

**ANNUAL REPORT  
EMPLOYMENT LEARNING, SKILLS AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND  
PERFORMANCE BOARD  
APRIL 2018 – MARCH 2019**

**Introduction from Councillor Andrew MacManus  
Chair of the Employment Learning, Skills and Community Policy  
Performance Board (PPB)**

This will be my third report to you as Chair of this Board. During the past year we have seen economic uncertainty and reduced funding having a bearing on work priorities and areas of focus. In addition, some of our skills and employment and business support funding are aligned with the Liverpool City Region governance arrangements. However, we continue to ensure that Halton gets its fair share of funding support to ensure that we provide excellent services to our residents, businesses and communities.

We really have done more with less resource over the last number of years primarily as a result of the thorough scrutiny role provided by this board which challenges how resources are deployed and whether they are being allocated to projects that have the greatest social and economic impact for the borough.

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.

After the May 2018 elections there were a number of changes to the Board; Cllr. Sue Edge, the vice-chair, and Cllr. John Gerrard stood down at the elections, Cllrs. Sandra Baker and Joan Lowe left the Board to work on other boards, I thank them for the service they gave the Board. The new members to the Board received induction training on the work of the Board.

I want to thank members who have given up their time to serve on the Scrutiny Topic Group. This has been a 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 continue to be challenges in the year ahead, I am confident that this Board 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 hope that the Board will continue to make an important contribution to creating an economically prosperous borough that encourages investment, entrepreneurship, business growth, and improves the education, skills and employment prospects of our people and workforce in what may become a more challenging environment.

**Councillor Andrew MacManus  
Chair, Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and  
Performance Board**

## MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2018/19, the Board comprised Councillors A. MacManus (Chair) C. Plumpton- Walsh (Vice Chair), L. Cassidy, C. Gerrard, R Leck, G. Logan, June Roberts, C. Rowe, A Telling, P Wallace and L Whitley.

## REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met four times during the year.

The Council's constitution sets out the Board's strategic priority is to develop policy and monitor performance in relation to the Council's objectives for employment, learning and skills in the borough.

Specifically in relation to 4 functions:

- Enterprise and employment
- Adult learning and skills
- Culture and leisure services
- Library Service

Set out below are the areas we have reviewed this year.

### **Enterprise and Employment**

#### Economic Assessment and Halton 2030

Members received a report updating them on the Halton 2030 document and advised on the proposed recommendations arising from the research undertaken. Members were informed that Halton 2030 set out an economic vision for how Halton's economy would look in the future. It also considered how we might respond through a 'whole community' approach to the economic and social challenges the Council and its partners faced over the next few years.

It was reported that the proposed vision would be that *"by 2030 Halton's residents would have access to good quality housing, excellent education and suitable jobs in a safe, strong and sustainable local economy. Halton's businesses would have the skills, investment environment and infrastructure to achieve their goals. Further, Halton would be a place healthy people enjoyed, with excellent access to vibrant local town, shopping and entertainment centres"*.

Members debated the topics raised relating to recruitment of staff for higher level jobs, skills shortages amongst local people; quality housing provision in the Borough, quality leisure facilities; and the Widnes and Runcorn Town Centres.

#### Business Improvement and Growth Team

Members received a report informing them about the current performance and future work priorities of the Business Improvement and Growth Team (BIG). The last update was provided in June 2017 and this update was presented to members at the request of the Chair.

The main functions of the BIG Team were outlined in the report. It was reported however, that the BIG Team were currently undertaking a broad range of activities and driving a diverse range of projects, beyond the scope of those objectives described.

It was important to note that the delivery of business support across the wider Liverpool City Region was also in a period of transition. Members were presented with a modified delivery model of the Team which ensured that they were focussed on those activities which would have the greatest impact upon the economic regeneration of Halton.

### Business Growth Programme

Members received a report informing them of the current performance of the Halton Business Growth Programme.

