

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

*At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board
Wednesday, 14 June 2006 Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Jones (Chairman), Fraser (Vice-Chairman), E. Cargill, Edge, Findon, M Hodgkinson, Parker, Lewis, Nolan and Stockton

Apologies for Absence: Councillor M Ratcliffe

Absence declared on Council business: (none)

Officers present: G. Collins, I. Grady, A. Villiers and L. Cairns

Also in attendance: Councillor Wright (in accordance with Standing Order 33)

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

ELS1 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was noted that no questions had been received.

ELS2 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Board considered the minutes relating to the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy & Performance Board which had been considered by the Executive Board and Executive Board Sub-Committee since 9th February 2006.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.

ELS3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy outlining the terms of reference of the newly formed Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board.

It was noted that a number of changes had been made to the Council's decision-making structure at Annual Council on 19th May 2006 in order to bring the Policy and Performance Boards into line with the Council's Strategic

Priorities as contained within the Corporate and Community Plans.

The Operational Director – Cultural Services and the Operational Director – Economic Regeneration outlined key issues within their areas that would require consideration by the Board during the year. These included:

- the Catalyst and Norton Priory Partnership;
- maximising the Benefits of the Olympics;
- opening hours of libraries;
- “City Employment Strategies”;
- adult learning and the Borough’s colleges; and
- the Local Area Agreement.

The Board considered the requirements of a “City Employment Strategy” for which it was advised that clear guidance was still awaited. It was noted that the Department of Work and Pensions required Councils to focus on deprived wards of which six had been identified in Halton. Concerns were expressed that this would be an issue in respect of worklessness also present in other parts of the Borough.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the terms of reference be noted; and
- (2) reports be submitted to the next meeting of the Board regarding the City Employment Strategy and the Local Area Agreement.

Strategic
Directors -
Environment and
Corporate and
Policy

ELS4 ANNUAL REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community outlining draft Annual Reports of the activities of the Life Chances and Employment Policy and Performance Board (PPB) and the Prosperity and Equality PPB during the 2005/06 Municipal Year.

In respect of the Life Chances and Employment PPB Annual Report it was noted that:

- the Board would continue to monitor the Employment, Enterprise, and Workforce Development Strategies throughout the year;
- the action plan in respect of the Barriers to Learning item was to be signed off and passed to the Children and

Young People PPB; and

- there was a need to include a mention of the very successful Student Games and a reference to the SACRE curriculum.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Life Chances and Employment, and Prosperity and Equality Policy and Performance Board Annual Reports be endorsed for the purpose of their adoption at a forthcoming meeting of the full Council subject to the inclusion of a reference to both the successful Student Games and the SACRE curriculum in the Life Chances and Employment Policy and Performance Board Annual Report; and
- (2) the original reports in respect of the Employment, Enterprise, and Workforce Development Strategies be re-issued to all Members as background information.

Strategic Director,
Health and
Community

Strategic Director,
Environment

ELS5 CORPORATE PLAN - PROGRESS

The Board received a presentation from the Head of Strategic Policy and Partnership, Mr. I. Grady, regarding the Authority's Corporate Plan Objectives, outlining targets for the Employment, Learning and Skills Strategic Priority, identifying key challenges ahead and areas offering most scope for productive overview and scrutiny.

It was noted that three key strategies were in place in respect of Employment, Enterprise and Workforce Development, and the Authority needed to test that these were robust enough to address the issues identified, such as the level of basic skills and the need to foster an entrepreneurial culture.

The Board considered a number of issues including:

- the location of jobs in Halton;
- the money and future associated with knowledge;
- self employment underpinning the economy;
- analysis undertaken identifying the skills gap including information gained from businesses regarding skills shortages;
- work being undertaken with the local Housing Associations in respect of a possible package whereby local people were employed; and
- the need to recognise efforts in the retail industry, the need to support the retail trade, and funding difficulties associated with this.

