

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4

REPORT TO: Halton Strategic Partnership Board
DATE: 15 March 2006
SUBJECT: Community Strategy Priorities Process

1. INTRODUCTION

At its last meeting the Board agreed a draft Community Strategy, and that it be subject to an intense period of consultation. This has been done and the Strategy has been revised accordingly. This report seeks agreement of the Board to the document.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

The Board is recommended to:

- Agree the Community Strategy;
- Agree that it is formally launched in May.

3. BACKGROUND

The Priorities Process has been in train for a full twelve months. Partners have been in an ongoing process of dialogue and debate on the shape of the new Community Strategy over that period. The draft strategy was constructed as a direct result of that process and based on the key issues which emerged. The draft has been subject to an intense period of consultation following its release by the Board in January.

The draft strategy has garnered a broad consensus that it is appropriate and properly sets out the challenges Halton faces and the response needed. No major changes have been suggested. However, a good deal of wordsmithing has taken place on some of the objectives, some of the targets have been amended to more accurately focus on key issues, and the cross cutting issues have been refined with sections on sustainability and disability added.

A copy of the suggested final version of the Community Strategy is appended to this report.

4. WAY FORWARD

Given that partners have been working on the new strategy for over 12 months and it has been subject to widespread consultation, it is recommended that the Board agree to adopt this final version of the Strategy. Legally, the Strategy has to be formally adopted by Halton Borough Council. This will take place at the next full Council meeting on 26 April.

It is suggested that the strategy is launched on 17 May. This ties in with next Board meeting. The intention is to have a press briefing prior to the meeting at which partners can be involved. The full-colour printed version will be available then for distribution across the borough.

It is incumbent on Partners to get the formal adoption of the strategy by their own organisation. The Strategy includes a commitment page on which partners are expected to sign as a pledge of this. The signing could take place at the launch as a “piece of theatre”. Therefore, it is important that Partner adoption should take place prior to the launch.

MAKING IT HAPPEN IN HALTON – A COMMUNITY STRATEGY FOR A SUSTAINABLE HALTON

What's a Community Strategy?

A key role for local authorities is to produce a community strategy for their area. This should aim to enhance the quality of life of local communities through actions to improve the economic, social and environmental well being of the area and its inhabitants. They must also:

- allow local communities to express their aspirations, needs and priorities;
- co-ordinate the actions of the council, and of the public, private, voluntary and community organisations that operate locally;
- focus and shape the existing and future activity of those organisations so that they effectively meet community needs; and
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development both locally and more widely.

They must have four key components:

- a long-term vision for the area focusing on the outcomes that are to be achieved;
- an action plan identifying shorter-term priorities and activities that will contribute to the achievement of long-term outcomes;
- a shared commitment to implementing the action plan, and proposals for doing so;
- arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the action plan, for periodically reviewing the community strategy, and for reporting progress to local communities.

Community strategies will reflect local circumstances and needs. They will:

- engage and involve local communities;
- involve active participation of councillors within and outside an Executive Steering Group;
- be prepared and implemented by a broad 'local strategic partnership', through which the local authority can work with other local bodies;
- be based on a proper assessment of needs and the availability of resources.

This Community Strategy has been prepared in accordance with these principles. It lies as the centrepiece of a portfolio of documents which help define the task for partners in improving life in Halton. The portfolio includes:

- The State of Halton Audit
- Consulting the Communities of Halton
- Priority Baseline Reports
- Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies
- A Local Development Framework
- A Community Engagement Strategy

- The Annual Public Health Report

The Community Strategy provides an overarching framework through which the corporate, strategic and operational plans of all the partners can contribute. Of particular note is the newly emerging relationship between the Community Strategy and the Local Development Framework (LDF). This is the replacement for the Unitary Development Plan, made up of a Core Strategy and individual planning documents for particular areas or issues. It gives a more flexible and responsive approach to planning in Halton.

Importantly, the LDF takes forward the land and space use elements of the Community Strategy. It takes into account all of the plans and strategies which affect the quality of life in Halton (such as health, housing and education) and impact upon future development. The Community Strategy is based on the socio-economic profile of the borough and listening to the views and aspirations of the local community. The LDF provides a vehicle through which the planning process can enable these to happen.

FOREWORD

The Halton Strategic Partnership brings together key representatives from all the major organisations that are vital to building a better future for Halton. Its role is to agree on a common purpose and a common sense of direction which is set out in this Community Strategy. Having done so, it provides a framework through which organisations, groups and individuals can co-operate to achieve our common goals. The Partnership is committed to making life better for everyone who lives, works, invests or visits the borough.

This is Halton's second Community Strategy. Whilst we can take pride in what has been achieved to date, there is still much more to do. This is a most important document because it sets out a vision of a Halton we would like to see emerge over the next ten years. It sets out the steps we need to take together to bring about real improvements that will change lives for the better. Those steps concentrate on the things that matter most to most people. The Strategy is about focusing on the issues that will make the biggest difference in the long-term.

This Strategy is relatively short. However, it is based on a significant body of research and consultation. This document outlines some key goals, some headline actions, and a scorecard of key performance measures by which we will be judged. It aims to guide the development and implementation of more detailed plans and actions to be undertaken by the Council, the Police, Health Agencies and others. Everyone has a role to play in making it happen in Halton. Working together we can make a difference and build a better future for the borough.

INTRODUCTION

Halton has inherited more than its share of issues, many rooted in the area's industrial past. Making the borough a better place to live and work presents some major challenges and opportunities for us all.

This Community Strategy is for the all the communities of Halton. It sets out the steps we need to take together to bring about real improvements that will change lives for

the better. In particular, we need to achieve real progress on five strategic themes that are set out clearly in this plan:

- A Healthy Halton
- Halton's Urban Renewal
- Halton's Children and Young People
- Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton
- A Safer Halton

These priorities have been derived from local opinion, what local people feel is important, and from the facts and figures about conditions in Halton. However, the strategy also recognises that Halton is not insular or isolated. Halton is an important component in the development of a thriving and successful Greater Merseyside/Liverpool sub-region, and more widely in a dynamic and sustainable North West region. Halton can only succeed as part of a successful and thriving region. This Community Strategy builds upon the wider strategic developments which are taking place in the region. Partners from Halton play a key role in shaping sub-regional and regional plans and arrangements. This connectivity – both strategically and operationally – is an important part of the Halton approach.

Halton's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) – the Halton Strategic Partnership Board, has developed the Strategy. As partners we have built on existing collaboration and are fully committed to working more effectively together and with the community to help improve the quality of life for people in our borough.

This Strategy outlines key goals for the borough, some of the headline actions to be taken, and measures by which progress can be judged. It guides the development of more detailed plans and actions – to be undertaken by the Council, Health Trusts, the Police, Community Empowerment Network, and others – whose actions are the important step that makes a difference to people on the ground. We all have a part to play in making it happen.

ABOUT THE HALTON STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

The Halton Strategic Partnership Board (HSPB) brings together representatives from all sectors of life in the borough. It is the strategic level Board and a key part of the broad-based Halton Partnership. It serves the function of a 'local strategic partnership' (LSP) for the area. LSPs are promoted by the Government and designed to help ensure that action taken at local level by a whole range of groups and organisations is properly 'joined up' and meets the needs of local communities.

The Halton Strategic Partnership Board, and this Community Strategy, provides a common sense of direction for the community and an overarching framework within which different partnerships, organisations and groups can co-operate together, committed to common goals and dedicated to improving life for people in the Borough.

