

## **EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 23 June 2008 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Jones (Chairman), Fraser (Vice-Chairman), Austin, Edge, Findon, Howard, Parker, Rowe and Stockton

Apologies for Absence: Councillor M. Bradshaw and Worrall

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Collins, M. Simpson, A. Villiers and P. Reilly-Cooper

Also in attendance: None

### **ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

		<i>Action</i>
ELS1	MINUTES	
	<p>The Minutes from the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2008 having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
ELS2	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
	<p>It was reported that no public questions had been received.</p>	
ELS3	EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
	<p>The Minutes of the Executive Board and Executive Board Sub relating to the work of the Employment Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board were submitted for information.</p> <p>Members queried a resolution from 11<sup>th</sup> January 2008, Minute No. ES64 with regard to recommendation no. 7, and asked what stage the Council was at in getting a 20% reduction in climate change. It was noted that a response would be sought and provided to the Members of the Board.</p>	

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.

Strategic Director  
- Environment

ELS4 HALTON LEA LIBRARY

The Board received a presentation from the Library Services Manager, which outlined the progress on the Community Libraries Lottery Funded Project “CORE – Community Opportunities through Reading and Engagement” at Halton Lea Library.

It was reported that the Library Service was successful in its bid for Community Libraries Lottery Funding to upgrade the facilities and services at Halton Lea Library with a grant totalling £1,271,900.93.

It was advised that the funding would be drawn down over three years following approval of the Stage 2 documentation by the Big Lottery Fund, these documents were submitted as required by 14<sup>th</sup> April 2008, and consisted of the Community Engagement Plan, Business Plan and Capital Project Delivery Plan.

The tender for building work was issued on 27<sup>th</sup> May with a deadline for return by Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2008. The tenders would be analysed and a contractor would be appointed by the end of July 2008. A tender review report would be submitted to the Big Lottery Fund for their approval before work can progress.

The presentation detailed the following:

- Images of current views of the Library;
- Images of the improved exterior and interior layouts provided by Austin Smith Lord – Designers;
- Vision – i.e. re-branding the library service, increase awareness, vibrant interiors that would inspire users, changing people’s perceptions, and support the community;
- Site plans and floor plans;
- Children’s library and teenage section;
- Outdoor seating area and new coffee bar;
- New and improved IT suite;
- Meeting room facilities; and
- Facilities for a training kitchen.

Members were advised that the official start date on site was anticipated to be the end of August 2008. To

ensure that a Library service could still be provided with the minimum of disruption to customers, the building work would be undertaken in two phases. Phase 1 covering the ground floor and first floor would take place from August 2008 until January 2009 and Phase 2 covering the second and third floors from January 2009 until May 2009.

It was reported that the library would be closed for three weeks from 8<sup>th</sup> December 2008 in order to relocate all the stock to the vacant unit available in the Shopping Centre as arrangements had been made to provide a library from this unit. It was advised that this would provide an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about the library and the refurbishment work and to promote and market the service from a different location to new audiences.

A full range of stock, newspapers and audio/visual materials would be available from this temporary location with rhyme time, class visits, reader development and other promotional activities still being delivered during this time.

The first floor would be re-opened in January 2009 , providing access to meeting rooms, computer facilities, Community History and study spaces.

The Board raised the following issues:

- Were the Library staff happy with the amount of reduced storage office space?
- How much of the work carried out so far was linked to Best Practice elsewhere – for example in other authorities who had had similar funding?
- Was there any access to the Library other than through Halton Lea for instances when shops were closed?
- Would there be any refurbishment of the new store and would there be any provision of IT Services in the new store?
- Was there any linkage into the Building Schools for the Future and how closely had work been carried out with the Children and Young People Directorate?
- What were the IT improvements that the project would bring?

In response, the following was noted:

- The current storage space had not been utilised effectively, this would be converted into

office and work areas and staff were confident that the arrangements were adequate and staff would be deployed efficiently;

- The service would still be offered via the Runcorn Old Town Library during the closure of Halton Lea Library and additional staff were to be deployed to Runcorn Old Town, customers would be encouraged to take more books out and due back dates would be extended;
- Best Practice had been looked into as had other schemes all over the country and ideas had been picked up from this, discussions had taken place with colleagues from other authorities also in receipt of the Public Library Lottery Funding;
- Access can be gained directly through the Busway down to the level of the library, and prominent signage would be implemented. Access would be in the form of a lift and stairs;
- The current old Fads Shop Unit would provide a full range of stock but ICT Services would not be available. However, promotional activities and publicity events would take place in the centre of Halton Lea providing an opportunity to promote the library to a different audience;
- The Library Service is part of the Stakeholder Group for Building Schools for the Future and also works very closely with the Children and Young Peoples Directorate and was very aware about how the support from these groups would strengthen the links; and
- Improved public access computers, self-issue and return facilities, wireless access for laptops and a self-booking service for computers.

Arising from the discussion, it was noted that this would be an opportunity to enhance the provision of the public art used in the Borough as there would be more opportunities for public art to be tied in with the refurbishment. Members noted the importance of prioritising the HBC signage.

