

Cllr. Jones
Chairman

ANNUAL REPORT

EMPLOYMENT LEARNING AND SKILLS

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

APRIL 2006 – MARCH 2007

“ This was the first year of the Employment Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board and I would like to start by offering my sincere thanks to Board members for all the work they have undertaken. The Board had a very challenging programme of monitoring, scrutiny, visits and policy development. I believe it is making a substantial contribution to improving the way the council and its partners work together and particularly note the increasingly close relationship with the Employment Learning and Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership, whose meetings I attend on behalf of this Board”.

Councillor Eddie Jones, Chairman Employment Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2006/07 the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors Eddie Jones, Frank Fraser, Ellen Cargill, Susan Edge, David Findon, Mike Hodgkinson, Harry Howard, Stan Parker, David Lewis, Margaret Ratcliffe, John Stockton.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to the Culture and Leisure Services and the Economic Regeneration Departments. The primary function is to focus on the work of the Council (and its partners) in seeking to improve economic prosperity in Halton and the skills and employment prospects of its residents, and to scrutinise progress against the Corporate Plan in relation to the Employment, Learning and Skills priority

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met 5 times during the year, and set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during the year.

Capital of Culture

The Board has played an active role in developing the Halton programme of activity for the Capital of Culture. This culminated in a full report being approved by Executive Board on 29th March 2007. The major proposal is for Halton to deliver a 2008 youth festival involving all the twin towns of the Liverpool City Region.

Local Area Agreement

The Board considered the development of the draft Local Area Agreement (LAA), particularly in relation to targets for employment, skills and enterprise development. Linked to that, is the consideration of work being undertaken by the Employment Learning and Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership (SSP) that is tasked to implement that part of the LAA. Of particular note is that the SSP has now finalised its 3 key strategies (Employment, Enterprise and Workforce & Skills) including many of the recommendations of previous PPB topic groups.

Employment

The Board has kept up to date with the development of the Liverpool City Region Employment Strategy. In this, all 6 authorities in Greater Merseyside have undertaken to work together to reduce worklessness in the most deprived wards. The PPB has inputted Halton priorities into this process and will keep monitoring its progress. The Board also kept under review the implementation of the employment action plan that resulted from previous scrutiny work and was very pleased to hear about the developing relationship between the Council, Halton Housing Trust and construction companies that it helped to instigate. The Board is presently reviewing Halton People into Jobs as part of its scrutiny programme and this will report early in 2007-08

Community Development

The Board received an annual report on **Community Development** service delivery scrutinising performance indicators around active community groups, initiatives and external funding levered in through the service. Also received annual monitoring information on the Council's Community Development and Youth Grants.

The Board received an annual report on **Community Centre** service delivery scrutinising capacity usage of the Council's five facilities by members of the public, other Council departments and partner agencies.

The Board received an annual report on impact of **Voluntary Sector Core Grant** funding. Mid-year monitoring information on grants and received presentations from Halton Voluntary Action and Citizens Advice Bureau on performance/service

Skills and Enterprise

The Board received reports on progress made on the Skills and Enterprise Action Plans that were developed as part of the previous scrutiny programme. Overall there is good progress, but the development of Job, Employment and Learning Shops is somewhat delayed due to funding issues. The Board is presently undertaking scrutiny of the adult learning team post inspection action plan.

Libraries

The Board considered the results of the Public Library Users Surveys undertaken in 2006 for Adults and Children. These revealed that there has been a significant improvement in the performance and levels of satisfaction with the service. The performance standards for BVPI 118 A and B were exceeded, (users who found the books/information they were looking for) and the Public Library Service Standards for overall satisfaction with the service exceeded the targets and increased to 97% for adults and 93% for children. The Board was also consulted on the proposed changes to the Mobile Library Service.

Community Cohesion

Community cohesion is a complex issue which touches on a range of inter related matters e.g. how cohesion impacts on community safety, educational standards, health improvement, community engagement in priority setting etc. It is acknowledged that there are no quick fixes. This topic formed part of the 2006/07 work programme and was investigated by a Working Party led by Cllr Jones. It seeks to examine and define the concept in the Halton context and consider how Cohesion is mainstreamed or exemplified in service delivery

Emerging challenges appear to be around anti-social behaviour, inter-generational issues, access to services and information across the borough, integration issues around migrant workers, and community engagement and civic pride.

These conclusions of the Working party and recommendations to the Executive Board will be presented to the PPB in June 2007.

Sport

The Sport Development - Inclusion in Sport Topic Group has, thus far, had two particular areas of focus and will complete its work in the first half of the new Municipal Year

a) Facilities - It considered a definitive list of sports recognised by Sport England and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and matched provision in Halton against this list. It also considered the findings of Sport England Active People survey, which showed levels of participation in various sports in Halton. This identifies under represented sports, and any poor take up by particular target groups.

b) Disability Sports - a full day was devoted to this area and opinions were sought from several stakeholders (e.g. Coaches, voluntary sector, school coordinator, health and physical activity sector, social care). The day attempted to audit current provision, identify major barriers to accessing sport and recreation activities, and consider what key improvements could be made for the provision of disability sport.

WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2007/08

The Board has decided that during the current municipal year (2007/08) it will complete the reviews of the following areas:

- Community Cohesion; and
- Sports Development – Inclusion in Sports;

Additionally, the Board will commence reviews of:

- Creating local jobs through public procurement; and
- Skills: Identifying the existing and future needs of businesses and developing a response.

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 Gary Collins 01928 516100 gary.collins@halton.gov.uk