

HALTON STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday, 29 September 2010 at the Bridge Suite, Stobart Stadium

Present:

Board Members:	Councillor Rob Polhill	HBC
	(Chairman)	
	Nick Atkin	Halton Housing Trust
	Colin Billingsley	Job Centre Plus
	P Cain	Chamber of Commerce
	David Parr	HBC
	Dympna Edwards	Deputy Director Public Health
	Cllr Mike Fry	HBC
	Gerald Meehan	HBC
	Cllr Ron Hignett	HBC
	Chris Koral	Northwest Development Agency
	Jo Lappin	Government Office North West
	Matthew Roberts	Halton Voluntary Action
	Diane Sproson	Greater Merseyside Connexions Service
	Richard Strachan	Cheshire Police

Advisors to the Boards

Pat Audoire	HBC
Alasdair Cross	HBC
Shelah Semoff	HBC
Joanne Sutton	HBC
Lynn Derbyshire	HBC

Apologies for Absence: Mr A Burgess, D Dalby, Cllr D. Cargill, B. Edwards, T. Gibbs, R. Jones, R. Mackenzie, T. Parle and C. Wyatt

17 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 May 2010 having been printed and circulated were agreed as a correct record.

18 VARIOUS GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATE ON THE NEW ARCHITECTURE OF HALTON UNDER THE NEW GOVERNMENT

The Board received a presentation from David Parr, Chief Executive, Halton Borough Council on the recent and proposed public sector changes under the new coalition government. The presentation was to promote a debate with the Partners to consider what would be the best way forward for Halton.

The Presentation was divided into the five priority areas for Halton as follows:-

1. Health Reform

- patient led NHS;
- Shift resources to promote better health outcomes;
- Revolutionise NHS accountability;
- Promote better health and reform social care.

It was reported that under the new proposals the Strategic Health Authority and the Primary Care Trust would be abolished by 2013 and a GP commissioning service would be established via a consortium. The rationale around the proposals was that the Government felt that GP's were closest to health care and therefore best placed to provide a commissioning service. This equated to approximately £80b nationally.

It was also reported that a GP event was taking place in November to explore the options for the future and build on what services are currently in place and how to deliver them in a different way. It was highlighted that the proposals could create some positive outcomes and Partners could influence the future debate on a way forward

The Partners were advised that the responsibility for public health and health promotion would be transferred to the Local Authority.

However, it was highlighted that Halton would be working closely with communities and GP's to minimise/prevent ill health

The revolutionising NHS Accountability proposal would give patients more choice and involvement in their health via a local Health Watch.

A Health Re-structuring chart NHS

It was agreed that this chart be circulated with the presentation to Partners.

2. Environment and Urban Renewal

- Change to National Planning Policy Statements;
- Abolish National Infrastructure;
- Likely abolish of Tenants Services Authority;
- Abolish NWDA/4NW;
- Revocation of Regional Spatial Strategy;
- Abolish Working Neighbourhoods Fund;
- Eco system services approach to National Environment;
- New Green Deal for Households and Businesses; and

- New Local Enterprise Partnerships.

It was reported that the BBC website had produced a list of Quango's that it was proposing be abolished. It was highlighted that there were no provisions in place to fill the gap should they be abolished. In addition, it was reported that there were no proposals to abolish arms length bodies.

In addition, it was proposed that Government Office North West (GONW) be abolished and the Chief Executive took the opportunity to thank Jo Lappin for the work undertaken by her during the last few years. He highlighted that there was no guidance on who would fulfil the role and advise locally on national guidance.

3. Children and Young People

- Greater autonomy for schools;
- Improved parental choice;
- More support for the poorest; and
- Whole system improvement.

It was reported that funding to the Local Authority to support schools would cease which would make it very difficult to support vulnerable pupils. The authority were currently looking at innovative ways to continue the support. Schools would receive funding and in effect would become small businesses contracting external providers etc.

It was also reported that parents could set up their own free schools. It was highlighted that this would not be suitable in Halton and the one size fits all approach would not work as Authorities have different needs.

4. Employment, Learning and Skills

- Replacement of Regional Development Agencies by city based Local Enterprise Partnerships;
- Rationalise of area based funding streams, new regional growth fund;
- Acceleration of welfare / work programme; and
- Shift to payment by results for contracted / commissioned adult skills and training provision.

It was reported that the new Regional Growth fund would be approximately £1b to support the whole country and they would take bids from anyone i.e private sector, Local Authority etc.

In respect of payments by results it was reported that payments would only be made if the individual stayed in employment after training for a specified time.

