

HALTON STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday, 18 February 2009 at the Bridge Suite,
Stobart Stadium

Present:

Board Members:	Cllr Rob Polhill	Chairman
	Cllr Ron Hignett	Chairman, Urban Renewal SSP
	Cllr Marie Wright	HBC
	Gerald Meehan	HBC
	Gary Finchett	Cheshire Police
	John Redmond	Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service
	Jim Wilson	Halton & St Helens PCT
	Diane Sproson	Greater Merseyside Connexions Service
	Mark Wilson	Jobcentre Plus
	Rev. Ray Jones	Faith Communities
	Terry Parle	Halton Sports Partnership
	Mike Fry	HVA / Empowerment Network
	Beth Edwards	HVA / Empowerment Network
	Cllr John Swain	HBC
	Julie Holland	Riverside College
	Noel Sharpe	Halton Housing Trust
	Jane McCusker	GONW

Advisors to the Boards

Rob Mackenzie	HBC
Shelah Semoff	Partnership Team
Helen Slater	Partnership Team

In Attendance::	Andy Guile	Halton Voluntary Action (HVA)
	Irene Rutter	Audit Commission
	Michelle Simpson	HBC
	Wesley Rourke	HBC
	Steph Davies	HBC
	Jim Twomey	Pion Econonmics

40 Apologies

It was noted that apologies had been received from J. Lappin, D. Parr, C. Koral, N. Atkin, J.Rowlands and I. Williamson.

41 Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2008, having been printed and circulated were agreed as a correct record.

In relation to Minute No. 30, the Board was updated on the progress made to date in respect of the Halton Observatory. A meeting with Local Futures had been held and a temporary extension of the Observatory had been negotiated. There was a consultation in relation to a longer-term solution and it was felt that the Observatory was a really exceptional powerful tool, which was not being used by partners on a regular basis.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.

42 Halton's Economic Review

The Board received a presentation from Jim Twomey from Pion Economics which outlined the following:

- Halton Economic and Tourism Review
- Background
- Positives
- Concerns
- Future and Overviews.

Arising from the discussion it was noted that ten years ago the Company was invited to undertake a review of Halton's economy. It was reported that the results over this period showed good progress in many areas, for example diversifying the economy. However improvement in unemployment and average income levels was slow. The level of worklessness had improved in certain areas but remained a persistent problem in some neighbourhoods.

It was reported that in terms of enterprise, a significant investment had been made and secured value for money in terms of business start-ups and growth. It was noted that it was better to equip people in order to find work. Overall the report was quite positive as Halton had made progress in a more broadly balanced effective economy. However, there was still more work to be done.

The Chairman thanked Jim Twomey for an informative presentation.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be received.

43 Community Cohesion and Community Engagement

The Board considered a report which detailed the work currently being undertaken within the Partnership and Borough Council in reviewing the structure that supports important areas of Equalities, Community Cohesion and Engagement.

It was advised that the Engagement Strategy was an umbrella strategy which shared best practice, it was now three years old and a lot of legislation over the last 12 to 18 months directed local authorities to look at the way it collectively worked around those agendas.

It was also advised that the Partnership had recently set up a Sub-Group with a strategic remit for Equality and Diversity. It was proposed that this Group would also pick up the strategic responsibility for Community Engagement and Cohesion. There was already a Partnership Community Cohesion Officers' Group which satisfied the tactical group requirement that would report every six months on the tension indicators to the Equalities Group and more frequently if required in response to heightened tension. Detailed in the report were the reporting structures for Members' consideration.

The Board was advised that Halton Borough Council was currently undergoing an audit of engagement activity which investigated the types of initiative for example an on-line survey. Should Members wish to share this template they were to contact Shelah Semoff.

RESOLVED: That Board Members:

- (1) support the ongoing review of the Community Engagement Strategy including a further audit of Partnership engagement;
- (2) note the revised infrastructure as detailed in the report, agree further updates on progress; and
- (3) the Board receives regular updates on the Equalities Cohesion and Engagement Group.

44 Local Area Agreement Delivery Plan

The Board received a report which outlined the proposals for updating of the Action Plans for each of the five strategic priorities in order to support the delivery of Halton's Local Area Agreement; and the approval of the funding allocations contained within them.

The report set out how the use of Working Neighbourhood Fund would support the five strategic priorities. It was reported that work had been carried out with the Specialist Strategic Partnerships in order to compile spending reports for this year and the next financial year. There was an opportunity to make allocations and agree and endorse the proposals which were outlined in the report for consideration.

Arising from the discussion it was noted that alcohol was a key focus for the areas of the PCT within the Local Strategic Partnership and it was paramount that the PCT worked alongside the Council to achieve success.

