



ANNUAL REPORT
EMPLOYMENT LEARNING AND SKILLS
POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD
APRIL 2009 – MARCH

Councillor Eddie Jones

INTRODUCION

We have completed another busy and eventful Municipal Year, which as is usual, has presented fresh challenges to Elected Members. Yet “real” Social Inclusion for all our residents has continued to be a priority for this Council. A commitment energetically supported by and through the members of this Policy and Performance Board. Despite their many other Council commitments, we have, together devised a heavy ongoing work programme, which has required much time and energy to meet it’s objectives, fortunately, I believe that with the quality support of our officers much has been achieved and the efforts worthwhile. In this regard I have been personally indebted to the dedicated Elected Members, in particular our loyal and supportive Vice Chair, and hardworking officers who have served this P.P.B so well.

In my view, formal PPB evenings have been packed agenda, lively affairs, demonstrating high calibre scrutiny and debate. The probing enquiries and robust challenge from Councillors perhaps most evident when outside bodies were called in to the Chamber. This often caused an unscheduled presentation and even resolution of issues, some thornier than others yet they who dares not grasp the thorn should not seek the rose.

In the broader sense I am pleased that we continue to develop a rich diversity in our cultural offer to our people. The wonderful Brindley Theatre goes from strength to strength, supported by core arts and performance development work in the community. A highlight event being, Halton’s Got Talent. Thus giving an opportunity to showcase the abilities and potential of our young people. As bases for such developmental work, our community centres continue to offer a wide range of activities and spaces. As do our school holiday leisure and sports programmes, alongside year round projects such as coaching and free swimming sessions. Well - being, leisure and quality of life comes in many forms. We are committed to striving for improvement in all manner of delivery for all of our residents.

Sport is still an integral part of our communities. Local clubs are flourishing, thanks to the commitment of volunteer coaches and administrators interacting with this Council that values them highly. Further, we have maintained the

involvement of our young people in The Merseyside Youth Games, allowing them to mix as well as compete with their counterparts across the sub – region. For young and not so young we have been able to provide greater access to better resourced Libraries and our residents have utilised them in all aspects. Access to improvement opportunities in enterprise and skills development has also been welcomed by many of our citizens. As has the continued excellence of Adult Learning provision in our Borough, coupled with the delivery from the Council's own very effective Employment Assistance Teams.

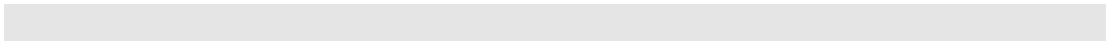
We hope this area in particular has been enhanced by some of the PPB's day to day activity, which has included the formation of task groups, examination of topics, scrutiny and development of policy, rigorous evidence days, the consideration of methodologies from far a field and much more.

Complex reports compiled from this scrutiny have included consideration of barriers to employment, joint work with other Board colleagues around science and technology aspirations, collaborations on how Health and disability impacts on work and the individual and cultural and sporting considerations, particularly focussing on the range and requirements of gifted and talented sports people.

We have also had a working party seeking to dissect and improve the delivery of vitally important performance monitoring reports. A broad but associated range of subject matter that I trust shows this PPB has been about vision with substance and has displayed a fair-minded clarity of purpose in its representation of the people. All the more poignant as we seek to consolidate, then enhance our position in this turbulent world. I would conclude by thanking all colleagues and external contributors to our past year's work, our officers for their diligence and Councillors, juggling a mass of responsibilities and demands yet retaining their enthusiasm and focus.

Thank you

Councillor Eddie Jones, Chairman Employment Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board



MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2009/10 the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors Eddie Jones, Susan Edge, Dave Austin, Marjorie Bradshaw, David Findon, Harry Howard, Stan Parker, John Stockton, Christopher Rowe, Councillor Kath Loftus, and Philip Worrall.

The Board was responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to the Culture and Leisure Services and the Economic Regeneration Departments. The primary functions are to focus on the work of the Council (and its partners) in seeking to improve economic prosperity, to further develop culture and community cohesion, to improve the skills and employment prospects of its residents, and to scrutinise progress against the Corporate Plan in relation to the Employment, Learning and Skills Priority.

Members were advised that Halton Borough Council (Halton People into Jobs) is part of the Liverpool City Region Future Jobs Fund programme being delivered by partners in the City Employment Strategy. Halton People into Jobs is managing the initiative in Halton and has a dedicated team on hand to support Future Jobs Fund employers and employees throughout the programme.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met four times during the year, and set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during the year.

