

Report to
Cabinet Member (Community Services)

Date:
11 January
2005

Report of
Director of Social Services and Housing

Title

**DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS WITH HENLEY COLLEGE
TO DEVELOP BRANDON WOOD FARM AS A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE**

1. Purpose of the Report



- 1.1 To report on preliminary discussions held with Henley College regarding the development of Brandon Wood Farm, and to seek approval from the Cabinet Member (Community Services) to consult regarding entering into a more formal partnership arrangement with Henley College.

2. Recommendations

The Cabinet Member (Community Services) is recommended to:



- 2.1 Approve a three-month consultation process with people with learning disabilities, carers and other partner agencies in the city. The purpose of this consultation will be to seek views and support to enter into a partnership arrangement with Henley College to develop Brandon Wood Farm as a centre of excellence.
- 2.2 The consultation process will also include seeking the views of staff in respect of these proposals.

3. Information/Background

- 3.1 The Coventry Learning Disabilities Partnership Board Strategy 2004-2007 identifies the following objectives:-
- To enable people with learning disabilities to lead full and purposeful lives in their communities and to develop a range of friendships, activities and relationships.
 - To enable more people with learning disabilities to take part in all forms of employment, wherever possible in paid work.

In order to help to achieve these objectives one of the key actions within the strategy is:-

- To review supported day activities and begin to change the way services are provided, to maximise access to education, training, leisure and employment.
- 3.2 Brandon Wood Farm has provided a day service for people with learning disabilities since the late 1970's, when Social Services took over the former landfill site. Approximately 7 years ago the farm was re-furbished and occupancy was doubled to the current 60 places per day.
 - 3.3 Vocational training at the Farm has been offered in Woodwork, Catering, Art and Craft, Horticulture, Animal Care, Music and Drama. All of these subject areas have basic literacy, numeracy and independent living skills promoted within the award frameworks.
 - 3.4 There are also around 300 animals at the farm including chickens, sheep, pigs, donkeys, goats, ponies and ducks.
 - 3.5 In 1998 approval was given for the Farm to become a Visitor Centre and offer educational visits for schoolchildren. However, due to a number of factors, including health and safety issues, human resource and associated increases in funding, this was not progressed further.
 - 3.6 In 1999 links with Colleges of Further Education were extended and training was commissioned to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities. Education and training also began to be delivered on site for some people who needed more support.
 - 3.7 Partnerships have developed, particularly with Henley College, to improve and enhance training provision for adults with learning disabilities and offer progression routes. In 2000, a project was developed at a central venue, which involved people with learning disabilities operating a luncheon club whilst undertaking a National Vocational Qualification at level 1 in Catering/Hospitality. This project provided real work experience in working with members of the public, as opposed to 'simulated' training activities.
 - 3.8 In 2002 funding was obtained from the Learning Skills Council to develop the E.A.S.T Project (Employment Access Support and Training) with Henley College. This project placed and supported people in work experience placements within the Hospitality and Catering Industry (eg. Hilton Hotel, Asda, University of Warwick) to enable them to make informed choices about employment as an option for the future. The project started with a group of eight people with learning disabilities and has been further extended this year to three groups of eight people. A number of new employers are also involved (eg. The Alan Higgs Centre, Coombe Abbey and B&Q), and we hope to access placements in a range of other work settings. This partnership work has been nationally recognised this year with the project reaching the final of the National Training Awards for people with learning disabilities.

4. Current Situation

- 4.1 Brandon Wood Farm supports 84 adults with learning disabilities (60 places per day), and provides a wide range of vocational training activities as well as social skills training and the promotion of independence.

- 4.2 It is already a good example of collaborative working with partner agencies, which provides a pathway towards employment and accessing activities in the community. This has made a huge difference in the day-to-day operation of the Farm and has provided stimulation and motivation for people with learning disabilities.



- 4.3 Henley College provide Lecturers and a Support Worker for each group that is supported on site. Social Services staff provide further support and during academic terms the staffing ratio is 3:8 as opposed to 1:10. This enables people with learning disabilities to have more individual support and this has had a significant effect in developing both confidence and abilities. Currently Henley College provide support on a term-time only basis, and therefore particularly during the summer months staffing ratios are lower and activities limited.
- 4.4 People with learning disabilities attending the Farm are currently paid "wages". These payments are historical and linked to sheltered workshops and the production of goods to assist with income generation. The focus of the Farm now concentrates on delivering education and training to develop individual's skills and abilities.
- 4.5 The Farm is currently over-occupied and there is a waiting list for places. Some progress has been made in enabling people to access work experience or other community activities and this needs to be developed further. However, it is considered that further development is limited unless we pool our resources with Henley College who have the skills and resources to help develop more opportunities.

5. The Way Forward - Proposals



- 5.1 The Cabinet Member (Community Services) is asked to approve a consultation process with people with learning disabilities, carers and other partner agencies in the city. This will be with the view of entering into a partnership arrangement with Henley College.
- 5.2 The consultation process will also include seeking the views of staff in respect of the proposals.
- 5.3 It is considered that we should build upon the success of joint working with Henley College and develop the Farm by placing the focus on education and training, pool our resources and fully utilise the skills and expertise of the college.
- 5.4 The Farm will become an inclusive centre of excellence for training and education and give people with learning disabilities more opportunities to develop alongside other students.
- 5.5 The Farm will offer a range of courses for students from Henley College, which will include individuals with learning disabilities, and would be designed to equip people with a number of skills and prepare them to access the world of work, some form of voluntary/paid, part or full-time work.
- 5.6 A realistic working environment would be created for hospitality, catering, retail and animal care students. This would enable people to make an informed choice about moving into paid employment, engaging in voluntary work or taking part in other vocational activities in the community.

