

**HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**



*Municipal Building,  
Kingsway,  
Widnes.  
WA8 7QF*

*10<sup>th</sup> July 2007*

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE HALTON  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

*You are hereby summoned to attend an Ordinary Meeting of the Halton Borough Council to be held in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall on Wednesday, 18 July 2007 commencing at 6.30 p.m.. for the purpose of considering and passing such resolution(s) as may be deemed necessary or desirable in respect of the matters mentioned in the Agenda.*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David W. R.', is centered on the page.

*Chief Executive*

**-AGENDA-**

- 1. COUNCIL MINUTES**
- 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 3. THE MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**
- 4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
- 5. LEADER'S REPORT**
- 6. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**
  - a) 16th May 2007
  - b) 7th June 2007
  - c) 21st June 2007
- 7. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB COMMITTEE**
  - a) 19th April 2007
  - b) 7th June 2007
  - c) 21st June 2007
- 8. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE (TRANSMODAL IMPLEMENTATION) SUB-BOARD**
  - a) 19th April 2007
- 9. MERSEY GATEWAY EXECUTIVE BOARD**
  - a) 18th June 2007
- 10. QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER NO.8**
- 11. MATTERS REQUIRING A DECISION BY THE COUNCIL**
  - a) **Decision Making Process - Village Green Applications**

To consider the attached report.

**b) Mersey Gateway Bridge Project - Progress Report**

To consider the attached report.

**c) Appointments to Outside Bodies**

To consider the attached report.

(NB an updated list will be circulated as soon as possible.)

**d) Policy and Performance Boards' Annual Reports 2006-2007**

To consider the attached report.

**12. MINUTES OF POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARDS AND THE BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD**

a) Children and Young People - Cream Pages

b) Employment , Learning and Skills - Yellow Pages

c) Healthy Halton - Grey Pages

d) Safer Halton - Pink Pages

e) Urban Renewal - Green Pages

f) Corporate Services - Salmon Pages

g) Business Efficiency Board - White pages

**13. COMMITTEE MINUTES**

a) Development Control - Pink Pages

b) Standards - White Pages

c) Regulatory - Blue Pages

d) Appointments - White Pages

e) Statutory Joint Scrutiny - White Pages

**REPORT TO:** Council

**DATE:** 18 July 2007

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Chief Executive

**SUBJECT:** Decision Making Process – Village Green Applications

**WARDS:** Borough Wide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To determine the decision making process to apply in respect of applications to register Village Greens under the Commons Act 2006 and its predecessor the Commons Registration Act 1965

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- (1) Council determines whether the decision on an application to register land as a Village Green under the Commons Act 2006 [ and its predecessor the Commons Registration Act 1965] should be made by the Council itself or delegated to the Regulatory Committee.
- (2) The Chief Executive be authorised to amend the Constitution appropriately to reflect that determination.

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Council is the Registration Authority under the Commons Act 2006 and its predecessor the Commons Registration Act 1965. As such it needs to determine applications to register land as a Village Green and to have in place the necessary process to do so.
- 3.2 The Council's function as Registration Authority is not an Executive Function. As such a decision has to be taken either by the Council itself or by a Committee or by an Officer acting under delegated powers.
- 3.3 The Constitution does contain a delegation to the Council Solicitor to determine applications. While this is felt to be satisfactory for non-contentious applications, there will be cases where it would be appropriate to take a decision at Member level.
- 3.4 The choice for decision making at Member level would be for the matter to be decided by the Council itself or for the Council to delegate responsibility to a Committee, such as the Regulatory Committee.

3.5 While the decision making body will have to weigh up the factual situation in respect of the land in question and apply the law correctly, there is no reason in law why such a role cannot be carried out by the Council meeting itself. In contentious cases there will generally be a Report from an Independent Inspector which will assist in the decision making.

3.6 The decision by the Council today on the process would be subject, of course, to review in the light of experience when the Constitution itself is reviewed at each Annual Council.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None – this is purely a procedural matter.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None – this is purely a procedural matter.

#### **6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 This is purely a procedural matter and as such no risk arises from the choice to be made.

#### **7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 None – this is purely a procedural matter.

#### **8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

8.1 None.

**REPORT TO:** Council

**DATE:** 18<sup>th</sup> July 2007

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Chief Executive

**SUBJECT:** Mersey Gateway Bridge Project – Progress Report

**WARDS:** All

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This report provides to Council details of the progress made in the delivery of Mersey Gateway Bridge Project (“Mersey Gateway”).

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION:**

That Council

- 1) notes the progress made towards delivering the Mersey Gateway Bridge;
- 2) accepts that the financial case for Mersey Gateway Bridge can only be met through a tolling regime that encompasses both bridges, as without tolling the project is not deliverable; and
- 3) seeks to maximise toll discounts for local residents and frequent users.

### **3.0 PROGRESS REPORT**

#### **3.1 Delivery Resources**

The project team resources have been extended with the appointment of GVA Grimley, as planning consultants, and DTW as public relation consultants. Discussions with the Department for Transport (DfT), aimed at putting in place project management best practice, resulted in an Officer Project Board being established, chaired by the Council Chief Executive and accountable for the administration of the project.

#### **3.2 Legal advisors**

In February, the Council Executive Board Sub Committee agreed to appoint DLA Piper as the new legal advisors for Mersey Gateway.

### 3.3 Liaison with Department for Transport

Two further quarterly progress meetings with the DfT have taken place since the last meeting of Mersey Gateway Executive Board in October 2006. The substantive issues covered in these meetings are addressed in Section 4 below.

## 4.0 PROJECT DELIVERY

4.1 The principle short term deliverables that have been achieved since Programme Entry (March 2006) are :-

i) Draft Reference Design

The draft Reference Design for the Mersey Gateway preferred route (Route 3A) has been completed in sufficient detail to support public consultation .The Reference Design includes proposals for adjusting the approach roads to Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) and is supported by the first phase of a public transport study. The response to public consultation will assist in refining the draft Reference Design prior to confirming the scheme to be submitted for planning approval early in 2008.

ii) Mersey Gateway Public Consultation

The Executive Board of 8<sup>th</sup> April 2003 approved the route known as 3A to be the preferred option for the route of the Mersey Gateway. This route was subsequently taken forward in the Major Scheme Appraisal that was submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT). Following this, in March 2006 the Mersey Gateway was granted entry into the DfT's Major Schemes Programme. Since programme entry, considerable work has taken place and a draft scheme layout is currently out for public consultation. This scheme layout is known as the Reference Design and for the first time includes draft proposals for adjusting Silver Jubilee Bridge, called SJB de-linking.

The public consultation will continue for period of three months and will involve:

- The notification of all directly affected landowners;
- The provision of a scheme consultation leaflet (draft attached at Appendix 1), to all households and business premises in the Borough and;
- A series of exhibitions at various locations during early to mid July 2007.

These consultations will serve a number of purposes. They will:

- Inform the public, institutions and businesses of the Mersey Gateway plans and proposed timetable for delivery;
- Ensure all interested parties are informed directly at the earliest appropriate opportunity of proposals that could directly impact upon them;



- Seek views and opinions on proposals, and to take the views received into account before confirming the scheme to be the subject of a planning application early in 2008;
- Provide an opportunity for the Council to respond to any adverse comments and to assist with mitigating potential objections prior to the formal planning process;
- Seek to build and maintain support for the project amongst its regional stakeholders; and
- Ensure that the project is employing best practice and meeting relevant consultation guidelines at all times.

