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EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 9 March 2009 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor M. Bradshaw and Stockton

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: H. Cockcroft, G. Collins, N. Goodwin, D. Owen, M. Simpson and A. Villiers

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

		<i>Action</i>
ELS41	MINUTES	
	The Minutes from the meeting held on 14 th January 2009 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
ELS42	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
	It was reported that no public questions had been received.	
ELS43	EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
	The minutes of the Executive Board relating to the work of the Employment Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board were submitted for information.	
	RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.	
ELS44	SSP MINUTES	

It was reported that there had not been an SSP since the last meeting of the Board.

ELS45 COMMUNITY GRANTS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which provided a brief on the criteria and assessment for accessing community grants. Community grants administered by the Community Involvement Team were reported as follows:

- Starter Grants, maximum £150;
- Community Development Grants, maximum £400;
- Voluntary Youth Group Grants; and
- Voluntary Youth Bursary Grants.

It was advised that grants were delivered as a rolling programme throughout the year. They would not reimburse monies already spent on routine overheads or running costs for established groups. It was noted that applications for grants must be from groups resident in the Borough and contribute to Halton's strategic objectives.

It was further advised that applicants must declare applications for grants from other sources and must be non-party political and operate non-discriminatory activity. It was reported that all grants were submitted to the Executive Board Member for approval and were required to acknowledge the Council's contribution in publicity leaflets etc. It was further advised that grants were monitored regularly with proof of expenditure required.

Arising from the discussion the following points were noted:

- corporately, a data base was being developed around the voluntary sector arrangements;
- as from 1st April 2009 there would be slight changes to the coding in relation to the financial management system. This would enable accurate reporting of funding to the voluntary and community sector;
- members discussed the possibility of duplication and it was noted that people were asked to declare if they were currently receiving funding or applying for funding from elsewhere; and
- the issue of CRB checks for voluntary staff was also discussed, and it was noted that all voluntary groups would have their own CRB checking procedures in place and would ensure that the correct people were

working with young people.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ELS46 COMMUNITY COHESION

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which provided an update on cohesion matters since the PPB Topic Group Report in September 2007. It was advised that the Topic Group examined cohesion issues in Halton which resulted in a report which concluded Halton's key cohesion issues centred around poverty, equality of opportunity, intergenerational issues aligned with community safety concerns and increasing migrant workers and international students in the Borough.

It was further advised that, in tandem with the PPB Topic Group the Audit Commission also undertook a self-assessment with the Council on cohesion and concurred with the Council's findings. As part of the process the Audit Commission provided a data set of performance indicators for tension monitoring around four themes:-

- Inequalities and competition;
- Isolation and participation;
- Safer communities; and
- Coping with change.

This concluded Halton was a fairly cohesive place.

The report outlined the developments around cohesion for Members' consideration.

The Board was advised of a Cohesion Officers' Group which was a tactical group required by the Contingency Plan. The Cohesion Officers' Group would report to the Local Strategic Partnership Sub-Group for Equality and Diversity. It was noted that this was an evolving piece of work and Members' input was essential.

Arising from the discussion the Board felt that the reporting element should still be maintained by the Board and future reports from the Community Cohesion Officers Group should come to the Employment Learning and Skills PPB.

RESOLVED: That the Board Members agree that future reports would also be received by the Corporate

Services and Employment Learning and Skills PPB.

ELS47 SKILLS TOPIC ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which provided a brief on the progress of the Skills Topic Group Action Plan. It was noted that as part of the topic work of the former Life Chances and Employment PPB, it established a topic group looking at skills issues in the Borough. It was noted that as part of the final reports from the topic group to the PPB a number of recommendations for improvements to the service were developed and put into an action. Details of this action plan were outlined as an appendix to the report for Members' consideration. In addition, the appendix provided an update on progress to date.

The Board was advised that the most notable development recently in terms of capacity and capability was the establishment of the Halton Employment Partnership. It was advised this new team funded through Working Neighbourhood Funds had a core element of designers and trainers. These trainers would deliver a core employment skills training and assist in the delivery of the bespoke package, supplemented by specialist trainers being brought in when required.

It was reported that in terms of strategic developments, the work on the logistics sector was well advanced. There had been work to identify the future needs of the logistics and distribution sector, the skill training that existed had been mapped out and partners had been engaged to resource implementation. It was further noted the next sector to be brought forward was science and technology.

The Board was advised the existing Skills and Workforce Development Strategy was due for updating in 2009/10. It was reported at that point a new action plan would be developed.

