

Date 10 November 2010
Subject Young People's Learning Agency Board meeting
Location Cheylesmore House, Coventry
Time 09:00
Publication intent NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Present

Members

Les Walton (Chair)
Pete Birkett
Gareth Dawkins
Peter Lauener
David Pearmain
Emma Pearson-Winstone
Mark Sanders
Michele Sutton
David Wootton

Observers

Sue Baldwin
Lesley Davies
Ian Ferguson
David Igoe
Frankie Sulke
Malcolm Trobe

Executive

Neil Flint
Sophie Hume Wright
Irene Oliver
Sue Randall (Clerk)
David Russell
Bob Walding (item 8 only)

Paul Williamson (item 11 only)
Rob Wye

In attendance

Ivan Sokac (NAO)
James Gourlay (NAO)
David Cragg (World Skills) (Item 5 only)
Nicky Brunner (World Skills) (Item 5 only)
Aidan Jones (World Skills) (Item 5 only)

Apologies

Peter Box
Dexter Hutt
John Merry
Helen Sexton

Item 1. Opening comments

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Board welcomed two observers from the NAO attending in connection with the NAO review of YPLA governance.
- 1.2 The Chair thanked Board member Emma Pearson-Winstone for leading the previous evening's discussion on learner engagement. Members had been asked to suggest questions that could be used in future online learner panel surveys.

Item 2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 There were no declarations of any interests specific to this meeting.

Item 3. Minutes of the last meeting

- 3.1 The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

Item 4. Matters arising

- 4.1 All actions identified during the previous meeting were in hand, or updates appeared on this agenda.

Item 5. World Skills 2011

- 5.1 The Board welcomed David Cragg, Nicky Bruncker and Aidan Jones to the meeting.
- 5.2 World Skills was the largest vocational skills competition in the world, and was held every two years. The UK was to host the event in October 2011.
- 5.3 A key aim of the event in 2011 was to raise awareness of the value of skills in the UK. It was felt that the YPLA could play a vital role in promoting both the event and its aims to a wider audience.
- 5.4 There was unanimous support for the event among Board members, and specific offers of assistance and engagement were gratefully received by the guests. It was suggested that a Board meeting could be arranged to coincide with the event to enable members to see the event in action.

Action: Sue Randall to look at dates

- 5.5 It was agreed that a possible use of the online learner panel might be to post a question about the general awareness of World Skills among learners. Emma Pearson-Winstone agreed to consider this.

Action: Emma Pearson-Winstone

- 5.6 Further work on communications would be led by Nicky Bruncker and the executive team. Developments would be shared with Board members at a future meeting.

Item 6. Updates

Chair (Paper YPLA 23a/2010)

- 6.1 The Chair reported back from the recent meeting with Lord Hill, who had been very complimentary about the work of the YPLA staff and Board.
- 6.2 Following the news that EMAs were to come to an end, it was important to focus on the future and all the challenges that lay ahead, including developing detailed arrangements for the enhanced discretionary learner support fund.

Chief Executive (Paper YPLA 23b/2010)

- 6.3 The Chief Executive tabled an updated performance summary which had previously been sent to Lord Hill for the ministerial review meeting. The tabled summary gave a more accurate picture of the current financial situation than the one contained in the performance report. The Board noted that a letter of comfort had been received from the Department in connection with the technical overspend on Academies which had arisen because of the transfer of converting academies from local authority to YPLA funding.
- 6.4 The Board's contribution to the Sarah Teather review of Special Educational Needs had been very well received.
- 6.5 The Public Accounts Committee on Academies had been complimentary about academy performance but had reinforced the need to secure high standards of financial and governance assurance. The executive team had begun a programme of work, being taken forward in partnership with

academies, to address the NAO recommendations and simplify elements of the financial reporting system and the academies financial handbook.

- 6.6 Meeting papers for the December Board would be circulated via the new extranet. Members were asked to check their operating systems, as explained in a recent note from Sophie Hume-Wright, to ensure compatibility.

