

Scrutiny Board (City & Regional Partnerships)

Inquiry into Skills

Terms of Reference

1.0 Introduction

1.1 On 3rd July the City & Regional Partnerships Scrutiny Board agreed to carry out an inquiry into skills.

1.2 In particular, it was decided to investigate the following three individual areas:

(a) Leeds Strategic Plan incorporating the Leeds Local Area Agreement

The background, activity and contribution of all interested parties towards achieving the relevant improvement priorities and targets contained within the LSP and any future plans in this regard. Two improvement priorities in the Leeds Strategic Plan particularly address the issue of improving skill levels to level 2 or higher, with reference to workforce development.

(b) Leeds City Region Multi Area Agreement (MAA),

The MAA for the Leeds city region has been developed to help close the gap in higher level skills, and reduce transport congestion across the city region, as identified within the City Region Development Programme (CRDP). The MAA was signed off in July by the eleven City Region Local Authority Leaders and government.

(c) The future of Further Education (FE) in Leeds

The Learning and Skills Council has consulted on the merger of Park Lane, Thomas Danby and Leeds College of technology to form a new Leeds College. The three colleges have agreed to the merger proposal, and it is expected there will be substantial investment in the FE estate.

2.0 Scope of the inquiry

2.1 The purpose of the Inquiry is to make an assessment of, and, where appropriate make recommendations on, the following areas of interest:

(a) Leeds Strategic Plan incorporating the Leeds Local Area Agreement

The activity and contribution of all interested parties towards achieving the relevant improvement priorities and targets contained within the LSP and any future plans in this regard.

(b) The Leeds City Region MAA

The focus of the MAA skills proposals, which is on higher level skills (NVQ levels 3 / 4 +) in priority business sectors.

(c) The future of FE in Leeds.

To ascertain the extent that the merger will bring about improved learning outcomes for employers, individuals and communities.

3.0 Comments of the relevant Director and Executive Board Member

3.1 The Directors of City Development and Environment & Neighbourhoods, and the relevant Executive Board Members have been requested to comment on these terms of reference.

4.0 Timetable for the Inquiry

4.1 The inquiry will take place over 6 sessions with a view to issuing a final report in April 2009.

5.0 Submission of evidence

5.1 The following formal evidence gathering sessions have been scheduled:

5.2 Session 1 – 23rd October 2008

Introduction to the LAA, MAA and FE

To consider the background and relationships of the LAA, MAA and FE in contributing towards meeting the target indicators with our partners as set out in the Council's Strategic Plan 2008/2011. It will also cover the scope and the rationale behind the targets which have been set.

5.3 Session 2 – 20th November 2008

The Leeds City Region MAA

The purpose of this part of the session is to consider the current proposed arrangements for the MAA in Leeds. In particular the Board will consider:

- The rationale for the MAA (evidence base).
- The proposed outcomes of the MAA, and impact on Leeds businesses and residents.

The future of FE in Leeds

This part of the session is to consider the proposed merger of 3 FE colleges in the city and the likely impact on employers, individuals and communities and to seek input from LSC, college principals and Leeds Skills Board on the plans for:

- the new college,
- its governance, and
- ability to respond to skills needs.

5.4 **Session 3 – 15th January 2009**

The Leeds City Region MAA

The purpose of this part of Session 3 is to consider any information requested from the previous session and examine any possible future developments to the MAA, eg City Region approaches to tackling worklessness.

The future of FE in Leeds

The purpose of this part of the session is to consider any information requested from the previous session and further matters relating to the merger of the 3 colleges and its impact in Leeds.

5.5 **Session 4 - 26th February 2009**

Leeds Strategic Plan incorporating the Leeds Local Area Agreement

The purpose of this session is to look at how are partners who have signed up to the LAA are delivering on the targets that have been set and to hear about the changes they are making in order that they can meet those targets. It will also explore individuals who are post school who have no qualifications/ no level 1 and the extent to which services are effective.

5.6 **Session 5 - 26th March 2009**

Leeds Strategic Plan incorporating the Leeds Local Area Agreement

The purpose of this session is to continue hearing evidence from the parties signed up to the relevant improvement priorities and targets in the LSP and any information requested from the previous session.

5.7 **Session 6 – 30th April 2009**

Final Report and Recommendations

The purpose of this Session is to consider the Board's draft inquiry report and recommendations.

6.0 Witnesses

6.1 The following witnesses have been identified as possible contributors to the Inquiry:

- Director of City Development
- Director of Environment & Neighbourhoods
- Relevant officers from the City Development and Environment and Neighbourhoods Departments
- Head of Regional Policy
- Key partners such as: Bradford Council (MAA skills lead), WY Universities, Learning and Skills Council, and Yorkshire Forward (Regional Development Agency), FE Principals, Shadow Board of the proposed new college, Leeds Skills Board.

7.0 Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.1 Following the completion of the scrutiny inquiry and the publication of the final inquiry report and recommendations, the implementation of the agreed recommendations will be monitored.
- 7.2 The final inquiry report will include information on the detailed arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the Board's recommendations.

8.0 Measures of success

- 8.1 It is important to consider how the Board will deem whether its inquiry has been successful in making a difference to local people. Some measures of success may be obvious at the initial stages of an inquiry and can be included in these terms of reference. Other measures of success may become apparent as the inquiry progresses and discussions take place.
- 8.2 The Board will look to publish practical recommendations.