

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS, AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills, and Community Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 25 September 2017 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors MacManus (Chair), S. Baker, Cassidy, Logan, J. Lowe, C. Plumpton Walsh, June Roberts, Wallace and Rowe

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Edge and J. Gerrard

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: W. Rourke, A. Jones, L. Carr and D. Unsworth

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

ELS10 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 26 June 2017 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

ELS11 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

ELS12 NATIONAL & REGIONAL POLICY OVERVIEW

The Board received the recent national policy announcements relevant to the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board.

It was reported that a number of policy, legislation, consultation and guidance documents were 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 information provided was not intended to be in-depth but provided a brief summary of key announcements along with observations of local reliance, where appropriate.

It was suggested that the report should be considered alongside the 'key development' and 'emerging issues' that were set out in the Quarterly Performance Reports and that the documents / projects referred to may provide ideas topics for future agendas.

Members discussed the *Manufacturer Live 2018 Conference* being held in Liverpool for the next three years and how Halton Council was working closely with Sci-Tech Daresbury and other companies to bring delegates out from the Conference to the Borough, for dedicated themed tours.

It was commented that it was important to upskill Halton residents to be able to compete with not only local jobs but also jobs within the Liverpool City Region (LCR).

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ELS13 BUSINESS GROWTH PROGRAMME IN HALTON

The Board received an update on the current performance of the Halton Business Growth Programme.

Members were reminded that the Business Growth Programme within Halton was part of a City Region initiative designed to assist Small to Medium Enterprises to grow and create employment. The Business Growth Programme started in January 2016 and was scheduled to finish December 2018. It provided assistance by commissioning external suppliers to undertake a two stage intervention, as described in the report, with eligible Halton businesses.

The report provided data on targets for company assists and jobs created from the start of the Programme in January 2016 to July 2017 and examples of successes were provided.

In response to Members queries it was noted that the Programme's suppliers were local businesses as well as from places such as Northwich and Liverpool. From the list of disciplines mentioned in stage two, Members welcomed the addition of 'HR Practices and Procedures', which was a crucial element to businesses that were expanding.

RESOLVED: That Members note the activities and performance of the Business Growth Programme and the support available to Small and Medium Enterprises within Halton.

ELS14 ADULT LEARNING UPDATE

The Board received an update on the activity taking place in Adult Learning.

It was reported that funding for Adult Learning was provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency via the Adult Education Budget. Officers advised that funding levels for 2017-18 were of a similar level to 2016-17 and this funding was used to offer a range of accredited and non-accredited learning in a variety of subjects including maths, English, sector specific and general employability skills, ICT, childcare and a small number of leisure type courses such as art, garment making and calligraphy. The courses were currently being delivered from Kingsway Learning Centre in Widnes; Acorn Learning Centre in Runcorn and Halton Lea Library.

The report provided information on the staff who delivered the service; Ofsted inspection comments regarding recruiting learners; the profiles of adults attending learning programmes in 2016-17; and details of adult learning in relation to the Council's priorities.

Following the presentation Members discussed the following:

- With regards to Children and Young People, one of the Council's priorities, one Member queried the correlation between the figures in the Ward breakdown of adults attending learning programmes (3.6) and the Troubled Families initiative; it was agreed that closer links to the Troubled Families was needed and this was discussed;
- It was suggested that courses around assertiveness, confidence building, and self-esteem should be taken by learners prior to academic courses, not after; and
- Adult learning services were advertised through the Council's website; flyers in public places and word of mouth. It was noted that how learners had found out about courses was a question as part of the induction process.

RESOLVED: The Board welcomes the progress made to date in managing an effective adult learning service.

ELS15 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE WORK PROGRAMME

The Board received an overview of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Work Programme contract, currently being delivered by Halton People into Jobs (HPIJ).

It was noted that in June 2011 Halton Borough Council entered into a subcontracting arrangement with two Prime Contractors (Ingeus Deloitte and A4E – now PeoplePlus) who were tasked with delivering the DWP Work Programme over the next 7 years.

Although the Programme was mandatory some voluntary referrals could be made by certain 'customer' groups from Job Centre Plus (JCP) of which there were 10, as explained in paragraph 3.1.2. It was noted that performance was measured against the following Priority Group (PG) customers – PG1, PG2, PG6a and PG6b and that the Programme offered payment by results, which was received on achievement of sustained job outcomes.

The report went on to discuss the Programme's performance and achievements to date, income and expenditure and the new basket of performance measures for all prime contractors and sub-contractors. It also explained the DWP Performance Stretch Targets for 2016-17 and discussed some key successes around these.

Following debate Members were pleased to note:

- the overall performance, quality and compliance standards had continued to improve year on year;
- that the Information Security audit had received a substantial rating;
- that financially, income was 26% over expenditure;
- some customers did have mental health issues and staff were working with them by encouraging them to engage in the Programme and helping with their readiness for work; and
- although all referrals to the Programme ceased in 31 March 2017, those customers on the Programme would be supported up to 31 March 2019.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ELS16 LOCAL ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

The Policy and Performance Board received a report presenting Halton's current economic profile and were updated on proposals to develop a more in-depth economic

assessment in line with future trends and economic forecast models.

The Board was referred to the current economic profile at Appendix 1 and were advised that the intention was to produce a more in-depth assessment to provide an evidence base for 'Halton Tomorrow'.

Halton Tomorrow would be a vision for how Halton's economy would look in the future and would set out future challenges and say how the Borough might respond to these challenges. The assessment would be based on information specific to Halton and it was proposed to include new data that had not been analysed previously. Members were advised that the following categories would be included in the assessment and the report provided further details on these:

- The economic overview;
- Enterprise and jobs;
- The resident population;
- Skills;
- Land, infrastructure and transport; and
- Future prospects, Halton tomorrow.

It was noted that the document would be finalised in time for implementation during 2018.

Members made the following comments following the officer's presentation of the item:

- The number of people in employment was forecast to increase as the pension age rose. This would result in fewer jobs and to add to this, many retirees find they have to continue working past pension age for financial reasons;
- High paid jobs seemed to go to people outside of the Borough;
- Lower level NVQ's were not being encouraged and some Members had received complaints that sciences were not being taught in some Halton schools; and
- It would be interesting to know what happens to the bridge employees once the project is finished.

RESOLVED: That the Board receives the update.

Meeting ended at 8.10 p.m.