

Employment, Learning & Skills SSP

Minutes of Executive Group Meeting 16 July 2009

9.00 am, Jobcentre Plus, Runcorn

Present:

Mark Wilson
Garry Collins
Neil Maguire
Mark Grady
Margaret Harper
Eleanor Carter
Claire Tierney
Claire Bradbury
Andy Guile
Hitesh Patel
Cleo Pollard
Colin Billingsley
Siobhan Saunders
Simon Clough

Organisation:

Jobcentre Plus (JCP)
HBC Economic Regeneration
Learning and Skills Council (LSC)
HBC Policy & Partnership
Riverside College Halton
External Funding (HBC)
External Funding (HBC)
YMCA
HVA
CAB
Halton Parents & Carers
Jobcentre Plus
Adult Learning & Skills (HBC)
14-19 Partnership (HBC)

1. Welcome/Apologies

1.1 Mark Wilson welcomed everyone to the meeting and the Group provided introductions.

1.2 Apologies had been received from:

Lisa Driscoll	Policy & Partnership (HBC)
Jane Trevor	Jobcentre Plus
Madeleine Hamadanian	Adult Learning & Skills (HBC)
Gerry Fitzpatrick	Enterprise & Employment (HBC)

2. Previous Minutes & Matters Arising

2.1 The previous Minutes were reviewed and agreed.

2.2 Matters arising were:

Item 7 – Migration Fund

The joint bid across Cheshire, Halton and Warrington, led by Cheshire Fire Service, has been successful in obtaining £476,388.00 for 2009-10 and £470,250.00 provisionally for 2010-11, subject to confirmation in the autumn. Cheshire Fire Service will act as the legal entity of the fund but this Partnership will lead on work in Halton utilising the funding. **EC agreed to keep the group appraised of developments.**

3. Feedback from Performance Review

3.1 MW reported that over 3 days around 15 reviews have been undertaken, providing more scrutiny of the SSP's projects than ever before. The notes from these will be written up and circulated to colleagues to with information on the

total allocation for each project, spend to date and forecasted spend. A brief narrative will also be provided highlighting the positives elements of each project and the issues that were raised. This report will be circulated in the next few weeks and taken to the LSP. **MW/GC to action**

- 3.2 Overall, it was felt to be a positive process, although some issues were raised that need to be ironed out. The reviews have, however, given a clearer indication of where underspend can be redistributed.
- 3.3 GC noted that confirmation is needed on whether underspends in year 1 of 2 year programmes will be kept by the partnership to be available in year 2 or taken back by the LSP. **GC to action**
- 3.4 Further discussion is needed in order to ensure this review process can be married into the regular monitoring and scrutiny of quarterly monitoring forms.

4. 2008/09 Final Report and Progress on SLAs

- 4.1 GC reminded colleagues that Service Level Agreement (SLA) forms have now been amended to become 2 year forms and so any programmes that have not submitted a 2 year SLA must do so. **Programme managers to action**
- 4.2 MG reported that 3 SLAs remain outstanding, as follows:
 - *Support to newly unemployed* – there has been agreement that this can be held back. The Board was reminded that this fund was set up to provide money to new recession related projects. It is proposed that any underspend identified as part of the review process be added to this line to create a larger recession fund. A SLA can be submitted at this stage if necessary. **MG to confirm**
 - *Voluntary Sector Sustainability* – this is around NI 7 but it was noted that there is no survey to be undertaken until 2010. Work is ongoing however across the Sector to work together on an action plan in the meantime for a thriving Third Sector. AG believed a signed SLA has been submitted. **MG to confirm whether this has been received**
 - *NEET(not in employment education or training)* – this programme originally came out of the commissioning arrangements last year to fund a specific post to provide a link between businesses and apprentices as part of the NEET reduction Strategy. However, the post has yet to be put in place. Further clarity is needed through Tony Crane. A decision was requested within the next 2 weeks from CYP on whether the post will be filled. If so, the money could be transferred to CYP, who will become the accountable body. Another option is for one of the ELS SSP partners to fill the post. Any underspend will be redistributed by this Partnership. It was noted that the vacant post will already have accrued savings for this financial year. **SC to action**
- 4.3 Discussion took place regarding the £160,000 the LSP is releasing for recession measures. 3 projects have been proposed by the LSP chairs group to utilise this as follows:
 - Recession Information advice and guidance (across the partnership)
 - Funding for small enterprise units through the Urban Renewal SSP

- Safety net of support for new business start-ups to cover the loss of benefits for the first 13 weeks for those from the worst LSOAs

4.4 The Board supported a recommendation that the fund be used for the small enterprises proposal, with safety net funding in place to encourage people to launch new businesses.

5. LAA Progress Report

5.1 GC noted the time lag in data. For example, the latest worklessness data for NI 153 is to August 2008 and so does not account for the worst of the recession. Some targets within the LAA have been frozen in light of the recession.

6. ELS Networking Event

6.1 Colleagues discussed the report circulated with the agenda by LD. The event would have several purposes – networking opportunity, increasing awareness of other projects within the partnership, promoting cross-working, reviewing membership, etc.

