

LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL GREATER MANCHESTER

Minutes of the fourteenth meeting of the LSC Greater Manchester Council held on Tuesday, 4 March 2003, at Arndale House, Arndale Centre, at 16.00 hrs.

Present:

Members	Anthony Goldstone Rachael Charlton Liz Davis Pauline Green Abdul Jabbar John Merry Kath Rigby David Seddon Michele Sutton Mollie Temple Chris Woodcock	Chair Executive Director (ED)
Observers	Nigel Burke - GO North West Hannah Roberts – Connexions Service Fiona Mellett – Chamber Business Enterprises	
In attendance:	Jane Bracewell, Director of Quality Improvement (DQI) Andrew Harrison, Director of Finance and Systems (DFS) Claire Humphrey (for Ian Lever for part of meeting) Ian Lever, Director of Strategy and Planning (DSP) Debra Woodruff, Director of Operations (DO) Jo Wiggans, Assistant Director, Open University North West (for agenda item 3)	
Clerk to the Council	Jean Johnson	
Apologies	Richard Guy Richard Hurst Alan Manning David Page Ray Short Linda Tomlinson – Job Centre Plus	

The chairman welcomed all members to the meeting and congratulated Abdul Jabbar on the birth of his daughter.

156. Minutes of 7 January 2003 meeting

The minutes of the 7 January 2003 meeting were **accepted** as an accurate record and signed.

157. Matters arising

Matters arising were covered by paper 15/2003 which was taken as read.

157.1 Minute 142.2 page 2 – Knowledge Capital – ED reported that the LSC's preference for the initiative to be extended across Greater Manchester had been discussed at a meeting of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) and had been supported.

157.2 Minute 142.3 page 2 – Wigan and Leigh College – Chair reported that he and the ED had met with the college principal that day to discuss the way forward. They would be attending a meeting of the college board.

Chair informed Council that he was attending meetings of college governing bodies and that Council members would be invited to those and other appropriate meetings in their areas in due course.

157.3 Minute 143.6 page 4 – Annual Plan 2003-04 – Claire Humphrey, on behalf of Ian Lever, confirmed that the plan had been circulated to Council members. The plan would be submitted to national office by e-mail on 7 March, with a hard copy to follow by 21 March. Council members were encouraged to send in any further comments within that timescale.

158. The Future of Higher Education White Paper – Implications for the Post-16 Sector

158.1 On behalf of Ian Lever, Claire Humphrey introduced paper 16B/2003.

158.2 In discussion the following issues were raised:

- With respect to the target of 50% of 18-30 year olds having participated in higher education by the end of the decade, at what point would participation be measured? How were schools and FE colleges counting those who went on to HE and were those who went out of the region to study included? ED said that individual institutions monitored student destinations and that participation would be measured from the HE end.
- The definition of HE would need to be widened as, under the new proposals, FE colleges would have a major role to play in the delivery of foundation degree courses.
- With regard to the proposal for a Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance which had been developed by the University of Salford and MMU, CH confirmed that all FE and HE providers would be included.
- In order for the targets to be achieved, it would be necessary to concentrate on areas where there were the lowest levels of participation. It was important for the Council to have the latest statistics on participation at local authority level so it could focus on where the biggest gaps were. Those areas needed new strategies to encourage participation in HE. ED confirmed that this would be in the local plans.

- Issues around the contribution FE colleges made to progression needed to be considered, particularly the work being done by Excellence Challenge and how AimHigher would affect that and how Excellence Challenge work fitted into the P4P plan.

158.3 Council **noted** the main themes of the white paper and the need for the LSC to support the delivery of the key developments. They **agreed** that officers should continue to explore and support the proposal for a Strategic Alliance.

ACTION: Strategy team to take forward, bearing Council's comments in mind.

159. Partnerships for Progression (P4P)

159.1 Chair invited Jo Wiggans, Assistant Director, Open University North West and Chair of Partnerships for Progression Greater Manchester Operations Group, to give a presentation on the P4P Sub-regional Plan for Greater Manchester. The plan had been circulated as paper 16/2003.

159.2 JW's presentation outlined the GM Partnership for P4P, its governance, its target groups and proposed activities under the different strands of its work: raising awareness; information, advice and guidance; preparation for HE study and raising aspirations and motivation.

159.3 In discussion the following issues were raised:

- The need to link work on widening participation with economic development and regeneration plans, including neighbourhood renewal activity throughout Greater Manchester.
- P4P would build on work already done by the universities on routes into the community
- It was not completely clear yet how the re-branding of P4P, Excellence in Cities and Excellence Challenge as AimHigher would affect existing activities. Excellence Challenge would be funded until 2006
- Plans for widening participation needed to fit in with other local strategies, for example raising standards in schools, working with local communities on continuing education, new deal.

Council **received** the paper noting that it would have to come back on these matters in the future.

Chair thanked Jo Wiggans for her presentation.

