

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 16th February 2015

Agenda item:

Wards: All

Subject: Adult Education in Merton – evidence and options for achieving a value for money service

Lead officer: Gareth Young

Lead member: Councillor Martin Whelton

Contact officer: Gareth Young (x 4889)

Recommendations:

- A. That Cabinet consider the evidence, including the financial analysis, responses to the public consultation and the equalities analysis
 - B. That Cabinet reconfirm their commitment to offering adult education services in the borough and their continued rejection of the previously outlined option 6 to cease offering these services.
 - C. That Cabinet approve the recommendation to move Adult Education to a Commissioning model (option 4) for the reasons outlined in 3.9 and based on the financial analysis provided in 2.1 That this is based on a commissioning strategy that seeks to provide courses in a diversity of locations around the borough and to make arrangements with providers that provide a supportive and nurturing environment for learners.
 - D. That Cabinet endorse the equalities action plan (appendix H)
 - E. That Cabinet adopt a series of core principles to underpin future commissioning of this service, in addition to a phased commissioning timetable (3.14)
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Due to reductions in government funding, the council needs to make £32m of savings over the coming years. With a pledge to ensure children's services and adult social care take less of a share of the cuts, all areas of the council need to find savings. The adult education service has been subject to over £430k in funding cuts from the Skills Funding Agency over the last few years, with further cuts planned, and is consistently overspending its budget with a cumulative overspend of over £540k over the period. Rather than allow the service to fail financially, Cabinet agreed to look at alternative ways of delivering the service within the reduced national funding envelope for adult education.
- 1.2. Six options were developed for consideration. These were:
 - (i) Option 1: MAE continues as it currently is
 - (ii) Option 2: Merton Council forms a shared service with South Thames College (Merton Campus)
 - (iii) Option 3: Merton Adult Education forms a shared service with another local authority managed college (such as SCOLA)

- (iv) Option 4: Merton becomes a commissioner of Adult Education Services
 - (v) Option 5: Merton ceases to be a provider and instead becomes a commissioner of Adult Education Services; partnering with the London Borough of Wandsworth to deliver this commissioning function.
 - (vi) Option 6: Merton ceases to offer adult education services.
- 1.3. Cabinet ruled out option 6
- 1.4. This report follows an initial report taken to Cabinet on the 10th November. At that meeting the Cabinet agreed that on balance and taking into account all the evidence and the financial pressures, its preferred option is that the council move to a commissioning model for the provision of adult education services. Cabinet also agreed to launch a public consultation to enable the public to input into the model of delivery and the content of adult education courses being offered.
- 1.5. The consultation has now concluded and detailed work on the financial modelling for each of the options for the service has been undertaken. An equality assessment has also been undertaken.
- 1.6. This report details the evidence and options for achieving a value for money adult education service. The report evaluates the options in light of financial/value for money considerations, evidence from the consultation with residents, and other relevant factors and makes a recommendation for decision.
- 1.7. All analysis has been considered in line with the Council's "July Principles", adopted by full council in July 2011 in order to provide a framework within the council can make the difficult decisions required to maintain a level of essential services in the light of ever reducing central government funding. The principles state the following:
- (i) We will continue to provide statutory services
 - (ii) We will maintain services for our older and most vulnerable residents, within limits
 - (iii) We will keep Merton's streets clean
 - (iv) We will keep the council tax affordable
 - (v) We will ensure Merton continues to be a good place for young people to go to school
 - (vi) We will do the best we can for the local environment
 - (vii) Everything else is up for discussion
- 1.8. As such, the report recommends that, having considered all of the options the council opt for option 4 and moves to a commissioning model of delivery.
- 1.9. This option is the most deliverable option which also provides the council with cost certainty, , provides the local authority with the most flexibility to deal with future budget reductions and reductions in grant funding from central government, protects learning, removes financial risk and still provides the council with the ability to steer the provision and the spread of services and venues to help us bridge the gap between the east and west of the borough. As the financial analysis shows just a 10% reduction in the SFA grant would leave the council with a £297,000 additional cost pressure which the commissioning option would allow us to avoid.

2 DETAILS

Financial Considerations

Summary

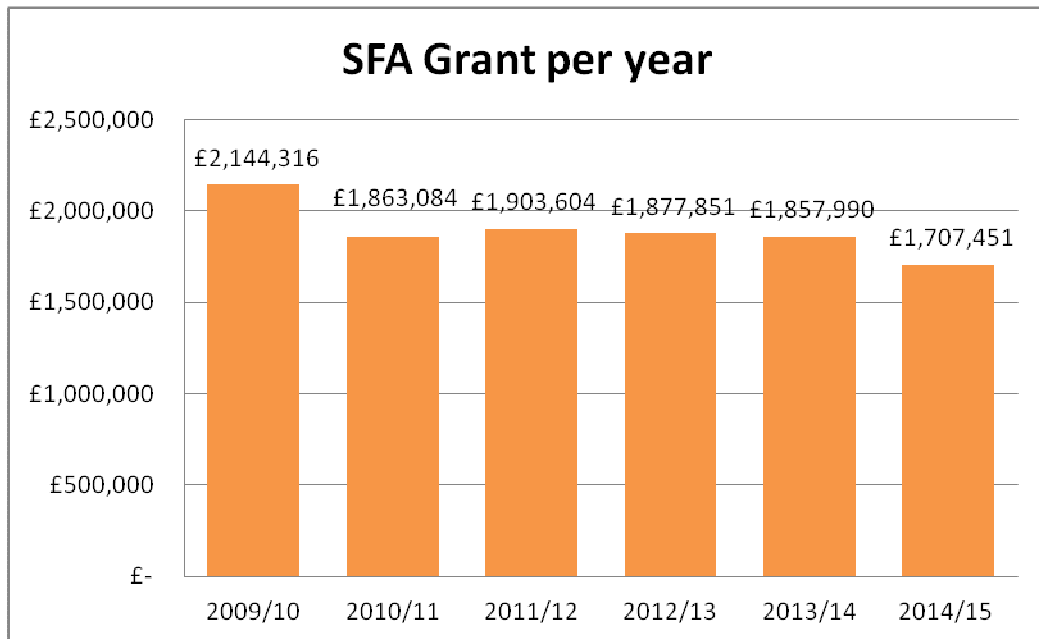
- 2.1. The analysis that follows, allied to appendix A which has more detail within it, shows six conclusions:
- (i) That the financial risk held by the council within option 1 is unacceptably large. If the SFA reduce their grant by 10% this represents a liability of £297k and if the grant is reduced by 20% that liability rises to £415k
 - (ii) That the volatility within the funding has meant that the College has found it difficult to live within its budget over the past five years
 - (iii) That the amount of additional commercial income required by the College to break even is likely unattainable
 - (iv) That the fixed cost base of the current model makes it difficult for the service to adjust its costs in line with funding changes and leaves the College, and the learning provided, vulnerable to further SFA grant reductions.
 - (v) That option 4 and 5 all enable the council to pass the risk to other providers; even as the grant reduces.
 - (vi) That options 4 and 5 offer the greatest degree of financial sustainability for the service and for the council.

Detail

- 2.2. The November Cabinet report made it clear that the purpose of any option was to remove financial risk from the council and to safeguard the service in the light of government funding cuts.
- 2.3. Further detail on the budget position of the college, analysis of the funding, income and expenditure and some modelling of the different options is in Appendix A. This is summarised below.

Quantifying the grant reductions

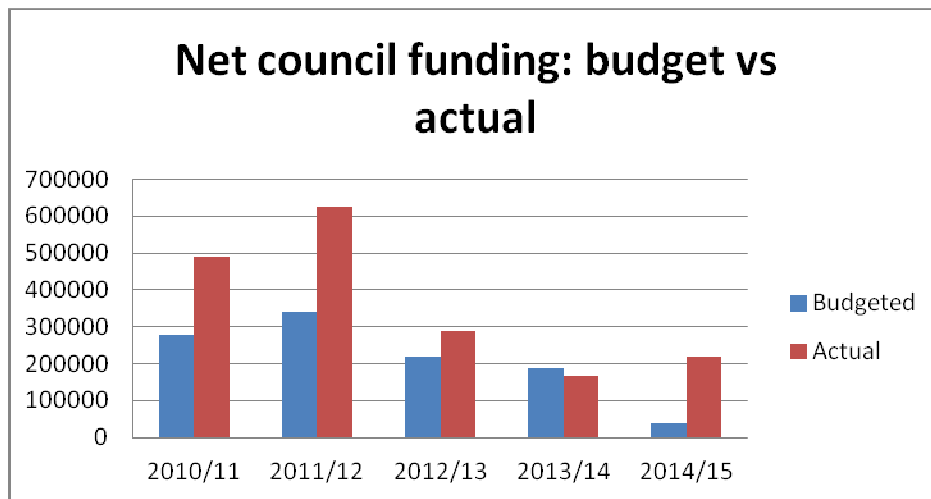
- 2.4. The following chart shows our Skills Funding Agency (SFA) grant per academic year.



- 2.5. This shows that Merton has had a cut in grant of £436,865 since 2009/10 in its grant from the SFA. Furthermore, in the 2013/14 academic year the funding formula has changed impacting on the councils costs as it requires councils to deliver more courses with the same funding. We were also advised by the SFA in December that our grant will be reduced by another £35,000 in year - this will be on top of the above figure.
- 2.6. The next announcement regarding funding changes from the SFA is expected to be made in March 2015. We expect this to signal a further reduction in the grant. This is due to the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in which the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) sits being a non-ring-fenced department and therefore being responsible for delivering a large amount of the reduction in Government spending announced in the 2014 budget and autumn statement.
- 2.7. Taken together the grant reductions and the requirement to do more with less have placed additional pressure on the MAE budget. We anticipate this pressure to grow further over the next financial years thus increasing the financial risk to the service and to the council.

Overspend

- 2.8. The following table shows the budgeted and actual net council funding received by the MAE service over the past four years, with projected figures for the current year.



2.9. As can be seen, over the past four years the service has only been able to meet its budget once (in 2013/14) leading to overspends of £209,605, £282,379, £69,388 and then an underspend of £21,196 respectively. In every year the council has committed between £165,000 and £625,000 to the provision of the service. In 2014/15 the current forecast overspend is £181,000.

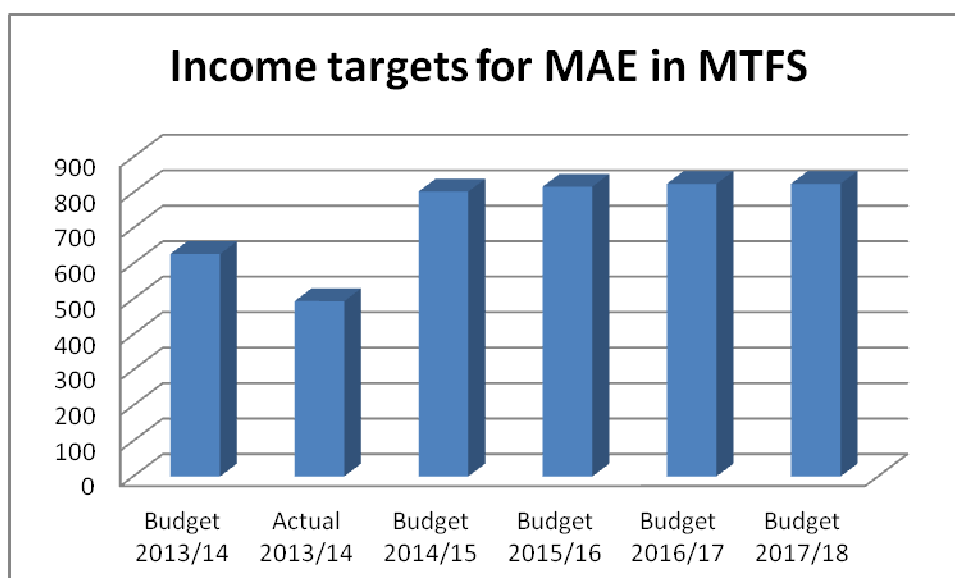
2.10. This is a clear and ongoing overspend.

