

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, 23 June 2014 in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors Edge (Chairman), MacManus (Vice-Chairman), Baker, Cassidy, Howard, P. Lloyd Jones, Logan, Parker, C. Plumpton Walsh, Ratcliffe and J. Roberts

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: D. Houghton, S. Lowrie, C. Patino, M. Simpson and W Rourke

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

ELS1 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 24 March 2014, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

ELS2 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was reported that no public questions had been received.

ELS3 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Board considered the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board relevant to the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Portfolio since the last meeting of the Board.

In relation to EXB166, Voluntary Sector Funding – Grant Allocation, the Board felt that the Chair of the ELSC PPB should be a member on the Panel that assessed agreed the recommendations, as the Voluntary Sector was within the remit of the PPB.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes and comments made be noted.

NB: Councillor P Lloyd Jones declared a Disposable Other Interest due to be a CAB Trust Board Member and Councillor Cassidy declared a Disclosable Other Interest due to occasionally working with Hitesh Patel as part of the Warrington Labour Party.

ELS4 ADVICE SERVICE TRANSITION FUND - PRESENTATION

The Board received a presentation from Hitesh Patel, Halton CAB regarding the Advice Services Transition Fund.

It was noted that Halton CAB had secured "Advice Services Transition Fund" Lottery Funding to improve partnership working amongst Halton's numerous advice agencies. One of the key tasks had been to undertake a mapping exercise of all the agencies based in Halton which provided 'information', 'advice' or 'tribunal/court advocacy/representation' services.

It was further noted that this detailed piece of mapping work has been undertaken in partnership with Halton BC as Halton was taking the "lead" to develop a multi-agency approach to helping people deal with the impact of the government's "Welfare Reform" agenda.

The presentation set out the four project outcomes as follows:

- more people would be able to get the right Housing, Benefits, Debt, Employment and other legal advice they need, from the right source at the right time;
- local people (aspiring to be legal advisers) would have better opportunities to gain skills and qualifications to improve their lives and employment prospects, whilst at the same time contributing back to the community;
- the advice sector would operate as highly skilled, knowledgeable and supported "collective", where more people could be helped and where the risk of giving out incorrect advice and information was reduced; and
- people would have better awareness of local advice services and would have a voice to demonstrate "decision makers" the impact of advice on their health and wellbeing; thereby helping safeguard services for future users.

The presentation further set out other areas of work as follows:

- partnership with local Churches;
- attending "residents association" meetings;

- attending community fairs (e.g. Runcorn Carnival);
- training for elected Councillors;
- encouraging “managers to let go”; and
- linking Widnes CAB and Runcorn CAB to create a ‘virtual’ call centre.

Members were further advised that the extension of operating hours to the evening service had been very successful with a footfall of over 150 people attending since February 2014. The Board was also provided with a list of courses supplied by the CAB.

In receiving the presentation the Board discussed evaluation of work support by other agencies, excellent standards of training and advice given by CAB staff, mapping and pin pointing of locations in the borough in greater need of debt advice and the help and support provided to the CAB from Halton’s External Funding Team when putting the bid together.

The Chairman thanked Hitesh Patel for an informative presentation.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be received.

ELS5 LIBRARY SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2013-2014

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which provided an annual report on the Library Service for the period 2013-2014.

Paula Reilly-Cooper, Library Services Manager, addressed the Board and advised that the Library Service was delivered through 4 static libraries, a satellite facility in Castlefields Community Centre, an outreach service for the housebound and through digital access. Key resources in their communities they provided books, information and technology which promoted lifelong learning, digital inclusion and encouraged and celebrated reading. It was reported that libraries were important community spaces which offered a welcoming neutral environment and hosted a range of cultural activities, events and opportunities for all sections of the community.

It was further noted that all libraries provided access to the Internet and quality assured online resources through more than 100 public computers and laptops. All the buildings were Wi-Fi enabled providing flexibility for

customers and also offered self service facilities for borrowing and returning materials. In addition 24/7 access to services were available through a virtual library presence, offering an enquiry service and the ability to search for, reserve and renew items remotely via the online catalogue.

Members were advised that in 2013-14 a total of 415,406 items were borrowed and visits had risen this year which reflected the significant proportion of people using libraries for other purposes i.e. to access public computer facilities.

The report further set out number of registered members, active members, number of items borrowed and number of visits to each library premise. The report also set out the progress that the Library Service had made in the last 12 months and provided information on the following:

- Priorities as follows:
 - Inspiring a community of readers and learners, (a comprehensive explanation of programmes and events held was set out in the report);
 - employment, enterprise and developing on line skills;
 - extending access through innovation and new technology;
 - providing a relevant and responsive library service; and
 - workforce development
- CIPFA Children and Young People's Survey; and
- Information on usage of different key stages of pupils.

Strategic Director -
Children and Enterprise

Arising from discussion of the report Members commented on the following:

- the increased usage of computers and the possibility of having more flexibility with use of lap tops and iPads;
- whether consideration could be given to approaching the CCG for funding towards "books on prescription" and the memory boxes to help with dementia;
- capacity for outreach work in terms of helping people with information technology in their homes; and
- the excellent services and facilities provided by the libraries.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the CCG be approached for a financial contribution towards "books on prescription" and memory boxes

for help with dementia.

