

MINUTE NUMBER 05/435 TO 05/445

**MINUTES OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL
GREATER MERSEYSIDE MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY, 24 MAY 2005
AT TITHEBARN HOUSE**

PRESENT: Roger Hoyle (Chair), Elaine Bowker (Executive Director), Heather Akehurst, Kath Boullen, Dr Martin Carey (from Item 05/439), John Firr, Elaine Owen (from Item 05/436), Dr Maureen Williams, Phil Round, Brian Rourke

APOLOGIES: Gordon Burns, Sue Carmichael, Claire Dove, Cllr Richard Marbrow, Cllr John Swain, Sir George Sweeney

OBSERVERS: Nigel Burke (GONW), Peter Fletcher (BLGM)

APOLOGIES: Margaret Woods (Jobcentre Plus), Kieran Gordon (Connexions)

IN ATTENDANCE: David Brennan; Marie Brookfield (Secretariat Manager), Kirsty Evans, Michael McDermott, Joyce Wildman (Secretariat Officer)

APOLOGIES: Sue Wood

05/435 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

Roger Hoyle welcomed Brian Rourke to his first Council meeting as a new Member. He also informed Members that Claire Dove's brother had sadly passed away and that he would send condolences from the Council.

He advised Members that George Sweeney had retained his position as member of the National Council, as a special advisor to the LSC, and, in his absence, offered congratulations.

Roger referred to the recent results of the Employee Perception Survey and commented on how this had identified significant improvements since the last survey. Further explanation of the findings of the survey would be made to Council later in the meeting.

He updated Members of developments with the Northern Way.

He also updated Members on discussions held at the recent Regional Management Board meeting on 19 May 2005, particularly with regard to allocations for 2005/06 and rebasing issues.

He requested Members to ensure that their Annual Register of Interest forms had been returned to Marie Brookfield.

At this point in the meeting the Chair was advised that the meeting was not quorate. Following brief discussion, those Members present AGREED to continue with the meeting and, if necessary, seek approval from absent Members for any decisions which were taken.

Elaine Owen joined the meeting.

05/436 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 APRIL 2005

The minutes were AGREED for signature by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

05/437 SUMMARY OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 APRIL 2005

The Summary was AGREED for signature by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

05/438 MATTERS ARISING

05/431, Executive Director's Report. Elaine Bowker updated Members on the situation regarding the 04/05 finance clawback. She advised Members that issues had arisen relating to the Birkenhead Sixth Form College clawback and, following discussion between the College Principal, LSC Greater Merseyside and the Regional Finance Manager, it was clear that the College's outturn would be greater than anticipated, the original clawback had been reduced. There had been no major issues identified with the remaining FE clawback.

Martin Carey joined the meeting

The Chair advised the meeting that, with the arrival of Martin Carey, the meeting was now quorate.

05/439 StAR

David Brennan explained to Members the recommendations from each of the recent Reviews as follows:

Liverpool – the consultation process had identified some issues and lessons had been learned on procedures and mechanisms. The options in the Borough had been i) Structured Collaboration, ii) Sixth Form Centre, or iii) Independent Sixth Form/School. The feedback from the general public and Stakeholders had been overwhelmingly in favour of Option 1 (Structured Collaboration). Therefore, the recommendation to Council was for Structured Collaboration. It was felt, however, that there would need to be some caveats attached in adopting this Option, with robust monitoring mechanisms established.

In response to a question, David Brennan advised that, in order to ensure that Liverpool supported the Structured Collaboration option, schools should work

closely with the LSC following a clear framework of guidance and performance monitoring. He felt that full Collaboration would not be in place until September 2006 with clear outcomes being evident during Summer 2008.

Dave also advised Members that, in Liverpool, a framework for monitoring and evaluation had been agreed by Stakeholders and a report would be produced shortly on progress during 2004/05.

Several Members expressed their concern that Option 1 was a 'no change' option which might not be the best solution for Liverpool. They felt that guaranteed improvement was required for young people/learners in this area. David Brennan commented that, though the clear targets set by the LSC and LEA it was expected that improvements would be seen.

Elaine Bowker stressed that Option 1 was not a 'no change' option. She confirmed that she, and her SMT, would be meeting with Colin Hilton on a six weekly basis and would be working very closely with both Colin and the City Council to ensure improvement – should the proposals be implemented.

Roger supported the comments of Elaine Bowker but, having noted the concerns of Members regarding the preferred option for Liverpool, suggested that collaboration be supported in principle pending further supporting information.

Members AGREED to support Option 1 for Liverpool pending further information and evidence on the preparation for collaboration being made available for consideration. Elaine agreed to bring the evaluation framework, which had already been set up, to the next meeting for Members consideration.

