

REPORT TO: Employment Learning and Skills and Community
PPB

DATE: 5th June 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Children and Enterprise

PORTFOLIO: Economic Development

SUBJECT: Presentation on Halton's ERDF 4.2 Business
Support Programme

WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to advise Members that there will be a presentation on progress regarding the Halton Business Support Programme (ERDF 4.2)

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Executive Board

- (1) Notes the progress made to date on Halton's Business Support Programme;
- (2) Members welcome the additional investment being allocated to deliver Business support activities in Halton.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

A report to the Executive Board (29 November 2012) provided information in relation to the outputs, timetable, delivery arrangements and financial implications of the Halton element of a pan-Merseyside European Development Fund (ERDF) Business Support Programme.

The project is being managed by the Council's Business Improvement and Growth team within the Economy, Enterprise and Property Department.

The presentation to the Employment Learning and Skills and Community PPB will report upon the delivery arrangements for the project, the number of businesses engaged, the outputs achieved and initial responses of the businesses to the Halton initiative.

Members will note that It has been government policy to migrate business support from the public to the private sector. As a consequence a number of business support agencies, which traditionally played a role in the Borough of Halton, either ceased to exist or curtailed their activities, for example Business Link, North West Development Agency and a number of cluster agencies and Sector Skills Councils.

As a result, the provision of business support to certain types of company in the Liverpool City Region declined.

The Liverpool City Region Local Authorities and partners, therefore, jointly brought forward a funding bid under ERDF Priority 4.2 to address a number of the gaps in current and future business support provision in the City Region.

3.1 The presentation will reinforce the fact that The ERDF Business Support Programme is based upon four key principles :-

- Providing the infrastructure for growth and investment;
- Stimulating enterprise and innovation;
- Capturing the economic potential of all communities;
- Transforming perceptions of deprived communities.

The programme is enabling us to provide a business support service in Halton which :-

- makes contact with all existing businesses
- provides detailed and tailored support to understand their wider business needs
- provides broad ranging advice and guidance but with a specific focus on enhancing the human resource available to the business
- supports businesses to make the job opportunities created available to residents in deprived communities
- works with colleagues to enable local residents to access those job opportunities.

The allocation of ERDF allows Halton Borough Council to augment and add value to its existing business support services by enabling us to buy in specialist Project Manager input, for two days per week to ensure that the service provided offers tailored and focused business support for Halton businesses, whilst meeting the complex ERDF audit procedures and requirements.

It is also enabling us to complement our existing 'new' business support provision by allowing us to assist existing businesses, which is particularly important in the current economic climate.

Similarly, ERDF will enable us to provide 1:1, face to face, specialist business provided by business professionals. This specialist service cannot be provided by the Council and, therefore the expertise will be procured through the Council's Matrix web-based services procurement application.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The programme will deliver benefits to both the local business community and the wider community of Halton and in so doing contribute to the realisation of a number of the Council's key strategic objectives described in the Community Strategy.

Halton Council and its partners recognise the importance of supporting local economic growth, but also acknowledge that future resources and interventions will need to be prioritised. This proposal links to work that the Council and its

partners are developing in terms of the types of employers and businesses with which we need to engage in the future.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The Halton Employment Partnership has developed initiatives which promote employability and recruitment support to businesses. The ERDF Merseyside Business Support Programme will add to the businesses support offer by providing tailored advice to help local companies to improve business performance and plan for growth.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Improving business sustainability and performance will create more employment opportunities for the Borough's young people

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The programme will engender a learning culture amongst, potentially, one hundred and fifty local entrepreneurs through the provision of tailored 1 :1 business support

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Access to employment is a contributor to the health of both individuals and communities. The project will both create and safeguard local jobs and thereby make a positive contribution to the health of the Borough

6.4 A Safer Halton

Access to employment is one of a number of contributors to anti-social behaviour. The project will create tangible employment opportunities for local people.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The project will contribute to the continuing diversification of the Borough's economic base and increased levels of entrepreneurship thereby contributing to the economic renewal of Halton

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

Significant risk associated with the projects include :-

Risk	Mitigation
The duration of the programme has been reduced from 36 months to 24 months, the number of outputs to be	Put in place robust project management, monitoring and audit systems Procure high quality business support

<p>achieved has increased and the financial resources to realise those outputs has been reduced. Realising the prescribed outputs will, therefore, be a challenge Potential claw back if outputs are not met</p>	<p>professionals Aggressively market the project to the local business community Ensure outputs are met and that every aspect of the project is auditable</p>
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8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

There are no equality and diversity issues

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act