

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet Meeting: 22 January, 2018

Report of the Cabinet Member for Learning and Culture

Adult and Community Learning Course Fees

Purpose of the Report

1. To review the levels of the Adult Community Learning (ACL) 'Vale Courses' fees, in line with the councils Income Generation and Commercial Opportunities Strategy 2017-2020.

Recommendation

1. That Cabinet approves the proposed fee increases with effect from September 2018:
 - Increase the **Full Fee (Band A)** by 3% from £89 to **£92** for a 10 week course.
 - Increase the **Concession Fee (Band B)** by 6% from £69 to **£73** for 10 week courses, equivalent to 79% of the full fee.
 - Increase the **Fitness Classes Full Fee (Band A)** by 8% from £60 to **£65** for a 10 week 1.5 hour session and by 6% from £80 to **£85** for a 10 week 2 hour session.
 - Increase the **Fitness Classes Concession Fee (Band B)** by 11% from £45 to **£50** for a 10 week 1.5 hour session and 8% from £60 to **£65** for a 10 week 2 hour session.

Reason for the Recommendation

1. The review of course fees is recommended in order to support the strategic objectives of the Income Generation and Commercial Opportunities Strategy 2017-2020 report:
 - To aim to achieve full cost recovery where it is appropriate to do so and to develop a standard approach to the application of concessions.
 - To support consistency across the council in its approach to income generation and commercial opportunities including setting, collecting and reviewing fees and charges.
 - To allow the ACL Service to continue to utilise the ACL Grant to deliver flexible learning opportunities in community venues for disadvantaged groups, especially those not engaged in education, employment or training;

- Provide a broader range of learning opportunities in order to attract individuals who are unable or unwilling to engage with a more traditional curriculum and sustain the universal leisure learning offer on a cost recovery basis.

Background

2. The delivery of ACL programmes is always dependent on viable class sizes. Therefore it is important to continue to access fee income from those who fall outside the priority groups and can afford to pay for their learning.
3. The "Adult Learning in Wales" document ([Appendix A](#)) sets out the Welsh Assembly Government's adult learning focus to support those in greatest need with a focus on:
 - Support all adults to improve their Essential Skills so that they are best placed to access work opportunities or progress while in employment.
 - Support Digital Skills helping people to engage fully with technology.
 - Improve employability skills to ensure adults are 'work ready'.
4. The Adult Learning in Wales policy document also outlines the need to support a curriculum of leisure and recreational courses for learners on the understanding that, where possible, learners will be expected to contribute to the cost of their learning themselves through the payment of fees.
5. The level of fees charged is aimed at ensuring that learning opportunities are affordable as possible and that cost barriers to participation are minimised whilst recognising that learners should make an appropriate contribution to the overall cost of learning.
6. The fitness classes have had no price increase for 4 years. This was to keep the sessions competitive with local keep fit classes. The price has remained the same since 2014-15 programme.
7. The last increase to course fees was September 2015. A typical 10 Week course increased from £85 to £89 (4.7%) and the concession fees increased from £64 to £69 (7.82%).
8. One Day Courses had a fee increase in September 2015 from £30 to £35. This fee will remain the same however material costs are now being included in the price of the course as an additional cost.

Relevant Issues and Options

9. Basic Skills, Family Learning and English for Speakers of Other Languages (EU Citizens, refugees and asylum seekers) are provided free of charge. Free courses are available for individuals seeking employment on the 'Get Back on Track' programme of one day accredited courses in Microsoft Office skills. In addition there are free work clubs around the Vale (Barry, Penarth, St Athan, Llantwit Major) to support CV writing and job searching using the Internet. There are no proposals to change this agreement.
10. Charges for courses are based on £4.60 per hour for full fee payers. Although courses run for 25 or 30 weeks learners are able to pay for their courses in 10 or 15-week blocks, which equates to £138 (15 weeks) and £92 (10 weeks).
11. Those who are on means tested benefits will be able to access the free Essential Skills and Employability Training through the 'Get Back on Track programme'.

12. To achieve a balance between our 2 aims, there is a need to:-
 - provide targeted opportunities to attract those considered to be in greatest need;
 - continue to provide a programme that appeals to as wide an audience as possible. including those learners who currently access the programme and are not considered to fall into one of the priority groups.
13. In order to continue to deliver the richness and diversity of the ACL programme many courses need to be offered on a fully cost recovery basis and in some cases generate income to support the ACL provision that will target those in greatest need.
14. To ensure the continuation of a broad range of courses and ensure funding is used for priority groups there needs to be an increase in the Full Fee and Concessionary fee, as set out above.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

15. In light of the current financial climate, there is a risk of a decrease in the number of learners paying full fees.
16. The 2016-17 enrolment figure for the fitness class is 327. Based on that number, the proposed increases in fees would generate £1,635 of additional income. For weekly courses, based on a typical 10 weeks term, the current enrolment number is 2,185. When the proposed increase is applied, an additional £8,085 in fees would be generated.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

17. There are no sustainability or climate change implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

18. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Crime and Disorder Implications

19. The proposed increase in fees would enable the ACL service to continue to deliver flexible learning opportunities and sustain a broad range of leisure learning opportunities to reflect demand on a full-cost recovery basis.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

20. The proposals are intended to increase participation of those who have benefited least from education in the past or who are most at risk of not benefitting in the future. Basic skills, family learning, some ESOL, 'Get Back on Track' and work clubs will continue to be free to students. Fees for Welsh for Adults courses were directed by Cardiff University until 2015-16 and although frozen since, remain the second highest of all providers of the National Centre for Learning Welsh (NLWC) . Providers currently await direction by NLWC regarding future moves to standardise fees for Welsh courses across Wales. Learn Welsh in the Vale needs to increase learner numbers in order to meet the terms of the contract with NLWC, freezing the fees for the coming year in anticipation of a likely fee reduction in future.

Corporate/Service Objectives

21. The ACL Service supports the Council's Wellbeing Outcome 3: An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale and Wellbeing Outcome 4: An Active and Healthy Vale.

Policy Framework and Budget

22. This falls within policy framework and budget and is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

23. Not applicable.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

24. Learning and Culture

Background Papers

None.

Contact Officer

Sally Perini-Cowbridge Adult Community Learning

Officers Consulted

Heather Todd-Bennett, Penarth Adult Community Learning
Debbie Lewis, Barry Adult Community Learning
Emma Evans, Basic Skills Coordinator
Phil Southard, Adult Community Learning Manager
Mared Furnham, Learning Development Officer Welsh for Adults

Responsible Officer:

Paula Ham, Director of Learning and Skills