Action: Elaine Bowker

Sefton – Consultation process went well with mixed feedback from both the public and the Stakeholders on the options being consulted. Four areas in the North of the Borough had expressed their preference for Structured Collaboration, whilst the preferred option of Stakeholders for South Sefton had been for a new Sixth Form Centre (letters had been received from the Archdiocese which had been signed by seven Head Teachers and the LEA all expressing support for a new Sixth Form Centre). One key stakeholder was opposed to this Option. The recommendation for Sefton would, therefore, be to progress a new Sixth Form Centre.

St Helens – Consultation went well with mixed feedback. The LEA in particular had expressed the need for the LSC to drive change. The LSC would now look to implement Structured Collaboration across all 3 areas and, in addition, recommended i) a phased approach to 14-16 Centres, ii) further development of the 'Gateway' approach.

Roger Hoyle summarised the recommendations for Members as follows:

Liverpool – Structured Collaboration;

Sefton – A new Sixth Form Centre in the south of the borough. A proposal supported by the LEA;
St Helens – no additional action at the present time.

The proposals were agreed.

David Brennan left the meeting.

(Brian Rourke declared an interest in these discussions). Elaine advised Members that in relation to the Sefton proposals there had been informal consultation. The next stage would be formal consultation prior to submission to the Secretary of State. There would be further opportunities to comment on the process.

Referring to St Helens, Elaine reminded the meeting that Structured Collaboration had been proposed in each of the three areas. Schools were similar and currently performing quite well. Members accepted this option.

Lynn Deacon joined the meeting.

05/440 Employee Perception Survey

Elaine Bowker provided Members with a background to the recent Employee Perception Survey, explaining that the last survey had taken place two years ago and had identified some poor results for Merseyside. She was delighted to say that the 2005 survey had been more positive.

Lynn Deacon outlined the findings of the survey. She commented on the event held for staff to enable them to review the findings and take forward the issues they identified as most important.

Members commented that, from the responses received to the survey, equality and diversity, quality of work and specific regional issues required further exploration. They also enquired why there had been such a change in responses. Elaine Bowker agreed to compile a summary for Members which outlined the reasons/areas of improvement. **Action: Elaine Bowker**

Roger thanked Lynn for her presentation and she left the meeting.

Mike McDermott left the meeting.

05/441 Executive Director's Report

Elaine Bowker informed Members of issues which had arisen at Widnes and Runcorn College regarding the Principal, she reminded them that similar issues had also occurred recently at Halton College – both Colleges are in the same borough. She assured Members that the LSC had been, and would continue to be, very closely engaged in managing these issues alongside the relevant Governing Bodies.

Referring to her Report, she briefed Members on budgets and funding.

Work Based Learning 04/05 - she advised Members that in 04/05 the NW Region had overspent by almost £5m. Greater Merseyside had been identified as a model of good practice with less than a 1% overspend.

FE- a £2.5m recovery had been successfully made with only few issues being raised. The Council congratulated the excellent work of the Team in managing a difficult situation very well.

2005/06 - there would be a 2.5% increase in WBL budgets, however, policy changes were not yet known. In FE, there was a £5m gap between available funds and providers' requests, funding of certain 'other provision' would be reduced - safeguards had been implemented for Skills for Life.

All colleges had been reminded that they would need to continue to change their provision/delivery to draw down LSC funding and, in light of recent funding changes, the coming year would be difficult.

Members were also informed that:

- LSC Greater Merseyside was centrally involved with the development of the Sub Regional Partnership (SRP) Regional Development Plan (written by the LSC);
- Sub Regional Partnerships were now close to signing the Memorandum of Intent (MOU) with the North West Development Agency (NWD A).

She advised Members that the remainder of her Report was for their information.

05/442 Feedback from Advisory Committees

Young Persons Advisory Committee – the last meeting had been held on 11 May 2005. Discussions had revolved around StAR in Knowsley, Sefton and Liverpool.

Adult Advisory Committee - this had been rescheduled to take place on 15 June 2005.

05/443 Updates from Observer Organisations

Jobcentre Plus – there were no updates to be reported.

Connexions – there were no updates to be reported.

Business Link North West – there were no updates to be reported.

05/444 Any Other Business

Elaine Bowker drew the meeting's attention to an addendum to the papers which related to Halton College's Business Strategy and Business Case. As it had not been possible to obtain a full appraisal of the College's Estate prior to the meeting and consideration at the Council's July meeting would be too late, the Chair suggested that a small sub-group be compiled to take this forward. Members AGREED to this suggestion and it was AGREED that the Group should consist of Roger Hoyle, Elaine Bowker, plus one other Council member (yet to be determined).

05/445 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the LSC Greater Merseyside Council would be held on 19 July 2005.