

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING, SKILLS AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 8 June 2011 in the Conference Room 2, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Edge (Chairman), P. Lloyd Jones (Vice-Chairman), Carlin, Horabin, Howard, Macmanus, Parker, C. Plumpton Walsh and Roberts

Apologies for Absence: Councillor G.Zygadlo

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: L. Derbyshire, T. Gibbs, T. Leather, C Pool and W Rourke

Also in attendance: In accordance with Standing Order 33, Councillor Jones Portfolio Holder – Economic Development.

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

ELS1 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 7 March 2011, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

ELS2 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

Note: (Councillor P Lloyd Jones declared a Personal Interest in the following items of business as a non Executive Director of Halton and St Helens Primary Care Trust).

ELS3 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board Sub Committee relevant to the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Board.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

ELS4 LOCAL ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which provided information regarding the development of a Local Economic Assessment (LEA) for the Borough of Halton.

The Board was advised that the draft LEA, where possible, utilised information contained in previous Halton Economic Reviews to provide a longer timeframe for the analysis of structural changes in the economy of Halton. The utilisation of an economic forecasting model to anticipate, for example GVA and employment growth, had been a key element of the previous reviews. The procurement of a bespoke, Halton specific, economic model to underpin the production of a Halton LEA would prove prohibitively expensive. The modelling of the future performance of the economy of Halton would, therefore, be provided by Cheshire East Council utilising the Cheshire and Warrington Economic Model, amended to include Halton. The results of that exercise would be available in July 2011 and would be factored into the next iteration of the report.

In this respect, the Board received a presentation from Mr T Leather, Children and Enterprise which:-

- Outlined the background to the Local Economy Assessment which focussed on key themes which influenced the performance of a local economy as follows:-
 - Productivity;
 - Labour Market and Industrial Structure;
 - Labour Supply;
 - Skills;
 - Enterprise and Innovation;
 - Land and Property; and
 - Summarised the conclusions in respect of employment, skills and enterprise.

The following comments arose from the discussion:-

- It was noted that historically the level of self employment and entrepreneurship in Halton was lower than the average. However, it was also noted that educational attainment in the Borough had significantly increased and this would encourage young people to consider self employment;

- Clarity was sought on the percentage of vacancies in properties. In response, it was reported that this would be circulated to all Members of the Board;
- It was noted that the College provided a basic course in new business start ups and the Council's Enterprise Team also provided support. It was also noted that the Council worked closely with the College and partners regarding the information obtained from businesses on their skill requirements in order to match these with the curriculum. Furthermore, it was highlighted that the approach and interface with businesses was improving;
- It was noted that the percentage of 16-18 year olds classed as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in Halton had declined over the last few years. It was also noted, however, that the number of young people unemployed was still high due to a number of factors such as inexperience etc;
- It was noted that a whole range of employment opportunities for different people was required and Halton's employee skills base would need to be matched to the expectations of employers; and
- The importance of retaining manufacturing opportunities for residents in the Borough was noted. It was also noted that the College was unable to offer some courses, because of the lack of a sufficient number of people being interested and this resulted in young people undertaking training outside of the Borough.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the comments raised be noted; and
- (2) the Board agree that the intelligence provided by the draft Halton Local Economic Assessment be utilised when formulating the key strategic documents of the Council.

Strategic Director
– Children &
Enterprise

ELS5 ANNUAL REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which provided an Annual

Report of the work carried out by the Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board for 2010/11. The report set out the work carried out and recommendations made for work programmes throughout the Municipal Year of 2010 to March 2011.

It was noted that the remit of the Board now included communities and it was agreed that future reports on libraries etc would be presented to the Board for consideration.

The Board agreed that a meeting be arranged with Riverside College to look at the Runcorn Campus and vocational training.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report and comments raised be noted.

ELS6 HALTON DIGITAL ECONOMY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources which set out the Digital Economy and Inclusion Strategy (DEIS) and supporting evidence paper which had been produced for Halton. It was also noted that consultation had taken place with stakeholders and comments incorporated. A draft Action Plan had been produced which suggested delivery vehicles and estimated costs.

