

Individual Decision

The attached report will be taken as an
Individual Portfolio Member Decision on:

29th January 2009

Ref:	Title	Portfolio Member	Page No.
ID1799	Adult and Community Learning Plan 2008/09-2010/11	Councillor Barbara Alexander	3 – 42
ID1721	Communication Strategy	Councillor Anthony Stansfeld	43 - 58

DRAFT DOCUMENT**Individual Executive Member Decision**

Title of Report:	Adult and Community Learning Development Plan 2008/9 -2009/10
Report to be considered by:	Individual Executive Member Decision
Date on which Decision is to be taken:	29 January 2009
Forward Plan Ref:	ID1799

Purpose of Report: To present the plan for adult, community and family learning provision in 2008/9 – 2009/10 and to review the concessions policy.

Recommended Action:

- Approve Adult and Community Learning Development Plan 2008/09 – 2009/10.
- Review and agree the concession arrangements for 2009/10.
- Agree a further review of concessions for 2011/12.

Reason for decision to be taken:

a) The Learning and Skills Council no longer requires a plan as the Further Education Sector moves towards self regulation but it must be informed on how its funding is going to be spent.

b) The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) expects providers to charge fees for personal and leisure courses.

c) Members agreed to keep the age related fee concessions under review.

Key background documentation: None

Portfolio Member Details	
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DRAFT DOCUMENT**Implications**

Policy:	There are implications for the adult learning Fee Concessions Policy.
Financial:	Funding for academic year 2009/10 adult learning programmes is expected to be at a similar level to the 2006/07 – 2008-09 levels of £458,503 per year with no inflation uplift (i.e. a continuing year by year cut in real terms).
Personnel:	ACL Team salaries are largely funded through external grants from the LSC and other funding bodies.
Legal/Procurement:	None
Environmental:	None
Partnering:	None
Property:	None
Risk Management:	Continued phased introduction of changes to fee concessions and information made available to the public should minimise concerns.
Community Safety:	None
Equalities:	Increased targeting of provision will give support to those most likely to experience barriers to learning. If the age related concession is further reduced or abolished then older people will perceive that they are being treated unfairly and complaints will rise.

Consultation Responses

Members:	
Leader of Council:	Graham Jones - emailed on 06 January 2009
Overview & Scrutiny Commission Chairman:	Brian Bedwell - emailed on 06 January 2009
Policy Development Commission Chairman:	Irene Neill - emailed on 06 January 2009
Ward Members:	None
Opposition Spokesperson:	Alan Macro - emailed on 06 January 2009
Local Stakeholders:	Dr Ann Murdoch, Principal, Newbury College.
Officers Consulted:	Ian Pearson, Janet Scott, Deborah Butland, Moyra Blake.
Trade Union:	N/a

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NOTE: The section below does not need to be completed if your report will not progress beyond Corporate or Management Board.

Is this item subject to call-in.	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No: <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:</p> <p>The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Considered or reviewed by OSC or associated Task Groups within preceding 6 months <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Item is Urgent Key Decision <input type="checkbox"/></p>		

DRAFT DOCUMENT**Supporting Information**

1. Background

- 1.1 The Adult and Community CL 2008/09 – 2010/2011 Development Plan sets out the priorities and targets for the provision of adult and family learning opportunities for people living and working in West Berkshire.

The Plan is supported by external funding from the Learning and Skills Council and other organisations like the Berkshire Neighbourhood Learning Centre Partnership and NIACE who are also funded by the Learning and Skills Council. Other opportunities to acquire funding are regularly considered.

This Adult and Community Learning Plan builds on the success of:

- the 3 year Strategic Adult and Community Learning Development Plan 2005/06-2007/08
- the 2006 update for to the Development Plan 2006/07 - 2008/09.
- the 2007 update to the Development Plan 2007/08

It is the basis for receiving grant funding from the Learning and Skills Council until the end of the funding safeguard for Adult Safeguarded Learning in 2010/11.

Learning and Skills Guidance states that the:

Aims of Adult Safeguarded Learning Funding are

- The overarching principle is to provide general access to ASL provision
- To concentrate some of the budget on those that need help most; lost out at school or would not otherwise be able to afford a course

Aims of Family Literacy Language and Numeracy programmes are

Designed for those with Skills for Life needs and aim to improve:

- The literacy, language and numeracy skills of parents
- Parents' ability to help their children
- Children's acquisition of literacy, language and numeracy skills

DRAFT DOCUMENT**Aims of Wider Family Learning programmes are**

Designed to enable adults and children to learn together and/or enable parents/carers to learn how to support their children's learning by:

- Developing the skills or knowledge of both the adult and child participants and
- Helping parents/carers to be more active in the support of their children's learning and development and to understand the impact of that support.

The Council contracts out almost all of its adult education provision that attracts fees to Newbury College, only directly delivering a small community laptop project itself that attracts about 60 – 100 learners. Free targeted provision is delivered by Newbury College, Community Council for Berkshire and small community and voluntary groups e.g. Mencap, Link UP and Turning Point.

2. Proposals

- To approve the detail of the Adult and Community Learning Development Plan 2008/09 – 2009/10
- To review the concession arrangements for 2009/10
- To agree a further review of concessions for 2011/12, if required.

3. Conclusion

- 3.1 To ensure the delivery of a high quality adult and family learning service that offers a wide range of learning opportunities that meet the needs of people living and working in West Berkshire prioritising those that need the most help.

DRAFT DOCUMENT**Executive Report**

1. Adult Learning Plan 2008/9- 2010/11

1.1 Mission

The continuing **mission** of the ACL service is to assist adult and family learners, particularly those experiencing barriers to learning or who are under-represented in learning, to achieve their potential through adult and community learning (ACL), which should be:

- high quality
- accessible
- safe
- varied and designed to meet the needs and interests of local people
- spread across West Berkshire including rural areas
- planned to provide impartial information about learning
- structured to help learners to progress on to further opportunities

1.2 Links to other plans

See Appendix 2

1.3 Consultation

The Plan has been built in consultation with partners in the West Berkshire Adult and Family Learning Partnership, including Newbury College.

1.4 Management and Governance

This year the Learning and Skills Council do not wish to approve the plan but they will wish to receive a copy. The Learning and Skills Council are supporting the Further Education Sector to become self regulating.

1.5 Finance and Management

In 2008/09 the LSC grant to West Berkshire Council for Adult Safeguarded Learning provision is £458,503 the same as 2006/07, and 2007/08; there has been no increase for inflation costs for 3 years. It is anticipated that funding will be at the same level, or lower, in 2009/10, again with no inflation uplift. Funding after the 2009/10 will depend on the reviews of adult education currently being undertaken and the outcomes of the consultation on informal learning. A major policy paper is scheduled for early 2009 and this will have implications for all stakeholders in Adult Safeguarded Learning.

1.6 The two year development plan identifies the strategic drivers from the government and the Learning and Skills Council, the links to the Council Plan and other strategic plans and sets out the priorities and targets for the provision. The Adult and Community Learning Team is looking for support to maintain the provision at current levels, to continue to explore alternative business models and to continue to explore possibilities for more direct provision so that it is flexible enough to respond to future changes in funding methodology.

2. Fee Concession Policy

2.1 The current West Berkshire Council Fee Concession Policy allows:

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A 50% fee concession for the following categories of learner:

- a) Those in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee.
- b) Registered unemployed
- c) In receipt of Income Support, job Seeker's Allowance or other means tested state benefit, including pensions guarantee credit.
- d) Carers of an adult with a severe learning difficulty or disability when enrolling with their dependant.

A 30% fee concession for:

Learners living in West Berkshire aged 60 years and over (not means tested).

- 2.2 In July 2007 Members agreed that an age related concession was justified in view of the Council's policy of promoting healthier communities in general and healthier old people in particular and found evidence on the from a written ministerial statement on 16th May 2007 from the then minister for Higher Education and Learning that the funding of adult education and training was outside the Employment Equality Age Regulations so that age related rules could be applied to the funding of programmes. In the new Equalities Bill the government is making it clear that benefits for older people will still be allowed.

