

## **EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 12 November 2007 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Jones (Chairman), Fraser (Vice-Chairman), P. Blackmore, Edge, Findon, Howard, Lewis, Parker, Rowe, Stockton and Worrall

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Wright (under Standing Order No. 33)

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: H. Cockcroft, L. Derbyshire, J. Hatton, L. Holland, S. Saunders and A. Villiers

Also in attendance: None

### **ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

#### **ELS25 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2007, having been printed and circulated, were signed as a correct record subject to Minute No: ELS22, Community Cohesion, Resolution 2 (v) being amended so that the references to "Corporate Services PPB" read "Business Efficiency Board".

#### **ELS26 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

It was noted that no questions had been received.

#### **ELS27 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.

In respect of Minute EXB40 – Business Improvement District Ballots – Members requested an update on the progress.

RESOLVED: That

*Action*

- (1) the minutes be noted; and
- (2) an update on the progress of the Business Improvement District Ballots be circulated to Members of the Board.

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## ELS28 JOINT STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT (JSNA)

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director - Health and Community and the Strategic Director - Children and Young People, which provided an overview of the requirement to produce a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) in line with Department of Health guidance. The process and subsequent JSNA documentation was to be managed jointly by the Local Authority and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and would describe the future health, care and well-being needs of local populations, and the strategic direction of service delivery to meet those needs, over 3 – 5 years.

A strong and effective JSNA would:-

- show the health status of the local community;
- define what inequalities existed;
- contain social and healthcare data that was well analysed and presented effectively;
- define improvements and equality for the community;
- send signals to current or potential providers, who could have other relevant information or proposals for meeting needs;
- support better health and well-being outcomes; and
- aid decision-making and stages of the commissioning cycle, especially to use resources to maximise outcomes at minimum cost.

The process of producing and subsequently utilising the JSNA was a systematic one and was outlined in the report. A three phase process was proposed with Phase 1 – Information Gathering; Phase 2 – Secondary Analysis and JSNA Production; and Phase 3 – Outputs and Commissioning Improvement.

The guidance from the Department of Health stipulated that the Director of Adult Social Services, Director of Children and Young People Services, Director of Public Health and Director of Commissioning from the PCT had a responsibility for co-ordinating the production of the document. Discussions had already commenced with a range of key stakeholders and the timetable and process for

completion was outlined in the report.

In addition, the Department of Health had stressed the importance of the direct links with Elected Members, Local Strategic Partnerships and key people including Local Authority Chief Executives, Environmental Health staff and staff involved in Research and Intelligence. Consequently, the Local Strategic Partnership had already received a similar report to own and understand the requirement to produce a JSNA. The Health Specialist Strategic Partnership (SSP) would thereafter be the responsible and accountable group to ensure that the JSNA was produced. As the Health SSP already had key people on its membership, it was suggested that a small working group would be tasked with producing a draft JSNA in the timescales identified.

Regular update reports to the Executive Board, Local Strategic Partnership, PCT Board and Healthy Halton Policy and Performance Board (PPB) would be produced which appraised individuals and groups of progress. The Healthy Halton PPB would scrutinise the process and ensure that effective community consultation was undertaken. However, a similar report to every PPB would be presented to ensure that they were aware of this matter and to provide them with an opportunity to be engaged.

It was noted that some financial costs to cover public consultation may be required and these would be determined at a later date.

The following comments arose from the discussion:-

- It was noted that it was anticipated that the initial document would go out for consultation in January in order that the Plan could be in place in April 2008. The Board requested that an update report on the Plan be presented to a future meeting.
- It was noted that the JSNA would enable the Local Authority and the PCT to establish improved commissioning relationships and provide the economy with progressive unity on commissioning and contracting priorities.
- In relation to Phase 1 of the Assessment – Information Gathering – it was suggested that this exercise had already been undertaken by Lancaster University on behalf of Halton at a significant cost. The Board was advised that a lot of positive work had

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already been undertaken by the Authority and the Council was already working closely with the PCT. However, this was now an ongoing duty and it would need to be reviewed annually.

