

Employment, Learning & Skills SSP

Minutes of Executive Group Meeting 7th February 2011

Room 2, Kingsway Learning Centre, Widnes

Present:

Wesley Rourke
Nick Mannion
Kevin Smith
Siobhan Saunders
Hitesh Patel
Gerry Fitzpatrick
Simon Clough
Cleo Pollard
Colin Billingsley
Claire Bradbury
Diane Sproson
Alan Graham
Cllr Susan Edge
Cllr Eddie Jones

Organisation:

Economic Regeneration (HBC)
Strategic Policy & Partnership (HBC)
Riverside College Halton
Adult Learning & Skills (HBC)
Halton CAB
Enterprise & Employment (HBC)
14-19 Partnership (HBC)
Halton Parents & Carers
Jobcentre Plus
Halton YMCA
Connexions
Communications & Marketing (HBC)
Chair, ELS PPB, Halton Borough Council.
Portfolio Holder, Halton Borough Council

1. Welcome/Apologies

- 1.1 Wesley Rourke welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies received from:

Claire Tierney	External Funding (HBC)
Madeleine Hamadarian	Adult Learning & Skills (HBC)
Sue Baxendale	Halton Housing Trust
David Gray	Welfare Rights (HBC)
Debbie Dalby	Halton & St Helens VCA
Helen Woollacott	Skills Funding Agency

2. Declarations of Interest

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.

There was only one matter arising not deal with elsewhere on today's agenda:

- 4.2 SS advised that The Routeway is now 'live', and is located at; www.sciencehalton.com .

4. Future Governance & Priorities for ELS SSP

- 4.1 NM outlined the discussion paper along with the key questions and issues set-out for consideration in it.
- 4.2 WR then briefed the meeting on the key outcomes of the Halton Strategic Partnership Board development session that had taken place the previous week.
- 4.3 A positive and wide-ranging discussion followed with contributions from all members.
- 4.4 There is a general consensus that the primary task for the partnership now is to work on tightening our focus on identifying and responding to the challenges and opportunities, both externally and locally generated, over which we can exert a degree of strategic influence.
- 4.5 Also, whilst the emerging sustainable community strategy will to a significant extent provide the framework within which we will operate over the coming years we also need to identify those 'components' that are right for Halton – will future provision help to deliver on our strategic goals, or are there 'gaps' which need to be first identified and then a decision made on if and how to tackle them.
- 4.6 We also need to make sure our work contributes to the overall aims of the SCS, and to the plans and strategies of our key partners, and vice versa.
- 4.7 Need to look both over the immediate policy 'horizon' of the next year or so, and also laterally to the impact and opportunities of ELS-related activity in neighbouring areas. Examples quoted were the growing number of academies and to LCR LEP and Regional Growth Funded projects impacting upon Halton.

WR to circulate the Skills Matrix produced in 2009(?) as a start point for a discussion about the group's future skills and representation requirements.

NM to arrange of an additional one-off workshop-type meeting in late March to formulate concrete proposals on the future direction, membership and priorities of the Executive Group and the network of sub-groups..

5. Sustainable Community Strategy ELS Development Programme, 2011- 2015.

Agreed at the December meeting to circulate the draft development programme for any further comments which will be reported to this meeting.

A small number of comments were received, all suggesting minor positive amendments. These were outlined by NM.

Agreed that NM to circulate the updated programme to all members for a further week and to then liaise with chair on the incorporation of any responses into the draft to be considered by the next meeting of the HSPB on 2nd March 2011.

6. Use of uncommitted WNF grant allocated to the ELS SSP for 2011/12

WR introduced a report on outlining the process for the allocation of unallocated WNF grant between the respective SSP's and how the £382,170 allocated to the ELS partnership has been in accordance with the evaluation exercise that started last September. Brief details in table;

Project Title	Allocation	Description
Enterprise & Business Starts	60	Provision of 10 'Kickstart' pre-start-up courses at £1,000 per course + offer of £500 start up grants to new business start-ups. The funding will provide 100 grants.

