

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

*At a meeting of the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 5 June 2013 in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall*

Present: Councillors Edge (Chairman), Howard, P. Lloyd Jones, Logan, MacManus, Parker, Roberts and Zygadlo

Apologies for Absence: Councillor C. Plumpton Walsh

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: L. Faint, J. Griffiths, T. Leather, P. Reilly-Cooper, W Rourke, S. Saunders, M. Simpson and D. Unsworth

Also in attendance: Councillor Jones in accordance with Standing Order No. 33

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

		<i>Action</i>
ELS1	MINUTES	
	The Minutes from the meeting held on 25 March 2013, 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	
	The Board considered the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board relevant to the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Portfolio since the last meeting of the Board.	
	RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.	
ELS4	QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORTS	
	The Board received a report of the Strategic Director,	

Policy and Resources, which set out the Priority Based Performance Management Report for the fourth quarter of 2012/13. The report detailed progress against service objectives/milestones and performance targets as described factors affecting the service, structured by key priorities as stated in section 3.3 of the report.

It was reported that in line with the Council Performance Framework for 2012/13, the PPB had been provided with an ELS&C Priority Based Overview Report which identified the key issues that arose from performance in Quarter 4. The priorities and common areas of focus were set out in the report as follows:

- supporting growth and investment;
- raising skill levels and reducing unemployment; and
- enhancing resident's quality of life.

Members were advised that the two departmental quarterly monitoring reports for Economy, Enterprise and Property, and Community and Environment were available via a link in the report.

In receiving the monitoring reports, the following questions had been submitted and responses given were detailed below:

1. Item 5a page 9 – paragraph 2.1.2  
What is the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) which carried out a mock OFSTED on us and when?

Response

LSIS is funded through the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) although the service would no longer be funded from 1 September 2013 due to Government cuts. LSIS worked on behalf of BIS in supporting learning and skills providers to drive up improvements. This was through a number of strands including training, consultancy, organisation health checks (mock inspections) and through provision of training materials. LSIS undertook a mock inspection on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> February 2013. The division was fortunate to have secured support from LSIS for a number of years which had directly impacted on driving up quality.

2. The main message that the inspection produced was contrary to the official OFSTED report on the same

service (page 82). What was the time scale between the two inspections?

Response

The Ofsted inspection was 23-26 April 2013 (2 months after the LSIS visit)

3. Could the use of the word 'Threats' on item 2.1.2 be explained?

Response

This was from the standard template that LSIS use to pull together their reports from the visit which included a well-used method to sum up findings called a SWOT analysis, (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats).

4. Could you provide the definition of the term "Changing Demands",

Response

The funding for adult learning has changed, there was now more emphasis on accredited provision and on supporting people to gain employability skills and employment. In the past funding had been given as a block grant, however now a large part of funding would be generated based upon outcomes.

5. Has LSIS been sent a copy of the official Ofsted report?

Response

The official report was released in the public domain on 24<sup>th</sup> May and a copy was sent to LSIS

6. Page 10, 2.1.4 – is there any information on what is in the pipeline for the Halton Employment Partnership Team?

Response

The two main projects were the Highways Maintenance contract for Halton and Warrington which Tarmac had been awarded and the other was the Mersey Gateway. The preferred bidder would be announced around the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2013. The HEP was

the main point of referral for all recruitment and training requests that came from the project which was expanded upon in item 6D.

7. Page 10, 2.1.5 – How many Governors attended the presentation about Family Learning?

Response

4 Governors attended.

8. Page 17 CE LI 6 - Could this performance measure be altered or another measure considered as its based on the number of items borrowed rather than figures of computer usage and events etc.

Response

That's correct the measure is not reflective of how people were using the library, however this would be given consideration in the future.

9. Page 17 CE LI 7 – Would the survey be extended to include 14 & 15 year olds as they were not in the target value of 24%?

Response

It was reported that they were not in the target value. The figure came from the Active People Survey which was a national survey that was proposing to include the views of 14 and 15 year olds. This was not confirmed yet and when it was ready to be introduced, Members would be informed.

10. In quarter 3 there was a noticeable shortfall in the income targets for both EEP and CE divisions. Has this improved in quarter 4?

Response

The income targets have improved slightly

Members commented on the reduction in services provided by the Citizens Advice Bureau and the need to deliver support in terms of budgeting skills and money management in light of the welfare reform. The Board also requested further information in relation to the Work Programme Improvement and it was noted that there had been significant improvements over the last two quarters.