5. Safer

- Policing in the 21st Century – Re-connecting Police and the People;
- Increase democratic accountability;
- Remove bureaucratic accountability
- National framework for efficient local policing; and
- Tackling crime together.

It was reported that in respect of removing bureaucratic accountability it was proposed to have only one commissioner for the whole of Cheshire which comprised of approximately one million people.

The proposals represented a 25% funding reduction for police and the abolishment of community safety grants which would affect Police Community Support Workers.

The Partners were advised of the cross cutting issues, supporting self reliance, giving people power and encouraging people to take an active role in their communities. In addition it was reported that in respect of localism – the transfer of power from central government to local government there would be a need to support co-ops, mutuals, charities and social enterprises,

A presentation on the Big Society, which a Government Official had presented at a recent event attended by David Parr, was circulated at the meeting. It was noted that a new contract would need to be created with the community to create a less dependent culture which would subsequently lead to better services as the Authority would be doing less and better and the gap would be filled by people taking personal responsibility. An example of this would be if people did not drop litter, there would be no need to collect it and this would save a significant amount of money which could be used to enhance other services.

The following points arose from the discussion:-

- Concern was raised that the Primary Care Trust proposals would result in Halton receiving an outreach service;
- Concern was raised on the proposal to have one Police Commissioner to represent the whole of Cheshire and the implications of this was noted;
- In respect of a definition of volunteers – It was reported that there was a pilot scheme in Liverpool currently which was led by Mr Philip Redmond, whose aspiration was to use volunteers in order to enable museums and art centres to have longer opening hours. Other parts of the country were also piloting different schemes. It was noted that

localism would work better in some areas than others as some communities were more organised/better equipped than other to undertake voluntary work;

- It was noted that the transition period represented a challenging role for Elected Ward Members. It was also noted that the proposals represented a massive culture programme change and the Local people, partners and the Local Authority would need to drive the changes forward;
- It was noted that central government had recognised the need to maintain relationships with local government and the importance of having a point of contact to undertake this role;
- It was noted that the proposals created a new opportunity for the partners/key stakeholders to think differently and innovatively when delivering services in the Borough;
- The role media would play in communicating the new way of working was noted;
- It was suggested that a half day workshop be arranged for the partners to discuss options for a way forward for Halton and consider what is best for Halton under the new proposals;
- In relation to receiving funding from central government, the importance of re-enforcing the message that Halton was a vulnerable community was noted.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the presentation be received;
- (2) David Parr be thanked for his informative presentation; and
- (3) A half day workshop be arranged for the Board to discuss the best way forward for Halton under the new proposals.

19 WNF REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The Board considered a report which informed the Partners of the work undertaken by the SSP Boards to evaluate those projects funded by WNF grant and develop appropriate continuation or exit strategies. The final decisions on the future of projects could be made once funding allocations became clearer.

The Board was advised that the SSP Chairs had met on 15 September and had been presented with the project evaluation lists for all thematic areas. It had been agreed that detailed exit strategies for each project should be prepared and implemented if alternative funding could not be guaranteed.

Following a challenging debate it became clear that there are three overarching (cross-cutting) priorities that the partnership should focus on in the short term and until funding became clearer. The themes were suggested as follows:

- Alcohol harm reduction;
- Employment (aspiration, skills, jobs, NEET); and
- Safer communities.

It was reported that focussing on these three areas offered the greatest impact across all five thematic areas due to the cross cutting nature of the topics and would deliver the greatest impact and value for money.

In addition, it was reported that in the longer term, the Partnership must continue to be aspirational in their vision for Halton. The combination of long term goals and short term priorities offered the most flexibility to steer the Partnership through the challenges ahead. The emerging Sustainable Community Strategy was the mechanism for this to happen.

The Board was further advised that the financial position meant that contingency plans must be prepared and implemented without delay and the Partnership must undertake a comprehensive review of the projects underway.

In the short term the Partnership must be clear about the areas where it can effect greatest change with scarce resources. A targeted approach with a narrow focus upon cross cutting issues would deliver better outcomes in the short term than spreading resources across a wide range of activities.

An updated report was circulated at the meeting which outlined the outcomes of the discussion of the SSP's. It was reported that three priorities had been identified at the meeting on 15 September, Alcohol Harm Reduction, Employment (aspiration, skills, jobs, NEET) and Safer Communities. The Partners were asked to endorse the identified priorities. It was highlighted that this did not mean that other areas were not important.

