

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Panel **DATE:** 24<sup>th</sup> January 2012

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Andrew Stevens  
**(For all enquiries)** Assistant Director, Culture and Skills  
Community and Wellbeing  
(01753) 875507

**WARD(S):** ALL

### **PART I** **KEY DECISION**

#### **ADULT LEARNING SERVICE**

##### **1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report is to seek Members' views on the annual self assessment review of adult learning (SAR), which is used to set improvement plans and targets for the service. The report also provides information requested by the panel on the impact of the economic climate and jobs market on adult learning.
- 1.2 In addition, the report invites Members to comment on proposals to develop a shared adult learning service with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) which will be the subject of a report to Cabinet on 6 February 2012.

##### **2 Recommendations**

The Committee is requested to:

- a) Comment and advise on judgements made in the annual self assessment review (SAR).
- b) Note information on the impact of the economic climate on adult learning services.
- c) Comment on the principle of a proposed shared service for adult learning with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

##### **3 Community Strategy Priorities**

- **Celebrating Diversity, Enabling inclusion**
- **Adding years to Life and Life to years**
- **Being Safe, Feeling Safe**
- **Prosperity for All**

Adult learning supports community integration and social cohesion, helps people develop practical skills, gain stimulation through creative activity and build their

confidence. It increases the knowledge, skill levels and employability of local residents.

#### 4 **Other Implications**

##### 4.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

##### 4.3 Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no immediate Human Rights Act or other legal implications arising from this report.

##### 4.4 Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment is undertaken for significant service changes.

##### 4.5 Workforce

There are no direct workforce implications for staff of Slough Borough Council arising from the report at this stage.

#### 5 **Self Assessment Review (SAR)**

5.1 All providers who receive funding from the funding from the Skills Funding Agency (SfA) are required as a condition of their funding to write an annual Self Assessment Review. It is good practice that scrutiny Members advise and comment on the review. The SAR is used by Ofsted inspectors as part of their annual desk top review of planning inspection timetables.

5.2 The SAR covers the two areas for which Slough Borough Council receives funding from the SfA, apprenticeship training and adult and community learning. It is written to cover the academic year from 1 August 2010 to 31 July 2011.

5.3 The format of the SAR is locally determined. The current format and headings are based on the Common Inspection Framework (CIF), the framework that Ofsted use during inspection. The accuracy of the judgements and gradings within the SAR are compared to those found by inspectors, and the SAR is used by Ofsted when they inspect the service.

5.4 The last inspection of adult learning was in November 2010, when the service was graded 2 (good) with good prospects to improve. The inspectors found the following were outstanding:

- How effectively provision meets the needs and interests of users
- How effectively partnerships with schools, employers, community groups and others lead to benefits for learners
- Information advice and guidance
- Migration Work programme “Outcomes for learners” and ....”Offering an extensive range of programmes and enrichment activities”

5.5 The SAR is written by managers within the adult learning service, using the same criteria and evidence that the Ofsted inspectors would use. These grades are then moderated through a council wide Adult Learning Self Review and Moderation group.

5.6 When grading performance Ofsted use the following four point scale:

Grade 1 Outstanding  
Grade 3 Satisfactory

Grade 2 Good  
Grade 4 Inadequate

- 5.7 A summary of the grading is attached as Appendix A. The self-assessment grades mirror the grades contained within the last Ofsted inspection report. The main categories are all graded as 2 (good):

	<b>Inspection 2010</b>	<b>SAR 2011</b>
Overall effectiveness	2	2
Capacity to improve	2	2
Achievement and outcome for learners	2	2
Quality of provision	2	2
Leadership and management	2	2

- 5.8 The 2010/11 SAR identified the following strengths and areas for improvement:

### **Strengths**

1. Very responsive range of provision, including increasing the number of accredited programmes in response to meeting the needs of learners.
2. Outstanding partnership arrangements that lead to very effective engagement and outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.
3. Very good integration of information, advice and guidance into Foundation learning programmes.
4. Outcomes for apprentices remain outstanding.
5. Good opportunities for learners with a disability to access a range of programmes

### **Areas for improvement**

1. Insufficiently consistent use of initial assessment tools to identify SMART targets for learners
2. Low engagement of white British and Irish residents
3. Insufficient high quality teaching and learning.

