



Report of Head of Projects and Programmes

Report to Chief Officer Employment and Skills

Date: 14 December 2016

Subject: Appointment of Specialist Adult Learning Provider

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):		
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		

Summary of main issues

- 1.1 As set out in the Best Council Plan 2016-17, the Council has an ambition for Leeds to have a strong economy and to be a compassionate city, tackling poverty and inequalities. In 2015-16, activities contributing to these aims included supporting more than 4,800 people move into employment and 12,200 local residents to acquire new skills including 7,500 learners through the Council's Adult Learning Programme.
- 1.2 Funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) under the Adult Education Budget, this provision offers a broad and balanced programme of adult learning in Leeds. Managed by the Employment and Skills Service on behalf of the Council, the majority of activities are delivered by external providers including third sector organisations.
- 1.3 Adult Learning is regulated by Ofsted according to the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) and rated as a 'Good' provider at the last inspection. In response to CIF best practice guidance and the SFA funding rules, the Council monitors the *intended* destination of learners.
- 1.4 The service continuously seeks to improve the offer to learners. Whilst it is appropriate to gather information on intended destinations, a follow up sample

of *actual* learner destinations would considerably enhance the Council's ability to judge the long term effectiveness of its activities to inform future delivery. The cost of this type of survey would not exceed £10,000 and could be fully met through the Council's externally funded Adult Learning Budget.

- 1.5 Following a recent soft market testing exercise, a provider with the relevant expertise in this area has been identified called J2Profit (J2P). This report seeks authorisation to commission J2P to undertake a destination survey of a sample of adult learners from the 2015-16 academic year.
- 1.6 Subject to approval, the survey would take place in January 2017 with the findings report available in February 2017. J2P have confirmed they have the resources and capacity to undertake the survey in the required timeframe.

Recommendations

The Chief Officer Employment and Skills is asked to:

- approve the award of a low value contract in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) 7 and, the invocation of CPR 7.1 to appoint J2Profit to undertake a destination survey of learners on the Council's Adult Learning Programme.
- authorise expenditure not exceeding £10,000 to J2Profit to carry out this work. The costs to be fully met from the Council's externally funded Adult Education Budget.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The report seeks authority under the relevant Contract Procurement Rules to progress a low value procurement not exceeding £10,000, and the direct appointment of a specialist provider, J2 Profit (J2P), to undertake a sample survey of the destinations of learners on the Council's Adult Learning Programme, without the need for competition.

2 Background Information

- 2.1 Funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) under the Adult Education Budget, the Council delivers a broad and balanced programme of adult learning in Leeds. Managed by the Employment and Skills Service on behalf of the Council, the majority of activities are delivered by external providers including third sector organisations.
- 2.2 Adult Learning is regulated by Ofsted according to the Common Inspection Framework (CIF). The Council's Adult Learning Programme is currently in scope for re-inspection by Ofsted (at the last inspection in 2013 the Council was rated as a 'Good' provider). In response to CIF best practice guidance and the SFA funding rules, the Council records and reports the *intended* destination of learners as part of the annual Self-Assessment Review (SAR).
- 2.3 The service continuously seeks to improve the offer to learners. Whilst it is appropriate to gather information on intended destinations, a follow up sample of *actual* learner destinations would considerably enhance the Council's ability to judge the long term effectiveness of its activities and is likely to be viewed positively in a future Ofsted inspection (the Council's Adult Learning Programme is currently in scope).
- 2.4 The cost of this type of survey would not exceed £10,000 and could be fully met through the Council's externally funded Adult Learning Budget.

3 Main Issues

- 3.1 Subject to approval, a sample destination survey will be conducted by telephoning learners who completed their courses in the academic year 2015-16. The survey will entail the following key elements:
 - Contacting a 10% sample of academic year 2015-16 learners
 - Identifying *actual* destination of those learners and comparing this with their previously recorded *intended* destinations
 - Provider engagement to address any identified unmet adult learning needs in relation to progression
 - Provide an ambitious, yet realistic and sustainable, action plan to support planning and delivery of future provision, in line with Council priorities.
- 3.2 The timing of the destination survey is also a consideration. The Adult Learning academic year 2015-16 ended on 31 July 2016 and best practice suggests a

follow up sample of learner actual destinations should take place no later than 6 – 12 months later. The survey is therefore planned to take place in January 2017 with the findings report being available in February 2017.

