



**Executive
11 April 2011**

**Report from the Director of
Children and Families**

BACES – Accommodation Strategy

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report proposes a rationalisation of BACES provision across 3 main sites instead of 5. This is in response to the expected reduction in grant from the Skills Funding Agency from September 2011.
- 1.2 The recommendations in this report should be seen in the context of a 3 part strategy for improving the cost effectiveness of adult and community education in Brent, as follows.
- a. Reducing BACES programme from 2011/12, delivering from three main sites
 - b. Achieving disposal or alternative use for the other two sites, in conjunction with the Property and Asset Management Team
 - c. Considering alternative options for the delivery of adult and community education through the College of North West London or another provider.
- 1.3 If no action were taken to reduce the BACES accommodation from August 2011, it is unlikely that BACES would be able to achieve a balanced budget for 2011/12. A decision about sites is needed in order to prepare the 2011/12 programme with a reduced level of staffing. The residual costs of the 2 decommissioned buildings would continue to be met by Children and Families until the buildings are sublet or disposed.
- 1.4 The decision to rationalise provision on to a reduced number of sites does not compromise the longer term consideration of an alternative delivery model. Discussions with the College of North West London are ongoing. Any agreement with an alternative provider is likely to be from the academic year 2012/13 onwards and will need to be subject to a subsequent report.
- 1.5 In deciding which sites from which to deliver, the following information for each site has been considered.
- Running costs including staffing complement and costs
 - Usage including number of enrolments
 - Future demand patterns
 - Capital investment requirements, property issues and disposal potential

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Based on the information provided, members consider that Ashley Gardens and the Carlton Centre are no longer required for the purposes of delivering the BACES adult learning programmes, and approve the closure of these sites with effect from 31st August 2011
- 2.2 That BACES continues to deliver adult learning programmes from 3 main sites: Harlesden Library Plus, Madison House and the Stonebridge Centre; as well as a range of community based venues in partnership with other council services providers and local community and voluntary sector organisations.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 BACES is entirely grant funded with the majority of the funding being drawn down from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) on an annually negotiated contractual basis. A small amount of funding is received from the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) for provision for 16-18 year olds. Income from tuition and examination fees also contributes towards the total budget. The funding year runs from 1st August to 31st July.
- 3.2 Indicative allocations have been provided from the Skills Funding Agency for the Adult Single Skills, Adult Safeguarded Learning and 16-18 contracts for the period 1st August 2011 to 31st July 2012. The allocation shows potential funding reductions in the range of a £245k reduction in the contract value from 2011/12, plus £60k which is dependent on achieving job outcomes.
- 3.3. Other risk factors that may threaten future levels of funding either from SFA/YPLA sources or from fees and charges are:
- changes to learner eligibility to the full concessionary rate from August 2011 – this could potentially affect recruitment as significantly more learners would need to contribute to tuition fees;
 - changes to the funding formula - this would mean that the number of learners accessing provision would need to increase in order to meet the funding target of the Adult Single Skills funded provision
 - The impact of these changes creates a risk of being unable to meet the funding target described above which would lead to further reductions in the contract value in future years. Taking this into account it would be prudent to assume full year savings in the region of £400k from April 2012.
- 3.4 Further reductions to the Adult Single Skills grant are expected throughout the comprehensive spending review period. The Adult Safeguarded Learning grant is protected at its current levels until 2014/15, however there will be a review of the type of provision this grant will support to ensure that it is prioritised for the people who need the most help and have had fewest opportunities.
- 3.5 From 1st September 2010 the service was restructured in line with the structure and staffing review recommendations on spans of control. This will save £500k per annum in staffing costs. Nevertheless, further significant savings are required in order to meet future funding reductions.
- 3.6 Provision is currently delivered throughout Brent from 5 main sites, 3 of which are Brent Council buildings, one is a leased building and one is shared accommodation with the Libraries, Arts and Heritage service (Harlesden Library Plus). The sites cover the borough from Wembley to South Kilburn, with the majority of the provision

being targeted in Brent's priority neighbourhoods such as Stonebridge, Harlesden and South Kilburn.