2.11. Both the consistent service overspends and the on going reductions to the government funding the service relies on have led to a situation where the future of the service is not secure. A decision needs to be taken whether to subsidise the service further, allow the service to fail or to seek ways of making it more financially sustainable so that the service is protected.

Future projections

2.12. The current MTFs has the council contribution to MAE staying roughly at £39,000 per year, however this does not take into account the continued overspend which increases the forecast council cost to £220k in the current year.

2.13. This net liability to the council is based on two additional assumptions – firstly a consistency in terms of the amount of government funding received and secondly an aggressive series of income targets. These income targets are shown below:



2.14. The income targets required simply to meet the £39,000 council contribution, without taking into account any overspend or reduction in grant funding, would require income of between £803,000 and £825,000. This is the size of the challenge that the in house service would face if we opted for option 1. As explained in 2.20 the income gap would require an increase of 1,500% in commercial income achievement – something that is unlikely.

Financially Assessing the Options

2.15. It is challenging to model exactly how the financial risk will be felt by the council and what the potential cuts or savings might be in relation to each of the options. Nonetheless, the table below models various reductions in SFA grant and what would happen with each option to the council bottom line:

Net cost to the council	With no grant reduction	With 5% grant reduction	With 10% grant reduction	With 15% grant reduction	With 20% grant reduction
Option 1	£180,000.00	£238,875.31	£297,750.62	£356,625.93	£415,501.24
Option 2	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£32,766.10
Option 3	£0.00	£35,351.36	£76,550.99	£135,426.30	£194,301.60
Option 4	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Option 5	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

2.16. The options above are based on a number of assumptions and these are captured in the individual tables in appendix A. In addition, the overhead assumptions are captured within section 2.32.

2.17. As the above makes clear, continuing with the current service risks the cost of the service spiralling to a level where it would no longer be financially viable for the council to continue to offer adult education in the borough.

2.18. It is difficult to allocate this funding as savings due to the uncertainty faced in terms of the grant and the models. However, if we use a conservative 10% SFA grant reduction as a basis for defining the cost avoided the model suggest potential cost avoidance as follows:

2.19.

Saving through cost avoidance for options 2, 4, 5 with a 10% grant reduction	£297,750.62
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Additional Information

2.20. Members of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel asked for information relating to the following three additional financial questions:

- (i) What is the size of additional income generation that would need to be delivered to close the financial gap faced by the College?
- (ii) Would it be possible to commission the Adult Skills Budget element of the budget whilst retaining the Community Learning elements in house? What would be the financial impact of this?
- (iii) What are the residual costs left with the council in each of the options?

- Income generation target

2.21. The following assesses whether increasing income generation activities could make the savings and provide the financial security required to protect the service without making any other changes to how it is run.

2.22. We could assume that the £220,000 overspend projected for 2014/15 is a little higher than the structural overspend expected year on year and thus assume that the budget gap is closer to £200,000 (however, this is without factoring in any further grant reduction).

2.23. This means that to be financially viable the service would need to attract income sources that generated a surplus of £200,000. Income generation has been difficult to come by for the college in recent years. Contracts with organisations such as Tesco, Housing Associations and other partners have largely been used to meet grant targets set by the SFA and therefore are already built into the budget.

2.24. However, in the current year the college will be able to generate income of £22,780 from external contracts and £37,876 from room bookings, a total of £60,656.

2.25. The feeling of management is that the room bookings could be further exploited over a period of 18 months but the level of achievable increase is difficult to predict. If we assume a challenging target of doubling room booking income to £80,000, this would leave a gap of £160,000 which would require between £233,000 and £350,000 of additional income to be achieved from these contracts, depending on the net profit. We believe that the £350,000 figure is far closer to the reality of what would be needed. This represents up to a 1,500% increase on current income generation from contracts which officers recommend is not deliverable

2.26. It is clear from the above that additional income generation will not save the service from failing financially or from the council needing to provide additional subsidy.

- **Splitting the ASB and CL provision**

2.27. The following assesses whether commissioning the Adult Skills Budget courses but retaining the Community Learning and provision for learners with disabilities in house would provide a better option to put the service on a sustainable financial footing.

2.28. This additional option has been modelled as follows:

Modelling ASB / CL split		
Service deficit	£220,000	As at 14/15 period 9
Add SFA funding for ASB	£735,000	As in 14/15
Minus ASB funding allocated for 'towards independence'	-£120,000	As at 14/15 allocation
Add in fee income not generated	£168,000	As in 13/14 for remaining ASB courses
Minus support / management staff no longer working on remaining contracts	-£313,050	As per adjusted estimates from MAE management
Minus teaching staff no longer required	-£371,258	As ASB is 48% of grant we assume 48% of tutor costs of £807,803 (which represent 46% of all staff costs)
Minus reduction in corporate overheads	-£100,320	Assumes 44% reduction in the controllable overheads of £228,000 (13/14 figures)
Minus reduction in exam fees	-40,000	Approximate
Bottom Line	£178,372	

2.29. The model suggests that this option would save roughly £40,000 compared to the current service, without factoring in potential future grant cuts.

2.30. In order to compare this option with the others proposed we also produced an analysis looking at the impact in light of future cuts to the grant – although in this case we were just modelling cuts to CL budget, assuming that the portion of the ASB that we retained would be the last element to be reduced. This modelling looks as follows with the initial deficit based on the analysis above:

ASB / CL split model	With no grant reduction	With 5% grant reduction	With 10% grant reduction	With 15% grant reduction	With 20% grant reduction
Current deficit	£178,372	£178,372	£178,372	£178,372	£178,372
Grant reduction (of just CL)		£39,418.90	£78,837.80	£118,256.70	£157,675.60
Account for increased income	-£40,000.00	£40,000.00	£40,000.00	-£40,000.00	-£40,000.00

ASB / CL split model	With no grant reduction	With 5% grant reduction	With 10% grant reduction	With 15% grant reduction	With 20% grant reduction
Account for reduction in variable costs		- £12,219.86	- £24,439.72	-£36,659.58	-£48,879.44
Bottom Line for council	£138,372	£165,571	£192,770	£219,969	£247,168

2.31. As is clear from the above, although there is a modest potential saving using this model compared to the current service, the saving is not sufficient to make the service financially viable and the service would become more and more unaffordable in the face of expected grant cuts.

- Retained costs

2.32. The following assesses whether the level of retained costs in any proposals for changes has any significant impact on the options appraisal.

2.33. In general, when we have moved into shared services with other providers we have negotiated to ensure that any retained overheads are captured within that new entity. This allows for some reduction in back office costs but does not leave costs to be redistributed across the rest of the council services that are not involved in the shared service.

2.34. As such, we assume that for option 1 and each of the shared service models (2 and 3) there would be no residual cost for the council.

2.35. For the commissioning options (4 and 5) there are residual overheads that the council would need to decide whether to continue to fund, or to make savings if these corporate items are no longer required. We have calculated this as approximately £72,000. The non-controllable overheads are detailed in appendix A. These overheads would not be releasable immediately and so a decision would need to be made about how to fund them until it is determined whether they can be released.

2.36. The level of residual costs has some impact on the attractiveness of options 4 and 5 however if the council decides to make the required savings to specific corporate functions that are no longer required when the service is commissioned then this could be considerably mitigated. In any event, even with retained costs, options 4 and 5 remain the most financially viable options for the service and for the council.

Financial Conclusion

2.37. It is clear from the above that option 1, no change, will not protect the service from financial failure. Although options 2 and 3 offer some savings, options 4 and 5 offer the greatest level of financial security for the council and in terms of safeguarding the future of the service.

Service Considerations

Summary

- 2.38. The council carried out a wide-ranging consultation with service users and members of the public.
- 2.39. The consultation revealed that respondents prioritised the following elements when designing an adult education service in Merton:
- (i) A supportive and nurturing environment for learners – especially for older learners and those with disabilities
 - (ii) A service that supports wellbeing as well as providing job opportunities
 - (iii) Retention of Whatley Avenue as a site for adult learning
 - (iv) A convenient location and one sited in Merton
 - (v) High quality tutors
 - (vi) Equipment and facilities – especially for arts and crafts courses
 - (vii) Control over the cost of courses
 - (viii) A diversity of courses offered
- 2.40. These elements can be met within the alternative models being proposed, apart possibly from the retention of the site, which may or may not be achievable.

Analysis of the results from the consultation survey

- 2.41. The consultation was designed to give people a number of different means of presenting evidence to the council. This included an online consultation, paper version of that consultation document provided at venues throughout Merton, communication through existing Merton networks, public meetings, specific sessions for learners with learning disabilities and their carers, easy to use surveys for individuals with limited English, special sessions held for staff and a logging procedure for receiving letters, comments, petitions, paintings and other submitted material.
- 2.42. This ensured a large number of respondents.
- 2.43. The aim of the consultation was to consult on both the model and the content of the service so that whatever model we chose to adopt the service delivery would meet the needs of local residents.
- 2.44. As such, we received:
- a) 97 attendees at two public meetings – both held on the 2nd December in the Council chamber and chaired by the Lead Member for Education.
 - b) 838 responses to the consultation survey, including both online surveys and paper consultation forms.
 - c) Over 40 letters and e-mails
 - d) 131 easy-read forms completed by those with disabilities and those with English as a second or other language
 - e) 4 petitions signed by over 2,500 people
 - f) 3 staff meetings, chaired by the Director of Community and Housing, each with 15-40 there.
- 2.45. There may be some duplication and overlap in the numbers quoted above with some respondents using multiple modes of response.

