

Minutes

Date	15 June 2011
Subject	<i>the information authority</i> board
Location	Grand Connaught Rooms, 61-65 Great Queen Street, London WC2B 5DA
Time	10.00am to 1.00pm
Publication intent	PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Present Board members and alternates:
Jon Collis (ALP); Ruth Curry (BIS); Sue Davies (DfE) (alternate); Mario Ferelli (HEFCE); Julian Gravatt (AoC); Geoff Hall (Chairman); Caroline Kempner (YPLA); Caroline Miller (Newcastle City Learning); Rob Pike (Ofsted); Ian Pryce (Bedford College); Keith Smith (Skills Funding Agency); Robert Spano (GoSkills)

In attendance: Pete Ashton (*the information authority*); Anne Fessi (*the information authority*); John Perks (*the information authority*); Richard Cookson (*the information authority*); Selvy Kasparis (*the information authority*); Ian Thomson (BIS)

Others: Gordon Aitken (RCU Limited)

Apologies Apologies were received from:
Emma Cochrane (Ofqual); Jude Hillary (DfE); David Pye (LGA)

Item 1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 Geoff Hall welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed those who had sent their apologies.

Item 2. Minutes of the last board meeting and action log

- 2.1 The board approved the minutes of the 02 March 2011 meeting.
- 2.2 John Perks provided updates on the action log, which was amended accordingly.

Item 3. Matters arising

- 3.1 There were no matters arising.

Item 4. AoC presentation on MiDES

- 4.1 Julian Gravatt introduced the project and confirmed that there was no additional data collection, that contribution was voluntary and that MiDES was open to AoC members. Julian then introduced Gordon Aitken from RCU who proceeded to present details of the MiDES benchmarking system. This included:
 - a. A summary of the role of RCU, which was set up by colleges as a shared service and which received funds from BIS
 - b. How colleges were using the system, i.e. some were providing this information to Ofsted as part of self-assessment, but it was not used as an inspection tool. Some colleges were also providing these reports to their governors
 - c. The number of colleges that were currently registered on the project (300), of which 277 have provided ILR uploads
- 4.2 The board made the following observations:
 - a. BIS stated that the project had been welcomed
 - b. Concern was expressed that the Data Service's role as a single source of FE learner data was being duplicated. It was noted, however, that although the Data Service would have the potential to undertake a similar role, it did not currently have the resources
 - c. Concern was expressed that this collection was not currently being extended to providers that are not colleges
 - d. Ofsted stated that they would not be using this information to influence their judgement, but that it could be used as evidence for evaluating the robustness of college self-assessment reports
 - e. Clarification was sought on whether the reports included information on value added and distance travelled, prior learning and achievements
 - f. There was discussion around online enrolment systems and the savings that could be provided
 - g. It was requested that the funding simplification agenda should take account of level of data collected
- 4.3 The board **received** the presentation.

Item 5. Dealing with late changes to the ILR data collection essential for funding in 2012/13

- 5.1 Pete Ashton presented the report and stated that although the change request process for 2012/13 was currently underway, the complexities of changes to funding would result in late changes to the ILR being requested. The purpose of the item was to obtain board agreement to consider these late requests if they met the outlined criteria and to agree the proposed timetable for doing so.
- 5.2 In summary, it was agreed that the only change requests that would be considered would be those that were essential for implementing funding or its monitoring and that would only require minor changes to the ILR.
- 5.3 The report also proposed that the last date for receiving these late changes would be 16 November.
- 5.4 Board members made the following observations:
 - a. Concern was expressed about the level of change that may be necessary to take account of the simplification agenda and the funding formula change. Members were assured that agencies were already discussing the emerging proposals with the secretariat. It was noted, however, that the annual policy review with ministers may result in unplanned changes

