

## **EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS, AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills, and Community Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 26 June 2017 in the Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes*

Present: Councillors MacManus (Chair), S. Baker, Cassidy, J Gerrard, Logan, C. Plumpton Walsh, June Roberts, Wallace and Rowe

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Edge and J. Lowe

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: W. Rourke, A. Jones, T. Leather, C. Patino, M. Patino and J. Unsworth

Also in attendance: M. Dodd – LCR Apprenticeship Hub and M. O’Carroll – The Women’s Organisation.

### **ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

*Action*

**ELS1 MINUTES**

The Minutes from the meeting held on 20 February 2017, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

**ELS2 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.

**ELS3 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES**

The Executive Board minutes relevant to the Employment, Learning and Skills, and Community PPB were submitted to the Board for information.

**ELS4 EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING, SKILLS AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD ANNUAL REPORT**

The Board received the Employment, Learning and Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board’s Annual Report for 2016-17.

The Chair wished to convey his thanks to the Vice Chair and all Members of the Board and Officers for their support throughout the year.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report is received.

ELS5 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY  
EMPLOYEES SUPPORT IN SKILLS (ESF) PROJECT  
OVERVIEW

The Board received an overview of the ESF Employees Support in Skills Project, which was managed by Halton's Employment, Learning and Skills Division on behalf of the Combined Authority. The presentation was made by Mel Dodd who was the Skills Strategic Manager for The Hub; the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Apprenticeship Hub.

Members were advised that in the summer of 2016 the Council submitted a competitive bid for a Skills Funding Agency ESF allocation of £875,000, on behalf of the Combined Authority, to deliver a series of Apprenticeship Hub related activities. The bid was successful and the contract was officially awarded in January 2017. The first meeting with the Skills Funding Agency (now the Education and Skills Funding Agency) took place in February 2017 to agree project details. Four staff members were then recruited to drive forward the project, which included Mel Dodd.

It was noted that Halton Borough Council already held the Chair position for the LCR Apprenticeship Hub and was responsible for the Hub's activities, and financial and personnel resources on behalf of the combined Authority and Local Enterprise Partnership.

The report explained how the young people and adults across Halton and the wider LCR had benefitted from an integrated programme of activity, led or supported by the LCR Apprenticeship Hub. The report provided examples of these. Ms Dodd went on to explain the aspirations of the Hub; its strategic priorities; and the three key areas of the *ESF Employees Support in Skills Contract and Deliverables* (20 x skills shows/events, 600 x targeted stakeholder engagement meetings and 10 events to articulate sector skills for growth agreements). The Apprenticeship qualification equivalents were also presented to the Board with the vision of the Hub by 2020.

The following was noted following Members queries:

- A school leaver wishing to apply for an apprenticeship would visit the Apprenticeship Hub website to register, or could telephone the office. They would receive help and support to apply for the vacancy they were interested in and advice would be provided if for example, they needed further education to qualify for an apprenticeship;
- There may be funding available for an employer who hired an apprentice;
- The Hub did work with other partners such as Job Centre Plus (JCP), the National Careers Service, local colleges and other learning providers;
- The Apprenticeship Levy was applied in May 2017 for the private and public sectors and the advantages of hiring apprentices was being highlighted in both sectors;
- A discussion around the lack of skilled workers for Daresbury Sci-Tech took place and some Members wished to comment that the Schools were letting the children down with regards to science subjects as they were not being taught; and
- The Apprenticeship Hub would host two large 'Skills Events Shows' this year with employers from the region; smaller events would take place in Halton;

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

## ELS6 COMMUNITY CENTRES

The Board received a report that presented them with information on the Council's Community Centres for the operating periods 2015-16 and 2016-17.

It was reported that the Community Centres service provided for the management and delivery of services from five buildings: Castlefields; Ditton; Grangeway; Murdishaw and Upton. The Centres' delivered programmes of community activity, community cafes and service outlets (children's centre, youth centre, day services). It was commented that the Centres provided a community hub, a central point at the heart of the communities within which they were located for residents to enjoy. It was noted that the facilities were well utilised.

The report provided Members with a summary of

performance since 2012-13: this included attendance data; net operating costs and income. The Community Centre profiles outlined in paragraph 4 included key performance indicators which illustrated the Centres' performance over a three year period. Graphs were used to present some of the information and demonstrate the direction of travel of the performance.

In summary it was noted that overall usage of the five community centres had increased marginally by 2,154 visits with a slight increase in income. However the net operating cost position for the service demonstrated the continuous improvement and overall efficiency of the service. It was reported that although it would be challenging, the ambition for the service was to continue this trend towards a zero net operating cost.

The report continued to explain the future plans for the centres with regards to marketing; increasing activity; website development and digital services.

