

# Minutes



Leading learning and skills

**Date** 25 September 2006  
**Subject** Council Meeting  
**Location** East Reach House  
**Time** 17:00 - 19:00  
**LSC office** Somerset  
**Publication intent** Public

**Present** Jane Barrie Trish Taylor  
Bryan Leaker Cathy Bakewll  
Chris Hyde Ian Bennett  
John Bloomfield Jon Gray  
Judith Richardson Margaret Luck  
Peter Hilman Rhiannon Prys-Owen  
Rupert Elliott

**In attendance** Andrew Slade Brian Archer  
Peter Renshaw

**LSC staff** Sally House

**Apologies** Apologies have been received from:  
Rob Sly Steve Jackson

## Item 1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 Jane opened the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

## Item 2. Minutes of last meeting

2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

## Item 3. Matters arising

3.1 Council Members asked Trish for an update on Theme 7 and particularly in relation to staff. Trish reported that all Somerset colleagues requesting voluntary severance have had this approved and those wishing to stay have taken roles in the new structure. There are still some vacancies in the Dorset and Somerset team and these will be advertised externally at the end of October. Connexions are providing a receptionist, funded by the LSC, to support the wider use of the office for meetings.

3.2 The Champions of Learning Event has moved on and LID funding has been put aside for the event. The additional funding required will come from

sponsorship. The process of contracting with a company to coordinate the event has begun and they will be tasked with securing the necessary sponsorship. Sally asked if the Council was happy for her to organise the steering group and take this forward with Peter who agreed that he was more than happy to continue. Sally is quietly confident that the event will go ahead.

**Action: Any Council Members wishing to volunteer to join the Steering Group should let Sally know.**

#### **Item 4. Director of Area's Report**

- 4.1 Trish gave an update on the progress being made to unify the new Dorset and Somerset Team. A team event was held at Holbrook House in early September and both Chairs, Jane Barrie and Richard Dimpleby, joined the team for dinner.
- 4.2 Trish was asked to expand on the new LSC Model and the change of premises. She reported that the Facilities Director has been developing a new style for the LSC which is being described as a kit of parts. When we move to the new premises there will be no reception as it is anticipated we will share space in a larger building. In future when entering an LSC office people will recognise the same kit of parts including a coffee stop area, hot desks and one or two informal meeting areas. There will be no offices or personal space but there will be quiet booths which staff can book for up to two days. The rationale being that people will be working externally and will utilise occasional home working and flexible working practices. There are interested parties in both the Bournemouth and Taunton buildings and teams will be relocated between Christmas and the end of March 2007. Council asked whether there was any indication of the new location for Taunton and they were advised that Blackbrook Industrial Estate is being considered. Brian mentioned that there is space at Creech Castle if the LSC is interested.
- 4.3 Several Council Members commented on the difficulties of working without a reception and of meeting the health & safety and home insurance requirements for home working. Concern was also expressed about staff finding the new working arrangements stressful and the importance of consultation.
- 4.4 The importance of the West Somerset project was noted from the Director of Area's report. This is a major project for the area which will impact on the local economy.
- 4.5 Council congratulated Trish on Dorset being top in the country for apprentice framework completions and asked that she give consideration to greater balance in the report between the two areas.
- 4.6 Council also asked for more performance information.

**Action: Trish and Sally to share autumn Performance Report with Council.**

#### **Item 5. Feedback from Regional Board**

- 5.1 Jane fed back from the Regional Board saying that an update was provided on all seven Theme's of Agenda for Change. John Savage gave a glimpse into the future of local Councils. Since this meeting a letter has been sent

from Chris Banks all local Chairs and Council members. The letter informs Members that local Councils are to be dissolved and asks for their continued commitment until the legislation goes through parliament. Regional Board Members will have to re-apply if they wish to continue on the Board and their current membership ends on 31 March 2007. Until the dissolution, local Councils will continue to have a statutory duty for approving local plans and capital applications.

