

(IN CONFIDENCE)

MINUTE NUMBER: 02/234 TO 02/248

**MINUTES OF GREATER MERSEYSIDE
LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL WORKSHOP
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6 AND THURSDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2002
AT THE VILLAGE HOTEL, WIRRAL**

Day 1 – Wednesday 6 November 2002

- Present:** Jim Michie (Chair), Paul Holme (Executive Director), David Atkin, Kath Boullen, Gordon Burns, Martin Carey, Sue Carmichael, Claire Dove, John Firr, Veronica Laird, Richard Marbrow, Geoffrey Piper
- (Observers):** Kieran Gordon (Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership)
Tom Kenny (Greater Merseyside Enterprise Ltd)
- In Attendance:** Elaine Bowker, David Brennan, Rob Burn, Clare Caffrey (Secretary to the Council), Richard Merritt, Sue Wood
- Apologies:** Gordon Burns, Brian Davies, Mike Doyle, Heather Hardcastle, George Sweeney
- (Observers):** Nigel Burke, Peter Fletcher, Brian Kearsley

02/234 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

Jim welcomed everyone to the Workshop, especially Tom Kenny, attending on behalf of Peter Fletcher. Jim gave an outline of the meeting schedule, emphasising the concentration on strategic issues and reminded Council Members to hand their declarations of interest to Clare Caffrey.

02/235 STRATEGIC PLAN 2003/04

Members received a presentation from Dave Brennan in which he set the context for the following syndicate discussions which included revisiting the current Strategic Plan to consider its continued relevance re:

- i) in the light of increased policy awareness
- ii) what the key operational priorities should be for 2003/04
- iii) target issues

Members noted:

- a) The intention to revise the existing plan with unification of the Strategy document and Business Plan
- b) National issues which had an impact including the Comprehensive Spending Review and new targets being negotiated/agreed
- c) Ongoing discussion between the LSC and DfES re whether generic targets or programme specific targets were the appropriate for the participation of young people

- d) likelihood of LSC moving towards three or four primary targets, with supporting targets
- e) A number of regional pilot schemes being announced to increase the emphasis on the adult skills agenda
- f) A departmental review of adult learning funding being undertaken
- g) A Strategy Unit Report on Workforce Development (WfD) and a National WfD Strategy
- h) Potential impact of the 14-19 Green Paper and student financial support considerations
- i) Government Higher Education targets and the issue of how the LSC and others will collectively deliver the 50% increase in young peoples participation by 2010
- j) The impact of strategic Area Reviews
- k) Imminent publication of national e-learning and ICT Strategies
- l) The ongoing relevance of the consultation undertaken in 2001 re strategy with only a limited revision necessary to the Strategic Plan and no change proposed to the strategic objectives agreed
- m) Need to produce a new strategic framework for 14-19 and the view that the current split in young peoples participation targets was still current – members noted the weakness in the approach to the 14-19 Green Paper which might be considered alongside the Strategic Plan next year
- n) GMLSC's role in leading the process to produce a sub regional version of the FRESA document and LSC's key priorities, reflected in the document
- o) The critical priority for LSC in engaging employers
- p) Operational priorities relating to quality issues with regard to the development and implementation of action plans
- q) The methodology proposed last year to realise the publication of targets for young people and adults in deprived wards and the need to ensure it was still appropriate

Dave informed Council Members of the timetable to be implemented:

- | | | |
|---|-----------------|--|
| - | Nov/Dec | Consultation (More narrowly focussed than last year) |
| - | Dec Council Mtg | To receive draft Strategic Plan for 2003/04 |
| - | Jan | Draft Strategic Plan to National Office for assessment |
| - | Feb | Feedback from National Office |
| - | March | Strategic Plan to National Council for approval |

During discussion, the following items were highlighted:

- i) Recent work being undertaken by National Office to enable comparisons between LLSCs with similar characteristics clusters and a planned discussion between the Executive Teams at GMLSC and West Yorkshire LSC

- ii) Equality and diversity impact measures were to be introduced into the revised Plan to enable a quantitative measure of 'mainstreaming' of equal opportunities policies

Attendees split into syndicate groups to consider:

- whether the developments proposed are right in light of the strategic drivers
- whether anything had been missed
- what should be GMLSC's two or three key priorities for delivery in 2003/04

with regard to: a) Young People b) Adults c) Workforce Development d) Quality

(Feedback from each of the groups was received and is included at the end of these minutes)

The Executive Director confirmed that feedback from the syndicate groups would contribute towards the development of the Strategic Plan, noting that a number of issues, not directly relevant, could be picked up via other mechanisms. He emphasized the need for the Strategic Plan to reflect the distinctiveness of Greater Merseyside and the need to be ambitious in addressing issues.