3. Current Profile of Learners and Funding

	2007 - 08	Planned 2008 - 09
Total Learners *	4329	
Total Enrolments *	2384	2978
60+ Learners	752	774-953
75+ Enrolments	248	179-268
Fees per hour	£48.50 (average)	£48.50 (average)
Average number of hours per course	20	20
ACL Funding of concessionary discount	£45,000	£30,000

- Learners are individuals, enrolments are courses and individual is enrolled on e.g. 1 learner enrolls on 5 courses = 1 learner, but 5 enrolments

Note – learner number targets are not reducing in line with the increasing cost of courses and reduced funding in real terms

- 3.1 The table below shows a comparison of age-related concessions presently given by a range of other local authorities.

Local Authority	Age-related concession	Comments
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead	50%	
Bracknell	No	Removed for 2008-09
New Directions Reading	50%	Reading residents only
Reading (TVU)	Free tuition	Pension Guarantee Credit

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Wiltshire	None	Means-tested concessions in colleges
Swindon	Free tuition	Pension Guarantee credit
Oxfordshire	50%	Pension Guarantee credit
Gloucestershire	No	Means-tested benefits only
Hampshire	No	Stopped 60 plus concession three years ago
West Berkshire	50% 30%	All learners aged 60 plus receiving pensions guarantee credit Other learners aged 60 plus living in West Berkshire.

4. Concessions for learners over 60 years old during 2009/10

- 4.1 It is important to agree West Berkshire's fee concessions policy early in 2009, so that appropriate arrangements can be agreed with Newbury College before prospectuses go to print.
- 4.2 Officers have explored a range of funding options, from removing concessions completely, through means testing and residence, to maintaining the status quo.
- 4.3 The Council is committed to maximising adult learning opportunities through a strategy that maintains quality and is affordable.
- 4.4 Any change in policy needs to be assessed in terms of impact, particularly around learner numbers, and cost and in relation to the Older People's Plan. With this in mind, a realistic option for 2009/ 10 would be to maintain the 30% 60+ concessions restricted to West Berkshire residents. Though it is difficult to accurately predict impact, officers estimate the probable cost of such a policy being in the region of £30,000. Numbers of learners over the age of 60 have reduced in recent years as fees have increased and concessions reduced but in the same proportion as other age groups and percentage of learners over 60 is in 2007-08 is 31.54% (compared with 32.57% in 2006-07). However a number of classes in rural areas, in the daytime and areas around the boundaries of West Berkshire have become too small to be viable because of the fall in number of in older learners.
- 4.5 Alternatively, in common with many other local authorities members, may consider that the existing 50% concession for those on Pension Guarantee Credit does support those in greatest need (It is estimated that 7% of learners may be eligible for pensions credit) and that, in terms of the election cycle this may be a suitable time to remove the concession for learners aged 60 and over releasing £30,000 of previously committed Learning and Skills Council Funding to support the provision, particularly in rural areas.
- 4.6 Whatever concession arrangement is agreed will need to be confirmed to Newbury College so they can amend their prospectus and website accordingly.
- 4.7 It may be prudent at this stage to agree a further review of concession arrangements in spring 2010 for the 2010/ 11 academic year, if necessary.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Adult and Community Learning Development Plan 2008/09 – 2010/11.

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West Berkshire Council - Adult and Community Learning Strategic Plan 2008/09 -2009/10

1. Introduction

This plan builds on the success of:

- the 3 year Strategic Adult and Community Learning Development Plan 2005/06- 2007/08 approved on 9th June 2005
- the 2006 update for to the Development Plan 2006/07 - 2008/09
- the 2007 update to the Development Plan 2007/08

It is the basis for receiving grant funding from the Learning and Skills Council until the end of the funding safeguard for Adult Safeguarded Learning in 2010/11.

The Head of Education, Children and Young People Directorate, West Berkshire Council is responsible for this plan. The contact for matters relating to this plan is

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2. Context

This Plan is one part of the family of plans which set the priorities for services in West Berkshire. Key plans and priorities setting the context for Adult and Community Learning are:

Comprehensive Spending Review Priorities 2008-2011

- Sustainable growth and prosperity
- Fairness and opportunity for all
- Stronger communities and a better quality for all
- A more secure, fair and environmentally sustainable world.

Learning and Skills Council Priorities

The programmes offered by West Berkshire Council and its providers address the LSC's national priority for "Better Jobs, Better Skills, Better Lives" and help it to deliver some key aims:

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- To improve the skills of the population as a step towards ensuring a world class skills base by 2020
- To target public funding at increasing social inclusion and economic success
- To increase Skills for life funding for all ages of learners to over £1billion by 2010-11
- To maintain Skills for Life ESOL funding at projected 2007-08 levels in real terms
- To support substantial growth in full Level 2 and full Level 3 achievements
- To maintain the safeguarded funding for adult learning at 2007-08 levels
- To provide transitional arrangements to help colleges and providers to manage change effectively.

Learning and Skills Council Priorities for Adult Safeguarded Learning (ASL)

Within the overarching principle of general access to ASL provision the principle aim is that some of the budget should concentrate on those who: need help most; lost out at school; would otherwise not be able to afford the cost of a course.

A Breath of Fresh Air - a Sustainable Community Strategy for West Berkshire to 2026. with its vision that embodies 5 key themes which will underpin the strategy going forward These themes are based around creating a district that in 2026 is:

Prosperous
 Accessible
 Greener
 Safer
 Healthy

West Berkshire Council Plan 2007 – 11, which has 12 high level objectives, the three current priorities are: Cleaner and Greener, Safer Stronger Communities, Successful Schools and Learning.

The Plan sets out the Council's values : these are *respect* in all our relationships; *integrity* in everything we do and *ambition* to deliver continuous improvement.

West Berkshire Council Priority	Examples of Adult and Community Learning Alignment
Cleaner and Greener	Reducing our carbon footprint and encouraging others to do so. Developing courses with the Nature Discovery Centre. Opportunities to for people to learn locally
Thriving Town Centres	Supporting Neighbourhood Learning Centres Courses in towns and rural areas
Vibrant Villages	Maintaining provision in village halls and community centres Making learning central to the activities in new centres
Healthier Life	Family Learning courses on healthy eating, Newbury College Keeping Active courses for vulnerable older people , traditional courses offer leisure and social opportunities
Safer Stronger	Links with Parish Planning process, Anger Management courses

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Communities	Links with Schools especially special schools to ensure transition to College courses, Family Learning. Development of courses for community organisations
Successful Schools and Learning	Supporting adult and family learning rooms in schools Support for extended services managers to develop adult and family learning and attract e.g. lottery funding Delivery of courses on school sites Developing ways of recording achievement
High quality planning	Comply with planning process to ensure infrastructure meets community needs
Promoting independence	Neighbourhood Learning Centres developed at residential homes and day centres. Outreach service for information and advice, Working with Pathways 2 Employment project, Keeping Active and Independent Living Skills courses
Excellent performance management	Clear objectives and targets Commitment to the Planning and Quality Cycles Monitoring contracted and partnership providers.
Protecting vulnerable people	Targeted family learning and parenting courses Anger management courses, discrete courses for people with SLDD and mental health issues. Safe recruitment of staff, child and vulnerable people protection training
Putting customers first	Identifying need, regular contact and acting on feedback from learners and involving them in decision making.
Value for money	Concessions for over 60s living in West Berkshire (under review) Concessions for those with means tested benefits Fees waived for those without level 2 qualifications and target groups Aligning funding with partners to access venues and admin support, attracting new funding for the provision.
Including everyone	Discrete courses for Gypsies and Travellers and other groups Courses delivered on traveller sites Preparation for ESOL courses for migrant workers Courses being developed for Muslim men at the mosque Discrete courses for people with substance misuse and mental issues. Courses for those with learning difficulties and / or disabilities Courses for teenage and young parents Courses for older learners e.g. those with Alzheimer's disease

Other Plans

Appendix 2 **Strategic Links – Relationship to other Strategic plans** shows the clear links between this plan and other regional and local plans and the person responsible for delivering the objectives.

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3. Adult and Community Learning Strategy

The continuing **mission** of the ACL service is to assist adult and family learners, particularly those experiencing barriers to learning or who are under-represented in learning, to achieve their potential through adult and community learning (ACL), which should be:

- high quality
- accessible
- safe
- varied and designed to meet the needs and interests of local people
- spread across West Berkshire including rural areas
- planned to provide impartial information about learning
- structured to help learners to progress on to further opportunities

Principles underpinning this strategy

The five key principles underpinning West Berkshire Council's adult and community learning provision are:

- improving quality and effectiveness and ensuring value for money
- increasing participation and responding to local priorities and learners' needs
- extending provision and promoting learning
- working in partnership
- raising employability skills and promoting learning organisations.

