

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

*At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 28 January 2008 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Rowe

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: H. Cockcroft, G. Collins, P. Reilly Cooper, G. Ferguson, N. Goodwin and A. Villiers

Also in attendance: None.

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

*Action*

#### **ELS35 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2007, having been printed and circulated, were signed as a correct record

#### **ELS36 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 minutes be noted.

#### **ELS37 PUBLIC ART PRESENTATION**

The Board received a presentation from Ian Banks on behalf of BEAM consultants engaged by the Council to develop a strategic approach to the development of Public Art within the Borough.

The consultants had been funded by Arts Council North West to develop a strategic approach to public art in

Halton. The presentation outlined how art in public places could be complementary to good urban and building design and how it provided environmental, artistic and economic benefits.

The Board discussed opportunities for public art throughout the Borough at key locations such as, 3MG Multi Modal, Building Schools for the Future, Widnes Waterfront, Castlefields Regeneration and Mersey Gateway. The Board also considered how the Public Art Strategy could be driven forward and it was suggested that funding possibilities should be investigated to create an additional post to assist with this.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the presentation be received; and
- (2) funding for an additional post to drive forward the Public Art Strategy be investigated.

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#### ELS38 LEARNING AND SKILLS COUNCIL

The Board had been active in developing an understanding of skill issues in Halton, most recently by considering the content of the latest business survey. At its last meeting, the Board requested that the Learning and Skills Council be invited to a future meeting to enable a discussion on the future skill needs of the Borough.

Dr Kevin Mothersdale, Partnership Director Halton, attended the meeting on behalf of Learning and Skills Council and gave a presentation which highlighted, the background and role of the organisation, its statement of priorities, future targets and current activity. The Board was advised that in 2010/11 LSC would no longer exist as it does today. The current role of LSC involving 14 to 19 age group would transfer to local authorities. Whilst the role of LSC involving adults was still to be decided by Central Government.

Arising from the discussion the Board considered:

- LSC targets – were they achievable?
- Expansion of apprenticeships in the workplace; and
- Skills pledge.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the presentation from the Learning and Skills Council regarding skills in Halton be noted;

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(2) the Executive Board be requested to consider that the Council should sign up to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) "Skills Pledge"; and

(3) additional funding from the LSC budget be provided in Halton, in particular for basic skills.

#### ELS39 COMMUNITY CENTRES ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2006/07

There were currently 5 Council-run Community Centres, a service which employed 33 staff and a significant number of volunteers who were an integral part of the running of the Centre's. The Board received a report which outlined evidence of continual improvement across the Community Centre's service.

The report detailed attendance and usage figures at the five Council-owned Community Centres. Whilst individual centre performance was important the report recognised that overall attendances across Community Centres had increased by 5360. In addition, it was noted that Centre income had also increased across the service by £27,924 or 12% on total income in comparison to the previous year.

In addition Community Centres had also seen increased investment both locally to support organisational service delivery and through funding mechanisms, most recently successful applications to Area Forums and the Waste Recycling Environment Network (WREN). An additional £200,000 of investment to core funding in the last two years had ensured much needed building improvements had taken place.

In order to ensure that Community Centres continued to deliver services effectively, meet expectations and maintain a focus on support and facilitation, an evaluation and consultation exercise had been undertaken to further measure performance and feed into the Culture and Leisure Service (TAES) Towards an Excellent Services Improvement Plan. The consultation provided a snapshot of customer profile and enabled a review of service standards and a gauge of customer satisfaction levels with:

- Agencies with whom the Centres had Service Level

- Agreements; and
- Regular users and casual users.

Detailed results of the evaluation exercise were outlined in the report.

In addition to the direct user consultation through questionnaires, a Focus Group was to be established early in the new year. The focus would be to determine what participants felt about using public accessible spaces in community settings.

In addition, future developments for the services included:-

- (i) Quality Standards;
- (ii) A Dementia Café (piloted at Murdishaw Centre);
- (iii) Planning for the New Community Centre at Castlefields;
- (iv) Developing the Youth Academy at Grangeway with Youth Services; and
- (v) A youth led refurbishment of the Youth Hall at Ditton Community Centre.

RESOLVED: That Board expressed its support for Community Centre's and their future maintainance.

*NB: Councillor Stockton declared a Personal Interest in the above item of business as a Board Member of Murdishaw Community Centre.*

#### ELS40 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.

RESOLVED: That Standing Order 51 be waived.

#### ELS41 VOLUNTARY SECTOR CORE GRANT AND MID YEAR MONITORING

The Board considered a report which outlined the mid-year monitoring report for Voluntary Sector Core Funding.