2.46. Full details of the consultation survey responses are contained within appendix B.

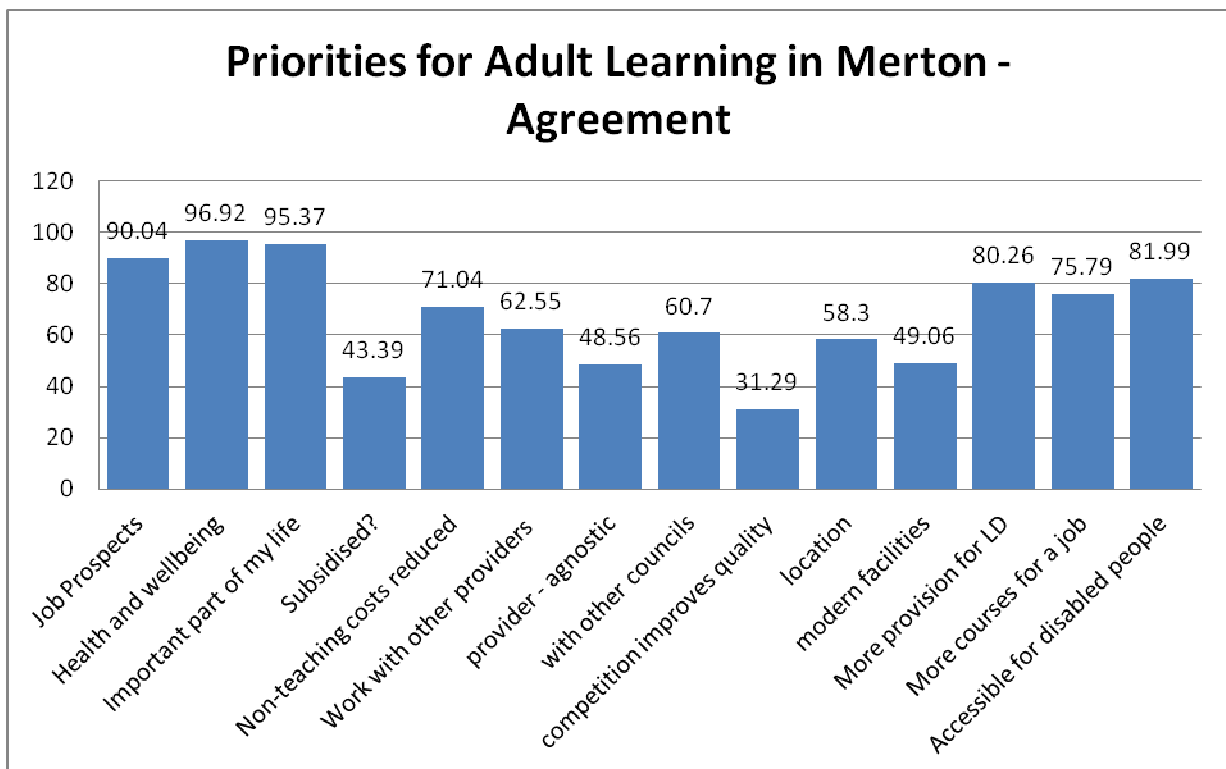
What do people want from their adult education service?

2.47. The survey asked a number of questions designed to get a deeper understanding of what respondents want from their adult education service.

2.48. In the first question we asked respondents to state their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:

- (i) Adult learning is important for improving people’s job prospects
- (ii) Adult learning is important for improving people’s health and well being
- (iii) Adult learning opportunities are an important part of my life
- (iv) Adult learning should not be subsidised at the expense of other council services
- (v) It is important to reduce spending on non-teaching costs
- (vi) It does not matter who provides the courses as long as they are good
- (vii) Merton should work with other councils to improve efficiency
- (viii) Competition between providers will improve quality
- (ix) I would take more courses if they were offered in locations closer to me
- (x) It is important that the facilities in which the courses are provided are modern
- (xi) More adult learning opportunities should be available to those with learning difficulties
- (xii) There should be more courses that help people to get a job
- (xiii) More should be done to make sure courses are accessible to disabled people

2.49. The percentage of people who either agreed or strongly agreed with each of these statements is captured below:



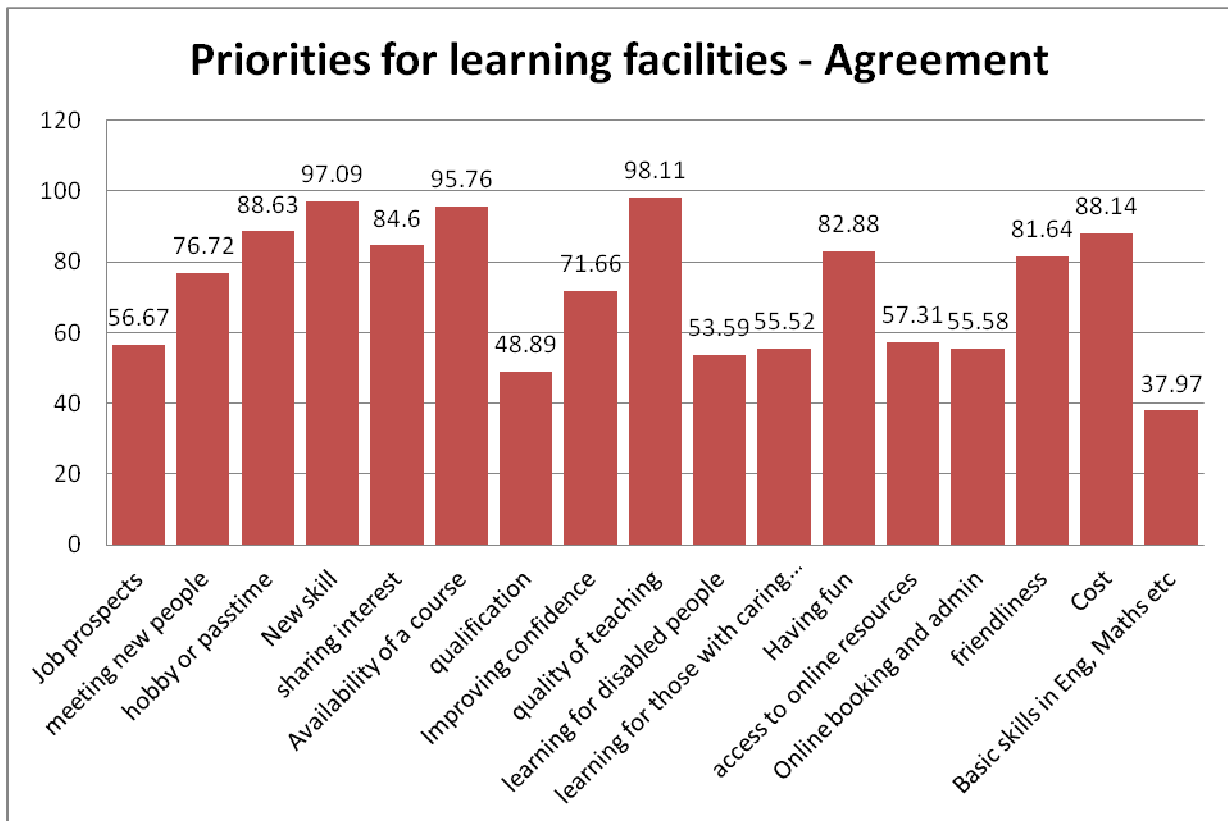
- 2.50. The above is useful in understanding what respondents value about adult education in Merton and what should be prioritised within any model of provision going forward.
- 2.51. In particular respondents viewed the service as equally important both for developing general wellbeing and for their job prospects. Future service provision will need to continue to reflect that.
- 2.52. Access and provision for disabled learners was important to a large number of respondents.
- 2.53. A large majority want to see non teaching costs reduced.
- 2.54. Although a majority of respondents were sceptical about the idea of introducing competition as a means of improving quality, roughly 63% of respondents agreed with working with other providers or other local authorities to improve efficiency and. nearly half were also provider agnostic in that they did not mind who provided the courses as long as they were high quality.
- 2.55. A small majority of respondents agreed that adult education should be subsidised at the expense of other council services, which on the face of it appears to contradict the council's agreed position that it is adult social care and children's services that should be subsidised over all other services.
- 2.56. It is clear from the above that maintaining the current breadth of courses covering both job focused and community learning options is important to respondents. There are some contradictory responses in terms of moving to a new provider but overall it appears that the kind of service offered is more important to people than who the provider is.

Facilities

- 2.57. We also asked respondents for their priorities when it came to the facilities and provision of an adult education service. In particular we asked them: what aspects of an adult learning course are important to you; specifically asking for comments in terms of how strongly respondents agreed or disagreed with each of the following elements being important. These were as follows:
 - (i) Improving my job prospects
 - (ii) Meeting new people
 - (iii) Developing a new hobby or pastime
 - (iv) Developing a new skill
 - (v) Sharing an interest with other people
 - (vi) The availability of a specific course
 - (vii) Getting a qualification
 - (viii) Improving my confidence
 - (ix) The quality of the teaching
 - (x) Learning designed for disabled people
 - (xi) Learning designed for those with caring responsibilities
 - (xii) Having fun
 - (xiii) Access to online resources and learning material
 - (xiv) Online booking and administration
 - (xv) Friendliness of non-teaching staff
 - (xvi) The cost of the course

(xvii) Help to gain basic skills in maths, English and science

2.58. These are captured in the below chart:



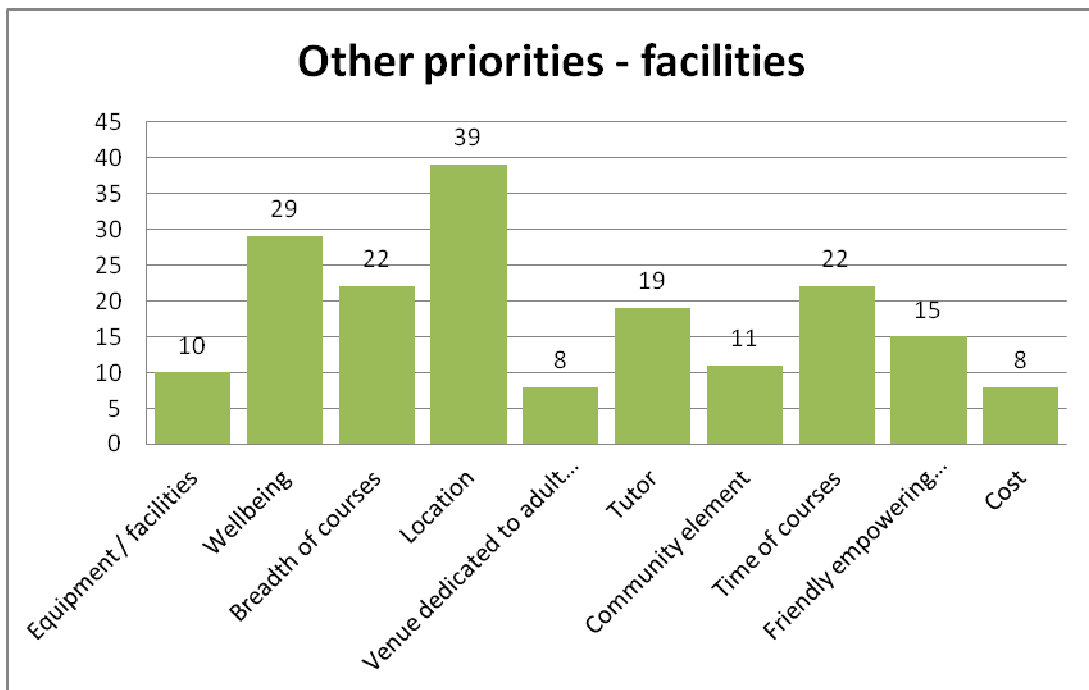
2.59. The most important thing for respondents was the quality of the teaching. Two other key areas of importance to nearly all students were availability of a course and the ability to develop a new skill.

2.60. Likewise, the cost of the course is also very important.

2.61. Friendliness of non teaching staff, the ability to share an interest, meet new people or just to have fun were also important to respondents. Whilst these are not quite as important to as many people as the courses and tutor, it is a big consideration.

