

## Cambridgeshire Skills Six-Month Review

To: Communities and Partnership Committee

Meeting Date: 3 December 2020

From: Assistant Director: Skills, Employment and Libraries, Pat Carrington

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: For the Committee to be appropriately briefed on matters relating to the delivery of the Cambridgeshire Skills service delivery plan for the academic year 2019/20, and on the direction of travel for the current academic year.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to:

- a) Note the progress of the Service operating as Cambridgeshire Skills;
- b) Comment on the ways the service has adapted to the ongoing impacts caused by the pandemic; and
- c) Suggest additional opportunities for the service to explore that will help meet the Council's objectives and support our communities.

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# 1. Background

- 1.1 Cambridgeshire Skills is the County Council's adult education service, funded through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) and the Department for Education (DfE). This grant funding, currently £2.3 million per annum, is for the provision of adult learning and training that is aligned to the County Council's priorities and the CPCA's Skills Strategy.
- 1.2 In 2018, the former service of Cambridgeshire Adult Learning and Skills Service transferred to the Communities and Safety service directorate and to the responsibility of the Communities and Partnership Committee. The Committee approved a proposal for the service to be managed through a Governing Board, which is chaired by the Chair of the Communities and Partnership Committee.
- 1.3 Prior to August 2019, adult education in Cambridgeshire was funded by the Department of Education. Since August 2019, the Adult Education Budget within Cambridgeshire has been devolved to the Combined Authority, who have prescribed the types, levels and geographical locations that are the priorities for delivery in this area.
- 1.4 In order to identify what would be required by the new service moving forward and running up to this transition of the new funding methodology, the Governing Board commissioned the Assistant Director for the service to carry out a review of the service and our preparedness for these funding changes. This review became the evidence base used to design the service and inform and make recommendations to the Committee.
- 1.5 Since the last report to the Committee, the focus of the Service has been to ensure it is operationally ready to deliver an adult skills service that meets both the council's priorities and its contractual requirement.

# 2. Progress of the Delivery plan

- 2.1 As referred to above, the transfer of the service to a new directorate and a new Committee enabled a full service review to be undertaken. This review resulted in a full service redesign, and a repurposed and rebranded service, Cambridgeshire Skills.
- 2.2 Since August 2019, Cambridgeshire Skills has achieved a number of important milestones, including securing the £2.15m contract with the CPCA and £146k via the Education Skills and Funding Agency. These contracts support enrolments and funding targeted at those furthest away from learning and work and to upskill others.
- 2.3 The Adult Education provision has been designed to meet corporate priorities of the Council's Business Plan, specifically:
  - A good quality of life for everyone
  - Thriving places for people to live
  - The best start for Cambridgeshire's children
- 2.4 The approach the Council is taking to develop place-based delivery models for all services was a key enabler in delivering targeted adult learning across the county.

In addition to meeting the needs of the Council, the service is meeting the CPCA priorities for adult skills through the:

- Development of skills to gain a job
- Retraining / reskilling to change employment
- Upskilling those in work, particularly those in low skill, low paid work
- Providing education and training opportunities to those who are furthest away from learning and work
- More recently, providing support for post-Covid social and economic recovery

2.5 The CPCA identified the importance of targeting provision in the areas of greatest need in Cambridgeshire, namely Fenland and East Cambridgeshire. Therefore, Cambridgeshire Skills have approached this by providing a hub and spoke model, with two bases and a large spoke in the targeted geographical areas:

- March Community Centre hub (similar to a local College) that serves Fenland and Huntingdonshire
- Library Learning Centre space in Ely, which has been redeveloped to become the East Cambridgeshire hub that also provides learning to South Cambridgeshire
- Cambridge Central Library, which delivers learning in Cambridge City

2.6 To further enable place-based delivery across the priority areas set out above, Cambridgeshire Skills delivered from 51 “spoke” delivery sites up to the first Covid lockdown. These are a combination of libraries, community centres, children’s centres, local schools, partner and employer venues and other venues conducive to deliver a positive and nurturing adult learning experience. The Head of Service has met with all four County Council Community Champions to promote the service.

