

SCRUTINY BOARD (CITY AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS)

WEDNESDAY, 17TH DECEMBER, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor S Bentley in the Chair

Councillors B Atha, C Campbell, G Driver,
C Fox, R Harington, V Kendall, J Lewis,
R Pryke, A Shelbrooke and L Yeadon

42 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Shelbrooke declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8, Draft Statement – University Fees, due to his employment with the University of Leeds. Minute No. 46 refers.

Councillors Driver and Fox declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 7, Additional Session – Skills Inquiry, due to their respective positions as Governors at Thomas Danby College and Leeds College of Technology (Minute No. 45 refers.)

43 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2008 be confirmed as a correct record.

44 Additional Session - Skills Inquiry

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development informed Members of the additional session for the Skills Inquiry. Principals of the three Leeds Further Education (FE) Colleges that would be forming the new Leeds City College had been invited to the meeting along with the Learning Skills Council to give the Board opportunity to consider the impact of the proposed FE College merger on employers, individuals and communities in Leeds.

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- Christina George, Learning Skills Council
- Maxine Room, Principal, Park Lane College
- Peter Ryder, Principal, Leeds College of Technology.

An apology for absence was reported on behalf of Roy Thorpe, Principal, Thomas Danby College.

The Board was advised that the three existing institutions are due to be dissolved on 31 March 2009 and students will automatically transfer to the

new institution. The new college will have 60,000 students and a turnover of £70m a year.

Members were advised that areas of responsibility for development of the new Leeds College had been allocated as follows:

- Maxine Room – Property and Finance
- Peter Ryder – Human Resources
- Roy Thorpe – Curriculum

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

- Financial forecasting for the Leeds City College showed efficiency savings would be made over the next three years.
- Specialist teaching areas would be retained within sections of the new college. The FE system was currently complex and duplication of courses needed to be avoided in order to be cost effective. Under current FE arrangements in Leeds, there had been duplication of courses that had led to unnecessary competition.
- The new college would provide a wider range of courses for 14-19 year olds in and around Leeds.
- The views and input of Leeds City Council would be valued, particularly as there would be new funding responsibilities for the Council and because of its role as a major employer and economic influence across the City.
- Savings would be made through the rationalisation and development of new sites and buildings, as many of the current premises were not cost effective.
- Consultation had taken place with young people, parents, College Governors, Elected Members and staff. Ongoing discussions are taking place with other partners including the Chamber of Commerce and the Leeds Skills Board.
- Partnership arrangements were being developed with schools, and clusters of schools and links between the new College and Education Leeds. It was reported that there would be greater emphasis placed on partnership working for the provision of 14-19 year olds education.
- The decision of Joseph Priestley College to opt out of the proposed merger and future provision of FE for young people from and in South Leeds.
- Changes to funding arrangements for FE and how this would be learner led.
- Sixth form and academy provision in Leeds.
- The planning process for FE and the need to reflect the requirements of Leeds.
- The need to target young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

- How to deliver qualifications to meet employer's needs and obtaining accreditation for employers to provide training. It was reported that many small and medium enterprises did not have the scope to provide formal accredited training.
- Proven FE success rates for young people who were non-attendees and/or did not achieve good results at school.
- Provision of financial support for students – Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and learner support funds were available to some.
- The challenge of making learning more accessible to young people.
- It was reported that there would be college provision around Leeds City Centre.
- The recent increase in uptake of professional courses and how this can be maintained and developed.
- Discussions are taking place with the other West Yorkshire Local Authorities as the College would also provide for those outside of Leeds.
- Transition planning and transfer of funding and responsibilities.
- Issues around the curriculum for the new College.
- Demise of the Learning and Skills Council and who would champion FE in the future.
- The importance of the Education Plan and the Local Area Statement of Need in developing a coherent FE policy across the city.
- Education Leeds becoming responsible for FE and their current performance levels in achieving delivery of level 2 (GCSE grades A* to C and BTEC first diplomas and certificates).

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the report and discussion be noted.
- (2) That the Leader of the Council, representative from Education Leeds, regional representative for the National Skills Academy Financial Services Academy (Yorkshire and Humber) and the Principal of Thomas Danby College be invited to the Board's next session on the Skills Inquiry.

45 Draft Statement - University Fees

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development, presented the Board with a revised Draft Statement on University Fees. The Draft Statement had originally been presented to the Board at the previous meeting and had been revised in line with comments from the Board and Director of Children's Services.

RESOLVED – That the revised draft statement be approved.

46 Work Programme

The report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development provided the Board with details of the current Work Programme. Appended to the report was a copy of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions and a copy of the latest Executive Board minutes.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

47 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 15 January 2008 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Members at 09.30 a.m.)