

## **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, 28 June 2021 in The Bridge Suite, Halton Stadium*

Present: Councillors Jones (Chair), E. Cargill (Vice-Chair), Begg, M. Bradshaw, Dourley, S. Hill and Teeling

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Logan, C. Plumpton Walsh, Stretch and Whitley

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: W. Rourke, A. Jones, C. Patino, S. McDonald, L. Carr and J. Griffiths

Also in attendance: None

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

		<i>Action</i>
ELS1	MINUTES  The Minutes from the meeting held on 8 February 2021, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
ELS2	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME  The Board was advised there were no public questions.	
ELS3	EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING, SKILLS AND COMMUNITY PPB ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21  The Board received the Employment, Learning and Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board's Annual Report for 2020/21.  On behalf of his predecessor the Chair wished to convey his thanks to all Members of the Board and Officers for their support throughout the year.  RESOLVED: That the Annual Report for 2020-21 be received.	

#### ELS4 PRESENTATION CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU

The Board received a presentation from Mr Hitash Patel, from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), regarding activities that the Organisation was delivering in Halton.

He introduced CAB as an independent organisation set up as a Charity in 1949. They specialised in providing information and advice to assist people with legal matters, benefits, debt, consumer matters, immigration, housing and homelessness, employment and employment training, budgeting and child protection. He tabled a leaflet for Members information that gave a summary of the services and provided some key statistics in relation to their clients.

It was noted that the CAB was a free, confidential and impartial service that was delivered primarily by highly trained volunteers, many of who went on to paid work either with CAB or in the wider community.

Mr Patel discussed the most requested services and gave examples of how a person often presents with one problem that might lead to another. He also discussed the excellent partnerships CAB had with Halton Borough Council, Halton People into Jobs, the CCG and the Food and Hygiene Banks. Mr Patel had also highlighted that the CAB was fortunate to have received European Social Funding in the past, and more recently Covid winter grants from the Council, which had helped enormously.

Further to Members questions, the following information was also noted:

- The service was always oversubscribed which led to a wait time for staff to reply to clients;
- The phone line was a Freephone Service;
- CAB had identified office space in Runcorn so that this office could reopen in the future; and
- Approximately 40 staff in total currently worked at the Bureau.

On behalf of the Board the Chair commended the work of the Citizens Advice Bureau in the Borough.

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

#### ELS5 WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE ELSC PPB

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director

– Enterprise, Community and Resources, which proposed a work programme for the Board for the 2021-22 Municipal Year.

The report also discussed the intention to invite external partners to present to the Board on their topics and also gave examples of locations for study visits that could be made by Members between Board meetings, subject to Covid restrictions. One Member requested to add the Runcorn Station Quarter and Astmoor Industrial Estate to the list of locations.

Two suggestions were made for a work topic: *Business Support* and *Health and Wellbeing and Employability*. Officers provided further details of each topic and after debate Members made a preference towards the latter.

It was noted that during study visits, officers would endeavour to include some element/s of the *Business Support* topic within these.

RESOLVED: That the Board agrees the preferred option for a work topic is Health and Wellbeing and Employability and that all Board Members be invited to participate.

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#### ELS6 DWP RESTART PROGRAMME

The Board considered a report which provided information regarding the introduction of the Government's Restart Programme.

It was reported that the new £2.9 billion Restart scheme was announced at the Spending Review on 25 November 2020, as part of the *Commercial Agreement for Employment and Health Related Services (CAEHRS)* Framework and Restart Programme. The Restart Programme would provide intensive and tailored support to unemployed people.

Members were advised that the Council's Employment, Learning and Skills (ELS) Division would deliver the Programme on a sub-contractor basis and that in April 2021, G4S were awarded the Restart Programme prime contract for CPA3 (North West).

The report discussed the details of the contract including income and expenditure costs. It was noted that the Programme offered 'Payment by Results' which were

received upon the achievement of sustained job outcomes. So providers would be incentivised to help as many people as possible into sustained employment – the more people helped to sustain employment the more outcome payments received.

Further to Members comments on the Programme, it was noted that this Programme was using a different approach than ones used previously with similar Programmes by the DWP, in that participation would be encouraged on a voluntary basis initially for the client.

Members welcomed the fact that the Council was delivering the Restart Programme on behalf of the DWP rather than a private company.

RESOLVED: That the Board notes the report and that the Restart Programme would be delivered by the Council's ELS Division on a sub-contractor basis.

