

Cambridgeshire Skills Six-Month Review

To: Communities, Social Mobility and Inclusion Committee

Meeting Date: 19 October 2023

From: Executive Director of Strategy and Partnerships

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: For the Committee to receive information relating to key progress made by Cambridgeshire Skills

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:
Note the contents of the report.

Officer contact:

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1. Background

- 1.1 Cambridgeshire Skills is the Council's adult education service and part of the Communities Employment and Skills service area within the Strategy and Partnerships Directorate. It is funded externally through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) and the Department for Education (DfE), with total funding currently at £2.55m. This is for the provision of adult learning and training that is aligned to the ambitions of the Council and the CPCA's Skills Strategy.
- 1.2 During the last six months, a key focus of the service has been working with officers in the Libraries and Communities teams to integrate the offer with other areas of the newly formed directorate, matching its curriculum plans to the priorities set out in the Council's Strategic Framework while ensuring its contractual obligations are met.
- 1.3 An overview of the service in September 2023:
- £2.55m in external funding
 - 2500 learners, with 4000 enrolments
 - 52 members of staff
 - 75 delivery venues spread evenly across the county
 - 12 community based external sub-contractors
 - 642 courses delivered in 2022/23 academic year
 - 132 face to face careers guidance sessions provided
 - £25,000 of hardship funding allocated to support learners

2. Main Issues

2.1 Funding

- 2.1.1 The CPCA has moved from issuing annual contracts and has now issued a two-year funding agreement for the academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25. The total amount of funding has increased by 11%, as shown in the table below, with additional funding for Free Courses For Jobs (FCFJ) and Multiply. The contract held directly with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for Adult Education Budget (AEB), for learners who enrol on courses but reside outside of the CPCA's area, has also increased.

Funding stream	2022/23	2023/24 & 2024/25	Growth
AEB (CPCA)	£2,000,000	£2,000,000	0%
FCFJ	£50,000	£200,000	150%
Multiply	£95,000	£200,000	111%
AEB (ESFA)	£135,000	£150,000*	10%
Total	£2,280,000	£2,550,000	11%

*ESFA annual contract for 1 year (2023/24)

- 2.1.2 Some additional funding has been secured from South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) to deliver English lessons to asylum seekers currently being housed at the Bar Hill hotel. Guests with asylum seeker status are not eligible for CPCA funding until they have been in the UK for six months or more, and SCDC is covering the costs for learners where that applies.

2.2 Unique learners, course enrolments and learner distribution data

2.2.1 In total, there were 2482 unique learners from September 2022 to August 2023, with some learners enrolling on more than one course. This is a 15% increase on the same period the previous year.

2.2.2 In total, there were 3935 course enrolments, a 21% increase on the previous year. The retention rate of learners who enrolled and completed their course was 96%, representing a 3% increase on the previous year.

2.2.3 Learners are spread across the county and 75 venues are used. Courses have been regularly delivered in Huntingdon, St Neots and Wisbech libraries for the first time, adding to provision that was already being delivered in Cambridge Central and Ely libraries.

District	Learners by district (home address)
Cambridge City	17%
East Cambridgeshire	15%
Fenland	21%
Huntingdonshire	19%
South Cambridgeshire	19%
Out of county*	9%

*ESFA funding for out of county learners is only 7.5% of total funding. Funding is not equal per learner, it is dependent on the course that they take, and courses' values vary from £100 to £3,000, which is why these two figures are different.

2.3 Curriculum Highlights/Challenges

2.3.1 Family Learning - Working with ten Primary Schools and eight Child and Family Centres in deprived and targeted areas to deliver courses that are specifically designed to enable parents to learn how to support their child's learning.

2.3.2 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) - Continued growth with 724 learners enrolled. This increase of 137% in demand from 305 learners in 2021/22, has seen tutor capacity increase from two to eleven. There are 95 learners active on courses being delivered at Bar Hill hotel. The service is also delivering courses at the Dolphin Hotel (St Ives) and in the Rose and Crown (Wisbech) to asylum seekers. An ESOL job club has been established in partnership with Cambridge City Council and SCDC Ukrainian Hub. The service is working in partnership with The Cambridge Russian Speaking Society, which is supporting an additional 180 Ukrainian ESOL learners. In addition, there are 54 learners who have recently arrived in the UK from Hong Kong.

2.3.3 Digital - A new offer for this academic year, with a programme pathway from complete beginners to formal qualifications to Level 3. It provides essential skills needed to safely benefit from, participate in and contribute to the digital world of today and tomorrow, in life and at work.

2.3.4 Challenges – Conversion rates from initial engagement to actual enrolments in Wisbech and parts of Fenland is lower than other areas. For ESOL learners the service is working

with partners and additional follow-ups are used to address this. Achievement rates for the Maths Level 2 qualification are lower than other areas of the service, while still above the national average, and this is a concern for the service. Specialist Continuing Professional Development has been put in place to help support the maths tutors.

2.4 Working with other council departments

2.4.1 In order to get best value from the external funding the service receives, it has increased the work it does with other departments within the Council, to enhance their offer by funding provision that enables them to better achieve their goals. These include:

- The Early Childhood Qualification Centre now offers qualifications which enable early childhood careers and pathways to those wishing to enter, remain or gain promotion in a childcare setting.
- Education to enable local schools and settings to be able to offer Forest School sessions from qualified staff.
- Grafham Water Outdoor Centre offers a range of Family Learning activities.
- Targeted Support Service (Child & Family Centres) offer funded parenting programmes for identified and targeted families.
- The Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) funds courses to support individuals to set up and maintain their own business.
- The Traveller Health team provides one to one employability programmes to support members of the Gypsy Roma Traveller community into work or other positive destinations.
- The Communities service delivers a range of courses to support local voluntary organisations and individuals to better support young people.

