

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 10 March 2008 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Lewis and Worrall

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Collins, J. Hatton, D. Owen, M. Simpson and A. Villiers

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

ELS46 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28th January 2008, having been printed and circulated, were signed as a correct record.

ELS47 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was reported that no public questions had been received.

ELS48 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

It was reported that in this instance there were no minutes relating to the remit of this Board since the last PPB.

ELS49 CAPITAL OF CULTURE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community, which outlined the range of activities that had happened or were planned to happen, that would demonstrate Halton's involvement in the Capital

of Culture celebrations.

The Board was informed of the programmed events already in place, for example the Steam Rally and the Firework Festival. The work of Norton Priory and Catalyst Museums also had a contribution to make.

Members were advised that all activities were based on an agreed budget that was set at £110,000 from Halton Borough Council plus £40,000 from the Culture Company. This was on the condition that we provided significant events in line with the Capital of Culture ethos.

It was reported that £50,000 had been released from Council budgets and Councillor Marie Wright was due to attend Executive Board on 20th March 2008 to re-confirm what was already agreed - the remaining £60,000.

In addition Members were informed of a major showcase event for Halton being the Youth Cultural Festival on July the 12th and 13th which would be held at the Stobart Stadium Halton and associated activities at the Brindley. A competition was planned titled "Halton's Got Talent", aimed at young people in the Borough. Councillor Wright informed the Board that Mike Andrews and Police Officer Simon Blackwell (from the Community Safety Team) would provide Police Community Safety Officer (PCSO's) on each day of the auditions at various venues for assistance.

RESOLVED: Members endorse the approach to the Youth Cultural Festival.

ELS50 CITY EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director - Environment, which provided an update on the Liverpool Region City Employment Strategy.

Members were advised that previous reports had been to the Board that set out the background to the City Employment Strategies. In summary, the concept was that local consortia was formed of public, private and voluntary sectors which would work together to target those wards with the highest levels of worklessness, i.e. worklessness above 25% of working age population.

In Halton the Department of Work and Pensions had identified Windmill Hill, Castlefields, Riverside, Halton Lea, Grange and Kingsway as having worklessness above 25%.

A new Deprived Areas Funding (DAF) programme had been established to provide funding to help implement City Employment Strategies. DAF money could only be spent on activities that would benefit workless people that lived in the identified wards.

It was reported that at present the Business Plan and the Strategy was ready to be signed off. Knowsley were nominated to take over with the implementation side of the scheme. This aligned with the developing Multi Area Agreement (MAA) for which Knowsley Metropolitan Council had the lead on employment and skills. It was reported that a target of 147 extra people had to be employed over the given period. It was noted that, as of December, there were 60 extra people now in employment therefore an expectation to have over 160 people.

The Board was advised of various incentives for getting people into employment, for example, travel expenses, Halton People into Jobs were giving people Hopper passes for the bus, the Travel Team provided a mini bus service to certain courses and there were talks of a moped hire scheme at a small fee for hiring of the moped for the week to travel to the workplace.

Members discussed the correlation between the money received and the number of people on income support and the barriers to employment.

RESOLVED: That Members consider the progress of the City Employment Strategy for Greater Merseyside.

ELS51 ECONOMIC REGENERATION SERVICE PLAN 2008-2011

The Board considered a report from the Strategic Director, - Environment, which outlined the new objectives for the Economic Regeneration Service Plan. It was noted that greater clarity had been sought in relation to aligning the objective service plan to collaborate with the Corporate Service Plan.

Members suggested a number of minor amendments. The proposed revised objectives were detailed as follows:

- To foster a culture of enterprise entrepreneurship particularly amongst low skilled unemployed parts of the Borough to make Halton an ideal place to start and grow economic activity;

- To develop a culture where learning was valued and raise skill levels throughout the adult population and in the local workforce;
- To promote and increase employability of local people to identify and remove any barriers to employment to get more people into work;
- To develop a strong, diverse, competitive and sustainable knowledge based economy;
- To create and sustain a thriving business environment; and
- To revitalise the town centres to create dynamic, well designed high quality commercial areas.

