Minutes

Date 8 February 2007
Subject Adult Learning Committee
Location Jolly St Ermins Hotel, London
Time 13:00
LSC office National Office
Publication intent Internal

Present Judith Armitt (Chair)
Tony Chandler
Richard Atkins
Pat McMullan
Graham Taylor
Anthony Massouras
Alan Tuckett (until item 3)
Pat Passley (from item 6)

In attendance Jonathan Mackey, DfES
Cathy Hughes, JobCentre Plus
Jacqui Henderson, UK Skills (for item 6)

LSC officials Jon Gamble,
Priya Gossain

Apologies Alex Pratt
Giles Clarke
Frances O’Grady
Chris Humphries
John Landeryou, ALI
Stephen Hillier, DfES
David Way, LSC
Melanie Hunt, LSC
Jaine Clarke, LSC

Item 1. Leitch Review of Skills
1.1 Judith Armitt welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that she was
chairing the meeting on behalf of Frances O’Grady who was unable to attend.
Unfortunately due to the poor weather conditions, Jaine Clarke was also
unable to attend the meeting, so Rob Wye would present the item on the
Leitch Review. This item was taken first on the agenda.
1.2 Rob Wye briefly presented the paper which summarised the actions being taken forward now that the final report of the Leitch Review had been published. Discussions were now taking place on the Government’s response to Leitch with an Implementation Plan to be produced around the time of the Comprehensive Spending Review, so this was a good opportunity for the Committee to comment on the report’s recommendations.

1.3 The Committee was supportive of the Leitch ambition and recommendations and made some specific comments:

- Clear that the report is not a ‘blue-print’ and the Government has to respond.
- The targets for 2020 are at the core of the report however qualifications are not a complete proxy for skills. There is an incomplete fit between the aspirations of Government and measuring success by achievement of qualifications.
- Supportive of the employer pledge, but how will success be measured and who will determine this.
- Learner Accounts need to be designed to allow space for personal development not just skills development.
- Glad to see more workplace learning, but need to have capacity to support this.
- A unitised credit system is important so a system to support this needs to be speeded up.
- Need clarity on the role of the Employment and Skills Boards and the relationship with Local Authorities. Must ensure they make sense for the local landscape and not clutter it.

1.4 In response Rob made the following comments:

- For a demand led system, would have to ensure that the qualification system works.
- Reform of SSCs needs to be speeded up and any delays avoided.
- The Commission for Employment and Skills would report to Government on ‘the pledge’ and Government would determine the basis on which the judgement would be made.
- Leitch talks about ‘economically valuable’ skills. There is lots of thinking to do and debate to be had on what this means.
- Discussions on the Employment and Skills Boards are further behind than the Commission and there are varying views on their role. If they are to be the ‘employer voice’ then flexibility of response will be needed if they are listened to.

1.5 Judith Armitt thanked Rob for his input and the Committee for their comments. She stated that the Leitch report should feature strongly in future Committee agendas so the detail could be discussed more fully. The Committee Forward Plan would be adjusted to reflect more Leitch focused items and also ‘thinned out’ to remove less pressing items.

Action: Priya Gossain
Item 2. LSC Role in Making the Market

2.1 Rob Wye made a presentation on the LSC’s role in a demand led system and in ‘shaping the market’. He commented that this work had started prior to the publication of the Leitch report and both had come together at the same time.

2.2 In response to the presentation the Committee made the following comments:

- The markets for employers, young people and adults are different. Must ensure that Learner Accounts works for disadvantaged adults or learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Significant role for the LSC to prevent market failure by planning and controlling failing colleges and managing mergers. Would therefore need strong LSC knowledge and leadership locally.
- Need clarity on who is shaping the 14 to 19 market as currently there are joint responsibilities which are supposed to be collaborative.
- Need a level playing field on capital investment into the sector.
- Public sector employers also need to invest in skills.
- Developing staff will be key if the LSC is to regulate the market.

2.3 Judith Armitt thanked Rob for his presentation and summarised the discussion by stating that the Committee endorsed the proposals but asked for assurance that the needs of disadvantaged communities were not lost. Also the LSC would need to do more on seeking out areas where market intervention was needed. And finally that a regulatory role could be problematic so the LSC would need to ensure that funds were distributed evenly.

Item 3. Changing Attitudes and Behaviours through Marketing and Communications

3.1 Rob Wye presented his final item by stating that marketing and communications activity outlined in the papers was part of a bigger piece of work to change behaviours and attitudes of individuals and employers and help them see the benefits and values of learning. A key part of the Leitch report was the need to change the hearts and minds of the population.

3.2 The LSC is working with partners to co-ordinate the campaign and ensure it is jointly owned. Agreement has been made between LSC, SSDA and DfES to embark on an overarching umbrella campaign and tenders are currently being considered for advertising and public relations activity. This would be launched around the time of Adult Learners Week at the end of May.

