

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 7 July 2009 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Jones (Chairman), Edge (Vice-Chairman), Austin, M. Bradshaw, Findon, Howard, Loftus, Parker, Rowe, Stockton and Worrall

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: H. Cockcroft, G. Collins, M. Simpson, C. Taylor and A. Villiers

Also in attendance: H. Patel – Citizens Advice Bureau

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

		<i>Action</i>
ELS1	MINUTES	
	The Minutes from the meeting held on 9 th March 2009 having been printed and circulated were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
ELS2	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
	It was reported that no public questions had been received.	
ELS3	EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
	It was reported that there were no minutes from the Executive Board or Executive Board Sub-Committee that were relevant to the Employment Learning and Skills PPB since the last meeting.	
ELS4	SSP MINUTES	
	The Board received the minutes of the Employment Learning and Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership Meeting	

held on 14th May 2009, which outlined the following.

- End of year performance review – new performance framework arrangements.
- Sub-Group reports
- Employment
- NEET (Not in education, employment or training)
- 3MG update and Inward Investment
- Migration Fund
- Future Jobs Fund
- Risk Register
- Sustainable Community Strategy Review and LSP Matters.

In receiving the Minutes the Board discussed 4.2 in relation to the financial inclusion topic group. It was reported that this would be established after the Summer and an email asking Board Members for participation on this group would be sent in the near future.

The Board was informed of a schools project which colleges were currently working on that related to having a single document for each student that provided a detailed record of courses attended and qualifications obtained. It was reported that this had been trialled in South Liverpool and had been effective. A draft document of this type would be circulated to Members for information.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

ELS5 TOPIC GROUP - WORKFORCE & SKILLS FOR THE LOGISTICS INDUSTRY - SUMMARY REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which provided an update on the ideas put forward in June 2008 to identify the future skills needs within the logistics sector in Halton and to assess whether existing activity would meet those needs, including the identification of opportunities for improved performance. In addition the report set out to explore in-work training opportunities within logistics companies in the Borough.

The Board was advised that the recommendations would lead to an improvement in the employment opportunities within logistics, particularly in terms of Halton's long term unemployed adult residents.

It was further noted that the Urban Renewal Policy

and Performance Board (PPB) in January 2008 selected this topic as a joint topic group with the ELS PPB. The joint topic group had met regularly since its inception and debated matters relating to the terms of reference and the recommendations. It was noted that work on furthering this topic had been undertaken and a clear understanding had been reached on various issues which were outlined in the report. The Halton Employment Partnership had also been established and support had been given by key partners which were detailed in the report.

It was reported that a Halton Investors' Handbook had been produced, specifically tailored to the logistics sector and set out the skills and recruitment offer of the Halton Employment Partnership. A pilot skills and recruitment offer was being tested with the first occupier at 3MG. It was noted that this pilot could be rolled out to all future occupiers on 3MG and boroughwide.

Arising from the discussion Members requested that an update report from the Topic Group be presented to the ELS PPB in the near future.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) approval is given to Council Officers to conclude the work of this Topic Group and a final report be brought back to a future meeting of this Board;
- (2) the recruitment model for the 3MG development is tested including feedback on:
 - a. Number of applicants
 - b. Number of interviews
 - c. Number of successful job outcomes for Halton residents of which:
 - i. % are from LSOAs
 - ii. Age breakdown
 - iii. Gender
- (3) Skills for Life Support (Maths, English, ICT) is embedded within any skills roll out relating to logistics training;
- (4) the 3MG development makes full use of apprenticeships; and
- (5) real case studies evidencing progression opportunities within the logistics sector were

identified and positive promotion of those were actively encouraged.

ELS6 QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORTS

The Board received a report of the Chief Executive which outlined progress against service plan objectives and performance targets, performance trends/comparisons and factors affecting services for economic regeneration and culture and leisure for the 4th quarter.

The Board was advised of a Sub-Group chaired by Councillor Edge which arose from some expressions of interest at the March PPB meeting. The purpose of the Sub-Group was to obtain more effective scrutiny across the PPB. A draft terms of reference for the performance group was tabled at the meeting and Councillor Edge outlined its intended scope, which included highlighting areas for improvement, both in performance itself in the systems for reporting performance, with a view to strengthening scrutiny.

It was made clear that the performance group was to complement and enhance the work of the PPB itself, and not to be a substitute for it, away from the public gaze: and also that it was early days for the group which it was hoped would evolve and increasingly add value as time went on.

