

# Briefing for members

## Enterprise and Skills in Harrow

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This is one of a series of policy papers being drafted for new scrutiny Members on areas of policy that fall within the terms of reference of the Sustainable Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

It relates to the promotion of enterprise and skills in Harrow – in particular, issues relating to adult and community learning and vocational training and support given to local businesses by the council. Only post-19 education is covered by this sub-committee – schooling and further education to age 19 (including Connexions) is covered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

Information on regeneration is provided in the separate briefing on planning and development.

The first section relates to national developments and the second to developments in Harrow.

### Nationally and regionally

#### Skills

Nationally the skills agenda is set by the Department for Education and Skills, who have been responsible for developing the National Skills Strategy, as well as guiding the policies of the wide range of national and regional skills organisations. Some of these organisations deal exclusively with adult learning and some with training for young people. Briefly, some important bodies are:

- Within the DfES, the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit, responsible for schemes such as “Read Write Plus”.
- The Basic Skills Agency, who are a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation (quango) responsible for improving speaking and listening skills, and other basic skills, of children and adults. The Agency is not responsible for skills training in the workplace.
- The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, a non-departmental public body (NDPB) sponsored by the DfES. In terms of adult learning, the QCA supports learning at work and makes assessments on the levels of vocational qualifications available, through a regular reviews process.
- Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate are tasked with assessing adult education provision. The ALI awarded Harrow a grade 2 for leadership and management of the ACL inspection regime – they considered that the authority benefited from the strength of having a clear strategic direction for the development of provision.
- Learning and Skills Councils – of which more below.
- National Training Organisations are bodies set up to represent the training needs of particular sectors of the economy. There are 76 of them, and they are co-ordinated by a Council.
- Learndirect is a government sponsored organisation set up using private money, providing an online resource for those who might not be able to access training in other ways. It has been established through the University for Industry initiative, which is also

responsible for the UK Online network of IT equipment and provision in libraries and other public places.

Regionally the GLA also takes a significant role, as does the West London Alliance made up of a number of west London authorities. More local information is provided in the next section, below "Enterprise".

Nationally, the government aims to provide free learning to all adults studying for their first level 2 qualification (equivalent to five GCSEs at A\* to C), as well as support ranging from maintenance grants to more comprehensive information on courses available. There is also an emphasis on "learning for its own sake" – the retired are included in the Government's plans.

More information on all these bodies and initiatives can be found in the more detailed policy pack available for members from the Scrutiny Officer.

### Enterprise

The DTI leads on enterprise matters in the UK, on a macroeconomic level. The DTI has a number of policies and responsibilities relating to regional sustainable economic development, but in general terms the London Development Agency plans a much more active role in the capital, in terms of promotion of enterprise and links between businesses and government bodies (including local government).

The London Development Agency – the LDA operates similarly to Regional Development Agencies in other parts of the country, but its direct accountability to the Mayor and expanded powers give it a varied and dynamic role. The LDA has produced an Economic Development Strategy which is looking both at infrastructure but at more intangible issues as well – such as barriers which affect the survival of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). The LDA concentrates in this business promotion agenda on the creative and production industries, innovation, life sciences and environmental sectors. They also provide significant support to the tourism industry, as seen by the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Sub-Committee when they undertook a review into the issue.

Most of the LDA's specific initiatives concentrate on revitalising areas of inner London that have seen the departure of heavy industry. More information can be found in the "Regeneration" briefing. In London-wide terms, however, the Private Investment Commission is probably the most important scheme, using the skills of investment experts to identify ways in which to encourage private investment in the capital.

### In Harrow specifically

#### Skills

Locally a number of organisations are responsible for a variety of initiatives.

Learning and Skills Council – LSC London West are responsible for provision in Harrow, as well as the other west London authorities. In 2005, they completed a Strategic Area Review (StAR), setting out long-term plans for learning and skills in the west London area.

The Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Fund (NLDC) is being harnessed to encourage learning – by improving the quality of small, voluntary providers and encouraging the use of Community Learning Chests for people to pick up more skills and knowledge.

London West also provide assistance to employers. In particular, they assist with Apprenticeships, NVQs, Skills for Life, IIP and other initiatives. They also help employers to locate skills providers. It is important to note that the LSC is not responsible for providing adult training and education opportunities itself.

The ACL review, carried out in 2005 by the Lifelong Learning Sub, made a number of findings in respect of the operations of the LSC, in which it found that the council's own ACL service has an important role in balancing the competing needs of local people (important in a demand-led model of community learning) and the interests of the funding body (the LSC and the government, who have targets for level 2 achievement, as we have seen).

GLA - the GLA have responded to the recent ODPM (now DCLG) consultation on the Mayor's powers by requesting significant extra responsibility in the learning and skills sector. Currently, the Mayor has now power over the strategic direction of the five London LSCs and feels that their (national) policy is at variance with his plans for regional economic development – particularly their policy to encourage level 2 qualifications, where he considers training to level 3 to be most useful to London's GDP. He has proposed that the LSCs be merged and rendered accountable to him. Any changes will be made in accordance with the Government's timetable for reviewing the Mayor's powers.

Particular local provision – Harrow contracts out its ACL provision through a number of local providers – principally, a number of local colleges. Only 9 staff are directly employed. Fees are set by the local authority (and have recently been subject to some alteration as a result of the ACL review) and are kept by the providers. There is some direct council funding to the 9 council posts, and additional NLDC funding as well.

### Enterprise

Local situation – Harrow's largest employer is Harrow Council. Other large employers include Kodak and First National Bank, but most economic activity takes place in small to medium sized businesses clustered around the borough's town and district centres. There is some light manufacturing industry on the Tudor Road Industrial Estate.

West London – the West London Alliance, West London Network and West London Partnership – all bodies involved the six west London authorities and a range of different private sector partners – have participated in developing an Economic Development Strategy for the sub-region, with the assistance of the LDA. The strategy will run to 2015. More information is available in the briefing pack.

SmartConnections – this is the Council's website for encouraging investment in Harrow. It provides information and advice generally geared towards small businesses.

Harrow in Business – HiB is Harrow's local Enterprise Agency. They are a not-for-profit body who are closely linked to the council, and provide advice and information to local businesses. Again, the emphasis is on smaller businesses.