

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, 11 January 2012 in the Boardroom - Municipal Building, Widnes

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

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: I. Atherton, N. Goodwin, T. Leather, W Rourke and M. Simpson

Also in attendance: Councillor Jones in accordance with Standing Order No. 33

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

ELS28 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 14th November 2011, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

ELS29 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

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

ELS30 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

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

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

ELS31 SSP MINUTES

The Board received the minutes of the Employment Learning and Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership Meeting

from the 31st October 2011.

Arising from the minutes Members discussed enhanced partnership working and suggested an update report be provided in future of progress made in terms of what individual partners were doing. The Board also discussed the Local Sustainable Transport Fund bid in relation to help provided for transport for students.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the minutes be noted; and
- 2) an update report regarding enhanced partnership working be brought to a future meeting.

ELS32 QUARTERLY POLICY UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources which set out recent national policy and announcements relevant to Employment, Learning and Skills.

It was reported that a steady flow of policy announcements, consultation exercises, reports and ministerial statements were issued by Government Departments and Agencies that had varying degrees of relevant issues on the Employment Learning and Skills agenda related topics.

The report set out brief summaries of key announcements to the Board for information, along with observations of local relevance where appropriate. This provided the opportunity for Board Members to consider whether to initiate more detailed scrutiny and/or reports to a future meeting. Recent key policy announcements were detailed in the report as follows:-

- Youth Charter;
- Review of the Skills Funding Agency;
- Further Education and Skills Reform Plan etc.;
- Growing Places Fund;
- Connecting Europe Facility; and
- Regional Growth Fund.

Arising from the report members noted the following:

- There was provisional indicative funding of £12.9m for the Liverpool City Region from the Growing Places fund and there was a criteria based on deliverability

- outcomes for the distribution of funds; and
- Various funds were available for individuals or private firms to set up businesses and council staff could assist in making a bid for those funds or help could be provided through Halton People into Jobs through the wider package provided.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

(Councillor Lloyd Jones declared a personal interest in the following item due to being a Director of the Murdishaw Community Centre Board)

ELS33 COMMUNITY CENTRES

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Communities which provided the Annual Report on Community Centres for the period up to 31st March 2011.

It was reported that Community Centres' services consisted of five buildings – detailed in the report - which had programmes of community activities, varying models of community cafes and service outlets i.e. children's centre, youth centre and day services. These centres provided a community hub, a central point at the heart of these communities for residents to enjoy chosen activities and receive services in their neighbourhoods.

The report set out the performance for community centres which contributed to a whole area approach to health and wellbeing. It was noted that community centre's service demonstrated continuous improvement through its performance monitoring and contributions to the Council's efficiency programme.

Community centres were benchmarked as part of the APSE (Association of Public Service Excellence) against other Civic, Cultural and Community Venues owned and run by other local authorities.

The Board received a presentation from Ian Atherton – Community Centres Manager which provided Members with performance data, including trend information over a number of years. It was further noted that all of Halton's Community Centres had progressed positively overall on their indicators earning them nomination for APSE national awards for improved performance. The presentation set out graphs representing service performance information over a five year period for Halton's Community Centres. These included –

- Net Cost per User excluding Centre Establishment Charges;
- Total Income Per User;
- Operational Recovery;
- Staffing Costs as a Percentage of Total Costs;
- Visits per Household-Catchment Area;
- Net Cost per Household Catchment Area
- Staff Absence; and
- Quality Assurance and Community Consultation.

Members were advised of other performance indicators that informed the Council that a centre was performing well. Four graphs were appended to the report showing the annual improvement across performance indicators for Murdishaw Community Centre.

It was reported that a detailed piece of work would be carried out in the near future, analysing the usage of community centres against post codes to reflect demographics of the local community which would enable APSE to be provided with a further breakdown of data.

The report also set out highlights of centre activity for 2010/11 at Murdishaw, Grangeway, Upton, Ditton and Castlefields Community. Members were also advised of the wider service delivery and future challenges.

