

# REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	13 March 2014
<b>Subject:</b>	Community Learning Strategy
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Paul Najsarek Corporate Director Community, Health and Wellbeing
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Manji Kara, Portfolio Holder for Community and Culture
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Decision subject to Call-in:</b>	Yes
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Appendix A: Draft Community Learning Strategy 2013 -15

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

This report sets out a draft Community Learning Strategy and Delivery Plan outlining the strategic aims and objectives for the delivery of adult, family and community learning in the borough and to achieve the vision for Community Learning contained in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) document, ***New Challenges, New Chances***.

### **Recommendations:**

Cabinet is requested to:

- i). Approve the adoption of the Community Learning Strategy 2013-5 and the Delivery plan as outlined in Appendix A and in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.4 of this report.

ii). Authorise the Corporate Director, Community, Health and Well-Being to proceed with the Community Learning Strategy Delivery Plan (Appendix A Annex 1) and take any action necessary subject to confirmation of Skills Funding Agency funding allocations, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community & Cultural Services.

**Reason: (For recommendation)**

As part of the national changes in the funding and delivery of Community Learning, the Adult Community and Family Learning Service is required to have in place a strategy, to be monitored by the Skills Funding Agency, that sets out how they will deliver a relevant balance of the objectives outlined in *New Challenges, New Chances* (Department of Business, Innovations & Skills, 2011).

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **2.1 Introductory paragraph**

2.1.1 Adult and Community Learning in Harrow is funded through the Skills Funding Agency (SfA). As part of the funding criteria for academic year 2013/14 onwards, the SfA require Community Learning providers to have in place a Strategy that outlines how they will deliver against the Government’s vision for the service outlined in *New Challenges, New Chances* (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011).

2.1.2 In order to maximise access to community learning, there is a national move towards targeting Community Learning funding on those who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate. Subsidised provision will be focused on the targeting and recruitment of identified priority groups with evidence of impact on social and economic wellbeing. The Harrow Community Learning Strategy 2013-15 sets out the main objectives, aims and actions in order to meet this agenda.

2.1.3 The Adult Community and Family Learning Service was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2013 and was graded ‘Good’ (Grade 2) across all areas. The recommendations for further improvement have been incorporated in the Objectives and Actions set out in the Community Learning Strategy.

## **2.2 Options considered**

2.2.1 In order to comply with the agenda set out in *New Challenges, New Chances* and with Skill Funding Agency requirements, the Adult, Community and Family Learning Service established a formal Framework for the commissioning of community learning delivery which was approved by Cabinet in April 2013.

2.2.2 Services receiving a Community Learning funding allocation from the Skills Funding Agency are also required to set out how they will meet the agenda of *New Challenges, New Chances* in a Community Learning Strategy. A draft strategy was produced and circulated for consultation in October-December 2013 and comments were incorporated into the final draft for consideration by Cabinet. This process has been approved by the SfA and funding for academic year 2013-4 has been agreed. The draft Community Learning Strategy now requires approval before final submission to the SfA.

2.2.3 Therefore Cabinet is recommended to approve the Community Learning Strategy as the planning framework for Community Learning programme delivery over the current and next academic years as follows:

i). Approve the adoption of the Community Learning Strategy 2013-5 and the Delivery plan as outlined in Appendix A and in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.4 of this report.

ii). Authorise the Corporate Director, Community, Health and Well-Being to proceed with the Community Learning Strategy Delivery Plan (Appendix A Annex 1) and take any action necessary subject to confirmation of Skills Funding Agency funding allocations, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Community & Cultural Services.

## **2.3 Current situation**

2.3.1 Harrow Council secures provision for Adult and Community Learning through the Adult Community & Family Learning Service, with funding through the Skills Funding Agency (SfA). In December 2011 the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) outlined proposed reforms of learning and skills in *New Challenges, New Chances*, setting out the objectives for Community Learning and expectations of recipients of Community Learning funding from 2013/14 onwards. These included developing different models of delivery for Community Learning with a wider range of providers in order to focus funding on people or groups who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate and to increase fee income from those who can afford to pay.