Arising from the discussion, the Board enquired whether the Council could deliver courses direct into the community in relation to the action on page 20 of the appendix. Members asked whether the LSC would consider Halton Borough Council being a provider. In response, it was noted that certain budgets had to go through the further education route, whereas other areas were more likely to be tendered out. It was advised, however, that the Council was starting to build itself a reputation as a provider in its own

sense. Members noted that the Borough was delivering what was required in terms of Level 2 education, however, it was felt that more work could be carried out in this area.

RESOLVED: That the progress on the Action Plan be noted.

ELS48 SKILLS: IDENTIFYING THE EXISTING AND FUTURE NEEDS OF BUSINESSES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which detailed the outcomes from the Skills Topic Scrutiny process that was undertaken between September 2007 and September 2008. Set out in the report were a number of final recommendations resulting from the outcomes.

It was reported that the Board established the “Skills: Identifying the existing and future needs of businesses” topic as a means for identifying whether existing activity would meet those needs, including the identification of opportunities for improved performance. It was noted that a survey of business perceptions in relation to skills and employment had been undertaken in early 2008 and provided a good foundation in the development of the topic group work.

In the first meeting the Topic Group identified a number of issues that should be included within the scope of the topic which were outlined in the report for consideration. Also outlined in the report for consideration were the major conclusions of the Topic Group.

It was advised that having taken all the evidence into account the Topic Group devised a list of recommendations which are appended to these minutes.

Arising from the discussions the Board felt that the Director of the College should be invited to the PPB in order to listen to the concerns of the local councillors and express their views on the Riverside College issues. In addition, the Board also raised concerns in relation to the cancellation of courses when minimum numbers were not reached.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board agree the recommendations set out in appendix 1 to the minutes; and
- 2) forward the recommendations to Executive Board for

Strategic Director
- Environment

consideration.

ELS49 MERSEY GATEWAY PROJECT - EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES UPDATE

The Board received a report which provided progress on the establishing measures relating to employment to ensure that local residents and businesses benefited from the Mersey Gateway (MG) and other capital projects.

It was noted that on 11th September 2008 the Executive Board accepted a series of recommendations arising from the ELS Scrutiny Panel Topic Group that explored the role of the Council's procurement policy in developing local employment. The Executive Board's acceptance of the recommendations was subject to consideration of the budget implications as part of the budget setting process.

The Board was informed that one of the recommendations that "progress on issues relating to employment in respect of the MG and other related capital projects be reported to ELS PPB on a half yearly basis". It was further noted that this report was the first half-yearly report and provided a summary of the MG procurement timetable, details of the potential job opportunities during construction phase and proposals to develop a Council wide policy designed to encourage the use of local labour and businesses in Council led construction projects was outlined for consideration. Key stages for the Mersey Gateway procurement timetable were set out as follows:-

- Stage 1 – Planning and Initial Preparation
- Stage 2 – OJEU Contract Notice to Shortlist Bidders via PQQ
- Stage 3 – Selection of bidders
- Stage 4 – The Dialogue
- Stage 5 – Post Dialogue
- Stage 6 – Bid Clarification
- Stage 7 – Award of Contract

The Board was advised of the job opportunities during the construction phase and it was noted a study of the wider economic impact of the MG project had been undertaken. The purpose of the study was to assess the effect of the project on the Local and sub-regional economy, employment within specific Regeneration Areas and Local regeneration using the project as a catalyst for regeneration and to attract inward investment.

Detailed in the report was a table which illustrated the types of construction related employment opportunities that would arise from the MG project defined as “specialist” and “general”. It was advised jobs were likely to be filled from local, regional, wider UK or even the international labour market. In the context of the study local was defined as Halton and regional as North West England.

Members were advised that it was anticipated that the specialist jobs would generally be imported by contractors and that the more general jobs would be recruited locally. Evidence from other major construction projects suggested that a third of the jobs would be drawn from the local area, a further third from the wider region and the remaining third from elsewhere. However, depending on the availability of people with the necessary skills locally, this could rise to half the construction jobs being recruited locally.

The Board suggested that local companies could be involved in sub contracting, for example supplying materials required for construction of the MG. The Board also proposed that further consideration of the rules of governing the employment of unemployed people on the project be undertaken. It was suggested that a further report on MG progress be brought back to the Board in September.