The Board also discussed the options of library services being available regardless of the opening hours of Halton Lea. Members requested that after the change of venue during the closure period to the empty retail unit in Halton Lea, that a report be brought back providing statistics regarding the usage of the Unit.

The Chairman thanked Paula Reilly-Cooper for an informative report.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received;
- (2) consideration be given to provide an opportunity for more public art within the refurbishment;
- (3) better usage of the mobile library during the temporary transfer of the library; and
- (4) a report be brought back after usage of the temporary transfer of the library providing statistics of usage.

Strategic Director  
- Health and  
Community

#### ELS5 UPDATE ON THE MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community which updated Members on the progress of the Mobile Library Service following the implementation of the new timetable in March 2007.

It was reported that on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2007, the service moved to a three week rota and more than 60 new stops were introduced at times when people were most likely to be in their community, for example on Saturdays and late afternoons. These changes resulted in an increase in operating times by an average of 7.5 hours each week and had been highly successful.

It was advised that 12 months after the implementation of these new routes, the mobile library service was still sustaining and increasing use and all the targets had been far surpassed; issues had increased by 45%, visits by 130% and active members by 155%.

Detailed within the report were mobile library statistics in relation to visits, issues, active members, number of stops and weekly time at stops, for the year's 2006/07, 2007/08 including the increased percentage.

It was noted the most successful of the new stops included 8 nurseries, 3 link clubs, 5 sheltered housing/elderly persons homes, 9 stops outside schools after closing, 2 traveller sites, and the 3 stops in the parks on Saturdays. The least successful had been those introduced in the large supermarket car parks.

Members suggested whether investigations could be made to redirect the supermarket stops and whether a better breakdown of statistics could be provided to see which stops were most actively used with the view of spending more time at certain stops. The Board felt that a ward by ward analysis of the length of time at venues and usage would be valuable as this could be promoted through the ward newsletters.

It was also proposed that DVD's promoting the mobile library services could be played in HDL's on the large plasma screens.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received; and
- (2) a report be provided to Members detailing a ward by ward analysis of the mobile library service.

Strategic Director  
- Health and  
Community

#### ELS6 ANNUAL REPORT

The Board considered the Annual Report for the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board.

The report outlined the Membership and responsibilities, the review of the year and the work programme for 2008/09.

The Chairman thanked all the officers and Members involved in producing an incredible amount of work throughout the year.

RESOLVED: That the PPB agree and endorse the Annual Report for the purposes of its adoption at a forthcoming meeting of the Full Council.

#### ELS7 PROCUREMENT TOPIC REPORT

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director Environment which detailed the recommendations of the Policy Board's Scrutiny Panel regarding the Council's Procurement Policy and its role in developing local employment opportunities.

It was advised that having considered the views and

comments that emerged from a series of interviews and study groups, convened with a broad cross section of Council Officers, who were responsible for procurement, interviews with local businesses, desk research and analysis of other local authority web based procurement data, and the findings of a procurement study undertaken with local businesses, the Panel recommended the following:

- A Meet the Buyer Event be convened to provide businesses with an opportunity to meet key buyers from the public services based in Halton (proposed lead – local strategic partnerships/environment)
- A workshop/s be convened for small businesses to advise them on the Council's Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) requirements, and tendering arrangements (proposed lead – Corporate and Policy/Environment)
- A review of the Council's term contract conditions be undertaken with a view to identifying ways in which they can be amended to benefit local businesses in order that they seek a commitment from council contractors, prior to being appointed, to consider using local suppliers as part of their supply chain to deliver the service they are being contracted to provide. (proposed lead – Corporate and Policy)
- Explore the potential for establishing an email tender alert system, to advise business when Council tenders above £1m are being let and also sending the alert to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Employment, Learning and Skills PPB (proposed lead – Corporate and Policy)
- Produce a printed/electronic leaflet on "How to do Business with the Council" the printed leaflet to be distributed to Halton businesses. In addition an abridged version of this be laminated and sent to business in order to be displayed at all times (proposed lead – Corporate and Policy/Environment)
- Training at a professional level be undertaken for officers engaged in letting and managing contracts valued over £1m (proposed lead – Corporate and Policy)
- A pre-tendering review system be established to ensure that policies and procedures, relating to procurement are being followed (proposed lead – Corporate and Policy)

- Where there is a Halton based dealership, the dealership be used for the servicing and repair of Council lease cars and leasing contracts be amended accordingly (proposed lead – Environment)
- Measures be taken to ensure that local businesses benefit from the Mersey Gateway Project and other major capital works to be undertaken in the Borough during the coming years (proposed lead – Environment)
- A study be undertaken to determine the skills and training needs and measures taken to address them, in respect of the Mersey Gateway and associated capital works programme, to ensure that Halton's residents are able to take full advantage of the employment opportunity that the programme of works will offer (proposed lead – Environment)
- Progress on issues relating to employment in respect of the Mersey Gateway and other related capital projects be reported to the Employment Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board on a half-yearly basis (proposed lead – Environment)
- Explore ways in which the Council's procurement policies can be used as a vehicle for generating apprenticeship opportunities with council contractors (proposed lead – Environment)

Detailed in the report were the cost estimates for each recommendation. It was advised that the majority of these could be carried out within the existing budget, therefore implemented quite quickly.