2.5 Work with the Gypsy Roma Traveller (GRT) Community

2.5.1 Through an internal partnership with Public Health's Traveller Health Team (THT), the amount of learning and positive outcomes have significantly increased. This is down, in no small part, to the dedication and commitment of the THT. This was recognised nationally recently, when a Project Development Officer, Rose Wilson, was awarded a Certificate of Achievement for "her commitment to learning" at the annual Festival of Learning.

2.5.2 In the last academic year, the THT has supported over 33 members of the GRT community, with a range of learning from Functional Skills qualifications, Community Learning and Multiply activities. Comprising of drop-ins with other services, one to one support, and online and group activity, the THT ensures that as many members of the community as possible can access the learning it offers.

2.5.3 One strand of the work focuses on adult literacy and supporting learners to achieve the required level for the Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) theory test. THT has established a

partnership with Peterborough Regional College, with 14 learners going on to start HGV training in 2022/23. A case study is attached at Appendix 1 of this report.

- 2.5.4 This summer, the THT delivered a Community Learning course on Water Safety, which provided GRT families an opportunity to learn about swimming, healthy lifestyles and even some maths. The sessions were primarily aimed at children from GRT families, with additional spaces offered to attendees of the Child and Family Centres (CFC). Families were recruited by the THT and volunteers at the CFCs, as well as Traveller volunteers.
- 2.5.5 Throughout these events, it was noted how well GRT families integrated with non-Traveller families. It was also apparent that GRT families and non-Traveller families attending did not use local leisure facilities for swimming and sporting activities, due to a lack of confidence and because they were too expensive.
- 2.5.6 The sessions were attended by 122 adults and 238 children over the four weeks the programme ran. Alongside the learning activity, several community partners attended to provide advice and support to the attendees, including the Fire and Rescue Service, Community Safety (Fenland District Council), a police constable from Community Policing, Library Service, Healthwatch, Targeted Support Services and the SUN Network mental health charity.
- 2.5.7 The programme was a great success, not only in achieving its principal outcome of improving water safety, but also engaging with a large number of people and linking them with other services and enabling them to consider undertaking further learning.
- 2.5.8 The THT's work has enabled the service to have far higher engagement levels and enrolment numbers from the GRT community than from neighbouring local authority adult education providers who are part of the local peer network, which includes Norfolk, Central Bedfordshire, Bedford Borough and Hertfordshire.

3. Alignment with ambitions

- 3.1 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes.

Cambridgeshire Skills is developing a range of courses that help improve residents' Carbon Literacy, Green Skills, Biodiversity and help people gain the skills to work in new Green Industries.

Working with the Council's Waste Management team Education Centre at Waterbeach to devise a range of standalone courses and modules which can be embedded into all courses, to help maximise recycling and reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill.

- 3.2 Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable.

Cambridgeshire Skills utilises the library network and other Council buildings to ensure face to face courses are delivered in easily accessible and local venues. The service is enhancing its hybrid/online offer to provide choices and reduce travel where possible.

3.3 Health inequalities are reduced.

There is a well-established relationship between poor education and health inequalities. People with lower levels of education often have poorer health outcomes compared to those with higher levels of education. By increasing the education levels, with a specific focus on English/ESOL, will improve access to health services and the ability of individuals to prevent/manage health conditions.

Cambridgeshire Skills works closely with local social prescribers to promote training and development opportunities for individuals seeking to improve their health and well-being as an alternative to medication.

3.4 People enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs.

The service will further develop and enhance the impact of its Independent Living Skills programme for adults with disabilities and/or learning difficulties to ensure that it focuses on gaining learners the skills they need to support their personal development, live independent lives, and gain meaningful employment.

3.5 Helping people out of poverty and income inequality.

Cambridgeshire Skills provide the Essential Skills and ESOL courses that are the foundation for securing, sustaining and progressing in paid employment.

In addition, the service provides high quality, impartial Careers Advice that supports people into work directly or through learning/apprenticeship opportunities.

Multiply interventions provide residents with the skills to better manage their money.

3.6 Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised.

The Business & Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC), now funded by Cambridgeshire Skills, will work with subject matter experts to deliver a programme of business support to aspiring and existing entrepreneurs, equipping learners with the key skills required to run successful businesses, including budgeting, finance, sales, and marketing. Programmes will be made up of a combination of one to ones, workshops, webinars and events.

People are able to gain the Digital Skills to fully participate in local democracy and can access a full range of services that are available online.

The service will continue to work with the Traveller Health Team to provide vocational learning to the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community that provides a pathway into paid employment.

3.7 Children and young people have opportunities to thrive.

Working with the Early Years Qualification Centre to develop and deliver courses that provide the skills to increase capacity and quality of the Early Years workforce.

Develop and deliver Family Learning courses for parents/carers to improve their parenting skills and have the knowledge and understanding to support children's education, giving them greater opportunities to achieve.

The service delivers courses that help parents and carers keep themselves and their families safe online.

4 Significant Implications

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes
Name of Financial Officer: Clare Andrews

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement and Commercial? Yes
Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or Pathfinder Legal? Yes
Name of Legal Officer: Emma Duncan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your EqIA Super User? Yes
Name of Officer: Sue Grace

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications? Yes
Name of Officer: Sarah Silk

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes
Name of Officer: Sue Grace

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health? Yes
Name of Officer: Kate Parker

If a Key decision, have any Climate Change and Environment implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?
N/A
Name of Officer:

5. Source Documents

5.1 None.