

Sustainable Futures Portfolio Group Meeting

Tuesday 9 February 2010

Attendees

Di Dale	Wiltshire College
Matt Dean	AoC
David Drury	South Nottinghamshire College
Esin Esat	Bedford College
Paul Hafren	Warrington Collegiate
Elizabeth Jones	EAUC
Peter Jones	Bromley College
Mary Kelly	LSC
Elaine McMahon	Hull College (Chair)
Graham Morley	South Staffordshire College
Roy Morgan-Wood	Leicester College
Martin Pritchett	AoC
Peter Robinson	Worcester College of Technology
Rachel Roost	AoCSW
Helen Taylor	AoC
Jim Whittingham	Hull College

'Meeting the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills' sustainability expectations in the current economic climate'

Presentation on Carbon Reduction Commitment – Andy Johnston, Local Government Information Unit

Andy Johnston gave a clear and straightforward explanation of the cap and trade and league table aspects of the Carbon Reduction Commitment, outlining approaches to strategy for organisations covered by the scheme, including examples of public body consortia which have been formed to pilot carbon trading in particular.

Andy made the point that, while only a few of the larger colleges are currently within the scope of the CRC scheme, it is likely that the qualifying threshold will be reduced over the next few years. All colleges should expect to be included in the scheme in the longer term.

Carbon Trading is a key part of the scheme. Analysis of the public sector pilots suggests that institutions were likely to adopt different trading strategies depending on perceived risk. Institutions will need to buy and sell carbon on the "open market". One of the issues is estimating the amount of carbon which an institution needs. Some of the public body consortia have agreed on a co-operative approach to carbon purchase and internal pricing which reduces this risk to individual members.

This will become more important because the price of the carbon traded within the CRC is planned to increase over time.

It is intended that this means that carbon and the price of carbon should become increasingly important in institutional decision making. Andy summarised a simple model which is sensitive to the price of carbon, which institutions can use to identify “cost effective” carbon reduction projects.

The group raised concerns about the advantages private sector bodies would have in the scheme, particularly in the league tables and the levels of fines that could then be levied. There was concern, for example, about the ability of colleges to match the private sector in terms of capital investment to reduce carbon emissions and concern that this might result in colleges (and other public sector bodies) tending towards the bottom of the CRC league table with the attendant risk of a transfer of cash from the public to the private sector.

There was some question over the current policy from the DCSF to install energy display monitors in all schools that would not be CRC compliant, implying a lack of connect between the Department for Energy and Climate Change and the sponsoring departments for Colleges.

Generally the group was uneasy about the implications of the scheme, the level of bureaucracy and data collection this would involve as well as the financial burdens.

Action: Helen Taylor to send copies of the presentation to all members of the group

Presentation from Nick Rousseau, Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, FE Policy Team

Nick Rousseau gave an overview of BIS thinking in terms of carbon reduction and meeting Government commitments outlined in the Climate Change Act, including the possibility of financial penalties should BIS fail to meet its targets.

Nick summarised current projections of the performance of the FE sector against the UK's legally binding commitment to reduce carbon emissions. The leading indicator of carbon emission within the sector appears to be GLHs. Demographics, coupled with funding changes and the investment to date in carbon efficient new builds suggest that the sector - as a whole - will achieve around a 30% reduction in carbon by 2020 through these factors alone.

He was keen for College feedback on what could be done by the Department to support Colleges in meeting some challenging targets, particularly in light of the capital issues.

Action: Helen Taylor to send copies of the presentation to all members of the group

Discussion of BIS Carbon Reduction Targets and skills strategy

Matt Dean raised the issue of the administrative burden on Colleges to collect and manage the data needed to calculate carbon outputs and savings. He questioned the

use of Guided Learner Hours and pointed out that many Colleges operated virtual GLHs and that funding was intrinsically linked to GLH, so there would be no incentive to reduce these.

Graham Morley asked about the use of Emandate and the rationalisation of their data collection.

Nick Rousseau said that they were consulting on the future of Emandate and looking to streamline the data collection and ensure that they only collected what was useful and necessary.

There were concerns raised that this was another bureaucratic burden on top of CRC and it was suggested that BIS officials and Colleges meet with DECC to coordinate.

Peter Jones was worried that the debate had simply become one about carbon reduction, which ignored other aspects of sustainability. He said that things like the Green Declaration were quite positive and engaging whereas CRC seemed a negative and punitive scheme. It was important to explain to people and make them understand the broader aspects of the agenda and engage positively.

Paul Hafren suggested that there were similarities with the Equality and Diversity agenda, which had begun in a more voluntary way, but become more target driven and hard-edged, though positive aspects still remained.

Nick Rousseau suggested that there needed to be a College briefing for Principals and those whose responsibility this would be that also included business opportunities.

The discussion moved on to sources of funding available to Colleges to help make their estates more sustainable. It was noted that the Salix loan fund had now run out.

Roy Morgan-Wood talked about the funds and assistance available from the Carbon Trust. Esin Esat talked about projects at Bedford College and the group agreed that Colleges should be seen as 'public assets' and this idea should be developed. There were also questions about what funding was available in the regions, from SSCs and RDAs?

'How to achieve Excellence in Leadership and Management under the new sustainable development inspection requirements'

Elaine McMahon told the group that of the few Colleges that had undergone inspection since the requirement had been introduced, none had experienced any significant focus on sustainability in their inspection. Roy Morgan-Wood agreed, having read through several recent reports, that sustainability did not feature highly if at all.

The requirement is expected to be fully in effect by September 2010 and Ofsted are currently reviewing the requirement. It is thought that it will have a community aspect to it.

Peter Robinson pointed out that some Colleges had always had a focus on this and so it had been a feature of previous inspections.

Roy Morgan-Wood said that Leicester College had been involved in a pilot inspection and suggested that this could be the driver for behaviour change that would link in with everything else; CRC and BIS targets.

The group suggested that case studies would be useful as would a tool, though this would need to be very precise.

It was also suggested that this might be something for LSIS rather than the portfolio group and that the group's role was to influence the agenda, keep to the headlines and feedback to Ofsted and BIS.

Discussion of possible group projects

Elaine McMahon suggested three themes for the group to work on: Partnership; Capital and Funding

It was suggested that the group consider partnership working on capital and perhaps commission a review on partnership working.

Elizabeth Jones suggested that EAUC may be able to help in producing case studies.

Graham Morley said that LSIS had produced a useful document on a review of LSC Strategy in this area and the HEFCE Sustainability Strategy was also mentioned.

Other projects included a review of funding sources available and a briefing paper for Nick Rousseau that would outline;

Questions for BIS to take to DECC

What Colleges would need assistance with to meet targets/CRC

Issues around Public/Private sector

An outline of what requirements are expected of Colleges and when.

Actions: Helen Taylor to send a copy of the LSIS and HEFCE documents to the group

Group to agree to one or more of the below outputs.

Possible Outputs:

- Case Studies on embedding Sustainability with a view to meeting Ofsted and CSR requirements. EAUC may be able to assist on this.

- Review of Funding Sources and Funding Options still available to Colleges to help achieve sustainability in order to inform a briefing note to Principals and to inform a discussion with BIS about measures which BIS should take to assist Colleges to meet their individual carbon reduction commitments.
- Lobbying Paper to BIS incorporating the above points.

Question for group members:

Do you think the group should focus on more than one output? Please place in order of preference