

SCRUTINY BOARD (CITY AND REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS)

THURSDAY, 15TH JANUARY, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor S Bentley in the Chair

Councillors B Atha, C Campbell, G Driver,
C Fox, R Harington, V Kendall and J Lewis

49 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Driver and Fox declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8, Session 3 – Inquiry Into Skills, due to their respective positions as Governors at Thomas Danby College and Leeds College of Technology. Minute No. 53 refers.

50 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Pryke and Yeadon.

51 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2008, be confirmed as a correct record.

52 Presentation - Chair of the Leeds Initiative Narrowing the Gap Executive

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which introduced a presentation regarding Narrowing the Gap: Partnership Working.

The Chair introduced Steve Williamson, Chair of the Narrowing the Gap Board and Chief Executive of re'new along with Kathy Kudelnitzky, Director of Leeds Initiative to the meeting.

Mr Williamson gave the Board an overview of his role and proceeded to set the context of partnership working within the Narrowing Gap Agenda. It was reported that the Narrowing the Gap Board was assembled from a range of partners and, via a wider range of agencies would assist in promoting the objectives of the Vision for Leeds and Leeds Strategic Plan.

Members attention was brought to the challenges and priorities of the Narrowing the Gap Board along with previous achievements and the Work Programme for 2009/10. It was reported that pleasing progress had been made in Leeds although this had not progressed as quickly as desired in all areas. Priority working was planned in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods across the city. Reference was also made to links with the

Local Area Agreement and changes to the partnership structure of the Narrowing the Gap Board and Going up a League Board.

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

- Critical success factors included reducing poverty, getting people back into employment and breaking down barriers to employment.
- How to ensure all deprived areas are targeted, particularly those that are isolated in more affluent wards. It was reported that there had been a reduction in the number of Super Output Areas in Leeds.
- The role of Elected Members in Community Engagement.
- Local employment opportunities and use of local labour in regeneration projects.
- Housing improvements.
- Members were informed of a project that involved 80 local families which would look at issues relating to objectives in the Narrowing the Gap agenda.
- Financial inclusion
- Partnership working across the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector and statutory agencies.
- Mental Health
- Supporting people back in work

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the report and presentation be noted.
- (2) That the Board receive an update in six months.

53 Session 3 - Inquiry into Skills

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report regarding the Board's Inquiry into Skills. The first part of the report focussed on the Multiple Area Agreement (MAA) and its skills related content and the second part focussed on the future of Further Education (FE) in Leeds.

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- James Flanagan, Project Manager, Executive Support
- Roy Thorpe, Principal, Thomas Danby College
- Cristina George, Learning Skills Council
- Sylvia Perrins, National Director, National Skills Academy Financial Services
- Linda Schofield, Regional Director, National Skills Academy Financial Services
- Gillian Haddon, 14-19 Project Manager, Education Leeds

Members attention was brought to Annex A of the report which detailed an extract from the Leeds City Region MAA Delivery Plan in relation to skills and

in particular the accreditation of in-house training within Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the Leeds City Region . It was reported that the delivery plan had been signed off by the City Regions Leaders Board and Members were informed of other issues including worklessness, performance management and possible implications of recent changes to the economy.

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

- Need to review the MAA from time to time.
- Worklessness programmes and the role of the Learning Skills Council and Job Centre Plus to ensure continuation of training for those not in employment.
- Reduced training opportunities in SMEs due to the current economic downturn and an acknowledgement that training has never been regarded as high priority for SMEs.
- How to get funding for SMEs to provide training and gain accreditation.
- Democratic accountability for the MAA and how it can be communicated down to community level.
- Need for robust challenge on performance management issues including responsibility for performance management and tracking the delivery of the MAA.
- Work in partnership with the City College of Norwich to accredit training.
- Refocusing work with Yorkshire Forward and working on packages for redeployment

The Board was informed that a business plan had been drafted for the financial skills academy in the Yorkshire and Humber and this would involve key employers in the financial sector throughout the region. SMEs were considered to be an important target group for the academy and a key challenge was to develop engagement with SMEs. Flexible programmes of training would be delivered and a range of funding sources would be available.

It was reported that the new Leeds City College would be running with effect from 1 April 2009 and that the College's Governing Body had now been formed. With regards to the curriculum it wasn't expected to be too different in the 2009/10 academic year with many programmes still running across the three former colleges. Further development would be made prior to the 2010/11 academic year. It was stressed that partnerships with employers across Leeds and the City Region were of importance and that employers were aware of training opportunities that were available. Further partnership engagement would involve the Council, Education Leeds and Yorkshire Forward.

In brief summary, the following issues were also discussed:

- The National Skills Academy for Hospitality and Food at Thomas Danby College.

- The development of Centres of Excellence with provision of qualifications from Level 1 through to Foundation Degree.
- The reduction of competition between FE providers in Leeds and increased opportunities for provision of courses to best meet the needs of learners and communities.
- Local democracy, governance and accountability issues
- Need for closer working relations between partner organisations, including Education Leeds, The Regional Development Agency, Learning Skills Council, new agencies and City Region Colleges
- Centre for Cities report
- Availability of impartial advice and guidance when choosing courses
- Need to respond to economic changes with innovative qualitative curriculum based on centres of excellence
- Work on the curriculum has to respond to government strategies regardless of local needs

RESOLVED -

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the Board be provided with a detailed specification of the performance management framework for tracking delivery of the MAA when available.

54 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.

55 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 26 February 2009 at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Board Members at 09.30 a.m.)