

# Minutes



Leading learning and skills

<b>Date</b>	14th December 2007
<b>Subject</b>	South West Regional Board
<b>Location</b>	Dillington House
<b>Time</b>	09.30
<b>LSC office</b>	South West Region
<b>Publication intent</b>	Internal

<b>Present</b>	John Savage CBE (Chair) Jane Barrie OBE Professor John Bull CBE Malcolm Gillespie Brian Kemp Bryan McGinity Malcolm Trobe Catherine Christie John Chudley Paul Lucken Denis Miles Mark Harvey Mike Davies
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<b>Apologies</b>	Richard Dimpleby Marinos Paphitis Trish Taylor John Temple
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## **Item 1. Welcome and introductions**

- 1.1** John Savage welcomed everyone to the meeting especially Malcolm Trobe from the National Council who was attending for the first time. The Chair introduced Sally House Partnership Director for Somerset, Rob Corfield Partnership Director for Cornwall and John Peart Partnership Manager in Devon and Cornwall LSC.

## **Item 2. Declarations of Interest**

- 2.1** The Chair reminded members of their responsibility to declare any interest relevant to the agenda. There were no new declarations made.

### **Item 3. Minutes of last meeting**

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2007 were agreed as a true record.

### **Item 4. Matters arising**

- 4.1 With reference to paragraph 10.1 Denis Miles said he had contacted the AoC regarding use of procurement cards in Colleges who said that the majority of Colleges across the country were operating this process and they were encouraging the remainder to follow suit. Brian Kemp asked whether there were any in the south west who were not using them.

**ACTION: Denis Miles to check whether there are any colleges in the South West not using the procurement card process.**

- 4.2 With reference to paragraph 9.2 Brian Kemp noted the importance of adult literacy in the LSC's Statement of Priorities and commented on the low performance numbers in the south west. Paul Lucken said that the region were already addressing this and said that as the last figures were for 05/06 they did not reflect the current position.
- 4.3 With reference to paragraph 10.2, Mike Davies reported that the Audit Committee are due to meet on the 17<sup>th</sup> December to consider a draft report.

### **Item 5. Capital Application (16 to 19) for Heathfield School**

- 5.1 Sally House Partnership Director for Somerset presented the capital bid papers and asked for comments and questions.
- 5.2 John Bull asked about the planned growth assumptions. Sally House said the LSC was satisfied with the figures and had confidence in the school's planning capability. In addition the Local Authority was supportive of the proposal.
- 5.3 Brian Kemp commented that the provision should address the under supply of performing arts technicians.
- 5.4 Malcolm Trobe asked if other providers in the area will make use of the provision. Sally House confirmed there was strong support from all the surrounding schools and the College. John Bull asked if there was an overlap with the provision available at the Somerset College of Art and Technology. Sally House confirmed that it was a different diploma course.
- 5.5 The Chair noted the points raised and acknowledged that the project would still require the approval of the Local Authority. **The Regional Board unanimously agreed the 16-19 capital fund applications from Heathfield School Somerset, to go forward under the usual arrangements for the amounts specified in the proposal paper.**

### **Item 6. Capital Bid from North Devon College**

- 6.1 John Chudley introduced the item and explained that the initial proposal had been considered by the Devon and Cornwall Council in September. The bid had now been refined for submission to the National Capital Committee subject to the consideration of the Regional Board.

- 6.2** John Peart, Partnership Manager from Devon and Cornwall presented the paper and gave the background to the bid. Denis Miles confirmed that the College was moving towards financial category B from category C.
- 6.3** Brian Kemp commented on the project management resource and expertise required to deliver an undertaking of this size and said that the appointment of an experienced project manager would be an essential condition of any endorsement of the bid.
- 6.4** Mark Harvey explained that there had been an increase in project costs because of the appointment of a design team and changes in the LSC cost model resulting in a higher building specification. Brian Kemp said that the increased costs will need to be fully reconciled in the submission to the national capital committee.
- 6.5** Bryan McGinity queried the inclusion of the Park and Ride in the bid. Mark Harvey said that car parking had been a major consideration because of the college moving into the centre of the town and that all of the options had been fully explored in reaching this outcome.
- 6.6** Malcolm Gillespie confirmed that this was a worthwhile project from a well managed college but agreed that the bid should not go forward without clear assurances on the project management and its costs.
- 6.7 The Board endorsed the capital bid with a rate grant of 77.5% in respect of North Devon College subject to the following –**
- **that the college engages project management that is fit for purpose in managing a capital build project of this magnitude**
  - **A reconciliation is carried out detailing the changes from the original proposal presented on 26<sup>th</sup> September compared to the new costs.**
  - **That the Regional Board in approving this proposal have recorded their concerns about the inclusion of Park and Ride costs being included.**

**Item 7.** Refreshment break

**Item 8. Merger proposal for Truro and Penwith Colleges**

- 8.1** The Chair welcomed Jonathan Burnett Principal of Truro College, Ellen Winsor Chair of Governors Truro College and John Willday Chair of Governors Penwith College.
- 8.2** Catherine Christie circulated a paper which described the delegated role of the Regional Board from National Council on the making and publishing of proposals for the establishment and dissolution of Further Education (FE) Corporations.
- 8.3** Rob Corfield presented the bid papers and gave the background of the colleges and the circumstances leading to the merger.
- 8.4** Ellen Winsor described the Truro Governors support for the merger and the advantages that would be gained and reported that tacit approval had been given by DIUS to a proposal to combine the governing bodies of both

colleges thus, for an initial period, exceeding the approved size of corporation.

