



DRAFT

Community Learning



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INTRODUCTION

1. Set up of Review

At a meeting of the Environment and Front Line Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 June 2003 it was agreed that an in-depth review of community learning be carried out. At the following meeting terms of reference and the scoping of the review were agreed.

The review team wish to thank those witnesses who gave evidence as part of the review and those who hosted visits.

2. Review Team



Councillor Ted Baker
(Conservative)



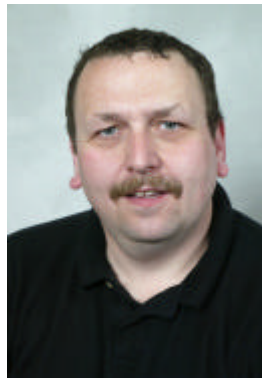
Councillor Paul Godwin
(Labour)



Councillor Karen Griffin
(Liberal Democrat)



Councillor Richard Guichard
(Liberal Democrat)



Councillor Mark Last
(Labour)



Councillor David Royle
(Conservative)

Three members from Environment and Front Line Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and three from Education and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

BACKGROUND

1. In the view of the review team “community learning” relates to bringing learning for the community close to their homes thereby making it more accessible to all. The main part of the review team’s research has been connected to work around extended schools rather than the wider interpretation of community learning.
2. The following is a summary of the providers of community learning in Medway at present:

Chattenden Community Project

The Royal Association in Aid of the Deaf

Byron Road Sikh Temple

Information Shop for Young People, Upbury Manor

Melville and Brompton Community Association

The Princess Royals Trust: Medway Carers Centre

White Road Community Association

Gillingham College Community Site-Adult Education

Chinese Elders Community Association

Medway Adult and Community Learning Service

Project Sunlight

Thames Gateway NHS Trust: Balmoral Gardens Clinic

Sure Start Chatham: Carpeaux Close Community Centre

Medway Community Living Service Ltd (voluntary organisation of care homes)

Chinese over 50 Association

Twydall Community Centre

SHARE

HANDS

Vines Centre Trust

ABC Borstal

Turkish Community Association

University of Kent

Mid-Kent College

University of Greenwich

Kent Adult Education Service [KAES]
Medway Racial Equality Council
Medway Ethnic Minorities Forum
Medway Council – Early Years and Young Children
Economic Development and Tourism
Medway Library Service
Groundwork Trust
Council for Voluntary Service

A number of the above organisations form the Medway Learning Partnership, which was established in 1999, with a mission to respond to the government's lifelong learning initiatives.

Medway Learning Partnership has two key remits of

- Promoting provider collaboration and
- Maximising the contribution of learning to local regeneration

Medway Learning Partnership has a voluntary board of 18 members who meet quarterly. The board membership comprises representatives from Higher Education, Further Education, schools, Councillors, Kent & Medway Learning & Skills Council, Government Office of the South East, South East England Development Agency, Job Centre Plus, Careers, Education, Adult and Community Learning, Economic Development, Community and Voluntary sector, private training providers and business. A wider membership includes all key players in the area involved in education, training, skills, information, advice and guidance.

3. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is responsible for funding and planning education and training (except higher education) for over 16 year olds in England. Each of the 47 local LSCs has been charged with undertaking a Strategic Area Review (StARs) of its education provision: locally, this covers all providers of post-16 learning in Kent and Medway.

StARs have four broad objectives in bringing about change:

- To ensure that the pattern and mix of education provision meets the needs of learners, communities and business
- To achieve better choice for young people and more parental confidence through improved 16-19 education and to strengthen the links between 14-19 education providers to achieve greater choice, including vocational opportunities

- To create a more co-ordinated approach that engages with employers and meets their skill needs and priorities
- To strengthen the links with higher education (HE) providers and to achieve better routes into HE, including foundation degrees

4. The Learning and Skills Council's vision for Kent and Medway is:

"That, by 2010, young people and adults in Kent and Medway will have knowledge and productive skills matching the best in the world"

By 31 March 2005 the Learning and Skills Council aims to have completed the StARs and published its outcomes in the plan for reform.

