



Relocation of the Adult Learning Programme from St Helen's House

RECOMMENDATION

1. To approve the relocation of the adult learning programme currently operating from St Helen's House to alternative venues, including the Rycote Centre with effect from July 2004.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Council Cabinet has already accepted that there is insufficient Council funding available to carry out the backlog of maintenance work to bring St Helen's House up to standard for the delivery of adult education.
- 2.2 Even if the building repairs are carried out, the building cannot provide a cost-effective, fully accessible, modern learning environment because the building's listed status restricts the adaptations we can make to it. Suitability of accommodation was an issue highlighted in the recent Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) report on the Adult Learning Service (ALS).

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Since the extent of the building difficulties became apparent, the ALS has been seeking alternative venues for the courses which are as convenient as possible for existing learners as well as encouraging more people to learn.
- 3.2 All courses that are currently run at St Helen's House, for which sufficient demand is forecast and which meet quality standards, will run in future but in other venues.
- 3.3 The Rycote Centre has been identified as an appropriate building in the short term but with potential for further development as a modern adult learning centre if Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funding can be accessed to make improvements. The centre is in a central location, close to St Helen's House and with good transport links.
- 3.4 The Social Services Department (SSD) has an existing arrangement with the Leonard Cheshire Foundation to provide day care services for disabled people in the centre. The building is therefore already fully accessible for disabled people.
- 3.5 The arrangements between Social Services and the Leonard Cheshire Foundation are under review given the recommendations of the Best Value Review of Day Services that a community-based model should be developed. A programme is in place to provide alternative community-based activities, which has led to the number of service users attending Rycote reducing significantly. This programme will be

continuing and the current contract with the Leonard Cheshire Foundation is planned to end in March 2005, although Leonard Cheshire will remain involved in the partnership through their own work to develop community-based support for people with disabilities in Derby. Because of this work several rooms in Rycote have become available for alternative use, both during the day and in the evening.

- 3.6 Positive meetings have been held between staff from the ALS, SSD and Leonard Cheshire to discuss the options for shared use of the facility over the next academic year. The ALS has also met with centre users and staff to explore their potential involvement in the adult learning programme. Centre users are very positive about the developments and are already planning the courses they would like to take part in. A number of other groups continue to use Rycote for a range of activities. There will need to be discussion with representatives of these groups to ensure that their interests are considered in future plans.
- 3.7 This work has already given rise to another positive development in that Leonard Cheshire has now asked the ALS to deliver adult education in its community based programme in Chester Green. The ALS is committed to widening participation in lifelong learning and already has a good track record of delivering courses for people with a wide range of physical and learning disabilities as well as for those with mental health problems. This was highlighted as a strength in the recent inspection report.
- 3.8 Further work needs to be undertaken to finalise arrangements with regard to caretaking and catering arrangements and to ascertain the ALS's contribution to running costs. The ALS has proposed some minor building alterations, which are beneficial for both organisations and this will be progressed in the coming weeks. The spirit of co-operation, which is evident between the ALS, the SSD and the Leonard Cheshire Foundation, suggests that this development will be a positive one.
- 3.9 In addition to the Rycote Centre, the ALS will also accommodate some evening classes in existing school-based centres at Bemrose, Littleover, Sinfin and Noel Baker Community Schools and the Allenpark Learning Centre. Some learners in daytime classes were previously transported to St Helen's House and they will now be transported to Allenpark. In addition, some space has been identified at Derby Multicultural Centre for some learners who have additional learning needs. The ALS will continue to explore other venues in order to offer more opportunities to current and new learners.
- 3.10 The ALS are also negotiating to lease a retail unit on the Park Farm Shopping Centre at Allestree. This will be used as a one-room Adult Learning Centre and offer a range of courses, predominantly modern languages.
- 3.11 Current planning suggests that courses will relocate as follows:
 - Visual and Creative Arts – Rycote Centre
 - Basic Skills – Rycote Centre
 - Languages, including Sign Language and Makaton – Rycote Centre, Park Farm Centre, Allenpark and existing school based centres
 - ICT – Rycote Centre
 - Yoga and Keep Fit - Rycote Centre, Allenpark and existing school based centres
 - Counselling – Rycote Centre

- Tutor and Volunteer Training – Rycote Centre and Allenpark.

3.12 All viable programmes will continue to run in addition to new courses which reflect learner interests. These are likely to include woodcraft, play reading and calligraphy.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4. The option to continue to deliver services at St Helen's House was explored but the outstanding building maintenance issues prohibit this.

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Background papers: None
List of appendices: Appendix 1 – Implications

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1.1 The premises running costs associated with the current occupancy of St Helens House are around £60,000 for the nine month period from July 2004 to March 2005. In the short term, there will be some savings in these budgets but there will still be some residual costs. The additional costs associated with the use of Rycote and other premises have still to be resolved in full, but will include some rental payments in addition to running costs. The adaptations needed to the Rycote Centre are expected to be funded fully from Minor Works grant from the Learning and Skills Council.
- 1.2 The short term difficulty of achieving full savings at St Helens House means that, in the short term, there is the prospect that savings from the move will be insufficient to fully fund the costs. These risks will need to be borne by the Education and corporate building budgets, taking account of the benefits to the Adult Learning Service from the move. A further report will be brought to Cabinet to resolve the allocation of costs within existing budgets when the position is clearer.

Legal

2. None arising directly from this report.

Personnel

3. The continued delivery of an adult learning programme comparable to that previously operating from St Helen's House will secure the employment of Adult Learning Service staff.

Equalities impact

4. This approach to the delivery of adult learning opportunities will ensure that disabled students have the opportunity to access learning alongside their non-disabled peers. The development of the Rycote Centre as an adult learning base will contribute to the achievement of targets connected with widening participation.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 5.1 The proposal comes under the Council's Objectives of **job opportunities, education, protecting and supporting people and integrated cost effective services.**

- 5.2 The proposal furthers the priorities of **modernising the fostering service and residential and community care for adults** and **enhancing our community leadership role through partnership working and listening to, and communicating with, the public.**