

**PROPOSAL THAT CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL BECOMES THE LEAD ACCOUNTABLE BODY FOR INFORMAL ADULT LEARNING**

*To:* **Cabinet**

*Date:* **27<sup>th</sup> April 2010**

*From:* **Rod Craig Executive Director: Community and Adult Services**

*Electoral division(s):* **All**

*Forward Plan ref:* **Not applicable** *Key decision:* **No**

*Purpose:* **The authority has been invited to assume the role of Lead Accountable Body for Informal Adult Learning for Cambridgeshire. This report sets out the current position within the County, including the strong existing partnership approach, and the further opportunity presented by the invitation.**

*Recommendation:* **Cabinet is recommended to agree to Cambridgeshire County Council making an initial commitment to become a Lead Accountable Body for Informal Adult Learning, and also entering into dialogue with the Skills Funding Agency, along with key partners, to develop this new role.**

<b><i>Officer contact:</i></b>		<b><i>Member contact</i></b>	
Name:	Mike Hosking	Name:	Councillor David Harty
Post:	Service Director: Community Learning and Development	Portfolio:	Learning
Email:	<a href="mailto:Mike.hosking@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Mike.hosking@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>	Email:	<a href="mailto:David.harty@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">David.harty@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
Tel:	01223 727954	Tel:	01223 699173

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 In March 2009 a White Paper, 'The Learning Revolution' was published. This provides a new vision for Informal Adult Learning and the adult learning courses provided by most local authorities. (Informal Adult Learning is learning for personal development that does not lead directly to a formal qualification.)
- 1.2 It also includes informal adult learning that happens in other places such as libraries, museums, through reading groups, through self-organised activities, on-line, via broadcasting, in communities.
- 1.3 It uses as a catalyst the £210 million Learning and Skills Council funds called Adult Safeguarded Learning – this is currently used for personal and community development learning, neighbourhood learning for deprived communities and family learning – with the intention to join with other existing national and local lifelong learning budgets, for example, health, culture.
- 1.4 In April 2010 the Learning Skills Council (LSC) was abolished and adult learning is now managed by a new successor body called the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).
- 1.5 Local Authorities are being invited to take responsibility for the local agenda for this type of learning by becoming a Lead Accountable Body (LAB). This puts upper tier local authorities in a key position to be advocates for and facilitators of a local strategic vision for this non-skills learning and build it more effectively into their local priorities.
- 1.6 The wider benefits of learning are well documented and this new agenda gives local authorities an opportunity to look at informal adult learning and link it to well-being for all. This includes developing a culture of learning in families, responding to demographic changes in the community such as helping older people to keep mentally and physically active and fit, supporting communities through the after-effects of the recession, targeting activities to engage people in local democratic processes, engaging people in new digital technologies, learning for a green future.
- 1.7 Informal Adult Learning can often be a stepping stone to gaining new skills and qualifications and complements vocational learning. It is part of a broader learning and skills continuum that can enable citizens to keep learning throughout their lives.

## **2. MAIN ISSUES**

- 2.1 The County Council has now been formally invited by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) to become the Lead Accountable Body for Cambridgeshire. This can be as single authority or as a partnership of elected councils – this is a local choice. Throughout 2010-11 the LAB will work with other partners in an area, including those currently receiving this

funding, to develop the plan. From 2011-12 all the funding will then go through the LAB.

- 2.2 A Lead Accountable Body (LAB) will pull together all the partners in the area and develop a local plan for all types of informal adult learning. This will ensure that the learning meets local needs and supports a range of social and economic priorities of elected bodies.
- 2.3 Local authorities are being invited to innovate in the way they do this. The Skills Funding Agency will agree the headline targets in the plan. If local authorities chose to they can group together and have one LAB across a number of authorities – but this does not need to happen.
- 2.4 The LAB will manage all the funds for Informal Adult Learning going into the area, including those currently paid directly to Further Education Colleges (FE Colleges) and other organisations. There is a commitment from the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) to deregulate this area. This means increased flexibility in how the funding can be used, non-accredited learning will be looked at differently by Ofsted and there are discussions about the type of qualifications needed for those facilitating the informal learning activities.
- 2.5 The LAB will have to show how it is leveraging in extra funds in addition to those from the Skills Funding Agency, either in kind, such as through opening up new spaces, or through other means. It will also need to show an increase in overall learner numbers.
- 2.6 We do not know the full details of deregulation and the new flexibilities, the specific accountability requirements of the LAB or the precise details of the relationship between the LAB and the Skills Funding Agency. Local Authorities themselves have an important role in helping shape the actual arrangements and requirements. BIS have committed to protect the budget at the current level for 2010-11, but we don't know what happens after then.
- 2.7 Nevertheless within the context of Cambridgeshire Together a strong partnership already exists in the form of the Adult Learning and Skills Board which supports the Economic prosperity Theme and this provides a appropriate partnership basis to develop this role,

### **3. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

#### **3.1 Resources and Performance**

The resources and performance implications are as follows:

- The responsibilities involved in the role of Lead Accountable Body are currently managed through the Adult & Community Learning Service and this will continue, with the new Head of Service leading.
- The authority will be responsible for managing all funding for Informal Adult Learning.

### 3.2 Statutory Requirements and Partnership Working

- Within the context of Cambridgeshire Together this is an important element within the Economic Prosperity Theme and strongly links to the Skills and Worklessness agenda

### 3.3 Climate Change (Includes any climate change, greenhouse gas emissions and environment implications and where significant, they are set out below)

- No significant implications.

### 3.4 Access and Inclusion

- As in 3.2 above there is strong voluntary sector involvement in the informal learning agenda and this will enable closer cooperation and better use of resources. Likewise the focus of the Learning Revolution is to increase access to learning and this will be a priority for a Lead Accountable Body.

### 3.5 Engagement and Consultation

- No significant implications at this stage.

Source Documents	Location
The Learning Revolution	<a href="http://www.dius.gov.uk/Policies/further-education-skills/engaging-learners/informal-adult-learning/white-paper">http://www.dius.gov.uk/Policies/further-education-skills/engaging-learners/informal-adult-learning/white-paper</a>
Letter of invitation to become a Lead Accountable Body for BIS (see appendix to this report)	