

(IN CONFIDENCE)

MINUTE NUMBER 03/281 TO 03/295

**LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL GREATER MERSEYSIDE
COUNCIL WORKSHOP
14 AND 15 MAY 2003
VILLAGE HOTEL, BROMBOROUGH, WIRRAL**

14 MAY

PRESENT: Roger Hoyle (Chair), Paul Holme (Executive Director), Kath Boullen, Gordon Burns, Sue Carmichael, Claire Dove MBE, Dr Martin Carey, Cllr Richard Marbrow, Geoffrey Piper, John Swain, Dr Maureen Williams

IN ATTENDANCE: Elaine Bowker, David Brennan, Rob Burn, Richard Merritt, Sue Wood, Bob Cooney and Vicky Sinclair (Facilitators)

Workshops only: Kirsty Evans, Claire Sessford, Bryan Wood, Paul Tinsley, Sheila Adams, Edith Graham, Julie Foster, Hilary Venney, Jacqui Burns.

APOLOGIES: David Atkin, John Firr, Heather Hardcastle, Sir George Sweeney

OBSERVERS: Kieran Gordon (Greater Merseyside Connexions), George Maguire (Employment Service)

03/281 CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

Roger Hoyle welcomed Members to what was his first meeting as a newly appointed Chair. The Chair expressed his pleasure on his appointment and his hopes of working with Council colleagues and the Executive to achieve the vision of the Learning and Skills Council. Roger also thanked Claire Dove for her efforts as temporary Chair during the lengthy appointment process and Geoffrey Piper in his continuing work as Deputy Chair.

Welcomes were also extended to Maureen Williams, as a newly appointed Council Member, George Maguire who was attending as deputy for Brian Kearsley and Bob Cooney and Vicky Sinclair who would be supporting the Council in the absence of Clare Caffrey due to illness. Best wishes were expressed to Clare for a speedy recovery.

(Geoffrey Piper arrived at this point.)

The Chair introduced the items and objectives for discussion and agenda for the next two days.

(Claire Dove arrived at this point.)

03/282 OVERVIEW OF ACHEIVEMENTS

The Executive Director presented a personal overview of achievements and areas of improvement over the last twelve months. Paul highlighted the fact that the organisation was again going through a process of change and stressed the need to involve our delivery and strategy partners in this process if the outcomes are to be successful. Members noted that relationships with partners were good.

(Richard Marbrow arrived at this point)

Members noted that the most important partnership challenge would be the regional one and that relationships with bodies such as the NWDA and NWLSCs would be crucial. Paul confirmed that regionally there were now regular meetings of LLSC Operations Directors and Strategy Directors attended by, himself Elaine Bowker and David Brennan.

In summary it was felt that LSCGM had had a good year, but that there was always room for improvement.

Roger thanked Paul for a thorough report and opened discussion. There was concern expressed that the lack of progress on the current NWDA/SBS Pilot Project did not reflect well on the NW as a whole, Paul confirmed that a full progress report on the Pilot would be presented to the next Council Meeting in June. There was also discussion concerning the current ethnic make-up of LSCGM staff and Members **AGREED** that a report from Sue Wood should follow at a future meeting. It was also **AGREED** that there would be some future discussion on the engagement of employers in achieving the objectives of the LSC.

(Martin Carey arrived at this point)

03/283 COUNCIL BRIEFINGS

The Chair welcomed Kirsty Evans who advised Members of the short series of breakout sessions based on the current work of departments within LSCGM.

Members split into three breakout groups to discuss with staff the latest developments around our operational objectives. Members **AGREED** that these sessions had been useful and informative and that the format should be repeated in the future. The Chair thanked LSCGM staff for their time and efforts on what were well planned sessions.

03/284 SETTING THE SCENE 2003/04

Members were given a series of updates from LSCGM Executives for information. Key issues were highlighted as:

- Delivery
- Relationships
- Policy and programme change
- Re-shaping of provision and the LSC

In particular note was taken of the future challenge of achieving delivery in the context of the current reshaping agenda. Members noted the possible implications on staff morale, particularly in the light of recent confirmation that there may be compulsory redundancies in future.

