

SCRUTINY BOARD (CITY AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS)

THURSDAY, 20TH NOVEMBER, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor S Bentley in the Chair

Councillors C Campbell, G Driver, C Fox,
R Harrington, V Kendall, J Lewis and
R Pryke

34 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Driver declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 37, Session 2 – Skills Inquiry, due to his position as a Governor at Thomas Danby College.

35 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Atha, Shelbrooke and Yeadon.

36 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2008, be confirmed as a correct record.

37 **Matters arising from the Minutes**

Minute No 29 – inquiry into Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector

It was reported that Councillors Bentley, Driver, Harrington and Pryke would participate in the Board's Working Group for this Inquiry and the possibility of visiting various VCFS organisations was discussed.

38 **Session 2 - Skills Inquiry**

The joint report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement) and the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development informed the Board of the main areas of consideration for the second session into the Skills Inquiry. It focused on the two main areas for this session, (a) the Multi Area Agreement (MAA) and (b) The Future of FE in Leeds. Also appended to the report was a copy of the terms of reference for the Inquiry.

It was reported that the first session of the item would look at arrangements under the Multi Area Agreement (MAA).

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- Rob Norreys, Acting Head of Regional Policy, Executive Support

- James Flanagan, Project Manager, Regional Policy, Executive Support
- Martin Dean, Deputy Chief Executive, Leeds Initiative
- Carson McCombe. Senior Economic Officer, City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
- Cristina George, Partnership Director (Leeds) Learning Skills Council
- Anne Craven, Economic Development Director, Learning Skills Council
- Mandy Crawford-Lee, Economic Development Manager, Learning Skills Council

In response to Members comments and questions, the following issues were discussed:

- The skills related content of the MAA, signed off in July 2008, has been built on the base of the 2006 Leeds City Region Development Programme (CRDP), and other key policy and research including:
 - The 2006 Leitch Review of Skills which identified the needs for improvement in skills to 2020.
 - The 2006 Leeds Metropolitan University study into the business and finance sector and labour market across the Leeds City Region.
 - Yorkshire Forward's Skills Policy Product which recognises higher level skills in the financial and business services sector as a Leeds City Region priority.
- The importance and challenge of moving towards a demand led skills system which engages all employers, including small and medium sized enterprises, and raising the demand for economically valuable learning, was stressed.
- Comparisons were made with skill levels nationwide and the need for continued investment, noting that that Leeds City Region was lagging in terms of higher level skills.
- The MAA focuses on boosting higher level skills in specific business sectors as this agenda is the most relevant to the geography of the city region. The MAA has also built on and joined up with local strategies such as on tackling worklessness and how different economic areas could work together.
- A key focus of MAA is how to work better with Small and Medium Enterprises to better understand their training needs, encourage the development of their workforce and reduce some of the administrative burdens currently imposed by central government to enable them to gain accreditation for 'in house' training.
- MAA Skills Targets - How they could improve the local economy
 - A pilot scheme cohort of 200 Small and Medium Enterprises and numbers of staff with level 3 and 4 qualifications and skills.
 - Ways of measuring improvement – Annual Workforce Survey, numbers of extra qualifications delivered.
 - Ensuring the targets are appropriate, ambitious and stretching
- Linkages to be fostered including with training initiatives such as Train to Gain scheme, and further exploring involvement of Higher Education institutions.

- It was reported that the Leeds City Region Leaders' Board would oversee the MAA arrangements, though there were elements of the MAA being delivered by partner organisations, eg the LSC, and linking with others eg Sector Skills Councils and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Additional member level Local Authority involvement was through the Skills and Labour Market Panel which advises the Board.
- A delivery plan for the MAA had been signed off by Leaders and it was agreed it would be helpful if this was made available to members.

The Chair thanked those in attendance for the first part of the session and welcomed the following to the meeting to discuss the proposed Further Education (FE) College Merger in Leeds:

- Cristina George – Learning Skills Council
- Martin Dean, Deputy Chief Executive, Leeds Initiative
- Ian Billyard, Principal – Leeds College of Building
- Carolyn Wright, Principal – Joseph Priestly College

The Board was reminded of the merger of FE Colleges in Leeds which would see Park Lane College, Thomas Danby College and the Leeds College of Technology form the Leeds City College from January 2009. The proposed merger had arisen as a result of a review of FE in Leeds. The Leeds College of Building and Joseph Priestly College had initially been included in the merger and had withdrawn.

Ian Billyard addressed the meeting and reported on the position in relation to the Leeds College of Building. There had been concerns regarding the proposed merger from Leeds College of Building and the Board of Governors had decided to remain independent. This decision had also been supported by their industry partners. He also reported that the college was the largest supplier of construction training nationwide and that there were plans to move the college forward as a centre of excellence.

With regards to Joseph Priestly College, Carolyn Wright reported that the Board of Governors had concern that a robust case had not been made to merge all 5 colleges and that their focus on South Leeds, which the college currently catered for would no longer be met.

In brief summary, the following issues were discussed:

- Differences between funding for young people and Adults.
- Providing training for those not in education, employment or training (NEET). It was reported that many learners who fell into the NEET category were training for basic skills and foundation learning.
- Future capital funding arrangements for Leeds College of Building and Joseph Priestly College – the Joseph Priestly College's accommodation strategy had been postponed due to the review of FE in Leeds but there were plans with the LSC for future building in South

Leeds. Leeds College of Building had presented an educational case for new buildings.

- Allocation of funds – this was formula based across FE Colleges and could be affected by factors such as demand.
- Concern regarding the duplication of FE across the city.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the joint report be noted.
- (2) That the Board request a copy of the Multi Area Agreement delivery plan outlining the of the pilot accreditation scheme with Small and Medium Enterprises.
- (3) That an additional session on the Skills Inquiry be held at the meeting on 17th December and Principals of the Colleges which are to merge be invited.

39 Draft Statement - University Fees

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which included a Draft Statement on University Fees. The Draft Statement was produced on the recommendation of the Board's University Fees Working Group following the request of Leeds University Unions concerning University fees.

It was reported that the Director of Children's Services had made representations regarding the Draft Statement and that Recommendation 3 of the draft should be amended.

RESOLVED – That amendments be made to the Draft as suggested, be circulated to Members and brought back to the Board for approval.

40 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which outlined the Board's current Work Programme. Also appended to the report was a copy of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions and recent Executive Board minutes.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

41 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 17 December 2008 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Members at 09.30 a.m.)