

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**REGENERATION AND DEVOLUTION
CABINET MEMBER**

ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To approve the transfer of Adult Community Learning from Customer Services to Planning & Regeneration within the Places directorate.
- 1.2 The key points in this report are:
- Adult Community Learning currently sits within the Customer Services division of the Places directorate
 - The service is externally funded to deliver a wide range of informal and accredited learning provision across North Lincolnshire
 - Links with services in the Customer Services have mainly focused on synergies around informal and lifelong learning
 - There is an increasing strategic focus on the contribution that Adult Community Learning makes to the skills and employability agendas. This has led to closer links with Planning & Regeneration to deliver service and council and area priorities
 - We are proposing that the ACL service formally transfers to the Planning & Regeneration division in Places to further build on and develop these linkages.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Adult Community Learning (ACL) currently forms part of the Customer Services division in the Places directorate. The service delivers a range of learning opportunities to adults across North Lincolnshire. It operates through three dedicated centres, and many local community venues.
- 2.2 The ACL service is entirely funded through external grants and is subject to the Ofsted inspection regime. The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) provides the vast majority of funding through two core funding streams:
- Adult Skills budget – which funds formal, vocational, accredited learning
 - Community Learning – which focuses on informal, non-vocational learning.
- 2.3 The total SFA grant allocation for 2015/16 is c. £1.29m. The Adult Skills budget allocation is £575k and the Community Learning allocation amounts to £712k. The overall grant allocation has declined in recent years. It is vital that

we continue to ensure that funding is directed to best meet current and future priorities.

- 2.4 The two distinct funding streams allow ACL to offer a broad spectrum of learning opportunities. These range from informal arts and crafts taster sessions, through to functional skills courses, and higher qualifications in Business Administration and Teaching Support.
- 2.5 With its focus on learning in its broadest sense, the service is able to make a significant contribution to council and wider area priorities. This includes both improving people's skills and job prospects, and the wider social benefits that contribute to individual health and wellbeing and community resilience.
- 2.6 Historically, most service take up has been in informal community learning. In a council restructure in 2010 a decision was taken to align the service with libraries. The rationale for this at the time was to maximise on synergies with libraries in terms of promoting lifelong informal learning, and delivering more integrated services for customers at co-located sites.
- 2.7 This approach has to date proven successful, and ACL now works alongside libraries and Local Links to deliver joint approaches for adult literacy and provision of Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG).
- 2.8 In 2008 the ACL service was judged as Unsatisfactory by Ofsted. We have worked hard since then to improve on this, and in 2013 the service was judged to be Good in every category. We have ambitions to build on this and become an Outstanding provider. To achieve this, the service needs to continually reviews its priorities and ensure it is fit for future purpose.
- 2.9 In 2011 the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) published ***New Challenges, New Chances*** which set out the government's policy for future investment in skills. This put a clear emphasis on the role and capacity of learning in its broadest sense to contribute to economic recovery, employability skills and the creation of jobs.
- 2.10 The ACL service reviewed its strategic priorities in light of ***New Challenges, New Chances***. The Community Learning Strategy 2013-16 objectives for Adult Skills are to focus funding on those needing to access the jobs market, and widen participation on accredited programmes for employability skills, Maths and English. We also continue to recognise the value of more informal learning as a stepping stone for progression to more formal learning and skills.
- 2.11 The focus on skills and employability has seen ACL staff increasingly work with Planning and Regeneration colleagues to deliver services in the last two years. This includes:
 - More targeted ACL provision in Westcliff through the Westcliff task force
 - Part of the Action Station group and a commitment to a permanent presence at the Action Station
 - Contribution and participation in the Festival of Skills for October 2015
 - ACL delivery of apprenticeship programmes for council apprentices
 - An increasingly integral role in identifying and developing local skills needs and provision through links with Planning & Regeneration and the LEP
- 2.12 These changes are reflected in ACL enrolments. The numbers of learners enrolling on accredited courses has risen from 39% of total enrolments in 2012/13 to 46% in 2014/15. The largest area of ACL provision is in Maths, English and ESOL with c. 900 enrolments per year.

- 2.13 The Ofsted Inspection Framework is putting increased focus on governance arrangements. We are currently exploring ways to strengthen and support the understanding, development and accountability of the ACL service at all levels in the organisation. This includes ensuring that ACL is best placed within council structures to meet its future priorities and ambitions.
- 2.14 In light of the issues above and we believe it now makes sense to transfer ACL from Customer Services to the Planning & Regeneration division within the Places directorate.

3. **OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 **Option 1** – to transfer Adult Community Learning from Customer Services to the Planning and Regeneration division within the Places directorate, with effect from 1 October 2015.
- 3.2 **Option 2** – to retain Adult Community Learning within the Customer Services division of the Places directorate.

4. **ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Option 1 is the preferred option. This will enable Adult Community Learning to:
- Better deliver on its strategic priorities and contribute to the local skills and employability agenda
 - Improve opportunities to develop contacts with local employers and facilitate a more holistic planning approach to meet future skills needs
 - Improve opportunities through employer contacts to extend apprenticeship provision outside of the council
 - Improve potential to provide work placements for vulnerable adults through employer contacts
 - Become an integral part of the provision of excellent IAG through a sustained Action Station presence
 - Continue to work with Customer Services as part of the wider Places directorate offer through co-location and service links already in place
- 4.2 Option 2 would enable the ACL service to continue to build on the synergies within the Customer Services around more informal learning. However, we could miss opportunities to maximise the potential to drive up local skills and employability that closer alignment with Planning & Regeneration would bring.

5. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

5.1 Financial

- 5.1.1 ACL budgets would need to be vired from Customer Services to Planning & Regeneration once a transfer has been approved.

5.2 Staffing, Property and IT

- 5.2.1 There are no significant staffing implications. Line management changes will need to be made for the Head of Adult Community Learning to report directly to the Assistant Director Planning & Regeneration in future. We will inform all service staff of the reasons for the proposed changes.

- 5.2.2 There are no property or IT implications.

6. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

6.1 Not applicable.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DECLARED

7.1 The proposal has been discussed with the ACL Head of Service who supports the transfer of the service and the benefits of closer alignment with Planning & Regeneration.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 That the Cabinet Member approves the transfer of Adult Community Learning from Customer Services to Planning & Regeneration to take effect from 1 October 2015.

8.2 That the Assistant Director Planning and Regeneration and Head of Adult Community Learning develop an action plan in consultation with the Cabinet Member to ensure that the service is able to contribute fully to the emerging local skills and employability agenda in the future, thereby maximising the opportunities in these regards arising from the decision to locate the service as part of the Planning and Regeneration division.

DIRECTOR OF PLACES

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None