Clarity was sought on whether WNF funds would be utilised to pay for any possible redundancies. In response, it was reported that a number of staff were funded via the WNF which finished next year. There had been an expectation that there would be an exit strategy for everyone. However, there would be a number of staff who maybe facing redundancy without an exit strategy in place and who had employment rights and it was considered to be prudent to use the underspend in the WNF to meet these legal obligations.

The importance of projects being delivered on time was noted. It was also noted that there maybe a tendency to invest in short term projects because of the funding implications. However, the importance of continuing to invest in longer term projects such as 3Mg and the benefits from doing so was noted.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Partners consider their priority 'cross cutting issues' for the Partnership against which effort and resource could be directed to greatest effect if resources could be identified (the initial thoughts of the SSP Chairs are Alcohol Harm Reduction, Employment including aspirations, skills, jobs and NEET and Safer communities);
- (2) SSP Boards identify their priority interventions within their thematic area, drawing a clear focus on those issues that would make the greatest difference in Halton if they were addressed;
- (3) all possible alternative funding / delivery options (including mainstream funding) that would allow priority projects to continue should be examined by partners; and
- (4) for those WNF funded projects where continuation funding cannot be found detailed exit strategies must be developed and implemented immediately.

20 SCS CONSULTATION AND DISCUSSION

The Board considered a report which sought approval to progress to public consultation on the draft Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) during November 2010.

The Partners were advised that for the last three months the Partnership Drafting Group had met to develop the draft document. In parallel to the drafting process a detailed analysis of the evidence base had taken place, together with internal consultation within the Council and with partners via the Specialist Strategic Partnerships (SSPs_ on the themes, visions, key objectives, challenges and priorities the partnership must deliver upon over the next 15 years. The new SCS would cover the period from 2011 to 2026.

The Board was further advised that final adopted strategy would contain a five year delivery plan that would set out in detail the policy responses the partnership intended to implement to tackle the challenges that needed to be faces. The financial climate is unclear and would remain so until after the Comprehensive Spending Review in October.

The Partners were also advised of the key dates in the drafting process from September 2010 – April 2011 when implementation began.

Partners were encouraged to forward any comments on the draft strategy to Tim Gibbs or Jo Sutton in the next two weeks. Two additional documents were circulated at the meeting, Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-2026 (draft) detailing the proposed content of the Strategy and an example containing graphics to show how the final Strategy could look.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) a final draft of the SCS be circulated via email to the Board for final comment and endorsement of the draft strategy for the purposes of consultation in October 2010;
- (2) the progression to public consultation on the emerging strategy during November 2010 be approved;
- (3) Partner representatives continue to attend the 'Partner Steering Group' meetings to shape the document; and
- (4) Partners submit 'success stories' to serve as short case studies within the new SCS which will illustrate the effectiveness of past interventions.

21 HALTON OBSERVATORY

The Board considered a report which informed the Partners on the progress of the Halton Observatory.

The Board was advised that the system was currently maintained by HBC's Research & Intelligence unit, together with an external company called Local Futures. The contract with local Futures would be coming to an end in December 2010.

The Board was further advised that the observatory had been reviewed both externally (by the [Centre of Local Economic Strategies](#)) and internally which suggested that the current observatory was playing a smaller role in supporting the research activities across the borough. HBC's research team had also made more partnership information available on the www.halton.gov.uk/research site that was now the preferred resource for activities such as the state of the borough, the monthly R&I email, JSNA evidence etc. It also brought together national resources such as the Places Analysis Tool, Data4NR and National Statistics.

In addition, there were also a number of new developments; a new council website which could provide the opportunity to provide a new observatory site with a partnership branding, a new internet mapping system (ishare maps) and a regional local information system (DORIC).

With the Local Futures contract coming to an end it provided an opportunity to use an alternative provision and move away from the current observatory format.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Local Futures contract to provide the Halton Observatory not be renewed; and

- (2) the content of www.halton.gov.uk/research site be continued to be developed in order to provide the observatory function.

22 ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The Board considered a report which outlined the key findings of the public health annual report. It also provided a commentary on the health of people in Halton and St Helens and an update on a key area of health policy. The NHS White paper suggested that local authorities would also have a lead in commissioning health improvement services including these programme areas.

The Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2009/10 was circulated at the meeting.

The Board was advised that the key issues of the report were screening services and early intervention. The annual report included:-

- Screening in pregnancy (now much earlier), new born babies, cancer, diabetic retinopathy and abdominal aortic aneurysms;
- Surveillance – pandemic influenza, H1N1 ‘Swine Flu’, dental public health and national child measurement programme;
- Case finding- Chlamydia and health checks plus programme; and
- Set out recommendations from the 2008/09 report and a compendium of statistics relating clinical and health indicators.