3.3 The Committee were supportive of the campaign and made the following comments:

- Helpful to know if there are any other examples of similar campaigns elsewhere in the world that we could learn from.
- May want to target specific sectors and Union Learning Representatives could help here.
• Consider links to broadcasters as Channel 4 and the BBC have a public education remit to fulfil.
• Need a framework that is permissive and enthusing but doesn’t switch people off. Critical that it is inclusive.
• Ensure it is adequately market-tested before it commences as it could be expensive.
• Not just public relations, but more about driving a change in attitudes.
• Need to somehow show the benefits of learning as they are intangible.

3.4 Judith Armit summarised by stating that the Committee was supportive of the campaign and asked that the comments be taken on board.

Item 4. Learning and Skills Report

4.1 As Jaine Clarke was unable to attend, Jon Gamble presented the paper by commenting that the paper gave headlines of what was happening in the Learning and Skills Groups in the LSC.

4.2 In response the following comments were made:
• Pleased to hear about NES developments. Would be useful to hear more about this at a future meeting.
• Lots of work happening on public services, in particular work on Train to Gain and ensuring it works for the public sector.
• Committee members can help and advise to support on Train to Gain performance if necessary.
• The numbers of Apprentices are down. Would be interested to know if young people are moving from Apprenticeships to Train to Gain.

4.3 The Committee noted the report and the Chair suggested that any further queries be sent on to Jaine Clarke by email.

Item 5. Performance Report

5.1 As Jaine Clarke was unable to present the report, the Committee noted the report and the Chair asked for comments and questions which would be sent on to Jaine after the meeting.

5.2 The Train to Gain section of the report is positive especially the survey results on broker satisfaction, however would like to know more on the value of brokers and the numbers of learners coming through as a result of intervention by brokers.

Action: Jaine Clarke

5.3 The report states that there has been a reduction in adult learner numbers of around 660,000 between 2004/05 and 2005/06. Members asked for a fuller analysis on the reasons behind the fall in numbers.

Action: Jaine Clarke
Item 6. WorldSkills and UK Skills Competitions

6.1 The Chair welcomed Jacqui Henderson, Interim Chief Executive of UK Skills to the meeting. Unfortunately Stephen Gardner was unable to attend to but suggested that members forward any questions on his paper to him by email.

6.2 Jacqui began her presentation by outlining the role of UK Skills which was a not for profit organisation whose key responsibilities were to:
- manage the National Training Awards to celebrate training and development;
- run UK skills competitions; and
- manage the selection and training of the UK team entering the WorldSkills competitions which took place every two years.

6.3 London is to host the WorldSkills competition in 2011 and the bid was won by selling the UK and working to ensure that skills is on the global agenda. It was hoped that this competition would act as a catalyst for change by changing attitudes to skills positively and permanently, leaving behind a lasting legacy.

6.4 The estimate for running the WorldSkills competition is £22 million and the Government has committed to matching any sponsorship funds supporting the competition. A detailed road map was produced last year and all are confident that a good forward plan is in place in the run-up to 2011. Work is also ongoing to ensure that the UK has a successful team for the competitions in 2009 and 2011 and medals are won.

6.5 The following comments and questions were made:
- The reality TV approach may help generate interest in young people for skills.
- Want to ensure that FE colleges can provide support at a local and regional level but also need examples of competition winners and experts to generate interest.
- Must ensure there is an equality and diversity strategy in place so that there is a diverse range of competitors.
- There is also an issue about improving the quality of teaching and learning of vocational skills to ensure it is of a world class standard.
- Snobbery exists around vocational skills but could change attitudes by getting professionals to create skills competitions for their sectors.

6.6 In response to the Committees questions, Jacqui made the following comments:
- A programme was being made with Teachers TV which would follow this year’s WorldSkills Team.
- Master classes are offered to institutions so as to promote ex-competitors and experts as inspirational role models for learners.
- UK Skills can provide details of UK skills competitions. In March the concept of a regional competition strategy is to be launched.
• Encouraging diversity by promoting skills competitions widely, but it is a competition of skills so there is a minimum benchmark to be met.
• Need to support lecturers and trainers to raise their game and acknowledge their expertise also. The STAR awards help this but also want to explore criteria to demonstrate exceptional performance in NVQs.
• Working with SSCs to energise them and involve them in skills competitions. For example working with Skills for Justice on an advocacy competition and SEMTA on a competition for environmental scientists.

6.7 The Chair thanked Jacqui Henderson for her presentation and for attending the meeting. She added that the Committee were supportive of UK Skills’ work and could offer any help needed in advocacy support or to celebrate WorldSkills.

Item 7. Minutes and Matters Arising
7.1 The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.
7.2 Priya Gossain updated the Committee on the actions from the last meeting:
• Para 2.5 National Skills Academies – A note had been drafted and will be sent round in the next week.
• Para 2.5 research reports – These had been circulated by email after the meeting.
• Para 3.3 cost of Level 2 routes – A note had been drafted and will be sent round in the next week.
• Para 3.4 Error in Performance Report – The correct version of the funding table had been circulated to members following the meeting.

Item 8. Any Other Business
8.1 There were no items of other business.

Meeting chair       Judith Armitt
Minute taker        Priya Gossain
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