

LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL GREATER MANCHESTER

Minutes of the eleventh meeting held on Monday, 2 September 2002, at University House, University of Salford, at 15.00 hrs.

Present:

Members	Anthony Goldstone Rachael Charlton Liz Davis Pauline Green Richard Hurst Abdul Jabbar Jean Llewellyn Alan Manning John Merry David Page David Seddon Ray Short Mollie Temple Chris Woodcock	Chair Executive Director (ED)
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Observers	Hannah Roberts – Connexions Service Linda Tomlinson – Job Centre Plus Nigel Burke - GO North West Roger Hinchliffe - Business Link Manchester North
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In attendance:	Jane Bracewell, Director of Quality Improvement (DQI) Andrew Harrison, Director of Finance and Systems (DFS) Ian Lever, Director of Strategy and Planning (DSP) Jeff Morgan, Director of Corporate Services (DCS) Debra Woodruff, Director of Operations (DO)
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Clerk to the Council Jean Johnson

Apologies	Fiona Mellett	Chamber Business Enterprise
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The chairman welcomed all members to the meeting and introduced Linda Tomlinson, Job Centre Plus, who was attending her first meeting of Council as an observer.

117. Minutes of 2 July 2002 meeting

The minutes of the 2 July 2002 meeting were **accepted** as an accurate record and signed.

118. Matters arising

Matters arising were covered by paper 57/2002.

118.1 Minute 107 page 4 – Council Away Day with overnight stay. ED confirmed that this would be included in the Council meeting planning cycle for 2003.

Action: Clerk to the Council

118.2 Minute 110 page 5, para 3 – North West conference on workforce development - ED reported that, rather than have one conference for the whole region, each north west LSC would be holding its own event. LSC Greater Manchester was co-operating with the two business links in Greater Manchester and would be holding a joint event with Business Link Manchester North on 4 November and with the area covered by City Pride at the end of October.

118.3 Minute 110, page 5, paras 4-6 – Capital Projects – ED confirmed that LSC Greater Manchester staff and the national property team were still working with MANCAT on the issues around the proposal for the new sixth form centre in Harpurhey. The college was doing further work on the proposals for the Chapel Wharf Hospitality and Facilities Management Centre. A report would be available for the 5 November meeting of the Capital Committee. ED confirmed that there had been no further comments on the number of capital projects coming from LSC Greater Manchester. The results of the review of provision in the Greater Manchester area would justify any capital projects being put forward.

118.4 Minute 111, page 6, para 1 – Framework for Regional Employment and Skills Action - Chair confirmed that Mike Shields, Chief Executive, and Fran Hulbert, Head of Skills Policy, North West Development Agency, would be attending the strategic discussions following the Council meeting to give a presentation on FRESA.

118.5 – Minute 113, page 7, para 1 – Links between LSC Greater Manchester Staff and Council members – The revised paper was attached to paper 57/2002 as annex 1.

Action: Council members to feedback to the Clerk to Council with any further comments.

119. Consultation Paper on the Functions of Local Councils

Chair invited John Merry, to introduce paper 58/2002.

119.1 John Merry said that the paper had come out of the last meeting of the Network Liaison Committee and was the first attempt at clearly establishing the functions of local councils and devolving responsibility from the national council to local councils. The report covered three areas:

- local councils as agents of the national body
- national objectives with discretion at local level on how these were tackled - there was a clear imperative to produce a local plan but discretion about what went into it and how it was to be delivered
- local area issues - for example, arrangements with local strategic partners and how far the LLSC contributed to local plans and local regeneration.

Chair invited comments from Council members.

119.2 In discussion the following points were made:

- Funding needed to follow any revised functions. If LSC GM needed increased flexibility or new resources for specific projects, it should provide examples of what it wanted to do.
- Council should take stock of the way it was carrying out its functions in relation to the implementation of its strategic plan and see where it needed more power to get things done.
- Council should be looking at areas where it wanted to take action, but should also keep in mind that the LSC had to deliver what the government wanted as the government provided the money.
- There was a perception of local councils as offshoots of the central body with limited decision-making powers, which put business people off joining the council. It was difficult to make a judgement on which of the proposals was controversial without having a briefing on the political background
- Council was glad to see new specified functions 7, 8 and 10 which would give it scope to be specific about what should be done in Greater Manchester. If the proposed new specific functions were agreed, it would be possible to propose changes to the way learning and skills were delivered to meet the needs of the area.
- LSC Greater Manchester had obligations to its stakeholders to achieve its targets and, if necessary, to ask for the impossible. Within 4 or 5 years time each area should have a distinctive local council.
- It was important to listen to what the general public wanted on education and skills
- Proposed functions on quality and standards (11-14) were particularly controversial and it was important that local councils should show that they had the expertise and ability to make those decisions and would not flinch from making them.

Council **agreed** it was not concerned about clarifying the terminology 'local Council' and separating out the functions of the local office from those of the local council or 'board'.

Council was broadly content with the paper and **agreed** that it should be used as a framework for taking stock of its roles and functions.

Action: John Merry would take back the view that local chairs, having followed the prescribed procedure for filling vacancies on local councils, should not be in the position of having their choices rejected at national level.

