

REVIEW BY THE RESIDENTS, EDUCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE: HILLINGDON'S ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING SERVICE

Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor Susan O'Brien
Cabinet Portfolio(s)	Families, Education and Wellbeing
Officer Contact(s)	Neil Fraser, Democratic Services
Papers with report	Final review report

HEADLINES

Summary	To receive the final report detailing the review by the now retired Residents, Education and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee in 2020/21, which looked at the topic of adult and community learning within Hillingdon. The review makes some recommendations for Cabinet to consider.
Putting our Residents First	This report supports the following Council objectives of: Our People;
Financial Cost	There are no direct financial costs arising from the initial recommendations, however, any service changes arising will need to be funded from within approved budgets, including any external funding to the service.
Relevant Select Committee	Families, Health and Wellbeing.
Relevant Ward(s)	All.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet welcomes the Committee's findings from their review into adult and community learning in Hillingdon, and the recommendations outlined below, noting that their implementation will be taken forward with officers and by the Cabinet Member for Families, Education and Wellbeing:

Policy Overview Committee Recommendations

1. That Cabinet recognises the good work and improvisation of the HACL service during the recent COVID pandemic and notes the new ways of working identified and underway.

2. That the service be rebranded to ‘Hillingdon ACE’ (Adult Community Education), supported by a communications campaign to support a ‘soft relaunch’ of the service to stimulate demand and uptake of courses.
3. That the service continues with the new ways of working identified as a result of the pandemic, including use of technology, blended learning, new courses, increased interdepartmental and partnership working via new processes.
4. That officers continue lobbying the GLA to increase their grant funding allocation, in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Families, Education and Wellbeing, and also investigate other funding or lobbying options.
5. That Council continues to review and develop oversight and scrutiny, and includes an annual report to the Families, Education and Wellbeing Select Committee & Cabinet Member (inclusive of feedback from learners and tutors).

Reasons for recommendations

The recommendations have been suggested to enable the Council to address the challenges identified by the review and align officer actions to the exploration of further improvements, to ensure the continued provision and financial sustainability of the adult and community learning service.

Members will be aware that the final report for this review had not been finalised when the Council moved to new select committee arrangements in May 2021, though all witness and information gathering sessions had taken place.

With the committee no longer in existence, members from that previous committee have instead been actively involved informally in finishing the review's final report and recommendations.

To ensure their final review report and recommendations can now come forward to Cabinet in a formal manner, it was presented to the new Families, Education and Wellbeing Select Committee on 26 October 2021 which covers the remit of adult education. They endorsed the review and, therefore, it is now duly recommended to the Cabinet.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The Cabinet could decide to reject some or all of the Committee's recommendations.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

From the information presented to the Committee throughout the review, the Committee concluded that the service was one of great value to those residents that use it, not only through upskilling and providing a platform for employment and career development, but also as an avenue for social interaction and the promotion of mental health.

Via the review of the service by Ofsted in 2019, the service's own annual self-assessment together with resident feedback, the Committee also concluded that the service was

performing well, and the Committee was particularly impressed with the timely and effective measures put in place to support service continuity throughout the pandemic.

However, the Committee acknowledged the challenges ahead, and the potential for further improvements, to ensure the continued service and financial sustainability of the service.

Terms of Reference for the review:

1. To understand Hillingdon's current adult education service offering, including feedback from learners and from recent Ofsted inspections;
2. To review existing best practice and identify further innovative ways of working, as identified through research and examination of other local government and volunteer service providers;
3. To examine how the service is currently funded, any risk of reduced funding, and how to ensure service continuity or expansion through the identification of additional funding opportunities;
4. To identify budget considerations and determine the service's value for money proposition;
5. To examine departmental, partnership, and multi-agency working to identify any gaps and opportunities to draw together the different strands of activities, ensuring the service is agile and responsive and is meeting the needs of its learners; and
6. To make practical, prudent recommendations to Cabinet, (and other bodies if applicable), from the Committee's findings to support residents engaging with the service.

Information Gathering:

As part of its witness and evidence sessions, the Committee received direct evidence from the following witnesses:

- Service Manager, Adult and Community Learning
- Curriculum Manager for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities team
- Sessional tutor for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities
- Learner who completed ESOL and Maths courses during the lockdown period
- Ealing Adult Learning Manager
- Head of Adult Learning and Skills Service, LB Hammersmith and Fulham

Officer Comments on Recommendations where relevant

Officers are committed to providing a broad range of courses in ways that meet the needs of residents in the Borough, combining high quality teaching with innovation to ensure a level playing field to enable adults of all ages, ethnicities and abilities to achieve their potential.

Officers will continue to maximise the opportunities presented to residents through strong partnership working and look forward to furthering oversight and scrutiny as the service strives to achieve its potential.

Corporate Communications will support the officers to publicise the new service name and develop a new look and feel for its publicity materials. Corporate Communications will start to use the new service name across all marketing materials for the start of the 2022/23 academic year.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial costs arising from the initial recommendations, however, any service changes arising will need to be funded from within approved budgets, including any external funding to the service.

RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities?

The service continues to be a powerful resource for adults aged over 19 in Hillingdon who wish to improve their life chances and their emotional health and wellbeing. In particular, the opportunities provided by the service for adults facing additional disadvantage to improve their economic prospects and social wellbeing have proven to be both valuable to residents and valued by the council.

Consultation carried out or required

The Committee sought a wide range of internal witness testimony, as set out in the report.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial implications set out above, noting that there are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendations within this report.

Legal

The Borough Solicitor confirms that there are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.