2.3.2 The local delivery model of approximately one third of learning delivery provided directly by Harrow Council and two thirds delivered through Harrow and Stanmore Colleges was therefore revised in 2013 to move to a full commissioning model. There are currently 20 providers on a Framework of Preferred Providers who have submitted proposals for a

range of community learning programmes set out in a Provider Prospectus. 13 of these have been contracted to deliver provision in 2013/14, working with a range of target groups that include the older learner, mental health service users, adults with learning disabilities and black and minority individuals with low qualifications or skill levels.

## **2.4 Why a change is needed**

2.4.1 In academic year 2013/14, providers in receipt of a Community Learning funding allocation are expected to work in line with the policy objectives set out in the Skills Funding Statement (December 2012) and *New Challenges, New Chances*. The Agency's Funding Rules for academic year 2013/14 also state that Community Learning providers must "have in place a strategy that sets out how they will deliver a relevant balance of the objectives set out in *New Challenges, New Chances*".

2.4.2 The Community Learning Strategy therefore sets out the main objectives, aims and actions over the next 2 years in order to meet this agenda. Key to this is shifting the balance of funding towards subsidising community learning provision that targets and recruits identified priority groups and shows evidence of impact on social and economic wellbeing. In order to maintain a universal access offer, it is also necessary to generate additional income through higher fees and other funding and to lever in other resources to reinvest in the local offer.

2.4.3 The main objectives in the draft Strategy are:

- Widening participation in learning through targeting community learning and providing a means for learners who do not currently participate to gain access to the learning process
- Enhancing individuals' quality of life by providing a wide range of learning opportunities that contribute to employability skills health and well-being, community cohesion and citizenship, and stronger family relationships
- Developing local learning communities by enhancing the capacity of new providers, particularly community and voluntary organisations, to develop learning programmes for their immediate communities
- Developing high quality teaching and learning by enhancing the professional status and on-going professional development of those engaged in the delivery of community learning in order to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

## **2.5 Implications of the Recommendation**

### **Resources, costs**

2.5.1 A new Community Learning Partnership will be established to monitor and plan provision developed as part of the Community Learning Strategy and to evaluate the impact of the local learning offer on target groups, individuals and families. Representation will be invited from internal and external partners and learners.

## **Staffing/workforce**

- 2.5.2 The new model of delivery with an increased role for contract management and data collection, and the changes in the curriculum with an greater emphasis on Functional Skills and employability skills, will require a review of roles and responsibilities within the Adult Community & Family Learning Service. This will be carried out before September 2014. Any changes will be undertaken with due regard to the organisation's Protocol for Managing Change.

## **2.6 Legal Implications**

- 2.6.1 A function of Local Authorities under the Education Act 1996 is to provide opportunities for the education of adults. The arrangements for securing and/or delivering the education provision are the decision of the local authority. The proposals set out in the Community Learning Strategy will support the delivery of the Local Authority's functions in relation to adult learning.
- 2.6.2 Education Services are Part B services under the Public Contracts Regulations so they only need to be procured in an open, non-discriminatory and fair way. The procurement process established as part of the changes in delivery of Community Learning meets that duty.

## **2.7 Financial Implications**

- 2.7.1 From March 2014, the Adult, Community and Family Learning Service will be entirely funded from external sources via the Skills Funding Agency and as a result contributes towards the 14/15 Medium Term Financial Strategy. Current SfA funding for academic year 2013/14 is £679,000. Of the total funding, £197,000 is formula funded from the Adult Skills Budget, with funding linked to the numbers of learners on specified programmes with qualifications on the Qualifications Credit Framework.
- 2.7.2 The balance of £482,000 is from the Community Learning budget. Providers allocated from this budget are expected to work in line with the policy and objectives outlined in *New Challenges, New Chances* (BIS December 2011) and which the Community Learning Strategy is intended to address.
- 2.7.3 The expectation of the Skills Funding Agency and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is that providers generate additional income above the core funding through a variable fee policy and generating/collecting additional fee income where possible (depending on the financial circumstances of individuals – the “Pound Plus” approach). The Prospectus issued to those on the Framework of Preferred Providers requires providers to raise fee income where possible, with full fee at the provider's discretion and concessions for those receiving a set range of benefits. Any fee income is used to lower the subsidy from the core funding. This approach has enabled a lower

level of subsidy and to sustain the number of adult learners within grant levels which have remained largely unchanged in recent years.

