

Employment, Learning & Skills SSP

Minutes of Executive Group Meeting 22nd October 2012

2.00 pm, Kingsway Learning Centre, Widnes.

Present:

Wesley Rourke (In the Chair)
Simon Clough
Chris Biggs
Claire Bradbury
Nick Mannion
Cleo Pollard
Janet Liversidge
Mal Hampson
Peter Walker
Helen Woollacott
Paula Cain
Catherine Johnson
Hitesh Patel
Tim Leather
Peter Moss

Organisation:

Economy, Enterprise & Property (HBC)
Children & Young People (HBC)
Greater Merseyside Connexions
Power in Partnership
Strategic Policy & Partnership (HBC)
Halton Parents & Carers Forum
Jobcentre Plus
Halton Speak Out!
Performance & Improvement (HBC)
Skills Funding Agency
Halton Chamber
Performance & Improvement (HBC)
Halton CAB
Business Development (HBC)
Employment, Learning & Skills (HBC)

Apologies were received from:

Siobhan Saunders	Employment, Learning & Skills (HBC)
David Gray	Welfare Rights (HBC)
Kevin Smith	Riverside College, Halton
Sue Baxendale	Halton Housing Trust
Claire Jones	Halton & St Helens CVA
Diane Sproson	Greater Merseyside Connexions
Peter Finney	National Apprenticeship Service

1. Welcome/Introductions

- 1.1 The Chair, Wesley Rourke, welcomed everyone to the meeting, and outlined the changes to the format previously used.
- 1.2 Introductions were made.
- 1.3 There were no personal or pecuniary declarations of interest.

2. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting on Monday 30th October 2012 were reviewed and confirmed as accurate and the following matters were not covered elsewhere on the agenda;

- 2.1 Halton Speak Out! (3.3) - a meeting of key partners has been arranged for 10.00 on 5th Nov. 2012 to discuss how more support for young people with learning difficulties can be offered to help the progression into paid employment.
- 2.2 Mersey Gateway Employment & Skills Strategies (8.1) - these are still commercially sensitive documents so are not yet available.

Action; SS to circulate the successful consortium's Strategy as and when possible.

3. Partner Updates

- 3.1 Job Centre Plus (JL). Recruitment for an initial 20 new jobs at the ice rink at The Hive in Widnes concluded by end of November, with a target opening date in time for the Christmas and New Year holidays.
- 3.2 Skills Funding Agency (HW). Invitations to tender for the EU-supported contracts will start during November.

Action; HL to circulate final version of service specification once it has been published.

- 3.3 Halton Speak Out (VH). Briefed the group in more detail about the 'Jigsaw for Jobs' project that is working with around 15 young people to support their progression into paid employment, and the purpose of the meeting scheduled for 5th November 2012. See 2.1 above.

HP advised that still considerable amount of stereotyping around people with learning difficulties

- 3.4 Connexions (CB). Connexions have successfully gained Matrix accreditation and we are currently negotiating an extension to contract for April 2013 to March 2014.
- 3.5 Power in Partnership (CB) - . The organisation has now passed its first birthday and continues to thrive, with considerable thanks to a range of local partners.

Been informed that made it through to the next round of the 'Talent Match' process, thanks to very helpful support and advice from HBC's External Funding Team with the application process.

Queried the lack of a Runcorn town centre based job club suitable for the 18-24 age group of job seekers. JL advised that an event is coming-up in early November that targets this age group.

Action; JL to circulate details of the event to Exec Group members so can cascade.

- 3.6 ELS Service, HBC. (PM) –

- Outlined progress on use of residual WNF funding to support apprenticeships.
- Meetings being held with Mersey Gateway bidding consortia with regard to respective Employment & Skills Strategies to offer feedback
- Future prospect of the possibility of NAS grant delivery.
- Urged members to participate and promote Global Entrepreneurship Week (12th to 18th November).and share with Lynsey.carr@halton.gov.uk

WR added that HBC has been assigned lead role in developing a Skills Strategy for the Sci-Tech Daresbury Enterprise Zone. Aim will be to generate opportunities for work experience, placements and apprenticeships etc. as well as mainstream employment for local residents.

- 3.7 LCR Apprentice of the Year Awards. NM brief the group on this event, scheduled for 12th March

2013 at St. George's Hall, Liverpool. Categories still being finalised, but there will be specific Halton Apprentice of the Year award.

Action; NM to cascade details of the event and how to submit nominations.

4. Draft Apprenticeship Delivery Plan.

- 4.1 JG outlined the background to the draft plan, whose origins are in HBC's recently adopted People Plan, and specifically the 'Talent Strategy' element of it.

A workforce survey in 2011 revealed that 3.4% of the Council's total workforce of around 3,000 (the largest in the Borough) were aged 24 or under, the average age of employee was in the mid-40's and that accredited skill levels across the organisation were low and need to be raised as jobs become more complex and technology-reliant.

The plan would contribute towards redressing some of these issues, as well as providing opportunities for local residents.

- 4.2 NM stressed that the plan is still at an early draft stage of development, but there has already been a positive input from the National Apprenticeship Service. .
- 4.3 WR pointed out that the focus would not be solely on 16-18 year olds or in areas of work previously associated with apprenticeships, but was part of the drive to offer a framework to develop exciting career development opportunities for local residents with the council.
- 4.4 SC reminded the group that these will not just be new or additional positions but a mixture with with casual vacancies and 'conversions' as well.
- 4.5 Partner feedback was very positive, especially with respect to the explicit commitment to encourage applications from groups that are under-represented such as care leavers and people with a disability, for example.

Action; The draft HBC Apprenticeship Delivery Plan was endorsed, and updates on its further development to be reported to future meetings.