2.62. All of these key requirements would be deliverable under any of the options for the service.

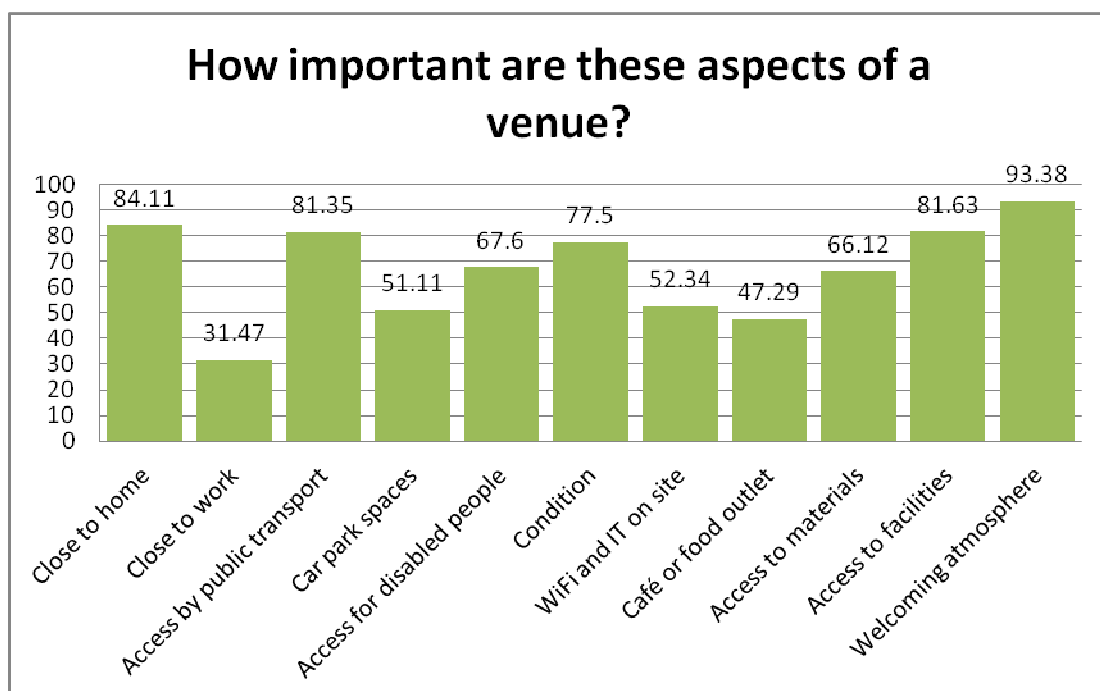
2.63. We also offered people the ability to list other elements they valued within the service. Although not all respondents answered this question, we received a wide diversity of feedback but the following elements can be broadly grouped together:



- 2.64. These are in addition to the selection we offered to people completing the survey.
- 2.65. Location was seen as important to a number of respondents to this question, respondents particularly emphasised a convenient location and courses still being delivered in Merton.
- 2.66. The importance respondents placed on wellbeing, the breadth of courses and the tutors was again emphasised, reflecting other findings.
- 2.67. The timing of courses and the tutors were also important. Some respondents wanted courses during daytime hours some preferred courses that fitted in with work schedules.

Venue

- 2.68. We asked people what mattered to them about the venue:



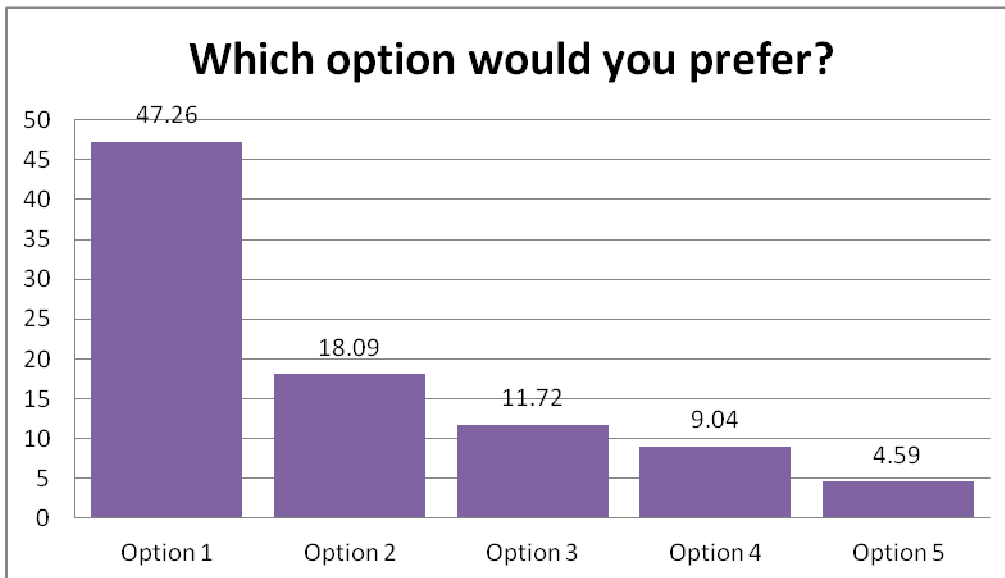
- 2.69. The single most important thing for respondents was that the venue has a welcoming atmosphere.
- 2.70. Access was a major feature of this question with a strong majority wanting the venue to be close to home or accessible by public transport.
- 2.71. The above key priorities could be delivered by any of the options outlined.

Additional elements

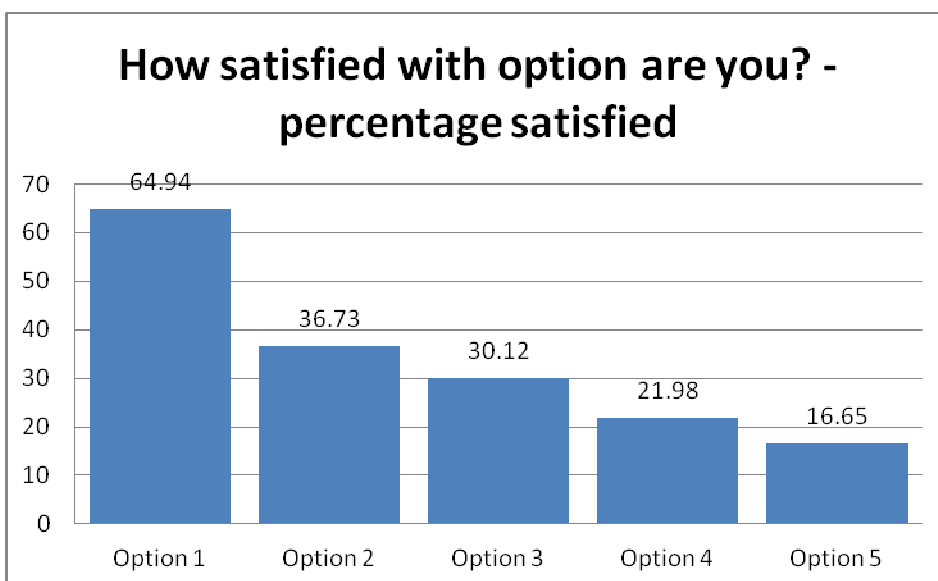
- 2.72. There were other elements reflected within the responses to questions that are not reflected above. Although these are anecdotal in nature these included:
- (i) Users of arts courses were particularly concerned about their provision. This included people who mentioned specific courses such as pottery and stained and fused glass and those who were worried that any commissioning or shared service would lead to a reduction in their art classes.
 - (ii) Linked to this respondents mentioned that one of the attractions of these courses was the provision of facilities not available at home. This included kilns, standing pottery wheels and other specialist facilities.
 - (iii) There was concern that facilities and classes for disabled people would be negatively impacted by any change. This was reflected throughout the different questions.
 - (iv) Similarly, there was a concern about the social services element of the adult education service with some respondents mentioning its role in supporting people with mental health problems and disabilities and suggesting that alternative support might be needed if the service changed.

What did people make of the options

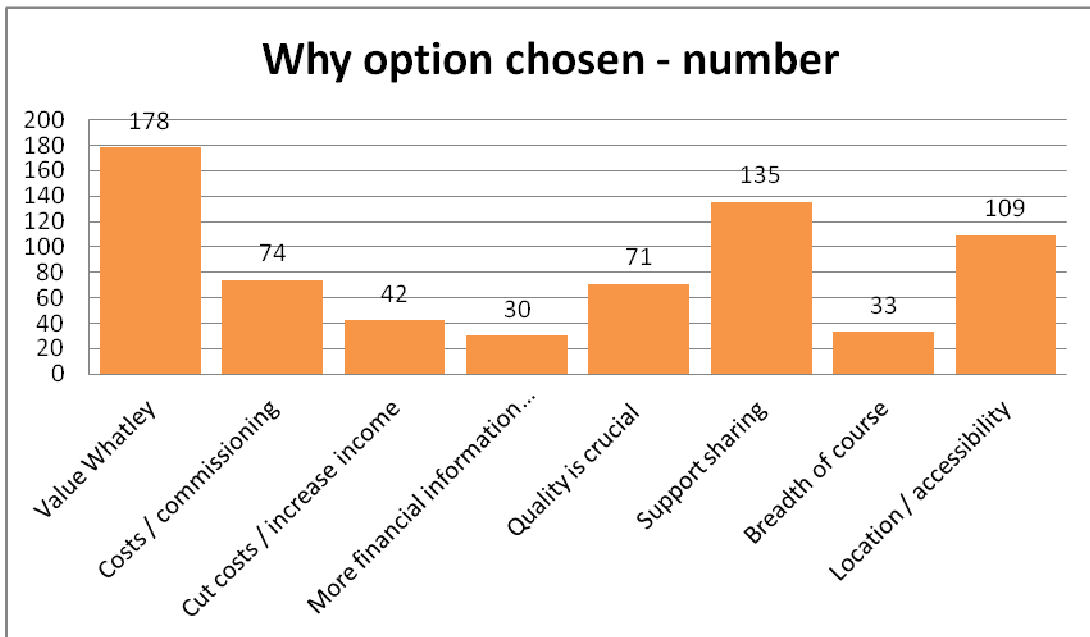
- 2.73. In order to give everyone the opportunity to respond directly to the options being proposed we offered respondents two opportunities; firstly for respondents to choose their preferred option and then to indicate their support for each of the options in turn. The results to these two questions are as follows:
- 2.74. The following chart shows the option the respondents preferred:



- 2.75. The option with the most support was option 1. However it should be noted that respondents choosing the “no change” option were not asked to explain how the service could avoid financial failure in the absence of any changes to the way it is currently delivered.
- 2.76. The following chart shows the support for each option independent of the others:



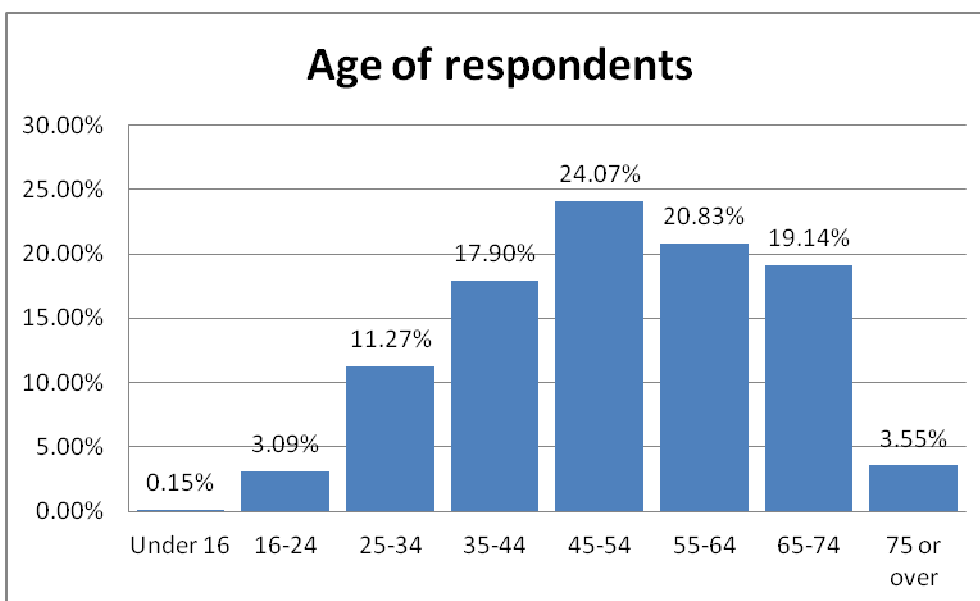
- 2.77. In general respondents were most satisfied with the status quo although it is of course difficult to meaningfully compare satisfaction with actual provision to theoretical models respondents have not yet experienced.
- 2.78. Interestingly, options 2 and 3 which involved sharing responsibility and authority with other parties were more popular than retaining control but developing commissioning relationships with other providers.
- 2.79. When we asked respondents to explain why they chose their preferred option we received a variety of comments which can be grouped into some broad areas as below:



