

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Date 6 December 2006
Subject Council Meeting - 39061206
Location St Mary's Stadium
Time 1300 - 1600
LSC office Hampshire and the Isle of Wight
Publication intent Public

Present Colonel Terry Scriven, Chair
Martin Lamb, Area Director
Professor Roger Brown
Michael Budd
Jonathan Cheshire
Christine Davis
Donna Green
Linda McGowan
Ken Moon
Mike Petter
Jill Wareham

In attendance Tim Jackson, Principal Sparsholt College and Matt Atkinson, Acting Principal Cricklade College for item 6
Pam Charlwood, Connexions observer
Cathy Evans, GOSE observer
Martin Pryor, Job Centre Plus observer

LSC staff Rachel McKellar, Partnership Director
Anne-Marie Mountifield, Partnership Director
Phillip Walker, Partnership Director
Deryn Martin, Partnership Adviser

Apologies Apologies have been received from:
Garry George
Dr Graham Jowett
Andrew Lloyd
Kathy Slack (SEEDA)
Jacky Stevens OBE, BusinessLink Wessex observer
Peter Woods, Partnership Director

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

Welcome

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and, on behalf of the Council, wished Dr Graham Jowett a speedy recovery from his recent illness.

Apologies

- 1.2 Apologies were noted from Garry George, Graham Jowett, Andrew Lloyd, Kathy Slack, Jacky Stevens and Peter Woods.

Declaration of interests

- 1.3 Members were formally reminded to declare any interests, or conflict of interests as the need arose. They were also reminded that under the Council's standing orders Members with a conflict of interest could be requested to leave the room for the duration of the discussion.

Chair's update

- 1.4 The Chair verbally updated Members on his LSC activities since the last meeting. At a national level discussions at the Chairs' conference had centred on the streamlining of the non-executive. Regional Board membership had been discussed but as yet there was little clarity on how local issues would be dealt with. Members were thanked for their continuing commitment to the LSC and efforts to ensure a seamless transition.
- 1.5 At a regional level the Chair had attended a regional Chairs' meeting, a Regional Board away day and a Regional Board meeting, the minutes of which were distributed to Members. The key discussions had focused on the regional priorities which were expected to be published in January 07.
- 1.6 At a local level the Chair highlighted the joint meetings of the Fareham and St Vincent corporation working group and his meeting, together with members of the Executive, with the Isle of Wight headteachers. In terms of the Island it was noted that the Public Policy Commission was reconvening that day to receive further evidence and the LSC anticipated being asked for concluding comments following the recent series of road shows.
- 1.7 Members were informed that the local Council capital sub-group had met "virtually" to approve the capital application for Burgate School and that this had now been submitted to the Region. The Chair had also attended a centenary event at Itchen college and a graduation dinner at Southampton Solent University and Professor Brown was congratulated on the overall success of the University.

Item 2. Minutes of last meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the last meeting of 4 October 2006 were agreed as an accurate reflection of the discussion of that meeting and were cleared for publication.

Item 3. Matters arising

- 3.1 Action 32.5 – it was agreed that credit could be given regarding arguing vociferously for more funding for further education and that this action could be closed.
- 3.2 Action 36.3 – Ken Moon would forward the Federation of Small Businesses survey as requested in closure of this action.
- 3.3 Action 37.2 – an event with WBL providers would be considered in the new year.
- 3.4 Action 37.5 – ILR information would be provided to the January StAG and thereby to the February Council.
- 3.5 Action 37.6 – discussion on the annual plan at the January StAG and thereby the February Council would close this action about discussion on funding and priorities.
- 3.6 Action 38.4 – discussions between the Executive and JobCentre Plus on joint working issues, including basic skills and ESOL were in progress.
- 3.7 Action 38.5 – an update on Train to Gain was contained within the Regional Board minutes that had been circulated and this action was closed.
- 3.8 The Chair drew Members' attention to the schedule of Council, local capital committee and StAG dates for 2007.

Item 4. Area Director's Report

- 4.1 Members reviewed the report on key performance developments since the last Council meeting in October 2006 and noted that that little new or revised performance information had become available since the last report.

Annual Statement of Priorities (ASP)

- 4.2 A copy of the ASP was circulated to Members who noted that work was continuing on funding and eligibility and issues relating to ESOL and asylum seekers.

Grant letter 07/08

- 4.3 The early receipt of this had been a major achievement and had enabled much national and regional work to be done on allocations.

Queen's speech

- 4.4 The specific elements of the Further Education and Training Bill were outlined to Members. It was noted that enactment was anticipated for early in the new year with commencement orders coming through until September 07. There were some substantial implications for the LSC.

Leitch Review of Skills

- 4.5 A copy of the executive summary was circulated to all Members. The review was substantive and contained some significant issues linked to the Pre-budget report. Looking to 2010 all public funding for adults would flow through Train to Gain on a demand led basis or through Adult Learner Accounts. It was suggested that this would generate considerable instability in funding streams. Apprenticeships, to state pension age, would see a

significant increase and additional annual investment in level 3 was required. There was some discussion about raising aspirations and expectations and the need for a change in culture. It was felt there was a need for coherent strategies between a number of key agencies to help deliver this challenging agenda.