The Board stressed the importance of ensuring to seek assurances that companies use local employers and not sub-contract the work out. The Board also discussed the Council's apprenticeship programme and suggested that the Council take leadership of the apprenticeship system and review the process of current training schemes.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Executive Board be asked to consider and comment on the Scrutiny Panel's recommendations at the earliest opportunity as follows:
  - a) A Meet the Buyer Event be convened to



- provide businesses with an opportunity to meet key buyers from the public services based in Halton (proposed lead – local strategic partnerships/environment)
- b) A workshop/s be convened for small businesses to advise them on the Council's Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) requirements, and tendering arrangements (proposed lead – Corporate and Policy/Environment)
  - c) A review of the Council's term contract conditions be undertaken with a view to identifying ways in which they can be amended to benefit local businesses in order that they seek a commitment from council contractors, prior to being appointed, to consider using local suppliers as part of their supply chain to deliver the service they are being contracted to provide. (proposed lead – Corporate and Policy)
  - d) Explore the potential for establishing an email tender alert system, to advise business when Council tenders above £1m are being let and also sending the alert to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Employment, Learning and Skills PPB (proposed lead – Corporate and Policy)
  - e) Produce a printed/electronic leaflet on "How to do Business with the Council" the printed leaflet to be distributed to Halton businesses. In addition an abridged version of this be laminated and sent to business in order to be displayed at all times (proposed lead – Corporate and Policy/Environment)
  - f) Training at a professional level be undertaken for officers engaged in letting and managing contracts valued over £1m (proposed lead – Corporate and Policy)
  - g) A pre-tendering review system be established to ensure that policies and procedures, relating to procurement are being followed (proposed lead – Corporate and Policy)
  - h) Where there is a Halton based dealership, the dealership be used for the servicing and repair of Council lease cars and leasing contracts be amended accordingly (proposed lead – Environment)
  - i) Measures be taken to ensure that local businesses benefit from the Mersey Gateway Project and other major capital works to be undertaken in the Borough during the coming

Strategic Director  
- Environment

- years (proposed lead – Environment)
  - j) A study be undertaken to determine the skills and training needs and measures taken to address them, in respect of the Mersey Gateway and associated capital works programme, to ensure that Halton’s residents are able to take full advantage of the employment opportunity that the programme of works will offer (proposed lead – Environment)
  - k) Progress on issues relating to employment in respect of the Mersey Gateway and other related capital projects be reported to the Employment Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board on a half-yearly basis (proposed lead – Environment)
  - l) Explore ways in which the Councils procurement policies can be used as a vehicle for generating apprenticeship opportunities with council contractors (proposed lead – Environment)
- (2) the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board considered the issue further including any comments which the Executive Board may have made at the next available meeting of the Board; and
- (3) the Council take leadership on apprenticeship schemes and review the process of current training.

## ELS8 SKILLS FOR LOGISTICS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director Environment, which provided Members with information around the necessary infrastructure and training mechanisms within logistics that the Council and its partners must put in place to ensure that the 3MG Project would not fail for want of a workforce and that local people were fully supported to access the new employment opportunities afford by the project, and in so doing contribute to the vitality of the wider community of Halton.

The Board agreed that the terms of reference could be signed off by the Chairman. Councillors Parker, Findon and Austin agreed to sign up to the Topic Group that was adjoining with the Urban Renewal PPB.

Members also discussed the uncertainty around the Fourth Generation Light Source at Daresbury Science and

Innovation Centre. It was suggested that a speaker from Daresbury Laboratories be invited to the next Board in order to do a presentation.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Policy and Performance Board consider the report;
- (2) the terms of reference for the Topic Group be signed off by the Chairman; and
- (3) Daresbury Laboratories be invited to the next Policy and Performance Board to do a presentation.

Strategic Director  
- Environment

#### ELS9 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORTS

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive on progress against Service Plan Objectives and Performance Targets, Performance Trends/Comparisons and factors affecting services for Economic Regeneration and Culture and Leisure for the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter.

The following points arose from the discussion:

- The reason the Project Team was not established on target for June 2008 was due to work being carried out for the IDEA review. It was noted that as a result from the review there would be a Corporate Action Plan produced for the areas that had been identified for improvement. The Equal Opportunities Policy would also be rolled out.
- In relation to the reduction in the number of learner enrolments for the academic year and the number of learners accessing Adult Learning Provision, this was due to the time of year that Easter fell as it was difficult to carry out a marketing campaign to sign people up. It was advised that a rise would be shown in later statistics.

RESOLVED: That the Policy and Performance Board receive the 4th Quarter Performance Management Report.

*Meeting ended at 9.00 p.m.*