Also at the heart of this strategy are the **Every Child Matters Outcomes**:

- o being healthy
- o staying safe
- o enjoying and achieving
- o making a positive contribution
- o achieving economic well being.

The Council believes that these outcomes are important for adults as well as children and addresses them within this strategy.

The role of West Berkshire Council's Adult Learning Team in the strategy

- Acting as an enabling / facilitating body to help broker a wide range of partners, including partners from community and voluntary sectors, to align resources to engage learners and deliver learning opportunities through the co-ordination of local groups e.g. the West Berkshire Adult and Family Learning Partnership (PCDL Partnership) and membership of regional groups, such as the Berkshire NLDC Partnership. This can include securing

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funding for partner organisations, monitoring that there is no duplication or overlap, arranging the sharing of accommodation and resources to cut costs for small providers, providing trained tutors, putting different streams of funding together to enable a programme to be delivered, a crèche or transport to be provided for partners, or promoting courses to their communities. Many courses for the hardest to reach and most vulnerable in our affluent area would not happen without the local authority's co-ordination, support or facilitation.

- Making sure that informal adult learning can link into extended schools, family, health, adult community care, public protection, community cohesion, vibrant communities, economic regeneration, provision of skills, healthy lifestyles and other national, regional and local agendas; as well as ensuring that community learning makes a contribution to local the economic and skills strand of the Local Strategic Partnership targets and Local Area Agreements
- Supporting the value of learning for its own sake as a leisure activity, to maintain skills and to help develop confidence and allow people to have a social activity, particularly important in a rural area, where people have fewer opportunities and, in some cases, limited contact with other people.
- Providing signposting, information, advice and guidance to learning opportunities in partnership with nextstep providers.
- Working with colleges, schools, private, community and voluntary organisations to provide professional development, training, support for quality assurance and capacity building, as well as establishing protocols for good practice, e.g. qualifications of staff, observation and moderation of teaching and learning, fee-setting, equalities targets and district-wide planning to avoid duplication and reduce gaps.
- Planning with and supporting FE Colleges, Extended Services Partnership Managers, Children Centre Managers, Health Visitors, Libraries and Outdoor Centres, Residential Homes and Day Centres, Neighbourhood Learning Centres and others to provide a wide range of learning experiences and to offer help with resources like childcare, training, transport, e-learning and learner support.
- Planning with others to identify and promote progression routes.
- Initiating or pump-priming developments such as family learning projects in schools, Learning at Work day events, community-managed Neighbourhood Learning Centres to enable such self-managed initiatives to get off the ground.
- Providing opportunities to network and exchange good practice.
- Providing a wide range of local intelligence / social and demographic data to help all providers in their planning.
- Being democratically accountable and being subject to scrutiny, audit and inspection to ensure quality and good value for money.
- Supporting the development of e-learning.
- Supporting learners by waiving fees or by fee concession policies for priority groups and those least able to pay.

4. Priorities for Adult and Community Learning in West Berkshire

- Increasing learner numbers and meeting Learning and Skills Council contract targets

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- Maintaining the percentage from priority target groups at 2006 -07 levels
- Developing the skills or knowledge of families, help parents / carers to be more active in the support of their children's learning and development and to understand the impact of that support
- Improving the literacy, language and numeracy skills of parents , improve parents' ability to help their children learn and improve children's acquisition of literacy language and numeracy
- Widening participation and promoting inclusion and community cohesion
- Contributing to the development of skills and employability
- Promoting Learning and the benefits of learning for individuals and communities
- Raising achievement and retention
- Continuing to raise the quality of adult and family learning in West Berkshire
- Realising the potential of e-learning.
- Value for money
- Committing to developing our understanding of sustainable development by raising awareness and by taking a sustainable view of our use of resources, our management of waste and our impact on the environment.

Service Developments in Adult and Community Learning in West Berkshire

The Council's Adult and Community Learning Service was inspected by the Adult Learning Inspectorate (now merged with OfSTED) in January 2007 and was judged overall to be grade 2 – good. The Council is due to be inspected again either in the old four year cycle or the new six year cycle of inspections during 2011 – 2013.

The Council will continue to secure Adult Safeguarded Learning (ASL) and First Steps Funding for its Adult and Community Learning Service from the Thames Valley Learning and Skills Council. Additional funding will also be sought from the LSC, nextstep, NIACE and other organisations for quality improvement e.g. for providing information and advice, peer review, staff training and developing the e-learning strategy.

In 2008-09 the Council will continue to contract through a Service Level Agreement based on set of targets with Newbury College to deliver a programme of adult and community learning courses, PCDL in rural areas, wider family learning, family literacy, language and numeracy and discrete

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courses for learners with learning difficulties and / or disabilities and for learners in residential homes and day centres. It will also continue its Service Level Agreements with the Community Council for Berkshire, New Directions and Victoria Park Nursery to deliver targeted courses in the community. A number of community and voluntary groups will also continue to be supported to deliver Community Education Fund projects. Direct provision of courses through the Community Laptop Project will continue and, hopefully, expand following the purchase of new equipment and employment of additional sessional qualified tutors.

For 2009-10, the Council is researching and piloting alternative business models for adult and community learning. It is looking to increase the number of providers, particularly for PCDL, to develop more provision in the community, particularly in rural areas and to increase the variety of courses to meet learners' needs. Early in 2009, in line with Council policy, the Adult and Community Learning Provision will be put through the tendering process and further bidding rounds of the Community Education Fund will take place to support the development of smaller providers and to attract new partners. The Council will also explore possibilities for more direct delivery.

There are four strands to Adult Safeguarded Funding (ASL):

- Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL)

Formerly known as adult and community learning (ACL) PCDL provision is now defined as learning for personal development, cultural enrichment, intellectual or creative stimulation and enjoyment without the requirement to progress onto other learning or achievement. The Council will continue to work with its providers to offer a wide programme of courses throughout the district. The focus for this activity is learner engagement to widen participation and while progression is not a funding requirement learners are signposted to further learning. Courses will take place at Newbury College and up to 40 community venues. In 2008-09 the majority will be 10 week part time courses with 2 hour sessions, however learners will also enjoy one day taster sessions and shorter courses. The majority of courses are fee paying, though fees are waived for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities on discrete courses.

The Council co-ordinates the work of the West Berkshire Adult and Family Learning Partnership (PCDL) partnership which strives to identify gaps in provision, progression routes and aims to prevent overlap and duplication of provision.

- Wider Family Learning (WFL)

Wider Family Learning is targeted at parents and carers, including fathers and grandparents with low self esteem, few qualifications and little confidence in helping their children succeed in order to widen participation and go some way towards breaking the cycle of poor school achievement by enabling parents to support their children's learning.

Priority venues for this provision are those that are able to provide access to a range of other family services to increase the range of possible outcomes and longer term impact for participating families such as Children's Centres and Extended Schools. This includes

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schools seeking to improve children's attainment by working in active partnership with parents in a 'whole organisation approach'.

- Family Literacy Language and Numeracy (FLLN)

Family Literacy Language and Numeracy is delivered in partnership with Newbury College and targeted schools and Children's Centres in areas where educational achievement is low and adults are known to have low attainment in basic skills for parents without level 2 qualifications. Learners have access to initial and diagnostic literacy and numeracy assessments and fill out an individual learning plan address those needs. FLLN courses provide opportunities for learners to achieve accreditation in national literacy / numeracy tests.

- Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC)

The Council works with the five other Berkshire unitary authorities through the Berkshire Neighbourhood Learning Centre Partnership (BNLCP) to secure funding from the NLDC funding stream and inform and advise on other related funding opportunities. This investment has created and developed eight Neighbourhood Learning Centres throughout West Berkshire which provide a range of IT facilities and training to specific groups of people who have difficulty in accessing IT services due to age, disability or location. The fund also supports a range of courses and workshops which provide information and guidance in relation to job skills and employment. These sessions are being delivered in partnership with P2E and other partners to provide information and advice to carers/parents about returning to work when their children start schools and older people, over the age of 50 years, who want to stay in the workplace after redundancy, retirement or illness.

Working in partnership with community groups a range of courses such as website design, community group development and Helping In School tasters are being targeted to adults in key deprived communities to encourage interest in learning and greater community cohesion. There are also plans for BNLCP to investigate funding a pan Berkshire development project on a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for ACL provision which can be adapted to suit local requirements.

