

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING, SKILLS AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 26 March 2012 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Edge (Chairman), P. Lloyd Jones (Vice-Chairman), Howard, Macmanus, Parker, C. Plumpton Walsh, Roberts, Rowe and Zygodllo

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Carlin and Horabin

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: J. Briggs, W Rourke and M. Simpson

Also in attendance: Councillor Jones in accordance with Standing Order 33

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

ELS38 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 11th January 2012, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

ELS39 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.

ELS40 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Board considered the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board relevant to the Employment Learning and Skills and Community portfolio since the last meeting of the Board.

In relation to EXB94, Members requested that bi-annual update reports be brought to the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Board also.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.

ELS41 SSP MINUTES

The Board received the Minutes of the Employment Learning and Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership Meeting from 13th February 2012.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.

ELS42 MERSEY GATEWAY AND TOURISM POTENTIAL

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which outlined the potential for tourism relating to the construction of the Mersey Gateway.

It was noted that with the progress now being made on the construction of the Mersey Gateway, a scoping paper which was appended to the report for information, had been developed to consider the potential impact it could have on tourism in the Borough. It was reported that if benefits were to be maximised, it was important to plan proactively rather than be reactive to opportunities as they arose. Members were advised that by bringing the report to the Board early it would enable a considered approach to be developed in the future in partnership with local tourism operators and the future concessionaire.

The report set out the potential tourism benefits and possible activities through a number of case studies of construction related projects. Key elements of a response as detailed in the report were set out as follows:-

- Viewing Points;
- Virtual Viewing Platform;
- Marketing and Promotion;
- Contractor Involvement;
- Employment and Skills; and
- Local Heritage Context.

It was further noted that working in partnership would be very important and there a number of hotels and tourist operators already interested in working together and a number had volunteered to be part of a delivery group.

Arising from discussion of the report the following points were noted:

- market research could be carried out in order to establish the market among customers and their needs;
- links could be made with Norton Priory as it was reported that the earliest Mersey Crossing was made from there; and
- plans were being investigated for a joint project with the Liner Port of Liverpool.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the potential for tourism activity related to the construction of the Mersey Gateway.

ELS43 THE HALTON EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIP (HEP) AND TESCO EXTRA STORES RECRUITMENT PROJECT

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which provided an update on the HEP/Tesco Extra Store recruitment project which the Halton Employment Partnership was currently supporting with the aim of supporting local unemployed people into jobs at the new Widnes store.

It was reported that the HEP was approached in May 2011 to meet with the Regeneration Partnership Manager of Tesco Stores Limited and Job Centre Plus to discuss the recruitment of staff to the Widnes Tesco store set to open in March 2012. It was further noted that since HEP had a commitment of assisting local people into local jobs and to support inward investors, it was agreed that HEP would support Tesco with their Regeneration Partnership programme of pre-employment training and recruitment.

Members were advised that five planning meetings had taken place between June and November between Tesco Stores and HEP and discussions covered many aspects of the Regeneration Programme and from this a delivery programme was agreed between partners which was set out in the report for information.

The report further set out promotion of the Tesco programme, the opening of a hotline, Tesco Open Days, Interview Skills Workshops, Interviews, Induction Day and Pre-Employment Training.

A further update was presented to Members as more information had been gathered since the report had been written. In particular it was noted that 100 local people were invited to attend a pre-employment course and 94 of these had been offered a contract to work in the Store. It was further noted that the new Tesco Superstore opened on 26 March 2012 and positive feedback was read out to Members in relation to the excellent staff performance on their first day of employment in the store.

The Board requested an update be brought back to a future meeting providing details of how many staff from the scheme were still employed by Tesco in 6 months time.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the Board recognise HEP as the key agent for the delivery and implementation of large recruitment projects within the Borough; and
- (3) an update report be brought back to a future meeting providing details of staff retention at the new Tesco Site.

Strategic Director
- Children and
Enterprise

ELS44 QUARTERLY POLICY UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources which informed Members of recent national policy announcements relevant to employment, learning and skills.

