

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 16 November 2009 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Jones (Chairman), Austin, M. Bradshaw, Findon, Howard, Loftus, Parker, Rowe, Stockton and Worrall

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Edge

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Simpson, H. Cockcroft, G. Collins, G. Fitzpatrick, N. Goodwin, J. Hatton, A. Page and A. Villiers

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

ELS25 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 21st September 2009, having printed and circulated were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

ELS26 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was reported that no public questions had been received.

ELS27 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

It was reported that there were no minutes from the Executive Board or Executive Board Sub-Committee that were relevant to the Employment Learning and Skills PPB since the last meeting.

ELS28 SSP MINUTES

The Board considered the minutes from the Employment Learning and Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership meeting held on 24th September 2009.

In relation to performance issues, the Board felt it important that more funding be allocated to basic skills in education due to the fact that 20,000 people in the Borough required basic skills in education. In response it was noted that there had been a recent press release detailing additional Working Neighbourhood Fund monies which would be fed through the Job Centre Plus. More details would be circulated once received.

The Board discussed the quality of service that was being delivered through Job Centre Plus and Members felt they would like to see value for money they were receiving and requested that a report be brought back to the Board. It was agreed that an officer from Job Centre Plus could come to a future PPB meeting to present that information.

Members noted literacy targets for teenage parents and felt they should be given the opportunity to improve their skills and be provided with better access to family learning services.

It was reported that the last bullet on 9.1 of the draft SSP minutes should have read that the wrap around service in Halton should be provided by TNG but it was currently being provided by Job Centre Plus. The Board was informed that the minutes would be amended.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the minutes be noted;
- 2) a recommendation be forwarded to the Executive Board requiring additional funding into Basic Skills for Education activities; and
- 3) an officer from Job Centre Plus be invited to a future PPB meeting to inform Members of the work carried out in relation to basic skills training and support being delivered or commissioned by Job Centre Plus, related costs, aims and objectives key performance trends and outcomes being achieved.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

ELS29 ANNUAL REPORT FOR VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which outlined the Annual Report for Voluntary Sector Funding. The report provided performance information on the 12 organisations Core Grant supported in 2008/09, which were detailed in the report for information.

It was advised that any organisation that received over £5,000 in funding was subject to a Service Level Agreement and quarterly monitoring reports.

Tabled at the meeting was a selection of case studies from various agencies such as Cheshire Asbestos Support Group, Cheshire Halton and Warrington REC, Cheshire Victim Support, Halton Citizens Advice Bureau, Halton Talking Newspapers, Halton Voluntary Action, Rape and Sexual Support Centre, Relate, Vision Support and W. and R. Cancer Support.

Arising from the discussion of the report Members requested that, in future, the amount of funding provided in previous years be supplied in order to compare figures over the years.

The Board queried whether there were any organisations that were not able to spend their capital funding, just the interest. In response, it was noted that this information would be sought and reported back to Members.

The Board wished to commend the work carried out by Voluntary Sector Funding for the year 2008/09.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be received; and
- 2) the continuation of funding at the current level for Voluntary Sector funding be supported.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

ELS30 APPRENTICESHIPS

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which provided an update on the progress on the Apprenticeships Programme.

Members were informed that in January 2009 the ELS SSP launched a new Apprenticeship Programme APT4U. The aim of this project was to generate 100 new apprenticeships in businesses by offering an incentive of £2,000. It was noted when employers agreed to take on an apprentice, they received a payment of £250 to start then once the apprentice was signed on, another £250 was awarded and then £75 per week was funded for a period of 20 weeks.

It was noted that at the time of writing the report, 68 new apprenticeship opportunities had been established with local businesses across a wide range of occupations. This figure had now risen to 76. Members were advised that the Council was well on its way to achieving the target of 100 apprenticeships by 2011. The wide range of occupations that had employed new apprentices were as follows: Engineering, Admin, Child Care, Construction, Horticulture, Catering, Pharmacy Assistant and Dental Surgery.

It was reported that five Care Leavers had been offered apprenticeships. The Board was informed that a report had been sent to Management Team which explored apprenticeships being provided in the Council and made a number of recommendations to offer apprenticeships to existing employees under the age of 25.

The Board held a wide-ranging discussion and considered that the Apprenticeship Scheme would benefit from mainstream funding. It was agreed that the Board would make a recommendation to Executive Board to seek mainstream funding to advance this Apprenticeship Programme.

Members suggested that money out of the additional Working Neighbourhood Fund that was expected be used to increase the current Apprenticeship figure to 100. In response, it was noted that this would be investigated.