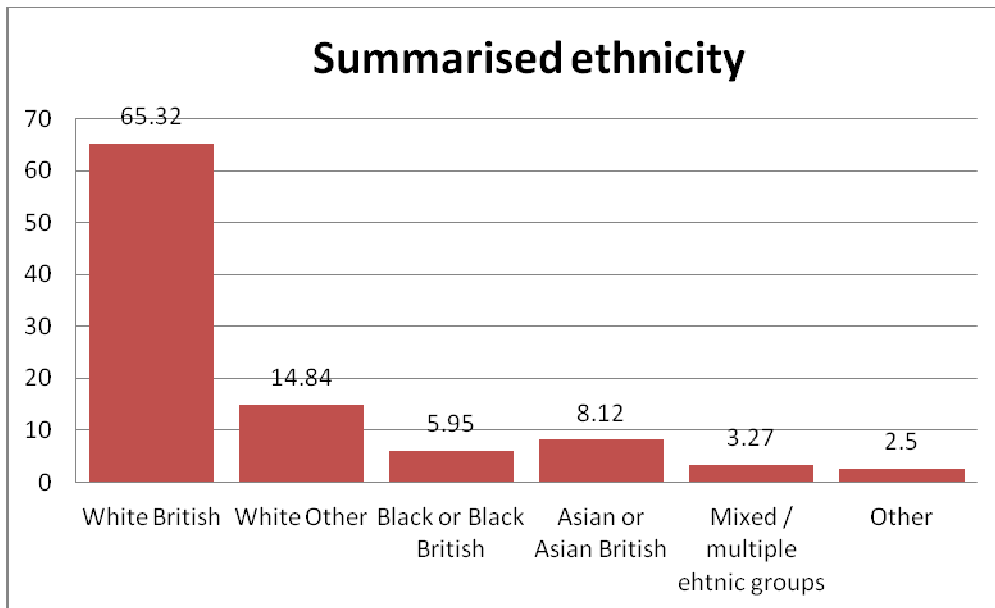
- 2.80. As the above makes clear, the largest motivating factor for choosing one of the options was people valuing the Whatley Avenue site. This may explain why option 1 was the most popular overall, with respondents equating the aspects of the service they value most (breadth of courses, wellbeing, etc) with the physical site.
- 2.81. A large number of respondents also noted their support for further sharing with other providers and expressed a variety of reasons for seeing this as the best approach.
- 2.82. Apart from the site, all of the other aspects of the service that people valued most highly are deliverable within any of the other options.

Who completed the consultation

- 2.83. The survey was completed a large amount of residents. The full detail is included in appendix B.
- 2.84. 74% of respondents were women. The age group spread was as follows:



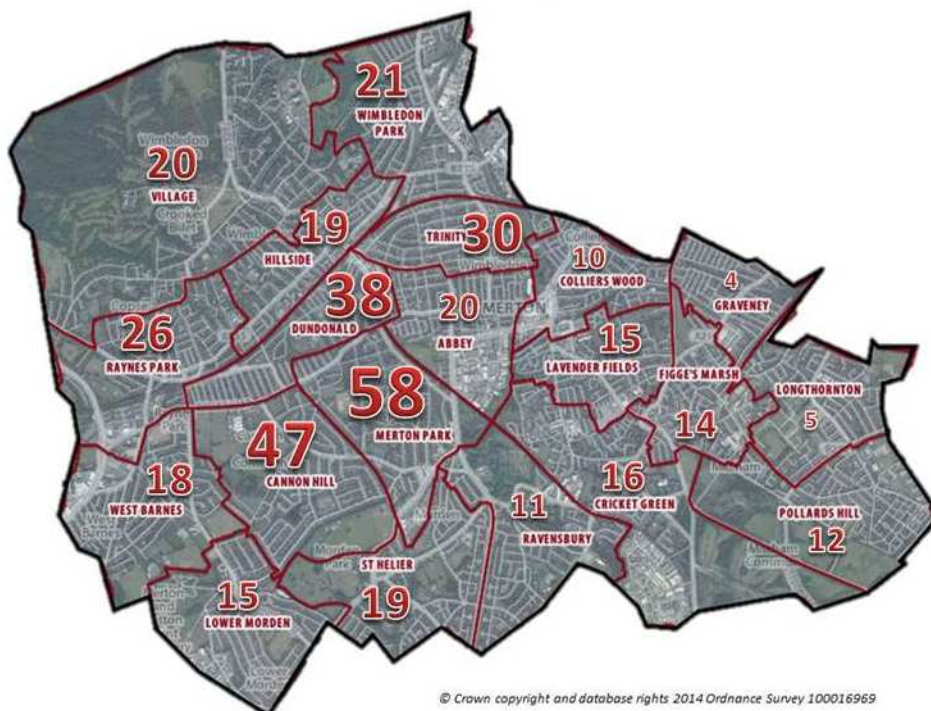
- 2.85. This is an older spread of ages than we would expect from the population of Merton as a whole where the 30-44 age group is the largest group.
- 2.86. The ethnicity of respondents is summarised in the following chart and full details are provided in the appendix:



- 2.87. This response is not closely reflective of the Merton population where the White British category makes up just under 50% of the population.
- 2.88. 15% of respondents have a disability although it should be noted that in both the ethnicity and disability questions additional surveys were carried out with those taking ESOL classes and those with learning disabilities which would have impacted upon those numbers.
- 2.89. In addition, we asked people where in the borough they lived. The following map shows which wards respondents came from. It is clear that the largest number of respondents were people who live near to the service's main delivery site at Whatley Avenue.
- 2.90. 96 (19%) of the respondents who provided their postcode came from the 8 deprived wards in the Borough.

Number of Respondents to the MAE Survey by Ward, 23 January 2015.

Source: London Borough of Merton

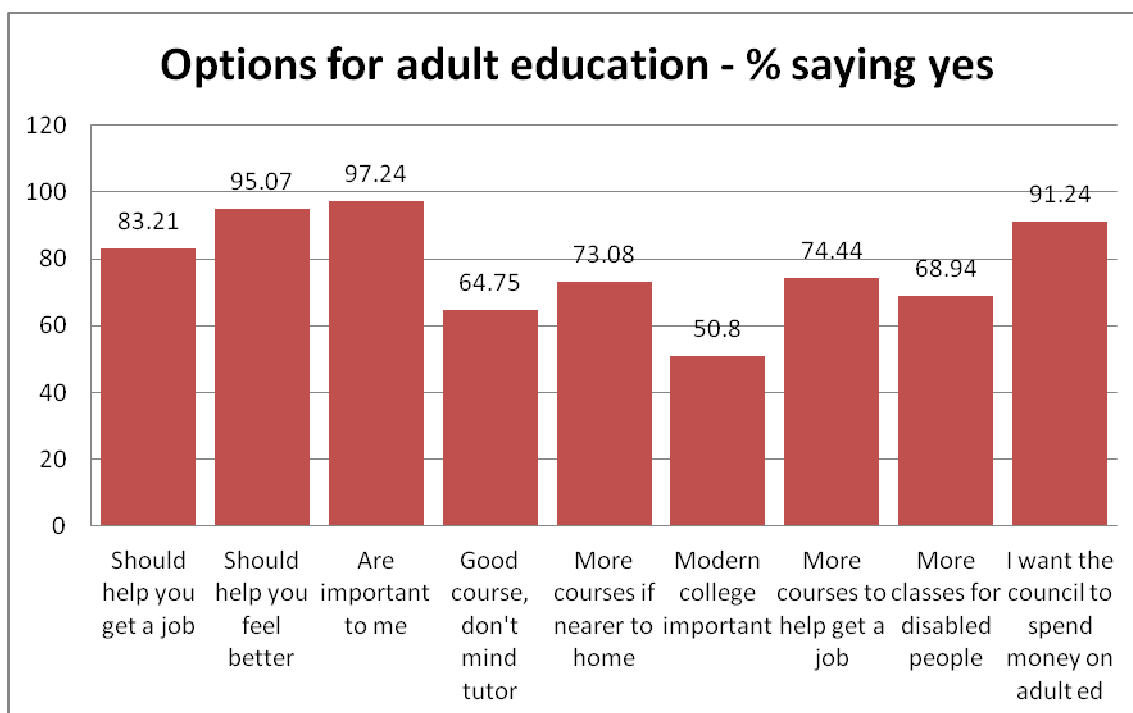


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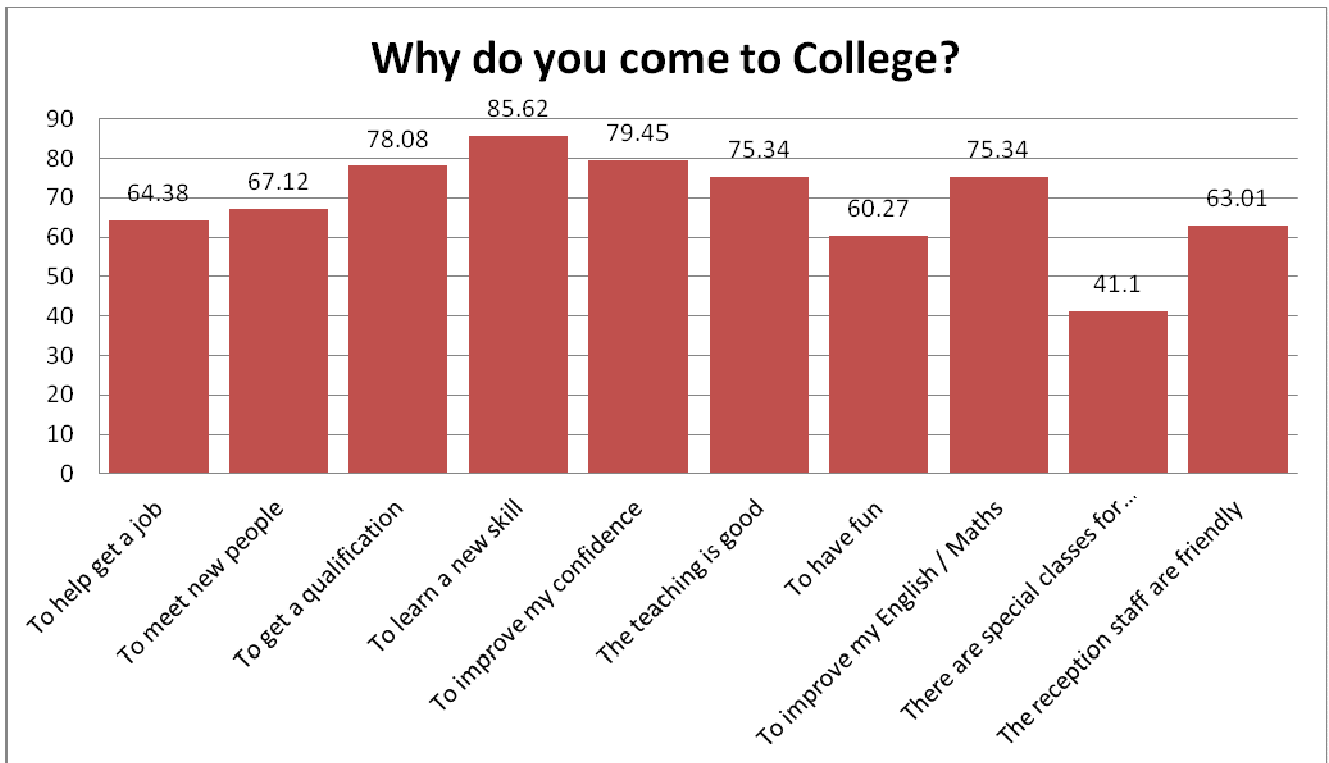
Note: 99 responses were also received from outside Merton.

