

REPORT TO: Employment Learning and Skills and
Community Policy Performance Board (PPB)

DATE: 24 June 2019

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Enterprise, Community
and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Economic Development

SUBJECT: Scrutiny Topic Group – “Better Jobs to Make Better
Lives”

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Members of the Employment Learning and Skills and Community Policy Performance the Final Report for the Scrutiny Topic Group “Better Jobs”. A detailed report is contained in appendix 1.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) Members approve the conclusions and recommendations presented in the report.**
- (2) The recommendations are presented to the Executive Board for consideration.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

During the last twelve months, Members of this PPB have been working on a Scrutiny Topic Group which has considered how and to what extent any jobs being created in the borough are accessible to local people. Within the context of this work, Members have evaluated the employment, learning and skills services provided by the Council, identifying the opportunities and challenges the Council faces in delivering these services, whilst taking into account the non-statutory nature of the these services.

The report acknowledges the positive work that the Council undertakes to support residents into training and or employment, but recognises that employees from outside the borough commute to take up higher paid job opportunities provided by Halton businesses. The report considers actions already being taken and further actions that could be implemented which would increase the number of residents accessing these jobs in the future.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

A wide range of research documents have been analysed and a number of conclusions and recommendations are put forward for consideration.

CONCLUSIONS

- Significant numbers of jobs are being created in the borough and, proportionately, Halton residents access the lower paid rather than the higher paid jobs. (The definitions are: “Low pay is defined as the value that is two-thirds of median hourly earnings and high pay is defined as the value that is 1.5 times median hourly earnings”).
- However, Halton when considering the annual survey of hours and earnings (2016), the borough has seen the largest increase in the LCR in both Full and Part time earnings for Halton residents over the past 5 years (higher than regional and national averages)
- It is apparent from the research undertaken by the topic group that there are a number of wider factors (health, skills, qualifications, access) that have a bearing on whether Halton residents would take up employment opportunities in the borough. This is evidenced by the comparative data which was analysed in respect of the borough’s disadvantaged and more affluent wards.
- The Topic Group concludes that the borough’s residents receive good support from the Council in accessing employment, learning and skills. This is evidenced by performance indicators showing the number of people who have been supported into work over a five – seven year period and presented to the PPB through quarterly monitoring reports.
- There are examples of specific community focused services provided by the Council and its partners aimed at encouraging residents to find training and employment.
- There are constraints that the Council faces in being able to deliver these services which are considered to be ‘non-statutory’. Whilst funding is available it is often time-limited and is focused on specific actions, and, therefore, less flexible.
- There is more promotional and marketing work that could be done to raise awareness of the employment, learning and skills services provided by the Council. A good example of where this has worked has been seen in the increase in enrolments on adult learning courses.

- Build on the analysis of, for example, of adult learning enrolment information and Households into Work data which would assist in better understanding how referrals/enquiries to Council services materialise (for example, word of mouth, marketing campaigns, and or direct referrals).
- However, the ability to do this is obviously determined by available resources. Furthermore, any increase in demand needs to be managed in line with existing resources and also in line with how the Council's Employment Learning and Skills division can procure and access support services, for example, IT, communications and marketing, alongside other competing Council priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made within the Topic Group report:

- Identify and work with recruitment agencies that operate outside the borough to encourage them to access a labour force from within Halton. (March 2020)
- Apply the learning from Public Health data collection and community engagement to gauge take up of Employment Learning and Skills services in the borough's disadvantaged areas. (September 2019)
- Awareness raising relating to employment learning and skills services provided – Develop Communications and an engagement plan. (March 2020). This could include actions such as:
 - Summarising HBC ELS services on business rates bills;
 - Posting messages via Member profiles on Facebook;
 - 'what businesses do' orientation boards in key employment areas; build on Hidden Halton theme raising the profile of 'unknown' businesses in the borough.
- Present an overview of the Sci-Tech Daresbury Talent Strategy to a future PPB (September 2019). This could include reference to how jobs in the medical services industry are promoted.
- Enrolment Data gathered by the Council's ELS Division is expressed as a proportion of the working age population and unemployment statistics rather than as raw percentages. (Now)
- Alignment with Business improvement and growth team with larger employers in terms of recruitment needs. (Now)
- Introduce new KPIs for the ELS and C PPB based on Topic Group conclusions (November as part of the business planning cycle). N.B. To set out targets that relate to an ambition to increase numbers of local residents accessing the better paid jobs

- Consider outsourcing of IT activities to specialist providers of IT in schools/colleges.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no further implications arising from this report. The recommendations reflect the challenging financial climate and it is considered that the recommendations made are deliverable with modest resources being made available through existing budgets.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Not applicable

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The scrutiny topic group report provides recommendations which support the Council's employment learning and skills priority.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Not applicable

6.4 A Safer Halton

Not applicable

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Not applicable

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

There are no risks identified in the report.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

There are no equality and diversity issues arising from the report.

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

None