

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Date 14 September 2006
Subject LSC Berkshire Council Meeting
Location Aylesbury College
Time 15:30
LSC office Berkshire
Publication intent Public

Present Kathryn Cook (Acting Chair)
David Ansell
Tony Eccleston
Anne Murdoch

In attendance Pat Upson (Chair, LSC MKOB)
Sally Staples (Connexions)
Linda Saunders (Jobcentre Plus)

LSC staff Shereen Samersinghe
Heather White
Pat Hadfield

Apologies Pam Alexander
Gordon Bull
Nicky Hillier
Jacqui Johnson
David Lunn
Gordon Marshall
Nick Parish
Leslie Stephen
Kathy Winrow
Laura Asquith (Jobcentre Plus)
Ronnie Epstein (Business Link)
Katharine Horler (Connexions)
John Parsonage (SEEDA)

Item 1. Minutes of 17th July 2006 Council Meeting and Matters arising

1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record of proceedings, subject to clarification of item 6.3. This reflected Council Members' perceptions that consultation on the closure of East Berkshire College's Maidenhead campus may not have been widespread. The Partnership Director for Berkshire East, who had not been able to attend the

July meeting to respond to this concern, confirmed that key partners and stakeholders had been closely involved in discussions with the college prior to the closure decision being reached (see also 2.5 and 3.1 of Paper 22/2006). The delay in informing Council Members was due entirely to the timings of Council meetings.

Steps will be taken in the future to ensure that members are given timely information on key decisions affecting learners, regardless of when Council meetings take place.

- 1.2 It was also noted that no expressions of interest had been received in response to the invitation to deputise for Gordon Bull (Chairman of the SE Regional Audit Committee) on the limited occasions when he may not be available to attend Audit Committee meetings. The Executive Secretary was asked to make individual approaches to members to identify a deputy.

Action: PH

Item 2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 A Declaration of Interest was routinely expressed by Anne Murdoch, as Principal of Newbury College.

Item 3. Area Director's Report (Paper 21/2006)

- 3.1 The Area Director highlighted key aspects of his written report as follows:

3.2 LSC Transformation

As the LSC approaches the final stages of its restructuring exercise, some 15 vacancies remain unfilled within the Thames Valley Partnership Teams. The assessment/interview process will continue over the next few months with a view to all posts being filled early in the New Year.

- 3.3 Agreement has been reached with the PCS Union for critical vacancies to be advertised externally where there have been no expressions of interest from employees on the redeployment register or from other internal applicants.
- 3.4 The office move has recently taken place positioning local office staff in their respective teams at the northern end of Pacific House. The southern end of the building is now designated as one of the two Regional Centres for the Thames Valley.
- 3.5 The process of team building is also underway and steps are being taken to define staff duties and responsibilities more clearly. A staff Away Day will take place on 19th September at which Directors will outline the vision, priorities and new ways of working.
- 3.6 *Berkshire College of Agriculture Accommodation Strategy*
Berkshire College of Agriculture has recently completed the first phase of its redevelopment programme. £1.3 million of LSC capital support has been utilised, as part of an overall £3.75m project, to build a new animal care centre and learning resource centre.
- 3.7 The college is now planning further enhancements to the campus and is discussing proposals with the Regional Property Adviser and Partnership

Director for Berkshire East. A bid for additional capital support will be submitted in due course for the Council's endorsement.

3.8 *Timetable for ACL Inspections*

The local Council has been notified that three Adult and Community Learning inspections will take place in Berkshire during the 2006/07 academic year. Slough Borough Council is due to be inspected in October and has agreed to participate in a pilot for the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI). This will entail the simultaneous inspection of all aspects of learning falling within ALI's remit, including work based learning.

3.9 The Royal Borough of Windsor will be inspected in November and West Berkshire Council in Spring 2007.

3.10 The outcome of the inspections will be reported at future Council meetings.

3.11 *Berkshire Area Wide Prospectus*

All areas are required to publish an area wide prospectus of 14-19 learning opportunities by 2007. The first phase of the Berkshire on-line prospectus, jointly developed by the LSC and Connexions, went live in August to coincide with the timing of GCSE results. The site 'Berkshire Opportunities' was accessed over 2000 times in the first two weeks following its launch.