Members of the Halton Strategic Partnership Board

Halton Borough Council
Halton Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise
Halton Primary Care Trust

Halton Housing Partnership (Riverside Housing)
Halton College
Halton Sports Partnership
Halton Together
Jobcentre Plus
Northwest Development Agency
Halton Faith Group
Cheshire Constabulary
Greater Merseyside Connexions Service
Business Link for Greater Merseyside (GME Ltd)
Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council
Halton Association of Secondary Heads (Is this one still true?)
The Five Thematic Partnerships

Observers

Government Office North West
Halton Voluntary Action

PLANNING A BETTER FUTURE FOR HALTON

This Community Strategy is about what is most important for Halton and about working together to improve the quality of life for all who live and work in the borough. It sets out key priorities and shows the direction we need to progress in together, and gives us challenging improvement targets to work towards. It provides an overall guide and framework for the activities of partners and other organisations in Halton, and it will guide the development of more specific plans and projects working across Halton.

To make real progress we will need to pool ideas and resources, and work even more closely and effectively together. Working in partnership and concentrating on what matters most will make the difference in planning a better future for Halton. This includes:

- knowing where we are heading, focusing on the priorities and agreeing clear objectives
- working productively together, sharing understanding of the borough's problems and their root causes, and joining up and co-ordinating our efforts to tackle them
- championing Halton's cause in the wider world, lobbying at regional and national levels, and working with wider UK and European partners for mutual benefit
- learning from experience, finding out and putting into practice what works best
- checking on our achievements, monitoring progress and keeping on track

The process to develop this Strategy was important. It was vital that the process was inclusive. Many people and groups were involved so we could build a clear picture on what was important and how we should go forward. Some of the key steps included:

- A review of our achievements since the first Community Strategy was launched four years ago, and an honest assessment of how well partnership arrangements have worked
- A new State of Halton report was commissioned to look objectively at statistical conditions and changes and trends in social, economic and environmental conditions
- A major telephone survey of residents backed up by focus groups was carried out to seek their views on what life is like, and should be like, in Halton
- A review of regional and national strategies, and those of partners, was carried out to assess the likely impact of this activity in Halton
- An inclusive process of debate and discussion on the way forward took place with members, officers, officials and volunteers of all the organisations involved with the partnership
- A thematic assessment of the challenges facing the borough, and a thorough review of outcomes, outputs and targets was carried out. These helped to demonstrate how the strategy and partnership working could make a difference in the future.

This process of engagement with people and partners was vital. It is only if there is a shared view of the challenges that Halton faces, and a broad sense of ownership of the resulting strategy, that there will be any chance of its ambitions being realised.

HALTON 2015

Halton is still a young place, but has a proud heritage that reaches back beyond 1974 when it was created. The place is still growing and developing. Part of Halton's success has been its ability to change and evolve, and its resilience in the face of adversity. It has had to cope with the loss of much of the manufacturing industry it formerly depended on. The effect of this was dramatic, leading to population loss and a legacy of deprivation across the communities of Halton. However, the position has stabilised and welcome signs of an improvement can now be seen. This resilience is the key to the future. The Halton Strategic Partnership sees this as one of the strengths on which a sustainable future can be built.

The vision for 2015 is for a Halton that has sustained itself. This is a place where people want to live and work. It is somewhere that provides a high quality living environment, sensitive to a range of needs, and recognises the diversity of its residents. This Strategy is all about giving people opportunities and choice. We want to build people's aspirations and abilities so they can exercise greater control and choice in their lives. Having done so we want to ensure we provide the quality of life and opportunities locally so that people choose to live and work here.

In short, we want to build a sustainable community that balances and integrates social, economic and environmental progress; that meets current expectations and prepares for future needs; and that respects the diversity of the place and people. The Partnership has identified the following components as being crucial to success.

(a) Respect and Enjoyment

The communities of Halton have a strong sense of community identity and belonging. They also tolerate and respect differences, and believe in 'live and let live'. Co-operation, collaboration and helpfulness are vital. There needs to be plenty of things to do and places to go – culture, leisure, sport, community, shopping – for all members of the community, young and old alike. People should feel their chances in life are good and crime, drugs or anti-social behaviour does not taint their lives.

(b) Thriving Places

The local economy has to flourish and provide a range of opportunities for all Halton people for both training and work. The economic infrastructure has to be top quality with a variety of land and premises (industrial, commercial and retail) available to support economic prosperity, growth and change. In addition, we want to see a strong business sector, which feels valued locally, and is well supported to create new enterprises and new jobs which can benefit local people.

(c) Well Planned

We need to retain a clear sense of place and retain features that make Halton distinctive. We want to see buildings and open spaces that are accessible, well designed and of the highest quality. Places and spaces that are safe, valued and promote a feeling of well-being. The housing market has to be dynamic and inclusive with a range of options available that are affordable for local people.

(d) Accessibility

People make places work, and all the communities and facilities of Halton (jobs, schools, town centres, health) need to be well connected and well served by the transport network. We need appropriate levels of car parking in the right places, a well managed and maintained road network, and a properly functioning public transport network to help people get about and reduce car dependency. We need to further develop opportunities for walking and cycling, and ensure our connection to the outside world through motorways, railways, ports and airports remain excellent. The further development of technology and digital opportunities will also enable Halton to be more accessible to the world, and will serve to make Halton more accessible to people outside the area, accessible electronically to the world and the world accessible to Halton, its businesses and its people.

(e) Well Served

People need to have good access to a range of services that are appropriate to their needs and that make their lives worthwhile. This includes good schools, further and higher education opportunities and lifelong learning, high quality health, leisure and social care facilities, including quality services for vulnerable adults, children and families. In addition a good range of information, advice and signposting is needed, and wherever possible services should be situated together to make access easier.

(f) Well Run

There has to be a sense of pride, responsibility and civic values which present themselves in a place that is well governed and managed. This includes democratic, representative and accountable governance through Halton Borough Council with community well being at its heart. It also encompasses effective community engagement and enabling active participation by local people in the decisions that

affect their lives. A strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector is a sign of success along with effective partnerships that lead by example.

WHAT IS HALTON LIKE?

Halton is a largely urban area of 118,900 people. Its two biggest settlements are Widnes and Runcorn that face each other across the River Mersey, 10 miles upstream from Liverpool. The population of Halton was decline for over a decade, but has recently started to increase. Between 1991 and 2002 the estimated Borough population decreased by 6,500 people from 124,800 to 118, 300 in 2002. However, in 2003 there was a small increase in the population and between 2003 and 2004 the estimated population increased 500 people.

As a result of its industrial legacy, particularly from the chemical industries, Halton has inherited a number of physical, environmental and social problems. The Council has been working hard to resolve these issues ever since the Borough was formed in 1974. Gaining unitary status in 1998 has helped to co-ordinate more activity over a wider front and increased the resources the Council, and its strategic partners, have been able to invest in Halton. However, there still remains much to be done.

Although located in Cheshire, Halton shares many of the social and economic problems more associated with its urban neighbours on Merseyside. The latest Index of Multiple of Deprivation (IMD) for 2004, not only contains some of the latest data available, but also is one of the most comprehensive sources of deprivation indicators, as some 37 different indicators are used. It shows for example that overall, Halton is ranked 21st nationally (a ranking of 1 indicates that an area is the most deprived), but this is 3rd highest on Merseyside, behind Knowsley and Liverpool, and 5th highest in the North West. St Helens (36th), Wirral (48th) and Sefton (78th,) are way down the table compared to Halton.

The Index of Multiple of Deprivation for 2004 suggests that Deprivation has improved in the Borough. In 2004 the IMD ranked Halton as 21st most deprived Authority in England for rank of average score compared to a rank of 16th in the 2000 Index. The proportion of Halton's population in the top category (i.e. the top 10% of wards in 2000 and the top 20% of super output areas in 2004) has also decreased from 54% in 2000 to 50% in 2004. However, there is still room for improvement. Halton's concentration of deprivation has gone up from 38th position in 2000 to 20th worse in England in 2004. Concentration is a key way of identifying hot spots of deprivation within an area. Within Halton there are 6 super output areas in the top 975 Super Output Areas in England, i.e. within England's top 3% most deprived. The highest neighbourhood is ranked 193rd out of 32,482 and is situated in southern Widnes. Clearly there remains much to do.