First Steps

First Steps programmes target learners without a full level 2 qualification and learners requiring skills for employment. Courses must meet the minimum of 9 hours. First Steps funding is not part of the Safeguard but is FE funding available to Local Authorities. It will eventually be merged into the newly planned Foundation Tier Funding. The Council will commission Newbury College and the Community Council for Berkshire to deliver first step courses to targeted groups and will offer funding to community and voluntary groups through the Community Education Fund

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Family Learning Impact Funding (FLIF)

FLIF has been offered for the first time during 2008-09. The funding is to other family learning funding but requires providers to track learners for up to three years following courses to see how they progress and to measure the results of the intervention. The Council will not bid for funding in the first tranches as there is insufficient capacity amongst its providers to take on additional work, however as additional strands of funding are offered the Council will look again at the capacity to deliver this additional family learning provision.

E-learning Strategy

There is a clear vision and strategy for e-learning across the ACL service. In January 2008 an additional team member was recruited with responsibility for the development of e-learning. Funding for over £20,000 worth of equipment was secured, through the NIACE capital fund and the E-Guide investment fund, to develop e-learning across the provision with particular emphasis on targeted socially deprived groups and venues. NLDC funding has also developed access to e-learning through Neighbourhood Learning Centres and targeted course programmes. One additional member of staff has been trained as an e-guide and has developed the use of e-learning across the service through team training sessions. Another member of staff is scheduled to complete the e-guide training in 2008/9. Over 90% of staff and learners have access to e-learning tools and most tutors have access to an e-learning champion, e-mail, websites, equipment and a virtual learning environment.

E-learning is now embedded throughout the RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement) process to support course selection, teaching, learning and progression.

West Berkshire Council Fee Policy on Adult & Community Learning Provision

1) Fees and Fee Concessions

West Berkshire Council delegates responsibility for the setting of adult education fees to contracted providers, who retain fee income to support the provision made, however contracted providers are required to negotiate any fee increase with the Council. Since 1999/2000, however, we have introduced an approach to the reimbursement of lost fee income which means that providers are no longer financially penalised for recruiting from certain disadvantaged groups. Under current Council policy (as reflected in the adult education service level agreements) all providers are expected to offer a reduction on the hourly fees charged to students:

30% Reduction

- resident in West Berkshire and aged 60 or over;

50% Reduction

- in receipt of Pension Guarantee Credit
- in receipt of a Jobseekers Allowance;

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- in receipt of any means tested benefit;
- who receive a Disability Allowance, or who care for those with a Disability Allowance attending the same course

2) Students Benefiting from Fee Policy in 2007/08

In 2007-08, 594 learners benefited from a fee concession, which represents 25% of the total number of learners:

	PCDL Provision 80% of Total
West Berkshire Resident (over 60 years)	23%
Jobseekers Allowance/Disability Allowance/Means Tested Benefit	2%
Total Learners across all ACL provision	2374

No fees are charged to learners on targeted provision such as Discrete Courses, First Steps, Wider Family Learning and Family Literacy Language and Numeracy . These courses represented 20% (494) of the total number of ACL learners in 2007-08 .

Councillors will be reviewing this fee policy in early 2009.

3) Learner Support - Discretionary Support Arrangements

As the Council contracts out its adult and community learning, it is at provider discretion whether a learner is eligible for funding to support child-care, travel and other costs. The Council takes no policy-line on this, however it would prove administratively impractical to offer hardship grants at a distance from the actual provision. Newbury College has a Hardship and Access Fund that all learners can apply to for assistance with fees, transport, additional costs for their course e.g. equipment and materials and for registered childcare.

The Council offers support to community projects requesting funds for childcare provision for adults engaged on initiatives secured via the Community Education Fund.

Additionally, it is Council policy that no fee shall be charged to adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities attending a discrete adult education class supported by Council funding.

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Equal Opportunities – inclusion statement

As a member and co-ordinator of the West Berkshire Adult and Family Learning Partnership the Council will work to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality and good relations within all sectors of the community.

Organisations working across the partnership will deliver services for adults and families that do not discriminate on the grounds of gender, age, ethnic origin, race, disability, immigration status, social, cultural or economic status, nationality, faith, religious beliefs, responsibility for dependents or sexual orientation. It is also recognised that inequality and disadvantage can occur as a result of a variety of circumstances including where people live.

Promoting equal opportunities is everyone's responsibility from learners in the classroom through to tutors and managers

Key Strategic Challenges

The key strategic challenges for the Adult and Community Learning Service are:

- The economic downturn
- Higher costs
- Less money in people's pockets
- The emerging vision of learning in the community following the consultation on informal learning
- The changing model of Personal and Community Development Learning
- New funding mechanisms
- Self regulation and a new quality agency
- A changing market for skills
- A changing workforce
- A new qualifications framework
- A new curriculum offer in Foundation Learning Tier Progression Pathways and replacement of First Steps
- Professionalisation of the workforce
- The introduction of Framework for Excellence and other external performance measures coupled with the LSCs increased powers of intervention
- The changing focus of inspection and anticipated future revisions to the Common Inspection Framework
- Changes in the planning and funding of Further Education as proposed in the White Paper of March 2008
- The governments's national indicator set for local authorities and local authority partnerships which will provide information on performance against national priorities

Draft

Key Performance Indicators

Overall Planned Learner Numbers 2008-09

Funding Stream	PCDL	FLLN	WFL	FIRST STEPS	NLDC	Total KPI
Target number of Learners	2500	48	200	230	300	3278

	LSC Contract Targets 2008 -09	
	Numbers	%
Overall number of learners	2978	100%
Proportion of learners who are male	864-953	29-32%
Proportion of learners with LDD	208-298	7-10%
Proportion of learners aged 75+	179-268	6-9%
Proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups	119-208	4-7%
Proportion of learners from areas of deprivation	357-506	12-17%

Secondary Targets		
Proportion of courses that run in rural areas		25-45%
Proportion of learners from rural areas		
Proportion of fee paying learners claiming concessionary fees as they are in receipt of benefits	60-149	2-5%
Proportion of learners aged 60+	774-953	26-32%

Draft

Attendance	2008-09	2010-11
% Attendance (contracted provision)	78%	78%
% Attendance Community Projects , WFL and FLLN)	87%	87%

Retention	2008-09	2010-11
% Retention (contracted provision)	90%	90%
% Retention(Community Projects , WFL and FLLN)	94%	94%

Appendix 1 Action Plan:

Draft

Priority	Actions	Success Criteria / Outcomes	Timescale	Named Partner / Person
1. To Increase learner numbers and meet Learning and Skills Council contract targets				
Support existing providers to develop new programmes and to attract learners	Work with existing providers to develop promotional activities and to develop new provision.	Existing providers develop new programmes to attract learners	March 2009	Contract providers and partners – see Appendix 3
	Identify ways to reduce numbers of courses cancelled especially in rural and Priority areas.	Some marginally viable courses able to run	March 2009	SM, PACLO
Invest to save Project - Work with consultants to develop a flexible “in house service”	<p>Use Invest to Save budget, produce Action Plan.</p> <p>Use WBC Web based Procurement process to identify consultants</p> <p>Receive and agree a costed proposal for developing new provision</p> <p>Work in partnership to develop a programme of courses which compliments other provision and identifies new tutors, venues and courses and</p>	ACL Team develop the knowledge and skills to deliver a flexible, profitable PCDL service	March 2009	PACLO Korina Associates

Draft

Priority	Actions	Success Criteria / Outcomes	Timescale	Named Partner / Person
	experiments with different days, times and lengths of courses. Evaluate Project and develop following action plan			
Identify new providers of Adult and Community Learning	Promote the availability of funding for PCDL Provision Encourage new providers to bid for funding.	There are a wider number of providers of Adult and Community Learning in West Berkshire who will continue to develop provision so that the service becomes more sustainable.	March 2009	FLO / ACLO Community Education Fund Panel
2. To maintain the percentage from priority target groups at 2006 -07 levels				
Deliver targeted provision and ensure that universal provision is accessible	Additional equality and diversity training for tutors. Continue to contract with and support other council departments, Newbury College, schools, community and voluntary organisations who have developed successful provision.	Provision is available for "hard to reach" learners who will be engaged and achieve in learning.	July 2009	Contracted Providers and partners ACL Team

