

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Date 25th January 2007
Subject Council Meeting
Location 26 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4AE
Time 09:30
LSC office Kent and Medway
Publication intent Public

Present Council Members Professor David Melville (Chair)
Graham Badman
Malcolm Bell
Paul Carter
Lesley Davies (Area Director)
Vernon Hull
Derek Hunter
Tracey Luke
Anne-Marie Nelson
John Parsonage
Professor Michael Wright

Observers Diane Houston (University of Kent)

LSC staff Tony Allen
Jane Ball
John Ratcliff
Malcolm Staunton
Kath Carty
Anne Jones

Apologies Council Members Chris Hearn
Angela Jenkins
Fiona Pollard
Ashley West

Observers Gordon Bernard (Connexions)
Claire Coday (BusinessLink)
Rose Collinson (Medway LA)
John Haward (GOSE)
Lynda Russell (Jobcentre Plus)

Item 1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed and relayed apologies. He especially welcomed Lesley Davies, newly appointed Area Director, to her first Council Meeting.

Item 2. Declaration of Interest

- 2.1 The Chairman invited members to declare any potential conflicts of interest of a substantial or pecuniary nature in relation to the agenda. None were declared.

Item 3. Approval of minutes of last meeting (23 October) and progress against action points

- 3.1 The minutes of 23 October were **approved** as an accurate record. The update report showed that the relevant actions had either been completed or were in hand.

Item 4. School Organisation Committee (SOC)

- 4.1 Following Theme 7 re-structuring new/additional nominees were required to attend each of the Kent and Medway SOC's.

Decision: Nominations agreed as John Ratcliff, Kent SOC and Tony Allen, Medway SOC with Lesley Davies and Jane Ball as alternates.

Item 5. Influencing and Shaping Local Priorities and Plans

- 5.1 Lesley Davies gave a brief overview of her priorities and plans for Kent and Medway highlighting the need to take forward the Annual Plan and ensure that working practices internally were fit for delivering our priorities and working with our partners.

Paul Carter joined the meeting

- 5.2 A joint presentation was given by Tony Allen and John Ratcliff covering:

- The Leitch Report
- KCC and Medway Council Strategic Plans
- SEEDA Regional Economic Strategy (RES)
- FE White Paper
- 14-19 Developments
- National/Regional Priorities

The purpose of the presentation was to understand the key drivers/influences on the LSC Kent and Medway Plan and to give Members

the opportunity to influence the development of the Plan.

Leitch

- 5.4 The Leitch Report highlights the lack of a competitive skills base in the United Kingdom with the focus on ensuring that a basic platform of skills for all (Skills for Life/Level 2) is provided. Skills should be portable and meet the needs of the employer and the individual with an adaptable delivery framework.
- 5.5 Performance to be improved through simplification, rationalisation and clear remits to all. The emphasis is on strengthening the employer voice and influence and a voluntary commitment to train all employees to Level 2.
- 5.6 The new Employment and Skills Commission (previously the Sector Skills Development Agency) raised the profile of Sector Skills Councils and would be the key route in identifying qualifications for public funding. All public funding for adult and vocational skills would be through Train to Gain and Adult Learner Accounts.

KCC and Medway Council

- 5.9 The contents of the KCC "Vision for Kent" and Medway Council's "Community Report and Plan" were highlighted and were acknowledged as fitting well with the LSC's national and regional priorities.

SEEDA RES

- 5.10 The aim of the strategy is to maximise the number of people ready for employment at all skill levels and ensure that they are equipped to progress in the labour market. There were direct links with the Leitch report on clarifying and simplifying the skills offer to business and meeting the needs of business via Sector Skills Councils.

FE and 14-19 Reform

- 5.11 There is a shared vision across FE and 14-19 reform and this vision is articulated by a new consultation around funding arrangements in 2008/09 called "Delivering World Class Skills in a Demand Led System". Funding arrangements would support the agenda rather than driving it and the role of the LSC would be one of commissioning and funding.
- 5.12 New funding arrangements would be in place by 2008/09, including funding for the first five specialised diplomas for 14-16 year olds and 16-18 year olds. There would be a national entitlement to 14 specialised diplomas for

14-19 year olds in 2013.

