

ANNUAL REPORT
EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING, SKILLS AND COMMUNITY
POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD
APRIL 2016 – MARCH 2017

INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR, COUNCILLOR ANDREW MACMANUS

At the bi-annual review of the composition of the board I was appointed as Chair and Councillor Sue Edge as the Vice Chair. Four members of the board left and were replaced. I would like to thank the outgoing councillors for their many years of service to the board and thank Sue for her 6 years service as Chair.

At the start of the year an induction programme was arranged for the new members to the board.

Administratively there were 2 changes. Members are invited to have an input in the agenda setting process and the agenda is now arranged under the themes aligned with the board's responsibilities.

The Board is assisted in its scrutiny role by the hard work and support of Member Services and the officers who supply the reports that enable the Board to carry out its duty effectively. I am particularly grateful for the support given to me by the lead officers Wesley Rourke and Chris Patino.

I would like to thank members for their active contributions to the meetings and their participation in the topic group.

The Borough continues to work increasingly as part of the Liverpool City Region in the employment and investment areas. Increasingly the Board's work is scrutinising this relationship and how Halton fits in to LCR plans.

The main issue affecting the Board's future work will be the impact of Brexit. The possibility of looking at this in a topic group was considered but it was decided that more information would be needed for this to be of value.

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2016/17 the Board comprised eleven councillors – Councillors A MacManus (Chair), S Edge (Vice Chair), L Cassidy, G Logan, C Plumpton-Walsh, S Baker, June Roberts, Joan Lowe, P Wallace, J Gerrard and C Rowe (opposition party representative).

The responsibilities of the Board are defined in the Council's constitution as:

Corporate Policies/Responsibilities:

- Arts and Cultural Policy
- Sports Strategy
- Adult Learning and Skills Enhancement
- Tackling worklessness and improving access to employment
- Employment, learning and skills aspects of the Sustainable Community Strategy and

- Corporate Plan
- Voluntary Sector

Functions:

- Library Services
- Culture and Leisure Services
- Enterprise and Employment
- Adult Learning and Skills

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The Board met 4 times during 2016/17. The main activities are detailed below. In addition the Board considered relevant Executive Board decisions, agreeing the departments' service plans and monitoring their general activities and performance against them.

Employment Theme:

Apprenticeships: A report gave an update on the Council's position on the apprenticeship policy framework, the apprenticeship levy and the public sector target.

A uniform approach to hiring by the Council has been developed. At the time of the report 13 apprentices had been hired and a further 9 were to be recruited.

Work Programme Contract: The Board received a report which provided an overview of the Department for Work and Pensions Work Programme contract currently being delivered by Halton People Into Jobs. This included achievements to date, income and expenditure and future strategy. The Programme is halfway through its 6 year delivery plan. Members noted the key successes of the Programme. Any financial benefit from the Programme was put back into the service.

Liverpool City Region Single Growth Strategy: A report gave an overview.

It was written to enable the LCR to realise its ambitions for economic growth over the next 25 years. The document explained how the Strategy for Growth encompassed the entire city region and acknowledged the unique strengths and assets of each of the region's local authority areas recognising that they were stronger together.

Members were advised that the Strategy aimed to capitalise on the city region's strengths. The focus of the strategy was economic growth. However, it acknowledged that economic growth was not in itself an end. It was rather the key factor in ensuring that all LCR residents had the opportunity for a decent quality of life for themselves and for future generations. It was noted that a Single Investment Fund had been established to fund the delivery of the LCR Growth Strategy and that over the next five years that would invest over £460 million.

Learning Theme:

Daresbury Open Days: The Board received a presentation from the Public Engagement Manger at the Science and Technology Facilities Council entitled '*Daresbury Open Days*'. During the planning stage all schools in Halton had been contacted regarding the event offering them the opportunity to participate. Many took up the offer.

Area Based Target Review: A report gave an update on Further Education in the Liverpool City Region. This is part of the national reforms to Post 16 education.

It was reported that the review process would identify the current position and priorities for skills in the LCR. Further it would 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. These would cover both infrastructure or curriculum changes.

Members discussed the report and the potential risks to Riverside College.

These outcomes would be the starting point for the future devolution of the Adult Education Budget from 2018-19 and would provide the cornerstone to the LCR's aspirations for the devolution of further education and skills responsibilities.

Members commented that they had concerns regarding the individual needs of each area of the LCR; and that there would be differentials that would need to be made between the Wards within Halton, which were all very different. In response, officers reassured members that the Area Based Review would provide opportunities for Halton to participate in dialogue regarding the uniqueness of the Borough, where points such as this would be considered.

