

(COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE)

MINUTE NUMBER: 01/146 TO 01/154

**MINUTES OF THE GREATER MERSEYSIDE
LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19 DECEMBER 2001 AT
THE THISTLE HOTEL, LIVERPOOL**

PRESENT: Jim Michie (Chair), Paul Holme (Executive Director), David Atkin, Kath Boullen, Gordon Burns, Martin Carey , Sue Carmichael, Claire Dove, Mike Doyle, John Firr, Veronica Laird, Richard Marbrow, Geoffrey Piper, George Sweeney

(OBSERVERS): Peter Fletcher (Greater Merseyside Enterprise Ltd)
Kieran Gordon (Connexions Partnership)
Brian Kearsley (Employment Service North West)
Jayne Wylde (Government Office for the North West)

IN ATTENDANCE: Elaine Bowker, David Brennan, Rob Burn, Clare Caffrey (Secretary to the Council), Kirsty Evans (Part), Richard Gummery (Part), Ernie Waller

APOLOGIES: Brian Davies, Heather Hardcastle
Nigel Burke (Government Office for the North West)
Esther Stewart (Employment Service North West)

01/146 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

Jim welcomed Ernie Waller as a guest to the meeting, in addition to Jayne Wylde, Kirsty Evans and Richard Gummery and reminded Council Members to complete and return declaration of interests and meeting standards forms.

Jim thanked Council Members for their commitment and attendance at meetings during the previous 12 months. He noted the willingness of Council Members to challenge and advise the Executive and the high value placed on the Executive and staff by Council Members, all of whom looked forward to the publication of the final Strategic Plan.

Jim requested that future presentations and material for Council Members used clear language and avoided acronyms to assist understanding.

01/147 MINUTES AND SUMMARY OF THE LAST MEETING

The Summary of the previous meeting was tabled. Members agreed the content of the minutes and summary of the meeting held on 28 November 2001 and they were signed by the Chair.

01/148 MATTERS ARISING

[01/137 Co-Financing]

The first meeting of the Co-financing Sub Group would take place in the new year and Claire, Gordon and Martin had volunteered to join it. The Group would consider its Terms of Reference at its first meeting and Council Members **AGREED:**

- a) the Terms of Reference should be circulated to all Members and if no objections were brought, the Group should adopt the Terms of Reference circulated

**[01/141 Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee
Feedback – 20 November meeting]**

A number of awareness sessions had taken place from which positive feedback from staff had been received at Council Members' attendance. Any Council Members who had not attended a previous session were encouraged to attend future sessions to be arranged to accommodate new staff joining GMLSC. Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) that when arranged, details of future sessions should be circulated to Council Members

01/149 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A declaration of interest was received from Veronica Laird, as a Governor of St Helens College.

Council Members noted the content of Paul's report and he highlighted the LSC Grant Letter 2002/03 from Estelle Morris to Bryan Sanderson setting out financial resources and objectives for the LSC.

LSC Grant Letter 2002/03

During a presentation from Rob Burn and discussion Council Members noted:

- a) the key LSC priorities identified in the letter for 2002/03 including 35 objectives and very challenging targets.
- b) in defining budget blocks the Grant Letter included cross cutting achievement areas and an outline of funding allocations

(Claire Dove arrived at this point)

- c) the emphasis placed on the LSC working effectively with key partners in each region
- d) the flexibility given to National LSC and that local Councils awaited details of their budget allocations. Draw down would be dependant on volume delivery for participation and achievement
- e) a higher than expected rate payable to 6th Form Colleges moving onto new national rates and that GMLSC should consider working closely with National Office as a pilot to provide an analytical opportunity re impact
- f) whilst provisional budgets had been allocated for post 16 provision for 2003/04, final allocations would depend on trends etc

2002 Meeting Dates

Council Members noted the dates and proposed future agenda items provided and were invited to put forward suggestions for additional agenda items. Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) to forward suggested items [*Please forward to the Secretary to the Council*]
- b) that an updated schedule should be included in all future meeting packs

Centres of Vocational Excellence (COVEs)

Council Members noted that Gordon and John were supporting Elaine to ensure proposals were driven by need.