RESOLVED: That:

- (1) the five Action Plans accompanying the report be approved;
- (2) the allocation of the Working Neighbourhood Fund and Safer and Stronger Communities Fund for 2009/2010, and the indicative allocations for 2010/2011 referred to in this report and contained in the Action Plans, be approved subject to endorsement by the accountable body (the Borough Council);
- (3) delegated authority be given to the Chair to approve amendments to the Action Plans as necessary;
- (4) that progress in developing the Alcohol Harm Reduction and Anti-Social Behaviour commissioning pot proposals be reported to the next meeting of this Board; and
- (5) SSP chairs be asked to make sure that SLAs are approved for the activities in the Action Plans by 31st March 2009 so that they could commence (or in the case of existing activities continue) from 1st April 2009.

45 Local Area Agreement Review and Refresh Update

The Board was informed of the progress being undertaken to ensure meeting the Government's deadline for a refreshed 2008/2011 Local Area Agreement (LAA) (2nd March) and detailed the findings of the Government Office annual review of progress to date in delivering the LAA.

It was reported that the Annual Performance Review of the LAA had been undertaken by Government Office North West (GONW). It was advised that the review found that overall good progress had been made and some excellent examples of good practice identified including attainment and achievement on Children's Services, joint work on health lifestyles, effectiveness and inclusivity of the Safer Halton Partnership, and the increases in the rate of VAT business registrations and stock.

Key development issues facing the partnership included better promotion of health behaviours, NEET performance and the latest proposals for post 16 provision and attainment. The slides detailing the findings further were included in the report for Partners' consideration.

During the LAA refresh a number of indicators had to be reviewed for various reasons such as changing definitions in data figures and new data available following the Places Survey results. These changes were listed in the report for consideration.

It was requested that Board Members should note the outcome of the performance review and it was recommended that each SSP be asked to report back to the next meeting on improvement plans being in place for each of the development areas.

Due to the timescale involved with the process of refreshing the 2008/2011 LAA it would not be possible to bring the final document back to a Board meeting. Members were asked that due to these timescales, agree and endorse the indicators electronically.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Board note progress with the refresh of the LAA;
- (2) note the outcome of the Annual Review of Halton's LAA;
- (3) request a report back to the next meeting of the Board from each SSP on each of the development areas with improvement plans; and
- (4) agree to an electronic endorsement of the final refreshed 2008/2011 LAA.

46 Sustainable Community Strategy Review

The Board was advised of progress with the mid-term review of Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy and a request was made to agree the next steps.

The main objectives of this mid term review were detailed in the report. Work had progressed in drafting amendments to the plan in conjunction with representatives from each SSP. It was noted that drafts were now available for each priority as well as cross-cutting issues section which were attached in the

report for consideration. It was noted that there was still work in progress in some cases, however, they did form a sound basis for discussion.

It was advised that these plans would be brought back for final approval at the meeting scheduled for May 2009.

Arising from the discussion it was agreed that there was a requirement for a workshop, as there had never been the opportunity for SSP members to discuss each other's work. This would help to close the gap with communication flows and would help set out a performance framework for the next two years.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the draft text attached to this report be approved for consultation;
- (2) SSPs and other thematic partnerships were requested to consider and respond to the draft text, and in doing so to consider the issues set out in section 7 of this report.
- (3) a draft of the full strategy document be circulated for comments; and
- (4) a final draft be brought back to the next meeting of the Board.

47 Performance Management Framework

The Board considered a report which provided an update on the progress to date with the review of the partnership performance management framework. Further to the report submitted to the Board on 19th November, a model framework was circulated for consultation in early January 2009. This model set out minimum reporting standards at various levels within the partnership structure.

Several responses had been received and were currently being considered. As a result of the responses, it had emerged that there was a desire not only to performance manage the strategic level targets but projects that were funded through the Working Neighbourhood Fund, as people were not always aware of how value for money was being obtained. It was noted that these comments would be taken on board.

RESOLVED: That the Board notes the progress made to date and endorses the completion of the review and implementation of a revised framework at the beginning of 2009/10.

48 Comprehensive Area Assessment Update (for discussion)

The Board received an update from Irene Rutter from Audit Commission which outlined the following:-

- The final framework was published on 10th February available on the Audit Commission website;
- The framework was still based around area assessment and organisational assessment.
- Area assessment would not be scored and a flag system would be used;
- Organisational assessment would be scored details of combinations of scoring systems were distributed at the meeting.

