Item 1. Welcome and introductions

1.1 The meeting began with a short discussion on the issue of papers for the LSC management group meetings, and the need to ensure that they have been equality proofed with an impact assessment of any relevant recommendations contained within.

1.2 The Chair started the meeting proper by welcoming all present to the meeting. She introduced the theme of the meeting which was to look at how the Committee’s work tied in with the internal processes of the LSC, especially during the current ‘agenda for change’ process. In respect of this she welcomed Sally Stewart, director of HR, who was attending to give members an update as to the effects of agenda for change on the diversity of the LSC workforce.

1.3 She expressed thanks to Judith Norrington for accepting an invitation to join the migration task force chaired by Giles Clarke, and thanks to Yvonne Thompson (in her absence) for accepting a similar invitation to join the Olympic Working Group. In addition Patrick Grattan had joined the Peter Little review group and advised members that the first meeting was shortly
due to take place so he would be able to report back to the Committee at the next meeting.

1.4 Members also noted receipt of an email from Alyson Malach raising concerns about the need to review the Committee’s terms of reference in the light of *agenda for change* and in particular the impact of theme 7.

**Item 2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 15 March were agreed as a true record of the discussions with the following amendment - Caroline Slocock was incorrectly listed in the attendees as an observer instead of a member.

**Matters arising**

2.2 Members noted an item still outstanding from the January meeting regarding the circulation to members of the Civil Service Equality and Diversity 10 point plan as it was received by individual teams in the government departments. Waqar Azmi had offered to send copies to the Committee for their shared interest.

**Action:** A Kakoura to follow up and circulate to members before the next meeting.

2.3 Members also noted the outstanding request to the DfES legislative team to come to a future Equality and Diversity Committee meeting to speak about the impact of legislation on Equality And Diversity issues.

**Action:** Alan Davies to speak to the DfES legislative team to arrange a visit to an E&D committee meeting.

**Item 3. Presentation by Sally Stewart, LSC Director of Human Resources.**

3.1 The Chair welcomed Sally to the meeting and asked the people present to introduce themselves.

3.2 Sally outlined the current state of the LSC workforce, describing ways in which the theme 7 process of *agenda for change* was impacting on equality and diversity issues across the organisation. She was unable to give an exact profile of the workforce at that time as theme 7 was well underway and the staffing situation changing continuously as people were appointed to various roles. Whilst she conceded that the LSC at the present time was not a diverse enough organisation, she advised the committee of a number of steps which the LSC was taking to resolve this.

- The most important piece of work was an equality impact assessment led by Sharon Smith, HR Diversity Manger, to monitor and report back on issues raised as the new workforce was appointed starting with the higher grades.
- Managers were being trained in people management skills in preparation for handling potentially sensitive issues during the selection process, including the local non-executive Chairs.
- There was a monitoring system in place to ensure that the change of premises and LSC property adhered to accessibility rules.
• Plans were in place to begin implementing a flexible working policy in the autumn
• HR was developing networks for specific groups within the new LSC.

3.3 The Chair invited members to make comments on and ask questions about the various processes described by the Director of HR and began by asking how closely equality and diversity was linked with national priorities. The HR director said that her team was working closely with the Director for Learning to ensure that people understood the issues and were sharing good practice.

3.4 One member asked whether there would be any exit interviews with staff who were leaving, in order to identify any equality and diversity issues which might be reflected in unconscious behaviours. The director assured members that there were plans to hold such interviews.

3.5 Another member was keen to emphasise the importance for the LSC of being seen as an exemplar employer especially with regard to age and disability policies. He strongly advised that data on LSC staff should be closely monitored and if necessary flexible working arrangements put into place for older and disabled workers. The HR director assured the committee that the LSC was working to those principles and added that the Disability Equality Scheme was due to come into force by 5 December 2006.

3.6 Members were keen to know about the level of equality and diversity support that would be available at local level when theme 7 was implemented. The HR director explained that it was too early to say at this time exactly when the support would be in place, as the process had not reached band 2 levels, from which the E&D support would be procured. She went on to assure members that the process did not discriminate against staff but depended on the individual’s circumstances.

3.7 The member from the Equal Opportunities Commission congratulated the director on the plans outlined in the paper and was impressed with the gender balance. However she suggested that it would be useful to monitor the data from the sifting process to see the profiles of those applicants who were not successful to identify any possible issues.

3.8 There was some concern expressed at the apparent low number of BME or disabled staff already appointed at Band 5 and the HR director was asked to explain how recruitment at these levels had included meaningful consultation with BME/ disabled staff. The HR director assured the committee that applications from BME staff had been positively encouraged. Applications had also been considered from people allowing for one year of in-post development. She stated that staff at all levels had been invited to attend personal development courses such as Springboard for women and Navigator for men.