The Board discussed the need for an objective relating to the 14-19 Education Agenda and it was noted that this would be forwarded to the Children and Young People's Department to suggest this objective be added to their Service Plan.

RESOLVED: That the Board note on the new revised Economic Regeneration service plan objectives.

ELS52 EMPLOYMENT LEARNING AND SKILLS PPB WORK PROGRAMME 2008/09

Members held a wide-ranging discussion in relation to further work topic groups. Names of groups and members volunteered for these groups were decided as follows:

- Urban Renewal – Logistics – Councillor Stockton, Councillor Rowe.
- Barriers to Employment – Councillor Stockton, Councillor Findon, Councillor Fraser and Councillor Jones.
- Facilities in Recreation, Sport and Arts – Councillor Edge, Councillor Blackmore, Councillor Worrall and Councillor Jones.

Membership of the topic groups would be confirmed once Councillors not present at the meeting had been contacted.

RESOLVED: That the membership on the above new

Work Topic Groups be noted.

ELS53 ENTERPRISE UPDATE

The Board received a presentation from the Strategic Director - Environment, which outlined the progress that had been made on developing an enterprise culture within Halton. It was reported that this had been funded through a package of resources including Neighbourhood Renewal Funds, European Regional Development Fund and the Council's own Revenue Priorities Fund. Detailed in the report was the activities that had taken place since April 2007.

Arising from the discussion Members discussed the Enterprise Academy that had been launched and noted that it provided specialist seminars for new businesses on issues that were important, such as how to make sales and how to get the best from networking.

The Board were informed of a new Start Up centre that had opened in partnership with SOG at The Heath. It was noted that this provided hot desk space for new businesses that were looking for business addresses and networking opportunities. Members were advised that as of the 1st April 2008 this facility would be advertised via a monthly newsletter.

Arising from the discussion reference was made to a Business Starter programme, the need to encourage young people, possibility of a sustainability grant and the need for a follow up report to come back to the PPB when all funding issues were made clear.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the progress on the Action Plan be noted; and
- (2) the Board explore the development of a sustainability grant.

Strategic Director
- Environment

ELS54 SCRUTINY PANEL UPDATE - THE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL'S PROCUREMENT POLICY IN DEVELOPING LOCAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Board received a presentation from the Head of Business Development Economic Regeneration

Department, which outlined the progress of the programme of work being undertaken as part of the Policy Board's Scrutiny Programme, which explored the Council's Procurement Policy and its role in developing local employment opportunities.

The presentation detailed the following:

- Context;
- Methodology;
- Interviews and Study Groups;
- Summary of Findings – Interviews and Study Groups;
- Interviews with Businesses;
- Summary of Findings – Interviews with Businesses;
- Desk Research;
- Summary of Findings – Desk Research;
- Procurement Survey 2007;
- Summary of Findings – Procurement Survey 2007; and
- Provisional Recommendations.

Members discussed various issues such as the tender notifications being distributed by email alert, qualified officers being on hand to provide advice and running an event for business to attend. It was also requested that an update report be brought to a future meeting to inform of what suggestions business had made in terms of what local business would like to see.

The Board wished to thank the Head of Business Development and the team for the work that had been carried out.

RESOLVED: That a further report be brought before the Board setting out the Panel's recommendations.

Strategic Director
- Environment

ELS55 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.

ELS56 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 3rd quarter.

The following points arose from the discussion:

- The bid for the application of the Family Science Big Lottery took place in November and was unsuccessful. It was reported that the Authority would reapply at the next round of bidding.
- The Business Skills Perception survey had now been completed.
- The Learning and Skills Council had £120,000 left to spend. It was noted that Riverside College would use this fund between now and July to help with Adult Learning.
- The PCT had confirmed the approval of £32,500 funding for the Mental Health Employment Project enabling people with mental health problems to get into employment.
- £90,000 had been secured for a contract for Trainers into the Public Sector.

RESOLVED: That the Policy and Performance Board receive the 3rd quarter performance management reports.

Meeting ended at 9.08 p.m.