Learning and Skills National Conference: 10 December

Geoffrey, George and Paul had attended the Conference. Council Members noted the key priorities from a speech given by Margaret Hodge and **AGREED**:

- a) GMLSC should work with other local Councils in the North West to hold a North West Local Learning and Skills Council “Engaging Business” event with a small group and that Paul should progress this with North West LSC Chairs
- b) GMLSC should submit proposals to Bryan Sanderson to enable Local Council Members to contribute towards national policy development
- c) the Council should receive a Marketing Strategy proposal for consideration at its March Meeting

01/150 STRATEGIC/BUSINESS PLANNING

Consultation – Key Themes

(Richard Marbrow left the meeting at this point)

Council Members received a presentation from Kirsty Evans and noted:

- a) GMLSC had mailed over 600 Consultation documents and questionnaires to organisations in addition to holding panel sessions on 4 themes of the Plan and 2 workshops with providers. This had resulted in 40 written responses (many from partnerships), 22 panel presentations and more than 80 workshop participants
- b) most responses received had broadly endorsed the work completed on the Strategic Plan

Kirsty highlighted the key themes during the consultation for each of the strategic objectives in the Strategic Plan, ie:

- Increasing participation and achievement of young people
- Increasing participation and achievement of adults
- Meeting the work force development and skills needs of employers
- improving the quality, relevance and coherence of local learning provision

A summary of consultation responses was made available to attendees

Social inclusion

Members noted a proposal for GMLSC to link its agenda to the Neighbourhood Renewal agenda and that a sub set of targets for young people and adults in the most “deprived” wards in Greater Merseyside should be established in addition to the ‘national’ targets in the Strategic Plan.

Whilst a number of Council Members welcomed the proposal they noted the need to ensure consideration of how achievement would be measured.

Sector Focus

David Brennan explained that the draft Strategic Plan's 16 sector approach had been reduced to 6 sectors to align it with those identified by the Mersey Partnership. GMLSC would be proactive in each of the sectors in engaging with organisations (work force development etc) to help sector growth whilst ensuring overall development of the workforce. During discussion Council Members highlighted:

- that whilst noting that "other" sectors were included, the SME sector was the growth sector on Greater Merseyside and that the business of many SMEs was cross sectoral in addition to many businesses not falling into a specific sector
- the distinctly different roles of the Mersey Partnership as a sector driven organisation and GMLSC's role in ensuring development opportunities for young people and adults

Paul reminded Council Members of GMLSC's broad remit and the need to identify a correct balance between overall support and the prioritisation of funds to be used in key sectors. Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) that David should report back to the Council on whether the balance proposed was appropriate

Supplier Capacity

A declaration of interest was received from Kath Boullen as Chief Executive of St Helens Chamber, a Work Based Training Provider.

David emphasized the need for GMLSC to reach out to groups whilst recognising and strengthening voluntary sector providers to address the participation agenda. Whilst emphasizing the positive impact expected in all sectors David recommended:

- a major programme of supplier development and collaboration.

During discussion Members noted potential sources of GMLSC funding to increase supplier capacity including the Standards Fund, the Local Initiative Fund and legacy funding.

Draft Strategic Plan/Targets 2002/05

David reported that many responses to the consultation had endorsed the development of district targets and recommended:

- that district level targets should not be included in the Strategic Plan but disaggregated with Greater Merseyside level targets once agreed, working with Learning Partnerships

(George Sweeney, Gordon Burns, David Atkin and Mike Doyle left the meeting at this point)

Structure of the Plan

Council Members noted information contained in their papers on Strategic Plan targets and that 4 strategic objectives were proposed bringing participation and achievement for young people and adults together. Each objective would be supported by 2 or more operational objectives. Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) the proposed structure of the Plan
- b) the need for GMLSC to ensure appropriate mechanisms were in place to facilitate the engagement of major employers

Targets

Council Members received a presentation from Richard Gummery and noted:

- data and processing were managed centrally by National Office
- no central database currently existed for information and a range of data sources were presently being used
- Local concerns regarding information, especially relating to work based learners

During discussion of young peoples' participation rates Council Members noted serious concerns from the Executive regarding the methodology used by National Office in setting targets and significant discrepancies between local and national figures for the number of 16-18 year olds on Greater Merseyside. In addition the overall levels of participation used by National Office for this group did not include 6th form students.

Council Members noted the baseline figure of 76% of 16-18 year olds in structured learning locally and the additional local number required of 5974 to meet the national target (representing 84%).

Acknowledging the reservations expressed, Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) that it would not be appropriate to agree specific targets until the base data had been rationalised
- b) that proposed targets should be brought to the February Council Meeting which both satisfied Coventry and were achievable

Planning

David described arrangements being finalised for the formal consultation of the Strategic Plan in January and February. Council Members noted GMLSC's proposals to ensure:

- an invitation for written responses from partners and stakeholders
- press coverage with local media, community and voluntary publications
- meetings with MPs with constituencies within the GMLSC geographical area
- support for all 6 Local Learning Partnerships to hold events for local stakeholders
- consultation with employers throughout Greater Merseyside, noting that Liverpool Chamber of Commerce had agreed to organise Employer Forums in Knowsley, Liverpool and Sefton and arrangements in other areas were progressing
- Ongoing work with strategic partners

David confirmed GMLSC's explicit expectation that Local Learning Partnerships would consult directly with learners as part of the process.

