



Cllr. Sue Edge
Chairman

ANNUAL REPORT

(Employment Learning & Skills and Community) POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

APRIL 2011 – MARCH 2012

“ For the past 7 years I have been a member of scrutiny on The Employment Learning Skills & The Community.

within this period my positions have been inclusive of 2yrs as Vice Chair and this my second year as Chair.

In respect of this I would like to take this opportunity to thank Members of this committee for the continuing support you have shown me.

As usual the quality of the debate that we have had on a variety of topics during the year has been excellent. The last 12 months have been challenging and I believe that your knowledge and experience of a wide range of complex issues has enabled us to make a real and positive difference to people, living, working and or studying in Halton.

I would also like to thank the officers for working with me to ensure that agendas and papers have not only reflected the role and remit of the PPB but have reflected a positive and proactive approach to tackling the economic down-turn. Difficult times often require difficult discussions to take place and as you will see in the report below we have been required to consider a number of topics and these have been presented in an informative and considered way.

Together I believe that the PPB has fully demonstrated its value in supporting the organisation to develop its policies in respect of Employment learning and Skills and Community initiatives in Halton.”

Councillor Sue Edge

Chairman, Employment Learning and Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2011/12 the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors Edge, (Chair) P Lloyd-Jones (Vice Chair), Carlin, Horabin, Howard, MacManus, Parker, C Plumpton-Walsh, Roberts, Rowe and Zygadlo.

The primary function of the PPB is to focus on the work of the Council (and its Partners) in seeking to improve economic prosperity in Halton, the skills and employment prospects of its residents, and their access to good sporting and cultural amenities, to scrutinise progress against the Corporate Plan in relation to the Employment Learning and Skills priority.

Employment, Learning and Skills Priority.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met four times during the year, and set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during the year.

Reports that were prepared by the ELS and C PPB are as follows: -

Local Economic Assessment

The Board considered a report regarding the development of a Local Economic Assessment (LEA) for the Borough of Halton.

The Board was advised that an LEA would be used to provide a longer timeframe for the analysis of structural changes in the economy of Halton. The LEA included an economic forecasting model to anticipate, for example GVA and employment growth, which would help us to prioritise and forward plan our economic regeneration activity.

Digital Inclusion Strategy

The Board considered a report which set out the Digital Economy and Inclusion Strategy (DEIS) and supporting evidence paper which had been produced for Halton. The Board was advised that the strategy targeted Next Generation Access (NGA) Broadband as a mechanism for driving economic development of social inclusion in Halton. It was noted that the new communications technologies not only helped businesses trade and develop but also created opportunities for businesses to develop new applications and services.

Single Work Programme

After discussion at the ELS and C PPB, a report was presented to the Executive Board to notify Members that Halton Borough Council was entering into contracts with the Prime Contractors Ingeus and A4E to deliver the Single Work Programme in Halton.

Members were advised that as part of the Government's welfare reform proposals, a number of existing employment support programmes had ceased and had been replaced by a new initiative called "The Single Work Programme".

Prior to the awarding of the contracts, Halton Borough Council, (through Halton People into Jobs), bid to deliver Work Programme provision in Halton on a sub-contracting basis.

Both prime contractors expressed an interest in working with Halton Borough Council via the Halton People into Jobs team. Halton was awarded 'end to end' delivery contracts for both organisations.

	<p><i>Employment Learning and Skills and Community PPB Riverside College Presentation</i></p> <p>The Board received a presentation from Kevin Smith – Vice Principal: Adults, Skills and Enterprise from Riverside College which set out the College’s contribution to the Employment Learning and Skills agenda in Halton.</p> <p>Arising from the presentation the following points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievements to date were excellent, particularly the best in England A level results which were physics, combined English and sociology; • Links could be formed with the Heath and Daresbury Laboratory in relation to science and the possibility of apprenticeships; • Concerns were raised with regard to proposals of secondary schools forming their own 6th forms and there no longer being a need for facilities at Riverside; and • There was a high percentage of adults in the Borough who did not have level 1 education, schemes to improve this could be investigated.
	<p><i>Scrutiny Topic Assessing the Impact of Deficit Policy on Employment Learning and Skills in Halton</i></p> <p>The Board received an update on the scrutiny topic “Impact of Deficit Policy on Employment Learning and Skills in Halton”.</p> <p>The topic group considered the Government’s deficit policy would have an impact on the wider range of initiatives and measures in Halton but that it was important to remain focussed on issues that would be of specific relevance to this Board.</p> <p>The group carried out an initial assessment of emerging Government policy relating to the Employment, Learning and Skills (ELS) agenda and an overview of the ELS policies that the Scrutiny Topic Group considered was appended to the report for information.</p> <p>Arising from discussion of the report Members suggested further involvement with local employers will be undertaken to encourage them to engage with college students and provide relative work experience. In response it was noted that this would be investigated. In addition the Board agreed to receive a progress update report in six months time.</p>

Presentation on the Enterprise Zone at Daresbury

Members received an informative presentation from the Chief Executive that Daresbury Science and Innovation Campus had received Enterprise Zone status. Members were advised that partners submitted a bid for Enterprise Zone status to further encourage and stimulate demand from high value businesses to the site.

