

Adult Community Learning as a Route to Employment

Cabinet

Date: 12th June 2013

Author: Cabinet Member for Children's Services
Board Director, Commissioning

Wards: All

Locality Affected: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report outlines the outcomes for Adult Community Learning in 2011/12, work to date in 2012/13 (September 2012 to August 2013) and recommends that Council approves the Adult Community learning Plan for Academic year 2013/14.
- 1.2 The report demonstrates how the priorities for Adult Community Learning have been reviewed to ensure funding is now targeted to contribute effectively to the Council's priorities in One Swindon: "We can all benefit from a growing economy"; the Corporate Strategy, "right skills, right jobs in the right place" and the Economic Strategy "a higher skilled and higher earning workforce". The resources for Adult Community Learning are now focusing on targeting residents who will benefit from a programme of learning as a route to employment. The report also outlines how we are maximising the benefits of a partnership approach to ensure the most effective use of resources across the area.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Endorse the Adult Community Learning Plan for the Academic Year 2013/14 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report and to recommend it for approval by Full Council on 18th July 2013;
- 2.2 Note and authorise the Board Director Commissioning to commission and arrange the delivery of the Adult Community Learning Programmes as detailed in the Adult Community Learning Plan for the Academic Year 2013/14;
- 2.3 Note the Adult Community Learning Performance for 2011/12;
- 2.4 Note the learning programmes being delivered in 2012/13 to meet the priorities agreed by the Council on 29th March 2012 (Council Minute 129, 2011/12 refers);
- 2.5 Note the update on funding, confirming that £466,283 will be available in 2013/14;
- 2.6 Note the national policy on minimum contract levels, which means that the Skills Funding Agency will continue to contract with Swindon Borough Council; and

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Sally Burnett, Direct Dial Telephone Number, 01793 463061.
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- 2.7 Support the principle of the development of a Community Learning Trust and endorse the actions being taken by the Board Director Commissioning to establish a Swindon Adult Community Learning Trust.

3. Detail

Introduction

- 3.1 The Council currently receives an annual grant from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) to deliver Adult Community Learning. The Adult Community Learning Plan outlines the priorities for the year and what it intends to achieve with the funding. The Plan is attached to this report as Appendix 1.
- 3.2 There has been some uncertainty over the future of funding for the Council, due to the proposed introduction of minimum contract levels. The report clarifies the position about funding and explains the implications of minimum contract levels.
- 3.3 The report also brings to Members' attention, a proposal to establish a partnership, the Adult Community Learning Trusts. In order to maximise the use of existing funding and to secure further sources of funding.

Adult Community Learning Plan 2013/14

- 3.4 The Adult Community learning Plan sets out Swindon Borough Council's plans for adult and family learning in Swindon for the period 2013/14. The community aspect refers to delivery within the communities to target potential learners who are less likely to access universal provision in, for example colleges.
- 3.5 The Analysis of Need, underpinning the plan is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.6 The plan includes the following features.

Priorities

- 3.7 Deliver a programme of learning, which clearly contributes to the Council's Economic Strategy and contributes to the corporate priority to enable residents to compete for jobs. The focus is on a higher skilled, higher earning population with the right skills for the right jobs and ensuring Swindon is a place of opportunity. The programmes of learning will support the development of skills that are most important to enable residents to compete for jobs including Literacy, Numeracy Digital skills and routes to specific vocational sectors.
- 3.8 Focus public funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate, including people on low incomes, low skills, furthest away from the labour market and young people.

