

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, 19 June 2023 in the Boardroom - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillors Jones (Chair), Teeling (Vice-Chair), Ball, Garner, S. Hill, Hutchinson and Ryan

Apologies for Absence: Councillors C. Plumpton Walsh, Rowe, Stretch and Wall

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: W. Rourke, A. Jones, S. Saunders, S. McDonald, T. Booth, K. Arrowsmith and J. Gallagher

Also in attendance: Sally Yeoman – Halton & St Helens Voluntary Action

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

		<i>Action</i>
ELS1	MINUTES	
	The Minutes from the meeting held on 30 January 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
ELS2	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
	The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.	
ELS3	EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING, SKILLS AND COMMUNITY ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23	
	The Board received the Employment, Learning and Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board's Annual Report for 2022/23.	
	The Chair conveyed his thanks to all Members of the Board for their support over last year. He also gave thanks to the previous Vice Chair, Councillor Ellen Cargill, who has since retired.	

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report for 2022-23 be received.

ELS4 THE BIG CONVERSATION UPDATE

The Board received a report presenting the approach being taken to 'The Big Conversation', which was integral to formulating a new Council Corporate Plan, to take effect from April 2024.

Further to agreement at Executive Board in March, the Council would provide adequate opportunity for meaningful public consultation and ultimately produce a Corporate Plan, which was unique and meaningful to the people of Halton.

'The Big Conversation' was all about engaging with the public so that they understood the challenges the Council is facing. The approach being taken was between the Council and everyone who lived or worked in Halton, to work together in order to create an improved Borough in all aspects of everyday life. It was noted that feedback would be welcome in all formats; paper submissions, electronically or face to face, between now and the end of the year.

The report and accompanying presentation outlined the survey themes and questions, the process of data analysis and gave the timescales the project will take, up to the launching of the new Corporate Plan.

Following the presentation Members' discussions and comments included the following:

- Hard to reach groups such as children and young people – QR codes should be included on the advertising so that the survey is accessed instantly by them on their phones;
- Paid advertising on Facebook will also encourage engagement;
- The themes suggested are expected to be provided by the Council anyway so what are we asking for;
- Requests to know the costs of the project;
- The engagement of those with disabilities, eg sight impaired or illiterate, how are they accessing the survey;
- Understood that engagement from the public as a whole was key for the success of the project;
- Targeted engagement was also important for hard to reach groups;
- Some questions need to be changed to make them

clearer and the purpose of them understood – noted that the survey had now progressed and some questions had been updated;

- It would be wrong to raise the public's expectations; and
- Suggested that one theme per month should be addressed by the survey.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) endorses the approach to facilitate 'The Big Conversation'

ELS5 PRESENTATION HALTON AND ST HELENS VOLUNTARY ACTION

The Board received a presentation from the Chief Executive of Halton and St Helens Voluntary Action, Sally Yeoman, who outlined the Organisation's strategic priorities, training, development and capacity building, and the support given to local groups.

Her presentation provided Members with information on:

- The Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector in the Liverpool City Region (LCR);
- The LCR VCFSE Infrastructure Partnership;
- The LCR VCFSE Manifesto 2021-24 – the three priority areas;
- Equality and diversity in the region for all;
- The generation of economic growth locally and investing in communities;
- Employment and skills opportunities for all;
- Recent investment; and
- Opportunities for collaboration.

Members' discussed the information presented and requested further details on associate organisations from Halton, as well as website links to the manifesto and other particular areas of interest. The presentation would be sent to Members.

RESOLVED: That the Board notes the presentation and action points.

ELS6 LIBRARY STRATEGY 2023-2028

The Board considered a report, which presented the Council's Draft Library Strategy for 2023-2028.

It was reported that the new Strategy had been produced in house by the libraries team and all library staff had been given the opportunity to comment and provide input. The Strategy provided useful information for the customer on what the Library Service offered and set objectives for the next 5 years, to improve the service and ensure it moved forward and widened the customer base. Following the Board's consideration of the draft Strategy, it would be taken to Executive Board for adoption.

Members also received information on the good work within the service that had taken place in 2022-23. The report presented attendance figures for the Library Services for 2022-23, which would be used as a comparison from one year to another going forward. It also gave information on new service offers and one off events carried out, as well as outreach service details and numbers relating to social media site visits.