It was reported that background notes were produced and circulated to all areas and were a starting point for the work to be planned. It was advised that they drew on published national data as of November and comments regarding these would be appreciated. The emerging picture would be produced by April and regular feedback to partnerships would be provided.

RESOLVED: That the update be received.

49 External Funding in Halton

The Board considered a report from Wesley Rourke – Head of External Funding, HBC, which outlined improvements to the way in which Halton Strategic Partners co-ordinated access to and use of external funding in the Borough.

The Board was advised of the background and history of the External Funding Division in terms of successes in securing external funding from a wide range of sources. It was reported that there were a number of opportunities available and more work had been carried out in terms of obtaining limited resources. Quantitative and qualitative research had been carried out in order to strengthen the infrastructure.

It was reported that the External Funding group would provide strategic leadership in ensuring that External Funding bids developed in accord with the Borough's strategic priorities. A step by step approach to meeting this objective was outlined as an appendix to the report for Members' consideration. In

addition, detailed in the report was a work programme for the Group, benefits to partners participating in the sub-group and the way in which External Funding could be accessed.

Arising from the discussion it was noted that there was an added value element and it was critical that duplication was avoided. In addition, it was also reported that encouraging people to share information was a really important information source. The Board was advised that the Halton Voluntary Action had a database which was already in operation and could focus primarily around the External Funding with a focus on how they reach the priorities.

It was agreed that an External Funding Sub-Group be established and Mike Fry was appointed as Chair of this group. It was advised that the Board would write to other organisations to request membership on this Board.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Board agree to the establishment of an External Funding Group for the Borough which would report to this Board;
- (2) the Board nominate individuals from respective organisations to sit on the Group by way of writing to each group; and
- (3) the Board nominate Mike Fry as Chair for the group.

50 Safeguarding Children

The Board received a report which outlined the findings of the Joint Area Review of Haringey Council and their statutory partners. In addition, it set out the analysis of current strengths in Safeguarding and Child Protection Services within Halton and its partners and it identified service trends in Safeguarding and Child Protection Services in Halton along with the Development Plan.

It was reported that in Halton Child Protection in Britain was amongst the safest in Europe. The findings Halton's Joint Area Review were outstanding in its Safeguarding and Child Protection Practice which meant that Halton had the highest overall rating in the North West in terms of Children's Services. This reflected on the Council's own services and work carried out by Officers and Members.

The report outlined findings from Haringey's JAR and Halton's strengths as a reflected process. Furthermore it was reported that there were significant challenges that needed to be addressed if Halton was to maintain its outstanding rating for Safeguarding and importantly improved outcomes for

children in need. Compromised parenting was most apparent in the levels of reported domestic violence, substance misuse, adult criminally and mental health problems.

There was a higher prevalence of these factors in vulnerable and unsupported families. There had been an increase in allocation rates and also resource implications for all the agencies and issues around fostering. Costs had risen in terms of residential care and there was a difficulty in recruiting Social Workers and Social Care Managers which had highlighted issues with regard to human resource processes.

The Board considered Halton's context and challenge and the development plan which detailed actions that were recommended on the basis of analysis of the strengths and areas for development in local safeguarding arrangements.

The Board was advised of a locality model for the future delivery of services (not including clearly identified child protection cases) that would be self-financing by using current resources differently. This would be subject of a separate report in March 2009. The LSP and Children's Trust would be central to the development of this model. It was proposed that a pilot would be carried out in an area of the Borough to look at the strategic process that would focus on a local field to the services model with a view to rolling out across the Borough.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Board endorse the Development Plan, enclosed as Section 4 of this report;
- (2) the Board requests partner agencies to review their safeguarding services to ensure they were fit for purpose (under the auspices of Halton Safeguarding Children Board); and
- (3) the Board considers the implications of a "Locality" model of service delivery.

51 Risk Assessment Review

The Board considered a report which advised the Members of the work required to ensure the Partnership's Risk Register was completed in line with the approved Improvement Plan. It was noted that the Risk Register was in two

parts, reviewing both strategic and operational risks. The Board was responsible for ensuring strategic risks were considered all partners involved with the work of the SSPs were encouraged to take ownership of the operational risks. The operational risks included the risks to the successful delivery of relevant objectives and targets in the LAA and Sustainable Community Strategy as well as any other key plans or strategies that the SSP may be responsible for delivering.

It was reported that the Partnership team would offer supporting guidance to thematic groups and maintain a central Register. This would help to maintain a consistent method across the Partnership and highlight cross-cutting areas of concern, provide potential for further joint working and reduction of risks.

SSP Chairs were asked to ensure the Partnership Risk Register was considered at future meetings of their thematic partnerships, with a completed Register returning to the Board for endorsement at its next meeting on 20th May 2009.

