

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

*At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 13 January 2010 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Jones (Chairman), Austin, M. Bradshaw, Findon, Howard, Loftus, Parker and Stockton

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Edge and Worrall

Absence declared on Council business: Councillor None

Officers present: M. Simpson, H. Cockcroft, G. Fitzpatrick, N. Goodwin, J. Hatton, A. Villiers and W Rourke

Also in attendance: C Billingsley and S. Nixon – Job Centre Plus

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

*Action*

At the start of the meeting the Chairman introduced and welcomed Wesley Rourke who had been appointed as Lead Officer to the ELS PPB, as a result of the ongoing re-structure of the Council. The Board wished to place on record their thanks and appreciation for the input and expertise Gary Collins contributed to the Board over the past few years.

#### **ELS35 MINUTES**

The minutes from the meeting held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2009, having been printed and circulated were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

#### **ELS36 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES**

The Board considered the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board and the Executive Board Sub-Committee relevant to the Employment learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board.

**RESOLVED:** That that the minutes be received.

## ELS37 SSP MINUTES

The Board received the minutes of the Employment Learning and Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership Meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009.

In receiving the minutes the Board showed interest in the World EXPO Shanghai event and requested a report be brought back to the next meeting providing details of the event.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the minutes be noted; and
- 2) a report providing details of the XPO Shanghai event, be brought back to the next Board meeting.

## ELS38 PRESENTATION: JOB CENTRE PLUS

The Board received a presentation from Colin Billingsley – External Relations and Sue Nixon – Operations Manager of Job Centre Plus, which outlined the following:

- priorities for 2010;
- targets;
- delivery from Runcorn and Widnes Jobcentres;
- services and schemes provided for 18-24 and over 25's'
- young persons guarantee;
- the partnership offer;
- employer's offer;
- response to the economic situation;
- Halton Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) Count for under 25's
- Halton JSA Count per ward; and
- breakdown of Halton's working age benefit recipients.

Arising from the presentation the Board asked the following questions:

- how were customers assessed to establish if basic skills training was required and who provided it?
- were there specific advisors who dealt with disabled people and specialised in work programmes for disabled people;

Strategic Director  
- Health and  
Community

Strategic Director  
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- how closely did JCP staff work with connexions and where the numbers of young people 16-18 increasing; and
- was support provided in terms of transport for customers?

In response the following was noted:

- advisors had been trained to identify whether basic skills training was required then the customer was given a test, following this depending on the result training would be arranged. Members requested that linkages be established in this process with the Council's specialist basic skills teams and staff in adult learning.
- there were trained disability advisors who offered various pathways to work programmes to disabled customers;
- a lot of work was carried out alongside Connexions and there was a dedicated Connexions advisor working with youngsters. Statistically the NEET figures were improving; and
- travel to interview schemes were in place and depending on individual situations travel support could be offered in order to help customers attend training and meetings with their advisors.

The Board discussed further issues around the need for Job Centre Plus (JCP) to reach further into the community and the importance of partnership working and engaging with local employers. The Board also considered the Future Jobs Fund and it was reported that the latest figures showed that there were now 255 people eligible for jobs from the Future Jobs Fund. Members were invited to visit the Job Centre Plus at any time they wished.

The Chairman thanked Colin and Sue for an informative presentation.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) The presentation be noted; and
- 2) Co-working be investigated with the Council's adult learning and basic skills team with the Job Centre Plus advisors.

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which provided information for the Mid-Year Monitoring Report for Voluntary Sector Core Funding in 2009/10.

It was reported that the Council had awarded eleven Core Grants in 2009/10 which were outlined in the report for information. It was noted that those organisations who were awarded over £5,000 were subject to a Service Level Agreement and had to provide quarterly monitoring. Those organisations who received under £5,000 provided six monthly performance monitoring information.

Appended to the report was the performance breakdown for the individual organisations for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

It was further noted that all but one organisation were forecast to meet expected targets and fulfil their Service Level Agreements. Cheshire Victims Support performance had dipped and a meeting had been scheduled in December 2009 to discuss the issue.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

#### ELS40 PUBLIC LIBRARY REVIEW

The Board received a presentation of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which required the Board to consider how the Council might wish to respond to the national review of public libraries.

It was reported that on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2009 the Culture Minister, Margaret Hodge launched a two month consultation seeking the views of a wide range of people on the future of public libraries. The consultation document took the form of 29 "think pieces" (short essays) from invited thinkers commentators and leaders in library services as well as individuals working in retail, digital media, education, publishing and local government on how to make libraries fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The five significant challenges to be addressed were set out in the report for information. In addition, appended to the report was a consultation paper which included 23 questions.