5. City Deal Implementation Plan.

- 5.1 WR delivered an update on the implementation of the Liverpool City Region Deal and specifically the six elements that are of greatest interest to our partnership's priorities. The deal was formally signed-off on 18th September 2012 and along with its implementation plan, is being used to provide a coherent framework for delivering key priorities. By bringing together public funding streams along with the ability to make local decisions on them, resources will be invested in ways that will have maximum positive impact across the LCR.
- 5.2 Plan overseen by the LCR Employment Board. Halton is represented by Cllr Eddie Jones.
- 5.3 CB queried element (3) of the plan that relates to customer choice in the Single Work Programme. WR explained that currently no customer choice with regard to which of the two (Ingeus Deloitte or A4E) a customer is referred to. Proposed that from March 2013 the expressed needs of the customer will be taken into consideration when selection made.

Action; WR to provide updates on the plan's progress to future meetings.

6. Halton Employment Event

- 6.1 WR provided a verbal update on discussions since the event held at The Heath in Runcorn in July aimed at picking out what went well, what we can learn from it and how to take things forward.
- 6.2 An option being considered is to develop a HEP 'Colander of Events' on key relevant issues to inform and advise specific targeted sectors/groups of partners.

7. Sustainable Community Strategy; Review of targets & measures for 2013 to 2016.

- 7.1 PW introduced a report that asks the partnership to review the suggested annual targets for 2013 To 2016 against the ELS measures included in the Halton Sustainable Community Strategy
- 7.2 Are the proposed targets realistic, or are they too low or too high?

Actions;

- a) Any comments on proposed targets to be made to the Responsible Officer for that particular priority ASAP.
- b) Final draft targets for 2013 to 2016 to come to the December meeting for adoption.

8. Thematic Timetable for ELS SSP Executive Group Meetings

- 8.1 NM outlined a proposed timetable for meetings that would provide an annual cycle to review the five key themes in the partnership's Action Plan.
- 8.2 Proposals agreed with inclusion of a slot to discuss the value of volunteering as a way to improve skills at the next (December 2012) meeting. Agreed plan set-out below;

Meeting	Theme
December 2012	The value of volunteering as a way to improve skills – HP to lead
February 2013	To foster a culture of enterprise and entrepreneurship and make Halton an ideal place to start and grow a business.
May 2013	To develop a culture where learning is valued and skill levels throughout the adult population and across the local workforce can be raised.
July 2013	To promote and increase the employability of local people and remove barriers to employment to get more people into work.
October 2013	To maximise an individual's potential to increase and manage their income, including access to appropriate, supportive advice services.

Action; Relevant partner(s) to be identified to lead the discussion on each of the themes at the four Executive Group meetings during 2013.

9. Sub-group Updates.

- 9.1 The minutes of the Halton Employment Partnership (17th September 2012) and the Skills Group (12th August 2012) were received and noted.

10. The Development of a strong, diverse, competitive and sustainable local economy.

- 10.1 TL and PC initiated the discussion by way of a short presentation in which they outlined the global and then the national economic context;
- Manufacturing output down 7% by end 2008; the deepest recession since the war
 - Unemployment rose to 8.1% (2.57m people) in August 2011; the highest level since 1994
 - After 15 quarters, GDP is still 4% down from peak at start of recession
 - The first double dip recession since 1974
 - Government policy is to migrate business support from the public to private sector.
 - As a result a number of business support agencies now either ceased or curtailed activities; for example Business Link, North West Development Agency and cluster agencies and Sector Skills Councils
 - Government has invited private sector organisations to deliver certain elements of business support at a national level rather than regional
 - A consequence is the provision of business support to companies in Halton has diminished.
- 10.2 Locally business enquires received by HBC's BIG (Business Improvement & Growth) team have recovered to the level seen just before the 2008 banking crisis struck.
- 10.3 TL outlined the current 'offer' from BIG and PC that of the Halton Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise to support new and existing businesses in the borough.
- 10.4 TL outlined the pending ERDF 4.1 (Start-up Support) and LCR ERDF 4.2 (Business Support) and Growth Accelerator programmes that should go some way to interface with existing local provision and plug some significant gaps left since the wind-down of previous programmes.
- 10.5 The presentation then addressed the question of what more can be done by suggesting a focus on the following challenges;
- Better co-ordination of business support
 - Better engagement with businesses
 - Better dissemination of business critical information
 - Cultivate strong working relationship with new providers of business services
 - Exploration of new models of service delivery
- Considerable work is already being done on these, and potential funding from the Regional Growth Fund, via the LCR Local Economic Partnership, will need to be fitted-in around the ERDF provision to avoid duplication and gaps in provision by developing delivery models that are fit for the future.
- 10.6 WR thanks TL and PC for their informative and thought provoking presentation and invited questions.

Issues raised included the following;

- What business support are clients prepared to 'buy'?
- Publicise services on offer and wait for business to come to us, or go out to them?
- How can we use contact data most effectively and efficiently?
- A significant 'gap' is ignorance amongst new SME's of basic HR duties and good practice – opportunity for shared HR amongst a 'cluster' of businesses?
- Need for better collaboration between partners even more acute.
- Maintenance of clarity of respective strategic roles of HBC and Chamber

10.7 WR summarised the discussion by reminding the meeting that whatever we do must be able to demonstrate that it is contributing to growing Halton's local economy. However, the level of confidence and optimism is noticeably healthier than it was 18 months ago.

11. Any Other Urgent Business

None

12. Future meetings

Monday 10th December 2012
Monday 11th February 2013
Monday 13 th May 2013
Monday 29 th July 2013
Monday 21 st October 2013
Monday 16 th December 2013
Monday 10 th February 2014

All meetings are at Kingsway Learning Centre, Widnes and start at **14:00**

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