- Claimant unemployment in the Borough has fallen from 5.0% in January 2000 to 3.1% in November 2005. However, Halton still had the 5th highest claimant count rate in the North West in November 2005. The claimant count rate only includes those people who are eligible for Jobseekers allowance and therefore underestimates the true number of people who are unemployed. The Annual population Survey for April 2004-March 2005 estimates that the unemployment rate in Halton was 7.3% compared to an England average of 4.7%
- The employment rate, i.e. the proportion of the potential workforce actually working at 68.5% in the 2004- 2005 Annual Population Survey Halton is in the bottom 6 of 43 Local Authority districts in the North West. The Borough rate is also significantly lower than the England average of 74.7%.

- Life expectancy in the Borough has increased in the past decade. Between 1992 –1994 and 2002-2004 Female life expectancy in the Borough increased from 77.8 years to 78.1 years. Life expectancy at birth for men in Halton also increased over the same time period from 72.7 in 1992-1994 to 74.1 in 2002-2004. However, despite the increase in Life expectancy Halton has not kept pace with other Authorities. Over a decade Halton has fallen from a rank of 382 for females to 424 out of 432 authorities with 432 being the lowest rank. For men the ranking has fallen from 352 to 397.
- SMRs for all causes, all ages, ranks Halton 4th highest out of 354 English Local Authorities for 2001/02 . At 124 it is 24% above the national average.
- GCSE passes in the Borough are improving between 1997 and 2005 the percentage of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C increased by 16.5 percentage points to 49.3%. The difference with the national rate has reduced to 8%. Pupils gaining no GCSE passes (or equivalent) was 4% in 2005 compared to 2.6 % nationally. Skills among the workforce remain low, with a quarter of all workers lacking any qualifications.

Bespoke research to get a better picture of life in Halton was commissioned in 2005. The Local Futures Group produced a 'State of the Borough' Audit of economic, social and environmental conditions. This is a timely and necessary assessment of the challenges and issues that face Halton. Performance is assessed according to how well the borough scores on a range of carefully selected benchmark indicators of economic, social and environmental well-being. It provides a perspective on the state of Halton by looking at how it compares with other districts, how it rates within the North West region, and also how it performs compared to the country as a whole.

The Audit demonstrates that the borough is performing well in terms of its current economic performance and structure. However, the level of human capital and trends in economic growth may present problems for the future. This is particularly so given the district's poor performance in terms of social and environmental indicators, which may create difficulties attracting the best qualified people to the borough. Halton's performance on education and skills, and low levels of home ownership points to problems of inclusiveness, with groups of residents not sharing in the current levels of economic prosperity.

OUR VISION FOR HALTON

Halton will be a thriving and vibrant borough where people can learn and develop their skills, enjoy a good quality of life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment; the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality; sustained by a thriving business community; and within safer, stronger and more attractive neighbourhood.

The Community Strategy is a pledge to secure a better future for the people of Halton. It is about giving everyone the opportunity to fulfill their potential and pursue the sort of life that suits them. The Halton Strategic Partnership will work vigorously to see this vision realised.

This strategy outlines the goals that the Halton Strategic Partnership wants to achieve to help build a better future for the borough. It concentrates on the fresh

challenges, priorities and achievements planned over the coming years to help improve quality of life for people in Halton.

Guiding principles

Halton partners should rightly be expected to maintain high standards in the way they conduct their business. In implementing actions which flow from this Strategy, partners will follow a set of guiding principles:

- **Leadership** – *the Partnership’s role is to give clear strategic leadership to the borough and to agree roles, responsibilities and relationships that make sense of the task and enable people to make the necessary contribution to make a difference.*
- **Fair and inclusive** – *promoting equal access to opportunities and facilities, and helping ensure that people or sections of the community are not left behind but can access the opportunities and progress being made in Halton. This includes the need to positively target activity at the most deprived geographical areas or particular groups of people.*
- **Good value** – *being economical, efficient and effective in delivering ‘Best Value’ for the public. It makes sense to invest in preventative activity that stops problems occurring rather than paying for actions to fix things that are going wrong. We need to invest more in success, rather than in failure.*
- **Collaborative** – *taking full advantage of the benefits for Halton from the community, organisations and groups working constructively together in partnership. This is about collective responsibility for making things better and embedding partnership approaches in everything that we do.*
- **Evidence-based** – *ensuring we learn from best practice elsewhere and make good use of research about what works in addressing the borough's priorities. The Strategy is about making significant change on the issues that matter the most. Work has to focus on consciously agreeing investment priorities and approaches based on evidence. Then it is about taking actions, and sometimes appropriate risks, to generate impacts on a small number of key outcomes.*

Overall, we fully expect all partners to be involved and committed to these principles. This means taking ownership of the priorities, principles and objectives contained in this Community Strategy. It also means taking them into account in deciding their own priorities and plans. Partners must co-operate with each other to achieve the improvement targets set out in this Strategy and progressively develop more effective ways of working together and with the community. Part of this is about sharing relevant information and good practice, and importantly contributing resources to support the Partnership.

WHAT IS THE FOCUS?

Taking action is one thing, but unless it is focused on the right things it is unlikely to yield the right results. This is why the Partnership invested a good deal of time and resources sounding out public opinion and gathering the facts and figures needed to identify the overall priorities for the borough.

In early 2005 the State of Halton report was researched and published, highlighting a range of challenges and opportunities facing Halton. Its findings have been checked and challenged by the Partnership and tested against public opinion. This led to the identification of a number of priorities for the borough over the medium term which, in combination, addresses the overall aim of making it a better place to live and work. These include:

- Improving Health
- Improving the skills base in the borough
- Improving educational attainment across the borough
- Creating employment opportunities for all
- Tackling worklessness
- Tackling the low wage economy
- 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
- Furthering economic and urban regeneration
- Tackling contaminated land
- Creating opportunities/facilities/amenities for children and young people
- Supporting an aging population
- Minimising waste/increasing recycling/bringing efficiencies in waste disposal
- Increasing focus on community engagement
- Running services efficiently

The key challenge is how best to frame the response to these through the Community Strategy. To do this challenges have been grouped into five key themes, which are:

- A Healthy Halton
- Halton's Urban Renewal
- Halton's Children and Young People
- Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton
- A Safer Halton

Each of these thematic areas has been examined more closely in a series of Baseline Reports, which identify in detail the issues where we need to concentrate our improvement efforts. The Partnership intends to focus heavily on these key issues and to focus its future investment into achieving the challenging targets in each chosen theme.

To help do this, five Specialist Strategic Partnerships (SSPs) have been established. Their task is to design and deliver strategies and action plans to address priorities. Their plans are based on the information from the Baseline Reports and on the expertise of the Partnership members. Each of the five major themes is addressed in turn in the next part of this Strategy.

The Government has established a set of floor targets in key areas that affect people's quality of life, such as health and crime. The Government is placing an increasing emphasis on these targets and the Partnership has tried to address each under the relevant priority.

The Partnership also works to improve the quality of life at a neighbourhood level. It does this by working through the seven geographical Area Forums established by the Council and supported by the partners. A Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy has been produced for each area, highlighting the concerns of local people and outlining actions to be taken to tackle issues at a local level. Many of those actions build on and link with the five SSPs' plans, while others are unique to their particular area. Each plan has devolved resources to draw on to help deliver these actions.

