

(COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE)

MINUTE NUMBER 02/211 TO 02/221

**MINUTES OF THE GREATER MERSEYSIDE
LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 JULY 2002
AT TITHEBARN HOUSE, LIVERPOOL**

Present: Jim Michie (Chair), Paul Holme (Executive Director), David Atkin, Kath Boullen, Gordon Burns, Sue Carmichael, Claire Dove, Mike Doyle, Heather Hardcastle, Veronica Laird, Geoffrey Piper

(Observers): Kieran Gordon (Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership)
Brian Kearsley (Jobcentre Plus)

In Attendance: Elaine Bowker, David Brennan, Rob Burn,
Clare Caffrey (Secretary to the Council), Richard Merritt, Sue Wood

Apologies: Martin Carey, Brian Davies, John Firr, Richard Marbrow, George Sweeney

(Observers): Nigel Burke (Government Office for the North West)
Peter Fletcher (Greater Merseyside Enterprise Ltd)

02/211 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

Jim welcomed Mike Doyle back following his recent absence and Mike thanked GMLSC and fellow Council Members for their support, emphasising his continuing commitment.

02/212 MINUTES AND SUMMARY OF THE LAST MEETING

Subject to minor amendments read out by the Chair and incorporated into the signed versions, the minutes and summary were agreed and signed by the Chair.

02/213 MATTERS ARISING

A declaration of interest was received from David Atkin as a Director of the Greater Merseyside Education Business Link Organisation (GMEBLO).

[02/199 Chair's Opening Remarks]

Jim confirmed arrangements for the North West Council Members event discussed at the previous meeting. Members noted it would be held on Tuesday 12 November at the Castle Green Hotel in Kendall, between 4-7pm with SMT and Observers invited to attend. Written details would be circulated.

[02/201 Update from Observer Organisations]

Members noted that Brian Kearsley would make his presentation about Jobcentre Plus during the meeting, to include implications and issues for GMLSC.

[02/202 Executive Director's Report]

Co-financing – Management of European Funds – Priority 2

David Brennan confirmed arrangements reached with the Priority Monitoring Committee (PMC) for the management of 3 strands of activity of ESF in Priority 2 by the LSC. The strands would be brought together in a single plan for commissioning, co-financing and management of ESF and activity would be commissioned against the plan in the near future.

Members noted that the value of ESF Priority 2 funding was expected to be approximately £25-30m over 3 years and would provide the scope to focus on a number of issues including social inclusion, local learning and gender equality.

TEC Legacy Funding

Rob informed Members that a recent letter from the liquidator confirmed of approximately £3m TEC legacy funding expected, approximately £600k (of which £400k was significant to GMLSC) was in jeopardy due to lack of evidence. GMLSC had assisted the liquidator in locating the majority of the evidence required and the risk was now reduced. The legacy issue was progressing with in excess of £2.6m expected from Merseyside TEC Ltd.

Whilst Government Office were encouraging progress by 29 August the liquidator thought this unlikely and GMLSC awaited further developments.

Members noted the intention for GMLSC to issue a prospectus for bids of discretionary funding in August, on the assumption that the legacy funds would be available.

[02/203 BUSINESS PLAN 2002/03]

During discussion of the Plan, Council members **AGREED**:

- a) The letter accompanying the Plan should include an 'order form' to prompt requests for the Equal opportunities and Social Inclusion Delivery Plan.
- b) David Brennan to determine if it would be helpful to make summaries of all the supporting plans available.

[02/204 Council Member's Succession]

Local Council Members

Jim urged those Council Members whose terms of appointment would expire during 2002 to complete and return their applications for reappointment to Clare Caffrey as soon as possible.