- 3.3 The results from the survey will be presented to the Employment and Skills Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the Council's Adult Learning Trust Board in the New Year. In addition, the findings will be shared with local authorities and other adult learning providers in the LEAFA region, as part of a wider piece of work that the Council is involved in focused on the development of a more collaborative partnership approach across the region, to the planning and delivery of adult learning.
- 3.4 Destination surveys are only one method used by the Council to capture qualitative data relating to the actual destination of learners. The Employment and Skills Service will continue to monitor intended destinations for all learners. In addition, the potential within the new Management Information System (Maytas) to monitor and target the take up of progression opportunities within the Council's own adult learning provision, is also being explored.
- 3.5 However, surveying a relatively large cohort of adult learners is a time consuming and specialist activity. The Council does not currently have the internal resources or expertise to undertake this work effectively. Following a soft market testing exercise carried out by Employment and Skills service, only two providers were identified.
- 3.6 The first provider is RCU Informed Strategic Decisions who have experience of destination surveys but mainly with large further education colleges. The second provider, J2Profit (J2P), was recommended by and has undertaken similar surveys for other members of LEAFA (the regional network of local authority lead officers for Adult and Community Learning.). Northern College, one of our established providers, has also previously engaged the services of J2P to carry out destination surveys.
- 3.7 J2P has confirmed they have the resources and capacity to undertake the Council's survey in the required timeframe. The cost of this work, based on a 10% sample size, will not exceed £10,000. Therefore this significant operational decision is in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) 7 - approval of a Low Value Procurement not exceeding £10,000.
- 3.8 Based on the limited marketplace a full procurement is not considered appropriate. The proposal is to appoint J2P without further competition under CPR 7.1 - which states that although "competition (three written tenders) is required for procurements with an estimated value of below £10k, if the relevant Chief Officer believes that it represents Best Value for the Council to make a direct appointment without the need for competition, they may do so".

4. Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 The Executive Member for Employment, Skills and Opportunity was consulted on the proposals in December 2016.

4.1.2 The views of local skills providers and the Council's Adult Learning Trust Board on the benefits of having a more informed understanding of current and planned adult learner destinations were used to inform these proposals, and will be integral to the completion of the survey.

4.1.3 Other local authorities and adult learning providers in the LEAFEA region were involved in the soft marketing testing exercise led by the Council to identify a suitable provider.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 An equality screening was carried out on 5 December 2016. The screening identified that some of the more vulnerable learners, such as those with learning difficulties or disabilities (LLDD) might not be in a position to respond to a telephone survey. Alternative survey methods will be used to accommodate vulnerable cohorts of learners to ensure their outcomes are included in the results.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 The information outlined in this report will contribute to the achievement of the Best Council Plan 2016/17 priorities, namely to support economic growth and access to economic opportunities, supporting communities and raising aspirations, by providing skills programmes and employment support.

4.3.2 The objectives of the Council's Adult Learning Programme will also help to deliver outcomes under the Best Council Plan's More Jobs, Better Jobs Breakthrough Project, in particular supporting the integration of skills support and health interventions including people with mild to moderate mental ill-health.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 The expenditure proposed of up to £10,000 will be met in full from the externally funded Adult Education Budget (AEB) allocated to the Council by the Skills Funding Agency, each year, to support the delivery of Ofsted regulated adult learning activities in Leeds.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 The proposals in this report do not contain confidential information and are not subject to Call In.

4.5.2 This decision relates to a low value contract not exceeding £10,000 (Contract Procedure Rule (CPR) 7, and the invocation of Contract Procedure Rule (CPR) 7.1 which states that although "competition (three written tenders) is required for procurements with an estimated value of below £10k, if the relevant Chief

Officer believes that it represents Best Value for the Council to make a direct appointment without the need for competition, they may do so”.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 The Employment and Skills Service has robust contract management and quality assurance procedures in place. The performance of the provider will be overseen by the Adult Learning Programme Manager and monitored by the Head of Projects and Programmes.

4.6.2 J2P is registered at Companies House and the audited accounts for the last 12 months will be requested prior to contract award. The company will also be required to report on expenditure and outcomes to an agreed timetable.

4.6.3 There is no financial implication to the Council if this specific activity is not achieved. However, there are quality standards and best practice implications if the decision is not supported, which could impact on the outcome of a future inspection (the Council’s Adult Learning Programme is currently in scope for a short notice Ofsted inspection).

5. Conclusions

5.1 The Council’s Adult Learning Programme is funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) under the Adult Education Budget. The provision is regulated by Ofsted according to the Common Inspection Framework (CIF). It is a best practice requirement of CIF and also part of the SFA funding rules, that the Council collects the *intended* destination of each learner at the end of their course.

5.2 Although not a contractual obligation, it is recognised that the follow up sample of *actual* learner destinations (6-12months) after their initial engagement in adult learning, would enable the Council to more effectively judge the long term effectiveness of its work, and help shape future adult learning provision in Leeds.

5.3 Soft market testing has identified only one specialist provider able to deliver these services within the Council’s timescales and who is recognised by regional sector peers. This report therefore seeks approval to award a one off low value contract under the value of £10,000 to J2Profit to undertake a sample destination survey of learners who completed adult learning courses in the 2015-16 academic year. If approved, the survey and findings will be completed by February 2017.

6. Recommendations

6.1 The Chief Officer Employment and Skills is asked to:

- approve the award of a low value contract in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules (CPR) 7 and, the invocation of CPR 7.1 to appoint J2Profit to undertake a destination a destination survey of learners on the Council’s Adult Learning Programme.

- authorise expenditure not exceeding £10,000 to J2Profit to carry out this work. The costs to be fully met from the Council's externally funded Adult Education Budget.

6.2 To note the Head of Projects and Programmes in the Employment and Skills Service will be responsible for the implementation of the decision.

7. Background documents

7.1 None