The Chair thanked the Executive for facilitating the syndicate groups and Council Members **AGREED** that a draft Strategic Plan for 2003/04 should be considered at the December Council Meeting.

02/236 Presentation By Young People And The Connexions Service

The Chair welcomed Pat Green, Assistant Director of Childrens' Services at Barnados and Trevor Hunter, Chief Executive of the North West Training Council.

Sue Wood welcomed :

- Andrew Bruce (Student, Wirral Metropolitan College)
- Margi Ellard (Youth Worker/Senior Participation Worker, Wirral Borough Council)
- Jane Washington (Community and Youth Co-ordinator, Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership)

Jane presented a report to Council Members produced by a sub group of young people in St Helens of "Forum x" which had met the previous week to consider post 16 options. Discussion followed with many questions directed at Andy and the main points highlighted were:

- a) Many students chose to study at College for national diplomas etc following good advice in the belief that this (national diploma) full time qualification was a higher level qualification than offered via the Work Based Learning route
- b) The importance attached by young people to the involvement and availability of Careers Advisors whilst at school
- c) The need for any large events utilised such as Careers Fairs etc to be well publicised to be useful

- d) The need for young people to be treated as individuals to enable informed choices to be made and for additional support to be provided, when necessary
- e) The attraction for young people of providing a wider curriculum beyond traditional subjects (maths, English etc) at an earlier age
- f) The lack of opportunity for all young people to have one to one interviews with Connexions Officers
- g) The late stage at which young people received advice from Careers Advisors (year 11) and the reality of many of them using their initiative to seek information about their future options
- h) The experience of young people who did not feel they were taught the skills to enable decisions to be made effectively about their futures whilst at school and the tendency for schools to concentrate on A' Levels
- i) More work experience opportunities would enable young people to make decisions based on experience
- j) The common difficulties between parents and young people as young people became mature and sought independence. The wish of many young people to be independent and able to take informed decisions about their futures with parents fulfilling a supporting role
- k) The acceptance that direction may be appropriate for young people who remained uncertain after receiving advice, though this should be given by an independent person
- l) The importance for young people to be advised regarding the future potential earning capacity offered by different routes etc
- m) The perception that school teachers were under pressure to obtain grades and unable to invest time in giving advice to students on their areas of expertise
- n) Opportunities for young people to undertake Modern Apprenticeships and allow young people to earn and train may reduce the number of young people leaving education at ages 16-17. The attractiveness to young people of Work Based Learning in incorporating part time study, work experience and the opportunity to engage in adult society was noted
- o) The difficulties encountered by young people who had not made the right choice initially at college etc in having to start again

Andy highlighted the three areas most important to him personally which needed attention:

- i) work environment
- ii) work experience – possibly day release
- iii) more mentors etc for young people

Jim thanked all of the guests for their contributions.

Day 2 – Thursday 7 November 2002

Present: Jim Michie (Chair), Paul Holme (Executive Director), David Atkin, Kath Boullen, Gordon Burns, Martin Carey, Claire Dove, John Firr, Heather Hardcastle, Veronica Laird, Richard Marbrow, Geoffrey Piper

(Observers): Kieran Gordon (Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership)
Tom Kenny (Greater Merseyside Enterprise Ltd)
Margaret Woods (Business Manager, Jobcentre Plus)

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

Apologies: Gordon Burns, Sue Carmichael, Brian Davies, Mike Doyle,
George Sweeney

(Observers): Nigel Burke, Peter Fletcher, Brian Kearsley

02/237 Chair's Opening Remarks

Jim welcomed Margaret Woods to the meeting, present on behalf of Brian Kearsley and Heather Hardcastle before outlining the schedule for the day.