FUTURE JOBS FUND

The Board received a report on the future jobs fund

The Future Jobs Fund is a national initiative of approximately £1 billion to support the creation of 150,000 jobs. It is aimed at long term unemployed young people and others who face significant disadvantage in the labour market.

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ECONOMIC CLIMATE

The Board received a presentation by Hitesh Patel, the Chief Executive of the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) in Halton entitled "The Economic Downturn Halton CAB's Perspective".

Arising from the presentation the Board discussed spreading the word regarding the specialist debt relief advice that CAB provided and it was suggested that this be publicised further by advertising through Registered

Social Landlord leaflets, Inside Halton and Parish Council news letters at minimal cost.

The Board also considered a report on the economic impacts of the present economic climate. It was reported that the Council and its partners had been working hard for many years to reduce unemployment in the Borough. Key elements in reducing unemployment included improving skills, promoting enterprise, reclaiming derelict sites, environmental and infrastructure improvement and facilitating private sector investment.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING

The Board considered a report which outlined the delivery of Community Development in 2008/09.

It was reported that the purpose of Community Development was to build relationships with our communities, to help groups and networks of people take joint action on matters that concerned them. It was also about enabling individuals to influence the decisions that affected their lives.

The Board were informed that to do this the Community Development combined a number of aspects which were outlined in the report for information. The Board was advised of the service performance and service development which detailed the following:

- Starter Grants;
- Community Development Grants;
- Voluntary Youth Organisation Grants; and
- Bursaries.

The Board also received a report 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.

Members reviewed 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.

LIBRARIES

The Board considered a number of reports on Libraries in Halton.

SKILLS

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which outlined the recommendations of the Topic Group on Workforce and Skills for the Logistics Industry.

The Board was advised that the topic commenced with a skills audit of the logistics sector in Halton and the audit covered aspects of work which were outlined in the report for information. It was noted that the Halton Employment Partnership was established in late 2008, to bring together expertise from various employment, learning and skills.

Members considered that a Halton Investors' Handbook had been produced, specifically tailored to the logistics sector and set out the skills and recruitment offer of the Halton Employment Partnership. A pilot skills and recruitment offer was being tested with the first occupier at 3MG. It was noted that this pilot could be rolled out to all future occupiers on 3MG and borough wide.

CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYMENT INTEGRATOR MODEL

The Board considered a report on progress made on identifying how employment and training opportunities resulting from the Mersey Gateway could be secured for local people.

The Board discussed various issues such as a breakdown of requirements and targeted audience, training needs for Job Centre staff to source the correct candidates for the jobs and a breakdown of percentage of categories of jobs required for example skilled, semi-skilled and low skilled.

GIFTED AND TALENTED

The Board received a report which detailed how young skilled and talented sports participants were managed in Halton.

The Board received a presentation from Gill McGough – Advisory Teacher for Sports and Physical Education and Sue Lowrie – Sports and Recreation Manager, which outlined processes for the gifted and talented young people in physical education and sport.

APPRENTICESHIPS

The Board received a report an update on the progress on the Apprenticeships Programme.

The Board held a wide-ranging discussion and considered that the Apprenticeship Scheme would benefit from mainstream funding.

SHANGHAI EXPO 2010

The Board considered a report on EXPO 2010. Shanghai World Expo takes place from 1st May to 31st October. It is expected that 70 million visitors and 200 participants (i.e. Cities and countries) will visit the exhibition which covers an area of 5.28 square kilometres.

Liverpool Vision is leading a North West Trade Pavilion which focuses on Liverpool gateway to the North West. Board Members were advised that the Liverpool pavilion is situated in one of the many regenerated old dock Buildings along the waterfront. The pavilions holding area is based on the theme of a 'departure lounge'

Members supported taking forward the opportunity for Halton, and the Council has along with the other five Merseyside Authorities agreed to contribute £18,000, as sponsorship for a service known as the 'Platinum Package'. The board considered that Expo 2010 is an opportunity to take forward a number of strategic objectives for the Council and its partners. In economic regeneration terms, a key objective would be to focus on developing a strong, diverse, competitive and sustainable knowledge-based local economy. Shanghai EXPO 2010 will enable the Council to support local businesses to benefit from growing and emerging markets and help them prepare for future ways of working.

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when the meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work, please contact Wesley Rourke 0151 4717526 wesley.rourke@halton.gov.uk