

REPORT TO:	Employment, Learning and Skills and Community Policy Performance Board
DATE:	27 June 2016
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director, People and Economy
PORTFOLIO:	Economic Development
SUBJECT:	Update of the Area Based Review of Further Education
WARD(S)	Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update PPB Members regarding the development of the Area Based Review (ABR) of Further Education (FE) in the Liverpool City Region. The review is important to the PPB as it will make recommendations on how in the future, FE Provision should be delivered in the Liverpool City Region and Halton.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That PPB Members consider the potential implications for Halton.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Area Based Review process forms part of the national reforms to the post-16 Education sector, with the aim of raising productivity and economic growth.

The purpose of the Area Based Review process is to deliver:-

- Institutions which are financially viable, sustainable, resilient and efficient, and deliver maximum value for public investment;
- An offer that meets each area's educational and economic needs;
- Providers with strong reputations and greater specialisation;
- Sufficient access to high quality and relevant education and training for all; and
- Provision which reflects changes in government funding priorities and future demand from both learners and employers.

3.2 One of the outcomes of the Liverpool City Region Devolution Deal is that the Area Based Review which has been established will be

chaired by a representative from the Combined Authority. The Steering Group should include all College Principals, Chairs of Governors and other key local stakeholders. The Operational Director for Economy, Enterprise and Property is a member of the Steering Group. The review commenced in April, and the first Steering Group meeting was held on 10th May 2016. Three further Steering Group sessions are scheduled and the review is expected to be completed in the Autumn.

- 3.3 A key factor for the preparation phase has been setting the scope of the Area Based Review early on so that a framework was developed to gather intelligence and data to support the process and provide evidence for the review. This is particularly important in relation to ensuring City Region skills priorities are accurately reflected within the overall process.
- 3.4 The Area Based Review process usually covers both FE and Sixth Form Colleges, although announcements made as part of the Autumn Statement has given the opportunity for Sixth Form Colleges, through the post-16 review process, to establish themselves as 16-19 Academies. There is an option to include other providers within the scope of the Area Based Review where they agree; the availability and quality of wider 16+ provision including School Sixth Forms and HEIs will also be considered during the analysis phase for the Liverpool City Region.
- 3.5 The outcomes of the Review process will be significant in terms of supporting the Liverpool City Region's growth ambitions and key to delivering aspects of the Devolution Agreement. The guidance provided by BIS around the Area Based Review notes that reviews should take into account factors including:-
- Local economic objectives and labour market needs and any local outcome agreements in place;
 - National government policy, including the national expansion and reform of the Apprenticeship programme; creation of clear high quality professional and technical routes to employment; the desire for specialisation, including the identification and establishment of centres of excellence such as Institutes of Technology; and the need for high quality English and Maths provision;
 - Access to appropriate good quality provision within reasonable travel distances, particularly for 16-19 year olds and students with special educational needs and disabilities;
 - Funding, including the need for 16+ providers to operate as efficiently as possible within a tight fiscal environment and

- changes like employer routed funding for apprenticeships;
 - Effective support for the unemployed to return to work; and
 - Legal duties relating to the provision of education, including but not limited to section 15A of the Education Act 1996 and section 86 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.
- 3.6 An important piece of work entitled the ‘Skills Conclusions’ document has been completed. This is a Skills and Local Needs Analysis which will be used as the evidence base for informing the Area Based Review.
- 3.7 In summary, it identifies the current position and priorities for skills in the Liverpool City Region. Its purpose is to promote discussion across the further education sector and encourage a collaborative approach to respond to local economic challenges and skills demands now and in the future, whether for infrastructure or curriculum changes.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Section 3.1 of this report sets out the intended delivery outcomes of the Review. Clearly, there is a strong emphasis on encouraging a close relationship between the development of FE provision in the City Region which is allied to the needs of businesses. However, it is also clear that the review is predicated on a significant reduction in Further Education Budgets. In some areas this is leading to discussions regarding the merging or closing of some FE colleges.
- 4.2 As far as Halton is concerned, it is important to stress that Riverside College is a strong college having recently undergone a ‘good’ Ofsted inspection and has been commended for its financial stewardship. Furthermore, given the unique geography of the borough, there is a strong argument to present that the College serves the needs of a distinct and clearly defined catchment area.

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial or other implications arising from this report

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

6.3 A Healthy Halton

6.4 A Safer Halton

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no risks associated with this report

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no Equality and Diversity issues arising from the report.

**9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.