

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Date 2 May 2006
Subject Council Meeting
Location Tithebarn House
Time 4.00 pm
LSC office Greater Merseyside
Publication intent Internal

Present

Council: Roger Hoyle (Chair), Elaine Bowker, Heather Akehurst, Sue Carmichael, Elaine Owen, Phil Round, Brian Rourke, John Swain, George Sweeney,
Observers: Kieran Gordon (Connexions),
In attendance: Marie Brookfield, Alan Harrison, Peter Kent, Sue Price, Lorna Rukin (National Office), Siobhan Saunders, Joyce Wildman (Minutes).

Apologies

Council: Kath Boullen, Gordon Burns, Martin Carey, Claire Dove, John Firr, Richard Marbrow, Maureen Williams.
Observers: Jackie Mason(JCP), Nigel Burke, Peter Morton (BLGM).
In attendance: Kirsty Evans, Dave Jones (Acting Principal Widnes and Runcorn Sixth Form College), Mike McDermott, Simon Pierce, Sue Wood.

Item 1. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

1.1 Welcome

Roger Hoyle welcomed members to an additional meeting which would consider the full merger proposal submission from Halton College and Widnes and Runcorn Sixth Form College.

He welcomed back Heather Akehurst who had been on maternity leave and introduced Lorna Rukin, from National Office, Peter Kent and Siobhan Saunders, Chairs of Halton College and Widnes and Runcorn Sixth Form College respectively, and Alan Harrison, interim Principal of Halton College. Roger informed members that, as from Friday, 28 April, Alan had also been appointed to interim Principal for Widnes and Runcorn Sixth Form College – following the current Acting Principal obtaining a new external appointment.

Roger proposed that, following the briefing on the proposal, colleagues in attendance from the Colleges should remain in the meeting. He reminded them, however, that only Council members would be able to comment on its contents.

**Item 2. CONSIDERATION OF FULL MERGER PROPOSAL SUBMISSION
FROM HALTON COLLEGE AND WIDNES AND RUNCORN SIXTH FORM
COLLEGE**

- 2.1 Roger reminded Council that the purpose of the meeting was to consider the full merger proposal from the two colleges and he handed the meeting over to Elaine Bowker to provide the background and briefing on the proposal.
- 2.2 Elaine circulated a Financial Summary briefing which provided a condensed version of financial information contained within the proposal.
- 2.3 She reminded members that they had received all the information contained within the proposal at a previous meeting, at which they had expressed their support. She assured members that there had been extensive consultation on the proposed merger and advised that a great deal of support from Schools (11-18), Chief Executive and leader of the local Council, both MPs in the Borough and, most importantly, both Corporations were fully supportive.
- 2.4 Elaine advised Council that there had, initially, been concerns raised by staff at Widnes and Runcorn Sixth Form College and also a campaign against the merger by an ex-teacher but, in the main, there had been a great deal of support for the proposed merger.
- 2.5 She requested Council consider whether the proposal met the Learning and Skills Council's criteria for re-organisation and whether they wished to recommend the proposal to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills. The aim would be to dissolve Widnes and Runcorn Sixth Form College (a type B dissolution) and that all business would be taken over by Halton College. Following public consultation, the proposed name for the merged College's would be Riverside College Halton.
- 2.6 Elaine commented that this would be an exciting opportunity which would bring together the strengths of both Colleges.
- 2.7 Sue Price advised Council that both she and Elaine had worked hard to ensure the support of the Region and John Korzeniewski had expressed his full support for the proposal. She advised that the LSC was committed to supporting Halton College through the process although, at present, no figure had been set for the financial support which would be required.
- 2.8 The following questions and concerns were raised by Council (John Swain declared an interest in discussions):
 - the welfare of disaffected staff from Widnes and Runcorn Sixth form College upon completion of the merger – *Alan Harrison assured Council that staff attitudes were changing as more information became available to them and their initial concerns that academic focus of Widnes and Runcorn would be lost and issues concerning terms and conditions of service had been eased. Siobhan Saunders*

commented that, now Alan had been introduced to staff as the new Interim Principal, this had also helped to ease staff's concerns;

- *Would projected capital projects still take place? – Elaine advised that there were no outstanding Capital projects. Any new requests for Capital Investment would be considered – a great deal of discussion had already taken place on the proposed rebuilding of the Kingsway site;*
- *Why were the only student comments received from the student Council at Widnes and Runcorn Sixth Form College and relating to pastoral care? – Alan Harrison assured members that there was already a strong pastoral care system in place in both colleges. The student council had submitted a response on behalf of the students – which had been a mix of positive and negative. No negative comments had been received from students from Halton College. Sue Price commented that positive individual responses had also been received;*
- *How would Colleges support Schools to work together on 14-19 Implementation Plan? – Alan Harrison commented that there were already very strong partnerships with School and they would continue to work together to support the initiative. He felt that, through the very positive and 'joined up' thinking, links would only get stronger;*
- *What links would be established with HE/Aim Higher? – Alan Harrison advised that this was an area where he would wish to strengthen provision to enable students to progress through a local pathway;*
- *What links would be developed with private business? – Alan Harrison commented that the College would need to consider how to improve its WBL links, whilst there were strong links already in place, further development would be required;*
- *How had the proposed new name been determined? – Alan Harrison advised that a number of working groups had been set up and also consideration had been given to models used by other Colleges. All necessary Searches had been completed on the proposed name. He felt that this would promote a better image whilst retaining the local link.*

2.9 In recognition of the hard work involved, Council members congratulated everyone involved in putting the merger proposal together.

2.10 Peter Kent advised the meeting that the Halton Corporation were fully supportive of the proposed merger and felt that this would be a new and exciting prospect for learners and employers in the Borough. He acknowledged the support offered by the LSC regarding financial support and commented that it was comforting to have the full support of the Council. He expressed his thanks to Alan Harrison for leading the process so far.

Siobhan Saunders agreed with the above comments and expressed her thanks to Dave Jones.

- 2.11 Roger thanked members for their comments and asked for a show of hands in favour of the merger. **ALL MEMBERS PRESENT WERE IN AGREEMENT OF THE PROPOSED MERGER.**
- 2.12 Elaine advised members that the file would now be forwarded to the Secretary of State for her consideration, and hopeful approval, of the merger. If the merger proposal was successful, the new College would open in August 2006.
- 2.13 Roger thanked all those present for attending, especially colleagues from both Colleges, and he requested the Chairs to convey Council's thanks to their respective Governing Bodies for their assistance and support with this proposal.

Alan Harrison, Peter Kent and Siobhan Saunders left the meeting.

Item 3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 APRIL 2006

- 3.1 Minutes - the minutes were AGREED as an accurate record for signing by the Chair.
- 3.2 Summary – the Summary was AGREED as accurate for signing by the Chair.
- 3.3 Matters arising – there were no matters arising

Item 4. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

- 4.1 The next full Council meeting would be held on 23 May 2006 at 4pm at Tithebarn House.

Meeting chair	Roger Hoyle
Minute taker	Joyce Wildman
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