Additional feedback from the easy read survey

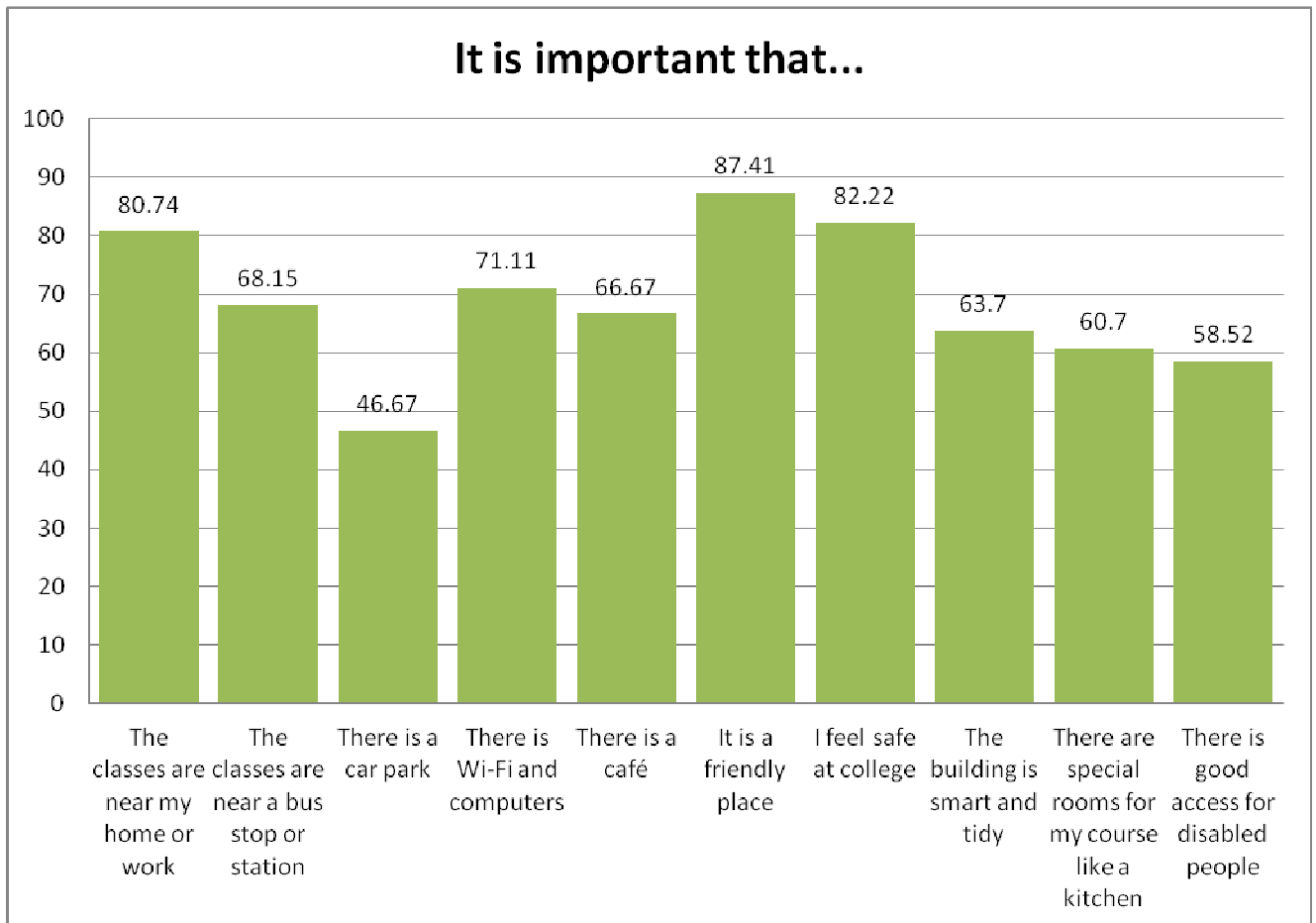
- 2.91. In order to be inclusive we designed an easy to use consultation survey specifically aimed at learners with limited English or disabilities. We provided support for learners to complete this survey and also made it available at the site. Full results of this survey are available in appendix C.
- 2.92. We asked them broadly the same questions as in the main survey and whilst this is presented separately for ease of reporting it is important that this feedback is treated the same as the feedback above.



- 2.93. It is clear, as we expected, that the adult education courses are important to the respondents and that they expect courses to help them feel better and to help them get employment. It is also clear that the people who completed this survey want the council to spend money on the service, although no detailed questions we asked of respondents as to where that money might be found in the context of government cuts and competing, often statutory, services.
- 2.94. Interestingly, 73% of respondents said they would do more courses if they were closer to where they lived.
- 2.95. We asked respondents to indicate why they came to the College. The answers were as follows:



- 2.96. Notable is the priority given to learning new skills, improving confidence and improving Maths and English. The improving confidence element reflects comments received within the main survey.
- 2.97. We also asked respondents what was important to them about the provision:

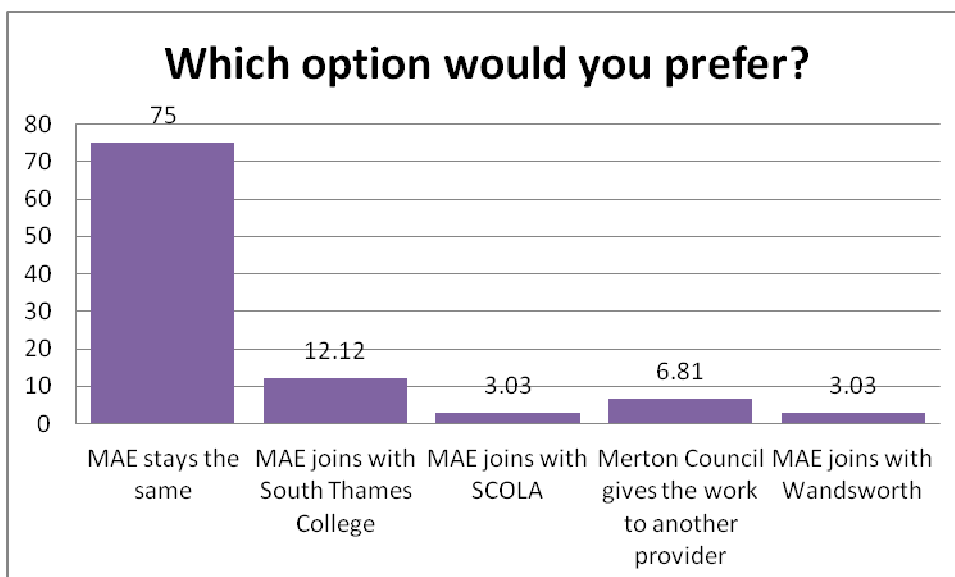


2.98. As in the main survey, respondents felt a friendly atmosphere was the most important thing. Feeling safe, being near to the users home or work, and IT facilities were also important. Proximity to a bus stop or station was also of concern.

2.99. As with the main survey, the areas respondents valued most highly could continue to be delivered under any of the options being considered.

Which option

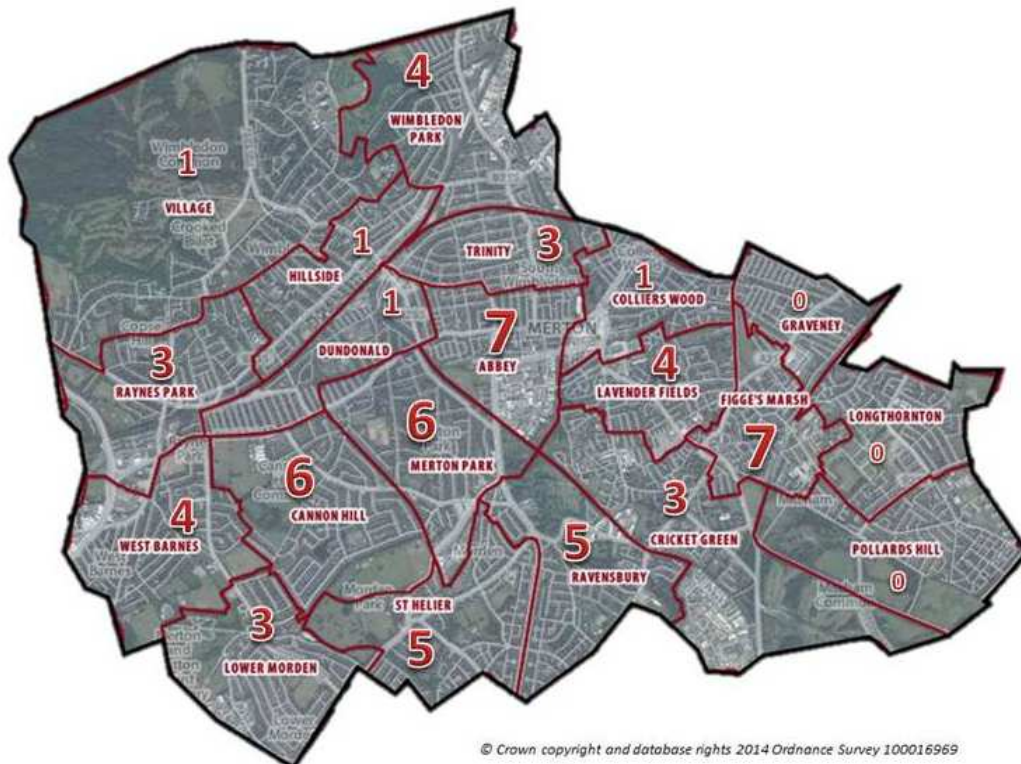
2.100. We also asked these learners how they felt about the various options on offer. Their response was as follows:



- 2.101. This demonstrated widespread support for option 1.
- 2.102. We also asked respondents for additional comments. There were four broad groupings that were particularly emphasised. These were:
- (i) That respondents did not want the Whatley Avenue site to be closed.
 - (ii) That the ability to develop English skills was very important to people
 - (iii) That the tutors are really important and really valued and
 - (iv) That the adult education, and the safe nurturing venue it is provided in, represents an important part of some of the respondents lives.
- 2.103. As in the main survey, these reasons may explain why so many respondents chose option 1 with many people equating the service with the physical building. Nonetheless, the actual aspects of the service that were valued could also be delivered through the alternative models being considered.
- 2.104. The respondents came from the following wards:

Number of Respondents to the ESOL MAE Survey by Ward, 23 January 2015.

Source: London Borough of Merton



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Note: 26 responses were also received from outside Merton.

