

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 17 November 2008 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Jones (Chairman), Fraser (Vice-Chairman), Austin, M. Bradshaw, Findon, Howard, Rowe and Stockton

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Edge, Parker and Worrall

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: I. Atherton, H. Cockcroft, G. Collins, S. Davies, L. Derbyshire, N. Goodwin, L. Holland and A. Villiers

Also in attendance: In Accordance with Standing Order 33 - Councillor McInerney, Portfolio Holder, Children & Young People

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

ELS18 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 29th September 2008, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

ELS19 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was reported that no public questions had been received.

ELS20 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The minutes of the Executive Board relating to the work of the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy Performance Board were submitted for information.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

ELS21 SSP MINUTES

The Board received the minutes of the Specialist Strategic Partnership Board (SSP), relating to the Board's

remit, for comments and information.

Arising from the discussion the following points were noted:-

- It was suggested that in relation Minute 3.2 (a) Skills – 100 apprenticeships – the word was not precise enough and consideration be given to being more specific to reflect the range of businesses and different skill levels;

It was reported that this comment would be raised at the next SSP meeting on 27th November 2008 for consideration;

- Concern was raised that the minutes contained a considerable amount of jargon which made them difficult to understand;

In response, it was reported that the jargon would be removed from the next SSP minutes for presentation to the next meeting of the Board.

- It was suggested that, if available, a transcript of a BBC Radio 4 Programme relating to Incapacity Benefit be obtained and circulated to all Members;
- It was agreed that a report be presented to the Board in January outlining all the projects commissioned by the SSP; and
- Concern was raised at the lack of consultation and details on the Riverside College proposals to have a learning resource at the Stobart Stadium Halton. It was highlighted that the Council owned the Stadium and clarity was sought on the income that would be generated from the resource. In principle, Members indicated in favour of the proposal, subject to it not being detrimental to other social community activities held at the stadium.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the minutes be received;
- (2) if available, a transcript of the BBC Radio 4 Programme relating to Incapacity Benefit be circulated to Members of the Board;
- (3) a report detailing the projects commissioned by the

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Employment, Learning and Skills SSP be presented to the Board at its meeting in January; and

- (4) it be noted that, in principle, the Board is in favour of the proposals for a learning resource which would utilise the Stobart Stadium, Halton, subject to further details on the proposals for the income that would be generated and it not being detrimental to other community activities.

ELS22 OLYMPIC GAMES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which gave Members an update of initial developments in Halton to respond to the award of the Olympic Games in London in 2012.

The Board was advised that the London Olympics would take place on 27th July – 12 August 2012. The Para Olympics would take place on 29th August – 9 September 2012.

The Board was advised of the activities that had taken place to encourage and support sport as follows:-

- A Sports Development Grant Scheme;
- A Platinum Card Scheme for elite performers;
- Rate Relief for Clubs;
- Free pitch hire for junior sports matches; and
- Significant sport-related capital investment for pitch drainage, athletics track, all weather pitches, multi use games areas, skate parks, flood lit training facilities and changing rooms.

The Board was further advised that an early proposed initiative was to establish an Olympic Fund to support Halton residents to get more involved because of the Olympics and to support local athletes to aspire to compete in the Olympic Games.

It was reported that the Executive Board at its meeting of 29 March 2007 had agreed to support the idea of an Olympic Fund. By attracting funds from a number of sources (NRF, Priorities, Sports Partnership, Sport England), a budget of £90,000 had been established. Grants had already been awarded to young people involved in table tennis, cycling and special gymnastics. The intention now would be to seek sponsorship from other partners and local businesses to continue to 'top-up' the fund up to 2012.

