

**ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING REVIEW / APPROACH TO FUNDING FOR INTO
WORK ADVICE SERVICES: PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY**

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide background information to Members to aid their scrutiny of the draft report to Cabinet regarding Adult Community Learning and the approach to funding for Into Work advice services, which is due to be considered by Cabinet at their meeting on 16 December 2021.

Scope of Scrutiny

2. At their meeting on 16 December 2021, the Cabinet will consider a report that sets out proposals for the future of adult community learning provision and seeks cabinet endorsement for the proposed approach to future funding bids for the Into Work service.
3. During this scrutiny, Members can explore:
 - i) The proposed approach to adult community learning
 - ii) The proposed approach to Into Work Advice Services
 - iii) Whether there are any risks to the Council
 - iv) The timeline and next steps
 - v) The recommendations to Cabinet.

Background

4. Cardiff Council's adult community learning has 3 strands: Learning for Work; Disability Inclusion in Community Education (DICE); and Learning for Life. These provide essential skills (literacy, numeracy, Welsh and English for Speakers of

Other Languages), digital skills, employability skills, and engagement activity courses.

5. Learning for Work courses are free to learners if they are out of work or in part time work and courses are fully funded by the Welsh Government Community Learning Grant (CLG). DICE courses are partly funded by the CLG, if participants are eligible, with a cost recovery model for recreational or engagement courses for those not eligible for free courses.¹ In the 202/21 academic year, there were 593 courses funded by CLG, with 4,166 people enrolled. 95% of those who attended accredited courses passed, with 45% of learners from the most deprived areas of the city.
6. Following consultation, in December 2018 the Welsh Government announced changes in the distribution of CLG funding across Wales, resulting in a 20% per annum reduction in Cardiff Council's funding allocation from April 2020 to April 2025, equating to £694,386. This means the annual budget will drop from £1,092,079 in 2019/20 to an estimated £397,693 in 2025/26.
7. The Welsh Government has indicated that they will put in place a national strategic body for Adult Community Learning by 2025.
8. The Council's Into Work Advice Service currently has four employability projects funded through the European Social Fund, which currently support circa 500 people per annum. This funding will cease to be available from Autumn/ Winter 2022, equating to a loss of £1.1 million per annum, as follows:
 - i) Communities for Work – March 2023 (£596k per annum)
 - ii) Journey 2 Work - September 2022 (£230k per annum)
 - iii) Skills@Work - September 2022 (£192k per annum)
 - iv) Inspire to Work - September 2022 (£124k per annum)
9. Announcements on the UK Government's replacement fund, the Shared Prosperity Fund, are expected on 20 December 2021. Currently, it is not known whether this fund will support employability activity.

¹ Learning for Life courses are provided on a full cost recovery basis and are not affected by the issues detailed in the report to Cabinet

10. The draft report to Cabinet entitled '*Adult Community Learning Review/ Approach to funding for Into Work Advice Services*' is attached at **Appendix A** and has **one** appendix:

- **Appendix 1** - Adult Learning Consultation Report Findings.

Issues identified in the Cabinet Report

Into Work Advice Services

11. **Point 16** of the report to Cabinet highlights a regional approach to bidding for funding for employability projects has previously been used by local authorities within the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal area. It states the Regional Skills Partnership Local Authority Cluster Group has produced a new Regional Framework to guide future employability activities and bids. This framework enables the retention of local delivery through the Council's services.

Adult Community Learning

12. **Points 17 -38** set out proposals for the future adult community learning service provision. **Points 17 – 23** set out the current position and proposed approach for service delivery, training delivery and location of classes. These highlight the following:

- i) Service Delivery – current delivery via 10 weekly two-hour sessions is not swift enough for people looking for work. Shorter one, two and five full day courses have been introduced for some work skills training and have produced good pass rates. This approach could be expanded, with evening and weekend courses, across the year, to make it as accessible as possible and to reduce costs.
- ii) Training Delivery – the current Learning for Work team consists of 14 tutors who are often part-time and sessional, meaning the model of delivery is not responsive. It is proposed to replace these posts with temporary specialist trainer posts, in line with the funding allocation year on year, who work throughout the year, in two teams – a work skills training team and a specialist digital team.
- iii) Location of Classes – courses are provided in community settings and online. The standalone Adult Learning Centre in Severn Road

has been closed since lockdown in March 202. There is scope to expand online provision, for those that prefer to learn this way. It is proposed to continue provision in community settings and online, to ensure available funding focuses on direct delivery rather than buildings costs.² The Severn Road Adult Education Centre would be retained by the Council's Education Department for alternative use.

13. Points 35-38 summarise the proposed way forward for Adult Community Learning, as follows:

- i) Use existing community buildings as location for courses
- ii) Replace the Learning for Work Tutor posts with new specialist Trainer posts
- iii) To continue to provide virtual learning as well as online tutorials alongside face-to-face courses
- iv) To expand course delivery to include Saturday and evening learning.

14. Financial Implications are set out in **points 42-44** and include:

- i) Continued, careful consideration needs to be given to the resource required for adult community learning to ensure costs remain within the funding provided
- ii) Consideration will need to be given to the impact of a national strategic body for community based adult learning by 2025, on future funding for local authorities
- iii) As proposals for replacing European Social Funding are developed, financial impacts need to be identified and managed within the overall funding available.

