

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning and Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 20th February 2017

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Enterprise, Communities and Resources

SUBJECT: Update on Economic Growth Activity

WARD(S): Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on work being undertaken by the Council's Business Improvement and Growth Team to support economic growth and prosperity in Halton.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

2.1 It is recommended that Members note progress being made on activities aimed at supporting economic growth in the borough

3.0 REPORT

3.1 Members will recall that in 2014 the Economy, Enterprise and Property Department appointed, for nine months, a Masters student from the University of Chester to undertake a Halton Business Survey. The student also carried out a desk top evaluation of previous regeneration activity in order to better measure the economic impact of the interventions and ensure that future resources were deployed to maximum benefit.

The Chair of this PPB has requested a progress report on this work and how the department is contributing to growing the borough's economy.

3.2 Unfortunately, owing to budget pressures, the Economy, Enterprise and Property Department was unable to retain the student for a longer period. This meant that the student was asked to focus primarily on developing a Business Attractiveness Model for the borough. This work was completed and the findings were presented to the Board in March 2015.

Understandably, given time pressures, the student could only undertake a 'high-level' business survey to determine the views of property developers, investors and commercial property agents about their perceptions of the attractiveness and obstacles to inward investment in Halton.

3.3 Whilst the results from the survey were mixed and the size of the sample made it difficult to validate the information received, the survey was extremely

useful in presenting some pointers for how Halton's support to businesses could be further enhanced.

- 3.4 At the time, most responses complimented the Council on its Account Manager approach to supporting businesses, i.e. businesses can expect to have one officer contact point to handle any support requirements.
- 3.5 Areas of improvement related to how the Council might raise the profile of its services. However, there needed to be a balance between managing expectations against the limited resources the Council has available.
- 3.6 There were also recommendations made in respect of how the Borough promotes its assets and opportunities.
- 3.7 It is helpful to note that these recommendations and areas for improvement have been taken forward. Some of the interventions were outlined in an update report to the Board in November 2015, but more recent developments are outlined in the interventions and activities below:

1. 'This is Halton 'Living Brochure

- A brochure entitled 'This is Halton. An Essential Guide to Working and Living in Halton' has recently been produced (January 2017).
- The brochure is aimed at key decision makers within potential inward investing companies and key workers who are considering relocating to Halton. It is not, therefore, a traditional inward investment brochure. However, it is being used to support the wider City Region inward investment message.
- The brochure contains information about housing, schools, educational attainment, communication links, health and wellbeing and leisure opportunities in Halton.

A copy of the document will be made available for PPB Members.

2. Liverpool City Region Inward Investment Team Tour

The Business Improvement and Growth Team has been working hard to raise the profile of the borough and what it has to offer. Last month, Twenty members of the 'informal' Liverpool City Region Inward Investment Team were invited to tour Borough's key assets. The tour itinerary comprised:

Time	Location	Purpose
09.20	MB	Meet Municipal Buildings, Widnes
09.30	MB	Presentation Board Room 'key assets, projects and opportunities'
10.00	Catalyst	Mersey Gateway presentation
10.40	Sci-Tech	Campus overview + Tech Space 1 & 2, Hartree, VEC and CTH
12.00	Norton	Lunch and networking with invited audience of

	Priory	businesses
13.00	Heath	Tour
14.00	3MG	3MG tour + drive by of Alstom site and Liberty Park
15.00	Various	Return to Municipal Buildings & Debrief
15.30	MB	End

- The purpose of the tour was inform City Region inward investment colleagues about Halton's key assets and opportunities and was universally well received.

3. Business Growth Hub

At its last meeting in November 2016, the Board received a report and accompanying presentation which informed Members of the development, delivery and current performance of the Growth Hub initiative in Halton.

Growth Hubs are a Government initiative intended to provide clarity, consistency and simplification across the business support agenda; increase migration business support from the public to the private sector and provide gateway support that was information, guidance and brokerage to the business community.

The Growth Hub Coordinator is based in the Council's Business Improvement and Growth Team.

4. Evolutive Data Management System

Evolutive is widely used in Economic Development, Business Support and Inward Investment organisations throughout the UK.

It is the leading cloud based CRM software system for enquiry management, business support, funding and grant management, property/land recording and marketing.

Halton was the first Local Authority in the Liverpool City Region to adopt the system and after a lengthy period, it is now being rolled out to other City Region partners.

Put simply, it allows the Business Improvement and Growth Team to track capture and monitor any transactions or interface the team and other partners will have with businesses in Halton, thereby hopefully ensuring that any support we provide to companies adds value and is relevant to their needs.

5. Local Economic Assessment

Work is focusing on developing a more 'forward looking' local economic assessment. Previous Assessments have reported on retrospective data and have provided a quantitative analysis of the borough's economic indicators.

The new approach will be used to create the vision for the future for the borough

by considering how future trends will shape and inform the borough's economic priorities.

A future report will be provided to this Board.

6. Miscellaneous

Members receive regular updates on the externally funded Business Support projects being managed by Halton Borough Council. Further details are provided in this quarter's performance monitoring report.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Despite ongoing challenges, the borough has seen an improvement in its economy in recent years. This is evidenced by the fact that Halton is home to 3,430 active businesses and several globally significant companies. It is well placed economically with a strong business base in a number of growth sectors. Average earnings of Halton residents have increased by 11.1% over the last 5 years and the number of people out of work has fallen by 32.6% over the same period. (Out of Work Benefit Claimants, DWP, 2011-16).

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no further implications arising from this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

Economic growth is a key priority for both the Council However, if we are to ensure that the benefits of economic growth reach everybody then making economic inclusion part of our business support and local growth strategies is essential.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are no anticipated risks arising from this report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
'This Is Halton'	5 th Floor Municipal Building	Tim Leather