- 5.2 Council Members expressed their disappointment as they thought that there would continue to be a local group influencing the deployment of resources. Trish added that in future the local LSC will look to the local partnerships including the Somerset Learning Partnership and the Economic Development Partnership to articulate local need. However there is not currently an effective way of engaging on adult learning unrelated to employment skills. Council Members asked about the discussion at the BDP Council and Trish said that Members had offered to be available on a virtual basis and expressed their willingness to be called on for focus groups as needed. The BDP Council will come together to agree the Annual Plan in February and for the Capital Bid from Bournemouth and Poole College. She also informed Somerset Members that the BDP Chair had suggested that they 'disappear with dignity'.
- 5.3 Somerset Council Members advised Trish of their full support and willingness to be involved as she identifies a particular need.
- 5.4 Council Members were asked how they would like to continue to be involved whether in formal meetings or through focus groups and whether they wished to go ahead with the away day.
- 5.5 Members were keen to continue to fulfil their responsibilities over the next 6 months and to pass on a fit for purpose organisation.
- 5.6 Members discussed the areas where they felt they should continue to be involved; annual plan (including the allocation of resources); Champions of Learning Steering Group, Capital Committee if the need arises. It was noted that a proposal from West Somerset School would come before the Capital Committee in March 2007.
- 5.7 Concern was expressed over the fact that the Regional Audit Committee is due to meet for the first time at the end of October. The delay in arranging this first meeting has meant that local Councils have not received any assurance since the dissolution of the local Committee. The Regional Audit Committee meeting is only planned for an hour and a half which is insufficient time for sorting out any issues.

**Action: Following the meeting Judith Dewar agreed to discuss this point with Denis Miles.**

- 5.8 As with the BDP Council concern was expressed in relation to ensuring proper representation for the area on the Regional Board.
- 5.9 It was noted that Chris Banks' letter does not make any reference to engagement with the voluntary sector. Nor was there any indication of how the LSC would ensure grass routes level of input and monitoring of local plans.

**Action: Jane offered to raise this point and others made at the meeting with Chris Banks at the forthcoming Chairs day.**

**Decision:** It was agreed to cancel the away day and to arrange a meeting at the end of November to develop the local plan with a further meeting to sign off the plan at the end of February. The February meeting to include feedback from the Joint Area Review. A small group will continue to lead on the Champion's for Learning event and if appropriate a focus group will be set up to work on the annual plan after Christmas. The Champion's for Learning event will be used as the final farewell to Council possibly with a short business meeting to tie up any loose ends.

## **Item 6. Local Area Agreements**

- 6.1 Local Area Agreements (LAAs) are three year agreements led through Strategic Partnerships. Their purpose being to join up strategies and targets based around four blocks with Children & Young People and Enterprise and Development being the main focus for the LSC.
- 6.2 LSC involvement has raised the profile of our objectives and targets as well as Connexions. NEET is now widely understood.
- 6.3 Although there is not a specific target in the Somerset LAA relating to Skills4Life in the Children and Young People's block there are NEET targets of 4.7% by 2007 and 4% by 2009. There was some discussion about how these targets are worked up by GOSW and the differential between Dorset and Somerset. Having agreed stretch targets for the LAA Somerset were then advised of the possibility of a reward element. Other strategic partnerships in preparing their LAA have been aware of the reward element in advance. It was explained that the LAA process has been iterative being further developed as each round takes place. The process has started to join up activity and has brought the LSC agenda to the forefront of minds. Prior to LAAs dialogue there had been little dialogue with the organisations such as the Police and Health Authorities.

**Action: Andrew agreed to investigate the rationale for target setting although he did point out that GOSW looks for consistency of approach rather than uniform targets.**

## **Item 7. Olympics Legacy Plans**

- 7.1 Council were told that the LSC has appointed two Economic Development Directors specifically to respond to the opportunities brought by the 2012 Games. One of these posts is in London and the other is Dr Paul Pettigrew for the South West Region. This is not just about 2012 and Dorset, it is about transforming skills across the country and using 2012 to help to deliver the LSC skills strategy.
- 7.2 Juliette Williams leads on this for the RDA supported by Guy Lavender who has responsibility for properly positioning the South West to develop the opportunities offered by the Games. It is an opportunity to 'olympify' our plans and to encourage SME's to put forward tenders for the wider range of opportunities the Games brings.

