

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING, SKILLS AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 16 September 2013 in The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillors C. Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chairman), Cassidy, Howard, P. Lloyd Jones, Logan, MacManus, Parker, Roberts, Rowe and Zygadllo

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Edge

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: Lynsey Carr, L. Derbyshire, D. Houghton, W Rourke and S. Saunders

Also in attendance: In Accordance with Standing Order 33, Councillor E Jones, Portfolio Holder Economic Development

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

ELS12 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING

The Board was advised that Councillor Carol Plumpton-Walsh would be Chairman for the meeting.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Carol Plumpton Walsh be appointed Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

Councillor C Plumpton Walsh
Vice Chairman of the Board
(in the Chair)

ELS13 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 5 June 2013, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

ELS14 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Board was advised that no public question had been received.

ELS15 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Board considered the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Board relevant to the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Portfolio since the last meeting of the Board.

It was noted that some departments across the Council had offered work experience placements and graduate internships in the past. It was agreed that a breakdown of the placements, where and the types of placements would be circulated to Members of the Board. The Board also noted that a workshop had been undertaken to secure more placements and an update would be given at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the minutes and comment raised be noted.

ELS16 SSP MINUTES

The Board received the minutes of the Employment Learning Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership from 13 May 2013.

The Board noted that the public jobs fair themed 'It Pays to Work', which had been held at St George's Hall, Liverpool on 4 July 2013 had been a huge success and many Halton residents had attended.

It was noted that the SSP minutes on the agenda were not the latest available and clarity was sought on whether the Board could receive draft minutes at future meetings. In response, it was reported that the most recent minutes would be circulated to all Members of the Board.

It was noted that Connexions were leading on awareness raising of apprenticeships in schools in other Authorities and also had contracts in the National Careers Service.

RESOLVED: That the minutes and comments raised be noted.

ELS17 QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORTS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which introduced, through the submission of a structured thematic performance report,

the progress of key performance indicators, milestones and targets relating to health in Quarter 1 of 2013-14. This included a description of factors which were affecting the service.

The following points arose from the discussion:-

- It was noted that Sci-Tech Daresbury had developed a stand alone proposition and clarity was sought on why a joint proposal had not been considered. In response, it was reported that the Authority had worked closely with Sci-Tech Daresbury and because of their specialist nature and the tight timeframe and that they were very well resourced, they had developed a stand alone proposition;
- Page 19 – Clarity was sought on the areas for concern on Raising Skills for life. In response an update was given on the reasons for the issue of concern notice. It was also reported in order to address this issue, the way the programme was delivered had changed to termly rather than yearly. The improvement plan had been accepted and there was no longer an issue;
- Page 21 – The number of starts on the DWP work programme – Clarity was sought on whether this figure would remain low for the remainder of the year. In response, it was reported that there was no specific reason for the low numbers and a 25% contingency had been put in place to deal with this matter;
- Page 23 – Clarity was sought on the number of employees the financial statement represented and it was requested that this information be included in future reports. In response, it was reported that in the Children and Enterprise Department there were 165 full time equivalent employees;
- It was noted that the Board did not receive many reports regarding the Community aspect of their remit. In response, it was reported that future meetings would contain a more balanced agenda to cover all aspects within the Board's remit; and
- Clarity was sought on the current situation regarding the libraries in the Borough. In

response, it was reported that there were no current plans to close any libraries. However, it was highlighted that with the Government budgetary cuts where significant savings had to be found, there was no guarantee that there would be no changes in the future.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments raised be noted.

ELS18 PRESENTATION ON HALTON'S WORK PROGRAMME CONTRACTS

The Board received a presentation from Siobhan Saunders and Lynsey Carr, Employment, Learning and Skills, on the progress regarding Halton's Work Programme Contracts.

The presentation:-

- Set out the background to the work programme;
- Outlined Halton's Work Programme; the delivery, the process and the customer journey;
- Detailed the performance against targets via good news stories;
- Explained Year 1 and Year 2's delivery and the lessons learned; and
- Set out the challenges and opportunities for Years 3 – 5 of the work programme.

The following comments arose from the presentation:-

- It was noted that to date there had been approximately 700 referrals from A4E and 1700 from Ingeus.
- It was noted that an individual's situation, regarding their entitlements, would be assessed in order to ensure that they would not be worse off in employment;
- It was noted that customers accessed the service via Job Centre Plus, which was in the form of an automatic referral after 9 months;
- A member of the Board raised concern at the

suitability of the placements; whether health and safety checks were undertaken and training given to individuals. He indicated that a family member had been injured on a placement and he had been placed in an unsuitable environment. In response it was reported that it would not have been a placement sources by Halton. All Halton work placements had been assessed for their suitability, strict additional guidelines had been given out, the individual would also be assessed, and health and safety procedures had all been checked. In addition, it was reported that a formal complaint could be made through the complaints procedure at the Job Centre. If the placement was via A4E, they should complain directly via their complaints procedure.

