



Cllr. Sue Edge  
Chairman

**ANNUAL REPORT  
EMPLOYMENT LEARNING, SKILLS AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND  
PERFORMANCE BOARD  
APRIL 2015 – MARCH 2016**

**Introduction from Councillor Sue Edge**

**Chair of the Employment Learning, Skills and Community Policy  
Performance Board (PPB)**

This is my sixth year as Chair of this Policy Performance Board, and this year has brought a significant number of both challenges and opportunities. These include the contribution of the Mersey Gateway to improving skills and providing job opportunities for residents of Halton. We are continuing to work together with our partners across the Liverpool City Region, as part of the new Combined Authority to promote economic growth and provide employment opportunities for residents. In addition we continue to deliver essential services through our libraries, community centres, sports facilities and the continued neighbourhood activity supported by our Community Development Team. The Government's welfare reforms continue to put added pressure on our Employment, Learning and Skills services as we strive to help people improve their employment opportunities in a difficult economic climate. That said, through Halton's Employment Learning and Skills and Community PPB we have overseen a number of positive activities aimed at helping people to find work, growing our local businesses and increase the skills and qualifications of our residents. The review below provides a snapshot of these activities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Member colleagues for their valuable contributions and the support they have shown throughout the year and in particular I want to thank members who have agreed to give up their time to serve on the Inward Investment Scrutiny Topic Group. I would also like to thank officers for working with me to develop an interesting and important range of topics and agenda items for consideration.

Although, there will be difficult times in the year ahead, I am confident that this PPB will continue to explore new and innovative ways of working to ensure that we provide the best possible Employment, Learning, Skills and Community services to the people of Halton.

I look forward to continuing to work together to make the most of the opportunities ahead and rise to challenges we will undoubtedly face.

**Councillor Sue Edge**

**Chair, Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and  
Performance Board**

## MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2015/16, the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors S. Edge (Chair) A. MacManus (Vice Chair), L. Cassidy, H. Howard, P. Lloyd-Jones, G. Logan, C. Plumpton Walsh , S. Parker, J. Roberts, C. Rowe and S. Baker.

## REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met five times during the year. Set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on:

### **Skills for Growth**

The Board reviewed a number of Skills for Growth documents which have been produced by the Liverpool city Region (LCR) that provide an analysis on current and future skills and employment requirements in key growth sectors and flag up future priorities for the Liverpool City Region. The priorities that have been identified range from advanced and higher apprenticeships in engineering to digital and technology solutions. Other 'generic priorities' include digital skills, customer service and a shortage of science graduates and 'headline challenges' which include improved careers advice, tackling long term worklessness, and enhancing links between businesses and education providers.

### **Inward Investment Scrutiny Review Report and Recommendations**

The Board received a report on the recommendations of the Inward investment Scrutiny Topic Group. The report was commissioned as the Liverpool City Region together with the local authorities are looking at the current approach to inward investment and considering how a collaborative approach may make better use of limited resources going forward. The report makes a number of recommendations, including the development and implementation of an investment social media strategy to link Halton with export agencies from around the world and to pursue relationships and links with the top 50 employers in Halton to ensure retention and growth of the businesses. This will include skills development and working with planning to help enable businesses to physically expand and grow.

### **The Brindley Theatre**

The Board received a presentation on the Brindley Theatre, which outlined its recent successes and future priorities. The Board was advised that the Brindley was opened in September 2004 and consisted of a 420 seat theatre; a studio with 108 seats; an education room, gallery, café and bar. The Arts and Events Manager outlined the Venue's awards since its opening and the changes that had been made to the exterior and interior of the building to update and freshen its quality appeal. This included use of new ticketing software and highlighted examples of the Theatre's increased income and general running costs, for example lighting and marketing.

### **Library Service**

The Board received a presentation on the updated Library Service following the implementation of the efficiency review findings in April 2015. The efficiency review had seen savings of £450,000 and resulted in: the reduction in the opening hours of the Libraries; the cancellation of the mobile library; a new staff structure;

and the employment of 25 new staff. The Board were informed of three areas the library service were currently working on; helping to get people online including IT clinics in all libraries; providing a Community Library Service, which includes a pilot program of service delivery with care and residential homes and Learning in Libraries, which includes Lego clubs.

#### **Annual report on the Community Development Service**

A report was presented to the Board explaining the role of the Community Development service which supports the creation, development and sustainability of independent local community groups, which in turn generated the capacity for effective and inclusive community engagement with Council departments and services, thus enabling the delivery on many hundreds of community initiatives to tackle strategic objectives and community needs. The work of the Community Development Officers was explained in the report which went on to provide some examples of projects and groups that the team were working with and alongside across the Borough

#### **Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Work Programme Contract**

The Board received an overview of the DWP Work Programme Contract currently being delivered by Halton People into Jobs. In June 2011 Halton Borough Council entered into a subcontracting arrangement with two Prime Contractors (*Ingeus Deloitte* and *A4E*) who had been tasked with delivering the Department for Work and Pensions Work Programme over the next 4 to 5 years. The contract works through payment by results and performance is measured against the Priority Group (PG) customers. The Board were informed of income and expenditure; the lessons learnt to date and key strengths of the programme; and discussed the future strategic direction of the programme as it was currently in year 5. It is hoped that the contract would be extended to year 6.

#### **Liverpool Growth Hub Update**

Members of the Board were advised of the development and proposed implementation of the Liverpool City Region Growth Hub Brokerage Service in Halton. The creation of Growth Hubs is a Government initiative intended to; provide clarity, consistency and simplification across the business support agenda; increase the migration of business support from the public to the private sector; and provide gateway support; that is information, guidance and brokerage, to the business community.

#### **Merseyside Business Support Programme**

The Board considered a report which provided an update on the delivery of the Merseyside Business Support Programme within Halton. The objective of the Programme is to offer assistance to companies who had been trading for more than 12 months and who had the capacity to expand and increase their workforce. The support is provided by the Merseyside Business Support Programme with initial funding for Halton of £381,852.

#### **Riverside College**

The Board considered a presentation from the Principal of Riverside College, Mary Murphy, which outlined the College's strategic priorities and the quality of teaching and learning; enrolments; funding, and key developments. The presentation included information on achievements at Cronton Sixth Form College and Kingsway and provided case studies of A Level students; Vocational students; Adult students and apprentices working with local employers. The

College worked with 657 employers and community groups and other agencies across the Borough. It also employed 347 people and educated a total of 6,134 people in 2014-15.

### **European Programme 2014 – 2020**

Members of the Board were given an update on the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Programme 2014 to 2020, which included the context at a Liverpool City Region (LCR) level and also details on the funding bids Halton have been developing.

### **Growing Economic Prosperity in Halton Update**

The Board considered a report on business support activities that had been undertaken to support the growth of Halton's economy. This included the work of the Business Improvement and Growth Team (BIG) who have undertaken 'customer surveys' to better understand the needs of our businesses. The Business Improvement and Growth team has also applied a sectoral focus to some of the businesses it supports, maintaining a relationship management & account manager approach, improving communication with businesses through use of the Evolutive and delivering externally funded business support programmes.

### **Ways to Work Programme**

The board received an update on the The Ways to Work project which is a European funded employment support programme for newly unemployed 18-24 year olds in receipt of Job Seekers' Allowance and Halton is already exceeding the agreed targets. The Ways to Work project will enable an extension and a broadening of the Youth Employment Gateway to reach more residents.

The focus of the Ways to Work project is on young people and those furthest away from labour market.

The Ways to Work project advocates an individualised approach to supporting residents in overcoming barriers to work through offering a broad range of interventions. It is an inclusive programme designed to work with those with multiple barriers including care leavers, those with mental health issues and those with low levels of literacy and numeracy.

### **Community Centres Annual Report**

The Board received an annual report on Community Centres.

Community Centres service consisted of five buildings: Castlefields, Ditton, Grangeway, Murdishaw and Upton. The Centres deliver programmes of community activity, varying models of community cafes and service outlets, for example, a children's centre, youth centre and day services. The Centres provided a community hub, a central point at the heart of communities for residents to enjoy activities and receive services in their neighbourhoods. It was noted they were based in the most severely deprived wards in the Borough and were well utilised.

Members were advised that the Community Centres were benchmarked through APSE (the Association of Public Service Excellence) against other

Civic, Cultural and Community Venues owned and run by other local authorities.

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work, please contact Wesley Rourke on 0151 511 8645 or e-mail: [Wesley.rourke@halton.gov.uk](mailto:Wesley.rourke@halton.gov.uk)