3.9 Members discussed briefly the issues of how to engage staff at the lower bands in discussion with managers about career progression. It was felt that these staff found it difficult to approach managers to discuss equality issues. The HR Director agreed that it was difficult but assured the Committee that everything was being done to try to engage with the staff – including the setting up of consultative forums for different groups across the organisation.
She described the process for appointing staff to posts, saying that appointments had begun at the higher grades and had continued down to the lower grades, with staff being ascribed as either flow through, fewer roles or new roles. Workshops were being run to assist staff through job applications and through the voluntary severance process.

3.10 On the subject of the appointment of the non executive regional chairs, members expressed serious concern that the process had resulted in the appointment of nine white men, and asked how this had come about. The HR director explained that the appointment of the non-executive had hitherto been separate from the appointment process for executive staff but assured members that future appointments would be picked up by the HR division. Members asked that their regret at the outcome of the regional chair appointments should be passed on to the LSC Chairman and Chief Executive.

**Action:** M Hunt, Director of Learning will pass on Committee’s view to the Chief Executive and Chairman

3.11 The member from the Disability Rights Commission was keen to know how the LSC was planning to obtain data on its employees with regard to disabilities, and more specifically those with long term health conditions which were not always apparent. The HR director said that staff had been encouraged to apply for any special work place adjustments needed to enable them to accommodate their conditions but pointed out that it was difficult to know where these adjustments were required if staff chose not to disclose health information. The DRC member stressed the importance for the LSC of finding ways to encourage staff to come forward with sensitive information in ways which were discreet but effective.

3.12 One member pointed out that “Investors in People” was a vehicle through which this information could be obtained. The HR director informed the Committee that so far IiP had been awarded to eth LSC on a group by group basis and that the organisation as a whole was working towards a corporate IiP award for 2007.

3.13 The HR Director asked members to send her other examples of good practice in data gathering which could be used at the LSC.

3.14 The Chair thanked the HR Director for her contribution to the meeting and suggested that she could return to the September meeting where members could offer advice on drawing up the LSC equality and diversity action plan.

**Item 4. Director of Equality and Diversity Report**

4.1 The Chair invited the Equality and Diversity Policy Manager to introduce the report and then invited comments from members on the content.

4.2 Members thanked the LSC for this paper and noted the following comments:
   a. The approach should take account of all diversity areas;
   b. The measures should be agreed nationally and fed into regional and area plans;
   c. There should be a link to the planning committee so that that group could consider and identify the equality dimensions of working;
d. Members would like to hear a progress report on this at each of the next committee meetings.

4.3 During a short discussion on EDIMs the Director of Learning pointed out the need to prioritise in order to get results.

**Item 5. The Framework for the Equality and Diversity Strategy**

5.1 The Committee **recommended** that the Equality and Diversity Strategy paper should go forward to Management Group for endorsement, and any progress reports included in the Equality and Diversity director’s report at each Equality and Diversity Committee meeting.

**Item 6. Comprehensive Spending Review**

6.1 The Chair welcomed Jim Minogue, LSC Director of Financial Planning, to the meeting and invited him to introduce his report on the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR).

6.2 He began by outlining the timings and process by which the LSC both received and allotted funding, following receipt each October of the Government’s Grant Letter. He pointed out that the current timetable had changed with short notice and therefore the Statutory Committees had not been involved as early as they would normally be.

6.3 He went on to describe the main priorities for LSC spending – 14-19 provision, adult provision, the efficiency agenda, performance framework (targets), capital spend – and then described the pressures on those priorities. He concluded by summarising the next steps in the process:

- Continued close working with the DfES
- Further Council and statutory committee input
- Baseline reviews of the CSR in June/July 2006
- Conclusion of the CSR in Spring 2007

6.4 Members were subsequently invited to ask for clarification or to make comments on the presentation.

6.5 Most members expressed concern that an impact assessment should be made of the impending loss of ESF funding to disadvantaged groups of people, and asked the Director for Financial Planning to report back to the Committee with information on how many and which particular groups would be affected.

**Action: J Minogue to provide report for next Committee meeting on the impact of the loss of ESF funding.**

6.6 There was a question raised about the Chancellor’s cross cutting themes, for example, the changing demographics, and whether these had been given consideration in the CSR. The director confirmed that there were financial constraints but these were being considered.

6.7 One member was worried that the loss of ESF would affect the NEETS groups currently provided for to a large extent through the community and voluntary sector. The Director for Learning responded by saying that where
there were gaps in provision created by the loss of ESF funds the Competitions initiative would cover.

6.8 The Director for Financial Planning pointed out that, whilst the last budget had set aside funding for women returners, there was still a need to decide whether to mainstream all funding or have pots of innovation funds. In the past, innovative ideas had failed when attempts had been made to mainstream them.

6.9 One member felt it was a matter of how much the LSC was prepared to consider research from other organisations, such as the NUS, to inform its funding policy.

6.10 Members endorsed the opinion expressed that a more open and sharing approach to solving funding problems was needed. Any further information which was identified as being of interest to members would be circulated before the next meeting on email.

