

49. Minutes of 3 September 2001 meeting

The minutes of the 3 September 2001 meeting were accepted as an accurate record and signed.

50. Matters arising

Matters arising were covered by paper 34/2001. In addition the following matters were raised.

- 50.1 Minute 39.1 Skills Show and Festival of Skills and Learning – Chair stressed the need to get business people involved in the show. He would like a presentation on the Skills Show at a future Council meeting.

ACTION 1/6.11.01 – Liz Davis

- 50.2 Minute 39.3 Regional Meetings – A meeting had been arranged between chair, chief executive and board members of the NW Development Agency and NW Learning and Skills Councils on 27 November.

- 50.3 Minute 40.8 Staff Away Day – The staff away day had been very successful and staff had appreciated the attendance of Council members.

- 50.4 Minute 42 Official Launch – The launch had attracted a lot of publicity. Representation from the business community had not been high. Executive Director reported that holding an event involving businesses and their intermediaries at a more convenient time for businesses was being considered.

- 50.5 Minute 44 Local Initiative Funding – Council noted that this would be a future agenda item.

ACTION 2/6.11.01 – Ian Lever

- 50.6 Minute 46 Strategic Framework – Head of Workforce Development and Strategic Planning reported that the consultation exercises had been very productive.

Council **agreed** to hold a special meeting to consider the final draft of the local strategic plan before it was put out for consultation in December. The final draft would be circulated to Council members by e-mail for comment prior to the meeting. Comments would then be discussed.

ACTION 3/6.11.01 - Ian Lever/Liz Davis

51. Application for support from Rationalisation Fund, City College Manchester

Council noted paper 35/2001 detailing proposed expenditure by City College Manchester of £993,000 to support its merger with Shena Simon College, of which £650,00 was eligible for funding from the rationalisation fund. Executive Director explained that money would only be released against expenditure which met the eligibility criteria.

Council **confirmed** its earlier decision to support the application and **agreed** that the college should be allowed to identify further eligible costs incurred in the merger.

52. Executive Director's Report

Chairman took Council through paper 36/2001 with members raising issues as they occurred.

- 52.1 School Sixth Forms – Executive Director confirmed that provisional funding allocations for the next 16 months had been issued. The Real Terms Guarantee was indefinite. Any influence the LSC GM had to ensure that they delivered what the business community wanted and that their plans fitted into LSC GM's overall strategy, would be through involving the sixth forms in strategy and planning meetings, working through local learning partnerships and opening dialogue with them through local authorities. LSC GM had no direct control at this stage.

She could not be confident that all the sixth forms LSC GM had responsibility for were in reasonable financial shape, but was confident that the new funding arrangements would not disadvantage them in any way. Schools would judge for themselves whether or not they had a viable sixth form. LSC GM would be involved in discussions where circumstances changed. A meeting with school sixth forms was being held on 13 November to explain the new funding arrangements. This would involve a question and answer session.

Quality in schools was managed via Ofsted's inspection regime and the schools' own development plans. However, school sixth forms were included in local area inspections, which reported on the range of provision in the local authority areas, and partners would consider the implications of any findings and include actions in the strategic plan.

On the Rochdale inspections, Jane Bracewell confirmed that meetings had been held with all key partners, including the heads of sixth forms, to discuss the way forward.

Council members raised the following issues:

- how the real terms guarantee distorted the funding situation by putting sixth forms in a different position from further education colleges
- the need for dialogue with higher education institutions as the destination for the majority of school sixth form pupils.

52.2 Provider inspections **THIS ITEM IS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL TO COUNCIL MEMBERS ONLY**

Executive Director reported that, after an unsatisfactory inspection, Stockport College had been unable to provide a satisfactory action plan. LSC GM would be meeting with Ofsted to decide how to respond to this situation on

15 November. She would also be meeting with the principal and chair of the corporation. LSC GM could, if necessary, appoint additional governors and use the standards fund to provide support for the management team.

Council raised the following issues in relation to further education colleges:

- the lack of general appreciation of the work of FE colleges
- the unpopularity of employment within FE because of poor pay and lack of security because of short term contracts, which in turn led to an inability to make long term plans
- what the colleges saw as excess bureaucracy, particularly with regard to audit requirements
- the appreciation of local colleges of the work Jane Bracewell's team was doing to establish a transparent system for provider performance review.

52.3 Placing Learners with Difficulties and Disabilities – Council members reported on comments from RNID representatives attending the launch event on the length and complexity of the funding process.

Head of Services to Young People informed Council that the placement process was being streamlined and her team was getting to grips with the monitoring and review process.

52.4 Childcare – Head of Workforce Development and Strategic Planning reported on the event planned for 29 November. There was a shortage of care providers and the job was not generally attractive because of the rates of pay. The area was also heavily legislated. Much of the FE provision was of little relevance to people running businesses. The event aimed to encourage a better relationship between early years partnerships, colleges and businesses and to try to identify the issues and see how they might be addressed.

Council **agreed** that childcare should be an agenda item at a future meeting.

