

LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL GREATER MANCHESTER

Minutes of the twelfth meeting of the LSC Greater Manchester Council held on Tuesday, 5 November 2002, at Arndale House, Arndale Centre, 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 Mollie Temple Chris Woodcock	Chair Executive Director (ED)
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Observers	Nigel Burke - GO North West Fiona Mellett - Chamber Business Enterprise Hannah Roberts – Connexions Service Linda Tomlinson – Job Centre Plus
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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) Debra Woodruff, Director of Operations (DO)
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Michele Sutton

Clerk to the Council Jean Johnson

Apologies	Ray Short
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The chairman welcomed all members to the meeting and introduced Michele Sutton, who had been appointed to Council with effect from 1 December and was attending the meeting as an observer.

126. Minutes of 2 September 2002 meeting

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

127. Matters arising

Matters arising were covered by paper 65/2002.

Minute 118.1 page 2 – Council Away Day with overnight stay. A Council member expressed the view that the away day should take place earlier than September. ED said that a date for September 2003 had been suggested to give members time to put it in their diaries. An away day at that time would also enable them to influence the strategic plan.

Action: Clerk to the Council

Minute 118.2 page 2 – North West Conference on Workforce Development – Director of Strategy and Planning reported that discussions were taking place between marketing managers at LSC Greater Manchester and LSC Lancashire with a view to holding a week of events in March 2003.

Minute 118.3 Capital Projects – Chair gave an update on the capital projects discussed at the Capital Committee. The committee had recommended support for MANCAT's two projects, one for the Nicholls Adult and Vocational Learning Centre and the other for the Central Park Learning Centre. Michele Sutton raised the issue of consultation with other providers in the area when new provision was planned and co-operation between colleges. Chair confirmed that where the students would come from was considered in the assessment of projects. There was a lack of provision in the areas covered by the projects.

128. Chair's Report

The report (paper 66/2002) was taken as read.

128.1 Chair drew attention to para 1-3 on the NW Festival and Skills and SkillCity, due to open the following week. The event would be attended by Prince Charles and it was hoped government ministers attending functions in the area would also visit. He encouraged Council members to promote and attend it. Jean Llewellyn offered tickets to Council members.

128.2 Re para 16 of his report, Chair informed Council members that each LSC would be asked to set up opportunities to talk to young people to find out their views on learning. He thought it was important to contact young people who were not part of the system. He expected the issue to be discussed at the next meeting.

Action: Clerk to the Council

128.3 Re para 19 and discussions with the chair of Manchester City Council, John Merry drew attention to the need for wider discussion with local authorities in view of the proposals for a 'knowledge capital' in the area which needed to have further education input. While the current proposals might not be accepted, he was sure that something would emerge concerning closer relationships between HE and FE institutions and the local authorities.

Mollie Temple declared an interest as principal of Bolton Institute, a higher education institution.

She stressed the importance of the LSC expressing an opinion on the proposals which might be of concern to further education institutions in the area, as they were to higher education institutions. The proposals focused on one area of Greater Manchester. There was concern about the concept of a 'learning capital'. She thought it was important that Council should discuss these developments and decide whether to support them.

Chair commented that the learning and skills strategy needed to be developed in the context of any agreed economic strategy. ED reminded Council that the draft AGMA strategy had been included in the papers for the strategic workshop that had followed the September meeting. She proposed to prepare a position paper for discussion by Adult Learning Committee or the full Council.

Action: Executive Director

Chair reminded Council members that they were welcome to contact the Clerk to the Council to suggest items for the agendas for Council meetings.

Council **received** the report.

129. Executive Director's Report

The report (paper 67/2002) was taken as read.

129.1 Executive Director drew attention to paras 69-77 on performance review. Progress was being made with colleges causing concern. She alerted Council to problems emerging with Wigan and Leigh College, where financial difficulties had delayed the start of their capital building programme. She would update Council at a future meeting. She invited questions and comments from Council members.

129.2 John Merry commented on the likely effects of the commitment in the Education Act that powers under the act would not be used to close down small sixth forms.

Council **received** the report.

130. Finance Director's Report

The report (paper 68/2002) was taken as read. Finance Director confirmed that the administration budget was being turned round, but not without some pain. It was likely that the grant letter would authorize less money for the next financial year, though the message within the LSC was that it was important not to underspend in this financial year.