Item 5. Advisory Group Reports

Draft minutes of the Strategic Advisory Group

- 5.1 Members noted the draft minutes of the StAG meeting of 16 November 2006 that had been circulated in advance of the meeting and which reflected discussion held at that meeting and it was noted that the Chair of StAG had complimented the Executive on their impressive contributions to the meeting.
- 5.2 Members' attention was drawn to the quality of the provider network in HIOW where no grade 4s in provision existed.
- 5.3 In reviewing the report against the 05/06 annual plan the group had discussed concerns over young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) and had noted that the complexities of this would be further discussed at the present Council meeting. The rise in Apprentice frameworks and the number of colleges accredited with the Action for Business standard had been highlighted to the group and they had agreed that this further reflected credit on the provider network.
- 5.4 The group had discussed ongoing issues relating to Fareham and Gosport and in particular Fareham College's financial position. Members had also accepted the proposal to establish additional vocational courses in the Bridgemary area but had cautioned on the need for careful handling if the new college was not to be pre-empted.
- 5.5 The group had applauded the Executive's stance in relation to the Isle of Wight Public Policy Commission and the series of road shows and had thanked Rob Munson for his professional and measured contribution to the work of the group and Council over the past six years in advance of his retirement.

Item 6. Initial Outline Proposal – Sparsholt/Cricklade College

- 6.1 Members were invited to reflect on the Initial Outline Proposal (IOP) and its recommendations and were advised that at this stage they were being asked to decide whether the proposal could proceed to formal consultation and to identify any issues that they would wish to see investigated further or specifically examined or developed in any final proposal. The Council was not being asked at this stage to determine whether or not the merger should proceed.
- 6.2 Subject to Council agreement, a draft proposal would be published for public consultation following which a full proposal would be brought to the Council for consideration in April 2007. Members' attention was drawn to the description of the statutory framework and criteria for provider reorganisations together with the process for merger. The IOP outlined the rationale, vision, objectives and curriculum offer for the new college and

analysed the implications for the other providers in the area. Members' attention was drawn to the support of the local stakeholders, including the MP, in the Andover area for the proposal.

- 6.3 The Executive outlined thoughts that Members may wish to probe with the Principals and the rapid timetable for the establishment of the new college in August 2007. The Executive's recommendation to the Council was that the IOP was supported and would proceed to formal consultation.
- 6.4 Members welcomed Matt Atkinson and Tim Jackson to the meeting and the two Principals outlined the positions of their respective colleges and the extent of positive support for the merger from their corporations. The vision for Andover was one of improved choice and there was a desire to build an excellent college for the people of that area. Improved vocational provision in construction and engineering would also have an impact on the NEET community of Andover and the development of a sixth form centre in the town would focus on academic excellence. Both colleges were working on a joint property strategy by April 2007 and accepted that the IOP had challenging targets to achieve.
- 6.5 The corporation of Sparsholt had wished the following points to be made:
- Targets identified a 5% improvement in success rates and a 1% increase in enrolment – the college did not anticipate a decline in enrolment through merger but would test these assumptions;
 - Putting Sparsholt into a financial category C college would have consequences but the Board would not allow the college to slip out of planned led funding;
 - The costs of the merger were recognisably significant and constructive discussions were ongoing with the LSC but the Board would wish a suitable package to fund the transition to be agreed prior to merger and to be assured of this in writing.
- 6.6 Members were pleased to learn of the increased vocational provision and asked for assurance that there was linkage with local employers and commitment to progression. They recommended the colleges link with the LSfPA in the Andover area. The colleges accepted the need to strengthen employer engagement and informed Members that there were looking at the curriculum to meet the needs of local employers and were naturally working with the relevant sector skills councils.
- 6.7 Members asked about the numbers of sixth form students in the Andover area. Cricklade numbered approximately 300 but there were also approximately 400 who left Andover to study elsewhere. To combat this the profile of sixth form provision in the town would be raised by increasing entry requirements and improving the curriculum offer as there was clearly a need for a high quality provider in the area. The services of a beacon college would be engaged to set up pastoral services and there would be an emphasis on integrity in recruiting sixth form learners and ensuring that there were suitable vocational alternatives.
- 6.8 Members asked about the possibility of offsite provision for vocational courses and were informed that Tribal Education had been engaged to help

with the joint property strategy as it was recognised that expert property advice was required on where best to place the provision. The colleges had found willingness on the part of the Borough Council to support the initiative.

