

Minutes of College/Council Strategic Liaison Group
22 September 2008 – COWA, King's Lynn Campus
10.20 am

Present

The College of West Anglia

Peter Dixon	Chair
David Pomfret	Principal
Roger Ward	Governor
Arlene Clark	Executive Director

King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council

Councillor Nick Daubney	Leader of the Council
Ray Harding	Chief Executive
Councillor Zipha Christopher	

In Attendance

Hilary Reid

Clerk to the Corporation, COWA

1 Apologies

None.

2 Minutes of the Last Meeting – 28 April 2008

The Minutes of the meeting of 28 April 2008 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3 Matters Arising

None.

4 College Corporate Issues

The Principal reported verbally on College issues, noted as follows:

(i) King's Lynn Campus/NORA Update

Planning decisions were due early in October. However, responses from third parties remained a concern. In particular, it was felt that the flood risk assessment was key, but understood there was a formal objection against the development on the grounds of flood risk from the Environment Agency (EA).

It was hoped that planning permission would be received prior to the Application in Principle being considered by the LSC.

The Principal sought guidance on the way forward with the Environment Agency (EA) from the Chief Executive of the Borough Council.

The Chief Executive advised that there had been difficulties with the flood risk strategy for King's Lynn as a whole. The EA were under-resourced and commissioning the work had not met their requirements. He was not aware of the current position in respect of CoWA's application but agreed to follow-up with officers.

Action: RH

The CEO also agreed to check whether there were any outstanding planning matters needing to be address.

Action: RH

Acknowledging the importance of finalising the Option Agreement, both parties agreed to ensure their own legal teams were moving forward.

Action: RH/DP

(ii) College Strategic Update

(a) Inspection/Beacon Status:

Ofsted had awarded an overall rating of "Outstanding" to the College following inspection and subsequently had been invited to become a Beacon College. This was a Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) award which had been given to only three Colleges in the Eastern Region out of twenty awarded nationally.

A decision on AoC Beacon Awards was also awaited. A decision would be announced in November 2008 – two items had been short-listed in recognition of the good practice demonstrated.

(b) Downham Priory Centre:

Downham Priory Centre was now the only remaining Community Learning Centre retained by the College. The Board of Governors had committed to it remaining open as a centre and to strengthening its future use.

The College had identified the Centre as a base for employer engagement work. Staff were currently re-locating there.

It was felt that there could be opportunities for the College to work closely with the Council in this area in the future.

(c) College Priorities:

- **16-18 recruitment within the 14-19 programmes.** Early indications for 16-18 enrolments were promising. The College was continuing to work closely with schools.
- **Train to Gain.** Contracting arrangements with the LSC had been agreed – a direct College contract was now in place. Partnership working would continue with targets in the region of 1,000.
- **Full level 2, 3 and Skills for Life.** These areas of work continue and relationships with local employers are strong.
- **Apprenticeships.** The College had gained a number of Apprenticeship Awards for the East of England and had won the Norfolk LSC "Big Skill" award. Enrolments to apprenticeship provision was higher than in previous years. Marham air base was exploring a substantive apprenticeship package with the College, the details of which would be finalised over the next few months.

- **Learning and Skills Partnership.** Now chaired by the Principal. Its purpose and objectives had become clearer.
- **Higher Education (HE).** This was an area of some concern. The latest recruitment figures were static. There was a drive to ensure that enrolments for 2009-10 would show an improvement.
- **IQER (Institutional Quality Educational Review) Audit.** A developmental review was to be undertaken this year followed by a detailed QA inspection.
- **Academy Developments.** Following a meeting with Andrew Adonis from DCSF, a joint meeting would be held involving representatives of the College, Borough and County Councils. It was becoming more common for Colleges to lead in academy developments and the Department had given certain assurances to the College were they to step forward as lead body. A meeting with the Governors on 1 October would be considering the issues in detail and the full Board would appraise the outcomes on 22 October before reaching a conclusion.

The Principal's report was noted.

5 Borough Council Corporate Issues

The Chief Executive reported verbally on Borough Council issues, noted as follows:

(i) Local Government Review

The review by the Boundary Committee was currently in the consultation phase. A number of briefing sessions had been undertaken for businesses and non-commercial organisations, Parish Councils and the College. The work was being undertaken by a small team within the Borough Council to enable the organisation to continue with its other tasks.

The Borough Council was working on the submission of a joint response to the three proposals with four other Norfolk districts and this was to be submitted by Friday, 26 September. The Boundary Committee report made it clear that it was consulting on a preferred single unitary authority going forward in Norfolk. The Committee is, additionally, seeking views on two other proposals – “the doughnut” and “the wedge”.

Affordability information was not yet complete and an extension to the timescale for consultation had been requested. A consultant had been engaged to carry out a value for money exercise because it was believed that start-up costs had been underestimated and overall costs not reflected appropriately. A judicial review was also being pursued.

500-600 responses to the consultation had been received from which 60% favoured the status quo, 20% a single unitary authority, 8% “the doughnut”, and 2% “the wedge”.

The impact on relationships with neighbouring authorities and the County Council was questioned by the Principal who was re-assured that these were continuing as normal despite an opposing view on Local Government Review proposals.

The Leader of the Council explained the impact, politically, was much more difficult. The Boundary Committee was still accepting views from individuals and organisations and he urged people to respond.

(ii) Borough Council Update

- ❖ **Local Authority Customer Excellence Award** – The Borough Council had been nominated for this award – the only District Council to be nominated.
- ❖ **CICs** – Job Centre personnel were now actively working within the Community Information Centre. The first of the Council's Community Information points had been opened in a Post Office.
- ❖ **"Direction of travel", annual audit** – an assessment undertaken by the Audit Commission in conjunction with the Council's auditors had resulted in an improved score year on year and a more positive response.
- ❖ **Growth Point Status** had provided an opportunity to apply for CIF2 for Southgate roundabout improvements and the bus transport routes. The Borough Council had been short-listed and could secure up to £5m for joint work with the County Council. The proposal had to be submitted by October 2008 with funding anticipated in the next financial year. Funds had to be spent within two years.
- ❖ **The impact of the "credit crunch"** on Council income streams was noted. In particular, the number of planning applications had dropped as had building control applications. As yet, there had been no impact on car parking, theatres and sports centres but these were being monitored. Commercial land was still being sold at competitive prices although residential land sales had slowed. The opportunity for the Council to get the infrastructure in place prior to building had been recognised.
- ❖ **Skills for Life** – Certificates had been awarded to the first cohort of Council staff participating in the learning programme. The Council were also participating in a DWP pilot scheme to enable people back into work quickly without impacting on their benefits.
- ❖ **Infrastructure** – The town centre Master Plan had been issued and positive responses received. The Hunstanton Master Plan had also generated positive responses and the first phase of work was due to start.
- ❖ **Academies** – The Borough Council was happy to support the College in the development of an Academy in the town, as was the West Norfolk Partnership.
- ❖ **An historic buildings review** had been undertaken from which an 8-10 year programme was to be developed. The programme would be dependent upon securing external funding.

6 Any Other Business

- (i) **Marina:** An update on the current position was requested by a Governor of the College and provided by the Chief Executive of the Council.

7 Date, time and venue for next meeting

Monday, 27 April 2009 at 10.00 am, Council Offices.

The meeting closed at 11.30 am