- 5.7 These proposals would also result in the opening of the Visitor Centre, providing training for the local community and conference facilities for the business world. This could bring about Social Enterprise Developments and real jobs for people with learning disabilities. Other benefits would include the raising of Disability Awareness in the wider community and inclusion at the Centre.
- 5.8 The option for change would mean:
- The Farm would become fully inclusive and allow adults with learning disabilities to participate in training activities alongside other students
 - Responsibility for the day to day running the Farm would be transferred to Henley College
 - Capital investment from Henley College to re-furbish the Farm's facilities and provide the latest training equipment to further develop individual's skills and abilities
 - The Farm would develop as a 7-day service
 - The operation of a Visitor Centre and a Restaurant would provide opportunities for employment of people with learning disabilities and the creation of social enterprise developments
 - Social Services would have access to Brandon Wood Farm and the current 60 places per day would be guaranteed for people with learning disabilities
 - Social Care support will continue to be provided to people with learning disabilities by a core staff group to meet assessed care needs
 - Social Care staff at the Farm will continue to be employed by Social Services
- 5.9 The option of no change would mean:-
- The Farm would continue to provide a service for people with learning disabilities, but not give people the opportunity to interact with other students
 - The Farm would remain a more traditional vocational training centre, working in informal partnerships with other agencies to commission specific training for individuals with learning disabilities
 - Developing social inclusion at the Farm would rely upon attracting employers to undertake Corporate Citizenship Projects
- 5.10 Along with improving and developing Brandon Wood Farm these proposals would realise savings to Coventry City Council in the region of £100,000 per annum.
- 5.11 It is considered that the payment of wages is no longer appropriate, and ceasing these payments would realise a further saving of £46,000.
- 5.12 These proposals seek to secure the long-term future of Brandon Wood Farm and modernise the service in line with the principles of 'Valuing People'.

6. Other specific implications

	Implications (See below)	No Implications
Area Co-ordination		✓
Best Value	✓	
Comparable Benchmark Data		✓
Corporate Parenting		✓
Coventry Community Plan	✓	
Crime and Disorder		✓
Equal Opportunities	✓	
Finance	✓	
Health and Safety		✓
Human Resources	✓	
Human Rights Act		✓
Impact on Partner Organisations	✓	
Information and Communications Technology		✓
Legal Implications	✓	
Property Implications	✓	
Race Equality Scheme	✓	
Risk Management		✓
Sustainable Development		✓
Trade Union Consultation	✓	
Voluntary Sector – The Coventry Compact	✓	

6.1 Best Value

Henley College and Social Services would ensure that the resource is managed appropriately and used in an efficient and effective way to promote training and education to a variety of students, including those with a learning and/or physical disability. A training plan would be jointly agreed between the college and the individual and this would help to ensure pathways for people to move on so that more people could access the resource throughout the year. The planned changes will open routes to additional external funding through the Learning Skills Council and other educational bodies.

6.2 Coventry Community Plan

Learning Disabilities service development is intended to impact positively on local people's experience of health and social care provision in the City, consistent with Coventry's Community Plan. The links between the Coventry Community Plan and the Coventry Learning Disabilities Partnership Board Strategy 2004-2007 are being actively progressed. These proposals will support

the first step in key theme 1 of the plan - Jobs and our Local Economy - "increase opportunities for people on benefits other than job seekers allowance to seek and gain employment opportunities". They will also help us to achieve key theme 6 - Learning and Training - "further develop a lifelong learning approach to learning especially for those in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities".

6.3 Equal Opportunities

'Valuing People' identifies people with learning disabilities as 'amongst the most vulnerable and socially excluded (groups) in our society'.

6.4 Finance

These proposals would deliver a saving to the Directorate of around £146,000, contributing to the £500,000 savings target identified in the Policies, Priorities and Resources (PPR) process in respect of supported day activities.

6.5 Human Resources

The current staffing structure is being reviewed in respect of these proposals. We anticipate that there will be some staffing implications and work is continuing to identify these.

6.6 Impact on Partner Organisations

These proposals promote positive partnerships across statutory agencies beyond health and social services, in line with the Coventry Learning Disabilities Partnership Board Strategy.

6.7 Legal Implications

Services provided at the Farm currently are covered by the 1990 NHS and Community Care Act as well as the Chronically Sick and Disabled Person's Act 1970. These proposals will also make provision subject to the range of legislation covering further education.

During the consultation period advice will be sought in respect of the ending of the payment of wages.

6.8 Property Implications

A formal Full Repairs Lease will be required directly linked to the delivery of services outlined in this report. Henley College will be responsible for all outgoing costs in relation to premises costs (repairs, improvements, maintenance, utilities etc.).

6.9 Race Equality Scheme

These developments are intended to ensure access to educational and employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities from all of Coventry's communities.

6.10 Trade Union Consultation

Staff and Trade Unions will be fully consulted on developments throughout the consultation period.

6.11 Voluntary Sector – The Coventry Compact

These proposals support the spirit of the Coventry Compact by extending partnership arrangements beyond traditional health and care support for people with learning disabilities.

7 Monitoring



- 7.1 The outcome of the consultation process will be reported back to the Cabinet Member (Community Services) and the Learning Disability Partnership Board at the end of the consultation period.

8 Timescale and expected outcomes



- 8.1 Should these proposed changes subsequently be approved, Henley College are equipped and ready to assume day-to-day management responsibility at any time in the near future, and we would ensure that there is a smooth transition.

List of background papers:

Proper Officer:

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Papers open to Public Inspection

Location

'Valuing People: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century', March 2001, Department of Health

Woodside