- It was noted that the Health Strategic Partnership would oversee the process.
- It was noted that the development of the JSNA would improve outputs and create an opportunity for improved regional commissioning of services. It was also noted that, as there was no additional funding available for the new duty and with improved commissioning services, there would be a likelihood of a re-direction of existing resources.
- Concern was raised at the possible implications of commissioned services and the impact this could have on employees within Halton Borough Council and the Primary Care Trust. The Board requested that they be informed at the earliest opportunity of any re-deployment/unemployment arising from the process.
- The Board requested that priority be given to addressing the shortage of General Practitioners and dentistry provision in the Borough.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Board support the process as outlined in the proposed co-ordination section of the report;
- (2) the Board receive a draft JSNA in 2008;
- (3) Halton Borough Council has already made great strides to meet the Health Improvement Agenda, as identified by the Lancaster University Report and would ask that on completion of the JSNA that additional funds be made available to address the outstanding priorities identified in the assessment;
- (4) the Board be informed at the earliest opportunity of any potential re-deployment or unemployment arising from the JSNA process; and
- (5) the document should be user friendly and enable members of the public to clearly identify the targets and performance of services in their community.

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## ELS29 BUSINESS PERCEPTION SURVEY 2007

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment, which provided the final draft Business Perceptions Survey 2007 for discussion and final comments prior to the survey being undertaken between November 2007 and February 2008. This was to build on the initial survey carried out in 2006 to begin to evaluate some of the training provision undertaken since that time. In addition, it was intended that the interviews to be carried out would explore some of the skills and employment issues within the key growth sectors in the Borough, as well as considering the implications the new Mersey Gateway would have on skills and employment levels.

The Board discussed the following issues:

- The total number surveyed represented 8/9% of the business database: a cross section of the database had been taken.
- There was concern about the potential lack of interest by employers in developing the skills of their workforce, as demonstrated by over 130 employers who declined to be interviewed by telephone. It was noted that the survey did not specifically ask if employers were committed to developing employees' skills; however, this could be picked up from the interviews. The Board considered that there was a need to specifically ask businesses if they were committed to training.
- A mix of small and large companies had been contacted. Throughout, there were employers who stated that they were not trainers, possibly demonstrating a lack of awareness or capability.
- There was pressure from Government on businesses for them to train their workforces.
- New companies had not been approached; however, there was a "welcome pack" available outlining assistance available. In particular, it was noted that a pre-employment course had been held locally from which five people had subsequently gained employment at O2. A second course was now to be held.
- The options for liaising with other Local Authorities and sharing information was being examined in the Topic Group together with issues such as people moving/travelling in and out of the Borough.

RESOLVED: That

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- (1) a list of definitions for the acronyms be attached to the survey;
- (2) employers who are contacted and decline to be interviewed be asked if they are committed to training;
- (3) new companies also be surveyed; and
- (4) the results of the survey be returned to the Board for consideration as soon as possible.

ELS30 ANNUAL REPORT FOR VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING 2006-07

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director - Health and Community, which outlined the Annual Report for Voluntary Sector Funding 2006-07.

In this respect the Board received a presentation from Ms L Holland, Voluntary Sector Co-ordinator, which:

- highlighted the benefits to Halton from funding from the Voluntary Sector;
- explained the government approach – Sustaining Grants - and the expression of support for the leaflet, a copy of which was tabled for Members' information;
- set out the differences between core funding and commissioning;
- outlined the impact beyond the initial investment by Halton Borough Council and Organisations;
- detailed the benefits of funding the Voluntary Sector ;
- outlined the Business Continuity Plan;
- explained the exploration of new frontiers of funding; and
- highlighted the Halton 4 Community funding finding website.

The Board discussed the following issues:

- extra money attracted by core funding had remained much the same as the previous year;
- Halton Disability Advice and Appeals Centre had not received funding this financial year: the Council currently funded the Citizens' Advice Bureau to provide advice to residents of Halton;
- comparability of funding across organisations – it was advised that some organisations were able to apply for other funding streams dependent on the nature of advice or services they were delivering, and the grant

received from Halton Borough Council assisted voluntary organisations to lever in this funding;

- Ms Holland assisted organisations in accessing alternative funding, for example by providing training and assisting in the completion of forms; and
- although it could appear that organisations were carrying out the same role, this was not the case and those that worked with the same client group liaised closely with each other with formal referral protocols in place. In addition, a feasibility study to look at shared resources for voluntary sector organisations was underway to provide increased efficiency in voluntary sector funding.

The Chairman thanked Ms Holland for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received; and
- (2) the delivery of voluntary sector services in receipt of core grant support from the Council be noted.

#### ELS31 PERFORMANCE REPORT ON THE LEISURE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director - Health and Community giving an update on the performance of the Leisure Management Contract. It was noted that, in October 2003, DC Leisure Management Ltd was awarded a 10 year contract to operate Kingsway Leisure Centre, Runcorn Swimming Pool and Brookvale Recreation Centre. Under the contract, DC Leisure was required to invest £1.53M in the centres. The work carried out to date was outlined for the Board's consideration. In addition, in October 2007, the Main Board of the company approved a further £60K to upgrade and extend the fitness suite at Kingsway Leisure Centre.