Draft

Priority	Actions	Success Criteria / Outcomes	Timescale	Named Partner / Person
	<p>Identify additional providers who can identify and engage excluded groups.</p> <p>Undertake service annual equality impact assessments and policy equality impact assessments</p>			
3. To widen participation and promote inclusion and community cohesion				
Identify and engage additional groups of learners	<p>Attract new targeted learners through tendering process, Community education fund, promotional activities, Adult learners' week, Family Learning month.</p> <p>Support for new providers to develop provision through the Community Education Fund.</p> <p>Deliver courses in community venues through both rural and urban areas, particularly in priority post</p>	<p>Successful Community Education Fund Round 16</p> <p>New Targeted provision established</p>	February 2009	Contracted Providers and Partners ACL Team

Draft

Priority	Actions	Success Criteria / Outcomes	Timescale	Named Partner / Person
	code areas.			
Increase the opportunities for potential learners to investigate the opportunities available.	<p>Increase the number of opportunities and venues for the delivery of information and advice</p> <p>Deliver tasters and short courses, in particular for young parents and parents of young families.</p>	More learners are motivated to engage in learning in future years		
4. To promote learning and the benefits of learning for individuals and communities				
Increase the number of individuals and groups receiving IAG services in West Berkshire	<p>Deliver CV workshops and information and advice sessions at WBC Job Fairs</p> <p>Introduce IAG Services to Neighbourhood Learning Centres</p> <p>Contribute to WBC's Learning at Work Day</p> <p>Tender to be a provider of</p>	People living and working in West Berkshire are aware of the provision available	July 2009	Nextstep CQO, ACLA

Draft

Priority	Actions	Success Criteria / Outcomes	Timescale	Named Partner / Person
	<p>Nextstep services</p> <p>Increase numbers of group advice sessions delivered.</p> <p>Develop marketing of Information and Advice service</p> <p>Train advice worker to NVQ level 3</p>			
Share good practice between stakeholders	<p>Provide networking opportunities</p> <p>Produce 3 editions of the newsletter "Making it Happen"</p> <p>Continue to develop the WBC ACL website and its links</p> <p>Support the development of Learning Platforms.</p>	People working in Adult and Community Learning are aware of good practice in the area, can access materials and can share ideas.	July 2009	CQO
Learner Achievement Awards	Engage the Adult and Family Learning Partnership to identify learners	The advantages of learning are promoted in the local area	May 2009	CQO

Draft

Priority	Actions	Success Criteria / Outcomes	Timescale	Named Partner / Person
	Hold a celebration event Publicise the awards.			
5. To raise achievement and retention				
Develop a Learner involvement Strategy	Form a Learner Involvement Strategy Group Review and evaluate existing learner involvement arrangements and policies Agree steps to improve existing learner involvement mechanisms and develop new ones Consider how the effectiveness of the strategy will be evaluated and reported to learners	Learners are able to participate in decisions that affect their learning experience and play an active role in quality improvement processes	March 2009	PACLO / OCO Contracted providers and partners
Continue to develop RARPA , in particular, mechanisms for recording achievement	Use observation of teaching and learning action plans to support tutors to develop and	RARPA is embedded in quality assurance procedures.	July 2009	PACLO Contracted providers and partners

Draft

Priority	Actions	Success Criteria / Outcomes	Timescale	Named Partner / Person
	<p>negotiate appropriate learning goals for their learners</p> <p>Introduce mechanisms for verifying the records of achievement.</p> <p>Voluntarily provide baseline data for achievement on the ILR upload to the LSC.</p>	Learners' achievement can be measured.		
Continue to improve course information	<p>Development of programme information on websites</p> <p>Development of programme information in WFL and FLLN.</p> <p>Support to new providers to develop course information.</p>	Learners are aware of the course outlines and learning outcomes before starting the course.	On going	PACLO / CQO Contracted providers and partners
6. Continuing to raise the quality of adult and family learning in West Berkshire				
Work in partnership with Berkshire Adult and Community Learning Officers Peer Review and Development Group to	Action plan to be developed to include a case study of the group's activities, embedding peer review and moderation between	<p>Funding is successfully obtained.</p> <p>Berkshire wide training takes place to reduce costs</p>	July 2009	Principal Adult and Community Learning Officer / CQO

Draft

Priority	Actions	Success Criteria / Outcomes	Timescale	Named Partner / Person
raise the quality of Providers in Berkshire	unitary authorities, extending peer review to other groups e.g. tutors to make it an all organisation approach.	of training Good practice is shared. Peer review opportunities are available for managers, observers and tutors. Developments take place as a result of the peer reviews		
Produce a Quality Improvement Plan following the 2007-08 Self Assessment review	Quality Improvement Plan Developed in partnership with providers with specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time bound objectives that are assigned to individuals to achieve.	Plan delivered to LSC portal by 20 th December 2008. Actions completed in agreed timescale.	December 2009	PACLO /CQO
Revive the West Berkshire Council ACL Providers Quality Group .	Group in place to consult on the self assessment report and quality improvement plan, to agree new and revised policies and procedures	Two meetings held and regular communication introduced.	July 2009	PACLO / CQO
To develop the skills of the West Berkshire Observation of Teaching	Additional training on writing judgements and developing tutors through	Improved action planning for tutors.	July 2009	PACLO OTL Team

Draft

Priority	Actions	Success Criteria / Outcomes	Timescale	Named Partner / Person
and Learning Team	the use of action planning. Training on Developing a Learning Culture so managers and tutors complete the required commitment to continuous professional development	Development of a Continuous Professional Development policy and staff training plan		
7. Realise the potential of e-learning.				
To continue to develop opportunities for learners to learn anywhere, anytime.	Further development of the e-learning strategy Additional training for tutors to develop their skills and confidence to use technology for the benefit of learners, including using the mobile learning unit, MOODLE and Sharepoint.	Tutors are confident in the use of technology in the classroom.	July 2009	QCO ACLO
To continue to support Adult Learning Providers to purchase and maintain e-learning technology	Identification of funding opportunities and partnerships	Sufficient equipment is available for learners	July 2009	QCO
To continue to deliver	Deliver 16 -20 Community	100 new learners are		QCO ACLO

Draft

Priority	Actions	Success Criteria / Outcomes	Timescale	Named Partner / Person
computer courses in the community	Laptop courses	introduced to new technology.		
8. Value for money				
Ensure the service gives value for money without compromising quality or learner numbers	Review fee policy and age related concessions	Clear policy on fees and fee concessions	January 2009	PACLO Portfolio Member
Bench mark West Berkshire Council Provision against the LSC Value for money toolkit.	Identify costs per individual guided learning hour for various types of provision	Clear costs are identified. Clearer guidelines can be given to providers tendering to provide or bidding to the Community Education fund		SFO ACL Team
9. Committing to developing our understanding of sustainable development by raising awareness and by taking a sustainable view of our use of resources, our management of waste and our impact on the environment.				
Develop a Sustainable Development Policy and Action Plan	Raise tutors' awareness at induction and the tutor forum	Clear understanding of how adult and family learning can contribute to sustainable development.	July 2009	PACLO
10. Contribute to the development of skills and employability				
Engage new learners and develop their confidence so that they are motivated to	Ensure there are progression opportunities planned when developing new courses.	Learners are able to develop skills for enjoyment and employment.		SM, PACLO

Draft

Priority	Actions	Success Criteria / Outcomes	Timescale	Named Partner / Person
continue learning and aspire to achieve national qualifications	<p>Ensure that all parents on FLLN courses have the opportunity to take national tests.</p> <p>All learners are made aware of information advice and guidance opportunities</p> <p>Raise the profile of community learning in local and regional forums</p>			
11. Develop the skills or knowledge of families, help parents / carers to be more active in the support of their children's learning and development and to understand the impact of that support				
Continue to develop family learning courses through Extended Schools, Children's Centres and community organisations, Newbury College and New Directions	<p>Promote family learning through the Newbury College brochure, CEF fliers</p> <p>Offer FL tasters during Family Learning Festival month through schools. Newbury College to deliver a Family Learning taster</p>	<p>Target of 200 learners is achieved for 08/09</p> <p>Family learning is delivered in new schools/ children centres/ organisations</p>	July 2009	MA

