

LOCAL ECONOMY POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Local Economy Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 15 September 2025 in the Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillors Jones (Chair), Teeling (Vice-Chair), Begg, Connolly, Garner, Rowe, Ryan and Skinner.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Gilligan and Hutchinson.

Absence declared on Council business: None.

Officers present: D. Cooke, H. Roberts, K. Arrowsmith, G Ferguson, and I. Moorhouse.

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

ELS9 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 6th June 2025, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

ELS10 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.

ELS11 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Board was presented with the minutes relating to the Employment, Learning & Skills and Community Portfolio, which had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of the Board.

The Board commented that they would have preferred to be consulted on the health and leisure in Halton before it went to Executive Board.

ELS12 PRESENTATION ON HALTON BUSINESS INVESTMENT & GROWTH TEAM

The Board received a report and accompanying presentation which provided an overview on the Halton Business Investment & Growth Team. The Team ran the

UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund) funded Halton Business Support Service and offered expert assistance to local businesses to make them more productive and competitive. They also helped with growth strategies and property searches.

The presentation outlined the range of current services offered to Halton businesses and progress on the delivery of the funded programmes and a view to post March 2026 when UKSPF funding came to an end.

Work done by the Team included signposting businesses to local council services and having one to one meetings or workshops with businesses in Halton to educate them on areas like cyber security. 67 businesses were supported between 2022-25 which was the target, and 15 new businesses were created but it was unknown how many jobs were created.

Post March 2026, Liverpool City Region (LCR) will focus on business support, housing, strategic planning & regeneration, transport, digital & energy infrastructure, employment skills and health as part of its industrial strategy. LCR would look at what could be done to replace UKSPF money when it ends in March 2026. It was noted that in early 2026 an Economic Forum will be held; 140 companies attended this event last year.

It was confirmed that there was no clarity on what would replace the UKSPF as Central Government attention shifted to combined authorities and devolution. Business rate relief was unavailable under the UKSPF, but the Team would signpost businesses to alternative sources of support.

Following some questions from the Board the following points were made:

- a proposal was raised that the Council should require new developments in Halton to offer on-site apprenticeships for local young people, in partnership with schools and colleges.
- the Team's promotional materials for town centre regeneration will be shared with the Board.
- it was confirmed that outreach to developers and property agents was conducted via the LCR network, real estate events, and local promotion. The Council did not have its own budget for self-promotion. The Board noted a need to better highlight Halton's strengths, for example its transport links.

- it was suggested the Council explore co-location and flexible working spaces, following Liverpool City Council's example.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

Interim
Regeneration and
Business Growth
Manager

Councillor Aimee Skinner left the Meeting at this juncture at 19:32

ELS13 PRESENTATION ON SCI-TECH DARESBUY

The Board received a report and accompanying presentation which provided an overview on the Sci-Tech Daresbury Joint Venture and the positive impact it had. Sci-Tech Daresbury Joint Venture was established in 2010 as a partnership with the Science & Technology Facilities Council (Daresbury Labs) and Langtree Property Partners. The site has been a legally designated Enterprise Zone since 2012 and in 2024 it became part of the Liverpool City Region Health & Life Sciences Investment Zone. It is the only National UKRI (UK Research and Innovation) Lab in the north of England and 160 companies were on site varying in size.

The presentation outlined the Sci-Tech Daresbury Campus including that it had the fastest supercomputer in the UK on site and one of Europe's largest liquid helium cryogenic cooling facilities. Other key points included:

- Businesses on site had a 95% survival rate.
- There were mainly small businesses onsite, but the average sales growth was 29%.
- £45 million was invested into the campus and £20 million of this was from public sector grants. £6.5 million of this came from the Council using the Enterprise Zone Borrowing Mechanism.
- The Council owned 25% of Daresbury Joint Venture assets. £883,000 per annum in business rates is currently retained by the Council for reinvestment into the enterprise zone until 2037.
- 15% of employees on site were from Halton.
- Over 70% of jobs at Daresbury were degree level and above and over 189 apprenticeships were created in the last four years.
- Roughly £3 million per annum is spent in the local supply chain just from the Joint Venture.
- A public engagement programme was established to work with local schools and colleges to engage with students on activities

including coding and video game design.

It was confirmed that placements at Daresbury had increased for students from schools in Halton, but the reason why employment levels were unknown. Officers agreed to ask the companies on site to see if they were receiving applications from students from Halton.

Regarding Daresbury's charity partnership, the Board requested that the next charity partnership be established with a charity based in Halton if possible.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

Interim
Regeneration and
Business Growth
Manager

ELS14 HALTON ADULT LEARNING – THE CREATIVE CURRICULUM IN 24/25

The Board received a report on Halton's Creative Curriculum for Adult Learning in 2024/25. Work was done to design programmes that would allow a holistic development of literacy, teamwork, communication/presentation skills, self-reflection and confidence. Halton Adult Learning was wholly funded by LCR's Adult Skills Fund. Officers provided brochures to the Board detailing the work undertaken in 2024/25 including crafts, murals, educational trips to free to access places and writing stories which were published. Most of the 450 adult learners in Halton enrolled on the creative courses and the feedback received was very positive.

Regarding the books that the adult learners had got published, Officers agreed to see if they could be provided to local schools as it promoted local successes.

The Board praised the work done by Halton Adult Learning and suggested that the learner's artwork go in Brindley Theatre.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Quality & Learner
Experience
Manager

ELS15 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 1 OF 2025/26

The Board received the performance management reports for Quarter 1 of 2025-26 (1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025) 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 2025-26 were agreed by Members and 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.

It was confirmed that the new Brindley Library was now set to open in the spring of 2026 due to site issues. Despite the footfall reduction at the relocated Library, service usage had increased due to the usage of online services.

Officers agreed to get an update regarding the condition of the swimming pool at Halton Leisure Centre.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Operational
Director
Economy,
Enterprise and
Property

ELS16 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 31 MAY 2025

The Board received a report from the Director of Finance, which gave the Council's overall revenue and capital spending position as at 31 May 2025, together year-end outturn position. All Policy and Public Performance Boards had received this report.

It was confirmed that the Board were unable to receive the budget information for July 2025 because this data was unavailable at the time when the agenda legally had to be published.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Meeting ended at 9:01p.m.