Partners were encouraged to scrutinise the programme to ensure that health was being maintained in the future.

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank Fiona Johnstone, Director of Health Strategy for the work she had undertaken during her time on the Board.

It was reported that a new pregnancy screening test was available. It was noted that the challenge with the test was that it had to be done at an earlier stage, within 11 weeks of pregnancy.

It was noted that alcohol harm reduction remained to be a high priority and was included in the annual report. It was suggested that the Board receive a report on the impact of alcohol misuse to a future meeting. In light of the Scottish Parliament not being successful in achieving a minimum pricing on alcohol the challenges surrounding alcohol harm reduction was noted. In addition, the high percentage of alcohol misuse in the Borough was noted.

As a result of the discussion in relation to alcohol harm, it was suggested that the workshop also consider ways of making people in the community taking ownership of their health.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

23 HALTON AND ST HELENS VOLUNTARY & COMMUNITY ACTION

The Board received a verbal report from Matthew Roberts which reported on the merge between Halton and St Helens CVS. It was reported that the two organisations would merge and share offices and operate at a sub regional level as a more sustainable organisation and offer services across Halton and St Helens. St Helens CVS had approved the merger at its AGM and Halton would be considering it on Friday 1st October 2010. It was highlighted that a very different voluntary sector would emerge over the next few years. The merge had also not been a 'knee jerk reaction' to the government's proposals but had been under discussion for 18 months.

RESOLVED: That the verbal report be noted.

24 HSP ECONOMIC DOWNTURN HOUSING EXAMPLES

The Board considered a report which gave Partners an update on the responses received from local housing providers on the responses they have developed in respect of the local economic downturn across the Borough.

The Board was advised that at the meeting on 18 November 2009, consideration had been given to the response to the emerging economic downturn. Partners were asked to gather examples of any initiatives / joint working that was felt to be useful for sharing with other partner agencies and / or promote increased levels of joint working opportunities.

It was reported that despite a number of recent successes in drawing new business and employment opportunities to the Borough, the effects of the economic downturn were impacting on all aspects of life in Halton. This was showing in numerous different ways as follows:-

- Increases in unemployment in some areas;
- Pressures on local businesses;
- Increasing numbers of repossessions;
- Pressures on the homeless service;
- Significant pressures being placed on advice agencies with people finding themselves in situations they've not experienced before;
- Increasing numbers of benefit claimants;
- Increasing numbers of unsuccessful benefit claimants; and
- Increased pressures on agencies whose role is to support people in such circumstances.
- The Board was further advised of examples of the type of activities that had been undertaken either by individual agencies or cross partnerships to help mitigate the downturn.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

25 2001 CENSUS

The Board considered a report which informed the Partners on the 2011 census.

It was reported that the amount of money Halton had to spend on services over the next ten years was directly influenced by how many people were counted in the borough, and the information the Government receive on the needs of Halton's many residents and communities.

Census Day would take place 27 March 2011. Questionnaires would be delivered to households by the Royal Mail. Households could either complete the questionnaire on paper or online. Special Enumerators would also deliver questionnaires to communal establishments and households where postal delivery was not possible or planned.

Follow up door to door visits, by census collectors, would also take place for those households with non-returns.

The Board was further advised that data processing had been outsourced to Lockheed Martin. This would involve questionnaire printing, providing a customer contact centre and data capture and processing.

It was reported that the amount of money Halton had to spend on services over the next 10 years was directly influenced by how many people were counted in the Borough and the information government obtained on the needs of Halton's many residents and communities.

It was therefore vitally important that as many people as possible completed the census as the Office for National Statistics estimated that each person counted in the census was worth £5,000 to the Local Authority over 10 years. This means that an undercount of just 100 people could equate to Halton missing out on £500,000 worth of funding.

The Partners were advised that if they had any questions or queries they could contact Rob McKenzie.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Partners and the wider Partnership help to make the 2011 Census a success by briefing their organisations on the importance of the 2011 census; and
- (2) To make sure positive messages are communicated to staff and to encourage those staff to communicate these messages to the public. A high response rate will benefit all organisations within Halton as census population statistics have a direct bearing on the government support Halton receives to fund public services; their accuracy depends on getting the highest possible response rates in all partnership areas.

The Board considered a report which outlined the State of the Borough report.