- b. BIS expressed concern that the deadline of 16 November for submitting changes did not align with plans to make announcements at the AoC conference, which would conclude on 17 November. It was agreed that the deadline should be 18 November
 - c. There was also concern that proposed changes may not meet the 'minor change' criterion of not requiring an additional field. Board members agreed that this criterion could not be relaxed due to the level of work necessary to meet ILR development requirements and to provide adequate notice to software suppliers
 - d. DfE also raised a concern that their proposed late change around 'learner premium' may not meet the timetable deadline as they would be consulting with the sector from July to October
 - e. The board did not want to meet on 7 December as well as 21 December so it was agreed that a single board meeting would be held on 21 December to progress these changes and deal with other business.
- 5.5 Board members **agreed** that late changes that met the above criteria would be considered at the board meeting on 21 December. Board members also **agreed** the proposed timetable for 2012/13 late changes (subject to extending the deadline for receiving late changes to 18 November).

Action 06/11-01: The secretariat to incorporate the process for late changes to the 2012/13 ILR as agreed above.

Item 6. Review of instruments of board governance

- 6.1 Anne Fessi presented the report and stated that there was currently no formal policy or process for the recruitment, tenure review and constituency review of the board and outlined the benefits of having such a policy/process. The board was asked to review the document, make comments or suggest changes, agree any amendments to the content and confirm that it was content for the chairman to submit it to BIS for further consideration.
- 6.2 The board made the following observations:
- a. Certain FE sector groups were not on the board, but the current composition represented those groups' interests on the board
 - b. Addition of other sector agencies could make the board too large to be effective
 - c. May be useful to have specialists from certain organisations to assist the board in making decisions as 'consultees'
 - d. On the use of alternates it was suggested that these should be limited to one alternate who is empowered to make decisions to ensure that there would be a degree of effective continuity within the board. Too many alternates dilute the power of the organisation they represent and make the board ineffective
 - e. Considered the inclusion of college principal or director of finance, academy representation and independent specialist providers
 - f. Considered naming individuals rather than organisations to make the board more accountable and also for the benefit of members who represent more than one organisation
 - g. Considered inviting LSIS on to the board since they are now responsible for workforce data.
- 6.3 The board **agreed** the policy in Appendix A subject to the following changes:
- a. Addition of section on enlisting the aid of specialists from FE sector organisations when the board needs information on which to make decisions
 - b. Addition of section on using one named alternate to attend meetings

- c. Amend paragraph 1 of the recruitment section to change the word 'reforming'
- d. Recommendation to invite LSIS as a board member.

Action 06/11-02: Anne Fessi to amend the document as discussed and share with chairman for further development with the sponsoring department.

Action 06/11-03: Anne Fessi to disseminate the amended version of the policy to board members.

- 6.4 Anne Fessi presented a report outlining proposed amendments to the protocol and terms or reference of the board and informed the board that both documents were amended slightly in June 2009 to take account of Machinery of Government changes. The proposed changes took account of the newer and different political paradigm and that the authority was now embedded within the further education sector. The board was asked to review both documents, make comments or suggest changes, agree the amended content and confirm that it was content for the chairman to submit them to BIS for further consideration.
- 6.5 Board members made the following observations on the proposed protocol:
 - a. Wished to retain the reference to the role of the board as a 'gatekeeper' for the further education sector
 - b. Considered the possibility of defining the 'further education system' and agreed that would include further education and skills
- 6.6 Board members made the following observations on the proposed terms of reference:
 - a. Agreed that the reference to the Foster report would be removed as it has already been embedded
 - b. Agreed that one of its objectives should include improving the efficiency and cost effectiveness for the sector
 - c. Considered its overarching goal for directing the overall strategy for data collection and arrangements and determining data definitions and standards and preferred the original wording
 - d. Agreed that the section about operating board meetings should be within the proposed policy and process for recruitment and tenure review and not the terms of reference
 - e. Suggested identification of the nominated standing representative of the organisations on the board
- 6.7 The board **agreed** the proposed protocol (appendix A) subject to the changes proposed above.
- 6.8 The board **agreed** the proposed terms of reference (appendix B) subject to the changes proposed above.

Action 06/11-04: Anne Fessi to amend the documents as agreed and share with the chairman to take forward with BIS.