It was further noted that the paper and the questions

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had had a mixed review from the industry". There seemed little new information since the last review of libraries (Framework for the Future 10<sup>th</sup> February 2003) in which a vision for a national library service was set out. It was noted that it did not attempt to define any national standards which remained a weakness since the removal of the national performance indicators.

The Board was asked to consider the questions posed and recommend how, if at all, the authority could respond.

It was reported that a response from Merseyside was currently being drafted and Members agreed that a Merseyside response would be more beneficial. The Board also agreed that the library service should remain statutory to the Council.

Members were asked to forward any suggestions they had regarding questions from the survey to Howard Cockcroft by Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2010.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Board recommend a Merseyside response to the Government's national consultation on the public library service be formulated; and
- (2) the Board forward any suggestions regarding the nature of the questions posed in the consultation paper to Howard Cockcroft by 21<sup>st</sup> January 2010.

#### ELS41 EMPLOYMENT LEARNING AND SKILLS PPB WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which was the first step in developing a work programme of topics for the Board to examine in 2010/11.

It was reported that the key tasks for Board members were:

- to suggest and gather Topic ideas on issues relevant to the Board's remit;
- to develop and prioritise a shortlist of possible Topics for examination in 2010/11, bearing in mind the Council's

agreed selection criteria (Annex 1); and

- to decide on a work programme of 2 or 3 Topics to be undertaken in the next Municipal Year.

The Board was advised that prior to determining their preferred Topics, the Board may wish to take soundings from relevant Executive board portfolio holders, the SSP and other key partners. It was further noted that the Board would shortly be concluding a number of existing topics including “Barriers to Work” the planned topic on “Financial Inclusion” was yet to commence and it may be sensible to carry this over into 2010/11.

Arising from the discussion Members noted that in view of the economic downturn, a focus on the increase in un-employment after 2 years, and what the Council could do should be considered. The Board also discussed the forthcoming take over of Connexions and the possibility of a Topic Group could look at in terms of providing education and opportunities to young people.

Members were requested to send any suggestions to the Chairman by the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2010.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the Policy and Performance Board Members forward any Topic suggestions to the Chairman by 28<sup>th</sup> January 2010; and

(2) decide at its 8<sup>th</sup> March meeting on a work programme of 2 or 3 Topics to be examined in 2010/11.

#### ELS42 STANDING ORDER 51

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

RESOLVED: That Standing Order 51 be waived for 15 minutes.

#### ELS43 LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT PERFORMANCE

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which provided information on the progress towards meeting Halton's Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets to September 2009.

It was reported that the revised LAA was signed off by the Secretary of State in June 2008. The LAA contained a set of measures and targets agreed between the Council, local partner agencies and government. There were 32 indicators within the LAA along with statutory and education and early years targets. The current Agreement covered the period April 2008 to March 2011.

It was noted that the LAA was refreshed in March 2009 following a review with Government Office North West. It was not expected that there would be many significant changes to the Agreement, excepting those areas affected by the downturn in the national economy, such as measures relating to the local economy and house-building. As a consequence of this the government had identified a list of indicators for which targets would be reviewed before the end of March 2010.

Appended to the report was information on progress to 2009/10 mid-year which included those indicators and targets that fell within the remit of the Policy and Performance Board.

It was reported that the Sustainable Community Strategy for Halton and the LAA contained within it was the main mechanism through which Government would performance manage local areas. It was therefore important that the Council monitor progress and that Members were satisfied that adequate plans were in place to ensure that the Council and its partners achieved the improvement targets that had been agreed.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

#### ELS44 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 first quarter were outlined in the report.

Members discussed the under-spend in the Local Strategic Partnership outcomes and it was noted that these were expected to even out as they were just becoming established. It was further reported that the possibility was being explored of a performance group that would sit below the Specialist Strategic Partnerships to look at the detail of outcomes and to ensure that targets initially set were being achieved. It was agreed that a report regarding this would be brought to a future meeting.

The Board noted their congratulations to Ditton and Grangeway Community Centres for receiving the most improved performer award.

RESOLVED: That the second quarter Performance Management Reports be received.

#### ELS45 MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE MONITORING GROUP

The Board considered the notes of the Employment, Learning and Skills Performance Group which outlined the monitoring processes and procedures. It was noted that Members had set out issues they had with the present arrangements and indicated the kind of features they would like to see in an improved system, details of which were outlined in the Minutes for information.

RESOLVED: That the notes of the Employment, Learning and Skills Performance Group be noted.

*Meeting ended at 9.15 p.m.*