

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING, SKILLS AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 7 March 2011 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Edge (Chairman), P. Lloyd Jones (Vice-Chairman), Austin, Carlin, Findon, Horabin, Howard, Macmanus, Parker, Roberts and Rowe

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: L. Cox, L. Derbyshire, A. Leadbetter, N. Mannion, C. Patino, W. Rourke and S. Saunders

Also in attendance: : In accordance with Standing Order 33, Councillor Jones – Portfolio Holder – Economic Development

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

ELS38 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 13 January 2011, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

ELS39 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Board was advised that no questions had been submitted.

ELS40 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board Sub Committee relevant to the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Board.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

ELS41 SSP MINUTES

The Board received the draft minutes of the Employment Learning and Skills Specialist Strategic

Partnership Meeting held on 7 February 2011.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

ELS42 PRESENTATION - CONSTRUCTION HALTON

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment and Economy which gave Members an update on the implementation of Construction Halton. The report also shared the recruitment and training workflow model highlighting the Council Departments and partner organisations that would be involved when undertaking procurement exercises and negotiating planning agreements, focussed on achieving Construction Halton job and training outcomes.

The instructions for the Skills Forecasting Tool, Work Types and Labour definitions were circulated at the meeting for Members information.

The following comments arose from the discussion:-

- Clarity was sought on what evidence was available to demonstrate that it had been a success in the North East. In response, it was reported that it had not been an expensive tool to purchase and the North East had been successfully using it for over a year;
- It was noted that the Construction Halton tool would be used in Section 106 negotiations;
- It was recognised that a lot of developers used sub contractors who would not necessarily wish to take responsibility for training local people. In addition, short term developments such as the build of a small number of houses would not be suitable for training opportunities. In response, it was reported that there would be clauses included in the contract which included sub contractors and it was expected that training opportunities or full time jobs would be created i.e. the 3MG and Mersey Gateway projects. The Council were also working closely with Halton Housing Trust to explore apprenticeship 'pooling' opportunities across different organisations;
- It was noted that due to the cuts as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Authority was not in a position to provide a shared apprenticeship scheme;

- It was suggested that the Authority liaise with the Industry Training Boards and signpost companies to this Board. NB Construction Halton had already made good links with Construction Skills, an Industry Training Board for the construction sector;
- The importance of quality training and having local people trained with appropriate trades as employment opportunities became available was noted. It was also noted that because of the economic downturn numerous skilled people had been made redundant and would be available immediately to take up employment opportunities as they became available;
- Clarity was sought on the outcomes of the North East using the skills forecasting tool – how many people had obtained a job and in what trade and how many people had undertaken training. In response, it was reported that this information would be presented to a future meeting of the Board;
- It was noted that the Council was working closely with Riverside College to take advantage of any employment / training opportunities. It was reported that young people who wished to be an electrician had to go to Warrington to access training as it was not available at Riverside College. It was highlighted that Industry Training Boards could manage this process to ensure that young people in the Borough were being steered in the right direction;
- It was noted that the skills forecasting tool would be beneficial to the Borough and had already proved useful in the Venture Fields Development; and
- It was noted that a report would be presented to the Board as the process was developed.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the presentation be received;
- (2) Siobhan Saunders be thanked for her informative presentation;
- (3) the report and comments raised be noted; and

Strategic Director
– Environment &
Economy

- (4) that a report would be presented to the Board as the process was developed.

ELS43 PRESENTATION - PROCUREMENT ACTIVITIES

The Board received a presentation and dvd from Lorraine Cox, Head of Procurement which:-

- Explained that the Procurement Centre of Excellence had been set up in April 2010;
- Set out what had been done internally with Officers and Members, establishing The Chest and the cross Council support;
- Detailed the rules and the law relating to the financial thresholds i.e. £1k to £50k – a minimum of 3 written quotes, £50k to £1m – a formal tender exercise and £1m+ - an Executive Board approval then formal tender;
- Outlined Halton Borough Council's Revenue Spend Profile 2009/10;
- Set out what had been done so far externally i.e. Partnership with Halton Chamber of Commerce and Local Businesses Engagement;
- Highlighted the engagement with businesses – that there had been 349 attendees, covering 248 local business and that 65 people had attended more than one event. Feedback from the event had also been very positive;
- Outlined The Chest Registration – that there had been a 33% increase since June 2010, from 279 to 415 as at 28 February 2011 and 136 new local businesses had also registered;
- Set out the requests for a quote via the Chest by Halton Borough Council since April 2010 to February 2011 which had already generated significant savings;
- Outlined the formal tenders via The Chest since April 2010 i.e. 13 tenders (over £50k) and 109 tendered (8% were local businesses), 7 of the 13 had also been awarded locally (Northwest); and

- Outlined the next steps in the procurement process.

