

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, 8 February 2021 held remotely

Present: Councillors MacManus (Chair), C. Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chair), J. Bradshaw, Cassidy, Logan, Rowe and Whitley

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Leck, June Roberts and Wallace

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: W. Rourke, A. Jones, C. Patino, S. McDonald, S. Bartlett, S. Lowrie and F. Edwards

Also in attendance: Councillor Jones (in accordance with Standing Order number 33) and one member of the press

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
ELS19 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes from the meeting held on 16 November 2020, were taken as read and signed as a correct record, subject to noting that Councillor Jones was also in attendance.</p> <p><u>ELS13</u> – Minutes – it was noted that a response from central Government regarding the request to increase the numbers of apprenticeships had still not been received.</p> <p><u>ELS16</u> – Preparations for Halton’s Borough of Culture – a brief update was provided; due to the ongoing Pandemic some events had been pushed back to the end of the year but nothing had been cancelled so far.</p>	
ELS20 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
<p>The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.</p>	
ELS21 POLICY UPDATE	
<p>The Board received a report outlining recent key</p>	

policy announcements relevant to employment, learning and skills. This included *The Government's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution* and the *Liverpool City Region (LCR) Marketing and Investment Strategy*.

It was reported that within the LCR Employment, Learning and Skills Programmes were a number of policy initiatives and programmes that had been announced since the last meeting of the Board – a summary was provided on:

- Kickstart;
- Youth Employment Task Force;
- Youth Hubs;
- Support for 18 year olds;
- Sectoral work;
- LCR – Local Skills Report; and
- Adult Education Budget.

In response to Members queries around the hydrogen economy the following was noted:

- The Council had been looking at the production and use of hydrogen in the Borough for the past two years;
- Officers were working with Liverpool City Region colleagues and other partners in this regard to develop strategies and campaigns going forward;
- One of the Team's Regeneration Officers would be repurposed to focus on green projects alone;
- A further hydrogen workshop to be hosted by Halton was planned for the summer; and
- In the future hydrogen will be used as an alternative to gas and existing gas fired generators could be converted to green energy.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report are noted.

ELS22 ADULT LEARNING SERVICE UPDATE ON TEST AND LEARN PROJECTS

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, on the Test and Learn projects delivered by Halton Adult Learning Service.

It was reported that the Adult Learning Service was funded through the devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB), which was managed by the Combined Authority, who allocated an additional £150k to the service to deliver on two pilot projects, Test and Learn. Halton used the additional

funding opportunity to deliver a number of projects including Web Design, Coding, Digital Marketing and Media, and Engage with Reading (a programme to train reading volunteers to support people in the community with lower level reading abilities).

Members were referred to Appendix 1, which provided details of the Test and Learn delivery and associated data. The Board was pleased that the attendance and success rates had held up well despite the Pandemic and that the project had supported people of all ages to improve their digital skills. It was noted that the reader volunteer programme had received recognition in the education supplement of the 'Times' as being best practice.

RESOLVED: That the Board welcomes the progress made to date in managing the Test and Learn Projects.

ELS23 UPDATE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AND GROWTH TEAM

The Board considered a report from the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided an update on key activities being undertaken and/or overseen by the Council's Business Improvement and Growth Team, during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

It was noted that during the past year most of the Team had been working on supporting local businesses during the Pandemic and activities had been changed to reflect this. Some generic support had continued which was summarised in the report and included:

- Business Growth Programme – Phase 2;
- Liverpool City Region Hospitality and Leisure Grants (HLG's);
- Growth Platform; and
- One Front Door.

Officers provided details on screen of HLG's awarded so far in rounds one and two, and advised that round 3 would start later this week. In response to Members questions, the expectation was that the demand in round three would be greater than it was for one and two, as it would reach the wider business community and those without support so far. A number of businesses did withdraw from the Business Growth Programme Phase 2; some wanted 'cash' support as opposed to 'hours' of business support, so did not engage any further with the Programme. It was noted that the diagnostic process for the

Business Growth Programme was now done in house.

It was reported that Phase 3 of the Business Growth Programme would align with the Council's priorities in improving the economic growth by aiding SMEs within Halton to grow, develop, become more sustainable and increase jobs. Phase 3 was planned to run from 1 January 2022 until 30 June 2023 and would require match funding of £85,799.

RESOLVED: That Members note the activities and performance of the Business Improvement and Growth Team and how this aligned with wider national and city region strategies.

ELS24 SPORT AND RECREATION TEAM

The Board received a report on the Council's Sport and Recreation Service covering the 2019-20 financial year and from March 2020 to December 2020, 'Covid year'.

It was reported that it had been an extremely difficult time for the service, the staff, regular customers, and being unable to engage with residents. The service worked actively with partner organisations such as Halton Sports Partnership, in order to facilitate development through a better understanding of the issues and a sharing of resources to achieve success. It was highlighted that without the contribution from staff and partners, much of the work outlined in the report would not have been possible.

It was recognised that sports and recreational activities were an essential component in supporting and developing the infrastructure of the community to improve the quality of life both physically and mentally.

The Sports and Recreation Team consists of two distinct areas: the Sports Development Team; and management of the Council's 3 leisure centres – Kingsway Leisure Centre, Brookvale Recreation Centre and Runcorn Swimming Pool. Members were advised that the Team had undergone a number of changes in 2020 and staffing was currently reduced to two full time officers. The report provided a snap shot of local projects delivered during 2019-20 and gave an insight into the key activities that leisure centres had engaged in since March 2020, when the lockdowns began.

Further to Members queries, the following was noted:

- Although the numbers of swimmers were consistent (exception Runcorn Swimming Pool), junior gym memberships were low – these were being encouraged but it was recognised that there was work to be done here;
- The swimming lessons and schools swimming was removed from Runcorn Swimming Pool due to staffing issues but these were transferred to Brookvale and Kingsway;
- An Aquatics Manager had been recruited to focus on the pools and further encouragement of swimming in the Borough;
- One Member commented that Runcorn Swimming Pool was at the heart of the community and should be the focus of a swimming strategy; and
- With regards to the upgrading of facilities in the Borough it was noted that a proposed new Leisure Centre in Widnes had just been granted planning permission and site identification for a new leisure centre in Runcorn had commenced. There were also other sites identified for improvements as part of the indoor facility strategy.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

ELS25 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 2 OF 2020-21

The Board received the performance management reports for Quarter 2 of 2020-21 (1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020) and were requested to consider and raise any questions or points of clarification in respect of these.

It was noted that the key priorities for development of improvement in 2019-20 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans 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. Also, information concerning the implementation of high risk mitigation measures relevant to this Board was included in Appendix 1.

The following points were highlighted:

- The Stadium and The Brindley were currently being used as vaccination centres and two testing centres were also to be introduced;
- It was hoped that the Libraries and Leisure Centres would be open in the next two weeks and staff had prepared and were ready to open, as per the current Covid-19 guidelines;
- Waste collection services; open space services and school meals services had kept going through the Pandemic;
- The development of adult remote learning been a success as discussed earlier;
- Some of the KPI reporting had been interrupted due to Covid-19 so some data was unavailable; and
- It was realised that there would be a loss of income from business rates from businesses closing and being unable to reopen, due to the Pandemic.

RESOLVED: That the quarter 2 performance management reports be received.

Meeting ended at 7.55 p.m.