

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, the Multi Area Agreement (MAA) and 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.

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- James Flanagan, Project Manager, Executive Support

- Martin Dean, Deputy Director, Leeds Initiative
- Rob Norreys, Acting Head of Regional Policy, Executive Support
- Carson McCoombe, City of Bradford Council
- Cristina George, Learning Skills Council
- Ann Craven, Learning Skills Council
- Mandy Crawford Lee, Learning Skills Council

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

- The skills related content of the MAA built on the base of the City Regions Development Programme.
- The influence of the Leitch Review of Skills which identified the needs for improvement in skills to 2020.
- The Leeds Metropolitan University study into the business and finance sector across the Leeds City Region (LCR).
- How the MAA built on local strategies, tackled worklessness and how different economic areas could work together.
- The role of the Leeds City Region Board and democratic accountability - it was reported that the LCR Board oversaw the MAA arrangements on a democratic basis, and though there were elements of the MAA outside local authority control, necessary checks and balances were in place.
- MAA 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.
- Raising the demand for learning.
- Involvement of partner organisations – Learning Skills Council, Local Authorities, Job Centre Plus and Others.
- How to improve people's skills and raise the demand for learning.
- Training initiatives such as Train to Gain.
- How to work with Small and Medium Enterprises to understand their training needs, encourage the development of their workforce and enable them to gain accreditation for 'in house' training.
- Involvement of Higher Education institutions.
- Basic Mathematics and English training.
- Comparisons of skill levels nationwide and the need for continued investment in the Yorkshire and Humber region.
- Role of the Sector Skills Councils.

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 Director, 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 report be noted.
- (2) That the Board request a copy of the development plan of the pilot 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.)