- 5.13 The main components for FE Reform are clarity around its mission with the needs of learners and employers at its centre. Funding would be focussed on priorities with less bureaucracy and more autonomy.
- 5.14 Under the FE Bill the LSC is in a position to operate regionally and focus more strategically and align with other local and regional strategies. The Bill also creates a London Skills Board and gives the LSC new intervention powers over removing senior managers from post.
- 5.15 The Policy drivers for 14-19 reform are to increase Post-16 participation and achievement and respond to employer and skills needs. A key element of this is delivering the entitlement to specialised diplomas through the Gateway process. An LA/LSC conference would be held in April following the result of the Gateway process.

National/Regional Priorities

- 5.16 The national and regional priorities appeared realistic. The SE focus was on improving the range and accessibility of learning opportunities for young people which lead to progression; improving skills training and employers engagement through implementing the SE Action for Business Strategy; raising performance and improve the quality of provision using Framework for Excellence; and supporting the regeneration and growth of targeted communities by developing the SE Action for Communities model.

Gordon Bernard joined the meeting

5.17 *Discussion points:*

- (a) The South East has been asked to trial Adult Learner Accounts (ALA) and initially this would be for learners taking Level 3 courses. The provision would focus around diamond growth areas – Thames Gateway and Ashford for Kent and Medway. The funding across the region for ALAs amounted to £7m for 2007/08 and 2008/09 and would go straight from the LSC to the provider.
- (b) With so many initiatives ongoing at present Derek Hunter requested short briefing papers on the pilots that were in place indicating what stage each were at.

- (c) Malcolm Bell said that “Action for Communities” was needed to safeguard community based learning , especially as the change in emphasis on funding from the LSC to target young people had resulted in funding being drawn away from community provision.
- (d) Vernon Hull said that the development of vocational centres and the capital investment in colleges in Kent and Medway was a real positive. There was still a need for greater employer engagement and innovation.
- (e) Michael Wright raised the issue of the absence of progression to HE and Aimhigher, together with the lack of connectivity. There was also a lack of local dimension.
- (f) John Parsonage said that the key targets in the RES were around employability. By bringing together LAs, SSCs, JCP with SEEDA and LSC there was an opportunity to begin to join things up and develop a model of local skills employment forums.
- (g) Kent was in a good position to take forward the specialised diplomas and **it was considered that David Melville and Paul Carter jointly contacting the Department to emphasise Kent’s position.**
- (h) Anne Marie Nelson had requested an item on the next agenda on safeguarding the interest of Kent and Medway in the future. David Melville said that there are a set of initiatives that can take this in the right direction. There is a common cause on the Council for learners in Kent and Medway and we must ensure that we are clear on our own plan and use the Government initiatives to take this forward.

Item 6 Risk Register

- 6.1 Peter Kennedy circulated the Risk Register as at 31st December 2006 which would be updated on 30th April 2007. The register identified 16 risks at green, 14 risks as amber and 2 risks as red.
- 6.4 PK advised that the red risks are identified on pages 4/5 of the Register and stressed that Council be assured that there are procedures in place to monitor and challenge the risks. Actions were in place to manage these risks.

6.5 *Discussion*

Point 2.2 – under constant review and further information is awaited

Point 3.6 - MAPPA – JR/GB to discuss outside of Council

Point 3.3 - **Directors to revisit 3.3. although still technically a red risk.**

Item 7 Update on Capital Projects

7.1 Jane Ball circulated a list of capital projects which had been separated into Partnership areas but gave the position across Kent and Medway. This linked to priority 3 around excellence and enhancing the quality of provision by “ratching up” FE estates and aligning this with Building Schools for the future (BSF)

Discussion

Vernon Hull said it was important not to lose sight of areas that were ill provided for i.e. Dover, Swale, Sittingbourne.

Malcolm Bell pointed out that as colleges were pushed beyond affordability higher grant support would be required from the LSC. He acknowledged the good working relationship between the LSC officers and FE Principals.

Item 8 AOB

8.1 The Chair drew Members’ attention to the Area Director’s Report and Minutes of the Capital Sub Group meeting. He also informed Members that the capital project for West Kent College had now been agreed in principle at the recent National Capital Committee