

**To receive a report on the proposed changes to the Adult Education provision in
Saltash and any associated actions**

Summary

The Town Council has recently been made aware that the 'Linked to Learning' Adult Education provision that is currently offered at Wesley Church in Saltash, is now part of a consultation process regarding the potential closure of several sites, including the Saltash location. In recent years, 17 Adult Education centres have operated in Cornwall, however, Cornwall Council have stated that financial pressures, including reduced enrolments and increased costs, has led to the depletion of reserves and a budget deficit. To address this, the Adult Education Board proposed to close six centres (Camelford, Callington, Torpoint, Saltash, Launceston, Penzance, and St Austell), while keeping others open.

Please note, the Town Clerk received a briefing note on the proposed changes on the 7th of November, with the closing date being 30.11.2024. It was felt by STC that this notice was insufficient to discuss Saltash's position in this proposed closure. Therefore, it was raised with Ad Ed that the lack of duration between being informed and the closing date left STC with minimal time to effectively participate within the consultation. In addition to this, representatives from Wesley Church Management Committee recently wrote to Cornwall Council to express their concern regarding the closure and, along with STC, stressed the importance of the service. **Please refer to Appendix 1 to see the attached letter.** Cornwall Councillor Frank has since visited the Saltash Centre to understand how people are feeling about the potential closure. **Please refer to Appendix 2 to see the full report.** The Chairman of Saltash Town Council gathered Members feedback to submit a response to the consultation. **Please refer to Appendix 3 to see the full response.**

Furthermore, a team's meeting took place on 21st November 2024 between STC and CC. The Town Clerk, along with input from STC members, asked the following questions, and the responses have been shown below:

Question: The briefing note states the centres individually proposed for closure had generated budget out-turn deficits at the end of last academic year and show a deficit for the current year. How has this happened? Why wasn't Saltash TC contacted before now to see if there was an opportunity to save the service for the people of the town by working with the Town Council?

Answer: The Adult Education Service has worked through a range of options across the service and for individual areas to negotiate the best rentals and overhead costs, more efficient ways of delivery and a review of the ways in which sessions are run and delivered. It was anticipated that these activities would work towards a more balanced budget, but early in the year it became transparent that these interventions were not sufficient to deliver a balanced operating model.

Across Cornwall enrolment numbers have been flat since a nearly full recovery from the pandemic while costs have continued to rise, as the briefing note states. We have been working with the TC for some months to boost enrolments and/or use low cost/free venues with limited success. Saltash itself is part of a bigger aim to maintain the overall volume of learners and funding they generate across a smaller total delivery capacity, thus being more productive.

Question: Subcontracted partners - is the briefing note stating there won't be an impact to Saltash for those with high needs? How is this service provided in Saltash now?

Answer: This part of the briefing note is explaining that Adult Education subcontracted partners who deliver 16-18 provision for those with high needs are not directly affected by any proposed centre closures. They work in different areas across Cornwall, and none is Saltash specific. Other provision comes through the FE colleges, including Plymouth. The first point of contact for young people and parents in Saltash is Careers South West who will meet them and discuss options.

Question: The Council resettlement team - How will this impact Saltash?

Answer: We are working closely with the resettlement team to continue support. We are discussing outreach and partnership opportunities as well as working with the education team to ensure that residents will still receive support should the proposals be approved.

Question: Reviewing the table in the briefing note, as below, does it mean that Saltash residents will only be able to use Liskeard as an alternative centre? Could they go to Plymouth, if not, why?



Answer: We are offering the following options to learners:

1. Accelerate learning and complete this term
2. Move to online learning
3. Move to another Ad Ed centre such as Liskeard
4. Transfer their learning to Plymouth City College or another Plymouth provider

Question: What support does CC receive from central government to provide adult education? Will CC still receive financial support for Saltash, if so, how will the funding be used?

Answer: The Department for Education provides a global allocation to the Adult Education Service and other providers of Adult Education. This will be devolved to Cornwall Council from August 2025. The Ad Ed service will still be able to run courses in Saltash should enough learners enrol and we plan to work with the local community to hire venues based on the demand presented.

Question: Saltash TC have a number of sites that may be appropriate to continue the service in our town. Could this be a possibility? We are keen to work with CC to retain the service for Saltash and look at how we can better promote it. Is this an option?

Answer: Please provide information which can be fed into the consultation and considered as part of the formal decision-making process.

Next Steps

In response to this situation, it has been proposed to explore alternative options for delivering adult education, to ensure STC protect and enhance the services in Saltash. To better understand the needs of the community, public consultation surveys can be created to gather input on how Saltash Town Council can best support adult education initiatives. Potential venues for these offerings could include locations such as Isambard House, the Guildhall, and Library. **A sample of the survey can be found in Appendix 4.**

Members are asked to consider the following:

- If they support the decision to explore alternative options of adult education provision in Saltash.
- If they approve the survey to be produced for public consultation.

