

Employment, Learning & Skills SSP

Minutes of Executive Group Meeting 6th December 2010

Marketing Suite, HBC Municipal Building, Widnes

Present:

Wesley Rourke
Nick Mannion
Kevin Smith
Siobhan Saunders
Hitesh Patel
Gerry Fitzpatrick
Simon Clough
Madeleine Hamadianian
Cleo Pollard
Colin Billingsley
Steve Kelsey
Claire Bradbury
Sue Baxendale
Diane Sproson
Alan Graham
Dave Owen

Organisation:

Economic Regeneration (HBC)
Strategic Policy & Partnership (HBC)
Riverside College Halton
Adult Learning & Skills (HBC)
Halton CAB
Enterprise & Employment (HBC)
14-19 Partnership (HBC)
Adult Learning & Skills (HBC)
Halton Parents & Carers
Jobcentre Plus
Skills Funding Agency
Halton YMCA
Halton Housing Trust
Connexions
Communications & Marketing (HBC)
Construction Halton (Item 5 only)

1. Welcome/Apologies

1.1 Wesley Rourke welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Kevin Smith – VP Skills & Enterprise, Riverside College and Helen Baxendale, Asst Director HR & Organisational Development for Halton Housing Trust. The remaining Group members provided introductions.

1.2 Apologies had been received from:

Claire Tierney	External Funding (HBC)
David Gray	Welfare Rights (HBC)
Debbie Dalby	Halton & St Helens VCA
Helen Woollacott	Skills Funding Agency
Cllr Susan Edge	Chair, ELS PPB, Halton Borough Council.
Cllr Eddie Jones	Portfolio Holder, Halton Borough Council

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 There were no personal or pecuniary declarations.

3. Minutes of last meeting and Matters arising

The Minutes of the last meeting were confirmed as accurate. Matters arising not deal with elsewhere on today's agenda:

3.5 Links to Work – NM confirmed this has now been regularised.

4. 'Science Halton' Routeway presentation

- 4.1 SS explained that Science Halton is the name given to an interactive website developed by the STAM (Science, Technology & Advanced Manufacturing) Group. She outlined the background to the project and demonstrated the Routeway website. A guide to the Routeway and the Halton STAM Skills Gap Analysis Report, which compliments the Routeway, was circulated.
- 4.2 The Routeway is scheduled to go 'live' in the near future and will be located at; www.sciencehalton.com
- 4.3 Group felt the Routeway has potential to be available resource to provide young people with quality information on future science sector opportunities, local events and activities etc and Halton's schools need to access and promote it.
- 4.4 KS advised that Riverside College will look at incorporating the Routeway into its curriculum planning. The YMCA will also be looking at the first steps on the ladder. It was felt that this product could be included in the marketing of Halton to prospective incoming employers. The suggestion was also made that a link could be included on the welfare rights and benefits advice pages in the HBC website.

SS requested that all feedback/suggestions on filling further gaps in the website should be made to her as soon as possible.

5. Construction Halton presentation.

- 5.1 DO made a short but informative presentation on the 'Construction Halton' initiative. Its key aim is to secure as many jobs and training opportunities for Halton resident in the delivery of major construction projects over the next few years in the borough. Examples include the Mersey Gateway, 3MG, schools building programme and possibly Widnes Waterfront and Daresbury Campus

However, the concept isn't limited to direct construction-related activities, but can also include the range of support functions and the wider of goods and services procurement process by large organisations such as the Council and NHS.

DO explained that the skills and knowledge participants acquire and the sustainability for businesses in Halton are key elements. Therefore, a skills forecasting tool will be integral to the process for each specific project, and not just for construction but also for related skills such as IT, logistics. It can be used as the basis for the focus for future growth in Halton.

- 5.2 There was general enthusiasm for the initiative. One specific suggestion was that a city region-wide approach with regard to large multi-authority infrastructure projects may be needed.

DO was thanked for his presentation and agreed that further updates on the progress of the Construction Halton project be reported to future meetings.

6. Digital Strategy

- 6.1 NM presented a report on the draft Halton Digital Strategy, which outlines the case for improving access to 'super-fast' broadband internet services. Key points were:
- A growing body of evidence that access is having a positive impact on areas as diverse as educational attainment, public health and SME business growth.
 - To achieve superfast (24 mbps+) broadband speeds fibre-optic cable is required instead of copper.

- The Strategy has the twin aims of ensuring Halton is not by-passed and that our more disadvantaged communities are not excluded.

