## Minutes

**Date**  
10 September 2008

**Subject**  
National Council meeting

**Location**  
Conference Room, Centre Point

**Time**  
09:30

**LSC office**  
National Office (London)

**Publication intent**  
Internal

### Present

Chris Banks (Chair)  
Gareth Cadwallader  
Shirley Cramer  
John Cridland  
Ian Ferguson  
Bryan Gray  
Mark Haysom  
Deian Hopkin  
Sally Hopson  
Claire Ighodaro  
Mary Marsh  
Emma Pearson  
John Taylor  
Malcolm Trobe  
Jill Youds

### In attendance

David Eastwood (HEFCE)  
Maggie Galliers  
Lesley Longstone (DCSF)  
Stephen Marston (DIUS)  
John Merry  
Matthew Nicholas (Job Centre Plus)  
George Sweeney  
John Denham (for item 6 only)  
Emran Mian (for item 6 only)  
Andy Westwood (for item 6 only)

### LSC staff

Margaret Coleman (Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Director)  
Caroline Neville (East of England Regional Director)  
Lee Probert (Director of Internal Communications)  
Sue Randall (Clerk)
Minutes

Cathy Robinson (Head of Legal and Governance)
David Way (National Director of Adult Learning, Skills and Employment)
Rob Wye (National Director of Young People's Learning and Skills)

Apologies

Apologies have been received from:
Frances O'Grady
Verity Bullough (National Director of Funding, Planning and Performance)
David Russell (National Director of Finance and Resources)

Item 1. Welcome

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, and took the opportunity to specifically welcome Emma Pearson and Maggie Galliers as new National Council members.

1.2 The Chair also welcomed Regional Directors Margaret Coleman (Yorkshire and the Humber) and Caroline Neville (East of England).

Item 2. Matters arising/notification of AoB items/Chief Executive’s update

2.1 Minimum Apprenticeship Wage – this will be increased from £83 per week to £95 per week in August 2009.

2.2 No Other Business items were notified.

2.3 In his update, Mark Haysom highlighted the following successes:
   - Increased number of Train to Gain starts
   - Increased Apprenticeship take up
   - Good progress on the September Guarantee

2.4 The following challenges were also highlighted:
   - Funding pressures delaying the publication of the Annual Statement of Priorities were being worked through
   - The delivery problems around Education Maintenance Allowances were being taken extremely seriously and much work was ongoing to resolve all issues, at which point a paper would be brought to Council.

2.5 The Departments were currently in the process of describing post Machinery of Government operations and structures.
Item 3. Minutes of the last meeting

3.1 These were agreed as an accurate record.

Item 4. Annual Statement of Priorities (Paper LSC 43/2008)

4.1 Rob Wye presented this paper relating to the current draft of the Statement.
4.2 This Statement did not differ substantially from the previous year. The LSC was already on a journey of transformation which the current Statement reinforced and supported.
4.3 Two notable new inclusions, however, were the National Apprenticeship Service and the integration of employment and skills.
4.4 It was unlikely that the originally anticipated publication date of 13 October would be achieved. There were a number of funding issues to be resolved arising from the wider economic climate which meant a more realistic date was later in October.
4.5 It had been appreciated for some time that the demand led funding approach would lead to fluctuating expenditure. Discussions had taken place regarding the use of resulting underspend, but overall civil service budgetary requirements meant any underspend would not necessarily be available for LSC activities.
4.6 The range of End Year Flexibility was not yet known, but would have a significant impact on the extent of budgetary pressures.
4.7 Council noted the absence of employer engagement and young people’s apprenticeships in the paper and asked for these to be added.

Action: Verity Bullough

4.8 It was proposed that an additional meeting of National Council be convened once a more final draft of the Statement was available. Council requested clear budgetary information together with robust information on funding pressures to be available at that meeting also. Council also asked that consideration be given to tele- or video-conferencing at this meeting to enable a larger number of members to contribute if their diaries did not allow them to travel to the meeting.

Decision: Sue Randall to liaise with the Chair, Rob Wye and appropriate colleagues to ensure the additional meeting was arranged.

Item 5. Apprenticeships

5.1 In an update on apprenticeships, David Way advised the following:
   - “Clearing House” arrangements for construction apprentices in particular were to be set up
   - A prospectus on “over training” apprentices was being worked on
   - This year had seen 40,000 more apprenticeship starts than last year
   - Completions for the current year were static, so work was ongoing to ensure all starts resulted in a completion
   - 16-18 starts were not increasing as quickly as 19-25, which was one of a set of issues to be looked at jointly with DCSF
• The test period for the National Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service (NAVMS) had been extended to ensure it was working well
• There was now more clarity around budgets for the trials and for Apprenticeship marketing campaigns.

5.2 Increasing the involvement of the public sector in offering apprenticeships was now a major area of work. Focus was currently centring on the Local Government, Central Government, Health and Education sectors. It was hoped a summit in October would act as a call to action as well offering an opportunity to share best practice and research outcomes.

5.3 The draft Apprenticeships Bill was currently going through a period of consultation due to end on 8 October. The Bill impacted significantly on the work of the LSC as it placed a number of duties on the organisation to which Council was asked to give consideration.

5.4 Council cautioned against making the definition of an apprenticeship too tight, which might have the effect of excluding some sections of the community.

5.5 There was also concern about placing too much responsibility on schools for the promotion of apprenticeships. The Bill currently proposed a voluntary agreement aimed at strengthening and underpinning their present responsibilities around advice and guidance.

5.6 The LSC did not intend to issue a formal response to the proposed contents of the draft Bill. It was not usual practice for the LSC to respond on legislation on which it has worked so closely. Council also noted that LSC officials had direct access to those drafting the Bill which afforded opportunity to comment and feedback.