Halton is enthusiastic about extending neighbourhood management as a means to engage and empower local communities. This will address problems in deprived neighbourhoods by managing and co-ordinating resources and services to achieve a greater combined impact. A sound neighbourhood approach will lay the foundations for delivery of improvements to liveability and public services, transforming neighbourhoods and empowering local people. Halton already has many front line services organised on a neighbourhood basis. Community Support Officers, policing, community development workers, housing management, street-scene teams and youth workers are organised on an area basis. Children's Centres will also co-ordinate service delivery at a local level. A neighbourhood focus will provide management and co-ordination mechanisms for joining these, and other services such as health and social care up on a local basis. This Community Strategy provides a framework through which these arrangements can be brokered.

A HEALTHY HALTON

Our overall aim

To create a healthier community and work to promote well being - a positive experience of life with good health (not simply an absence of disease), and offer opportunities for people to take responsibility for their health with the necessary support available.

Why health?

Statistics show that health standards in Halton are amongst the worst in the country and single it out as the aspect of life in the borough in most urgent need of improvement. The population is ageing which could put even greater demands on the health and social care services. At the same time lifestyle choices in the borough, especially among the young, in terms of diet, smoking, alcohol, exercise and other factors continue to give cause for concern for the future.

Key Objectives

- A To understand fully the causes of ill health in Halton and act together to improve the overall health and well-being of local people**
- B To lay firm foundations for a healthy start in life and support those most in need in the community by maximising and promoting autonomy.**
- C To promote a healthy living environment and lifestyles to protect the health of the public, sustain individual good health and well-being, and help prevent and efficiently manage illness**
- D To reduce the burden of disease in Halton by concentrating on lowering the rates of cancer and heart disease, mental ill health and diabetes and addressing the health needs of older people**
- E To remove the barriers that disable people and contribute to poor health through ensuring that people have ready access to a wide range of social, community and housing services, and cultural and sporting activities that enhance their quality of life**

Background

The recent State of Halton Report identified Halton as one of the most deprived districts in England. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ranked the borough as 21st out of 354 districts. Several parts of Halton are amongst the poorest in the country. The Report also shows Halton still experiences some of the worst health outcomes in the country. For example, no less than 57 out of Halton's 79 Super Output Areas are in the top 20% for health deprivation nationally, with 24 of these in the top 4%. The Census 2001 showed that 21.5% of Halton residents had a Limiting Long Term Illness. In a telephone survey, commissioned by the Halton Strategic Partnership Board in March 2005, 27% of local residents said they had a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity.

When compared with other areas in England, Halton is within the worst 20% of areas for life expectancy, for common causes of death and for deprivation. Life expectancy is lower than the national average. Men can expect to live around 2.2 years less than the average for England and women 2.5 years less. The Standardised Mortality Ratio for Halton in 2002 was 123, that is 23% above the national average.

The two biggest killers in Halton are heart disease and cancer. Heart disease reduces the average man's lifespan by two years and the average woman's by one year. All cancers, put together, take two years off the average lifespan in both men and women. Life expectancy is improving, but the gap between Halton and the national average is not being bridged. Some of the reasons why Halton residents suffer disproportionately high death rates from major causes of death include poor diet, high smoking rates and inadequate levels of physical activity. In 2003 the Halton Health Partnership appointed a team of consultants from Lancaster University to examine the reasons for Halton's poor health record. Whilst there was much speculation around the role of Halton's industrial legacy and existing levels of pollution, the study revealed that economic, social and lifestyle factors were largely responsible for the high rates of illness and death.

When taking these factors into consideration, it becomes easier to understand why some communities suffer disproportionately from poorer health than others do. Addressing the wider determinants of ill health is a key issue for Halton if it is to effectively respond to national and local targets. This will mean working across partnerships to achieve our goals. The Halton approach is pragmatic and focuses on certain overarching priorities:

- Reducing the number of people who smoke
- Reducing obesity and improving diet and nutrition
- Increasing exercise
- Encouraging and supporting sensible drinking
- Improving sexual health
- Improving mental health.

Wider policies to reduce these inequalities should include:

- Taking steps to reduce unemployment in areas with poor health statistics
- Improving educational attainment and increasing access to training opportunities for those living in deprived areas
- Improving the quality and provision of social housing
- Improving access to services such as social and leisure facilities, supermarkets, health services and transport.
- Understanding how knowledge and perceptions of health related issues can affect the local population
- Reducing social isolation
- Reducing crime and improving community safety
- Maximising community resources and facilitating effective community engagement and participation

Individuals also have a role to play in improving their own health and well being. Lifestyle factors such as a poor diet, smoking, and lack of exercise can all have a negative impact on an individual's health. Actions and services aimed at increasing participation in sport and leisure activities and promoting a healthy diet and lifestyle can contribute towards improving the health of local people. However, whilst agencies can work together to improve access, affordability, and quality of services, it

is also important to encourage local residents to play an active role in improving their own health.

Well being is about more than health. It is about the ability to enjoy a range of activities that actually make life worth living. This about having access and the ability to enjoy culture in all its forms – sport, arts, libraries, leisure, entertainment, hobbies, friends and family, and shopping. We aim to enhance these opportunities for people. Happy people are more likely to be healthy people and vice versa. We need to address all of the determinants of health and well being and not just concentrate on sickness.

Improvement targets

By 2010 we aim to:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <i>Life expectancy</i> | Narrow the gap at birth with the national average by at least 10% |
| <i>Heart disease</i> | Reduce the death rate (in under 75s) by 53% |
| <i>Cancer</i> | Reduce the death rate (in under 75s) by 26% |
| <i>Equity</i> | Narrow the gap so that the overall death rate in any ward is no more than 25% above the Halton average |
| <i>Satisfaction</i> | Improve public satisfaction with the quality of health and social care services year on year |
| <i>Birth weight</i> | Reduce the proportion of low birth weight babies by 10% |
| <i>Conception</i> | Reduce the rate among girls under 18 by 55% |
| <i>Lifestyle</i> | Reduce adult smoking rates to under 22% |
| <i>Culture</i> | Increase take up of cultural and sporting activities by adults by 5% |
| <i>Housing</i> | All social housing to have affordable heating systems and insulation levels that exceed the national minimum guidelines |

HALTON'S URBAN RENEWAL

Our overall aim

To transform the urban fabric and infrastructure, to develop exciting places and spaces and to create a vibrant and accessible borough that makes Halton a place where people are proud to live and see a promising future for themselves and their families.

Why urban renewal?

Modern day Halton has inherited an exceptional legacy of obsolete and poor quality land, buildings and physical infrastructure that undermine the development potential and attractiveness of the area. Putting this right is a key to greater prosperity and boosting the image of the borough.

Key Objectives

- A To create and sustain a twenty first century business environment with the required variety and quality of sites, premises and infrastructure that can support high levels of investment and economic growth and increase Halton's competitiveness**
- B To revitalise the town centres to create dynamic, well-designed high quality commercial areas that can continue to meet the needs of local people, investors, businesses and visitors**
- C To support and sustain thriving neighbourhoods and open spaces that meet peoples expectations and add to their enjoyment of life**
- D To ensure Halton designs in and maintains high levels of accessibility to places and spaces so that opportunity and need are matched, and provides excellent connectivity to the wider world through transport and ICT links.**
- E To enhance, promote and celebrate the quality of the built and natural environment in Halton to further improve the borough's image**

Background

Halton helped maintain the momentum of the industrial revolution in the 19th Century and was a cradle of invention and innovation. Reflecting this industrial and manufacturing history Halton has a legacy of ageing infrastructure, obsolete and redundant buildings, a relatively poor built and natural environment, an overly mature housing stock, and an under provision of modern amenities to support a far more discerning population.

Whilst much has been done in recent years to improve the quality of the urban fabric and quality of life, the job is far from complete. The creation and maintenance of high quality places and spaces that support a twenty first century economy and lifestyles, and are accessible and well connected is a pre-requisite of the Community Strategy.