The Board was advised that the strategy targeted Next Generation Access (NGA) Broadband as a mechanism for driving economic development of social inclusion in Halton. It was reported the term "next generation access" (NGA) referred to superfast broadband that was enabled by replacing current technology such as copper phone lines with new technology, such as fibre optic cable fibre and the latest fixed mobile wireless technologies. NGA, it was reported achieved speeds above 50Mbps (Megabits per second) and the network in Halton currently achieved 2 – 20Mbps.

The Board was further advised that the four elements of the digital economy and inclusion strategy were set out in the report for information. It was noted that the new communications technologies not only helped businesses trade and develop but also created opportunities for businesses to develop new applications and services. The report also detailed the BGA Broadband Group and next steps in terms of the key milestones over the next six

months.

The following comments arose from the discussion:-

- It was noted that the next generation NGA broadband would create opportunities for localised video conferencing;
- It was noted that maintenance costs would decrease with the new system and the Department of Business was making available £580m available to set up next generation broadband;
- It was noted that the information would only be quicker with appropriate equipment and clarity was sought on whether this would result in digital social exclusion for some residents in the Borough who did not have adequate IT equipment. In response, it was reported that this was addressed in the Strategy and that consideration was being given to recycling IT equipment and renting it out at a nominal cost to increase the number of people who had access to technology. In addition, facilities were available in the libraries throughout the Borough and basic skill courses were also available;
- It was noted that some people were not interested in using Information Technology. It was also noted that an action plan was in the strategy which would encourage people in Halton to use the new technology and this would be widely available via UK online centres, libraries, Adult Learning – PC courses and the Volunteer Policy i.e. neighbours teach each other etc;
- It was noted that the business plan would develop the business site and the strategy if achieved would attract businesses and this would result in a reduction in the overall costs in Halton; and
- The financial differences between the three scenarios set out on pages 54 and 55 of the report were noted.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Board support the Strategy; and
- (2) the Executive Board be recommended to

Strategic Director

adopt the Digital Economy and Inclusion Strategy.

– Policy &
Resources

ELS7 QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources on the performance management reports for quarter four of 2010/11.

Members were requested to consider and raise any questions or points of clarification in respect of the performance management reports against service plan objectives and performance targets, performance trends, comparisons and factors affecting the service for –

- Enterprise and Employment and Adult Learning and Skills Development; and
- Community services namely, Library Services and other Culture and Leisure Services.

The following comments arose from the discussion:-

- Page 79 - Clarity was sought on why there were only 18 schools, including two secondaries that hosted a family learning programme. In response, it was reported that the figures only represented the fourth quarter and other schools had been included;
- Page 79 – Agreeing future provision in light of WNF ceasing is a priority for the division – It was reported that enrolments were reducing and this was partly due to the impact of the economic downturn and whether an individual could afford to participate in courses;
- It was noted that consideration had been given to activities funded by the ceased WNF funding and some underspend had been identified last year to continue with the majority of the projects previously delivered;
- EEB L12 – Clarity was sought on the differential between health and disability. In response, it was reported that this information would be circulated to all Members of the Board;
- NI146 – it was noted that adults with learning disabilities could be further disadvantaged as the

economic downturn continued. It was reported that Halton People Into Jobs provided generic and specialist service to individuals. In addition, it was a competitive market and there were various reasons for barriers to employment; and

- Page 84 – Double the number of Council apprenticeships by January 2011 – the reasons that this target had not been met was noted. However, it was also noted that the Council had retained ten apprenticeships.

RESOLVED: That the quarterly monitoring reports and comments raised be noted.

ELS8 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which provided information on the progress in achieving targets contained within the Sustainable Community Strategy for Halton.

The Board was advised that the Sustainable Community Strategy for Halton, and the performance measures and targets contained within it would remain central to the delivery of community outcomes. It was therefore important that progress was monitored and that Members were satisfied that adequate plans were in place to ensure that the Council and its partners achieved the improvement targets that had been agreed.

The importance of support for people with mental health issues to access jobs and during potential redundancies was noted.

RESOLVED: That the report and comment raised be noted.

ELS9 SCRUTINY TOPICS 2011 / 2012

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director Children and Enterprise which updated Members on the existing Scrutiny Topic Groups and suggested various topic groups to be considered for the year 2011/12.

