

COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE

MINUTE NUMBER 05/414 TO 05/424

**MINUTES OF THE LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL GREATER MERSEYSIDE
MEETING
TUESDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2005
AT TITHEBARN HOUSE**

PRESENT: Roger Hoyle (Chair), Elaine Bowker (Executive Director), Heather Akehurst, Kath Boullen, Dr Martin Carey, Sue Carmichael, John Firr, Elaine Owen, Cllr John Swain, Sir George Sweeney, Dr Maureen Williams, Phil Round

APOLOGIES: Gordon Burns, Claire Dove, Cllr Richard Marbrow, Prof Maureen Williams

OBSERVERS: Linda Harris (Jobcentre Plus), David Howard (Connexions), Peter Morton (BLNW)

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Dave Brennan, Kirsty Evans, Sue Wood, Joyce Wildman (Secretariat Officer)

APOLOGIES: Marie Brookfield (Secretariat Manager)

05/414 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

Roger Hoyle welcomed Members to the first meeting of 2005. He also welcomed Kirsty Evans, who was attending her first meeting as a member of the Senior Management Team.

He requested Council Members to complete the Declaration of Interest form, which had been previously circulated with the meeting papers, and return to Joyce Wildman at the end of the meeting.

Roger provided feedback to Members on the recent Business Skills North West Board meeting. He advised that the main items discussed had been the 14-19 White paper and the Youth Green Paper. Also discussed, at length, had been a standard agenda item, Northern Way, and it had been agreed to bring together a common agenda for all North West Regional Development Agencies.

Roger reminded Members that he was now a member of the LSC National Appointments Committee, assisting in the appointments process across the organisation.

He also advised Members that he had attended the January Regional Management Team meeting. At this meeting, Steve Dunmore had presented a financial report which had raised some significant concerns regard the expenditure position. Further details of how local and national LSCs handle this situation would be covered later in the meeting.

Roger commented on the success of previous lunch time seminars for Council Members and advised that Marie Brookfield would be arranging further sessions during 2005.

Action: Marie Brookfield

05/415 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 7-8 DECEMBER 2004

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

05/416 SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF 7-8 DECEMBER 2004

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

05/417 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

05/418 ANNUAL PLAN

Kirsty Evans circulated to Members a paper outlining the key issues/risks for LSCGM in relation to its Annual Plan. The paper also suggested actions which should be taken to resolve any issues. She advised the meeting that the paper reflected the Annual Plan and that Members would be given the opportunity to comment.

Kirsty highlighted the main issues:

- improving the participation and achievement of young people
 - 14-19 – the LSC continued to be greatly involved with LEAs. However, there were concerns that momentum might be lost by the integration of children's services and subsequent wider age range (0-19);
 - WBL – considering the local employment base and the number of learners with appropriate levels of prior attainment, consideration would be given to moving some WBL into FE to improve quality. The LSC would need to work closely with Colleges to ensure that 16-18 year olds accessing FE continued to grow and also that 19+ adult provision supported the new Modern Apprenticeship and level 2 targets;

Elaine Bowker commented that, as there would be no further Area Wide Inspections to provide guidance to the LSC, the LSC would need to carefully manage any risks which developed in relation to integrated Children's Services.

Members discussed the proposal and felt that, whilst there might be an initial reduction in 16-18 year olds whilst they studied in FE, it would be good practice for learners to study for 6-12 months in full time FE as this would better prepare them for their training and progression to WBL at a later date.

Council had no further questions on this section of the paper.

- raising the level of skills
 - good progress had been made against the Skills for Life 2004 milestone – with National Office estimating 104% achievement. Whilst significant progress had been made in the development of a joint local plan with JCP, there were still significant barriers preventing JCP clients accessing LSC funded basic skills provision;
 - lack of demand for delivery of Level 2 via the FE route, from both employers and individuals, would challenge the LSCs ability to deliver to its level 2 target. It had become clear, through the highly successful Skillworks programme, that employers want more customised training for their employees or, as evidence

would now indicate, more apprenticeship type provision for their 19+ employees;

- there must remain an appropriate balance between first step and level 2/3 provision to enable sufficient numbers of learners to progress to level 2.

Roger Hoyle commented on the success of the current Skillworks programme and enquired to its future. He was advised that another programme of Skillworks would run up to 2008.

Members were informed that 3,000 businesses had spent over £12m on Skillworks and, in order to provide an exit strategy for Skillworks (in light of the end of ESF funding), the LSC would be looking to redesign the provision to include a wider offer, i.e. Apprenticeships, Level 2, etc.

Elaine Bowker highlighted her concerns that targets set around first level 2 qualifications would be more attractive to individuals than to employers and stressed that a balance needed to be identified.

Council had no further questions on this section of the paper.

- improving the quality and responsiveness of provision
 - overall, work based learning performance remains poor – especially in FE Colleges.
 - there was considerable variability of provision in School Sixth Forms and, whilst the LSC enjoyed a good relationship with the LEAs and other stakeholders, it was likely that there would be considerable opposition to some proposals for closure and/or amalgamation of sixth forms.

Roger Hoyle commented that the current and forthcoming area reviews would be a challenging time for the LSC and he stressed that the LSC needed to be seen to be listening to people's views and taking issues forward. He emphasised that, as the Annual Plan was still in draft format, it was important that Members raised any issues/areas of concern.

Roger confirmed that the LSCGM Annual Plan would be presented to Mark Haysom on 3 March 2005 by Elaine Bowker, Executive Director. He advised that the Annual Plan would be published to the Internet at the end of March 2005 and would, subsequently, be used to generate the budget.

05/419 BUDGETS AND PERFORMANCE

David Brennan presented the paper for discussion updating Members on progress against budgets, performance to date and key targets.