The Board was further advised that Halton had successfully put itself forward as a potential pre-games training camp. The Stobart Halton stadium and Regional Table Tennis Centre had also been included in the 2012 Training Camp Guide which had been produced by the Olympic Committee.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were noted:-

- The importance of links with schools and organisations to target and support individuals with potential in sporting activities was noted. In addition it was also noted that elite athletes in the Borough could be used as role models to encourage other individuals to aspire to compete in the Olympic Games;
- The difficulties elite athletes had in obtaining individuals for quality practice was noted;
- It was noted that, as yet sponsorship from other partners and local businesses to continue to 'top up' the fund to 2012 had not been established. This would be considered when the programme had been developed;
- It was noted that the Authority worked closely with the Schools Sports Co-ordinator, Clubs and National Governing Bodies to try to ensure that individuals with potential and transferable skills were identified;
- It was agreed that a report on the work being undertaken by the schools to identify and support potential athletes be presented to a future meeting of the Board;
- It was noted that the Olympics could be used as an opportunity to identify elite athletes and this be used as a catalyst to encourage other people to participate;
- The importance of the Volunteer Programme was noted and it was agreed that it should be accessible to all age groups;
- It was suggested that there should be Big Screens available in Widnes and Runcorn so that local people could enjoy the televised Olympics as a collective experience;

- The Board took the opportunity to congratulate Lucy Martin on her excellent achievements in sport; and
- The Board approved of the activities outlined in 3.4 (2) of the report.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) a report on the work being undertaken by the schools to identify and support potential athletes be presented to a future of the meeting of the Board;
- (2) it be noted that the Board approves of the following activities to support individuals who could genuinely aspire to participate in the 2012 Olympics, including volunteers:-
 - free entry to the Council's sports facilities;
 - support for coaching and practice partners;
 - advice and support from mentors;
 - physiotherapy and access to medical advice;
 - support to cover the costs of competing and equipment;
 - access to sports science expertise;
 - health and medical advice including nutrition and diet; and
 - appropriate travel costs to support training and participation;
- (3) consideration be given to the use of Big Screens being utilised in Widnes and Runcorn to show the televised Olympics; and
- (4) Lucy Martin be congratulated on her excellent achievement in sport.

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(NB Councillor Stockton declared a personal interest in the following item of business due to being an unpaid Director of Murdishaw Community Centre).

ELS23 COMMUNITY CENTRES ANNUAL REPORT 2007-08

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which updated the Members on the performance of Community Centres in 2007/08 and issues impacting across the service.

The Board was advised that there were five Council operational Community Centres: Upton, Ditton, Castlefields, Grangeway and Murdishaw. Across the service 31 staff

were employed and there were 17 active volunteers. A grant was also provided to Churchill Hall which was run by the TH Brown Trust.

The Board was further advised that the Community Centres were safe, accessible facilities located in the heart of the Borough's communities. They served both the local and wider community and promoted inclusion, equality and diversity and community cohesion. The Community Centres service contributed to the six key council priorities as outlined in the report.

The Board was also advised of the Community Centres Performance, the quality and standards for customer care, the development of a Luncheon Club at Murdishaw, the planning of the new Community Centre for Castlefields, the Youth Hub at Grangeway, the programming and investment into the Community Centres, the service improvements and future developments in the Community Centres.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were noted:-

- Castlefields Community Centre – it was noted that there had been a reduction in visits which had been largely due to the withdrawal of a Community Café Service because the external funding had ended and a lottery bid had been unsuccessful. A limited refreshment service was being provided whilst opportunities to re-establish a café service was being developed. It was agreed that this matter be resolved as soon as possible and a café service re-established;
- the importance of quality standards for customer care and consideration being given to a Charter Mark for sport and leisure facilities was noted;
- concern was raised regarding the partial closure of Upton Community Centre for redecoration. The Board requested that Property Services make every effort to resolve the problem and agreed that a report on this matter be presented to the next meeting;
- the Board requested that the Children and Young People's Directorate give consideration to any opportunities to expand the community centre service within the Building Schools for the Future Programme; and

- the Board discussed the benefits and agreed that the Authority look at ways of encouraging Halton Housing Trust and Registered Social Lords to have joint funding arrangements to improve local surveillance for external cameras that would be routed through Community Centre Monitoring Systems.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Café Service at Castlefelds Community Centre be re-established as soon as possible;
- (2) Property Services be requested to make every effort to resolve the roof problems at Upton Community Centre and a report on this matter be presented to the next meeting of the Board;
- (3) the Children and Young People's Directorate be requested to give consideration to any opportunities to expand the community centre service within the Building Schools for the Future Programme; and
- (4) the Authority look at ways of encouraging Halton Housing Trust and Registered Social Landlords to have joint funding arrangements to improve local surveillance for external cameras that would be routed through Community Centre Monitoring Systems.

