Introduction

West Lothian College Board welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill. The college has also contributed to a sector paper drafted by College’s Scotland.

This paper provides both comments on the content of the Bill and, by this means, an update on the Board’s comments submitted in February 2012 in response to the review of Further Education Governance in Scotland undertaken by Professor Griggs.

The Board would like to acknowledge the high standard of governance which currently exists within the college sector and which has been noted in previous reviews undertaken by the Scottish Government and Audit Scotland.

This paper focuses specifically on college regionalisation, data sharing and the role of the Scottish Funding Council in reviews of FE and HE funded education.

College Regionalisation

West Lothian College Board is pleased that the Scottish Government approved the designation of West Lothian as a single-college region. The Board is not complacent about the challenges which lie ahead but it is confident that the College has both the skills and expertise in its Board Members and executive management as well as strong partnerships with its community to enable it to address the challenges and opportunities of the Regional Outcome Agreement.

This paper focuses on the issues for a single-college region. However, the Board notes the differences for multi college regions and the challenges which may be presented by these.

The Board would be keen that no matter what Regional structures are in place a united college sector approach to initiatives or issues is achieved.

Board Membership

The Board notes the Government’s proposals for membership of a single-college regional board, with a maximum membership of 18. It is pleased that the new regional board may appoint the Principal as a member, and that there will be both teaching and support staff members, and two student members.
The Board also welcomes the more flexible arrangements provided in the Bill for different lengths of service with a board and the provision of an extension of up to a further four years.

In February 2012, the Board expressed the very strong view it had that the positions of Chair and Board Members should continue to be non-remunerated. The Board is still of the view that the voluntary membership of West Lothian College Board has resulted in collective responsibility, independence of mindset, selfless public behaviours, credibility with the wider community and natural participants with a philanthropic and generous spirit. We would reiterate that view.

The Board is pleased, that Board Members other than the Chair can be appointed by the Board, with the approval of the Chair and Scottish Ministers, without having to go through the formal Public Appointments process.

Stability in board membership over the next few years of change and challenge will also be crucial. The current membership of West Lothian College Board includes persons with extensive skills, knowledge and expertise in their specialist areas as well as substantial knowledge of the college and the West Lothian community. It is hoped that as many of these persons will be appointed to the new board as possible in order to maintain stability, provide succession planning, and to give the College and the region the best chance to develop for the future.

The Board notes the introduction of Ministerial powers to remove chairs and other members for reasons of failure in addition to mismanagement. The Board reiterates its view that it has no difficulty with being audited against a set of agreed outcomes,

**Data Sharing**

West Lothian College Board notes these new provisions and has no specific comments to make. The College already has a number of data sharing agreements in place but welcomes the opportunity the provisions create for involvement in a nation-wide monitoring and tracking of the 16-24 year old age group’s participation in education and training.

**Review of FE and HE Funded Education**

West Lothian Colleges Board notes the provisions set out in the Bill to allow the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to review the provision of fundable further and higher education with a view to ensuring that such education is being provided by post-16 education bodies in a coherent manner. We would assume this to be done within existing resources and that it would not further reduce funding to colleges.
Annual Accounts

We would recommend 31\textsuperscript{st} July as the year end for college accounts in line with current practice.

Board of Governors
West Lothian College