

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR SAFER & STRONGER COMMUNITIES 10 MAY 2010**

### **ADULT LEARNING SERVICE: USE OF PREMISES**

Report by Head of Community Services

#### **Introduction**

1. Like all publicly funded services, the Adult Learning Service is required to make efficiencies. The requirement on this Service is particularly compelling for a number of reasons. It is entirely dependent for its funding on sources outside the County Council. Its principal funder is the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), whose financial support has reduced significantly in recent years, often at very short notice. The LSC was abolished from 1 April 2010 and its functions have been taken on by a variety of other bodies – in the case of adult learning, most notably by a new Skills Funding Agency, although a range of national and regional funding and commissioning arrangements is still being considered. There is therefore likely to be continuing uncertainty about funding for the Service in the future.
2. Another significant source of funds is the fees paid by learners, especially for leisure learning classes. Reductions in national subsidy for such classes have led to rises in the fees charged. There has been some customer resistance to this which, possibly combined with the impact of the current recession, makes it ever more challenging to attract learners.
3. In order to mitigate the impact of reductions in funding, the Adult Learning Service has undergone a series of major changes in recent years, including the loss of staff, reductions in management capacity, and a rigorous reappraisal of the range of learning it is able to offer.
4. In order to reduce costs further the Service has undertaken a review of its use of premises, and this report outlines the actions it intends to take as a result.

#### **Proposals**

5. The following proposals are designed to make revenue savings to the Service, largely by withdrawing administrative presence from a number of locations, but not by diminishing actual learning provision around the county. This will minimise the impact, if any, on the public, whose only notable contact with administrative staff locally in the past has been to register for courses. This activity is now mainly carried out by telephone or online.
6. It is intended to withdraw Adult Learning administrative staff from the following locations.

- **The Mill Arts Centre, Banbury.** An arrangement to base administrative staff here has never been fully implemented and so the impact on learners will be nil. The range of learning on offer at the Mill will not be affected.
- **SS Mary and John Primary School, Oxford.** This location is used entirely for administrative and management purposes. Staff will be relocated to Cricket Road Centre.
- **Littlemore Adult Learning Centre (Oxford Academy).** Teams based here will be moved to the Blackbird Leys Learning Centre and to Holton. A post of Administrative Manager will be deleted as a result, the saving to be achieved through normal staff turnover. Learning provision will continue at Littlemore; plans for the Academy envisage shared space with the public library.
- **Cumnor Adult Learning Centre (Matthew Arnold School).** Staff based here will be relocated to The Union. The school has indicated that it has a pressing need for additional space, which this move will meet. Adult learning classes will continue at the school.

7. It is proposed to withdraw completely from Chinnor Adult Learning Centre, including the provision of classes. This Centre has not been staffed and has had a low level of provision for some years. Classes will continue to be offered in alternative venues locally.
8. In addition, negotiations are underway to reduce the charges paid to two schools where use of space by the Service has reduced. These are Bartholomew School (Eynsham) and King Alfred's (Wantage).
9. Further savings are expected to be made by more efficient use of budgets for the hire of external learning venues, and by a change in the use of a courier service.

### Financial implications

10. The expected savings (in a full financial year) from these proposals are as follows.

Proposal	£
Withdrawal of administrative staff from four locations. (based on running costs to the Service)	15,500
Deletion of post of Administrative Manager (inc on-costs)	31,000
Total withdrawal from Chinnor Adult Learning Centre	1,700
Renegotiation of charges at two schools	5,500
Target saving in external hires (10%)	6,400
Change in courier service arrangements	8,000
Total	68,100

11. No assumption is made with regard to any savings from vacating Chinnor Adult Learning Centre (other than the running costs incurred by the Service).

12. The achievement of this level of savings is an important part of the Service's strategy to ensure that its revenue budget is controlled in line with the five-year plan agreed by the Cabinet in 2008/09. All other major components of that plan have now been implemented, and it is predicted that the current financial year's outturn will be broadly in line with that plan.

### **Risks**

13. The main risks associated with this proposal are:
- A risk of not fulfilling the Service's financial plan if the predicted savings are not achieved. This is to be mitigated in two ways: firstly through having adopted conservative estimates/targets for the savings, and secondly through regular management monitoring of implementation and actual savings.
  - Possible risk to the reputation of the Service if it is perceived that these changes will have an adverse effect on learning provision. The chief method of mitigation of this risk is through communication with learners and other stakeholders including local councillors.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

14. **The Cabinet Member for Safer & Stronger Communities is RECOMMENDED to approve the changes proposed in this Report.**

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Background papers:

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