Two specific areas of concern were highlighted:

- i) The large national overspend on WBL – which had occurred through a variety of reasons. He informed Members that the position on Merseyside was not as difficult as in other parts of the country;
- ii) FE planning and funding agreements for 2004/05 – these had been generated as an estimate of the 2003/04 outturn. Now that the actual outturn could be compared to the estimated outturn, in a significant number of cases the estimated

figure had been in excess of the actual. Funding may, therefore, need to be clawed back in year, together with rebasing in preparation for 2005/06.

In response to Roger Hoyle's request for clarification on LSCGM's position, Elaine Bowker confirmed that WBL would not cause a major problem but that she envisaged challenging management issues in recouping the £3.5m excess funding in FE for 2004/05. She felt that it would be realistic to expect to recoup around £1-1.5m. She reminded Members that Mark Haysom had already written to Colleges regarding this issue (a copy of which had been distributed with the papers).

In response to a question from Members, David Brennan explained that, for a variety of reasons, the cost per learner had been over estimated by Colleges when calculating 2004/05 funding. He confirmed that 2004/05 funding had already been allocated and that the Government could not be requested to underwrite the overspend.

Sir George Sweeney raised concern that it might be possible for some Colleges to be destabilised through such a clawback.

Members felt that it would be beneficial to hold a special meeting to discuss the issue further and in greater detail. Dave suggested that an extraordinary PQA meeting be held. Roger Hoyle AGREED to this request. Roger commented that questions had been asked of Steve Dunmore - which had not yet been answered – this information would be required for the special meeting. Elaine Bowker also advised Members that finance had been requested to run a risk assessment on each College to determine the effect any clawback would have.

Actions: Marie Brookfield/David Brennan (arrange meeting), Steve Dunmore (response to questions), Finance (risk assessments)

David Brennan referred Members back to the remainder of his report and updated them on Work Based Learning, E2E, FE and ESF. The meeting noted the contents of the report and also noted that:

- recommendations a) to c) were for information only;
- recommendations d) & e) would require further action.

05/420 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Elaine Bowker presented key issues from her report for Members' attention.

Members were requested to delegate authority, with regard to the appointment of LSC Governors to college corporations, to the Executive Director, the Chair plus one other Council Member. **Members AGREED to this request.**

Elaine provided feedback to Members on the recent 'Outstanding' outcome of the Liverpool Community College OfSTED/Ali inspection. She commented that this brought the figure to 4 outstanding colleges in Greater Merseyside. She also highlighted the recent 'Outstanding' outcome from the Knowsley AWI and she thanked Knowsley Council for their assistance, guidance and support with regard to 14-19 in Knowsley.

Roger Hoyle reiterated these comments and the meeting noted the remarkable achievement.

Elaine referred back to her report and updated the meeting as follows:

Annual Planning Review - following completion of self-assessments and the 'toolbox' spreadsheet by providers and meetings to discuss progress, a letter would be sent out at the end of March with indicative allocations for 2005/06;

Business Cycle and New Approach to Targets 2005/06 – from this year, there will no longer be any national, top-down disaggregating of targets. This will now be done through a process of development and agreement of local LSC annual plans. Some Council Members expressed concern at how this new approach would be managed. Elaine reassured Members and stressed the importance of agreeing realistic development with providers.

Policy Updates –

Young People – Elaine briefly updated the meeting on:

- ❖ the Children Act 2004;
- ❖ Every Child Matters – Next Steps;
- ❖ 5 year strategy for children and learners;
- ❖ the Tomlinson Review of 14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications;
- ❖ the Youth Green Paper – publication expected late February/early March.

She specifically referred to the publication of the 14-19 White Paper in response to the Tomlinson Review and commented on the significant impact this would have on the work of the LSC.

Integrated Children's Services – the Government's vision for integrated children's services was set out in the Green Paper 'Every Child Matters – Next Steps'. The role of the LSC needed to be defined. David Brennan reported that LSCGM was working well with Halton on this.

Learner Health and Safety – following the introduction of the new National LSC policy, action plan and performance indicators in April 2004, the LSC were performing well in Learner Health and Safety.

Update of StAR –

Knowsley consultation – now completed

St Helens consultation – underway, ends 11 March 2005

Sefton and Liverpool consultation period now underway, ends 24 March 2005

Halton consultation – process delayed, expected consultation in July 2005

Wirral consultation – now completed.

John Firr and Kath Boullen left the meeting at this point.

Elaine Bowker stressed that it was an extremely busy time for the LSC at present with a lot of issues to be addressed.

05/421 FEEDBACK FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Young People's Advisory Committee

David Brennan reported on the outcomes of the Knowsley StAR. The Group now needed to determine a way forward and he would report any issues to the next Council meeting.

Adult Learning Advisory Group

Martin Carey advised Members that the last meeting had not been quorate, although the meeting went ahead. The next meeting was scheduled to be a single item agenda to discuss

EDIMs. Roger Hoyle suggested that, in order to ensure that future meetings would be well attended, meeting dates should be well publicised.

Workforce Development Advisory Committee

Kirsty Evans advised Members that the Committee had discussed 3 main items:

- Skillworks;
- Work Force Development;
- Sector Skills Agreements.

05/422 FEEDBACK FROM OBSERVER ORGANISATIONS

GM Connexions

Members noted the update paper provided by David Howard.

Business Link Greater Merseyside

Members noted the update paper provided by Peter Morton.

Jobcentre Plus

Members noted the comments from Linda Harris regarding the internal organisational review, the results of which would be available week commencing 28 February 2005.

05/423 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to discuss.

05/424 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next Meeting would take place on 19 April from 4.00pm in the Council Room, Tithebarn House.