- 3.7 In addition to the main sites, BACES, through the use of the Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities Capital Fund has, in recent years, worked with local voluntary and community groups to assist with refurbishing and equipping learning resource rooms in the priority neighbourhoods. Two examples of this are Cricklewood Homeless Concern and St. Raphael's Tenants Association. BACES also delivers from the Neasden Library Plus site which is the subject of a separate consultation managed by the Libraries, Arts and Heritage Service.
- 3.8 In April 2010 the Property and Asset Management Service (PAMS) took over the management and maintenance of all the sites that BACES occupies. PAMS makes an annual lump sum recharge to BACES based on the running and maintenance costs of each of the sites. BACES continues to pay for utilities separately.
- 3.9 A wide range of courses are delivered covering the arts, business, childcare, health and social care, languages, beauty, hair care and complementary therapies, ICT, hospitality, sport and fitness, performing arts and Skills for Life; the majority of which offer vocational and employability qualifications. A significant proportion of provision is dedicated to English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Literacy and Numeracy. Classes are delivered on a flexible basis, available in the day, evening and at weekends with a smaller programme running out of term time.

3.10 Site information

	Ashley Gardens	Carlton Centre	Harlesden Library Plus	Madison House	Stonebridge Centre
Address	off Preston Road, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 8NP	Carlton Vale, London, NW5 5RA	38 Craven Park Road, Harlesden, NW10 4AB	24-28 London Road, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 7HD	1, Morland Gardens, Stonebridge, London NW10 8DY
Tenure	Owned	Owned	Owned	Leased – expiry date September 2012	Owned
Max. occupancy per session	77	234 (259)*	70	151(196)*	146 (236)*
Average overall use per week (incl. Saturdays)	57%	46%	56%	62%	59%
Number of enrolments 09/10 (to July 31 st 2010)	485	1596	754	1653	1600
Number of enrolments 10/11(to date)	371	954	638	1109	1038

Annual Running costs (excluding staffing)	48,963	165,396	32,888**	134,784	184,918
Staffing costs	72,384	122,281	32,256	100,896	102,768
Total estimated savings	121,347	287,677	65,144	235,680	287,686

* these figures include the halls being occupied at maximum capacity

**Historical expenditure on the BACES Harlesden site prior to relocating to the Harlesden Library Plus site

Appendix A shows more detailed information for each site including types of courses, the profile of learners by age range, ethnicity, and disability, and a post code analysis of learners attending courses at each site.

3.11 Rationale for the discontinuation of Ashley Gardens and the Carlton Centre as a site for BACES provision

3.12 Ashley Gardens is one of the smaller sites that BACES uses. With just 371 learners to date it provides for significantly fewer learners than the Harlesden Library Plus site which has a similar overall capacity and is considerably more cost effective to run.

3.13 In addition Ashley Gardens is not located in a priority neighbourhood, and whilst it is moderately used the relatively small number of learner numbers could be accommodated at Madison House with careful planning. The relocation of learners to Madison House would also provide learners with the benefit of access and progression to a much broader adult learning curriculum.

3.14 Whilst the Carlton Centre is located within an area of high deprivation it is significantly underutilised compared with all other sites. It is marginally the second most expensive site to operate in terms of staffing and running costs. These factors combined make the site inefficient.

3.15 There are some options for consideration for relocating provision from the Carlton Centre to other venues within the South Kilburn area subject to the cost effectiveness of any room hire charges e.g. family learning at the Childrens centre, literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses at Kilburn library, use of the Granville centre for IT, multi-media, childcare, business, specialist art and craft courses.

3.16 Carlton Centre, Granville Road, South Kilburn

3.17 This is a late 19th Century former school building on ground, first, and second floors. It totals 1768 sq m and is on a site of 1329 sq m (0.32). The property has been used as an adult education centre for around 20 years and was refurbished in 2003/04 with a new extension and lift. It physically adjoins the Granville Youth and Community Centre – which incorporates a children's centre.

3.18 The property is located within the South Kilburn Regeneration area

3.19 The building is generally in good order following refurbishment and new energy efficient boilers have recently been installed. The whole building is separately metered and heated.

