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AGENDA for a Meeting

of the **West Norfolk Partnership LEARNING AND SKILLS GROUP**
on **26th February 2007**
at **2.00pm**
in **The Boardroom, Principals Suite, College of West Anglia**

1. **APOLOGIES**
2. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8th JANUARY 2007 (ATTACHED)**
3. **MATTERS ARISING**
4. **REVIEW OF MEMBERSHIP OF GROUP**
5. **PROJECT UPDATE (GD)**
6. **INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES – PROJECT PROPOSALS TO SUPPORT THE AIMS OF IIC IN WEST NORFOLK (PS/VM)**
7. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
8. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

WEST NORFOLK PARTNERSHIP

SKILLS AND LEARNING GROUP MEETING

Notes of a Meeting of the Skills and Learning Group
held on Monday 8th January 2007 at 2.00pm
in the Principals Suite, College of West Anglia

PRESENT: Peter Stewart (Chair), David Dixon, Paul Kunes, Gill Daniels, Andy Hodgson, Martin Frost, Mike George, Sarah Glenn, Beverley Evans, Martin Slater, Vicky Etheridge, Sue Jorgenson-Moore

	ACTION
<p><u>Apologies</u></p> <p>There were no apologies.</p> <p>The Chair explained that this was the first meeting of the Skills and Learning Group which brought together the former Skills Agenda Group and the West Norfolk Learning Partnership.</p> <p>The Group introduced themselves.</p>	
<p><u>Growing Our Own – Project Update Report</u></p> <p>The Chair explained that the Growing Our Own project had been part funded by this group and therefore needed to be monitored and evaluated.</p> <p>Sarah Glenn introduced the report and explained that three detailed reports had been produced. One report had been completed by an independent trainer, one by Prospect Services and one by Connexions. Prospect Services had interviewed local employers and Connexions had concentrated on 14-16 year olds.</p> <p>The report brought all three reports together. It concentrated on how career and work experience choices were made and looked at links between students and employers. Everyone surveyed had highlighted the importance and value of work experience. It gave young people a sense of direction and motivation. All respondents had noted their frustrations at the communications between all parties. Sarah Glenn highlighted the importance of briefing and de-briefing with regard to work experience.</p> <p>The group were asked to comment on the report. David Dixon noted the value of the report and was pleased to see that work experience was valued highly by all parties.</p>	

Sarah explained that a work experience journal would prove a valuable resource and expressed concern over how Wexweb would work if Connexions failed to win the contract. She highlighted the fact that the entitlements for 14-19 year olds was changing and block work experience would not be the only entitlement available to this age group.

The Chair highlighted this point and explained that there would soon be radical shifts in the curriculum for 14 years and upwards. Specialist diplomas would be launched in September 2008. It would still be important for employers to 'buy in' to this concept.

David Dixon questioned how this would relate to the work of Peter Bridgham and Paul Bland. Sarah Glenn explained that they were employed as educational business co-ordinators. David Dixon noted the importance of a co-ordinated approach to avoid employers being approached more than once, for example. The Chair explained that Peter and Paul had been appointed some time prior to the appointment of Sue Jorgenson-Moore and therefore had started work on the project. They were now line managed by Sue and there would be a co-ordinated approach.

Sarah Glenn explained a resource pack would be produced, not as a manual, but as a method of clarifying procedures. The Chair noted that it would prove useful to run this resource pack past employers first to gauge opinion.

Andy Hodgson questioned whether this resource pack would be made available to young people involved in work experience to which Sarah explained that this would not be part of this project's remit but may prove useful to complete. The resource pack could be circulated via employer links and shared databases. It would be important for all those involved not to work in isolation. The development of networks would be important. The Chair explained that engagement was a broad term and that different employers would have different preferences, for example work experience or apprenticeships. Sarah Glenn explained that young people would discuss career options with a variety of individuals and then use work experience as a means of trying out these options.

Sarah Glenn circulated a report outlining the success of the West Norfolk Opportunities day. She noted that there had not been as many businesses at the event as had been anticipated, and felt that the concept of composite stands, whereby, for example one retail stand would be provided and manned by different retailers, might help overcome this. The website would be updated soon with pictures of the event. The website would then be used as part of the brief and debrief of the event.

