

**This report may be of interest to: Economy and Lifelong Learning Committee,  
Education Committee, Community Committee**

**THE COUNCIL'S PARTICIPATION IN THE UNIVERSITY FOR INDUSTRY (UFI)**

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 To provide the latest information about the Government's initiative to increase lifelong learning activity through the University for Industry (Ufi).
- 1.2 To invite members to endorse the Council's participation in the initiative locally.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 The Government has introduced an initiative to encourage increased and wider participation in lifelong learning through the use of new technology. The initiative, entitled the University for Industry (but now branded as "LearnDirect"), is seeking local project proposals to begin operation during 2000/01.
- 2.2 Council officers have worked closely with Milton Keynes College and the Lifelong Learning Partnership to submit an outline bid for a Ufi hub within Milton Keynes.
- 2.3 Previous information items have alerted Members to developments, but this report seeks approval for the formal involvement of Milton Keynes Council in the project.

**3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 The Committee is recommended to:
  - (a) note the background to the Ufi and the work undertaken so far; and

(b) endorse the involvement of the Council in the initiative.

## 4. Background

- 4.1 The Government announced its intention to launch an IT-based learning opportunity to encourage greater involvement in lifelong learning in and widen participation, in **The Learning Age**, its Green Paper on Lifelong Learning.
- 4.2 Information about how local organisations could participate began to circulate in July 1999. Through the Milton Keynes Lifelong Learning Partnership, it was agreed that Milton Keynes College would act as the central focus, known as a 'hub', to signal early interest. An initial meeting with regional officers of Ufl was held in August 1999.
- 4.3 The working group putting together a bid has met a number of times, though information from Ufl about funding and other essential aspects of the initiative have been slow to emerge. The most up to date information, from Ufl's own website, is attached as an **Annex** for information.

## 5. Issues and Choices

### a) Submitting a bid to Ufl

- 5.1 The first part of the business plan, which is in effect, the outline bid provided the details of the proposed project in Milton Keynes. This is available from the Economy & Learning Manager on request. This was submitted without any obligations on the part of the partners. Ufl has now agreed that the bid is feasible in principle, so a more detailed proposal now needs to be completed. This will need to include financial information and will require partners to make firm commitments to the project.
- 5.2 There is no further financial information available to demonstrate the viability of the outline proposal. However, it is understood that learners enrol and funding then is received from the learner and/or FEFC. This funding goes to the learning centre or access point, which then pays 27% to Ufl and a further amount is paid to the hub (Milton Keynes College) to provide the central co-ordination. There is, therefore, no financial risk unless any outlay is made, but there is an uncertain income.
- 5.3 Although full information is not available, the Council needs to agree in principle to be involved because Ufl require an indication of interest. The Committee may wish to agree to involvement subject to there being no financial implications beyond the agreed budgets for its services.

### b) Extent of Ufl hub boundary

- 5.4 The Ufl Regional Office has clearly indicated that MK is too small to be a hub on its own. Nationally, all hubs are being re-engineered to conform to the newly announced Learning and Skill Council boundaries.
- 5.5 Milton Keynes will therefore join with Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire to form a single hub. The second stage of the business plan needs to be completed by 15 May and this will require a considerable amount of work to ensure a single

business plan will meet the needs of all partners against criteria laid down by Ufl.

## **6. Implications**

### 6.1 Environmental

None at this stage.

### 6.2 Equalities

The initiative is designed to make learning more accessible.

### 6.3 Financial

The financial implications of the initiative are outlined above.

### 6.4 Legal

None at this stage.

### 6.5 Staff and Accommodation

If the proposal is implemented several of this Committee's services and their facilities would be contributing to the project.

### 6.6 Other

There are no other implications at this stage.

## **7. Conclusions**

7.1 The paper outlines the actions being taken by officers to submit a bid to Ufl that will involve the Council's services as partners. Although full implications are not clear, the Council needs to confirm its interest in principle to take the project forward

Background Papers:       None notified by author