The Board was advised that the State of the Borough report provided an evidence base for the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Core Strategy. It gives the key messages and provided pointers to where more detailed data could be obtained. The Sustainable Community Strategy is based on the socio-economic profile of the borough and listening to the views and aspirations of the local community. It sets out the steps that needed to be taken to bring about real improvements that would change lives for the better. In particular there was a need to achieve real progress on five strategic themes:-

- A Healthy Halton;
- Halton's Urban Renewal;
- Halton's Children & Young People;
- Employment, Learning and Skills In Halton; and
- A Safer Halton.

RESOLVED: That the report be adopted as the evidence base for major policy and strategy work.

27 MY HALTON UPDATE

The Board considered a report which gave information on the upcoming 'My Halton' event.

The Board was advised that the main focus of the day would be the information and fun activities taking place at the Stobart Stadium Halton. There were plans to have some services out and about in the borough across Runcorn and Widnes so that lots of people could see the range of services available in Halton. The event would be taking place from 12pm until 4pm on Friday 29 October 2010 (half-term week).

The Board was further advised that the event would be marketed widely to the public using flyers and posters circulated around the borough, on the Internet, advertisements in the local press in the run-up to the event and via press releases and newsletter articles.

The Authority were also looking to involve a radio station on the day; both for publicity and for providing fun activities and to involve people on the day itself.

It was reported that the Authority would like partners support to help publicise the even in the run up to the day to ensure that as many people as possible attended the event. Sample magazine / newsletter articles and flyers and posters available from early October. Partners were also encouraged to join in the event.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the event be noted; and
- (2) Partners support the event again this year.

28 CORE STRATEGY

The Board considered a report which sought to provide an update on the progress made on the Halton Core Strategy since it was last reported to the Board in February of this year. The report also informed the Partners of the next stages in the process towards the adoption of the Core Strategy, currently programmed for December 2011.

The Board was advised that the report highlighted the progress made to date on the Core Strategy and discusses the next steps in the process towards the adoption of the document. The Core Strategy was now entering its final stages of production and it was therefore critical that the commitment to the production of the document from the Board was maintained.

RESOLVED: That the next steps in producing the Core Strategy be noted.

29 CHILD AND FAMILY POVERTY UPDATE

The Board considered a report which outlined the progress and developments since the previous report in November 2009.

The Board was advised that the key milestones over the next six months were as follows:-

- The publication of a Liverpool City Region Needs Analysis incorporating an overview and six district based chapters.- October 2010;
- The adoption of an overarching Liverpool City Region Child and Family Poverty Strategy - December 2010; and
- The drafting and adoption of a local strategy for Halton to meet the requirements of the Act - March 2011.

The Board was further advised that the Child & Family Poverty Group would start work very soon on drafting the local child & family poverty strategy, incorporating the local findings of the needs assessment and consult over the winter months with wider partners and local communities. It was reported that one option may be to adopt a 'Total Place' approach to the whole issue of tackling primary causes as well as dealing with the inevitable consequences of child poverty.

It was reported that the whilst poverty could be measured by income, it was a much broader issue and included service poverty and participation poverty.

The Partners were encouraged to attend any future events relating to child poverty.

RESOLVED: That Partners engage in the consultation process with regard to the Halton Child & Family Poverty Strategy.

30 WNF FINANCIAL SUMMARY UPDATE

The Board considered a report which gave an update on the latest spend profile for WNF and drew attention to other financial matters.

The Board was advised that the attached spreadsheet showed the SSP WNF spend up to 7 September 2010, expenditure for quarter 1 of the 2010-11 financial year with some early expenditure for quarter 2 also included in the overall figure.

The Board was further advised that the spend profile currently was showing 24.3% of the 2010-11 revised allocations which was quite high compared to previous years and showed the continued monitoring by colleagues across the Partnership.

It was reported that there had been a substantial amount of slippage from the 2009-10 financial year. The carry over had to be spent before current expenditure could be shown on the Council's financial system. In light of the recently announced cuts to Government grant funding and the proposed cuts were attached at Appendix B to the report. The total reduction in available funding compared to previous expectation is £1.2m.

In conclusion, the Board was advised that currently spending was according to profiles and would be monitored to ensure it remains as such. It was reported that any current slippage would no doubt be reclaimed by central government and the Partnership should work to ensure that allocated funds were spent to the benefit of Halton residents.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report be noted and actioned as appropriate.

31 MERSEY GATEWAY UPDATE

The Board received the Mersey Gateway Submission to the Spending Review for information.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Meeting ended at 11.44 a.m.