HEP	133	Brings together expertise from various learning and skills agencies. Engages with businesses at an early stage to ensure required skills set is in place. Works with employers, in particular in growing sectors, to understand future job types & skills requirements. Engages residents, in particular unemployed adults, in up-skilling them and making them job ready for working in that particular sector.
Apprenticeships	129	Grants to organisations to support employment of an apprentice/additional apprentice. Each LCR authority is committed to offering grant of £3,000 to companies that participate in the Apprentice Programme. The funding sought would support up to additional 43 new apprenticeships in Halton.
Graduate internships	16	Continued funding for public sector organisations to offer paid internships to returning Halton graduates. Programme will support up to 20 internships.
Pre-level 2 provision	44	Continue to commission and deliver Skills for Life and ICT learning opportunities to meet the needs of individuals, employers and community organisations. The focus of the provision will be adult literacy, adult numeracy and IT courses with accreditation offered as part of the programmes. Already an approved centre to offer adult literacy and numeracy national tests and IT qualifications.
Total	382	

Query raised, asking if all the SSPs followed the process set-out. Also that that voluntary sector 'financial advice and support' type activities have suffered particularly badly in the process.

The allocation of the £382,170 of uncommitted WNF grant to the ELS SSP for use in 2011/12, and the conditions attached was noted.

The distribution of the ELS allocation to the five projects listed in the report was agreed. Progress reports on each of the continuing projects, detailing activities and spend are to be brought to future meetings.

Partners urged to provide every support to partners seeking replacement external funding for ongoing activities beyond March 2011.

A report on the work of the five projects is brought to future meetings.

7. Sub-Group Updates

7.1 Performance Group

DS drew the group's attention to key points in the notes of the 19th January 2011 meeting of the ELS Performance Group circulated with the agenda. Stressed the important to have in place as soon as possible a suitable set of performance indicators for April 2011 onwards in light of the end of the LAA (Local Area Agreement) at the end of March.

Suggested that an 'End of Programme Review' citing the examples of achievement and good practice developed with the partnerships WNF allocation is produced.

NM to find out the position regarding a replacement performance management framework/local indicator set and report back to a future meeting.

Agreed that an (electronic) summary of the work of the wide range of work undertaken with support from the WNF in Halton is supported.

7.2 Enterprise

GF prepared a progress report on the Enterprise Board and Enterprising Halton Programme activity as at 31st January 2011. This had been circulated with the agenda.

Concern that for the first time the latest data has indicated a majority of business 'deaths' over 'births'. However, new data collection methods should give a more accurate picture on business start-ups.

Still some outstanding queries about the incoming New Enterprise Allowance ('NEA'), one of which is around what the terms of 'low interest' loans to new businesses will be in reality.

Report received.

7.3 Employment

Confirmed that Halton's two Job Centres are to become part of a new Merseyside district with effect from 14th February 2011.

CB will ensure there is appropriate continuity, and colleagues are kept informed of changes to the local management structure and the contact details of key people.

7.4 Skills

Notes of the Skills group meeting on 26th January 2011 were circulated with the agenda. Key points;

- Update on Tesco recruitment supported by the HEP showed that of the 422 new jobs, 73% were offered to residents of Halton.
- NEETS – positive news in that the Halton NEET figure for December 2010 was 9.2% against a figure of 10.3% for December 2009. A positive outcome during a difficult year for the local economy.
- Apprenticeship figures are also healthy, with nearly 1 in 5 of our young people now been on an apprenticeship.

Report received

8. Update on the Work Programme & Benefit changes.

CB delivered a detailed verbal update on the inter-related issues of impending changes to the welfare benefits system, with a move towards a single benefit - Universal Credit, and the soon to be launched Work Programme.

The work programme will see fundamental changes, with JCP only being responsible for the initial period (around 6 months) of a claim, which will then migrate into the programme. There will also be a greater degree of compulsion and more stringent checks as part of the changes.

Whilst we are now aware of the 16 external applicants wishing to deliver various elements of the programme, more details on local delivery arrangements and partners will emerge over the next few months. There is also likely to be much greater local flexibility that currently, both with regard to the remaining JCP functions, and the delivery of the programme.

CB to bring further updates to future meetings.

9. Next meeting;

As indicated at item 4.7 an additional meeting is to be arranged for late March 2011.

DRAFT