

Communities Committee

Item No.

Report title:	Progress made in Norfolk Community Learning Services
Date of meeting:	11 May 2016
Responsible Chief Officer:	Tom McCabe, Executive Director of Community and Environmental Services
Strategic impact <p>This report provides Communities Committee with the latest information on service improvements and in particular the two strategic objectives previously determined for 2015/16 for the Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To achieve a Grade 2 ('Good') at Ofsted re-inspection• To implement a new vision and operating model for the service from September 2016 onwards	

Executive summary

With oversight and scrutiny from the all-party Steering Group, the new vision and operating model for the service have previously been presented to this Committee and comprise a series of learning opportunities with the option for individuals to join at a point appropriate to their prior experience and achievement. Also now on offer is a programme of commercially delivered 'Full cost' courses. The aim of the 'Full cost' provision is to ensure that there continues to be 'leisure and pleasure' courses on offer which meet the need for extended social learning in a range of disciplines, mainly arts and crafts and language courses.

The focus of the grant-funded provision is gradually changing over the 2015/16 academic year so that by September 2016, the courses on offer will be those which engage and inspire those 'hard to reach' and 'second chance' learners who would not normally, and easily, access provision offered by other educational institutions in Norfolk. The service will also offer educational provision, some of it higher level (up to Level 5) that others do not offer and in a flexible way that they would not be able to offer. In this way the service will fulfil its vision and mission to provide learning opportunities that other organisations are not able to provide and so meet the educational needs of learners in Norfolk that would not otherwise be met.

In order to deliver the new vision more effectively and easily, a full service re-structure proposal is reaching its conclusion, and implementation of the new structure will commence on 1st May. Previously the decision to appoint a new permanent Head of Service was made and the new appointee will commence in post in mid-June to oversee the latter stages of re-structure implementation. This appointment and the new structure will secure the service for the future.

In order to effectively and confidently deliver this vision and also so that the service can seek and secure additional funds and contracts, it is important that the current Ofsted Grade 4 ('Inadequate') judgement is converted to a Grade 2 (Good) as soon as possible. Grade 3 ('Requires Improvement') would still mean that the service was subject to intervention and would not provide the security and sustainability of provision that Norfolk County Council seeks. In April the service was subject to a full re-inspection by Ofsted and the progress made was acknowledged.

Recommendation

Communities Committee is recommended to

- **approve the further improvement and development of NCLS as Norfolk's 'second chance' learning provider**
- **note the service's improvement and progress as acknowledged by Ofsted .**

1. Proposal

1.1. The aim of the Strategy for NCLS is to:

- I. Align Norfolk Community Learning Services more effectively with the priorities of Norfolk County Council:
 - a. Excellence in Education
 - b. Real Jobs
 - c. Good infrastructure
 - d. Supporting Vulnerable People
- II. Position the service in the best possible place to respond to the direction of travel for central government grant funding, in particular as a provider that specialises in the delivery of apprenticeships and second chance learning. This will also enable the service to attract further discretionary funding, for example, from European Social Funds.
- III. Build resilience in the service that will enable it to survive in an era of austerity.
- IV. Recognising the significant investment made by the Council so far, provide a return on this investment (ROI) for the Council with the service providing important parts of the following corporate outcomes for example:
 - a. Children's Services Early Help offer
 - b. Adult Social Care preventative strategy
 - c. Local Enterprise Partnership economic priorities
 - d. Devolution bid

1.2. Service funding

The service receives a grant from central government which is administered through the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and amounts to £4.97 million for the academic year 2015/16 (1st August 2015 to 31st July 2016). Of this approximately £350,000 is top-sliced for central service costs. The remaining budget is currently used to deliver a range of 'courses' to learners in Norfolk and provide the infrastructure to manage and quality assure this learning provision. In addition to the grant received, the service generates income by charging fees for some courses including 'leisure and pleasure' courses, apprenticeships and classroom based qualifications.

1.3. Summary of vision

The new vision and operating model for the service has previously been endorsed by Communities Committee and comprises a series of learning opportunities for individuals in Norfolk with the option to join at a point appropriate to individual prior experience and achievement. Students are able to progress and advance through levels of learning starting at community engagement level and, depending on individual ambition and aspirations, be assisted through to higher level vocational qualifications and onto programmes delivered by partners including colleges and

universities. At every point in their learning 'journey', learners are offered support to make the best of the 'second chance' opportunities that the service offers.

1.4. The 'full cost' offer

The aim of the 'Full cost' provision is to ensure there continues to be 'leisure and pleasure' courses on offer which meet the need for extended social learning in a range of disciplines, mainly arts and crafts and language courses. There is a clear need and demand for these courses with learners continuing to meet and learn together for many years (in some cases up to 15 years and still continuing). Through the engagement with learners that has taken place in the development of the new Vision, learners on these courses have made it very clear that they wish the service to continue to offer this provision and it is also clear to service managers that there is a market for the specialist teaching and skills development that falls within this area of the service's offer.