Failure to address the challenges that Halton faces, which are often concentrated in particular locations, will seriously damage the economic regeneration effort. A thriving and prosperous economy supporting dynamic urban living is the foundation of the Halton approach. This is one of the underlying root causes of the more obvious signs of social distress which define the continuing deprivation of Halton, such as poverty, crime or poor health outcomes.

Negative perceptions about Halton still prevail. Environmental improvements and better quality open spaces, in addition to a better quality built environment, are vital as steps to promote Halton's assets. A positive image is a key requirement if we are to boost the confidence and aspirations of local people and business.

Improvement Targets

By 2010 we aim to:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| <i>Growth</i> | Sustain levels of Gross Value Added (GVA)/capita at or above the regional norm. |
| <i>Jobs</i> | increase the jobs capacity in Halton by 10% |
| <i>Vitality</i> | Increase prime rents on commercial property by 15% |
| <i>Reclamation</i> | Bring 50ha of derelict land back into beneficial use |
| <i>Housing</i> | Ensure the decency standard is met by all social housing |
| <i>Housing</i> | Ensure 50% of all new housing is built on brownfield sites |
| <i>Premises</i> | Facilitate bringing to market of at least 100,00 sq. m. of new and replacement commercial floorspace |
| <i>Town Centres</i> | Increase footfall by 25% across the borough |
| <i>Transport</i> | Increase use, punctuality and reliability of public transport by 10% |
| <i>Waste</i> | Ensure 30% of waste is recycled or composted |
| <i>Satisfaction</i> | Improve the satisfaction rate of residents on quality of the built and natural environment by 10% |

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE IN HALTON

Our overall aim

To ensure that in Halton children and young people are safeguarded, healthy and happy, and receive their entitlement of high quality services that are sensitive to need, inclusive and accessible to all.

Why children and young people?

Children and young people are the future of Halton. In time they will become the adults that take responsibility for all aspects of life in the borough. Therefore, it is vital that we should invest in Halton's future by investing in them. This will make sure they have the best possible start in life, have places to go and things to do that are positive and life enhancing, and the opportunity to fulfill their potential and succeed.

Key Objectives

- A. To ensure all children and young people in Halton enjoy a healthy lifestyle that helps them to achieve physical and emotional well being**
- B. To ensure all children and young people in Halton grow up and thrive in safe environments, communities, homes and families**
- C. To ensure all children and young people in Halton participate and enjoy, learning to develop socially and achieving their full potential**
- D. To ensure all children and young people in Halton engage in enterprising behaviour, are confident and make positive decisions about their lives and their communities**
- E. To ensure all children and young people in Halton have positive futures after school by embracing life long learning, employment opportunities and enjoying a positive standard of living**

Background

Development in early childhood, success while at school through educational and other achievement, and the acquisition of important, employable skills, are key determinants of individuals' life and employment chances. They have a major effect on people's ability to get a job, on the income they earn, on their aspirations, behaviour, health and longevity, and on the range of positive choices they are able to make in life.

The Government policy, *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*, describes a vision of improving outcomes for all children and young people and narrowing the gap between those who do well and those who do not. In Halton, as elsewhere, this requires radical change in the whole system of children's services including:

- The improvement and integration of universal services – in early years settings, schools, the health service and play and recreation – and to raise standards of achievement for all learners

- ❑ More specialised help to promote opportunity, prevent problems and act early and effectively if and when problems arise
- ❑ The development of services around children, young people and families through the delivery of better and more easily accessible services may involve co-location through, for example, extended schools, children's centres, and the bringing together of professionals in multi-disciplinary teams
- ❑ Dedicated and enterprising leadership striving for the highest standards at all levels of the system
- ❑ The development of a shared sense of responsibility across agencies for safeguarding children and protecting them from harm
- ❑ Listening to children, young people and their families when assessing and planning service provision, as well as in face-to-face delivery

To bring about improvement in the life chances and employment prospects for children and young people in Halton, we need to remove socio-economic barriers to early development, and deliver the *Every Child Matters* agenda through the new Children's Alliance, and through better joint commissioning of services through a widely agreed Children's and Young People's plan.

The key agencies that have an impact on children and young people need to build on existing cooperation. Firstly we need to develop policies based on evidence of what works most effectively that are focused on the areas for policy development highlighted above. Then we must create a model of what measures and services to enhance life chances and employment need to be like to make the most positive impact in Halton. Finally, we should devise an action plan to make any changes needed to shift from the measures and services that exist now, to what they need to be in the future.

Improvement targets

By 2010 we aim:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Health | To reduce health inequalities by at least 10% as measured by infant mortality and life expectancy at birth. |
| Health | To increase to at least 85% the percentage of children fully immunised by their second birthday |
| Safety | To reduce by at least 50% the number of under 15's killed or seriously injured in road accidents |
| Obesity | To stabilise the growth in obesity rates in the under 11's |
| Foundation Stage | To increase to 60% the percentage of children whose personal and social development is assessed as "good" at the end of the Foundation Stage |
| Attendance | To reduce unauthorised absence towards the national average in both primary and secondary schools by 6% and 10% respectively |
| Attainment | To increase the number of pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs at Grades A*-C to at least 60% |

KS3	To improve the performance of pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 in Maths, Science and English so that attainment at least matches the national average
<i>Engaged</i>	To reduce the number of young people not in employment, education or training to fewer than 7%
<i>Protect</i>	To increase the reported perception of safety after dark by at least 15% by 2008
<i>Employability</i>	To increase the number of 19 year olds with Level 2 qualifications by at least 30%
<i>Accessibility</i>	To increase to 25% the number of 13-19 year olds that are reached by the youth service, and who have a youth centre or project open at least one night each week within a mile of their home
Equity	To reduce the proportion of children living in homes with a relatively low income by at least 40%
<i>Care</i>	To reduce the number of care leavers who live in temporary accommodation to at least 15% by 2009
Statements	To reduce the proportion of pupils with statements of special education needs to 2.8%.
Crime	To reduce year on year the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system

EMPLOYMENT LEARNING & SKILLS IN HALTON

Our overall aim

To create an economically prosperous borough that encourages investment, entrepreneurship, enterprise and business growth, and improves the education, skills and employment prospects of our residents and workforce so they can share in the all the opportunities Halton affords.

Why employment, learning and skills?

A strong economy provides the key foundation for any prosperous and successful place. It provides jobs, opportunities, wealth and aspirations for local people. There is a sustained mismatch between the needs of local business and the skills of local people. This means that opportunity and need are out of balance and contribute to the widespread deprivation in Halton. Sustainable economic growth and prosperity requires a commitment to encourage and support a vibrant business sector and a commitment to employment, learning and skills to satisfy all stakeholders in Halton.

Key Objectives

- A To foster a culture of enterprise and entrepreneurship and make Halton an ideal place to start and grow economic activity**
- B To develop a culture where learning is valued and raise skill levels throughout the adult population and in the local workforce**
- C To promote and increase the employability of local people and remove any barriers to employment to get more people into work**
- D To develop a strong, diverse, competitive and sustainable knowledge-based local economy**

Background

Despite a range of Government and Halton's own initiatives, the borough is still characterised by widespread deprivation. Skills and employment are key factors. Educational attainment whilst at school and the acquisition of important, employable skills are key determinants of individuals' life and employment chances. They have a major effect on people's ability to get a job, on the income they earn, on their aspirations, behaviour, health and longevity, and on the range of positive choices they are able to make in life. The creation of a strong, knowledge-based economy able to compete in the increasingly global market can only be achieved by investment in skills, a vibrant employment market and a robust culture of entrepreneurship.

Research shows that the skill base of the local area is relatively poor compared to Great Britain as a whole and surrounding local economies. Halton has a low percentage of adults with further education qualifications and low rates of numeracy and literacy. All told, there is a mismatch between skills in the local workforce and jobs available in the borough. Looking to the future, estimates indicate that the majority of new jobs will require some form of higher education qualification. Over

95% of new jobs will need qualifications of at least NVQ 2 level; over 70% at NVQ 3 and above. There are forecast to be skill shortages across a range of sectors such as public services and retail by 2012.

