

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 13 June 2007 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Jones (Chairman), Fraser (Vice-Chairman), P Blackmore, Edge, Findon, Howard, Parker, Rowe and Stockton

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Lewis and Worrall

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Collins, Cooke, N. Goodwin, S. Saunders, A. Villiers and L. Derbyshire

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

		<i>Action</i>
ELS1	MINUTES The minutes of the meeting held on 12 th March 2007, having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record. COUNCILLOR FRASER IN THE CHAIR	
ELS2	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME It was noted that no questions had been received.	
ELS3	EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES The minutes of the Executive Board relating to the work of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy Performance Board were submitted for information. RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted. COUNCILLOR JONES IN THE CHAIR	
ELS4	CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME	

The Chairman, Councillor Jones welcomed all the Members to the first meeting in the municipal year. He also took the opportunity to welcome the new Members to the Board, Councillors P Blackmore, Rowe and Worrall and thanked Councillors E Cargill, Hodgkinson and Ratcliffe, for their contributions to the Board during the previous year.

ELS5 COMMUNITY COHESION UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate & Policy which provided an advanced interim summary of progress of the Cohesion Working Topic Working Group, with an indication of an emerging series of recommendations on how best Halton should discharge its duties in respect of Community Cohesion. The report also sought the views of Members on further issues which may need to be considered to complete the review.

In addition, the Board discussed the following points:-

- That the final report should contain a summary and the recommendations be set out at the beginning of the report;
- The complexity of community cohesion and the range of inter related matters was discussed and noted;
- The potential role of Parish Council's to further develop community cohesion was noted; and
- The positive impact that building on existing links within smaller communities could have on community cohesion was noted.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the following key recommendations be noted and actioned:-
 - i) the "Vision Story" developed during the scrutiny process be adopted as the community cohesion statement for Halton and form part of the overall corporate equalities statement used in service planning;
 - ii) the Equality Impact Assessments be extended in scope, in line with LGA guidance, to cover the potential

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community cohesion impacts of all council policies and programmes. This should be carried out as part of the established service planning process;

- iii) an Officer Working Group be established, as a sub-group of the Corporate Equalities Group, to specifically look at the needs of new migrants in the Borough and to monitor the joint delivery of services to them;
- iv) the Officer Working Group above report back to the Board on a regular basis;
- v) the cohesion implications of council activities be monitored and reported to the various Policy and Performance Boards as part of the normal service planning monitoring process. In addition a data set of cohesion indicators should be set up and populated. These should form an annual progress report on cohesion, which would be monitored by the Employment, Learning & Skills PPB;
- vi) the Corporate Services PPB be alerted to emerging concerns about perceived barriers to accessing services. These include opening hours, disabled access, transport, difficult locations, information and communication, bureaucracy, quality of response and perceived attitudes to certain client groups. Corporate Services PPB may wish to consider whether it is worthy of further investigation or scrutiny;
- vii) that the Council and its partners be informed of the results of this scrutiny topic and recognise that anti-social behaviour has profound implications for cohesion in Halton. It is one of its defining issues. The anti-social behaviour scrutiny topic team and Halton's Community Safety Team should take note of the impact of their work on community cohesion and be aware that this will form part of the cohesion monitoring system in Halton; and

- viii) inter-generational myths and conflicts were identified as a key defining feature of cohesion in Halton. It is recommended that the appropriate teams within the Children's Services and Health and Communities Directorates collaborate on joining up activity to specifically address inter-generational issues within Halton.

ELS6 IMPLEMENTATION OF REVISED MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which gave Members an update on the Mobile Library Service following its review and subsequent implementation of a new timetable in March/April 2007.

In this respect, an update on the statistics and a full list of mobile library stops were available at the meeting.

In addition, the Board discussed and considered the following points:-

- The role the library service provided to education and the opportunities for the service, within the Building Schools for the Future Programme was discussed and noted;
- That officers be congratulated on the improvements to the mobile library service and the success of implementing the changes that had been suggested through the consultation process including at the Area Forums;
- That a further report be presented to the Board at a later date detailing the results of longer term monitoring of the impacts of the changes;
- The potential benefits of acquiring another mobile library vehicle was noted; and
- It was agreed that the Board receive regular reports on the library service, which would outline any possible implementation changes within the service.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;

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- (2) before the changes in the review are implemented, a report be presented to the Board which would consider further deposit collections in community buildings, evaluate the three weekly rota and the feasibility and financial costs of acquiring another mobile library vehicle;
- (3) the three weekly rota for the mobile library service be evaluated in the future; and
- (4) the Board receive regular reports which would outline any possible implementation changes within the service

(NB: Councillor Stockton declared a Personal Interest in the following item of business as a Director of Murdishaw Community Centre)

ELS7 COMMUNITY CENTRES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which provided information on the Community Centre's and detailed the variances across the five Council facilities.