02/238 Learning Infrastructure

Council Members received a presentation from Dave Brennan in which he emphasised the LSC's responsibility to ensure the infrastructure for the delivery of learning and skills was of a high standard and covered:

- i) key issues regarding the provider infrastructure
- ii) role and responsibilities of the LSC and its partners
- iii) analysis of the issues
- iv) investment priorities

Following the presentation Council Members split into syndicate groups to explore:

- i) the role of the LSC
- ii) the role of partners
- iii) how to ensure effective work was undertaken with partners and resources deployed effectively

in relation to a) 14-19 b) Voluntary and Community Sector c) Employer engagement

(Feedback from each of the groups is included at the end of the minutes)

The Executive Director summarised the points raised:

- a) The need to demonstrate strategic leadership while recognising Local Education Authorities as key strategic partners
- b) Recognition that the barriers to change in different sectors could not be allowed to hinder progress

- c) The need to progress the 14-19 agenda, tackling the needs of young people and learners and responding to Area Inspections
- d) Recognising the different challenges for the voluntary and community sector where ESF, co-financing and SRB changes may be perceived as a threat whereas the changes provide may be new opportunities
- e) The importance of employer engagement
- f) Major challenge of RDA/LSC/SBS pilot – to be covered as a future agenda item later in the Workshop

The chair thanked participants and Council members **AGREED:**

- a) more time should be allowed for syndicate discussion at future Council meetings
- b) The Council should consider quality issues for WBL, including what is not working and why
- c) Paul Holme, Martin Carey and Clare Caffrey should arrange a one off event for non Executives to allow Council Members to consider Merseyside focussed ideas in an uninhibited manner, allowing innovative ideas to be put forward, in January

02/239 Minutes and Summary of the Last Meeting

Council Members accepted the minutes of the last Council Meeting as an accurate record and they were signed by the Chair.

The Summary of the last meeting was accepted as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

02/240 Matters Arising

[02/225 Functions of Local Councils]

The Executive Director confirmed that council discussion from the last meeting had been used to inform the consultation undertaken and work was being progressed by the National Network Liaison Committee.

[02/227 Budgets and Targets]

The Audit Committee had agreed a framework to progress work at its last meeting and it was intended to return to the Council in December with an update on budgets and targets.

[02/228 Area Inspection Update]

This items would be picked up in the Executive Director's Report.

02/241 RDA/LSC/SBS Pilot

Council Members received a presentation from the Executive Director (copies of slides used are available on request) and noted:

- a) Ongoing discussions with regard to the introduction of the Pilot/s and their strategic importance
- b) The Chancellor's statement that from April 2003 RDA/LSC Pilots would operate in one or two regions whereby budgets for adult learning are pooled between LSCs and RDAs and co-ordinated in partnership
- c) IN addition to the RDA/LSC pilot other regions would undertake RDA/SBS pilots (ie, responsibility for SBS contracts)
- d) Related commitments and the importance of the LSC supporting young people, to impact on skills and employer engagement
- e) The expected formal announcement by the Chancellor in November for the NWDA and 5 LLSCs to develop a proposal for a joint pilot, bringing together the adult learning and skills programme alongside the proposed SBS pilot – the North West would be the only region looking to bring both aspects together and the deadline for the proposal was 29 November 2002
- f) The aims and objectives of the pilot which outline work already progressing (FRESA, LLSC Strategic Plans and a new WfD Strategy) with much already in place
- g) The expectation for the pilots to test:
 - i) pooling/co-ordination of funding for adult learning
 - ii) the identification of skills needs and planning of provision
 - iii) funding incentives for colleges and other providers
 - iv) support for employers identification of long term needs
- h) There was no presumption that control of funding would move from one partner to another
- i) The significantly larger budget of GMLSC compared to NWDA
- j) The opportunity to use European funding in a flexible way across the North West
- k) The need to work closely with other organisations involved in planning and funding of adult learning (Jobcentre Plus etc)
- l) The creation of an LSC working group with a consultant (former Cheshire/Warrington employee) providing support.
- m) Hope for agreement at the LLSC/NWRDA Chairs meeting the following day to establish joint working and steering groups to meet the 29 November deadline
- n) Key issues to be discussed in a paper at the Chairs meeting including:
 - i. GMLSC's wish for the NWDA/LSC pilot to focus on strategic alignment, improved planning and shared action