5. The "Success for All" strategy was developed in November 2002 by the Department for Education and Skills

- to reform the pattern, workforce and leadership of further education and training provision so that it meets the current and future needs of learners, employers and communities in every local area, as well as regionally and nationally
- to drive up the standards of further education and training and embed better teaching and learning so that there is no unsatisfactory provision and an increasing proportion of provision is excellent, and to ensure the process is irreversible
- to ensure that all publicly funded providers of further education and training deliver a distinctive and effective contribution to one or more of the Government's strategies for 14-19 learning, basic skills, adult skills and higher education

6. Medway Adult and Community Learning Service (MACLS) a division within the education and leisure directorate is funded by the Learning and Skills Council and they are responsible for delivering mainstream adult education as well as a number of outreach projects and further education programmes. The service is responsible for delivering family learning programmes and family literacy language and numeracy courses in partnership with schools in Medway. The review team took evidence from the Strategic Manager and his Deputy and this forms part of their research.

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND LIST OF WITNESSES

1. Terms of reference

“To investigate how Medway is developing community based learning and leisure facilities, based on the extended use of schools and other council owned facilities. To look at the schemes currently offered in Medway and to consider how increased provision could be offered to communities taking into account schemes elsewhere. The task group was also asked to investigate the scheme already taking place in Montgomery Avenue, Chatham”

2. List of witnesses

It was suggested that evidence was taken (either in writing or in person) from the following:

Director of Education and Leisure
School Improvement Manager
Early Years Development and Childcare Manager
Officers from greenspace services
Policy Manager (Local Strategic Partnership)
Councillor Wes Hollands, portfolio holder
Councillor Les Wicks, portfolio holder
Councillor Janice Bamber, portfolio holder

Medway Lifelong Learning Partnership
Headteacher Greenvale School (already undertaking work as an extended school)
Headteacher – Cuxton Junior School (in pilot)
Children’s University
University of Kent at Medway
Medway Adult and Community Learning
Further education representative
Medway community representative
Medway Youth Parliament
Ethnic Minority Forum
Disabled Forum representative
The Pensioners Forum

The suggestion was also made that there could be a mini focus group with the youth service to encourage discussion with young people.

3. Programme

The full programme of witnesses and visits is shown below:

2 September 2003	Rod Lipscombe, School Improvement Manager
11 September 2003	Ian Fleming, Parks Development Officer and Paul Hughes, DSO Contracts Manager, at Cozenton Nursery
16 October 2003	Ralph Tebbutt, Pensioners Forum And Jeff Brown, University of Kent at Medway
20 October 2003	Visit to Cuxton Junior School (one of the pilot schools for the extended schools project)
4 November 2003	Visit to the horticultural therapy project at Montgomery Avenue, Chatham
27 November 2003	Dr John Walker, Strategic Manager, Medway Adult and Community Learning Service and Teresa Cambell, Deputy Strategic Manager
11 December 2003	Visit to Strood Youth Centre

One member of the review group met on 18 December 2003 with the co-ordinator to consider the group's recommendations and findings.

A summary of the evidence produced can be found at Appendix A of the report.

Section One

National and Local Context of the Extended Schools Pilot

1. National Context

- 1.1. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) are keen to see schools develop a wider range of services for pupils, families and the community. Many schools are already doing great things, with some further down the road than others. The DfES say

'In disadvantaged areas in particular, extended schools have the potential to transform lives. Our aim is to see more schools at the heart of their local community, providing learning and cultural experiences for all and offering help and support where it can be easily accessed'

Baroness Catherine Ashton, DfES 2003

- 1.2. An extended school is one that provides a range of services and activities often beyond the school day to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community through:

- Adult education
- Study support
- ICT facilities and
- Community sports programmes

Schools and their partners can build on existing provision and consider what service or activities they might offer. There is no blueprint for the types of activities that school might provide, or how they could be organised. Working with local partners, schools can develop as little or as much provision as they think suitable for their own community.