In addition, the Board discussed and considered the following points:-

- That the figures outlined in the report were related to group attendance figures not individual attendance at the centres; and
- In discussions relating to the availability of public transport services to the centres, it was agreed that this information be circulated to Members of the Board. In this respect, it was also suggested that a simple survey could be undertaken across the community centres asking users what form of transport they had taken to the centres.

RESOLVED: That the Board support the continuation and development of the community centre provision.

ELS8 BUSINESS PERCEPTIONS SURVEY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which provided information on the scope of the follow up Business Perceptions Survey commission through the Employment, Learning & Skills SSP

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as part of the 2007/08 commissioning process.

The Board was advised that a further more comprehensive survey is to be commissioned 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 would explore some of the skills and employment issues within the key growth sectors in the Borough as well as considering the implications the new Mersey Gateway would have on skills and Employment.

The Board was further advised that the tendering process was scheduled to take place in August and the process of undertaking the survey would commence in September/October 2007. The findings of the survey would be reported back to the Board during Quarter 4.

In this respect, the Members were requested to consider the scope of the project.

In addition, the Board discussed and considered the following points:-

- 1) The funding mechanisms in relation to Level 1 and Level 2 NQV's and the differences in the levels was noted;
- 2) The differences between academic achievements and NVQ's was discussed and noted;
- 3) It was suggested that more details were required on how the data set out in the survey had been completed. It was also acknowledged that some of the results seemed to be contradictory;
- 4) That the authority was in a good position to take the lead and provide tailor made training packages to local employers;
- 5) That an A4 sheet containing the National Skills Curriculum Framework could be attached to the proposed survey;
- 6) In relation to funding, it was suggested that employers could be encouraged to put procedures in place to enable people to have the opportunity to claim a grant for training;
- 7) It was agreed that the commissioned survey

before it was sent out to employers for completion, be presented to the next meeting of the Board for consideration;

- 8) It was noted that 96% of employers had indicated that they would be willing to pay for all or part of the employees training;
- 9) The Council's apprenticeship scheme could be reviewed over the next few months with a view to maximising the scheme in the Borough;
- 10) Concern was raised re the safety of trainees that could be placed with inexperienced trainers;
- 11) That a set of questions related to apprenticeships be established; and
- 12) A revised report be circulated to Members of the Board for comments before it is presented to the next meeting on 10th September 2007.

The Chairman asked for nominations for the two new topic groups that would be commencing in the near future, Creating Local Jobs Through Procurement and Skills Identifying the Needs of Businesses. He indicated that the meetings would take place in the early evening and dates would be circulated shortly.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) The comments raised above be noted / actioned as appropriate;
- (2) The survey be presented to the next meeting of the Board for consideration before it is sent to employers;
- (3) A report regarding apprenticeships be presented to a future meeting;
- (4) a revised report, that takes account of the points set out in 1 – 12 above, be circulated to Members of the Board for comment before it is presented to the next meeting on 10th September 2007; and
- (5) the following Members be nominated on the new topic groups as follows:-

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i) Creating Local Jobs Through Procurement

Councillors: Jones, Blackmore, Findon, Fraser and Howard; and

ii) Skills Identifying the Needs of Business

Councillors: Jones, Findon, Fraser, Howard, Rowe and Stockton.

ELS9 DARESBUY SCIENCE AND INNOVATION CAMPUS VISIT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which reviewed the recent Board visit to the Daresbury Science and Innovation Campus.

The report advised that the Board had been given an extensive presentation regarding the future of the Campus and also a tour of the Innovation Centre. There had been a lengthy debate on the long term impact it would have on the area, particularly in relation to future jobs and the skills that would be required. It had been agreed that whilst many high level skills would be required, the campus would offer a range of employment opportunities.

In addition, the Board discussed and considered the following points:-

- That the visit had been very successful and it was suggested that Members undertook further visits to alternative sites. It was also agreed that the Board undertake a visit to the site annually;
- In relation to public transport being improved to help people from the most deprived areas gain employment on the campus, it was suggested that this matter be investigated;
- It was suggested that the Industrial Forum be invited to a meeting of the topic group;
- It was suggested that Mr B Badrock, The Chamber of Commerce be invited to a future meeting of the Board;
- The benefits of senior people within local companies becoming governors at local schools was noted; and

- A linkage could be devised between the schools and the Daresbury catalyst that gave the young people an incentive to undertake in employment opportunities.

RESOLVED: That

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- (1) the following issues be approved for further investigation:-
 - i) Access in the longer term to employment opportunities. How could public transport be improved to help people from the most deprived areas gain employment on the campus?
 - ii) what level of skills would be needed?
 - iii) What types of science skills would be needed?
 - iv) Where will the businesses presently located in the Innovation Centre go once they were ready to move on? How do we keep such businesses in Halton?
 - v) How well does the Campus work with local schools?
 - vi) How would local residents aspire to work on the campus? and
 - vii) There would need to be a link to the Business Survey and to work in the schools.
- (2) the Board undertake visits to:-
 - i) Astmoor
 - ii) Halebank;
 - iii) The Heath; and
 - iv) Daresbury Park;
- (3) Prior to a visit, a pre meeting be arranged to identify the aims and objectives of the visit and a consensus on potential questions be established;
- (4) the Council, if necessary, write to local

employers to encourage their senior employees to become governors at local schools; and

- (5) Members of the Board undertake an annual visit to the Campus.

