

The HCU¹

(The Harrow Corporate University)

Learning together to improve what we do

Introduction

1 Harrow is committed to transforming the way it works and delivers services. Everyone, from councillors and directors to street cleaners and care workers, will need to “work more flexibly; across professional boundaries and developing and using new skills and competencies.”² The success of the transformation will rest on the understanding, motivation and effectiveness of everyone. That’s why a key driver for this vision will be the *HCU* – Harrow Corporate University³ - a major, groundbreaking project, unique in local government, the first of its kind in the country.⁴

2 A corporate university is an internal structure designed to improve individual and business performance by ensuring that the learning and knowledge of an organisation is directly connected to its business strategy. The *HCU* will enable the Council to develop rapidly as a genuine learning organisation – one that recognises that active learning by individuals and teams is the life-blood of innovation and improvement. It will also pave the way to Harrow Council becoming a significant work based learning provider in its own right, able to draw down further direct funding from the LSC to deliver an apprenticeship programme for young people.

3 *The HCU* will work with local business as well as the key public sector agencies, working to pool resources, expertise and premises, supporting the delivery of shared ambitions. It will reach out to the local voluntary and community sector organisations, building their capacity- increasing their influence on service planning and delivery.

4 *The HCU* will support the Council’s strategic community leadership role.

¹ Working title subject to confirmation.

² Strategy for People, March 2004

³ The use of the word ‘University’ is by custom and practice associated with further and higher education. This became enshrined in law in the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (Sections 76 & 77 refer). At this stage, it is not envisaged that this proposal will operate as a higher educational institution as defined by law. Any uncertainty regarding the use of the word University is avoided by naming the initiative *HCU*.

⁴ According to enquiries carried out with IDeA – the development agency for local government - and the Sector Skills Development Agency.

The Current Position

5 Harrow employs some 5,600 people of whom 2,600 are based in schools. Employees are spread across more than 100 locations in the borough. 45% are part-time staff.

6 In practical terms, decisions about training for Harrow employees, as in most organisations, are largely taken by service managers across the four directorates.

7 An estimated 8,409 days and £3.4 million was spent on training by Harrow staff in 2003/4. This works out at about 1.5 days per employee. Or rather it would do if learning were distributed evenly (which it is not!) In fact managers estimated that in 2003/4 only about 60% of their staff undertook any formal learning. What is particularly significant about this data is the high number of employees – some 40% - who appear to undergo no formal learning at all. Those not taking part are predominately from the lower end of the scale, thus perpetuating the cycle of educational disadvantage.

The Opportunity, the Vision

8 Harrow Council will be the first Local Authority to establish a corporate university. Aside from the prestige that successful delivery of the project will bring, the creation of the *HCU* will enable Harrow to address the key challenge faced by all public service providers: the need to develop the skills and knowledge of the workforce alongside the understanding and engagement of the public they serve.

9 A three-year timescale is envisaged as realistic and sustainable to realise and develop the *HCU*.

Key Objectives

(a) To drive service improvement across Harrow

(b) To diversify the Council's workforce, enhance its skills and tackle skills shortages, setting new standards for all public services in Harrow

(c) To strengthen the competitive base of local businesses by diversifying the local workforce, improving skills and tackling skills shortages

(d) To help strengthen local communities and community and voluntary sector organisations

(e) To provide high quality and easily accessible learning opportunities inside the Council and across the Borough

10 In some cases, the *HCU* will commission learning, sometimes acts as direct provider but usually act as a broker ensuring that the learning is provided in the most effective ways possible.