- 5.9 Actions proposed to address these areas for improvement include:

#### **1. Use of initial assessment tools to identify SMART targets for learners**

- Targeted support for tutors not spending sufficient time on this
- Lesson observations to focus on initial assessments and target setting

#### **2. Engagement of white British and Irish residents**

- Improved targeting by commissioned providers of learning
- Targeted work with community groups and local people in particular wards

#### **3. Quality of teaching and learning**

- Embed and monitor use of new learning plans developed since inspection
- Peer support programme for tutors and strengthened observations

- 5.10 The service has, for the first time included a table with key performance indicators (Appendix B). Two areas are of particular interest:

- Increase in the number of learners with disabilities from 3.% in 2006/07 to 13.7% in 2010/11. Particularly successful was the integration of learners with a disability, some supported by their carers into main stream provision.

- Increase in the number of learners gaining units of qualification towards recognised qualifications from 172 (2006/07) to 714 in 2010/11.

5.11 The service now is preparing a Quality Improvement Plan that will address the areas that require additional improvement. Members are invited to comment on findings in the SAR and priorities for the improvement plan.

## 6 **Trends within the current economic climate**

6.1 Since 2009/10, when the impact of the economic downturn was first detectable, the number of people taking part in learning has remained steady. There are signs of some change in learners' behaviour though:

- Marked increase in people seeking information, advice and guidance (IAG) to help them find training and employment
- More people joining vocational programmes (for example pilates and nail art)
- ESOL (English as a second language) increasing slightly, reflecting its value in securing employment
- Steady increase in the number of people taking programmes leading to nationally recognised qualifications, particularly those with low skills levels. 25% of ICT classes now lead to qualifications
- General classes for health and wellbeing (eg yoga) continue to be popular

6.2 The fact that the take up of most classes remains steady suggests that pricing is appropriate and affordable. At the same time there is a gradual shift to learning more directly related to employment, which mirrors trends elsewhere, such as libraries, where more people are borrowing books that will help them improve their skills and find work.

## 7 **Potential shared service for adult learning**

7.1 Appendix C is a summary briefing paper on work being undertaken by officers with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) to explore the potential for a joint adult learning service covering both boroughs.

7.2 In November the RBWM Cabinet approved the paper included with the briefing note which endorses the principle of a shared service and the proposal that Slough should be the lead authority. As indicated in the briefing paper, officers are currently working on a business case which will be the subject of a report to Cabinet on 6 February 2012.

7.3 Appendix C sets out the context and the reasons why this is being explored. While motivated initially by the need to ensure the service is large enough to continue to be eligible to receive funding from the Skills Funding Agency, there are other potential benefits in a larger service led by Slough that would be able to reduce the proportion of administrative costs and improve the range of learning opportunities for local people.

7.4 The proposal to develop a more robust and larger adult learning service is initiated by external factors and changes to minimum funding levels from the Skills Funding Agency. However, Windsor and Maidenhead's positive support for a shared service option with Slough as lead is a further endorsement of consistently strong performance and quality provided by the Slough service.

7.5 The business case for Cabinet in February will assess benefits and risks to Slough Borough Council for a decision to be made on whether to proceed with a shared service. A copy of the draft Cabinet report will be available at the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 24 January.

## 8 **Conclusion**

8.1 Adult learning is provided to improve the skills of local people and help them gain employment. This is of particular value at a time when work opportunities are limited. The service continues to perform at a good level and Members are invited to advise on how it may improve its services further.

8.2 In order to improve services and help make the service more resilient to change, officers are exploring the opportunity for Slough Borough Council to deliver adult learning services for the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and potentially other local authorities. Members are invited to comment on the opportunities and risks of this approach so that this can be taken into account in preparing a business case for consideration by Cabinet in February 2012.