In respect of funding associated with the retail trade, it was advised that a proposal was to be submitted to the relevant Specialist Strategic Partnership of the Local Strategic Partnership requesting that unallocated Neighbourhood Regional Funding be used to plug this particular gap.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) summaries in respect of analysis work carried out be circulated to the Board for information and a report be submitted to a future meeting outlining the findings of a recent follow up survey to the piece of work carried out by Pylon Economics;
- (2) a report be submitted to a future meeting providing an update on the negotiations being carried out with the local housing associations regarding an employment scheme; and
- (3) a note of acumens be circulated for Members' information.

Strategic Director,
Environment

ELS6 COMMUNITY COHESION IN HALTON

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community providing an outline of cohesion issues in Halton including Council roles, measuring cohesion, the role of various bodies and the need to engage the community.

It was noted that community cohesion had previously been identified as a scrutiny topic for the Prosperity and Equality Policy and Performance Board. Therefore, a Community Cohesion Working Party had been set up to consider the issue and how it might be taken forward to fulfil the Council's responsibilities. As a result of this, a number of objectives had been identified which could be used to produce a Community Cohesion Action Plan.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the outline of cohesion in Halton set out in the report be noted;
- (2) Community Cohesion be included on the work plan as an item for scrutiny and the list of objectives outlined at Annexe B of the report be used as the topic brief; and

Strategic Director,
Health and
Community

- (3) Members interested in joining the working group contact the Chairman. All Members

ELS7 WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment outlining potential areas of scrutiny for the forthcoming year.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the following areas of work be scrutinised in the 2006/7 Municipal Year:
- (a) Adult Learning and Basic Skills – with a separate focus on each of these areas in the terms of reference
 - (b) Halton People into Jobs;
 - (c) Sports Development/Inclusion in Sport; and
 - (d) Community Cohesion;
- (2) the Learning Skills Council be invited to give a presentation to the appropriate topic group; Strategic Director, Environment
- (3) a report be presented to the next meeting of the Board regarding Community Centres in order that the Board may decide whether or not to include this issue as a topic for scrutiny; and Strategic Director, Health and Community
- (4) voluntary sector organisations funded by the Council be invited to give presentations to the Board throughout the year. Strategic Director, Health and Community

(Note: Councillor Findon declared a personal prejudicial interest in respect of one of the possible major areas of activity outlined in the following report as he was the Town Twinning Secretary.)

ELS8 CAPITAL OF CULTURE OF UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community providing an outline programme of activities related to Capital of Culture

activities. It was reported that the list provided was not exhaustive and other opportunities were expected to emerge.

Members noted that the economic benefits of Liverpool's Capital of Culture Celebrations for Halton were being identified and businesses in the area were being encouraged to sign up to the Business Club in order to benefit, particularly at supply chain level. In addition, transport links were being examined in order to assist visitors travelling from Liverpool to Halton's activities, facilities and events.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the outline programme of activities relating to Capital of Culture activity be noted; and
- (2) a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Board outlining economic possibilities and implications.

Strategic Director,
Environment

ELS9 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive outlining the 4th Quarter year-end Performance Management Reports for the following services:

- Student Services and Lifelong Learning;
- Culture and Leisure Services; and
- Economic Regeneration.

The Board considered a number of issues including:

- the fact that financial information was still not available two months after year end; and
- plans to expand libraries.

In respect of financial information, the Board was advised that all outturn budgets were to be reported to the Business Efficiency Board on 30th June 2006.

With regards to libraries, it was confirmed that the replacement library in Runcorn was on hold as this had been subsumed as part of the Urban Splash recommendations. It was noted that capital was an issue in respect of increasing the network; however partnership opportunities were being investigated and the section was also looking to extend its mobile service. Possible use of school and college libraries was being looked at although

there was an issue in respect of where they were located on site and how they could be accessed safely.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the 4th Quarter year end Performance Management Reports be received; and
- (2) the use of Community Centres as part of the outreach library collection be investigated.

Strategic Director,
Health and
Community

Meeting ended at 8.17 p.m.