

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	20 June 2019
Subject:	Acceptance of Adult Education Budget Grant to Support Sefton Adult Community Learning Service		
Report of:	Head of Economic Growth and Housing	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regeneration and Skills		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

The Adult Education Budget is part of the Liverpool City Region Devolution deal on employment & skills from the next academic year. The offer which has now been made to Sefton Council for the academic year 2019/20 therefore comes from the Combined Authority rather than the Education Skills Funding Agency, as it has done in previous years. The level of grant available to Sefton has been increased from the 18/19 allocation of £787k to £820k, an additional inclusion of a sum of £150,000 for the operation of some agreed “test and learn” pilot activities.

Recommendation(s):

(1) Note the offer of £969,724 Adult Education Budget funding available to Sefton Council, which is ring-fenced for the delivery of adult community learning provision for residents aged over 19.

(2) Accept a formal offer of funding, in consultation with Head of Corporate Resources, from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority when this is available, entering into a contractual agreement with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

Sefton Council is requested to undertake this key decision at this time in order to maintain continuity of service for adult learners and allow the Service to make necessary arrangements for service planning and resource decisions for the year ahead.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

The only alternative option would be to not accept the offer of Adult Education Budget. Refusal of the grant would result in Sefton Council being unable to deliver this important service for adults who need introductory or second chance learning to improve their wellbeing and employability. The Service is well established and well regarded; it fulfils a

considerable need within our communities and directly contributes to the Council's Vision and values and is central to the achievement of our corporate objectives. The option to discontinue a Community Learning Service has therefore been rejected.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The decision relates to the acceptance of grant flowing into the Council and does not incur any additional costs to the Council as the operations will be funded entirely by the AEB grant.

(B) Capital Costs

N/A

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): There are no resource implications as this proposal relates to funding flowing in to the Council
Legal Implications: There are no legal implications
Equality Implications There are no equality implications

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Adult Community Learning offers opportunities for residents who have had less favourable educational attainment to access second chance learning opportunities to improve their confidence and wellbeing. The Service targets a high proportion of learners who are vulnerable in terms of low skills, long term worklessness, BAME, Learning difficulties and other disabilities.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: A key focus of the Adult Community Learning curriculum is on promoting community cohesion and connectivity.
Commission, broker and provide core services: Adult Community Learning offers sub-contracting opportunities to high quality local delivery partners
Place – leadership and influencer: Adult learning has a strong influence in civic awareness and the promotion of pride and cohesion in communities

<p>Drivers of change and reform: Adult Community Learning has a key role to play in the further development of the Council's strategy for early intervention and prevention and wider public-sector reform.</p>
<p>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Improving the skills of the workforce is central to this Service's objectives and the Council's wider aims on inclusive growth, by enabling more local residents to gain the skills and confidence they need to take up employment opportunities arising from investment and regeneration.</p>
<p>Greater income for social investment: The Service engages with a number of social enterprises including an in-house Bistro and a range of other community groups, enabling them to access skills development and improve their effectiveness.</p>
<p>Cleaner Greener Environmental awareness is integrated into many aspects of the Adult Community Learning curriculum and learners are encouraged to be more aware of energy consumption & supply, impacts upon our ecology etc and provides opportunities to make real change, such as courses to encourage learners to grow their own food.</p>

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD.5666/19) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD.4790/19....) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the "call-in" period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

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Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 Adult Education Budget has been incorporated into the Liverpool City Region Devolution deal on employment and skills from the academic year 2019/20. A grant allocation of £51,380,231 from the Department for Education in respect of the devolved Adult Education Budget for the period 1st August 2019 to 31st July 2020 was accepted by Liverpool City Region Combined Authority at its meeting on 12th April 2019. This meeting detailed the individual grant allocations for all agreed AEB delivery organisations, including Sefton Council.

1.2 The devolution of the Adult Education Budget has enabled the Combined Authority to tailor the delivery to the need of its residents. It also provided an opportunity for flexibility and innovation which included increasing the threshold salary for learners to the Real Living Wage. Three test and learn areas will be piloted in 2019/20, specifically to improve the life chances of residents. The findings from these pilots will be used to help inform future delivery for English for speakers of other languages (11 pilots), digital skills (10 pilots) and English and maths (10 pilots).

1.3 The Adult Education Budget funding allocation has now been distributed to those Further Education Colleges, Local Authorities and Independent Training providers who deliver adult community learning and, through a competitive procurement process, some funding has also been allocated to other organisations who have evidenced their capacity to deliver.

1.4 Sefton officers have been in negotiation with the CA over the last period to agree the funding for Sefton, its scope and priorities for our communities. This has resulted in a funding offer which is in line with our planned objectives for the Service and is comparable with recent years' performance. The AEB offer, excluding pilot programmes, for the period 1st August 2019 to 31st July 2020 is £819,724.

1.5 Sefton has also agreed to operate two of the Test and Learn pilots in the coming academic year, focusing on innovative methods to track and improve progression for learners and new ways of working with regard to digital learning. An additional funding offer of £150,000 has been made for these pilot programmes bringing Sefton's total Adult Education Budget grant offer to £969,724 for the period 1st August 2019 to 31st July 2020.

1.6 The Combined Authority is currently awaiting a formal contract for the total Adult Education Budget for the sub-region. Sefton has been assured that once this wider contract is secured, a specific contract for Sefton will be forthcoming from the Combined Authority. This is expected to be received before the commencement of the new academic term.

1.7 Test & Learn pilot 1– Blended Learning Progression in English, Maths and English as Second Language training.

The intention of this Pilot is to offer blended approaches to education, utilising technology to engage all adult learners wanting to further their education/training, career and or skills. An element of this pilot will test innovative progression tracking of learners, particularly those who are taking part in ESOL provision. As businesses increase digitisation, workers are more likely to work across different physical locations. Blended learning approaches can help prepare employers and employees to excel in such work environments through improving digital skills and confidence. For learners aspiring to

career progression, or those intending to improve their skills in their current position, blended learning can provide huge benefits utilising online learning making use of available resources and technologies together with face to face, traditional techniques to consolidate learning within a more traditional delivery structure. The service has a key role in ensuring non-traditional learners who are furthest away from the job market are equipped with necessary skills and feel confident to carry out duties associated with new emerging markets. Research suggests that people who start in low paid work have a relatively low chance of progressing to better paid work and careers. Many Sefton residents in low paid, precarious work have insufficient support to increase their earnings or maximise transferable skills to change their careers. The pilot will work closely with local businesses in collaboration with Sefton@work to identify or create development opportunities that will benefit workers and businesses.

1.8 Test /& Learn Pilot 2 Business Ready Digital Skills

This pilot aims to close the current gap in digital skills and confidence that persists between our residents who have low digital skills and no recent work history and the wider workforce. By reducing this deficit, the pilot will equip learners to progress into employment across many sectors, including the technology sector with a “ Digital Passport” The project will engage learners who are traditionally hard to reach, unemployed and or are in low paid precarious employment and provide them with an array of digital skills that are applicable in all aspects of everyday life as well as in the workplace. We aim to engage local employers to work with us on this concept of the “Digital Passport” through collaboration with Sefton@work and we intend to apply this to our local workforce challenges in sectors such as health and social care, social enterprises, financial services and customer service.

Building ICT skills, awareness and confidence positively impacts upon learner experience in numerous ways and we believe this is a passport to improved outcomes in terms of prosperity, personal effectiveness and self-actualisation. One of the aims of this project is to assess current ICT skills of learners and further develop these skills, learn new skills and identify transferable skills using a range of software packages that can be used by learners in the world of employment.