

Minutes



Leading learning and skills

Date 23 October 2006
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 Internal

Present Council Members Professor David Melville (Chair)
Tony Allen (Acting Area Director)
Malcolm Bell
Chris Hearn
Vernon Hull
Angela Jenkins
Tracey Luke
Anne- Marie Nelson
John Parsonage
Ashley West

Observers Gordon Bernard (Connexions)
Rose Collinson (Medway LA)
Lynda Russell (Jobcentre Plus)

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

Apologies Council Members Judith Armitt
Graham Badman
Paul Carter
Derek Hunter
Fiona Pollard
Professor Michael Wright

Observers Clarie Coday (Business Link)
John Haward (GOSE)

Item 1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed attendees and relayed apologies. He especially welcomed Tracy Luke, Headteacher of Folkestone School for Girls to her first Council meeting and also welcomed John Ratcliff, newly appointed Partnership Director for NE Kent. He also welcomed Rose Collinson to the meeting who would be attending as an Observer from Medway Local Authority, given that Judith Armitt had been appointed as Chief Executive of Thames Gateway.
- 1.2 This was also Tony Allen's first meeting as Acting Area Director.
Decision: It was agreed to approve his membership of the Council until Lesley Davies, new Area Director, is in post.
- 1.3 As Members were aware, no new Members could now be appointed to the Council. Vernon Hull, Anne-Marie Nelson and Michael Wright had all agreed to continue for a further period.

Item 2. Declarations of Potential Conflicts 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. Ashley West registered an interest in agenda item 6, presentation on the Thames Gateway, as he was a Non-Executive Director of MHS Homes.

Item 3. Approval of minutes of last meeting(05 July 2006) and progress against action points

- 3.1 The minutes of 5 July were **approved** as an accurate record. The update report showed that the relevant actions had either been completed or were in hand.

Item 4. LSC Restructuring

- 4.1 This had been raised at previous Council meetings and had been discussed at the recent Chairs day. There was an acceptance that local Councils would be replaced by a regional tier over the coming months and the Chair reported that there were also plans to streamline the National Council and replace the two Statutory Committees with one. However, some concerns had been raised over this.
- 4.2 Although there was a shift to a regional structure, the Regional Board had yet to be determined, but it was envisaged that this would be linked to individuals rather than local Councils. There was also a culture change in local offices with emphasis on local relationships with areas and partnership working.

Main Discussion Points

- There was still a need to articulate the position for Kent and Medway, for example the challenges of disengaged young people and the migration of the workforce from the EU.
- It appeared the political drive was towards giving more weight to LAAs and these together with the City Regions raised the real danger of a number of organisations all looking at the same thing.
- This was an opportunity for a business simplification agenda and the RDA, working closely with the Regional Director and Regional Chair, was pushing for the continuation of the Local Skills for Productivity Alliances.
- Concerns over the links across the SE region were raised as parts of Kent and Medway had stronger links with the Thames Gateway and London LSCs than other parts of SE.
- The reduction in the non executive team (3 of whom had a remit as Champions of Equal Opportunity) could result in the concentration on more mainstream provision to the detriment of minority groups. Although there was no clarity on how this would be taken forward nationally, regionally resources had been committed to LLDD in the SE with a real commitment to address this.
- For the Directors, the creation of 4 Partnership Teams covering specific areas gave the opportunity for an increase in external working with bodies and groups already in place such as LAA, CBI, KAFEC, Planning Forums etc.
- Staff were still mainly in the transition stage of the new structure with some staff still bringing with them old responsibilities. However, many staff were fully embracing their new role. It was a real opportunity for the Executive to understand the variety of institutions in their “patch” and get to know the key partners.

Summary

- 4.3 It was important to maintain the input from the local Council during this time of change. Relationships were developing in the areas and the new Area Director, once on board, would be able to build relationships in the areas at the highest levels.

Action: The Executive were asked to bring to future Council Meetings a proposal as to how existing groups/partners would support the work of the LSC.

Item 5. Apprenticeships Update

- 5.1 Malcolm Staunton presented a report on the performance of Work Based Learning in Kent and Medway.

Main Points

- Kent and Medway currently had approximately 5,000 apprentices in training, via contracts with the 7 FE colleges and 18 other providers, including KCC. The FE college contracts accounted for 42% of all apprentices in Kent and Medway.
- There had been a big increase in the success rates over the last 2 years – reaching 55% in Kent and Medway, which was higher than the national and regional figures.
- LSCKM was working closely with Connexions on Entry to Employment (E2E) to offer places to young people not ready to join further education, training or employment. The progression rate into FE, employment or WBL had increased from 34% in 03/04 to 55% in 05/06, which was the second highest in the country.
- KCC, through its “Vision for Kent” was planning an additional 1,000 Apprentices by 2010 and the LSC would be working closely with them on this.