In summary the Executive Director felt that LSCGM was well placed to meet agenda but that this would be challenging.

Geoffrey Piper, Gordon Burns and George Maguire left the Meeting.

03/285 DINNER DISCUSSION WITH PETER HOLMES

The Chair introduced Peter Holmes from the National Chair's Office.

Peter thanked Roger for the invitation and the opportunity to meet GMLSC Members. Peter explained that the reason for his visit was to open up communication between National and Local Councils and to further discuss the role of Local Councils and issues of mutual support.

Discussion followed on the role of Local Councils and relationships between National and Local Councils. Particular areas of concern were:

- a) Lack of recognition of the differences between Local Councils, particularly in the case of Greater Merseyside, which has its own unique dynamics and issues.
- b) Members felt that there was a lack of trust and delegation of authority from National Council on certain issues especially in the cases of the larger and more capable Councils
- c) Lack of input to the National Agenda and lack of feedback from National Office to issues raised by Local Councils
- d) Implication that Local Council were simply Sub Committees of Council, in particular Members expressed disappointment over lack of consultation in the appointments procedure for the Chair.

Noted suggestion from Members that Peter Holmes could have an overview of Local Council Meeting dates and put issues of concern to National Council to them for discussion (proposals on a regional basis).

Members **AGREED** that the current timing and structure of Advisory Committees should be reconsidered to enable Members to take a more proactive role in the organisation.

The Chair thanked colleagues for attending the Workshop and for such stimulating discussion. Thanks were also expressed to Peter Holmes for his input and responding to the discussion openly and candidly.

15 MAY**PRESENT:**

Roger Hoyle (Chair), Paul Holme (Executive Director), Kath Boullen, Gordon Burns, Sue Carmichael, Claire Dove MBE, Dr Martin Carey, Cllr Richard Marbrow, John Swain, Dr Maureen Williams

IN ATTENDANCE:

Elaine Bowker, David Brennan, Richard Merritt, Sue Wood, Peter Holmes (Chairman's Office), Bob Cooney and Vicky Sinclair (Facilitators)

APOLOGIES:

David Atkin, John Firr, Heather Hardcastle, Sir George Sweeney

OBSERVERS:

Kieran Gordon (Greater Merseyside Connexions)

03/286**PLANNING 2003/04**

The Executive Director welcomed Members back, provided a brief summary of the previous day's discussion and introduced Dave Brennan who presented key issues for the organisation in planning for 2003/04. Members broke into three Breakout Sessions and reported back on three key questions/issues:

Strategic Leadership

Key issues re strategy formulation were discussed:

- Council should be involved at the earliest appropriate stage
- Council to be involved in consultation process Dave Brennan and Roger Hoyle to produce a short update paper for Council on strategy formulation process
- Strategic objectives should emphasise the Workforce Development agenda
- LSCGM needs to give further consideration to an entitlement statement

Challenges to the Executive

Key challenges were discussed:

- Locally there was a need to challenge National Office priorities if necessary
- Key Performance Indicators to be developed locally and there was a need for National Office to compare like with like in considering the performance of local Councils (benchmarking)
- The cycle of Council and Advisory Committee meetings need to be reconsidered to more actively engage in the challenges ahead

Securing Stakeholder Engagement

Key points discussed included:

- Rethinking of the consultation process for key documents was required, including more engagement with partners and stakeholders. This could include face to face events such as the recent Select Committee which it was felt worked well
- More larger scale events should be organised to give the opportunity for input
- Further discussion was required of the role of Members as possible focus of representation for stakeholders
- The successes of stakeholders should be celebrated to encourage a spirit of partnership in achievement

The Executive Director thanked Members for their views and Council **AGREED** that proposals for taking forward these issues would be discussed at a future meeting.

