

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

At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills, and Community Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 10 November 2014 in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors Edge (Chairman), MacManus (Vice-Chairman), S. Baker, Cassidy, Howard, P. Lloyd Jones, Logan, Parker, Ratcliffe and Joe Roberts

Apologies for Absence: Councillor C. Plumpton Walsh

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: W Rourke, A. Jones, C. Patino and L. Faint

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

Members and officers observed a minute's silence prior to the start of the meeting to mark the sad passing of Councillor Frank Fraser.

ELS21 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 15 September 2014, 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 meeting of the Executive Board relevant to the Employment, Learning and Skills, and Community Portfolio, since the last meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

ELS24 ADULT LEARNING UPDATE

The Board was advised of the current position of Adult Learning activity within the Borough and received a presentation from Louise Faint, the Adult and Family Learning Curriculum Manager.

It was reported that the Adult and Family Learning curriculum offer had been amended for the 2014-15 academic year to better align with the Council's priorities and reflect on the wider economy. The 2014-15 curriculum contained more accredited provision with a bigger focus on progression routes into further or higher education. Longer courses spanning a full academic year, such as Counselling and a Teaching Assistant course were now offered. It was expected that delivering one course over 3 terms rather than 3 shorter courses would have an impact on the number of learners that would be supported during the coming year.

The following activities were also reported:

- all ICT provision was now being accredited with Functional Skills qualifications starting at Entry Level 1 and progressing through to Level 2 ECDL;
- those established curriculum areas which produced good quality outcomes for learners with lower skills still remained, for example Family Learning and the Volunteer Reading Programme;
- Engagement courses such as cake decorating also remained; and
- All other leisure courses had been cut for 2014-15 with alternative half day workshops being offered in these areas.

Further information was provided on the profile and demographic profile of adults attending Adult / Family Learning Programmes 2013-14. The engagement figures per ward for academic years 2012-13 and 2013-14 were also shown.

Following the presentation the following comments were made and noted:

- Members raised concerns that due to the amendments made in the curriculum, i.e, reductions in non-accredited courses, that this would affect the overall take up of accredited courses, in particular

English and Maths. However it was noted that Maths and English would remain a priority;

- The importance of community learning was acknowledged, as it encouraged people and led them onto other courses;
- Windmill Hill Ward had a low number of adult education participants when compared to other more deprived wards;
- The College did still deliver adult learning programmes although these could be in mixed classes of adults and young learners; and
- The demographic profile showed that the number of men taking up adult education classes was only 26% so far lower than women; also they tended to study mainly ICT.

RESOLVED: That the Board notes the impact and potential of the 2014-15 Adult Learning Programme.

ELS25 EUROPEAN PROGRAMME 2014 - 2020

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which provided an update on the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Programme for Halton 2014 to 2020 and advised on the processes that the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was co-ordinating to support the implementation of the Programme.

It was noted that Members had previously received a presentation on the key elements of the (ESIF)/European Programme and the priorities and themes that had been developed by the Council and partners. Resulting from this Halton had prepared a 'position paper' aimed at presenting to the LEP how Halton could contribute to the delivery of the European Programme; this document was attached at Appendix 1. Appendix 2 outlined the governance arrangements for the programme which had now been agreed by Government. The key points of the Programme and issues raised were discussed in the report, together with the next steps for Halton.

One Member requested to know the Halton allocation; this was £17m and would be spent once the European Programme was approved by the Commission up to 2020. A breakdown of this would be sent to the Board for

information following the meeting. The breakdown showed the LEP Activity priority areas that the funds should be spent in and their yearly allocation. It also showed a further breakdown in Thematic Objectives that were the European priorities.

RESOLVED: That Members note the update on the European (Structural and Investment Funds) Programme 2014-2020.

Strategic Director
- Children and
Enterprise

Councillor Lauren Cassidy joined the meeting at this point.

ELS26 NORTHERN FUTURES

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which provided an update on the recently announced policy initiatives and to advise Members on Halton's response.

The following initiatives were discussed in the report:

- Northern Funds Review;
- Growth Deals; and
- The Adonis Review

It was also reported that the recent referendum on Scotland's independence had re-energised the debate on devolving powers and responsibilities to local areas. It was commented that whatever the future governance arrangements in the North may be, it was important that Halton continued to develop its evidence based approach to economic regeneration.

It was noted that Halton's success in attracting resources to the Borough had been focussed on developing deliverable schemes based on need and demand, set within a strategic regeneration framework of inter-linked schemes. These schemes could then 'be brought off the shelf' to meet funding opportunities and policy opportunities that arose.

RESOLVED: That the Board notes the work the Council has been undertaking to respond to these initiatives.

ELS27 YOUTH EMPLOYMENT GATEWAY

Members were presented with a report which provided information on the Youth Employment Gateway Programme which had commenced at the beginning of November.

It was reported that the Liverpool City Region secured £5.9m of Government investment to deliver a programme to reduce youth unemployment across the City Region over the next three years. It was noted that Knowsley Council was acting as the Accountable Body on behalf of the other City Region Local Authorities. However, each Local Authority had been given an allocation to deliver their scheme in their respective areas.

It was explained that the Programme aimed to support young people aged 18-24 years old, who had been unemployed between 2 and 9 months. Members were referred to Appendix 1 which provided a more detailed explanation of how the Programme would work. Further, Appendix 2 outlined how young people would be referred to the Programme and how the Local Authority would be expected to contribute to the Programme.

In summary, it was commented that this contract would enable the Employment, Learning and Skills Division to work with all levels of young unemployed individuals in the Borough, whilst providing the shorter term unemployed with access to an already established range of employment related interventions and outstanding employability courses. The Programme would also encourage young people to consider self-employment as a career option.

Following Members' discussions the following was noted:

- Concerns were raised over the more deprived Wards and the fact that they had low participation results in such programmes. Members suggested that some wards be targeted differently to encourage engagement with the residents and that an action plan was needed;
- In order to find out more about the Programme, residents should visit the Job Centre Plus (JCP) in the first instance;
- A portion of the funding would go towards the apprenticeship scheme;
- The encouragement of self-employment amongst young people was supported, although not without warning them of the financial risks involved;
- One Member queried why there was a difference between the JSA 18-24 figure and the Economic

Dashboard information. In response it was noted that this was to do with the date at which the benchmark for the Programme was set, which was an earlier date, compared with the figures provided in the more recent Dashboard.

RESOLVED: That Members support the development of a Youth Employment Gateway Programme in Halton.

ELS28 BUSINESS PLANNING 2015-18

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, inviting them to contribute to the development of Directorate Business Plans for the coming financial year.

It was noted 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 2015-2018 had now begun and Members were invited to identify a small number of priorities for development or improvement 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.

Members were presented with a briefing note which provided an overview of key strategic issues facing the Board over the medium term. The Chairman suggested that the *Inward Investment Protocol* for the Liverpool City Region be included as one of the priorities in the business plan and this was agreed. Any further suggestions for development or improvement should be submitted through the Chairman.

RESOLVED: That the Board receive the information provided and indicate any further areas of service activity that they feel relevant to the Plans, through the Chairman.

Meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.