Action 06/11-05: Anne Fessi to disseminate amended versions of both documents to board members.

Item 7. Update on communications targets – 2010/11

- 7.1 Anne Fessi presented the report and informed the board that its purpose was to provide a brief summary of communications activities and to report progress against development areas for the period from December 2010 to June 2011 for the board to note.

- 7.2 The board made the following observations:
- a. The communications activities had resulted in accurate, valid and timely ILRs in most instances
 - b. Communications around duplicate learners had been helpful
 - c. Members noted that there could be more active reporting and celebration of *the information authority's* successes. Current communications include the annual report, conferences and website updates. Meetings with ministers would also ensure the enhancement of *the information authority's* role
 - d. Board members noted that the general view is that data is perceived to be problematic in the sector and, therefore, it is crucial that successes are recognised and embedded
 - e. Members confirmed that the ministers are very interested in data and request data such as Statistical First Releases often
 - f. The board considered means of imaginative reporting to highlight the successes of *the information authority*.

7.3 The board **noted** the report.

Action 06/11-06: Anne Fessi to enhance means of celebrating successes and consider more imaginative means of reporting successes.

Item 8. Secretariat report

- 8.1 John Perks presented the secretariat report and highlighted the following items:
- a. The secretariat requested the board's approval for its workplan and performance criteria and confirmed that the YPLA's previous comment had been incorporated
 - b. The inclusion of an update on the strategic replatforming project for the board as requested at its last meeting
 - c. The report also outlined the actions taken with regard to the ILR returns timetable, single ILR in XML, and legal position of privately-funded provision
 - d. Asked the board to take note of the simplification pilot project
 - e. Ask the board to note the performance 'dashboard' for the secretariat.
- 8.2 The board made the following observations:
- a. ASL providers were unclear about their data returns dates and had been informed that these should be monthly. The secretariat confirmed that this would be addressed by the production of a provider type returns timetable, which would contain 'tailored' information
 - b. Suggested that communications were needed to inform the sector that the burden was not in the XML part of the single ILR, rather on the associated business processes
 - c. Noted that the legal argument for privately-funded provision is not compelling
 - d. Expressed their concern that they were not fully informed of the NES large employers' simplification project. It was stressed that the project is currently a pilot and therefore the data requirements had not been defined. It was agreed that the pilot would need to go ahead, but the chair requested a report on progress at the next meeting
- Appendix A: Progress report
- e. With marketing budget reduced, there was a need to maintain visibility by working with other event organisers

- f. Members suggested adding college visits to these reports as they increase visibility of *the information authority*

Appendix B: Secretariat Workplan

- g. Members discussed whether workstream 6 should be placed higher - perhaps number 3
- h. Bullet point number 3 on Business as Usual activities: Secretariat support/support for systems across the sector (on page 10) should read 'impartial' rather than 'neutral'

Appendix C: Strategic replatforming and LARA status update May 2011

- i. Board members noted the replatforming project slippage
- j. Board members noted that the LIS reports have been delayed and the funding reports will only be available in version 2

Appendix D: Dashboard

- k. Board members noted that the amber status on the returns timetable is no longer applicable
 - l. Board members noted the staff vacancy within the secretariat.
- 8.3 The board **noted** the secretariat report and **agreed** the workplan and performance criteria for the secretariat.

Action 06/11-07: Pete Ashton to liaise with Data Service to ensure appropriate advice is given to ASL providers on the ILR timetable.

Action 06/11-08: Anne Fessi to amend the workplan (Appendix B) as proposed above.

Action 06/11-09: John Perks to present a full report on the simplification project at the next meeting.

Item 9. Date of next meeting

- 9.1 The next meeting of the board will take place on Wednesday 28 September 2011, with further details to follow.
- 9.2 The proposed agenda items include information security, consideration of the suitability of quarterly submissions to BIS (like HEFCE) and of a complaints procedure for providers.

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Meeting chair

Geoff Hall

Minute taker

Selvy Kasparis

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