Council Members noted the timetable for local and national approval of the Strategic Plan and **AGREED**;

- a) to feed back individual comments to David Brennan by 9 January 2002 prior to the draft strategy being sent to National Office on 14 January
- b) the Chair should receive sight of the Plan for approval on behalf of the Local Council prior to its despatch to National Office

(Martin Carey arrived at this point)

Funding Streams

Council Members received a presentation from Elaine Bowker explaining the new planning, contracting and budget arrangements for providers for 2002/03 and outlining the means by which the arrangements linked back to the Strategic Plan.

Members noted the timetable produced illustrating the planned introduction of revised funding arrangements in each learning sector towards a common approach for all sectors by 2004.

Work Based Learning (WBL)

Elaine highlighted the national funding approach to WBL over a 16 month period from March 2001 to July 2002 to bring it in line with the LSC's August to July funding year and future contracting arrangements between providers and GMLSC. Contracts would be influenced by national and strategic objectives whilst growth depended on volumes available to GMLSC.

Further Education

From 2002/03 modified funding arrangements would be introduced for Further Education providers as a step towards a common funding approach for the 2003/04 funding year.

Growth would be allocated to institutions by GMLSC in accordance with the Strategic Plan, Business Plan and Government priorities.

School Sixth Forms

By the end of December 2001 two sets of funding in cash terms for each school would be calculated – an adjusted Real Terms Guarantee level and a formula funding level. Council Members noted the expectation that 61% of GMLSC school 6th forms would be funded on the new national rates.

Elaine informed Council Members of the need for GMLSC to consider its present lack of influence on 6th Form provision.

Adult and Community Learning

2002/03 represented the final year of a 2 year funding guarantee to maintain a cash allocation in real terms to Local Education Authorities (LEAs) at the 2000/01 level, subject to fulfilment of commitments in the Adult Learning Plan. Council Members noted the wide variation at present between LEA's fee policies and what was envisaged as part of a common funding approach. In addition the need for GMLSC to carefully consider where funding was allocated and ensure providers were made aware of the provision required was acknowledged.

Business Planning 2002/03

Council Members received a presentation from David Brennan in which he emphasized the importance of funding underpinning the strategy and not vice versa in addition to the need to maintain a transparent decision making process. Council Members noted that the business planning model to be adopted had worked well in a number of other areas. The model would include a range of operational targets to support delivery of the published strategic targets and link GMLSC's strategic targets, contracting and funding processes. The operational targets provided a framework for individual contracting and funding decisions to be made.

01/151 OUTLINE CAPITAL PROPOSALS UPDATE

Elaine explained that the purpose of this agenda item was to update Council Members and seek comments rather than formal approval.

Knowsley

Council Members were asked to note a submission proposing the construction of a purpose built block for 14-16 year olds at a Knowsley College to go to the "Capital Committee," noting that the Executive Director had authority to sign it off. The innovative project had also been part of the post Knowsley Area Inspection Action Plan previously agreed.

Claire Dove highlighted the need for future investment in such resources to ensure long term viability and maintain standards. Council Members noted the expectation for more centres throughout the Greater Merseyside area as the 14-16 curriculum expanded and the capacity for the resources to be highly utilised.. Paul reminded Council Members to recognise the proposal as a national pilot and that Local Authority boundaries should not inhibit proposals for this type of resource. Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) Background information about the project should be provided to them
- b) GMLSC should engage Council Members in future proposals at an early stage and during development

Wirral

Council Members noted proposals by Wirral Metropolitan College (WMC) to dispose of its Borough Road site and consolidate remaining property by retaining the Carlett Park site or moving to the International Business Centre site in central Birkenhead. WMC had "in principle" agreement for its proposal from the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) Details of the proposal should be circulated to them
- b) Capital appraisal of the proposal should be considered at Council's February Meeting

01/152 FEEDBACK FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee Meeting held on 12 December 2001

Sue informed Council Members that the Advisory Committee had received a presentation from the Chief Executive of Expanding Horizons to highlight social inclusion and Social exclusion issues.

The Committee had considered the introduction and development of staff Equal Opportunities Champions in GMLSC and discussed the role descriptions in depth, making a number of recommendations. In addition it was anticipated that all staff would be enabled to visit providers to broaden awareness and provide development opportunities.

Council Members received details of an Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Conference to be held at the Village Hotel in Bromborough on 16 January to which all were invited.

The Advisory Committee had considered co-opting an external attendee to future meetings and would ensure the most appropriate person was invited. In addition a review of the effectiveness of the Advisory Committee was underway, to include benchmarking with other local LSCs.

01/153 MINUTES FOR ACCEPTANCE

Council Members accepted the minutes of the following meetings:

- a) Adult learning Advisory Committee Meeting held on 17 July 2001
- b) Audit Committee Meeting held on 18 July 2001
- c) Adult Learning Advisory Committee held on 6 November 2001
- d) Young Persons' Advisory Committee Meeting held on 15 November 2001

01/154 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next Meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 20 February at 4pm in the Council Meeting Room.