It was reported that The Enterprise Zone status (which uniquely has the full support of 3 LEP's - Liverpool, Manchester and Cheshire and Warrington) would enable the accelerated delivery of the plans to build on Daresbury's continuing role as a nationally designated Science and Innovation Campus, containing internationally competitive facilities, developing world-class science, and maximising opportunities for knowledge transfer.

It was noted that All Enterprise Zones would benefit from;

- A business rate discount worth up to £275,000 per business over a five year period
- All business rates growth within the zone for a period of at least 25 years will be retained by the local area, to support the Partnership's economic priorities and ensure that Enterprise Zone growth is reinvested locally
- Government help to develop radically simplified planning approaches for the zone using, for example, existing Local Development Order powers
- Government support to ensure that superfast broadband is rolled out throughout the zone, achieved through guaranteeing the most supportive regulatory environment and, if necessary, public funding.

Bridge Tourism

The PPB received a report on the potential for tourism relating the construction of the Mersey Gateway.

With the progress now being made on the construction of the Mersey Gateway, a scoping paper has been developed to consider the potential impact it could have on tourism in the Borough.

The paper considers the potential tourism benefits and possible activities through a number of case studies of construction related projects.

Members agreed that working in partnership will be very important. It was noted that there are a number of hotels and tourist operators already interested in working together and a number have volunteered to be part of a delivery group. The future concessionaire will have a critical role to play and will no doubt have its own ideas to contribute.

The Halton Employment Partnership (HEP) and Tesco Extra Stores recruitment project

Members were recently provided with an update on the HEP/Tesco Extra Store recruitment project which the Halton Employment Partnership supported with the aim of supporting local unemployed people into jobs at the new Widnes store. An intensive programme of pre-employment training, interviews skills workshops and interviews was provided leading to 94 local people securing employment at the store.

Report on Business Development Activity

The PPB received a progress report on the work of the Business Development Team (BDT) within the Economy, Enterprise and Property Department. The primary aim of the team is to encourage investment into the Borough and to support companies already based in the Borough to expand and grow. The report also provides information on the positive measures the team is taking to support Halton's businesses during the economic down turn. The report advised on recent announcements regarding 'employer facing' initiatives and set out proposals for how the team will respond to these announcements.

Community Development

The board received an annual report on the Councils Community Centres service for the operating year 2010/11. The report detailed APSE (Association of Public Service Excellence) benchmarking data providing information on efficiency and the direction of travel for the service over the last five years. The benchmarking data overall demonstrates improved performance across the service and identifies areas of focus to support continuous improvement. The report also outlined contributions to the Councils efficiency programme and details of the significant savings achieved in reducing energy costs by adopting good housekeeping measures. The report hi-lighted how the provision and usage of community centres contributes to the Councils key priorities and identified future challenges for the service.

The Board considered a report which outlined the delivery of **Community Development in 2011/12**.

It was reported that the purpose of Community Development was to build relationships with our communities, to help groups and networks of people take joint action on matters that concerned them. It was also about enabling individuals to influence the decisions that affected their lives.

The Board were informed that to do this the Community Development combined a number of aspects which were outlined in the report for information. The Board was advised of the service performance and service development which detailed the following:

- Starter Grants;
- Community Development Grants;
- Voluntary Youth Organisation Grants; and
- Bursaries.

The Board also received a report which outlined the **Annual Report for Voluntary Sector Funding**. The report provided performance information on the 12 organisations Core Grant supported in 2010/11, which were detailed in the report for information.

WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2012/13

The Board has decided that during the next municipal year (2012/13) it will focus on:
Welfare Reform and The Single Work Programme;
Interface with the Private Sector and Employer Facing Services;
Sector Development;
The Low Carbon Economy;
Apprenticeships.

The topic groups Barriers to Employment (from an Employer perspective) and;
Apprenticeships will be completed and reported to the June Committee

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work please contact (Wesley Rourke, Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Employment)