Members were advised that, in 2006, all three centres in Halton were assessed by an independent external assessor and had all achieved the QUEST Sport and Leisure Industry quality mark. Kingsway Leisure Centre received a score of 78%, which was the highest score of any of the 118 centres run by DC Leisure.

The Board discussed the following issues:

- there was a need for user information relating to

school usage of the leisure centres, which would be picked up in future reports;

- DC Leisure had renewed its IT and booking and information systems in order that different usages could be analysed;
- unfortunately, no analysis by age group was available as personal details from all users would have to be sought and this was not considered to be a feasible option; however, analysis of broad groups, such as “junior” or “senior” could be carried out, as could memberships;
- if the centres were closed permanently, the Council would be liable under the 10 year contract for loss of profit in that centre, unless the centre was replaced rather than closed;
- the surveys were only applicable to local authority centres and did not carry out comparisons with private facilities, eg JJB;
- quality of equipment and a number of other issues highlighted as concerns by the survey had been raised with DC Leisure; and
- the replacement costs of the leisure centres were considered to be approximately £7/8M – no Council reserves were currently available for their replacement in the sudden event that this was required.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the data held be analysed to try and provide some information on usage by age bands; and
- (3) the PPB carry out a visit to the centres in the Borough.

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## ELS32 COMMUNITY LIBRARIES LOTTERY AWARD

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director - Health and Community, which presented a briefing on the successful bid for Big Lottery Community Libraries funding for the project ‘CORE – Community Opportunities through Reading and Engagement’ at Halton Lea Library.

The Bid for £1,271,993 (excluding VAT) had been made in March 2007 to upgrade the facilities at the library. As Big Lottery specified that VAT must be included in the total cost of the project, some elements of the original scheme had to be dropped. However, the process of



accepting the grant was now underway, which would enable the services at Halton Lea Library to be completely transformed.

It was advised that Big Lottery was very prescriptive in the way in which the funding should be spent; that is, on facilities identified by the community. Therefore, an extensive consultation process would now take place with local people.

The following issues were discussed:

- there was expertise within the Authority to carry out the physical improvements;
- the consultation would ask what facilities users would like to see at the library that were not already there;
- some research had already been carried out into best practice by contemporaries and in-house expertise would be utilised; for example, Kingsway Library was recognised nationally as best practice;
- results from a survey would be used;
- there was the opportunity to discuss the potential for a new Runcorn library as part of the Urban Splash development;
- issues around access to the library was to be included in the survey – the location could not be changed;
- a good security element should be built into the scheme; and
- learning opportunities in the Borough could be increased.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received;
- (2) information on the consultation survey and best practice research be submitted to the March meeting of the Board for consideration; and
- (3) an analysis of transport access to the library be carried out together with where users of the library resided.

ELS33 STANDING ORDER 51

The Board was reminded that Standing Order 51 of the Council's Constitution stated that meetings should not continue beyond 9.00 pm.

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RESOLVED: That Standing Order 51 be waived.

#### ELS34 PERFORMANCE 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 second quarter.

The following points arose from the discussion:

- a visit had been made to Lane Tennis Club to discuss how its facilities could be promoted to the widest possible audience – it was agreed that this should be pursued;
- wider promotion of sport in the Borough was required in order to obtain recognition and funding – for example, the Mayor had included the Valiant Sports and Gym Club as one of his charities and the Club was using the money to prepare for the next Special Olympics;
- the red light on page 92 of the agenda related to Social Services;
- the red light on page 93 related to a delay in an appointment that had now been made;
- figures on page 97 were comparable to the same quarter the previous year;
- the red lights on pages 99 and 103 were reliant on third parties to improve the figures; that is, arrangements with the police; and
- the policy of selling books after they had been withdrawn from the library service was questioned as it was considered that they should be made available to those children who did not have access to books at home.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report and comments raised be noted;
- (2) primary and secondary schools be requested to identify pupils who are talented at tennis in order that a selection and development programme may be produced; and
- (3) a report be brought to the next meeting of the Board setting out how many books are bought from the library service, how many are withdrawn, how many could be distributed, readability levels of the books

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and age groups that could be targeted, and whether families best suited to these books could be identified by schools.

*Meeting ended at 9.35 p.m.*