- 2.7.4 The draft Community Learning Strategy assumes grant funding will continue at the existing levels. However indicative allocations for academic year 2014-15 have yet to be received. It should be assumed that any notified reduction in the grant will require the Strategy to be revised and the deliverables limited to the grant allocated.

## 2.8 Performance Issues

- 2.8.1 The Adult Community and Family Learning Service returns regular sets of learner data to the Skills Funding Agency, including annual returns for enrolment numbers, success rates and retention rates. These are currently reported on the Community and Culture Scorecard as below and will remain as performance indicators. A Quality Assurance Framework and Continuous Professional Development programme is in place to ensure success and retention rates are not adversely affected by a widened provider base.

	2011/12	2012/13
Number of student enrolments	5531	5400
Retention rates	88.5%	90%
Success rates	86.5%	88.5%

- 2.8.2 The purpose of the Community Learning Strategy is to shift the balance of funding towards recruiting identified priority groups and evidence impact on social and economic wellbeing. A further set of indicators, including qualification level and post-code, will be developed and each learning programme will be monitored for the extent to which it addresses identified need and engagement of target group(s).
- 2.8.3 The provision will remain under Ofsted Inspection and all provision will be monitored against the Service's Quality Improvement Framework and providers will be supported through a Continuous Professional Development Programme. The Service was graded as Good by Ofsted in October 2013 and the Inspection Report commented that the draft Community Learning Strategy was well-founded and provided a clear basis for current and future developments.
- 2.8.4 The key recommendations for taking forward that were contained in the recent Ofsted Inspection Report form part of the actions of the Community Learning Strategy and the Service's Quality Improvement Plan. These are the embedding of the quality assurance framework across all providers; improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, especially in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); and ensuring all tutors have access to effective information and learning technologies.

## 2.9 Environmental Impact

- 2.9.1 There are no environmental impact considerations in this report.

## **2.10 Risk Management Implications**

2.10.1 Risk included on Directorate risk register? Yes  
Separate risk register in place? No

2.10.2 The risks identified with these proposals are:

- *Future external funding for adult and community learning jeopardised by failure to deliver anticipated learner numbers through new commissioning process* .There are planned phases of commissioning new programmes at later stages in the year and for direct delivery to increase the volume of delivery if necessary. There is also the opportunity for new providers to apply to join the Framework annually.
- *External funding through Adult Skills Budget at risk from under-delivery* There are plans to increase number of ESOL and Functional Skills programmes through direct delivery to increase numbers eligible for accredited funding.

## **2.11 Equalities implications**

2.11.1 Was an Equality Impact Assessment carried out? Yes

2.11.2 It was not considered a risk that the proposals could potentially have a disproportionate adverse impact on any of the Protected Characteristics. In order to maximise access to community learning, available funding will be focused on those who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate. Priority groups include older learners, particularly those in an isolated or vulnerable situation and those entering the Fourth Age, 75+ years; disabled learners and mental health service users or ex-users or those with learning difficulties/disabilities; and black and ethnic minority individuals, particularly with below Level 2 qualifications.

## **2.12 Corporate Priorities**

The Community Learning Strategy contributes to the Council's priority of a fairer borough. The Community Learning Strategy is intended to widen participation in learning through targeting community learning with funding focused on planned programmes designed for identified priority groups. Curriculum delivery will focus on employability skills, functional Maths and English, health and well-being needs, community cohesion and citizenship and stronger families.

### **Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance**

Name: Donna Edwards

on behalf of the  
Chief Financial Officer

Date: 4 February 2014

Name: Matthew Adams

on behalf of the  
Monitoring Officer

Date: 12 February 2014

### **Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance**

Name: Martin Randall

on behalf of the  
Divisional Director  
Strategic  
Commissioning

Date: 29 January 2014

### **Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance**

Name: Andrew Baker

on behalf of the  
Corporate Director  
(Environment &  
Enterprise)

Date: 30 January 2014

### **Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Geoff Trodd, Service Manager for Community Learning  
Tel: 020 8416 8805

**Background Papers:** [New Challenges, New Chances \(Dept of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011\)](#)



**Call-In Waived by the  
Chairman of Overview  
and Scrutiny  
Committee**

**NOT APPLICABLE**

*[Call-in applies]*