

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, 17 June 2024 in the Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillors Jones (Chair), Teeling (Vice-Chair), Abbott, Connolly, Garner, S. Hill, McDonough, Ryan and Stretch

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Hutchinson and Rowe

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Jones, D. Cooke and L. Carr

Also in attendance: None

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

Action

ELS1 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 29 January 2024, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

ELS2 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

ELS3 EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS, AND COMMUNITY PPB'S ANNUAL REPORT - 2023-24

The Chair presented the Employment, Learning and Skills, and Community PPB's Annual Report for 2023/24.

The Board had met four times during the year and the report set out the work carried out during the Municipal Year April 2023 to March 2024. He thanked all Members of the Board and Officers for their participation and support over the past year.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report for 2023-24 be received.

ELS4 RIVERSIDE COLLEGE - PRESENTATION

The Board welcomed Mary Murphy, the Principal of Riverside College, who presented an update on various areas of interest, including key developments taking place.

She announced that recent skills development and investment had included:

- An £8.5m Health and Wellbeing, Business, Computing and Immersive Room was opened in Cronton in June 2023;
- New sports facilities were opened in Cronton in November 2023;
- A new music hub and teaching block would open in Cronton in 2025;
- A hydrogen pipework rig was opened in March 2024 in Riverside;
- A new Green Skills Centre would be opening in the Kingsway Campus in December 2025; and
- As part of a joint venture with the Council and NHS, funded by the Runcorn Town Deal, a Health and Education Hub would be developed, offering Health and Social Care and Maths and English courses.

Further to Members' questions, the following information was provided:

- Runcorn used to have 2 campuses' many years ago, but these were unviable so they were closed and the College offering was consolidated in Widnes;
- Students from Runcorn aged between 16-18 were offered free bus transportation to and from College;
- Depending on household income, adult learners may qualify for access to a discretionary bus fare fund;
- The College is publicly owned and funded by the DfE, as well as the Liverpool City Region (LCR);
- The ratio of pupils from Runcorn and Widnes would be provided after the meeting as the numbers were not at hand;
- 70% of the students were from Halton;
- The College had donated approximately £90,000 to local charities and they also offered services in the community, such as painting and decorating and performing arts shows.

Members discussed the Apprenticeship Levy and welcomed the fact that the College offered courses for all trades (plumbing, electrical, joinery etc), which were in huge demand locally and nationally. They also agreed that the

installation of a hydrogen pipework rig was impressive and looked forward to seeing this.

It was noted that the work of Riverside College complemented a wide range of areas within the Council's priorities. It was recognised that the College was an important and supportive strategic partner in contributing to the Borough's economic regeneration and growth agenda. It is one of only two outstanding Further Education Colleges in the North West.

Mary invited to Board to visit the College Campuses in the near future, so that they could view the investment projects mentioned above.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be received and comments made be noted.

Director
Economy,
Enterprise &
Property

Councillor Abbott declared an Other Registerable Interest in the following item as he had previously accessed the services of HPIJ as an employer in the Borough.

ELS5 EMPLOYER INITIATIVES

The Board received a report from the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which gave an overview of the current services provided by Halton People into Jobs (HPIJ).

It was reported that HPIJ had delivered a range of DWP Welfare to Work Programmes since 2011, including the Work Programme, Ways to Work, the Work and Health Programme, JETS and more recently, the Work and Health Programme Pioneer Support Programme. All of the above programmes had supported Halton residents with looking for and sustaining employment.

HPIJ had also delivered a range of externally funded programmes that had provided financial incentives/grants to employers to recruit unemployed and economically inactive residents. These included Future Jobs Fund and Kick Start (both DWP funded), and the Intermediate Labour Market wage subsidy programme (ESF/SIF funded) through Ways to Work, since 2016.

It was announced that funding had been secured through the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) to continue to deliver the Ways to Work Programme, from October 2023 to March 2024, before the UKSPF funded activities from April 2024 to March 2025.

The report provided details on the Ways to Work Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) wage subsidy for employers, and the Young Persons Guarantee (YPG) grant for employers, which included performance information. Income and expenditure for both programmes and the key successes were noted.

Further to Members discussions and questions, the following additional details were provided:

- Officers had received a good response from employers to the ILM, which now offered a simpler application process than previously;
- After 26 weeks of employment under the ILM, HPIJ would assist with securing employment elsewhere, if they were not kept on by the employer;
- Data had shown that some clients were kept on after the 6 months for up to one year;
- Staff were preparing to market the YPG grant for employers – Members were invited to contact any companies they were aware of who would benefit from this;
- HPIJ offered employers access to jobs fairs – noted that 5+ vacancies were required from an employer to be able to attend;
- Regrettably, the company ‘Carpenter Additives’ was leaving Halton – Officers advised that the Council would offer support to those being made redundant. The Health Improvement Team (HIT) were also contacted when large numbers of people were facing job losses.

It was commented that HPIJ had been operating for 22 years and had earned an excellent reputation in the community. The staff at HPIJ were very knowledgeable and skilled and were praised by the Board for the support they offered to clients. They also offered valuable ‘signposting’ for clients to services they may not be aware of.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

ELS6 QUARTER MONITORING REPORTS - Q3 OF 2023-24

The Board received the performance management reports for quarter 3 of 2023-24 (1 October 2023 to 31 December 2023) and were requested to consider and raise any questions or points of clarification in respect of these.

The key priorities for development or improvement in 2023-24 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.

RESOLVED: That the quarter 3 2023-24 performance management reports be received.

ELS7 QUARTER MONITORING REPORTS - Q4 OF 2023-24

The Board received the performance management reports for quarter 4 of 2023-24 (1 January 2024 to 31 March 2024) and were requested to consider and raise any questions or points of clarification in respect of these.

The key priorities for development or improvement in 2023-24 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.

Officers advised that a new reporting system would be in place in the coming months, which would be simpler to understand. It was agreed that narrative behind the data was important to add context but this should be succinct.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair congratulated The Brindley Theatre for its recent award for Customer Service Excellence, and the success of Halton's 50th Anniversary event in Runcorn was noted.

A site visit to the new Leisure Centre on Moor Lane was being arranged on 17 July 2024 at 4pm and all Members of the Board were invited to join.

RESOLVED: That the quarter 4 2023-24 performance management reports be received.

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Meeting ended at 8.15 p.m.