- 6.9 Members discussed the current Cricklade campus and noted that although it needed rationalising, it was quite big and not as constraining as first thought so it would therefore be possible to decant students whilst building commenced so that normal business could continue.
- 6.10 Members noted that the staff of both colleges had been engaged in the proposals and that whilst most saw the development as positive action, there would, necessarily be some efficiencies made and no assurances had been given.
- 6.11 Members asked whether accessibility and transport had been part of the planning considerations. This had been limited as neither college expected students to travel from one site to the other, though accepted that it would affect some staff. From this perspective the merge was seen as essentially beneficial as there would not be students travelling out of the Andover area to access high quality provision elsewhere. There was also benefit in the current Cricklade site and its proximity to public transport networks.
- 6.12 Members discussed the need to turnaround perceptions of learning in the Andover area. It was accepted that raising the esteem of Andover as a learning centre would be challenging and Members were encouraged that the colleges had already jointly spoken with the local schools to raise standards and aspirations.
- 6.13 In response to one of Sparsholt Corporation's concerns the Executive acknowledged the financial challenge of the merger proposals and was working on appropriate arrangements to ensure that the new arrangements would be sustainable into the future.
- 6.14 Both Principals were thanked for their presentation of the IOP and in their absence Members continued to discuss the proposal. Members had been greatly encouraged by the leadership and management displayed both from the colleges and the LSC and were confident of the vision for the future. The Chair cautioned that Basingstoke should not feel left out and it was suggested that LSC ambitions in this area be aligned with those of SEEDA's diamond for growth to compensate for any loss.

Decision: Members unanimously voted in favour of the colleges continuing to develop their proposal and to undertake local consultation (9-0).

Item 7. Discussion on NEETs

- 7.1 Members thanked Pam Charlwood for the helpful paper which shared information the number of young people aged 16-18 not in education, employment or training (NEET), their characteristics, reasons why they became NEET, the annual snapshot of the activity survey for year 11 leavers, the action being taken by various partners to reduce the number of NEETs and proposals for further action needed.
- 7.2 It was noted that although the SE region had the lowest NEET figures in the country, it was struggling to keep it that way and that HIOW was bucking this

trend. There were particular NEET pockets in various areas in all four districts of HIOW with an average of 1800 in the county of Hampshire alone. Trends identified through the annual activity survey showed evidence of young people struggling to find a range of opportunities in employment. Connexions was sharing this information with schools, colleges, consortia etc.

- 7.3 The paper focussed on statistics in Southampton for characteristics of young people who were NEET and suggested some reasons for why young people became or remained NEET. These included family, societal, educational and aspirational reasons together with availability of options and quality of information, advice and guidance (IAG).
- 7.4 The paper outlined action being taken through central and local government targets, 14-19 consortia, work-based learning and NEET action groups. Further action required majored around availability of apprenticeships and engagement with employers. It was noted that Apprenticeship Online was a big step forward with over 900 opportunities available to date but there was a need to move into stronger linkage between the LSC and Connexions working together with Local Authorities and to think imaginatively of ways of reaching out to this sector.
- 7.5 Members also reviewed Professor Brown's paper about widening participation in Higher Education but accepted that the issues were cognate and that the roots of the problem went beyond the age of 16. His paper also implied that cooperative effort was required and outlined the particular problem for those in employment with no training.
- 7.6 Members were informed of the work that Wheatsheaf Trust in Southampton did with Year 11 learners in trying to pick these young people up before they became NEET and also with NEETs themselves. They experienced young people with both massively complex needs and those who just required some motivation and suggested that educational disaffection was the most serious reason behind why a young person became NEET – either for those who had learning difficulties or for those who were bright but bored.
- 7.7 Members felt that IAG was the key to guiding young people down the right path and suggested that this was particularly needed for vocational options. They were encouraged by Apprenticeship Online.
- 7.8 Focussing on the statistics for Southampton where as at 24 November 2006, of the 2011 young people who had entered further education in September 2006, 227 had already left the courses they had entered at the three colleges in the City, the Executive suggested there was a need to look at this drop out and analyse whether it was possible to identify where this 227 had gone.

Action: 39.1 Executive

- 7.9 Members were informed that the NEET issue was exemplified in the Annual Statement of Priorities as a national priority and would be replicated through the regional and local priorities. It was also recognised that there were some schools producing disproportionate numbers of NEETs in comparison to other schools of a similar social/economic background.

7.10 Members agreed that there was a need for more proactive work to be done early in schools and in IAG opportunities and felt that children in care should be a particular priority. It was felt that there were different root causes in different areas and suggested that StAG might review this to further the discussion at a future meeting.

Action: 39.2 Executive

Item 8. Any other business

- 8.1 Jill Wareham fed back to Members from the recent Regional Audit Committee meeting. Risk management in local offices had been raised as an issue and Area Directors had been asked to ensure that such arrangements did not fall down during this transition year. Members were informed that the local plan would be risk assessed and monitored.
- 8.2 The Chair thanked Members for their work during 2006 and wished everyone a happy Christmas.

Item 9. Date of next meeting

- 9.1 The next Council meeting will take place on Wednesday 7 February 2007, 0915 – 1300 at Eagle Point.

Note: copies of all papers and reports relating to each item and presented to Council are not circulated with the minutes but are held on file.

Signed:
Colonel Terry Scriven, Chair

Date:

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Meeting chair Colonel Terry Scriven

Minute taker Deryn Martin

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