



Cllr. Sue Edge  
Chairman

**ANNUAL REPORT  
EMPLOYMENT LEARNING, SKILLS AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND  
PERFORMANCE BOARD  
APRIL 2014 – MARCH 2015**

**Introduction from Councillor Sue Edge**

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

This has been my fifth year as Chair of this committee, and this year has brought a significant number of both challenges and opportunities. These include the contribution of the Mersey Gateway to improving skills and providing job opportunities for residents of Halton. We are continuing to work together with our partners across the Liverpool City Region, as part of the new Combined Authority to promote economic growth and provide employment opportunities for residents. In addition we continue to deliver essential services through our libraries, community centres, sports facilities and the continued neighbourhood activity supported by our Community Development Team. The Government's welfare reforms continue to put 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 and in particular I want to thank members who have agreed to give up their time to serve on the Welfare Reform Scrutiny Topic Group and the new Inward Investment Scrutiny Topic Group. 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 look forward to continuing to work together to make the most of the opportunities ahead and rise to challenges we will undoubtedly face.

**Councillor Sue Edge**

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

## MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2014/15, the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors S. Edge (Chair) A. McManus (Vice Chair), L. Cassidy, H. Howard, P. Lloyd-Jones, G. Logan, C. Plumpton Walsh , S. Parker, J. Roberts, M. Ratcliffe and S. Baker.

## 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:

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

The Board considered a report on progress towards 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 Liverpool City region shortfall from the UK average currently stands at 18,500 and assuming an up-lift in UK business density in the next 20 years this will equate to at least 20,000 businesses in 20 years. The Strategy aims to create an environment where we can grow and develop new business opportunities across the City region.

### **Welfare Reform Scrutiny Review Report and Recommendations**

The Board received a report on the process undertaken by the Scrutiny Topic group members to prioritise the recommendations from the Welfare Reform Scrutiny Topic Group. The aim of this work was to identify actions that are most likely to be of most benefit, so that resources can be targeted more effectively. A prioritisation tool was used to rank the recommended actions, based on agreed criteria, including costs and added benefits that were determined to be important.

### **Sport and Recreation Annual Report 2013-14**

The board considered the priorities within the Halton Sports Strategy 2012 - 2015 which illustrated how sport had, and continued to enrich the lives of people living and working in Halton. Activities were used as an essential component in supporting and developing the infrastructure of the community and to improve the quality of life both physically and mentally.

### **Library Service Annual Report 2013-14**

The Board considered a report on the Library Service which provides key resources in their communities, where they provide books, information and technology which promoted lifelong learning, digital inclusion and encouraged and celebrated reading. Libraries are important community spaces which offer a welcoming neutral environment and hosted a range of cultural activities, events and opportunities for all sections of the community. Libraries provided access to the Internet and quality assured online resources through more than 100 public computers and laptops. In 2013-14 a total of 415,406 items were borrowed and visits had risen which reflected the significant proportion of people using libraries for other purposes i.e. to access public computer facilities.

**Advice Service Transition Fund**

The Board received a presentation from Hitesh Patel, Halton CAB regarding the Advice Services Transition Fund. Halton CAB have secured "Advice Services Transition Fund" Lottery Funding to improve partnership working amongst Halton's numerous advice agencies. One of the key tasks had been to undertake a mapping exercise of all the agencies based in Halton which provide 'information', 'advice' or 'tribunal/court advocacy/representation' services. This work has been undertaken in partnership with Halton BC who are taking the "lead" to develop a multi-agency approach to helping people deal with the impact of the government's "Welfare Reform" agenda.

**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.

**Adult Learning Update**

The board considered a report which provided an update on changes to Adult and Family Learning offered in the borough. This included amendments to the curriculum for 2014-15 to better align with the Council's priorities and reflect the wider economy. The 2014-15 curriculum contains 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 are now offered.

**Youth Employment Gateway**

The Board received information on the Youth Employment Gateway Programme which commenced at the beginning of November. The Liverpool City Region has secured £5.9m of Government investment to deliver a programme to reduce youth unemployment across the City Region over the next three years. Each Local Authority has been given an allocation to deliver their scheme in their respective areas. The Programme will support young people aged 18-24 years old, who had been unemployed between 2 and 9 months.

**Universal Credit – Welfare Reforms**

The Board considered a presentation from the Council's Revenue and Benefits and Customer Services Division on the introduction of the Universal Credit Scheme. Universal Credit is a single payment for people who are looking for work or are on low incomes. It went live in Halton on 17 November 2014, bringing three key changes: a single household payment; being paid monthly; and rent being paid directly to the claimant. The presentation included an overview of the advice and support provided by the council's Welfare Rights Service to residents.

**Community Centres Annual Report**

The Board considered a report on the Community Centres service, which consists of five buildings, Castlefields, Ditton, Grangeway, Murdishaw and Upton. The centres deliver programmes of community activity, varying models of community cafés and service outlets, i.e children's centre, youth centre, day

services. These centres provide a community hub, a central point at the heart of these communities for residents to enjoy chosen activities and receive services in their neighbourhoods. They are based in the most severely deprived wards in the Borough and are well utilised.

### **Merseylink Employment & Skills Performance Update**

The Board received a presentation on progress made to date against the Employment & Skills Key Performance Indicators associated with the new Mersey Gateway crossing, which include:

- *'A minimum of 3,000 hours per year **volunteer opportunities** delivered linked to the activities of the Visitor Centres and Community Relations Programme.'*
- *'A minimum of **10% of all new construction employees** to be sourced from Job Centre Plus, Work Programme and current local employment and career development.'*
- *'A minimum of **40 days per year (during Works) work based learning opportunities** for young people and adults living within Halton.'*
- *'To deliver **15 weeks work experience** placements per annum, during the construction works to support both adults and young people.'*
- *'**10% of all labour on the construction works being delivered by New Apprenticeships**, including higher apprenticeses.'*
- *'The target of **80% of all new apprenticeships** recruited through the Mersey Gateway Project to **complete their framework**'.*
- ***100 days Timebank support per annum** during the construction period for the delivery of targeted and meaningful support for Halton Borough Council, local third sector community organisation and educational establishments.'*

### **European Programme 2014 - 2020**

The Board received an update on the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Programme for Halton 2014 to 2020 and advised that the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was co-ordinating the implementation of the Programme. The Board also considered a Halton 'position paper' aimed at presenting to the LEP how Halton could contribute to the delivery of the European Programme. The Liverpool City Region has received approximately £185 million, with an indicative allocation of £16.9 million ring fenced for Halton.

### **Inward Investment Scrutiny Topic Group 2015**

In March 2015, the Board established an Inward Investment Scrutiny Topic Group to determine if:

- The inward investment service provided in Halton is fit for purpose;
- There is synergy between a local and city-region wide inward investment service and where added value can be obtained.

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)