Strategic Director
- Environment

ELS24 ANNUAL REPORT FOR VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING 2007/08

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which examined the current funding climate for the Voluntary Sector and provided performance information on the thirteen organisations Core Grant supported in 2007/08.

The Board was advised that they would need to consider what funding was available in 2009/10 before any guarantees or decisions were made prior to commit funding to the future projects identified in the report.

In this respect the Board received a presentation which outlined the benefits of core funding the Voluntary Sector during 2007-08.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were noted:-

- The 2005 Home Office Citizenship Survey which estimated that 44% of the population of England and Wales volunteered formally at least once over a 12 month period was noted;
- In respect of 28 individuals providing 28,885 hours of volunteering which if paid would cost £375,500, which equated to £13 per hour, clarity was sought on how it had been calculated and it was noted that £13 per hour represented a low rate of pay;
- The series of short training events on the first step to winning contracts which had been delivered by a Contract Manager from the Local Authorities Social Services team at Halton Voluntary Action was noted. It was also noted that it was too early to assess how successful the training had been in respect of Contacts gained after training;
- It was agreed that the mid year funding report be presented to the Board's meeting in January;
- The Board agreed that the three year funding arrangement had been very successful and should be restored, and that in the current economic climate, funding to the Voluntary Sector should not be decreased and funded to at least its current level;
- It was noted that the ability for the Voluntary Sector to attract alternative funding had decreased as a result of a decrease in funding from the Authority;
- It was highlighted that wherever possible, if there were duplications of activity and services, agencies should be encouraged to merge and work together; and
- It was suggested that Members visit the various agencies to observe their surroundings and how they worked. It was agreed that if Members wished to participate in this they could email the Voluntary Sector Co-ordinator.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the mid year Voluntary Sector Funding report be presented to the January meeting of the Board;
- (2) funding to the Voluntary Sector for 2009/10 should be

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funded to at least its current level and not decreased and the three year funding arrangement should be re-established; and

- (3) Members wishing to participate in a visit to various Voluntary Sector Agencies contact the Voluntary Sector Co-ordinator.

ELS25 CITY EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which gave Members an update on the progress made by the Liverpool City Employment Strategy.

The Board was advised that the North West Development Agency had confirmed £3m of funding to support the programme of which £194,000 was for Halton.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were noted:-

- It was noted that the small executive team would comprise of a manager, a programme officer and a monitoring officer;
- It was agreed that the Barriers to Employment Topic Group findings be shared with the City Employment Strategy (CES). It was also agreed that a meeting would be arranged with Members and Officers from other Authorities and the Topic Group Members to discuss the work and findings of the Topic Group, and those of other local authorities examining similar issues;
- It was noted that there was potential for a roll out of parent direct across the area; and
- The challenges related to engaging fully with the private sector were noted.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the findings of the Barriers to Employment Topic Group be shared with and inform the City Employment Strategy; and
- (2) a meeting be arranged between the Topic Group and Members and officers of the six local authorities in Merseyside in order to share information to inform the

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City Employment Strategy.

ELS26 PUBLIC ART

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which presented the draft Public Art Strategy for consideration.

The Board was advised that they had previously received a presentation from Consultants employed by the Council, funded by the Arts Council, to develop an approach to public art in Halton.

At the presentation, the value of public art had been discussed. It had been recognised that Halton had no overall approach to public art, and had a tendency to be reactive to opportunities, and could be missing funding opportunities to develop public art.

The Board was further advised that the strategy was currently at the draft stage and Members were asked to suggest any changes and then recommend a report to Executive Board that could be adopted as Council Policy.