It was noted that the Programme within Halton was part of City Region initiative designed to assist small to medium enterprises to grow and create employment. The Programme started in January 2016 and was due to finish in December 2018.

The Programme provided assistance by commissioning external suppliers to undertake a two stage intervention with eligible Halton businesses.

Information was provided to members on performance against company assists and performance against jobs created.

Delivery of the Business Growth Programme was completed on December 31 2018. The programme has engaged with 230 Halton businesses, assisting 141 businesses against a target of 123.

It was reported that following discussions with city region partners, it was anticipated that the Programme would be extended to cover the period 2019 – 2021. If secured it would have a target of assisting a further 95 businesses and creating an additional 95 jobs.

### Update on Liverpool City Region Activities

Members received a report on employment, learning and skills activities in the Liverpool City Region (LCR).

It was reported that the Council contributed to a number of initiatives and actions that were taking place in the LCR as follows:

- Local Industrial Strategy for the LCR;
- Apprenticeships Hub, so far it has supported 1,711 individuals in Halton;
- LCR Apprentice Graduation Ceremony;
- School Careers Hub;
- Devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB);
- Skills for Growth Action Plans and Careers Materials; and
- National Apprenticeship Week

Further to member's queries the following comments were made:

- The Adult Education Budget (AEB) would receive an additional £150k funding for Test and Learn pilots;
- The Halton Tomorrow Strategy would link in with the LCR Local Industrial Strategy;
- The apprenticeship levy was discussed and the potential for its misuse by employers; Officers advised that they promoted quality and progression for those on apprenticeships;
- The LCR Apprentice and Employer Ambassador Network had been launched and to date four of Halton's employers had signed up to be Ambassadors; it was hoped that the list would increase in numbers; and

- The Open Your Door Theatre Company had delivered a short play to local secondary schools around apprenticeships.

### International Business Festival

Members received a report the 2018 International Business Festival.

It was reported that the Festival was first established in 2014 and was held every two years. Previous festivals had attracted over 50,000 attendees and facilitated an estimated £500m worth of business deals. Members were advised that it was claimed to be the world's largest business festival, providing businesses the space, support and expertise to make connections and realise their potential.

### **Adult Learning & Skills Development**

#### The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Work Programme and the Work and Health Programme.

Members received updates on the programme contracts contract currently being delivered by Halton People into Jobs.

The first contract was the Work Programme.

In June 2011, the Council entered into a subcontracting arrangement with two prime contractors (*Ingeus Deloitte* and *A4E now PeoplePlus*). They were tasked with delivering the DWP Work Programme over the next 7 years. The contract was now in its final year of delivery, due to end on 31 March 2019.

The report provided an overview of the achievements to date, income and expenditure and future exit plans. Further to members' queries the following was noted:

- Over the 8 years a total of 3905 customers had started on the Work Programme with 1745 customers being supported into employment;
- Employers were encouraged to employ ex-prisoners via the ILM Programme (Intermediate Labour Market Placements);
- Education and support staff were available to offer advice to customers with learning difficulties or disabilities;
- It was hoped the Council would soon reach Level 3 in Disability Confident status;
- As the Programme would soon come to an end, it was hoped that the staff employed here would be reemployed in another area of the Council, as per the staff at risk protocol;
- Those customers who were successfully employed at the end of the Programme did a variety of jobs, depending upon their abilities and skills and
- The whole process of getting people into work had a knock on effect for the local economy.

The second contract was the Work and Health Programme.

It was noted that that this was a contracted employment provision to help people with a disability, the long term unemployed (LTU) and specified disadvantaged groups to find sustained work. It would target those who were most likely to benefit from the additional support of the Programme. It was reported that in 2017 the contract was awarded to *Ingeus* for the North West Contract Package Area. It started in November 2017 and is running for 7 years. Halton Borough Council / Halton People into Jobs

were successful in being awarded a sub-contract agreement by *Ingeus* to provide 100% of the programme in Halton.