It was reported that the first preliminary meeting of the performance group had been held and notes from this meeting would be circulated to Members of the Employment Learning and Skills PPB. Arising from the discussion, Members felt that this was a positive step towards effective scrutiny that might be rolled out across all PPBs. The Board wished to congratulate Councillor Edge for progressing this initiative and for the work that had taken place.

In relation to the performance monitoring for the 4th quarter, the following points were noted.

- the Merseyside Primary Games had taken place and had proved useful in looking towards 2012;
- work at Halton Lea Library was on target. It would be closed between the 15th July to the 13th August for the final work to take place and the shelves and books would be re-stocked. Relocation to a shop unit in Halton Lea Shopping Centre would also commence;

- the Community Safety Team would be moving to Widnes Waterfront in the near future;
- at the time of producing these reports the data was not available from the Place Survey. This was now in place and would need moderating and would be available for Members in the near future;
- the Board requested an invite to all Members of the PPB to have a visit to the new Halton Lea Library once the work had been completed.
- Simms Cross Rugby Club had celebrated their 40th birthday and the Board wished to congratulate them on the achievement of the 6 trophies won in a season as follows:

NWC Premier Division Champions;
 Lancashire Cup Winners
 Premiership Division Cup Winners;
 Widnes Cup Winners;
 Champion of Champions Winners; and
 Tough Tackle Trophy Award.

The Board requested that a letter of commendation be written from this Board to the Simms Cross Rugby Team.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the 4th quarter performance management reports be received;
- (2) the terms of reference for the performance group be endorsed; and
- (3) a letter of commendation be written from the ELS PPB Board to Simms Cross Rugby Team in light of their success and victory over the past year.

ELS7 ECONOMIC CLIMATE / RECESSION UPDATE

The Board received a presentation by Hitesh Patel, the Chief Executive of the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) in Halton entitled "The Economic Downturn Halton CAB's Perspective". The presentation outlined the following:

- what we are seeing eg; increases in debt handled by

- CAB and more employment related cases;
- eight key things the CAB was doing to help people through this difficult time. Since May it was noted that the CAB had doubled the size of the Debt Advice Team, there were now 8.5 full time debt caseworkers. In the last 12 months, eight CAB volunteers had found paid employment;
 - CAB staff were now qualified to help clients qualify for debt relief order;
 - there was a new evening advice service launched;
 - a new extended schools service to help families identified by teachers;
 - more strategic partnership work, more agencies had signed up to use the encrypted on-line referral system;
 - the intention to expand volunteer training programmes, waiting lists to join the CAB team now stretched up to September. It was noted that CAB training could qualify for an NVQ and so they were now formulating plans to become an Open University “Accredited Learning Centre”;
 - the CAB was going into schools to give one hours “value for money” workshops to 14 year old students; and
 - the CAB was working in partnership with HBC’s Adult Learning Team to deliver a series of 10 week courses called “making sense of money”.

Arising from the presentation the Board discussed spreading the word regarding the specialist debt relief advice that CAB provided and it was suggested that this be publicised further by advertising through Registered Social Landlord leaflets, Inside Halton and Parish Council news letters at minimal cost.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Patel for an informative presentation.

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment which provided an update on the economic impacts of the present economic climate. It was reported that the Council and its partners had been working hard for many years to reduce unemployment in the Borough. Key elements in reducing unemployment included improving skills, promoting enterprise, reclaiming derelict sites, environmental and infrastructure improvement and facilitating private sector investment. Appended to the report were the headline unemployment figures for Halton and it was noted that in the present economic climate,

unemployment had been clearly increasing. Other unemployment statistics and the Future Jobs Fund DWP summary were also outlined in the report for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report and presentation be received; and
- 2) further means of advertising CAB debt relief advice services be investigated.

ELS8 STANDING ORDER 51

The Board was reminded that Standing Order 51 of the Council's Constitution stated that meetings should not continue beyond 9.00pm.

RESOLVED: That Standing Order 51 be waived for 30 minutes.

ELS9 EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR CARE LEAVERS

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Young People which provided an update on the current situation for Care Leavers and information about proposals for the future.

It was reported that although there had been some improvement, it had been known for some time that young people who left care were over represented in the Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) figures in Halton. The Board was advised that Connexions data had showed that in November 2006 only 20% of 19 year old care leavers were in some form of education, employment or training. In November 2007, the figure was 30% and by November 2008, it was almost 45%. Members were advised that whilst this was an improvement it did not compare favourably with over 62% for the general 19 year old population who were in EET in Halton.

