

**(COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE)**

**MINUTE NUMBER: 02/199 TO 02/210**

**MINUTES OF THE GREATER MERSEYSIDE  
LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE 2002 AT  
TITHEBARN HOUSE , LIVERPOOL**

**PRESENT:** Jim Michie (Chair), Paul Holme (Executive Director), David Atkin, Martin Carey, Sue Carmichael, Brian Davies, Claire Dove, John Firr, Veronica Laird, Richard Marbrow, Geoffrey Piper, George Sweeney

**(OBSERVERS):** Nigel Burke (Government Office for the North West)  
George McGuire (Jobcentre Plus)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Elaine Bowker, Clare Caffrey (Secretary to the Council), Kirsty Evans (Item 5), Anthony Goldstone, Richard Merritt, Sue Wood

**APOLOGIES:** Kath Boullen, Gordon Burns, Mike Doyle, Heather Hardcastle

(Observers): Peter Fletcher (Greater Merseyside Enterprise Ltd)  
Kieran Gordon (Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership)  
Brian Kearsley (Jobcentre Plus)

**02/199 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS**

Jim welcomed George McGuire (present on behalf of Brian Keasley of Jobcentre Plus) and Anthony Goldstone, Chair of Greater Manchester LSC, who was present as a guest to the meeting and noted that Kirsty Evans would join the meeting for agenda item 5.

Members were pleased to hear that Mike Doyle was making good progress and hoped to return at the next Council Meeting.

Jim informed Members of a paper on regional employers considered at the recent quarterly Chair's Meeting and the possibility of the item being pursued jointly in the North West. It had also been agreed to arrange a North West Council Members' event (possibly annually), including overnight accommodation. Details of the event were subject to confirmation but a provisional date of 12 November had been identified.

**02/200 MINUTES AND SUMMARY OF THE LAST MEETING**

Members agreed the content of the minutes and summary of the meeting held on 14/15 May 2002, subject to amendment of text under "Regional Assembly" on page 6, and they were signed by the Chair.

**02/201 MATTERS ARISING**

**[02/183 Review of 2001/02]**

In response to a query Paul confirmed that the outcome of syndicate discussions at the previous meeting were being fed into the four internal Business Development Groups involved in the production of the internal Business Plan and that the Plan would be considered by specific GMLSC Advisory Committees.

## **[02/188 Executive Director's Report – Culture Workshops]**

Paul informed Members that feedback from the Workshops would be brought to the July Council meeting.

## **[02/196 Update from Observer Organisations]**

Members noted that the presentation originally planned at this meeting from Brian Kearsley would take place at the July Council Meeting.

## **02/202 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Declarations of interest were received from Richard Marbrow, as an Education Business Partnership Director and David Atkin as a Greater Merseyside Education Business Link Organisation Board Member.

Members noted Paul's report and he highlighted the following items:

### **Administration Budget**

Whilst difficult, GMLSC forecast that it would be able to deliver within the expected budget though the resources available would need to be monitored carefully. The full position would only be known after final harmonisation details were available.

### **Harmonisation**

Further guidance had been received from National Office and one to one interviews with all staff would be undertaken between July - September. A full SMT awayday was planned the following week to ensure consistency in approach across the office.

Awareness sessions had been planned for all staff across the office to ensure a full understanding prior to the one to one interviews regarding terms and conditions. Pay and budget ranges were as yet unknown.

Paul reported staff morale as reasonable but fragile, with significant work pressures and role changes in some teams. Every effort was being made to address internal and external pressures.

Members noted recent learning, development and training of staff in addition to structural changes to enable them to move away from their traditional functional delivery roles in some departments.

### **Workforce Development**

Members noted that with support from internal 'experts,' GMLSC was working towards becoming an exemplar organisation. The importance of sharing good practise with and from other organisations was noted.

### **Co-Financing – Management of European Funds**

**Priority One** – Discussions were progressing well and the Priority One Panel had been content with the bids received, though a number had been unsuccessful. As a next step GMLSC was now looking to commission bids to meet identified need.

**Priority Two** – GMLSC's proposal was to be considered in July with an additional £2.8m package expected. Members noted GMLSC's intention to link Priority Two with LIF and where possible to manage the funds in one bidding round, ensuring a more joined up local prospectus.