High economic inactivity rates across the borough, with particular pockets of high deprivation and social exclusion, are endemic in the local economy. The Halton economy is heavily reliant on a narrow range of industry sectors and is susceptible to global pressures, which could have a negative effect. There is a lack of an enterprise culture in Halton, with generally low levels of business start-up, survival and growth.

Improvement Targets

By 2010 we aim to:

Employment Increase employment rate by 2%

Economic Inactivity Reduce rate by 10%

Skills Increase number of adults qualified to Level 3 by 25%

Skills Increase number of adults qualified to Level 2 by 15%

Learning Reduce number of adults with no qualifications by 15%

Enterprise Increase rate of self-employment by 20%

Growth Increase number of VAT registrations by 15%

Knowledge economy Increase number of adults qualified to Level 4/5 by 15%

Equity Ensure unemployment rate in any ward is less than 20% above the borough average

A SAFER HALTON

Our overall aim

To ensure pleasant safe and secure neighbourhood environments, with attractive, safe surroundings, good quality local amenities, and the ability of people to enjoy life where they live.

Why a Safer Halton?

Crime and the fear of crime affect everybody's lives. It is a major concern according to every survey of Halton residents. These surveys also show that cleaner, tidier neighbourhoods would make the biggest difference to improving life for people in their local area. We want Halton to be a clean, green, safe and attractive place to live. People should tolerate, value and respect each other, their property and the places where they live.

Key Objectives

- A To investigate and tackle the underlying causes of crime and disorder and respond effectively to public concern by reducing crime levels**
- B To improve the understanding of drug/substance misuse problems and reduce the harm caused by illegal drugs**
- C To create and sustain better neighbourhoods that are well designed, well built, well maintained and valued by the people who live in them, reflecting the priorities of residents**
- D To understand and tackle the problem of domestic abuse in all its forms**
- E To better understand all the impacts of alcohol in Halton and develop a strategic approach to reducing the harm it causes**

Background

The Safer Halton Partnership has a wide-ranging remit focused on two major concerns of Halton people. Crime and the local environment have consistently been two areas the public have raised as high priorities in successive consultations over the last few years. We want to make Halton a great place to live with an attractive quality of life and excellent local environment. However, this is very much dependent on reducing current levels of crime, tackling anti-social behaviour and improving the local environment in our neighbourhoods. Recent years have seen reductions in total recorded crime and for key crimes such as burglary, and car crime. The Safer Halton Partnership - with its focus on action at the neighbourhood level - has contributed to these welcome reductions. However, this remains the most pressing problem for most people in Halton, and fear of crime remains at unacceptable levels and impacts upon too many lives. At the same time, whilst general satisfaction levels are rising with Halton as a place to live, it is the condition of their local environment which is of most concern to residents.

Therefore, the Strategy aims to increase the confidence of communities in their neighbourhoods. This is about improving local conditions and encouraging people to get involved in helping to shape what happens in their local area. We want to encourage active citizenship, volunteering and community activism. Area Forums and Participation and Delivery meetings provide greater opportunities for local accountability on this agenda. This requires residents to see that public agencies have got their priorities right; that they respond to local concerns, and will take more effective action against the issues that most impact on their quality of life. Tackling the causes as well as the symptoms of neighbourhood distress is a responsibility shared by all partners. Increasingly, they will look to better co-ordinate their activity through neighbourhood management arrangements to have a greater impact. This will increase the effectiveness of work that can prevent and intervene early in the conditions which lead to dissatisfaction.

Improvement targets

By 2010 we aim to:

<i>Crime</i>	Reduce the British Crime Survey comparator rate by 17.5%
<i>Violence</i>	Reduce violent crime rates by 12%
<i>Burglary</i>	Reduce burglary from dwellings by 40%
<i>Drugs Treatment</i>	Increase the total numbers of places by 25%
<i>Drugs Treatment</i>	Increase the retention rate for 12 weeks to 85%
<i>Fear of Crime</i>	Reduce levels of expressed fear of crime and anti-social behaviour by 25%
<i>Alcohol</i>	Reduce positive breath tests by 20%
<i>Domestic Abuse</i>	Increase the number of victims accessing support by 20%
<i>Resident's Satisfaction</i>	Raise satisfaction levels with the neighbourhood area where people live to above 63%
<i>Volunteering</i>	Increase the rate of people involved in community activities by 30%
<i>Neighbourhood Management</i>	Implement a local management scheme in all neighbourhoods in Halton

CROSS CUTTING ISSUES

Introduction

This strategy is concerned with addressing social exclusion. This is about what happens when people face a multitude of problems such as poor housing, high crime, poor health, worklessness, discrimination and poor relationships. These problems link and reinforce each other creating a vicious circle for people. Often they are clustered in specific neighbourhoods. However, this strategy tries to take a positive view of the future. Past approaches have very much concentrated on dealing with Halton's failings and problems. Significant change is unlikely if we continue to focus in this way. It will be better to shift our focus to prevention measures, to promoting positive lifestyles and the many excellent aspects of life in Halton, and to more timely interventions to help people at the times when they most need support.

The core of this approach is policies and interventions that have local people as their focus. Part of this is about service delivery itself. We need to ensure that they are accessible, appropriate and can meet complex needs. Service Staff need to fully understand the range of services and benefits available, and be able to negotiate access to a range of options. Such advisers and advocates are essential, and they need to have the skills and flexibility to tap into a variety of support, and the ability to work with people. Whilst technology can be a great help in enabling new and better ways of making services accessible, this guardianship is vital. In a borough where up to 30% of people have literacy problems, there is a danger that we can create a digital divide between those who can access and navigate services electronically and those who cannot.

Issues

Overall poverty, unemployment and material deprivation are diminishing in crude terms. However, Halton continues to display high rates of benefit dependency. At the same time many people are still not claiming their full entitlements which would allow them to enjoy a minimum standard of living. Therefore, information, advice, guidance and advocacy are crucial in allowing people to access the help they need to navigate an extraordinarily complicated benefits system. This is not only beneficial for the recipients themselves but also for the local economy as research shows that most transfer payments are spent locally. Halton is also characterised by high levels of personal debt, with up to 10% of households struggling to support debt levels. This in turn impacts on people's health and well being and the positive contribution they can make to the local economy. Therefore, debt advice and innovative community finance initiatives are a continuing need.

Whilst the population of Halton has stabilised in recent years, its most prominent future feature will be the rate at which it ages. The next ten years will see a reduction in teenagers by 20% and a dramatic rise in the over 60s (27%) and over 75s (19%). This presents new risks for social exclusion and shifting demands for services. Single person households will rise, and single parenthood will become even more common. One result is likely to be a marked increase in social isolation which will have profound effects on people's health and involvement in their communities.

There is already growing pressure on housing in Halton. The underpinning reasons for homelessness – including family breakdown and mental health problems – are still with us. Choice and quality in housing will be key across all tenures and in all parts of Halton. This is essential if we are to mitigate the housing element of social exclusion and concentrate on preventing homelessness and the damage it does, especially to children.