6.2 Comments received included:

- HP felt Halton risks being left behind in terms of the e-government agenda. His service has ideas for reducing time/costs when the Council develops its services.
- There isn't yet a complete local evidence base of usage by both home and businesses, in Halton, would be useful to know the need and demand in Halton.
- To be competitive during construction projects businesses need to have the facility to be smarter in how they use ICT.

Members asked to give consideration to response to the 5 points set-out in section 4 of the draft strategy and to feed any comments back to NM by 28th January 2011.

7. Sustainable Community Strategy ELS Development Programme.

7.1 At the last meeting agreed that a small sub-group would draft a development programme for the delivery of the ELS element of the Halton Sustainable Community Strategy 2011 – 2026. This was circulated with today's agenda. Comments had been received from Riverside College and the National Apprenticeship Service.

7.2 General agreement and support for the programme and recognition that we need to work SMART-er and to focus on key objectives, especially as will be much reduced level of direct external funding available from April 2011 to the partnership. Strong support for the continuation of the Skills for Life programme in Halton.

Members asked to forward specific comments on the draft development programme to NM by 22nd January 2011.

8. WNF Spend & exit strategies

8.1 WR briefed the group on the outcome of the recent HSPB meetings on this issue. Very pleasing the 'employment' has been adopted at one of the HSP's key areas of focus from April 2011 onwards.

8.2 Regular contact being maintained with project managers to ensure that any potential underspend(s) identified promptly for return into 'the pot' and that key elements of good practice sustained as far as possible. Finally, that an orderly wind-down is achieved for non-continuing activities during Quarter 4 (January – March 2011).

Further updates are brought to future meetings.

9. BIS Skills Strategy Consultation.

9.1 SS outlined key points from the executive summary of the consultation exercise circulated with the agenda. The related Skills Investment Strategy 2010 – 2011 is available on the BIS website.

9.2 Whilst pleasing that support for Adult Learning has been renewed for a further 2 years, there is an expectation that there will be a shared responsibility for skills between the employer and the student, in particular, paying for it.

10. Sub-Group Updates

10.1 Performance Group

DS drew the group's attention to key points in the notes of the 4th November meeting of the ELS Performance Group that had been circulated with the agenda. Re-iterated that point made earlier that the group will maintain regular contact with project managers during this critical period and will follow up where there are any issues on spend or delivery against that projected in the respective SLA(s). Some of the information is not as up to date as would be preferred. Significant delays in payment of invoices are a recurring problem.

10.2 Enterprise

GF has prepared a progress report on the Enterprise Board and Enterprising Halton Programme activity as at 30 November had been circulated with the agenda.

With the launch of the New Enterprise Allowance Scheme it is hoped that Merseyside will be a trial-blazer from January 2011. Although Halton is not included in the Merseyside Challenge, JCP feel it should be open to all who live in the LCR sub-region.

CB will obtain further information on this and circulate via NM.

10.3 Employment

A progress report on the Employment Sub Group activities had been circulated with the agenda.

CB queried whether future providers and organisations delivering IAG for Halton should be included in future sub-group meetings.

Job Centre plus is undergoing some changes at the moment. Halton is to become part of a new Merseyside district. CB will ensure there is appropriate continuity and keep colleagues informed.

It was requested that when changes are finalised a summary of how JCP will look and contact details of key people is circulated.

CB, GF, SS to meet to look at the number and remits of sub-groups from April 2011 onwards and to report back options to the next Exec Group meeting.

10.4 Skills

A copy of the Minutes of the Skills Sub-Group 3 November was circulated with the agenda.

SS informed of the presentation by John McDonald of Greengrape Solutions of a new careers information resource. www.mysignpost.org. This is a directory of services and programmes across Gtr Merseyside relevant to supporting practitioners, employers and the wider community to progress into work, life and learning.

SS urged members visit the website and ensure their organisation is included in the website – contact is john@greengrapesolutions.co.uk .

11. Any Other Business

11.1 Draft SCS consultation is open until 24 January 2011; www.halton.gov.uk/mysay/ which has a link to the Sustainable Community Strategy and other current consultation exercises.

11.2 SB informed that Halton Housing Trust has signed up to the Impact on the City Region around worklessness with a network of social landlords. HHT is working on an Action Plan in conjunction with Impact to make a positive impact on worklessness in Halton.

11.3 Finally WR extended Christmas & New Year wishes to all Group Members.

11.4 Next meeting; 09.30 on 7 February 2011 in MR2 at Kingsway Learning Centre, Widnes.

DRAFT