- 2.105. As can be seen from the above, and reflecting the main survey, there was a preponderance of responses from people who live near to the main service delivery site of Whatley Avenue.
- 2.106. Full results of this survey are included within appendix C.

Other

Additional feedback from the public meetings

- 2.107. Notes from two public meetings are available as appendix D. Most of the comments reflect the comments provided within the written consultations

and the petitions. However a few points that particularly emphasised or have not been raised elsewhere in this report include:

- (i) A concern from some that the proposed savings are not sufficient to justify the changes.
- (ii) A concern from some about the impact on the Whatley Avenue site; particularly people who lived locally to the site or saw it as a community asset.
- (iii) There was concern from some about the impact the changes would have on specific courses or learners groups. Particular issues raised include arts courses and the impact on users with disabilities
- (iv) A number of attendees urged the council to put up council tax to pay for the protection of the service.

Petitions

- 2.108. In addition to the consultation the council has received four petitions: a petition using the national 38 degrees website and had 1,264 signatures (including 28 from a copy of the same survey submitted by the Stroke Association). However it is likely that at least some of the petitioners will reside outside of the borough.
- 2.109. A further petition of roughly 1,000 people was received protesting cuts or detrimental changes to the Whatley Avenue site and two further petitions from the national Women's Institute (with the same proviso regarding petitioners from outside the borough) entitled 'Save Merton Adult Education' and one entitled #JoHoSaysNo; the latter receiving over 300 signatories and particularly concerned about the impact of any decision on Joseph Hood primary school.
- 2.110. Full details including the text are available in appendix E.

Further responses

- 2.111. We received over 40 letters from residents, sometimes directly and sometimes through their elected representatives. In addition, we received four letters that asked to be treated as complaints. Most of the letters reflected comments also made within the consultation.
- 2.112. The Merton Centre for Independent Living (CIL) also conducted a focus group with 8 learners with disabilities who attended a pottery class.
- 2.113. We also received a letter from Harris Academy which expressed an interest in the Whatley Avenue site for a potential secondary school should the site become vacant.
- 2.114. In addition, a learner event was held at MAE prior to the consultation being launched in November.
- 2.115. These letters, additional details from the pre-consultation session and the art work are included in appendix F.

Staff Consultation

- 2.116. Consultation has also taken place with staff from Merton Adult Education with and a range of responses given. These are available in appendix G

Other analysis and considerations

Whatley Avenue

- 2.117. It is clear from the consultation that people value the current service. However they see the service as indistinguishable from the current main delivery site at Whatley Avenue. They value the site as among other things: a nurturing environment, a community asset, an ideal location, providing good facilities and as a good location for adults of all ages, abilities and requirements to learn.
- 2.118. As such, a lot of the opposition to any of the alternative options stems from concern about the future of the Whatley Avenue site and whether the provision provided at that site could be replicated elsewhere.
- 2.119. It is crucial that any commissioning model is able to not only replicate the learning and courses provided but also provide a welcoming, nurturing and supportive atmosphere for students.
- 2.120. The location of Whatley Avenue was mentioned by some respondents as a positive. Analysis does not suggest this is the case when considering the borough as a whole. Whilst it is within walking distance of Wimbledon Chase and Raynes Park station and on some bus routes these tend to make it more accessible to residents from the West of the borough rather than the south or east. The fact that a large number of respondents lived close to the Whatley Avenue site may explain this response.
- 2.121. In addition, due to the limited parking available on site the location is not ideal for driving either. For many learners who may live nearby Whatley Avenue is in an ideal location – however, that does not mean that alternatives could not be just as good, or even better, for the whole borough.
- 2.122. There was also concern that the site would be sold for re-development, although there are no current plans to redevelop the site.
- 2.123. It is clear from the above that although there is significant affection for the Whatley Avenue site from learners, the elements of the venue that learners value would not prevent us from using different venues in the borough under alternative delivery models that met these needs and priorities.
- 2.124. As part of the consultation, the council also received a letter from Sir Dan Moynihan, the Chief Executive of the Harris Academy. This letter expressed their ‘very strong interest in using the site and building for the free school we have applied for to the DFE to open in Wimbledon.’
- 2.125. Decisions about the site should follow decisions about the model of adult education we wish to pursue.

Arts and Crafts courses

- 2.126. There was some concern that current courses could not be facilitated by South Thames College. Particular issues were raised about stained glass and pottery classes.
- 2.127. These courses are provided under the Community Learning part of the SFA funding and thus will be protected going forward provided there is not a cut in the grant from the SFA.
- 2.128. Any commissioning strategy will need to take due consideration of the fixed equipment and materials that are required to do these courses, including but not limited to a kiln. Nonetheless, all of the options under consideration could potentially deliver on this requirement.

Learning for those with disabilities

- 2.129. Currently about £120,000 of ASB grant, and a small amount of Community Learning grant, is allocated to courses for learners with disabilities under the 'Towards Independence' element of the SFA grant. This is grouped in a category described as non-regulated ASB and is designed to support people towards independence.
- 2.130. This represents the largest element of the ASB grant and in 2013/14 provided courses for 125 learners.
- 2.131. Re-providing this provision in an environment that is supportive, nurturing and safe for these students would be an absolute priority for any commissioning strategy. Officers believe that there are a number of options for how this could be provided.
- 2.132. For example, there is a precedent for MAE tutors running Adult Education sessions in our in-house day centres. These have included Literacy and Numeracy, Cookery, Personal Development, Fitness sessions and Music. The joint working began to address issues such as transport, availability of specialist bathrooms and changing facilities, and the need to provide support staff in some cases. This was particularly helpful in allowing people with more complex needs to have access to these sessions.
- 2.133. We are happy to provide space in our centres both to maintain existing arrangements and to cater for other groups, and if needed provide access to equipment and of course to bathrooms and changing areas. Each centre has a reception area where customers from elsewhere can wait for classes and transport. Tutors can access IT and refreshment facilities.
- 2.134. All centres are available outside of core hours, including evenings and weekends.
- 2.135. This is one option and we believe that other similar arrangements could be developed in partnership with learners, their carers, tutors and our partners. This would include settings that have more mainstream options such as libraries, the intergenerational centre, St Marks and South Thames College and many more – meeting the needs of the wide range of learners.
- 2.136. The changes to this provision would be dealt with sensitively and phased throughout the 18 month implementation period.

How might the options for change fit with what respondents value?

- 2.137. Of the four options that involve changing the way the service is delivered, two primarily involve a shared service approach and two primarily involve a commissioning model, although there is some crossover with hybrid models.
- 2.138. There has been some confusion from respondents as to what commissioning would mean in practice and the following outlines some of the key components of this model and assesses whether it could still allow the council to deliver the kind of services respondents want, within the reduced financial envelope. Some of this will also be relevant to shared service and hybrid models (e.g. option 5).
- 2.139. Commissioning means paying other educational providers to provide a service on our behalf but retaining control over that service. The council would be able to choose that provider based on our needs.
- 2.140. Across London, many boroughs already commission their adult education services to a range of providers.

- 2.141. Under a commissioning model, we would retain a portion of the grant (roughly 15%) to manage the commissioning and would retain responsibility for the diversity and quality of the learning. We are also able to set the fees that will be charged.
- 2.142. As the current provider of the service we would also expect to transfer the tutors who currently work for the service to the new providers; this would keep continuity of provision.
- 2.143. The Skills Funding Agency require councils that commission their adult education services to retain responsibility for the range of courses provided, the quality of the courses provided and other learning elements such as fees charged.
- 2.144. Commissioned services do not have to be at one site. Working with South Thames College, for example, does not mean that every course they provide would need to be at the Morden campus. We could ask them to provide courses in other locations.
- 2.145. As the council retains responsibility and control we can vary the adult education offer every year in line with need.
- 2.146. Commissioned providers will not necessarily have a profit motive; indeed most will not. Many of the potential providers we would work with are educational establishments or social enterprises who do not aim to make profits from their work. However, some providers may seek to make a profit.
- 2.147. Although this is a rule of thumb rather than set terms, in general we would expect to work with providers on the basis of a 60:40 split with at least 60% of the contract being spent on directly on teaching. This would compare favourably to our current model where only 46% of the staffing costs are spent on teaching; not even considering the other costs.
- 2.148. In order to provide diverse input into the commissioning process we would develop a commissioning model that includes mechanisms that allow for the regular input of key stakeholders. This will include learners, council officers and partners. For specialist areas such as the courses for adults with disabilities we would work closely with those learners, and their carers, in developing the provision.
- 2.149. The commissioning process would also seek to commission services that are available at a variety of convenient locations across Merton.
- 2.150. Shared service models would provide many of the above assurances for the council and for learners, in terms of the areas of the service that are valued. However, a key difference with the current service and with a commissioned service would be a reduction in the council's level of control over the diversity and quality of the learning. This is particularly the case if we were to be the minority partner in a far larger organisation, as would be the case in option 2.

South Thames College and other providers

- 2.151. As the largest provider in the borough we anticipate that any commissioning strategy would mean working closely with South Thames College.
- 2.152. Respondents have expressed some concern about the college's capacity and range of courses. As mentioned in the November Cabinet report some

analysis has been carried out with the college to assess their capacity. This can be broken down as follows:

Courses at MAE	Can be provided same time at STC Merton	Could be provided at STC with some adjustments	Courses already provided at STC (duplicates)
273	224	49	69

2.153. It is also worth saying that commissioning a college like South Thames provides an opportunity for a wider course base. An analysis of courses provided by the MAE and STC show that STC currently provide 4 times as many types of courses as MAE. This does not mean we would change the current provision but it does provide potential additional opportunities for our learners.

Current course types provided by MAE	Current course types provided by STC
163	652

2.154. It is also worth noting that STC Merton is a large modern campus with good transport connections and modern facilities – including art studios, IT suites, performance spaces, professional kitchens, various workshops and specialist facilities.

2.155. In addition, there are a large number of smaller providers who may be interested in providing courses. These include:

- (i) Wimbledon School of Art
- (ii) Grenfell Housing and Training
- (iii) Capital Training Group
- (iv) Commonsides Community Development Trust
- (v) Training and Recruitment Partnership
- (vi) Delrose Earle Training

2.156. There would be many others as well, in addition to independent tutors who we might commission directly, but the above demonstrates some of the partners we could consider working with

Equalities Implications

2.157. A number of respondents raised concerns about the equalities implications of any potential change to the adult education provision in Merton. In line with the council's practice an Equalities Analysis has been produced to accompany this report. It is available as appendix H

2.158. The analysis was informed by the consultation, including specific surveys carried out with learners with disabilities and limited English.

2.159. The EA identifies some potential negative implications of moving to a commissioning model. As such, it has been scored as a level 3 proposal. This means that the EA has identified adjustments to remove negative impact or to better promote equality. These are reflected in the action plan contained within the EA which specifically includes proposals to mitigate the potential impact on learners with disabilities, older learners, learners from

BME backgrounds and those with particular religious beliefs as well as from specific socio-economic groups.

- 2.160. Some of these implications could be positive but in order to protect against potential negative impacts and to make sure the process is as positive as possible it is crucial that the commissioning process is carried out carefully and with due consideration given to how services can be provided that meet the needs of all learners from all backgrounds.
- 2.161. Although the recommendations are varied the most important is probably the proposals around the implementation and phased nature of the roll out of a commissioning model. This will help us work closely with potentially impacted groups to ensure that the provision meets their needs.
- 2.162. It is important that the action plan is implemented as part of any decision. As such, it is recommended that Cabinet specifically endorse the equalities action plan.