All respondents to consultation will be able to give their views by a number of different media including questionnaires, e-mail, text and telephone. The consultation period will close on 21<sup>st</sup> September. The results will be collated together with draft recommendations on the Council response to the consultation results, and a report will be presented to the November meeting of the Mersey Gateway Executive Board prior to publication.

In parallel with the consultation proposed for Mersey Gateway, the Council will also be publishing draft proposals for a Regeneration Strategy and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) for South Widnes. The Regeneration Strategy and SPD for South Widnes will assist with the integration of the Mersey Gateway scheme into the overall formal planning framework. This consultation is due to start this summer and will involve residents and businesses, particularly in the South Widnes area.

iii) Project Costs

Revised estimates of project cost have been produced based on the draft Reference Design, supported by a more detailed appraisal of project risk. Overall project costs are stable in real terms, after allowing for inflation. (See Section 5 further.)

iv) Traffic Model

The new Traffic Model, required to satisfy one of the DfT funding conditions, has been developed up to draft model validation stage. The model is currently undergoing refinement to improve its performance to ensure it reflects the existing travel pattern and behaviour in the study network. Once the model performance compares satisfactorily in the base year, it can be used in a forecasting capacity.

v) Procurement

DfT has considered our representation to adopt procurement based on an early concessionaire appointment, but their officers have given a strong message that

this procurement approach would be much more controversial than taking forward conventional PFI procurement. The project team is now preparing to adopt a conventional PFI procurement strategy and the forward plan reflects this approach.

vi) Project Management

The Council responded to the Secretary of State's announcement on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2006 by establishing a dedicated project team charged with the delivery of the project. To meet the project programme and budget, it is essential that the project team, via the Project Director, has access to speedy decision-taking authority. The initial governance arrangements established the Mersey Gateway Executive Board (MGEB) with the intention of it meeting at monthly intervals to deal with the emerging project issues. Experience with these initial arrangements called for a more streamlined decision taking structure with clear delegation given to officers.

The proposed Officer Project Board (OPB) will improve access to decision-taking authority, exercised within the limits of delegation given by the Council. The OPB has been trialled in recent months, chaired by the Chief Executive with the Strategic Director – Environment as the senior internal service customer for Mersey Gateway.

The OPB benefits from varied senior officer support, including the Mersey Gateway Project Director.

The MGEB formally establish the OPB at its last meeting enabling the OPB to work under a Scheme of Delegation, which has streamlined decision-taking and enabled the MGEB to meet less frequently.

Members will continue to be advised of progress through the Council's formal committee structures, Members Bulletin and the Leaders Briefing.

The Mersey Crossing Group will continue to provide an important opportunity to engage with the Councils partners.

An external Advisory Board consisting of private sector partners has also been established to bring additional commercial expertise to this unique local government scheme.

vii) Surveys

Surveys to collect environmental, topographical and geotechnical data, required to support the environmental statement and procurement, are all close to completion.

viii) Tolling

Government have made it clear to the Council that the Mersey Gateway Bridge can not be delivered without tolling. In short no tolling no new bridge. The current proposal is to toll Mersey Gateway and Silver Jubilee. Tolls will be set at a rate equivalent to the current Mersey Tunnel tolls. The Business Case submitted to Government builds in provision for discounted tolls for local people/frequent users on Silver Jubilee, subject to not compromising the financial case for the delivery of the Mersey Gateway Bridge.

4.2 The above, with the exception of the new Traffic Model, have been achieved to programme. The calibration of the new Traffic Model has experienced some delay due in part to a shortfall in the amount of existing information that has been made available to the Council, which has increased the work required to produce the model. Resources and forward plans have been adjusted to avoid any overall slippage in the project delivery programme.

## **5.0 FINANCE**

5.1 The Council has set a five year development budget to support project delivery up to the commencement of construction. Expenditure in the first year of the development programme was £3.6m, which represented a modest overspend when compared with the Council approved project budget of £3.5m. The slightly higher expenditure ensured that the Council would receive the full potential contribution from the North West Development Agency, who have committed to funding up to £3.5m of Mersey Gateway actual development costs incurred in 2006/07 financial year.

5.2 The Mersey Gateway project financial plan has been adjusted to accommodate the following developments:

- i) To undertake extensive public consultation on the draft Reference Design proposals prior to confirming the scheme to be presented for planning approval.
- ii) To prepare for conventional PFI Procurement based on the outcome of discussions with the DfT on procurement options; and
- iii) To allow more time for the new traffic model to be developed to improve the reliability of model predictions.

5.3 In taking forward a project of the scale of Mersey Gateway, the Council recognised that there would be considerable additional pressure on a number of Departments that would be called upon to support the project team. Such additional work pressure is now evident in the Planning Department. The Council spatial planning policy is required to be modified to embrace the confirmation of the Mersey Gateway project.

The scope of work required includes the preparation of Supplementary Planning Document(s) along the Mersey Gateway route and a master planning exercise to ensure the Council sets out to capture the maximum regeneration benefit from the project. This is a catching up process and consequently the work is not covered by existing budgets.

The resource requirements are reported below.

5.4 The additional work required to be undertaken this year will modify the budget profile as indicated below:

Approved Budget	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	Total
<b>Original Profile</b>	<b>£3.50m</b>	<b>£3.25m</b>	<b>£2.65m</b>	<b>£1.75m</b>	<b>£2.0m</b>	<b>£0.85m</b>	<b>£14.0</b>
<b>Revised Profile</b>	<b>£3.60m</b>	<b>£3.75m</b>	<b>£2.50m</b>	<b>£1.55m</b>	<b>£2.0m</b>	<b>£0.60m</b>	<b>£14.0</b>

5.5 The current position with the financing arrangements for the revised budget profile is given in the following table:

Year	Spend	Contributions		Prudential Borrow		Total	Shortfall
		3 <sup>rd</sup> Parties	Grant	Tranche 1	Tranche 2		
06/07	£3.60m	£3.50m		£0.10m		£3.60m	£0.0m
07/08	£3.75m			£3.75m		£3.75m	£0.0m
08/09	£2.50m			£0.63m	£1.87m	£2.50m	£0.0m
09/10	£1.55m				£0.38m	£0.38m	£1.17m
10/11	£2.00m		£1.2m			£0.80m	£0.80m
11/12	£0.60m						£0.60m
<b>Total</b>	<b>£14.0m</b>			<b>£4.48m</b>	<b>£2.25m</b>		<b>£2.57m</b>

5.6 A bid for £2m from ERDF Objective 1 transitional funds is under consideration to reduce the shortfall. The need for further prudential borrowing will be kept under review alongside the development of the external contributions secured.

5.7 The above cost plan does not cover the corporate and policy support that will be required from several Council Departments. The requirement for additional planning policy development is estimated at £135k and there is currently no allowance for this expenditure in the Department budget. It is proposed that priorities are reviewed to release these funds. In future years, the support requirements for Mersey Gateway will be identified in Department Service Plans.