### **TEC Legacy Funding**

Nigel Burke informed Members that having spoken with the Merseyside TEC liquidators recently, agreement was being reached regarding the release of some legacy funding and was now expected at the end of July 2002.

### **Marketing Activity**

Following recent media coverage, Members noted positive progress regarding Heritage Skills and looked forward to receiving an update when final decisions were reached.

### **Area Inspections**

Members noted that Area Inspections were due to take place in Halton, St Helens and Wirral during October and November. GMLSC had welcomed proposals for Institutional Inspections to be undertaken simultaneously, despite the resultant internal pressures upon GMLSC and the external institutions being inspected. A project management approach was being adopted.

Paul confirmed the inspections would be of 16-19 provision and not 14-19 but that this did not preclude a 14-19 response in the form of an Action Plan.

### **Education Business Links**

Richard Marbrow expressed concerns regarding corporate governance issues relating to the new Company. Members noted that the establishment of the new company was not within GMLSC's remit but rather it needed to ensure the ability of the organisation to deliver any contractual obligations. Richard Marbrow agreed to discuss his concerns with Richard Merritt outside the meeting.

### **Modern Apprenticeships**

In response to a query from Brian Davies regarding the availability of research findings relating to the retention of Modern Apprentices, Elaine confirmed that detailed analysis was being undertaken locally.

Members noted the emphasis on ensuring the highest possible quality of provision, recent improvements in retention figures and GMLSC's wish to assist providers where systems were problematic in addressing new requirements. Members **AGREED**:

- a) results of the analysis on retention should be brought to a future Council meeting
- b) the Audit Committee should keep progress under review to ensure continuing improvement

### **Learning and Skills Development Agency Conference**

Paul highlighted some of the key items from the recent conference:

- a) the creation of the LSC and the Common Inspection Framework provided the infrastructure to determine the future learning infrastructure
- b) the LSC's key role in ensuring delivery of what was needed locally
- c) Recognition of area differences and the importance of developing leaders in education now and in future
- d) The launch of the 'Success for All' a consultation, to be taken forward by LSC in September
- e) The announcement of a £60m package to support college capital, level 2/3 achievement and learning/development support for college support staff

In response to a query, Nigel Burke confirmed that education was perceived as the government's *main* priority, although a tough spending round was expected.

### **Statement of Internal Control (SIC)**

Members noted that due to the unavailability of Audit Committee Members it had not been possible to hold a quorate Audit Committee Meeting to enable consideration by the Committee of the Statement of Internal Control from Paul Holme to National Office.

In the absence of a meeting, the Audit Committee Chair had examined all the evidence, spoken individually with some Committee Members and had written on behalf of the Committee recommending acceptance of the Statement.

Jim and Veronica urged Council Members to prioritise the importance of Audit Committee meetings and the need for commitment in attending pre-arranged meetings, noting that Veronica had written to the Executive Director to request urgent consideration to address the serious shortfall in meetings. Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) The Audit Committee Chair's recommendation to accept the Statement of Internal Control and advised the Executive Director to sign it
- b) Audit Committee meeting dates for 2002 to be reviewed and for 2003 established as soon as possible

### **02/203 2002/03 BUSINESS PLAN**

Jim welcomed Kirsty Evans to the meeting.

Jim acknowledged that the problems regarding budgets discussed at the previous meeting were as a result of information awaited from National Office. Members noted that no response had been received from the letter previously sent to National Office. Jim felt that a further letter should be sent suggesting an LSC operational year from August to July and that the April – March financial year should be managed centrally.

Noting that the above topic was a proposal of the Bureaucracy Busting Task Force, Paul informed Members that gaps still existed regarding volumes and budgets and that the Operational Plan would not be published until clarification on these items was received.

Kirsty informed Members of the legal requirement in the Learning and Skills Act to produce a Business Plan annually and this was fulfilled locally by the Strategic Plan and annual Business Plan Summary, underpinned by an Operational Plan. The Business Plan summary

was structured to meet with strategic objectives with the timetable dependent on budgets etc. There was also a mandatory requirement for local Councils to consult with the North West Development Agency (NWDA) and Local Education Authorities. Members noted that the Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Plan was already being implemented and the Business Plan would be published and issued to partners with the Basic skills and Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Plans available on request. Feedback from National Office on the Plan/s had been positive. During discussion of the Plan and associated topics, Members highlighted:

- a) Need for the plan to acknowledge partnership working
- b) Cross reference should be included in the Plan to invite applications for copies of the Equal Opportunities and Basic Skills Plans
- c) Potential funding difficulties in the voluntary and community sectors through the additional requirements of the new Disability Act and the possible impact on delivery
- d) GMLSC awaited final confirmation of budgets to support the targets and National Office were aware of a national concern regarding Level 3 targets – the Plan should include a caveat to represent concerns
- e) Positive impact of employer testimonials
- f) Employees in the employment market should be engaged more fully and the text in the Plan should include reference to ongoing work with TUC Learning representatives which may assist towards Level 3 targets
- g) All the targets were felt to be stretching and Members should support the Executive in their achievement
- h) The need existed to ensure a clear understanding by the community and voluntary sectors to avoid building up false expectations regarding Local Initiative Funding, etc

Following discussion, Members **AGREED**:

- a) Richard Marbrow should liaise with Kirsty Evans regarding the representation of graphical information in the Plan
- b) The detailed Workforce Development Plan would be brought to a future Council Meeting and included reference to the problem of local organisations not being able to access specialised training in Liverpool
- c) Subject to the points raised being addressed and wording in the Plan being reviewed all Members were happy that the Business Plan should be published

Jim thanked Kirsty for her contribution and she left the meeting.

## **02/204 COUNCIL MEMBERS' SUCCESSION**

Jim informed Members that following meetings all five Members whose terms of office were due to expire in November had expressed enthusiasm to continue, with his support.

Members noted the Chair's wish to defer the issue of Members' terms of office and rotation arrangements and his request to Rob Burn to work out a model for Council consideration.

### **North West Development Agency (NWDA) Representation**

Members noted that Mike Doyle's tenure with the NWDA would expire at the end of the year and discussions would be held with NWDA re Mike's successor on the local Council.

### **Chair's Position**

Jim informed Members that he had just signed a letter tendering his resignation as Chair of GMLSC, with effect from December 2002. Having served as Merseyside TEC Chairman for over 3 years and as Chair of GMLSC for over 2½ years (by December) and satisfied that the transition had been successfully managed, Jim felt it was the right time to ensure minimum disruption. In addition Jim's retirement from the Littlewoods Organisation had resulted in his diminishing involvement in the external community in Merseyside and he felt his resignation as Chair would give the opportunity for somebody more fully connected locally to lead GMLSC. The process had now been started to identify a new Chair and the Search Committee had met for the first time that day, led by Geoffrey Piper and including Jim Michie, Claire Dove and Paul Holme

Acknowledging National Office requirements and the demanding timetable considered by the Search Committee, Geoffrey informed Members of the intension to stimulate wide interest in the position throughout Greater Merseyside through local advertisements and contact with partner organisations to ensure the fullest possible range of applicants for the position, including any applications from existing local Council Members.

Paul confirmed that the advertisements to be placed would be carefully considered and Members noted that in addition to a letter from Jim to Bryan Sanderson, National Chair of the LSC, a letter would be sent to GMLSC staff and to key partners organisations from Jim.

Members noted the Search Committee's disappointment that to comply with National Office regulations in reappointing a local Chair, no local Council Member representation was included in the Sift and Interview Panels but an attempt was to be made to have GMLSC either "in attendance" or otherwise involved.

### **Two year local Council Member Appointments**

Paul confirmed completion of the majority of the process to be undertaken locally prior to recommending reappointment of those Council Members who terms of office were due to expire later that year and Members **AGREED** that:

- a) Standard forms should be sent to those Members for completion and return to reapply for appointment
- b) confirmation of terms of appointment would be confirmed at a later stage

## **02/205          ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

### **Workforce Development Advisory Committee**

Paul outlined the proposals contained in the paper to align the local Council's Advisory Committees with its Strategic Objectives and 4 Business Planning Groups, ensuring the work of the Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee was embedded within

the four Advisory Committees. A Workforce Development Advisory Committee would be created and Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Champions from each of the Advisory Committees should meet twice per year. The Workforce Development Advisory Committee would lead on employer liaison matters.

Brian Davies expressed some concern of the need to ensure employees received full consideration, noting that the new group would have mixed membership.

