

ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

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

APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020

**Introduction from Councillor Andrew MacManus
Chair of the Employment Learning, Skills and Community Policy Performance
Board**

During the past year as in previous years, we have seen economic uncertainty and reduced funding having a bearing on work priorities and areas of focus. In addition, some of our skills, employment and business support funding are aligned with the Liverpool City Region. However, we continue to ensure that Halton gets its fair share of funding support to ensure that we provide excellent services to our residents, businesses and communities. The topic group work referred to later in the report found the services were of a high standard.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank members for their valuable contributions and the support they have shown throughout the year. In addition, I thank members who have given up their time to serve on the scrutiny topic group.

I thank the officers for working with me and the Vice-Chair to develop an interesting and important range of agenda items for consideration.

At the time of writing the future is less certain than at any time in the living memory of many residents. The country left the European Union on the 31st January and we are in the trade negotiation phase with them and others. The outcome will have a material impact on our businesses and community.

Coronavirus has severely disrupted employment and businesses. The full impact of both of these is unknown.

I hope that the Board will continue to make an important contribution to creating an economically prosperous borough and improves the education, skills and employment prospects of our people in this challenging environment.

**Councillor Andrew MacManus
Chair, Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance
Board**

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2019/20, the Board comprised Councillors A. MacManus (Chair) C. Plumpton- Walsh (Vice Chair), J Bradshaw, L. Cassidy, R Leck, G. Logan, June Roberts, C. Rowe, A Telling, P Wallace and L Whitley.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The Board met four times during the year.

The Council's constitution sets out the Board's strategic priority is to develop policy and monitor performance in relation to the Council's objectives for employment, learning and skills in the borough.

Specifically in relation to 4 functions:

- Enterprise and employment
- Adult learning and skills
- Culture and leisure services
- Library Service

Set out below are the scrutiny activities we carried this year.

Enterprise and Employment

Liverpool City Region Growth Company

The Board received an update on the development of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Growth Company.

It was reported that in the spring of 2019, the LCR Combined Authority announced its intention to establish a special purpose delivery vehicle for economic growth, the Growth Company.

Members were advised that the primary focus of the Growth Company was to develop a step change to how the LCR maximised its growth potential in future years. In order to achieve this there was a need to develop a clearer and simpler model to support inward investment and business support in the City Region. It was also acknowledged that the success of the Company would require greater partnership working with a number of key institutions, notably local authorities; universities; colleges and the third sector. The proposals sought to strength further the links between the Combined Authority and Local Enterprise Partnership.

The report described the areas that could be delivered through this vehicle. This topic will be revisited at a future board.

Employment Learning and Skills Update

It was reported that the Employment, Learning and Skills Division sat within the wider Economy, Enterprise and Property Department and consisted of the following services:

- Adult community learning
- Family Learning
- Halton Employment Partnership and Employability Programmes
- Halton People into Jobs, delivering on the following contracts:
 - DWP Work and Health Programme
 - DWP Households into Work
 - DWP/ESF Ways to Work; and
 - ESF/Big Lotto Digital Inclusion Project
- Liverpool City Region (LCR) Apprenticeship Hub (managed on behalf of the Combined Authority).

It was noted that the services that the division delivered were 100% externally funded for the past 5+ years by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Education and Skills Funding Agency. Additionally, the division had been successful in being awarded European Social Funds (ESF) to deliver a number of projects.

The report provided Members with updates relating to:

- Devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB);
- Skills Capital;
- ESF Calls; and
- The Skills and Apprenticeship Hub.

Members noted the introduction of new courses teaching website design, marketing/digital advertising and marketing with film, which would fill a gap that existed in these areas. They also welcomed the bid that was being made by Halton on behalf on the LCR for the National Youth Employment Initiative funding.

Economic Progress and Economic Profile

A report on Halton's current economic profile and an update on developments in the economy in recent years was presented.

In summary, the update included: The Economic Overview; Enterprise and Jobs; The Resident Population; Skills; and Land, Infrastructure and Transport.

The current economic profile was described and officers presented an assessment based upon the information provided as an evidence base for '*Halton 2030*' which is a vision for how Halton's economy would look in the future, set out the future challenges and how the Borough might respond to these challenges.

Business Growth Programme Update

The Board was advised on the changes from Phase 1 of the LCR Integrated Business Support Programme through to Phase 2, now named as the Business Growth Programme (BGP), and the nature of support across the Liverpool City Region.

It was reported that it was proposed to extend the Programme and if this was successful Phase 3 would commence January 2022. The programme met a distinct gap in the current business support delivery positioned between pre start / start up / post start up delivered by others within the LCR. Further, supporting Phase 3 of the BGP would align with the Council's priorities in improving the economic growth by aiding SME's within Halton to grow, develop, become more sustainable and increase jobs.

Further to Members' queries, the following information was added:

- A risk analysis was done once a year using the Local Economic Assessment
- Some SME's failed in their first 3 years of trading; accurate statistics relating to Halton would be available later and reported to the Board
- SME survival rates in the Borough were comparable and slightly exceeded the LCR average
- Information on job numbers and types of business were provided in the monthly economic report produced by the council's Customer Intelligence Unit.

LCR Local Industrial Update

This provided an update in respect of the emerging Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) for the LCR and highlighted its emerging importance in being used to determine how future resources from Government might be allocated.

Following on from the Government's Industrial Strategy White Paper, *Building a Britain fit for the future*, published on 27 November 2017, devolved areas such as the LCR were invited to develop their own LIS.

The Board was advised that a working draft of the LIS was produced before Christmas 2019 and was currently being updated. Further comments and input from partners, including local authorities, was being sought. The vision for the LCR as outlined in the LIS was provided in the report together with its aims by 2040.

Delivering the Hydrogen Economy NW Event Report

A report was presented on the *Delivering the Hydrogen Economy North West* Event, held at The Heath Business and Technical Park on Wednesday 5 June 2019.

A presentation was made to members to accompany this and described the various schemes and funding applications currently being advanced across the LCR and the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership area, and the likely impact upon the economy of Halton of the development of a hydrogen economy locally.

Members noted the significance of the development of a hydrogen economy locally and the contribution likely to be made to the decarbonisation of industry, the creation and sustainability of local employment and a range of significant positive public health outcomes.

One Front Door – Liverpool City Region’s Inward Investment Service

The Board received a report which updated them on the *One Front Door* for the LCR, a new delivery model for engaging with new prospective investors.

Members were advised that the Inward Investment Service was the approach taken within the LCR to attracting investment into the area and with intense demand for investment among city regions, it was crucial that the approach taken was as effective and efficient as possible.

The report discussed the LCR approach, its success and recent activities such as the review which started at the end of 2017.

Adult Learning & Skills Development

LCR Apprenticeship Hub: Apprenticeship growth Plan 2018-2020 and ESF Employees Support in Skills Contract

The Board received a presentation on behalf of the LCR Apprenticeship Hub Skills Strategy Manager. This gave an overview on progress to date against the LCR’s Apprenticeship Growth Plan 2018 – 2020 and a review of the ESF Employees Support in Skills contract, awarded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

It was noted that the LCR’s Apprenticeship Hub had operated since 2011 and was a good example of close collaborative and partnership work that existed within the region. Halton Borough Council operate the scheme across the region on behalf of the LCR.

The presentation provided information on what the Apprenticeship Hub was, as well as information on:

- The ESF Employees Support in Skills Contract and deliverables
- Key successes of the Hub
- Events and activities happening locally in Halton
- The LCR Apprenticeship Ambassador Network;
- The LCR Skills show 201
- The priorities of the Apprenticeship Growth Plan 2018-2020;
- Progress on the Apprenticeship Growth Plan 2018-2020 so far
- The next steps for the Apprenticeship Hub.

Members commented it was useful to have an outside and impartial body visiting the schools to explain apprenticeships. It was also noted that Halton had hosted the Apprenticeship Hub for a number of years despite being the smallest local authority; Members praised the work and skills of officers in respect to this.

Presentation: Sci-Tech Daresbury Talent and Skills

The Board received a report from Mr Phil Atkinson of the Science Technology Facilities Council, who presented an update on the development of the Talent and Skills Strategy at Sci-Tech Daresbury.

The Talent and Skills Strategy responded to the objective of growing the campus to 10,000 – 15,000 people by 2037. The Strategy helped understand what the skills challenges were, how interventions would benefit the campus and what evidence was available to support these interventions. Further, the aim of the strategy was to attract, develop and retain the wide range of sector talent and skills essential to Sci-Tech Daresbury, Halton, the LCR and beyond.

It was noted that the focus would be to enable science and technology companies on the campus to readily access the talent and skills necessary, to enable their growth and to scale up. The report provided details of the focus of the strategy, its actions and the intended outcomes.

Following Members' questions, the following additional information was noted:

- A jobs portal was being developed as part of the strategy and a link to jobs/careers would be on the Daresbury Sci-Tech website as well. The Divisional Manager for Employment, Learning and Skills also received job vacancy alerts from Daresbury Sci-Tech which were circulated locally;
- One aspect of the strategy was to give advice to SME's that were struggling to expand due to lack of locally skilled staff;
- Outreach work within the community was being focussed to highlight the opportunities available to young people by involving local schools, teachers and parents etc. Open days at the site had taken place previously and more were planned in the future.

Apprenticeship Update

This provided an update on the new Skills and Apprenticeship Hub and the Apprenticeship Ambassador Programme launched in January 2019.

It was reported that following a recent successful funding application, the LCR Combined Authority was bringing together under the umbrella of a new 'Skills and Apprenticeship Hub' the expertise of the existing Apprenticeship Hub, the City Region's Skills for Growth Service, and the work of the Combined Authority around specific sectors and careers.

The Service is in place from 1 November 2019 and has 5 main functions. These were outlined in the report with the management and delivery arrangements.

The following comments were made following presentation of the report:

- It was good to see older people (25+) doing apprenticeships as some were not ready to take an apprenticeship straight from school, so it was an option for them later on in life.
- It was also encouraging to see that some people were continuing up to higher levels within their apprenticeships.
- The importance of Riverside College in ensuring that students were 'job ready' was discussed.
- The number of older people retraining to follow different career paths.
- The workforce requirements of companies within the Borough were shared with the Council and the College, so that skills and qualifications shortages could be identified and could be focussed upon.
- Members requested to know how many apprenticeships were completed and how many apprentices actually secured employment from them.
- Members requested a breakdown of apprenticeships for Halton and how many of those were school leavers.

Family Learning Provision in Halton

A report and accompanying presentation provided an overview of the provision of family learning within children's centres and primary schools across Halton. Members were advised that Halton's Employment, Learning and Skills Division delivered a range of adult learning programmes within primary schools and children's centres linked to supporting the aims and objectives of the TALK Halton project and the Halton Reading Strategy.

In response to Member's queries/comments, the following additional information was provided:

- There were children from the Troubled Families Programme accessing the family learning services mainly from the children's centres;
- Staff would carry out a data capture exercise in relation to numbers of troubled families taking part in Family Learning;
- Some parents were unaware of the service and some perhaps felt intimidated to ask for help. Marketing of the Family Learning Programme was carried out via emails and leaflets in children's centres and schools. Staff also identified need where possible and often spoke to parents in the playground;
- Adult learning provision was free to anyone where the household income was below £17,400;
- The number of schools offering the service had increased over the last couple of years with nearly all primary schools are now accessing the service;
- The staff who delivered the service were qualified primary school teachers.
- It was noted that the funding for the Family Learning provision in schools and notice of further funding would be available soon. Family Learning in children's centres was grant funded by the Department for Education and was due to end in June 2020 with no alternative funding made available yet.

Presentation Riverside College

The Board welcomed the Principal from Riverside College, Mary Murphy, who presented an overview of the College's strategic priorities, quality of teaching, enrolments, funding and key developments.

Members welcomed the information provided and were pleased to note the College's successes and examples of case studies where students had gained entry to Universities throughout the country or were successful in securing permanent employment.

The following items represent the 'community' areas of the PPB's work

Culture and Leisure Services

Sport and Recreation Team Annual Report for 2018/19

The Board received the report and accompanying presentation.
The team has two distinct areas:

- The Sports Development Team
- Management of the council's 3 leisure centres – Kingsway Leisure Centre, Brookvale Recreation Centre and Runcorn Swimming Pool.

The report outlined the responsibilities for the team and their day to day duties and presented information on local projects being delivered under six Themes: Increasing Participation and Widening Access; Club Development; Coach Education and Volunteering and Sporting Excellence.

Members welcomed the presentation and the following comments were made in response to questions:

- The Sports Development Team went into schools to promote the service and facilities available to students in the Borough
- The 'teen-gym' (11-15 year olds) was explained
- Despite ongoing maintenance issues Runcorn Swimming Pool would remain open
- The plans for a new leisure centre in Widnes were welcomed but the need for a new one in Runcorn was also recognised
- Brookvale Leisure Centre would be upgraded in the future
- The need to retain and develop staff was a priority and retention plans were being looked at
- Feedback was requested from customers who did not renew or cancelled their memberships
- The leisure market was becoming more competitive year after year and ongoing challenges that were faced with the recruitment of skilled staff and attracting custom because of this were recognised.

Community Development Service Annual Report for 2018/19

It was noted that the Community Development Service helped support local community groups and organisations with their formation and facilitated the delivery of community led initiatives and activities.

The team also had a combined role in managing Area Forum projects delivery, enabling elected members to respond to community concerns and aspirations. This combined role generated effective community engagement with council departments, services and partner organisations and contributed to building resilience in Halton's communities.

The report set out how the Community Development Team officers worked within their respective neighbourhoods and described the relationships fostered over the years.

The amount of funding from external sources in the year 2018/19 had increased considerably from the year before, this was welcomed by members. Examples were also provided of projects and groups that the service were working in partnership with across the Borough.

Detailed information was provided on projects funded through the Area Forums, which included the costs and areas of the council's priorities and where the spend had been made for each.

The consensus of the Board was that the work, knowledge and guidance provided by the Community Development Team was invaluable to members and assisted in the harnessing of community spirit within their respective wards.

Community Centres Annual Report for 2019/20

The report covered the period April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

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 activities with varying models of community cafes and service outlets. It was noted that these centres provided a community hub, a central point at the heart of the communities where they were located, for residents to enjoy chosen activities and receive services in their neighbourhoods.

Members were provided with a summary of service performance that included centre usage and operating costs. The report went on to include the profile for each community centre that included key performance indicators to illustrate the performance of each over a three year period.

The Brindley Theatre

The Board received a presentation from the Brindley Arts and Events Manager that included an update on the theatre's successes and future priorities.

Information was provided on external and internal improvements since 2017, the new website, how income was generated, how customers bought their tickets, and future regeneration opportunities. It was noted that 50% of the Brindley's customers were from outside the Borough.

Members discussed the possibility of using the green space outside The Brindley for outdoor events in the future; an area that benefits from being in the town centre and with free parking. This site was being surveyed in order to progress this. The possibility of encouraging inward investors to the Town Centre was discussed and the Operational Directors, Environment and Community, and Economy, Enterprise and Economy were working collaboratively on this.

Members welcomed the positive progress being made to promote The Brindley Theatre as an important visitor destination.

Borough of Culture Consultation

The Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, invited Members to attend a consultation that will explore the themes identified for Halton's Borough of Culture Year in 2021.

The Board was advised that the award of LCR Borough of Culture was inspired by the UK City of Culture Programme that followed Liverpool's European Capital of Culture in 2008.

It was noted that the Borough of Culture initiative was a non-competitive process that would rotate round the LCR with the aim of encouraging each borough to develop collaboratively its local talent and potential, whilst reflecting the ambitions and aims of the Regional Culture and Creativity Strategy which looked to build sustainable capacity across the City Region.

Further, Members were advised the aim of Halton's Borough of Culture Year was to increase participation in quality cultural activity across Halton. This would help more people to experience the arts and to benefit from the role that culture could play in transforming lives, improving health and wellbeing, reduce social isolation, increase community cohesion, inspire creativity, support learning and making Halton a great place to live and work. This would be delivered under the banner of 'Celebrate Halton' and would look to celebrate the borough's past, present and future, through a programme of activity ranging from small community led activities to large scale events which would bring in national and international artists.

Following Member's discussion the following information was noted:

- Funding of £200k was available for Halton's Borough of Culture Year
- Halton has had its own talented artists and these would be identified and invited to join in the celebrations
- Many community groups had expressed an interest in taking part in the consultation, which could be arranged

- A previous year's topic group was focussed on culture; the findings of which would be revisited and hopefully used
- It was important that local people were aware of the historical heritage and culture of where they lived but many did not. It was hoped that this event would inspire and appeal to all people and communities
- It was agreed that this opportunity needed to be maximised for the legacy of the borough and for the younger generation, so input from everyone was welcomed.

It was confirmed that due to the Election on 12 December, the original date of the consultation event had been cancelled. Once the new date was known, Members would be advised.

Library Service

The annual report was delayed this year and is due to be presented at the first meeting in 2020/21 year.

Topic Group

The topic this year was *Better Jobs for Better Lives*. The report and recommendations were presented to the Executive Board.

Significant numbers of jobs are being created in the borough and, proportionately, Halton residents access the lower paid rather than the higher paid jobs. Employees from outside the borough take up higher paid job opportunities provided by Halton businesses.

The Topic Group worked to identify why and how this could be changed.

The Topic Group considered to what extent jobs being created in the borough are accessible to local people.

Members evaluated the employment, learning and skills services provided by the council, identifying the opportunities and challenges the council faces in delivering these services. The report acknowledged the positive work that the council undertakes to support residents into training and employment.

The report considered actions already taken and further actions that could be implemented which would increase the number of residents accessing better jobs in the future.

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. However, the ability to do this is 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 alongside other competing Council priorities.

Performance Report

At each meeting the Board receive this report that informs them of emerging issues and the performance of the Council in meeting the Key Performance Indicators. The later feed out of the annual business plan.

The Board received a report on the progress being made on the 2020/2023 Business Plan.

Policy Update Report

Again at each meeting the board receive a briefing on national and regional policies that might affect the areas covered by the Board.