- 1.3. The benefits of extended schools found so far are –

- ❖ Increasing in educational achievement
- ❖ Improvements in health
- ❖ Reduction in truancy and exclusions
- ❖ Reduction in crime
- ❖ Increases in adult literacy
- ❖ Improvements to the well-being of the area and
- ❖ Greater involvement of parents in the school

and the types of services which could be provided are as follows

- Childcare
 - Lifelong Learning
 - Healthcare and Social Services
 - Cultural and sporting activities
 - Other services for the community
 - Other services for children and young people
- 1.4. Extended schools have been developing in the USA and in Scotland for some years. The initiative was introduced by the current government following a report from the Social Exclusion Unit called **Schools Plus: Building Learning Communities** (Policy Action Team report 11, Autumn 2000). The aim of Schools Plus was to “improve the learning activities of children and young people in disadvantaged areas and support this work within and out of school.
- 1.5. The initiative has now been mainstreamed by the DfES. In 2003 the DfES has funded 25 pathfinder projects, including all of the Local Government Associations 7 pathfinder areas to develop extended schools. In March 2003 the DfES announced that from 2003/4 to 2005/6 all Local Education Authorities (LEAs) will receive funding to develop at least one extended school in their area.
- 1.6. In June this year David Miliband, Schools Minister, gave the go-ahead for plans to provide 21st century school facilities for every secondary pupil in the next 10 to 15 years from 2005, subject to future spending decisions. In the guidance issued it refers to the need to have school buildings which will be used by the community.
- 1.7. The intention is for the Council to express interest in the plan with the DfES by 19 December 2003 in order to be considered potentially as early as possible in the 10-15 year rebuilding programme and to keep options open.

2. Local Context and Extended Schools Pilot

- 2.1. Medway Council was chosen to be part of an extended schools pathfinder project along with 25 other local authorities. The council was given £200,000 to enable certain projects to be undertaken.
- 2.2. As part of Medway’s Education Development Plan a rural schools strategy group was formed to look at problems experienced with rural schools and ways of overcoming these.
- 2.3. During consultation with schools it was decided that Medway’s extended schools pilot project should focus on rural areas and 11 primary schools were chosen to take the project forward. Another reason for choosing these schools were that a number of primary schools on the Hoo peninsular at some stage had been in serious weaknesses or in special measures.

- 2.4. Using the funding given a consultant was appointed to work with the council. The consultant was a former headteacher who was also a former member of the advisory team so had a good background on community work in schools and she lead the pilot scheme.
- 2.5. The rest of the funding was used on a needs led basis depending what schools required to establish themselves more widely in the community. In many schools the money was needed to deal with security issues. In some schools there is only one access to the building and once you have gained access you are then able to get round the entire building. There were also issues of external lighting and extra accommodation to be resolved. Funding was also given for the running costs for the duration of the project.
- 2.6. Details of the specific schools and projects undertaken can be found in Appendix A under the evidence from Rod Lipscombe.
- 2.7. The **Schools Asset Management Plan** was agreed by the Cabinet on 25 November 2003 and refers under the head of priority 7 – promoting inclusive education to the following statement:

*‘new initiatives designed to assist in the raising of educational standards include the **‘extended school’** that gives greater access to the community to school facilities, especially outside normal school times. This initiative to help regenerate a community through promoting greater community involvement in its local school can be strongly supported by good accommodation design and capital investment. We are planning to develop a “full service” school (including child care and health provision as well as out of school hours and community education opportunities) by 2005/06’*

- 2.8. In the **Adult Learning Plan 2003-2004** agreed by the Cabinet on 1 April 2003 support was expressed for the project:

*‘Medway Adult and Community Learning Service is especially interested in working with disaffected parents, and is supporting the **Extended Schools Pathfinder Project** on the Hoo peninsular, where it is developing programmes in Basic Skills and Basic IT Skills, along with a range of other learning activities responding to local need’*

- 2.9. **The Community Plan** agreed by the Cabinet on 25 November 2003 expressed the following aims as targets:

Increasing participation and achievement by young people,

Increasing the demand for learning by adults,

Helping to maximise the contribution learning and training can make to economic performance, and

Raising standards by encouraging excellence in teachers and trainers

2.10. The aim of the review ties in with a number of the council's core values

Fostering citizenship – by promoting the self esteem of the community

Working for equal opportunity and access – recognising and redressing the needs of vulnerable groups in society and working actively to ensure equality of services and active citizenship

Realising everyone's potential – in attempting to improve levels of achievement of all groups in the local community, expanding and developing educational and lifestyle opportunities and being committed to the principles of lifelong learning.

