

**REPORT TO:** Employment, Learning, Skills  
& Community Policy & Performance Board

**DATE:** 8<sup>th</sup> June 2011

**REPORTING OFFICERS:** Strategic Director – Children and Enterprise

**SUBJECT:** Scrutiny Topic Reports

**WARDS:** Borough Wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To update Members on existing and future scrutiny topic group titles.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION:** That

- i. Members support a joint scrutiny topic group on Apprenticeships
- ii. Members note progress being made regarding the topic 'Assessing the Impact of the Government's Deficit Policy on Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton'
- iii. Agree to carry over the topic Barriers to Employment from an Employer perspective into the Municipal year 2011/2012

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 For the Municipal Year 2010/11 Members proposed that two scrutiny topic groups should focus on '**Assessing the Impact of the Government's deficit policy on Employment Learning and Skills**' and '**Barriers to Employment from an Employer perspective**'.
- 3.2 At the beginning of April 2011, the Employment, Economic Regeneration and Business Development department moved to the Children and Young People directorate and the Children and Enterprise directorate was established.
- 3.3 By bringing together Children and Enterprise within one directorate it is recognised that for most young people it is the transferable skills that are developed at school and in further education that will determine their success in a range of jobs throughout their lives. It is, therefore, proposed that a topic title on apprenticeships would further cement these principles. It is proposed that the topic would be jointly overseen by members of both the ELS and Community PPB and the Children's PPB.
- 3.4 The scope of this topic is set out below:

## **To review the provision of apprenticeships in the borough**

### **Context**

Britain has a long history of apprenticeships but the level of state intervention and the types of programme have varied over recent decades. The National Apprenticeships Service (NAS) was launched in 2009 and has end to end responsibility for the delivery of Apprenticeships. In the past, apprenticeships in the borough have been supported by a number of funding pots, in particular WNF. With reductions in funding, Local Authorities and partners will need to work even more closely with NAS to ensure that resources are deployed to create apprenticeships that are relevant to both the needs of employers and young people.

### **The topic will consider the following: -**

- 1. The implementation of an apprenticeship programme for Halton;**
  - 2. Monitoring and Review of the programme i.e. the effectiveness of the programme;**
  - 3. Engagement with the Private Sector;**
  - 4. Roles and Responsibilities of respective agencies to drive forward the apprenticeships agenda in Halton.**
- 3.5 In regard to the **Barriers to Employment from an Employer perspective** topic, the scrutiny topic group has met twice. Consideration has been given to how partners support local people to gain employment, but more importantly how we provide local people with the skills, knowledge and experience needed by employers to ensure that support is demand led not supply led.
- 3.6 The intention had been to engage with the following agencies and groups.  
Halton Chamber of Commerce;  
North West Employers;  
Halton Enterprise Board;  
North West Business Link;  
Employers' Engagement Service.
- 3.7 Unfortunately, the topic has not progressed as quickly as anticipated, not least because of a lack of clarity which has surrounded the Government's approach to providing business support to date and uncertainty surrounding roles and responsibilities of national and regional agencies in respect of this agenda.
- 3.8 With the launch of the Bigger Better Business initiative, it is anticipated that this will give the topic group a steer and this work can be reignited in the new Municipal Year.

- 3.9 In regard to the second topic, much of the early work of the group has been dependent upon the outcome of the Government's Spending Review, which was announced at the end of October.
- 3.10 Good progress has been made in undertaking an initial audit/assessment of emerging Government policy relating to the Employment, Learning and Skills agenda. Reference has been made for example, to the Local Growth White Paper, and wider welfare reform agenda and its relationship with worklessness and potential return to work incentives.
- 3.11 Arising out of these discussions Members have suggested that it would be useful to map current activities and the organisations undertaking this activity with likely future arrangements.
- 3.12 Work is progressing on evaluating which activities/actions have "worked" for Halton, and will Government policy accommodate these activities in the future.
- 3.13 Consideration is being given to whether this activity will continue albeit with a different emphasis or a different delivery organisation. Similarly, whether activity has ceased but is being replaced by a different approach to solving or tackling a particular issue?

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no immediate policy implications for the organisation. However, the proposed and existing topic groups will support the Council in: -

Presenting key facts, figures and other key evidence that define a problem and establish a baseline for service improvement;  
Identifying any developments and relevant future issues or trends that are expected to impact significantly on the services we provide;  
Mapping out any relevant current key policies, initiatives, facilities and patterns of service;  
Identifying relevant best practice and develop a 'model' response to the issues previously identified

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

N/A

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

Members are advised that the Employment Learning and Skills SSP is giving consideration to the future direction of partnership activity in Halton. This includes an exercise to link the Sustainable Community Strategy to future provision and will consider respective roles and responsibilities.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

There are no risks anticipated in developing the proposed Scrutiny Topic Titles.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

The choice of Scrutiny Topic Titles reflects a commitment to ensure that our employment service provides support for all our residents.