



Cllr. Sue Edge  
Chairman

**ANNUAL REPORT  
EMPLOYMENT LEARNING, SKILLS AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND  
PERFORMANCE BOARD  
APRIL 2013 – MARCH 2014**

**Introduction from Councillor Sue Edge**

**Chair of the Employment Learning, Skills and Community Performance Board**

This has been my fourth year as Chair of this committee, and this year has brought a significant number of both challenges and opportunities. In regard to opportunities, our board has considered how European Structural Funds for Halton from 2014 will be allocated. We have also considered how the establishment of a new Combined Authority across the Liverpool City Region will complement existing employment learning and skills services in Halton. We have been working in partnership to develop new job opportunities arising from our regeneration projects, including the Mersey Gateway. We have seen neighbourhood activity going from strength to strength supported by our Community Development Team. In addition, Halton were hosts to Rugby League Teams for the World Cup, being one of 14 of the 37 towns and cities that applied. The Government's welfare reforms continue to have an impact on our Employment, Learning and Skills services as we strive to help people improve their employment prospects 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 and in particular I want to thank members who have given up their time to serve on the Welfare Reform Scrutiny Topic Group. This has been an intensive and complex piece of work, which cuts across many sectors and organisations. 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, there will be difficult times in the year ahead, 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 very much hope that the ELS and C PPB will continue to making an important contribution to creating an economically prosperous borough that encourages investment, entrepreneurship, enterprise and business growth, and improves the education, skills and employment prospects of our **people** and workforce.

**Councillor Sue Edge**

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

## MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2013/14, the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors S. Edge (Chair) C. Plumpton Walsh (Vice Chair), L. Cassidy, H. Howard, P. Lloyd-Jones, G. Logan, A. McManus, S. Parker, J. Roberts, C. Rowe and G. Zygadlo

## REVIEW OF THE YEAR

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

### **Library Strategy**

The Board received a report on a revised three year Library Strategy for Halton. This set out five priorities for the library service:-

- inspiring a community of readers and learners;
- employment, enterprise and developing online skills;
- extending access through innovation and new technology;
- providing a relevant and responsive library service; and
- workforce development.

A key challenge for the library service is to continuously improve and modernise the service in response to new technological innovation.

### **Ofsted Inspection of the Adult Learning & Skills Development Service**

The Board received a report on the outcome of Ofsted inspection, which examined and made judgements on 3 areas:

- Outcomes for learners;
- Quality of teaching and assessment; and
- Effectiveness of leadership and management.

The final grades for the Adult Learning Service Ofsted inspection were very positive with 3 'outstanding' and 3 'Good' grades being awarded. Ofsted were so impressed that they wanted to use Halton as good practice case studies.

### **Liverpool City Region Enterprise Strategy**

The Board considered a report on the development of an Enterprise Strategy for the Liverpool City Region. The Strategy aims to develop and deliver a coherent plan of action to tackle the chronic shortage of businesses in the City region, which will impede economic performance. The Strategy aims to address an identified gap of 17,000 businesses, creating an environment where we can grow and develop new business opportunities across the City region.

### **Halton's Work Programme Contracts**

The Board received a presentation which provided an update on progress regarding Halton's Work Programme Contracts. The presentation set out the background to the programme, its delivery and the customer journey, performance against targets and challenges and opportunities ahead. The successful programme, works with customers referred via Job Centre plus to help them into employment.

## **Welfare Reform Scrutiny Topic Group Report**

The Board received a report, which proposed ways in which to take forward the recommendations from the Welfare reform Scrutiny topic Group. The Topic Group identified a number of recommendations around four key themes:-

- Adult education and skills, working with job centres and up-skilling the adult population;
- Data and research to gather information about partners experiences, including case studies;
- Information and support given to vulnerable groups; and
- Policy development and partnership working.

The Scrutiny Topic Group will continue to meet and revisit and prioritise its' recommendations to ensure we focus on actions that will have the greatest impact and are achievable, particularly in light of current budget and other resource constraints.

## **European Programme 2014 - 2020**

The Board received a report on the new seven year European Programme. The Liverpool City Region has received approximately £185 million, with an indicative allocation of £16.9 million ring fenced for Halton. EU Regulations for the new programme require all EU funding to be spent on 11 thematic objectives; the Liverpool City Region has agreed that these themes will be taken forward through 5 portfolios:

- Blue/Green Economy
- Business Economy
- Innovation Economy
- Inclusive Economy
- Place and Connectivity

Halton has mirrored the 5 Portfolios in developing its own set of projects under the same themes, covering a number of priorities including, tackling youth unemployment, transport infrastructure, social growth and connectivity, low carbon economy and helping adults back into work.

## **Rugby League World Cup – USA Tomahawks**

The Board considered a report which informed Members of the activities and events which took place when Halton hosted the USA Rugby League Team during the Rugby League World Cup in Autumn 2013. The USA Team engaged with hundreds of pupils, various community groups and attended civic functions with the Mayor. The USA Team presented Halton with an award for being a fantastic host and displaying excellent team spirit.

## **Community Centres – Annual Report**

The Board received an Annual Report on the five Community Centres in Halton located in Castlefields, Ditton, Grangeway, Murdishaw and Upton. The Centres provide programmes of community activities, various models of community cafés and service outlets, i.e. children's centre, youth Centre, day services. The Community Centres are benchmarked as part of APSE (Association of Public Service Excellence) against other Civic, Cultural and Community Venues owned and run by other local authorities. Based on

this performance information, Halton's community centres have progressed positively overall on their indicators earning awards for Ditton & Upton as most improved centres and nominations for Grangeway and Murdishaw in recent years. For the operating year 2012/13, Upton Community Centre was nominated for a Best Performer award and Castlefields Community Centre won the award for the Most Improved Performer.

### **Vikings in the Community**

The Board received a presentation from Mr James Rule, Chief Executive Officer of Widnes Vikings which set out the work undertaken in the local community groups and schools by the Widnes Vikings Rugby League Team. The presentation outlined the following:-

- Community focus – building relationships with residents;
- Influence the Widnes Vikings players have on young children;
- Visits to schools by young players who had recently signed for the Vikings 1<sup>st</sup> team;
- Partnership work carried out with local amateur rugby league clubs;
- Details of various projects and schemes carried out in local schools;
- Provision of a B-Tech. course in Sports for young people;
- Healthy heart and nutrition project;
- Vikings inspire award;
- Vikings against bullying;
- School games award;
- Community Fit 4 Life and Schools Fit 4 Life; and
- Visits to children's wards in hospitals

### **Widnes Recreation Ground Development**

The Board received a report which set out information regarding development of Widnes recreation Ground. The council are working in partnership with a local school to obtain their input into the design of the new sports facilities including pitches for rugby, cricket and football plus changing facilities.

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](mailto:Wesley.rourke@halton.gov.uk)