In response to a question from the Chair regarding sustainability

	<p>of the event, Sarah explained that applications would be submitted to the Investing in Communities Fund. However they may not be open to funding ongoing costs of the event and if this were to happen she would like to approach the Partnership for funding. The Chair supported this proposal and asked Martin Slater for his comments. In response to a question from Martin, Sarah explained that the total cost of the event in 2006 had been £17,000, which had included venue hire and transport. The cost for 2007 may be in the region of £20,000 - £22,000. Martin explained he would take the costings back to Ian Burbidge, Policy and Performance Manager to discuss. Martin questioned whether it would be appropriate to request sponsorship from employers for the event, Sarah Glenn explained that their time at the event was a sufficient contribution however, she could approach those employers not attending the event for a contribution if required. Sarah explained that the Investing In Communities Funding was intended to help support new activity and is not available to fund ongoing initiatives, and it would be important to ensure the event was sustainable. Mike George explained that private sector sponsorship was not sustainable.</p> <p>Beverley Evans questioned the role of Connexions with the event, to which Sarah Glenn explained that they would not be in a position to fund the event. Sarah explained that to improve the event there would need to be evaluation in terms of impact of the event. Partnerships between the Learning and Skills group and both employers and schools needed to be strengthened.</p> <p>It was AGREED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Discussions to be held with the Partnership Management Group regarding funding the Opportunities event. 2) The full Growing Our Own report to be made available to members of the group on request 3) Consideration be given to implementing full recommendations in the report in the future. 	<p>MS</p> <p>SG</p> <p>ALL</p>
	<p><u>Minutes of Last Meeting</u></p> <p>There were no minutes from the previous meeting as this was the first meeting of the Skills and Learning Group.</p>	
	<p><u>Matters Arising</u></p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>	

Retail Report

Gill Daniels introduced this item by explaining she had interviewed retailers in Kings Lynn, Hunstanton and Downham Market. She had interviewed a range of businesses from major high street names to small, independently run businesses. It would appear that many students were dissuaded from a career in retail and it was seen a menial role. However Gill noted that teachers did not seem to be fully aware of the opportunities available in the retail sector. The retail sector tended to have a rapid turnover of staff, but this had not proven to be the case in West Norfolk. This meant that there were not always the opportunities for young people to move into different retail roles.

Martin Slater noted it was an employers market in the retail sector and questioned whether salaries would reflect this. Gill Daniels explained that she had not found this to be the case, as employers tended to have standard rates of pay. David Dixon explained that one retailer he was aware of had pay scales but that different branches of the same store may have different pay scales.

Mike George commented that the report contained some very general statements. However Gill explained that it had proved difficult to make comparisons in the report as the type of retailer interviewed was so diverse.

The Chair noted that he had shared the report findings with the head of the Retail Centre of Vocational Excellence. It would be important to identify where to go from here. Mike George noted the similarities between the findings from the retail sector and those of the manufacturing sector. He was not aware of evidence to support the fact that schools dissuade young people from entering either sector. Martin Frost explained that it should also be the responsibility of employers to promote their sector and not solely the responsibility of the schools. In response to a question from Beverley Evans regarding the remit of the report, the Chair explained they had been aware of the work in the manufacturing and food sectors and they had tried to ascertain the barriers experienced by employers in recruiting staff.

Mike George explained that there seemed to be a lack of opportunities at the top end of the retail sector. The Chair explained that young people were not being trained just for jobs in West Norfolk but that they may move further afield to Norwich or Cambridge for example. The key issue would be to change the perception of the retail sector.

Paul Kunes explained that some businesses did not use Job Centre Plus to advertise vacancies. Gill Daniels explained that Job Centre Plus did not appear to handle many retail vacancies,

	<p>unless a major new employer came to the town.</p> <p>Discussions took place around the skills required for a career in retail and how these skills needed to be valued and were good skills to have. The type of skills required to work in a shop were different to those required in a supermarket for example. It would be important for both schools and the retail sector to promote the opportunities available within the sector.</p> <p>It was AGREED that:</p> <p>1) The report to be circulated to participating retailers</p> <p>2) Retailers to be reminded of the Retail College of Vocational Excellence</p> <p>3) A retail display to be put forward as a suggestion for the next Opportunities West Norfolk event.</p>	<p>GD</p> <p>GD</p> <p>GD</p>
	<p>Budget Position</p> <p>This item was taken after item 7.</p> <p>A detailed budget was circulated. There was a balance of £127,227 brought forward from the Skills Agenda. There were funds of £23,000 from the Norfolk Learning Partnership, which was to be drawn down in three stages, (of which two had been received). There was also a sum of £27,000 from the Learning Partnership. This gave total funds of £177,227.</p> <p>Mike George questioned the ongoing commitments from the Borough Council, County Council and the College of £3,750 each per annum. Mike noted that the Borough Council had made their commitment of £3,750 for 2006/07 and had considered this to be the final year a contribution would be due from the Borough Council. Andy Hodgson noted that a report could be sent to the Learning and Skills Council in March 2007, which may prompt the early release of funding.</p> <p>It was AGREED that:</p> <p>1)The College, Borough Council and County Council contribute £3,750 each towards the Learning and Skills Group for 2007/08</p> <p>2) The College to arrange to invoice the Borough Council and County Council as soon as possible after 1st April 2007.</p>	<p>MG/PS/BE</p> <p>PS</p>
	<p>Project Proposals – Raising Aspirations</p> <p>The Chair introduced this item by explaining this had taken place</p>	

