

London Borough of Bromley

PART 1 - PUBLIC

Briefing for Education, Children and Families Select Committee Wednesday 28 June 2017

ADULT EDUCATION UPDATE

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1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of the impacts arising from the 2016 restructure of the councils adult education service. The report considers the impacts under three main headings, provision, accommodation and staff.
- 1.2. The adult education service was inspected in February 2016 and the impact of the restructure on the outcome is reflected throughout where appropriate.
- 1.3. All data used in this briefing is accurate as of 28 April 2017 unless stated otherwise.

2. **BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 At a meeting of the Council's Executive Committee on 10 February 2016 members endorsed a proposal for a reorganisation of the adult education service, known as Bromley Adult Education College (BAEC).
- 2.2 The restructure encompassed a refocusing of the curriculum offer to increase the level of resource used to support vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, a reduction in staffing levels across the service and withdrawal from the Widmore Centre in Bromley, which had operated as the main administrative centre for the service since September 1998. Another anticipated outcome was the return of the Adult Education budget to a balanced position.
- 2.3 As the larger of the two remaining designated adult education sites, the Kentwood Centre became the new main administrative centre for the service with effect from August 2016.
- 2.4 Between June and 31 August 2016 staff relocated those resources identified as required for the continuation of the service to the Kentwood or Poverest sites. Some resources were transferred to other sections within the council whilst items identified as surplus were put up for public sale.
- 2.5 The proceeds from the public sale came to a total of £3,220. Following the public sale charitable organisations were invited to view and collect remaining items free of charge. For example, this enabled the Men in Sheds project to make use of woodwork benches and some tools that would otherwise have been disposed of.
- 2.6 BAEC previously operated with a Governing Body with delegated powers under a local scheme of management. The Governing Board was dissolved at the end of the 216/16 academic year and a new body, known as the Community Learning Advisory Consortium (CLAC) was formed.

- 2.7 The Community Learning Advisory Consortium is chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Education and has representation from various sections of the local community, other teams with ECHS, and the BAEC student body. The group has met twice in 2016/17 with a third meeting planned for the summer term.
- 2.8 Under its terms of reference the purpose of CLAC is to provide local intelligence to inform the adult learning offer; provide links to local communities to help funding reach identified vulnerable groups and contribute to the local authorities priorities; to provide support and challenge to adult learning leaders and managers to ensure that funding is targeted and used effectively to support disadvantaged adults and communities.
- 2.9 The service commenced full operation under the new structure from 1 September 2016 and the autumn term began on 19th September.

3. IMPACT ON PROVISION

- 3.1 Whilst the restructure reduced the volume of courses open to public enrolment, BAEC has continued to retain a reasonably wide range of provision within its mainstream offer for members of the public. Up to the end of April 2017 a total of 462 courses have taken place. Of these courses, 180 have been provided through community project partnership work, targeted at specific vulnerable groups. At the time of writing this report a further 104 courses were planned to start later in the summer term.
- 3.2 Although the closure of the Widmore site resulted in the loss of some popular specialist subjects such as pottery and jewellery making, a few minor adaptations at the Kentwood and Poverest Centres enabled the retention of some of the arts and crafts subjects. These include art appreciation, etching, floristry, interior design, photography, stained glass and upholstery.
- 3.3 The accredited provision on offer has retained a strong focus on English and maths, including GCSE and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Other qualifications have remained as part of the offer to residents, including counselling, book keeping and accounting, office skills, ICT, food safety, sign language, childminding, photography and interior design.
- 3.4 Managers have continued to work in partnership with the Job Centre Plus staff to offer specific training and qualifications for unemployed adults, including Universal Job Match, CV writing and interview skills.
- 3.5 BAEC has continued with its discrete offer for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities providing a range of courses in independent living skills, ICT, art and craft, dance and drama and photography.
- 3.6 Within the community outreach programme to date managers have worked with a total of 32 partners, of which 18 are primary schools. These include family learning courses delivered in 2 local authority maintained schools and 16 academies. Family learning provision has also been successfully provided through partnership working with five of the Bromley Children and Family Centres.
- 3.7 At the time of the inspection in February 2017, Ofsted reported that the service "...offers a good range of courses, in a wide variety of locations, ensuring good learning opportunities to the borough's most disadvantaged residents". However, Ofsted were critical regarding of the slow progress made by leaders and managers in improving the achievement rates in some of the accredited provision, in particular the ESOL courses. Work to address these areas for improvement is underway and forms the key process of a post inspection action plan.

