

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet Meeting: 25 April, 2016

Cabinet Member for Adult Services

Fees for Leisure Learning Courses

Purpose of the Report

1. To review the fee levels of the Adult Community Learning (ACL) leisure courses, to ensure the learning programme remains viable and sustainable.

Recommendation

1. That members approve an increase in the full fee from £85 to £89 for a 10 week course, an increase to the concessionary fee from £64 to £69 for a 10 week course and to increase 1 day courses from £30 to £35.

Reason for the Recommendation

1. To ensure the universal leisure learning offer can be sustained on a cost recovery basis.

Background

2. The Welsh Government's policy document "Delivering Community Learning for Wales" sets out the Government's adult and community learning policy, describes the strategic aims and defines the key action for providers. The aims are to:
 - Increase participation for those who have benefited least from education in the past or who are most at risk of not benefiting in the future.
 - Improve quality in the learning experience including increased progression to other learning opportunities or work.
 - Retain the accreditation of at least 80% of ACL provision.
3. Furthermore, Welsh Government (WG) outlines the need for a balance between provision funded by the Department for Education and Skills grant, and by the learner, employers and other fee paying organisations or groups.
4. The level of fees charged is established to ensure that learning opportunities are affordable and that cost barriers to participation are minimised whilst recognising that learners should make an appropriate contribution to the overall cost of their learning. Those who are on means tested benefits are able to access the free Essential Skills and Employability Training through the 'Get Back on Track' programme.

5. Free courses are also available for individuals seeking employment via our 'Get Back on Track' programme on one day accredited courses in Microsoft Office skills. These learners can also access additional free work clubs around the Vale (Barry, Penarth, St Athan, Llantwit Major). The work clubs support curriculum vitae writing and job searching using the internet.
6. The Council offers a curriculum which is wide ranging and diverse to engage those participants who are learning for leisure, social or learning progression opportunities. These ACL programme courses offered on a cost recovery basis and in some cases generate income to support the ACL provision that targets those in greatest need.
7. To ensure the continuation of a broad range of courses and ensure available funding is targeted at priority groups there needs to be an increase in the full fee and concessionary fees for these leisure courses.

Relevant Issues and Options

8. To achieve the three aims referred to in paragraph 2 there is a need to:-
 - provide free targeted opportunities to attract those considered to be in greatest need;
 - continue to provide a programme that appeals to as wide an audience as possible including those learners who currently access the programme and are not considered to fall into one of the priority groups.
9. Charges for courses are based on £4.45 per hour for full fee payers. Although courses run for 25 or 30 weeks learners are able to pay for their courses in 10 or 15-week blocks, which equates to £133.50 (15 weeks) and £89 (10 weeks). Currently the Council is recovering up to 89.9% of total running costs for ACL provision from students, room rental and other income.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

10. The total expenditure for the full cost recovery programme is £329,189 of which £296,014 (89.9%) is offset by income. Income is generated from various areas: student fees £218,018 (66.22%); rentals £33,242 (10.09%); vending £2,576 (0.78%); contribution from Welsh for Adults grant £20,536 (6.24%) and a contribution from Cardiff County Council £21,642 (6.57%). The revenue funding contribution from the Vale of Glamorgan Council is £33,175 (10.1%).
11. The increase in fees will assist the Council to reduce its revenue costs for the Adult Community Learning Service. The Council intends to review its costs in this service and is seeking to reshape the service at no detriment to the learner but to make the Leisure Course Programme self-sustaining in the future. This will ensure that the Council's revenue funding is targeted at those in greatest need of support with their learning and future life choices.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

12. There are no sustainability or climate change implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

13. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Crime and Disorder Implications

14. There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

15. The proposals are intended to increase participation of those who have benefited least from education in the past or who are most at risk of not benefitting in the future. Basic skills, family learning, some English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), 'Get Back on Track' and work clubs will continue to be free to students. Courses for students on means tested benefits will also continue to be free.

Corporate/Service Objectives

16. Community Strategy Priority 6 - "people of all ages to access learning opportunities and skills to reach potential, remove barriers to employment"

Policy Framework and Budget

17. This is a matter for Executive decision.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

18. Not applicable.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

19. Lifelong Learning

Background Papers

None

Contact Officer

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Officers Consulted

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Heather Todd-Bennett, Penarth Adult Community Learning
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Emma Evans, Basic Skills Coordinator
Andrew Borsden Lead Officer for Youth and Community Learning

Responsible Officer:

Jennifer Hill, Director Learning and Skills