3 OPTIONS APPRAISAL, RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- 3.1. Although a majority of consultation respondents preferred no change to the current service, it is clear from the financial analysis that option 1 would not provide the cost savings and financially resilient service that the council needs both to contribute to the overall £32m savings required by the council and to put the service on a sustainable footing in the light of future funding expectations.
- 3.2. The Cabinet has already ruled out ceasing the service (originally option 6).
- 3.3. All of the other options offer some level of cost avoidance for the council and offer greater protection for the service going forward, within a volatile adult learning funding context.
- 3.4. All of the options for change could deliver against much of what respondents to the consultation value about the current service, to greater and lesser extents.
- 3.5. However, options 2, 3 and 5, which all involve a degree of sharing services, would offer the council less control over the breadth and quality of learning, key issues for survey respondents.
- 3.6. Option 4, which is a commissioning model, would allow the council to retain control over the service and to deliver it in line with the elements currently valued by survey respondents.
- 3.7. Overall, options 3, 4 and 5 would, if we received just a 10% reduction in our grant, offer approximately £300,000 in cost avoidance.. However, options 4 and 5 would potentially deliver the greatest level of protection against future funding cuts.
- 3.8. As is clear from the above, Option 4 is the most attractive model in terms of cost and it performs best of all of the options for change in terms of what survey respondents value about the service. This model would potentially allow us to most closely replicate the current service within a more affordable cost envelope.

Recommendation

- 3.9. In light of the additional information and analysis in this report it remains the view of officers that the commissioning model is the most appropriate model for the council. In order to ensure that any potential negative impact on learners is mitigated we would recommend a tailored commissioning approach to ensure that the concerns of learners are addressed.
- 3.10. The specific support for the commissioning model is for the following reasons:
- (i) The financial analysis conducted shows that the financial risk to the council of continuing as an in house provider is still high and that the commissioning model would reduce that risk.
 - (ii) The commissioning model can still meet most of the priorities of learners in Merton as reflected in the consultation.
 - (iii) Adult education is not a service that the council has a statutory duty to maintain. Due to the council's financial position if there is an option for delivery that minimises the cost to the council there needs to be a good reason not to take it; especially as the council is unlikely to be able to increase costs by any subsidy to the service without making service reductions elsewhere .
 - (iv) The commissioning model protects adult education in Merton; this is not a cut to the service beyond any future reduction made by the SFA although this model does not fully protect services from the impact of those cuts.
 - (v) The Skills Funding Agency funding is volatile in nature and if we do not act now we may be forced to take alternative action within a year or two. By taking this decision now we have the opportunity to bed the new delivery model in before any further grant reductions impact on the service.
 - (vi) The commissioning model is used by numerous authorities and works successfully.
 - (vii) Commissioning would allow us to move away from a provider model with high fixed costs and allow us to invest as much of the SFA funding we do receive in the future on learning
 - (viii) As commissioners the council will be in a position to steer provision and the spread of venues so that the service fully addresses the challenge of "bridging the gap" between east and west. This ability will be maintained.
 - (ix) By moving to a sole commissioning model we would keep full control of the commissioning process allowing us to ensure that the needs identified above are fully met – something that might be constrained in the joint commissioning model.
 - (x) Unlike some of the other options considered during the consultation this option is deliverable.
- 3.11. For all the above reasons we recommend to Cabinet that the council opt for option 4 and move to a commissioning model for adult education over the next eighteen months.
- 3.12. However, it is clear from the consultation that a new commissioning model would need to be implemented in a sensitive way and safeguards put in

place to ensure that learners such as those with learning disabilities and older learners are protected in line with the needs identified within this consultation.

- 3.13. As such it is recommended that the Cabinet accept the recommendation along with the following commissioning principles and an implementation plan that reflects this change of approach.

Commissioning principles

- 3.14. The commissioning model also needs to ensure that the newly commissioned service meets the expectations of residents and learners. Officers have therefore developed a series of commissioning principles to underpin future commissioning. These are derived from the consultation and are as follows:

- (i) That commissioning should look to continue the same breadth of courses currently provided. This does not mean that the courses must be the exact same year to year as needs change but that the breadth and variety should be maintained.
- (ii) That courses should continue to be delivered within the borough
- (iii) That the economic development and skills agendas of the council should be prevalent through the commissioning process
- (iv) That TUPE regulations will be followed and every effort made to retain the highly valued tutors.
- (v) That the environment and support of each provider should be assessed as part of the commissioning process
- (vi) That adults with disabilities and their carers should be involved in the commissioning process for courses specifically tailored for them
- (vii) That discussions about the provision of facilities for art and craft courses should involve user representatives from those courses
- (viii) That a focus on wellbeing and aging well and on helping learners to gain employment should be key elements of the commissioning process to go alongside any focus on qualifications and learning
- (ix) That hobbies, crafts and non-vocational skills courses should still be commissioned in line with SFA funding
- (x) That fees should be set by the council as part of the commissioning process and controlled accordingly
- (xi) That effort should be made to ensure provision is spread around the borough and not just located at one site, although quality and cost will remain key considerations.
- (xii) That, where possible, services should be commissioned with not-for profit organisations
- (xiii) That the outcomes for learners should be closely monitored to ensure that job prospects, well-being, support for vulnerable learners and safeguarding aspects are all considered as part of the commissioning cycle.

Implementation process and costs

- 3.15. The implementation process detailed below is designed to ensure that the commissioning can be implemented in a way that protects the services valued by learners and meets the action plan proposed within the Equalities Analysis. As such, the process would be phased over a 18 month period. This would allow us to ensure that the providers we commission with are appropriate, develop in house provision where necessary and provide continuity of the service while the implementation is completed.
- 3.16. We would firstly investigate providers interested in providing the Adult Skills Budget (ASB) element of the service. Our ambition would be to commission this element of the budget by September 2015. We would also look for other services that may be easily commissioned at this time.
- 3.17. We would then work with commissioned providers to develop a commissioning model for the Community Learning and provision for learners with disabilities. This would include specific work looking at arts and crafts courses and older learners.
- 3.18. The work with learners with disabilities would be developed particularly carefully with engagement with learners, carers and tutors designed to shape the commissioning.
- 3.19. This latter commissioning could then take place over the course of the 2015/16 academic year with an ambition that, provided the proposals meet with formal Cabinet approval, every service to be provided on a fully commissioned basis by the summer of 2016.
- 3.20. Broadly speaking, the timetable proposed can be captured as follows:

Milestone Description	Critical Date
Commissioning commences	Feb 2015
Consultation with staff commences	April 2015
First stage of TUPE / residual redundancies take place	September 2015
New prospectus published	May 2015
First phase of courses move to new providers	Sept 2015
Second phase of courses move to new providers	Jan / Feb 2016
Third phase of courses move to new providers	June 2016

- 3.21. We would work closely with learners and any providers to make sure that the proposals developed have their input and then subsequently that any transition would be as seamless as possible.
- 3.22. Any new provider would be asked if they intended to include the Whatley Avenue site as part of their proposal.
- 3.23. In terms of funding it is anticipated that the transition will incur one of costs of approximately £175,000. These costs would pay for the following:
- A full time project manager for 8 months - <£75k (assume 150 days at £500pd)
 - Support services (HR, procurement) - <£50k (assume input equal to 1 FTE between the services over the 8 months)
 - Additional staff to ensure BAU alongside the implementation - <£100k (assume at 3 additional staff brought in to manage BAU and free up staff to contribute)

- 3.24. These costs would be one of costs with no impact on the council's revenue budget and would be met from the council's transformation fund which is in place to fund efficiency initiatives such as this.

CONCLUSION

- 3.25. The adult education service is valued by learners who would prefer no change to current provision. However the council is facing unprecedented financial pressures and needs to act responsibly by assessing whether there are other ways to deliver the service that could achieve greater financial resilience whilst still delivering much of what residents value in an adult education service.
- 3.26. The recommended plans, in the view of officers, will allow for a more financially resilient service which can withstand the current climate of increasing funding cuts whilst at the same time allowing much of the concerns of survey respondents to be met and for councillors to be reassured that the models being delivered will meet the needs of learners.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1. The consultation considered 5 potential options having previously discounted the option for Merton to cease being a provider of adult education.
- 4.2. Backbench Members also asked us to look at the potential for splitting the ASB and CL provision and analysis of this is provided in section 2.20

5 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 5.1. As detailed in section 2.41 a substantial consultation has taken place with Merton residents. The full analysis of this consultation is available as appendix A
- 5.2. In total approximately 3,500 people have been engaged through this consultation process.

6 TIMETABLE

- 6.1. The proposed timetable is outlined in section 3.15 and recommends a phased implementation over an 18 month period.

7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. MAE is mainly funded by grant. The net MAE budget including overheads is £39k.
- 7.2. MAE is currently forecast to overspend against the allocated budget by £181k.
- 7.3. The over-spend is mainly due to forecast under-achievement of Income due to changes in the SFA funding regime made after budget setting in previous years and the non-delivery of savings.
- 7.4. There has also recently been a reduction in SFA funding for ESOL Transitional funds.

8 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The main statutory basis for the adult education service is section 15B of the Education Act 1996. This section empowers local authorities to secure the provision for their area of full-time or part-time education suitable to the requirements of persons who have attained the age of 19, including provision for persons from other areas. It includes power to secure the provision of training, including vocational, social, physical and recreational training, and of organised leisure time occupation which is provided in connection with the provision of education or training. The authority may do anything which appears to them to be necessary or expedient for the purposes of or in connection with the exercise of their functions under this section. In exercising their functions, the authority must in particular have regard to the needs of persons with learning difficulties or disabilities.
- 8.2. The authority does not therefore have a statutory duty to maintain an adult education service but must in considering whether to provide a service and what service to provide take account in particular of the needs of people with learning difficulties or disabilities.
- 8.3. In considering changes to service provision the council must also have regard to consultation responses and to its Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 8.4. Case law establishes that the Council must not rule out any alternative options prior to consultation and must take the responses to consultation conscientiously into account in finalising any proposals.
- 8.5. The Council's public sector equality duty is set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, which provides that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, foster good relations and advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to: (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic; (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it; and (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low. Relevant protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.
- 8.6. To meet the public sector equality duty the authority must assess the risk and extent of any adverse impact of proposals and the ways in which such risk may be eliminated before the adoption of a proposed policy. An equalities analysis has been completed to enable this assessment to be undertaken as referred to in section 2.155 of the report.

9 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. An equalities analysis has been completed and is attached as appendix H and referred to in section 2.155 of this report.

- 9.2. From the officer analysis and the consultation undertaken with residents we can see that there is a potential negative impact on a number of groups. In order to mitigate this we would need to ensure that the commissioned services matched the current provision. In addition, we would want to see commissioned services that were able to provide some of the supportive and nurturing elements that the current provision does and also work hard to continue to attract and support learners from protected groups.
- 9.3. The attached action plan is designed to meet these concerns and by taking 18 months to implement we should be able to ensure that the services we commission are specifically designed to meet the need of these residents.
- 9.4. Members are encouraged to review the potential equalities implications and the proposals put in place to mitigate them.

10 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. None

11 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. None

12 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

Appendix A –Financial analysis

Appendix B – Consultation survey responses

Appendix C – Easy read consultation survey responses

Appendix D – Feedback from public meetings

Appendix E – Petitions received

Appendix F – Additional submissions

Appendix G – Feedback from staff meetings

Appendix H – Equalities Analysis

13 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1. Adult Education in Merton: Options Appraisal – Cabinet 10th November.