Members were further advised of an energy efficiency programme that was carried out at 2 centres. It was reported that the gas and electricity consumption was reduced by around 20% across these centres. It was further reported that at Murdishaw Community Centre there was a 39% reduction in gas and a 3.5% reduction in electricity for 2011/12. Members discussed the implementation of the efficiency programme across all other community centres and wider areas of the council to make further savings.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ELS34 COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities which provided an annual report on the Community Development Service for the period up to 31st March 2011.

It was reported that Community Development supported the creation, development and sustainability of independent local community groups. This generated the

capacity for effective and inclusive community engagement with Council departments and services thus enabling the delivery of many hundreds of community initiatives to tackle strategic objectives and community needs. It was noted that the Community Development team had both a strategic and neighbourhood role in co-ordinating partnership support to respond to community concerns and create cohesive neighbourhoods which were participative and vibrant with a strong sense of community connectedness.

It was further noted that locality working was introduced to the service in April 2010 linked to the expiry of neighbourhood management initiative. This mechanism involved Community Development supporting an increased role for partners and community involvement in the Area Forums.

The report set out details of the Community Development Team, the budget for Community Development, details of performance framework, grass roots delivery and information for each Area Forum of projects that had been carried out. The report also set out details of starter grants and Community Development grants, Voluntary Youth grants and total expenditure to date.

It was further reported that successful intergenerational projects had been carried out. The Team were looking to further develop community services and were hosting a learning exchange seminar in March 2012.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ELS35 INWARD INVESTMENT AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS REPORT

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which provided progress on the work of the Business Development Team (BDT) within the Economy, Enterprise and Property Department. It was noted that the primary aim of the team was to encourage investment into the Borough and to support companies already based in the Borough to expand and grow.

The report also provided information on the positive measures the team was taking to support Halton's businesses during the economic down turn. Members were advised of recent announcements regarding "employer facing" initiatives and set out proposals for how the team would respond to these announcements. A summary of the announcements was appended to the report for information.

The report set out the core activities of the BDT, the global economic context, conversions, the number of enquiries which were translated into actual investment projects, activities to generate more enquiries, activities to support recent business start-ups, the Business Improvement District (BID) programme, visitor economy, outputs and areas the BDT would focus upon in the coming year.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board note the work of the BDT; and
- 2) the Board acknowledge that a response to recent announcements will need to be built into departmental work priorities.

(NB: Councillor Lloyd Jones declared a personal interest in the following item due to being a governor at Bollingbroke Academy.)

ELS36 PERFORMANCE MONITORING QUARTER 2

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources on the Performance Management Reports for Quarter 2 of 2011/12. Members were requested to consider and raise any questions or points of clarification in respect of the Performance Management Report against service plan objectives and performance targets, performance trends, comparisons and factors affecting the service for:-

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

Arising from discussion of the data Members noted the number of learners at college had reduced as a consequence of the withdrawal of Education Maintenance Allowance and the importance of partnership working with the 5 Borough Trust when dealing with the long term unemployed in relation to mental health issues and provision of clinical support.

RESOLVED: That the Quarterly Monitoring Report and comments raised be noted.

ELS37 BUSINESS PLANNING 2012-15

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director Policy and Resources which provided an update on Business Planning for the period 2012 – 15 and set out the Directorate priorities, objectives and targets for services for this period that fell with the remit of the Board.

The Board was advised that each Directorate was required to develop a medium term business plan, in parallel with the budget that was subject to annual review and refresh. The Policy and Performance Board had had input into the business planning process and the setting of priorities for the Directorate which was an important part of this process. The Board was advised that the key priorities for development or improvement in 2010-15 were proposed to be as follows:-

- Welfare Reform and the Single Programme;
- Interface with private sector and employer facing services;
- Sector development;
- Arts and culture development, including the role of libraries;
- Low carbon economy; and
- Apprenticeships.

Members were advised that any comments should be made to the relevant Operational Director by 18th January 2011 to allow inclusion in the draft Business Plan.

The Board discussed increased levels of debt which could be linked to mental health, alcohol issues and worklessness and whether Halton monitored levels of debt in the Borough. Members also felt that money management should be taught at secondary schools and colleges.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report and comments made be noted; and
- 2) Members of the Board pass any detailed comments that they may have on the information in the report to the relevant Operational Director by 18th January 2012.

Meeting ended at 9.00 p.m.