

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 29 January 2007 in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors Jones (Chairman), Fraser (Vice-Chairman), Edge, Findon, Parker and Stockton

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Hodgkinson, Howard and Lewis

Absence declared on Council business: Councillor (none)

Officers present: L. Derbyshire, H. Cockcroft, G. Collins, N. Goodwin and P. Reilly Cooper

Also in attendance: One Member of the Public

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

ELS31 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th November 2006, having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record.

ELS32 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was noted that no questions had been received.

(NB: Councillor Findon declared a personal interest in the following item of business, due to being the Personnel Treasurer of the Housing Town Twinning Association).

ELS33 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

In respect of Minute No: EXB68 – Local Area Agreements, clarity was sought on the progress that had been made to date.

The Board was advised that the final document had been submitted on time on 20th December 2006. The employment aspect of the agreements had to be updated due to changes in the benchmarking process. The first

formal feedback is expected in the near future.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the minutes be received;
- (2) an update report on the Local Area Agreements be presented to the next meeting of the Board; and
- (3) the comments raised be noted.

Strategic Director
- Environment

ELS34 MID-YEAR MONITORING REPORT FOR VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which outlined the mid year monitoring report for Voluntary Sector Core Funding.

Members considered a variety of issues and noted the following comments:-

- That the six monthly monitoring figures for Halton Talking Newspapers had been omitted from the agenda. It was agreed that these figures would be circulated to Members via email;
- That the increase in Halton District Citizens Advice Bureaux's yearly target of £1m was as a result of more debt being written off; and
- That a key role in the community development function was to help external organisations obtain funding. It was acknowledged that some organisations would require a lot of support in completing documentation in order to obtain such funding. It was also recognised that a simple process for obtaining funding via grants was essential.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report and comments raised be noted; and
- (2) the Authority look at ways of streamlining the process and documentation required for applications for funding.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

ELS35 HALTON HOUSING CONSTRUCTION PARTNERSHIP

The Board considered a report of the Strategic

Director, Environment which briefed the Members on the emerging Halton Housing Construction Partnership (HHCP) and the Recruitment Event which had been arranged by HPIJ that had been held at Halton Stadium on 1st November 2006.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were noted:

- that the Decent Homes Scheme whereby 4000 homes would be renovated over a four year period commencing from late November 2006 only represented the first phase of the renovation;
- concern was raised regarding the maintenance and installation of alley gates and the difficulty residents have in communicating with Halton Housing Trust in order to resolve these problems. It was acknowledged that this matter was within the remit of the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board. However, it was agreed that this matter be discussed and considered at the next Board pre-agenda meeting;
- it was essential that local people be equipped with the skills for jobs being created. A skills demand audit could also be undertaken which would highlight potential gaps in the workforce. This audit would be of benefit to local schools so that future jobs could be identified;
- it was recognised that the first essential step was to ensure people in the area had the necessary skills to obtain the jobs that become available; and
- that the Board place on record a vote of thanks to everyone who had undertaken work on this excellent initiative.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) The Board support the further development of the partnership working arrangement between Halton's Housing Construction Partnership and Halton People into Jobs (HPIJ);
- (2) the future opportunities of the housing construction work be identified via a skills audit and reported back to the Board;

Strategic Director
- Environment

- (3) Halton Housing Trust be urged to use companies with a travelling base within the region;
- (4) The recruitment and training initiatives developed by HPIJ and HHCP when providing jobs should create a balance between age and gender; a
- (5) the Board place on record a vote of thanks to everyone who has undertaken work on this excellent initiative; and
- (6) the progress to date and comments raised be noted.

ELS36 TOPIC GROUPS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment and which asked Members to consider developing a work programme of topics for the Board to examine in 2007/08. The report also requested that Members:-

- Suggest and gather topic ideas on issues relevant to the remit of the Board;
- Develop and prioritise a short list of possible topics for examination in 2007/08, taking into account the Council's agreed selection criteria; and
- Decide on a work programme of two to four topics to be undertaken in the next municipal year.

Arising from the discussion the following comments were noted:

- That the Board had currently four topic groups: Adult Learning - Basic Skills, Halton People into Jobs (HPIJ); Sports Development – Inclusion in Sports and Community Co-hesion; and
- It was acknowledged that the Halton People into Jobs and the Sports Development Topic Groups were near to completion.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report and comments raised be noted; and
- (2) the following topic groups be approved as the work programme for 2007/08:

- (i) Community Co-hesion;
- (ii) Sports Development – Inclusion in Sports;
- (iii) Creating local jobs through Procurement; and
- (iv) Skills: Identifying the needs of businesses.

ELS37 EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS SPECIALIST STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which provided a briefing on the Employment, Learning and Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership (SSP).

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were noted:

- The funding relating to Bulky Bobs was the last payment from the contract that ended March 2006;
- The increase in the funding to WFD had been as a result of the introduction of the introduction of the Business Perceptions Survey;
- The 2007-08 budget figures in the table were provisional. They would be considered by the Performance Monitoring Group in the first instance and then be presented with recommendations to the full Partnership Board: and
- That the Performance Monitoring Group had created three action plans which would look at reducing duplications in the services.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the progress on the development of the Specialist Strategic Partnership be noted; and
- (2) the comments raised be noted.

ELS38 LIBRARY USERS SURVEY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which outlined the findings of the Public Library Users Survey (PLUS) for adults and children which had been undertaken in 2006.

The Board was advised that the results of the survey had identified that overall 97% of users were satisfied with the library service. The Authority had also achieved joint second in the country for satisfaction with the service.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were noted:-

- The benefits of a new library in Runcorn Old Town;
- That the area forums, this cycle, would be receiving a presentation on the review of the mobile library service and the public would be asked for suggestions on new stops and their views on the expansion of the service;
- That access to some areas of the Borough was restricted due to the size of the mobile library vehicle;
- That it had been suggested that the mobile library stop at shopping areas and parks;
- That there was an opportunity to place a bid for lottery funding to re-furbish Halton Lea Library. The deadline for the submission was the end of March 2007;
- The activities undertaken to encourage people into reading i.e. poetry sessions etc which attracted speakers and authors into the area; and
- Halton Literature Festival would commence shortly.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report and comments raised be noted;
- (2) the new library and the attempts to re-furbish Halton Lea Library be supported;
- (3) the expansion and increased access to the service be supported; and
- (4) the Board place on record a vote of thanks to everyone in the library service for their excellent achievements to date.

Meeting ended at 8.25 p.m.