Item 7. Report from the Audit and Risk Management Committee

- 7.1 The Audit and Risk Management Committee had met the previous day. An early partial draft of the minutes was tabled for the Board.
- 7.2 The Committee had agreed a number of amendments to its ways of working. The Committee had agreed to meet a minimum of four times a year, and more often if deemed necessary. It would meet around two weeks prior to the relevant Board meeting, and hold a meeting in early May for sign off of the annual accounts.
- 7.3 The Committee Chair agreed to discuss with and write to the YPLA Chair with a view to establishing clear delegations for the Committee.
- 7.4 The Committee had considered the Performance Report in detail. The main area of concern was around the impact of the rapid expansion of the Academy programme. The expansion had meant that it was not now possible to undertake financial risk assessment visits to converting academies within the current resources of the finance team. A self assessment programme had been put in place as a more appropriate alternative. This would be followed by a risk assessment of the returns and then visits where appropriate.
- 7.5 The Committee had noted the progress on the assurance work which would lead to a Statement of Internal Control. This work was planned so that the Chief Executive could sign the statement with confidence at the appropriate time.
- 7.6 The Committee had asked for progress on management actions following Internal Audit reviews to be included in future reports from Internal Audit.
- 7.7 The Board noted that the risk assessment of EMAs had changed from amber/green to amber/red. This was due to current uncertainty surrounding the programme and the possibility of the previous pattern of take up in the rest of the financial year being disrupted. This might cause some volatility in patterns of spend but did not reflect any weaknesses in control systems.
- 7.8 The Chair thanked the Committee Chair and members for the feedback. It was important to monitor the self-assessment of Academies given this was a new approach. Forecasting of Academy numbers was also an important issue in planning future spend by YPLA. Finally, the Chair asked the Committee to consider the issue of succession planning, probably in conjunction with the Organisational Development and Remuneration Committee.

Item 8. Quarterly Performance Report (Paper YPLA 24/2010)

- 8.1 The Board agreed that performance reporting had improved significantly, although there was still work to be done on drawing out the risk management structure.

- 8.2 Areas where there had been significant improvement in performance included: management of the LLDD budget; increased capacity in the Academies team; increased 16-19 participation; and reduction in the NEET numbers.
- 8.3 The Board noted that new converter academies would have an impact on in-year spend. The letter of comfort provided to the YPLA gave appropriate assurance.

Item 9. Report from the Organisational Development and Remuneration Committee (Paper YPLA 25/2010)

- 9.1 The first meeting of the Committee had been held on 29 September. An item on the Reward Strategy had been deferred to the next meeting, but useful discussions on a Communications strategy, stakeholder engagement, and an organisational development plan had taken place.
- 9.2 The Board asked the Committee to take a view on the affordability of planned communication and organisational development activities.
- 9.3 The pay and performance section of the Committee's terms of reference would be amended to clarify that this remit was subject to authorities delegated from DfE.
- 9.4 It was agreed that media training would be made available if Board members were interested.

Action: Irene Oliver

- 9.5 The Chairs of the ODR Committee and Audit Committee agreed to write a joint letter to the YPLA Chair about proposed delegations to clarify what would be decided by the Committees and reported back as opposed to being referred as recommendations for Board agreement.

Item 10. Issues arising from the Spending Review outcome for the post 16 envelope of YPLA funding

- 10.1 The Board received a presentation on the Spending Review, which set out the reasons for current and potential pressures in the system, together with a reminder of previously discussed savings options.
- 10.2 It was not yet possible to report on the detail of the review, but a Grant Letter was expected by mid-December.
- 10.3 Members were keen to avoid any unintended outcomes which may impact badly on disadvantaged learners. There was also much discussion around equality of funding at institutional level and management of the quality of provision.
- 10.4 An initial submission was to be sent by DfE officials to Ministers in the next week. Members were keen that their advice be offered to Ministers as soon as possible, so it was agreed that the following five priorities be included in the submission:
- Protection of disadvantaged learners' funding
 - Aim for equitable funding (convergence) between schools and colleges

- Support for the phasing of system changes over the whole spending review period
- Providers to have flexibility to use allocated funding to meet learner needs
- Support for locally led partnerships.

