

Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement
Meeting to be held on Monday 5 October 2015

Electoral Division affected: All

Lancashire Adult Learning
(Appendices 'A' and Appendix 'B' refer)

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Executive Summary

The report provides an update for the Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement on the County Council's response to the Ofsted inspection of Lancashire Adult Learning.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement is recommended to note the progress to date in responding to the Ofsted inspection of Lancashire Adult Learning.

Background and Advice

1. FE Commissioner

Following the inadequate inspection result in November 2014, the Minister for Skills and Enterprise decided that the FE Commissioner should assess the position of the service in line with the government's intervention policy set out in *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills*.

The FE Commissioner conducted his assessment between 19 January and 23rd January 2014. He considered; the capacity and capability of the service's leadership and governance to deliver quality improvement within an agreed timeframe; any action that should be taken by the Minister and/or the Chief Executive of the funding agencies to ensure the delivery of quality improvement (considering the suite of interventions set out in 'Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills'); and how progress should be monitored and reviewed taking into account the Agency's regular monitoring arrangements and Ofsted's monitoring visits.

Two FE Advisers contributed to the assessment. In summary the FE Commissioner made seven recommendations – namely:

- The Lancashire Adult Learning Service should restrict its activities to Adult and Community Learning.
- The Skills Funding Agency ("Skills Funding Agency") should consider more appropriate ways of delivering the skills programmes currently being offered through the Lancashire Adult Learning Service by using colleges and providers with greater experience and success in the delivery of the provision.
- Governance arrangements for the Adult Learning Service should be introduced that involve both council and non-council representatives to determine the strategy for the service going forward and to provide suitable monitoring and challenge of the executive.
- The Council should ensure that there is sufficient management time and an appropriate structure to deliver a high quality Adult and Community Service.
- New arrangements for quality assurance should be introduced as a matter of urgency that prioritise the improvement of teaching and learning and the production of an appropriate self-assessment report and quality improvement plan.
- The post Inspection Action Plan should be revised by aligning it more closely with the weaknesses identified by Ofsted and with clear responsibilities, actions, milestones and monitoring arrangements.
- The FE Commissioner should undertake a monitoring visit at the end of the summer term to review progress.

The monitoring visit was carried out by a Further Education Adviser over the period 23/24 June 2015 to consider the progress that had been made in line with these recommendations.

The report from the FE Commissioner is set out at Appendix 'A' together with the covering letter from Nick Boles MP, Minister of State for Skills. The FE Commissioner has concluded that Lancashire Adult and Community Learning is being transformed, and the practical partnership between the local authority and the Board of Nelson and Colne College in introducing interim arrangements is to be applauded. There is clear evidence of a changing culture. A strong Governing Body with appropriate experience and autonomy has been complemented by an equally strong Senior Leadership Team which has maintained an inexorable focus on quality improvement. It is hoped that these arrangements can translate into a permanent arrangement.

The FE Commissioner has recommended that in the light of the service's performance, the service should no longer be subject to a review by the FE Commissioner but be included in the normal SFA monitoring procedures.

2. Ofsted

Ofsted carried out a third follow up re-inspection monitoring visit to Lancashire Adult learning on 17 March 2015. A copy of Ofsted's follow up re-inspection monitoring visit report is set out at Appendix 'B'.

We expect a further one day monitoring visit in October. This visit will be carried out by a single HM Inspector. We will learn more when a full re-inspection is likely to happen at that visit.

3. Appointment of the Principal

In July, there were a number of announcements and publications which led to the Governing Body agreeing to the recommendation of the acting Principal that it would be sensible to defer the Principal appointment until we can understand better the impact on Adult and Community Learning (ACL) funding of the Comprehensive Spending Review in November. We understand that the national ACL budget will be reviewed, and whilst we anticipate that there will remain some sort of funding for our learners in the medium term, we don't know the shape or size of that funding. We could progress with the recruitment process but we would be unlikely to actually appoint any successful candidate at a time of such great change and uncertainty.

In addition, the announcement of Area Reviews of all provision for learners over 16, essentially reshaping the FE College sector to align to different priorities and specialisms both locally and nationally, makes it sensible to await further guidance before firmly establishing our independence through the appointment of a Principal.

As far as the leadership of the College goes, and preparation for Ofsted, the present arrangement under which we are supported by the Principal and Deputy Principal of Nelson and Colne College will continue. Ofsted will, however, want to be satisfied that there is long-term leadership stability in our planning.

4. Restructuring and voluntary means process

The recent restructuring exercise has resulted in the appointment of a new middle leadership team, with the skills and enthusiasm to take the College forward. A leadership development programme was undertaken with the team at the end of the last term, sharing objectives and standards and providing a sound base for the start of the `15/16 Academic year.

Many of the teaching posts have also now been filled. In the light of the expected funding cuts, we have retained some teachers on hourly paid teaching posts rather than open up vacancies to those people. We are satisfied however that we have a strong complement of established teachers to be the core of our delivery team, and strong hourly paid teachers who we will invite to apply for established posts once our future funding picture is clearer. In all cases, we are ensuring that teachers are able to participate in all training to secure even more improvements in our Teaching and Learning profile.

Consultations

The County Council is consulting Ofsted and the SFA on the response to the Ofsted inadequate assessment.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

Following the Ofsted inadequate assessment in November 2015 , the County Council has put in place a series of measures to ensure that the Lancashire Adult Learning is able to respond positively to the planned Ofsted re –inspection.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
Nil		

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A