

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5

REPORT TO: Halton Strategic Partnership Board

DATE: 13 July 2005

REPORTING OFFICER: Local Authority Chief Executive

SUBJECT: Community engagement

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

Community engagement forms an essential part of everything the partnership does. The purpose of this report is to update the Board on the work in progress to develop a new community engagement strategy for the borough.

2. RECOMMENDATION: That the Board note the process now in train

3. BACKGROUND

In the autumn of 2004, the Board endorsed a proposal to develop a new community engagement strategy for Halton. Following initial consultation and discussion with partners an inclusive process of strategy development has taken place. This was outlined to the Board at its last meeting.

Work with stakeholders has enabled three key 'products' to be drafted – a new engagement strategy and plan for its implementation; a toolkit of advice and best practice for practitioners, and a protocol for managing/sharing the results of participation processes. These drafts are attached for information. Whilst these are hard copies, it is the intention that the final versions will be most accessible and useful in electronic form. It is intended that these will form the start of an engagement web resource to be developed and hosted on the partnership website.

4. THE STRATEGY

The aim of the strategy is to ensure communities have the opportunity to participate to the fullest possible extent in the decisions that affect their lives and in delivering the services that make a difference to them. This is about generating enthusiasm, communicating more effectively, setting a standard for engagement and accepting nothing less, but above all it's about making a difference. The strategy aims:

- To allow communities a say in the decisions that affect their lives
- To increase the accountability of public agencies to the communities they serve

- To develop a sense of pride in Halton, a sense of belonging, a sense of making a difference and being valued
- To develop support networks for agencies and communities to help improve the quality of life in Halton
- To increase confidence of people to participate and give them a voice on the understanding that they would be heard and listened to

The Board is asked to comment on these draft documents. In particular, the Board is asked to agree that a formal process of consultation now takes place on the rationale and approach to engagement in Halton as set out in these documents. The consultation plan included sets out how the process will be carried out. The intention will be to bring the suite of strategy documents back to the Board for formal endorsement in the autumn.

The rationale underpinning the process has two key elements. Firstly, that a worthwhile engagement strategy can only be produced through a process that is itself highly participative. Secondly, that the process must be both deep and wide. A core group of stakeholders has been deeply involved in the development process. Through them a much wider range of people have had the opportunity to be involved. It is important that over the coming months that this reaching out process continues.

ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

Outline for consultation of strategy document, toolkit and information sharing protocol

Draft community engagement strategy

Draft community engagement toolkit

Halton's draft networking arrangements