End of Report

Development and Engagement Manager

Appendix 1



Saltash Wesley Methodist Church

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To: Councillor Linda Taylor Chairman of Cornwall Council

CC: Councillor Barbara Ellenbroek (Portfolio holder for Children and families)

Stacey Sleeman, Head of Skills : stacey.sleeman@cornwall.gov.uk

Rob Sweetzer-Sturt, Head of Service – Adult Education : rob.sweetzer-sturt@cornwall.gov.uk

Dear Councillor Taylor

On behalf of Saltash Wesley Methodist Church, we are writing to you regarding "Link to Learning" Adult education facility which is based in our premises. We understand that this was commissioned by central government but this will change next year when adult education budgets are devolved to unitary councils. It has come to our attention that this facility will be closing in December 24.

We are extremely concerned that following this closure there will be no Adult Education facilities within Saltash having already lost Cornwall College which provided similar services.

Link into Learning provides an opportunity for students to gain qualifications to assist them to obtain employment. As a church we see firsthand the affects that unemployment has through our work with the homeless and those attending foodbank. Many of the students need the opportunity to attend the center not only for educational needs but also for their mental wellbeing. Traveling to a center in another town is out of the question due to transportation and family commitments. We note that the Cornwall web site is not advertising any facilities/education courses at Wesley, only our address.

We would be grateful to learn the reasons behind your decision to close the center within the very near future and if there is any possibility of you reconsidering that decision.

If there is anything we can do as a Church to relieve the situation then please advise.

[REDACTED]
Bob Austin

Chairman Wesley Management Committee

Saltash Freeman

[REDACTED]
Rev Jonathan Budd

Circuit Superintendent for South East Cornwall

Appendix 2

Adult Education Report

Cornwall's Adult Education Board has endorsed a proposal to close six Adult Education Centres in Cornwall, citing financial pressures and declining enrollment. Callington has already closed, and now other centres in the East of Cornwall are under threat.

Centre	Arrangements	Course Offer	Current enrolments	Alternative Adult Education Centre			Closest Alternative Training Provider
				Location	Distance Car (Mins)	Distance Public Transport (Mins)	
Camelford		English, Maths, Diploma in Beauty.	24	Bodmin	22	49	Callywith, Bodmin
				Bude	26	96	
Torpoint		Maths, ICT, English.	22	Liskeard	27	71	Plymouth City College
Saltash		Maths, ICT, English.	20	Liskeard	24	38	Plymouth City College
St Austell		Maths, ICT, English, ESOL	63	St Dennis	19	48	Cornwall College, St Austell
				Bodmin	25	61	
				Truro	28	56	
Launceston		Maths, ICT, English, ESOL	38	Liskeard	34	61	Callywith Bodmin
				Bude	29	37	
				Bodmin	32	120	
Penzance		Maths, ICT, English, ESOL	58	Hayle	22	37	Truro and Penwith College, Penzance
				Helston	31	70	
Total			225				

I visited the Saltash Centre last week and spoke with several people there. They are all dismayed at the sudden nature of the closure proposal, particularly at the lack of engagement from Cornwall Council to explore ways to reduce costs or improve services.

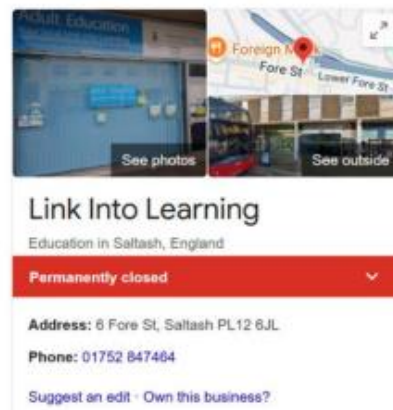
Concerns were raised about the significant impact the closure could have on vulnerable residents, especially at a time when the Wesley and the Adult Education Centre provide much-needed hope and support - a single mother studying Level 3 English has been so devastated by the uncertainty that she hasn't returned to lessons in the past two weeks. Students at the Centre aren't just learning, they are also being supported by 'wraparound care', including free hot meals, thanks to the generosity of Wesley Church.

The proposed closure seems particularly short-sighted given the increasing demand for services in Saltash. The town is seeing an expansion with the housing development at Treledan, and is now home to a growing number of refugee families, alongside over more than 50 homeless people being given temporary accommodation in Travelodge and The Croft. For many of these, the provision at the Wesley has been a lifeline.

The table above shows the distance from Saltash to 'the nearest alternative provision' of Liskeard. However, the table doesn't reflect the challenges faced by learners in surrounding parishes. For example, while there is a direct bus from Hatt to Saltash, there is no direct bus from Hatt to Liskeard, and the trip actually takes 96 minutes - precisely four times longer than the 24 minutes suggested in the table.