- 8.5** John Willday gave the perspective from the Penwith Governors and confirmed the positive working relationship that exists with the Truro Governors. John Willday said that the survival of FE provision in Penwith depended on a merger and Truro had been selected, following a competition, as the most suitable partner.
- 8.6** Jonathan Burnett said that the merger represented significant challenges in relation to quality improvement, recruitment and reputation but he was positive about rising to these. A clear priority was to improve the quality of the estate in Penwith and John Willday described the need for urgent capital investment should the merger be approved.
- 8.7** Jane Barrie commended the merger process following the recent one in Somerset and asked about the size of the combined governing body. Ellen Winsor said it would exceed the normal maximum but believed that some would stand down as soon as they were satisfied that the merger had been achieved.
- 8.8** Brian Kemp asked about the benefits for Truro and whether a risk assessment had been carried out as the merger would divert resources away from Truro. Ellen Winsor saw the merger as providing better provision for learners working as one corporation rather than two colleges in competition with each other. It would also reduce overcrowding and commuting time as currently there are many Penwith learners attending Truro College. Ellen Winsor said that the process of assessing the merger proposal had examined the key risks and issues.
- 8.9** Bryan McGinity asked about the potential impact of any improvements at Cornwall College. Ellen Winsor said it would provide competition but she envisaged there would be quick progress with improvements in Penwith and these provide the necessary stability.
- 8.10** Bryan McGinity asked about the financial impact of the merger and Denis Miles said this proposal looked sound.
- 8.11** Jonathan Burnett asked that if the proposal is approved by the Regional Board that the subsequent stages be taken forward as quickly as possible. Malcolm Gillespie said that this was in the hands of others but the LSC was keen to be involved in the implementation process.
- 8.12** The Chair summarised the discussions and asked members to vote. **The Regional Board unanimously approved the merger proposal of Truro and Penwith colleges.**

### **Item 9. Regional Commissioning Plan**

- 9.1** The draft plan was presented by Catherine Christie who said that more work will be done on the volumes and rates but it represents the agreed key priorities. Catherine Christie then invited comments and questions.
- 9.2** Bryan McGinity noted the requirement of Colleges to be a major contributor to learners achieving professional qualifications including levels 4 and 5 but said that Further Education did not have a reputation for delivering this.

Malcolm Gillespie acknowledged the need to develop this in some cases but said that HEFCE already recognised the role of FE to do this and highlighted the development of the national academies and foundation degrees.

- 9.3 Malcolm Trobe asked about the impact of the demographics in respect of the 16 to 18 cohort. Catherine Christie said that this had been taken into account in the full strategic analysis that had been carried out.
- 9.4 John Bull commented that the plan needs to be clear about the demand it is responding to as there are differing expectations from politicians, industry and individuals.
- 9.5 Brian Kemp asked if the plan will build in an increase in leadership and management training. Paul Lucken acknowledged that the volume of provision in the south west had been low but significant increases will be built into the plan.
- 9.6 The Board endorsed the general themes of the plan but wished to record that the plan implementation will need to communicate the importance of providers developing additional sources of income in order to achieve the LSC's priorities.

#### **Item 10. Regional Directors report**

- 10.1 Malcolm Gillespie referred to the Machinery of Government changes and said that the consultation document expected in January had been delayed until late February. In the joint letter from both of the relevant Secretaries of State there was reference to working with Directors of Children Services in preparation of the changes. This region had already initiated this collaboration.
- 10.2 Malcolm Gillespie reported that the LSC has continued to deliver the business and referred to the recent successful provider briefing in Bridgwater. On the financial performance there is currently an under spend on Train to Gain and Work Based Learning and an over spend on funding for Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD). The administrative budget is on profile and all budgets are regularly reported upon and are being managed.
- 10.3 Malcolm Gillespie reported that the region is working with partners to strengthen the links between employment and skills and LSC has signed the Skills Pledge as an employer. Brian Kemp commented on the need to encourage more employers to sign the Skills Pledge especially the Beacon employers. Paul Lucken agreed and is developing a campaign to influence the take-up through the LSC's existing interaction with employers.
- 10.4 Malcolm Gillespie reported on a recent meeting with John Denham the Secretary of State for Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) when he visited Gloucester and said the Secretary of State was very supportive of the collaborative work that was going on between the LSC and the RDA.

#### **Item 11. Any other business**

- 11.1 The Chair thanked Bryan McGinity for the paper on College pensions.

**11.2** Malcolm Gillespie said that he was working with the Chair to prepare for the recruitment of the new Regional Council. In the meantime the Chair asked members to retain all of the 2008 Board meeting dates in their diaries.

**Item 12. The next meeting of the Board**

**12.1** The next meeting will take place on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2008 starting with lunch at 12.30pm. The agenda is likely to include the North Devon/East Devon college merger proposal and a number of capital bids.

<b>Meeting chair</b>	John Savage
<b>Minute taker</b>	Mike Davies