

## **EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS, AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills, and Community Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 19 February 2018 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors MacManus (Chair), S. Baker, Cassidy, Logan, J. Lowe, C. Plumpton Walsh, June Roberts, Wallace and Rowe

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Edge

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: W. Rourke, A. Jones, P. Corner and J. Griffiths

Also in attendance: None

### **ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

*Action*

#### **ELS24 MINUTES**

The Minutes from the meeting held on 20 November 2017, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

#### **ELS25 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.

#### **ELS26 BUSINESS PLANNING 2018-19**

The Board received an update on Business Planning for the period 2018-19 for the Employment, Learning and Skills, and Community Policy and Performance Board.

It was reported that the Council developed a medium-term business plan in parallel with the budget that was subject to annual review and refresh. The input of the Policy and Performance Boards (PPBs) into the business planning process and the setting of priorities for the Directorate was an important part of this process. It was noted that the key proprieties for development or improvement for the various functional areas reporting to this PPB were outlined in a three year Business Plan presented to the Board in 2017.

The draft Corporate Business Plan was being developed and the relevant extract from the Plan was available for consideration by the Board (this was featured at the end of the report). The Board was advised that the plans could only be finalised once budget decisions had been confirmed in March 2018, and that some target information may need to be reviewed as a result of final outturn data becoming available post March 2018.

The Board were happy to receive the advance draft of the relevant extract of the Corporate Business Plan and in relation to this discussed:

- Brexit – the impact of this was still not known; approximately 5% of companies in Halton were foreign owned and out of these 51% were from the EU. It was noted that there had been interest in the Borough from other EU companies since the referendum;
- The ending of the DWP contract – it was hoped that this would be replaced with another programme and that the staff would be kept on;
- Higher education for adults – funding for this was being devolved to the LCR.

RESOLVED: That the Board receives the advance draft of the relevant extract of the Corporate Business Plan, prior to its consideration by the Executive Board.

## ELS27 SCRUTINY TOPIC GROUP INTERIM REPORT - CULTURE

The Board received an update on the Culture Scrutiny Topic Group review which was established to '*Review Halton's Cultural Offer within a City Region context*'.

The aim of the review was to determine:

- If the Halton cultural offer was being captured within a wider city region cultural narrative; and
- If there was synergy between a local and city-region wide cultural offer and where added value could be obtained.

It was noted that as part of the review it had become evident that the development of a Cultural Strategy for the City Region, the governance arrangements and prioritisation of activities in the Region were still emerging. Added to this was the fact that the cultural landscape in the City was complex. It was reported therefore that no decision had been made yet on how to streamline the current

arrangements, which had somewhat hindered the progress of the topic group.

Given the uncertainty, it was decided that the group should focus on developing an understanding of what was meant by '*Halton's Cultural Offer*'. The Board was informed of the findings of the group and activities carried out by them as described in the report. A Visitor Economy summary Report had presented 12 recommendations and actions, five of which had been prioritised as set out in point 3.13 of the report.

It was noted that the views of 'the customer' were extremely important when determining the Borough's priorities for investment in cultural and visitor attractions so in light of this the Council launched a survey to find out what local people knew about culture and leisure in Halton. The survey and responses were appended to the report.

Members discussed the findings and commented that the survey had been carried out using online methods and social media; so perhaps there was another way so that a wider section of residents could respond. Also, that marketing of the Borough should be concentrated on using visuals, for example the billboards visible from the train platforms in Runcorn.

The Chair referred Members to the prioritised recommendations in the report listed on page 28 which covered these suggestions. It was also reported that future publications of '*Halton in Touch*' would contain advertising and reports on things to do in Halton.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) notes progress to date; and
- 2) endorses the prioritised recommendations as set out in the report.

#### ELS28 SCRUTINY TOPIC GROUP ITEMS 2018-19

The Board received the proposed topic group suggestions for 2018-19 as follows:

- Creating Better Jobs;
- The impact of a Soft or Hard Brexit on Halton; and
- Promoting employment and opportunity in the Healthy New Town.

It was noted that a scrutiny topic was identified by the Policy and Performance Board each year which had the potential to inform and change service delivery and may result in an amendment or improvement of a Council policy. It was stressed that the above topics were suggestions only and that Members were invited to consider other topics not discussed in the report.

Following debate on the proposals it was agreed that *Creating Better Jobs* would be the subject of the topic group for 2018/19, although another title for the subject was suggested. All Members of the Board were invited to participate in the group and further details of future meetings would follow.

RESOLVED: That the Board agrees

- 1) on the establishment of a topic group *Creating Better Jobs* (title subject to revision); and
- 2) all Members of the Board be invited to participate.

#### ELS29 POLICY UPDATE FEBRUARY 2018

The Board was informed of the recent national policy announcements relevant to the Employment, Learning and Skills, and Community Policy and Performance Board.

The policy announcements covered the period from October 2017 to January 2018 and included the following:

- Social Mobility through Education Action Plan (Unlocking Talent Fulfilling Potential);
- Improving Lives: The Future of Health and Work, Health and Disability;
- Brexit; and
- The Autumn Budget, which included:
  - Business Rates Retention;
  - Other Business Rates Measures;
  - A skills partnership with the Trade Union Congress and the Confederation of British Industry;
  - Universal Credit;
  - Cultural Development Fund; and
  - Centenary Fund

RESOLVED: That the report and information be noted.

