

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 29 September 2008 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Jones (Chairman), Fraser (Vice-Chairman), Austin, M. Bradshaw, Edge, Findon, Howard, Parker, Rowe, Stockton and Worrall

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: H. Cockcroft, G. Collins, L. Derbyshire and A. Villiers

Also in attendance: Mr J Leake and Mr H Gun-why

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

ELS10 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 23rd June 2008, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

ELS11 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was reported that no public questions had been received.

ELS12 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The minutes of the Executive Board relating to the work of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy Performance Board were submitted for information.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ELS13 DARESBURY SCIENCE AND INNOVATION CAMPUS

The Board received two presentations from Mr Henry Gun-why (STFC Daresbury Laboratory) and Mr John Leak (Daresbury Innovation Centre).

The first presentation by Mr Gun-why gave the Board an update on STFC progress and future vision for Daresbury Science and Innovation Centre which:-

- Outlined the Council's science and technology facilities;
- Set out the STFC mission summary;
- Set out and explained the issues and challenges in respect of the merger;
- Gave a history of the Daresbury Laboratory and the open days and celebrations that had taken place;
- Showed photographs of the Laboratory in 1960 – 1970's and aerial views of 2002 and 2007;
- Detailed the impact of the SRS closure;
- Outlined the current research facilities;
- Showed photographs of the proposed detector Technology Centre, Technology Gateway Centres, the proposed Hartree Centre and the New Daresbury Reception Building – October 2004; and
- Outlined the science and innovation campus model.

The second presentation by Mr Leake gave the Board an update on progress and the future vision for Daresbury SIC which:-

- Gave an update on the companies within the Daresbury Innovation Centre in respect of the planned closure of the Synchrotron, the formation of the new body STFC, the development of the campus model and the ambitious vision for the future;
- Gave an introduction and overview of the campus;
- Outlined that the centre had opened in April 2005 and comprised of 77 high tech companies and focussed on healthcare, digital/ICT, instrumentation/electronics and energy and environmental technologies; and
- Explained what campus companies looked like and the vision for the future which included developing a major international 'Technology Village' which would be delivered through JV and Strategic Partnership and would engage with all stakeholders especially Halton Borough Council; and

- Set out the next stage of the development in respect of private investment of £25m from St Modwen Properties and the establishment of Vanguard House by 2009.

Arising from the discussion, reference was made to a number of issues including:-

- It was noted that the proposals could create significant job opportunities in the Borough, provide an opportunity to develop the East Runcorn area and infrastructure used by local people and public transport facilities;
- The percentages in respect of private and central funding to the Centre was noted;
- The importance of all stakeholders having the same aims and objectives in respect of the development of the centre was noted;
- The issues in respect of Rutherford and Daresbury competing for investment was noted;
- It was noted that the redundancies, although regretful, had been handled sensitively and in a civilised manner;
- In respect of the Student Mentoring Programme launch with local A Level students from local colleges, it was agreed that it would be beneficial to involve young people at primary school age in the science programme instead of at the A Level stage. It was suggested that a meeting could be arranged with relevant parties to look at ways of extending the programme to children of primary school age. It was also agreed that it would be beneficial for the Operational Director, to look at incorporating this within the Topic Group;
- It was noted that the Council would be monitoring the development of the STFC to ensure a consistent focus on Daresbury and provide a legacy that the Borough could be proud of;
- In respect of addressing the skill gap in the Borough to enable to get people into jobs it was noted that it was important to raise standards and awareness in the Borough. It was suggested that this could be

addressed by the schools holding a science competition in which they could use the laboratory and mentoring programme and which would result in a link with the companies. This would help to demonstrate to young people the potential opportunities that were available in the Borough. It was also suggested that Halton Schools be aligned to Higher Education Institutes in order to heighten awareness;

- The situation in respect of Jodrell Bank was noted;
- It was noted that it was vital that the site had a good public transport infrastructure to enable young people access to the potential job opportunities. Public transport to the site would need to be quick and efficient;
- It was noted that the majority of people currently working on the site did not live in Halton;
- It was agreed that Members of the Board visit the site in the future;
- Concern was raised that the Daresbury site had a Cheshire postcode and telephone number which resulted in the perception that it was not part of Halton. It was agreed that the Operational Director look into this matter to ascertain what could be done to address this issue; and
- It was suggested that the history of Mr Charles Barkla, from Halton, who received a nobel prize in physics could be used in a marketing campaign to raise awareness of opportunities and achievements.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the presentation be noted;
- (2) Mr Gun-why and Mr Leake be thanked for their informative presentations;
- (3) the progress on the development of the STFC be monitored by the Board;
- (4) the Operational Director, Economic Regeneration, look into the possibility of the postcode and telephone number of the Daresbury site being changed to indicate it was part of Halton;

Strategic Director
- Environment

- (5) a site visit be arranged for Members of the Board at a future date;
- (6) the Operational Director, Economic Regeneration, look at how the topic group could support the involvement of young people of primary school age into the Mentoring Programme; and
- (7) the possibility of using the history of Mr Charles Barkla for future marketing events be considered.