Section Two

External visits and evidence taken

1. External visits

Date	Visited	Attended by
11 September 2003	Cozenton Nursery (Horticultural therapy project)	Councillors Baker and Royle With Rosie Gunstone
20 October 2003	Cuxton Junior School (one of the pilot schools)	Councillor Royle with Bjorn Simpole
4 November 2003	Montgomery Avenue Chatham (Horticultural therapy project)	Councillor Royle with David Howes
10 December 2003	Cuxton Junior School lunch group visit	Councillor Royle
11 December 2003	Visit to Strood Youth Centre – youth forum	Councillors Godwin and Royle

2. Written evidence

Written evidence was supplied by the following:

Medway Community Learning Forum
Councillor Janice Bamber, Portfolio Holder - Front Line Task Force
Medway Access Group
Jacqui Dyer, Head of Greenspace Services
Helen Cole, Medway Community Learning Forum

Section Three

Findings and Recommendations

1 Pathfinder Schools

1.1 The review team took evidence from the School Improvement Manager on 2 September 2003 about the types of community learning taking place currently in Medway and one of the task group members visited Cuxton Junior school on two occasions to see the community learning taking place.

1.2 Councillor Royle visited Cuxton Junior School on two occasions, the first to speak to the headteacher about the community learning which takes place there and on the second occasion to participate in the lunch group which is opened to local pensioners at a cost of £2.50 for a two course meal with coffee. His report of the visit is as follows:

“Numbers present were 13, normally 17-18 pensioners attend. 6 pensioners help some children on an individual basis to get more confidence in reading and hopefully acquire a liking for reading. It also encourages the interaction between the children and older people. The group meets every Wednesday and they are having a Christmas lunch this Saturday. The pensioners commented that they are often greeted by the children around the village, which makes them feel more secure. The school feels the exercise is well worthwhile and hopes it will continue. Lunches are cooked on the premises and many of the materials are bought locally”

1.3 The review team were impressed by the work that has taken place in the pathfinder schools and feel that the community benefits were clear.

1.4 Evidence was sought from another participant in the extended schools pathfinder project, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, to find out what they had accomplished. They had canvassed local residents about what was required in the way of community learning and also had discussions with the Primary Care Trust.

1.5 The services to be provided at Newcastle-upon-Tyne were outlined as follows:

- ❖ Neighbourhood Housing will be providing a housing management function, reporting repairs and rent collection via a smart card system.

- ❖ Leisure services will provide a Sports Development Officer, Kenton Dene Ranger Service and Community Facility Support Staff, whose specific responsibility will be the development of the Management Group
- ❖ Social Services will formulate a network, feeding services into the extended school
- ❖ Play and Youth service staff will be providing services for children and young people aged 5-13 and 13-25
- ❖ Community Development staff will have the responsibility of ensuring community participation and engagement on the Cowgate Estate
- ❖ Newcastle Nutrition will provide professional support to the Food Projects Co-ordinator and develop the Extended School Food Nutrition Action Group
- ❖ The Primary Care Health Trust Team will be based in the extended school. This team will include a Nurse Practitioner, Speech Therapist and Health Visitors
- ❖ The Workfinder Project will support local people to get back into employment and training
- ❖ The Family Health and Community Project will be providing community based health services for the whole family. The project will also be responsible for managing the community crèche
- ❖ Sure Start will work with families and children up to age 3
- ❖ Victim Support will be providing services to those people who have been a victim of crime
- ❖ Northumbria Police will hold a weekly community surgery
- ❖ Family Mediation Services will hold a weekly community surgery
- ❖ Adult Guidance will develop work alongside the Work Finder Project
- ❖ Citizens Advice Bureau will be providing weekly community surgeries for local people

1.6 A number of these services related to health issues. These issues were not considered as part of the review as it was determined, at the time of setting out the terms of reference, that the review group wished to confine its research into learning and leisure aspects only.

- 1.7 Members felt that every opportunity should be taken to make necessary adaptations to school buildings at times of planned maintenance to enhance them for community use.