Peter Holmes left the meeting at this point and thanked Council Members for their views and for an open and lively dinner discussion the night before. Roger Hoyle thanked him for attending on behalf of the Council.

03/287 CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair again thanked Claire Dove for her role as Acting Chair during the process of appointing a new Chair. Council were reminded to complete the Declaration of Interest forms and of the invitation to attend the Local Council Members Ministerial Reception hosted by Margaret Hodge on 23 June 2003.

03/288 MINUTES AND SUMMARY OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes and summary were **AGREED** as a true and accurate record subject to some textual amendments and Council **AGREED** that Geoffrey Piper sign as Deputy Chair.

03/289 MATTERS ARISING

Council were updated on progress for recruiting a replacement to the Council for Veronica Laird. Sift Panel would meet on 19 May 2003 and interviews would take place on 16 June.

03/290 AREA WIDE INSPECTION

The Chair introduced Elaine Bowker who delivered a presentation updating Members on the draft Area Inspection Reports for St Helens and Wirral.

Key discussion was centred on the potential difficulties of engaging Local Authorities and LEAs in the change agenda due to the local elections and political sensitivities. Members **AGREED** that areas of priority needed to be recognised and plans should be made accordingly.

Discussion also included the role of advice and guidance in the whole 14 to 19 agenda. Members **AGREED** that more pressure should be placed on education providers to offer systematic, ongoing and comprehensive advice and guidance.

The Executive Director stressed that Council required challenging timetables in taking tasks forward in order to ensure that learner needs are met. These and other delivery tasks needed to be met whilst also considering the further pressures on staff of the reshaping agenda.

Council **AGREED** the plan and delegated final sign off to the Chair and Executive Director with further updates to come to future Council Meetings.

03/291 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Executive Director presented the report for discussion.

Council were asked for further volunteers to the Audit Committee and John Swain and Maureen Williams accepted the invitation.

Paul raised the issue of Council Members representation on the FRESA Stakeholder Group which was to be part of the Strategic Area Review process. Maureen Williams expressed an interest in volunteering to attend the Group. It was **AGREED** that the Chair and Executive Director would consult Council Members individually regarding involvement on this group.

Richard Marbrow requested that an endorsement of the Education Business Link proposal to budget via cohort size be noted and progress in this area be welcomed, but also questioned the importance of long term full cost funding.

The Executive Director updated Members on the NWDA/SBS Pilot and again advised that a full report would be delivered at the next meeting. Members also noted that Roger Hoyle would be attending his first North West Executive Directors' and Chairs' meeting on 16 May were this and other matters would be discussed.

03/292 FEEDBACK FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Audit

Feedback was postponed, as Geoffrey Piper was not present.

Young Peoples'

Noted that minutes had not yet been signed off and a report would be delivered to the next meeting.

Workforce Development

Elaine Bowker advised Members of John Firr's apologies and updated Members as requested.

Members noted that the group had met twice in a 2 week period and that the frequency of meetings reflected activity in this area. Members noted, however, that there had been problems achieving quorum for the group and volunteers were invited. John Swain advised of his interest in becoming a member of the group. Council also discussed the possibility of a 'strike out' system in the cases of lack of attendance.

03/293 UPDATES FROM OBSERVER ORGANISATIONS

Kieran Gordon tabled a short paper on behalf of Greater Merseyside Connexions. Members raised some questions regarding the calculation of figures in the report. Kieran advised that he would confirm these figures at a later date, but that they were calculated as requested by DfES.

(Claire Dove left the meeting.)

Members noted the positive feedback from the WBL Survey and **AGREED** that this should be communicated generally.

03/294 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Sue Carmichael advised members of a communication regarding an opportunity for further Equal Opportunities training and Members were encouraged to take up this offer.

Roger Hoyle thanked colleagues for an interesting, informative and positive workshop. Thanks were also conveyed to LSCGM staff who had input to the Breakout Sessions and those who had arranged and facilitated the event.

03/295 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would take place on 25 June 2003 at 4.00pm Tithebarn House.