

## Employment, Learning & Skills SSP

### Minutes of Executive Group Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> February 2012

2.00 pm, the Boardroom, Municipal Building, Widnes

**Present:**

Wesley Rourke (In the Chair)  
Nick Mannion  
Cleo Pollard  
Janine Peterson  
Cllr Eddie Jones  
Claire Bradbury  
Catherine Johnson  
Diane Sproson  
Matt Roberts  
Marie Hoyles  
Kevin Edwards  
Geraldine Edwards

**Organisation:**

Economy, Enterprise & Property (HBC)  
Strategic Policy & Partnership (HBC)  
Halton Parents & Carers Forum  
Jobcentre Plus  
Portfolio Holder, Halton BC  
Power in Partnership  
Performance & Improvement (HBC)  
Greater Merseyside Connexions  
Halton & St Helens CVA  
ELS Team (HBC)  
Halton Speak Out!  
PA to Kevin Edwards

Apologies had been received from:

Cllr Sue Edge  
Ian Graham  
David Gray  
Siobhan Saunders  
Hitesh Patel  
Kevin Smith  
Simon Clough

Chair of HBC ELS Policy & Performance Board  
Communications & Marketing (HBC)  
Welfare Rights (HBC)  
Employment, Learning & Skills (HBC)  
Halton CAB  
Riverside College, Halton  
Children & Young People (HBC)

#### 1. **Welcome/Introductions**

- 1.1 Wesley Rourke welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced new members Janine Peterson and Kevin Edwards. Group members provided introductions.

#### 2. **Declarations of Interest**

- 2.1 There were no personal or pecuniary declarations of interest.

#### 3. **Minutes of last meeting and matters arising**

The Minutes of the meeting on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2011 were reviewed and confirmed as accurate.

- 3.1 Matters arising not covered elsewhere on today's agenda;

Item 3.1 - Halton Enterprise Board – notes of latest meeting on today's agenda.

**Item 3.1 – Welfare Reform Bill – NM briefed meeting on current position with regard to this piece of key Government legislation. Several key issues are currently subject to debate between the Lords & Commons, details of which have been widely reported in mainstream media. NM to continue to update group on progress.**

**Item 5 - Local Sustainable Transport Fund bid – NM updated meeting on current position. Final submission date is 24<sup>th</sup> February 2012. Halton also a partner in a 'Mid-Mersey (Halton, St Helens & Warrington) bid to the LSTF and a 'Better Bus Fund' application – closing date also 24<sup>th</sup> February, with outcome expected by end of May. Finally, local operator Arriva recently submitted a bid to Government's Green Bus Fund. Decision on this is expected by end of March. NM to continue to update group on progress.**

#### **4. Partner Updates**

- 4.1 WR introduced this new standing item on the group's meeting agenda. One of the conclusions from the enhanced partnership working pilot is that we need to be aware of what respective partners are currently doing and are planning. It will also help the partnership to strengthen our shared vision and identify where there are gaps and overlaps in service.
- 4.2 Connexions (DS); Have been contracted by 5 out of the 6 LCR authorities (since meeting sixth has joined) for a further 12 months - to March 2013. Will focus work on post-16 vulnerable/NEET young people. Also the 2012 Education Act will see high schools be responsible for directly commissioning own IAG provision. Widnes Connexions centre to close in March with continuing services re-locating to CRMZ on Kingsway. Runcorn centre at Halton Lea unaffected. Have been successful in a bid to DWP's Innovation Fund for an outcome-based project called New Horizons that will commence ASAP, providing support to NEET & vulnerable young people.
- 4.3 HBC (Cllr EJ – portfolio holder); The Government's Troubled Families initiative will commence soon. However, uncertainties as to how it will join-up with the Work Programme. Also doubt as to difference between it and the ESF Families with Multiple Problems initiative for which the local provider is Reed in Partnership. Also unresolved issues around data sharing and safeguarding.
- 4.4 PiP (CB); still not a year old, but currently have 100 people at the centre now, many of which were previously NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. Encouraging retention rates of 90%+ being recorded. Major challenge is the end of EMA and perceptions of young people in that they believe there is now no financial support available to them to continue in education.
- 4.5 Job Centre Plus (JP); Outlined the latest local developments in the DWP's 'Get Britain Working' Strategy. A key element is the much greater degree of local flexibility down to district level which should help DWP tailor their 'offer' much more closely to local circumstances.
- 4.6 Halton & St. Helens VCA (MR); planning to relocate Halton base to St Marie's Church in Widnes from current base in Sefton House, Runcorn. Have submitted a second Heritage Lottery Bid after their first was disappointingly turned-down. VCA are hopeful that the required funding for the move will be found in 2012. Also disappointed to have a bid to the Transforming Local Infrastructure Lottery scheme rejected. MR stressed that regardless of financial difficulties, Volunteer Brokerage schemes (which can provide long-term unemployed people with vital skills, experience & confidence) would continue.
- 4.7 HBC (MH); Most of current work covered by HEP and Skills group elsewhere on today's agenda.
- 4.8 Halton Speak Out! (KE); Reminded the group of the need to be aware to make sure that

our information is produced in user-friendly formats and avoids jargon.