- 7.3 Council were pleased to see the LSC committing itself to the Games but questioned the current Capital Grant policy which does not enable funding to be spent on sports facilities.
- 7.4 It was noted that Somerset has specialist facilities for equestrianism and Cheddar has a drop pool for paraplegic athletes. It was felt that the time has come to stop talking about the Games and to start engaging, it is a great opportunity but only if we take it.
- 7.5 Council spoke of the 2012 Games website which has a wealth of information including opportunities for volunteering.

**Action: Trish to raise the issue of Capital funding in relation to sports facilities with Paul Pettigrew and Mark Harvey.**

#### **Item 8. National Nuclear Skills Academy**

- 8.1 Council were advised that the Chair and Director of Area were approached by Bridgwater College to see if the LSC would support them in a bid for becoming part of the National Nuclear Skills Academy. This is a hub and spoke model and a bid has been put forward. The LSC's normal policy for Capital Bids is set at a maximum level of support of 35%. This is a problem for the College who already have a capital build plan that ties up their resources. The issue was taken to the Regional Board last week and it was agreed that since the Academy will be part of the South West Regional spoke, this should be considered in a broader Regional context and therefore considered for a higher rate of support. We are now waiting to see if the Bridgwater bid is successful.
- 8.2 Council felt that Bridgwater was a natural home for the Academy and a very exciting opportunity. The College should be commended for picking up the opportunity.
- 8.3 Trish has spoken to Kay Homer of the RDA and has copied the bid to her for consideration. She has also contacted the Regional Skills Partnership who have expressed their support for the bid.

#### **Item 9. Update on Joint Area Review (JAR) and 14-19 Progress**

- 9.1 Sally advised council that work on the 14-19 Progress Check has been continuing. The Progress Check looks at quantitative issues as well as qualitative. Qualitative data comes from the Local Authority, LSC and Connexions. Earlier on today GOSW met to give feedback against the self assessment and although their findings still need to go through a regional moderation process they did agree that Council could be given the provisional findings.
- 9.2 Overall GOSW have considered progress to be good, there is evidence of strong partnerships and they have agreed that the self assessment is accurate and broadly agreed the evidence. The assessment uses the traffic light system and in some areas GOSW felt that the rating should be lower as they will be looking for progression over the four to five years life of the plan and this should be an iterative process.
- 9.3 GOSW agreed the overall self assessment should be Amber/Green.

- 9.4 Judith Richardson advised the Council that in preparation for the JAR inspection of Children Services across Somerset they are preparing a self assessment. A draft has gone out to Partnership Board Members and Sally and Judith are firming up on the economic element. There is a meeting this week with the inspection team and additional pressure is being placed on them as this is taking place at the same time as the CPA Corporate Assessment. A series of briefing meetings for people involved in the JAR is taking place at different locations including Bridgwater, Williton, Frome and Street. The relevance of the JAR to the LSC is what we are doing to secure good services for Children & Young People and the strength of the partnership. The inspection starts week commencing 6 November when the inspection team will begin by looking at data as well as undertaking a small number of visits. The team is then away for four weeks followed by a week of visits using focus groups as well as carrying out two neighbourhood studies where they will meet the young people involved and ask about the quality of the services they have received. There will be a timetable of interviews and a second week of field work in the first week in December. Feedback from the JAR will take place on 8 December.
- 9.5 On behalf of the Council Jane wished Judith well and offered any help that she thought would be useful.

**Item 10. Any other business**

- 10.1 The RDA is proceeding with two zones for Business Link, the northern arc which includes Bristol, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire & Swindon and Dorset and the southern arc which includes South Gloucestershire, Devon & Cornwall and Somerset. However the southern arc merger is not going ahead as the Somerset Board have not agreed to the merger and asked for an open tender to take place. In view of this the current Business Link contracts are to be extended by at least 6 months. The Train2Gain contract held by Devon & Cornwall will continue as part of the normal contract until March 2007. The merger did not go ahead as the Board of the Somerset Business Link did not get the safeguards they asked for. Somerset will be putting in a strong public and private sector bid and the Council wished them well for this.

**Item 11. Date of next meeting**

- 11.1 The next meeting of the Committee will take place at 16:30 on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2006 at East Reach House.

**Publication no.**

**Meeting chair**

**Minute taker**

**Date created**

**Document ref.**

Jane Barrie

Judith Dewar

28 September 2006

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