- ii. Unlike the SBS pilot, the NWRD/LSC pilot draws on existing partnerships built on a memorandum of understanding with no change of accountability for funding
- o) From a number of issues listed by the Executive Director, the wish to identify success criteria regarding the pilot to identify a range of activities
- p) GMLSC's wish for a phased approach to implementation by:
 - i. Developing an intelligent interface with business
 - ii. Improving the planning process to achieve greater coherence with consideration of whether some items are best progressed at sub-regional level
 - iii. Improving the impact of joint budgetary activities
- q) Work needed by NWDA, 5 NW LLSCs and SBS to ensure governance, processes and management arrangements etc were in place to ensure full engagement whilst ensuring continued progress
- r) The NWDA/LSC meeting the following day would consider:
 - i) a shared understanding of the potential benefits, agree outcomes and recognise the importance of the inclusion of the SNBS proposal
 - ii) include consultation of the regional management structures beyond the pilot
 - iii) reinforce the importance of strong regional partnerships
- s) The Minister's proposal that the pilot would run for 2-3 years

Council Members provided feedback:

- i) Concern was expressed by the Chair at the inclusion of the word "pooling" in the Minister's statement (see item (b) above) as this could be interpreted to mean jointly managed
- ii) Concern was expressed by Richard Marbrow that a) as the strategy did not impact directly upon partners the need existed to ensure those organisations which delivered were informed: b) there was inadequate time for a wider audience to appreciate the proposals and for a strategic view to be taken properly with questions adequately considered c) that short timescales infringed on the capacity of the Executive to plan effectively d) the ability of the NWDA to achieve what was required within the short timescales was unproven
- iii) Though positive in principle, regarding the proposals, providing they addressed strategic issues, Council Members felt it unhelpful to even consider changing structures too quickly. The timetable and consultation were felt to be inadequate and unhelpful
- iv) Members queried whether the emphasis on targeting employers in the pilots reflected the aim to engage with employers and whether the pilot sought to restructure LLSCs with regional sub committees

The Executive Director acknowledged the need to ensure all partners were reassured about the proposals and the danger of the pilot being perceived as threatening is seen as a way to “pool” budgets though there was no indication that NWDA desired that outcome.

The desire to engage employers reflected the Treasury’s need to tackle the skills gap and productivity issues in the UK partly though persuading colleges and providers to be more responsive to employers needs

- v) Members queried the selection of the North West region for the pilot and whether it could be a pre-cursor for Regional Government
- vi) Members acknowledged the advantages of the North West pilot in presenting opportunities to influence adult learning and funding
- vii) Members acknowledged that ERDF in the Business Link network would transfer automatically to NWDA if the pilot was approved in December

The Chair summarised the points made by Council Members:

- 1) GMLSC’s genuine interest to participate in the pilot, acknowledging the opportunity to incorporate new ideas
- 2) The very positive reaction by local Council Members, despite the lack of time but significant concerns regarding any future structure and budgetary implications
- 3) Local Council Members remained convinced that delivery was best achieved through LLSCs delivering the sub regional priorities.

Council Members **AGREED** that a letter should be sent to partners involved in delivery outlining the strategic implications of the proposed pilot to keep them informed.

02/242 Executive Director’s Report

Council Members noted the Executive Director’s Report and he briefly provided updates on a number of items:

Area Inspection and College Inspections

Formal feedback was still awaited from Area Inspections and informal feedback reflected the update to Council members at the September Council meeting. A self assessment report had been produced with partners indicating some concern with Work Based Learning provision and results achieved. The Area Inspections would identify items requiring structural change.

College reviews at St Helens, Wirral Metropolitan College and Birkenhead 6th Form College had been reassuring with no serious concerns. Members acknowledged the success achieved as a result of the effort of LSC staff, partners and Inspectors etc and **AGREED** that information on targets and achievements by provider and sector should be provided.