## **6.0 NEXT STEPS**

### **6.1 Project Milestones**

The revised dates for achieving the key project milestones are as follows:

- Public Consultation Ends September 2007
- Public Consultation Results Announced November 2007
- Submit Planning Application and Publish
- Draft Orders Early 2008
- Public Inquiry Late 2008
- SoS Decision on Orders Late 2009
- Invite Tenders Spring 2010
- Financial Close/Construction Starts Summer 2011

## **7.0 KEY RISKS**

7.1 The project now has a detailed risk register to support robust delivery.

7.2 The proposed communication with affected landowners and the widespread publicity resulting from the consultation process may generate further requests for land to be purchased. A study to look at options to facilitate advanced land acquisition is underway.

7.3 The revised project governance provides the project team with direct access to decision-taking authority where issues can be dealt with by the OPB or escalated to the MGEb, as determined by the delegation given to the OPB. The arrangements are consistent with the Council constitution.

## **8.0 POLICY**

8.1 The progress made is consistent with delivering Mersey Gateway to programme and at best value.

8.2 The public consultation materials will bring the draft Reference Design into the public domain and enable the Council to amend its proposals prior to confirming the scheme to be presented for formal planning approval.

## **9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

9.1 The new Mersey Crossing will improve accessibility to services, education and employment for all.

**10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

10.1 Files maintained by the Mersey Gateway Project Team and the Highways and Transportation Department.

**REPORT:** Council

**DATE:** 18th July 2007

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy

**SUBJECT:** Appointments to Outside Bodies

**WARDS:** Boroughwide

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To review the Council's representation on outside bodies.

**2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the Council appoint representatives to the outside bodies.**

**3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Each year the Council undertakes a review of its membership on outside bodies. In accordance with this practice a review has been undertaken and recommendations to serve on the various bodies have been put forward.

**4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

None.

**5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

None.

**6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

None.

**7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

None.

**8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.

This page is intentionally left blank



**REPORT TO:** Council

**DATE:** 18<sup>th</sup> July 2007

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy

**SUBJECT:** Policy and Performance Boards' Annual Reports 2006-2007

**WARDS:** All

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

To receive the Policy and Performance Boards' Annual Reports for 2006-2007.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the 2006-2007 Annual Reports submitted from the Policy and Performance Boards be received.**

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Article 6 of the Constitution requires each of the Policy and Performance Boards (PPBs) to submit an Annual Report to Council outlining their work, making recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.

The Annual Reports (see attached) have now been submitted to the appropriate PPBs for consideration and all have been agreed.

### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

None.

### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

None.

### **6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

None.

### **7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

None.

**8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None under the meaning of the Act.



(Cllr. Mark  
Dennett  
Chairman

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

### **CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**

### **APRIL 2006 – MARCH 2007**

“The Victoria Climbié case, one of many high profile cases, provided a stark reminder that all children’s services – educational and social care needed to work together. It also raised the profile of the responsibilities of elected members, local authorities officers, and other agency workers like the Police and doctors, had to the children and young people within their area.

The Children Act 2004 and the Every Child Matters agenda set out to address these failings by requiring all local authorities to integrate all children’s services under one Director and also to have a lead Member with sole responsibility for children.

A new overview and scrutiny board focussing solely on the needs and welfare of the children and young people of the borough was created as a direct response to this agenda.

Bringing all of these issues together has created a board with a wide remit, and the topics examined by the board during its first year have highlighted this. Presented below are some of the highlights from the year and thoughts about the boards future.

The start of the new Council year also brought the formal creation of the Halton Children and Young People’s Alliance Board and the Local Safeguarding Board. Both of these boards are multi-agency boards whose membership comes from all of the different agencies involved with children and young people, for example the Police, the Fire Service, the Primary Care Trusts, and Health Trust, as well as the Halton Borough Council.

Together they commissioned a comprehensive needs analysis across the borough taking into account everything that has an effect on children’s lives. This then formed the basis for the Children and Young People’s Plan that outlined the main outcomes for the children of the borough and how the different agencies were going to tackle them together. This document would form the basis of how the services provided to our children by all agencies would be judged and was adopted at full Council.

During the course of the year a one-off joint overview and scrutiny meeting was held with the members of the Healthy Halton Policy and Performance Board to feed into the consultation on Alder Hey Children's Hospital's bid to be Foundation Hospital. This proved to be a lively debate in which we expressed our concerns about the nature of the new Trust and also the need of the residents of Halton.

Reviews and inspections of services were carried out throughout the year, including:

- Review of Special Educational Needs (SEN) Provision
- Independent Review of the Youth Service
- Adoption Inspection
- Fostering Inspection

These highlighted areas for improvement, as well as strengths to be built upon. It is heartening to note that the review of the Youth Service showed that since its inspection in 2004 the Youth Service provided by Connexions for Halton Borough Council had moved from a poor service to a good service.

Members of the Borough's Youth Bank (Amy Baldwin, Daniel Belfield, Nicola Howe, Johanna Pickering and Jack Slater) provided an excellent presentation on the workings of the Youth Bank. This is a project where young people can apply for funding of a community project for young people. The scheme itself is managed and administered by young people and has funding of £328,000 from Halton Council to distribute to worthy projects.

During the year the board piloted two initiatives. The first was to create a small members group specifically to look at performance monitoring outside of the PPB cycle to make it more responsive to performance issues as they arose. The second initiative was to invite the board to hold a question and answer with the Children and Young People Portfolio Holder, Councillor Tom McInerney. This proved very successful and I aim to make this an annual event.

Looking forward into next year, I plan to engage the users of our services more by going out to members of the Parent and Carers forum and the Youth forum and bringing them into dialogue with the board, so that they understand the role of overview and scrutiny in the provision of the services they use and need, and also can feed into and enhance the performance of the board.

Looking back I think it has been a good foundational year for the board and I would like to thank all of the members of the board, as well as all of the officers involved for their continued support and contribution.

Finally, I would like to conclude this report by thanking all of the officers and members (of all parties) involved in all of the 'additional duties' that take place to make sure that the children and young people receive that best care and support. Duties such as being a school governor with all of the responsibilities that that entails, statutory inspections of our care homes (regulation 33) or of our social worker teams (Climbié visits), membership of the Local Safeguarding Board, the Adoptions Panel, the Children and Young People's Alliance Board, to name but a few of the 'extra duties' that both members and officers perform to support the work on behalf of the children and young people of the borough."

**Councillor Mark Dennett**  
**Chairman, Children & Young People Policy and Performance Board**

#### MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2006/07 the Board comprised eleven Councillors and two representatives from school governing bodies – Cllr Mark Dennett (Chairman), Cllr Margaret Horabin (Vice-Chairman), Mr Andy Brothers, Mr Colin Chorley, Cllr Frank Fraser, Cllr Robert Gilligan, Cllr Trevor Higginson, Cllr David Lewis, Cllr Kelly Marlow, Cllr Stan Parker, Cllr Ged Philbin, Cllr Margaret Ratcliffe and Cllr John Stockton.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to the work of the Council (and its Partners) in seeking to ensure that children and young people in Halton have the best possible start in life and the opportunity to fulfill their potential and succeed, and to scrutinise progress against the Corporate Plan and Children and Young Peoples Plan in relation to the Children and Young People Priority.