Halton is committed to equality of opportunity for disabled people and to ending discrimination. The passing of the Disability Discrimination Act in 1995 has given a new focus to our commitment to disabled people. Underlying this Community Strategy is a commitment to turn policy into practice. We want to identify and support all family carers and cared for people with disabilities in Halton by striving to improve their quality of life and life chances. We want disabled people living and working in Halton to be able to realise their full potential. We will make progress towards this by removing barriers and changing the attitudes which prevent disabled people from gaining access to employment and to the services provided by partners. Disability is a social issue and an impairment becomes a disability because of the social and physical barriers that the individual faces. Our efforts will be focussed on removing these barriers. Our approach will be guided by the following principles:

- Anti-discrimination - such that disabled people are not subject to discriminatory practices
- Equality of opportunity - for disabled people in every aspect of their lives
- Independence not dependence - enhancing the independence of disabled people and increasing the choices available to them
- Individual needs - recognising that the disabled person is an individual who has needs, abilities, rights and responsibilities
- Accountability - so that the responsibility for securing equal treatment and removing barriers rests with all partners
- Integration - so that services for disabled people are provided as part of an integrated whole, not separately
- Involvement in decision-making - so that disabled people and their advocates are engaged before decisions which affect them are made

The Halton Strategic Partnership want to develop policies and programmes which leave a lasting and positive effect on future generations of people in Halton. We also want to look forward and help to achieve sustainable development both locally and more widely to promote regional, national and global aims.

Given its dependence on the chemical industry, Halton has always been sensitive to the need to improve and protect the environment. Halton's ambitious Local Agenda 21 was one of the most comprehensive in the UK. It sets out Halton's contribution to meeting national and international commitments, and to tackling worldwide environmental issues such as climate change. It looks at ways we can manage our resources better, and avoid the many local problems that adversely affect our quality of life. It also considers practical ways in which we can all contribute to making Halton more sustainable. This Community Strategy sets out clearly our ambitions for a sustainable future for Halton. Underpinning all of the proposed actions is the belief that changes in our behaviour are needed to make a significant impact on long term sustainability.

The people of Halton, and a focus on responding to their full range of needs, is the key cross cutting theme that underpins this strategy. The needs analysis allows us to anticipate likely changes and plan accordingly. We want to sustain progress and increasingly provide a much greater range of opportunities, and the ability to take advantage of them. We want to sharpen up service delivery and focus on the things that will make the most difference. The key measure of whether service delivery is transformed is how far and how fast we can narrow the gap in outcomes for the most disadvantaged in Halton, as measured by comparison with both Halton and national averages.

Improvement Targets

By 2010 we aim to:

- Child Poverty*** Reduce the number of children living in income support eligible households to under 20%
- Income*** Increase average household income in Halton to more than 90% of the national average
- Deprivation*** See Halton outside the 40 most deprived districts in England

HOW WILL WE MAKE IT HAPPEN IN HALTON?

All the objectives and targets outlined here are achievable. However, all of our aspirations will not happen unless we do the job properly. That means money, people, physical resources, proper intelligence and information, allied with the strength of will to use them in the best way.

How well and how quickly our objectives are realised depends crucially on the availability of resources and how smartly they are used. A key purpose of this Strategy is to ensure that the resources available are targeted and used effectively to bring about improvements in the borough. This means:

- Being clear and agreeing about what we need to achieve so we are all pulling in the same direction
- Maximising the funding we can generate or draw in to benefit Halton and developing our own resources and the capacity to help ourselves
- Co-operating to be more effective, cutting out duplication and waste, and pooling the budgets, knowledge and efforts of different organisations and groups where this makes sense
- Listening and responding to what matters most to people locally
- Targeting what we do to where it can make most difference
- Doing the kind of things that experience has shown will really work and be successful
- Checking on progress, letting people know how we are doing, and adjusting where necessary to keep on track

Without the tools and the will to do the job, the improvements set out in this Strategy will not happen.

Money

The organisations that make up the Partnership already spend hundreds of millions of pounds of public money each year in Halton. Much of this goes to maintain essential services like health, policing, schools, transport and waste collection that we tend to take for granted. The way money is spent on these statutory services – ‘mainstream budgets’ – has to be steadily re-focused to achieve the specific objectives and improvement targets within this Strategy. The Community Strategy provides a tool to help partners refocus their budgets.

The Strategy also provides a framework to help identify and secure additional funding for the borough from a variety of sources. It sets out shared policy objectives along with clear aims and targets across the five agreed key themes. This gives a framework in which partners can make budgetary decisions that reflect Halton's priorities.

Halton also needs to win and use any additional funding that is available to support these improvements and to help meet the agreed objectives. Already the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund has provided tremendous support (around £30M) to the aims of the Community Strategy. Local Area Agreements will provide the vehicle in the future for deploying additional resources in Halton outside of mainstream budgets. These will allow the aims of the Community Strategy to be operationalised through the five themes. For each theme an agreement will be developed which sets out realistic aims and targets for what can be achieved over the next five years. Non-mainstream funding sources will be pooled and invested by the SSPs in projects to achieve the agreed targets.

Local Area Agreements provide a mechanism for the partners to genuinely work together to achieve the same goals. They provide an opportunity to map resources and activity, streamline current processes, pool and align budgets, eliminate duplication, attract new funding and to target activity to where it is most needed to achieve the overall vision for Halton. In particular agreements will target funding at the most deprived neighbourhoods and towards specific at-risk groups.

People & Assets

Allied to cash, the efforts, skills and determination of people living and working in the borough are key to success. This applies to individuals interested or already active in helping their local community as well as to those who work in public, voluntary and other organisations serving Halton. We need to boost skills and knowledge and stimulate confidence and motivation that will strengthen the Borough's capacity to help itself. We must ensure that we are organised and co-operate in ways that are effective and deliver real benefits. Also, we need to provide better ways for people to work collaboratively and across organisational boundaries to increase their own job satisfaction and their impact on the challenges they deal with.

Most of the steps we need to take in moving Halton forward will involve some use of land, buildings, equipment and materials. Hundreds of millions of pounds are currently invested in publicly owned physical resources of various kinds within the borough. We need to make optimum use of these assets, cutting out any unnecessary duplication and ensuring they are well adapted to local requirements.

In particular we have to respond to the rise of consumerism and the desire of people to access a range of services through a single portal. The advent of Halton Direct Link, Health Care Resource Centres, extended schools and Children's Centres provide models of exemplary service delivery which are highly valued by local people. Increasingly, partners will need to look at much greater efforts towards co-location and joint use of facilities. Not only is this more cost efficient, but it gives partners a proper customer focus.

Intelligence

Without proper information, and making it easily accessible to people, we are working in the dark in trying to bring about improvement in Halton. This covers information about local needs and conditions, and what people think is most important for their

communities. It is about the information we need to understand what is likely to work well in achieving our targets for Halton. It's about keeping people – local people and partner organisations – in the picture about the progress we are making together.

The Partnership has made a big commitment to improving the way information is gathered, used and shared. Of particular note are:

- a) A data observatory that is being set up to hold key statistical information on all aspects of living conditions in Halton. This will keep data at a variety of spatial levels – super output area, ward, neighbourhood and district level – and allow for comparison with our neighbours and regional and national averages. It will greatly help people to understand the geography and nature of disadvantage in Halton.
- b) The Partnership is setting up a database of consultation and community engagement in Halton. This will enable people to access a rich source of attitudinal data on a range of issues. It will also help people to plan and execute better community engagement in the borough.
- c) The Partnership website is being updated and expanded to provide an easy to access source of material on all aspects of regeneration in Halton. It will cover the full range of activity being carried out by the Partnership. The electronic information will be backed up with written material – plans, newsletters, and good practice guides – in a number of formats, to especially target the electronically disadvantaged.

MANAGING RISKS

The Partnership recognises the scale of its ambition and is realistic in its expectations of what can be achieved given the scale of resources being deployed. In addition it also recognises that risk management must be an integral part of the performance management framework and business planning process. This will increase the probability of success (and reduce the likelihood of failure) by systematically identifying, evaluating and controlling the risks associated with the achievement of its objectives.

The risk management process focuses attention and resources on critical areas, provides more robust action plans and better informed decision-making. It also fosters a culture where uncertainty does not slow progress or stifle innovation and ensures the commitment and resources of the Partnership to produce positive outcomes.

