

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 30th January 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director Economy, Enterprise & Property

PORTFOLIO: Employment, Learning and Skills, and Community

SUBJECT: Update on Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board Business Support Scrutiny Topics

1.0 PURPOSE AND CONTENT OF REPORT

1.1 To provide an update on the Business Support Scrutiny Topic Group

2.0 RECOMMENDED:

2.1 It is recommended that the ELS & C PPB:

- i. Notes the update on the Topic;
- ii. Agrees that the Business Support Topic Group is concluded.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Members have progressed two topics i) 'Health and Employment' and ii) 'The Provision of Business Support in the Borough'. The Health and Employment Group has been concluded.

3.2 The Provision of Business Support in the Borough

In assessing the provision of business support in the borough, Members have received the following:

- 1) an introduction to the Topic Group (Background and Context)
- 2) a presentation from the Council's Inward Investment officer, who provided Case Study examples demonstrating where business support has been effective.
- 3) a presentation from The Chief Executive of the Chamber of Commerce outlining how the Chamber supports business in the borough
- 4) a presentation from the Managing Director of the Liverpool City Region Growth Platform (21st November)
- 5) A study visit to Carpenter Additive, Dennis Road Widnes (19th December).

Emerging issues and key considerations relating to points 1-3 have previously been provided to the PPB. Further information relating to points 4 and 5 are set out below.

3.3) **Liverpool City Region Growth Platform**

The Growth Platform is Liverpool City Region's growth company, designed to support people and businesses to realise their potential and generate growth. Its role is to strengthen and simplify the business landscape, creating a sustainable economy that reflects the needs of our community.

The presentation included information on a number of themes and priorities:

Sector Insight

It was reported that Growth Platform manages a range of City Region based Sector Boards that provide insight on the key opportunities and challenges facing business in each sector. These feed into the Combined Authority in the development of policy, strategy and its delivery through projects relating to business growth, innovation and investment. Halton is well represented on these Boards.

Cluster Development

An explanation of the role of Cluster development was provided to the PPB. Cluster Development enables businesses working in and supporting key sectors to benefit from sector expertise and growth and generate a fertile business environment for future growth.

The Growth Platform has included Sci-tech Daresbury in the LCR cluster development work to encourage closer working and support for emerging clusters to strengthen the offer of the city region across the scientific and tech sectors.

Growth Platform Sector managers have supported Halton businesses into a wide range of LCR schemes and programmes including LCR 4.0 and LCR4 START, Health Matters, plus general sector support.

Halton is actively engaged on Visitor Economy (VE) strategy and widely consulted on the VE short term recovery strategy, shaping the future of the DMO for the City Region.

Halton Digital & Creative businesses have been supported through Gather's suite of programmes around business resilience, leadership and management.

Other initiatives have included participation in Digital Manufacturing Week, support of the Healthcare Sector, Space Cluster; and MedTec cluster.

The Growth Hub

The Growth Platform manages the City Region Growth Hub coordinating business support to help local business access the wide range of support available across the City Region – working with local delivery partners.

Scale Up Business Support

Reference was made to giving priority to Scale Up Business Support. The data show that the Liverpool City Region does not have a business start-up problem, but business survival and growth is a key issue.

High Growth/Scale up business account for about 5% of the UK economy but generate 50% of the growth and jobs – so its vital that we get to know and understand them and support them as the beacons of growth in our economy over the next 10 years

(Scale up definition: 20% growth year on year)

Growth Platform manages a High Growth Business Support Programme (launched April 2022 through to June 2023) for the City Region, including Halton

16 High Growth/Scale up Halton Businesses have been identified and targeted for High Growth Account management.

Talent Support

The Growth Platform manages a City Region wide programme of support for schools and students to better understand and experience local careers and future employment opportunities

It was reported that 13 Halton Schools and Colleges are engaged with and supported by the Liverpool City Region Careers Hub managed by Growth Platform.

The Careers Hub Lead links directly into the Council's Education services and the wider team with Careers Leaders attending regular network meetings and termly action plans are reviewed and agreed.

8 of the 13 schools/colleges in Halton are achieving 5 or more Gatsby Benchmarks with 2 schools fully achieving all 8 Gatsby Benchmarks with good progress across all schools.

Strong links have been made with Halton employers supported by the Careers Hub team of Enterprise Advisers and Give An Hour volunteers working within all schools and colleges.

'Let's Explore' virtual reality programme is accessed by SEND and Alternative Provision schools to explore the world of work and experience work experience to build student confidence and resilience

Inward Investment

The Growth Platform manages the City Region's Inward Investment Agency – Invest Liverpool City Region - working closely with Halton Council who sit on the Investment Board.

3.4) **Study Visit Carpenter Additive**

Carpenter Additive is based at a £20m Metal Powder Production Facility at the Widnes Waterfront. The company is a global leader in speciality alloys for over 130 years. The company's approach to industrial metal additive manufacturing is to help customers solve the most challenging material and process problems. Throughout the development of the additive industry over the past two decades, the company has supplied material and expert advice to those entering the space. Customers around the globe are in the aerospace, medical, transportation, energy, and industrial sectors.

During the visit, Members were provided with the opportunity to see the production facility in full.

The company emphasised the positive relationship they had established with the Council. Members will recall that the Council facilitated the development of the facility and the company is leasing the land and premises from the Council.

The emerging issues from the visit include;

Training and Development

Carpenters have invested in providing exciting employment opportunities for Apprenticeships and graduates and work closely with Riverside College, Halton People into Jobs and Liverpool University to provide long-term careers for aspiring local talent.

Market Issues

The company's strategy is to operate inside and outside the EU hence mitigating problems of exporting and importing feed stock and finished product.

Carbon Management

The company are introducing measures to ensure that they continue to have a neutral carbon footprint which is particularly important given the nature of the businesses they supply.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no further policy implications

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications identified in this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

No implications

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The topic groups were established to support service development in this key priority area.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

No implications

6.4 A Safer Halton

No implications

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

No implications

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

There are no risks associated with this report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

There are no equality and diversity issues.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.