

(COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE)

MINUTE NUMBER 02/222 TO 02/233

**MINUTES OF THE GREATER MERSEYSIDE
LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2002
AT TITHEBARN HOUSE, LIVERPOOL**

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

02/222 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

Jim welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Bindy Shah who attended on behalf of Kieran Gordon. Jim reminded Members to complete and return their declaration of interest forms to Clare Caffrey.

02/223 MINUTES AND SUMMARY OF THE LAST MEETING

Subject to Paragraph (c) in minute number 02/218 being amended to show that work focussed approach to accessing benefits would be introduced by October 2003 and not 2002 as currently shown, the minutes were accepted as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

The summary was accepted as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

02/224 MATTERS ARISING

[02/218 Jobcentre Plus]

Members noted the meeting to discuss Jobcentre Plus and Learning and Skills Council (LSC) agendas was planned to take place the following week.

All other items would be picked up on the agenda.

02/225 FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Paul introduced the paper to enable Members to contribute to the review of the functions and responsibilities of Local Councils currently being undertaken through the Network Liaison Committee, chaired by John Merry. Paul highlighted a number of issues:

- a) Members may consider the document to be legalistic and therefore failed to illustrate how Local Councils made a difference,
- b) under the planning/targets section of the Consultation Paper (Paras 2-8) those items identified as new specified functions were already being progressed by the Local Council,
- c) under the quality and standards section (Para 15) the development of a strategy for development of Centres of Vocational Excellence (COVEs) to meet local/regional skills needs, quality requirements and progress to and within the workplace, would be brought to the Local Council's November Workshop,
- d) under the Higher Education section (Para 27) Members noted that the specified function to appoint Members to further education corporations within the Local Council area, subject to certain provisions, had not arisen locally,
- e) under the School Organisations Committees section (Para 30). The nomination of representatives to School Organisation Committees had been taken forward as an executive responsibility to date but an update would be provided for Council Members at the next meeting and views taken.

Members noted that all other sections were being progressed locally and during discussion Members suggested the following feedback:

- a) the Partnership section did not contain reference to the Government's national Neighbourhood Renewal Policy,
- b) the document was insufficiently specific e.g. Planning and Targets section (Paras 2-8) implied that primary school education fell within the Council's responsibilities but this was not the case
- c) Partnership and Consultation section (Para 10). It would be helpful to clarify the role of Local Councils from April 2003, using stronger language than "sustain" in relationships to Local Learning Partnerships,
- d) Planning and Targets section (Para 8) – suggest that proposals from National Office should come forward for local response, noting that no indication regarding resource was mentioned,
- e) the document would be improved with the addition of:
 - i) an introduction to put the work of National Council and Local Councils in context and state overall responsibilities, noting lack of any reference to what local Council's were trying to achieve
 - ii) recognition of Local Councils' contribution in terms of being creative locally rather than all initiatives being directed from National Office,

- iii) a suitable quotation from the 'Learning to Succeed' paper to reinforce (ii) above,
 - iv) a mechanism to evaluate the performance of Local Councils,
 - v) the role of Local Councils in influencing National LSC,
 - vi) the inclusion of social enterprise as distinct from the voluntary sector,
 - vii) linking the engagement of local strategic partnerships to delivering the national strategy for neighbourhood renewal,
 - viii) recognition of the influence for Local Councils to work with Regional Development Agencies in a wide context.
- f) Planning and Targets section (Para 3). Local Councils reflected different localities and economic circumstances and this para fails to discourage consultation with institutions rather than people and businesses directly,
- g) needed to set out duties and responsibilities of the Local Council more specifically in a dynamic way.

Council Members **AGREED:**

- a) the November Workshop agenda should include consideration of the development of a strategy for development of Centres of Vocational Excellence (COVEs) to meet local/regional skills needs, quality requirements and progress to and within the workplace,
- b) the terminology of 'GMLSC' should be used to refer to the local office and all its staff. The term 'GMLSC Board' should be adopted to refer to Local Council Members,
- c) Clare Caffrey and Sue Wood should prepare the response to National Office.

02/226 ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING (ACL) 2003/04

A declaration of interest was received from Richard Marbrow as an LEA Member.

Richard Merritt introduced his paper. Council Members noted:

- a) key issues of GMLSC's use of ACL would be considered at the November Workshop,
- b) the range of provision included in ACL and the differences in the types of ACL offered and the scale of ACL within each Local Authority area,
- c) ACL was not formula funded and the need existed to more sharply define the learning plans purchased in future,
- d) the intention to introduce formula funding for the majority of provision funded with the proposal being consulted upon
- e) the proposed flexibility of ACL in developing the capacity of Providers,

- f) opportunity to review the allocation of funding to LEAs currently guaranteed until next year and discussion with LEAs of a number of key issues,
- g) the need to understand the overall impact of different funding streams with lots of the items delivered for ACL also delivered through ESF etc,
- h) need to agree principles to move forward, having considered subcontracting and direct contracting arrangements,
- i) need to consider progression of learners, understand and ensure progression leads somewhere,
- j) necessity to understand how funding is being used, with fee policies becoming increasingly important,
- k) care needed to ensure formula funding doesn't result in diminishing the added value currently in place,
- l) the work being undertaken to raise voluntary/community sector capacity and review the high number of subcontracts in place,
- m) pilots being undertaken in preparation for future inspections of ACL and the need to develop Management Information Systems.