## **Appendices attached**

- A 2010/11 Self Assessment Review: key grades
- B 2010/11 Self Assessment Review: headline performance data
- C Adult learning models briefing note

## **Background papers**

None

**APPENDIX A**

**2010/2011 Self Assessment Review: key grades**

<b>Key Grades</b>	<b>Inspection Grade*</b>	<b>Self Assessment Grade</b>		
		<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>
<b>Effectiveness of provision/ Overall effectiveness</b> <i>Contributory Grade</i>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
Adult and community learning		2		
W.B.L. - apprenticeship scheme		1		
<b>Capacity to improve</b>				
	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement &amp; standards/ Outcome for learners</b> <i>Contributory Grade</i>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
Adult and community learning		2		
W.B.L. - apprenticeship scheme		1		
How well do learners achieve & enjoy their learning?	2			2
a) How well do learners attain their learning goals?	3			2
b) How well learners progress?	2			3
How well do learners improve their economic & social well being through learning & development?	2			2
Do learners feel safe?	2			2
Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well being?	2			2
<b>Quality of provision</b> <i>Contributory Grade</i>				
	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
Adult and community learning		2		
W.B.L. - apprenticeship scheme		1		
How effectively do teaching, training & assessment support learning & development?	3			3
How effectively does the provision meet the needs & interests of learners?	1			1

Key Grades	Inspection Grade*	Self Assessment Grade		
		2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
How well do partnerships with schools, employers, community groups & others lead to benefits for learners?	1			1
How effective are the care, guidance & support learners receive in helping them to achieve?	2			2
<b>Leadership and management</b> <i>Contributory Grade</i>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
Adult and community learning		2		
W.B.L. - apprenticeship scheme		2		
Ambition and Prioritisation	2	2	2	2
Governance	2	3	2	2
Safeguarding (limiting)	2	3	2	2
Equality and Diversity (limiting)	2	2	2	2
User engagement	2	2	2	2
Self assessment	3	2	2	2
Value for money	2	3	2	2
<b>Equality of opportunity</b>				
	<b>2</b>			

\* Inspection took place in November 2010

Following the change in the Common Inspection Framework in 2009 a new key grading framework was introduced. These have been added. Consequently some key grades have ended (shaded grey) and others are new.

## APPENDIX B

### 2010/2011 Self Assessment Review: headline performance data

Area	Trend	Data
Unique learners	<i>Year on year increase</i>	2,127 in 2006/07 to <b>2,399</b> in 2010/11
Enrolments	<i>Slightly lower this year</i>	3,631 (2009/10) to <b>3,567</b> (2010/11)
Learners with a disability	<i>Year-on-year increase</i>	3.01% (2006/07) to <b>13.71%</b> (2010/11)
White British/Irish learners	<i>Slight increase this year</i>	18.81% (2009/10) to <b>21.05%</b> (2010/11)
Male learners	<i>Decrease this year</i>	28.02% (2009/10) to <b>25.64%</b> (2010/11)
Retention (average)	<i>Remains high</i>	<b>95.29%</b> (94.55% 2009/10)
Attendance (average)	<i>Constant</i>	<b>91.40%</b> (91% 2009/10)
Achievement (non-accredited programmes)	<i>Good</i>	91%
Achievement (Accredited programmes)	<i>Satisfactory</i>	85.2%
ESOL (success rate)	<i>Decrease this year</i>	87.84% (92.59% 2009/10)
Units of qualifications (achieved)	<i>Year on year increase</i>	172 (2006/07) to 714 (2010/11)
Customer complaints	<i>Low</i>	5
Sickness	<i>Reducing</i>	125 (12 months to August '10) to 72 (12 months to August '11)
Learners learnt something new	<i>Slightly lower</i>	97% 99% (2009/10)
Learners enjoyed their course	<i>Slightly lower</i>	97% 99% (2009/10)



## **APPENDIX C**

### **Adult learning models**

#### **1 Purpose of this briefing note**

- 1.1 This report updates Members on work being undertaken to review options and develop a business case for a new model for adult learning provision for Slough, in partnership with the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM).
- 1.2 The proposal is intended to provide a positive response to the risk of changes to grant funding that could mean Slough BC can no longer on its own receive direct funding for adult learning and to provide a more robust basis for future service delivery through a larger and more cost effective unit.
- 1.3 The approach takes full account of proposed PPRG efficiencies for adult learning and will support their delivery.