The following comments arose from the presentation:-

- It was noted that the Authority was not trading internal service provision but challenging the spend we commit currently with the private sector;
- It was suggested that as the majority of Members were school governors and they could receive further details of The Chest and the procurement pilot with the schools to enable them to influence their school's engagement with this new procurement process which will be offered to all schools as a traded service later this year. In response it was reported that five schools including Fairfield Infant School were taking part in the pilot and a briefing note on this would be circulated to Members of the Board.
- It was noted that three staff were fully qualified members of the Institute of Purchase and Supply and half of the remaining team were currently working towards it via a fast track programme and distance learning;
- It was suggested that the £50k internal threshold could be increased in line with the European Union amount to £156,422. In response it was reported that work was being undertaken with the Legal Department to look at sustainable approaches to procurement and to amend Procurement Standing Orders to incorporate increased thresholds;
- In respect of travel and subsistence, it was noted that the centralised system did not generate additional costs and was actually demonstrating spend reductions;
- The importance of raising the threshold and promoting new local businesses was noted; and
- In relation to contracts and front end savings versus rebates, it was noted that safeguards were built into the contract to ensure the best deal was obtained. It was also noted that the Council had an excellent record of paying small and medium enterprises (SME's) within 10 working days and this could be highlighted when negotiating a contract.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the presentation be received;
- (2) Lorraine Cox be thanked for her informative presentation;
- (3) The Board recommend that the Executive Board target sustainable approaches to procurement; and
- (4) the comments raised be noted.

Strategic Director
- Resources

(Note: Councillor P Lloyd-Jones declared a Personal Interest in the following item of business due to being a Non Executive Director of Halton & St Helens PCT.)

ELS44 HALTON CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY STRATEGY 2011-2013

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Resources which gave details on the development of the Halton Child & Family Poverty Strategy and sought endorsement of the draft strategy.

The Board was advised that the summary of key elements in the strategy were as follows:-

The key underlying causes of child and family poverty in Halton was as follows:-

- Low family aspirations; and
- Persistent cycle of benefit dependency, often intergenerational.

The Key priorities to tackle child and family poverty in Halton were:-

- Change/challenge cultural acceptance and raise aspirations;
- Early intervention;
- A whole family approach; and
- Provide a single point of access to key support services.

The Key issues to be tackled as an early priority

were;

- To ensure that support services meet the needs of target groups now, and in the future, and were easily accessible; and
- To improve the sharing, and quality of information, between partners to provide a better response and greater levels of longer-term support to service users.

In conclusion, it was reported that the next steps, subject to formal approval, would be to draft an Action Plan to co-ordinate work towards the objectives set out in the strategy in Quarter 1 2011/12. The Action Plan, it was reported would be presented to the Board as soon as it was available.

The following comments arose from the discussion:-

- The importance of the Action Plan to address child poverty in the Borough and that the Board receive it in the near future was noted;
- It was noted that the Action Plan had been delayed until the impact of the cuts as a result of the spending review on partner organisations was known;
- In respect of the Integration of the Child and Family Poverty Strategy with Key Plans and Strategies set out on Page 54 of the report, it was suggested that this could include private landlords and house owners. In response, it was reported that private landlords and house owners had been included in the strategy;
- It was noted that with the economic downturn, the freezing of benefits and wages and the rise in inflation could result in an increase in child poverty in the Borough. It was also noted that child poverty was a complex family issue and could not be dealt with in isolation. In addition, it was recognised that there was a link between child poverty and unemployment;
- Clarity was sought on whether the Action Plan would target specific deprived areas in the Borough or whether it would be more general and incorporate the whole of the Borough. It was also

noted that there were a lot of people in the Borough facing unemployment for the first time as well as people who had been unemployed for a long period of time. In response, it was reported that there was not a one size fit all solution to addressing child poverty in the Borough and the Council was working together with other partners to target services to families with the greatest need, and for those families to use them;

- It was suggested that the Executive Summary set out on Page 34 include under the various headlines, details of the number of Halton people; and
- It was noted that specific funding had been given to address poverty issues in the most deprived wards. It was also noted that people living in poverty were more likely to smoke and drink etc which could result in depression and mental health problems.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Halton Child & Family Poverty Draft Strategy be endorsed; and
- (2) a further report on the Strategy's Action Plan be brought to a future meeting.