RESOLVED That:

- (1) the Mersey Gateway Procurement timetable be noted;
- (2) the proposal to establish a Council-wide employment policy be accepted; and
- (3) a further report on MG be brought back to the September meeting of the Board

Strategic Director
- Environment

ELS50 ELS PPB WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which sought to establish a work programme of topics for the Board to examine in 2009/10, bearing in mind the Council’s agreed selection criteria which was appended to the report for members’ consideration.

It was noted that at the previous Board meeting, Members identified a number of potential topics for consideration during in 2009/10 including:

- Workforce and skills for science and technology focusing on Daresbury (this would be a joint group with the Urban Renewal PPB);
- Financial inclusion including employment and debt support through the economic climate;
- Libraries and the possible increase of mobile libraries including examination of options such as libraries in schools and satellite libraries; and
- Identification of potential and encouragement of elite sports performance in the Borough.

It was reported that in relation to the sports performance in the Borough, a paper would be brought to a future PPB meeting detailing were the identification of elite sports performance was up to. This would be looked at in more detail after that meeting and assessed after a certain period of time. An e-mail would be sent to all Members including the ones not present at the meeting, asking them for nominations to be on Work Topic Groups.

Membership for the Libraries Work Topic Group was decided as follows:

Councillors: Findon, Austin and Howard.

Membership for the Finance Working Group was:

Councillors Parker, Findon, Fraser and Worrall.

RESOLVED That:

- (1) the Board agree the Topics to be examined in 2009/10; and
- (2) all Members of the Board be contacted requesting which Topics Groups they would like to be a member of.

Strategic Director
- Environment

ELS51 STANDING ORDER 51

The Board was reminded that Standing Order 51 of the Council's Constitution stated that meetings should not continue beyond 9 p.m.

RESOLVED: That Standing Order 51 be waived until the business was concluded.

ELS52 QUARTERLY 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 3rd Quarter.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were noted:-

- clarification was provided in relation to the business start up figures, in that the way in which companies registered tax has been changed. This was expected to be a one off peak;
- Members queried the performance indicators that were currently listed as a red light and reasons why were provided.

In addition it was suggested that at future meetings the Performance Monitoring items be put at the beginning of the agenda.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

ELS53 PART II

SCHEDULE 12 A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

(1) Whether Members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act, 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and

(2) Whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it is likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information will be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

ELS54 FAIRFIELD HIGH SCHOOL - ALL WEATHER PITCH

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community, the purpose of which was to respond to a request from the Federated Governing Body of Wade Deacon High School and Fairfield High School for funding to bring the all weather pitch from the Fairfield Campus back into use.

RESOLVED: That, at this current time, no funding options were available.

APPENDIX 1

Topic Group Recommendations

In order to properly establish the principles,

- a) Family learning provision is expanded and delivered in all schools of the Borough. This should be accompanied by regular assessment of activity levels, and input requirements.
This would further involve particular targeting of specific schools and monitoring of degree of take up/lack of take up by schools. Progress reporting at six monthly intervals to E.L.S PPB. This review to identify any arising issues or further actions. [proposed lead – Adult Learning and Skills Division in partnership with Children and Young People]
- b) The overall level of employability provision in the borough is increased to reflect need as opposed to funding formulae. This should include enhanced L.S.C. and D.W.P. provision such as Train to Gain/NVQ's (i.e. full qualifications) but also establish a core principle that equally non qualification based training is a priority. Particularly during economic

downturn to support anti – recession measures.
[Proposed lead – Employment Learning Skills SSP,
partner organisations as commissioners of Services]

- c) The way in which the LSC’s Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (N.L.D.C.) grant is awarded and is scrutinised more closely through the inclusion of a PPB Member (nominated by the chair of ELS PPB) on the Awards Panel and through regular 6 monthly performance reports to the PPB. [Proposed lead – Adult Learning and Skills Development Division].
- d) Riverside College to be requested to re-commit to the Employment Learning and Skills SSP and ensure attendance at meetings. [Proposed lead – Employment Learning and Skills S.S.P chair]
- e) Children’s Centres are developing a Volunteer Training Programme, which includes support from Adult Learning & Skills Development. It is recommended that the Adult Learning Division, work be on developing their “Learning Champions” through a volunteer/mentoring programme that compliments the work that the Children’s Centres are doing. Those that join this programme would need to be trained in offering one to one learner support to adults, identifying their needs and supporting individuals with skills for life. The aim would be to provide regular one to one support to people who will be seeking to improve their Skills for Life. [Proposed lead – Adult Learning and Skills Development Division]
- f) The Strategic Director Environment sends a letter to the Secretary of State in relation to the new qualifications and rules for teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector explaining how these will impact negatively on some, existing staff and will act as a barrier for using volunteers. These effects will therefore be detrimental to support offered to post 16 learners. [Proposed lead – Adult Learning and Skills Development Division]
- g) The level of pre – level 2 provision in the Borough is increased in recognition that moving from no or few qualifications to full level 2 is sometimes too big a jump for some learners. The balance of such provision to be monitored by ELS PPB. [Proposed lead – Employment Learning and Skills SSP partners]

organisations as commissioners of services]