#### **2 Background**

- 2.1 The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) currently funds Slough BC with £540,000 for adult learning and apprenticeships. In 2010/11 the SFA, in order to reduce its administrative costs dealing with a very large number of directly funded providers, decided not to fund organisations in receipt of less than £500,000 a year.
- 2.2 A clear signal was given in 2010 that this level would be raised in future years. The threshold will not be increased in 2012, but may be raised in future years.. If the threshold were even to remain at £500,000, with likely reductions in government funded programmes, there is a serious risk that Slough BC would not be eligible to continue to receive grant funding from this source.
- 2.3 Changes initiated by the SFA prompted officers in SBC and neighbouring boroughs to start discussions about how we might best respond. Most Berkshire authorities are at a similar level of funding with Slough, with West Berkshire and Wokingham this year and Bracknell next year all falling just below the threshold.
- 2.4 West Berkshire and Wokingham have formed separate arrangements with a local college and the Workers Educational Association (WEA) and Bracknell have yet to make a final decision.
- 2.5 In January-February 2012, organisations funded by the SFA will be required to decide how their funding allocation will be received. If SBC were to fall below the £500,000 threshold, the Council can nominate another organisation to receive the funding on its behalf who would be committed to delivering learning outcomes in the borough.

#### **3 Options**

- 3.1 Officers from Slough and RBWM have carried out an evaluation of options open to the local authorities and have had joint discussions with Bracknell Forest. These options included enabling a local college to receive the funding, or a national charitable organisation such as the WEA, or a larger local authority. Soft market testing was carried out with potential providers to test what they might offer and to establish the benefits and disadvantages of each option. A further option was to combine the grants from two or more boroughs to develop shared management arrangements.

3.2 The initial conclusions from this work were:

- The preferred route is to develop a shared service between the two boroughs. It improves resilience, could enable some economies of scale and better value for money and doesn't compromise other options if they were required at a future date.
- This change should be explored thoroughly regardless of changes in the SFA funding rules.
- The preferred option was a local solution between the two boroughs, RBWM and Slough.
- The lead authority should be Slough BC, recognising the quality and effectiveness of the borough's adult learning service and its Ofsted good (grade 2) rating in 2010.

3.3 The benefits of a shared service between the two boroughs include:

- **Flexibility.** It still allows partnership with a larger provider if the SFA threshold increases beyond £1m
- **Operational efficiency.** Geographical proximity facilitates shared resources. The two boroughs also share key partnerships, including East Berkshire College

3.4 A report agreed by Cabinet in RBWM on 23 November approved delegated authority for officers to implement a shared service led by Slough, subject to the agreement of terms and the business case and Slough Borough Council Cabinet approval.

#### **4 Business case for a shared service model**

4.1 Since September 2011, officers from Slough and RBWM have been developing a business case for a potential shared service. This will cover:

- Governance and decision making
- Legal matters, including exit strategies, TUPE liability
- Financial arrangements including management charges
- Staff matters, including costed proposed management structures

4.2 The new arrangement would need to be in place for 1 August 2012 ready for the next academic year, probably with a transitional period before a fully integrated service could be achieved. How this would work will be set out in the business case.

#### **5 Timelines and decision making**

5.1 The business case will be ready for consideration by Cabinet on 6 February 2012.

5.2 A decision will need to be taken on the business case in advance of a final response to the SFA on how sums allocated to Slough and RBWM should be managed for the academic year 2012/13.

5.3 If the decision were to proceed, there would be 6 months in which to implement transitional arrangements.