Strategic Director
- Resources

ELS45 UPDATE ON ELS WORK PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment and Economy which presented proposed work priorities in respect of Employment Learning and Skills agenda for the next financial year.

The Operational Director for Employment, Economic Regeneration and Business Development provided a verbal report to Members outlining key work areas over the next 12 months as follows:-

- Maximising Single Programme Opportunities;
- Focus On Employer Facing Services;
- Halton Employment Partnership;
- Construction Halton;
- Science Halton;
- The Science Halton Routeway;
- Other Opportunities e.g. Regional Growth Fund; ERDF Business; and
- Support Programme.

The following comments arose from the discussion:-

- It was suggested that developers were mainly building offices. It was therefore, suggested that the Council could look at what type of businesses could be developed to benefit Halton and that this be added to the list under section 4 or 5 on the list; and
- It was suggested that the list of areas could be combined in some instances i.e. item 2 with item 3, and 5a with 5b.

RESOLVED: That the work priorities for 2011/12 and comments raised be noted.

ELS46 STANDING ORDER 51

The Board was reminded that Standing Order No. 51 of the Council's Constitution stated that meetings should not continue beyond 9.00 pm.

RESOLVED: That Standing Order No. 51 be waived.

ELS47 QUARTER 3 MONITORING REPORTS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Resources regarding the Third Quarter Monitoring Report for:

- Enterprise & Employment and Adult Learning & Skills Development; and
- Community Services namely Library Services & other Culture & Leisure Services.

The following comments arose from the discussion:-

- Page 110 – Adult Learning and Skills Development – It was suggested that the statistics could have included age groups. In response, it was reported that this information could be included on future reports;
- Page 110 – Clarity was sought on how Riverside College had been affected by the spending review and whether this would result in the transfer of some provision for adult learning to the Council. In response, it was reported that the College

would lose a quarter of its budget over a four year period and that the college had already made this request and negotiations were currently taking place;

- The significant number of people with literacy and numeracy problems in the Borough was noted. The difficulties in getting people to acknowledge that they had an issue with literacy and numeracy was also noted. However, it was recognised that if there was a greater demand on the service there may be a shortage of provision;
- It was noted that family learning at schools had been protected. However, it was also noted that there would be no opportunities to expand it;
- It was suggested that assessors could be sourced via volunteers, retired people and Citizens Advice Bureau etc;
- Page 134 – Clarity was sought on - The Review and update of the Sports Strategy Facilities to begin their implementation during 2010/11 being on hold until after actions had been determined following the Comprehensive Spending Review. In response, it was reported that this information would be circulated to all Members of the Board;
- Page 135 – NI9 – % of adult population (16+) say they have used their public library service during the last 12 months - Clarity was sought on how this compared with the national library usage. In response, it was reported that this information would be circulated to Members of the Board;
- Page 113 – The Science Halton Routeway would go live in Q4 - It was noted that the website www.sciencehalton.com provided an excellent careers resource for the Borough. The website also provided information on what qualifications would be required for specific jobs and the different types of jobs that were available in the Borough. It was also noted that next week was National Science week;
- It was noted that HPIJ had forged links with eight of the sixteen Prime Contractors that had been shortlisted to deliver the new Work Programme across Merseyside including Halton; and

- It was noted that in respect of enterprise and business start ups Jobcentre Plus signposted people to the Council at a sub regional level.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments raised be noted.

ELS48 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman reported that Mr A Villiers (Divisional Manager - Scrutiny) was attending his last meeting prior to retiring from the Authority.

The Chairman took the opportunity to place on record the Board's appreciation of the work undertaken by Mr Villiers during his time with the Authority.

RESOLVED: That the Board place on record its thanks to Mr Villiers and extend its best wishes to him for the future.

Meeting ended at 9.20 p.m.