ELS14 QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORTS

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive on progress against service plan objectives and performance targets, performance trends/comparisons and factors affecting the services for Economic Regeneration, and Culture and Leisure for the first quarter.

Arising from the discussion, reference was made to a number of issues including:-

Culture and Leisure

- The Board was advised that £253,000 had been distributed from Sports England to employ Sports Development Officers. They had been set targets in order to give people the opportunity to access clubs.
- The achievements of the UK cycling and rowing activities this year and the resources that had been provided for these events was noted.

Economic Regeneration

- In respect of the difficulties filling the vacancy of Skills Strategy Officer which had recently been advertised – concern was raised on the impact this would have on the services provided in the Borough.
- The Board was advised that there had been some difficulties in relation to the recent Job Evaluation process, in that some jobs were now graded below market value. This had resulted in people in key positions within the organisation leaving. The appeals process was also taking a considerable time. The post had been advertised

but as a result of the grade, there had been no suitable candidates.

In this respect, the Board agreed that the Barriers to Work Topic Group undertake an analysis of the impact of the vacancies within the Directorate which would include how many people there were, the current grades, how many had been downgraded and the impact on the delivery of services;

- The Job Evaluation process and the pending appeals process was noted. It was also noted that the Job Evaluation scheme had been established nationally to address issues relating to equality of pay.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the Board requests that an analysis of the impact of vacancies on the ability of this Directorate to deliver services. The analysis should be made in the form of a report, presented to the Barriers to Work Topic Group and this group should report back to the Board with its findings and recommendations.

Strategic Director
- Environment

ELS15 BARRIERS TO WORK

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which provided a briefing on the recent employment focussed research undertaken in the neighbourhood management areas.

Arising from the discussion, reference was made to the following issues:-

- It was noted that the report was an excellent piece of work;
- Members were advised that the full report was available on request;
- It was noted that the list of types of work people would like did not include any job groups that were available at the Daresbury Science Innovation Centre; and
- It was noted that people did not feel that self

employment was an option due to the record keeping and accounting involved. It was suggested that the Business Start Up Team could look at providing a hands on service for book keeping.

RESOLVED: That the research findings be referred to the Barriers to Work Topic Group for detailed consideration.

Strategic Director
- Environment

ELS16 ENTERPRISE UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which provided a Members with information on the progress of Enterprise Action Plan.

The Board was advised that since the report had been written the NDWA, next year would be commissioning £180,000 to Business Start Ups as a 'one off'. The details relating to this were as yet to be determined.

The Board was further advised that a report would be presented to a future meeting on the additional £630,000 of Working Neighbourhoods Funding which had been secured to expand the enterprise programme, In addition, the Board was advised that it was time to update the Action Plans set out on Page 60 of the report.

Arising from the discussion, reference was made to the following issues:-

- In relation to Halton's Enterprise Business Grant in comparison to Knowsley's £500, it was suggested that this be increased and that they be given guidance on completing a Business Plan which would encourage more people to consider starting their own business;

The Board was advised that the funding was as a result of budget constraints and pressures. However, applicants would be required to complete the Business Plan in order to obtain the grant. External Business Advisors were also available to give support with Business Plans. It was agreed that the Topic Group look at the possibility of providing a 12/18 month sustainability grant for new business start ups; and

- Clarity was sought on the number of professional trades people had applied for a Business Start Up Grant.

It was reported that this information would be emailed to all Members of the Board.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That progress on the action plan be noted;
- (2) that the Topic Group review the Action Plans;
- (3) the Topic Group look at the possibility of providing a 12/18 month sustainability grant for new business start ups; and
- (4) information on how many professional people had applied for a Business Start Up Grant be emailed to all Members of the Board.

Strategic Director
- Environment

ELS17 LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT & COMMUNITY STRATEGY PROGRESS 2007/08

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which advised Members on progress towards targets set in the Community Strategy and 2007 Local Area Agreement.

The Board was advised that other Policy and Performance Boards had agreed to place the minutes of the relevant Specialist Strategic Partnership on the agenda of future meetings. Members were also asked to consider how often they would like to receive a progress report. It was agreed that a report be presented to the next meeting outlining the various timescales in respect of performance monitoring indicators.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the progress report be noted;
- (2) the Board receive the minutes of the Employment Learning and Skills SSP at future meetings; and
- (3) a report outlining the various timescales in respect of performance monitoring indicators be presented to the next meeting.

Strategic Director
- Environment

Meeting ended at 9.00 p.m.