

## AGENDA ITEM NO. 13

**REPORT TO:** Halton Strategic Partnership Board

**DATE:** 18 May 2005

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Local Authority Chief Executive

**SUBJECT:** Community Strategy Priorities Process

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The overall policy direction for the Borough is captured in the Community Strategy. This is a purposely time-limited document which expires at the end of this financial year. The Board agreed the process and timetable for the planning process to develop new versions in November 2004. The purpose of this report is to inform the Board about the progress being made.

### 2. RECOMMENDATION: The Board is recommended to:

- **Note the progress being made;**
- **Consider the strategic questions in Section 5, as a basis for discussion with partners and stakeholders;**
- **Give any initial view of the key challenges which the Priorities Process now needs to address; and,**
- **Approve the Away Day Report attached as an annex to this report**

### 3. BACKGROUND

The Partnership has adopted a strategic planning framework, the “priorities process” which has been held up as a model of good practice by central government. The current Community Strategy expires on 31 March 2006. The Board agreed in the autumn the scope and timescale of the planning process to refresh, reinvigorate and refocus the strategic direction of the Partnership by March 2006. The key elements of this process are:

- (a) Identifying The Strategic Priorities – the *State of the Borough Report* presents a snapshot of local socio-economic conditions and benchmarking which reveals issues needing attention. From this the Partnership is able to identify its key priorities.
- (b) Preparing a Baseline – a number of baseline reports are produced which examine more closely the needs, causes and demands which underpin the existing situation in respect of each theme of strategic policy, along with an examination of best practice and evidence of what works in situations relevant to Halton.

- (c) Policy/Strategy Development – all the strands of policy consideration and development are finally drawn together in a new Community Strategy.

#### **4. PROGRESS**

There has been good progress to date. The State of the Borough phase is now nearing its conclusion. The baselining phase, which will last until July, is now getting underway. It is still expected that the final draft of the new documents will be ready for Partnership endorsement in November. Key milestones to date include:

- The State of Halton report, authored by Local Futures, has been produced and was launched at a major event in late January. All Board members were invited to the event and have subsequently received a copy of the report.
- The Halton Strategic Partnership held its annual performance review away day on 13 April. This considered a performance management report, which gives a useful summary of distance travelled to date along with pointers to gaps, and activities on which future focus may be appropriate. A full report of the outcome of the away day is attached as an annex to this report.
- A telephone survey of residents has been completed providing useful information on the perceptions and priorities of local people. This report is now available. In addition focus groups are being held with a wide range of people in key demographics, e.g. the unemployed, young people, older people. These latter elements will be summarised in a report which will be available shortly, and circulated to all members
- A discussion paper has been produced on future drivers which reflect on wider societal changes and trends, and the impact they may have on Halton over the next fifteen years. This is attached for information and comment.
- Each of the Specialist Strategic Partnerships are having facilitated discussions on the progress they have made to date and the challenges facing their particular areas in the coming years. This will form an important part of the baselining process and will build upon the analyses they have all carried out on their priorities in recent times.

#### **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The Partnership's strategic planning framework is a robust and inclusive one. As the report demonstrates solid progress is being made in developing the new Community Strategy. There are a number

of key questions which partners need to resolve to underpin this process. These include:

- Are the current five priorities still fit for purpose and encapsulate the areas of activity which need to be addressed?
- Within the overall themes, what are the activities that will make the most difference and are partners in a position to prioritise the priorities?
- How can the Partnership focus its activity so that it has the greatest differential impact in the most deprived areas?
- Is the structure, form, and function of the Partnership right to meet the challenges ahead?

These questions will need to be answered in the next phase of the process. Partners at the away day and in the recent Specialist Strategic Partnership workshops have begun to explore them. It is vital that Partners actually take the lead in guiding these discussions to the most acceptable outcome. Any views from the Partners at the meeting would be very welcome

#### **ATTACHED DOCUMENTS**

Halton Strategic Partnership Board Awayday Report 13 April 2005