RESOLVED: That the quarterly monitoring report and comments made be noted.

ELS5 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY - YEAR END MONITORING REPORT

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

It was reported that the SCS for Halton was the central document for the Council and its partners which provided an evidence-based framework through which actions and shared performance targets had been developed and communicated.

Appended to the report for information was the progress from April 2012 to March 2013, which included a summary of all indicators for the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community priority within the SCS.

Members discussed the withdrawal of funding for the Adult Literacy and Numeracy qualifications from August 2012. It was noted that the courses had been replaced by functional skills which was a different type of qualification but covered similar areas.

The Board wished to place on record congratulations to Riverside College for the improvement in NVQ4 qualifications.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

ELS6 CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which provided an Annual Report of the work carried out by the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board for 2012/13. The report set out work carried out and the recommendations made for work programmes throughout the Municipal Year April 2012 to March 2013.

The Chair wished to place on record her thanks to Members and Officers for their continued support and hard work throughout 2012/13.

The Chair also wished to congratulate the Procurement Team and all those involved, for receiving a best practice award from the Government for the work carried out helping small businesses secure contracts with the authority. Halton was named as one of 10 winners in the 'Best Councils to do business with' category out of 67 entries.

RESOLVED: That the Annual report be noted.

## ELS7 LIBRARY STRATEGY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which set out Halton's Library Strategy in draft format for comment.

It was reported that the library service had a statutory responsibility to provide "a comprehensive and efficient library service" as set out in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. It was further noted that the national library standards did provide a framework for provision of service however they had been abolished and local authorities were able to determine the level and priorities of their own library services.

The Board was informed that the draft Library Strategy, (which was appended to the report for information), defined the priorities for the service in Halton over the next 3 years to ensure Halton fulfilled the statutory responsibilities whilst contributing to the strategic priorities of the Council and delivering service within available resource. The 5 priorities were reported as follows and detailed further in the report:

- inspiring a community of readers and learners;
- employment, enterprise and developing online skills;
- extending access through innovation and new technology;
- providing a relevant and responsive library service; and
- workforce development.

Members were advised that the Strategy took into account previous published reports that advised organisations what their libraries should offer and also focussed on the two current documents that would influence development of the service in the future which were, 'Universal Offers' and 'Envisioning the Library of the Future'. These were outlined in further detail in the report.

Furthermore the report set out the Libraries Vision, strategic objectives, and next steps.

Arising from discussion of the report the following points were made.

- availability of digital records for non-library users and provision of local history material and memorabilia being available through a portal website;
- library usage figures of people from outside the borough were low;
- the key challenge for the service to continuously improve and modernise the delivery of service and the ongoing commitment to technological innovation for new and existing users;
- Members queried whether Job Centre Plus were helping to fund Work Clubs in libraries. In response it was noted that JCP would support the Council through the programme and signpost clients, however the Library Service needed to find a sustainable format to deliver the clubs and were currently re-visiting this.

RESOLVED: That the draft Library Strategy and comments made be noted.

#### ELS8 READ ON – VOLUNTEER READERS' PROJECT

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which informed Members of the launch of the 'Read On Volunteer Readers' project for 2013 including its origins and progress to date.

It was reported that the latest Skills for Life Survey (2011) showed that the number of adults at Entry 1 level or below had actually increased from 3.4% in 2003 to 5% in 2011. In Halton 6.5% of the adult population were at Entry level 1 or below which was equivalent to the reading ability of a Reception aged child. Appropriate provision to support adults in Halton was an identified gap with public funding focussed on Levels 1 and above. It was further noted that the Read On Volunteers project was meeting the identified need in the Borough. The report set out in detail the different elements of the project including how volunteers were selected and interviewed, how it had been supported and ways in which support was provided.

Members received a presentation from Louise Faint, Curriculum Manager, Learning and Development which set

out the following:

- details of the project;
- effect of poor reading;
- level of need in the borough;
- training programme & structure of delivery for volunteers;
- benefits for volunteers;
- 2011/12 & 2012/13 cohort;
- 2 x case studies; and
- future plans.

Arising from discussion of the presentation, Members felt that the percentage of adults at Entry level 1 was higher than 6.5% in Halton as many of the people in this category were difficult to reach. The Board noted that the project was a fantastic opportunity to help adults and the case studies had proven results. Furthermore Members welcomed the proposals to include IT usage in the programme in light of the Welfare Reform and online registrations required.

RESOLVED: That the Board welcome the launch of the Read On Volunteer Readers' Project.

