

REPORT TITLE: Community and Adult Skills Programmes 2024 – 2025.

Cabinet Date	12 th June 2024
Cabinet Member	Cllr Philip Robinson, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Bus Transport
Key Decision	Yes
Purpose of Report	<p>To seek cabinet approval to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Run a competitive procurement process using a bespoke 2-year framework for the provision of adult learning services and then to award call off contract(s) of varying lengths up to a maximum of 12 months, depending on the type of courses or piece of work, for the 2024 - 2025 academic year. 2. Enter into the funding agreement with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for the purpose of funding the delivery of Community Learning and the Adult Skills Programme during the 2024 -2025 academic year.
Recommendations	<p>That the Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director of Economy, Environment, and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Bus Transport to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enter into a funding agreement with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) under which the council has received ESFA funding for the purpose of delivering Community Learning and Adult Skills Programmes during the 2024 – 2025 academic year (1st August 2024 to 31st July 2025). 2. Conduct a mini-competition process, under each of the following Lots of the council’s bespoke Community and Adult Skills Framework Agreement, in respect of 5 call-off contracts for the supply of adult learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Steps • Employability • Adults with Learning Disabilities and/or Difficulties (ALDD) • Steps into Work (Supported Internships) • Local Flex (Responding to identified/emerging local need)

	<p>Each call-off contract shall continue for a period of 12 months or less, according to the type of courses or pieces of work required in the 2024 – 2025 academic year.</p> <p>3. Award each Call-Off Contract to the preferred tenderer.</p>
Reasons for Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Without the Education and Skills Funding Agency funding the Adult Learning Direct Delivery Service (Adult Education in Gloucestershire) would not be able to continue to deliver Adult Education in Gloucestershire in the 2024 – 2025 academic year or procure the delivery of such services from the third-party providers. The council would need to manage the resulting costs of liabilities arising in respect of any redundancies in relation to the Council's Adult Education staff. 2. Without the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding the Council would not be able to utilise such funding to contribute to developing skills in the local community. 3. The council's bespoke Community and Adult Skills framework agreement governs the relationship between the Council's Adult Education staff and the contracted supplier in respect of the provision of services by the supplier to the Council's Adult Education staff.
Resource Implications	<p>The combined aggregate value of the Call-Off Contracts described in Recommendations 2 and 3 above shall not exceed £400,000.</p> <p>The total cost of the Adult Education provision (including both direct delivery and outsourced provision) will be met from the ESFA adult skills fund grant, totalling £2,859,085 for the 2024 – 2025 academic year.</p>
Background Documents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cabinet Member Decision (21/06/2023) Community and Adult Skills Programme 2023/2024 <p>Decision - Community and Adult Skills Programmes 2023/ 2024 (gloucestershire.gov.uk)</p>
Statutory Authority	N/A
Divisional Councillor(s)	All
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Timeline	

Background

1. Gloucestershire County Council has been receiving funding for Adult Education from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) since 2011. A contract is issued by the ESFA to the council for each academic year, with funding allocated to specific areas of the provision.
2. For the 2024 - 2025 academic year the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will require Gloucestershire County Council to enter a Condition of funding agreement for an amount of £2,859,085 that contains agreed delivery of learning for:
 - a) Tailored Learning (non-accredited learning programmes primarily aimed at adults with low skills levels and economically disadvantaged learners): £2,247,589.
 - b) Adult skills (Accredited learning utilised by the Adult Education service to improve English, mathematics, and language skills of adult learners): £535,423.
 - c) National skills fund: level 3 free courses for jobs: £76,073.
3. The conditions of the funding agreement also require organisations to register as an Education and Skills Funding Agency provider and comply with those ESFA requirements. These cover issues to do with learner health and safety, equalities, quality standards, data collection and return as well as sub-contracting arrangements. Gloucestershire County Council is fully compliant with all their requirements.
4. During the 2024 - 2025 academic year funding from the ESFA will be used to deliver learning programmes to approximately 6,000 adults in Gloucestershire. Currently funding is primarily focused on meeting the needs of low skilled and economically disadvantaged adults, enabling them to re-engage with education and to progress into vocational training, employment/self-employment. This contributes to the Council's plans for Levelling Up Local Communities.
5. We have supported individuals from different communities within Gloucestershire more recently a visually impaired learner whose only dream was to be able to cook a meal for her husband and family. The learner attended a cookery course at Adult Education, where she learnt to measure and chop ingredients using specially adapted equipment and utensils. Once the learner felt comfortable with these aspects, she moved onto the practical element of cooking using only her other senses to guide her. After 12 weeks of attendance, she was able to cook a meal at home unsupported for her family. The learner returned to Adult Education and went on to complete a digital skills course where we were able to gain access to specialised software to support her in learning alongside her peers.
6. We have recently launched a programme that supports learners who aren't able to read and write called 'Never 2 Late 2 Learn'. This programme enables individuals to learn English and maths through more non-conventional teachings such as cookery and arts & crafts. One of our learners who wouldn't attend the initial sessions without his dad now attends the sessions independently and he is now able to spell his own name without support.

7. To meet the needs of learners across Gloucestershire and to make use of the expertise of partner organisations, the council's Adult Education Service has hitherto sub-contracted its delivery of certain adult learning obligations arising from its funding agreement with the ESFA to partner organisations.
8. For the current academic year 2023 – 2024 the Community and Adult Skills programme operates under a framework. The framework has improved efficiency, effectiveness and quality of the service in awarding contracts to training providers and is fully compliant with the council's Contract Procedure Rules and procurement regulations. It does not affect the annual ESFA funding arrangements.