Members put forward a number of individual suggestions which may help attendance at future Advisory Committees, noting that most Advisory Committees had been well attended during the year. Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) to support the proposal to have four local Advisory Committees:
  - Young Peoples' Advisory Committee
  - Adult learning Advisory Committee
  - Workforce Development Advisory Committee
  - Audit Committee
- b) the work of the Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee should be embedded within the four Advisory Committees, with Champions within each Committee meeting as a group at least twice during the year
- c) Members wishing to volunteer to join the Workforce Development Committee should contact Paul Holme
- d) In liaison with Paul and Committee Chairs, Clare Caffrey would diarise full Council Meetings and Advisory Committee Meetings for the following year, prior to the next full Council Meeting
- e) the draft Terms of Reference for the new Workforce Development Committee, at Annex 1 in the paper.
- f) The Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee planned in September should go ahead

Members considered agenda items 8 and 10 (Minutes for acceptance and feedback from Advisory Committees) together.

## **02/206 MINUTES FOR ACCEPTANCE**

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

Members accepted the minutes from each of the following meetings:

- a) Adult Learning Advisory Committee meeting held on 22 May 2002
- b) Young Peoples' Advisory Committee meeting held on 29 May 2002
- c) Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee meeting held on 6 June 2002

## **02/207 FEEDBACK FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

Declarations of interest were received from Richard Marbrow as an Education Business Partnership Director and David Atkin as a Greater Merseyside Education Business Link Organisation Board Member.

### **Adult Learning Advisory Committee meeting held 22 May 2002**

Martin Carey provided feedback on the Committee's consideration of the Workforce Development (WfD) Strategy Consultation Document, noting the proposal to create a new Workforce Development Advisory Committee to give focus and that a WfD Implementation Plan would be developed. It had been agreed that Elaine Bowker would draft and send the response to the Consultation Document, based on the comments made at the meeting.

The Advisory Committee had recommended support for the creation of a Workforce Development Advisory Committee.

### **Young Peoples' Advisory Committee meeting held 29 May 2002**

David Atkin highlighted a) Report on WfD b) Education Business Links c) discussion on Further Education.

Richard Marbrow expressed a number of concerns about the current arrangements and following in-depth discussion Members **AGREED**:

- a) Paul should report back at each meeting regarding progress on Education Business Links
- b) A future main Council Agenda should explain the different levels of funding applied to 6<sup>th</sup> forms

### **Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee meeting held on 6 June 2002**

Sue Carmichael welcomed the appointment of Hilary Venney as new Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Manager, highlighting the support received from Sharon Benjamin since January.

At the meeting acceptance of the national policy entitled "HR Policy for all Employees: Equality and Diversity in Employment – 06/02" had been recommended.

The draft Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Delivery Plan had been implemented but was undergoing reformatting to match the Basic Skills Delivery Plan.

The Committee had welcomed the new proposed Advisory Committees structure and felt that the meetings proposed for EOSI champions would strengthen the impact of EOSI.

The Committee had proposed that the expertise of all local Council Members should be made available to all staff to enable them to draw on it directly.

### **02/208 UPDATES FROM OBSERVER ORGANISATIONS**

Council Members noted the written updates provided from Jobcentre Plus, Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership and Greater Merseyside Enterprise Ltd. Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) David Atkin and George Maguire should make arrangements outside the meeting to enable the opportunity for David to learn more about the Jobcentre Plus organisation

During a verbal update from Nigel Burke from Government Office for the North West, Council Members noted:

- a) the importance placed on delivery targets by Government
- b) the intention to reorganise the genesis on Further Education Strategy, with the creation of Standards Units
- c) Vice Chancellors' commitment to 14-19 Agenda. Martin Carey confirmed that an informal meeting of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has taken place some time ago where a formal framework had been formed, a range of issues identified and the potential for dialogue. Members also noted that the Senior Management Teams from Liverpool John Moores University and GMLSC would meet the following week
- d) The Government would respond to the Partnership for Progression Response in July and Nigel would provide feedback at the September Council Meeting
- e) Nigel would feedback the negative impact of the Secretary of State's recent unsupportive comment re "Barge Poles" with regard to schools, when problems in some schools were already acknowledged

**02/209 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Anthony Goldstone thanked the Chair and Council Members for allowing him to attend the local Council meeting.

Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) Plans for the two day Workshop already diared in November should be reviewed as it would take place very near to the North West Council Members event now proposed.

**02/210 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 24 July in Tithebarn House.