Chair's Position

Discussion took place of the process being undertaken to identify and appoint a new local Chair with effect from January 2003. Council Members noted that the initial advertisements would be placed during the week commencing 5 August, the closing date of 9 September proposed, Sifting during September and interviews on 14 October and **AGREED**:

- a) Any local Council Members who might wish to apply should speak to Paul, Geoffrey or Claire
- b) Council Members should highlight the names of any suitable potential candidates to Paul, Geoffrey or Claire

- c) A letter should be drafted on behalf of Geoffrey, as Chair of the Search Committee to propose:
 - i) applicants should have the opportunity to talk with the Executive Director as part of the process
 - ii) Claire Dove should sit on the Sifting and Interview Panels in an observer capacity on behalf of GMLSC, to try to balance the Panels' all male membership
- f) Every effort should be made to stimulate interest in the important local position, using contacts, partnership organisations etc
- g) GMLSC should consider repeating the advertisement if necessary

[02/209 ANY OTHER BUSINESS]

Jim confirmed that the 6/7 November Workshop would go ahead as planned and details would be sent out nearer to the time.

02/214 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A declaration of interest was received from David Atkin as a Greater Merseyside Education Business Link Board Member.

Members noted Paul's report and he highlighted:

Harmonisation

GMLSC's budget had been received and LSC contractual offers would be made to all staff during one to one interviews due to start on Friday and be completed in 3 weeks time.

Paul confirmed he was content with the budget received for harmonisation and thanked his Senior Management Team colleagues for the work completed and their support in the process.

General and Advisory Committee Meeting Dates 2002/03

Members noted that future meeting dates for the Council and Advisory Committees would be brought to the September meeting to give time to ensure the timing of meetings coincided with key planning and decision dates.

Proposed Future Agenda Items

Members noted the proposals in the Annex and the intention for the September Council agenda to cover:

- i) discussion of the function of local Councils
- ii) Adult and Community Learning 2003/04, to set out the context for any issues during the next year

Council Members **AGREED:**

- a) Clare Caffrey should diary Council Meeting dates for the following year, in liaison with the Executive
- b) Items for decision and for information should be distinguished on future agendas

- c) Future GMLSC Council meeting packs should contain a summary of any lengthy council papers
- d) Meetings should be scheduled to last no longer than 2½ hours

Advisory Committee Membership

Claire Dove expressed concern that the result of mainstreaming would dilute the importance of equal opportunities also that the equal opportunities champions needed to feel confident they had sufficient knowledge and expertise to fulfil their roles effectively.

Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) the Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee Meeting (of Equal Opportunities Champions) should go ahead as planned and discuss future arrangements
- b) Issues raised regarding training and expertise of Equal Opportunity Champions should be addressed
- c) Arrangements should be reviewed in a year's time
- d) To accept the proposed membership of Advisory Committees, as shown in Annex 2 (Terms of Reference would be amended to reflect any changes in membership)

LOCAL ISSUES

Heritage Skills

Members noted ongoing discussions taking place and progress made regarding Heritage Skills

Training Provider

Paul informed Members of work being undertaken to provide alternative training for 80-90 trainees after QMAT withdrew from a contract with effect from the end of July.

Budget

Members noted the receipt of most budgets and **AGREED** that details of all budgets/volumes to support delivery should be brought to the September Council Meeting.

EXTERNAL ISSUES

Education Business Links (EBL)

In response to a number of issues raised at the previous meeting, Paul confirmed GMLSC's intention to contract with the GMEBLO Board noting recent progress made. Members noted continuing discussions with Directors of Education regarding the long term vision of EBLs in Greater Merseyside and a very positive GMEBLO Board meeting the previous evening. Members **AGREED** to the proposed use of £360k of discretionary funding to ensure the level of service provided by EBL was maintained.

Skills Assessment for Greater Merseyside 2002

Members congratulated David Brennan and his team for the quality of the document recently circulated to them and noted the intention for it to be circulated beyond the 500 copies already distributed. Members felt the document would be of interest to employers and noted its importance in any debate regarding general education vs educating people for specific roles. Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) The Council's November Agenda should contain an agenda item to discuss the issue of general vs role specific education. Council Members should be provided with information to give a full picture relative to specific interests

(Rob Burn left the meeting at this point)

2002 Spending Review

Paul reminded Members it would take several months for the full effect of the recent review to become apparent.

