Adult and Community Learning in Tandridge

19 March 2003

KEY ISSUE

To present an annual report on Adult and Community Learning in Tandridge in 2001/02 and to offer the Committee an opportunity to influence future planning of the service, in particular, learning activity which could support self-reliance.

SUMMARY

This report sets out the current context for adult and community learning together with a summary of current provision in the Tandridge area. It seeks the input of the Local Committee on the future direction of the service.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Tandridge Local Committee should:

(i) consider and comment on the annual report for 2001/2.
(ii) offer comment on adult and community learning priorities for Tandridge, and how they could be addressed.
BACKGROUND TO THE SERVICE

1. Although many people still refer to the service as Adult Education, the title “Adult and Community Learning” was adopted in 2001 to reflect active partnership with learners and the wider role of the service.

2. Adult and Community Learning (ACL) attracts over 31,000 learners and 53,000 enrolments annually to a programme of recreational learning which is delivered through a network of 16 adult learning centres and over 300 community locations across 9 of the 11 Boroughs/Districts in Surrey. A programme is provided in Tandridge and Reigate & Banstead by East Surrey College under a contract with Surrey County Council.

3. The contract with East Surrey College began in 1999. The College leases Adult Learning Centres in East Surrey from the County Council, and undertakes to provide a programme of recreational learning alongside the College’s own programme of community-based accredited learning, which is funded directly by the Learning and Skills Council. The College receives a grant from the County Council, net after payment for rent, to support the recreational programme.

4. The contract expired in August 2002, but has been extended to 31 July 2003; the grant has been increased by £50,000. Discussions about the continuation of the contract beyond summer 2003 are taking place; the College has indicated that it wishes to continue with the present arrangement, but with changes to the provision and the terms of the contract. These are yet to be detailed and agreed.

Service overview

5. The essence of Surrey ACL is the offer of recreational learning, where choice is paramount. Individuals choose to undertake courses for a wide range of reasons, including a step towards more formal study, a second chance to return to learning, a desire to develop a new skill, skills leading to employment, to meet new friends, or to maintain mental or physical fitness. ACL aims to enhance the quality of learners’ lives through a more positive use of their leisure time and a greater understanding of the world in which they live. Information below relates to the non-contracted provision, but also describes the programme in East Surrey:

- The majority of Surrey ACL learners are 50 years and over (54.69%). 33.9% of our learners are 60 years and over compared to 20.9% in the Surrey population generally. There is a disproportionate number of women (76.26% of enrolments), which probably reflects the greater interest many women have in learning or their decision to prioritise some of their available leisure time to learning.

- There is an extensive programme of learning for adults with learning disabilities and difficulties, and programmes of community learning targeted at people who would not otherwise engage in learning located in districts designated as ‘socially deprived’.
Learner Satisfaction Surveys are held each term and there are high levels of satisfaction with the provision. 95.6% of learners give an excellent or good rating for the content of their course, for the overall effectiveness of their learning and for the quality of teaching. Learners express lower levels of satisfaction for the accommodation used at 66%, reflecting the age and condition of the ACL property portfolio.

6. Surrey ACL works closely in partnership with the Colleges of Further Education, which provide basic skills courses, accredited and vocational learning for adults in our adult learning Centres. Learners regularly progress from ACL to college courses as they seek to improve their vocational opportunities. The contract with East Surrey facilitates this progression. Similar partnership arrangements are maintained with the University of Surrey.

PLANNING AND FUNDING ADULT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING

7. In April 2001, the Learning & Skills Council (LSC) assumed responsibility for all post-16 further education. This includes all sixth form provision, Further Education Colleges and work-based learning as well as adult and community learning. Local education authorities (LEAs) lost the duty to provide adult learning to the LSC but retain the power to secure provision.

8. The transfer of the legal duty for ACL from LEAs to LSCs included the financial resources that were allocated by the County Council for Adult and Community Learning. From April 2001, the service has been funded by a grant based on the annual Adult Learning Plan submitted to the LSC.

9. For the current academic year (2002/3) ACL expenditure will be £6.81 million. This is funded by £3.47 million from learner fees and other income, and £3.33 million in LSC grant. Surrey County Council provides no direct funding for ACL. As the LSC grant is based on activity in 1998/9, providing improved quality, new programmes and widening participation within the available budget is challenging.

10. The Secretary of State has guaranteed the level of funding until August 2003. The LSC wishes to move to formula funding based on learner numbers and the attainment of individual learners. This change would significantly simplify the contractual arrangements with East Surrey College by making the funding transparent. From recent research and consultation, the LSC is aware that this change is much more complex than expected and cannot be implemented universally from August 2003, as originally planned. Funding for 2003/4 at the current level is now expected. The long-term impact for Surrey of changes to the funding mechanism is unclear.

11. ACL has benefited since April 2001 from additional resources made available by the LSC to achieve specific objectives. In 2002/3, specific grants have been received for a new management information system, building access improvements for disabled people; minor works building improvements and family learning.

12. Other changes include a rigorous quality regime that has required the development of a Quality Assurance Framework and annual self-assessment. An inspection by the Adult Learning Inspection is expected within the next two years. This will include the provision contracted to East Surrey College, and a future contract will be based on clear and very specific targets for learner numbers, planning of the curriculum and quality assurance related to the Learning and Skills Council’s targets for Adult and Community Learning.

