> <p>LLSC</p> <p>LLSC</p>