ELS10 SCRUTINY TOPIC GROUP - ADULT LEARNING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

The Board considered a report of the Adult Learning & Skills Development Topic Group which outlined the findings of the group.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were noted:-

- The issues relating to LSC funding were noted;
- It was agreed that an additional recommendation be added to the issues and next steps as 3.15 of the report which would provide support in a career change for the over 40's. This would need to link specifically to the Government's drive to fund a first Level 2 and the fact that many adults would already have a Level 2 and attempting to make a career change would mean self funding any new training; and
- The verbal update on the Government proposals relating to English as a second language which would be effective from September 2007 was noted.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the following recommendations of the Topic Group be endorsed:-
- (i) Halton Borough Council re-commence provision of core funding to the Adult Learning & Skills Development Team;
 - (ii) An 'invest to save' approach is adopted within Halton Borough Council in terms of providing IT and Skills for Life training to employees;
 - (iii) more formal mechanisms are put in place whereby other services/teams within HBC can access Adult Learning & Skills

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Development provision;

- (iv) full time tutors are employed, wherever possible, to ensure opportunities for developing and diversifying the service are enhanced;
 - (v) the Adult Learning & Skills Development Team expands its languages provision to enhance and improve the delivery of English and other language skills in the borough, including supporting local schools (particularly primary) in offering a wider range of language choice; and
 - (vi) the Adult Learning & Skills Development Team liaises with the Learning & Skills Council and Job Centre Plus in supporting a Career Change Service for the over 40's, given the perceived lack of support for this age group in terms of making a decision to follow an new career path;
- (2) an action plan be prepared; and
 - (3) the Board endorse the continuation of the Adult Learning Team remaining within the remit of Economic Regeneration.

ELS11 SCRUTINY TOPIC GROUP - HALTON PEOPLE IN JOBS

The Board considered a report of the Halton People into Jobs Scrutiny Topic Group which outlined the programme of work that had been undertaken as part of the Board's scrutiny programme. The report also explored the options for increasing employment opportunities for local residents.

The Board was advised that the Authority has recently been successful in a tender bid with a service value of £183,000 to help unemployed people gain employment in the public sector.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the following recommendations of the Topic Group be approved and forwarded to the next available Executive Board for consideration:-

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- (i) funding be secured to continue to deliver HPiJ services beyond 31 March 2008 be recommended as a key priority;
- (ii) the identification of alternative, more accessible and suitable premises for HPiJ in Halton Lea, preferably a shop front and an additional HPiJ base in Widnes Town centre should be pursued;
- (iii) HPiJ should apply for the Matrix Excellence Award and use this as the basis of securing further external income, particularly from Jobcentre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council;
- (iv) The promotion of HPiJ as the preferred recruitment supplier to employing organisations in Halton should be championed by the Council and Halton Strategic Partnership;
- (v) Funding be secured to continue the Enterprising Halton programme to stimulate Entrepreneurship and Business Start-up beyond 31 March 2008 be a priority;
- (vi) The potential of creating local jobs through the Council Procurement Strategy should be explored and a Topic Group to address this issue be established;
- (vii) Further employment opportunities for young people aged 16-19 years of age, particularly those 'not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET)' should continue to be developed i.e. Council Apprenticeship Programme, Care Leavers Pre-employment programme;
- (viii) The feasibility and costs associated with the Council introducing the Princes Trust Team Challenge, a personal development programme for young people aged 16-25 years provided by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service should be explored; and

- (ix) The Government should re-cycle a set percentage of the first year savings when unemployed people find work back into employment schemes. This would enable such schemes to continue and would reward success as opposed to just paying for process.

ELS12 SCRUTINY TOPIC GROUP ANNUAL REPORT

The Board considered a report which represented a draft annual report of the activities of the Board during 2006/07. The report, subject to endorsement, would be presented with reports of other PPB's to a forthcoming meeting of the Council for adoption. The report outlined the Membership and responsibilities, the main initiatives the Board had considered during the year and the work programme for 2007/08.

The Chairman, Councillor Jones indicated that the report did not represent the final document as some aspects of the report would need to be highlighted and expanded upon. During the discussion, it was suggested that the paragraph relating to disability sports could be expanded and highlighted as a priority.

Councillor Jones, took the opportunity to thank the Members of the Board for all the work they have undertaken during the past year. He highlighted that the Board had a very challenging programme of monitoring, scrutiny, visits and policy development and had made a substantial contribution to improving the way the Council and its partners work together.

RESOLVED: That the Board endorse the Annual Report for the purpose of its adoption at a forthcoming meeting of the full Council.

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Meeting ended at 9.45 p.m.