Proposed Future Agenda Items

Council Members noted the additional items for the December Council meeting from the Workshop and that suggestions for other agenda items should be forwarded to Clare Caffrey. Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) To make suggestions for the one off session suggested by and to be led by Martin Carey
- b) Social Enterprise should be added to a future agenda

Staff Events/ Commitment to Investors in People (IIP)

Council Members learnt of recent staff events held during the previous week and a letter confirming GMLSC's commitment to IIP to be sent to staff that day.

02/243 FRESA

Council Members noted the report and that a sub regional group had been established which met monthly. A series of bilateral discussions were taking place with group members and the group would endorse a document to contribute to the regional agenda.

02/244 Provider Review

Declarations of Interest were received from John Firr, Heather Hardcastle, Kath Boullen, Claire Dove and Richard Marbrow as providers subject to the Provider Review process.

Council Members noted the report and Sue Wood highlighted:

- a) National concern at the time taken for providers to move from the "concern" Category
- b) The importance of a transparent process to ensure wider understanding of why categories were used
- c) The Provider Review included all colleges and WBL providers, some external organisations and University for Industry with the intention for it to extend to include adult and community learning provision
- d) The Review was required to report by 5 December 2002
- e) An overall judgement of equality and diversity issues would be made under the heading of "management"
- f) Two moderation panels had been established locally, one chaired by the Executive Director – the panels would ensure a more rigorous programme of monitoring
- g) Strengths and weaknesses would be identified from the provider review to inform action points
- h) A Provider Quality Monitoring Database would be introduced and be the primary tool for National Office monitoring

02/247 Feedback from Advisory Committees

Workforce Development (WfD) Advisory Committee held 5 November

Paul Holme provided feedback from the first meeting and Council Members noted:

- a) John Firr should be appointed as chair of the WfD Advisory Committee

Audit Learning Advisory Committee Meeting held 23 October

During feedback the chair expressed concern that the Statement of Internal Control had not been brought to the full Council for approval. Council Members accepted the recommendations of the Committee including:

- a) The Council Support Manager should arrange for all local Council Members to receive copies of future Audit Committee agendas and attend at least one Audit Committee meeting each year.
- b) Details of local risks should be summarised for the local Council in the Executive Director's Report

(Claire Dove left the meeting at this point)

Adult Learning Advisory Committee

Members noted the invitation for Jackie James to be invited as a co-opted attendee at future Adult Learning Advisory Committee Meetings.

02/246 Acceptance of Minutes

Council Members accepted the minutes of the following Advisory Committee meetings:

- a) Audit Committee held on 29 August
- b) Equal opportunities and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee held on 4 September

02/247 Updates from Observer Organisations

Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership

The update included:

- a) A significant reduction in the percentage of young people not remaining in learning following post compulsory education
- b) The achievement of a full compliment of Personal Advisors employed at GM Connexions Partnership
- c) The introduction of a single set of terms and conditions for employees and greater flexibility of service provision
- d) The different criteria between GMLSC and GM Connexions for gauging success regarding young people and the local e.g. Young people in employment without training

Greater Merseyside Enterprise Ltd

The update included:

- a) Confirmation that the Objective One pilot was to go to the Project Committee on 14 November
- b) A business support deadline of 15 November with 15 new deliverers commissioned
- c) The SBS business planning cycle
- d) Confirmation that the SBS/ NWDA network was scheduled to make a presentation to DTI of 5 December to consider the regional pilot proposals
- e) The GMLSC contract had been agreed, to March 2003
- f) Approval of the Objective SBS bid after 12-14 months deliberation with emphasis the private sector for delivery
- g) A business planning pack would be provided by GME with the written update for the December Council meeting

Jobcentre Plus

The update included:

An update on Ambition IT, a different way of thinking which relied upon substantial employer demand and was one of 2 projects of its type, the other taking place in Manchester. Ambition IT attracted high expectations and focussed on the number of job entries, salary levels and sustainability of the jobs – a decision was expected on 9 December as to whether it met the criteria of employers.