- 1.5. These courses do not necessarily fit with central government and local priorities to up-skill the Norfolk workforce and improve the local economy including bringing reluctant and unconfident learners back into active learning and out of welfare benefit. This is the unique role of Norfolk Community Learning Services.
- 1.6. In order to refocus the service and better align the established staff structure with the new vision, a re-structure has been proposed and the formal consultation process for this re-structure has recently been completed (April 30th). The consultation process is summarised below:

29 February 2016	Consultation commences
29 March 2016	Consultation ends
29 March – 27 April 2016	SMT review feedback, make changes to proposals and agree on the process for appointment to posts
28 April – 29 April 2016	Trade unions review our final proposals and the process for appointment to posts
Week commencing 2 May 2016	Final structure and process for appointment to posts published
Week commencing 2 May 2016	Letters sent to affected staff detailing rights to posts and inviting expressions of interest
Week commencing 9 May 2016	Recruitment to posts commences

In the consultation document it was stated that managers believed these timescales were realistic but "in a period when we are expecting our Ofsted re-inspection at any time, it would be important to understand that external factors could impact on our ability to meet these deadlines." It is likely therefore that 2 May and 9 May dates will be pushed back by one week because of the Ofsted visit.

- 1.7. In a recent rigorous interview process, a new permanent Head of Service for NCLS has been appointed. The new appointee will take up his duties in mid-June and there will be a period of hand-over between the current interim Head of Service and the new appointee to ensure continuity of the current direction of travel.

1.8. **Quality Assurance – Ofsted re-inspection**

At the time of the last Communities Committee, NCLS awaited a full Ofsted re-inspection. The service was informed that this re-inspection was to take place on Thursday 14th April and a four day inspection took place from Monday 18th April until Thursday 21st April. The inspection team comprised 6 inspectors with a core team including a Lead Inspector, Assistant lead and a Lead for Teaching, learning and Assessment. This core team was present in Norfolk from Monday to Thursday. In addition three further inspectors were deployed from Tuesday to Thursday, one with a lead responsibility for inspecting Apprenticeship provision. On the Wednesday of the inspection week a senior regional HMI attended to quality assure the inspection process.

- 1.9. Informal verbal feedback was given on Thursday 21st April by the lead inspector. The full report will be sent to NCC within approximately 30 working days for accuracy checks with the final report then published on the Ofsted website.

2. **Evidence**

- 2.1. The restructure of the service has been a rigorous process through which staff have had considerable opportunity to influence and shape the new service through an open and transparent consultation. 169 separate staff feedback comments were made and as a result 20 material changes were made to the original management plans. Trades unions and NCC HR staff have been fully involved throughout the process. Through this process the new structure now provides fit-for-purpose job descriptions and reporting arrangements which will assist the service to deliver more effectively and efficiently into the future.
- 2.2. The Ofsted inspection of Norfolk County Council was conducted under part 8 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 in accordance with the *Further education and skills inspection handbook from September 2015*, which outlines the procedures for conducting inspections.
- 2.3. Steering Group minutes show that NCLS managers are properly held to account for improvements in service quality and developments in service delivery to ensure that the new vision and mission for the service are being effectively delivered.

3. **Financial Implications**

- 3.1. The service receives a grant from central government which is administered through the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and amounts to £4.97 million for the academic year 2015/16 (1st August 2015 to 31st July 2016). Of this approximately £350,000 is top-sliced for central service costs. In addition to the grant received, the service generates income by charging fees for some courses including 'leisure and pleasure' courses, apprenticeships and classroom based qualifications. The income received aims to cover the cost of the provision.
- 3.2. In April 2015, funding arrangements were agreed for Norfolk Community Learning Services, to support improvements in the service, up to the next unannounced Ofsted inspection. This included the cost of additional leadership support (interim Head of Service), a series of mandatory CPD events for all staff, additional external scrutiny of the observation of teaching, learning and assessment processes. The report to January committee identified that the cost was expected to be between £0.232m and £0.287m. The total cost for 2016/17 was £0.215m and has been covered from with the Communities and Environmental Services Budget.

- 3.3. For 2015/16 financial year we have delivered a balanced budget, through the use of reserves and the funding arrangements as outlined in section 3.2 above. The Member Steering Group will review the on-going cost of the service to ensure that the service meets its budget targets.

4 Issues, risks and innovation

- 4.1 There are no current issues to report.

4.2 Risks

- 4.3 Following completion of the service re-structure proposals and the re-inspection of the service by Ofsted there is only one risk that is currently identified and that is associated with the appointment of the new Head of Service. The risk is that the new appointee will change the current direction of travel for the service and will in this way reverse some of the improvements and developments that have occurred over the past year. To mitigate this risk there will be an overlap between the departure of the current interim Head of Service and the new appointee and there will also be a thorough induction period planned and overseen by the Assistant Director, Community and Environmental Services and Head of Libraries and Information.
- 4.4 Recent changes in national funding arrangements means that the service may face competition from other providers for first step learners. To mitigate this risk a positive Ofsted grade and continued strong partnership working will position the service as the second chance provider of choice in the county.

5 Background

- 5.1 Ofsted Inspection and Monitoring Reports –

<http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/53545>

Previous Committee Report and Vision document –

<http://norfolkcc.cmis.uk.com/norfolkcc/Meetings/tabid/70/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/397/Meeting/372/Committee/12/Default.aspx>

FE Commissioner's Report –

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/433042/Norfolk_County_Council_-_Further_Education_Commissioner_assessment_summary.pdf

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper or want to see copies of any assessments, eg equality impact assessment, please get in touch with:

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