Action: ED and Chair to respond to the consultation. Also to consider what needed to be done to enable LSC Greater Manchester to achieve its targets and how far those actions could be undertaken within existing resources and make a case where additional powers/resources were needed.

120. Chair's Report

120.1 Chair introduced his report (paper 59/2002) which was taken as read. He reported that there was a lot of interest in the Skills Show and Skills Festival, though

the response from the tourism industry had been disappointing. It was important that LSC Greater Manchester should build on its success with the Commonwealth Games. It was unfortunate that 12 November, the date immediately prior to the Skills Show, had been set for the meeting of all north west Council members and he was seeking to get it changed. The date also clashed with the presentation ceremony for the national training awards.

120.2 Three names had been put forward to the national appointments committee to fill the vacancies on the council. It was hoped that they would be accepted. It had been hoped to appoint a council member with experience of the 14-19 schools sector, but the response from that area had been disappointing.

Council **received** the chair's report.

121. Executive Director's Report

121.1 The report (paper **60/2002**) was taken as read. With reference to para 1, ED drew attention to the local consultation on *Success for All* which would take place on 19 September.

121.2 With reference to para 44, ED tabled a summary of the Manchester Area Wide Inspection report. The report was generally positive, stating that, in general post-16 provision in the Manchester area was good. However, there were issues with pre-16 education, as a large number of young people in the Manchester area were not achieving 5 GCSE passed as grades A-C and were therefore not feeding through into further and higher education. The key priority was to promote collaboration within the context of an agreed strategy for the area. LSC Greater Manchester's self-assessment report had been well received by the inspectors. The report also mentioned positively the work done by LSC Greater Manchester to support providers of work-based learning. The full version of the report was available to Council members on request. Groups were now in place to bring forward an action plan which would come to a future Council meeting.

Action: Clerk to note for agenda.

121.3 With reference to para 70, ED gave Council members an update on the harmonization process. Progress had been made in reducing the variance in pay levels within the same job at local level. The moderation exercise across all learning and skills councils had not been so successful and had resulted in a lot of appeals at local level. ED thought more work should have been done on defining the job roles across the organization. It would take time to rebuild morale following this process.

121.4 ED reported that the DfES had appointed York Consulting to conduct an evaluation of the new post-16 learning arrangements. Data would be gathered by means of a survey of all LLSCs and an in depth study of 5 LLSCs, of which Greater Manchester was one. Workshops would also be held with local partners and key stakeholders. Three learner focus groups with 8 participants each would get the views of learners. This was a very important piece of work and it was quite early in the LSC's life for such a survey to take place. LSC Greater Manchester would be reviewing most of the areas itself in any case as part of its own internal stock take.

She invited questions and comments on her report.

121.5 ED and DCS gave the following answers to questions raised by Council members:

- Staff were being asked to make a decision as to whether or not they would accept the LSC terms and conditions by 9 September. For most staff the LSC offer was an improvement in pay and conditions. Appeals could continue after 9 September.
- This would involve discussions with their managers to explain their positioning. If staff were still not happy the appeal would be referred to national office. Appeals would be considered on the basis of the evidence put forward.
- The insistence of some LLSC Executive Directors on having complete autonomy over their own local structures had been part of the problem.
- A flexible benefits package would be introduced once harmonization had been dealt with.

Council **received** the report.

122. Finance Director's Report

DFS introduced his report which was taken as read. In discussion the following points were raised:

- Council were concerned as to how the £84K shortfall would be dealt with. ED reported that administration budgets were being reviewed at national level.
- Senior managers were monitoring the budget on a 2-weekly basis.
- While LSC Greater Manchester was required to achieve an 8% vacancy to keep within the budget, it was currently operating with a 6½% vacancy rate. The directors were now looking at strategies for making the most of the skills and expertise available among staff. Staff were only being recruited from outside the organization where this was essential or where there were specific funds available for that.
- Within the next 2 weeks senior management would be doing a fundamental review of the structure. As yet there was no mechanism for voluntary severance. Once a scheme was in place, areas could be targeted.

Council **received** the report.

123. Reports from Advisory Committees

123.1 Capital Committee – Council **received** the minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2002, which chair had reported on at the 2 July 2002 Council meeting and given an update on in his report.

123.2 Adult Learning Committee – Chair invited Chair of Adult Learning Committee to introduce the minutes.

Pauline Green said the committee had had a very useful discussion on how it wanted to go forward.

Council **received** the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2002.

123.3 Audit Committee - Chair invited Chair of Audit Committee to introduce the minutes.

Chair of Audit Committee drew Council's attention to the annex to the minutes evaluating the work of the committee and particularly to the need for performance measures to enable an evaluation of the LSC Greater Manchester's performance against its objectives. He hoped that would be picked up in the discussions on strategy following the Council meeting.

Council **received** the minutes of the meeting held on 20 August 2002.

123.4. Chair said that he was hoping to appoint a new chair for the Young People's Learning Committee within the next two or three months.

124. Any other business

None raised.

125. Date of next meeting

Chair confirmed that the next meeting of Council would be on **Tuesday, 5 November 2002** at 16.00 hrs.

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

The Council meeting was followed by a Strategy Workshop. The notes from the Strategy Discussions Groups are appended to the minutes at **Annex 1**