## ELS30 INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY WHITE PAPER

Members received an update on the publication of the Government's Industrial Strategy White Paper, which included the impact on the Liverpool City Region (LCR) and beyond.

The White Paper, titled '*Building a Britain fit for the future*' was published on 27 November 2017 and examined the UK's strengths and weaknesses, and considered the role of Government in boosting the UK economy, improving productivity, embracing technology and using public procurement initiatives and the regulatory environment to support business.

The 256 page document was available online but the report outlined a summary of this which included some potential implications and opportunities for Halton, as discussed from paragraphs 3.16 to 3.25.

The report discussed the development of the Paper since the Green Paper was launched at Sci-Tech Daresbury in January 2017. It also discussed the four *Grand Challenges* identified by the Government which were global trends that would shape the rapidly changing future and which the UK must embrace, to ensure all opportunities they brought were taken.

RESOLVED: That the Board notes:

- 1) the Industrial Strategy would be used to inform Halton's future regeneration activities; and
- 2) the Council would work with the Combined Authority to ensure that a future Liverpool City Region Local Industrial Strategy reflects the Borough's regeneration priorities and opportunities.

## ELS31 LIBRARY SERVICE

Members welcomed the Library Strategy and Development Manager who provided the Board with an overview of the activities undertaken by the Library Service over the past 12 months.

This included an update on the e-books service and Libraries Events, a booklet titled *Events from January to April 2018* was tabled for Members information. She also discussed the external funding activities and the modernisation of Widnes Library. It was noted that the

Libraries in Halton offered the following services:

- Child and adult learning – code clubs, IT clinics, work clubs and Lego club;
- Events – summer reading challenge activities, author visits;
- Book lending – including free reservations from all 4 Halton Libraries, large print and audio books on CD;
- Online library service – free books and e-audio to download book sets for reading groups
- Local history collections and research facilities;
- Newspapers and magazines – both physical and online;
- Home library service and community library service;
- Free public computer facilities and free Wi-Fi;
- Staff help and support – getting online; book recommendations etc;
- Digital skills development – code club, microbit and codebug lending, IT clinics, 1-2-1 digital support.

The proposed Library Service Strategy which was appended to the report was discussed by Members. The remodelling of the Widnes Library was welcomed and considered to have made a huge improvement to the service. Members also highlighted particular elements of the service, such as the reading groups for adults, the health and wellbeing element and the *Books on Prescription*; and the events for children which were varied and interesting.

Overall the Board agreed that the library services contributed enormously to the communities of Halton and they supported the Library Strategy going forward.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) notes the report; and
- 2) approves the Library Strategy.

## ELS32 ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT & HALTON TOMORROW

The Board received an update on *Halton Tomorrow* in line with future trends and economic forecast models. Halton Tomorrow was described as a vision for how Halton's economy would look in the future, setting out future challenges and how the Borough might respond to these challenges.

It was reported that a more in-depth assessment to provide an evidence base for Halton Tomorrow was being

produced. The assessment was based on information specific to Halton and Members were advised that new data had been analysed that had not been analysed previously.

The following was highlighted in the presentation:

- The economic overview;
- Enterprise and jobs;
- The resident population;
- Skills;
- Lane, infrastructure and transport;
- Future prospects, Halton Tomorrow.

Following on from the presentation, the following points were made / queried:

- A workless household was where no one in the household worked. The data was broken down into Wards and the information was also contained on the economic profile document sent each month to Members;
- There was a dip in the population of Halton between 1991 and 2016 for reasons mainly due to natural migration, so people moving for jobs. The trend was reversing now and it was hoped that the population would increase in the future;
- Members had identified that some of their constituents had a desire to improve on their education and qualifications, however they were unable to act on this due to time constraints and commitments personally and at work, so did not have the opportunity to attend courses in their spare time;
- It was noted that some businesses were not aware of the training opportunities available to their employees;
- The relevance of NVQ's to employers was discussed in relation to the skills gap that existed in Halton; information on employers' requirements were fed back;
- The Liverpool City Region (LCR) was producing a skills survey to assist with the production of a work programme. The Skills Strategy document would come to this Board in the future.

RESOLVED: That the Board receives the presentation and update.

Operational  
Director - Economy,  
Enterprise &  
Property

ELS33 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS - QUARTER  
2 OF 2017/18

The Board received the performance management reports for Quarter 2 of 2017-18 and were requested to consider and raise any questions or points of clarification in respect of these.

It was noted that the key priorities for development or improvement in 2017-18 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans, for the various function areas reported to the Board as follows:

- Enterprise, Employment and Skills; and
- Community and Environment

The report detailed progress against service objectives and milestones, and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

Members noted that a 'u' (uncertain) indicator in the progress column meant that the performance indicator was reported on a yearly basis, so the information would only be available at quarter 4. The indicators therefore that fell into that category could be looked at in more detail at this time.

RESOLVED: That the Quarter 2 performance management reports be received.

*The Chair conveyed the get well wishes of the Board to Chris Patino, Operational Director – Community and Environment, who was absent due to ill health.*

*On behalf of the Board and other colleagues he also thanked Councillor Sue Edge for her service to the Council and this Board as Chair and Vice Chair over the years, as she would shortly be stepping down from her role.*

*Meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.*