

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

MINUTE NUMBER 05/425 TO 05/434

**MINUTES OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL GREATER MERSEYSIDE
MEETING
TUESDAY, 19 APRIL 2005
AT TITHEBARN HOUSE**

PRESENT: Roger Hoyle (Chair), Elaine Bowker (Executive Director), Kath Boullen, Gordon Burns, Dr Martin Carey, Sue Carmichael, Claire Dove, Pam Flynn, Elaine Owen, Sir George Sweeney, Dr Maureen Williams, Phil Round

APOLOGIES: Heather Aikhurst, Cllr Richard Marbrow, Cllr John Swain

OBSERVERS: Margaret Woods (Jobcentre Plus), Kieran Gordon (Connexions), Peter Morton (BLNW)

APOLOGIES: None

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

APOLOGIES: Sue Wood

05/425 CHAIRS OPENING REMARKS

Roger Hoyle welcomed members to the second meeting of 2005. He especially welcomed Michael McDermott to his first meeting as a member of the Senior Management Team and Margaret Woods (Observer) to her first meeting of 2005.

He requested members to complete their register of interest forms and hand them to either Marie Brookfield or Joyce Wildman by the end of the meeting.

Roger reminded members that, as an Election campaign was currently in progress, members needed to ensure that, as representatives of the LSC, they behaved in a specific manner and were aware that they could only attend, be involved in, or comment on, a limited number of events. He advised that Elaine Bowker or Marie Brookfield would be able to provide guidance if required.

He advised Members that the meeting would focus mainly on the outcomes of the Knowsley Area Review and the ED's Report – specifically issues relating to budget, both in year and next.

Roger informed Members that he had attended the following meetings/events since the last Council meeting:

Liverpool First Board – the meeting had discussed measures on health, especially the development of a 'non-smoking' City;

Business Skills North West Board – the meeting had considered engaging with Business Link and the issues which would arise from this. They had also considered the impact of the Northern Way on Business Link. Roger expressed his concern that this meeting lacked strategic focus and felt that an Executive Group should be formed to ensure that any issues raised were actioned - as the Group would be the main driver of the Regional Skills agenda.

Visit to Widnes and Runcorn College – he had visited the College campus in Runcorn and discussed the College's aspirations for developing the site.

Regional Management Board – the last meeting had been held in Preston where financial issues and rules of engagement had been the main issues discussed.

Meeting with Jack Stopforth – he had met with the Chief Executive of Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, who was also the Chair of LSC Cumbria. Mr Stopforth would also be meeting with Elaine Bowker in the near future.

Roger advised Members that Brian Rourke, Headteacher of Formby High School, had been appointed as a Council Member – he would replace David Atkin.

He reminded Members that, if they had not already done so, they needed to respond to Marie Brookfield with their availability for the North West Council Regional Conference, which would be held in Cumbria on 10 June.

05/426 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 FEBRUARY 2005

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

05/427 SUMMARY OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 FEBRUARY 2005

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

05/428 MATTERS ARISING

With reference to Minute 05/420, Executive Director's Report – specifically Integrated Children's Services, Elaine Bowker informed the meeting that she had attended DfES Priority Question sessions in both St Helens and Sefton. She commented that further work would be required in Liverpool and that she would be meeting with Steve Maddox, Chief Executive, Wirral LEA, to discuss issues further. The LSC had a good partnership with Knowsley and she advised that she would feedback to Council once all meetings had been held across all Boroughs.

05/429 OUTCOMES OF THE KNOWSLEY STRATEGIC AREA REVIEW (StAR)

David Brennan referred Members to the paper which outlined the Outcomes of the Knowsley 16-19 StAR and advised that the report had been taken, in draft format, to two key stakeholder groups in Knowsley prior to coming to Council. The stakeholder groups had been happy with the recommendations contained in the paper.

He recapped the process which had been undertaken in the Review and reminded Members that the Public Consultations had, in significant numbers, chosen option 1,

which had been recommended in the Paper. Technical data available also supported this option.