RESOLVED: That the Board Members, in particular, SSP Chairs:

- (1) endorse the process needed to ensure completion of the Partnership's Risk Management Register; and
- (2) encourage SSPs to take ownership of the Register and ensure its completion following discussion with their thematic groups.

52 Halton Borough Council's Budget Process

The Board received a report which set out the Budget setting process for Halton Borough Council, a draft version of which was outlined in the report for consideration. Board Members were asked to comment on the Budget proposals attached to the report and it was noted that there was a need to share resources between partners and agencies.

It was reported that the Council's total budget of £320m and details for how it was made up and how it was spent were outlined in the report. In particular, it was noted that Council Tax revenue equated to approximately 13% of the budget. In terms of balancing the budget it was noted that there had been a challenging financial settlement. Increasing cost pressures, and a subsequent funding of £6m meant that there were some difficult choices to be made in the near future.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

53 Economic Downturn - Verbal Report

The Board received a verbal report from Rob MacKenzie – Operational Director Policy and Performance which outlined issues concerning the economic downturn. It was reported that a Task Group had been established including Members and Officers to determine the response. The aim was to ensure that everybody was aware of what help and support was available from the Council. There was a business breakfast to be held on 27th February at The Brindley which would address these issues. Any further suggestions around this area would be welcomed.

Arising from the discussion it was felt that a brainstorming session would be beneficial and would make a contribution to these issues. The Board was advised of two leaflets which were being produced aimed at businesses and residents. Members of the Board were requested to e-mail any comments relevant to Rob MacKenzie.

It was noted that the Social Housing was not mentioned in the report and it was noted that this would be added.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

54 State of the Borough - Update

The Board considered a report which detailed the findings of the 2009 State of the Borough report. It was noted that there was important information in the report and the SSPs should take this into account. The most significant changes since 2008 were detailed for consideration. It was further advised that the report provided further evidence to support the priorities. It did not however fully reflect the impact of the economic downturn. The recession should not deflect the Council from its long-term ambitions however, it may affect the pace at which the Council could move forward.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Board Members note the revised State of the Borough report; and
- (2) Ensure the State of the Borough report was shared amongst their own organisations.

55 Neighbourhood Management Update

The Board considered a report which outlined the progress made in developing neighbourhood management in Halton.

It was advised that since April 2006 Halton had received funding from the neighbourhood element part of the then Safer and Stronger Communities block of the Local Area Agreement to develop neighbourhood management in those areas of the Borough that fell within the 3% most deprived under the 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation. Since April 2008 the funding had been part of Halton's Area Based Grant allocation would continue until March 2010. It was reported that work was being focused in Halton in three neighbourhoods, each of which fell within the above category; Central Widnes, Hallwood Park and Palacefields and Castlefields and Windmill Hill.

The Halton Neighbourhood Management Board (HNMB) had met twice since the last meeting and the key issues raised at the meeting were outlined in the report for Members' consideration.

Key issues raised at the January meeting were also outlined in the report.

RESOLVED: That the information be received.

56 Working Neighbourhoods Fund : Financial Summary

Board Members were provided with a summary of spend for the second quarter of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund, October 2008 – December 2008 and were provided with information for a Board discussion on the use any potential WNF under spend. It was advised that the expenditure details in the report was from the Core Allocations to SSPs for the financial year 2008-09. There had been limited progress in developing service level agreements for the commissioning pot. So far the only expenditure authorised was for the Alcohol Harm Reduction Programme in 2008/09 and no commissioning pot spend had been notified to the Partnership team to date.

SSPs were asked to notify the Partnership of any possible under spend by 30th January 2009, however, due to delays with commissioning, start of projects and other administrative issues, a true picture of the under spend was unclear, although indications were that it would be between £150,000 and £250,000.

It was reported that it was vital that the hard work of colleagues to spend according to profile was maintained. Whilst WNF would be carried over into the other financial years, the Partnership did not want to see a large under spend at

the end of the funding period. This was also a responsibility to ensure the funding is spent in trying to narrow the gap and achieve its agreed priorities.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the financial summary stated in the report as being a true and accurate statement be noted;
- (2) identified WNF under spend at year end be used to create a “fighting fund” for the economic downturn and the process for managing this fund be delegated to the SSP Chair’s Group meeting (11th March 09); and
- (3) agreement that any project currently wishing to carry funds in the 09/10 financial year must provide a business case to do so and seek approval through agreed processes as detailed in the Quarter 2 report which was brought before the Board on 18th November 2008.

Meeting ended at 12.05 p.m.