NB: Councillors Plumpton Walsh and MacManus declared a Disclosable Other Interest due to being a Member of Halton Leisure Centres and Stadium Fitness respectively.

ELS6 SPORT AND RECREATION ANNUAL REPORT

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Communities which set out the annual report for the period 2013/14 on the Council's Sport and Recreation Service.

Sue Lowrie, Sports and Recreation Manager, advised Members that the Sport and Recreation Team has worked in partnership with a range of stakeholders and had made considerable progress, impacts and achievements across the borough. The report set out the priorities within the Halton Sports Strategy 2012 - 2015 which illustrated how sport had, and continued to enrich the lives of people living and working in Halton. Activities were used as an essential component in supporting and developing the infrastructure of the community and to improve the quality of life both physically and mentally.

It was reported that the service actively worked with partner organisations such as Halton Sports Partnership, in order to facilitate development through a better understanding of the issues and a sharing of resources to achieve success. It was noted that without the contribution from Halton's partners much of the work highlighted within the report would not have been possible.

The report further set out details of the Sport and Recreation Team and the Sports Strategy Delivery for 2013/14 which included information of the six themes as follows:

- increase participation and widen access;
- club development;
- coach education and volunteering;
- sporting excellence;
- finance and funding for sport; and
- sports facilities.

Appended to the report for consideration was information on coach education and volunteering, sport coaching bursaries, sports development grants and sports bursary awards.

Members commented on the amount of sport and voluntary coaching hours provided in the Borough and commended the work of the Sports Development Team.

The Board further discussed the increase in users of leisure centres and the success of the SWIMTAG scheme where users could view their distance, hours and calories burned that had been recorded.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ELS7 CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which provided an Annual Report of work carried out by the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board for 2013/14. The report set out the work carried out and the recommendations made for work programmes throughout the Municipal Year from April 2013 to March 2014.

The Chairman wished to place on record her thanks to Members and Officers for their continued support and hard work throughout 2013/14.

RESOLVED: That the Chair's Annual report be noted.

ELS8 WELFARE REFORM SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which set out the recommendations from the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community (ELSC) PPB Welfare Reform Scrutiny Topic Group and the process undertaken to prioritise the recommendations.

Members were advised that the aim of the work was to identify actions that were most likely to be of most benefit, so that resources could be targeted more effectively.

It was reported that at the ELSC PPB on 11 November 2013, Members agreed to endorse the recommendations from the Welfare Reforms Scrutiny Topic Group report.

It was further noted that on 8 January 2014, the ELSC PPB received a report on taking forward the 19 recommendations from the Welfare Reform Scrutiny Topic

Group. Members recognised that not all of the recommendations would be achievable due to the Council's current financial position and budget constraints, however they agreed to continue the work of the Topic Group and further investigate how the recommendations could be implemented. It was further noted that the recommendations were aligned under four priority themes as follows:

- information and support;
- adult education skills;
- data/research/performance measures; and
- policy development areas.

The report further set out the prioritisation process, prioritisation matrix, prioritisation outcomes, resources and a summary

The Board discussed in depth the two projects that were currently progressing forward; development and roll out of Halton Go-ON project and the 'join up' days for council staff with the Credit Union and noted the prioritisation score of the remaining projects which were set out in 7.1 of the report.

In relation to the project around helping people with disability appeals, it was suggested that the CCG be approached with regard to provision of medical reports stating levels of disability and the issue of the cost of these reports be investigated as fees had been reported to vary from £10 to £130.

Members sought clarity on estimates of workloads in relation to how many people would need assistance in completing forms and requested more detail be provided regarding what the £40,000 would be spent on and to demonstrate the levels of need for the services that it would be used for.

As part of discussions relating to the recommendations outlined in the topic group report Members requested that a further recommendation should be included. This related to CCG's being approached with regard to provision of medical reports. It was agreed that the report would be amended accordingly.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the actions identified from the review and prioritisation that has taken place and in particular the actions that would require additional resources, which are included in the report.

ELS9 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORTS

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which set out the Priority based Performance Management Report for the fourth quarter of 2013/14. The report detailed progress against service objectives and milestones and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

Members were advised that key priorities for development or improvement in 2013-16 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans, for the various functional areas reporting to the Board as detailed below:

- Employment, Enterprise and Property Services; and
- Community and Environment Services.

In receiving the monitoring reports Members discussed applications for grants and wished to place on record their request for consideration of a bid to Heritage Lottery or Big Lottery etc. be submitted for Halton Castle.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the fourth quarterly monitoring reports be received; and
- 2) consideration be given to submitting a bid for Halton Castle to either Heritage Lottery or Big Lottery.

Strategic Director
- Children and
Enterprise

ELS10 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which provided information on progress in achieving targets contained within the 2011-2016 Sustainable Community Strategy for Halton.

The Board was advised that the Sustainable Community Strategy was a central document for the Council and its partners, and provided an evidenced-based framework through which actions and shared performance targets could be developed and communicated.

The Board was also advised that Appendix 1 to the report outlined the progress for the period to year end 31 March 2014, which included a summary of all indicators for employment, learning and skills in Halton.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

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Meeting ended at 8.40 p.m.