10.5 The Chair would continue to speak to Board member colleagues over coming weeks to confirm a preferred direction of travel.

Item 11. Funding 16-19 Education and Training (Paper YPLA 26/2010)

11.1 Paul Williamson joined the meeting. He presented simplified draft guidance on 16-19 funding for the Board to consider.

11.2 The Board had previously considered an earlier draft of the guidance, and thanked Paul and the team for successfully revising it in the light of Board and stakeholder comments.

11.3 It was not possible to release the guidance until the publication of the forthcoming education White Paper.

11.4 There was further work to be done to ensure local flexibility, achieved through a balance of local authorities and partnerships. The guidance also needed to be clearer on how non-grant funded providers would be accommodated.

11.5 The Board felt that the guidance was not sufficiently clear as far as new provision was concerned. There was intended to be flexibility in the lagged funding system for new provision, so Paul Williamson agreed to revise the wording to ensure this was clearly articulated.

Action: Paul Williamson

11.6 Members had a number of other comments about content and clarity. In the interests of time, members agreed to send further comments to Sophie Hume-Wright by Wednesday 17 November.

Item 12. Academies Update (Paper YPLA 27/2010)

12.1 The Board received an update on developments around the YPLA's Academy function.

12.2 Broadly, matters were on track against demanding deadlines. There had been few problems with converter academies, and internally, an increase in the number of senior staff in the team was improving capacity significantly.

12.3 Proposals around performance assessment systems were currently being considered by Ministers, although the final approach would be determined by the White Paper.

12.4 In terms of funding, a replication system would be used in 2011/12. It was fully expected that all institutions would receive their funding information, with initial letters by end December 2010 and final letters by March 2011.

12.5 The Department was reviewing capital funding. The YPLA team was working closely with the 80 academies with building projects already in the pipeline.

12.6 Academy colleagues on the Board felt that matters were progressing well, with the right areas being prioritised. The White Paper would bring about another increase in the number of academies, so YPLA colleagues needed to ensure they were prepared for this, so that the carefully built reputation did not slip. YPLA funding colleagues were recommended to maintain an open dialogue with Academies about replication. Protocols on performance monitoring also needed to be transparent.

Item 13. Any Other Business

13.1 There was none.

Item 14. Meeting Review

14.1 The Chair summarised all the main agreements and action points from the meeting:

- World Skills 2011 had full Board support
- A positive meeting had been held with Lord Hill, with acknowledgement and thanks for the YPLA's adaptability, flexibility and performance
- The main points of the Audit and Risk Management Committee had been noted. The Committee Chair was to compile a joint letter about delegations with the Chair of the Organisational Development and Remuneration Committee
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- The Board's five main priorities were to be fed back to Ministers to inform their CSR deliberations
- Good progress had been made on 16-19 funding guidance. Engagement from institutions and local authorities was key
- Academy performance reporting to be as transparent as possible.

Action Point Summary

Agenda Item	Action	Lead	Status
5.4	Look at the possibility of moving the date of a Board meeting to coincide with World Skills 2011	Sue Randall to look at in conjunction with Peter Lauener and Les Walton	In progress
5.5	Online learner panel to be considered as a way of gauging awareness of the World Skills event	Emma Pearson-Winstone	In progress
9.4	Media training to be offered to all Board members	Irene Oliver	In progress
10.4	Ministers to be advised of the Board's views about priorities for the 16-19 funding settlement	Sue Baldwin	In progress
11.5	16-19 Funding Guidance to be revised to clearly articulate that there was flexibility in the lagged funding system for new provision	Paul Williamson	In progress

Meeting chair Les Walton
Minutes creator Sue Randall
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