

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Date 4 April 2006
Subject Council Meeting
Location Tithebarn House
Time 4.00 pm
LSC office Greater Merseyside
Publication intent Internal

Present

Council: Roger Hoyle (Chair), Gordon Burns, Martin Carey, Sue Carmichael, Claire Dove, Phil Round, John Swain, George Sweeney, Maureen Williams.

Observers: Kieran Gordon (Connexions), Jackie Mason (representing Mike Scott)

In attendance: Marie Brookfield, Kirsty Evans, Michael McDermott, Simon Pierce, Sue Price, Joyce Wildman (Minutes).

Apologies

Council: Heather Akehurst, Kath Boullen, Elaine Bowker, John Firr, Elaine Owen, Richard Marbrow, Brian Rourke.

Observers: Mike Scott, Nigel Burke, Peter Morton (BLGM).

In attendance: Sue Wood

Item 1. CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

1.1 Welcome

Roger Hoyle welcomed members to the third meeting of the year. He extended Council's congratulations to Elaine Bowker on her appointment to Director of Area for Greater Merseyside within the new LSC structure. He advised members that Elaine was unable to attend the meeting as she was heavily involved in the assessment and interview process for the next level of appointments in Theme 7 (level 4s). He also advised Council of Paul Holme's appointment to post of Regional Skills Director.

He informed Council that, as Regional Chair for the North West, he had met with other Regional Chairs to discuss how the Regional Board would operate. He also informed members that John Swain and Elaine Owen had been appointed for a second term of office.

He extended further congratulations to Elaine Owen on her appointment to Chair of Wirral ICT Cluster.

- 1.2 Roger provided a brief overview of the agenda items to be discussed and advised that, whilst the main issues at the moment were the Sefton Competition and the Halton merger, these were not on the agenda but would be discussed/considered in-depth through future single item agenda meetings.
- 1.3 He provided members with an outline of meetings he had recently attended as follows:
 - RMB – Roger provided brief feedback on discussions;
 - RSP Board – 17 March, which had also included reps from DTI and DfES;
 - dinner with Bill Rammel and Chris Banks - on the launch date of the White Paper;
 - inaugural Regional Chairs/Directors and National Chairs/Directors meeting;
 - debate on Liverpool's future;
 - AoC Regional Governors' Dinner – this provided a good opportunity for Governors to discuss the White Paper;
 - 1:1 with Brian Rourke - who had now been a Council member for 6 months.

Item 2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 FEBRUARY 2006

- 2.1 Minutes - the minutes were AGREED as an accurate record for signing by the Chair.
- 2.2 Summary – the Summary was AGREED as accurate for signing by the Chair.
- 2.3 Matters arising – with regard to agenda item 3, Agenda for Change, Roger advised Council that, as requested, he had raised their concerns with Chris Banks, Regional Chair. In response to questions, he commented that:
 - there appeared to be some flexibility with certain regional posts being based at the local office, as oppose to the Regional Centre;
 - owing to inconsistencies, a review of flow-through arrangements would be held;
 - assisted travel costs could be available for up to 3 years for staff relocated to the Regional Centre.
- 2.4 Roger informed Council that he would continue to express their continuing concerns.

Item 3. AGENDA FOR CHANGE – THEME 7

- 3.1 Mike McDermott advised Council that the Band 5 appointments had been announced by Mark Haysom on 30 March. The 25 unfilled vacancies had

been re-advertised on the Intranet and across the Civil Service for a two week period prior to external advertisement. Band 4 interviews would be completed by the 7 April. Any unfilled vacancies would be re-advertised week commencing 8 May.

- 3.2** With regard to Voluntary Severance requests, staff who had put in such a request would be actively involved in the selection process until a decision on their request had been made. At the present time, it was unclear when staff would be advised if they had been successful in their request for Voluntary Severance.

Item 4. LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1** Kirsty explained that Local Economic Development had been a priority had become a higher priority over the past year. She highlighted the strong link which, through several national developments, had grown between skills and employment. This link was essential to ensure that the workforce was upskilled.
- 4.2** Kirsty outlined that much of the LSC's current involvement was strategic and it was involved at other spatial levels such as City Region, Sub-Regional and local level.
- 4.3** She advised Council that the LSC were working with Local Authorities and Job Centre Plus to address local challenges and had played a strong role in developing proposals for the City Business Case – the key proposals of which were outlined in the Report.
- 4.4** In response to questions Kirsty commented that:
- Adults were the main focus of economic development activity, but there was also a need to ensure preventative actions were in place for 14-19 year olds noting the strong link between NEET and subsequent adult inactivity;
 - there would be a Regional response to the consultation on new structured funds – but a local response could be sent if Council so wished;
 - exact figures for future co-financing were yet to be determined –
- Action: Kirsty to ensure LSCGM are influencing the NSRF.**
- 4.5** In concluding her update, Kirsty stressed that there would be some real opportunities for the LSC to make a difference to both individuals and the local economy. She stressed that the LSC did not, however, feel that it would be necessary to 'pool' funding with Local Authorities, as being suggested by the ODPM.
- 4.5** Roger thanked Kirsty for her report and emphasised to Council that LSC Greater Merseyside was focused on delivering the LSC's mission, alongside its partners.

