

AGENDA ITEM: 7

REPORT TO: Halton Strategic Partnership Board

DATE: 15 March 2006

SUBJECT: Neighbourhood Management

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

In November the Board received a report on the need to develop proposals for the use of the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund (SSCF) Neighbourhood Element. The Board agreed to establish a sub group to examine neighbourhood management in the Halton context and develop proposals for pilot arrangements utilising the Neighbourhood Element monies. The purpose of this report is to update the Board on progress.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board:

- a) Note the progress to date and endorse the methodology for establishing the pilot areas;
- b) Agree the governance and management arrangements as set out in the report; and that financial accountability should rest with Halton Borough Council
- c) Delegate authority to the Chair in consultation with the HSPB Neighbourhood Management Steering Group to make decisions around financial spend, appointment of staff where appropriate and to manage the next stage of the process on behalf of the Partnership.
- d) Agree for the HSPB Neighbourhood Management Steering Group to become the shadow neighbourhood management board for the interim period before the formal neighbourhood management (NM) board is able to take over the process.
- e) Receive updated reports from the HSPB Neighbourhood Management Steering Group
- f) The HSPB partners commit their organisations to a neighbourhood management model and approach to service delivery within Halton

BACKGROUND

The government is enthusiastic about extending neighbourhood management as a means to engage and empower local communities. Neighbourhood management is intended to address problems in deprived neighbourhoods by managing and co-ordinating resources and services to achieve a greater combined impact. A sound neighbourhood approach should lay the foundations for delivery of improvements to liveability and public services, transforming neighbourhoods and empowering local people. To support this approach the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund Neighbourhood Element (SSCF NE) has been made available to selected local authorities on the basis of deprivation. This funding is to establish management arrangements to make better use of existing resources. In particular it aims to better

focus activity in order to close the gap between deprived areas and others. Halton's allocation from the neighbourhood element, is:

2006 – 07	2007 – 08	2008 – 09	2009 – 2010
£412,800	£516,000	£412,800	£258,000

To satisfy the government agenda it will be necessary to concentrate first on those neighbourhoods containing the most deprived SOAs.

ACTION

A small Steering Group of partners has been established. This group was given the remit to:

- Confirm neighbourhood(s) and agree the rationale for establishing these with Government Office.
- Examine possible local governance/partnership arrangements.
- Commission work to audit existing initiatives and establish baselines in performance.
- Undertake gap analysis for crime, liveability, education, economic development etc.
- Prioritise interventions and develop targets
- Suggest management arrangements, and develop an action plan for implementing the priorities using existing resources and funding streams, including monitoring and review arrangements

PROGRESS TO DATE

The Steering Group have put forward the following approach to neighbourhood management, for consideration by the Board:

1) A baseline audit was commissioned. Each partner organisation on the sub-group was asked to complete an audit pro-forma, to identify the current situation in the worst 3% SOAs. This included identifiable neighbourhoods, known needs and aspirations, existing community infrastructure, existing activity and service provision and known data and data sources. The audit will help inform the neighbourhood management process.

2) Establishment of three Neighbourhood Management Areas for Halton. There are six SOA's within Halton, which are within the worst 3% nationally. Due to the nature of SOA boundaries, these do not cover natural neighbourhoods. In some cases for example one side of the road is in and one is out. Taking this into account the Steering Group have proposed three neighbourhood management areas for Halton, each containing two of the worst 3% SOAs. These are central Widnes including Kingsway, Stewards Avenue and Lacey Street area, Castlefields and Windmill Hill and Halton Lea, which includes Palacefields and Hallwood Park. The total population

of the three proposed areas is 16,753. (Maps will be tabled at the meeting for ease of reference)

3) Establishment of a neighbourhood management board to cover the three neighbourhood management areas. This Board will have a wide representation of service providers, local councillors, community and voluntary sector and other partner organisations. There is still some debate about the coverage of such a Board. For example, should there be one board covering all three areas, or two covering both sides of the river; or, indeed three individual boards. There is an emerging consensus that favours setting up one board initially, but this decision still needs to be formally made by the Steering Group.

However it will take time to set up such a board and for them to be able to manage the NM process. It is therefore proposed that the HSPB neighbourhood management steering group, take on the role of a shadow Neighbourhood Management Board in the interim period. There will be a seamless transfer to the new Neighbourhood Management Board in due course.

4) It is proposed that the neighbourhood management process will potentially involve the need for several new posts. These are a Neighbourhood Management Manager, and three Neighbourhood Management Officer posts one for each of the selected areas. The neighbourhood manager would operate at the strategic level ensuring a co-ordinated response from all partners, whereas the three officer posts would operate at the community level. It would be helpful if some or all of these posts could be filled by secondments from partners, by officers with some knowledge and experience of the area. Neighbourhood Element monies could then usefully be used to fund the back filling of posts left vacant with the host partner. If this does not prove possible then external recruitment will be necessary.

5) Some further investment will be required to establish consistent baseline information. A liveability survey has already been carried out in Castlefields and Windmill Hill, but it will need to be extended to the other neighbourhood management areas in question. Additional resource will also be required to bring baseline data together into the data observatory.

6) The Steering Group are currently developing a clear action plan with timescales in order to implement the neighbourhood management agenda within Halton. This will include developing terms of reference for the Neighbourhood Management Board, writing relevant job descriptions for new posts, and what will be required to happen to develop local action planning processes within each of the three areas. They will also draw up a clear vision, remit, membership and terms of reference for the shadow neighbourhood management board.

GONW recently held a meeting with representatives from the Steering Group to discuss the neighbourhood management process. GONW appear comfortable with the proposed physical boundaries for the Neighbourhood Management areas and the approach adopted to date. They did however stress the importance of including hard to reach groups and reducing the gap between these deprived areas and other areas. Targets and outcomes will need to be agreed and included in the SSCF Agreement currently being updated.

For this process to work it is vital that partner organisations are willing to commit to neighbourhood working. They must be prepared to consider alternative patterns of service delivery where this will improve outcomes for the most deprived

neighbourhoods. At the same time we must acknowledge that this can only happen in the context of the existing overall resource, statutory or other constraints. The emphasis will be on becoming more effective in use of existing resources through joining up delivery and reducing duplication.