Council **received** the report.

131. Reports from Advisory Committees

131.1 Young People's Learning Committee – Council **received** the minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2002. There were no comments or questions.

131.2 Adult Learning Committee – Operations Director reported on the 28 October meeting. The committee had focused on learning partnerships. Adult information, advice and guidance and e-learning and ICT. Council would receive the minutes at its next meeting.

131.3 Equal Opportunities External Advisory Group – Chair of EOEAG introduced the circulated minutes. He drew attention to the committee's proposal that an event should be held to formally launch the Equality and Diversity Policy. He had become a member of a national committee which was looking at ethnic diversity in an urban context. Greater Manchester was taking the lead in some of the things being done in that area and he hoped that LSC Greater Manchester would be able to make a presentation to the group in the future. John Merry thought there was a need for some work to be done on discrimination in terms of providers.

131.4 Audit Committee – Chair of Audit Committee introduced the circulated minutes. He reported that he, chair of Council and Executive Director were considering proposals relating to the performance measures to be put in place for evaluating LSC Greater Manchester's performance against its objectives.

Council **received** the minutes of the 8 October meeting.

131.4.1 Council commented on and **agreed** the draft procedure for the selection of members of Audit Committee (paper 72/2002) subject to inclusion of reference to an independent (non-Council) member with financial experience being appointed to the committee.

131.5. Chair had reported on the 5 November meeting of the Capital Committee under Matters Arising.

132. Objective 3 ESF Co-Financing Plan

Director of Strategy and Planning informed the Council that the paper came to them for information. It had been approved by the government office. In answer to a question, he assured Council members that monitoring systems were in place and a contract manager had been appointed to ensure that objectives were achieved and data collected. He agreed to send out a list of projects and their values with the minutes.

Action: Director Strategy and Planning and Clerk to the Council

133. Nominations to School Organisation Committees

Executive Director introduced paper 74/2002 listing LSC staff serving on School Organisation committees for approval. She said that it was hoped that in the future it would be possible to link Council members who were familiar with the areas and the issues into these roles.

Council **approved** the nominations.

134. Action Plan in Response to the Manchester Area Wide Post-16 Inspection

135. Revised 14-19 Strategy

135.1 Agenda items 9 and 10 were taken together as the Action Plan in Response to the Manchester Area Wide Inspection had been developed in the context of the 14-19 Strategy. Executive Director gave a presentation on the 14-19 strategy. (**Clerk's note:** A copy of the presentation will be circulated.) The strategy was already being revised to cover 14-19+ as referred to in para 16. She invited questions and comments.

135.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- The strategy would go out for consultation around the end of November with the results coming back by the end of December.
- The strategy covered the next 3-5 years.
- Council would receive regular reports of progress against targets.
- It was important to consult the private sector and to have something positive to offer business people if the LSC wished them to be involved.
- There was a need to tackle the issues raised at the September away day about the effect of a 50% target for entry into higher education on crafts industries.
- The problem of aspirations and perceptions, particularly of young, working class males, who didn't think that what happened in schools and colleges was relevant to the outside world, needed to be addressed. Such young people needed to see how what they were doing in school and college would reward them in later life.
- It was important to reach parents and teachers so that they could convince young people that there was a future for them. Excellence in Cities and the Excellence Challenge were working with parents and teachers to raise aspirations. Linda Tomlinson gave an example of how a Junior Jobs Fair had helped raise the aspirations of 7 year old primary school children.
- The strategy needed to be followed by an action plan setting out what was going to be done. It was recognized that some of the fundamental problems would take a long time to resolve but the action plan also needed to include some 'quick wins'.
- Para 33 on the Connexions service needed to be revised to reflect the current situation.
- There was a need to act quickly because the employment situation would get worse, not in terms of the number of jobs available but in terms of the skills they required.
- The emphasis on co-operation rather than competition, and on vocational qualifications was commended.

135.3 Executive Director assured Council members that many of the things outlined in the strategy and action plan were already under way, but there was no consistency of approach. There was a lot of good work to be built on. There would be discussions between employers and providers on whether qualifications and provision was meeting the needs of businesses. Partnerships would be developed between providers and employers to ensure that what was being provided was giving the skills needed by the current and future workforce.