Members considered a variety of issues and noted

the following comments:

- Halton Citizens Advice Bureaux received a core grant of £152, 403 and not as published;
- Halton Voluntary Action received a core grant of £63,586 and not as published; and
- the grant to Warrington Law Centre had proved to be an expensive service due to low customer take-up.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

#### ELS42 LIBRARY BOOKS ANALYSIS

At the previous meeting the Board requested a report on the quantity of children's books withdrawn from stock and the suitability of this material for distribution to targeted families in the community. Stock was withdrawn from the library service on the basis of condition, age and levels of use. If appropriate, the material was then offered for sale through the normal library book sale process. It was noted that children's stock was heavily used, over 35% of fiction was on loan at any one time and this figure rose to 55% for picture books, the stock was therefore subject to considerable wear and tear.

As a result of wear and tear 10% of withdrawn children's books had to be discarded straight away as they were only suitable for recycling. Of the remaining material approximately 45%, 1,700 items would be suitable for distribution to targeted families on the basis of their condition.

Diverting any quantity of material away from the normal book sale would result in a loss of income for the service, which was estimated at £1,000. Material suitable for distribution could be identified by Library staff at the withdrawal stage and sorted into target age categories and offered to the Children and Young People's Area Networks (CYPAN's) and the Family Learning Team for distribution/use by their targeted families as appropriate.

Members made the following comments:

- in light of local government review in Cheshire, the cost of replacing Cheshire County Council's Schools Library Service with a similar Halton Service should be explored; and
- the Library Service consult with the Adult Learning Team on adult books withdrawn from stock and

the suitability of this material for distribution to targeted families in the community.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) withdrawn children's books be distributed as outlined above;
- (2) approval be sought from the Executive Board Sub-Committee to waive the loss of income;
- (3) in light of local government review in Cheshire, the cost of replacing Cheshire County Council's Schools Library Service with a similar Halton Service be explored; and
- (4) the Library Service consult with the Adult Learning Team on adult books withdrawn from stock and the suitability of this material for distribution to targeted families in the community.

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#### ELS43 CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT 2008/9 SERVICE PLANS

The Board was advised that the three-year Departmental Service Plans were currently being reviewed and rolled forward. Service Plans would be submitted to the Executive Board for approval on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2008 at the same time as the draft budget. This would ensure that decisions on service planning were linked to resource allocation.

The Board had previously received a detailed seminar on both Service Plans and Local Area Agreement. Further each individual Operational Director gave an overview describing the key factors affecting their service and their main objectives for the coming three years for the following areas:

- Economic Regeneration; and
- Cultural Service

In respect of Cultural Service it was proposed that the following comment should be included in the Service Plans:

"ways to improve existing external built sports facilities be sought"

In addition the Board noted that the objectives within the Economic Regeneration Service Plans would be amended and a revised version circulated. It was proposed that a copy of the final Service Plan for Economic

Regeneration agreed by the Executive Board on 21<sup>st</sup> February would be brought back to the next meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the presentations on individual departments Service Plans be noted;

(2) Members pass any detailed comments that they may have on individual Service Plans to the Operational Director by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2008; and

(3) a copy of the final Service Plan for Economic Regeneration agreed by the Executive Board on 21<sup>st</sup> February be brought back to the next meeting of the Board.

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ELS44 EMPLOYMENT LEARNING AND SKILLS POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD WORK PROGRAMME 2008/9

The Board considered a report which was the first step in developing a work programme of Topics for the Board to examine in 2008/9. It was noted that suggestions for Topics to be included in the Board's 2008/09 work programme should be brought to the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That

(1) initial suggestions for Topics to be included in the Board's 2008/09 work programme be brought to the next meeting; and

(2) the Board develop and informally consult on a shortlist of its own and others 2008/09 Topic suggestions ahead of the Board's meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March, bearing in mind the Council's Topic selection criteria.

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ELS45 LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

The Board received a briefing on the timetable for the development of the new Local Area Agreement for Halton. The draft Local Area Agreement timetable was as follows:-

January LOG Meeting  
HVA Forum  
SSP Meetings  
GONW Lead Officers Meeting  
Draft SSP Action Plans

February Executive Board Report

HSPB Board  
LOG Meeting  
Advanced Draft LAA to GONW

March PPB Progress Report  
SSP Meetings  
GONW Lead Officers Meeting

April LOG Meeting  
Executive Board Report

May Final LAA submitted to GONW

June LAA sign Off by Ministers

RESOLVED: That NI 161 (literacy) and NI 162  
become a priority.

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*Meeting ended at 9.37 p.m.*