#### ELS7 UPDATE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENTS AND GROWTH TEAM

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided an update on key activities being undertaken and / or overseen by the Council's Business Improvement and Growth Team during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was noted that since March 2020, most of the Team had been working on supporting local businesses during the pandemic and activities had been changed to reflect this. Some generic business support had continued and the report included an update on:

- the Liverpool City Region Hospitality and Leisure Grants (HLG);
- the Growth Platform; and
- One Front Door.

It was reported that 1,671 grants totalling £3,934,764.97 had been awarded to date and a breakdown of the applications approved and total funds paid to each group was presented to Members.

Members welcomed the activities carried out to help Halton's business during this unprecedented time and examples of positive feedback from clients were heard at the meeting. Concerning queries on the potential for fraudulent claims being made, Halton was able to confirm that none

had been fraudulent so far. It was recognised that nationally, millions of pounds of fraud had been identified in this area, but due to the rigorous checks that were made by the Team in Halton, this was not the case here.

The Chair commented that these grants had clearly helped businesses and the local economy, and gave thanks on behalf of the Board to the whole Team for their work in managing the process.

RESOLVED: That Members note the activities and performance of the Business Improvement and Growth Team and how this aligned with wider national and city region strategies.

## ELS8 BUSINESS GROWTH PROGRAMME

Members considered a report of the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided an update on the Business Growth Programme (BGP), which was being undertaken by the Council's Business Improvement Growth Team.

Most of the Team had been working on supporting local businesses during the pandemic and activities had been changed to reflect this. However, the BGP was one of the service areas that had been protected and continued in its current form.

It was reported that the BGP had been supporting Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) that delivered Business to Business, across the Halton Region since January 2013. As part of the Liverpool City Region's (LCR) Growth Hub Programme, it supported businesses by offering fully funded specialist support through ERDF and Council funding.

It was noted that phase 2 of the BGP ends on 31 December 2021 and the Council has been informed by the combined Authority that Halton will not be included in the bid for a phase 3 extension, as there was no ERDF funding available.

The report outlined the type of support offered, targets and performance to date. An internal evaluation of the BGP had also been undertaken and the key findings were presented to Members.

The Board agreed the importance of the need to continue with the Business Growth Programme, as it was a

valuable service for the businesses within Halton and agreed to lobby for a continuation of this.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the performance of the Business Growth Programme and agree to lobby for a continuation of the Programme.

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#### ELS9 BOROUGH OF CULTURE

The Board considered a report that provided an update on the Borough of Culture project.

It was reported that the award of Liverpool City Region Borough of Culture was inspired by the UK City of Culture programme that followed Liverpool's European Capital of Culture in 2008. The new initiative launched in 2018 as Liverpool celebrated its 10 Anniversary as the UK's only European Capital of Culture.

The Borough of culture was a non-competitive process that rotated around the City Region with the aim of encouraging each Borough to collaboratively develop 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.

The report outlined the aims of the programme and the five key elements being weaved into the creativity programme. It also highlighted the aims of Halton's Borough of Culture year. The operational side of the programme, the Celebrate Halton Programme (appended to the report) and aspects relating to funding and marketing were also presented in the report.

Members discussed the programme of events that were planned and hoped to be taking place, Covid restrictions permitting. It was with great sadness that the Bridge Event, scheduled for 26 June 2021, had to be postponed due to rising numbers of infections in the Borough. The Board remained positive that the remainder of the schedule of events will be able to proceed and they looked forward to attending them.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

#### ELS10 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 4 OF 2020/21

The Board received the performance management

reports for Quarter 4 of 2020-21 (1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021) and were requested to consider and raise any questions or points of clarification in respect of these.

It was noted that the key priorities for development of improvement in 2019-20 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans for the various function areas reported to the Board as follows:

- Enterprise, Employment and Skills; 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.

It was recognised by the Board that due to the unprecedented circumstances we have found ourselves in for the past 18 months, the performance data is understandably not what it could be.

One Member queried the permitted work hours by the DWP; this would be sent following the meeting as the information was not at hand.

Members commented on the importance of the Stadium as a venue for the vaccination programme for the NHS and furthermore it has enabled the Council to conduct its business over the past couple of months, since the change in meeting legislation for local authorities. It was also noted that the waste and recycling collection services and catering services had continued throughout the pandemic.

Members offered their thanks to the staff at the Stadium and within the whole Directorate who have worked to ensure the success of these activities.

RESOLVED: That the Quarter 4 Performance Management reports be received.

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*On behalf of the Board the Chair passed on thanks to Chris Patino, Operational Director for Community and Environment, for his loyalty and dedication in his role to the benefit of the Borough of Halton. He has a record to be proud of and we wish him a very happy healthy retirement.*

*Meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.*