The Board was informed there was a duty on Halton Borough Council to act as parent for care leavers and the Children in Care Pledge was to be considered by Executive Board in July. The report detailed the progress made and actions taken so far in addition to the implementation of an Employment Policy for Care Leavers. However, unfortunately it was noted that the Employment Policy has

had little impact. In the past 12 months Members were advised that three care leavers had received employment training or experience. It was reported that no care leavers were currently employed full time and permanently by Halton Borough Council.

Arising from the discussion, Members raised concerns as to why so few care leavers were in education or training. It was suggested that a letter be written to the Chief Executive and the Strategic Directors requesting that greater emphasis be put on implementation of this policy in a more serious nature. It was also suggested that the Executive Portfolio for Children and Young People be notified of the Board's strength of feeling comments and actions on this issue.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the report be noted; and

(2) the Chief Executive and Strategic Directors be contacted to ascertain why this policy had not been implemented with more vigour across all Directorates.

ELS10 LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT REFRESH AND UPDATE REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which outlined the progress made towards meeting Local Area Agreement targets at the end of the first year of the Agreement.

The Board was advised that the revised Local Area Agreement (LAA) was signed off by the Secretary of State in June 2008. The purpose of the LAA was to agree a set of targets for Halton with Government and local partners. It was noted that named partners had a duty to co-operate in striving to achieve those targets. There were 32 indicators in the LAA, together with statutory education and early years targets. The agreement covered the period April 2009 to March 2011.

The Board was advised that the agreement was "refreshed" in March 2009. The indicators and targets were reviewed with Government Office and there were a number of gaps and estimates in the original agreement, The principle changes made were to fill these gaps using

information that had become available between June 2008 and March 2009 such as the results of the Places Survey. A summary of the changes were attached as an appendix to the report for Members' consideration.

It was further advised that the economic downturn would inevitably have an impact on the likelihood of achieving some targets relating to the economy and housebuilding, and the Government had identified a list of indicators for which targets would be reviewed before the end of March 2010, by which time the impact of the downturn would be clearer.

Members were further advised that progress over the first year of the Agreement was attached at Appendix 2, covering those indicators which fell within the responsibilities of this particular Policy and Performance Board. This was based on the targets in the refreshed agreement. Members were advised that in reading the report it should be noted that all the national indicators were built into the quarterly service plan monitoring reports and certain indicators were only reported some while after year-end, therefore, in those cases, no progress report was yet available. There were also some survey based indicators for which no further data would be available until the survey was repeated in 2010.

The Board was advised that the LAA reflected the priorities in our community strategy for improving the quality of life in Halton. It was the main mechanism by which Government would performance manage local areas and it was therefore important that the Council monitored progress and that Members were satisfied that adequate plans were in place to ensure that the improvement targets were achieved.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

ELS11 MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Board considered the report of the Strategic Director Corporate and Policy which provided an amended version of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

It was advised that Local Authorities were required to prepare and implement a Sustainable Community Strategy. It was noted that the Council was expected to work with partners through the Local Strategic Partnership to agree

priorities and to engage and involve local communities. It was reported that the current Sustainable Community Strategy was adopted in 2006 and contained the long-term vision and objectives with delivery targets for the period 2006 – 2011. It was advised that since it was prepared a number of changes had taken place which made it necessary to conduct a mid-term review of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Board was informed that this was an update and not a complete revision.

The Board was advised that the recent perception surveys and the revised State of the Borough Report 2009 confirmed that the underlying vision and priorities from 2006 remained relevant. Widespread engagement had not therefore been undertaken for this mid-term review. However, in 2010/11 work would commence on a full review and roll forward of the strategy with wide engagement and would link up with work being done on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

The main objectives of this mid-term review were outlined in the report for Members consideration. The draft of the mid-term review had been drawn up following consultation with partners and was considered by the Halton Strategic Partnership Board on 20th May 2009. It was reported that the revised Sustainable Community Strategy had to be adopted by full Council as per the Local Government Act 2000. Following consultation with the Policy and Performance Board it was planned to take the final draft to the full Council meeting on 22nd July with a recommendation from Executive Board for final adoption. The draft mid-term review document was included within the report for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That the draft mid term review of the Sustainable Community Strategy be received.

ELS12 ANNUAL REPORT

The Board received their annual report which covered the period April 2009 to March 2009. The Chairman thanked Officers and Councillors for their work throughout the year.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report for 2008/09 be received.

Meeting ended at 9.30 p.m.