- 3.20 The adjacent children's centre is a new build addition provided at the same time as the main refurbishment of the Carlton Centre.
- 3.21 Options for the future use of the Carlton Centre**
- 3.22 The building has the potential to be sold for educational use, residential conversion with possible small new build extension. It could also be potentially leased to an education institution which would have the benefit of providing an income stream to the Council.
- 3.23 The Council owns the freehold to this building and there could be a potential capital receipt of £1.2 - £1.8 million. The rental value per annum is estimated at £125K-£180k.
- 3.24 Ashley Gardens Pavilion, Ashley Gardens, Wembley**
- 3.25 A 1920's former pavilion on ground floor with a first floor former flat located on a site of 2714sq m (0.67 acres).
- 3.26 The flat was sold under the Right to Buy 1980 Legislation and has subsequently been converted to a children's nursery.
- 3.27 There is also a single storey portacabin located alongside the pavilion which is used by Brent's Alternative Education Service and as a base for an Out of School project for new arrivals.
- 3.28 The area utilised by BACES is 450 sq m. The building has suffered from some structural movement and ongoing monitoring and investigation are currently taking place.
- 3.29 The future use/ redevelopment of this property is seriously complicated by the sold flat at first floor. Consideration was given in the past (about 6 years ago) to seek to buy out the flat owner but at this time a business case could not be justified. The Regeneration and Major Projects Department will consider how the property could best be re-deployed (including reuse by the council) in order to seek to meet the Council's financial and regeneration objectives. However it should be noted that the existence of the sold long leasehold flat seriously reduces any value. In the event that the property were offered on the market it is likely that the property might prove popular with church groups or nursery operators.
- 3.30 Both these buildings represent a significant security risk if left vacant for any length of time. This can also have a negative impact on the surrounding areas. The Council has recently appointed Colliers International to advise on potential marketing and uses for the building if it becomes vacant.

3.31 Options for the future use of Ashley Gardens

- 3.32 The single portacabin is jointly used to provide tuition for excluded pupils through the Alternative Education Service and for an out of school project for secondary aged pupils. This out of school project is specifically for new arrivals with English as an Additional Language (EAL). The small size of the portacabin means that only a limited number of pupils can be accommodated there. To move the out of school provision to the building currently used by BACES would allow a greater number of pupils to be accommodated and allow for the provision of other courses for pupils, for example, GCSE courses.
- 3.33 An alternative option could be to use the space to provide school places for primary aged children. Ashley Gardens Early Learning Centre (AGELC) opened in January 2011 and provided 60 places for reception aged children. If planning permission is not granted for Preston Manor Primary School in March 2011 to open in September 2011, there will need to be somewhere for the children at AGELC to progress to.
- 3.34 Preston Manor High School's playing fields border the Ashley Gardens site, and the council may consider exploring with the school if they would wish to utilise the building and surrounding grounds.
- 3.35 The Alternative Education Service is currently exploring other options for relocating the provision delivered from the portacabin.
- 3.40 The rental value of this site is estimated at £30 - £50k per annum.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There will be a need for BACES to make efficiency savings from August 2011 and throughout the spending review period in order to meet the expected reduction in the grant allocation. Without the closure of both sites it is unlikely that BACES would be able to achieve a balanced budget. The proposed closure of two of the main sites could generate savings in the region of £400-450k including staffing and premises costs.
- 4.2 The savings will be achieved mainly through staffing costs estimated at £194,665 and running costs of the two sites estimated at £214,359. Further savings not included in the Property and Asset Management recharge that are associated with general downsizing could be realised, e.g. reduction in payroll costs, reduction in telephone and PC charges, photocopier leases, postage etc.
- 4.3 There could be potential capital receipt from the sale of the Carlton Centre. This could be in the order of £1.2-£1.8m depending upon the flexibility of planning. Ashley Gardens is however more difficult to dispose of given that the first floor flat was sold under the Right To Buy and could probably not be sold in isolation.
- 4.4 There will be ongoing security costs of both these buildings which need to be accounted for plus empty rates. Property and Asset management holds the budget for these costs and makes a service re-charge to the BACES budget.
- 4.5 Disposal of the site and/or making arrangements for alternative use of the sites may take some time to achieve. However, a smaller amount of savings will still be achieved through the reduced staffing and running costs.
- 4.6 Potential repayment of £1m capital grant from the former Learning and Skills Council arising from the sale of the Carlton Centre. See 5.3 for more details.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 **Ashley Gardens:** A private day nursery owns the first floor flat.

5.2 A base for the Alternative Education Service is located in a portacabin within the grounds of Ashley Gardens. However, there are proposals to relocate the service to other sites so this is unlikely to be a problem.

5.3 **Carlton Centre:** This was refurbished in 2003 with £1m of former Learning and Skills Council (LSC) capital funding. The conditions of the use of funds state that “The LSC’s financial support may have to be repaid should the premises cease to be used for Adult and Community Learning purposes’.

However, discussions with staff from the regional Skills Funding Agency team have outlined that in the event of any sale of buildings that had previously received capital funding there could be two possible scenarios:

- The Skills Funding Agency would write off any repayment as the capital expenditure was granted in 2003;
- That the capital receipt of any sale at its depreciated value should be reinvested in Adult and Community Learning.

5.4 **Madison House:** This is leased accommodation over two floors with two separate leases for each floor. Both leases expire in September 2012.

