

LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL GREATER MANCHESTER

Minutes of the ninth meeting held on Tuesday, 14 May 2002, at Arndale House, Manchester, at 16.00 hrs.

Present:

Members	Anthony Goldstone Rachael Charlton Liz Davis Pauline Green Richard Hurst Abdul Jabbar Alan Manning John Merry David Page David Seddon Ray Short Chris Woodcock	Chair Executive Director
Observers	Fiona Mellett Hazel Blackwell	Chamber Business Enterprise GONW (for Nigel Burke)
In attendance:	Jane Bracewell, Head of Quality Improvement Andrew Harrison, Head of Finance and Systems Ian Lever, Head of Workforce Development and Strategic Planning Debra Woodruff, Operations Director	

Clerk to the Council Jean Johnson

Apologies

Jean Llewellyn Molly Temple Steve Brown Nigel Burke Hannah Roberts Roger Hinchliffe Jeff Morgan	Employment Service GO NW Connexions Service Business Link Manchester North Head of Corporate Services
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The chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

92. Minutes of 5 March 2002 meeting

The minutes of the 5 March 2002 meeting were accepted as an accurate record and signed.

93. Matters arising

Matters arising were covered by paper 29/2002. In addition the following matters were raised:

- 93.1 Minute 80 – Council noted LSC Greater Manchester’s share of the national capital budget. The following points were raised in discussion:
- There was a need for a strategy on the development of the structure for education and training in the area
 - Research to underpin the strategy was currently being undertaken
 - All colleges had an accommodation strategy
 - Whether there was enough money nationally for all the capital projects coming forward from LSC Greater Manchester.

94. Chair’s Report

Council **received** the chair’s report. There were no questions or comments. Chair stressed the need for discussion and debate at future national chairs’ meetings.

95. Executive Director’s Report

Chair and Council welcomed Executive Director back from her sick leave. Executive Director thanked Council and members of SMT for their support and leadership in her absence.

The report was taken as read. Executive Director gave an update on the following items:

- Growth Funding (para 24) ED had received notification from national office that any growth in 16-18 provision and basic skills would be funded at 100% rather than the 60% previously proposed.
- Manchester Area Wide Inspection (para 32) Formal feedback on the inspection would take place on 10 June and a meeting with key partners would be held on 12 June.

Council members raised the following issues:

- Learner accidents (para 52) Whether the accidents recorded were serious and whether or not the number was high. Ian Lever confirmed that none of the accidents had been serious. He would supply statistics comparing the accident rate within LSC Greater Manchester area with those of other LLSCs.
Action: Ian Lever
- Learning Partnerships (paras 8-10) What the implications of the changes in funding were for the seven Greater Manchester learning partnerships. Executive Director said that the new arrangements gave LSC Greater Manchester greater flexibility to build the capacity of the learning partnerships.
- Chair raised the issue of LSC Greater Manchester’s involvement in Adult Learners Week. ED confirmed that the LSC GM was involved in Adult Learners Week through the provision of Bite Size Courses and through Skills Festival events. Hazel Blackwell offered to provide information about the event at the Town Hall.
Action: Hazel Blackwell to provide cuttings
- Chair also raised the issue of lack of progress nationally on harmonization.

Council **received** the report.

96. Finance Director's Report

Finance director introduced his report, drawing attention to the further cut in the administration budget and the difficulty of achieving the required saving of £392K.

Council raised the following points in discussion:

- What would happen if the saving could not be achieved? FD said we would be monitored on a monthly basis to ensure we were keeping within budget.
- The requirement to run LSC GM with an 8% vacancy rate should be challenged.
- LSC GM had already achieved a 7% cut in its budget compared with 01/02. It was unacceptable to expect it to achieve further cuts amounting to 16%.
- It was unacceptable to expect further cuts in the budget one month into the current financial year.
- There was no voluntary severance/redundancy package on the table. National office should not tie LSC Greater Manchester's hands in this respect, but should allow it to manage its staffing levels locally.
- The 7% cut in budget had been imposed by DfES in response to criticisms from the AoC on LSC costs. However those criticisms had not taken into account the fact that TECs could charge admin costs to programme lines.
- LSC Greater Manchester was not overmanned and was currently running with about 180 staff.
- With the budget cut to this extent, of necessity some work would be pushed out. This would tend to be local work which was important in terms of strategic local partnerships. We needed to be explicit with national office about what we would not be able to achieve locally this year because of budget cuts.
- The possibility of charging more out to programme budgets (para 8) was not generally regarded as an acceptable alternative, though one council member pointed out that the LSC had very few options, as we relied on a government grant for our income.
- Concern was expressed that, despite having achieved a 7% cut in its budget, LSC Greater Manchester was expected to make further cuts. Council members wondered whether further cuts were necessary because other LLSCs and national office had not achieved 7% savings.

Action: Council agreed that Chair should write to national chair asking for information on the 7% budget cuts nationally and express Council's concern at the process for the budget reduction and the view that this could inhibit and create problems for LSC Greater Manchester. He would follow up once a response had been received.

97. Workforce Development

Head of Strategy, Planning and Workforce Development introduced the LSC Draft National Workforce Development Strategy, which was going out for consultation, and his paper setting out the key points, the implications for LSC Greater Manchester and the issues he suggested covering in our response. The implications in paras 8 and 9

were of particular importance. He took Council through the issues to be covered in the response and asked Council to consider and agree the response and suggest other issues which might be included.