It should be noted that one of the main reasons for the relatively low number of learners in Saltash is the limited range of courses that has been made available, coupled with inadequate promotion. The lack of variety discourages wider participation, and many residents are simply unaware of what is on offer. This has created a self-fulfilling cycle where the Centre appears underutilised despite a need in the community.

A search for Link Into Learning in Saltash brought up this message, showing the old address before the Centre moved to the Wesley, and saying that it is permanently closed:



The Adult Education Board

Six Cornwall Councillors sit on the Adult Education Board:

- Michael Bunney (Mebyon Kernow)
- Barbara Ellenbroek (Conservative)
- Julian German (Independent)
- Peter Guest (Conservative)
- James Mustoe (Conservative)
- Sally Anne Weedon (Conservative)

However, the Board only makes recommendations, and the final decision-making power lies with the Portfolio Holder, Cllr. Ellenbroek.

It was shocking to learn that meetings of the Adult Education Board are not open to the public. This makes it even more important for Saltash Town Council to formulate a considered response and submit it through formal channels to the Portfolio Holder as well as the Board. Without this, the views of Saltash residents may not be adequately represented in decisions that could have lasting consequences for the town.

Hilary Frank

Cornwall Councillor representing Saltash Essa

Appendix 3

Re: Proposed Changes to Adult Education Provision in Saltash

The concerns regarding the proposed changes to adult education provisions and their significant impact on Saltash and South East Cornwall. Once again, Saltash appears to be suffering from a lack of recognition for its unique community needs, with decisions being made that treat the area as an extension of Plymouth rather than as a distinct community requiring tailored support.

While the constraints of limited enrolment numbers and the financial challenges involved in sustaining a local adult education provision, it is deeply disappointing that these factors have overshadowed the broader benefits and long-term value of accessible adult education within the community and that such a short notice period was given to fully understand the reason for these proposed changes.

Education is far more than just acquiring knowledge; it plays a pivotal role in fostering social interaction, developing social skills, conversation and providing individuals with the tools to navigate the wider world. Many prospective learners in Saltash are unlikely to benefit from online-only education due to its isolating nature.

It is worth noting that adult education in Saltash has already faced significant cuts, leaving the community with limited options. The closure of this provision would force learners to travel to Plymouth or rely on facilities in Liskeard, which may not be practical for many due to distance, cost, and lack of suitable transport links.

While the low enrolment numbers are undeniably a challenge, they also reflect the need for more effective outreach, improved facilities, and a more diverse range of course offerings, particularly in core subjects like English, Maths, and IT. Addressing these issues could potentially revive interest and participation in adult education within Saltash.

If the decision is to consolidate services, we urge that consideration be given to providing support for learners in Saltash and other affected areas, such as subsidised travel to Plymouth or Liskeard and accessible transport solutions for disenfranchised learners.

Additionally, we have been disappointed by the lack of transparency and the short timeline provided for responses to this proposal, which undermines the community's ability to engage meaningfully in the decision-making process.

It is with the hope that the concerns and suggestions raised here will be taken into account to ensure fair access to education for all residents of South East Cornwall.

Appendix 4

Please note: The survey is a draft form and can be changed if members agree to take public consultation forward.

Saltash Town Council Public Consultation Survey.

STC are seeking your views on adult education services within Saltash. Your feedback will help guide future decisions about how we can best support lifelong learning in our community. Please take a few moments to answer the following questions.

**1. What type of adult education courses would you be most interested in?
(Please select all that apply)**

- Vocational training (e.g., trades, skills development)
- Digital skills and IT
- Personal development (e.g., language learning, communication)
- Health and wellbeing (e.g., fitness, mental health)
- Arts and creative subjects (e.g., painting, music, photography)
- Business and management
- Other (Please specify):

2. What is your preferred method of learning?

- In-person classes
- Online courses
- A combination of in-person and online (blended learning)
- Other (Please specify):

3. Do you have any accessibility needs that should be considered when attending adult education courses?

(Please select all that apply)

- Wheelchair accessibility
- Hearing impairment support (e.g., sign language interpreters, hearing loops)
- Visual impairment support (e.g., large print materials, screen readers)
- Learning support (e.g., dyslexia assistance, extra time for tasks)
- Transport or parking needs
- No specific accessibility needs
- Other (Please specify):

4. What times of day would you be most likely to attend adult education courses?

(Please select all that apply)

- Mornings
- Afternoons
- Evenings
- Weekends
- Flexible times depending on course type

5. What factors would influence your decision to participate in adult education in Saltash?

(Please select all that apply)

- Cost of courses
- Convenient location
- Flexible class times
- Availability of online learning options
- Quality of the course content
- Support services (e.g., childcare, learning support)
- Other (Please specify):

Thank you for your feedback!