	<p>in the context of the three schools programme. The Group had agreed to fund this review. Resources had been frozen.</p> <p>Sue Jorgenson Moore circulated a report and explained that for this project a steering group had been established with representatives from the three schools along with Connexions, Rick Martin, Peter Bridgham and Paul Bland. This project would focus on year 8 girls as this group could often be neglected. Emphasis in the past had often been on boys, but girls were often as disaffected, just more passive in their disaffection. It was noted that disaffection appeared to be starting earlier. The project proposed to produce a magazine which would be an enjoyable experience to the target group.</p> <p>The three schools had already identified the group of year 8 girls they expected to join the programme. It was suggested that Gill Birch be approached to complete the focus work. Sue explained the main cost would be that of the facilitator and it would be unreasonable to expect the schools to pick up the costs. In response to a question from the Chair regarding employment of the facilitator, Sue sought the group's thoughts on this. Each school had identified teachers from departments that would be able to assist with the project. David Dixon expressed concern that if the facilitator was based in one school, this school would receive more of their time. Sue explained that one of the schools would need to employ the facilitator but that she would line manage them to ensure a fair distribution of resources.</p> <p>Discussions took place around the type of magazine that was required and whether printing costs could be met or local businesses approached to complete the work at no charge. It was recognised that it was important to ascertain the type of magazine in relation to the target audience. The Chair explained that the budget for this project was £40,000, but the project request was for £36,300. It was felt the extra budget should remain in case of unforeseen costs. More detailed costings would be required, particularly with regard to printing costs.</p> <p>It was AGREED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The project proposal be supported subject to more detailed costings 2) A budget allocation of £40,000 be earmarked for this proposal. 	
	<p><u>Project Proposals / Recommendations to the Committee</u></p> <p>Gill Daniels introduced this item and expressed her thanks to those who had responded to her request for information. Gill noted that both projects were good value and would like to support both with the proviso that the Age Concern project</p>	

	<p>worked in conjunction with the Adult Education / Library service project. Age Concern were requesting transport costs only.</p> <p>The Chair expressed concern that the projects were so similar and did not appear to have communicated with each other. Beverley Evans expressed her apologies for not being aware of the Adult Education project. Mike George expressed concern over the added value of the Age Concern project.</p> <p>It was AGREED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Adult Education to look at addressing the issues of similarity between the two projects 2) Consideration to be given to incorporating all libraries in West Norfolk into the project. 3) Projects received to be assessed and circulated to the rest of the group. 	<p>BE</p> <p>GD/PS</p> <p>GD/PS</p>
	<p><u>Investing In Communities – A Briefing</u></p> <p>The Chair had attended the Partnership Annual Forum on 7th December 2006 and had spoken to Vince Muspratt from Investing in Communities (IIC). The Chair circulated an IIC briefing paper. There were three themes for Norfolk, these were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills • Employment • Enterprise <p>It was important to give consideration as to how best to use resources and whether it would be possible to obtain extra funding from IIC.</p> <p>Andy Hodgson explained she had submitted a four year strategic plan which had been well received by IIC. The outcome would be known in March 2007. IIC were keen on innovative projects, so it may be possible to obtain funding for the early stages of a project and then attempt to lever in funding from elsewhere.</p> <p>Mike George explained that IIC funding was a commissioning process and not a bidding round. Mike, Andy Hodgson and Martin Frost all sat on the IIC Board and so they could make collective representations on behalf of the Borough.</p> <p>Vicky Etheridge joined the meeting at 3.45pm, and was introduced to the group by Martin Slater. Vicky explained her role as Neighbourhood Manager and highlighted the five wards her work would concentrate in. There would be an overlap with the work of the Learning and Skills Group.</p>	

	<p>The Chair highlighted the need for all members of the group to think of innovative projects in order that a bid may be made to IIC. It was noted that the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) often requested project ideas late in the year so it may prove helpful to think of projects at this stage. The group could make suggestions to the IIC Board for projects in the Borough. The Partnership Data Observatory (DAWN) could be used to provide evidence of need in order that efforts could be targeted.</p> <p>It was AGREED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) All members of the group to give consideration to some innovative projects in order that a bid can be made to IIC 2) IIC bids to be put on the agenda for the next meeting 3) Details of progress to date to be circulated to the group 4) Data regarding those not in education or training (NEET) to be assimilated from DAWN. 	<p>ALL</p> <p>RM(SD)</p> <p>MG</p> <p>MS</p>
	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>Martin Slater explained that the West Norfolk Partnership were able to provide administrative support to the skills and Learning Group.</p> <p>Gill Daniels questioned whether the membership of the group should be revisited in light of the fact the voluntary sector were not represented.</p> <p>It was AGREED that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) All future agendas would be sent via the West Norfolk Partnership secretariat 2) Membership of the Skills and Learning Group be an agenda item at the next meeting. 	<p>RM (SD)</p> <p>RM (SD)</p>
	<p><u>Date of next meeting</u></p> <p>AGREED: The next meeting would be held on 26th February 2007 at 2.00pm in the Boardroom, Principals Suite, at the College of West Anglia.</p>	

The Meeting closed at 4.38pm