2.7 Cambridgeshire Skills delivered learning to 1,732 residents up to the first Covid lockdown on 23 March 2020, with 2,100 residents in the pipeline for the Summer term. Courses ranged from accredited and non-accredited Basic Skills programmes – namely English, Maths, IT and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). It has also developed a range of accredited and non-accredited vocational programmes to meet local needs. Examples of this include Retail, Customer Service, Volunteering, and Teaching Assistant training. As a result of this:

- 240 classes ran in 51 venues, 62% of the classes were held in Fenland/Huntingdonshire and 38% in East Cambridgeshire/South Cambridgeshire/Cambridge City
- In addition to the direct delivery classes above, we worked with 13 subcontracted partners to extend our reach further
- 85% of all learners were retained for the duration of their course *(Due to Covid a number of learners were put on a temporary learning break and were unable to continue to the end of the course. This has impacted on the overall retention figure reported. 8% of learners were put on a temporary learning break)*
- 92% of all learners achieved their learning objective, with 6% achieving via a calculated result
- Overall 65% of learners have progressed, with those that were unemployed at

enrolment having progressed as below:

- 38% into further education/learning
- 12% into employment
- 2% into volunteering

Cambridgeshire Skills also worked with some local employers, including G's to upskill English language in their workforce, Citizen's Advice to offer safeguarding and financial literacy classes to volunteers and staff, RAF Marham and the Chatteris Business Cluster.

- 2.8 The service continues to work closely with the Cambridgeshire Libraries service and this was further strengthened during lockdown. We supported over 500 residents through a new, collaborative initiative, 'Open New Doors'. This project, developed alongside the library service, City College Peterborough and Civic, pulled together, in one place, a variety of activities, experiences and learning for our residents to try.

Residents were able to take a virtual tour through the Discovery Section, get crafty through our free craft pack distribution to individuals and families, learn how to sew scrub bags to donate to the NHS and care homes through the sewing bee campaign, learn new skills for work (or even a career change), and access our library resources through Libraries.Live.

In addition to this, the Library service were able to secure 10 free devices (including a data bundle) donated by the Good Things Foundation, and these were delivered as part of the Open New Doors initiative.

- 2.9 Cambridgeshire Skills continues to signpost to community "club" provision such as Makaton / internet clubs provided by the Voluntary Sector.
- 2.10 The academic year for 2019/20 was significantly different from any previous academic year due to Covid. Following the lockdown on 23 March 2020, 45% of the team were redeployed into the County Coordination Hub. The remainder of team members very quickly diversified into writing online content and courses and although we could not convert all pipeline enrolments, over 300 residents studied online to either attend a new class or complete their pre-Covid course.

All learners were supported throughout lockdown with support calls and the continuation of learning where possible.

Staff largely worked from home from 23 March through to 2 September 2020. Although some centres will not yet allow face-face-delivery we have returned to the office on a bubble rota to ensure we are available for our learners and to support the wellbeing of our team.

- 2.11 During 2019, the service was assessed for, and maintained, the Matrix award which is required in order to deliver Government and CPCA adult skills contracts. The Matrix Standard is a unique quality standard for organisations to assess and measure their advice and support services, supporting individuals in their choice of career, learning, work and life goals.
- 2.12 In order to ensure quality and up to date resources for our learners, the service upgraded all its computers at Cambridge Central and Ely Libraries. Alongside this, an essential fibre

broadband was installed in March Community Centre to increase the bandwidth capacity from 3mbps to 74mbps. The service also purchased 4 portable 72" smart screens to improve the adult learning experience when delivering digital skills. The service continues to grow its IT function and will offer a laptop loan service in the 2020/21 academic year and will upgrade the computers in March Community Centre.

- 2.13 The Service was successful in winning a £400k Capital bid from the CPCA Growth Fund. This grant will refurbish aspects of March Community Centre and create 5 more vocational classrooms. In addition to this, the community space will expand for our stakeholders and continue to be the vibrant centre for the residents in the surrounding area. Although there has been some project creep due to Covid, the contractor, Gleeds, have been appointed and work commences in the next 6-8 weeks.
- 2.14 Looking forward, the delivery plan for 2020/21 has been planned around the principles of post-Covid social and economic recovery. This includes the demand for re-skilling those residents who now find themselves unemployed or claiming Universal Credit and looking for work, supporting businesses, traineeship and Kickstart programmes to support 18-24 year olds, increasing digital inclusion and social mobility and meeting the priorities of our 'Cambridgeshire Local' place-based working model. The service will also be making extensive use of the new Cambridgeshire Local Outreach Vehicle.
- 2.15 The voice of the local authority continues to be represented at a strategic level with our funders. Both the Assistant Director and Head of Service sit on the CPCA Adult Learning Steering Group. In addition, the Assistant Director is a prominent member of the Combined Authority's Skills and Employment Board and has regular meetings with the Combined Authority's Director for Business and Skills in order to support, advise and influence the direction of skills across the County.
- 2.16 Critical to Cambridgeshire Skills success is strong leadership. The Governing Board is now well established and has been invaluable to the development of the Service. Governors have a breadth of knowledge and experience which has been integral to the success of the new service to date, offering strategic direction, challenge and support. The Governing Board meets bi-monthly, and in addition to these meetings has formed two sub groups: one for quality and curriculum; the other for finance and resources. The Chair of the Governing Board is also the Chair of the Communities and Partnership Committee which is where the overall governance responsibility lies. The Committee receives copies of the Governing Board minutes and a minimum of two reports a year from Cambridgeshire Skills.

### 3. Alignment with corporate priorities

#### 3.1 A good quality of life for everyone

The objectives the service commits to deliver and use its funding to support include:

- To advance education
- To relieve unemployment
- To relieve poverty
- To advance health
- To improve social mobility
- To improve digital inclusion
- The promotion of community participation in healthy recreation, in particular by

the provision of facilities for the playing of sports and related activities

### 3.2 Thriving places for people to live

The service has increased delivery in the targeted areas of need identified in local social and economic data. This has improved the work and life prospects of local residents.

### 3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

We have engaged and provided skills to adults to improve support for children and families. Service Managers continue to work with the local primary schools and the Child and Family Centre Managers to devise pre-entry literacy and other courses and qualifications which will support improved literacy and other skills for local families. We are in the process of distributing 50 digital devices and internet dongles through the Connecting Families project to improve digital inclusion.

### 3.4 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050

All work to be carried out during the refurbishment of March Community Centre has been approved by the Strategic Property Board and the new heating system complies with the Council's aspiration to have net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

## 4. Significant Implications

### 4.1 Resource Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

### 4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

### 4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

### 4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

The work carried out by the service is often with the county's most vulnerable residents and as such makes a positive contribution to issues of equality and accessibility.

### 4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The Service operates in partnership with local community and voluntary organisations.

### 4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

At the heart of the Adult Learning and Skills Service is its local engagement and place-based delivery. The development of the service has resulted in the provision of three discrete learning centres, one in March, one in Cambridge City and another in Ely. In addition, the Service continues to work to identify accessible, local buildings from which to deliver community-based learning, albeit this is proving more difficult in the current Covid climate.

The Governing Board has both County Council and District Council representation.

#### 4.7 Public Health Implications

Public health are a partner of the Adult Learning and Skills Service and is represented on our Governing Board.

The Public Health implications of this paper are positive. Improving access to adult training opportunities with appropriate targeting and positioning of the services will help address health and wellbeing inequalities across Cambridgeshire.

**Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes**

Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

**Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement? Yes**

Name of Officer: Gus de Silva

**Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? Yes**

Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan

**Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?**

Yes

Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman

**Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications? Yes**

Name of Officer: Christine Birchall

**Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes**

Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman

**Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health? Yes**

Name of Officer: Val Thomas

## 5. Source documents guidance

### 5.1 Source documents

N/A