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- 3.9 Widen participation in learning through locally delivered informal and accredited programmes, delivered in communities in a wide range of venues, focused on deprived areas.
- 3.10 Continue to increase the number of learners achieving successful outcomes and increase the numbers gaining an accreditation and/or progression to further learning and work.
- 3.11 Deliver a universal Adult Community Learning programme with access for all, focused on improving Health and Wellbeing. Develop a fees strategy to ensure fees are paid where learners are able to do so and subsidise learning for those who are not able to pay.
- 3.12 Ensure learners have access to high quality information, advice and guidance.
- 3.13 Develop a Curriculum Plan which gives priority to
 - Improving skills to level 1 and level 2 (level 1 is equivalent to 5 GCSE passes Grade D-G; level 2 is equivalent to 5 GCSE passes Grade A*-C).
 - Literacy, numeracy and digital skills.
 - Meeting the needs of those who are unemployed and who have been made redundant and increase the numbers of learners age 19-25.
 - Meeting the needs of vulnerable adults including those with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities and those with Mental Health issues
 - Supporting family learning, targeting families where adults need support to engage in learning with children

Leadership and management

- 3.14 Continue to improve the planning and commissioning of ACL including improved analysis of need, build capacity within providers to further improve the quality of teaching and learning, outcomes for learners and ensure value for money. Ensure we are on target to achieve an Ofsted outcome of Grade 2, as outlined in the Self-Assessment Review.
- 3.15 Develop a Curriculum Plan, outlining the courses that will be on offer to meet the priorities outlined above.
- 3.16 Work with partners to develop a 'Community Learning Trust' model with one coherent strategy and learning offer across the partnership and arrangements to maximise the use of resources available. The partnership includes colleges and voluntary sector who also receive SFA Adult Community Learning Funding, Swindon Borough Council, National Careers Service, Skills Funding Agency,

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Voluntary Action Swindon and Job Centre Plus. The partnership will report to the Skills and Employment Board. The Board is part of the Economy Change Programme and is overseen by a Board of members.

- 3.17 Build capacity in communities to enable them to deliver Adult Community Learning including increasing the number of volunteers.
- 3.18 Ensure the work of Learning Ambassadors contributes to the priorities and the impact of their work is effectively captured. Commission this aspect of delivery from 2013/14.

Adult Community Learning Performance for 2011/12

- 3.19 Learners' achievements (those who have successfully completed their Individual Learning Plan aims) are good as 90% of those enrolled fully achieved them. This was an increase of 11 percentage points from 2010/11. This compares favourably with the national achievement rate of 87%. We have an overall success rate (achievement divided by the number starting their course) of 91%. This was an increase of 10.85 percentage points from the 2010/11 figures and is in line with the benchmarking average.
- 3.20 Overall, our success rate (the number that achieved their learning goals set within their chosen course, was 91% in 2011/12, compared to 80.15% in 2010/11. Our retention rate (the number completing their chosen course) was 97% in 2011/12, compared to 94% in the previous year. Our success rate is above the national benchmarking average as is our retention rate.
- 3.21 Our target number of learners, set by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) was 2820. We achieved 2694 individual learners with 3485 enrolments (some learners enrolling on more than one course). We delivered 240 courses in 63 venues across Swindon. The gap in overall numbers was due to poor take up in specific courses. The Council's performance management of learning providers includes support and challenge to improve engagement and marketing and an approach where funding is withdrawn where providers do not reach their recruitment targets. This does bring the extra challenge of re-commissioning provision mid-year.
- 3.22 As well as learner numerical targets set by the SFA, ACL sets targets to improve participation of specific groups of learners. In 2011/12, we overachieved on our male enrolments and on our ethnic minority enrolments, reflecting the success of our strategy to improve participation by these groups. We also overachieved on our numbers of enrolments, which achieved an accredited qualification. Our proportion of Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities reduced and this is being addressed this year through some targeted provision.

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- 3.23 Delivery and targets for 2012/13 are outlined in Table 4 on page 7/8 of the Plan in Appendix 1. This demonstrates the wide range of learning programmes being delivered to achieve the Council's current priorities. Council agreed these priorities in May 2012.

