

REPORT TO: Employment Learning & Skills
Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 16th November 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Environment

SUBJECT: Enterprise Update

WARDS: Borough wide

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide a briefing on progress of enterprise activities in Halton.

2. RECOMMENDED: That

2.1 The Board notes the progress made on the enterprise programme and identifies future developments that should be added to the programme.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Halton Enterprise Board

The Halton Enterprise Board is a private sector led sub group of the Employment Learning & Skills Strategic Partnership. The Board is made up of local business men and women who have agreed to lead on the enterprise development agenda and are prepared to act as a sounding board on behalf of the Partnership for employment and skills related issues.

3.2 2008/09 "Enterprising Halton" Performance (01/04/08 – 31/3/09)

- 78 business starts against a revised target of 75 starts
- 67 additional jobs created against a target of 50 jobs
- 42 business sustainability grants awarded against a target of 30
- 4 new 'kick-start' pre-start-up training courses delivered

3.3 2009/10 progress as at 30 September 2009

- 261 new start-up enquiries – 74 (28%) female
- 84 new start-ups – 31 (37%) female
- 24 start-ups in priority wards
- 10 business owners with a disability (12%)
- 48 additional jobs created over and above owners

The number of new business enquiries continues to grow despite the recession with an average of 40 new enquiries per month. The number of VAT registrations is very encouraging with 9 new registrations.

3.4 Business Survivability Audit

The recently conducted business sustainability audit has looked at the survival rate for businesses supported by Enterprising Halton. For the most recent group that have gone through the programme (trading between 12-18 months) the survival rate is 63%. For the group of business that went through the programme some time ago (trading for 18-24 months) the rate is a little more at 65%. These compare favourably to the 2008 national business survivability rates of 65% for 12-18 months trading and 45% for 18-24 months trading.

3.5 Enterprising Halton Challenge Competition 2009

The 2009 competition will have the following competition categories:

- Next Generation Entrepreneurs (13 – 17 years)
- Young Entrepreneurs (18 – 30 years)
- New Entrepreneurs (31 – 49 years)
- Silver Entrepreneur (aged 50 years and over)

The competition will be launched during Enterprise Week (16 November 2009). All competition entrants will be offered 'kick-start' training, 1:1 business advice & support prior to business plans being submitted to a judging panel made up of private sector Board members in late January 2010 so that the competition winner can be announced at 2010 Tourism & Business Awards Evening on 25 February 2010.

3.6 Enterprise Fair September 2009

The 'Enterprise Fair' brought together business support organisations, new business start-ups and potential entrepreneurs. The event took place on 3rd September 2009 at Halton Lea Shopping Centre in Runcorn – more than 20 positive business start-up enquiries are being followed up.

3.7 Enterprising Halton Promotional DVD

The promotional DVD has now been finalised and copies will be available to issue to potential new start ups. This will be shown at the meeting.

3.8 Jobcentre Plus Self Employment Credit

The Self Employment Credit will provide an allowance of £50 per week for upto 16 weeks, which is disregarded by tax, tax credits, Housing Benefit, CTB, child maintenance for customers that have been claiming job seekers allowance for 6 months or longer who move off benefit and into self employment. Customer take up of the credit seems to be low in

Halton and colleagues from Jobcentre Plus are looking into this and findings will be fed back to the Board.

3.9 Women's Business Network

Halton Chamber has recently launched a new business network for women supported by working neighbourhood fund. Attendance at meetings has been strong and there is desire from attendees to expand its remit into training.

3.10 NWDA Intensive Business Start up Programme

The new NWDA Intensive Business Start up Programme will replace the current regional start up provision that has been delivered by the A4 consortium. The NWDA has offered £180,000 per year over the next three years and the Council has agreed to co-fund £40,000 per annum to support the business start up programme in Halton. NWDA has completed a regional procurement exercise and has a preferred list of business start-up providers. Two start-up providers have been appointed from the NWDA list to co-ordinate all business start up activity in Halton. ELECT is a Liverpool based social enterprise that specialises in business start-up advice & support, that have been appointed to handle 265 new start ups from October 2009 – March 2012; and Princes Trust a specialist business support organisation aimed at helping young unemployed people aged 18 – 30 years has been appointed to handle 50 start ups during the same period. Both providers will offer post start up support to any new business that has been trading for between 1 – 3 years.

3.11 Chamber Procurement Support

Working Neighbourhood Funding has been allocated to Halton Chamber to appoint a procurement advisor. Initially this is for a period of 30 days and the advisor will work with council procurement officers to review systems and processes within the context of local procurement. The post will also work with local businesses to help them steer through the maze of public procurement.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Enterprise agenda is a key priority within the Corporate Plan and increasing the rate of business start ups is a target within the Local Area Agreement.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 No other implications.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES.

- 6.1 Children and Young People in Halton.

Work is also underway to attach a local business as an enterprise ambassador to each school as a way of boost enterprise awareness. Boosting the awareness of young people to future options in self employment and enterprise start up strongly supports the enterprise work undertaken in schools.

6.2 Employment Learning and Skills in Halton

Enterprise development is a core activity for ELS. The first full year of activity delivered higher than expected results. The additional working neighbourhood funding and NWDA resources will further boost activity.

6.3 A Healthy Halton.

No implications identified at this time.

6.4 A Safer Halton

No implications identified at this time

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The creation of new businesses has a direct effect on demand for new business space. The work of Urban Renewal is essential in regard to the provision of smaller units such as being built at the Widnes Waterfront.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The biggest risk is associated with the operation of the new NWDA contract. As a new way of working the emphasis is on the new contractors getting out into the community to generate enquiries. A number of actions have been put in place to boost the chances of success. The main contractor has recruited the existing Council enterprise coaches to work in Halton as this will maximise existing networks. We will continue to promote enterprise through the existing Enterprising Halton branding. Business Link now has a community engagement team that will hold events in Halton to boost awareness.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 As a direct result of result of examining the provision that was available in Halton, the new NWDA contract includes new provision for young people through the Princes Trust.

9. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT

9.1 None under the meaning of the Act.