The HCU Programme

- 11 The programme will comprise learning opportunities for
- the Council's workforce
 - for employers across the Borough, private, public and not-for-profit
 - for local residents, communities and voluntary organisations

Learning Together – with our workforce

(a) Induction/Updating

For new staff and those new in post

(b) Promoting and Managing Learning

Including learning in teams, learning by doing and work process analysis (building on the successful experience of the Work Foundation High Performing Teams project), performance management, project management, learning needs analysis, appraisal and liP, coaching and progression, talent spotting, basic skills assessment, communication (with colleagues, customers and partners) signposting and progression planning, acting as a learning champion, managing quality and preparing for inspection

(c) Corporate Priorities

Including customer focus, area working, integrated service delivery (Every Child Matters; Youth Offer), equality and diversity

(d) Leadership and Management

Including fast track schemes, training for elected members, succession planning, designing/implementing equality and diversity programmes, development programmes to embed the desired leadership behaviours and skills as an enabling tool to take the organisation forward. Personal coaching for senior managers. Positive action management programmes for underrepresented groups in the workforce or a service.

(e) IT

Including First Contact system, appropriate IT accreditation, specialist IT, financial monitoring and control systems for managers and finance managers, access to the intranet, training on use of Groupwise and intranet for all

(f) Professional Qualifications

Including early years, teachers' INSET, teaching assistants, accountancy, caring for the young and the elderly, social work, librarianship, planning, legal, technical, sports coaching and leadership

(g) Statutory Responsibilities

Including health, safety and welfare (duty of care), child protection; equality, human rights and anti-discrimination legislation, community safety, food safety and preparation.

(h) Apprenticeships and Traineeships

12 Tackling skills gaps and shortages, developing vocational pathways at 14+, Positive action programmes, work shadowing, work experience, mentoring, leadership training,

Learning Together – with local employers

13 The *HCU* offers real potential for developing collaboration with other local employers and Harrow in Business, so as to pool resources, expertise and premises, and build each other's capacity. Children's Services is just one example of one area where the Council will need to cooperate increasingly closely with other services such as the Police and the PCT. The Council's growing expertise in customer contact will be of interest to other service providers, commercial as well as public. The *HCU* will also be an important conduit through which will flow expertise from other employers. The Council will also want to maximise the benefits of its investment in learning at work by selling its services more widely. The *HCU* will initiate early discussions with local employers about scope for collaboration, beginning with the activities laid out in the previous section. It may also be appropriate to develop expertise in related areas such as social enterprise, live-work units and business incubators.

Learning Together – with local communities

14 The community dimension is increasingly important to the Council in several ways:

(a) user engagement: the experience of Urban Living and public realm management has pointed to the value of user groups in managing facilities and designing improvements through collaboration with service managers and service teams

(b) civic renewal and service delivery: the review of grant aid to the voluntary and community sector points to the need for a more comprehensive engagement as the basis for civic renewal so that both sides are able to understand and influence each other's agendas including, for example, new forms of service delivery and new opportunities for young people

(c) 'the hard to reach': the Council will lean increasingly on the capacity of the voluntary and community sector as a means of making contact with hard to reach groups such as carers, ex-offenders, those with substance abuse problems, mental health problems, refugees and economic migrants, and as a means of strengthening local policies for equality and diversity and social cohesion

(d) widening participation in learning: the Council will want to build on its successful Adult and Community Learning programme to reach out to neglected groups and areas of Harrow and to strengthen pathways to work for the workless.

Structure

- 15 Core Staff Team:
 The Principal/Director
 Project Workers (x2)
 Administrator

This team will take responsibility for delivering *the HCU* action plan.

16 An early priority for the Core Team will be to identify and negotiate the scope for a refocusing of corporate resources on strategic priorities.

17 New work, projects and initiatives will develop as *the HCU* develops, and an 'investment fund' will support a responsive approach. The fund will also allow the commissioning of bespoke learning.

Extended Team

18 A larger Extended Team will be created for which existing post holders will be sought, on a fractional basis, from within the directorates and services. This is essential as it will symbolise support from all sections of the organisation and will begin to embed *the HCU* within service areas.

19 The Extended Team will grow the capacity of *the HCU*, but more importantly will create career development opportunities across the organisation.

