

Report title: Adult Community Learning Update	
Report to: People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Report author: Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
Date: 10 November 2022	For: Consideration and identifying any follow-up scrutiny actions
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County Divisions affected: Not applicable	

1. Introduction

The Committee has previously been consulted on the development of an Adult Community Learning (ACL) Strategy. This is a further update.

2. Action required

The Committee is asked to consider:

- (i) **The attached update; and**
- (ii) **Identify any follow-up scrutiny actions**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Committee last discussed ACL services in May 2022 as part of considering an early draft of a proposed ACL Strategy. A link to the papers for that meeting are [here](#)
- 3.2 The Committee made a number of comments and suggestions and these are recorded in the extract of the minutes of that meeting attached as Appendix A.

4. Update and Next Steps

- 4.1 The update is attached in the Appendix B and C. Next steps are as proposed under Action Required.

Expected attendees to support the discussion:

County Councillor Tony Ball, Cabinet Member – Education Excellence, Life-Long Learning and Employability.

Lisa Jarentowski - Adult Community Learning Principal

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5. List of Appendices

- A. Extract of the minutes of the PAF meeting held on 12 May 2022.
- B. Briefing Paper – PAF Scrutiny Committee – Titled ACL Draft Strategic Plan
- C. Adult Community Learning – Strategic Plan 2022-2025

Extract of the Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 9.45am on Thursday, 12 May 2022 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Chelmsford

Agenda item 6: Adult Community Learning Strategy

The Committee considered report PAF/13/22 comprising of an update on the latest draft of the Adult Community Learning (ACL) Strategy.

The following people from Essex County Council attended the meeting to introduce the item, deliver a presentation and respond to questions:

- Councillor Tony Ball – Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Life-Long Learning and Employability,
- Katherine Burns – Adult Community Learning Principal.

The presentation included key facts and statistics on ACL, why a new strategy was needed, the background and purpose of the strategy and what it would offer including the goals and initiatives.

Following the presentation, the following was highlighted, raised and/or noted:

- i. The majority of ACL funding came from the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The Agency specified what ACL could charge for qualification courses and who was eligible for funding. The funding was fixed and had not been increased, this meant in real terms that funding had decreased by 50% over the last ten years. If internal income was increased ACL could have greater capacity and provide more courses but that was dependent on how much learners would pay for courses.
- ii. ACL generated fee income from learners which was reinvested to support learners who were unable to pay. Any surplus went towards overheads.
- iii. ACL had approximately 300 apprentices a year doing a range of programmes.
- iv. ACL worked with employers through the apprenticeship program and a business development team that worked across different sectors. There was also the current development of the local skills plan and there would be a skills roundtable for employers and other partners to contribute to the plan.
- v. ACL worked closely with the Skills and Employability team within ECC I to determine where the skills needs were. They were not able to respond to all sector skills shortfalls because they did not have the infrastructure that big colleges had. The focus was on establishing ACL's place in the market using the data available and working with particular sectors where that infrastructure was needed.

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- vi.Colchester was investing £900,000 in developing a digital hub within the Colchester ACL centre. Working digitally would be explored in the hub.
- vii.Due to digital learning, there was potential to work nationally with certain courses to enhance income and this would be explored.
- viii.Some courses were best delivered digitally whilst other courses needed to maintain in person teaching. In each ACL centre hybrid classrooms were currently being installed to allow people to have choice from the next academic year.
- ix.ACL co-located within Harlow town centre library, this felt to be the best place to deliver learning most accessibly for learners.
- x.ACL worked closely with libraries and had recently started to cross-pollinate within newsletters to promote each other's businesses within their respective services.
- xi.Promoting ACL on library community walls, in local authority newsletters and by distributing leaflets was suggested by committee members.

Conclusion

It was agreed that:

- Further information would be provided on the financial details,
- Information on numbers of apprentices there were with other providers in Essex would be provided,
- There should be stronger links with Everyone's Essex,
- A work-plan would be brought to the committee at a future meeting,
- The final strategy would come back to the committee.