

# Minutes



Leading learning and skills

<b>Date</b>	28 March 2007
<b>Subject</b>	Council Meeting
<b>Location</b>	Dalton House, Middlewich
<b>Time</b>	16:00
<b>LSC office</b>	Cheshire and Warrington
<b>Publication intent</b>	Public

<b>Present</b>	Andrew Gurr (Chair) Liz Davis Bill Rutter Alistair Tranter Tara Jade David Collins Christine Gaskell David Black David Rowlands Karen Russ Graham Dumbell Steve Hoy
<b>In attendance</b>	Steven Dunmore (part) Shelagh Page
<b>LSC staff</b>	John Barber John Warham
<b>Apologies</b>	Jim Keegan Tim Wheeler Lorelly Wilson Dave McCall

## Item 1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 Andrew Gurr welcomed members and visitors to the forty-third Council meeting. Apologies had been received from James Keegan, Tim Wheeler and Lorelly Wilson.
- 1.2 Sandra Brusby had resigned as Observer as a result of the Business Link restructure and had been thanked for her valuable input into the work of the LSC.

## **Item 2. Minutes of last meeting**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting of 31 January were approved as a true record of that meeting.

## **Item 3. Matters Arising**

- 3.1 With regard to item 7 of the minutes, Liz Davis had informed the Regional Office Manager that Council were not convinced of the value of a Regional Conference.
- 3.2 Regarding the draft local delivery plan, Liz Davis told the meeting that suggestions from Council had been incorporated into the plan and this had been sent to the NWDA, RMB and National Council, and it had been endorsed accordingly. A final version had been sent to local Council for information, but it was a live document and comments would always be welcomed.

**Decision:** Council endorsed the circulated version as the final version of the plan for 2007/08

## **Item 4. South Cheshire College Capital Proposal (Paper 253)**

- 4.1 David Collins introduced this item, and gave a presentation which outlined the proposal.
- 4.2 In brief, the proposal was to redevelop substantially the Crewe campus of South Cheshire College in order to meet the objectives of its current strategic plan and associated property strategy.
- 4.3 LSC Cheshire and Warrington and the National Office colleagues had worked closely with the college since it submitted the application and the Council was asked to consider the plan with a view to recommending in principle approval for the whole development.
- 4.4 David then took questions from the meeting:-
- In response to a request from Graham Dumbell that local workers be used on the project, David Collins said that this would be discussed with contractors.
  - In response to a query from Tara Jade, David confirmed that there would be a business suite available, including conference facilities.
  - A transport plan was in place and the College would operate a green travel policy.
  - David Rowlands questioned the forecasts used of potential student numbers and was assured that these were considered to be realistic by the local Partnership Team.
- 4.5 David Collins left the meeting and discussion of the proposal took place.
- 4.6 Steve Dunmore, Provider Financial Management Director, advised regarding the financial aspects of the proposal:-
- It was no longer unusual for colleges to present projects of this value, amounting to approx. £60.5m when inflation was taken into account, and which had the support of the National Property team.

- Borrowing levels were at the top end rate;
  - It would bring in student growth of 14%, and there was a lot of confidence amongst LSC colleagues that it could be funded;
  - The college was bringing in efficiency savings. 71.2% of grant support was needed, but this would be higher without efficiency savings.
  - The Finance team considered that this was a good proposal and could be delivered.
- 4.7 The college had previously had a policy of not participating in the 14-16 agenda but if the building plans went ahead, proposed to incorporate this into their curriculum.

4.8 Council was asked to agree the following recommendations:-

- Local council would give approval in principle to this capital application at a level of LSC grant support of 71.2% (£42,078,500);
- The project be recommended for approval by the National Capital Committee at £59,099,000, with capital grant support of 71.2% (£42,078,500);
- Borrowing consent of up to £23.3m reducing to £10m by the end of August 2013 be approved for the full project;
- An immediate borrowing consent be approved for £7.4m to allow the college to secure adequate working capital funds to finance the professional fees required for this project.

**Decision:** the recommendations were unanimously approved.

- No LSC Council or sub groups would exist after Royal Assent had been given to the FE and Training Bill , but they needed to exist until that time;
  - Recommended linkage between local Councils would be through sub-regional partnerships. One had been selected for each sub-region in the north west. Cheshire and Warrington would be served by the Cheshire and Warrington Economic Alliance.
- 4.9 David Collins returned to the meeting.

#### **Item 5. Academies for Ellesmere Port (Paper 254)**

- 5.1 John Barber presented this paper. These proposals had previously been brought to Council's attention as part of the Area Director's report. The Council was asked to note the contents of the report, discuss and agree any key points which they would like to make to the local authority.
- 5.2 It was proposed to replace the three current schools of Cheshire Oaks High School, Ellesmere Port Specialist School of Performing Arts, and the Whitby High School, with two 11-18 Academies for the town of Ellesmere Port.
- 5.3 This project, which would be subject to wide consultation, would bring major investment to one of the most deprived areas in Cheshire and Warrington.

