1. The White Paper sets out the Government’s vision for developing Informal Adult Learning. This Learning Revolution is about investing in new ideas to reach out to new learners. This is not just about formal learning but encompasses learning in its broadest sense. It is about learning as a means to enjoyment and personal fulfilment, and about developing social networks that benefit individuals and communities. One of the benefits may be that it leads some people on to further learning, qualification and employment opportunities. I am asking the County Council to support this initiative by signing up to the Learning Pledge and committing to:

- support the core principles of informal learning and encourage others to sign up
- advocate wider participation, especially for those who have benefited least from learning
- find flexible ways of using our existing spaces, or opening up new spaces, for learning
- encourage and support learning organised by people for themselves
- embrace new ways of learning, including the use of technology and broadcasting
- find and work with new partners to increase learning opportunities
- celebrate our successes.

2. The Adult and Community Learning Service is leading on this for the County Council and has already been successful in securing funding (£100,000) for a project for adult carers to access informal learning opportunities in libraries, museums and archives. We also have a Development Officer in place to take the Learning Revolution forward in Staffordshire

3. **Recommendations**: I recommend:

a. That the contents of the White Paper – ‘The Learning Revolution’ and the implications for the County Council are noted.
b. That the County Council demonstrates its commitment to Informal Adult Learning (IAL) by signing up to ‘The Learning Pledge’.
c. Cabinet endorses that the development of Informal Adult Learning in the County will continue to be led by the Adult and Community Learning (ACL) Service on behalf of the County Council.
Cabinet – Wednesday 18 November 2009

The White Paper – ‘The Learning Revolution’ – Implications for the County Council

Recommendation(s) of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture

1. That the contents of the White Paper – ‘The Learning Revolution’ and the implications for the County Council are noted.

2. That the County Council demonstrates its commitment to Informal Adult Learning (IAL) by signing up to ‘The Learning Pledge’.

3. Cabinet endorses that the development of Informal Adult Learning in the County will continue to be led by the Adult and Community Learning (ACL) Service on behalf of the County Council.

Report of Corporate Director (Communities Directorate and Chief Executive’s Office)

Background

4. In March 2009, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) published the White Paper – ‘The Learning Revolution’. This identified the Government’s commitment to IAL. This new movement in learning will be led by the Government, investing in innovative new ideas that reach out to new learners. The document outlined the responsibility of local authorities to take a lead role in the promotion of and support for IAL in local communities. The aim is that every adult can access and benefit from a wide range of IAL opportunities within their local community.

5. The Learning Revolution document can be found at http://www.dius.gov.uk/skills/engaging_learners/informal_adult_learning/white_paper. A summary of the White paper is shown in Appendix 2.

6. ‘IAL’ takes many forms:

   • It is learning in the widest sense not necessarily in ‘formal’ classes
   • Part-time, non-vocational learning (leisure / recreational classes) where the primary purpose is not to gain a qualification, but for enjoyment and to gain personal fulfilment, intellectual, creative or physical stimulation
   • A way of helping to develop local social networks that improve the health and well-being of communities and the confidence and resilience of individuals
• Learning opportunities created by people for themselves e.g. U3A, Reading Groups, Interest Groups.
• IAL does not include accredited courses / qualifications, although some adults will progress on to further learning, qualifications or employment after taking part in IAL opportunities.

7. The ACL Service is responsible for ensuring the delivery of adult learning, including IAL provision in the County. This is delivered in partnership with F.E. Colleges and Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations. As part of the restructuring of the ACL Service in September 2009, a half-time ‘Development Officer for IAL’ was appointed.

8. As part of its commitment to IAL, the Government allocated £20 million in the 2009/10 financial year to the Transformation Fund. Applications for this funding were sought from any organisations who work in partnership to provide innovative learning opportunities for adults. £1 million was allocated for ‘early bird’ bids. The ‘Culture and Libraries’ Division, led by ACL, has been awarded £100,000 to deliver a project for adult carers to access IAL opportunities in libraries, museums and archives in their local community. This was one of 16 projects funded nationally from the ‘early bird’ bids.

The Learning Pledge

9. The White Paper called on public, private and voluntary sector organisations to actively promote IAL and its benefits. To do this, organisations are invited to demonstrate their commitment by signing a ‘pledge’ to help improve the quality and quantity of IAL.

10. The White Paper contained the names of 50 national organisations that were committed to the pledge, and since its publication, over 1200 organisations nationally have signed the pledge.

11. The pledge is a commitment by organisations signaling their intent to play a role in bringing the vision for informal learning to life. They will be important ambassadors and advocates for learning and a key driver for change and innovation on the ground. In pledging, the County Council becomes part of a wider movement and an ambassador for IAL.

12. There are seven overarching commitments which organizations signing up to the pledge agree to:

• support the core principles of informal learning and encourage others to sign up
• advocate wider participation, especially for those who have benefited least from learning
• find flexible ways of using our existing spaces, or opening up new spaces, for learning
• encourage and support learning organised by people for themselves
• embrace new ways of learning, including the use of technology and broadcasting
• find and work with new partners to increase learning opportunities
• celebrate our successes

Implications of The Learning Revolution for the County Council

13 Local Authorities are charged with providing local leadership and any necessary infrastructure to create a joined-up, innovative and broad community-based offer.

14. This leadership will comprise of five core elements:

• Innovation: using public funds flexibly to complement private and third sector investment effectively. This will enable new learning opportunities to be developed.
• Universal access: All adults can shape and have access to the learning they want for personal development and fulfilment, wherever they live, whatever their qualifications and income
• Targeted support: the most support is given to those in most financial need. Most adults should contribute in part or in full to the cost of their learning, with fees collected and reinvested in extending the range of learning provided
• Collaboration: with a wide range of partners and services: This may include aligning funds to maximise the learning offer and to help adults move from one learning opportunity to another
• Promotion: provide and maintain high quality, current information on informal learning opportunities, that is freely available to local communities

15. Local authorities will have a remit to translate the national vision into local action that genuinely improves and transforms people’s and communities lives. IAL will need to be more visible in Local Strategic Partnerships, Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements. There will be scope to shape LSC/Skills Funding Agency funding, to align it more closely with other funding such as museums, galleries, libraries, sports and schools, as well as Primary Care Trusts (PCTs).

Funding Implications

16. The Learning revolution does not propose any changes to the way in which IAL is funded. This will form part of an extensive review of the funding of Post-16 education and training. It is not anticipated that in the future all funding for IAL will be passed to the County Council. Partner organisations are likely to continue to receive funding and will need to work in partnership to ensure that this funding is used effectively to meet the needs of all adults.
Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

The implementation of The Learning Revolution is intended to widen the participation of all adults in IAL.

Legal implications:

None

Resource and Value for money implications:

Effective partnership working will result in the sharing of resources and increased value for money.

Risk implications:

None

Climate Change implications:

No significant implications for carbon dioxide emissions.

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