	<p><b>REVIEW OF THE YEAR</b>  The full Board met five times during the year, and set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during the year.</p> <p>It was agreed that outborough school admissions be selected as the main topic for detailed scrutiny in 2006/2007. A wide range of quantitative data was compiled and analysed to help inform the group on the numbers of pupils who choose outborough provision and their destinations. Questionnaires were issued to parents seeking information on the factors influencing their choice of provision.</p> <p>The topic group will continue in 2007/2008 and concentrate on the financial impact of outborough admissions along with the impact on the authority's performance data. Consideration will also be given to identification of strategies to reduce outborough admissions.</p> <p>A wide range of issues were covered by the Children and Young People PPB in 2006/2007 these included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools Balances –</li> <li>Children and Young People's Plan</li> <li>APA/JAR Process</li> <li>An update on Barriers to Learning</li> <li>The transition from Sure Start to Local Children's Centres</li> <li>Alder Hey Foundation Status</li> <li>Gifted and Talented Education</li> <li>Local Area Agreements</li> <li>Secondary School Attendance</li> <li>SEN Review</li> <li>Every Child Matters in School – The secondary School Perspective</li> <li>Education Business Partnership</li> <li>Youth Matters</li> <li>Halton Preventative Services</li> <li>Educational Attainment</li> <li>Youth Service Inspection and Action Plan</li> <li>Complaints</li> <li>Climbie Visits</li> <li>Adoption, Fostering and Private Fostering</li> <li>Health of Looked After Children</li> </ul>
	<p><b>School Balances</b>  School Balances through the introduction of a policy to clawback excess surplus balances and as a consequence of the level of reporting and scrutiny of school balances, both the level of balances and the number of schools with excess balances was seen to reduce significantly. Balances reduced from £6.1 million to £4.3 million. The number of schools with excess balances also reduced from 47 to 15.</p>
	<p><b>Attendance</b>  Following the identification of Attendance as a key priority for Children and Young People and the additional investment agreed in 2006/2007 budget, attendance in the secondary sector has significantly improved. There have also been improvements in primary attendance.</p> <p><b>Special Education Needs</b>  Following the identification of Special Needs as a key priority for Children and Young People reports identified the major progress in this area with the re-</p>

designation of all four special schools completed in 2006 and major capital investment in two of the special schools approved. Members were informed that the restructure of the Learning Support Service had been finalised with the new SEN service coming into effect in January 2007. Levels of pupils placed in outborough special provision has been seen to reduce along with the number of statements across the

Borough.

#### Health of Looked After Children

The excellent performance in relation to the level of health assessments completed in Halton in comparison to the national average was reported and commended with the Halton percentage at 91.2% compared to the 77.3% National Average.

#### **Halton Preventative Services**

The success of the establishment of the Preventative Services mini trust was reported to the Board and the approach by GONW to use the Halton model as a case study for national publication. It was acknowledged that although the trust covered both complex and challenging agendas combining Young Persons Substance Misuse, Children's Fund and Teenage Pregnancy would be a more effective delivery vehicle for these services.

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work please contact *Ann McIntyre – Operational Director – Business Planning and Resources – [ann.mcintyre@halton.gov.uk](mailto:ann.mcintyre@halton.gov.uk) telephone 0151 471 7543)*

This page is intentionally left blank





Chairman  
Councillor  
Gilligan

## **ANNUAL REPORT CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD APRIL 2006 – MARCH 2007**

*“ I would like to thank the members of the Board for their hard work over the last year. The Board has been very effective in reviewing some key areas, and its recommendation on pension policy and partnership governance were accepted by the Executive Board. An in-depth review of Area Forums is also nearing completion .”*

Councillor Gilligan

Chairman, Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

### **MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

During 2006/07 the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors Gilligan (Chairman), Lowe (Vice-Chair); Blackmore, Bradshaw, Dennett, Edge, C.Inch, Loftus, Nolan, Norddahl and Wainwright.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to Resources, Personnel, IT and E-Government, Property, Committee and Member Services, Risk Management and Emergency Planning, Legal Services, Communications and Marketing, Registration Service, Stadium, Civic Catering, Procurement, Equalities (Employment Aspects), Corporate Complaints Procedure and Area Forums. The Board also has responsibility for monitoring the performance of the reporting departments namely, Policy and Performance, Legal and Member Services, Finance, Exchequer and Customer Services (Revenues), Property Services, Personnel, and IT.

### **REVIEW OF THE YEAR**

The full Board met five times during the year, and set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during the year.

#### **Area Forums & Community Engagement**

As it is responsible for monitoring the activities of Area Forums, the Board was keen to review progress after almost 5 years of their operation. A Topic Group was established to look at how the Area Forums are working, to identify good practice within Halton and in other local authorities, and to consider the implications of emerging national policy. The group commissioned surveys and focus groups of residents who attend forums, and those that do not. It also interviewed partners, council officers, met with a selection of elected members from all 7 forums, and visited two other local authorities.

The Board's recommendations will be finalised early in the 2007/08 municipal year.

### **Partnership Working**

During the year the Board assisted with the creation of a Partnership register, establishing some criteria for determining when it is appropriate for the Council to become involved in partnerships and to invest staff time or other resources in that partnership, whilst ensuring that arrangements for governance and accountability are in place in the partnerships with which the Council is involved. Consequently, the Board made the following recommendations which were agreed by the Executive Board on 29th March 2007:

- (1) the definition of partnership as set out above be agreed;
- (2) a register of all partnerships of which the Council is a member is created and kept by the Council's Solicitor including the information as outlined in the report;
- (3) all new partnerships created or joined by the Council were notified to the Council Solicitor by the Officer with responsibility for the partnership;
- (4) the governance of partnership checklist is formally endorsed;
- (5) the issues set out in the checklist are properly considered and addressed before a decision is taken to form or enter into a new partnership;
- (6) annual progress reports are presented by each partnership in the register to the appropriate PPB;
- (7) the Corporate Services PPB reviews the partnership register and partnership arrangements on an annual basis to make sure that they are working effectively; and
- (8) as the process with regard to partnerships is developed, additional reports be brought to the Board.

### **Equalities**

As the Board with responsibility for Personnel and Staffing matters the Board considered the forthcoming changes in legislation in relation to age, disability and gender:

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006  
Disability Discrimination Act 2005

The Board requested the Executive Board "to consider whether the Council should set a default retirement age in the light of the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006". The Executive Board adopted a no default retirement age policy on 16 November 2006.

### **Halton Direct Link**

During the previous municipal year 2005/06 the Board had commissioned a major review of the operation. The findings of the review undertaken by SOCITM highlighted future opportunities for delivering further services through HDL.

The Board recommended that the developments outlined be investigated and a programme of work developed to deliver the outcomes of these investigations. It was also agreed that a timetable for business process reviews be drawn up, and progress be reported back to the Board quarterly.

