

REPORT TO: Employment Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 17th November 2008.

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director of Environment

SUBJECT: City Employment Strategy

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To update the Board on progress made by the Liverpool City Employment Strategy partnership.

2. RECOMMENDED: That

2.1 **The Board gives consideration as to the progress made on the Liverpool City Employment Strategy.**

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

3.1 The City Employment Strategy (CES) concept as developed by government is that local consortia are formed of public, private and voluntary sectors which will work together to target those wards with the highest levels of worklessness i.e. worklessness above 25% of working age population. In Halton, the Department of Work and Pensions have identified - Windmill Hill, Castlefields, Riverside, Halton Lea, Grange and Kingsway. The six local authorities in Merseyside submitted a joint business plan to the Department of Work and Pensions that was successful and the area is now one of the national pilots.

Recent Progress

3.2 There is general acceptance that the partnership has tended to focus too much on process rather than delivery. To a large extent this has been imposed on the partnership as it has sought additional European Social Fund resources (not available to Halton) with which to implement the delivery plan. With the creation of the formal Board, more direction and drive is starting to be put in place. As a result, a number of key actions are being progressed/implemented including –

- Commissioning of an additional £465,000 of business start up activity.
- Recruitment of a small executive team.
- The North West Development Agency has confirmed £3m of funding to support the programme of which £194,000 is for Halton.
- Pilot advice programme to small and medium size enterprises to help them develop fair recruitment and human resource procedures.
- Development of an on line information system for personal advisers that operates down to ward level so that the information they give people is always up to date.

- Over £10m of additional European Social Fund has been secured.
 - Pilot programme of employment advice in prison prior to release.
 - Potential roll out of parent direct across the area (Halton already has this)
 - Development of a common framework for child poverty activity with a view to potential joint purchasing.
- 3.3 Looking to the future, the potential to expand the CES Board into a full 'Employment and Skills' Board is being explored as part of the sub-region Multi Area Agreement. This would ensure a seamless approach from addressing worklessness through to the higher level skills issues in the area. A key part of this is exploring the potential for joint commissioning arrangements where the local board would pool funding from local authorities, learning and skills council and department of work and pensions. Such a co-ordinated arrangement would remove duplication from the system and could produce improved outcomes.

Issues and Next Steps

- 3.4 The Board is yet to decide on how to fully engage the private sector. This programme is configured around meeting business need but private sector representation on the Board is very light. Part of this is tied up with wider private sector involvement in the sub regional governance arrangements.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Being part of a city region consortium City will help the Council and the LSP achieve targets within the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan, most notably under the Employment, Learning and Skills Theme.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 No other implications.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES.

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton.

Young people that are not in employment, education or training are a key target group within the CES strategy.

6.2 Employment Learning and Skills in Halton

The CES will increasingly enable joint working across the 6 local authorities all aimed at reducing worklessness and unemployment. A key element of this will be the agreement of best practice provision across the area.

6.3 A Healthy Halton.

Supporting people who are on incapacity benefits back into work is a key action within the CES. As such, the Board at its first meeting agreed to extend membership to cover health. Discussions are to take place with the Strategic Health Authority and the Merseyside Health Commission.

6.4 A safer Halton

No implications identified at this time

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Whilst the CES seeks to enable workless/unemployed people into work, the urban renewal work that is underway in Halton (and elsewhere in the partnership area) is critical in attracting business and jobs to the area. Increasing the number of jobs is a fundamental activity that must take place if the CES is to succeed.

7. RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 There are a number of risks associated with this programme, but they are considered acceptable and manageable at this time. The key risks are
- Potential delays in finalising any enabling measures that are allowed

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 Equality and diversity are key aspects in the CES plan with a number of key groups being identified for priority actions.

9. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT

- 9.1 None under the meaning of the Act.