160. Overview of School Sixth Form Provision in Greater Manchester

160.1 Director of Quality Improvement introduced circulated paper 17/2003. She drew attention to annex 1 comprising a summary of local activity to date, annex 2, comprising base line information on learner numbers and financial allocations, and annex 3 summarising the latest available inspection findings for each school sixth form. She invited questions or comments.

160.2 In discussion the following points were made:

- Ofsted was responsible for the inspection of school sixth forms
- Although the information in annex 3 was the latest published information, some of it could be six or seven years out of date. However, the area teams were aware of changes.
- The strategic area review would look at issues of duplication of provision. From 1 April 2003, the LSC would have powers to recommend changes to sixth form provision. Under its new powers the LSC had to consult local School Organisation Committees on any proposed re-organisations, but did not need their unanimous approval, as local authorities had in the past.
- LSC Greater Manchester had set up a network of head teachers which met with LSC staff and LEA colleagues to discuss issues affecting school sixth forms.
- The impact of area wide inspections on sixth forms should be emphasised.

Council **noted** the report.

161. Employer Training Pilot Update

161.1 Director of Operations introduced circulated paper 18/2003 giving an update on the Employer Training Pilot. She drew attention to para 11 onwards on the extension of the pilots to other LSCs and the extension of the existing pilots to August 2004. Comparison of the tables in para 7 gave an indication of the time taken to get employers signed up to the pilots. The results raised issues relating to basic skills. In the first year of the pilot it had been difficult to get employers and employees to sign up to separate basic skills qualifications, although those working towards level 2 qualifications received basic skills support. In the second year of the pilot it was hoped to market basic skills in a different way as 'business finance' or 'business English'. Para 13 of the paper listed new minimum level and higher level performance for 03/03 for submission to the DfES. The position would be clear within the next two weeks. The pilots would make a significant contribution towards achieving LSC Greater Manchester's basic skills and level 2 targets, as well as the targets for engaging with employers. The contact with employers also gave us the opportunity to prepare more employers to take part in the modern apprenticeship scheme.

Council **received** the report and noted the progress made and the performance levels for the extension of the ETP.

162. Review of Work of the Strategy and Planning Directorate

162.1 Ian Lever introduced his report on the Strategy and Planning Directorate circulated as paper 19/2003. The report was the second in a series of reports on the work of the different directorates. He invited questions and comments.

162.2 In answer to a question from a Council member on whether the one full-time and one part-time staff members dealing with Equal Opportunities would be reviewed, DSP said that the programme was under way to make sure that Equal Opportunities was embedded in all the LSC's operations. The EO staff played a key role in ensuring that everyone across the organization was able to fulfil the various aspects of the LSC's role in Equal Opportunities. It was likely that the reshaping exercise would have an effect.

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162.3 A Council member expressed concern about some of the comments in the draft review document. ED drew attention to para 54 of her report on the meeting of GM College Principals Group which had agreed the way forward. DSP said that the document would form a useful basis for the national strategic area reviews starting in April. He acknowledged the difficulties with the draft report, but felt that, on balance, it had been a useful piece of work containing accurate information on the local economy and demography. More information was being collected from colleges and providers to ensure that any concerns would be met in the future.

Council **noted** the review of the strategy and planning directorate.

163. Chair's Report

163.1 Chair drew attention to para 9 of his report announcing his appointment as a member of the newly formed Modern Apprenticeship Task Force. It was a great opportunity for LSC Greater Manchester to be involved.

163.2 Re para 1, chair reported that he and the ED had met Nigel Burke (GONW) and Hannah Roberts (Connexions) that afternoon to discuss the potential for holding local events building on the success of the NW Festival of Skills/SkillCity. The ED was working on proposals resulting from the meeting.

163.3 Chair reported to Council that, while SkillCity had been a great success, there had been a shortfall in the national final figures which did not have any bearing on the work done in the region. In answer to a question from a Council member, ED confirmed that the event had been evaluated on how it had achieved its aims and she would circulate a summary if it was feasible.

ACTION - ED

Council **received** the report.

164. Executive Director's Report

The report (paper 20/2003) was taken as read.

164.1 Executive Director drew attention to the following areas:

- Paras 7, 8, 9, 52, *Success for All* was fundamental to transforming the LSC's relationship with its provider base. Discussing its implications would be on the agenda at one of the strategy days.
- Para 18, Jane Bracewell and Ian Lever were leading a team to devise an allocations strategy for the new Local Intervention and Development (LID) fund, setting out priorities for achieving our aims. She would report progress at the next meeting.
- Paras 23, 25 and 29 - Participation in school sixth forms had increased by 3.4% and in FE colleges by more than 5%. However there had been a reduction in participation in work-based learning of at least 4.3%. Addressing this was a key priority for LSC Greater Manchester.

