



REPORT TITLE: Community and Adult Skills Programme for 2023/24

Cabinet Date	21 st June 2023
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. 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 2023 – 2024 academic year.2. Conduct a mini-competition process under the council’s existing Community and Adult Skills framework agreement in respect of 5 call-off contracts for the provision of adult learning services whose contract periods shall be determined according to the type of courses or piece of work required in the 2023 – 2024 academic year and then to award such call-off contracts.
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 shall receive the ESFA funding for the purpose of delivering Community Learning and Adult Skills Programmes during the 2023 – 2024 academic year.2. Conduct a mini-competition process, under each of the following Lots of the council’s existing Community and Adult Skills Framework Agreement, in respect of 5 call-off contracts for the supply of adult learning programmes:<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 such call-off contract shall continue for a period of 12 months or less, according to the type of courses or piece of work required in the 2023 – 2024 academic year.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. Award each such Call-Off Contract to the preferred tenderer.

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 2023 – 2024 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 Councils 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 existing Community and Adult Skills framework agreement governs the relationship between 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 £350,000.00.</p> <p>The costs of the Adult Education contracts will be met from the ESFA grant, totalling £2,670,980.00 for the 2023 – 2024 academic year.</p>
Background Documents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cabinet Member Decision (22/06/2022) Community and Adult Skills Programme 2022 – 2023 <p>Decision - Community and Adult Skills Programmes 2022 – 2023 (gloucestershire.gov.uk)</p>
Statutory Authority	N/A
Divisional Councillor(s)	All
Officer	<p>Name: Natasha Panchbhaya Telephone: 07795 265598 Email: Natasha.panchbhaya@gloucestershire.gov.uk</p>
Timeline	Funding agreement August 2023 – July 2024

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 provision.

2. For the 2023 - 2024 academic year the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will require Gloucestershire County Council to enter a Condition of Funding Agreement for an amount expected to be £2,670,980 that contains agreed delivery of learning for:

- Community learning (non-accredited learning programmes primarily aimed at adults with low skills levels and economically disadvantaged learners): £2,064,048
- Adult skills (Accredited learning utilised by the Adult Education service to improve English, mathematics and language skills of adult learners): £536,481
- National skills fund: level 3 free courses for jobs: £70,451

3. The Conditions of the funding agreement also require organisations to register as an Education and Skills Funding Agency provider and comply with their requirements. These cover issues to do with learner health and safety, equalities, quality standards, data collection and return and sub-contracting arrangements. Gloucestershire County Council is fully compliant with all their requirements.

4. During the 2023 - 2024 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. In order 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.

6. For the current academic year 2022 – 2023 the Community and Adult Skill programme framework is within its first year, with 3 years remaining. 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

7. To authorise entering into funding agreement for Adult Education in Gloucestershire for the 2023 - 2024 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.

8. Run a competitive procurement process under the existing framework agreement, valid for another 3 years, 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 2023 – 2024 academic year.

9. 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 2023 – 2024 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

10. 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

11. The combined aggregate value of the Call-Off Contracts described in Recommendations 2 and 3 above shall not exceed £350,000.

The costs of such contracts will be met from the ESFA grant, totalling £2,670,980 for the 2023 - 2024 academic year.

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

Climate change implications

12. Adult Education teaches in venues across Gloucestershire, reducing the need for learners to travel via personal or public transport. Following the global pandemic, we continue a blended learning approach to be adopted across the Adult Education service, an approach which requires less reliance on travel and subsequently reduces carbon emissions.

13. 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.

14. 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.

Equality implications

15. The learning provision targets learners within groups with protected characteristics and sets targets to reach a higher proportion of people with protected characteristics.

16. Local community providers and partner organisations are utilised in order 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.

17. Cabinet Members should read and consider the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) and Due Regard Statement in order to satisfy them as decision makers that due regard has been given.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) implications

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

Social value implications

19. 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 be evaluated in the moderation of bids and ongoing contract review meetings.

Consultation feedback

20. Adult Education Delivery and Subcontract Manager has consulted current and potential providers about the proposed curriculum and associated funding for the 2023 – 2024 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.

Officer recommendations

21. 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

22. 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.