Funding, National Policy and Community Learning Trust

- 3.24 Adult and Community Learning is funded by the skills Funding Agency (SFA) and in 2012/13, £468,300 grant is available to plan, manage and deliver learning. It has now been confirmed that £466,283 will be available for 2013/14. Swindon Borough Council needs to use the funding to meet the objectives of Adult Community Learning as set out in New Challenges, New Chances: Building a World Class Skills System (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2011 https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32313/11-1380-further-education-skills-system-reform-plan.pdf.) Swindon Borough Council also needs to meet the overall target numbers of adults set by the SFA.
- 3.25 The SFA had proposed that organisations receiving contracts to the value of less than £500,000 would no longer be able to receive funding directly from the SFA. The SFA has confirmed that these minimum contract levels will not apply for 2013/14 and that we can expect at least the same level of funding as in 2012/13.
- 3.26 In March 2013, the SFA issued additional information outlining the expectations that those in receipt of SFA funding will:
- 3.26.1 Secure additional revenue over and above the 'public subsidy' (in the case of Swindon Borough Council, this is £466,283 SFA funding for 2013/14, with the SFA now regarded this as a contribution;
 - 3.26.2 Have an ACL Strategy or Plan in place outlining how a relevant balance of provision will be delivered;
 - 3.26.3 Work with other partners to ensure engagement and consultation with communities;
 - 3.26.4 Develop a Financial Strategy.
- 3.27 'New Challenges, New Chances, Building a World Class Skills System', (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2011), announced the Government's intention to introduce Community Learning Trusts to deliver the new agreed objectives more coherently. In April 2012, it published the Community Learning Trust Pilots Prospectus outlining the detail of the approach. A number of 'Community Learning Trust' pilots were set up across the country with the aim of rolling out this approach in 2013. Officers are currently working with partners to set up a 'Community Learning Trust' model in Swindon, which

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will be called the Swindon Adult Community Learning Trust. The key aims of the partnership are to:

3.27.1 Develop one Adult Community Learning Strategy across Swindon with a clear learning offer.

3.27.2 Develop a clear mechanism for community members to shape and contribute to the delivery of the learning offer including volunteering.

3.27.3 Maximise the contribution that the voluntary sector can make to ACL.

3.27.4 Develop a funding strategy to secure additional money in addition to the current public funding.

3.27.5 Ensure ACL is able to effectively contribute to a wider Skills and Employment Strategy with effective structures to link this together.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Council could decide to focus on a different set of priorities for Adult Community learning, whilst still being required to meet the overall SFA targets and adhere to the SFA funding guidance.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 Adult Community Learning delivery and management for 2012/13 and 2013/14 will be contained within the SFA budget available. For 2012/13, £468,300 is available and in 2013/14, £466,283 will be available. Alternative sources of funding will be explored through the partnership. Commissioning of Adult Community Learning will follow the Council's procurement guidelines. Implications of our performance management process are that we sometimes commission in year, which is not the most efficient approach.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 All legal and human rights implications have been taken into account in preparing this report. It is considered that the report's recommendations are compatible with Convention Rights.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 The ACL Plan proposes that Learning Ambassadors will be a commissioned service from 2013/14 rather than direct delivery through Swindon Borough Council or through Pertemps, the Council's preferred contract provider.

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Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment has been undertaken. It identified no adverse impacts. A copy can be obtained from the report author.

Risk Management

- 5.5 The annual nature of the financial planning requires the Council to undertake short term commissioning, often with new providers on an annual basis. This leads to instability with providers and puts the achievement of learner number targets at risk. In order to mitigate the risk, officers are developing an approach to three-year contracts with annual break clauses dependent on confirmation of funding from the SFA.
- 5.6 The aim to deliver Adult learning in the community often means commissioning service for small providers. These organisations are often very good at engaging with members of the community but may be fragile due to capacity. Officers are looking to build sustainability through longer term contracting as mentioned in 6.6 and also investigating a model of commissioning larger providers who still would be able to deliver in the community.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.
- 6.2 Potential members of the Adult Community Learning Trust Partnership including providers and the Voluntary & Community Sector were consulted on the priorities of the Adult Community Learning Plan.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1: Adult Community Learning Plan 2013/14
- 8.2 Appendix 2: Needs Analysis Summary
- 8.3 Appendix 3: Diversity Impact Assessment

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme

- 9.1 This is not a Key Decision as it is a recommendation to Full Council and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme for June 2013.