
ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING – COST RECOVERY MODEL

Purpose of report

1. This report enables Members to assess the impact on Adult Community Learning following the introduction of a cost-recovery model for non priority courses and by subsidising priority courses.

Background

2. At its meeting on 10 February 2014, the Economic & Culture Scrutiny Committee received a presentation on the Neighbourhood Learning Service and budget implications for 2014/15. Members heard that in January 2014 the authority was informed of a reduction in Welsh Government grant for Adult and Community Learning of 37.5% or £563,763 – to take effect from 1 September 2014.
3. In view of this reduction the Committee was informed that the Council would be moving towards a cost recovery model for recreational and non priority adult community learning courses. This would mean courses delivered on a cost neutral basis to the Council, with learners fees covering the full cost associated with non-priority courses. Priority learner courses would continue to be grant funded.
4. The following groups are considered priority learner groups:
 - 16+ Basic Skills needs
 - ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)
 - NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) and in receipt of state benefit

- Aged 50+ and not in full time employment
- Older Learners (specifically those aged over 65)
- Welsh Medium Provision.

5. The Communities, Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal section within the 2014-17 Corporate Plan contained the following commitment:

- **E&LL9:** Work in collaboration with Partner Organisations and other Local Authorities to deliver a sustainable Adult Community Learning delivery Model.

6. The 2015-17 Corporate Plan contains a number of Priorities and the outcomes the Council wishes to achieve. Priority 1, and one of the subsequent outcomes are relevant to Adult Community Learning:

Priority 1: Education and Skills for People of All Ages

- Every Cardiff school is a good school where learners achieve well
- Looked after children in Cardiff achieve their full potential
- Adult learners achieve their potential.

7. The Corporate Plan 2015-17 states that, “*The Council’s contribution to ACL in Cardiff focuses on two key areas:*

- ***Learning for Work:*** *This focuses provision on priority learners as defined by the Welsh Government, and these learners include those currently not in Education, Training or Employment and those aged 50+ who are currently unemployed. Key learning categories include English for Speakers of Other Languages and Basic Skills, Digital Literacy and Welsh medium provision.*
- ***Learning for Life:*** *This element provides opportunities for recreational lifelong learning courses on a cost recovery basis. These courses are available to all community members. “*

8. The 'Learning for Life' element of Adult Community Learning is the area to which the cost recovery model has been applied in Cardiff. Attached at **Appendix A** is the 2014-15 'Learning for Life' prospectus – enabling Members to see the courses that are subject to the cost recovery model.
9. For reference purposes, the 'Learning for Work' and 'Learning for Adults with Additional Learning Needs' can be found here:

Learning for Work prospectus

<https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/resident/Schools-and-learning/Adult-Learning/Prospectus/Pages/default.aspx#work>

Learning for Adults with Additional Needs prospectus

<https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/resident/Schools-and-learning/Adult-Learning/Prospectus/Pages/default.aspx#disc>

10. The Q4 Performance Report for Communities, Housing and Customer Services (to be considered at item 7) gives the following information with regard to Adult Community Learning:

“In the 1st year of the new approach to ACL, the Learning for Life programme was delivered at cost neutral to the Council, the Learning for Work programme (grant funded) achieved a 72% success rate (the target in the Corporate Plan and up from 61% 12/13). Verified 82% success rate for term 1”.

Previous Scrutiny

11. The Economy & Culture Scrutiny Committee previously scrutinised Adult Community Learning in April 2014. Having received an overview of financial and performance information, Members of the Committee made the following observations in relation to the Cost Recovery model to the Cabinet Member – Education and Skills:

- care is needed in managing the public consultation around the changes, both in terms of the Council's public and media reputation, and in terms of ensuring that vulnerable service users will not be left behind.
- there will be a spectrum of needs and abilities to pay for courses within current learner groups. While many people may be able to usefully subsidise other areas of provision by paying full price for pastoral and recreational activities, there will also be many who cannot.
- concern surrounded the reengineering of DART (Disability Advisory & Resource Team including ILS Independent Living Skills) provision. Members could understand that even within this area there is a difference between priority and non-priority provision, and that difficult choices will need to be taken to sustain the service. Members were however mindful of the over-riding economic, financial, personal and social challenges facing disabled people across Cardiff, and of the huge value they might derive from non-priority activities as part of their personal development.
- Committee was pleased with plans to undertake intensive, one to one consultation with this learner group (DART) above and beyond the other types of consultation being undertaken. Members were sure officers will be guided by the best principles in accessibly involving disabled people, work well with third sector equalities and advocacy organisations, undertake rigorous Equality Impact Assessments, seek all third party avenues for leveraging in external funding, and work productively and carefully with the media in carrying out this consultation.
- Members felt that local and voluntary provision can be nurtured to step into any voids resulting from Council service reductions or cost increases.

Way Forward

12. Councillor Julia Magill (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) has been invited, and may wish to give a statement. Sarah McGill (Director – Communities, Housing and Customer Services), Isabelle Bignall (Assistant Director of Communities and Customer Service) and John Agnew (Corporate Customer Services Manager) will also be in attendance.

13. Following the meeting, Members will send their recommendations and observations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.

Legal Implications

14. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal powers of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. Scrutiny Procedure Rules; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

Financial Implications

15. The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet/ Council will set out any financial implications arising from those recommendations.

Recommendations

16. The Committee is recommended to give consideration to the information attached to this report and received at this meeting and to submit any recommendations, observations or comments to the Cabinet.

Marie Rosenthal

County Clerk and Monitoring Officer

8 May 2015