Members noted the presence of GM Connexions Partnership officers at the “Sills Show” to cater for attendees between the ages of 16-18 years old.

02/248 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next Council meeting was scheduled to take place on 11 December at 4pm.

FEEDBACK FROM SYNDICATE GROUPS:

02/235 Strategic Plan 2003/04

Attendees split into syndicate groups to consider:

- whether the developments proposed are right in light of the strategic drivers
- whether anything had been missed
- what should be GMLSC's two or three key priorities for delivery in 2003/04

with regard to: a) Young People b) Adults c) Workforce Development d) Quality

Quality

- Quality was considered on 2 levels:
 - 1) relevance, appropriateness and coherence
 - 2) confidence re targets and base from which GMLSC is working
- Concern re how targets are defined – collaborate more re sharing targets to achieve them and capitalise on work undertaken
- Need exists to introduce a process for targets and monitoring to enable effective review and modification as move forward – this would also assist understanding when “non sensical” targets were set
- Consideration needed re different types of provision eg, how we measure social inclusion and equal opportunities agendas and “value added” – the need existed to ensure we used best practise effectively and were brave and innovative
- Concern was expressed at the need to evaluate the data available, use the data we have available more effectively and consider whether data was readily available from other sources

Workforce Development (WfD)

WfD was considered with regard to the review of the Strategy and whether it needed to change:

- Too early to change the strategy after only 18 months of operation
- Need to consider how the strategy related to the North West Strategy currently under review
- Should wait for the NWDA/SBS pilot
- Need to focus on aspects of operation eg, industrial sectors and penetration success in small areas etc
- Ensure the balance is right between industrial sectors and geography
- Look at what colleges offer and the different language used to that of businesses
- Felt 1-10 level of employee business may not recognise the gateway, regarding LSC as irrelevant to them
- Build on the success of the 10-49 level of employee businesses
- Recognise decisions often taken elsewhere for larger businesses

- Explore what is on offer and consider using private training provision in companies
- If looking at new vehicles, TUC Learner representatives have been successful
- Look to large companies to act as champions to promote improvements to smaller companies and the supply chain

Attendees also suggested:

- Using intermediaries to engage small businesses eg, Accountants, Solicitors etc
- Need existed to review equal opportunities re WfD
- Consider possibility of identifying and using role model companies which had grown from 1-10 employees to 10-49 as an influence

Council Members noted the need to think about suggestions in the context of the existing infrastructure

Adults

- Adult learning needed a connection to employers (WfD kept being raised)
- Need to ensure consistent direction of the Strategy
- Should identify a few things GMLSC would be flagship for
- Need to look at individual sectors important to Greater Merseyside, their main issues and how we might respond, also examine the different groups of people we are trying to reach and the issues for each
- Recognise the difficulty in connecting between economically inactive who are not in employment, with employers
- Recognise there is not sufficient employment for those we are trying to help and need to look at social enterprise etc

Attendees also suggested

- Encouraging new businesses starts
- Employability issue is critical for unemployed and linked to Chancellor's recent statement to tackle unemployment "street to street" Importance of funding issues for businesses starts and the quality of provision of business advice
- Nb context ie, lack of medium enterprises in Greater Merseyside

Young People

- Need for the strategy to change in emphasis in areas:
 - i) 14-19 – lots of support for young people disengaged at 14 and if different at post 16 there is a need to do pre 16
 - ii) Caution was needed in considering the Green Paper and a broad strategy to recommend participation and capable of responding to any legislative changes in the White Paper
- Targets were needed to differentiate between disadvantaged and disengaged and the group felt that the disengaged were forgotten

- Need to use data intelligently with a greater emphasis on tracking and understanding the reasons young people drop out
- recognise issues out of Area Inspections
- Focus needed on higher level skills re progression to HE
- Clarity needed regarding what is available for those individuals who are undecided
- Strategy should have greater emphasis on learners with difficulties and disabilities
- Consider WBL Strategy in relation to WfD strategy – given the produce and drive, what can we do to get young people up-skilled and attractive to employers?