Item 5. FE FUNDING ALLOCATION

- 5.1** Simon Pierce referred the meeting to the paper relating to the Further Education (FE) Funding Allocations advising Council that the key challenges at present related to Adult funding. He referred members to

page 2 to of the paper which provided a background as to how the Regional budget had been determined - 2.6% FE funding increase in the North West. This was, however, mainly targeted at young people with the available funding for Adults being decreased in line with the policy changes set out in Priorities for Success. The greatest reductions in Adult funding had been within sixth form colleges and local authorities which made the least contribution to the LSC's 19+ targets. Additional funding had been allocated, however, for full level 2 provision for adults.

- 5.2** In response to several questions, Simon advised Council that:
- it was difficult to quantify whether certain providers were disadvantaged by the current system but providers did receive an appropriate uplift where applicable;
 - 14-16 education was funded through the LEA and, therefore, outside the LSC's funding remit;
 - not all funding was being targeted at 16-19 it was being redistributed as it was considered that more adults should contribute to their education than at present.
- 5.3** Sir George Sweeney congratulated LSC Greater Merseyside on the way in which it had handled the recent funding issues and reminded Council that, in order to respond to the Government changes outlined in the White Paper, providers needed to adapt to change. Unfortunately, owing to restricted funding, this may mean that, in some instances, providers would be unable to continue to fund specific programmes/courses.
- 5.4** Roger Hoyle commented that this provided an excellent opportunity to work more closely with the Sector to achieve the challenges set out in the White Paper and felt that the Government were keen to feed public money into the areas where it was most needed.

Sir George Sweeney left the meeting.

Item 6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- 6.1** In the absence of the ED, Mike McDermott outlined the following points from her Report.
- 6.2** White Paper – he reminded Council that the White Paper set out a comprehensive programme of change which would transform the FE system and which built on the LSC's *agenda for change* and the Foster Report, to reduce bureaucracy through the alignment of funds.
- 6.3** Work Based Learning performance – with regard to Learner numbers, current data indicated that both 16-18 and 19-24 figures were down on planned numbers. Kieran Gordon commented that this was being affected by the reluctance of providers to take on young people unless they were employed or had an employer placement and, therefore, young people were struggling to get into apprenticeships. Sue Price agreed that this was an issue in some areas and advised Council that Apprenticeships were designed to support young people in employment and accredit their learning and development and that an employed young person was 75%

more likely to complete their apprenticeship than a young person who was not employed. She explained that, by ensuring young people were on more appropriate programmes, success rates had improved locally by 10 percentage points on the same period last year. ESF funding had been used to ensure other opportunities were available for young people. Sue also advised that LSCGM were in the process of contracting out an additional £1.6 million for the borough response programme and were going out to tender for £650,000 to support Connexions with their activity agreement pilot to reduce NEET. She informed Council that 40 bids had been submitted in the recent WBL reshaping exercise - 2 of these had failed strategic fit and 38 had been put forward for appraisal. Following this process a total of 6 new providers had been invited to deliver provision in Merseyside. With regard to E2E, 3 new contracts had been agreed. She advised Council that funding allocations would need to be sent to providers by 22 May.

6.4 The remainder of the ED's report was for their information.

Item 7 FEEDBACK FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEES

7.1 Young Persons' Advisory Committee – the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2006 were provided for Council's information. The main issue discussed at the meeting had been the 14-19 Implementation Plan and how the LSC could work with partners.

7.2 Adult Skills, Employability and Regeneration Advisory Committee - the minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2006 were provided for Council's information. Martin Carey reminded members that this had been the inaugural meeting of the newly merged committees (Workforce Development Committee and Adult Advisory Committee) and that he and John Firr would be joint Chair of the Committee. The Committee had mainly discussed the critical issues from both Committees and the key Terms of Reference.

7.3 Performance, Quality and Audit Committee – this meeting had not been quorate.

Item 8 UPDATES FORM OBSERVER

8.1 Connexions – Kieran Gordon provided a presentation which outlined the Business Plan setting the strategic framework for Connexions across the sub-region for 2006-08 - including Key Outcomes and Performance Indicators. He advised Council that a full copy of the Plan could be distributed to members via Marie Brookfield. Roger thanked Kieran for his presentation and expressed the LSCs desire to continue to work with Connexions in the future to benefit young people.

8.2 Business Link – the meeting noted the contents of the update from Peter Fletcher on Business Link for Greater Merseyside

8.3 Job Centre Plus – Jackie Mason, on behalf of Mike Scott, updated the meeting on developments from Job Centre Plus. She advised Council that, as funding for Basic Skills training through WBL would not be available from

April 2006, Job Centre Plus would be looking to use the LSC's train to Gain initiative. She also informed Council of a change in the way that Job Centre Plus would measure its performance. It would no longer individually record the outcome of interviews but would use data available from Inland Revenue records to more accurately determine whether referrals had gained employment.

Item 9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 There was no other business to discuss.

Item 10 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

10.1 The next Council meeting, which would be held on 2 May 2006 at 4pm at Tithebarn House, would focus on the proposed merger of Halton College and Widnes and Runcorn Sixth Form College.

Meeting chair	Roger Hoyle
Minute taker	Joyce Wildman
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