Welcome, introductions and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were made and the Chair welcomed Kathryn Podmore, Principal of Birkenhead 6th Form College.

Apologies were noted as those recorded above.

Chair’s announcements

The Chair informed the Board that he had met with representatives from HEFCE the previous day and part of the discussion centred on LLN, developments in the North West and the possibility of a
further LLN in Lancashire. The Board was asked to note that the Chair of the Executive had been attending meetings with interested parties in Lancashire and the Board would be kept informed of progress.

The Chair informed the Board that Skelmersdale and Ormskirk College was in continuing merger negotiations with an FE college from the North East of England.

003/Bd/LLN/07 Minutes of the GM & WL LLN Board Meeting held on 12 October 2006

It was agreed that the minutes be accepted as a true record of the meeting.

004/Bd/LLN/07 Matters arising

031/Bd/LLN/06 Curriculum Development
The Project Manager informed the Board that programmes were under development in Health, Financial Services and Creative Arts.

035/Bd/LLN/06 Memorandum of Association
The Chair of the Executive informed the Board that the MoA had been updated as agreed at the Board’s meeting in October 2006 and was included in the Annual Review (Appendix 1).

005/Bd/LLN/07 12 Month Report to HEFCE

First Year Review

The Project Manager introduced the First Year Review to the Board and noted six key highlights of the past twelve months.

- Full engagement by partners in key developments which are at the heart of the Government and funder’s agendas: widening participation, employer engagement and higher level skills
- The development of new Foundation Degrees and Year 0 provision providing new progression opportunities in health and social care
- ASN Targets likely to be met through successful recruitment to programmes in seven partner institutions and applications to in year bridging and CPD modules
- Significant employer and sector skills engagement
- Strengthening of Strategic links with key partners inter alia, Aimhigher, Connexions and establishment of links with the Higher level skills pathfinder project
- Establishing FE Colleges as SOLSTICE hubs and the appointment of SOLSTICE Associate Fellows
- Pilot Progression Agreements for Level 3 learners being tested in colleges which have capacity to underpin specialised
diplomas.

The Board welcomed these developments and noted the importance of meeting ASN targets.

The Chair informed the Board that Edge Hill University (EHU) anticipated it would exceed its HEFCE funded places and if there were a short fall on the LLN appropriate programmes from all partners, it may be possible that some of the University’s numbers could be set against the LLN ASNs. It was noted by the Chair that, in any case, these ASNs would not be transferred to EHU in perpetuity.

The Project Manager noted that in-year short courses and CPD modules were a way forward. He noted that an in-year recruitment leaflet for modular programmes had been produced. This leaflet would continue to be updated and distributed.

The Project Manager asked the Board to note the key areas for development for the next twelve months.

- External evaluation to assess areas of strength which will underpin proposals for additional funding to further develop support to colleges.
- Rolling out good practice in learning and teaching through SOLSTICE fellows and hubs.
- Identifying the unique learner profiles of the LLN constituencies and their support needs, in particular IAG.
- Developing new curriculum opportunities and progression routes in creative industries, sport and leisure and financial services.
- Continued and strategic engagement with new agendas including, inter alia, 14-19 specialised Diplomas, Higher Level Skills Pathfinder and employer engagement as identified in the Leitch Report.
- Ensuring the sustainability and embedding of the work of the project.
- Meeting ASN targets through new and innovative programmes.

The Chair asked the Board to note that to fully establish the LLN within three years of funding was too short a timescale and he had discussed sustainability with HEFCE.

The Board was asked to note that the recently published Leitch Report, amongst others, was timely and could be a catalyst to build on progress within the LLN.

Risk Analysis

The Chair of the Executive introduced the Risk Analysis, included
within the Review, and asked the Board to note that it had been updated since the six month report in July 2006 and drew attention to the potential impact from:

- the Leitch Report
- fees
- mitigating risks and ensuring strong quality
- supporting curriculum developments within FECs.

