

## **AGENDA ITEM NO: 4**

**REPORT TO:** Halton Strategic Partnership Board  
**DATE:** 28 September 2005  
**SUBJECT:** Community Strategy Priorities Process

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The overall policy direction for the Borough is captured in the Community Strategy. This is now subject to wholesale review. The purpose of this report is to update the Board on progress.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION:**

The Board is recommended to note the report and agree a mechanism for agreeing the Priority structure for the Community Strategy.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

The Partnership has adopted a strategic planning framework, the 'Priorities Process', which has been held up as a model of good practice by central Government. The current Community Strategy expires on 31 March 2006. The process to refresh, reinvigorate and refocus the strategic direction of the Partnership is underway, and going well. A critical path of actions includes:

1. State of the Borough reports
2. Base line reports
3. NRF impact assessment
4. Priority setting
5. Draft community strategy
6. Action planning
7. NRF commissioning

The first action is complete. The Baseline Reports have been drafted and are being considered by the SSPs. An evaluation of the impact of NRF is being coordinated by the Council's External Funding Unit and will be available at the next Board meeting.

Of the remaining actions the most pivotal is Priority setting. In effect, deciding the overall themes of the community Strategy provides the framework on which the rest of the process can be built – priorities, structure, governance, investment and partnership processes.

#### 4. Way Forward

The available research through the State of the Borough reports identifies a number of Key Priorities for the Borough over the medium term. These include:

- Improving Health;
- Improving the skills base in the Borough;
- Improving educational attainment across the Borough;
- Creating employment opportunities for all;
- Improving environmental assets and how the Borough looks;
- Creating prosperity and equality of opportunity;
- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour;
- Improving amenities for all age groups;
- Further economic and urban regeneration;
- Creating opportunities for children and young people;
- Improving urban environment.

At its last meeting the Board endorsed a tentative realignment of thematic areas around these Key Priorities. These were:

- Safer Halton
- Healthy Halton
- Halton's People
- Living and Working in Halton

The intention was to generate debate within the partnership. In that spirit a partner's seminar was held immediately after the Board meeting to start the process. The discussion on the issue has continued over the summer in many fora. Each of the SSPs will be taking a view at their current round of meetings. Board members themselves may wish to reflect on the views that have been expressed to them in recent weeks.

The decision on themes is pivotal, and the debate and discussion has been vital. However, it now needs to be brought to a close and a definitive decision made. Being cognisant that many partner groupings have scheduled discussions of the issue in the near future it may be premature to seek a decision now. However, it is suggested that the Board may wish to convene a special partner event in the next month to agree the themes. That event could also usefully garner views on action planning, commissioning and the direction of funding. This would enable the Board to make substantive decisions on these issues in a timely way to allow the Strategy to be concluded and implemented for next year.