Officers outlined what the programme hoped to achieve; its performance indicators; and progress to date.

### ESF Ways To Work Programme

Members received a report which gave an overview of the European Social Fund (ESF) Ways to Work Programme currently being delivered by Halton People into Jobs. Members was advised that in January 2016 the Council, as part of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Combined Authority submission, successfully secured a grant for the programme. The total cost of the Programme was over £40 million. The Programme would run until December 2018 and Halton's contract was up to a maximum of £3.3 million.

The Programme provided funding to reduce the barriers to employment to those residents furthest away from the job market. Participants on the Programme were able to access a personal budget for items such as training, interview clothes and travel costs. The funding also supported 6 – 12 month work placements known as Intermediate Labour Market Placements. It was noted that the project had placed 142 people from Halton into these placements.

The report discussed the Programme's achievements to date, income and expenditure; and future strategy for delivery. Officers advised that funding to extend the 16-29 year old element of the contract had been approved by DWP and was extended to the end of March 2020. Confirmation of the request to extend funding for the 30+ year old element of the contract was still awaited.

### Apprenticeships Growth Plan

Members received a report that updated them on the significance and relevance for stakeholders in the Halton, of the recently published Apprenticeship Growth Plan.

It was noted that the Apprenticeship Growth Plan had been developed in direct response to the LCR Area Review of Post-16 Education and Training. The Area Based Review recommended an '*apprenticeships growth plan to drive forward targets for the expansion of the breadth and volume of apprenticeships*'.

Members were advised that the LCR Apprenticeship Hub, on behalf of the Combined Authority, commissioned *Eunoia* Research to develop the Apprenticeship Growth Plan in conjunction with employers, stakeholders, local authorities, colleges and independent training providers.

The Plan offered a truly collaborative approach to ensuring a greater alignment between the demand for and the supply of high quality apprenticeships and was a key document to develop collective action, galvanise and promote collaborative activity by colleges and training providers and ensure a co-ordinated approach to driving forward apprenticeship delivery over the next 3 years.

Further it was reported that the aspiration was to deliver 20,000 apprenticeships across the LCR per annum by 2020.

The report continued to discuss the aims of the Plan and its Key challenges, as well as the priorities for growth and key actions to drive growth.

Following member's discussion it was noted that European Social Funding money would be available until 2021/2022 and discussions were ongoing with Government regarding replacement funding.

Also, some small to medium enterprises were put off by employing apprentices due to costs, however they were encouraged to do so and were helped by subsidies in some cases.

## **Culture and Leisure Services**

### Community Development Service Annual Report for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018

Members received a report informing them of the operational delivery for the Community Development (CD) Service.

It was reported that CD activity helped support the creation, development and sustainability of independent local community groups. This generated the capacity for effective and inclusive community engagement with Council departments and services, thus enabling the delivery of a wide range of community initiatives to help tackle strategic objectives and community needs.

It was noted that Officers had a strategic and neighbourhood role in co-ordinating support to respond to community concerns and aspirations and create cohesive neighbourhoods which were participative and vibrant.

The report outlined the role of the CD and Project Officers' work in the community and referred to the performance framework in place for community development activity.

Members were pleased to note that for every £1 it costs to provide the CD service a further £1.19 was levered into the Borough to support community groups and initiatives.

### Community Centres Annual Report for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018

Members received the Community Centres Annual Report. The report advised that the Community Centres Service provided the management and delivery of services from five buildings: Castlefields, Ditton, Grangeway, Murdishaw and Upton.

The Centres delivered programmes of community activity; varying models of community cafes; and service outlets such as children's centres, youth centres and day services. It was stated that these centres provided a community hub; a central point at the heart of the communities within which they were located for residents to enjoy activities and receive services in their neighbourhoods. They were based in deprived wards in the Borough and were well utilised.

The report provided detailed performance information for each Centre which included results of customer satisfaction surveys as described by Officers. It was noted that overall community centre usage continued to increase annually, up by 3,535 visits for 2017-18 with an increased income of £21k.