## **5. Enhanced Partnership Working/Leading by Example**

5.1 WR introduced the item and the commitment of the HSPB to continuing the development of closer integration of service delivery.

5.2 NM then outlined the draft final report on the 'Stronger Local Labour Force' pilot. Key evaluation points from which are;

- Because of the way larger national and regional partners operate it is not possible to disaggregate costs to the local level.
- Smaller community & voluntary sector partners have limited capacity to take-on work of this nature, as time spent cannot be charged to a specific project or funding stream.

5.3 However, several useful learning points though;

- Allocation of resources – helps to identify area when may be possible to re-allocate resources 'down-stream' to be uses on service delivery rather than assessment and evaluation.
- Duplication – instances of duplication and overlap need to be taken out
- Sustainable Community Strategy – partners' need to focus efforts more on its key objectives.

### **Agreed; Final Stronger Local Labour Force Pilot report adopted.**

5.4 WR & JP outlined the 'Leading by Example' concept and it was agreed to work through this web-based peer support and assessment tool, looking in detail at the two of the assessment areas; 'Developing Skills' and 'Workforce Strategy and Planning'. WR felt that this was an opportunity to use the tool as a basis for identifying gaps in service provision across partners.

### **Agreed; NM to download and circulate the assessment framework for partners to complete and that the 'Leading by Example' process to be included in the partnership's 2012/13 work programme. Results to be reported to next meeting.**

## **6. Performance Report.**

6.1 CJ outlined the report and the two appendices. These have replaced the previous LAA indicators and targets with ones specifically designed and selected to guide and monitor the partnership's progress towards the key objectives relating to ELS in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

6.2 One small correction is that in Appendix 2 (Mid-year Progress Report, April-September 2011) the weekly earning indicator on page 3 should have a red cross not as included in some copies.

6.3 Chair stressed that whilst some partners will have the lead responsibility for collating the commentary for specific indicators, it is not just down to them to deliver work towards the achievement of that target. We should also look at the broader picture and direction of travel rather than concentrating one individual indicator.

### **Agreed; Report received, and indicators, lead partners and local targets confirmed.**

## **7. Sub-Group updates.**

7.1 HEP; MH drew partners attention to the notes of the HEP meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> January and also gave a verbal update on the most recent meeting that took place on 6<sup>th</sup> February and for which the notes

have not yet been released. Particularly pleasing is the work with Tesco's on recruitment for their soon to open store in Widnes.

- 7.2 It was reported that the Halton Enterprise Board ('HEB') had met, and considered the following;
- The resources and provision of business support in Halton.
  - New Enterprise Allowance and Blue Orchid delivery
  - The Chamber's plans to set-up a 30-35 group to engage with others in a Halton Future Networking Group.
  - Basic skills assessments and enterprise culture to be discussed at next meeting.

WR is scheduled to meet with the chair to consider how the HEB compliments wider employer engagement co-ordination, notably through the HEP and also to consider how we support business start-ups post-ISUS .

- 7.3 Skills Group. Most recent meeting was on 4<sup>th</sup> January at which an updated version of the very helpful client engagement matrix was circulated. A range of updates from partners was also made, details of which are included in the report. Also possibility of a bid to the Growth Innovation Fund to be raised at Exec Group meeting (see item 8 below)

**Agreed; Reports received.**

## **8. Growth Innovation Fund.**

- 8.1 NM outlined the Government's recently launched Growth Innovation Fund, which is aimed at helping employers to work with supply chains, business clusters, colleges and training providers, their staff and trade unions to remove barriers in developing skills.
- 8.2 WR has previously expressed that The Heath in Runcorn could be an interesting collaboration

**Agreed; that the Skills group to be asked to explore the feasibility of a local consortium making a submission in one of the future rounds of GIF funding.**

## **9. National Apprenticeship Week (6th – 10th February 2012).**

- 9.1 Partners fed-back on the previous week's National Apprenticeship Week, along with initial assessments of the contribution of local partners, including Riverside College, Halton Borough Council to local and city region events to promote the availability and value of apprenticeships
- 9.2 It was reported that the borough council's ELS and Children & Young People's Policy & Performance Boards had set-up a joint topic group on the subject of apprenticeships. It was also Noted that Halton Borough Council's Economic Development portfolio holder had presented a report to the Council's Executive Board recently regarding how the borough council could further the support for apprenticeship corporately.

**Agreed; Report received.**

## **10. 2011/12 Meeting Dates (all start at 2 pm)**

Monday 14th May 2012  
Monday 20th August 2012  
Monday 22nd October 2012

Monday 10th December 2012  
Monday 11th February 2013

Venues TBC

**11. Any Other URGENT Business.**

**11.1** Since the preparation of the agenda for today's meeting the partnership has been asked to review two key documents;

- Risk Register
- Our Action Plan

**Agreed; NM to pull-together small sub-group to review our Risk Register and Action Plan to be an agenda item for the next meeting**

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