

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3

REPORT TO: Halton Strategic Partnership Board
DATE: 18 January 2006
SUBJECT: Community Strategy Priorities Process

1. INTRODUCTION

The overall policy direction for the Borough is captured in the Community Strategy. This has been subject to a wholesale review, which started last January. At its last meeting Board reflected on the full range of discussion and came to a view on shaping the key elements of the new Community Strategy.

On that basis a new Community Strategy has been drafted, which is attached as an annex to this report. The purpose of this report is to seek the agreement of the Board to a consultation process on its refinement and adoption.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

The Board is recommended to:

- Agree the contents of the draft Community Strategy as the consultation version;
- Agree that the consultation process set out below in the section on Way Forward is adopted; and,
- Ask that a final version of the Strategy be brought to the next Board meeting for adoption.

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 has been constructed as a direct result of that process and is based on some key issues which emerged:

- a) There is a consensus that the existing strategy is broadly correct. It properly analyses Halton problems, future challenges, and the long-term nature of sustainable solutions. Therefore, wholesale change is not called for, but a realignment and refocus of activity around certain key issues.
- b) The State of Halton report and the community consultation reinforced this. They confirmed that Halton's relative position on a range of socio-economic indicators are little changed, and reconfirmed the many

challenges Halton faces. However, they also highlighted a good many positive strengths, which Halton possesses. These provide a base, which can be built upon in the future.

- c) What we do is important, but the way we do things is even more vital. Good partnership working and relationships help to ensure success, as does a proper customer focus, and a concentration on those areas of concern where we have furthest to travel. Engagement with all stakeholders and with communities is a vital underpinning to the strategy. Given that the existing strategy is broadly correct there has to be an increasing focus on better productivity and more efficient service delivery.

On page 10 of the draft are listed the seventeen headline areas for improvement which have emerged from the process. These are captured and explored more fully in the five thematic sections that follow, and elsewhere in even greater detail in the SSP baseline reports (which are available on the partnership website). For completeness it can be seen that the headline areas can be mapped thematically as follows:

Healthy Halton

- ❑ Improving Health
- ❑ Supporting an aging population

Safer Halton

- ❑ Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour

Urban Renewal

- ❑ Improving environmental assets and how the Borough looks
- ❑ Further economic and urban regeneration
- ❑ Tackling contaminated land
- ❑ Improving amenities for all age groups
- ❑ Minimising waste/increasing recycling/efficient waste disposal

Children & Young People

- ❑ Creating opportunities/facilities/amenities for children and young people
- ❑ Improving educational attainment across the Borough

Learning & Skills

- ❑ Improving the skills base in the Borough
- ❑ Creating employment opportunities for all
- ❑ Tackling worklessness
- ❑ Tackling low wage economy

Cross Cutting

- ❑ Creating prosperity and equality of opportunity

- ❑ Increased focus on Community Engagement
- ❑ Running our business efficiently

One of the key points of principle is that the themes are merely convenient ways of grouping and managing issues. However, many issues are of concern to all or several themes. It is how we join up and coordinate our responses as a partnership that is important. This area will be explored in more detail at the governance day planned for 1 February.

4. WAY FORWARD

Given that partners have been working on the new strategy for over 12 months already it is time to bring the process to a conclusion. It is suggested that the Board agrees that the draft strategy be released for a short and intensive process of final consultation. This process will encompass:

- All partners consider the strategy at their own internal Boards/Management Teams.
- Council members are consulted through the Executive Board, Policy and Performance Boards and members seminar.
- Each SSP considers the draft and in particular agrees its own section and finalises the suggested improvement targets.
- Halton Together coordinates a wider public consultation via its network.

The aim will be for the Board to adopt the final version of the strategy at its next meeting in March. The strategy can then be launched as part of the Partnership Review day planned for 5 April. It will be incumbent on Partners to get the formal adoption of the strategy by their own organisation. This step should be planned into this period