Draft

Priority	Actions	Success Criteria / Outcomes	Timescale	Named Partner / Person
Support new provision of courses for parents of children with special needs	Support delivery of new Time Out for Special Needs course at Victoria Park Nursery Support new provider in delivering Time Out for Special Needs, Time Out for ADHD and Time Out for ASD	Targets are met for Victoria Park Nursery Targets are met for Parenting Special Children	July 2009	MA
Engage young parents to be and deliver project in partnership with PCT, Connexions, Newbury College	Write delivery plan to obtain funding from LSC Deliver course Evaluation of course	Students progress onto further employment, education or training Learner feedback and achievement	July 2009	MA
Pilot development of a targeted FL course aimed at year 7 parents of children within secondary schools	Work in partnership with Newbury College and Theale Green Extended School to pilot a course Evaluate course	Parents of year 7 children feel more able to support their children at school.	July 2009	MA
Develop provision of targeted healthy eating courses	Pilot CEF projects with Fir Tree School and Robert Sandilands through Excel cluster	Projects to be rolled out through Extended School cluster.	July 2009	MA

Draft

Priority	Actions	Success Criteria / Outcomes	Timescale	Named Partner / Person
	Evaluation of projects			
Engage more fathers in family learning provision	Delivery of a football 'Kickabout' CEF project. Evaluation of project	Increase in number of fathers participating in family learning provision in - 08/09	July 2009	MA
12 Improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills of parents , improve parents' ability to help their children learn and improve children's acquisition of literacy language and numeracy				
Continue to offer Family Language Literacy and Numeracy courses through Extended Schools, Children's Centres, organisations, Newbury College and New Directions	FL tasters at Newbury College linked to National Year of Reading to signpost learners onto FLLN courses. Newbury College to work in partnership with schools to identify learners. Identification of new funding opportunities within the FLIF funding stream	Target of 50 learners is met for FLLN courses Apply to FLIF funding for 09/10	July 2009	MA
Provide opportunities for learners to achieve accreditation in literacy and numeracy	National test offered in literacy and numeracy on FLLN courses Signposting of learners to basic skills courses	Learners achieve accreditation in national literacy/numeracy tests.	July 2009	MA

Draft

Appendix 2.

Strategic Links – Relationship to other Strategic plans

Strategy / Plan	Description of Link	Lead Person
Berkshire Economic Strategic Board Strategy for Economic Prosperity	Membership of the Berkshire SEEDA funded "legacy" project Task and Finish Group and the WBC Skills and Enterprise Group	SH
Berkshire Neighbourhood Learning Centre Partnership Plan	Steering Group membership ACL Team Family Learning, Language and Numeracy and First steps Learner Number Targets are included as associated targets to deliver the objectives.	SH / AP
Berkshire ACL Officers Peer Review Group Action	Share in leading the group, share joint funding to undertake peer review activities	SH
Berkshire Health and Well Being Partnership	The Older People's Service Plan, the 7 outcomes for the commission for social care in independence and well being	PM
Nextstep information advice and guidance (VT Careers)	Representative of nextstep (VT Careers) sits on West Berkshire Adult and Family Learning Partnership	SH
West Berkshire Strategic Partnership plan	To increase the number of learners achieving level 1 and level 2 qualifications	MA / PM
West Berkshire Children and Young People's Trust Children's Workforce development strategy	Though the Children's Centres and Extended Services Strategy and the recruitment of the Family Learning workforce	MA AT
West Berkshire Children and Young People's Trust Parenting Strategy 2008-11	Raising children's achievement and raising the skills of parents, especially those with low levels of skill or barriers to learning, mapping of parenting support provision	MA AT
West Berkshire Children and Young People's Trust Children	Raise the achievement of children in vulnerable groups	MA

Draft

and Young People's Action Plan	Increase participation in out of school activities	
WB Teenage Pregnancy Strategy	Provision of courses for young parents.	MA
WBC Children's Centres and Extended Services Joint Strategy	Facilitating the provision of flexible and targeted services for families and children and young people Providing families with single points of access for information and advice Supporting all schools to provide access to a varied menu of activities and community access to school facilities by 2010	JS
WBC Special Educational Needs strategy	Support for parents of children with special educational needs	MA
National Year of Reading	Membership of the WBC National Year of Reading Steering Group to increase the numbers of people reading. Developing the Council's Literacy Policy.	MA
WBC Education Service Action Plan	To raise the achievement of children in vulnerable groups To deliver the government targets for "core offer provision" in extended service partnerships To realise the potential of e-learning anywhere anytime. To support ACL tutors to increase their skills and confidence , to use new technology for the benefit of learners To increase family learning programmes and assess impact on pupils achievement by promoting good practice , engaging more schools,	SH / MA AT SH / AP / PM PM / AT SH/ MA

Draft

	developing programme content and data collection Develop the Adult and Family Learning Partnership linking with priorities in the Community Plan and raise the Quality of Provision	SH / AP
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Individual Executive Member Decision

Title of Report:	Communication Strategy
Report to be considered by:	Individual Decision
Forward Plan Ref:	ID1721

Purpose of Report: To present the Communication for 2008-2011 for approval.

Recommended Action: To approve, subject to any comments, the Communication Strategy for the Council.

Reason for decision to be taken: To ensure that the Council is supported by an effective and up to date Communication Strategy.

Key background documentation: N/A

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Plan Themes and Outcomes by: Ensuring effective communication both within the Council but also across the West Berkshire Partnership.

Portfolio Member:	Councillor Anthony Stansfeld
Tel. No.:	01635
E-mail Address:	astansfeld@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details

Name:	Andy Day
Job Title:	Head of Policy and Communication
Tel. No.:	01635 519459
E-mail Address:	aday@westberks.gov.uk

Implications

Policy: Having effective communication strategies for the Council is crucial to delivering improved quality of life across the District.

Is this item subject to call-in?	Yes:
If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box (double-click on the box & click next to 'checked'):	
The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position	<input type="checkbox"/>
Considered or reviewed by OSC or associated Task Groups within preceding 6 months	<input type="checkbox"/>
Item is Urgent Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>

Executive Report and Summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The world of communication operates in the context of fast changing technological channels and quickly increasing customer expectations. The ability to provide information to residents in the format they, individually, wish to use it is increasingly challenging as communication channels further fragment.
- 1.2 The Communication Strategies for the Council reflect the dynamic environment within which it operates and proposes an action plan to support the deliver of improved quality of life across the District.

2.0 A Great Place to Live

- 2.1 In support of both the Council and West Berkshire Partnership Communication Strategies, West Berkshire News has been completely revamped in terms of its look and feel and focus and is now called "A Great Place to Live". The contract for the selling of advertising and more importantly managing the design has recently been let to a partnership comprising Maxx and Resonates Designs.
- 2.2 There have been two editions of "A Great Place to Live" and both have received positive comments both from the partners but also from members of the public.

Appendices

Appendix A – West Berkshire Council Communication Strategy 2008-2011

West Berkshire Council

Communication Strategy

2008-2011

Introduction

This strategy is a framework and focus for West Berkshire Council's communication activity and will support all work across the Authority to ensure we continue to improve in everything we do.

West Berkshire is a good place to live, work and visit and one of the roles of the Council is to articulate this to its residents and people who visit the District. The aims and objectives included in this strategy therefore support the delivery of outcomes included in the Council Plan 2007-2011.

Two-way communication is key to achieving these aims for the District and ensuring that West Berkshire Council continues to deliver the best possible services to the people of West Berkshire by communicating widely and openly, internally and externally, and engaging with all audiences through consultation and inviting feedback, West Berkshire Council can continue to improve in all that it does.

We believe that working in partnership with the communities, other services providers and businesses in West Berkshire is the best way to continue to drive West Berkshire forward. Excellent communication will sit at the heart of these relationships to ensure involvement, understanding and accountability.

Background

The world of communication operates in the context of fast changing technological channels and quickly increasing customer expectations. The ability to provide information to residents in the format they, individually, wish to use it is increasingly challenging as communication channels further fragment.

West Berkshire Council has a responsibility to communicate with its residents about its services and believes that communicating well is essential. This strategy provides a corporate framework in which all communication will be delivered for and on behalf of West Berkshire Council.