As part of implementing this Community Strategy the Partnership will adopt a Risk Management Strategy and establish a Strategic Risk Register. The Strategy will set out the risk management objectives, the role and responsibilities for risk management of the Board and individual SSPs, and will categorise risks and the approach to risk management action plans.

The risk management objectives include the;

- Adoption of Risk Management as a key part of the Community Strategy
- Identification, evaluation and economic control of strategic and operational risks

- Promotion of ownership through increased levels of awareness and skills development

The Partnership's risks can be broadly categorised as either "strategic" or "operational". Strategic risks cover those threats or opportunities which could impact upon the achievement of medium and long-term goals.

A major review of strategic risks will be carried out in 2006 when the Community Strategy has been adopted. That will be followed up by an assessment of operational risks through each of the SSPs as part of their Action Planning and Local Area Agreement process.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The Partnership is determined to deliver its vision of a better future for Halton's people. We are committed to equality for everyone regardless of age, sex, caring responsibilities, race, religion, sexuality, or disability. We are leaders of the community and will not accept discrimination, victimisation or harassment. This commitment to equity and social justice is clearly stated in the adopted equal opportunities policy of the Partnership. This states that the Partnership:

- is committed to promoting equal opportunities in Halton
- values diversity and encourages fairness and justice
- wants equal chances for everyone in Halton to work, learn and live free from discrimination and victimisation
- will combat discrimination and will use its position of influence in the borough, wherever possible, to help overcome discriminatory barriers

As well as accepting our legal responsibilities, we are committed to broad principles of social justice. The Partnership is opposed to any form of discrimination and oppression. Our policies will apply to all of those who come into contact with us. This includes current users of directly provided services, users of services provided on our behalf, potential users of services, other agencies and professionals, employees and job applicants, and the general public.

The Partnership wants to create a culture where people of all backgrounds and experience feel appreciated and valued. Discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, disability, age or any other unjustifiable reason will not be tolerated. As a Partnership we are committed to a programme of action to make this policy fully effective.

Partners will work collaboratively to develop effective procedures and policies to combat all forms of unlawful discrimination and to share good practice. They will ensure that all services are provided fairly and without discrimination. Reasonable adjustments will be made so that services are accessible to everyone who needs them. People's cultural and language needs will be recognised and services will be provided which are appropriate to these needs. Partners will monitor the take up of services from different sections of the population. The information collected will be used to inform service planning and delivery. Equality Impact Assessments will also be carried out on Partnership policies and services to assess how policies and services impact on different sections of the community. The results of the Equality Impact Assessments will highlight areas for improvement, which will be dealt with through the Partnership Improvement Plan.

The Partnership takes complaints seriously. People who feel they have been unfairly treated have the right to use the complaints procedure laid out in the Local Compact.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING?

This Strategy runs for five years. It is an important step, but only a step, in a much longer journey to build a better future for people in Halton. If we succeed in achieving our targets they will translate into real improvements for local people. This is why it is important to know how we are doing and what progress we are making in meeting the improvement targets we have set ourselves. By monitoring progress closely we can identify and build on successes, provide necessary assistance or support where progress has not met expectations, and adjust our efforts and resources to adapt to changing circumstances.

A range of high level outcomes have been set in the Strategy. These provide a benchmark and clarity in how our progress can be measured in the future. For all five themes there are several key objectives and a small number of key targets for each. In particular these reflect the government floor targets, local public service agreements and key desired outcomes. Together these form a 'score card' for the Community Strategy.

We want to be judged by what we do and not by what we say. Every year the progress on the Community Strategy will be reviewed and the scorecard published as part of our Annual Report. This will allow for scrutiny of the work of the Partnership. Local people are the best judges of how well we are doing. The Partnership works on their behalf and they are best placed to venture an opinion on how the quality of life in Halton rates. As well as the scorecard the Partnership will repeat its Quality of Life survey at regular intervals to track public perceptions of how well the Strategy is being implemented. This regular dialogue is a key part of our performance-monitoring framework. We genuinely want to know what people think of the things we do, how we go about tasks and what we should pay attention to in the future.

The forward programme of the Partnership in pursuit of the Strategy will be reviewed and updated to ensure it responds to changing circumstances. As well as the high level scorecard, each Specialist Strategic Partnership will have a more detailed action plan (Local Area Agreement). This will contain a richer hierarchy of outcomes, outputs, targets and milestones. Each Partnership will be accountable for its own performance and the Board will seek qualitative monitoring reports on how work is progressing. One of the key features of the Strategy is the understanding of how each of the themes are linked and impact on each other. The Strategy establishes the importance of a number of key crosscutting themes that are common across all Partnership activity. It is proposed to establish a Performance and Standards Group reporting directly to the Board. This group will take responsibility for all aspects of performance management and ensure proper oversight, scrutiny and accountability of all activities that take place under the auspices of the Partnership and this Community Strategy.

ENGAGING THE PEOPLE OF HALTON

Wholesale improvement in the quality of life enjoyed by local people can only come about if a significant part of the community is involved in making it happen. This can

take place informally, in many different ways within the community itself. However this has to be complemented by action taken with the support of a variety of public, voluntary and other bodies.

The views of the public were an important factor in deciding the overall themes and direction of this Community Strategy. Channels of communication like the borough's Area Forums and the police Participation and Delivery meetings provide extra ways to share, discuss and resolve local issues. A whole range of services actively consult with and involve their customers, and staff from a range of organisations work closely with local people on a day-to-day basis.

The Halton Strategic Partnership sees itself, through this Strategy and the actions of partners, as providing leadership. This can only be achieved if they remain in touch with the people and communities they represent and serve. The Strategy aims to create an environment in which everyone can get involved in making things happen in Halton. We want to foster active participation by as many people and agencies as possible. The Partnership will look for ways to make itself more accountable to communities through events, panels, area forums and open and transparent decision-making processes. A number of steps define this:

Customer focus – Services and processes have to be designed around the needs of the people who actually use them. At the same time users need to have an appropriate role in specifying the services that are delivered.

Consultation & engagement – Partners will create specific and purposeful opportunities for people to give their views on what is needed and how it should be delivered. Wherever possible people should be actively involved in decision-making, service specification and design.

Communication – Letting people know what is happening, how they can get involved and encouraging dialogue between partners and local communities is vital. Various media and methods will be used in appropriate and sensitive ways to build and maintain the communication effort.

The Partnership has spent a considerable effort in developing an inclusive approach to engagement through its bespoke strategy and network arrangements. Full details are available on the Partnership website. Community empowerment is about members of a community feeling able to achieve their own goals, with some measure of control over the processes and strategies to attain these. It is a process whereby communities are encouraged to become increasingly self-reliant in improving their neighbourhoods and livelihoods. It is a cyclical, participatory process where local people co-operate in formal or informal groups to share their knowledge and experiences and to achieve common objectives. It is a process rather than a blueprint, and one that underpins this Community Strategy.

THE WAY FORWARD

This Community Strategy highlights key objectives for each strategic theme and improvement targets by which success can be judged. These targets collectively form the Partnership Scorecard, which is attached as an Annex to this Strategy. We will report back to partners and the public each year on progress against this Scorecard.

This Strategy runs for five years, at which point we expect it be reviewed. It is an important step, but only a step, in a much longer journey to build a better future for people in Halton. If we succeed in achieving our targets, they will translate into real improvements for local people, including:

- longer, healthier lives
- a better urban environment and reasons to feel pride in Halton
- higher standards of education and skills and the greater employment and other life chances that go with them
- fewer people trapped by poverty, excluded or held back through some form of deprivation or disadvantage
- the freedom to feel safe and enjoy life in an attractive neighbourhood

If you have any queries or comments you would like to make about this Community Strategy, please contact the Halton Partnership Team, c/o Halton Borough Council, Municipal Building, Kingsway, Widnes, WA8 7QF, Telephone 0151 424 2061 (Ext 1154) or email LSP@halton.gov.uk