15. Property Implications are set out at **Points 45 - 46** and highlight that Strategic Estates will work to review future options for the Severn Road property and will work with the service area to understand any relevant investments or property improvements required for the delivery of services in existing assets. The

² Currently £130,070 out of £658,073 CLG is spent on buildings and associated staff costs

Education Department has indicated they wish to retain the Severn Road Adult Centre building, either for future primary education or to develop further Additional Learning Needs provision through a Specialist Resource Base.

16. **Human Resource** implications are set out at **Point 47** and highlight initial consultations with trade unions and affected staff have taken place and that these will continue following Cabinet's decision, with any restructure proposals carried out in line with corporate processes and legislative requirements.

17. **Legal Implications** are set out at **Points 48 – 51** and include:

- i) Members must ensure they have considered consultation responses and taken them into account before a decision is made
- ii) The need to make decisions in the context of the Council's public sector equality duties, Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, Welsh Language Standards, and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Proposed Recommendations to Cabinet

18. The report to Cabinet contains the following recommendations:

- i) *Agree the approach to the future delivery of Adult Community Learning as set out in this report. This includes the repurposing of Severn Road Adult Learning Centre, which would be retained within the Council's Education department, allowing a greater provision of training in existing community settings across the city.*
- ii) *Endorse the principle of a regional approach of bidding for funds for the Into Work Advice Service, post-European Social Funding.*

Consultation Undertaken

19. **Points 25 – 34** of the report to Cabinet provide information on the consultation undertaken by the Council in August 2021. The consultation ran for 5 weeks, with an online survey and paper copies in hubs and libraries. The survey was promoted on the Council's website and social media channels and over 4,000 previous learners were sent a direct online link.

20. In total, 1,312 responses were received, of whom 73.3% had attended Adult Learning training. Of these 80% lived in the southern arc of Cardiff, 81% were from an Ethnic Minority background and 70% were aged 35 or under.

21. The headline findings were:

- i) The most common Learning for Work courses attended were 1- or 2-day First Aid, Manual Handling and Food Safety courses
- ii) A low number of learners attending several courses, indicating courses are helping people get the right skills for the job they want
- iii) A split between respondents wanting face-to-face learning (47.3%), hybrid model (36.2%) or online learning (30.9%)
- iv) Saturday morning and evenings were the most popular time to attend courses
- v) Regarding Severn Road Learning Centre not reopening, 83% of responses were favourable, 7% were not favourable and the remaining 10% were indifferent
- vi) 43% of respondents had attended Severn Road, of whom 15.9% had walked, with other respondents using public transport or own vehicle.
- vii) 94.4% of respondents would like to see Adult Learning provision in their local areas.

22. The report to Cabinet states, at **Point 34**, that *'Overall the survey was supportive of the proposed way forward, although some changes have been made to respond to the comments received.'*

23. **Point 39** of the report to Cabinet highlights ward councillors for Canton and Riverside were disappointed with the proposal to repurpose the use of Severn Road Adult Learning Centre and asked whether learning space could be made available in Canton Library; this has not proved possible. Ward councillors also asked that work be undertaken with Estates and Schools teams to ensure the building was put to best use should the proposals be agreed.

Previous Scrutiny

24. In August 2018, this Committee held a forum meeting to discuss the Welsh Government's consultation on the funding and delivery structure of adult learning in Wales. Consequently, the Chair, Councillor Howells, wrote to the Further Education & Apprenticeships Division of Welsh Government, expressing the Committee Members deep concern about the impact on adult learning in Cardiff that all the proposed models for delivery and associated funding changes will have if implemented. The letter was counted as an official response to the Consultation.

25. Since then, this Committee has kept a watching brief on adult community learning and Into Work services, via its performance and budget monitoring role and via scrutiny of the Corporate Plan and Budgetary Proposals. Following scrutiny of the draft Corporate Plan 2021-2024 and Budgetary Proposals 2021/22, the Chair, Councillor Howells, wrote to Councillor Weaver (Cabinet Member – Finance, Modernisation and Performance) capturing the Committee's comments and observations, including the following that are relevant to this scrutiny:

i) **Into Work Services**

Members recognise that demand for these services will increase this year, given the impact of the pandemic. Members were concerned that there was no growth bid for this area but are reassured to note the explanation that this is because £1m external funding has been secured to provide re-skilling and upskilling support.

ii) **Adult Learning**

With regard to Adult Learning, Members note the 5% cut in Welsh Government grant and that the Council is continuing to lobby Welsh Government to seek a reversal in this, particularly given the impact of the pandemic and the need to reskill and upskill people for different areas of work. Members welcome the increase in online learning opportunities that has resulted from the pandemic and urge that the Council increase this offer as far as possible within existing budgets.

Way Forward

26. Councillor Sarah Merry (Cabinet Member – Education and Lifelong Learning) and Councillor Chris Weaver (Cabinet Member – Finance, Modernisation and Performance) will be invited to make a statement. Jane Thomas (Director of Adults, Housing and Communities), Helen Evans (Assistant Director, Housing and Communities) and Hayley Beynon (Operational Manager – Advice) will attend to give a presentation. The whole panel will be available to answer Members' questions.

Legal Implications

27. 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

28. 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.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to:

- i) Consider the information in this report, its appendices and the information presented at the meeting
- ii) Determine whether they would like to make any comments, observations, or recommendations to the Cabinet on this matter in time for its meeting on 16 December 2021, and
- iii) Decide the way forward for any future scrutiny of the issues discussed.

DAVINA FIORE

Director of Governance & Legal Services

10 December 2021