It was agreed that the brand was seen as positive and could be developed further.

**Progression Agreements**

Copies of the Progression Agreements (PAs) were at Appendix 5 of the First Year Review.

The Project Manager informed the Board that the LLN was prioritising PAs. He noted that the PAs had an important role to play in awareness raising for vocational learners and their parents. The PAs would be available for vocational learners as they begin on Level 3 programmes and eventually for 14 year olds taking 14-19 Diplomas.

The Project Manager noted that the PAs would be trialled with vocational learners in FECs and with parents.

The Project Manager was thanked for a well written report. It was agreed that working together collaboratively for learners was the way forward.

The Board was asked to note that some minor amendments including the word ‘Wirral’ after Birkenhead Sixth Form College on page 8 be removed to avoid confusion.

**Action: Gary Mallon**

The Board agreed that the First Year Review be forwarded to HEFCE when the amends had been completed.

**006/Bd/LLN/07  A Proposal for Evaluation of the LLN**

The Chair asked the Board to note the contents of the paper on evaluation and the two letters received from HEFCE. The Chair informed the Board that evaluation was a requirement by HEFCE.

The Chair of the Executive Group informed the Board that she and the Project Manager had met with Anne Merry, University of Liverpool, to discuss a way forward. The discussion focused on the purpose, scope and anticipated audiences for an evaluation.
Learner Constituencies
Progression Agreements
Governance and Management
Employer engagement
Potential research
Sustainability

The Chair of the Executive Group informed the Board that there had been an allocation of £25,000 in the budget for evaluation. The Board was asked to consider the following options.

1. Commission an external evaluation for completion in June 2007 which would support a bid for additional funding.
2. Commission an interim evaluation in 2007 to be completed in the final year of the project. The funding to be phased over two years.

After discussion it was agreed that option 2 outlined above was clearly the best way forward. It was noted that the ‘learner voice’ in the evaluation was important and agreed that the Executive would take this forward.

**Action: Gary Mallon/Rhiannon Evans**

**007/Bd/LLN/07 Progress Report from the Project Manager**

The Project Manager reported to the Board that the main progress points were outlined in the Annual Review and asked the Board to note the significant progress made since the Six Month Report to HEFCE in July 2006.

The Project Manager informed the Board that it was planned to hold a shared learning experience at Edge Hill University for FD students in April 2007.

The Board was asked to note that Riverside College, Halton, was proposing to launch their SOLSTICE Hub in March 2007. The Board and Executive members and other LLN stakeholders would be invited to this event.

**008/Bd/LLN/07 GM & WL LLN Inaugural Annual Seminar**

The Project Manager informed the Board that the launch of the GM & WL LLN held on 2 November 2006 had been well attended and a success. He extended his thanks to the speakers at the event: Avis Mulhern; Kieran Gordon; Stan Pochron, Catherine Jones and Rhiannon Evans.

The Project Manager informed the meeting that the proposed date
for the Inaugural Annual Seminar would be March 2007. The Project manager introduced the draft programme for the event and this was discussed. It was agreed that a small planning group would be convened and the following points were agreed.

- Kevin Whitston, Head of Widening Participation at HEFCE, would be the keynote speaker.
- Students would be involved on the day.
- Tutors involved in the FDs and Year 0 should be included in the target group of attendees.
- This would be an opportunity to bring LLN partners, employers, schools, stakeholders and students together.

Subsequent to the meeting the date for the Inaugural Annual Seminar was confirmed as Wednesday 21 March 2007 and would be held at Edge Hill University, Ormskirk.

009/Bd/LLN/07 Minutes from the GM & WL LLN Executive Meetings

The Board received the minutes of the meetings held on 2 November and 12 December 2006 for information.

010/Bd/LLN/07 AOB

011/Bd/LLN/07 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting of the Board will be held at 2.30pm on 21 June 2007 in the Oak Room at the Connexions’ Wavertree Training Centre.