Richard Marbrow expressed concern regarding the issue of direct contracting as opposed to subcontracting and its potential impact on Local Authority cooperation. Also he expressed the view that LSC's would not be able to support provision without taking responsibility for it (e.g. social provision) and that clarity was needed.

Paul emphasised the need to simplify funding streams and relationships and assured Council Members this would be done sensitively to ensure good provision was maintained. Paul also highlighted the need to look at provision in the context of Adult Learning as a whole and the impact of funding from various sources.

During discussion, Council Members **AGREED** the following items should be considered further at the November Workshop:

- a) a comparison of what the same funding brought in each Local Authority area, to inform discussion,
- b) the opportunity for capacity building to potentially include new organisations previously excluded,
- c) noting work being undertaken by DfES to define ACL, that if no conclusion had been reached prior to the November Workshop, GMLSC's discussion should be fed back for consideration by DfES.

02/227 2002/03 BUDGETS AND TARGETS

Members noted the paper from Rob and he informed them that the main increase in local budgets was due to the transfer of £49m school sixth form funding to the LSC.

Members were concerned to hear of delays in receiving TEC legacy funding discussed at the previous meeting, noting the result of the delays in decreasing the expected funding and the potential impact on GMLSC's plans for the year. Paul outlined the effect on GMLSC

having taken the decision to launch the discretionary prospectus on the reasonable assumption that TEC legacy funds would be available by October but GMLSC needed the legacy funds available or a contingency plan to allow it to announce the package of support available. Members noted the expected legacy of £2.5-£2.6m and the expectation of being able to consider the effect of the competitive spending review on GMLSC by December.

Rob confirmed that comparison of the different types of expenditure were broadly as expected (David Brennan left the meeting at this point) and that issues regarding Provider performance were being addressed nationally and locally at Period 4 (noting that from a delivery perspective, Period 4 expenditure was from last year's budget). During discussion, Members noted:

- a) in the absence of receipt of TEC legacy funding, there would be a delay in projects being able to start. GMLSC continued to work on the basis that funds were expected and would be pragmatic if necessary to maximise achievement of local projects,
- b) with indemnities in place, it was possible the liquidator may agree to provide an interim payment.

Council Members **AGREED** that Paul should send a letter setting out specifically why the funding was necessary and that GMLSC's intentions were in full support of Government policies. The letter should be copied to the Chair and Government Office.

Council Members received a presentation from Elaine Bowker (copies of slides available on request) demonstrating the progress GMLSC expected to make in 2002/03 towards the achievement of its 2004 strategic objectives. Following the presentation Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) the Council should return in November to look at whether delivery matched targets to September.

02/228 AREA INSPECTION UPDATE

(Richard Merritt left the meeting at this point)

A declaration of interest was received from David Atkin as Head of an 11-18 school.

Elaine outlined the key points from her paper and Council Members noted:

- a) the unusual situation in undertaking three Area Inspections within such a short period of time and the purpose of ascertaining a good overview of 16-19 provision in terms of quality, sufficiency etc across the area,
- b) close work undertaken with Local Education Authorities and Learning Partnerships in each area and positive feedback from Inspectors and partners,
- c) near completion of two Self Assessment Reports and the references in more recent Area Inspection Reports regarding what the LSC should/should not be undertaking,
- d) the expectation for LSC to be proactive in strategic planning, partnership working and managing Work Based Learning contracts
- e) the key issues within each local Borough and the importance of close preparation work with partners in reacting to the different ways of working by Inspectors,

- f) WBL issues within each area and the inability of GMLSC to draw on institutional data as GMLSC was not coterminous with any previous TEC,
- g) intention to present improvements since April 2001,
- h) OfSTED inspection of 5 FE/sixth form colleges
- i) lots of key partnership working with Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership to demonstrate effectiveness and the need to accept weaknesses and work to resolve them,
- j) the opportunity to plan any communications during the process of Area Inspection,
- k) GMLSC's intention to work with partners to produce an action plan to address any issues identified from informal feedback,
- l) the challenge for 11-18 schools in collecting the data required and that not all information could be measured,
- m) recognition that the relatively short time since the LSC had been established did not allow a demonstration of its impact so far and this may be highlighted in the Reports.

Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) a short update should be provided at the November Council Workshop followed by a full update at the December Council Meeting,
- b) Elaine and her team should be congratulated for the work undertaken.

02/229 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

A declaration of interest was received from Richard Marbrow as an Education Business Partnership Director and as an LEA Member.