### Sports and Recreation Team Annual Report for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018

Members received the annual report for the Council's Sport and Recreation Service. It was noted that there were two distinct areas within the Team:

- Sports Development Team – who developed programmes and activities to support the local infrastructure and encourage residents to start and stay active; and
- Management of the Council's three Leisure Centres: Kingsway Leisure Centre; Brookvale Recreation Centre and Runcorn Swimming Pool.

Members were advised that overall the report demonstrated a year where the Sport and Recreation Team had worked in partnership with a range of stakeholders and had made considerable progress, impact and achievements across the Borough. The Team was structured to direct resources on tackling inactivity, as this was where the gains for the individual were greatest. The activities were used as an essential component in supporting and developing the infrastructure of the community and to improve the quality of life for residents, both physically and mentally.

Members were advised that the Service worked closely with partner organisations to share resources which, in turn, helped achieve success. The report provided detailed commentary on the delivery of the Sports Strategy 2017-18 under 6 themes as follows:

- Increase Participation and Widen Access;
- Club Development;
- Coach Education and Volunteering;
- Sporting Excellence;
- Finance and Funding for Sport; and
- Sports facilities.

Members welcomed the presentation and were pleased to hear about the activities being carried out across the Borough. They noted that there were now less people in Halton who were considered to be inactive as they had taken advantage of the opportunities available such as: Couch to 5k; Couch to 2k; Health Walks; Junior Parkruns; and GP Practices Health Walks.

The report also outlined the work being carried out around summer holiday activities; mental health matters; and workshops and grants. Officers provided responses to Members' concerns regarding staff shortages in the leisure centres' swimming pools and the fact that services were being cancelled due to this. Members were reassured that recruitment was ongoing for both roles and some staff would be in place for January 2019. It was also commented that there was a national shortage of swimming instructors which together with the pay rates had had an impact on recruitment.

### **Library Service**

Members received an overview of the activities undertaken by the library service over the past 12 months.

Members were presented with the Halton Libraries Events booklet, January to April 2019 and information on the Public Library Universal Health Offer (a partnership offer delivered by the SCL and The Reading Agency).

Members welcomed the news from the Libraries and congratulated the staff involved. It was commented that the service had strived to continue to provide numerous activities for the public despite cuts to funding.

The importance of the Libraries was discussed within the community and they were considered to be a warm, safe, friendly environment. It was reported that a consultation was taking place to find out what more the Libraries could offer.

In response to members queries regarding the Libraries working with primary schools to improve their English Language standards; it was noted that some work was already done with schools but the Child Development Officer at the Council would be contacted with regards to this in particular and a response provided later. Also with regards to the delivery of the activities offered in the Libraries, it was stated that the library staff were facilitators of the events, not teachers. There were some activities however that were required to be run by qualified people.

### **Topic Group**

The Board has two activities to fulfil, firstly to scrutinise the work of the Council's officers in delivering the policies of the council and to help develop the policy. The latter is done through members working with officers' assistance on a topic. Members received the proposed Topic Group brief for the year 2018-19. Members agreed to the establishment of a Topic Group, '*Better Jobs*', which would consider how residents could be encouraged to access the better paid jobs being created in the Borough.

The following Members nominated themselves to join the group: Cllrs. Wallace, June Roberts, Teeling, Leck, C. Plumpton Walsh, Whitley, Cassidy and the Board's Chair.

During the year the Board received an update on the work of the Topic Group. It was reported that the Topic Group used aspects of the Six Sigma methodology to manage the process. This approach was known as DMAIC; Define, Measure; Analyse; Design; Improve and Control.

### **Performance Report**

At each meeting the Board receive this report that informs them of emerging issues and the performance of the Council in meeting the Key Performance Indicators. The later feed out of the annual business plan.

### **Policy Update Report**

Again at each meeting the Board receive a briefing on national and regional policies that might affect the areas covered by the Board.