

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Minutes of meeting

Date 20 December 2005
Subject Board Meeting
Location LSC, Taylor House, Caxton Road, Preston.
Time 17:00

Present Mike Collier, Chair
Steve Palmer
Nancy Cookson
Jeff Cowburn
Tony Gill
Joan Lee
Alyson Malach
Clive Memmott
Iqbal Memon
Steve Palmer
Greg Turner

LSC staff Dave Cresswell
Andy Fawcett
Viv King
Sandra Whyte

Apologies Apologies have been received from:
Nigel Burke
Hazel Harding
Ray McManus
John Moverley
Peter Neill
Karen O'Donaghue
Janice Parker
Khalid Saifullah

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

Mike Collier welcomed all present and informed the Board that Item 4 on the agenda would be deferred.

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 November were agreed as a true record.

Item 3. Matters arising from November's meeting

Item 4 - BAe Apprenticeship Programmes – Steve is setting up a meeting between BAe, Asian Business Federation and Training 2000.

Action: SP

Item 6 – Refined Draft Capital Plan – Mike Collier suggested that the discussion be picked up at the Awayday meeting held in January.

Action: AF

Item 4. Annual Statement of Priorities presented by Andy Fawcett.

Andy Fawcett referred to the Business Planning and Update Report he had provided for the Board.

The focus was to create stronger cohesion of plans and priorities between the LSC, Colleges and providers. The main objective being to achieve greater coherence between LSC priorities and the provision that we procure. This will require significant changes to the provision which is currently delivered but we would seek to achieve this on an incremental basis to avoid destabilising providers. Our ability to make these changes has been significantly enhanced by the quality and range of data that we now hold. Also the level of data is more detailed and therefore allows suppliers and providers to analyse areas of change and the subsequent consequences.

With regard to performance issues it was reported that there was a significantly increased priority in respect of the Level 2 at 19. Lancashire area is performing below national benchmarks but we believe that the 2008 target is achievable. With regard to the other major PSA targets LSC Lancashire is making steady progress. With regard to the Level 2 Adult target maximising the added value from Train to Gain will be a vital component in success.

Tony Gill questioned whether the major issue affecting achievement at 19 was retention of learners as opposed to overall participation and asked if any particular research or action had taken. It was reported that this had been the focus of considerable activity and retention rates had markedly improved. Nancy Cookson commented that further work continued to be undertaken.

With regard to Skills for Life Tony Gill highlighted the achievements of younger people as a major contribution to the target and the need to shift provision towards adults. This was happening at an increasing rate and significant progress had been made but there was still work to do and especially amongst adults in employment.

With regard to the adult Level 2 achievement, further work was being done on the planning assumptions regarding success rates on ETP which were overstated at 80% and are currently estimated at 60%. Dave Creswell felt that 2006/07 will be steady with LSC to sustaining momentum via mainstream programmes, whereas 2007/08 will be full steam ahead.

Alyson Malach asked why ACL funded provision was not included in the methodology. Andy Fawcett explained that an agreed regional process had been applied. It was agreed that an assessment would be made of the extent of the contribution to target coming from ACL funding. Alyson Malach also questioned the impact and consequences of policy changes to adult and community provision and it was agreed that this would be picked up at a future Board meeting. Alyson Malach was concerned that some sectors are marginalised. It was suggested by Mike Collier that Andy Fawcett and Alyson Malach discuss this subject separately and bring back the item to the Board at a later date.

Action: SP

Item 4A – Business Plan

Andy Fawcett outlined the approval process for the business plan. In 2006 there will be a regional dimension to this involving both Executive Directors and Chairs of LSC local offices. The Board will receive a draft Business Plan in advance of the Awayday.

Action: AF

Item 5. Foster Report.

Sandra Whyte summarised the content of Sir Andrew Foster's recently published report "Realising the Potential", a review of the future role of further education colleges. She felt that the Report shares many of the objectives of a number of government policies, and of the LSC's Agenda for Change in its approach to transforming the sector. Foster believes that the core purpose of Further Education Colleges should be on "improving employability and supplying economically valuable skills".

Sandra highlighted that, whilst recognising the good work done by colleges, the report identified the need to address the issues of the number of young people in the NEET group; adult literacy and numeracy; the percentage of the workforce without qualifications; and the low level of basic and intermediate skills in our workforce.

Furthermore, criticism within the report was not restricted to colleges; with weaknesses in the compulsory education sector, confusion about planning roles of LSC and colleges, lack of clarity about LSC/DfES roles and too much reorganisation seen as the cause of some difficulties.

Sandra noted that, as with Agenda for Change, quality was seen as of key importance and a swift response to deal with underperforming colleges was advocated.

Sandra felt that the response of the sector to the report had not been particularly enthusiastic, with most considering the report to contain little that is new. She suggested that many of the changes recommended were already in hand as part of Agenda for Change and other initiatives.

Nancy Cookson expressed disappointment that the Foster report aligned itself so closely to government policies and was therefore neither maverick nor groundbreaking. The wider role of colleges, particularly in largely tertiary areas like Lancashire, was not considered fully.

Item 6. Capital Plan.

Following the consultation period a revised Capital Plan was submitted to the Board by Andy Fawcett. The major change was that the estimated overall spend had increased significantly.

Andy also referred to the 16-19 Capital Fund and the anticipated guidance which will accompany the new fund. This was likely to lead a number of schools to actively consider the establishment of 6th forms. This will have implications for the Board who will oversee the approvals process locally.

Mike Collier stressed that the Board need to be fully briefed by the executive to ensure that any potentially difficult situations are effectively managed. Andy was asked to prepare a brief for the Board for the Awayday.

Action: AF

Item 7. Board Buzz Groups.

Steve presented his paper to the Board and asked for views and amendments. Buzz groups would focus on areas where the Board could make a difference as the Chair had requested.

Jeff Cowburn suggested that in the Spring there should be focus on WBL quality/achievement rate. Steve agreed and said that it would be picked up at the March meeting. Jeff also suggested a Buzz Group on Capital Plans.

Action: SP

Item 8. Executive Director's Report.

Steve Palmer presented his report to the Board.

Item 9. Any Other Business

None

Item 10. Next Meeting; Board Awayday, Tuesday 17th January from 1:00 pm at Barton Grange Hotel.

The Board Meeting to be held on the 21st February will commence at 5:00 pm.