

## **BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**25 NOVEMBER 2021**

### **MEDWAY ADULT EDUCATION (MAE) BUSINESS PLAN**

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director of Place & Deputy Chief Executive  
Author: Daniel Ratcliff, Skills & Employment Programme Manager

#### Summary

The Business Plan sets out a short-term and medium-term framework for Medway Adult Education, focusing on work outside of business as usual. It considers challenges and opportunities, both from a commercial and holistic perspective. It lays out the priorities and an action plan to deliver against.

#### 1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1. Approval of the MAE Business Plan is a matter for Cabinet. The Committee is asked to provide comments for consideration by Cabinet in determining this matter.
- 1.2 The MAE Business Plan is consistent with the Council Plan, notably the strand 'Residents with Jobs & Skills' whilst interacting with others such as 'Healthy and Active Communities'.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 Medway Adult Education has been on a significant journey of improvement, in 2013 it was given an Inadequate rating by Ofsted. A lot of work began to improve this, which culminated in a Good rating in 2015 and a further Good rating in 2018. Now that MAE is established as a Good provider, the time is right to launch a new business plan, to explore future business opportunities and ensure long term sustainability.
- 2.2 Drafting of the business plan commenced in March 2019, however, was paused while the impact of COVID-19 was assessed. Delivery against the core aims of the draft however didn't pause and so elements of the business plan have been delivered, including a small structure redesign to enable MAE to respond to new ways of working in the pandemic.

2.3 The business plan has also been aligned with the Skills & Employability Plan for Medway 2035 and adopts 3 of the 4 priorities currently within the skills plan. This strengthens both plans and Medway Council's ambitions to provide residents with the right skills and jobs.

2.4 The business plan is focused on delivering new areas of work for MAE and as such will need to be delivered alongside business as usual activities. It must not compromise the delivery of our core Education Skills Funding Agency contract and our Ofsted performance. The pace of delivery will be affected by those factors as well as the level of investment that can be raised.

### 3. Advice and analysis

3.1 The Business Plan is important for driving MAE forward, to ensure it remains a key part of the community, enabling residents to reach their potential, whether supporting them to enhance their work skills, or supporting creativity. Concurrently it also provides the framework for increased commercial activity, seeking to generate new income streams to ensure continued sustainability for the service.

3.2 The plan identifies some key opportunity areas, notably working in with businesses in alignment with our skills agenda. We have much to offer businesses, including tailored courses, support for wellbeing and apprenticeships. Other opportunities include enhancing our digital offer through the new, exciting facility at Britton Farm Mall and embracing online delivery.

3.3 The plan sets out four priorities, each priority promotes growth for all and expands the reach of MAE. Behind each priority is a suite of objectives and actions, bringing the priorities to fruition.  
The priorities are:

- Matching Business Demand with Skills Supply
- Developing Medway's Talent Pool
- Establishing Routes to Employment
- Developing Individuals Holistically

3.4 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been completed and is attached to this report as Appendix 3. The Plan is for all residents and will help to advance equality in Medway.

### 4. Risk management

4.1 Identified risks and proposed mitigation is as follows:

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Business as usual slows delivery	Delivery of existing services and contract is demanding with numerous peaks throughout the year. This will slow the pace of delivery of the plan.	Seek investment to grow the team to focus on delivery of new services. Ensure the structure has in built flexibility to meet demand.	C2
Lack of investment	Without additional investment the pace of delivery will remain slow.	Seek investment from a variety of sources, work with the External Investment Officer. Deliver change in a careful way to allow for resource to match demand.	C2
National Policy	The Government is currently working on a policy change which will affect the funding of adult education services. The impact of this is not yet known. It could substantially alter the deliverability of this plan.	Keep a close eye on policy as it forms. Lobby as appropriate and maintain communication with the wider adult education network.	B2
Lack of business engagement	Businesses may not want to engage with MAE and its services, which would make certain elements of the plan undeliverable.	Align the offer with our skills work. Use multiple channels for engagement and work with other departments that work with businesses.	D2

## 5. Consultation

- 5.1 The basis of the plan was formed after a wide-ranging consultation took place, including internal stakeholders, training provision, further education and higher education. The bulk of the plan has been formed largely with internal

stakeholders, under the guidance of the Medway Adult Education Oversight Board.

## 6. Climate change implications

- 6.1 The business plan takes into account the importance of the climate change agenda and seeks to support the education of residents around the importance of climate change. Work will also take place to explore opportunities within the work skills curriculum to enable residents to work in growing decarbonisation industries

## 7. Financial implications

- 7.1 There are no immediate financial implications, there is an investment section in the report which explains the areas where funding from external sources will be sought. Pre-COVID Medway Adult Education has operated within the revenue that it generates.

## 8. Legal implications

- 8.1 The Business Plan is aligned with the contractual obligations of our Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) contract. It is in line with national strategies.

## 9. Recommendation

- 9.1 The Committee is asked to review the Medway Adult Education Business Plan set out in Appendix 1 and provide comments to Cabinet.

## Lead officer contact

Daniel Ratcliff, Skills & Employment Programme Manager  
[daniel.ratcliff@medway.gov.uk](mailto:daniel.ratcliff@medway.gov.uk)

## Appendices

Appendix 1: MAE Business Plan  
Appendix 2: MAE action plan  
Appendix 3: Diversity Impact Assessment