In addition to Care Leavers the Board felt that Young Carers should be included in the Apprenticeship Scheme in future. It was agreed that this would be accommodated.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board note the development of the Apprenticeship Programme;
- 2) Young Carers be included in future Apprenticeship Schemes; and
- 3) a recommendation be made to Executive Board requesting that mainstream funding be implemented in order to advance the Apprenticeship Programme post 2011.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

ELS31 FREE SWIMMING

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which provided an update

on the Government's Free Swimming Initiative in Halton.

It was reported that free swimming had been offered since April 2009 at all general swimming times on pool timetables at Kingsway Leisure Centre, Brookvale Recreation Centre and Runcorn Swimming Pool to all those aged 60 and over and all those aged 16 and under.

Outlined in the report were the figures based on 2007 mid-year population of the number of junior cards issued and the number of over 60s cards issued. It was reported that 25% of junior (eligible under the age of 16) cards had been issued and approximately 5% of all adults aged 60 years had registered on the scheme.

The Board considered maps which plotted the registrations that had been produced and displayed how take up for the scheme was spread across the Borough with a number of participants residing in Runcorn registering at Kingsway Leisure Centre. It was further noted that this was probably attributed to the learning pool provision at Kingsway Leisure Centre.

It was further reported that all the money allocated would not be utilised, therefore the remaining monies could be spent on promoting swimming. It was reported that more swimming lessons would be provided out of school hours for Year 6 children who could not swim. In addition, lessons and confidence building sessions would be provided for the over 60s.

Members discussed the Building Schools for the Future in relation to Brookvale School and swimming pool and wished to be kept informed of the status of the future of the pool and the Leisure Centre. It was also suggested that the free swimming scheme be promoted further by advertising free swimming sessions in health centres.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) Members be updated on the status of the future of Brookvale Pool and Leisure Centre; and
- 3) free swimming schemes be advertised in health centres across the Borough.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

The board received a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which provided a briefing on progress of enterprise activities in Halton. Members were advised that the Halton Enterprise Board was a private sector led sub-group of the Employment Learning and Skills Strategic Partnership.

The Board was made up of local business men and women who had agreed to lead on the enterprise development agenda and were prepared to act as a sounding board on behalf of the Partnership for employment and skills related issues.

Outlined in the report was the Enterprising Halton performance for 2008/9, the progress as at 30th September 2009/10, Business Survivability Audit, Enterprising Halton Challenge Competition 2009, Enterprise Fair September 2009, Enterprising Halton Promotional DVD, Jobcentre Plus Self Employment Credit, Women's Business Network, NWDA Intensive Business Start-up Programme and Chamber Procurement Support.

The Board watched the Enterprising Halton promotional DVD which showed interviews of businesses who had used the service, grants that had been obtained and support that was provided. The overall theme that the Enterprise Board encouraged businesses to grow and prosper.

It was reported that at a recent event businesses were complimentary of the service delivery by Halton Enterprise Board.

Members discussed various issues such as the after care support provided being crucial and that more help should be provided from Halton Council's Property Services in terms of Business Rates. The Board suggested that somebody from Property Services attend a future meeting in order to discuss support they provide to local businesses in relation to premises in the Borough.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the progress made on the Enterprise Programme be noted; and
- 2) an officer from Property Services be invited to a future PPB meeting to inform Members of the support they provide to local businesses.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

ELS33 ENTERPRISE GAME - PRESENTATION / UPDATE

The Board received a presentation from Andy Page, the Manager of Education Business Partnership and Pat Smedley.

The presentation outlined the following:

- The Enterprise Game was owned by schools and the Council;
- The game involves pupils and teachers and helps players to learn basic business terms and ideas about the local labour market;
- The game addresses the required schools agenda “Every Child Matters” economic wellbeing as it covers 3 of the 4 key concepts and 3 of the 4 key processes of the 2008 programmes of study;
- 3,000 board games had been produced and had all been sold. 76% of sales were from the North West;
- Other local authorities such as Hampshire and Jersey Council had purchased this board game;
- Various editions of the board game were available such as the standard edition, customised edition, a Castlefields edition and a Maritime version had recently been produced;
- The game was a platform for learning raised the profiles of local businesses; and
- The aim was to have a game available in every school over the next two years.

Arising from the presentation, the Board felt that this could be linked to career development and the board game could be further developed by way of making it more of an ideas game where pupils came up with ideas for future businesses and making products and ideas.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

ELS34 SERVICE PLANS

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director,

Health and Community which offered a timely opportunity for Members to contribute to the development of Business Plans for the coming financial year.

It was reported that each Department had been required to develop a medium term business plan, in parallel with the budget that was subject to annual review and refresh. The process of developing service plans for the period of 2010 to 2012 was just beginning. The Board agreed to schedule a meeting in the near future to discuss service plans.

RESOLVED: That a meeting be scheduled in the near future for the Board to undertake priority areas for service development or improvement over the next three years.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

Meeting ended at 9.50 p.m.