Options

9. To authorise entering into the funding agreement for Adult Education in Gloucestershire for the 2024 - 2025 academic year between Gloucestershire County Council and the Education and Skills Funding Agency and to engage in a procurement process for the delivery of adult learning by contracted suppliers.
10. Run a competitive procurement process using the council's current bespoke 2-year framework agreement for the provision of adult learning services and then to award call off contract(s) of varying lengths up to a maximum of 12 months, depending on the type of courses or pieces of work, for the 2024 - 2025 academic year.
11. To discontinue the Education and Skills Funding Agency Agreement. The resource implications of this would be: -
 - a) Adult Education would not be able to continue in the 2024 – 2025 academic year without funds available from the ESFA as there is no immediate or alternative source of funding available. The council would need to pick up the costs of liabilities arising in respect of any redundancies in relation to the council's Adult Education staff.
 - b) The council would not be able to utilise this funding to contribute to developing skills in the local economy.
 - c) There would be an impact on the skills base in the county and the reputation of the council as an enabler of economic growth and improving the life chances of citizens in the county.

Risks

12. The main risk in relation to this proposal arises from the possibility that the ESFA may withdraw its community learning and adult skills funding as this would result in: -
 - a) the council being unable to deliver adult learning programmes in the county; and
 - b) the council incurring liabilities in respect of redundancies in relation to the council's Adult Education staff consequently.

This risk is assessed as low because the ESFA is contractually committed to give twelve months' notice of any significant changes to contract values and no notice has been issued.

Financial implications

13. The combined aggregate value of the Call-Off Contracts described in recommendations 2 and 3 above shall not exceed £400,000.

The costs of such contracts will be met from the ESFA grant, which is £2,859,085 for the 2024 - 2025 academic year. The remainder of the grant will be utilised by the Direct Delivery within Adult Education.

The cost of the contract will be contained within the resource available from the grant.

Climate Change and Ecological implications

14. Adult Education teaches in venues across Gloucestershire, reducing the need for learners to travel via personal or public transport. Following the global pandemic, it continues a blended learning approach which has been adopted across the Adult Education service, an approach which requires less reliance on travel and subsequently reduces carbon emissions.
15. Adult Education are involved in several community initiatives such as allotment and gardening projects, which allow learners to become more self-sufficient, improve mental well-being and become eco-friendlier; as the food they harvest will only travel a few miles, be more organic and involve no machinery or plastic wrapping.
16. Adult Education use energy efficient buildings in areas where public transport is available including local shops, reducing the travel time and use of private transportation, it operates within existing infrastructure and uses energy efficient lighting.

Following completion of the CIAT, adoption of climate conscious practises should continue to be encouraged, namely via active / sustainable travel for both staff and users.

Equality implications

17. The learning provision targets learners within groups with protected characteristics and sets targets to reach a higher proportion of people with protected characteristics.
18. Local community providers and partner organisations are utilised to reach adults with protected characteristics. There is access for learners to all areas of the curriculum, and the curriculum strategy does not differentiate, or discriminate between age groups, gender, race, sexual orientation, religion and/or belief, or disability.
19. Cabinet Members should read and consider the Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) and Due Regard Statement to satisfy them as decision makers that due regard has been given.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) implications

20. A DPIA will be prepared to ensure that the data rights of individual learners will be appropriately protected.

Social value implications

21. Community based Adult Education has been an integral part of life for Gloucestershire for many years, located in people's homes, schools, community centres, libraries and even churches when no other space has been available. It reflects a strong sense of local ownership of the learning process, tremendous pride in the educational

achievements of people from the local community and increasingly a determination to defend a form of learning which flourishes outside of the formal education sector. Providers will demonstrate in their bids how they will embody social value, which will be evaluated in the moderation of bids and ongoing contract review meetings.

Consultation feedback

22. Adult Education Delivery and Subcontract Manager has consulted current and potential providers about the proposed curriculum and associated funding for the 2024 - 2025 academic year. The range of organisations includes Further Education (FE) colleges, schools, and other training, community and voluntary organisations. All new subcontracting opportunities will be advertised and awarded using the GCC Pro-contract system. The consultation has concluded that a lot of the providers support persons within the community who otherwise would not be in education and the funding that we provide is crucial in supporting them to take the next steps in education. The providers that we work with are specialists in their field and support learners in some cases with extreme disabilities or learning difficulties. Without the funding we provide these individuals would not be supported or integrated within their community.
23. Adult Education continuously seeks feedback from learners who attend provision both within Direct Delivery and our Subcontracted delivery to ascertain what they liked about our courses, what we could improve and what they would like to see in the future. We collate this feedback and analyse what we can provide in the next academic year that will meet the local community needs.

Officer recommendations

24. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Executive Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure in consultation with Cllr Philip Robinson, Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Bus Transport to implement the proposals set out in the above Recommendations.

Performance management/follow-up

25. Key targets and performance indicators will be agreed with each provider and included in their contracts. A programme of reviews will be conducted with providers to assess performance against targets, particularly in the areas of numbers and types of learner, target groups, guided learning hours and learner hours. The contract is regularly monitored by the Education and Skills Funding Agency through data and funding returns, and contract performance review meetings are held with providers as required throughout the year.
26. Direct Delivery performance is monitored on a regular basis with each delivery manager working closely with the Head of Service to monitor performance, finances, KPI's, Quality measures and learner feedback.