NOTE OF KEY POINTS

• Council took the Leitch Review as its main discussion topic, with members being updated on latest developments. A period of gaining employer feedback on the Review’s contents had started, with early indications showing that employers had three major areas of concern: that the system as it stands is too complex; that current "labelling" of elements within the system is unclear and needs to be more meaningful; and that the advantages of using or engaging with the FE system are not clear. Many aspects of Leitch built on initiatives already in train, such as: Train to Gain; joint working with JobCentre Plus; skills and employment integration; further development of the National Employer Service; support for smaller companies; and the introduction of a demand-led system. Main areas of interest for Council members were the role of the new Employment and Skills Commission and how it would align with that of the LSC, and the increasingly complex qualifications landscape.

• A leadership event held on 26 January for the top management tier of the LSC had identified the key issues facing the LSC in 2007. Council was asked to consider this “Forward Look” and comment on its scope. This would be a busy year and key areas for LSC involvement in 2007 were: FE Reform implementation; Leith consultation and implementation; introduction of the demand-led system; 14-19 and NEETs; apprenticeships; Train to Gain; Learner Accounts; and Skills for Jobs.

• A progress report on the agenda for change programme focussed mainly on the Framework for Excellence which had received some “red” ratings in a recent readiness report from KPMG. Actions had been taken to address all concerns and it was hoped that the concerns would become “green” by June 2007, which would still fit with the Framework’s overall milestones.

• In his Management Group’s Report to Council, Mark Haysom highlighted updates on Leitch; Regional Commissioning Plans; minimum levels of performance; the fall in the number of adult learners and apprentices; reduction in fee income; and a proposed NEET summit. Council asked for an analysis of the impact any rise in the compulsory participation age was likely to have on apprenticeships.

• The Financial Performance Report for the period ended November 2006 showed an end year review forecast of a balanced revenue position. Capital budgets continued to show an underspend but this was fully anticipated and could be carried over.

• Capital proposals were agreed for St Helens College; Westminster Kingsway College; West Kent College; South Thames College; and a revised grant was agreed for Harrow College.

• In her annual report on the work of the Equality and Diversity Committee, Shirley Cramer highlighted three particular successes of the past year: the introduction of the Single Equality Scheme; the ongoing work of the Committee’s subgroups (particularly in implementation of the Little Review and Equality and Diversity Impact Measures); and the establishment of the Voluntary and Community Sector advisory group.

• The Chairman thanked Council member Ruth Harker, whose term on the Council was coming to an end and who was stepping down. Ruth continued to be a member of the Young People’s Learning Committee and her contribution to the LSC was greatly appreciated.