

Cllr. Jones
Chairman



ANNUAL REPORT

EMPLOYMENT LEARNING AND SKILLS

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

APRIL 2008 – MARCH 2009

“ This has been a very busy and productive year for the Employment Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board and I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Board members for all the work they have undertaken. The Board undertook a very challenging programme of monitoring, scrutiny, visits and policy development. I believe it is making a substantial contribution to improving the way the council and its partners work together and particularly note the increasingly close relationship with the Employment Learning and Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership, whose meetings I attend on behalf of this Board”.

Councillor Eddie Jones, Chairman Employment Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2006/07 the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors Eddie Jones, Frank Fraser, Dave Austin, Marjorie Bradshaw, Susan Edge, David Findon, Harry Howard, Stan Parker, John Stockton, Christopher Rowe and Philip Worrall.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to the Culture and Leisure Services and the Economic Regeneration Departments. The primary functions are to focus on the work of the Council (and its partners) in seeking to improve economic prosperity, to further develop culture and community cohesion, to improve the skills and employment prospects of its residents, and to scrutinise progress against the Corporate Plan in relation to the Employment, Learning and Skills priority

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met 5 times during the year, and set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during the year.

Community Cohesion

The Board received an update on community cohesion matters and considered a range of performance indicators that could be used to measure progress.

Local Area Agreement

The Board considered the progress made on the Local Area Agreement (LAA), particularly in relation to targets for employment, skills and enterprise development.

Employment Learning and Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership (SSP)

The Chairman of this Board is a member of both the Employment Learning and Skills SSP and its Performance Sub Group. It was agreed to further develop the relationship between the two Boards that the SSP minutes would be regularly considered at PPB meetings.

Community Development

The Board received an annual report on **Community Development** service (2007-08) that directly supported 90 community organisations involving 2,084 active volunteers (increase of 945 from the previous year).

The Board received an annual report on **Community Centres** scrutinising capacity usage of the Council's five facilities by members of the public, other Council departments and partner agencies.

The Board received an annual report on impact of **Voluntary Sector Core Grant** funding for 2007-08 and considered the mid-year performance for 2008-09. It also considered a report on the criteria and assessment process for accessing community grants.

Libraries

The Board considered a number of reports on Libraries in Halton. This included a presentation on the investment in Halton Lea Library, an update on the Big Lottery CORE (Community Opportunities through Reading and Engagement) programme, and the progress being made on delivery of the mobile library services.

Arts Policy and Public Art

The Board also considered the development of an Arts Policy and considered the relationship between arts development work and the Council's wider corporate strategy. The Board also considered the draft Public Arts Strategy including the development of a new part time post (externally funded) that would help to kick start public art across the Borough.

Skills

The Board established a joint topic group with the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board to examine how to maximise the opportunities resulting from the investments in the logistics and distribution sector, most notably at 3MG. It also received a detailed report on progress on the Daresbury Science and Innovation Campus and considered a progress report on implementation of the skills action plan. The Board also considered the findings of a large scale survey of local businesses that sought to identify business skill needs. This was referred to the new Scrutiny Panel that was established to identify existing and future skill needs.

Employment

The Board considered the findings of research that sought to identify why certain parts of the Borough has persistently high levels of worklessness. This detailed report summarised a number of group sessions with workless and recently employed people and identified a number of key issues. The report was referred onto the Barriers to Work Scrutiny Panel for detailed consideration. It also reviewed the progress made on the Liverpool City Region Employment Strategy.

Procurement

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director Environment which detailed the recommendations of the Policy Board's Scrutiny Panel regarding the Council's Procurement Policy and its role in developing local employment opportunities.

Service Plans

The Board considered issues that should be fed into the service planning process and examined the draft service plans for Culture and Leisure Services and Economic Regeneration Departments.

Sport

The Board gave consideration to a report regarding how Halton is responding to the opportunities offered by the Olympic Games including; sports development grant scheme, elite performers and free pitch hire for junior sports clubs.

Enterprise

The Board reviewed progress on the Enterprise Action plan and considered the opportunities open to Halton through the new North West Development Agency enterprise programme.

Free Swimming

The Board considered a report regarding the government initiative to provide free swimming to all those aged over 60 and those under 16 for two years from 1st April 2009. This is part of the government initiative to get two million people more active by 2012.

Child Poverty

The Board considered a report on Child Poverty in Halton. The report explained that whilst good progress had been made in reducing the overall numbers of children living in poverty, the government focus to date has been on those parents/carers that are out of work. However, there are still many children living in poverty who live in working households. Child poverty is a key focus for the Liverpool City Region Employment Strategy and the partnership is developing a common methodology framework for the development of child poverty action plans.

Joint Needs Assessment

The Board considered a report on the first Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Health. It discussed this at length and considered ways in which the activity within Employment learning and Skills can contribute to improving Health in the Borough.

Fairfield High School – All weather pitch

The Board considered a letter from the school regarding the all weather pitch provision at the site and how the existing pitch could be improved.

Mersey Gateway

The Board requested and received a report on the employment opportunities arising from the Mersey Gateway. The Board was keen to identify the range of opportunities (not just construction) that will arise and how apprenticeship, training places and jobs could be secured through the contracting arrangements.

Performance Issues

The Board considered the departmental quarterly monitoring reports through the year. It particularly noted the impact that the recession had on targets relating to inward investment and jobs created/safeguarded. Of real note was the positive impact the changes to the mobile library services which had seen visits increased by 130% and issues by 45%.

Work Programme 2009/10

The Board has decided that during the current municipal year (2009/10) it will complete the reviews of the following areas:

- Logistics – Joint with Urban Renewal
- Barriers to Employment

Additionally, the Board will commence reviews of:

- Workforce & Skills for Science and Technology joint with Urban Renewal
- Financial Inclusion
- Libraries

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work please contact Gary Collins 01928 516100 gary.collins@halton.gov.uk