

REPORT TO: Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 13 June 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director of Environment

SUBJECT: Business Perceptions Survey

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide information on the scope of the follow up Business Perceptions Survey commissioned through the Employment, Learning & Skills SSP as part of the 2007/8 commissioning process.

2. RECOMMENDED: That

2.1 Policy and Performance Board consider the scope of the proposed survey.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

3.1 In early 2006, the Employment, Learning & Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership commissioned a Business Perceptions Survey across Halton to gauge the views of Halton employers in terms of workforce development activity and support services available to them.

3.2 Peat Associates won the tender and worked with the Adult Learning & Skills Development Team in designing the survey and agreeing the methodology for carrying out the survey. During February and March 2006, Peat Associates undertook 102 face-to-face interviews with local businesses and 48 telephone interviews. In excess of 130 employers who were contacted declined to be interviewed by telephone even when the interviewers offered to re-contact them at a time more convenient to them. This demonstrated a potential lack of interest by employers in developing the skills of their workforce.

3.3 The 150 companies who took part in the survey represented a cross section of sectors, geographical locations and company size. A copy of the results of the survey is attached at Appendix 1.

3.4 In terms of the training needs identified through the survey, Health and Safety courses were the most mentioned followed closely by supervisory training and basic IT skills. First Aid refresher courses were also high on the list. Specialised IT skills were very important to the employers, with SageLine 50 and 100 being specifically mentioned a number of times. Autocad 2D and 3D was also very important in the manufacturing, design and engineering sectors.

Progress to Date

- 3.5 Further analysis of the results of the survey was carried out to identify those businesses located in the NRF priority wards. NRF was made available via the SSP to begin to address some of the training issues raised during the survey. Of the 150 businesses interviewed, 38 were located in NRF priority wards. In September 2006, a workforce development project officer was assigned to work with these 38 companies in identifying training solutions.
- 3.6 From August 2006, the Learning & Skills Council has been operating Train to Gain (its employer-led national training programme) via LSC Skills Brokers. The Skills Broker's role is to offer businesses a whole organisation needs analysis and then to source appropriate training based on need. HBC's workforce development project officer has been working very closely with the LSC's Skills Broker in identifying training that cannot be funded through Train to Gain or any other government funded initiative.

Issues and Next Steps

- 3.7 The Employment, Learning & Skills SSP has now commissioned a further, more comprehensive survey to build on the initial survey and to begin to evaluate some of the training provision undertaken since the first survey (including Train to Gain). In addition, the survey will explore some of the skills and employment issues within the key growth sectors in the borough, namely logistics, science and customer service as well as considering the implications the new Mersey Gateway will have on skills and employment levels in the borough.
- 3.8 The tendering process will take place in August and the process of undertaking the survey will commence September/October 2007. Unlike the initial survey, the research base for this survey will be greater. The findings of the survey will be reported during Quarter 4.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5. RISK ANALYSIS

- 5.1 There are limited risks associated with undertaking this survey:
- Failure to recruit suitable consultant within the timescales

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 6.1 The survey will take into consideration the views of a wide range of businesses, across different sectors, of different sizes and in different geographical locations across the borough.

Contacts

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	Manufacturing	Service Distribution	Construction	Professional	Research	Engineering	Social Care	Software
Large 100 +	4	1	1			1	2	1
Medium 10 - 99	29	10	16	12	4	1	10	5
Small 1 - 9	10	8	15	3	2	2	6	2
Totals	43	19	32	15	6	3	17	8

Do you have a training plan in place	Yes 110 73.33%	No 40 26.66%	
In your experience do you feel that organisations are more interested in providing the standard training facilities they have rather than what you need	Yes 93 64.58%	No 26 18.06%	Don't know 25 17.36%
Do you formally assess your skills gaps and training needs within your business	Yes 80 55.56%	No 64 44.44%	
If you received a subsidised Training Needs Analysis were you satisfied with it.	Yes 12 70.59%	No 5 29.41%	
If you did receive a Training Needs Analysis, which organisation conducted it for you	Cannot remember 11 Satisfied GME, Blue Orchid, VB Consulting. Dissatisfied Skills for Logistics, Blue Orchid, in2bus (funding ran out)		

Have you taken advantage of any funded training programmes Or	Yes 46 31.29%	No 101 60.71%	
Have you taken advantage of any subsidised training programmes	Yes 29 21.01%	No 109 78.99%	
Grant for Training NB. Some companies had both funded and subsidised training			
Was the quality of the training provided up to the standard you require and did it meet current needs NB. Some people arranged their own training	Yes 61 93.85%	No 4 6.15%	Not Applicable 13
Does the local workforce have the basic skills to fulfil the general needs of business	Yes 100 66.67%	No 45 30%	Don't Know 5 3.33%
Can the local workforce provide the higher level skills to satisfy your business needs for example:- Technical - Supervisory - Managerial - Professional	Yes 74 49.33%	No 70 46.67%	Don't Know 6 4%
Is there is a mismatch between the skills of the local workforce and the skills your business needs	Yes 86 58.90%	No 61 41.22%	Don't Know 1 0.68%
Do you have to recruit the correct and most suitably qualified or experienced personnel from outside the local area	Yes 44 29.33%	No 30 20%	Sometimes 76 50.67%

Question	Yes	No	Don't know
Are there non-English speaking employees in your workforce from EU or non-EU countries	22	126	
	14.86%	85.14%	
If so			
Are you aware that ESOL courses (English for S peakers of O ther L anguages) are available at various locations within Halton	Yes	No	
	5	144	
	3.36%	96.64%	
Do you feel the local workforce have low aspirations and are not always very ambitious	Yes	No	Don't know
	75	35	37
	51.02%	23.81%	25.17%
Is there enough contact between local support agencies and employers to understand the employment needs of businesses	Yes	No	
	55	92	
	37.41%	62.59%	
Are you fully aware of all of the local training opportunities that are available	Yes	No	
	41	107	
	27.70%	72.30%	
And does that put you off actually proceeding with subsidised training	Yes	No	Possibly
	12	117	8
	8.76%	85.40%	5.84%

Do you feel that your company may have a skills gap in the future and if so what training help would be the best solution for your business					Yes 119 88.81%	No 15 11.19%
For example						
<i>Please mark or fill in other in subjects</i>	Practical	6	FLT	40	patient handle	4
	Product Training	2	Marketing	11	dementia care	4
	Technical	24	First Aid	60	customer care	6
	Logistics	5	Lifting	1	child care	2
	Health & Safety	79	Multiskills	9	food hygiene	5
	Materials Handling	48	NVQ 2	1	fire awareness	1
	Basic IT	62	Lit & Num	9	abrasive wheel	1
	Specialised IT	54	Telephone	7	height awareness	5
	Supervisory	62	Trainers	1	European D L	2
	Managerial	38	Time manage	2	QA	1
	Professional	18	Waste	1	Coded Welding	4
	Electrical design /Installation	3	Accountancy	7		
	Legal & Administration	2	Interview Skill	2		
	HNC Business Management	2				
	NVQ level 2 Social Care	2				
	Italian Language Course	2				
	General Office Procedures	3				

Where would be the best place for the training to take place	Off site	On Site	Mixture	
	60 (48.78%)	26 (21.14%)	37 (30.08%)	
When would be the most acceptable for your business	Work Time	Evenings	Weekends	Mixture
	56 (45.53%)	5 (4.07%)		62 (50.40%)
Would you be prepared to fund all or part of that training	Yes	No		
	107 (96.40%)	4 (3.60%)		