

## **EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING, SKILLS AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 30 May 2012 in the The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes*

Present: Councillors Edge (Chairman), C. Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chairman), Cassidy, Howard, P. Lloyd Jones, G. Logan, Macmanus, Parker, Roberts and Rowe

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Zygadlo

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: J. Briggs, H. Coen, N. Mannion, C. Patino, M. Simpson and W Rourke

Also in attendance: Councillor Jones in accordance with Standing Order 33

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

|      |   | <i>Action</i> |
|------|---|---------------|
| ELS1 | MINUTES   |               |
|      | The Minutes from the meeting held on 26 March 2012, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.  |               |
| ELS2 | PUBLIC QUESTION TIME  |               |
|      | It was reported that no public questions had been received.   |               |
| ELS3 | EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES   |               |
|      | The Board considered the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board relevant to the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community since the last meeting of the Board.  |               |
|      | In relation to EXB123 Members discussed the areas for improvement, mainly the need for focus on greater access to work experience and trials. It was also queried whether it was more difficult to find work experience for people. It was noted that an update would be brought to a |               |

future meeting.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Minutes be noted; and
- 2) an update regarding improving access to work experience be brought to a future meeting.

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#### ELS4 ANNUAL REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which provided an Annual Report of the work carried out by the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board for 2011/12. The report set out the work carried out and recommendations made for work programmes throughout the Municipal Year April 2011 to March 2012.

The Chair wished to note on record her thanks to Members and Officers for their continued support and hard work throughout 2011/12.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report and comments raised be noted.

#### ELS5 BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT (FROM AN EMPLOYERS PERSPECTIVE)

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which set out the scrutiny topic on barriers to employment from an employers perspective.

It was reported that the topic built on the previous topic regarding barriers to employment from an employee perspective. It was noted that there were a number of barriers or key considerations cited by employers when they were considering recruiting staff. The three skills or attributes were found to be of greatest importance to local employers where communication, numeracy and literacy.

RESOLVED: That the Board support the recommendations contained in pages 13-18 of the report, namely;

- 1) to continue the Recruitment and Training 'offer' to inward investors provided through the Halton Employment Partnership and seek funding for a dedicated resource to provide this coordinated support on a medium term basis;

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- 2) to seek Government support to help Halton support people from disadvantaged groups and areas within Halton to access jobs and training opportunities arising in the construction industry;
- 3) to support the development of a wider system of vocational qualifications focused on the STAM agenda;
- 4) to support the development of the Fab Lab concept; and
- 5) to ask Government to re-visit the Apprenticeship Eligibility rules.

#### ELS6 JOINT SCRUTINY REVIEW OF PROVISION OF APPRENTICESHIPS IN THE BOROUGH

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which provided a draft report on the Joint Scrutiny of Apprenticeships which sought approval and recommended that it be referred to Executive Board.

Members were advised that the draft report was commissioned jointly by the Children, Young People and Families and the Employment, Learning and Skills PPB's. A scrutiny review Topic Group was established comprising of six Members (3 from each Board), and was chaired by Councillor Edge.

It was noted that there had been a significant resurgence in the Apprenticeship model in recent years, with the current Coalition Government providing enhanced financial incentives to employers, and especially Small Medium Enterprise's (SME's) to encourage them to offer apprenticeships.

It was further noted that the review focussed on the following:

- the implementation for an Apprenticeship programme for the Council;
- monitoring and review of the programme;
- engagement with the private sector;
- the roles and responsibilities of partners to drive the Apprenticeships agenda in Halton.

The report also set out the number of means in which the review was conducted, findings and other implications.

The draft scrutiny review of provision of apprenticeships in the Borough set out;

- reason why the scrutiny review was commissioned;
- methodology summary;
- findings – Halton picture and national picture;
- challenges;
- National Apprenticeship Service;
- Borough Council's People Plan;
- Waste Management's apprenticeship pilot; and
- overall conclusion

In addition the draft review contained an Apprenticeship Scrutiny Review Action Plan, a Topic Brief, methodology detail and 8 recommendations for action and further improvement.

Chris Patino – Divisional Manager, Community and Environment, advised Members that as per results from the People Plan it was apparent that the workforce profile in Halton for under 25's was low. An event was held in order to help recruit apprenticeship posts within the Council. 70 people under 25 attended the away day and were invited to complete application forms, 40 of which were received. From this 40 interviews were held and 11 apprenticeship positions were offered and have been accepted.