Quote from Councillor Janice Bamber: *"I support the idea of extended schools for community learning and indeed for community use especially in the rural areas where amenities that town dwellers take for granted can be scarce, provided that every precaution is taken to protect the property and its occupants"*

Quote from Medway Access Group: *"Access will be important in any setting where community learning takes place, attention needs to be made to signage, ramps, hearing impaired communication loops etc. all the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act need to be adhered to"*

Quotes from users of mother and toddler group set up at Allhallows School: *"This is the only mother and toddler group in the area and is a place for mothers and toddlers to be able to meet up, share experiences and make friends."*

"Until now I had been very lonely, now I have the chance to mix with other Mums and young people"

Quote from Rod Lipscombe: *"At St Helen's school a single father was able to access a literacy and numeracy class because it was not too far from home. Other classes offered were too far a way and it was too expensive for him to travel. By accessing the class at the local school he was able to leave his children for a shorter length of time"*

Quotes from Headteacher of Cuxton Junior School: *"I would rather have the school facilities used out of school hours wherever possible rather than leaving them empty. Having people on the school site later in the day does also have benefits in terms of decreasing the likelihood of vandalism etc."*

"Before the school offered extended access it was viewed as being quite isolated from the community. It now has a much closer relationship with the people of Cuxton"

Recommendations:

That officers report jointly on the outcome of their deliberations in response to the following recommendations to the meeting of Environment and Front Line Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 13 April 2004:

- 1(A) The Strategic Manager for Medway Adult and Community Learning Service should be asked to report on progress on**
- (a) assessing the geographic and thematic gaps in provision of community learning across Medway**
 - (b) sharing this analysis with the School Improvement Manager and identifying where “extended schools” could make the most effective contribution to filling those gaps**
- 1(B) Officers should explore the possibility of securing funding for the extended schools co-ordinator – or a broadly comparable role – from the Learning and Skills Council and the potential payment of a supplement to teaching staff, where appropriate, who are asked to run out-of-school activities**
- 1(C) The opportunities for supporting community learning in secondary schools through the *Building Schools for the Future* programme should be fully explored and exploited**
- 1(D) At the time of planning any building works at schools in Medway consideration be given to enhancing school buildings for community use**

2 Medway Community Learning Forum

2.1 Written evidence was sought from the Medway Community Learning Forum who put forward information particularly relating to gaps in provision and barriers to learning. These were identified from their discussion with people in Medway whose views were canvassed at the forum.

2.2 Access to Learning

- Learning available does not always suit learners
- To attract new learners need to start learning gently i.e. short non accredited courses and `soft stuff`
- Types of effective courses are assertiveness or art and craft. Once enjoyed friendly environment inc. sandwiches/coffee etc learning can progress on
- Creche facilities important

- More than a taster session less than accredited courses required
- 6 week courses – 2 hours per week as a start need to be available
- Shorter courses – 1 day need to be available
- Life skill courses important to engage new learners
- Make learning relevant to people's lives
- Adult rooms in primary schools – working well although some health and safety issues
- Community Centre Co-ordinators required to support possible new learners and signpost to learning
- Funders need to understand it is expensive to introduce concept of learning

2.3 **Barriers to learning**

- ❖ Learners needs
- ❖ Appropriate setting for learning
- ❖ Confidence can take 2 years to get away from site
- ❖ Childcare/carer transport
- ❖ Paperwork – MHS homes completes all paperwork for learners
- ❖ Only feel safe in own community
- ❖ Issues of sustainability
- ❖ Learning and Skills Council need to understand level 0-2 can take 4 years – funding issues
- ❖ Fear of going to college
- ❖ Education development issues – not always ready for learning
- ❖ Those on benefits live day to day
- ❖ Comfortable with what they have
- ❖ Family can hold learners back, have to be at home

2.4 **Other issues**

Recommendation:

That officers report jointly on the outcome of their deliberations in response to the following recommendation to the meeting of Environment and Front Line Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 13 April 2004:

- 2. In developing the council's programme of community learning, the Strategic Manager for Medway Adult and Community Learning Service and the Youth Strategy Manager should engage the School Improvement Manager and other stakeholders, in particular Medway Community Learning Forum, the Learning and Skills Council, the Pensioners Forum, the University of Kent in Medway and Medway Learning Partnership.**

- 2.5 The review team felt that the issues raised by the Medway Community Learning Forum had identified matters, which needed to be addressed by the Medway Adult and Community Learning