David highlighted that Knowsley had been the only area to obtain an Outstanding grade in their 14-19 Area Wide Inspection. However, he felt that there was room for further improvement around collaboration (16-19) and a case for a more robust structured management process.

In response to a comment relating to lack of parental comment and the implementation plan, David felt that it would be difficult to say whether further responses could have been obtained and confirmed that EDIMS would be built into target setting and monitoring methodologies. He agreed that Advice and Guidance would be independent.

David explained that:

- there would be rationalisation of Partnership Groups, with one new Group being formed from the previous two;
- a residential would be held on 6/7 May to discuss and consider, amongst other issues, how to achieve a better level of engagement with employers.

After consideration of all of the information contained within the Report, **Members AGREED to APPROVE Option 1 for Knowsley.**

05/430 POLICY UPDATES

Elaine Bowker made a presentation to Members which provided a brief update on her interpretation – not the LSCs final response - of recent Policy publications/documents and the implications these might have for the local office.

14-19 White Paper

This Paper had been in response to Tomlinson – though not all the recommendations from Tomlinson had been included. She felt that it had sufficient framework to allow for the development of a really exciting and challenging future – especially in post-16. LEAs and LSCs would share responsibility for provision. In response to a query, Elaine commented that the LSC must ensure that independent Advice and Guidance would be available to all young people to help guide them, and their parents, though the process and choices. She advised Members that she would ensure that they received a copy of the White paper for their information/reference.

Action: Marie Brookfield/Joyce Wildman

Skills White Paper

This Paper was aimed at equipping the UKs labour force with the skills for Global competitiveness and covered Employers, individual adults and Regional working. The Chair commented that there needed to be clarity of strategic direction and felt that the LSC would have a major responsibility for funding in this area.

Budget 2005

There would be £300m allocated to Education and Training in 2006/07, rising to £400m in 2007/08. Additional funding would be allocated to:

- Employer Training Pilots – though it was still unclear whether this would be in addition to monies already identified;
- Employer and Work Based Learning – over 2 years from April 2006;
- targeting those not in Education, Employment or Training Pilots – from April 2006.

Elaine commented that she would be most keen to pursue the latter of these three points.

Skills in England

This identified the volume of unfilled vacancies through the high proportion of people lacking basic skills, formal qualifications and technical skills. Birmingham, Manchester, London, Bradford, Leeds and Leicester had all been identified as BME CoVE areas. With regard to Sector Skills, the LSC needed to ensure that the right balance between employers and Sector Skills was maintained.

05/431 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Elaine advised Members that she would focus mainly on the budget information contained within her Report as, considering the occurring issues Nationally, Regionally and Locally, which changed daily, she felt that they should be kept informed of the current position.

She explained that, whilst the budget had increased, there was tremendous pressure on both Admin and Programme budgets.

With regard to the Admin budget (which runs on a Financial year) she felt that this had been well managed for 2004/05 – with a probable small underspend - but was uncertain what would be required of this budget for the coming year (2005/06). She explained the possible changes which could be made to the distribution of administrative funding and responsibilities. As Greater Merseyside's outturn would be virtually as planned, this would assist in securing its 05/06 admin budget but this would need to be managed very efficiently. She stressed that, as the Greater Merseyside office had already restructured its admin staff it was unlikely to be adversely affected by forthcoming changes.

Turning to the Programme budget (which runs on an Academic year) and specifically FE funding allocations. Elaine advised that, following on from information provided at the previous Council meeting, some FE Colleges would need to repay funds owing to underperformance in 2003/04 and 2004/05 – 3 Colleges (Southport, Birkenhead and Hugh Baird) disagreed with this assessment. Elaine expressed her concern that the clawback exercise would be carried out prior to the General Election.

David Brennan reminded Members that:

- budgets were calculated on an estimated outturn which was provided by Colleges in April 2004. Should these calculations be over estimated then the 2004/05 allocation would, therefore, be inflated;
- estimated outturns for 2005/06 had, in some instances, seen significant cases of underperformance.

Elaine advised Members that all Regions would be required to recover funds from under performing Colleges - £2.4m would be recovered on Merseyside alone. Colleges would be advised the following day of the amount to be recovered. She would personally be contacting the 3 Colleges who had disagreed with the figures to advise them of the final amount to be clawed back. Steve Dunmore, Regional Finance Manager had assured Elaine that the clawbacks would not adversely impact on any of the Colleges financial categories. She advised that any monies recouped would be put back into the Regional budget and any colleges who had over performed would be then be rewarded with a payment

The Chair noted Members concerns of the effect that the clawback might have on Colleges and assured them that he was actively pursuing an urgent response as to how the current situation arose. Members supported the Chair.

The Chair requested the Executive Director to provide a brief summary for Members on the outcomes – ensuring that the objectives of the exercise and its outcomes were clear. **Action: Executive Director**

The meeting considered the in-year position, as explained in Annex 2

Referring to 2005/06 budgets, Colleges would receive their indicative budgets the following week. Elaine advised that, in order to deliver to budget, reductions to aspects of the Adult provision would need to be made.

Pam Flynn left the meeting

David Brennan referred the meeting back to the Work Based Learning section of the EDs Report and advised that a number of significant Policy changes had been proposed. These could have a significant effect of budgets. He emphasised that the proposed changes would not be implanted prior to the General Election.

Elaine advised Members that an additional £38m had been identified nationally for WBL and felt that providers should receive their funding allocation in July. ALL providers would have their allocations by 16 May and that the LSC would work with Colleges to adjust their planning assumptions and guaranteed funding for 16-18, Skills for Life and 1st Level 2 qualifications. Not all non-priority Adult provision would not be funded – if it was not qualification focused. Adult Community Learning programme budgets had been safeguarded.

The Chair requested that these issues be discussed further at the next Council meeting.

Maureen Williams left the meeting

Members raised as an issue the level of funding for Schools compared to Colleges.

Elaine advised Members that the remainder of her Report was for information and was self explanatory.

05/432 Feedback from Advisory Groups

Adult Learning Advisory Group – Martin Carey advised that the Group had discussed Terms of Reference and under achievement in BME communities in Merseyside and the need to see movement in taking this forward. Elaine Bowker advised that, with regard to supporting BME, the LSC had commissioned some work – which would be fed into BME via Kirsty Evans – there had also been a test bed in this area.

Performance, Quality and Audit – Elaine Bowker informed members that this meeting had held a lively debate with staff from the PFA team and had requested that three pieces of work be undertaken, i) allocation, ii) benchmarking, iii) signing off of internal control. She advised that she had met with Jacqui Gratton and Heather Aikhurst to discuss PFA issues. She also advised that good attendance at the June meeting was essential as the Group would be reviewing the Internal Statement of Controls.

Young Peoples' Committee – this meeting had been postponed to May owing to the Chair's commitments to the forthcoming General Election.

05/433 Updates from Observer Organisations

GM Connexions

Members noted the update paper provided by Kieran Gordon. In response to a question, Kieran advised that Connexions were targeting NEET in the BME minorities and also in recruiting.

Business Link Greater Merseyside

Members noted the update paper provided by Peter Morton. He commented that some outstanding issues were being discussed with the LSC to ensure that a quality service continued to be delivered. He acknowledged the hard work of his team.

Jobcentre Plus

Members noted the comments from Margaret Woods. She advised that a more streamlined service would be created – by merging Jobcentre Plus and DWP. Consideration was also being given to Benefit Processing Centres.

05/434 Any other business

The Chair reminded Members that he was hoping to repeat the successful lunch time sessions, which had been held the previous year. He advised that dates for these sessions would be circulated shortly.

Action: Marie Brookfield

He also reminded Members that he would be holding his annual one to one meetings with each Member. He requested Marie Brookfield to action this on her return from leave. **Action: Marie Brookfield**