

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, 31 January 2022 in the Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Jones (Chair), E. Cargill (Vice-Chair), Begg, Logan, Stretch and Aimee Teeling

Apologies for Absence: Councillor M. Bradshaw, S. Hill, C. Plumpton Walsh and Whitley

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: W. Rourke, A. Jones, S. Saunders, P. Wright, S. Wilson and J. Griffiths

Also in attendance: One member of the press

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
ELS17 MINUTES	
The Minutes from the meeting held on 20 September 2021, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
ELS18 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.	
ELS19 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
The minutes relating to the Employment, Learning and Skills and Community Portfolio, that were considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of this Board, were attached at appendix 1 for information.	
ELS20 BOROUGH OF CULTURE UPDATE	
The Board received a report of the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided an interim review of the Borough of Culture Project; this was supported by a presentation.	

The award of the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Borough of Culture was inspired by the UK City of Culture Programme, that followed Liverpool's European Capital of Culture in 2008. This new initiative was launched in 2018, as Liverpool celebrated its 10th Anniversary as the UK's only European Capital of Culture.

Members were advised that the Borough of Culture initiative was non-competitive and rotated around the Boroughs of the LCR. Its overall aim was to stimulate talent, aspiration and promote creativity and economic growth through cultural engagement and activity across the City Region. Each borough was required to weave five key elements into their creative programme – these were presented in the report.

Halton's Borough of Culture year had been delivered under the banner '*Celebrate Halton*' – celebrating Halton's past, present and future, through a diverse programme of activity.

The report and presentation gave details of the Celebrate Halton Programme which included 500 activities 200 artistic/creative events, and described its outputs and outcomes so far. It was announced that the *Celebrating Halton's Heritage* public programme had started this month, focussing on 'trades' in Halton from the 1500's to the present day, and would continue for another 6 months.

Members welcomed the update and positive responses and participation from residents and all partners across the Borough, such as the Catalyst and Norton Priory Museums and many more. Some Members had attended events themselves and agreed that despite the challenges faced by Covid, the events were well attended, successful and enjoyable for the community. The Board also recognised the efforts from staff and volunteers who contributed to the success of the Borough of Culture so far, and it was hoped that events that were cancelled due to the pandemic, would be rescheduled at some time in the future.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

ELS21 HALTON'S WELCOME BACK PROGRAMME

The Board received a presentation and update on the *Welcome Back Programme* and how it had been delivered in Halton.

The Board was advised that the Welcome Back Programme was funding received by Councils to build on the Reopening High Streets Safety Fund (RHSSF) in 2020; Halton's allocation of this was £114,260 and an allocation of £179,260 was made for the Welcome Back Fund (WBF), giving a total budget for Halton of £293,520 to deliver the project.

Members heard how this funding had been used, in line with the grant criteria, to meet various activity strands, such as developing an action plan for the safe reopening of local economies; this and other activity strands were outlined in the report and elaborated on in the presentation.

Further to Members questions, the following information was provided:

- No additional staff were recruited to lead the delivery of the project; which was primarily delivered using existing resources. However a part time existing HBC officer was offered an additional one day per week for 7 months to support the project liaising between partners and HBC Officers;
- Town Centres' were seeing an increase in footfall more recently;
- The project was originally due to end in March 2021 but it was extended to March 2022; and
- There were no further plans to extend the Programme beyond this date but businesses would still have the support of the Council.

The Board recognised the enormity of the task for staff of delivering the Programme and passed on thanks to the Team involved in its success.

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

ELS22 APPRENTICESHIP SUPPORT BY BE MORE UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, that provided an overview on the Apprenticeship Support by the Be More contract, managed by Halton Borough Council on behalf of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) Skills and Apprenticeship Hub (SAH).

Members were advised that the Apprenticeship Support (AS) by the Be More Team was a delivery partner, managed by Halton's Employment, Learning and Skills

Division. The service provided free information, advice and guidance (IAG) about apprenticeships to schools, young people, parents and residents. The contract was currently under a Service Level Agreement from November 2019 to September 2022.