5.4 There were 16-18 issues as it was proposed to increase the number of 16-18 places, whilst the 16-18 pupil population was forecast to decrease. This was to take account of proposed legislation around the raising of the compulsory participation age to 18, together with the development of partnership arrangements around specialist diplomas, which may have a positive impact on the sixth form numbers.

5.5 The paper recommended that Council should support the proposals in principle but suggested that further analysis should be undertaken of the planned 16-18 numbers at the feasibility stage. Council were also asked if they wished to make any other points in the response to CCC.

5.6 Discussion followed:-

- Bill Rutter was pleased to see reference in the paper to collaboration between academies and sponsorship organisations;
- It was noted that a high level of co-operation had taken place between the schools involved to agree to the difficult proposals, in view of the prospective closures. Those involved in the project to date were commended for working within the community to bring the proposal to this stage.
- Potential students may be convinced to study locally in the proposed academies, rather than travel to other colleges.

**Decision:** It was agreed to support the proposals in principle, subject to further analysis of the planned 16-18 learner numbers at the feasibility stage.

## **Item 6. Employment and Skills Board for Cheshire and Warrington (Paper 256)**

6.1 Andrew Gurr presented his paper to the meeting. The paper proposed holding an inaugural meeting of potential members in order to create a 'shadow' board, and to move ahead as quickly as possible. Council's input was welcomed.

6.2 It was not yet clear if the national Commission would license local employment and skills boards, but the CWEA and RDA strongly felt it should be flexible and that it should be employer-led. Any Council members who were employers were encouraged to contact Andrew if they wished to become involved

6.3 Christine Gaskell told the meeting that the CWEA would expect the proposed Board to have some teeth and not just be a talking shop. Andrew responded that it would be up to the national licensing framework whether or not it had teeth. Christine considered that the body might have more flexibility, if it were not a statutory body.

6.4 Andrew had been asked to chair the proposed Board, the purpose of which was not to replicate the Council, but to broaden it to link further education and higher education and employment to economic development.

6.5 Liz Davis had recently seen a presentation on the proposed Manchester Employment and Skills Boards which had been given by the Area Director for

Manchester. This was very much a public-sector led initiative and there had been questions as to whether it added value. A lot of interest had been shown in the Cheshire and Warrington proposal.

- 6.6 There was some discussion about whether or not the Board would have an influence and Andrew Gurr responded that the Board that it would be difficult at the beginning and that its work would need to be of high quality in order that people would respect and listen. There was potential for links to the Cheshire Governance Board and other local economic and skills partnerships.
- 6.7 The next step was for all interested parties to meet and discuss how the Board should be structured and the meeting would take place within six weeks.
- 6.8 Andrew thanked Council members for their input and circulated a letter that had recently been received from Chris Banks, which indicated that progress on the FE and Training Bill had been slightly delayed. Council may, therefore, still be meeting in the Autumn.

### **Item 7. Area Director's Report**

- 7.1 Liz Davis presented her report and updated the following items:-
- *Joint DfES/LSC Leitch Communication Roadshow*. This had taken place earlier on 28 March and had been well attended and innovative.
  - *Sandbach High School* had again decided to admit boys into its sixth form from September 2008. The Local Authority warned of the possibility that it would be referred back to the adjudicator if the decision was not reviewed.
  - *Vale Royal Borough*: Good progress had been made regarding the potential Winsford Learning Zone.
  - *14-19 Diplomas*: Results of applications had been received on 28 March. Fewer than 50% had been endorsed. 23 partnerships would be progressed from 2008 across the North West, 4 from the Cheshire and Warrington area. Others were likely to be progressed in 2008 and 2009 subject to further conditions.
  - *Planning (agreement of budgets for 2007-08)* – The LSC was currently taking a local and regional approach and measuring performance of key providers against our priorities, looking at allocations for the year ahead. This was very time consuming, difficult work. It was hoped to support the majority of the proposals around 16-18, but adult budgets were more difficult.
- 7.2 Andrew Gurr commended Liz Davis and her team for getting through all the work outlined in her report. Liz said that her team were doing an excellent job and that the concept of partnership teams relating to partnerships appeared to be working well.

**Decision: Council noted the report.**

**Item 8. Minimum Levels of Performance to Work-based Learning 2007-08  
(Paper 255)**

- 8.1 Christine Gaskell left the meeting before this item due to a conflict of interest. David Rowlands also declared an interest as Governor of West Cheshire College.
- 8.2 John Warham presented the paper which was for information, and which followed a short paper presented to the Council in Autumn 2005. The paper outlined the key performance measures and criteria being applied in deciding which Apprenticeship provision would be subject to competition in 2007.
- 8.3 The paper also informed Council members of the key indicators being used and summarised the impact of local work-based learning provision.
- 8.4 There was some short discussion of the paper and the following points were confirmed:-
- The tender round would take place in April and there were 1000+ places available across the region;
  - There had been an overall improvement in the region, those providers who would be replaced had failed to keep up with the improvement.

**Decision: Council noted the report.**

**Item 9. Any Other Business**

- 9.1 There was no other business.

**Item 10. Next meeting**

- 10.1 The next meeting will take place at 4.00 pm on Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> June, at Dalton House.