It was further noted that 6 posts were created within Waste and Recycling and 5 posts were created in Open Spaces, all 11 posts were for a 2 year scheme achieving entry level 1 and 2. Members were advised that apprenticeships could be interchanged between each area or even possibly across other directorates in order to provide them with more scope.

In relation to apprenticeship starts across the Borough, it was noted that so far this year there was a 10-15% increase across all ages. Members queried the level of non-completions amongst apprentices. In response it was noted that an answer would be sought.

**RESOLVED:** That the Board approve the draft report on the Joint Scrutiny Review of Apprenticeships and forward it to the Executive Board for consideration.

*(NB: Councillor Parker declared a personal interest in the following item due to being Chair of an Appeal regarding Halton Community Transport)*

ELS7 HALTON COMMUNITY TRANSPORT - OUTCOMES FROM SCRUTINY TOPIC

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which informed Members of the outcome from a series of meetings in connection with the Halton Community Transport (HCT) scrutiny topic group.

It was reported that the HCT topic group was set up to review the operations of, and services provided by HCT including identification of funding streams contributed towards HCT's overall operations and service delivery. Another focus of the group was to consider the potential social inclusion benefits that the services operated by HCT provided to its users and the impacts on those users should the service discontinue. A terms of reference was devised at the first meeting of the group and was appended to the report for information.

It was further noted that a series of four meetings had been held as part of the group and a brief explanation of discussions from the meetings was set out in the report.

Members considered the key recommendations set out in 3.3 of the report and raised concerns regarding the recommendation around fitting vehicle scheduling system and tracking devices and the costs this would incur.

The Board also sought clarification on the future of the Dial a Ride service and the significant effect on the service should further grant deductions occur.

Members agreed that the recommendations from the group be put forward with the exception of fitting of vehicle scheduling system and tracking devices as The Board requested further discussions take place around this issue and the cost to do this.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the content of the report be acknowledged;
- 2) the recommendations set out in 3.3 of the report be agreed with exception to 3.3.4 (vehicle scheduling systems and tracking devices); and
- 3) further discussions take place with Halton Community Transport with regard to the cost of vehicle scheduling systems and tracking devices.

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## ELS8 QUARTERLY POLICY UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which informed Members of recent national policy announcements relevant to employment, learning and skills.

It was reported that a steady flow of policy announcements, consultation exercises, reports and ministerial statements were issued by Government departments and agencies that had varying degrees of relevance to issues on the employment, learning and skills agenda and related topics.

The report set out brief summaries of key announcements to the Board for information along with observations of local relevance, where appropriate. This provided the opportunity for Board Members to consider whether to initiate more detailed scrutiny and/or reports to future meetings. The report set out the following:-

- 2012 Chancellor's Budget;
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- The Youth Contract;
- Launch of National Careers Service;
- Community Learning Trust Pilots;
- European Union Update; and
- Government Response to the Portas Review.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

## ELS9 PERFORMANCE MONITORING QUARTER 4

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources which set out the Quarterly Monitoring Reports for the fourth quarter of 2011/12 to March 2012. The report detailed progress against service objectives / milestones and performance targets and describes factors affecting the service for:-

- Economy Enterprise and Property extracts for Employment Learning and Skills; and
- Community Service, namely Library Services and other Culture and Leisure Services.

Members discussed the opening of the new library in Runcorn Old Town and the new system used across all libraries for checking out and returning books. It was noted that there still were staff based behind counters.

The Board discussed the short term contract offered by the new Tesco Store and queried how many had been laid off from the numbers recruited from the Halton Employment Partnership (HEP). In response it was noted that this information would be investigated and reported to Members.

RESOLVED: That the quarterly monitoring report and comments made be noted.

#### ELS10 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY - YEAR END PROGRESS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which provided information on the progress in achieving targets contained within the 2011-2016 Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for Halton.

Members were advised that selected measures and targets for Employment, Learning, Skills and Community priority were summarised in Appendix 1 to the report, using the Halton corporate template, designed for the purpose of bringing together all relevant items of performance information.

It was further noted following extensive research and analysis and consultation with all stakeholder groups including Elected Members, partners, the local community and representative groups, a new SCS was approved by Council in April 2011.

Arising from discussion of the report Members discussed the following:-

- reduction in opening hours of the Libraries and the impact it had had on usage and noted new initiatives;
- the development in Halebank, legal challenges and investment into the Borough;
- the reduction in percentage of people with no qualifications from 2006 to 2010 was remarkable;
- support would be provided by the Council to Halton residents accessing welfare and debt advice at a casework level; and
- whether information regarding the three bids for Art projects within the Borough could be brought to a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be

noted.

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*Meeting ended at 8.55 p.m.*