135.4 Chair asked about the timescales for consultation and for the strategy itself. He stressed the importance of moving ahead quickly with implementation. ED confirmed that there were already pilots which would quickly be extended across the Manchester area.

Council **noted** the Action Plan and 14-19+ strategy.

136. Outcomes of the Review of Provision Reports

136.1 Chair invited John Keyes of the consultants GVA Grimley to report on the outcomes of their review of the physical infrastructure and premises in Greater Manchester. (**Clerk's note:** A copy of the presentation will be circulated.)

136.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- Council members queried the figure of 8% space usage and efficiency for Oldham College. John Keyes explained that the figure had been reached as a result of information derived from a questionnaire filled in by the college on the basis of usage between 9.00 and 17.00 hrs, 5 days a week. It was agreed that the data needed to be checked over a wide range of institutions.
- Whether the figure of 16% excess capacity with a value of £3 million actually referred to usable space. John Keyes confirmed that no analysis had been done at this stage.
- The finding that 26% of college accommodation was in need of major repair and that 55% of accommodation was not suitable for its purpose was an important finding in support of the capital projects being put forward to the national committee from Greater Manchester.
- The findings would help to inform the development of a wider accommodation strategy and form the basis of dialogue with providers on accommodation issues.

Chair thanked Mr Keyes for his presentation.

137. RDA/LSC Pilots on Funding Adult Learning and Skills

137.1 Executive Director introduced paper 78/2002 outlining arrangements for RDA/LSC Pilots on funding Adult Learning and Skills. The RDA had given a presentation at the September Council meeting and priorities and ways of working together to support the NW economy and skills had been agreed. The paper set out developments which had taken place since then as a result of proposals in the Comprehensive Spending Review. Two pilots were proposed, but Ivan Lewis had indicated that he would like one region (probably the north west) to pilot both projects simultaneously. Para 39 – 42 outlined the issues from a local LSC perspective. There were concerns about the definition of adult learning; the complexity of ensuring that local LSC plans aligned with regional and national strategic plans and the need to clarify the role of the local council to drive the strategy forward; the fact that some of the budgets not included in the pilots were related to skills and would need to have some input in order to make the pilots meaningful, relevant and effective.

137.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- The pilots could be used to push forward the kind of issues identified through the framework for employment and skills action (FRESA) exercise and get momentum behind it
- Running the two pilots simultaneously gave the opportunity to examine how to align the business support system with the skills agenda.
- What were the financial implications for the LSC? ED commented that the regional pilot would influence the use of part of programme budgets, LIF funding and ESF.
- Would the LSC's freedom to operate be determined by someone outside the LSC? The LSC already had to ensure that local strategy aligned with regional and national strategy – this would place a stronger emphasis on regional planning.
- Did this mean that the RDA was beginning to hold the reins rather than the LSC centrally? ED thought it was unlikely that the DfES would let go of the LSC's remit. The LSC would have the job of managing the interface between the two.

137.3 Chair commented that the chairs of the 5 north west LSCs had met with NWDA to discuss these proposals. They intended to write to the new Secretary of State to invite him to SkillCity, express a commitment to ensuring the success of the pilots and seek a meeting to clarify his vision for the pilots and the role of local Learning and Skills Councils in taking them forward with the RDA.

Council **noted** the content of the paper.

138. Cante Report on Community Cohesion.

Consideration of this item was postponed until the January meeting.

139. Any other business

139.1 Appeal Panel Members – Council members **agreed** to give their names to the Executive Director by 27 November if they were interested in serving on an appeals panel.

Action: Interested members of Council and ED

139.2 Jean Llewellyn – Chair reminded Council that Jean Llewellyn had come to the end of her term of office as a member of Council. He thanked her for her services as a member and for her support for the work of the Learning and Skills Council Greater Manchester. She would continue her work with skills in her new role with the RDA. Council members joined the chair in wishing her well.

139.3 Christmas Celebrations – Chair said he thought that it was better for the Council to have one celebration rather than the committees to have individual celebrations. It was therefore agreed that a dinner should be arranged to follow the 7 January 2003 meeting of Council.

140. Date of next meeting

Chair confirmed that the next meeting of Council would be on **Tuesday, 7 January 2003** at 16.00 hrs

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