



Communities Select Committee
23 July 2014

The vision for Community Learning & Skills

Purpose of the report: To review progress on the previous recommendation of the Select Committee of 20 March 2014

Recommendation: That Information Management and Technology (IMT) and Customer Services' Web Team work with the Adult Learning Service to develop a stand alone website to enable online booking for courses and effectively market the service. This is to maximise the potential of the service and ensure its sustainability. Report back to the Communities Select Committee on progress of this development in 3 months time.

1. Introduction:

- 1.1. The Adult Learning Service is largely a direct delivery provider of Community Learning, funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) as well as fee income paid by Service users.
- 1.2. It expressed concern and this was supported by the Select Committee that the then existing website was poor and this was impacting on enrolment numbers and income. By way of comparison with the West Sussex and Kent adult learning services, the Surrey web presence was far behind what these neighbouring local authorities have in place.
- 1.3. The Chair's letter was passed on to the Head of IMT and the Head of Customer Services. They met with the Principal on the Adult Learning Service on 6 May 2014 to take the matter forward.
- 1.4. This report should be read as a cover report and the presentation will demonstrate the precise position with a real-time link to the site for Select Committee.

2. Service Development:

- 2.1. In order to increase participation on the Service's programme, through improved communication with the residents of Surrey.
- 2.2. A quality online presence is seen as a key area of improvement. The Service aspires to have a website equal to the best adult learning services in the country. This will enable the Service to maximise its potential and to ensure its sustainability.

3. Progress since March 2014:

- 3.1. There has been good progress since March 2014. There is a new launch page for the Adult Learning Section of the Surrey County Council website. The Service is pleased with the look and feel, however it is seen as very much work in progress. A number of initial pieces of editing need to be completed. The Service is working with the web team to address these.
- 3.2. The Service has been advised that it will have direct control over sections of the content in the future. This is welcomed as it will enable the Service to be able to use the site as a tactical sales and marketing tool.
- 3.3. There has also been good progress on the introduction of online enrolment. The testing of the online enrolment and payment facility is programmed to commence in the week beginning 23 June 2014. If the penetration testing proves positive, i.e. the system is sufficiently robust to prevent hacking, user testing will follow. We are hopeful that the facility will be in place before the end of July 2014.

4. What Next?

- 4.1. The situation at time of writing the report was quite fluid, with various members of both IMT and the Web Team working on outstanding matters. The best case, and most likely, scenario is that by the end of July the Adult Learning Service will have a modernised web presence, with an online enrolment facility within the Surrey County Council web site. The presentation will focus on a real time demonstration of the current status of the Adult Learning section of the web site.
- 4.2. It is anticipated that the Committee will see a clear improvement on the position in comparison to March 2014. The Service acknowledges that some other Adult Learning Services' websites, such as Kent's, have had several years of planned iterations of review and improvement
- 4.3. We need to move to a process where we have a review, plan and implementation cycle that will enable us to become the best. For example, we know the online enrolment module we are implementing is far from ideal. However having a workable online enrolment process will be a substantial step forward from where we were a few months ago.
- 4.4. Further consideration of a stand-alone website should be part of the review process. It would give the Service the flexibility that it aspires. However, these considerations need to be weighed against the benefits of staying inside the main County Council website, including search engine optimisation and ongoing development costs and maintenance.

5. Conclusions:

- 5.1. Can the Adult Learning Service fulfil its aspiration to have a web presence equal to the best in the sector and remain embedded in the Surrey County Council website? A balanced view on the matter is that we don't know at this juncture. However, the service will attempt to work with both IMT and Web Team to instigate an annual review, plan and implementation cycle to make this an obtainable target.

6. Recommendations:

1. The Service seeks the continued support of the Select Committee to meet its aspiration to have a web presence the equal of the best in the Adult Learning Sector.
2. The Select Committee to continue to monitor progress on the matter, and for the Service to include an update as part of its annual reporting cycle.

Report contact:

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Sources/background papers:

Appendix A

Letter from the Chair of the Customers and Communities Select Committee of 27 March 2014

Appendix A

Letter from the Chair of the Customers and Communities Select Committee of 27
March 2014

TO: Lucie Glenday (Chief Digital Officer)

27 March 2014

Dear Lucie

**Communities Select Committee recommendations on Surrey's Adult Learning Service
and Surrey's Library Service**

At the Communities Select Committee meeting of 20 March 2014, the Committee considered items on the Vision for Surrey Libraries and the Vision for Surrey's Adult Learning Service. Papers for this meeting can be found at the following web address:
<http://mycouncil.surreycc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=172&MIId=3296&Ver=4>
The minutes of the meeting will be published on this page in due course.

I am writing to you to draw your attention to two recommendations made at this meeting which fall within the remit of the Chief Digital Officer to respond to and take forward.

Adult Learning Service

The Select Committee were disappointed to note that despite a recommendation being made in the Public Value Review of the Adult Learning Service in 2012, to develop an overarching marketing strategy and plan centred on an effective interactive web presence to drive increased participation rates and income, improvement of the quality of the service's web presence and creating functionality to provide online enrolment still remain outstanding from the PVR implementation plan.

The Committee received compelling evidence of the improvement that is required. Here are links to other adult learning providers and the current web offering for our own service.

Kent: <https://www.kentadulteducation.co.uk>

Sussex: <http://www.aspiresussex.org.uk>

Surrey: <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/learning/adult-learning>

You will note that Surrey currently only provide information on their adult learning courses, whilst the other providers use stand alone websites to actively market their service and enrol learners. The Committee were informed that these providers have seen a substantial increase in online enrolment as a result of their web offering. For a service which uses its income from grants and course fees to cover its expenditure, increasing enrolment is a business critical issue. It is for this reason that the Committee resolved to make the following recommendation.

Recommendation: That the Chief Digital Officer work with the Adult Learning Service to develop a stand alone website to enable on-line booking for courses and effectively market the service. This is to maximise the potential of the service and ensure its sustainability. Report back to the Communities Select Committee on progress of this development in 3 months time.

Library Service

For the item reviewing the vision for Surrey's Libraries, the Committee received evidence highlighting how IT provision is a priority for this customer-led service. With an increasing number of virtual visitors, increase in customers' use of mobile devices and demand for apps and e-books, and the government's push for digital by default there is a growing need to develop services to meet these expectations and need. At present, the Library service do not

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have a budget for IT development. However, I understand that in your role as Chief Digital Officer, you will be working with County Council services to secure the most suitable and efficient digital solutions to meet service and resident needs. The Committee therefore resolved to make the following recommendation.

Recommendation: That the Chief Digital Officer work with the Library Service to develop their IT provision as part of the Council's development of their Digital Strategy.

I look forward to hearing from you on how these recommendations can be taken forward.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Denise Saliagopoulos
Chairman of the Communities Select Committee

cc. Communities Select Committee members, Helyn Clack (Cabinet Member for Community Services), Denise Le Gal (Cabinet Member for Business Services), Peter Martin (Deputy Leader), Paul Brocklehurst (Head of IMT), Peter Milton (Head of Cultural Services), Paul Hoffman (Principal Community Learning and Skills), Rose Wilson (Library Operations Manager).

ENDS

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