- h) The LSC (and it's success the Skills Funding Agency from 2011) should publish and regularly update the list of Train to Gain providers in order to provide greater clarity for businesses and other public sector providers. And that the LSC (and it's successor) be requested to deliver an annual presentation on Halton Skills to the ELS PPB. [Proposed lead – LSC]
- i) As a matter of urgency the LSC should commission Train to Gain and other services on the basis of local targets and penetration rates in order to ensure that all areas benefit from national programmes and to ensure skills gaps are closed between more deprived areas and the rest of the country. The ELS PPB should seek to maintain any progress on this recommendation. [Proposed lead – LSC]
- j) That Corporate Services PPB (supported by ELS PPB) is requested as a matter of urgency to consider ways that the Corporate Training Centre could be used to support skills development of workless and low skilled people. Further, that consideration is given to the development of a corporate core-training offer covering a clear range of factors. For Example, clusters and schedules of training, perhaps all team leaders must be corporately trained in x, y ,z or defined timescales for a new staff member to undertake corporate induction. [Proposed lead – Corporate Services PPB]
- k) As part of the Efficiency Programme, that consideration should be given to the dispersed nature of training activity within the Council with a view to establishing the merits of bringing training activity more together. This may involve regular reviewing of internal and external needs and formalising any necessary scheduling. This may provide a more meaningful range of provision, which is responsive to the needs of staff/managers/changing agendas, etc. [Proposed lead – Business Efficiency Board]
- l) Regular good news stories/statistics are fed into ELS PPB meetings and into the press along with business needs data. [Proposed lead – Adult Learning and Skills Development Division]
- m) The time it takes to recruit staff through H.R. procedures is reduced in order to maximise the draw

down of external funding and to speed up delivery of employment and skills programmes. This would also benefit new recruits who may suffer from delayed start dates. With regard to reducing unemployment locally, closer working between H.R. and Halton People into Jobs may implement a more reactive process. This should be explored as a matter of urgency. [Proposed lead – Corporate and Policy]

- n) The Council recommences core funding for adult learning in order to increase service provision and reduce the skills gaps that exist between Hanlon and the rest of the North West. [Proposed lead – Management Team]

Meeting ended at 9.50 p.m.

1st April

E.L.S. Topic Group Recommendations Final Draft

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- g) The level of pre – level 2 provision in the Borough is increased in recognition that moving from no or few qualifications to full level 2 is sometimes too big a jump for some learners. The balance of such provision to be monitored by ELS PPB. [Proposed lead – Employment Learning and Skills SSP partners organisations as commissioners of services]
- h) The LSC (and it's success the Skills Funding Agency from 2011) should publish and regularly update the list of Train to Gain providers in order to provide greater clarity for businesses and other public sector providers. And that the LSC (and it's successor) be requested to deliver an annual presentation on Halton Skills to the ELS PPB. [Proposed lead – LSC]
- i) As a matter of urgency the LSC should commission Train to Gain and other services on the basis of local targets and penetration rates in order to ensure that all areas benefit from national programmes and to ensure skills gaps are closed between more deprived areas and the rest of the country. The ELS PPB should seek to maintain any progress on this recommendation. [Proposed lead – LSC]
- j) That Corporate Services PPB (supported by ELS PPB) is requested as a matter of urgency to consider ways that the Corporate Training Centre could be used to support skills development of workless and low skilled people. Further, that consideration is given to the development of a corporate core-training offer covering a clear range of factors. For Example, clusters and schedules of training, perhaps all team leaders must be corporately trained in x, y ,z or defined timescales for a new staff member to undertake corporate induction. [Proposed lead – Corporate Services PPB]
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- n) The Council recommences core funding for adult learning in order to increase service provision and reduce the skills gaps that exist between Halton and the rest of the North West. [Proposed lead – Management Team]