Paul highlighted the key items in the paper and Council Members noted:

Chair's Vacancy Update

The Sift Panel had met and 5 candidates would be invited for interview on 14 October. Paul, with one or both of the Deputy Chairs, would meet each candidate to enable them to understand the work of GMLSC.

Council Member Vacancy

Council Members **AGREED**:

Claire Dove and Geoffrey Piper should represent the Local Council on Sift and Interview Panels, together with an Independent Assessor.

Adult Learning Advisory Committee: Co-opted Attendee

Noting the Adult Learning Advisory Committee's recommendations, Council Members **AGREED**:

Jackie James, Manager of the Greater Merseyside Information Advice and Guidance Partnership should be invited as a co-opted attendee at future Adult Learning Advisory Committee meetings.

Council and Advisory Committee Meetings During 2002/03

Council Members noted the proposed meeting dates and items for future Council meetings and workshops, noting the main theme for the November 2002 Workshop as Strategic Planning 2003/06, followed by a thematic evening. Paul requested ideas as to what the theme might be and who the Council would like to have invited to contribute to the debate.

A number of ideas were forwarded:

- i) understanding participation of young people – Members noted the opportunity to invite a young person or young people to the November Workshop, taking advice from the Connexions Partnership,
- ii) issues in the voluntary and community sector and the opportunity to consider this formally prior to the meal,
- iii) the opportunity to use the Skills Festival taking place the week following the Council meeting to link with whatever topic was chosen.

Following discussion, Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) meeting the needs of young people should form part of the November Workshop agenda
- b) the Workshop should contain a formal agenda for business.

North West Academy

Paul reported that Liverpool LEA was currently in dialogue with DfES and investors and had sought GMLSC's views regarding support for the Academy in North Liverpool. Paul had spoken with Colin Hilton, Director of Education at Liverpool LEA and, noting the opportunity for raising standards, better facilities and opportunities, in addition to significant capital investment from the investor, GMLSC encouraged continued dialogue, but wished to have greater detail of any proposals. Council Members **AGREED**:

- a) GMLSC's position should be communicated to DfES
- b) consideration should be given to preparing a public announcement to make GMLSC's position clear, if media interest arose
- c) the importance of GMLSC and Liverpool LEA working together in co-operation

Education Business Links (EBL)

Richard Marbrow informed Council Members that the concerns referred to in the Report (Para 50) regarding the geographical distribution of the budget to be taken into account in preparing for 2003/04 by LEA, were strong concerns. Richard also felt that despite the

arrangements put in place to ensure otherwise, that there had already been adverse impact on Education Business Link activity. Paul emphasised:

- a) the need to contract with Greater Merseyside Education Business Link Organisation (EBLO) for 2002/03,
- b) GMLSC's awareness of Liverpool LEA's concerns regarding the distribution of funding which had been accepted by Liverpool's Director of Education for 2002, with an agreement to review the position and reach agreement on concerns in advance of 2003/04
- c) The need to consider the impact of the 14-19 Green Paper on the future EBL strategy
- d) further meetings with the Director of Education were planned.

Richard Marbrow's concerns were noted and Council Members **AGREED** that the issues should be addressed in the months after Christmas

02/230 FEEDBACK FROM ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Council Members received feedback from Geoffrey Piper and Sue Carmichael on each of the following Advisory Committee meetings:

- a) Audit Committee meeting held on 29 August 2002,
- b) Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion Advisory Committee meeting held on 4 September 2002.

02/231 UPDATES FROM OBSERVER ORGANISATIONS

Greater Merseyside Enterprise Ltd

Members received a written update from Greater Merseyside Enterprise Ltd.

Jobcentre Plus

Members noted from Brian:

- a) Jobcentre Plus had designated September as 'Basic Skills' month to highlight the requirement to undertake basic skills screening and access to provision. Revised initial assessment tools would be introduced for literacy and numeracy from 7 October,
- b) his intention to discuss a potential opportunity for GMLSC and partners to become involved in an open day for training providers to exhibit programmes for staff and customers.

Council Members **AGREED** Clare should arrange for copies of Brian's written report to be distributed.

Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership

(Brian Kearsley left the meeting at this point)

Bindy provided updates on:

- a) Summer Activities Programme (including the Youth Centre Initiative) and Members noted the Government Office's interest in making it a permanent Programme, following its success,

(Paul Holme left the meeting at this point)

- b) a number of proposals being evaluated to involve young people and gain continuous feedback on the service offered.

02/232 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Mersey Partnership Board Meeting Attendance

Council Members supported the arrangement for Claire Dove to attend The Mersey Partnership Board Meetings in place of Jim Michie until a permanent arrangement was agreed.

Workforce Development Advisory Committee

Members noted the first meeting of the new Advisory Committee was scheduled to take place on 5 November 2002 at 4pm.

02/233 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was an overnight workshop scheduled to take place on 6/7 November 2002. Details of the venue would be circulated.