### **PERFORMANCE ISSUES**

During the year the Board has focused a significant amount of effort on monitoring the performance of its reporting departments. Among the performance issues overseen by the Board during the year are:

- the Halton Stadium Annual Business Plan
- the successful implementation of the new payroll system Trent
- the completion of the Accommodation strategy
- the commencement of a review of the Council's training provision

Services monitored by the Board have successfully received Municipal Journal and APSE awards and been "highly commended" at the Local Government Chronicle awards.

### **WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2007/08**

The Board has decided that during the current municipal year (2007/08) it will carry out full reviews of the following areas:

- Learning from Complaints
- Development of Web Based Service Delivery
- Disabled Access to Council buildings
- Performance Management

**Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work please contact please contact Committee Services in the first instance, telephone 0151 4242061 extension 1125 or email [Lynn.Caims@Halton.gov.uk](mailto:Lynn.Caims@Halton.gov.uk)**

This page is intentionally left blank

Cllr. Jones  
Chairman

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
***EMPLOYMENT LEARNING AND SKILLS***  
**POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**  
**APRIL 2006 – MARCH 2007**

“ This was the first year of the Employment Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board and I would like to start by offering my sincere thanks to Board members for all the work they have undertaken. The Board had a very challenging programme of monitoring, scrutiny, visits and policy development. I believe it is making a substantial contribution to improving the way the council and its partners work together and particularly note the increasingly close relationship with the Employment Learning and Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership, whose meetings I attend on behalf of this Board”.

Councillor Eddie Jones, Chairman Employment Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board

**MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

During 2006/07 the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors Eddie Jones, Frank Fraser, Ellen Cargill, Susan Edge, David Findon, Mike Hodgkinson, Harry Howard, Stan Parker, David Lewis, Margaret Ratcliffe, John Stockton.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to the Culture and Leisure Services and the Economic Regeneration Departments. The primary function is to focus on the work of the Council (and its partners) in seeking to improve economic prosperity in Halton and the skills and employment prospects of its residents, and to scrutinise progress against the Corporate Plan in relation to the Employment, Learning and Skills priority

**REVIEW OF THE YEAR**

The full Board met 5 times during the year, and set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during the year.

***Capital of Culture***

The Board has played an active role in developing the Halton programme of activity for the Capital of Culture. This culminated in a full report being approved by Executive Board on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2007. The major proposal is for Halton to deliver a 2008 youth festival involving all the twin towns of the Liverpool City Region.

### *Local Area Agreement*

The Board considered the development of the draft Local Area Agreement (LAA), particularly in relation to targets for employment, skills and enterprise development. Linked to that, is the consideration of work being undertaken by the Employment Learning and Skills Specialist Strategic Partnership (SSP) that is tasked to implement that part of the LAA. Of particular note is that the SSP has now finalised its 3 key strategies (Employment, Enterprise and Workforce & Skills) including many of the recommendations of previous PPB topic groups.

### *Employment*

The Board has kept up to date with the development of the Liverpool City Region Employment Strategy. In this, all 6 authorities in Greater Merseyside have undertaken to work together to reduce worklessness in the most deprived wards. The PPB has inputted Halton priorities into this process and will keep monitoring its progress. The Board also kept under review the implementation of the employment action plan that resulted from previous scrutiny work and was very pleased to hear about the developing relationship between the Council, Halton Housing Trust and construction companies that it helped to instigate. The Board is presently reviewing Halton People into Jobs as part of its scrutiny programme and this will report early in 2007-08

### *Community Development*

The Board received an annual report on **Community Development** service delivery scrutinising performance indicators around active community groups, initiatives and external funding levered in through the service. Also received annual monitoring information on the Council's Community Development and Youth Grants.

The Board received an annual report on **Community Centre** service delivery scrutinising capacity usage of the Council's five facilities by members of the public, other Council departments and partner agencies.

The Board received an annual report on impact of **Voluntary Sector Core Grant** funding. Mid-year monitoring information on grants and received presentations from Halton Voluntary Action and Citizens Advice Bureau on performance/service

### *Skills and Enterprise*

The Board received reports on progress made on the Skills and Enterprise Action Plans that were developed as part of the previous scrutiny programme. Overall there is good progress, but the development of Job, Employment and Learning Shops is somewhat delayed due to funding issues. The Board is presently undertaking scrutiny of the adult learning team post inspection action plan.

### *Libraries*

The Board considered the results of the Public Library Users Surveys undertaken in 2006 for Adults and Children. These revealed that there has been a significant improvement in the performance and levels of satisfaction with the service. The performance standards for BVPI 118 A and B were exceeded, (users who found the books/information they were looking for) and the Public Library Service Standards for overall satisfaction with the service exceeded the targets and increased to 97% for adults and 93% for children. The Board was also consulted on the proposed changes to the Mobile Library Service.

### *Community Cohesion*

Community cohesion is a complex issue which touches on a range of inter related matters e.g. how cohesion impacts on community safety, educational standards, health improvement, community engagement in priority setting etc. It is acknowledged that there are no quick fixes. This topic formed part of the 2006/07 work programme and was investigated by a Working Party led by Cllr Jones. It seeks to examine and define the concept in the Halton context and consider how Cohesion is mainstreamed or exemplified in service delivery

Emerging challenges appear to be around anti-social behaviour, inter-generational issues, access to services and information across the borough, integration issues around migrant workers, and community engagement and civic pride.

These conclusions of the Working party and recommendations to the Executive Board will be presented to the PPB in June 2007.

### *Sport*

The Sport Development - Inclusion in Sport Topic Group has, thus far, had two particular areas of focus and will complete its work in the first half of the new Municipal Year

a) Facilities - It considered a definitive list of sports recognised by Sport England and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and matched provision in Halton against this list. It also considered the findings of Sport England Active People survey, which showed levels of participation in various sports in Halton. This identifies under represented sports, and any poor take up by particular target groups.

b) Disability Sports - a full day was devoted to this area and opinions were sought from several stakeholders (e.g. Coaches, voluntary sector, school coordinator, health and physical activity sector, social care). The day attempted to audit current provision, identify major barriers to accessing sport and recreation activities, and consider what key improvements could be made for the provision of disability sport.

### **WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2007/08**

The Board has decided that during the current municipal year (2007/08) it will complete the reviews of the following areas:

- Community Cohesion; and
- Sports Development – Inclusion in Sports;

Additionally, the Board will commence reviews of:

- Creating local jobs through public procurement; and
- Skills: Identifying the existing and future needs of businesses and developing a response.

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work please contact Gary Collins 01928 516100

[gary.collins@halton.gov.uk](mailto:gary.collins@halton.gov.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank





Cllr Ellen Cargill  
Chairman

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

### ***HEALTHY HALTON* POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**

### **APRIL 2006 – MARCH 2007**

My first priority in this report is to express appreciation for all the support I have received over the past twelve months from my vice Chairman Cllr Kath Loftus and all of my colleagues who have served with me on the Board. Their enthusiasm has been infectious. Officer support has also been vital to the Board and my thanks go to Audrey Williamson, Martin Loughna, Peter Barron Nigel Parker and Dwayne Johnson.

Once again, this has been a challenging year for the Healthy Halton Policy and Performance Board, particularly in relation to work with Health partners. A number of important consultations were undertaken during this year including North Cheshire Hospital Trust on services to be provided in both Halton and Warrington Hospitals, and Mental Health proposals from the 5Boroughs Partnership Trust in 'Change for the Better'.