3. Views from the Pensioners Forum

- 3.1. The review group took evidence from Ralph Tebbutt, chairman of the Pensioners Forum who highlighted the areas which could assist pensioners as far as community learning was concerned. These were predominantly:
- A need for a place to meet to take up new skills, IT, public speaking, photography, budgeting and other courses across age groups
 - Retirement training needs to be provided
- 3.2. He also made the suggestion that pensioners should be encouraged to work with schools particularly in areas such as history where some of the pensioners had first hand experience of the war for instance. He also suggested that there could be a roadshow organised by the forum to go throughout the schools in Medway teaching young people about the history of the area, particularly in relation to transport.

Recommendation:

That officers report jointly on the outcome of their deliberations in response to the following recommendation to the meeting of Environment and Front Line Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 13 April 2004:

- 3. Officers should design a programme, in consultation with the Pensioners Forum, to engage them in work with schools and wherever possible encourage teachers to use the skills of pensioners to enhance the curriculum by means of their local and historical knowledge.**

4. University support

- 4.1. Evidence was taken from the Director of Operations at the University of Kent at Medway, Mr Jeff Brown. He explained that the University was very enthusiastic about community learning and offered the university's support to it. He stated that the library at the University was to be a community resource and expressed an interest in being involved in community learning generally
- 4.2. While taking evidence from Mr Brown and Mr Tebbutt discussion took place about the planning of new schools and it was felt at the time of planning for new schools that the relevant consideration needed to be

given to making it suitable and available for community use from the outset.

Recommendations:

That officers report jointly on the outcome of their deliberations in response to the following recommendations to the meeting of Environment and Front Line Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 13 April 2004:

- 4(A) The resources and enthusiasm of the University of Kent in Medway, University of Greenwich and Mid Kent College should be exploited in the development of any programme for community learning**
- 4(B) Officers from the Education and Leisure directorate should consider at the outset of planning any new school in Medway designing the building to make it suitable and available for community use bearing in mind the need for security and appropriate access**

5. Youth issues

- 5.1. Discussions with a small group of young people, some of whom had learning difficulties or were disabled, at Strood Youth Centre highlighted a number of issues which the review group feel need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. These are as follows:
- There appears to be a policy across Medway that only children going to a particular school are able to access any afterschool and holiday activities which take place at that school
 - People who have children with specific disabilities or learning difficulties are not being made aware of any leisure/social events available to them and are often particularly isolated
 - A high number of Medway children aged 9/10 appear to be taking anti-depressants because they are not fitting in with their peer group and some are bullied at school. They need to have a safe place to socialise and build up their confidence after school and in the holidays with the opportunity to take part in activities which suit their own particular needs
 - There are a lot of taboos with schools and clubs about the needs of children who are disabled or who have a learning difficulty mainly due to not understanding how to cater for their needs. Toggles, a charity funded originally by money from Children in Need, now funded by Kent Youth, can provide training for teachers and volunteers – this needs to be widely publicised

- Stronger links need to be built between those organising the facilities at Woodlands Centre and the information shop next to Uppbury Manor School to make more people aware of what is available
 - It was clear that there is little or no support in Medway for parents with children with disabilities or learning difficulties and that many parents, often with disabilities of their own, are unaware of the benefits they could be claiming
- 5.2. The review group were impressed by the constructive work which the staff at Strood Youth Centre are doing to assist young people, both able bodied and those with either physical or learning disabilities, to gain confidence and assisting them to improve their social and interactive skills.

Recommendation:

That officers report jointly on the outcome of their deliberations in response to the following recommendation to the meeting of Environment and Front Line Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 13 April 2004:

- 5. The Youth Strategy Manager be asked to consider measures to address the issues raised by the young people and parent at Strood Youth Centre and, where appropriate, any comments raised by other Medway Youth Centres**

6. Medway Adult and Community Learning issues

- 6.1. The Head of the Medway Adult and Community Learning Service, Dr John Walker and his deputy Teresa Cambell gave evidence to the review group and answered their questions in relation to services currently provided by the service.
- 6.2. The review group were particularly interested in a scheme operating in Waltham Forest where Asda work with the local authority by providing a learning/resource room within the supermarket. The group were also informed about different areas across the country where local authorities are working with Asda/Sainsburys and other shopping centres to provide learning opportunities stalls at supermarkets where the public can gather information about courses available and speak to a careers adviser.

