

27.2 Minute 18.3 – page 2 – invitation to Minister to launch LSC GM. An invitation had been sent to Estelle Morris, but feedback from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) was that Ivan Lewis MP (see ED’s report Annex A) would be delegated to do it.

27.3 Minute 19.9.5 – provision of breakdown of rationalisation fund expenditure for the Shena Simon/City College Manchester merger. Assurances on financial support from the LSC had been acceptable to City College Manchester and the recommendation that the merger should proceed had been sent to the Secretary of State for approval. The colleges were already working together informally. The official date for the merger was 1 September 2001. The breakdown of expenditure would be provided in due course.

AP1/3.7.01 ED to report back to Council

27.3 Minute 20.5 page 8 - double funding. A letter had been sent to Bolton College pointing out that funding had already been provided for staff restructuring.

27.5 Minute 23 page 10 – Strategic Framework and Draft Corporate Plan. This would form the basis of the work at the Council Strategic Framework Workshop on 9 July.

28. Executive Director's Report

ED introduced circulated paper 16/2001, highlighting the main issues.

28.1 National issues

The full implications of the new ministerial appointments were not yet clear but LSC Greater Manchester would continue to work closely with the Employment Service in the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

28.2 Local action

28.2.1 National Learning Targets for Young People - Young People’s Learning Committee (YPLC) had discussed driving up achievement of targets for young people.

28.2.2 Youth Marketing Campaign - Members of the YPLC had expressed concern about the quality of the materials produced nationally. Council members were invited to comment on tabled material. Council’s views were mixed. The material was not easy to use for people with disabilities.

Council received a guide to current services produced locally which was aimed at the employment and careers services and would be available to employers through the Small Business Service.

28.2.3 Partnership’s – LSC Greater Manchester continued to work with a variety of partners on increasing the demand for learning. It would be involved with arrangements for the Skills Show and Skills Festival. Council members had been invited to the launch of the Skills Show.

28.2.4 Raising skills levels – LSC GM was working with the Trade Union Forum.

28.2.5 Improving quality - ED reported confidentially on the Stockport College inspection which had taken place in May under the new inspection framework. The report was due out in about six weeks' time.

Council discussed the new inspection regime. The following points were made:

It would be necessary to take firm and decisive action where college performance was unsatisfactory. However, the governors and management should be given the opportunity to address the weaknesses through development and implementation of an action plan with the support of the LSC.

It was important that the new inspection regime should not cause colleges to withdraw from the more difficult areas of provision such as basic skills and special needs and should not drive out opportunities for learning.

The implications of inspections for the local area plan should be noted. Colleges and others would work together to find out where strengths and weaknesses were to inform the local area strategy.

Council needed to influence specific colleges and specific areas to make sure the right programme of courses was available throughout the area.

As LSC GM moved forward and developed and published its corporate and strategic plans, colleges would be expected to produce plans which fitted in with the overarching plan for local and regional needs. However colleges would need time and support to make changes.

There was an issue as to how much funding could be used to influence planning.

28.2.6 Provider assurance – the process was being initiated and the first round of reviews would start shortly. Information about providers was being collected and they were being categorised against specific criteria. The aim of the review was to see what action should be put in place and what improvements should be made for the benefit of learners. There would be an evaluation of the provider assurance process.

29. Draft policy on Council Members visits to providers in the Greater Manchester Area

Council agreed to adopt the policy outlined in paper 21/2001.

30. Young People's Learning Committee

Council confirmed the revised terms of reference set out in paper 22/2001.

31. Adult Learning Committee

Council received the minutes of the 11 May 2001 meeting of the Adult Learning Committee and confirmed the revised terms of reference.

Council discussed membership of the committees. Points made included:

Non-Council members of committees should have equal rights with Council members to make proposals and vote.

It was important for Council members to attend the meetings of the committees so that decisions taken were in line with decisions made by Council and would not subsequently be overturned by Council.

Membership of both committees should be increased by one Council member.

AP2/3.7.01 PS/DW to take forward

A calendar of meetings needed to be drawn up.

AP3/3.7.01 PS to take forward

A clear and transparent procedure for nominations, perhaps by means of a Nominations or Search Committee, needed to be put in place for future appointments.

AP4/3.7.01 ED to take forward

32. Striving for excellence through internal quality improvement

Introducing paper 19/2001, Head of Quality Improvement said that, In order for the LSC to fulfil its remit to strive to be an exemplary public service organisation and lead the modernising government agenda, it was necessary to develop a robust culture of continuous improvement within the organisation. In the absence of a lead from national office on this, LSC GM had decided to put forward the proposals contained in the paper.

Council endorsed the proposals that LSC Greater Manchester should adopt the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) as a framework within which to seek continuous improvement and, having applied the EFQM framework, implement the resulting recommendations.

33. Provider performance review

Head of Quality Improvement introduced paper 20/2001.

Council would be given the overall performance rating of providers to give them a feel for where excellence was and where providers were needing support.

Council discussed whether or not it needed more detailed information on providers.

AP5/3.7.01 JB to discuss Council's needs with BG and JL, who were the Council links on raising standards

Council was concerned that the lack of complete data on providers could lead to judgements which might not align with subsequent inspection results.

Council was assured that, by the second round of progress reviews in October, providers would receive feedback on the review process through their contacts in the office and have the opportunity for discussions.

Council noted how LSC Greater Manchester was implementing the provider performance review process.

34. Council Strategic Framework Workshop

ED drew attention to paper 23/2001 outlining the programme for the 3 July 2001 workshop. Two papers were tabled and Council members were asked to consider before the workshop how they would prioritise the options listed on the paired comparisons chart, and bring the completed chart to the workshop.

AP6/3.7.01 All

35. Any other Business

35.1 Procedure for applications for capital grant, property related consents and other approvals under the financial memorandum between FE colleges and the Council.

ED introduced her tabled paper outlining the procedures and asked Council to agree on the levels of delegated authority proposed in table 1.

Council discussed the various options.

Council agreed that applications for projects up to £2.5 million and any property related consents only, could be approved by Chair and Executive Director.

Council agreed that all projects over £2.5 million should be considered by the full Council rather than by a Capital Committee so that it could make sure that projects fitted in with its overall strategy for Greater Manchester. If any projects requiring urgent approval outside the normal pattern of meetings, a special meeting of Council would be called.

AP7/3.7.01 ED/Chair to take forward

35.2 Employment Service update

Council received an update on the employment service tabled by Steve Brown, Assistant Regional Director.

36. Dates of next meetings

Council noted the dates of meetings for the rest of 2001 and 2002 listed in paper 24/2001 and agreed that the May 2002 meeting should take place on 7 May.