It was reported that a steady flow of policy announcements, consultation exercises, reports and ministerial statements were issued by Government departments and agencies that had varying degrees of relevance to issues on the employment, learning and skills agenda and related topics.

The report set out brief summaries of key announcements to the Board for information along with observations of local relevance, where appropriate. This provided the opportunity for board Members to consider whether to initiate more detailed scrutiny and/or reports to future meetings. The report set out the following:-

- Regional Growth Fund;
- Unlocking Growth in Cities;
- Building Engagement, Building Futures BIS/DWP;
- Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) 16 – 19 Statement;
- UK Commission for Employment and Skills announced preferred providers for the delivery of standards and frameworks;
- National Audit Office Report into the launch of the Work Programme; and
- Action to safeguard and improve the quality and standards of apprenticeships.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(NB: Councillor Parker declared a personal interest in the following item due to being the Chair of the Appeals Panel which considered a case against Halton Community Transport).

ELS45 POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which set out scrutiny of Halton Community Transport as part of the 2011/12 work programme.

Members were advised that for the Halton Community Transport Working Group which was now under consideration, a report had also been presented to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on 14th March 2012. It was reported that the Scrutiny Topic Group would review Halton Community Transport's operations and determine whether it was providing the service and value for money that the Council would expect.

In addition, due to the immediate need to establish the Group (as budget savings proposals for 2012/13 were being recommended) nominations from Members had been sought. Those subsequently nominated were Councillors Hignett, Gerrard, A. Lowe, Edge, Nolan, Zygadlo and E. Cargill. The Group had already met on several occasions prior to this meeting and a topic brief had been prepared and was appended to the report for information.

Members were advised that discussions had taken place as to whether the Council could provide the same level of service more cost effectively. However, it had been determined that this would not be possible. Members discussed whether the Social Services' fleet of vehicles were able to provide the service and fully cater for the disabled needs that the Council had to provide to the public and, again, it had been determined that it was more cost-effective to use Halton Community Transport.

The Board also raised the issue of communication to service users in relation to charges and any changes that could take place. The Board agreed to endorse the topic brief appended to the report.

RESOLVED: That the work of Halton Community Transport (HCT) Working Group and the topic brief be endorsed.

ELS46 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY
PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 2011-16 AND MID YEAR
PROGRESS REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources which provided information on the progress in achieving targets within the 2011 – 2016 Sustainable Community Strategy for Halton.

The Board was advised that selected measures and targets for Employment Learning Skills and Community priority were summarised in Appendix 1 to the report, using the Halton corporate template, designed for the purpose of bringing together all relevant items of performance information.

Arising from discussion of the report, Members commented on the data in Appendix 1 for business, births and deaths in that the information was only provided for 2009. In response it was noted that the data was produced two years in arrears as this was how performance information was produced for that performance indicator.

In relation to the reduction of the proportion of people with no qualifications, it was queried whether the figure for 2010/11 being 12.8% was an actual statistic or an estimation. In response it was noted that this answer would be sought and provided to Members of the Board. In addition, Members noted the employment statistics for when one employer recruits 1,000 jobs this statistic would only show as one employer and whether an additional indicator would be added to indicate the number of jobs created. It was noted that this would be investigated further.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

ELS47 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORTS FOR
QUARTER 3 OF 2011/12

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources which set out the Quarterly Monitoring Reports for the third quarter of 2011/12 to December 2011. The report detailed progress against service objectives/milestones and performance targets and describes factors affecting the service for:-

- Economy Enterprise and Property extracts for Employment Learning and Skills; and
- Community Service namely Library Services and

other Culture and Leisure Services.

The Board discussed Appendix 1 and the relationship that Halton Borough Council had with Blue Orchid as HBC was unsuccessful in its bid to secure the new Enterprise Allowance Contract. However, it was noted that there was a recognised need of demand from an area within the Borough.

RESOLVED: That the quarterly monitoring report be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.20 p.m.