

AGENDA ITEM NO. 9

REPORT TO: Halton Strategic Partnership Board
DATE: 17th May 2006
SUBJECT: Halton Local Development Framework

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Board about current progress of the Halton Local Development Framework and in particular the Core Strategy, which needs to be closely aligned with the new Community Strategy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) the content of this report be noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Halton Unitary Development Plan was adopted in April 2005 and provides the planning framework for determining development proposals in the Borough by containing policies and proposals for the development of land.
- 3.2 A new Planning Act was introduced in September 2004 which has fundamentally changed the process for producing development plans and the content of them. A presentation to the LSP in September 2004 by the then Forward Planning Manager, Andrew Pannell, outlined the main consequences of this new Act. The main points can be summarised as follows.
- 3.3 A new style of 'spatial plans' must be produced which provide the means of taking forward the elements of the Community Strategy that relate to the physical development and use of land in Halton. Spatial planning goes beyond traditional land use planning by bringing together and integrating policies for the development and use of land with other policies and programmes which influence the creation of places and how they function. For example, spatial planning can contribute towards the 'Healthy Halton' priority of the Community Strategy by policies requiring safe residential road layouts, the provision of children's play areas and the protection of open space from development.
- 3.4 There are also stronger requirements for community involvement in planning. An emphasis has been placed on the need to engage communities early on in producing new plans, so called 'front loading' of

the process, and that consultation should be more ongoing and continuous. Planning should therefore be more closely aligned to the work of the Local Strategic Partnership and should be more strongly engaged in community participation.

- 3.5 Authorities must produce a Statement of Community Involvement specifying how they intend to involve communities and other organisations in the process of producing new planning documents and consulting upon major planning applications. The draft Halton Statement of Community Involvement is currently being looked at by a Government Inspector and is expected to be adopted in the summer.
- 3.6 New planning documents are also required to meet the aims of sustainable development by balancing economic growth and employment, social progress, effective protection of the environment and the prudent use of natural resources. This will be assisted by a Sustainability Appraisal.
- 3.7 The Local Development Framework (LDF) is the name given to the portfolio of spatial plans that will be produced under the new Act. The LDF will replace the adopted Unitary Development Plan. Unlike the Unitary Development Plan, which is a single Borough wide document, the LDF will be a collection of several documents which individually can cover either the whole Borough or only parts of it. However, collectively they will continue to provide a Borough wide planning framework.
- 3.8 The Council must produce a Local Development Scheme (LDS) which is a work programme for the next three years for preparing the Local Development Framework. This outlines what documents will be produced and when. A copy of the LDS has been provided for viewing at this meeting.
- 3.9 The Council's Spatial Planning team have been working on the Halton LDF for over a year and during this time non-statutory documents have been produced that supplement the policies in the adopted Unitary Development Plan, for example ones dealing with adverts and shop front design or providing a more detailed planning framework for the Castlefields and Norton Priory area. However, the time has now come to shift emphasis to the production of the statutory documents that will make up the LDF, including those dealing with site allocations for future development.
- 3.10 The Core Strategy is the first of the statutory documents to be produced. It will be the overarching document within the LDF and will set out a vision, broad spatial objectives and core policies for the future development of the Borough. Background work has commenced on this and it is anticipated that issues and options papers will be available for public consultation during July and August. These will give alternatives, for which a preference can be expressed by respondees, for the broad future direction of development and the spatial implementation of the

Community Strategy in Halton. This forms the first stage of firming up the objectives and policies to be incorporated into the Core Strategy, with further public consultation planned towards the end of the year.

- 3.11 Given comments at paragraph 3.3 above, the timing of informing, drafting and consulting upon the Core Strategy has been deliberate to tie in with the launch of the new Community Strategy. This report has been produced for the LSP as further background to the new planning system and how it affects the development plan for Halton. Members of the LSP are encouraged to become further engaged with the Local Development Framework, in particular by commenting upon the issues and options for the Core Strategy that will be consulted upon shortly. Other key documents dealing with more detailed policies and detailed site allocation for future development will follow.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Halton Local Development Framework is required to be produced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It will replace the adopted Halton Unitary Development Plan and once adopted will form part of the development plan for the area, along with the Regional Spatial Strategy. It will provide the planning framework for determining development proposals in Halton.