- 3.8 Enrolment for the 2017/18 academic year will commence on Monday 5th June 2017 and the funding grant for the forthcoming academic year is expected to remain at the same level as that for 2016/17.
- 3.9 In order to support those residents whose courses were being displaced or lost from the adult education offer as a result of the restructure and closure of the Widmore site, an adult learning section was developed as part of the Bromley Mylife website. A total of 22 subject areas were built into the facility, of which 20 have been populated with courses offered by other providers.
- 3.10 The providers listed on the site are comprised of a range of large companies (e.g. David Lloyd Clubs), other colleges (London South East Colleges), other local authorities (e.g. Bexley and Croydon adult education services) training providers (e.g. JACE Training), third sector organisations (e.g. U3A, Ripley Arts Centre) and small independent providers. In total there are over 100 different providers with course listings included on the MyLife site. The role of a graduate intern has been crucial in enabling the information on this facility to be kept current.
- 3.11 Between 1 September 2016 and 25 May 2017 there have been a total of 420 views on the adult learning homepage and 580 on the “find a course” page. February was the busiest month for views on the adult learning listings. Drawing and badminton were the two most popular viewed listings and stress management, followed by sculpture and silversmithing the least.
- 3.12 Three former tutors from BAEC have independent listings on the Bromley MyLife site and a further six provide classes at the Ripley Art Centre with links to that site included on the relevant MyLife pages.

4. IMPACT ON ACCOMODATION

- 4.1 The closure of the Widmore site reduced the number of designated BAEC teaching spaces by 50%. However at that time, following year on year reductions in funding, the volume of courses had declined over a four year period and all three sites were underused. For example there were a total of 742 BAEC courses in 2015/16 compared to a total of 1,061 in the academic year 2011/12.
- 4.2 The relocation of the administration and support functions to the Kentwood centre resulted in the loss of a further four of the smaller classrooms to accommodate support staff and resources. However, the closure of the nursery enabled the creation of 3 new teaching spaces providing a total of 22 teaching rooms at the Kentwood Centre.
- 4.3 In 2016/17 usage of the teaching rooms at Kentwood has varied across the week, with Tuesday mornings being the busiest slot and Friday afternoon remaining the time when rooms are used the least. The combined art and etching room has been used consistently across all available teaching slots and the use of the ICT room has increased from around 45% in 2015/16 to 79% during 2016/17 to date.
- 4.4 Average daily room usage is shown in table 1 below. This data includes all available slots across mornings, afternoons and evenings where open. Kentwood is open for classes for four evenings per week during term time and Poverest for two evenings.

4.5 Table 1: Average daily room usage 2016/17 to date

	Kentwood (out of total 22 rooms across 14 slots)	Poverest (out of total 10 rooms across 12 slots)
Monday	44%	67%
Tuesday	65%	85%
Wednesday	64%	64%
Thursday	50%	75%
Friday	30%	85%

- 4.6 At the Poverest Centre there are a total of ten teaching spaces available including the main hall space. The busiest slot during the week are Tuesday and Friday mornings and the quietest is a Wednesday afternoon.
- 4.7 Provision for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities has continued to form a significant proportion of the curriculum offer at the Poverest Centre; however the range of mainstream courses available to open enrolment has increased. This has provided residents with an increased choice in some subjects e.g. art based subjects; dance etc. plus English, maths and ESOL.
- 4.8 Following the closure of the Widmore site, staff were able to consolidate resources, ensuring that the newer and/or higher specification of furniture and equipment was retained. This has helped to improve the learning environment and resources in some of the teaching and communal areas at the Kentwood and Poverest sites.
- 4.9 The letting of rooms to outside organisations has continued to contribute to the income generated by the adult education service, although at lower levels than in previous years. Two of the regular lettings are former tutors who have continued to offer, on a private basis, courses that were discontinued under the BAEC restructure.
- 4.10 To date, a total of an additional 34 community venues have been used to deliver adult learning provision. All of these venues have been accessed using the pound plus principle under which accommodation was provided free of charge by the community partner as part of their contribution to the costs of delivering adult education in communities.
- 4.11 In addition to the schools and children and family centres referred to in 5.6 above, other locations used include: Job Centre (Bromley), Active Age Centre, Community Centres, village halls and sheltered housing centres.