Item 6. Secretary of State

6.1 The Council welcomed John Denham, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills to the meeting.

6.2 The Secretary of State thanked the LSC for the leadership it continued to show throughout the current period of change and uncertainty. There were a number of areas where the LSC’s leadership and expertise would continue to be required for the foreseeable future, including:
• Change management
• Train to Gain and the demand led system
• Bureaucracy reduction
• Interface with employers and investment in skills
• Promotion of a coherent service and joint working with other agencies
• Provider communication
• 14-19 planning and development.

6.3 The Secretary of State went on to compliment the recent round of Skills publicity, stating that it contributed towards the ultimate aim of having “skills” discussed automatically as part of discussions on the economy.
Areas of challenge identified by the Secretary of State were around an unevenness of achievement and specialisation around the country. He felt it important to progress work on extending capital eligibility to private providers in a targeted way where private providers would assist in improving provision.

The Secretary of State also focussed on the importance of developing public sector apprenticeships. It was important to tap into localised good practice and use those successful employers who employ apprentices as exemplars for others. The key message here though, was to get young people to make the choice that is right for them, and the recent mood change he perceived around apprenticeships should mean that they began to figure increasingly in young people’s spectrum of choice.

Council welcomed the Secretary of State’s emphasis on colleges’ developing community leadership role, which he felt had a crucial dual role both in returning to the flexibility of informal adult learning, and also assisting in youth crime prevention.

The Secretary of State acknowledged Council’s concerns about the quality of careers advice and guidance for young people. There was a variety of work going on to look at this area and he hoped for a positive result. It was crucial not to let individuals face important skills decisions alone. He also confirmed that he expected the voluntary sector to play a significant role in advice and guidance in future.

A supporter of college self-regulation, the Secretary of State said that colleges had to take ownership of performance and quality. He agreed that self-regulation did not necessarily mean self-commissioning.

The Chair thanked the Secretary of State for attending the meeting and giving Council members the opportunity to hear his thoughts and put questions to him.

**Item 7. Regional Councils (Paper LSC 45/2008)**

Cathy Robinson introduced this paper that asked Council to establish nine regional learning and skills councils; specify that the councils carry out a range of listed functions; give consent to the councils to delegate functions to members of staff of the regional council; delegate the preparation of guidance for regional councils to the Chief Executive; and abolish the nine Regional Boards.

Council agreed to carry out the above actions and delegations.

**Item 8. Quorum of the Council (Paper LSC 46/2008)**

Cathy Robinson introduced this paper that proposed an amendment to the quoracy for National Council meetings. The paper proposed that quoracy be amended from a proportion of the current members (50%) to a set number (5).

Some members expressed concern about the amendment since meetings were rarely inquorate under the current arrangements, however, the proposal was agreed as it was acknowledged that some meetings had come close to
being inquorate especially when members needed to leave the meeting early.


9.1 John Taylor presented this paper that informed the Council of recommendations made at the Capital Committee meeting on 14 August 2008.

9.2 There were four projects for approval by the Council, three of which were in principle.

9.3 After hearing a summary of each application, Council approved the applications for Stoke on Trent College, Great Yarmouth College and City of Bristol College.

9.4 Council required more assurance on the Bradford College application as the Committee had concerns about its scale of ambition and the potential return on the investment. It was agreed that the project be allowed to proceed as described in the paper, but final approval must be given by Council and was not delegated to the Committee.

9.5 Council requested a paper at its next meeting looking at specialisation and land price issues.

    **Action:** David Russell

**Item 10. Level 2 and Level 3 Targets**

10.1 This item was deferred to the next meeting. The results of the Level 3 Review had been expected in time for the meeting. However, although the review had been signed off by the LSC, it had not yet been cleared by Ministers.

**Item 11. PMDU review of young people not in education, employment or training (Paper LSC 49/2008)**

11.1 Rob Wye presented this paper that provided Council with a report of the review by the Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit of the likelihood of the 2010 target for NEET reduction being met through current policy and practice.

11.2 Council welcomed the news that LSC colleagues were working closely with DCSF in drafting a plan which will be taken forward as an integral part of the recently developed Joint Targets Delivery Plan.

11.3 While it was important to focus on the NEET group as a whole, Council felt that equal focus should given to the long term “core” of young people who are NEET. It was important not to fall into a trap of solving only the easier problems. It was also acknowledged that the number of young people who were NEET would go up once the “unknown” group was tackled.

11.4 Rob Wye advised that RoCPA (Raising of the Compulsory Participation Age) represented an official policy of 0% NEET.

11.5 It was proposed that part of the evening session prior to the next meeting be used to look at plans to address the NEET issue.

    **Action:** Sue Randall to ensure this is arranged
12.1 This item was for information and was noted.
12.2 Members were encouraged to raise any specific issues with LSC Directors if necessary.

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Item 14. Update on the implementation of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (Paper LSC 52/2008)
14.1 Rob Wye presented this paper that updated Council on QCF implementation.
14.2 Council noted progress and that the QCF delivery model was still subject to Ministerial agreement.
14.3 It was agreed that a full discussion on this issue was required at Council at the appropriate time.

Action: Rob Wye

Item 15. Any Other Business
15.1 As this was Council member John Taylor’s last meeting, the Chair thanked him for his contribution to the work of the LSC since joining in 2005, which included membership of the Capital Committee and acting as the link between the Capital Committee and Council.

Item 16. Date of next meeting

Meeting chair Chris Banks
Minute taker Sue Randall
Date created 19 September 2008
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