Recommendation:

That officers report jointly on the outcome of their deliberations in response to the following recommendations to the meeting of Environment and Front Line Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 13 April 2004:

6. The Strategic Manager, Medway Adult and Community Learning Service should be asked to report on progress on

(a) investigating the options for more flexible learning opportunities in the community using venues easily accessible to the public such as supermarkets and local businesses

(b) in consultation with colleagues in the education and leisure directorate, be requested to look at options for extending adult learning into schools after school hours and during summer holidays

7. Horticultural therapy projects

Cozenton Nursery

7.1. Councillors Royle and Baker visited Cozenton Nursery on 11 September 2003 and took evidence from Ian Fleming, parks development officer and Paul Hughes, DSO Contracts Manager. They were advised of a horticultural therapy scheme which had been designed to

- Provide a centre for disadvantaged members of the community to undertake horticultural therapy
- Provide a resource for basic skills for life training that leads to greater independence
- Provide a resource for basic, entry level vocational training
- Provide a resource for community horticultural skills training and work placement
- Promote sustainable plant production
- Promote horticulture for its therapeutic benefits
- Generate income and secure the nursery's future
- Help Medway Council to meet its Local Strategic Partnership objectives as expressed through the Communities Plan for education, skills development, social inclusion, healthy living and a sustainable environment

7.2. Having considered the scheme members were very supportive of the horticultural therapy scheme but were mindful of the fact that the

Cozenton Nursery would be included in the review of greenspaces to be undertaken shortly.

The subsequent visit to the Montgomery Avenue horticultural therapy project indicated it was targeted at a specific client group. The aspiration to attract a wider community base to a Cozenton project is therefore untested.

Finding:

7(A) The review group supports the aims and objectives of the proposed Cozenton Nursery horticultural therapy project but chooses not to make any firm recommendations on it ahead of the Greenspaces review.

Montgomery Avenue, Chatham

- 7.3. Councillor Royle attended an evidence session at Montgomery Avenue in Chatham to find out more about their "Greenfingers" horticultural therapy project. The centre is one of five community resources centres in Medway run by West Kent NHS and Social Care Trust for Mental Health.
- 7.4. The project has been designed specifically for clients with a mental illness who are referred from care managers via social workers. The project is focussed on a specific client group and its current emphasis on therapy rather than learning differentiates it from other areas considered by the community learning review. The project hopes to offer vocational training (including to NVQ level) but this would remain focussed on people with a mental illness.
- 7.5. Service users have developed the grounds of the premises by installing terraces, patio, paths, steps and water features as well as planting and maintenance of grass and planted areas. They have also designed and undertaken various craft projects both within the garden itself such as the beach garden and large mosaic and by production of items such as driftwood mirrors for sale. Craft work provides a useful alternative to garden-based horticultural work in poor weather. Much is sold at Cozenton Park and the proceeds go to buying tools etc for the project.

Recommendation:

7(B) That the information and service development proposals explored on the visit to the Montgomery Avenue horticultural therapy project should be forwarded to the portfolio holder for health and community services for his information.

Section Four

Background Documents

1. An introduction to extended schools providing opportunities and services for all – Department for Education and Skills (ref EXSGL)
2. Social and Therapeutic Horticulture – evidence and messages from research – Loughborough University – centre for child and family research
3. The development of Montagu Primary School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne – DfES Extended Schools Pathfinder project
4. Article from Daily Mail dated 27 August 2003 relating to garden therapy
5. Medway Adult and Community Learning Service – Adult Learning Plan 2003-2004
6. Asset Management Plan – date
7. Community Plan – date
8. Briefing Note – business plan for Cozenton Nursery written by Jacqui Dyer, Head of Greenspace Services
9. “Success for All” DfES/Learning and Skills Council document November 2002
10. Summary of evidence received from Simon Norton (Executive Director) and David Waggett (Head of Policy) of the Kent and Medway Learning and Skills Council taken as part of a review of the Learning and Skills Council undertaken by Education and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee