

# minutes



Meeting SKILLS: NOW AND THE FUTURE SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 12 May 2008 (commencing at 2.00 pm)

## Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

## COUNCILLORS

John Knight (Chair)  
Joe Lonergan (Vice-Chair)

	Peter Barnes		Lynn Sykes
A	Jen Cole		Kevan Wakefield
A	Jim Creamer	A	Brian Wombwell
A	Philip Owen		

## MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 14 April 2008, having been circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

## REPRESENTATION FROM COMPANIES: JOHN LEWIS PLC

Sue Workman, Personnel Manager at the Nottingham branch of John Lewis told the Select Committee that her branch employed around 800 people, with a 17% turnover per year (excluding Christmas seasonal staff). Recruitment was usually of part-time or specialist staff. The company's focus during recruitment was on people's social and behavioural skills, with the company taking the view that it could more easily develop technical skills while people were in post.

Ms Workman answered questions from the committee. She said that John Lewis was looking for the same basic skills whatever the level of post being recruited to. She said some 14-15 year olds had too high expectations of work. John Lewis operated a transparent structure, so people could see how their careers might develop. The company assessed employees' skills through an Assessment of Capability Programme. Posts might be filled by internal or external recruitment. John Lewis was seen as company that was good to work for.

Boots had also been invited to attend the meeting, but had declined.

## **WORK PROGRAMME**

Members noted the programme for the remaining meetings of the Select Committee.

### **CBI Annual Skills Survey 2008**

Geoff George, Economic Regeneration Manager, Communities Department, presented a summary of the recently published CBI Annual Skills Survey. Findings included 53% of employers reporting a lack of confidence in their ability to find enough people with the right basic skills, IT skills being seen as weak, difficulty in finding people qualified in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Mr George observed that companies had their own responsibilities for developing their staff, but needed tools and resources to do this.

Councillor Wombwell suggested there was a need to forecast the skills needed locally in ten years time, to give people leaving school or university an idea of the sort of jobs which might be available. Councillor Wakefield observed that his division included young people with both high and low expectations, and was interested to see what effect the new Samworth Academy would have.

Councillor Lonergan saw the lack of basic skills as being a matter for schools, yet schools were continually being asked to widen the curriculum. He believed that the economy depended on people who had skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. There was a need to encourage young people to study these subjects and to offer vocational subjects at school. He believed that the committee could contribute by making recommendations in relation to further education, the Learning and Skills Council and Job Centre Plus.

There was discussion about the local universities' links with China and eastern Europe. Mr George pointed out that Building Schools for the Future was about changing aspirations as well as buildings. He said that the FE colleges were the main deliverers of support to business, and referred to the proposed merger of FE colleges in Nottingham. He queried the implications for West Notts and North Notts FE Colleges.

The meeting closed at 3.05 pm.

## **CHAIR**

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