6.11 The Chair thanked The Director for Financial Planning for attending the meeting and to members for their comments which would be noted.

Item 7. LSC Annual Report

7.1 The Chair invited members to comment on how the Equality and Diversity work of the LSC should be presented in its Annual Report. Members made several suggestions as to how and in what format this work should be taken forward, and what should be included:

- The RES standards
- An explanation on the roles of the various subcommittees
- Cross working practices across the LSC
- Events/initiatives which have impacted on Equality and Diversity both in the LSC and in the learning and skills sector
- Capital spend on infrastructure and the effect on accessibility and disability issues.
- Compliance with legislation
- Progress on occupational segregation issues and women in work commission
- Overall strategy of the EDIMs
- What the LSC has done independently of legislation to further the Equality and Diversity agenda
- Need for baseline data and current data to show how the Committee was having an effect

7.2 The Chair thanked the members for their input and suggested that any further thoughts should be emailed to The Equality and Diversity Policy Manager

Item 8. Updates from Subcommittees

8.1 A number of verbal updates were presented to members from those present.
DfES update

8.2 Members were updated as to current activity at the DfES and in particular the creation of the new Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) headed by Ruth Kelly, which would have a specific responsibility for equality and diversity policies. The DCLG would also be responsible for a Commission for Integration and Cohesion and would have a particular interest in “women and work.”

8.3 A short discussion followed in which the Chair encouraged members to suggest names of ministers/experts to invite to future Equality and Diversity meetings to meet with and discuss how to take forward the equality and diversity agenda. Names could be forwarded to the clerk and invitation letters sent out once future dates had been confirmed.

**Action:** Clerk to prepare invitation letters for future speakers

LLDD Subcommittee

8.4 A verbal report was made to the Committee which touched on recent activity with LLDD progress. A hard copy of the report was received and would be circulated to members following the meeting. It is also attached to these minutes at Annex A.

**Action:** Clerk to circulate hard copy of the report with these minutes.

Age subcommittee

8.5 Members were advised that there had not been a formal meeting of the members but that the business had been managed through email correspondence, and a good communications network.

8.6 The verbal report highlighted a successful series of regional meetings which had been set up with NIACE in which local data had been evidenced. The continuity of these meetings had been affected by the process of theme 7.

8.7 Members were also informed that the DTI and the DfES had produced a guidance note on funding schemes.

Muslim subgroup

8.8 Members were informed that the DfES would be taking the work of this subgroup forward, following a re-evaluation and scoping exercise of what needs to be done. It was agreed that there was a need for more clarity on what the issues were exactly and what role the Equality and Diversity Committee should play in any strategy.

8.9 The DfES observer assured members that he would take back the Committee’s concerns and recommendations that a scoping exercise be carried out and would report back at the next meeting.

Item 9. Joint Committee meeting

9.1 Members noted the arrangements already made for the joint meeting and were asked to send comments and suggestions for names of speakers to the Committee clerk.
Item 10. Any other business
10.1 There was no other business noted so the Chair drew the meeting to a close by thanking all present for their contributions

Item 11. Date of next meeting
11.1 The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 14 July 2006, at the Copthorne Tara Hotel in Kensington. London, as part of the joint event with the Adult Learning and Young people’s Learning Committees.

Meeting chair       Shirley Cramer
Minute taker        Alison Kakoura
Date created        18 May 2006
Document ref.       G:\Chairmans\Division\Secretariat\COMMITTEES\EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY\2006 meetings\MINUTES\nat-equalityanddiversitycommittee\meeting-minutes-17may2006.doc
Annex A

Update from LLDD subcommittee

At its last meeting in January, the subcommittee on learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were provided with:

- An update on the implementation of Through Inclusion to Excellence
- An update on the work of the Mental Health Task Group
- An overview by DWP of the green paper ‘A New Deal for Welfare – Empowering People to Work’

Pat Passley from the Adult Learning Committee joined the subcommittee and it was agreed that Rob Greig from Valuing People should also be invited to become a member. A member of the Young People’s Committee will also join at some point.

We received over 200 responses to the consultation on the Peter Little Review from across the sector and including responses from other agencies/partners such as Primary Care Trusts. Responses were highly supportive of the recommendations made. An analysis of and commentary on the responses will be published in late May/early June. The Implementation Plan is close to completion (likely to be completed in May) and I am due to meet with the LSC team and with Peter Little to hear progress. Work is currently underway (in one way or another) in taking forward each one.

The launch of the National Strategy in response to Through Inclusion to Excellence is intended through a publication planned for October 2006. Drafting is currently underway aligning the strategy with Agenda for Change. Regional Strategies will to be developed in parallel with the national strategy for publication at around the same time as the national strategy. The strength of the approach is the strong regional network approach of the programme.

On mental health the task group is managed by David Barker as Chair and is intending to launch a draft of the LSC’s plan in relation to people with mental health difficulties in June.

Peter Lavender.
May 2006