5.5 **Stonebridge Centre:** This site was refurbished in the 1990’s with City Challenge capital funding.

5.6 Part of the site is occupied by the voluntary organisation Victim Support, but records of any formal agreement regarding tenure cannot be found. The Council does not make a rental charge to Victim Support.

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 The Equality Act 2010 Section 149 introduces a new public sector equality duty which came into force on 6th April 2011. It requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have ‘due regard’ to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited under the Act, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a ‘protected characteristic’ and those who do not share that protected characteristic.

6.2 A ‘protected characteristic’ is defined in the Act as age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership are also a protected characteristic for the purposes of the duty to eliminate discrimination.

6.3 Having due regard to the need to ‘advance equality of opportunity’ between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not includes having due regard to the need to remove or minimize disadvantages suffered by them. Due regard must also be had to the need to take steps to meet the needs of such persons where those needs are different from persons who do not have that characteristic, and encourage those who have a protected characteristic to participate in public life.

Having due regard to 'fostering good relations' involves having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

- 6.4 The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons include steps to take account of the persons' disabilities.
- 6.5 Complying with the duty may involve treating some people better than others, as far as that is allowed by the discrimination law.
- 6.6 In addition to the Act, the Council is required to comply with any statutory Code of Practice issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The new Code of Practice under the new Act has yet to be published. The EHRC has however published guidance. The advice set out for members in this report is consistent with the published advice.
- 6.7 Having due regard to the equality duty must form an integral part of the decision making process. Members must consider the effect that implementing a particular policy will have in relation to equality before making a decision
- 6.8 Where it is apparent from the analysis of the information that the policy would have an adverse effect on equality then adjustments should be made to avoid that effect. The steps proposed to be taken are relocating learners to existing provision on other BACES sites; signposting learners to other educational providers within a reasonable travelling distance; relocating where possible some of the provision at the Carlton Centre to other venues in the South Kilburn area
- 6.9 At the same time as complying with the above duty, Members must also pay regard to any countervailing factors which it is proper and reasonable for them to consider. For BACES these include meeting the budget pressures caused by funding reductions from the Skills Funding Agency outlined in paragraphs 1.3 and 4.1
- 6.10 A full Equalities Impact assessment has been carried out and is attached in the essential background papers. In summary, the proposals may have the following implications:
- 6.11 These proposals will have an impact on ESOL learners studying if the Ashley Gardens site were to close. However, there is already an extensive ESOL programme at Madison House which is less than 2 miles from Ashley Gardens.
- 6.12 Closure of Ashley Gardens would result in loss of crèche facilities. However, the transfer of some of the crèche staff to the Stonebridge Centre site would enable extended opening hours of the crèche at the Stonebridge Centre.
- 6.13 The proposals will also have an impact on learners living in the priority neighbourhood of South Kilburn. However, close collaboration with neighbouring authorities such as Camden and Westminster would ensure that a broad and diverse adult learning programme remains locally accessible.
- 6.14 There would be a loss of some specialist craft facilities, such as pottery, if the Carlton Centre were to close. However, in the current programme there are just 3 sessions of pottery per week. There could be opportunities to deliver a smaller core adult learning programme including the specialist art and craft programmes in other venues in the area e.g. at the adjoining Granville Plus site,.

Collaborative planning with neighbouring authorities and other community venues within the South Kilburn area may assist with continuing this offer locally.

- 6.15 Whilst it is anticipated that most of the provision will be accommodated on other sites, some learners may need to travel further to learn, thereby adding to travel costs.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 A reduction in the number of sites will achieve savings in staffing costs. It is expected that there will be staffing reductions in the customer service administration and crèche teams. The estimated saving in staffing is £194,665.

Consultation will be carried out in accordance with the Managing Change policy. Staff and trade unions will be consulted.

- 7.2 A number of staff from the customer service and crèche staff teams applied for voluntary redundancy when the Council's scheme was re-opened. Their applications are currently on hold and would be considered in the first instance.

Background Papers (essential)

- i) Equality Impact Assessment

Contact Officers:

Sue Hasty, Head of BACES, 1 Morland Gardens NW10 8D,
Tel: 020 8937 3960. Sue.hasty@brent.gov.uk

Rik Boxer, Assistant Director Achievement & Inclusion,
Chesterfield House, 9 Park Lane, Wembley Middlesex HA9 7RW.
Tel. 020 8937 3201 rik.boxer@brent.gov.uk

James Young, Deputy Head of Property and Asset Management,
Tel: 020 8937 1398. James.young@brent.gov.uk

Krutika Pau,
Director Children & Families Department