ACTION 4/6.11.01 – Ian Lever

Council **agreed** that future Executive Director's reports should be taken as read and that Council members should come to the meeting prepared with issues they wished to raise.

Council **received** the Executive Director's report.

53. **Finance Director's Report**

Finance Director introduced paper 37/2001.

The finance team was working on the implementation of the new finance system. Providers continued to be paid against profile. Administration costs had been kept within budget so far.

Council was pleased with the progress made.

Council **received** the Finance Director's Report.

54. Schools White Paper + Consultation on 16-19 Organisation and Inspection + Draft Response from National Office

Executive Director introduced the 3 circulated papers. Council was asked to consider whether the Executive Director should respond on behalf of the local Council in support of the National Council response.

Council members raised the following issues:

- Concerns as to whether the new powers for schools to acquire sixth forms would conflict with local authority and LLSC plans for provision in the area
- The response should include practical examples of good practice in 14-16 education

Council **agreed** that Executive Director should send a response on its behalf.

ACTION 5/6.11.01 – Liz Davis
[Response attached to these minutes.]

55. Staffing Issues (CONFIDENTIAL ITEM)

Head of Corporate Services introduced his circulated paper 39/2001. The big issues for staff were pay anomalies and the timescale for harmonisation of terms and conditions. It was not possible for LSC GM to harmonise alone; harmonisation had to be done nationally. The staff survey, now taking place, would provide information about staff attitudes and help us to develop plans. The results would be available in December.

Issues raised by Council members included:

- the importance of specifying a time by when people would be on the same terms of employment
- the importance of ensuring that all LSC GM staff were fairly rewarded
- the difficulties caused by being unable to communicate to staff the process and plan for harmonisation as there appeared to be no national office strategy for it
- the importance of sorting out the anomalies of pay between people doing the same job
- pressure should be put on the national council to sort out harmonisation quickly.

Head of Corporate Services confirmed he would raise these issues with Gareth Harris in the national HR team.

ACTION 6/6.11.01 – Jeff Morgan

Council agreed that, once the results of the staff survey were available, the Chair should write to the national chair expressing Council's view that a clear process and timetable for harmonization of staff terms and conditions must be communicated urgently.

ACTION 7/6.11.01 – Anthony Goldstone

56. Interim Equal Opportunities Policy

Executive Director introduced the Interim Equal Opportunities Policy, explaining that it was interim until a national policy was produced. It was important that the Council should adhere to the policy and that it should train and develop staff. In signing off the policy Council members accept the responsibilities set out in it.

Council **signed off** the Interim Equal Opportunities Policy and **confirmed** its commitment to it. Members congratulated the staff on producing a good piece of work.

57. Reports from Advisory Committees

57.1 Young People's Learning Committee - Council **received** the minutes of the meeting of the Young People's Learning Committee held on 17 September 2001.

57.2 Adult Learning Committee - Council **received** the minutes of the meeting of the Adult Learning Committee held on 24 September 2001.

Council **noted** the proposed approach to the development of Centres of Vocational Excellence in the Greater Manchester area.

Council **endorsed** the committee's approval of the draft Memorandum of Understanding between LSC Greater Manchester and Local Learning Partnerships.

57.3 Audit Committee - Council **received** the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 2 October 2001.

58. Search Committee

Executive Director introduced paper 44/2001 and drew attention to the tabled guidance on the appointment of local Council members issued by national office. She invited Council members to agree the terms of reference, agree a time for the first meeting, note the role of the Equal Opportunities External Advisory Group and sought expressions of interest in joining the committee.

In discussion of the paper the following points were made:

- the purpose of the Search Committee was to find a pool of people from which Council members could be appointed
- although the national Appointments Committee was responsible for appointments to local Councils, it would normally rely on recommendations from local Councils
- the Committee should be brought into being quickly as the Council now had its first vacancy
- the importance of drawing on Government Office's experience of appointing local Council members
- the importance of maintaining the recommended balance of 40% business representation, with some local authority, voluntary sector and trade union experience, on the Council.

Council **agreed** that the mention of local authority, voluntary sector and trade union experience should be separated out from the need to have members who understood the needs of the specific groups of people.

ACTION 8/6.11.01 – Liz Davis

Council members **agreed** to let Executive Director know if they were interested in serving on the committee.

ACTION 9/6.11.01 – All (by 19 November please)

59. Any other business

- 59.1 National Chairman's Update - Executive Director drew attention to the tabled national chairman's update and accompanying documents. The Cassels report on Modern Apprenticeships was of particular interest and would be discussed at a future Council meeting.

John Merry, as a National Council member, asked about the local response to the paper recommending maximum flexibility in the relationship between national and local councils.

Council **agreed** that Executive Director should send a response to the paper on its behalf and copy it to Council members.

ACTION 8/6.11.01 – Liz Davis
[Response attached to these minutes.]

60. Dates of next meetings

An extraordinary meeting would be organised in December (see minute 50.6). **Suggested date is Monday, 3 December 2001 at 16.30hrs – in place of the meeting of Young People's Learning Committee.** Other dates confirmed as 15 January 2002 and 5 March 2002.