6.2 A proposal to have a ‘marketplace’, with speed dating to allow all projects to quickly give information on their work to the rest of the partnership, which could, if appropriate, lead to a review of the priorities within the action plan, amending some but recognising the long-standing work in place progressing towards agreed objectives.

6.3 The idea was approved and it was felt that the event should be mandatory for all projects that receive funding from the SSP. All partners will be asked to also produce a one page summary of their work following the event, including key contacts for further information.

6.4 It was agreed that a small working group should be put together to take these ideas forward. **LD to contact MW to put together group**

7. Future Jobs Fund

7.1 GC noted that the national Fund is looking to create 150,000 jobs, 100,000 for 16-24 year olds and 50,000 for those over 24. Each will be at least 16 hours per week and for at least 6 months, with the focus on ‘green’ jobs and wards where unemployment is 1.5% above the national average – 13 wards in Halton currently fall into this category.

7.2 A bid has been submitted at city-region level for 6000 jobs. In Halton, the proposal is for 120 jobs every 6 months. Announcements on the successful bids will be made on July 29th, with the programme due to start in October. More guidance is expected in the meantime. All information will be circulated to colleagues when received. It is thought that the scrutiny of the bids will be focused on the benefits that they will bring to the area, the proportion of ‘green’ jobs, sustainability, etc

7.3 If successful with the bid, jobs will be advertised through JCP. It is hoped that many of the jobs created will be at least 12 month posts but the funding only lasts for 6.

8. Construction Employment Integrator Update

8.1 SS noted that a similar report to that provided with the agenda had recently been presented to the Council Management Team to look to bring together the major construction projects in Halton. From the approval received for the proposal a workshop has been arranged for July 30th to look at ways companies can work in partnership on projects and devise protocols on the percentage of jobs to direct towards local unemployed people in Halton's most deprived wards, as well as looking at training, workforce development, etc. **SS agreed to bring regular updates back to the partnership** and noted that partners may be contacted for information in relation to the workshop.

9. 3MG and Inward Investment Update

- 9.1 SS reported that following the last meeting the 3MG recruitment team was in place and marketing set to be rolled out once the announcement was made by 'customer number 1' that it would be creating initially 600 jobs in a warehousing and distribution centre from October. However, the announcement has been delayed.
- 9.2 It is understood that Stobart will announce in 2 weeks 150 jobs from October and this partnership to lead on recruitment. If this does happen it is hoped that it will lead to a snowball effect and announcements from 'customer number 1' and 'customer number 1a'.
- 9.3 The Skills Sub Group meeting next week will look to progress this. Once announced this will become the number one priority for all partners. Plans will now be put into place for the offer of pre-recruitment training for these jobs, whether the posts are from October or next year.

10. Response to the Economic Downturn

10.1 Covered through earlier discussions

11. Sub Group Reports

11.1 Enterprise

- Report circulated at the meeting
- NWDA Local Enterprise Programme (LEP) for business start-ups – in tranche 2 local authorities have been given the opportunity to coordinate LEPs. In Halton, the Enterprise Team will manage these on the LA's behalf. The contract is worth £180k, with a proviso of a local contribution – Halton already spent £40k in this area and it has been agreed that this should be Halton's contribution. It was noted that this money can only be used for advice, not grants.

11.2 Employment

- Report circulated, including this week's latest unemployment data.
- Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) has stabilised in Halton over the past 3 months but it is still too early to confirm this trend.
- The annual June-June JSA increase in Halton was 86%, in Widnes it was 110%. It was noted that these percentages will gradually fall as the rises over the past 12 months take effect in future figures.
- A Local Employer Partnership agreement has been signed by Halton Housing Trust.
- The sub group asked the board for a steer on the following three areas

- School leaver situation over the upcoming months be looked at
- Developing a financial inclusion strategy – it was reported that the ELS Scrutiny Board will look at developing a strategy and action plan. SS is the officer leading on this with the Scrutiny Board, which will meet with SSP colleagues to look at this. Financial champions from Lancashire County Council that are looking at this work in other areas will also be involved.
- Giving provider organisations more input into SSP discussions – this will be looked at during the Networking Event (see item 6).
- **CB agreed** to report at the next meeting on ‘better off’ calculations in respect of current and future national policy, as well as the future policy implications for lone parents. This was because there were some concerns that some of these were not accurate.

11.3 Skills

- Report circulated with agenda and papers
- Work Solutions made a presentation to the last sub group meeting.
- Discussions took place around redundancy issues and support, 3MG, Construction Employment Integrator Model, science sector, the updated economic development strategy and YMCA (detail of these contained within report).
- The next business perceptions survey is due this year and the sub group will look at which questions from the previous survey should be used this time. The suggestions will be circulated to colleagues on the SSP and other sub groups for comment and the sub group will keep the SSP informed of progress with the survey following this.

12. Date, Time and Venue of Next Meeting

Thursday September 24th, 9:30am, Runcorn JCP