

**ANNUAL REPORT
EMPLOYMENT LEARNING, SKILLS AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND
PERFORMANCE BOARD
APRIL 2012 – MARCH 2013**



Cllr. Sue Edge
Chairman

Introduction from Councillor Sue Edge

Chair of the Employment Learning, Skills and Community Performance Board

This has been my third year as Chair of this committee, and this year has perhaps been both the most challenging and rewarding to date. This is because a number of national legislative and policy changes have specifically impacted on the Employment Learning and Skills and Community agendas. For example, the Localism Act is making us reflect on how we manage our community assets, (libraries and community centres), as well as our relationships and responsibilities in supporting community groups. The Government's welfare reforms place added pressure on our Employment, Learning and Skills services as we strive to help people improve their employment opportunities in a difficult economic climate. That said, through Halton's ELS and C PPB we have overseen a number of positive activities aimed at helping people to find work, growing our local businesses and increase the skills and qualifications of our residents. The review below provides a snapshot of these activities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Member colleagues for their valuable contributions and the support they have shown throughout the year. I feel that we have a really good balance between new and established Council Members on this committee and there is a wide range of experience and knowledge around the table, which really does ensure that the quality of the discussions is excellent.

I would also like to thank officers for working with me to develop an interesting and important range of topics and agenda items for consideration.

Although, it is unlikely that the challenges we face will recede in the next Municipal Year, I am confident that this PPB will continue to explore new and innovative ways of working to ensure that we provide the best possible Employment, Learning, Skills and Community services to the people of Halton.

I look forward to continuing this you in the next Municipal Year

Councillor Sue Edge

Chair, Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2012/13, the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors Edge (Chair) C Plumpton Walsh (Vice Chair), Cassidy, Howard, Lloyd-Jones, Logan, McManus, Parker, Roberts, Rowe Zygodllo

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met four times during the year. Set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on:

Library Services

The Board received a report on the library service achievements for the period up to 31 March 2013. It was reported that the library service undertook a CIPFA evaluation of the service in October 2012, and overall satisfaction was shown that 94% of users rated the service as good / very good. In addition it was noted that there had been 82,000 visits recorded in the last year.

The following highlights had contributed to the positive results:

- Runcorn Library opening in April 2012;
- Supporting Change Lottery Funding at Halton Lea Library;
- Community Pathfinders Project at Halton Lea and Widnes Library;
- Reading activities project;
- Reading families project;
- Library strategy;
- Home delivery service; and
- Koha library management system.

Community Services

The Board received an annual report on Community Centres. Members learned that the Centres provide programmes of community activities, varying models of community cafés and service outlets, i.e. children's centres, youth centres and day services. Many centres act as a community hub and are often a central point at the heart of communities for residents to enjoy chosen activities and receive services in their neighbourhoods.

International Festival of Business 2014

The Board were informed of proposals for the development of an International Festival of Business in the Liverpool City Region and were also advised of the opportunities that the event could bring to the Borough. The Festival takes place in June and July 2014.

The event had been described as a Mini Shanghai Expo and will bring together world and UK cities for 61 days of themed events, exhibitions and showcases. It is anticipated that the Festival would attract 250,000 visitors from across the globe and bring £100 million worth of investment.

Apprenticeships

The Board received a report which provided an update on apprenticeships in Halton. It was reported that apprenticeships took between one and four years to complete and covered 1,400 job roles in a wide range of industries.

Earlier in the Municipal year, Members at participated in an Apprenticeships Topic Group which had been used to make recommendations to the Executive Board on key actions needed to develop an apprenticeships culture in the borough.

Common Inspection Framework for Further Education and Skills

The Board received a report which provided details of the new Further Education Common Inspection Framework, advising Members on the preparations which were underway within the Employment, Learning and Skills Division should they receive a two day notification of inspection and informed the Board on how they could support the Ofsted inspection process.

City Deal – Employment Learning and Skills

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which provided an update on the implementation of the Liverpool City Region Deal (LCRD)

and outlined how it related to Halton's Employment, Learning and Skills priority. It was reported that the Liverpool City Region Deal was launched with Government on 5 July and was signed off on 18 September. The Deal includes the following:

- establishment of a Skills for Growth Bank;
- piloting payment by results in the skills system;
- customer choice in the Work Programme;
- extension of New Enterprise Allowance eligibility; and
- Youth Unemployment Task Force.

Members were advised that the Deal and the associated Implementation Plan were a culmination of a significant amount of effort from colleagues across the City Region and Government and indicated the desire of the City Region to work together cohesively to drive the economic growth of the City Region.

Global Entrepreneurship Week

The Board considered a report which informed Members of the activities and events which took place in Halton during Global Entrepreneurship Week (12th – 18th November 2012).

Hidden Unemployment

The Board received a report produced by Sheffield Hallam University entitled the "Real Level of Employment". It was reported that this was the fourth report in the series and attempted to identify 'hidden' groups of unemployment in addition to those groups that were officially counted.

Business Improvement Districts

The Board received a report which provided a view of the first five years of the Business Improvement District (BID programmes at Astmoor and Halebank Industrial Estates). The report detailed the measures that had been put in place to secure a positive vote from the business community to continue to deliver the programmes for a further 5 years.

It was reported that BIDs were a partnership between local authorities and local businesses to provide additional services or improvement to a specific area funded by an additional levy to the non-domestic rates.

Members were advised that all rate payers in the BID area had the opportunity to vote on the proposed BID and approval of a BID had to meet two tests. Firstly a simple majority of those voting in the BID ballot must vote in favour. Secondly, those voting in favour must represent a majority by rateable value of the rateable properties of those voting. It was reported that BIDs were completely private sector lead so local businesses had control over how the resources of the BID were spent. Local businesses could therefore develop local solutions to address local issues and by investing collectively in those solutions they could make a real impact on their business area.

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work, please contact Wesley Rourke on 0151 511 8645 or e-mail: Wesley.rourke@halton.gov.uk