REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TRANSPORTATION PARTNERSHIP BOARD

REPORT BY THE
BRAINTREE DISTRICT SKILLS PARTNERSHIP TASK & FINISH GROUP

Background Papers: Task Group Meeting Notes (previously circulated)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

1. The Braintree District Skills Partnership Task Group was established by the Economic Development & Transportation Partnership Board in September 2008 as a Task and Finish Group.

2. The purpose of establishing the group was to map and review Personal, Community & Development Learning (PCDL) and Skills for Life (SfL) learning offered in the Braintree District, identify gaps and duplication, and make recommendations to the Braintree Local Strategic Partnership for strategic intervention and better utilisation of available resources.

3. Following completion of the project, the Partnership Board is being asked to endorse 6 key recommendations which will be presented to the Braintree Local Strategic Partnership.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Economic Development and Transportation Partnership Board support the following recommendations presented by the Task and Finish Group:

1. That all learning providers working in and around the District seek ways of working together to join up pathways to funding for local people including PCDL, Family Learning, Train to Gain, Response to Redundancy, Learndirect and other funding sources;

2. That more learning provision should be focussed in identified areas of deprivation and the more rural areas of the Braintree district;

3. That financial resources for Skills for Life (SfL) provision should be increased. (Where a fee is charged for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) provision, funding is secured by the provider to support this work in order to bring down barriers and reach more learners);

4. That the general public are better informed of the learning opportunities available in the District by producing a directory which lists main learning provider contacts; (Suggested that an A5 space in the District Council’s Contact magazine is used to include a Case Study, local contacts, details of courses, SfL learning opportunities, work related opportunities and Train to Gain provision)

5. That a single point of contact is found in the District for learning and training enquiries and the signposting of learners to appropriate provision.
BACKGROUND:

1. Essex County Council is leading on a project for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to scope all PCDL learning with the aim of sharing good practice, identify gaps and work in close partnership with PCDL activity across the county.

2. The LSC defines PCDL as ‘learning for personal development, cultural enrichment, intellectual or creative stimulation, and enjoyment, It is also learning developed with local residents and others to build the skills, knowledge and understanding for social and community action.

3. Skills for Life is defined as being literacy, numeracy, and English as a second language (ESOL).

4. The Braintree Task & Finish Group was chaired by Richard Cook. Membership was drawn from the Learning and Skills Council, Adult Community Learning, Primary Care Trust, Braintree College, Library Services, Voluntary Sector, Braintree District Council and the Economic Development & Transportation Partnership Board.

5. The group met on 16th September, 18th November 2008, and 27th January 2009 and after having agreed terms of reference, formulated an action plan which was monitored and reviewed at each meeting, and by the Economic Development and Transportation Partnership Board. The main actions of the group were to:

- Secure Administrative Support for help with the mapping exercise;
- Update the Economic Development and Transportation on project progress;
- Map PCDL and SfL provision across providers in the District;
- Scope learning provision against LAA priorities on headline themes;
- Present recommendations to the April 2009 meeting of the Economic Development and Transportation Board.

6. Headline results from the project are that most provision is centered on the 3 main towns in the District. A total of 489 courses across 11 providers were mapped. It was established that provision is focussed in Health & Public Services, ICT, Arts, History, Preparation for Life and Work (including SfL), and provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD).

7. Provision was scoped against Themes 3 and 4 of the District’s One District – One Vision draft Strategy (October 2008), in terms of supporting the economy by increasing basic skills levels and vocational training opportunities, and supporting a Safe and Healthy lifestyle by providing fitness, Yoga and other health courses, opportunities for elderly people and those with LDD.

8. All actions have been completed on time and the outcomes are detailed in the full report.

9. It is anticipated that the outputs from the recommendations, if adopted, will be:

- Increased awareness of provision raised in the District by producing and distributing 5,000 leaflets - cost circa. £6,000;
- A minimum of 100 new learners engaging in Arts/Crafts and Fitness programmes;
- A minimum of 200 new Skills for Life learners engaged in literacy and numeracy provision in 2009/10;
- A minimum of 20 new ESOL learners engaged in ESOL provision in 2009/10.
10. It is anticipated that outputs from the recommendations will contribute to the following targets:

Priority 6 – More participation in Sports, Culture and volunteering for the benefit of the whole community;

NI 11 – Engagement in the Arts target 2009/10 44.5% from 43.3% in 2008/09;

Priority 8 – Essex has a strong and competitive economy;

N163- Proportion of adults qualified to at least level 2 or higher. The target is 71.2% in 2011 from 62.7% in 2006.

Key:
SfL – Skills for Life which includes Literacy and Numeracy
PCDL – Personal, Community and Development Learning funded by the Learning and Skills Council
LDD – learners with learning difficulties &/or disabilities
LAA – Local Area Agreement
TTG – Train to Gain funding managed by the Learning and Skills Council