3.12 *Period 4 Accounts*

The Period 4 Accounts reflected year-to-date expenditure against budget. Given that (a) not all budgets are controlled locally and (b) final allocations against some programme lines are still awaited, the financial summary is to be interpreted indicatively. There are, however, no specific areas of concern.

Item 4. East Berkshire College Accommodation Strategy (Paper 22/2006)

4.1 Following discussions at the last Council meeting, the Partnership Director for Berkshire East provided an update on the status of East Berkshire College's plans for a phased withdrawal from its Maidenhead site.

4.2 In recent years, with LSC capital support, the college has invested heavily in re-developing both its Langley and Windsor campuses. The original strategy also included a rebuild of the Maidenhead site. However, driven by the FE White Paper 'Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances' and the LSC's agenda for change programme (Themes 1-6), the Board of Governors commissioned an independent review of the college's accommodation strategy.

4.3 The outcome of the review resulted in a decision being made not to progress redevelopment of the Maidenhead site. The decision took account of:

- The low level of income generation from the site (approx 7% of the college's overall income)
- The relatively low level of enrolments
- The small number of full-time learners
- The considerable distances travelled by full-time learners with learning difficulties/disabilities to access provision.

4.4 The college Principal has discussed proposals with key partners and stakeholders and is currently in the process of modelling a series of options

for ensuring that the needs of the local learning community are met. In the meantime, it is intended that the existing campus will continue to operate fully for the remainder of the 2006/07 academic year.

- 4.5 The Berkshire East Partnership Team will work closely with college staff to ensure that suitable alternative provision is identified either at the college's Langley or Windsor sites, or through other providers in the Maidenhead area.
- 4.6 Discussions are already underway to ensure that the needs of students with learning difficulties/disabilities are responded to appropriately.

Item 5. 14-19 Reform (Paper 23/2006)

- 5.1 The Partnership Director for Berkshire West introduced Paper 23/2005, explaining the background, process and timetable for the introduction of fourteen specialised diplomas which, by 2013, will extend the range of qualifications available to young people.
- 5.2 The new diplomas were proposed in the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper, published in 2005, and seek to improve the curriculum offer by combining practical skills development with theoretical and technical understanding and knowledge.
- 5.3 The first five specialised diplomas will be available for teaching in 2008; a further five will be introduced in 2009 and the final four in 2010. Planning and preparation for the new qualifications has been delegated jointly to Local Authorities (for 14-19 year olds) and the LSC (for 16-19 year olds); the expectation is for both organisations to work together to establish and develop consortia arrangements for delivering the diplomas.
- 5.4 Expressions of interest to deliver the first five diplomas have already been received. The criteria against which formal applications will be judged are expected imminently. Similarly, information is still awaited on the self-assessment framework which will enable consortia to test their readiness to deliver in 2008, ahead of submitting formal applications at the end of November 2006. The LSC and Local Authorities will work closely with consortia groups over the next few months to determine which outline proposals should be developed into formal applications for submission to Regional Panels in January and February 2006.
- 5.5 All applications will be subject to a Gateway scrutiny process which will identify the consortia best placed to secure the necessary awarding body approval to deliver the new qualifications.
- 5.6 Membership of the Regional Panels will comprise a range of bodies including Government Offices, Diploma Development Partnerships, QCA, Awarding Bodies and others. Council members stressed the importance of ensuring that membership was balanced and included representatives from schools. David Ansell and Pat Upson undertook to raise this at the Regional Board meeting on 22nd February.

Action: DA/PU

- 5.7 Additionally, members commented that it was also important to ensure an appropriately broad range of membership on the emerging consortia groups.

5.8 A question was raised over the level of support that the local LSC would be able to dedicate to the consortia. David Ansell responded by confirming that the 14-19 agenda was a key priority area and that both financial and staff resources would be directed to supporting the introduction of diplomas.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 16.30.

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Meeting chair Kathryn Cook (Acting Chair)
Minute taker Pat Hadfield
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Signed: (Chairman)

Date: