

Cambridgeshire Skills Six-Month Review

- To: Communities, Social Mobility, and Inclusion Committee
- Meeting Date: 8 July 2021
- From: Assistant Director for Skills, Employment and Libraries, Pat Carrington
- Electoral division(s): All
- Key decision: No
- Outcome: Cambridgeshire Skills, the County Council's adult learning and skills service, will continue to improve and enhance its offer to those furthest from learning or employment, impacting positively on our ambition to reduce poverty and social immobility.
- Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:
- a) Comment on the six-month progress of the service operating as Cambridgeshire Skills; and
 - b) Identify other priority areas of focus to support the council's overall priorities.

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1. Background

- 1.1 Cambridgeshire Skills (formerly Cambridgeshire Adult Learning and Skills Service) is the County Council's adult education service, funded through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and the Department for Education (DfE). This grant funding, currently £2.3 million, is for the provision of adult learning and training that is aligned to the County Council's priorities, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's (CPCA) Skills Strategy, and the Post-Covid Local Economic Recovery Strategy (LERS).
- 1.2 The performance of Cambridgeshire Skills is the accountability of this Committee. It's predecessor – the Communities and Partnership Committee - approved a proposal for the service to be managed through a Governing Board, which would hold delegated responsibility for the service. As a condition of that agreement, the service is required to report its progress to Committee at least every 6 months.
- 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 Since the last report to Committee in December 2020, the focus of the Service has been to ensure it meets the outcomes set out in its delivery plan to meet both the council's priorities and its contractual requirements.
- 1.5 This report is therefore reporting on the service's progress in the preceding 6 months.
- 1.6 Cambridgeshire Skills' vision and curriculum intent can be found in Appendix 1.

2. Main Issues

- 2.1 Since December 2020, Cambridgeshire Skills can report many successes, including 3,012 enrolments onto courses to support residents' economic and social wellbeing. These enrolments target those furthest away from learning and work and to upskill those with a lower skill set.
- 2.2 The strategy theme of developing a place-based delivery model across all service has been a key success factor of delivering targeted adult learning across the county. In addition to meeting the needs of the Council, Cambridgeshire Skills are 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

- 2.3 The CPCA identified the importance of targeting provision in the areas of greatest need in Cambridgeshire, namely Fenland and East Cambridgeshire. Therefore, Cambridgeshire Skills has approached this by providing a hub and spoke model with one Head Office hub and two large spoke venues in the targeted geographical areas:
- March Community Centre hub, serving Fenland and Huntingdonshire
 - Ely Library Learning Centre, with space redeveloped to become the East Cambridgeshire spoke that also provides learning to South Cambridgeshire
 - Cambridge Central Library, serving Cambridge City.
- 2.4 To further enable place-based delivery across the priority areas set out above, Cambridgeshire Skills delivered from 51 community delivery sites up to the first Covid lockdown. These were a combination of libraries, community centres, children's centres, local schools, partner and employer venues and any venue conducive to delivering a positive and nurturing adult learning experience. Covid has hampered our ability to deliver from our place-based venues in the past 6 months, and as a result, the large majority of our provision has been online. During 2021 – 2022, it is our intention to grow again our place-based venues to support local delivery to local residents.
- 2.5 In January 2021, Cambridgeshire Skills was successful in gaining 50 donated IT devices (and data bundles) from the Good Things Foundation and these were distributed to families in target geographies to support digital inclusion and their learning. We also ran a small laptop loan scheme to support those learners who did not have access to hardware or data to support the completion of their learning.
- 2.6 Cambridgeshire Skills has achieved 3,012 enrolments from 1 August 2020 up to the end of May 2021. Due to Covid restrictions, lockdowns, and the loss of the majority of our community venue bookings, these enrolments have been largely delivered online. Courses have ranged from accredited and non-accredited Basic Skills programmes, namely English, Maths, IT, Family Learning, and courses for 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.

In addition to the direct delivery classes above, we work with 16 strategically placed subcontracted partners to extend our reach further.

- 2.7 96% of learners have been retained and 82% have achieved their programmes, with a forecast maximum of 95% by the end of the academic year in July 2021. Currently 67% of learners have progressed, with those that were unemployed at enrolment having progressed as below:
- 62% into employment (515 people)
 - 3% into self-employment (26 people)
 - 2% into volunteering (21 people)

In total, our current social return on investment is in excess of £7m¹, meaning that for every £1 of contract used to date, there is a £4.57 social return.

¹ Calculated via the [socialvalueengine.com](https://www.socialvalueengine.com)

2.8 Cambridgeshire Skills has also worked with internal stakeholders and some local employers, including G's to upskill English language in their workforce, and both the County Council and Fenland District Council to support the upskilling of staff and residents in Level 2 and 3 programmes. Examples of this latter service include a service level agreement with the Traveller Health Team to support Travellers to develop their literacy and life skills leading to further formal learning and employment, and a blossoming relationship with our Early Years and Learning & Development teams for Level 2 and Level 3 delivery. We also supported those being made redundant by local firm, Bartletts by providing opportunities for further learning or signposting to jobs in the employer premises. The service continues its partnership with the Library Service and Social Mobility teams, and this has been further strengthened during the pandemic.

Cambridgeshire Skills is also administering the internal delivery of the Council's Apprenticeship Levy on behalf of the Learning and Development team. This was previously administered via LGSS.

- 2.9 During 2020, the service was assessed and maintained the Matrix award which is required in order to deliver Government and CPCA adult skills contracts. The Matrix Standard, 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.
- 2.10 We are in the process of piloting a job club model in Huntingdonshire in collaboration with the District Council and have commissioned Social Echo to run the job club in Yaxley. Brampton, Huntingdon, St Ives, and St Neots are to follow in the next 3 months.
- 2.11 As part of our contractual arrangements with the CPCA, Cambridgeshire Skills was selected for a full financial audit in November 2020 and Mazars undertook this remotely. The audit highlighted several areas of good practice and the error rate of less than 5% was recorded. Therefore, the audit was deemed satisfactory. This was the best possible result the service could achieve as the only other audit result indicator was unsatisfactory.
- 2.12 During 2020, the Service was successful in winning a £400k Capital bid from the CPCA Growth Fund. This grant has refurbished aspects of March Community Centre and created five more vocational classrooms and the work completed in May 2021. In addition to the education side, the community space will expand for our stakeholders and continue to be the vibrant centre for the residents in the surrounding area. There will be a soft opening of the centre in August of this year, with a formal opening being organised for October 2021.
- 2.13 Looking forward, the delivery plan for 2021/22 has been planned for post-Covid social and economic recovery. This includes the demand for re-skilling those residents who now find themselves claiming Universal Credit and looking for work, supporting businesses, programmes to support 18-24 year olds, increasing digital inclusion and social mobility and meeting the priorities of our 'Think Communities' place-based working model. The service will also review its English language provision, ensuring it's meeting the needs of all of our residents including refugees.
- 2.14 The voices of the Local Authority and local people continue to be represented at 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

- 2.15 Critical to Cambridgeshire Skills' success is strong governance. The current 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 Service to date, offering strategic direction, challenge, and support. In addition to these meetings, there are two sub-groups: one for quality and curriculum and the other for finance and resources. With the new joint administration, we are in the process of appointing our new Chair. 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 Communities at the heart of everything we do

The report above sets out the implications for this priority. In addition:

Our vision is to:

- deliver countywide place-based Adult Education
- promote and develop peoples' social mobility and economic wellbeing
- engage with business, partners, and other stakeholders to identify the skills needed both now and in the future, to help drive the economy (including Covid recovery).

The vision places people and place at the heart of everything we do, and our team all have this values-based culture instilled in them.

3.2 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, including healthy eating

3.3 Helping our children learn, develop and live life to the full

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 have donated and distributed 50 devices and internet dongles through the Connecting Families project to improve digital inclusion.

3.4 Cambridgeshire: a well-connected, safe, clean, green environment

All work 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 be net zero carbon by 2050.

3.5 Protecting and caring for those who need us

Cambridgeshire Skills have a statutory duty to protect our learners through our comprehensive safeguarding policy and procedures.

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, however this is proving 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

4.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas

4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Positive Status:

Explanation: Refurbishment work to our Head Office has made the heating system more efficient and has reduced the Centre's carbon footprint.

4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: N/A

Explanation:

4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats, and land management.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: N/A

Explanation:

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: N/A

Explanation:

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability, and management:

Positive/neutral/negative Status: N/A

Explanation:

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: N/A

Explanation:

4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: N/A

Explanation:

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: Henry Swan

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? No
Name of Officer: Val Thomas

If a Key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by
the Climate Change Officer? No
Name of Officer: Not required as not a key decision