

Agenda Item 12

REPORT TO: Halton Strategic Partnership Board

DATE: 17th May 2006

SUBJECT: **HALTON TOGETHER UPDATE**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide Board Members with an update on Halton Together (Community Empowerment Network).

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Board Members note the attached update from the new Halton Voluntary Action Executive Officer, who has a special responsibility for the CEN.

ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

Halton Together update.

HALTON TOGETHER REPORT:

The Halton Together Action Plan for April 06 to March 07 has now been completed. Discussions are required between the LSP Central Team and Halton Together staff members as to how the work will be divided up.

The work of the CEN took a major blow when Kath Parkes left Halton Voluntary Action at the end of March. Due to illness, Dan Copley has been absent from work for the second half of April. This has left the CEN with just one member of staff (Matthew Roberts) who has attempted to cover as much of the work as possible.

The Halton Together Newsletter (circulated fortnightly) and website continue to grow in popularity, though this service may have to be reduced to monthly. Developments with the Uniservity web portal (the long term successor to the Newsletter) are progressing nicely. Matthew Roberts has formed a working group made up of some of the VCOs that used the Halton Together Newsletter/website service and these are being trained so that the web portal is being actively used when the site is launched to the public. The working group includes the likes of Norton Priory Museum and Gardens, Centre 8 Theatre Group and Halton Access to Media.

The thematic Forums are also continuing to progress with many Halton Together members seizing the opportunity to share best practice, network and work together on projects of shared interest. A shining example of the good work the Forums do is "Environment Together" (lead by Norma Hornby - Canal Boat Adventure Project) who have just completed a large piece of research on recycling in the borough. In this forum, representatives of voluntary and community groups have had the chance to alongside employees of Halton Borough Council and researching funding opportunities to bring a Horse and Cart "Rag n Bone" man back to the streets. Other forums include The Halton Disability Alliance, Access to Sport Forum, Web Together and The Health and Community Care Forum.

Before sick leave, Dan Copley was working in a outreach capacity, visiting representatives from Halton Together member groups and explaining the opportunities available to them to increase their role in Halton Together (such as joining Forums, SSP Shadow Groups ect). Dan was also looking at what support or training he could provide for them so that they were better prepared to make the extra commitment.

Financial disappointments and short staffing have proved to be a major headache for the network over the last few months, but we are doing our best, with support from the central team to overcome these. There is still some confusion on the future direction of the network, who is to monitor the work and were we fit into the Local Area Agreement scenario. However we hope to work on these problems in the coming months.

Andy Guile is now stepping down as Chair of Halton Together to take up the post of Executive Officer at HVA, with responsibility for the Community Empowerment Network (in effect Kath's role). This will begin Monday 8th May