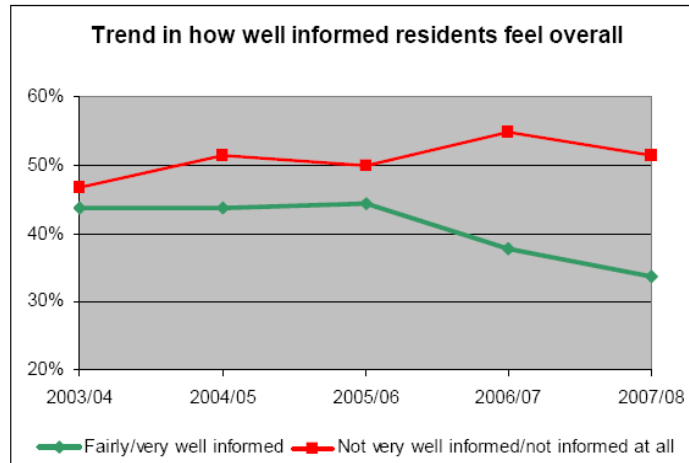
The Council is increasingly being asked to work in partnership in order to tackle many of the things which affect the overall quality of life across the district. To this end this Strategy supports the Communication Strategy developed for the West Berkshire Partnership which is more focused on West Berkshire as a place and therefore has direct synergy with the new Statutory Place Survey and the role that the Partnership's quarterly magazine will have in managing a number of perception indicators.

Customer Satisfaction

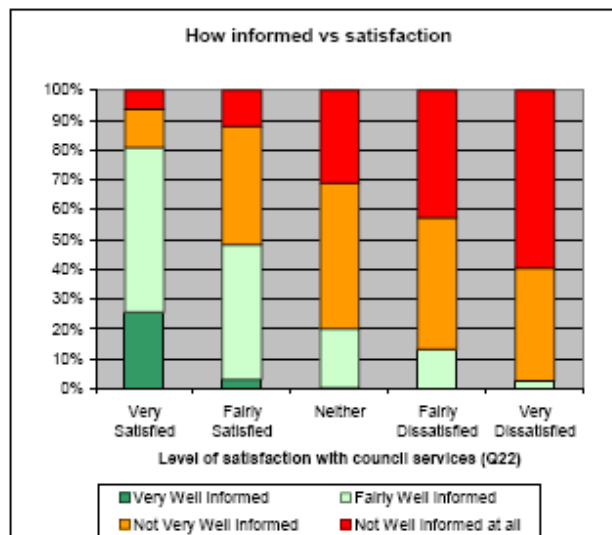
Overall, satisfaction with local government across the country has fallen in recent years from a high in 2000 of 65% of residents fairly / very satisfied with

their local council to around 54% in 2006. West Berkshire compares well in national rankings with a latest (07/08) satisfaction score of 65% of residents.

Nationally, the proportion of residents saying that they are kept informed by their council has fallen from 51% in 2003/4 to 42% in 2006/7. West Berkshire has seen a fall from a return of 45% of residents feeling very / fairly well informed (2003-5) down to our current 34%.



The 2007/08 annual resident survey found a marked positive correlation between the extent to which people feel informed about West Berkshire Council and any associated levels of satisfaction.



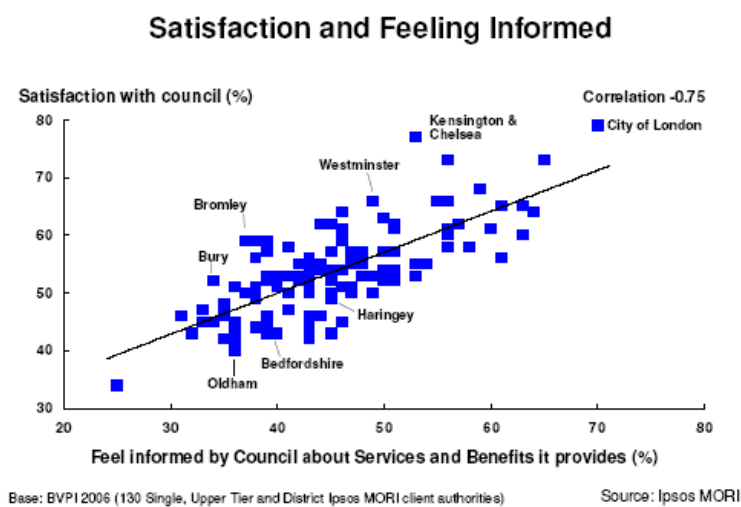
The above graph shows that residents who are more satisfied with the way the Council runs things, tend also to feel very well informed about the services and benefits we provide. 80% of people who were very satisfied with the way the Council runs things, felt either very or fairly well informed.

Opportunities to get involved in local decision making

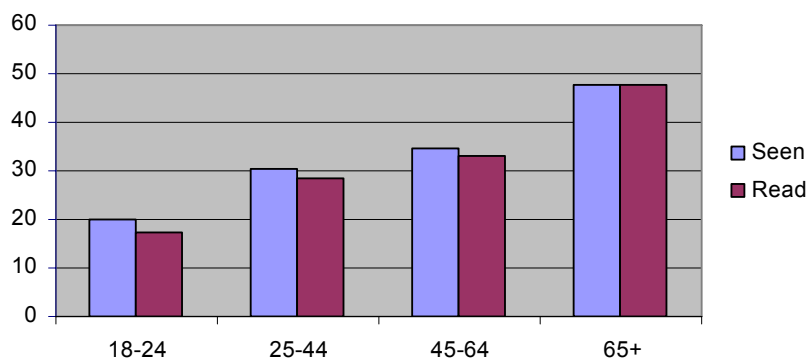
Analysis points to a positive relationship between satisfaction with opportunities to get involved in local decisions and overall satisfaction with authorities (47% correlation). This is significant given increased user engagement and participation in the decision-making processes is one of the key policy aims of the Local Government White Paper as well as one of the indicators in the second Local Area Agreement.

Communications

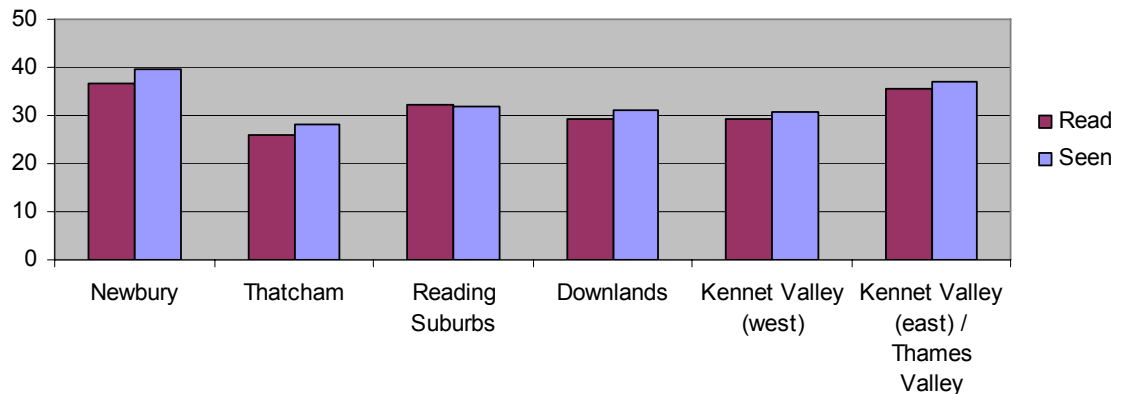
Analysis also suggests that the link is even stronger when compared to the extent to which Local Authorities keep residents informed about the services and benefits it provides. The graph below shows the strength of this positive relationship.



The Council is a contributor to the West Berkshire Partnership’s publication “A Great Place to Live” which is delivered to all residential properties across the District on a quarterly basis. The two graphs below show the results, by age, of a readership and perception survey undertaken in 2007 of its predecessor (West Berkshire News) in relation to the question “Have you ever seen and read West Berkshire News”. The second graph then breaks the answer to this question down by area.



Graph 1



Graph 2

It can be seen from the first graph that acknowledgement of having seen and read West Berkshire News increases significantly according to the age of the person. This could be for a number of reasons but this trend accords with national surveys generally.

In order to ensure that the Council is effective in delivering its key messages across the age groups and areas listed above it needs to continue to use a range of communication methods. This strategy therefore outlines those methods and strategies which will be used to improve communications.

Key messages

The Council Plan is a key Strategic Vision document for the Council. The Council Plan compliments the Sustainable Community Strategy entitled “A Breath of Fresh Air” which is the key strategic vision document for the West Berkshire Partnership.

One of the purposes of this Communication Strategy is therefore to provide opportunities for regular messages about the progress being made against the priority outcomes in the Council Plan. This Strategy will therefore support the delivery of the outcomes leading to improved service delivery and the West Berkshire Partnership’s aim of improving the quality of life in West Berkshire. From a purely Council perspective some of the key messages include:

- The Council is a successful organisation
- The Council delivers high quality, value for money services
- The Council listens to, and responds to, the needs of the community
- The Council is caring, inclusive and professional in all that it does.