- The Portfolio holder, Economic Development, Councillor Jones reported that Halton People into Jobs had been very successful and had achieved excellent outcomes. However, the programme had been replaced by the Government to a contract with private providers. He highlighted that the change represented a huge internal cultural change for employees and he gave credit to Officers who had managed the change, the terms and conditions and the expectations. He reported that the Council had been keen to deliver the new programme in order to retain some of the elements in a contract that the Council valued, to protect employees jobs and to ensure that residents had direct involvement with the clients. In conclusion, he reported that the programme had been successful for two years.
- Concern was raised regarding zero contracts and that some of the jobs were only for 13 or 26 weeks. In response, it was reported that the Authority were not encouraging people to take on agency work, but to obtain permanent employment. In addition, it was reported that it was the payments that were for 13 or 26 weeks not the employment. It was also highlighted that the public sector ethos was to ensure the sustainability of the employment and the Scrutiny Topic Group were also considering this matter;
- It was noted that a contact centre in Sheffield undertook the random allocation to ensure that it was a fair allocation. It was reported that up to

date statistics had been requested on this information.

- Clarity was sought on the funding for a certificate for a customer, if it was required to obtain an interview. In response, it was reported that whether it was funded or not was based on the likelihood of the person obtaining a job from having the certificate. It was also reported that work took place with the customer and a letter was sometimes sent to the employer asking if the certificate was essential and if it was, it would be funded. The Authority also worked with other organisations to enable the individual to obtain the certificate free of charge or undergo training to increase their chances of gaining employment;
- It was noted that when a customer commenced work, an assessment was completed. If it was agency work they would be considered as a high risk and extra support would be provided. The customer would continue to be job matched to ensure that they had an opportunity of long term employment. The customer would indicate how often and how they would like to be contacted and determine how the support would be provided. The minimum contact with a customer would be every four weeks;
- Clarity was sought on the percentage of staff sickness. In response, it was reported, that previously over a six month period there had not been a full capacity of staff at any one time. However, this had greatly improved, the sickness absence had been managed and dealt with and the actual figures would be circulated to Members of the Board for information.
- Clarity was sought on the percentage of customers who achieved employment and whether they were full time or part time. In response, it was reported that part time or full time work was for 30 hours or more, which was a requirement of Job Seekers Allowance. However, it was reported that some customers, preferred part time work initially in order to build up their confidence before commencing full time employment; and
- The Board noted the significant demand on debt

services in the Borough. It was also noted that all available services were considered regarding debt management; A4E undertook staff training and Ingeus put customers on financial training courses.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) The presentation and comments raised be noted; and
- (2) Siobhan Saunders and Lynsey Carr be thanked for their informative presentation.

ELS19 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION ENTERPRISE STRATEGY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which informed Members of the preparations being made to develop an Enterprise Strategy for the Liverpool City Region.

The Board was advised that Partners in the Liverpool City Region (LCR) were developing an Enterprise Strategy to capture and evaluate existing evidence on economic development in Liverpool City Region and the wider economy to inform the design and development of a future enterprise programme. The Enterprise Strategy would contribute to the City Region's submission on ERDF 2014-2020 programmes.

The strategy was being developed so that the LCR was able to develop and deliver a coherent plan of action to tackle the chronic shortage of businesses that would impede economic performance and address the gap of 17,000 business, creating an environment where business were created and grow at a rate above targeted levels.

The Board noted the developments that the strategy would include and the key question that needed to be considered.

It was reported that Members would be kept informed of the development of the Strategy.

In respect of whether there were structural issues that must be addressed before economic potential could be realised, it was noted that earlier reports had highlighted skill shortages; that health statistics were poor in the Borough; the impact debt problems would have on employment and the challenges facing the Authority in local people being able

to embrace the job opportunities.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) The report and comments raised be noted; and
- (2) The draft Strategy be circulated to the Board as it is produced.

ELS20 EMPLOYMENT LEARNING & SKILLS QUARTERLY POLICY UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which informed Members of recent national policy announcements relevant to employment, learning and skills.

The Board was advised that a number of policy, legislation, consultation and guidance documents, had been issued by Government departments and agencies that had varying degrees of relevance to issues on the employment, learning and skills agenda and related topics.

The Board was further advised that the report represented a brief summary of key announcements with observations of local relevance, where appropriate, so that Members could consider whether to initiate a more detailed scrutiny and/or report to a future meeting.

The following points arose from the discussion:-

- In respect of Halton being able to access European Structural Funds via the Liverpool City Region arrangements, it was noted that match funding would need to be identified as part of the process for schemes to commence;
- In respect of the business rates retention scheme, local authorities would be able to come together on a voluntary basis to pool their business rates, to create scope to generate additional growth, clarity was sought on how this would operate. In response, it was reported that there was currently no indication on how this would operate, as it was only an option, giving local authorities the flexibility to consider. However, this discussion was taking place via the Executive Board. In addition, it was reported that the promotion of businesses in the Borough was very specific to re-investment in the Borough. However, there

were opportunities within the Borough and this could be dealt with on a case by case perspective;

- It was noted that in respect of European Funding, the application deadline for the Grundtvig visits/exchange grants was 17 September 2013 and that to date, there had been no applications;
- It was noted that Glasgow University had undertaken a study which showed that there was no evidence of generational poverty. It was reported that the study had been undertaken by several universities around the country to ensure that the information was accurate. It had showed that there were very few second generation families and most single generation families were not workless but had been in and out of numerous jobs for various reasons. It was agreed that the research report would be circulated to all Members of the Board; and
- Clarity was sought on how Erasmus+ (2014-2020) could be accessed and whether there was any projects that could be applied for. In response, it was reported that it was a competitive bidding process to the European Union which was primarily for schools and colleges and was available to the Authority.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments raised be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.40 p.m.