

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, 21 September 2020 via remote access

Present: Councillors MacManus (Chair), C. Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chair), J. Bradshaw, Leck, Logan, June Roberts, Teeling, Wallace and Whitley

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: W. Rourke, A. Jones, C. Patino, S. McDonald, J. Griffiths, P. Corner and J. Unsworth

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

		<i>Action</i>
ELS5	MINUTES	
	The Minutes from the meeting held on 28 July 2020, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
ELS6	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
	The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.	
ELS7	COVID-19 LOCAL AUTHORITY DISCRETIONARY GRANT FUND	
	The Board received a report from the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which set out how the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund (LADGF) provided by central Government had gone some way to support local businesses.	
	It was noted that the impact of the Coronavirus was being felt in communities in many different ways and Halton's businesses had been severely affected with many losing several months of trade and some were still not fully operational.	

It was reported that during lockdown, the Business Improvement and Growth Team collated all current Government advice to businesses into a single resource for use by Council colleagues and developed dedicated resource packs for specific target groups, for example the self-employed. With regards to the LADGF, this was designed, administered and delivered by the Council and targeted businesses that were not able to access previous grant schemes. The criteria for accessing the scheme was discussed in the report together with Halton's focussed schemes for eligibility.

The report provided the Board with details of numbers of applications and grants awarded and examples of feedback submitted from businesses.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

ELS8 EMPLOYMENT LEARNING AND SKILLS UPDATE

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources which provided an update on the work of the Employment, Learning and Skills Division.

It was reported that since 20 March 2020 the staff within the Employment, Learning and Skills Division had been operating a remote system for customers and learners, with all learning centres currently closed. The staff were now in the process of preparing for centres to reopen again and planning how delivery to customers and learners would be rolled out given social distancing measures.

As well as guidance surrounding Covid-19 being core to the delivery going forward, the Board was advised that the work of the Division would focus on supporting those individuals that had been adversely affected economically by the Pandemic and had lost jobs and/or confidence.

The report provided Members with updates in the following areas:

- ESF Ways to Work;
- Liverpool City Region apprenticeship Hub;
- LCR Apprenticeship Growth Plan;
- DWP Work and Health Programme;
- Merseylink Employment and Skills Performance;
- and
- Adult Learning and Devolution.

In response to Members queries regarding the potential for an increased demand for apprenticeships once the furlough scheme ended, officers advised that this was anticipated so a request had been submitted to Government for the numbers of these to be increased.

With regards to the Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS) Programme, Members were advised that this would support 1453 participants between October 2020 and March 2022 and would provide positions of not less than 3 months duration. Members requested a progress report at a future meeting of the Board.

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RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

ELS9 LIBRARY SERVICE

The Board received an update report from the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, on the Library Service.

It was reported that in line with Government advice all library buildings were closed to the public on 23 March 2020. Library teams worked quickly to shift activity to digital platforms with budgets being reallocated to increase resources and support new demand. Members were advised that an intensive social media campaign was developed to engage audiences and highlight resources to new and existing customers.

The report outlined the recovery of the libraries following the easing of restrictions; all libraries were now open with safety measures in place. The service had renewed its focus on three key values – connection, creative learning and spaces. The Board was provided with details and examples of current projects taking place using these renewed key values.

Members were also advised of *The Joy Project*, a planned season of visual arts activity in public spaces taking place across the Borough this Autumn. This was arranged in response to the need to engage creatively with communities during the Pandemic, which had taken away the option of using the Library buildings as venues.

In response to Members queries, the following was noted:

- There was no actual unique story telling material

for adults as this was not available with publishers – there were however talking books and e-books available for customers to download; and

- Attendance levels at the Libraries were down to 15% when compared to this time last year, but there was a rise in digital customers and customers for the home library service, which was proving to be a valuable service to the Boroughs vulnerable and isolated residents who were impacted by the Coronavirus the most.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

Councillor Logan declared a Discloseable Other Interest in the following item as his wife was Secretary of the Runcorn Community Choir Group.

ELS10 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, informing of the operational delivery for the Community Development Service for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

It was commented that the Community Development Service helped support local community groups and organisations with their formation and facilitated the delivery of community led initiatives and activity. The Team also has a combined role in managing Area Forum projects delivery; enabling Elected Members to respond to community concerns and aspirations. It was noted that this combined role generated effective community engagement with Council departments, services and partner organisations and contributed to building resilience in Halton's communities.

The report discussed the work of the Community Development Team, its purpose, activities and performance for 2019/20 against the previous years. Also provided for Members information were examples of some projects that the Team had helped to deliver throughout the year within each Area Forum and information was provided on community development grants that had been awarded during the year.

The Board welcomed the report and agreed that the knowledge, guidance and support provided by the Community Development Team was invaluable to the work Members did within their Wards' and gave thanks for this to

the whole Team.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

ELS11 COVID-19 RECOVERY AND HALTON'S ECONOMY

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which expanded on the Borough's Economic Reset Plan, which had previously been circulated to all Council Members.

It was reported that the Plan would be used to ensure that the Council could support local businesses in partnership with local organisations and businesses and partners operating in the Liverpool City Region. Further it was understood that local authorities were consolidating existing statutory and operational requirements as we emerged from the first phase of the Covid-19 crisis. Also, they were reallocating and securing resources in order to redefine their economies and were working hard to improve the economic and social prospects for local residents and businesses over the year ahead.

A presentation was made to the Board which provided further analysis and data on the potential impact of Covid-19 on Halton's economy; this would be sent to the Board following the meeting.

The report also provided Members with a summary of key findings and emerging issues to date, due to the impact of Covid-19. The Chair requested a follow on report be submitted at a future meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED: That the report and presentation be noted.

ELS12 SCRUTINY TOPIC GROUP 2019-20

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, regarding the scrutiny topic group for 2019/20 – *Traded Areas in the Borough*.

It was noted that since the first meeting of the topic group on 13 February 2020, no further meetings had taken place due to the Coronavirus. Further, the operation of the traded areas had changed significantly since the topic was selected and as they started to reopen, their operations would not resemble those previously experienced as they

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will be in recovery mode, following the Covid-19 crisis.

The Chair announced, that following consultation with Councillor McDermott (Chair of the Scrutiny Chairs' Committee) the current topic group would cease; the 2020/21 topic group would be a fallow year; and that at a future meeting of the Board a topic group for the year 2021/22 would be considered.

The Board agreed with the above proposals.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the current topic group should cease further activity;
- 2) there should be no topic group for 2021; and
- 3) at a future meeting of the Board during 2021, Members should consider a topic group for 2022.

On behalf of the Board the Chair thanked the Council Officers for their hard work over the past 6 months which had clearly been demanding and unprecedented due to the outbreak of Covid-19 Pandemic.

Meeting ended at 7.30 p.m.