The Board was advised that the scope for the topic group was set out in the report for information. The Board also considered the progress made regarding the topic for “assessing the impact of the Government’s deficit policy on Employment Learning and Skills in Halton” which was

detailed in the report for information. Members also agreed to carry over the topic barriers to employment from an employer perspective topic group into the Municipal Year for 2011/12.

The Board was further advised that a joint scrutiny topic group with the Members of the Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board was being established.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Members support a Joint Scrutiny Topic Group on apprenticeships, in conjunction with the Children, Young People and Families PPB;
- (2) the following Members be appointed to the Joint Topic Group on apprenticeships – Councillors Edge, Horabin, P Lloyd Jones, Parker and C Plumpton Walsh; and
- (2) progress made for the topic “Assessment the Impact of the Government’s Deficit Policy on Employment Learning and Skills in Halton”, be noted; and
- (3) the Board agree to carry over the topic ‘Barriers to Employment from an Employer’ perspective into the Municipal Year 2011/12.

Strategic Director
– Children &
Enterprise

ELS10 SINGLE WORK PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which provided an update on the Single Work Programme and set out progress being made to implement the programme in Halton.

It was reported that at a meeting of the PPB on 7 March 2011 it was agreed that a key priority for the year ahead would be maximising single work programme opportunities for Halton.

It was noted that as a part of the Government’s welfare reform proposals, a number of existing employment support programmes had ceased and had been replaced by a new initiative called “The Single Work Programme”.

The Board was advised that the work programme would be a mandatory programme for residents reaching

key milestones of unemployment. For 18 – 24 year olds, referrals would be after nine months of claiming Jobseekers Allowance. Those aged 25 and over would be mandated to attend after 18 months of claiming benefit. Other groups such as those on sickness benefits found fit for work, would also be referred. Once referred, support would be given for a period of up to three years.

The Board was further advised the work programme was being delivered through a number of contract areas, Halton was part of a large contract area which included Merseyside, Lancashire and Cumbria.

It was reported that in April the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) had awarded contracts for the Merseyside, Lancashire and Cumbria area to A4e and Ingeus. They were described as 'Prime Contractors'. A description of the two companies was set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

Prior to the awarding of the contracts, Halton Borough Council had undertaken to meet bidders with the purpose of ascertaining whether successful bidders would wish to enter into a Sub-Contracting arrangement for the Council to deliver the contract in Halton. Both A4e and Ingeus had expressed an interest in working with Halton Borough Council via the Halton People into Jobs team.

Furthermore, discussions regarding how the contract would be operated in Halton were at an early stage. For example, further clarification was required regarding the potential TUPE transfer of employees from Ingeus and A4e as well as other contractors who provided frontline services under the current arrangements. Confirmation on targets and numbers of beneficiaries was still being developed with the two external organisations and would be subject to formal ratification by the Council. There was also a remote possibility that the proposed transferees would not be acceptable in its entirety. In addition, it was reported that the support of the Council's HR and Legal colleagues had been invaluable to date and it was proposed that an internal implementation group would be established to oversee and scrutinise the process. Similarly further negotiations were taking place regarding an implementation date in June.

The following comments arose from the discussion:-

- It was noted that there would need to be a harmonisation of the TUPE terms and conditions:

- The background information on the A4e and Ingeus companies was noted;
- The financial implications and possible risks of entering into an agreement with A4e and Ingeus was noted;
- It was suggested that the Board receive further update reports at future meetings;
- Clarity was sought on an individuals salary during training. In response, it was reported that the individual would be unemployed whilst undertaking training and development. When an individual had been in employment for six months they would be paid at an appropriate level commensurate with the job. From nine months to three years, support would be given and it was hoped that they would enter into employment during that period;
- Members of the Board unanimously supported the negotiations and the next steps in delivering the programme;
- It was noted that Appendix 1 to the report was not attached to the agenda and reported that this would be circulated to all Members of the Board; and
- It was noted that discussions were taking place on a regular basis with Trade Unions.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the progress made to date on the Single Work Programme be noted; and
- (2) the Board unanimously support the negotiations and proposed next steps in delivering the programme in Halton.

Meeting ended at 8.55 p.m.