As part of the Board's response to these consultations a Joint Statutory Committee was established with St Helens and Warrington to enable the three Borough Councils' to look in detail at the changes proposed for Mental Health Services. I would like to thank all Members, Officers and health colleagues for their efforts and support during this year. I had the privilege of chairing the Joint Committee with the support of vice Chair Cllr Andy Bowden, from St Helens also Cllrs Loftus and Inch, from Halton, McGuire and Stephanie Topping from St Helens and Councillors Hoyle, Johnson and Banner from Warrington.

#### **MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

During 2006/07 the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors Ellen Cargill, Loftus, Blackmoor, Howard, Hodgkinson, Horabin, D Inch, Jones, Lloyd-Jones, Swift, and Wallace. The primary function is to focus on the work of the Council (and its Partners) in seeking to improve health in the Borough and to scrutinise progress against the Corporate Plan in relation to the Healthy Halton Priority.

## **REVIEW OF THE YEAR**

The Board met seven times in 2006/07 and received reports on a wide range of both Health and Social Care issues, which affected Halton residents. These included:

### Short-term Respite Care for People with Learning Disabilities

The Board looked at a model of short-term breaks, which offered increased choice and opportunities for adults with learning disabilities to participate in activities within the community. The Board supported this model and it is hoped this will be implemented later in the forthcoming year.

### Carers Strategy

Services for carers have had an increasing focus for the Council during this year. It was noted that the new Carers Strategy had been developed with the valuable input of carers themselves identifying priorities and areas for development.

### Vulnerable Adults

The Board received the Annual Report of Halton's Multi-Agency Adult Protection Committee. The Council is the lead agency for this important area of work. The growing awareness of vulnerability of some adults who need additional support has led to an increase in the number of referrals and strengthening Multi-Agency arrangements.

Local Area Agreements which were established this year and which the Council plays an important role alongside its partners.

### Changes within the Health Service

The changes within Health Services and reconfiguration of organisations remained a strong focus for the Healthy Halton Policy and Performance Board this year. The Board contributed to the Annual Health Care Assessments of the Primary Care Trust, 5Boroughs Partnership Trust and North Cheshire Hospital Trust. The Board received reports from all three health organisations, which chartered progress on government set standards. Contributions were made by the Policy and Performance Board, which were incorporated into the final Health Care Self Assessments.

Royal Liverpool Children's NHS Trust application for foundation status. A special joint meeting was held with the Children and Young People Policy and Performance Board to receive consultation on the foundation status application. While only a few children actually access this hospital based in Liverpool, nevertheless it was important that consultation took place because the services provided are specialist and valuable.

'Better Care Sustainable Services'

The Board received a presentation by North Cheshire Hospital Trust on their new model of service delivery. The proposals affected both Warrington and Halton hospital and are potentially very significant in Halton. They were the subject of detailed debate by the Healthy Halton Policy and Performance Board. Regular reports on the development of the changes have been requested by the Board.

'Change for the Better'

This model for Mental Health Services was proposed by the 5Boroughs Partnership Trust. There will be a significant impact on Mental Health Services, particularly within Halton, which has traditionally relied on a large number of beds for people with Mental Health problems and fewer community resources. The model seeks to reverse this and support more people within the community. In recognition of the significance of the proposed changes, a Joint Scrutiny Committee was established with members from St Helens and Warrington Scrutiny Committee. Halton was pleased to host and chair this Committee. The Joint Board met regularly and looked in detail at the proposals submitted by the 5Boroughs Partnership Trust. This process ensured that changes were made to the original proposals improving the model of change; for example, single sex wards were identified and accepted as necessary rather than the original model of mixed gender wards.

The Policy and Performance Board noted that the reconfiguration of the Primary Trust now covering both St Helens and Halton local authorities will lead to an increased need to work jointly with Scrutiny Committees, particularly from St Helens. Changes to services are likely to affect both residents within St Helens and Halton. Positive relations were established through the Joint Scrutiny process, which will facilitate further working arrangements. Members from St Helens and Halton Policy and Performance Boards attended two seminars to examine the establishment of a protocol between the two Councils. The protocol will identify when joint working arrangements are required and how such arrangements will be established. A full draft protocol will be considered by the Board in Autumn 2007.

**WORK TOPICS**

In addition to the Board meetings, Members participated in two work topics:

- 'Choosing Health' in Halton was explored in some detail and while there has been some delay due to the reconfiguration of the Primary Care Trust a valuable presentation was made by the Director of Public Health looking at the priorities for Halton in improving Halton residents' health. The Board will receive a full report of the outcome of this work during the next Committee cycle.

▪ Day Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities

Three members looked at this area of service. There has been a significant change in the way that services are delivered in Halton with the closure of Astmoor this year and increasing use of local community centres. Visits took place to other Councils to explore the services as well as the scrutiny of services within Halton. A full report will be submitted to the Policy and Performance Board in May 2007.

**PERFORMANCE ISSUES**

Healthy Halton Policy and Performance Board has received quarterly monitoring reports on Social Care performance. Performance has continued to remain strong this year with the following:

- No delays in hospital discharge due to Social Care since fines for delays were introduced three years ago
- The opening and development of Dorset Gardens, Halton's first extra care scheme
- Development and roll-out of new telecare services linked to further expansion of wardens and lifeline
- Modernisation of Independent Living Team has improved waiting times for assessment
- Joint End of Life service established with Halton and St Helens PCT
- Contractual arrangements with Warrington, St Helens and Knowsley to establish an Advocacy Service as required under the Mental Capacity Act
- Significant increase and support for carers of people with mental health problems. This support was recognised by the recent Mental Health Inspection
- Establishment of a Bridge Building Service to increase access for mainstream services for people requiring additional support

**WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08**

Healthy Halton Policy & Performance Board has not yet formally agreed work topics for the following year, but will consider the following two areas:

▪ Health of Carers

There are a large number of carers within Halton and their health needs are important given their additional responsibilities

▪ Services for People with Sensory Disabilities

The carers has a small number of contract providers to meet the needs of this group of people. The work topic, if agreed will offer the opportunity to scrutinise these in detail and seek any potential improvements identified

Councillor Ellen Cargill  
Chairman, **Healthy Halton** Policy and Performance Board

Cllr. Shaun  
Osborne



## **ANNUAL REPORT SAFER HALTON POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD APRIL 2006 – MARCH 2007**

“ This was the first year of the Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board and I would like to start by offering my sincere thanks to Board members for all the work they have undertaken. The Board had a very challenging programme of monitoring, scrutiny, and policy development. I believe it is making a substantial contribution to improving the way the council and its partners work together to improve the quality of life in Halton. The Board has received a number of presentations during the year and I am grateful to all those who have contributed”.

Councillor Shaun Osborne, Chairman Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board

### **MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

During 2006/07 the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors, Osborne, Stockton, Edge, Lloyd-Jones, Morley, E.Ratcliffe, Redhead, Rowan, Swift, Thompson and Wallace.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to Community Safety and Drugs Team, Registration and Consumer Affairs, Risk and Emergency Planning, Environmental and Regulatory Services, Road Safety and Waste Management.

