

## **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, 11 November 2013 in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall*

Present: Councillors Edge (Chairman), C. Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chairman), Cassidy, Howard, P. Lloyd Jones, Logan, MacManus, Parker, Roberts and Zygadlo

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Rowe

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Bowen, D. Houghton, C. Patino, W Rourke, S. Saunders and M. Simpson

Also in attendance: None

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

*Action*

#### ELS21 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 16 September 2013, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

#### ELS22 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

#### ELS23 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings 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.

#### ELS24 SSP MINUTES

The Board received the minutes of the Employment, Learning Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership from July

2013.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

ELS25 LOCAL ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT (LEA) -  
PRESENTATION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which provided information on the Local Economic Assessment (LEA). It was noted that the LEA was a key evidence base for the Borough which provided an accurate picture of economic performance.

In relation to the 'Supporting Information' section of the report, Members were advised of a typing error in the second paragraph around the scope of the report detail. The Board was advised that the results of the exercise would be available in July **2014**, rather than 2011.

It was reported that the LEA looked to link in with the strategic priorities of the Liverpool City Region and would be key in providing supporting evidence for funding programmes such as the European funding programme.

Members were advised that the Halton LEA focussed upon key themes that influenced the performance of a given local economy, as follows:

- economic value and growth by sector;
- employment and economic activity;
- skills;
- economic inactivity and unemployment; and
- land and property markets.

It was further noted that, where possible, the draft Halton LEA utilised information contained in previous Halton Economic Reviews to provide a longer timeframe for the analysis of structural changes in the economy of Halton.

Members were advised that the modelling of the future performance of the Economy would be provided by Cheshire East Council utilising the Cheshire and Warrington Economic Model, amended to include Halton.

Arising from consideration of the information, Members discussed the following:

- with regards to the statistics around economic inactivity, clarity was sought for the wording of the

percentage of the economically inactive people who 'did not want a job'

- research / actions being taken in terms of the wider context around average earnings in Halton;
- could more details be provided with regards to apprenticeships that had not been completed as some people had found better paid full time positions; and
- various ways in which the image of Halton Lea could be improved to attract national branded retailers and how marketing exercises could help with this.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the intelligence provided by the Halton Local Economic Assessment be utilised when formulating the key strategic documents of the Council; and
- 2) the comments made be noted.

Strategic Director  
- Children and  
Enterprise

#### ELS26 OUTCOMES OF 2011 SKILLS FOR LIFE SURVEY AND IMPROVEMENTS IN HALTON

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which provided details of the outcomes of the recently published 2011 Skills for Life Survey, and informed Members of the progress made since the 2003 survey results published in 2005.

It was reported that the Skills for Life 2011 Survey was commissioned by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. It was noted that the survey was designed to measure basic skills amongst people aged between 16 and 65 (inclusive) in England.

Members were advised that the aim of the survey was to provide an evidence base upon which the Government could judge what progress had been made on literacy and numeracy amongst adults of working age in England since 2003. The survey also provided a robust evidence of the standard of ICT skills in the population. It was noted that data was available for Local Authorities and model estimates were available at ward level.

It was reported that in Halton there had been a 17% increase in level 2 literacy in 8 years. In numeracy level 2 there had been an 8% increase over 8 years.

The report further set out the Qualifications

Framework, local improvement in literacy and numeracy down to ward level, the 2011 Skills for Life Survey outcomes and the next steps.

Arising from consideration of the information Members discussed levels of education in developing countries and requested that the information be circulated in order to obtain a comparable figure. In response it was noted that this information would be circulated to Members of the Board.

The Board wished to place on record their congratulations to the Learning Centre Team for the excellent results from the survey and the work carried out to date.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

#### ELS27 CHILDREN AND ENTERPRISE QUARTERLY POLICY UPDATE

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which informed Members of recent national policy announcements relevant to employment, learning and skills.

It was reported that a number of policy, legislation, consultation and guidance documents 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, so the Board can consider whether to initiate more detailed scrutiny and/or report to future meetings.

The report set out the following:

- new policy, strategy and statutory guidance;
  - cutting red tape for business improvement districts that helped small shops and local traders;
  - Ofsted single inspection framework;
  - free school lunch for every child in state-funded infant school and disadvantaged students in further education; and
  - changes to early entry at GCSE;

- research, consultations and general information
  - the vanishing high street: the Grimsey Review;
  - Liverpool City Region Combined Authority;
  - locally led delivery projects for raising the participation age;
  - Government proposes ‘SME friendly’ public sector procurement market;
  - Government announces independent reviewer for benefit sanctions;
  - workers see pay packets drop by £30 a week since 2007;
  - Ofsted survey going in the right direction? Evaluation of careers guidance in schools from September 2012;
  - 16-19 accountability, DfE Consultation;
  - Industrial strategy: government and industry in partnership;
  - SEN reforms;
  - Tax-free childcare – HMT consultation and implications for Universal Credit;
  - Daniel Pelka Serious Case Review, Coventry LSCB; and
  - child poverty – CPAG and NCB reports.

In relation to the serious case review Members queried whether Halton had sufficient mechanisms in place in terms of reporting concerns regarding young people to the appropriate agencies. In response it was noted that this information would be circulated.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

ELS28 DRAFT WELFARE REFORM SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which provided the draft Scrutiny Review of the Welfare Reform Topic Group report and recommendations.

It was reported that a scrutiny review working group was established with five Members from the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board, Operational Director, Principal Policy Officer and Partnership Officer. It was noted that the report was commissioned by the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board.

Members were advised that the scrutiny group was a response to the Welfare Reform Act 2012 which represented the biggest change to the welfare system since its conception 60 years ago. The scrutiny review was conducted through a number of means between June and September 2013, details of which were set out in the report for information.

Appended to the report was the Draft Welfare Reform Scrutiny Review which set out the purpose and structure of the report, methodology, a summary of evidence and analysis with findings and conclusion and an overall conclusion. In addition the report provided an action plan with 19 actions, including details of progress on the actions.

Members discussed the difficulties in reaching the people who needed advice the most and effective ways to help them and issues around privacy when using communal computer areas to input personal data.

Furthermore it was felt that with regards to "Membership" of the Scrutiny Working Group the people who provided knowledge and presentations to the topic group also be added to the Membership section of the draft document and that this be duplicated in the supporting information section of the report.

Members considered the recommendations from the draft Welfare Scrutiny Report and agreed that the report be presented to the Executive Board for approval.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board approve the draft Welfare Reform scrutiny review report and recommendations; and
- 2) the report be referred to the Executive Board for consideration and approval.

Strategic Director  
- Children and  
Enterprise

#### ELS29 BUSINESS PLANNING 2014 -17

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which provided the opportunity for Members to contribute to the development of Directorate Business Plans for the coming financial year.

Members were advised that each Directorate of the Council was required to develop a medium-term business plan, in parallel with the budget that was subject to annual

review and refresh. The process of developing such plans for the period 2014-2017 was just beginning.

The Board was further advised that at this stage Members were invited to identify a small number of priorities for development of priorities to development or improvement (possibly 3 or 5) that they would like to see reflected within those plans. Strategic Directors would then develop draft plans which would be available for consideration by Policy and Performance Boards early in the new year.

The report further set out the timeframe for plan preparation, development and endorsement.

RESOLVED: That the content of the report be noted.

*Meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.*