- Para 41 – The LSC had withdrawn its support for Wigan and Leigh College’s £22m capital project and was working with the college on its accommodation strategy and wider 14-19 issues in the borough.
- Para 57 – Tameside College had been awarded full CoVE status.
- Para 59 – Notification from DfES of whether the Manchester post Inspection action plan had been approved or needed further work was still awaited.
- Para 76-78 – Annex 2 showed national data on participation and achievement rates in Greater Manchester and our performance relative to other local LSCs. ED requested that Council members should keep that information confidential as some of it was estimated and needed developing further. The focus had been on getting information at a national level to give an early indication of whether the LSC was making progress. The Audit Committee was anxious to continue to develop local performance targets and had concerns about the validity of the national data. They had requested that we should push for it to be available at local authority district level. ED assured Council members that LSC Greater Manchester was aware of which areas to prioritise as being the most deprived.

164.2 ED also reported on difficulties with a major local college arising from the ISR and final funding claim audit and the college’s significant growth in English as a Second Language (ESOL) provision. National LSC colleagues were involved, as auditors were appointed nationally, and were trying to help resolve the difficulties. The college had registered a complaint of institutional racism and breaches of the Disability Discrimination Act in the audit process. This was being dealt with by the LSC’s solicitors. LSC Greater Manchester was doing its best locally to move forward. Council members might have the issues brought to their attention and should refer any queries back to the executive team. The college had raised useful points which needed to be examined as the LSC moved forward to new funding arrangements. Following the publication of *Trust in FE*, a fundamental review of planning and funding arrangements was taking place. Under the proposed new arrangements funding would be against delivery of development plans.

164.3 Council members commented on the audit burden on FE colleges and, while acknowledging that public money had to be accounted for, the need to ensure that the costs of auditing did not exceed the amount of money involved.

Council **received** the report.

165. Finance Director’s Report

165.1 Finance Director introduced his report (paper 22/2003). The forecast for the year-end was an underspend of £64K on a total budget of £5.573 million. This was due to redeployment of staff into ESF and ETP work and not employing extra staff. Since writing the report he had been notified that next year’s budget would be £5.4 million. While this appeared less than the current year’s budget, this was accounted for by some adjustments which included the expectation that we would be able to charge salaries in specified areas to the programme budgets. No inflation increases for pay or non-pay costs were included in the budget. The results of the re-shaping exercise would have some effect during the year. A paper setting out the admin budget in detail would be presented to the next meeting of Council. Director of Finance and Corporate

Services confirmed that, with £200K taken out of the programme budget for salaries, there would be less money for delivery.

Council **received** the report.

166. Reports from Advisory Committees

166.1 Adult Learning Committee – Chair of Adult Learning Committee reported on the 24 February 2003 meeting. The meeting had been held at the Link Learning Centre at Oldham College and committee members had had the opportunity to look at the center which is a joint venture between Oldham College, the local authority, library service, private providers and the voluntary sector. Ufl hubs had been discussed and the committee had noted the good inspection results from 2 of the hubs and the support being given to the third hub to improve its performance. The committee had discussed progress of the Employer Training Pilot (ETP). She tabled a brochure Link Learning Centres, and noted that the committee had remarked on the lack of acknowledgment of LSC Greater Manchester's funding role.

ED confirmed that the requirement for recognition of LSC Greater Manchester funding would be written into all new contracts.

166.2 Audit Committee – ED, on behalf of David Page, drew Council's attention to (i) the committee's concerns in relation to performance targets about the reliability of the LSC's databases and (ii) its proposals for local LSC Greater Manchester targets. She confirmed that local targets were included in the local plan. Council would receive regular reports against those targets in the next financial year.

Council **received** the minutes of the 4 February 2003 meeting.

166.3 Equal Opportunities External Advisory Group – Chair of EOEAG reported on the 25 February meeting. The meeting had discussed:

- The launch of the Equality and Diversity Strategy on 3 April 2003 at the Renaissance Hotel by Lord Herman Ousely, former Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality. Council members were invited to note the event in their diaries. Invitations would be issued shortly.
- The evaluation of the work of the advisory group. A questionnaire would be sent to Council members.
- Tameside College's presentation on its work on the differences in achievement levels between boys and girls in ethnic minority groups.
- The consultation on a single equality body.

Chair thanked AJ for his work with the group. Council supported the suggestion that an article on LSC Greater Manchester's Equality and Diversity strategy should be prepared for the local or national LSC bulletin.

ACTION: Ian Lever

167. Any other business

167.1 Chair invited Council to consider whether to support in principle the proposal contained in the circulated letter from Manchester Enterprises, Chamber Business Enterprises and Manchester Chamber of Commerce and Industry to Chair of the North West Development Agency, that the Small Business Service in Greater Manchester should be delivered via a single contract. ED confirmed that the proposal had the support of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA).

Council **supported** the proposal in principle.

168. Dates of next meetings

Chair confirmed that the next meetings of Council would be on **Tuesday, 6 May 2003** at 16.00 hrs and **Tuesday, 10 June** at a time to be notified closer to the meeting.

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