Adult Learning: It was noted that in line with a national 24% Skills Funding Agency funding reduction the 2015-16 provision had been reduced. The main qualification delivery focused on priority areas such as maths, English, employability, ICT and childcare. Members were advised that established curriculum areas which produced good quality outcomes for learners with lower skills still remained, such as Family Learning.

Members were advised that the Mental Health Programme was nearing its Year 1 end with 85 learners taking part. Officers would advise if they had been selected to continue into Year 2 once the analysis of data had taken place.

Investment and Economy:

Local Economic Assessment – 2016: Members were advised that the Local Economic Assessment (LEA) was a key evidence base for the Borough of Halton, providing an accurate picture of the economic performance. The LEA looked to link in with the strategic priorities of the LCR and would be key in providing supporting evidence for funding programmes.

Members were requested to consider whether the intelligence gathered through the LEA should be utilised when formulating the key strategic documents of the Council; and whether an accompanying document to the assessment should be developed (Local Economic Assessment Dashboard).

Business Growth Hub Initiative: The Board received a report and accompanying presentation which informed of the development, delivery and current performance of this initiative. It was launched in May 2016 in partnership with the Halton Chamber of Commerce.

The report explained that the creation of Growth Hubs was a Government initiative intended to provide clarity, consistency and simplification across the business support agenda. They are the interface between the business community and business support providers. The report went on to discuss the LCR Growth Hub and Halton's approach to a local growth hub.

Council's Business Improvement and Growth Team: A report provided an update on work being undertaken by the team to support economic growth and prosperity in Halton. A Halton Business Survey was commissioned. The scope of the survey was explained in the report and although the results from the survey were mixed, it was noted that it was

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

Members were advised that those recommendations and areas for improvement had been taken forward. More recent developments were outlined in the interventions and activities which were discussed in the report.

Review of the impact of current and future policies. The Board received a report at the end of the council year which provided a review and summary of the economic and regeneration strategies and interventions that were published by central government and regional agencies. It also provided commentary on a range of local strategies from Halton based organisations, including the Council.

The report considered how these might influence aspects of the Council's future service delivery in respect of economic development and regeneration.

Sport Theme:

Annual Report for 2015-16: The Board received a presentation from the Council's Sport and Recreation Manager. Members were advised that the Sport and Recreation Team had worked in partnership with a range of stakeholders and had made considerable progress, with a number of impacts and achievements. The team was structured to reflect the priorities set out within the Halton Sports Strategy and illustrated how sport continued to enrich the lives of people living and working in Halton.

It was noted that the service actively worked with partner organisations in order to facilitate development through a better understanding of the local issues and a sharing of resources. Without this much of the work highlighted within the report would not have been possible.

Library Theme:

The delivery of the 'Library Strategy 2013 – 2016' was reviewed through the quarterly Performance Reports.

Annual Report 2015 – 16: The Board received a presentation on the Library Service activity over the last 12 months which had focussed on increasing usage of the service across the community. Members were advised of activities which had supported the delivery of the Library Service Strategy.

Community Theme:

Annual Report 2015 – 16: The report explained that Community Development supported the creation, development and sustainability of independent local community groups, which in turn generated the capacity for effective and inclusive community engagement with Council departments and services. This enabled the delivery on many hundreds of community initiatives to tackle strategic objectives and community needs.

It was reported that the Community Development service also administered grants for Starter, Community Development and Voluntary Youth grants.

Updates were also provided in the report on the Big Local initiative on Windmill Hill, the Your Life Your Community event, the Armed Forces Covenant, and the strategic approach to community engagement in Halton at partnership level.

Brindley Theatre: The Board received a presentation from the Brindley Arts and Events Manager which outlined the recent successes and future priorities for the theatre.

The presentation outlined the recent structural improvements to the building and made reference to operational improvements such as staff restructuring and a new website. He advised that the theatre had undergone a rebranding of the name and logo, brochure format styles and advertising templates.

Members discussed the income generation aspect of the theatre and welcomed the improvement in the finances so far for 2016-17.

Topic Group:

It was noted that the LCR Combined Authority was developing a collaborative city region approach to culture following the City Region Devolution Deal in November 2015.

A report advised of the 'Creative Conversion Group' that was created in February 2016 and provided details of the joint action plan that had been developed producing nine key areas, which were detailed in the report.

After discussion of options members decided to review the cultural offering in Halton in the context of the LCR approach. This will be reported on later in 2017.