Discussion Points

- Gordon Bernard said that E2E had been very successful but some issues had arisen from the replacement of the training allowance (available up to last April) with Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). There had been delays in dealing with applications which had resulted in a loss of students. In particular, there were issues with the handling of applications by JCP, where young people had been on benefits.

Action: Lynda Russell to check to see if this could be streamlined.

- Very few learners progressed to jobs and there was a need to stimulate employer demand. In addition, most learners’ progressed to FE but the majority had to wait until the September enrolment rather than being able to join during the year. NWK College had a flexible enrolment.

Action: Malcolm Bell would check back with other colleges at the next KAFEC meeting to see if this could be addressed.

Item 6. Delivering Thames Gateway Skill Needs

6.1 A presentation was given by Vernon Hull and Malcolm Bell setting out the opportunities, challenges and issues facing the Thames Gateway in delivering skill needs. The Gateway Knowledge Alliance (GKA) had produced an agenda for action which highlighted the following proposals:

- Continuing focus on basic and lower level qualifications.
- Providing intermediate and higher level qualifications.
- Recruitment, Labour Market Information , Advice and Brokerage
- Demographics and older workers were key areas that needed addressing.
- Skills to address the needs of North Kent priority sectors as too many vocational routes run into “buffers”.
- Progression Pathways, collaboration, partnership and development need to be worked and made to happen.

6.2 Malcolm Bell's presentation was based on the college perspective.

Additional points were:

- Low participation/achievement level and lack of provision at levels 1-2 for young people in Medway, Kent Thameside and Swale had been identified from the StAR process.
- Growth in student numbers – for NWK College an increase of £9m in funding from the LSC from the period 00/01 – 06/07. There was a real problem of funding adult learners especially those in part-time education because of the emphasis on 16-19 cohort.
- Capital investment at NWK College totalled £23m since 02/03 but their borrowings were 30% of their income. Further projects were being brought forward but as the college had borrowed on an earlier project a higher level of support would be required from the LSC. This would be an ongoing issue for all colleges and the LSC.
- Funding should not continue on an historical basis but should be targeted at the growth areas in the country.

Main Discussion Points

- Sheppey had all the indices of an area of deprivation and the strategic key to the area was on getting job opportunities in Swale. Links needed to be established with economic regeneration, community and learning and skills.
- Train to Gain (T2G) and Profit from Learning (PfL) were a way of taking forward the issues of provision for 19+ learners. We now have 12,000 more adults at level 2 than we would have had if we had not had employer training pilots. The SE Region was being asked to pilot the new Adult Learner Accounts.
- Additional funding was needed around the growth agenda and all Members were encouraged to raise this in any appropriate forums.
- There was a major change away from allocating funds to providers to “commissioning” what we want, which should result in higher quality and an increase in the sectors we need.
- The expectation from the Olympics was that 30,000 jobs would be created and it was important to understand the legacy that would remain after the Olympics. Strategic conversations on activity/achievement and a clear understanding of “mapping” in the Thames Gateway were key to ensure that the work we were doing addressed the key strategic issues.
- The Thames Gateway Strategic Framework recommended that T2G should cover Level 3 in the Thames Gateway area only and it was hoped that this would be agreed.

Item 7. Framework for Excellence

7.1 Jane Ball gave a presentation on the Framework for Excellence which is a comprehensive performance assessment framework, initially focused at colleges but was a very important initiative for both FE and WBL.

7.2 In summary, the main points were

- A four point numbered scale would be used for key performance areas – 1 being “outstanding” and 4 “unsatisfactory”.

- The overarching scale would be a 5 point descriptor scale with the “underperforming” descriptor used for those providers who had remained “satisfactory” for a number of years and not realised the improvement from their action plan.
 - Grades informed by self assessment.
 - A lot of work is required on standards and validation before the initiative is rolled out.
 - National benchmarks would be used to monitor improvement.
 - Hadlow College and Mid Kent College had volunteered to be part of the trialling process and it was intended that the framework would be published in June 2007. This would be operational for colleges and WBL providers from autumn 2007 and extended to other providers (excluding schools) from autumn 2008.
- 7.3 Council would watch the development with interest and would discuss any challenges that came out of the initiative.

Item 8. Any Other Business

- 8.1 The Chair drew members attention to the publications tabled – “Raising our Game – Our Annual Statement of Priorities” and “Delivering Learning and Skills – Progress Report” Our local statement of priorities would be discussed at the November Council meeting.
- 8.2 Our new Area Director, Lesley Davies would be attending the November Council meeting.
- 8.3 The Chair drew Members attention to the Area Director’s Report.

Meeting chair	David Melville
Minute taker	Kath Carty
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