The report discussed the current service delivery outputs in relation to the delivery of promotional events on apprenticeships and one to one support, and advice and guidance interventions provided to residents. It also advised on how the IAG sessions were moved to virtual platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic, to enable the continuation of the service. Additionally, the report outlined forthcoming events and projects planned this year and the progress made in updating the Be More portal. It was hoped that the portal would be relaunched in May 2022.

The Chair advised that unfortunately the accompanying presentation to this report had to be deferred, but would be rescheduled on a future agenda with an update on the Service.

Members agreed that the continuation of funding for Halton for the Apprenticeship Support by the Be More Team was greatly needed in order to make a success of the apprenticeship service and supported continued lobbying for this.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

ELS23 LIBRARY SERVICE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which gave an update on the Library Service.

It was reported during the pandemic all library buildings were closed to the public and staff from 23 March 2020 and activities were moved to digital platforms. Following this an intensive social media campaign was used to engage audiences and highlight digital resources to new and existing customers – there was a 350% increase in new members during the first lockdown. The *Home Library Service* and *Choose and Collect Service* had both proved to be valuable and popular with residents during the pandemic, especially for those who were isolated, vulnerable or shielding.

Since July 2020 Halton's libraries were reopened to the public as restrictions were lessening, and activities were

added in line with Government guidance. An update was provided on the activities within the Library Service since November 2021. Members discussed the challenges and constraints of delivering the Service as it recovered from the impacts of the pandemic. They also noted the positive response from the public and that the library service was still greatly valued in the community. It was also noted that schools had restarted their visits.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair requested that their thanks be conveyed to the Library staff.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ELS24 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS UPDATE

The Board received a report updating them on a number of employment and skills developments in the Liverpool City Region (LCR).

These in included:

- The Adult Education Budget (AEB) Procurement;
- LCR Skills Show and Apprenticeship Graduation Ceremony;
- The Apprenticeship Support by Be More Team; and
- The LCR Insights Tool.

Arising from the update, Members discussed:

- The diverse demographic in Halton considering its small size and the problems people had in more deprived wards in accessing these services because they did not have a car for example;
- Citizens' Advice Bureau and the 'Big Local' were named as organisations who may be able to provide some funds to help people with transport;
- Housing Associations often support residents to access employment and training support;
- Previous outreach events in the community and schools;
- The targeting of schools in promoting the services in future;
- The encouragement of local people to register with local recruitment agencies as opposed to those out of Borough;
- The cessation of the funding for the Apprenticeship Support by the Be More Team in September 2022 and the need for this to be continued; and

- The rescheduled 'Skills Show' now moved to 1 and 2 March 2022 – Members were welcome to attend this.

One Member requested data on the gender proportions that applied for different types of apprenticeships, in particular engineering. This information was not at hand but could be obtained from the LCR database, so would be sent following the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the information and comments made be noted.

Operational Director Economy, Enterprise & Property -

ELS25 NEW LEISURE SERVICE DIVISION

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided an update on the creation of a new Leisure Services Division as part of a restructure that had taken place within the Community and Environment Department.

Members were advised that following the appointment of a new Operational Director, a review was undertaken of the existing structure of the Department. It was considered that the existing structure no longer fitted the way in which the Council organised its portfolios and there were anomalies in terms of reporting.

The Community and Environment Department is one of the largest in the Council and due to this, the restructure would need to be done in phases. Phase one was completed and the new structure for Community and Environment Department was presented in the report, showing the new Leisure Service Division within this. The Leisure Services Division consisted of: Brindley Theatre and Events; Community Centres; Leisure Centres and Sports Development Team; and Libraries.

It was noted that there would be future phases of restructure within this Community and Environment Department in the coming months and the Board would be updated accordingly.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Operational Director Community & Environment -

ELS26 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS - QUARTER 2 OF 2021/22

The Board received the Performance Management reports for Quarter 2 of 2021-22 (1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021) and were requested to consider and raise any

questions or points of clarification in respect of these.

The key priorities for development of improvement in 2021-22 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 noted that due to the cancellation of the November Board meeting, these reports were emailed to Members on 1 November 2021. As the quarter 3 reports would be ready soon, these would be sent in advance of the next Board meeting in June.

RESOLVED: That the second quarter Performance Management reports be received.

Meeting ended at 8.05 p.m.