

REPORT TO: Executive Board Sub Committee

DATE: 15 January 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Environment

SUBJECT: Joint Working with the Learning and Skills Council – (National dissemination post 16 transport information)

WARDS: Borough-Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Executive Board Sub Committee of joint work currently being undertaken by the Environment Directorate in partnership with the national Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to disseminate and develop best practice nationally, in terms of post 16 education transport provision for learners.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) the decision of the Operational Director (Highways, Transportation and Logistics) to enter into a contract with the Learning and Skills Council to disseminate good practice on post 16 education transport provision be supported; and**
- (2) the programme of ongoing partnership working with the Learning and Skills Council be endorsed.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 As Members will be aware, Halton Borough Council recently received Beacon Council status for the work it is doing to improve accessibility by transport for local residents to a wide range of everyday facilities (including post 16 education, training and work based learning facilities.)

3.2 Halton Borough Council has been identified by the LSC as an Authority which has fostered an effective multi-agency partnership to deliver transport services for post 16 learners, having delivered a range of improvements locally including:-

- Discounted public transport tickets for learners;
- Independent Travel Training for vulnerable young people;
- A wide range of accessible travel information (through the Council's Neighbourhood Travel Team); and
- An accessible 'door to door' transport service for learners with mobility difficulties

Some of this work is funded by a Transport Partnership Grant payable to Halton Borough Council from the LSC (currently £34,000 in 2008/9).

3.3 Building on this success, in 2007 the national Learning and Skills Council approached Halton Borough Council with a request that the Authority jointly work with the LSC to disseminate 'best practice' on post 16 learner transport nationally. This was the result of the LSC having identified a strategic 'gap' nationally in terms of information on how local authorities are providing effective transport for young learners above the statutory school leaving age of 16 years.

3.4 During 2008/9, the LSC has agreed to the payment of an additional £25,000 to enable Halton Borough Council to assist it deliver the following dissemination activities at a national level:-

- Managing and developing a web based form , producing regular quarterly reports and updates to the LSC on levels of usage by local authorities;
- Assist the national LSC in collecting information from other local authorities on how post 16 transport arrangements are delivered;
- Arranging nine regional partnership conferences to disseminate best practice; and
- Create / participate in the development of a 'critical friends' network to support the LSC in developing national post 16 transport policy.

3.5 Further details of the above initiatives are shown in Appendix One. This work is being currently co-ordinated using existing staff resources within the Transport Co-ordination Section (Environment Directorate),

3.6 The above work is progressing well, with final preparations being made to jointly host with the LSC a series of nine regional conferences in March 2009. This should provide Halton and other local authorities a unique opportunity to appraise local post 16 learner transport policies and provision against emerging 'best practice' nationally.

3.6 Issues of particular interest currently include:

- Funding arrangements for post 16 learner transport following the planned re-organisation of the LSC in 2010/11 and the transfer of some of its responsibilities to local authorities;
- Independent Travel Training initiatives and how to 'mainstream' this activity into normal service delivery plans;
- The continued roll out of 14-19 diplomas and the implications for participating learners of their transport / access requirements; and
- Discounted learner travel passes.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct policy implications arising from this proposal.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Halton Borough Council has recently attained Beacon Council status in recognition for the innovative work it has been involved in to improve accessibility for socially excluded communities. This proposal seeks to build upon the solid platform of improvements already delivered.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

This proposal will help the Council and its local partners to gain access to more information on emerging best practice in terms of improving accessibility for young people accessing education, training and work based learning facilities. This work will help inform the ongoing development of the Halton Local Transport Plan and its associated transport improvement programme.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

As (6.1) above

6.3 A Healthy Halton

By assisting the LSC disseminate 'best practice' in terms of sustainable travel for young people, it is hoped that Halton BC can also benefit in terms of developing accessible, affordable and easy to use sustainable transport provision within the Borough. This will in turn help to promote healthier lifestyles.

6.4 A Safer Halton

No direct implications arising from this report.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

No direct implications arising from this report.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

The Council is required to enter into a contract with the LSC to provide a range of information services. The main risk associated with signing the contract is that key staff could leave the Authority making it difficult to meet key commitments. To mitigate this happening a number of key staff are involved to ensure we provide a good continuity of service to the LSC.

8.0 QUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

This proposal will directly contribute to the attainment of the Council's objectives to promote equality and diversity within the Borough. Of particular pertinence is the focus on reducing the number of young people who are classed as NEET (Not in employment, education and training).

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Halton BC Sustainable School Travel Policy 2008/9	http://www2.halton.gov.uk/publictransport/pdfs/schooltravelpolicy2008-2009.pdf	David Hall Tel 0151 4717514

Appendix One

Details of the joint partnership work being undertaken by Halton Borough Council and the national Learning and Skills Council regarding post 16 learners transport provision.

1. Managing and developing web-based forum, producing monthly reports and updates.

- Monitoring the numbers of people signed up to the site and which organisations they represent. Ensuring all members logins are 'activated', creating and approving log-ins for new members, removing logins for people who have left their roles and signing up their replacements.
- Adding news and best practice to the website. Ensuring LSC news is posted on the site first and encouraging members to access news via the website. Aim to produce at least 1 article of news/best practice per month.
- Encouraging use of the website and forum via monthly mailouts and contact with members.
- Working towards ensuring all Local Authorities are represented. Identify all Local Authorities, which are represented and contact those which are not – identify the appropriate individual and sign them up.
- Producing monthly reports on members and usage of the site and sending reports each month to LSC.

2. Arranging nine Regional Partnership Conferences.

- Work to ensure local authorities and their partners and other key stakeholders, in each region, have the opportunity to come together and network. Work in conjunction with the LSC to identify the best location/venue for 9 regional half day conferences in each LSC region. Arrange logistics of the events, booking venues, inviting relevant delegates; identify and engage suitable transport partnerships in each region to present slot to others on good practice in use of transport partnership funds. All 9 events to take place in March 2009.

3. Creation of a 'critical friends' network.

- Create a critical friends network of interested stakeholders in conjunction with LSC. Via mailouts advertise opportunities to comment on LSC guidance and opportunities to be part of the 'critical friends' network. Continue to mailout to the 'critical friends' with requests for feedback, on behalf of the LSC. (Ongoing.)

4. Additional role

- Maintain links with the 14-19 Rural Access to Learning group, advertising their work via the website and attending meetings as necessary.