The Board was also advised that the strategy had suggested the creation of a post to kick-start the development of public art. The Arts Council had indicated that they would fund a part-time post for two years at no financial risk to the Council.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were noted:-

- It was suggested that the report and strategy could be more succinct and financial costs could be included;
- The importance of art being on display in public places was noted;
- It was suggested that the work undertaken by the new part-time post be monitored by the Board; and
- Concern was raised regarding the vandalism of the public art outside of the Asda store in Widnes, that it had not been repaired for a considerable time. The Board agreed that the Authority contact Asda requesting support in the maintenance of the statue.

RESOLVED: That

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- (1) the creation of a part time post on a fixed term contract for two years to kick-start the development of public art be supported;
- (2) the Board receive regular reports on the work undertaken by the new postholder on the development of public art in the Borough;
- (3) that future reports should be more succinct and concise and contain financial information;
- (4) the Authority contact Asda, Widnes to request they support the maintenance of the statue outside their store; and
- (5) the Draft Public Art Strategy, subject to the inclusions above, be endorsed and referred to the Executive Board for approval.

ELS27 STANDING ORDER 51

The Board was reminded that Standing Order 51 of the Council's Constitution stated that meetings should not continue beyond 9.00 pm.

RESOLVED: That Standing Order 51 be waived.

ELS28 ARTS POLICY AND STRATEGY REVIEW

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which asked the Members to consider the content of the draft Arts Policy and Strategic Review attached as Appendix One to the report.

The Board was advised that the purpose of the report was to:-

- recognise and commend good practice;
- understand the relationship between arts development work and the Council's wider corporate objectives;
- identify areas for service development and improvement;
- suggest areas where cross-service working can be strengthened; and
- help the Arts Development Team in developing their

action plan and business plan for the next phase of arts development work in Halton.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were noted:-

- That arts in parks, weather permitting should be promoted;
- It was agreed that the biggest influence in the Borough was architectural design and the Authority should be investing in visual art. It was also suggested that architectural design should be regarded as a key aspect in projecting the cultural ambitions of the Borough; and
- It was noted that it was difficult for the Borough to obtain funding from other sources.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Strategy include architectural design and deliver outstanding designs that represent the cultural aspects and talent within the Borough;
- (2) additional internal and external funding be explored; and
- (3) the strategy, subject to the inclusions above, be endorsed and referred to the Executive Board.

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ELS29 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORTS - QUARTER 2

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive on progress against Service Plan Objectives and Performance Targets, Performance Trends/Comparisons and factors affecting services for Economic Regeneration and Culture and Leisure for the 2nd Quarter.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were noted:-

- the issues and challenges related to the current economic climate;
- the reasons for the various targets not being applicable;
- the progress being made on installing new visitor information kiosks and the key issue that the kiosks

must be able to integrate with the existing Merseyside network; and

- the approaches being used in primary schools to promote a programme of next generation entrepreneurs.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

ELS30 SERVICE PLANS 2009-12

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which gave Members an opportunity to contribute to the development of Service Plans at the beginning of the planning process.

In respect of Service Planning, the Board was advised of the following issues for consideration:-

General Issues

BSF Opportunities, KPMG, budget restraints, Utility Costs, the effect of the credit crunch, CPA and addressing inter-generational issues.

Libraries

National Review, Halton Lea, IT/System replacement, Radio Frequency Implementation and Runcorn Urban Splash.

Sport

Health / Participation / Delivery, Olympic Games and Runcorn Linnets.

Community

Engagement, Cohesion, Castlefields Community Centre and Modernising Social Services.

Arts and Culture

Received Strategies, Norton Priory – HLP Board and the Halton Castle development.

After considerable discussion, it was agreed that a Special Meeting of the Board be arranged in December to consider the issues highlighted above in relation to the Service Plans. It was also agreed that the meeting would

take place at the earlier time of 5pm.

RESOLVED: That a Special Meeting of the Board be arranged in December to consider Service Planning issues for 2009/10.

Meeting ended at 9.55 p.m.