02/238 Learning Infrastructure

Council Members split into syndicate groups to explore:

- iv) the role of the LSC
- v) the role of partners
- vi) how to ensure effective work was undertaken with partners and resources deployed effectively

in relation to a) 14-19 b) Voluntary and Community Sector c) Employer engagement

14-19

- Still a Green Paper – opposing views were expressed about moving too quickly or too slowly but an overwhelming need to move forward to benefit learners and show leadership
- To achieve above the LSC with post 16 responsibility and LEAs and schools with pre 16 responsibility must work co-operatively together
- Recognise all schools do not recognise the opportunity to tackle poor performance and achievement
- Clarity re responsibilities in post 16 learning needed between LSC and LEAs – maybe opportunity for honest dialogue re perceived threats and opportunities
- Noted new funding formula providing opportunities for schools is responsibility of LEA, despite strategy
- The LSC needs to influence legislation for 14-19
- Recognised big issues regarding transport and diverse curricula
- Need to ensure high quality advice and guidance is consistent and available from age 13
- Full discussion should take place by Council where quality issues re WBL are not working and why
- Recognised inconsistencies between school, FE and WBL sectors – if seamless, need to look at competency framework etc

Attendees added:

- Local behaviour should be informed and not directly by the national policy context
- Recognition that despite partnerships and the strategy, schools may simple not choose for pupils to go out to employers
- The need for the LSC and LEAs to work positively together

Voluntary and Community Sector

- The need for a strategic approach and definition of what is needed
- Need wider methods if LSC is looking to involve new providers
- The opportunity to identify potential future organisations for mainstream contracts through LIF projects and the need to identify appropriate ways to develop them
- Look at the potential capacity for SRB and ESF providers to be appropriately developed to eventually act as mainstream LSC providers
- Examine the criteria for new providers – it is preventing desirable provisional change?
- To what extent can LSC assist with the development costs of new providers and is it reasonable to contract with them for only one year is they are being asked to take the risk of entering the market
- Strategic need exists to examine the geographical distribution of those needing help
- Consider:
 - Transport pattern and whether relevant to above point
 - should provision be within walking distance?
- consider “buddy” organisations to assist new voluntary and community sector providers as they develop
- Consider whether there are other methods to connect with communities and look at how we relate to: Sure Start, Neighbourhood Renewal

Attendees added:

- The important issue of organisations operating on short term discretionary funding (SRB etc) which will run down. Consider 2 crucial and very challenging issues:
 - i. how GMLSC sooner establishes direct relationships with organisations with an eye to the future
 - ii. If above achieved, need to regard threat of funding sources ending as opportunity for GMLSC to use an existing learning infrastructure to achieve its objectives

Worth exploring issue of half way house with regard to point (i) above

Employer Engagement

- “Employer engagement” refers to employers engaging with the agenda of training their own staff
- LSC’s attitude? - we tend to talk re the LSC’s ability to engage with employers, not employers ability to engage with the LSC
- Need to consider the appropriate role of the public sector in working with employers, noting issues linked to Objective One re Merseyside
- Recognise a “grant culture” in some organisation

- What investment should employers be expected to make alongside public investment?, and consider that if of value, most would expect employers to value the product and make a contribution. We need to think innovatively re those not we are not in contact with eg training loans etc
- Need to consider additional issues to cost including flexibility etc eg deliver on Sunday etc
- LSC's role in helping to define the experience of the customer by adopting customer focussed contracts
- Demand with employer is critical – first step to above use eggs of good practise, Trade Union Learning Representatives, identify employers with concerns re Trade Union issue and consider whether we need generic LSC representative approach
- Consider intermediaries role in stimulating demand (eg Banks, Accountants etc – develop relationship with one bank/accountant etc to offer additional service and perhaps explore at regional level; MSIF – look to link conditional loan of MSIF to WFD agenda, etc
- Different routes to market – need to undertake professional work to establish what avenue might be taken and how to use them eg bring employers to employer event etc
- Be mindful of language used to business eg “participation” means nothing to business
- “Black box” approach needed with appropriate messages

Others added:

- Uncertainty re how to achieve a more customer focussed approach based on failure of extremely flexible projects tried in past years
- Recognise barriers to SME businesses in releasing staff to undertake training etc
- Recognise that demand from SMEs is not currently there