

Merton Council - call-in request form

1. Decision to be called in: (required)

Adult Education in Merton: Options Appraisal
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2. Which of the principles of decision making in Article 13 of the constitution has not been applied? (required)

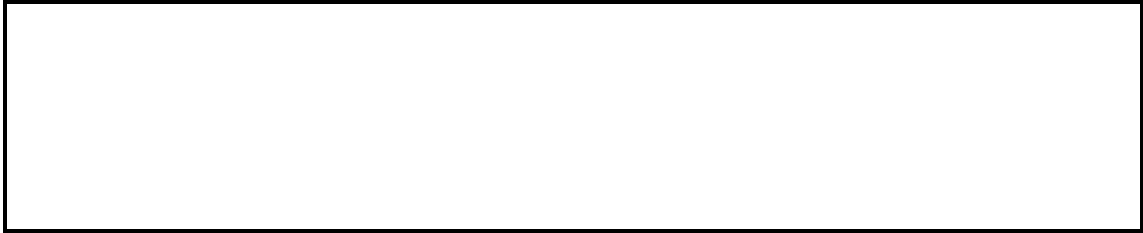
Required by part 4E Section 16(c)(a)(ii) of the constitution - tick all that apply:

(a) proportionality (i.e. the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome);	X
(b) due consultation and the taking of professional advice from officers;	
(c) respect for human rights and equalities;	X
(d) a presumption in favour of openness;	X
(e) clarity of aims and desired outcomes;	
(f) consideration and evaluation of alternatives;	X
(g) irrelevant matters must be ignored.	

3. Desired outcome

Part 4E Section 16(f) of the constitution- select one:

(a) The Panel/Commission to refer the decision back to the decision making person or body for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns.	X
(b) To refer the matter to full Council where the Commission/Panel determines that the decision is contrary to the Policy and/or Budget Framework	
(c) The Panel/Commission to decide not to refer the matter back to the decision making person or body *	
* If you select (c) please explain the purpose of calling in the decision.	



4. Evidence which demonstrates the alleged breach(es) indicated in 2 above (required)

Required by part 4E Section 16(c)(a)(ii) of the constitution:

Whilst we welcome Cabinet's decision not to discontinue the Merton Adult Education service completely, we are extremely concerned about the whole premise of the proposed consultation and whether it is based on correct assumptions.

a) Proportionality and f) consideration and evaluation of alternatives;

There are real doubts about whether what are being proposed as options for the future of the MAE service are in fact proportionate to the challenges faced.

Figures set out in the Service Plan for MAE suggest that the service not only breaks even but in fact produces a surplus of up to £124,000 for the Council. The Service Plan document indicates that MAE meets its own overheads and also makes a significant contribution to the central corporate overhead. Yet this important point is not properly considered and evaluated in the report before Cabinet. The consultation which has been instigated in the last couple of days, and which itself has cost implications and will cause further angst for both staff and students, does not take this into account when setting out the options for consideration. Given that the Cabinet has failed to demonstrate that any money will be saved by their proposals, the rationale for putting at risk a vital service for over 5,000 people is not clear.

The consultation also gives a series of seemingly mutually exclusive options rather than allowing for consideration of a mixed approach whereby the core services continue to be delivered at Whatley Avenue whilst, for example, the merits of a back office merger with South Thames College are considered along with the option for some specialised or less popular courses to be commissioned rather than delivered. Given the important financial information above, it is unclear why this mixed solution does not form part of the council's consultation. As such, it seems Cabinet has not properly evaluated all of the alternatives for delivering the MAE service in the future and thereby residents and users are being denied the

opportunity to consider such mixed solutions as part of the consultation. It is also unclear what the property implications of these changes will be for the council.

We are also concerned that it is only a relatively short time ago that the Cabinet endorsed the recommendations of the Adult Skills and Employability scrutiny task group. The Cabinet report makes reference to the implementation of the task group's recommendations but it seems that not enough time is being given to see whether these changes will indeed lead to additional sources of revenue for the MAE service to offset any further reductions in funding by the Skills Funding Agency. For example, in order to subsidise courses for local residents MAE could provide professional training courses to local businesses, charged at commercial rates. A link with a local university would also enable residents to study for degrees through evening classes at Whatley Avenue.

A range of such recommendations were made by the task group to secure the financial future of the MAE service. Until these alternatives, which were previously endorsed by the Cabinet, are allowed to be implemented, there have to be doubts about the proportionality of Cabinet's decision of 10th November 2014.

c) respect for human rights and equalities;

Merton is committed to ensuring that "all residents should have opportunities for a good life across Merton, including... good skills training, life-long learning and work".

Merton Adult Education brings benefits that are social, educational and economic. It is life-enriching, community building and employment enabling and is often a lifeline for students with mental health issues, carers and older people.

Yet, there is no Equality Impact Analysis provided with the report on the impact of the Cabinet's proposals on different groups so it isn't clear how they would be affected by this decision.

d) a presumption in favour of openness;

The Cabinet has not engaged in any cross party discussion with opposition councillors nor in any pre-decision scrutiny.

The Budget report considered by Cabinet on 20th October 2014 was not published until late on the afternoon of Friday 17th October and was the first information on any proposed Budget savings provided to opposition councillors.

We also note that the Cabinet decision of 10th November 2014 has been, at

least in part, implemented already since the consultation commenced on 17th November and yet the call in deadline is not until noon on 18th November.

5. Documents requested

All papers provided to the Director of Community and Housing/Director of Corporate Services/Director of Environment and Regeneration and relevant Cabinet Member(s) prior to, during and subsequent to the decision making process.

All emails where appropriate and relevant, reports and associated documentation relating to the future of the MAE service provided to the relevant Cabinet Member(s), Leader of the Council, Chief Executive, Director of Community and Housing, Director of Environment and Regeneration, Director of Corporate Services and other council officers.

The detailed financial analysis of the projected costs/savings attributable to each option under consideration.

The Equality Impact Analysis of the impact on different groups in the borough.

All correspondence between the relevant Cabinet Member(s), Leader of the Council, Chief Executive, Director of Community and Housing, Director of Environment and Regeneration, Director of Corporate Services, Head of Community Education and other council officers on the future of the MAE service.

6. Witnesses requested

Cllr Martin Whelton, Cabinet Member for Education
Simon Williams, Director of Community and Housing
Yvonne Tomlin-Miller, Head of Community Education
Staffside representative
Representatives from 'Save MAE' group

7. Signed (not required if sent by email): Cllr James Holmes, Cllr Charlie Chirico and Cllr Brian Lewis-Lavender

8. Notes – see part 4E section 16 of the constitution

Call-ins must be supported by at least three members of the Council.

The call in form and supporting requests must be received by 12 Noon on the third working day following the publication of the decision.

The form and/or supporting requests must be sent:

- **EITHER** by email from a Councillor's email account (no signature required) to democratic.services@merton.gov.uk
- **OR** as a signed paper copy to the Head of Democracy Services, 8th floor, Civic Centre, London Road, Morden SM4 5DX.

For further information or advice contact the Head of Democracy Services on 020 8545 3864

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