02/215 FRESA – FRAMEWORK FOR REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS ACTION

Members received a paper and noted from David Brennan:

- a) The FRESA initiative was led by the North West Development Agency (NWDA) and included a Steering Group of Partners on which the Executive Director sat and technical Support Group on which David Brennan sat
- b) A regional document would be launched the following month
- c) The intention to develop a sub-regional document was welcomed by GMLSC
- d) The importance of aligning the sub regional action planning process, resulting in the publication of the sub regional document in December 2002/January 2003 which would identify no more than approximately 10 priorities for the sub region
- e) GMLSC's role in:
 - i) articulating the way agencies would work together
 - ii) enabling evaluation of the process to ensure structured delivery

During discussion Members noted the importance of local Councils working with Regional Development Agencies which had recently showed an increasingly regional focus within the national framework and opportunities to highlight local needs.

Members noted the absence of voluntary and community sector representatives and of employers from the arrangements outlined in Annex 2 which outlined the FRESA arrangements at sub regional level.

As a Mersey Partnership Director, Geoffrey reminded members that the Action Plan was Greater Merseyside's Plan and all sectors were invited to be involved during extensive consultations.

Members noted the background information supplied on the FRESA initiative and progress at the North West regional level.

02/216 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT (WfD) OPERATIONAL PLAN

Elaine emphasised GMLSC's priority to engage local employers and to increase WfD penetration. During presentation of the main issues in the paper from Elaine and during discussion, Council Members noted:

- a) A detailed Action Plan was available on request
- b) The introduction of 10 staff now working within GMLSC across the Boroughs on WfD
- c) The priority to reduce confusion and increase penetration by working intelligently with partners which interface with employers
- d) Planning to ensure that intermediaries had the same information for employers to raise awareness of what was available, how it could be accessed and its cost.
- e) The intention to improve flexibility of provision to meet demand to respond to employers' needs
- f) A number of budgets available to stimulate employment growth, support inward investment and cultural change
- g) Challenging targets for GMLSC and its lead responsibility linked to key sectors
- h) Potential 'Social Enterprise' opportunities and the need to look to see how it could be supported by GMLSC
- i) The need to recognise sensitivities regarding funding and the need to avoid raising expectations
- j) The Chair's thanks to the Adult Advisory Committee and Executive in addressing the issues raised in the consultation document

Council Members noted a report on Social Enterprise, available from Claire Dove, on request and **AGREED** that further details should be brought to the Council at a later meeting, detailing GMLSC's support for Social Enterprise.

02/217 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Council Members received a paper from Sue Wood and Elaine Bowker and a number of points were highlighted:

- a) The Collaborative adoptive approach adopted by GMLSC for the achievement of goals
- b) The significant improvements brought about as part of GMLSC's quest to improve provider quality
- c) An overview of the relationship and involvement with each sector including Further Education Colleges, Work Based Learning Providers, School Sixth Forms and Adult and Community Learning
- d) The assessment given of progress against recent inspections and the Provider Review
- e) 31 institutional Work Based provider inspections had taken place within the GMLSC geographical area and the evidence based results allowing GMLSC to focus on what was needed and evaluate success of interventions

- f) The importance of GMLSC staff skills in accessing and supporting provision with a major training programme planned the following year for staff. Members also noted the emphasis placed on transferring the focus from a targets to a quality based agenda
- g) The ongoing and immediate role of GMLSC in working with providers to improve quality of provision and the intention to fund only those providers which meet the quality standards, providing support to others, where necessary
- h) The importance of research undertaken and the need to improve the quality of 'mediocre' providers
- i) The challenge regarding voluntary and community sector providers with a clear 'social exclusion' remit and different views expressed with regard to the correlation between retention and achievement
- j) Work undertaken by GMLSC to consult and encourage wide participation regarding the quality framework, recognising the need to engage the voluntary and community sector early on

Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) Further information should be provided to show how GMLSC was tackling the perceived problem for the voluntary and community sector in retaining trainees and ensuring achievement when dealing with clients who often required additional support etc

02/218 JOBCENTRE PLUS

Members noted the paper from Brian Kearsley and he highlighted the following items:

- a) Jobcentre Plus brought together the Employment Service and part of the Benefits Agency as a new organisation (this was not a merger), with the key tasks of i) helping people into work ii) helping employers fill vacancies iii) Benefits (not pensions)
- b) The Employment Service no longer existed
- c) The work focussed approach to be adopted to accessing benefits – to be introduced to Wirral, Knowsley and Sefton by October 2002
- d) Difficulties experienced by some employers in Merseyside in filling job vacancies and a ratio of 1 in 4 people of working age unemployed in the Liverpool area
- e) "One Stop Shops" would be introduced throughout Merseyside
- f) The need for Jobcentre Plus to work with partner organisations and for coherence to be introduced in Greater Merseyside with employers
- g) The opportunities for:
 - i) introducing cohesion between Work Based Learning for Young People (GMLSC) and Work Based Learning for Adults (Jobcentre Plus)
 - ii) looking towards commonality eg, common set of providers used by both organisations
 - iii) coherence re contracting periods of different organisations
 - iv) collaboration between partners to effectively address issues identified eg, dyslexia

- v) raising awareness regarding Adult and Community Learning
- h) Overlapping interest of LSC and Jobcentre Plus regarding co-financing (priority 2 etc)
- i) Challenges in ensuring that any intentions discussed were carried out in addition to raising awareness

During discussion Council Members noted some of the practical work underway during the last 6 months between LSC and Jobcentre Plus towards commonality in contracting, with ongoing dialogue taking place.

David Atkin highlighted the importance of tracking individuals with special needs post compulsory education age with special needs eg, dyslexia, noting work currently undertaken by Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership and the significant degree of undiagnosed health problems identified by them. Kieran highlighted the opportunity available for partners to work together to tackle the problems regarding tracking which had been highlighted. Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) The need to identify the means to continually improve the problems identified
- b) A meeting should take place between LSC's Senior Management Team and Job Centre Plus District managers to discuss the issues raised
- c) GMLSC should introduce a broader partnership locally for a wider vision relating to Local Learning Partnerships
- d) A report should be brought back to the Council in 6 months time to review progress made and achievements after the opportunity to look closely at the relationship between GMLSC and Jobcentre Plus

(Mike Doyle left the meeting at this point)

02/219 WRITTEN UPDATE FROM OBSERVER ORGANISATIONS

Members noted the update received from Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership, Government Office for the North West and Greater Merseyside Enterprise Ltd.

Kieran informed Members that 19 key workers had been appointed and trained as part of the Street Crime Summer Plus Programme in Knowsley and Liverpool, emphasising the importance of partnership working.

Members received a copy of part of the first quarter's report on Performance against targets (available to GMLSC Members on request) and noted that more personal advisors were being trained and the need for analysis of factors relating to the numbers of pupils leaving post compulsory education.

02/220 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

In response to Jim's request for examples from Council Members of successful achievements/initiatives by GMLSC to incorporate into a response to National Office in support of the production of the National Corporate Plan, Council Members suggested:

- a. Work achieved in the Colligate in Knowsley
- b. Achievements in Further Education
- c. Number of consultations successfully undertaken
- d. Area Reviews

- e. Supporting smaller organisations to capacity build
- f. Vision building locally
- g. Progress with Workforce Development with major employers in North West
- h. 360° local Council Members appraisal system

02/221 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 17 September 2002 at Tithebarn House.