ADULT & COMMUNITY LEARNING IN TANDRIDGE

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13. East Surrey College provides learning using two main Centres in Tandridge – Caterham Valley and Bletchingley. Bletchingley is also used as a community facility and offers courses in languages, art, crafts and physical education; there is no ICT provision at the Centre. A new ICT facility has been provided at Caterham Valley and a full curriculum offered, with much of the provision now accredited. A range of community venues are also used, including:

- Oxted School
- Oxted Library
- Area 75 (formerly Harry’s)
- St Mary’s Hall
- St Agatha’s hall (Hurst Green)
- Lingfield and Dormansland Community Centre
- De Stafford College
- Warlingham School
- Douglas Brunton Centre
- St Luke’s Church, Whyteleafe

14. There is also a new literacy project at Holland School, running on one morning per week.

15. In North Tandridge, the provision competes with Croydon (CETS) and in south Tandridge, with East Grinstead, but enrolments have been sustained through the College reviewing and revising the programme. Daytime accommodation in Oxted is limited but more learning could perhaps be provided through expansion of the evening use of Oxted School. The programme at Warlingham School was revived in the last two years and is growing with the help and support of the school.

16. Overall, there has been an increase in participation countywide in the last year. Subjects that are attracting more interest are languages, especially Spanish and Italian and physical exercise (Yoga in particular). There is a constant demand for all art courses with a particular preference this year for watercolour. Despite much attention being drawn to the need to improve IT skills, there has been a slight decline in interest both locally and nationally, reflecting perhaps the increased skills in the community and local over-provision, although free learning (which has been offered at Oxted School and Oxted Library) has been successful, as have courses on specific programmes and related topics, such as digital photography.

ADULT & COMMUNITY LEARNING ISSUES IN TANDRIDGE

Self reliance

17. Learning is a significant factor in promoting self-reliance in individuals and communities. Projects are targeted at the areas of highest deprivation and the needs of specific communities. In Tandridge, activity has been largely centred on

- Providing learning opportunities for older people in the community at St Luke’s Church Whyteleafe, where an Active Retirement group has been running since Autumn 2000. The programme includes light exercise and guest speakers each week. Although the venue has now moved, it continues to provide an active environment for mature learners.
- Supported learning for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities
- Basic skills – including a new provision in Lingfield.
Widening Participation

18. The challenge for Adult and Community Learning is to widen participation, in particular to draw more non-learners, younger people and more men into learning. The Learning and Skills Council has set targets for Adult and Community Learning for 2003/4 and these will be reflected in a contract with East Surrey College.

Extended Schools

19. Through the Education Act 2001, the Government is encouraging schools to widen their community role. Surrey’s approach has been outlined in the recent publication, “Organising for Success”. This will include the opportunity to expand the use of school resources for learning by pupils’ parents and relatives as well as other adults living locally.

20. This approach is already being piloted with three Surrey schools, and this is an opportunity to enhance our service using SCC facilities, with access to market the programme to parents. Any expansion of learning for adults will be within the framework of the Adult Learning Plan.

Family Learning

21. Using the additional funding provided by the Learning and Skills Council, significant development is taking place to enhance the delivery of family learning opportunities which contribute to the raising of achievement by children and widening participation by adults in learning, particularly Basic Skills. The programme of activity includes:
   - Developing a strategy for family learning, linked to other key strategies including the Education Development Plan, Early Years, Parenting strategy
   - Setting up a providers and projects network
   - Innovative family learning delivery programmes based in the community and using resources such as museums, Youth Development Outdoor Centres, County Arts
   - Pilot network of 39 schools provided with additional support to develop family learning (in Tandridge, Hillcroft Primary and Hurst Green 3 – 7)
   - Developing a core curriculum, resources, evaluation and accreditation

Special Educational Needs Act 2001

22. This Act extends the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to education establishments and services. A significant issue for Adult and Community Learning is to ensure, by September 2005, that buildings offer no barriers to participation in our programme. Many of the dedicated Centres have significant access deficiencies, which, despite additional funding from the Learning and Skills Council and the County Council, may not be overcome by September 2005.

23. Improving access is a significant issue for ACL, and emphasises the importance of the discussions with secondary schools and other possible partners about alternative locations. However, schools rarely have available space during the day, when many learners prefer to attend our courses.

East Surrey Community Learning Partnership
24. Lifelong Learning Partnerships were originally set up in response to the Government initiative for a network of stakeholders. The Surrey Lifelong Learning Partnership has representatives from the Surrey LSC, Surrey County Council, University of Surrey, the Colleges of Further Education and business. This provides countywide co-ordination and the Surrey LLP set up Community Learning Partnerships (CLPs) co-terminus with Borough/District areas, except in East Surrey, where there is a combined partnership covering Reigate and Banstead (except for the Banstead area) and Tandridge.

25. The East Surrey Partnership is chaired by Richard Latham, Principal of East Surrey College, and aims to add value to learning by identifying need that is not currently being addressed, provide a local network and co-ordinate planning of learning across sectors.

**Adult Learning Plan 2003/4**

26. The annual Adult Learning Plan is due for submission to the Surrey LSC by 31 March 2003, covering the academic year 2003/4, and will be considered by the County Council on 25 March. The Plan will set out how adult and community learning will be delivered and at what cost. The Plan will describe how Adult and Community Learning contributes to the County Council’s and the LSC’s key strategic objectives.

27. The Adult Learning Plan is required to address the Learning and Skills Council’s priorities for 2003/4:

- improve basic skills
- widen participation in learning to those who do not traditionally participate in education and training
- enhance family learning provision
- support strategies for neighbourhood renewal
- promote good citizenship
- improve IT skills at all levels
- encourage language provision in line with the National Languages Strategy

28. The LSC recognises and supports the County Council’s key strategic role in identifying the learning needs of adults and in coordinating related plans and strategies, such as health and community care; this role has a critical local dimension. The Tandridge Local Committee is asked to consider these priorities in relation to need in Tandridge, to identify the most significant and how best could they be addressed.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS:**