Members agreed that the Community Centres were crucial to the communities that they served and perhaps the local communities could be canvassed to see what they wanted at their local Centre – to make suggestions, in an attempt to increase footfalls. It was noted that each area would have different ideas according to the demographics, but the needs of the communities they served should be met if possible.

It was also noted that the net operating costs for the year 2016-17 had dropped dramatically due to efficiency savings made that year through a staff restructure, resulting in one off savings.

RESOLVED: Members welcomed and noted the report.

#### ELS7 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AND GROWTH TEAM UPDATE ON WORK PRIORITIES

The Board received a presentation informing them about the current performance and future work priorities of the Business Improvement and Growth Team. The report reflected upon the changing nature of business support both nationally and across the Liverpool City Region (LCR).

The responsibilities of the Business Improvement and Growth Team were explained to Members. It was noted that the delivery of business support across the wider LCR was

in a period of transition. It was timely therefore to consider the broader range of activities undertaken by the Team and to identify the key priorities of the Team going forward and ensure that they are focused upon those activities which would have the greatest impact upon the economic regeneration of Halton.

Members wished to thank Wesley Rourke and Tim Leather and the Business Improvement and Growth Team for the work they do for the Council and the promotion of Halton as a business destination. The Officers advised that they were continually trying to embed themselves even more within the business community as there were opportunities for business improvement that had not yet been realised. Members were provided with examples of successful outcomes due to the involvement of the Team and examples of ongoing ones where the Team were currently working with them.

It was suggested by Members that the Business Improvement and Growth Team should have a bigger presence on the Council's website, so it was easier to find and draw attention to with perhaps a link to a promotional video for the LCR Growth Hub in Halton.

**RESOLVED:** That Members note the activities and performance of the Business Improvement and Growth Team, including the emerging delivery model which better reflects the priorities of the Council, seeking to align local delivery with emerging LCR business support delivery.

#### ELS8 PRESENTATION WOMEN'S ORGANISATION

The Board welcomed Maggie O'Carroll, Chief Executive Officer of the Women's Organisation. She gave a presentation to the Board outlining the work of the organisation and how it was being funded to deliver a wide range of business starts and provide self-employment advice to residents in Halton.

In summary she explained that the 'Enterprise Hub' was an integrated package of business support consisting of: awareness raising; one to one advice; start up skills development; mentoring/coaching; access to networks; access to finance; and business processes and infrastructure, eg ICT and policies.

It was reported that there was an 18,000 business start-up deficit within the Liverpool City Region (LCR) as a whole, and that the take up in Halton was particularly low.

She provided Members with some data relating to the business start-ups up to March this year and out of 145 people who registered with the Enterprise Hub in Halton, 67% of these were women. Out of 27 new businesses started, 74% of these were women.

She explained the services of the 'Better Off Finance' programme (lead by the Citizens' Advice Bureau) which was a personal programme of advice and support that helped people take control of money and improved their job prospects.

Ms O'Carroll requested that awareness of the Women's Organisation be raised within the departments of the Local Authority (LA) so that further links could be made within the LA, SME's and amongst the communities of Halton.

Following Members questions, the following additional information was given:

- Older people (50+) were starting up in business and the types of businesses being started had changed. For example there was a growth in more digital based companies in marketing, education, software development.
- It was noted that to run a business ie, be self-employed, was not for everyone so the Organisation helped people to decide if it was for them by presenting them with a walkthrough or process of what was involved and encouraged them to think realistically;
- Members suggested that perhaps the Women's Organisation could hold an event in conjunction with the Local Authority in the Halton Stadium to raise awareness locally.

RESOLVED: That the Board noted the presentation and action points.

#### ELS9 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORTS - QUARTER 3 AND QUARTER 4 OF 2016-17

The Board received the performance management reports for quarters 3 and 4 of 2016-17 and were requested to consider and raise any questions or points of clarification in respect of these. Members had received Quarter 3 in advance of the agenda as these were finalised in between

the Board meeting schedule.

It was noted that the key priorities for development or improvement in 2016-17 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans, for the various function areas reported to the Board as follows:

- Enterprise, Employment and Property Services; and
- Community and Environment

The report detailed progress against service objectives and milestones, and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

The following were highlighted from the reports:

- Officers wished to highlight that during June, July and August, there would be digital offers for school children in the summer programmes of the Libraries, which were free of charge;
- The reduction in the numbers of schools and nurseries engaged in family learning had dropped dramatically in quarter 4, Members raised concerns about this;
- The outcome of the revised Sci-Tech Skills Factory Capital Funding Bid was awaited;
- Congratulations were given to Chris Patino and his team on the success of the Elton John concert on 18 June; and
- Phil Redmond would be visiting the Borough and the Board would be invited to meet him.

RESOLVED: Quarters 3 and 4 2016-17 performance management reports be received.

*Meeting ended at 8.40 p.m.*