#### ELS9 ERDF BUSINESS SUPPORT PROGRAMME

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which informed Members of progress to date with respect to the delivery of the Halton element of the Merseyside Business Support Programme. The Halton element of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funded project was delivered locally by Halton Borough Council.

It was reported that it had been government policy to migrate business support from the public to the private sector. As a consequence a number of business support agencies, which traditionally had played a role in the Borough of Halton had either ceased to exist or curtailed their activities.

As a result, the provision of business support to certain types of companies in the Liverpool City Region (LCR) declined. The LCR Authorities and partners, therefore jointly brought forward a funding bid under ERDF Priority 4.2 to address a number of the gaps in current and future business support provision in the City Region.

It was reported that the ERDF Business Support Programme was based on four key principles, which were



set out in the report for information and that the programme would lever £381,852.41 of European support and Council funding into a series of business support interventions.

The Board received a presentation from Tim Leather, Lead Officer Business Improvement and Growth, and Dave Unsworth, Project Manager, ERDF 4.2 Business Support Programme, which set out the following:

- details of the support programme; specifically the delivery of a comprehensive business diagnostic which generated an Action Plan for Growth for each eligible business. The Action Plan for Growth indicated more specific business support which was delivered at nil cost to the businesses;
- Halton's element was delivery of the initial evaluation;
- duration of the programme, timescales, output and budget;
- update on enquiries, eligibility and referrals;
- areas for support for small, medium enterprises (SME); and explanation of support provided;
- details of eligibility criteria;
- details of suppliers and their specialisms; and
- a flow chart detailing the process.

Arising from discussion of the presentation Members discussed the possibility of SME's challenging the diagnostic provided, the auditing process, the procurement of executive financial management. The Members felt that the service provided was excellent.

The Chair thanked Tim Leather and Dave Unsworth for an informative presentation.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the progress made to date and comments made be noted; and
- 2) the Board welcome the additional investment being allocated to deliver Business Support activities in Halton.

#### ELS10 SCRUTINY TOPIC - WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which provided an update on the topic group which had been established to consider the main aspects of the Welfare Reform changes on Employment

Learning and Skills Provision in the Borough.

It was reported that the group met on 29 April 2013, to discuss a number of considerations the topic group would to debate and assess that would ultimately inform and influence the Council's response to the Welfare Reform Act. The considerations were set out in the report for information.

The group held another meeting met on 23 May where they discussed the following:

- less capacity for CAB to support people due to reduced funding;
- changes to legal aid and the impact this was having;
- the importance of helping people to stay in employment as well as find employment; and
- the development of a mini work programme.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the summary of key considerations and actions from the Topic Group's first meeting be noted; and
- 2) an evaluation report be presented to the Board no later than September 2013.

#### ELS11 OFSTED INSPECTION OF EMPLOYMENT LEARNING & SKILLS DIVISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which provided details of the outcome of the recent Ofsted inspection of the Adult Learning & Skills Development Service.

It was reported that the work carried out by the department was governed by the framework for the inspection of further education and skills. (The Common Inspection Framework), the overall aim of which was to evaluate how efficiently and effectively education and training provision met learners' needs.

It was noted that learning and skills providers received two working days' notice prior to a planned Ofsted inspection. On 19 April, the Adult Learning Service received a call advising that an Ofsted inspection would take place from Tuesday 23 to Friday 26 April and that a team of inspectors would undertake the inspection.

Members were advised that it was agreed to change the scope of the inspection to better reflect the work of the

Adult Learning Service as part of a wider ELS division. The inspection would examine and make 'key aspect' judgements on 3 areas:

- outcomes for learners;
- quality of teaching and assessment; and
- effectiveness of leadership and management.

The report set out the inspection process, an explanation of the grades and their characteristics, the outcomes, key findings and next steps.

The final grades for the Adult Learning Service Ofsted inspection were very positive, as detailed below:

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Overall Effectiveness of provision	Good (2)
• Effectiveness of leadership (1) and management	Outstanding
• Outcomes for learners (1)	Outstanding
• Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good (2)
<b>Curriculum Grades</b>	
• employability (1)	Outstanding
• community learning	Good (2)

Members noted that to have received 3 areas of outstanding practice, was a massive achievement and commended the work of officers and partners involved.

It was further noted that Ofsted were so impressed with Halton's practices, they wished to return in the future to carry out case studies and gain further evidence of good practice to identify models to roll out across other Local Authority provision of Adult Learning.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

*Meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.*