More specific messages should all align with the 16 outcomes, five high-level objectives, and three priorities as detailed in the Council Plan.

Aims

The aim of this strategy is to support West Berkshire Council to achieve the following:

- Two-way communication, giving residents the choice of how to communicate with us.
- West Berkshire residents who are well informed and have a high awareness of the Council's services and how to access them.
- The reputation of the organisation is maintained and enhanced locally and nationally.
- A fully informed and engaged workforce is enabled to deliver the best possible services.
- To endorse communication as a priority issue for the authority.
- Partnerships are developed and improved.

Principles

In order to achieve these aims, West Berkshire Council is committed to ensuring all communication adheres to the following principles:

Customer focused

We will put the customer at the heart of everything we do and adhere to the standards of our Customer Care Charter.

Open and Honest

We will give honest, positive, evidence based messages and be open to debate and questions.

Timely

We will communicate with our audiences proactively when the messages are relevant to them.

Accessible to all

We will offer an appropriate choice of communication methods in order not to disadvantage any members of the community.

Relevant

We will create and develop communication channels that allow the audience to access as much or as little information as they feel appropriate.

Encourage and enable feedback

We will publish contact information on all communication we produce and continue to encourage feedback in order to improve two-way communication.

Listen

We will proactively seek the opinions of our audiences, acknowledge them and respond to them quickly, honestly and consistently.

Plain English

We will use “plain English” in all of our communications with the residents of West Berkshire.

Evaluate

We will endeavour to measure the success of each of our communication channels, products and messages as appropriate and be open to change based on the results.

Minimise environmental impact

We will select communication methods which are cost effective and environmentally responsible, using electronic channels as appropriate but also having regard to the need to choices and needs of our residents.

Value for money

We will make the best possible use of our resources and budgets by working with colleagues across the organisation to share best practice.

Audiences

The Local Government Association’s Reputation campaign (published in July 2006) carried out research into how local government organisations are

perceived by the public. From this they identified 12 core actions that would improve public perceptions, four of which were directly linked to communication:

- manage the media effectively to promote and defend the Council.
- publish a regular Council/Partnership magazine to inform residents.
- ensure that the Council brand is consistently linked to services.
- good internal communications – make sure staff and Members are informed.

The research highlights the need for excellent communication across all audiences in order for the organisation to be valued by its communities. Communication therefore has a direct link with customer satisfaction.

It is essential to identify all of the relevant audiences we communicate with in order to deliver the most relevant messages to them in the most appropriate way. Each individual will have different needs and expectations of their interaction with West Berkshire Council. We shall therefore use as many channels of communication as appropriate to reach as many people as we can.

Our main audiences will include:

- West Berkshire Residents
- West Berkshire Council employees
- Elected Members
- Partner organisations
- Recognised trade unions
- National Government and government agencies
- Other local authorities
- Voluntary sector
- West Berkshire Schools
- Businesses
- Members of Parliament
- Public outside of West Berkshire
- Media

Methods

West Berkshire Council currently uses a wide range of methods to communicate with various stakeholders. These currently include:

West Berkshire Residents	Face to face Word of mouth County Show User Groups/Focus Groups
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	<p>Consultation Partnerships – Voluntary Sector, NHS, Police, Fire and Private Sector Information and access through offices and libraries Front line interaction with customers West Berkshire Council's Chairman's events and activities Lord Lieutenancy Public meetings</p> <p>Written Campaigns eg, Road Safety Regular output of news information to the local media. Strategic Documents – Council Plan, Sustainable Community Strategy Information leaflets Place Survey Committee Reports A range of newsletters, leaflets, brochures, posters, exhibitions and displays.</p> <p>Electronic West Berkshire Council website Consultation with West Berkshire residents and organisations E mail distribution lists</p> <p>Telephone West Berkshire Council contact centre</p>
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<p>West Berkshire Council Employees</p>	<p>Face to face Word of mouth Line management and supervision Team briefings Team meetings 121's Senior Management seminars Communication representatives</p> <p>Written Council wide electronic monthly newsletter Directorate Plans Service Plans Appraisals Campaigns Internal Noticeboards</p>
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	<p>Staff newsletters</p> <p>Electronic West Berkshire Council Website</p>
Stakeholders	<p>Face to Face User Groups Focus Groups Consultation activity Parish Conferences Partnership meetings Informal meetings</p> <p>Written Formal letters Consultations Place Survey Reports</p> <p>Electronic Website E mails</p>

Additional Plans and Policies

As mentioned, this strategy provides a framework for all communication across the authority and additional plans and policies will compliment this strategy in addressing specific issues. This strategy will also support cross cutting, user driven communications focussing on specific target audiences.

Branding

Branding is the perception by others of your organisation and can affect customer satisfaction, expectations and loyalty. Maintaining our brand is essential in order to continue to push boundaries as a local authority.

The key elements of West Berkshire Council's branding are three-fold. Logo, colour and typeface (font).

The logo is available in two versions, and neither must be distorted, fragmented or altered in any way. It can be used only in black, white, or corporate green. Rules for use of the logo are in the Council's Corporate Identity Manual available on the intranet.

The corporate colour is green Pantone PMS 334 (PC 'Word' custom colour equivalent is the mix of Red 0; Green 152; Blue 120).

The corporate typeface (font) is Helvetica (PC equivalent Arial) and should be used on all documentation.

There are two procedures only for production of literature. Through the Council's graphic design team, or through use of the templates on the intranet.

Internal Communications

Reporter – the Council wide electronic monthly staff newsletter

Reporter will continue to be used to help West Berkshire Council staff to be West Berkshire Council advocates and ambassadors. It will aim to increase staff engagement, motivation and retention rates, lower absence and increased innovation across the organisation.

Performance Management Framework

The Council's performance management framework will be crucial in ensuring the efficient cascade of key Council messages throughout the organisation.

Corporate Induction

The Council's Corporate Induction process will provide a positive opportunity to cascade information to all "new starters" about the Council's aims, objectives, values and ambitions.

Website and Intranet

This Strategy will provide the foundations for West Berkshire to maximise its website to provide the best possible information to residents and staff.

Directorate Plans

Each Service Directorate already produces a plan to address the specific needs of its target audiences.

External Communications

Members have a community leadership role and as part of this have a responsibility to provide their electorate with progress on the Council's aims and objectives as set out in the Council Plan. Having 52 Members as Council advocates will be crucial to achieving the outcomes in the Council Plan.

Roles and Responsibilities for Communication

Corporate Communications Group

- To agree and drive the Communication Strategy.
- To direct strategic communication issues affecting West Berkshire Council including branding, PR and campaigns publicity and engagement.
- Ensuring value for money
- Agreeing or formalising new communication approaches/strategies
- Agreeing best practice and guidelines
- reviewing and improving current communication policies and guides
- To provide advice and guidance to ensure that communication with media, branding and publications are cohesive and present a “one organisation” approach

Service Grouping Communication Groups

- To translate corporate guidelines into meaningful actions for their specific messages and audiences
- To create Directorate specific communications and feed in to the Corporate Communication’s Group and work
- To act as communication advocates

Managers

- To keep up to date with issues affecting their teams or areas, and those affecting the wider West Berkshire community
- To communicate regularly with their teams or areas and those affecting the West Berkshire area
- To run team briefings with their teams on a regular basis
- To communicate team ideas and thoughts up to their manager

All Staff

- To make themselves aware of what is going on in their immediate areas as well as familiarising themselves with some of the key strategic issues
- To put forward ideas for service improvements, innovation and budget savings
- To build successful communication within teams.

Appendix A

2008/09 Communications Action Plan

Ref	Action	By When	Resource Implications
1.	Establish a Communications governance model comprising a Corporate Group supported by Service Grouping Groups.	July 2008	
2.	Produce monthly editions of Reporter and special editions as necessary.	Monthly	
3.	To assist in the development of key public messages that support the priority outcomes in the Council Plan.	Ongoing	
4.	Establish and maintain a calendar of events in order to enhance the opportunities for joining up communication activity.	Annually	
5.	Develop and maintain a website as a public communication and performance management tool.	Ongoing	
6.	Use the annual refresh of the Council Plan as a means of communicating the Council's priorities and successes.	Annually	