Council discussed the strategy at length. Issues raised included:

- The need to have more business representation, especially from the private sector, rather than academic or public sector representation, on the workforce development strategy groups, though the difficulty of connecting up with small businesses who felt they did not have time for such groups was recognised
- Concern that, as a result of the strategy, the small business service would be presented with yet another set of targets which did not measure what employers actually wanted. Small businesses did train their employees to do their jobs but did not generally link their training into qualifications.
- It was important to capture what business did already in the way of training and what they wanted more of. More research was needed on why those small business who trained their staff did so.
- It was important to tap into businesses who were already interested in training through Investors in People.
- Businesses needed to be persuaded that training their staff would improve their bottom line.
- There was a need for a focus group of business people on which ideas about strategy could be tested. ED pointed out that business people would have been consulted prior to the PIU report and that would have informed the strategy set out in the document.
- Businesses had a responsibility to be involved in the social inclusion issues related to the workforce development strategy
- The need for financial incentives to employers to train their employees
- The key question was 'what steps can LSC take to engage employers, particularly SMEs who are so far disengaged?'
- The need to create a demand from employers for training and to align the training with the employers' needs
- Since 80% of the workforce worked in large and medium-sized enterprises, it might be more effective to concentrate on developing those people rather than those working in small enterprises
- The need to involve the Small Business Service, Business Links and other key partners in the consultation, as well as other employer groups.
- [Council's wanted positive steps taken quickly and positive results.](#)

Action: Head of Strategy, Planning and workforce development agreed to take note of Council members comments and incorporate them into LSC Greater Manchester's response. He would report back to the July Council on progress. Fiona Mellett agreed to provide the Council with details of case studies.

98. Services to Young People

98.1 Report on the Work of the Services to Young People Directorate

Chair invited Operations Director to report on the work of the services to young people directorate. Debra Woodruff drew attention to paras 20-24 of her report. The level 2 initiative had been extended into the next funding year and to level 3 qualifications. £60 million was available nationally for the initiative.

Debra introduced a tabled report on Work Based Learning performance in 2001-02. For NVQs the level of achievement varied nationally between 73.1% and 33.9%. Greater Manchester's achievement of 57.5% was close to the national average of 57.7%. Framework achievement varied nationally between 63.2% and 9.1%. Greater Manchester's framework of achievement of 36.9% was close to the national average of 39.6%, despite the complexity and challenges of the GM area.

Chair invited questions and comments.

In answer to a question on the effect of the new arrangements for Education Business Links Organisations on employer involvement, Debra confirmed that the Connexions Board would make sure that the employer link was in place and that delivery would still be through contracts with local Education Business Partnerships.

98.2 Terms of Reference for Young People's Learning Committee

Council **approved** the amended terms of reference for the Young People's Learning Committee.

99. Lifelong Learning

99.1 Centres of Vocational Excellence

Operations Director reported that Adult Learning Committee had received a paper on the management of the CoVE process. The approach had been agreed between LLSCs in the region, with the Regional Development Agency and national office so as to avoid competitive bids. The CoVE programme was being extended to non-FE providers and it was expected that there would be 50 non-FE CoVES created over the next few years. It was unlikely that Greater Manchester would have a Path Finder. Other committees would be consulted on the approach to non-FE Coves.

Council **received** the report and noted the planned approach to the CoVE programme for Greater Manchester.

99.2 Terms of Reference for Adult Learning Committee

Council **approved** the amended terms of reference for the Adult Learning Committee.

99. Reports from Advisory Committees

99.1 Equal Opportunities External Advisory Group Meeting - Chair of the committee reported on the need for the LSC to produce a race equality scheme to comply with the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Executive Director confirmed that a plan was being produced nationally and that it would be taken into account in local Equal Opportunities strategy and action planning. A report on Equal Opportunities would be on the next Council agenda.

He also reported that the committee had raised the issue of having a deputy chair. It had been agreed that an officer could act as deputy chair in the chair's absence.

Council **received** the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2002.

99.2 Audit Committee - Council **received** the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2002.

99.3 Capital Committee - Council **received** the minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2002 and **approved** the revised terms of reference, noting that all Council members would receive Capital Committee papers for comment.

99.4 Young People's Learning Committee – Council **received** the minutes of the meeting held on 8 April.

99.5 Adult Learning Committee – Council **received** the minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2002.

Chair reported that he was seeking new chairs for the Young People's Learning Committee and Adult Learning Committee.

100. Quality and Standards 2001/02

Council **noted** the report on progress made in raising standards in the Greater Manchester area. The work would be extended to include Adult and Community Learning and Ufl hubs in the current year.

101. Local and National Council Relationships

Council **received** the report. Executive Director invited expressions of interest from Council members to serve on the Equality in Urban Areas task group.

As a member of the national council and chair of the Network Liaison Committee, John Merry commented that there was still a need to establish a relationship between non-executive Council members and the national council. There was a lot of expertise available on local councils which could be used by the national council.

102. Any other business

102.1 Report from Search Committee meeting 8 May 2002 – David Seddon, as chair of the Search Committee, reported on action to be taken as a result of the 8 May meeting. This was:

- Replacements would be sought for the two current vacancies, one for a business person, the other for an education and training provider by means of an advertisement
- A skills audit of current Council members would be undertaken to enable the chair and appointments panel to have a clear idea of the balance of the Council
- A flyer would be sent to interested parties, including business organizations, inviting them to publicise the vacancies
- A letter would be sent to people who had sent in applications for the previous round of appointments inviting them to re-apply
- The closing date for applications was 1 July 2002.

102.2 Creation of English Regional Assemblies – Executive Director reported that the white paper on the creation of English Regional Assemblies proposed that the regional assemblies should appoint two people to local LSC Councils, one of whom should be a business person. Currently the regional development agency appointed one representative.

103. Dates of next meetings

Chair confirmed that the next meetings of Council would be on Tuesday, 2 July 2002 and Tuesday, 3 September. The meetings would start at the usual time of 16.00 hrs.

Chair thanked members for attending the meeting and declared the meeting closed.