The following responses were noted in response to Members' questions:

- The word 'employment' did not appear in the Strategy – this would be feedback and taken on board;
- Staff offered support to customers who were able to use the facilities free of charge and held workshops etc for public to attend;
- The lower numbers using the PC's in Widnes Library was probably due to demographics and the ability of customers to attend when the Library was open;
- Usage of the Borrowbox service was low – the service needed publicising to raise awareness;
- Memory Box Delivery as part of the outreach service – this was welcomed by Members and considered an important service for the Borough's care home residents;
- Staff welcomed suggestions from Members regarding authors for the Borrowbox – these could be emailed to the libraries' or Leisure Manager directly;
- Access to the service for full time workers was considered limited – the libraries division was undergoing a restructure, with the aim of all sites' opening hours being the same – this would avoid confusion in the communities;
- Runcorn Library on Granville Street would be moving

to the Old Police Station in the interim before The Brindley extension is complete; and

- All Library customers were able to subscribe to the monthly newsletter.

RESOLVED: That the draft Library Strategy be taken to Executive Board for adoption.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

ELS7 THE BRINDLEY THEATRE

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which set out the financial position of The Brindley since its opening in 2004. The report also requested that Members delegate the full commercial programming of the Brindley Theatre to the Brindley Manager and Leisure Services Divisional Manager.

The report outlined details of the Theatre's finances since 2004 when it was running at a loss up to 2011; the commercial management review carried out in 2012; its increased income following the review; the impacts of Covid Government grants; and the plans for a large extension as part of the Town Deal Fund, in 2024.

It was recognised that the commercial programming of the venue was critical to maximising income and to maintain the Venue's break even position, in what was a highly competitive and challenging marketplace.

Members discussed the programming for past years and the complaints that had been raised by some Members regarding two acts in particular. It was the opinion of some that the Borough's cultural and moral bar was not being reached in these cases and consideration should be given to future appearances of these acts. Although not in favour of censorship, Members suggested exploring the legalities within contracts, although it was recognised that this may be difficult. Members requested their views and sentiments in relation to the programming of these acts be forwarded to Executive Board for consideration. It was noted that no complaints had been received from the public so far this year regarding any act and Members suggested a further exploration of the complaints procedure.

Board Members presented reasons both in favour of and against the proposal and emphasised the need to take into account the wider views of Members, who had not attended the meeting.

In the meantime it was agreed by the Board that the

Brindley Manager and the Leisure Services Divisional Manager would resume full responsibility for the programming and when required, consult the Operational Director for Community and Greenspace and the Executive Director for Environment and Regeneration.

RESOLVED: That the report is submitted to Executive Board for approval.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

ELS8 PROGRESS ON PATHWAYS TO TEACHING PROGRAMME (CO-ORDINATED ON BEHALF OF THE LCRCA)

The Board received a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which provided an overview of the *Pathways to Teaching Project*, co-ordinated by HBC's Employment, Learning and Skills Division, on behalf of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA).

It was reported that the six local authority Adult Learning Services in the LCRCA were experiencing a shortage of good quality adult learning tutors to deliver their services, which caused a reliance on agency staff. Following discussions a pilot Programme was proposed, whereby each service would 'grow their own' tutor base. The LCRCA agreed to grant fund this and Halton Adult Learning Service agreed to act as the co-ordinator for the Programme – Pathways to Teaching, from September 2022.

Members were provided with detailed information on the Programme including its key four principles, as well as performance data and income and expenditure. The accompanying presentation gave examples of real case success stories and outlined the challenges faced and the next steps to the Programme planned for next year.

Members welcomed the Programme which could respond to the needs and aspirations of people in the community. It was hoped that the number of participants from Halton could be increased next year, as there were only currently four. As the infrastructure was now already there and the continuation of funding confirmed, it was hoped that more Halton residents would come forward and join the Programme.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

ELS9 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR
QUARTER 3 OF 2022/23

The Board received the performance management reports for quarter three of 2022-23 (1 October 2022 to 31 December 2022) 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 or improvement in 2022-23 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.

Members discussed issues relating to Bonfire Night fireworks, Kingsway Learning Centre and refuse/recycling bins.

RESOLVED: That the quarter three 2022-23 performance management reports be received.

Meeting ended at 9.00 p.m.