### **REVIEW OF THE YEAR**

The full Board met 5 times during the year, and set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during the year.

### **COMMUNITY SAFETY ISSUES**

The Board identified Anti-Social Behaviour as a key area, and through a Topic Team has supported the development of a new Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy that was formally launched in April 2007. It will now have a responsibility to monitor that Strategy. It also considered how the Community Safety Team should operate and has worked up proposals for a Multi-Agency Problem Solving approach to be developed through 2007/08. It monitored the developments in the area of domestic violence, and lent its support to the continuance of funding for this area of activity. It received a full presentation on the work of the Drug and Alcohol Team to which a group of young people were invited and who were able to ask many and various questions. The Board considered the future development and management of alleygates and recommended that mainstream funding for the future of alleygates should be sought. This was secured in 2007/08's budget.

#### ROAD SAFETY ISSUES

The Board analysed the annual road traffic casualty reports and the progress towards the achievement of the national casualty reduction targets. The Board received a presentation on 'Megadrive', a training scheme used in schools to educate pupils of the dangers of high speed reckless driving. From this it agreed to support a request to mainstream funding for the scheme for future years.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL AND REGULATORY SERVICE ISSUES

Developing policies around Waste Management to meet national targets has been a major focus of attention, and will continue to be so in 2007/08. This included strategic and operational issues around collection and disposal of waste, and options related to re-cycling including an understanding of the Merseyside Joint Waste Development Plan. It also considered how to respond to the Smoke Free Premises Legislation, due to come into force in July 2007. The Environmental Health and Risk Assessment Working Party is developing guidance on behalf of the Council.

#### RISK AND EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Board considered the new Civil Contingencies Act, and the responsibilities of the Council in respect of that Act. There was a particular focus on the need to develop business continuity management plans, not just for the Council, but for the private and voluntary sectors. The need to review off-site plans, and identify which agencies would take the lead during incidents was highlighted. The Board also considered the impact of vandalism on schools and identified the schools and Council's responsibilities in relation to incidents of vandalism. It resolved that schools be encouraged to allow their Site Manager/Caretaker to attend seminars on school security and fire precautions.

#### BEREAVEMENT SERVICES / CONSUMER PROTECTION / REGISTRATION SERVICE

During the course of the year the Board received reports on meetings of the Bereavement Services Working Party and was able to contribute to the ongoing development of policy in this sensitive area of the Council's activity.

The safety of headstones in the Council's cemeteries continued to pose a challenge during the year, but the Council continued to face this challenge in a pragmatic and sensitive manner. The Board reviewed the Council's Risk Management Strategy for Safe Headstones and recommended that the revised strategy be agreed. This revised strategy recognised the use of a relatively cheap and unobtrusive ground anchor to temporarily make safe many of the unsafe headstones in the Council's cemeteries. Additionally, the Board recommended to the Executive Board that Halton applied to be a registered Burial Authority with the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM) and that from 1 October 2007, only BRAMM accredited memorial masons should be permitted to operate in the Council's cemeteries. This will provide for increased assurance of standards of Memorial Mason workmanship, more clarity as regards policing of workmanship and greater consumer protection via a 10-year guarantee, which is a requirement of the BRAMM scheme.

The Board received an update on the issue of cremations and "mercury abatement" and recommended that this Board should maintain a watching brief on this subject and receive update reports as appropriate to inform ongoing policy development. The Board noted that the Council's current position was that it "plans to contribute to a national cremation burden-sharing (i.e. cost-sharing) scheme from 1 January 2013, and has no immediate plans to install mercury abatement equipment, though this position remains under review".

During the course of the year work on phase 2 of the preparation of the western strip of Widnes cemetery for burial ground was begun and completed. Significant progress was also made on the development of a new Garden of Remembrance in Runcorn cemetery. As part of a project that began the previous year, a number of gardeners from the Landscape Services Division are now permanently based in the cemeteries. As a result, there has been a noticeable improvement in grounds maintenance and greater flexibility at peak times, when the gardeners are able to assist the cemetery workers, and vice-versa.

The Board recommended that the Executive Board adopt a revised Consumer Protection Enforcement Policy. The purpose of such an enforcement policy is to set out the Consumer Protection Service general approach to enforcement. The policy was based around the general principles of good enforcement, the Enforcement Concordat and the Code for Crown Prosecutors, and had been updated following relevant case law and other experience of legal arguments raised over enforcement policies in recent years. An important part of the revision process was consultation with business, other enforcing agencies and none users of the Service.

The Board recommended that the Executive Board agree to the operation of the Warrington Borough Council Trading Standards Approved Motor Trader Scheme in Halton. The Board was advised that for Halton, the financial and labour costs of agreeing to this arrangement were minimal. Further, because of the comparatively low numbers of motor traders in Halton, the Board appreciated that it would not be viable for Halton's Consumer Protection Service to design and operate its own Approved Motor Trader Scheme. Such a scheme would however enable Halton motor traders to compete on a level playing field with their Warrington counterparts. Additionally, the arrangement was in line with the Best Value principles of maximising cross-border partnership opportunities to the benefit of both the Council and the people we serve.

The Board received a report on the use of the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) by the Consumer Protection Service and heard that in recent years, there has been concern within the Trading Standards profession that courts often imposed low financial penalties on defendants in trading standards prosecutions. In some instances defendants were able to pay immediately as fines were so low. This did nothing to deter future offending, was demoralising for investigators and such low penalties did not remove the financial means from offenders to prevent them from continuing their criminality. Nor did it send a strong message to other would be offenders that 'crime does not pay'. The Board was advised that the Council's Consumer Protection Service now has an officer fully trained and accredited under the provisions of the POCA to undertake this work. The Board therefore recommended that the Executive Board agree to the use of the full 'confiscation regime' and 'offences' under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 by the Consumer Protection Service.

The Consumer Protection Service continued to focus its efforts on reducing sales of alcohol to children, raising its profile in the more deprived wards and protecting the vulnerable from unscrupulous doorstep sellers. With regard to the latter, and after consultation with local residents, the Service was instrumental in the creation of Halton's first "No Cold Calling Zone" which covers Cedar Avenue and Elm Avenue, Widnes.

As part of a major step forward in terms of the modernisation of the Registration Service, the Board recommended that the Executive Board agree to the pursuance of new governance arrangements for the delivery of the Halton Registration Service. Such arrangements will provide for a more flexible, less prescriptive, scheme, allowing local authorities greater discretion to deliver local services which meet both national standards and local community needs.

In this respect Proper Officers acquire increased responsibility and accountability for the delivery of the local service. Other benefits include the opportunity to explore more innovative ways of delivering the service; the strengthening of the management of the local service; the potential to make more efficient use of resources; the increased flexibility to determine staff numbers to cope with peaks and troughs in service demands; implementation of changes to staffing levels, location of offices etc. without the need for a formal registration scheme change, and the bringing of the registration service into line with other local authority service strategies for setting, maintaining and monitoring performance (though in this respect it must be noted that the Halton service is already covered by the authority's performance management regime).

#### WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2007/08

It is proposed that the working groups established in 2006/07 continue their on-going work. These are:

Environmental Health and Risk Assessment

Waste

Bereavement

Anti-Social Behaviour. It is proposed that this group becomes the Community Safety Working Party to encompass broader issues. A priority work area for this group will be domestic violence.

It is suggested that a new group be formed, in conjunction with the Health PPB, to consider the topic of safeguarding vulnerable adults.

It is proposed that representatives of young people be co-opted on to the Board to ensure that young people's views are properly represented.

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work please contact Howard Cockcroft (0151 471 7461) or e-mail at [howard.cockcroft@halton.gov.uk](mailto:howard.cockcroft@halton.gov.uk)





Councillor  
Hignett

## **ANNUAL REPORT URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD JUNE 2006 – MARCH 2007**

“Once again the Urban Renewal PPB has overseen the vast amount of activity which is contributing to Halton’s renaissance. The number of cranes which have appeared on the skylines of Widnes and Runcorn are testimony to the priority which the Council attaches to renewing the economy and the physical fabric of Halton. Also, the development programmes which the Board has agreed in the past year will ensure that this dynamism will continue to fuel Halton’s renewal into the future.”

**Councillor Hignett**  
**Chairman, Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board**

### **MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

During 2006/7 the Board comprised eleven Councillors –

Councillor R. Hignett (Chairman)	Labour
Councillor D. Leadbetter (Vice Chairman)	Labour
Councillor Ellen Cargill	Labour
Councillor K. Morley	Labour
Councillor P. Nolan	Labour
Councillor C. Rowe	Liberal Democrat
Councillor D. Thompson	Labour
Councillor T. Sly	Liberal Democrat
Councillor P. Wallace	Labour
Councillor I. Whittaker	Conservative
Councillor P. Worrall	Liberal Democrat

The Urban Renewal Policy & Performance Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to the following areas:

- Highways and Transportation,
- Environmental Health and Planning,
- Economic Regeneration and
- Major Projects Departments with the additional responsibility for
- Contaminated Land (as from 2005/06)
- Strategic Housing (as from 2006/07).

## **REVIEW OF THE YEAR**

The full Board met five times during the year. As well as considering Executive Board decisions relevant to the work of the Urban Renewal Board, agreeing the Service Plans of the relevant Departments and monitoring their general activities and performance against them, set out below are some of the main activities and issues that the Board has worked on during the year:

### **Corporate Responsibilities**

- The terms of reference for the Board have been amended following changes to the Council's decision-making structures, implemented in 2006/07, in order to bring them into line with the Council's Strategic Priorities, as contained within the Corporate and Community Plans. One amendment to the terms of reference being that this Board be responsible for scrutiny of the strategic housing function.
- The Board received a report outlining the need for a Local Area Agreement, negotiated with Central Government.

### **Major Projects Department**

- Progress on the implementation of the Castlefields and Widnes Waterfront Regeneration programmes was considered and noted. The Board was asked to review and agree the Widnes Waterfront NWDA Performance Plan for 2006/7 and then, later, for 2007/8.
- The Board received a presentation on the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy Review and noted the revised implementation timetable.
- A report reviewing the conclusions and recommendations outlined in a commercial property study, which assessed the supply of and demand for employment land and premises (industrial, office and retail) in Halton, was considered by the Board and resolved that recommendations set out in that report be supported.

### **Planning**

- Consideration was given to a report which advised on new powers available to the Council to make Gating Orders. The report proposed policy to be adopted in relation to these which was supported and it was recommended that the Executive Board adopt a policy requiring Gating Orders be made against future alley-gate proposals.

### **Highways and Transportation**

- The Board reviewed a Delivery Report of the First Local Transport Plan 2001/2 to 2005/6. Of particular note was the difference that the Plan had made in terms of the Council's strategic priorities at that time, as set out in the Borough's Corporate Plan.

- The Board was informed of the need to appoint a Chairman and three Members to the Public Transport Advisory Panel. As a consequence Cllrs Hignett, Leadbetter, Sly and Polhill's names were put forward.
- There was an update on the current position regarding the measurement and treatment of highway skidding resistance, which informed the proposal to introduce a policy for analysing skid resistance data in order to produce programmes of treatment, which was recommended for adoption.
- The Board received a presentation on the Best Value Review of Transportation and Access. Transport links to new developments and local hospitals were discussed and it was determined that the Public Transport Liaison Panel should scrutinise this further, to the benefit of Halton residents.
- The Street Lighting Topic Review was received.
- A petition requesting signals at Derby Road, Widnes, was considered by to the Board. A refuge was an option that was debated but not adopted due to the presence of the bus route. It was determined that this situation should continue to be monitored.
- The Local Transport Capital Expenditure Settlement 2007/8 was considered and welcomed. It was noted that this improved settlement rewarded the high performance achieved in both the LTP2 and LTP1 Delivery Reports and that Halton was now in the top quartile of the 82 local transport authorities in England.
- The Board reviewed and noted the Public Right of Way Milestone Statement Progress Report 2007/8 in which a reduction in core funding for Groundwork Mersey Valley was identified.

### **Economic Regeneration**

- The Board considered a study undertaken in Runcorn and Widnes town centres to evaluate the level of support from traders and businesses for developing Business Improvement Districts (BIDS) and determined to support this initiative.
- The Board reviewed and noted the draft Town Centre Strategies for Halton Lea and Runcorn Town Centre, as Supplementary Planning Documents, which had been approved for public consultation. Widnes would, instead, have an Area Action Plan produced.

### **Housing**

- The Board received a report on the Housing Needs Survey 2006, which had proved to be a comprehensive and robust housing market and needs assessment.
- An update on a review of Supported Housing by the Health PPB was given and, due to a change in the Board's remit, this will be considered as a future scrutiny topic.
- The Board reviewed an updated report on proposed changes to the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy and determined that the document be accepted for public consultation purposes prior to being referred to the Executive Board.
- The draft of the House Extension Supplementary Planning Document was noted by the Board, prior to it going out to public consultation.

**Other**

- The Board reviewed the Natural Assets Strategy, which was adopted in 2000, together with associated DVD's entitled 'Swifts in Halton' and 'Pickering's Pasture'. The need to get the balance of vegetation right, particularly during the planning process was discussed, along with the regeneration works at Castlefields. The review was recommended to be published in 2007, as a document available to the public, and policies and actions contained therein be noted and followed by all services in the Council where this would have an impact.

**WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2006/7**

- A report on the topic brief 'Business Parks' was considered as part of the scrutiny programme and accepted, with key recommendations to be considered and decided upon by the Executive Board.
- The topic brief report on 'Raising Additional Revenue from Existing Services' was considered and recommendations made for further action.
- The Board considered a report on the topic brief for 'Street Lighting', which was noted and to be forwarded to the Executive Board for consideration of the various recommendations.

**WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2007/8**

The Board has contributed a number of Topic ideas to be considered by the 2007-8 PPB for inclusion in their work programme for the coming year.

- Future of Town Centre Management;
- Housing Strategy;
- Income Regeneration (continuation of).

**Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work please contact Committee Services in the first instance, telephone 0151 424 2061 extension 1125 or email [Lynn.Cairns@Halton.gov.uk](mailto:Lynn.Cairns@Halton.gov.uk)**