5. STAFF IMPACT

- 5.1 The employment contracts of 50 part time tutors, 17 support staff (including management) and 14 nursery workers were terminated by reason of redundancy as a direct consequence of the restructure. In addition, two members of staff were redeployed to other teams within the council.
- 5.2 The teaching staff affected predominantly taught those subjects that were being discontinued from the curriculum as part of restructure, e.g. some arts and craft subjects, badminton, beauty therapy and some language provision. In a few cases the closure of the Widmore site significantly reduced the volume of work on offer for other subjects, such as painting and drawing and Pilates. As a consequence the hours available for specific individual tutors were not a suitable alternative offer compared to their previous contracted hours.

- 5.3 In 2016/17 managers have reported that the overall reduction in the size of the teaching pool has restricted the flexibility of the curriculum. This has made it more difficult to set up community courses as quickly as in previous years and find cover for classes during periods of staff sickness.
- 5.4 Along with other providers in the post-16 sector, managers report a shortage of teachers for English, maths and ESOL classes. As a consequence, staff who are available are usually offered sufficient work during the hours that are most convenient for them. Thus it has become more difficult to find staff to teach during the less popular working slots such as evenings.
- 5.5 Following the restructure, the management posts were reduced from 9.5 FTE to 4 FTE. Under the new structure there are two Heads of Centre and a Head of Outreach, all of whom report to a Head of Adult Learning. The Head of Adult Learning reports directly to the Head of Service for Early Years, Schools Standards and Adult Education.
- 5.6 All staff appointed to the new management posts are responsible for areas of BAEC operations that were new to them in September 2016. Therefore the autumn term was a period of learning and adjustment as staff gained a fuller understanding of their new areas of responsibility and adjusted to new ways of working.
- 5.7 As we approach the end of the first year of operation under this new model, all managers have found the breadth of responsibilities on top of their curriculum and tutor line management roles challenging. For example, the two Heads of Centre and the Head of Outreach provision between them are responsible for the line management of 92 part time tutors.
- 5.8 In the long term developing the capacity within the team to innovate and respond to new initiatives is likely to remain difficult without additional resource. Staff have worked in close partnerships with other local authority adult education services, many of whom are facing similar challenges. Through these network arrangements the sharing of good practice is being adopted to help all partners realise efficiencies with regard to staff time and capacity. For example, the adult education services of the London Boroughs of Sutton, Bromley and Croydon are sharing a training event for teaching staff, thus widening the CPD opportunities available for tutors.
- 5.9 The Ofsted report of February 2017 commented favourably on the new management structure, recognising the positive impact a more simplified structure has had on improving communications and the decision making process. They identified that the Heads of Centre managed their teams of part time tutors well. They further commented that the significant staff resource invested in the restructure process had limited the ability of leaders and managers to bring about the necessary improvements in teaching and learning. This is now the priority for all staff and increasing amounts of staff resources have been directed towards the necessary interventions since January 2017.
- 5.10 Under the restructure administrative and funding support staff were reduced from 14.5 FTE to 9.75 FTE. The team are now processing fewer mainstream enrolments and there has been a reduction in the volume of data inputting for mainstream non accredited learning. However, the volume of activity for the accredited courses, which have higher levels of administrative functions attached to them, has remained at similar levels. Many students enrolling on mainstream non qualification courses now enrol online. However, recruitment and enrolment on community outreach programmes is achieved through partnership work and involves staff batch inputting the enrolment data. Increasing the community outreach work has therefore started to increase the levels of data inputting as the academic year has progressed.
- 5.11 Staff in both general and funding administration have struggled to manage the volumes of work required of them during busy times of the academic year, particularly the start of the academic

year and subsequent new terms. At this stage there is no evidence that this is having a negative impact on BAEC's ability to fulfil the contractual obligations under the terms of the funding grant. Managers will continue to monitor staff workloads and any subsequent impact. However, the role undertaken in the management of the funding processes by Head of Centre for Kentwood has sometimes reduced or delayed her active participation in curriculum improvement work. This will continue to be monitored to identify if it impacts negatively on the services' ability to complete the necessary intervention work in a timely manner.

6. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 Ofsted concluded that the reorganisation of the service had been well managed and successful with regard to bringing about a closer integration of the work of adult education with that of the council. They also recognised that the transition had been significant but concluded that the work done to implement and manage the restructure process was had a negative impact on the capacity of leaders and managers to implement all the required curriculum quality improvement actions.
- 6.2 Ofsted were also of the view that the changes brought about an improvement in the governance arrangements for the service, that lines of accountability are now clear and that BAEC are well positioned to contribute positively to the council's overall key aims and objectives.
- 6.3 Many of the areas for improvement identified by Ofsted in February 2017 had been highlighted by the service as part of its own self-assessment process and actions to address the issues built into a quality improvement plan. This plan has formed the basis of the subsequent post inspection action plan and has a strong focus on raising the achievement rates on qualification courses through improved teaching and learning techniques. Senior adult education staff meet with the Director of Education on a regular basis to review the progress made and agree priorities and targets.
- 6.4 External support, provided by a senior adult education officer, with current Ofsted inspection experience, from another local authority has been in place since December 2016. Through this support managers have received updated training in the observation of teaching and learning which has realigned their expectations more closely with that of Ofsted and the Common Inspection Framework 2017. Following the training, managers conducted observations of lessons accompanied by the external consultant who subsequently reported that managers are making good judgements about the quality of teaching and learning seen in the classrooms and setting appropriate improvement targets with tutors.
- 6.5 Further developments as a consequence of the external support include a more rigorous approach towards follow-up and the monitoring of tutor action plans and managers displaying an improvement in moral, self-belief and levels of motivation. Further training for managers is planned for later in the term and arrangements are in place for the current support to remain in place until December 2017.
- 6.6 All BAEC tutors were invited to attend a targeted tutor training day in May 2017. They were given the opportunity to attend a choice of two out of four planned workshops. Each of the workshops was focussed on key areas for improvement as identified in the Ofsted inspection report of February 2017. These were: Improving assessment strategies and techniques; the use of appropriate target setting; effective questioning techniques; differentiation strategies. The impact of the training is being evaluated during the summer term lesson observations and learning walks.
- 6.7 The restructure has clearly helped to refocus the work of BAEC, ensuring it is well placed to help the council meet its stated aim of focussing support on the Borough's more vulnerable

residents and enabling a more joined up approach with that of other council services. Despite the pressure on resources, staff are committed and motivated to achieve the necessary improvements in the quality of teaching and learning that will result in improved overall grade at the next inspection.

- 6.8 Partnership work between local authority services will remain an essential part of the work for adult education as all LA's struggle with a diminished resource. Furthermore, the likely outcomes on local authority adult learning that will arise following the devolution of funding to the Office of the Mayor of London remains uncertain. However, one of the key recommendations arising from the London Adult Community learning Area Review process was that services were asked to seek ways of sharing backroom operations and/or curriculum led activities in preparation for a possible move towards a merged hub based structure.
- 6.9 Local authority services across London have started to meet on a regular basis with a view to developing possible transition models for council leaders to consider. Bromley is in a unique position in that it sits on the border of two sub-regional groups. One is the South London Partnership which includes the boroughs of Croydon, Merton, Sutton, Kingston and Richmond. The other is the east sub regional partnership, which includes Bexley and Greenwich on the south of the river, and the London Boroughs of Newham, Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Waltham Forest north of the Thames. Bromley has been invited to participate in discussion about both transitional options and it seems likely that both will feature in a future options appraisal report for members' consideration.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The aim of the restructure was to put forward a model that would deliver savings and put in place a structure that would enable Adult Education to operate in a flexible way, depending on the continuation of various government funding streams.
- 7.2 The restructure will realise savings of £275k (2017/18) in a full year. This has already been reflected in the 2017/18 budget.
- 7.3