



Executive Board

Thursday, 4 November 2010 2.00 p.m.
Marketing Suite, Municipal Building

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David W R'.

Chief Executive

ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

PART 1

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1. MINUTES	
2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal or personal and prejudicial interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda no later than when that item is reached and, with personal and prejudicial interests (subject to certain exceptions in the Code of Conduct for Members), to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on the item.	
3. LEADER'S PORTFOLIO	
(A) PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2011-2026	1 - 52

*Please contact Angela Scott on 0151 471 7529 or
Angela.scott@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Committee is on Thursday, 18 November 2010*

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In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 4th November 2010

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director - Resources

SUBJECT: Public Consultation on the Sustainable Community Strategy 2011 – 2026

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks Executive Board approval of the content of the Halton Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), in order that the document is approved for an eight-week period of public consultation from 29th November 2010 to 24th January 2011.
- 1.2 The consultation period allows for a combined consultation to be run alongside the Core Strategy Publication Document and Local Transport Plan 3.
- 1.3 Appendix 1 comprises the Sustainable Community Strategy for public consultation.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) The draft Halton Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) 2011-2026 be approved for the purposes of a eight-week period of public consultation;
- (2) Further editorial and technical amendments that do not materially affect the content of the Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-2026 document be agreed by the Operational Director – Policy and Performance in consultation with the Leader of the Council, as necessary, before the document is published for public consultation; and
- (3) The results of the statutory public consultation exercise on the Sustainable Community Strategy document are reported back to the Executive Board following the consultation period.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Local authorities and their partners have a statutory duty to develop a Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out the strategic direction and long term vision for the economic, social and environmental well being of an area. The targets in Halton's existing strategy run to 31 March 2011, and so Halton Strategic Partnership must produce a new Sustainable Community Strategy for adoption by the Council by April 2011.

3.2 The SCS is a long term plan that will guide Halton's Strategic Partnership over the next 15 years and it is important to remain aspirational in outlook. In the short term, the financial climate and uncertainty over the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review on available budget may constrain our ability to deliver change on the ground. This uncertainty will be dealt with via a 5 year delivery plan that will be prepared once the budgetary position becomes clear (see section 3.5 below).

3.3 The attached draft SCS has been produced through extensive research and analysis of baseline data followed by wide consultation with Elected Members and partners to identify key themes and related strategic objectives. This has included reports on the detail of the emerging strategy to all Policy and Performance Boards during the September 2010 meeting cycle.

3.4 Public Consultation

An extensive consultation plan has been prepared, and a number of methods will be employed with the aim of ensuring that the SCS and other documents reach as many interested parties as possible. The Council's Communications and Marketing Division have played an important role in the planning of the consultation activities. Examples of methods to be employed include (please note that this is not a comprehensive list):

- **Use of the Consultation Database:** A comprehensive database has been created, over a number of years, of people and companies with an interest in the development of Halton. These parties will be sent a letter or e-mail informing them of the publication of the suite of strategy documents for public consultation, and of how they will be able to comment.
- **Public Exhibitions and Posters:** Officers will schedule a number of exhibitions for the consultation period, to take place at key town centre locations. Posters stating information about the consultation will also be hosted at Council buildings, including libraries, and in other key locations.
- **Online Materials and Deposit Locations:** Information about the SCS and other consultation documents, including copies of the document and its supporting material, will be available online and in a number of deposit locations in Halton, including the Halton Direct Links and libraries.
- **In Touch / Inside Halton Magazines:** These publications are being used to publicise the SCS consultation among Council staff and Halton residents respectively.

3.5 SCS Delivery Plan

The final adopted SCS will contain a five year delivery plan that will set out in detail the policy responses the Partnership intends to implement to

tackle the challenges facing the Borough. Until the strategy has been consulted upon, it is not possible to generate a delivery plan. In addition, the financial climate is not clear and will remain so until after the Comprehensive Spending Review in October. For this reason the consultation in November will focus on the strategic vision for the future of Halton and will not contain a delivery plan for the strategy at the time of public consultation.

3.6 Timescales to Adoption

The key dates in the drafting process are as follows:

Date	Stage
29 Nov 10 – 24 Jan 11	Public consultation on Core Strategy Development Plan Document and draft Sustainable Community Strategy.
Dec 10 – Jan 11	Finalisation of SCS Delivery Plan
11 February 11	Halton Strategic Partnership Board (HSPB) to sign off final document.
17 March 11	Approval of SCS for adoption - Executive Board.
20 April 11	Adoption at Full Council.
April 2011	Implementation begins.

3.7 New Corporate Plan

The new SCS offers the opportunity to revisit our Corporate Plan and to set out our ambitions for the next five years. Taking a strategic outlook, the Council can set its direction and align this with the Key Objectives of the SCS. The drafting of a revised Corporate Plan will commence in January 2011.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The new edition of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) will look over a longer time period allowing strategic planning over 15 years to 2026. This will bring major plans into alignment, such as the Core Strategy and Local Transport Plan, allowing coordinated delivery.

4.2 The SCS will impact upon all policy areas and have wide ranging impacts on, but not exclusively, social inclusion, poverty, equality and diversity, physical development, environmental quality and health care.

5.0 **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The draft SCS takes into account Government guidance on the development of Sustainable Community Strategies and the duty to inform, consult and involve local people. It is imperative that partners continue to play an integral role in the delivery of the Strategy through the Halton Strategic Partnership structure.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

A significant component of the content of the SCS is aimed at raising aspirations of children and young people, assisting them to do well whatever their needs or wherever they live. Ensuring that feel safe at school, home and in their community is a central objective. Health and well-being is a key policy driver for the SCS with a long term focus on ensuring children and young people are physically, emotionally and sexually healthy.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

One of the main thrusts of the SCS is the support, maintenance and enhancement of the Borough's economy including promoting economic growth and diversification. This includes the enhancement of local employment opportunities, as well as support for learning and skill development opportunities at the Borough's educational establishments and workplaces.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The SCS contains a wide variety of policy guidance focussed on addressing the Borough's health problems; hence the priority for a healthier Halton is strongly reflected across the document. Emphasis is placed on reducing the inequalities gap that forms when the health of the population as a whole improves, but the health of the least and less well off either improves more slowly than the rest of the population or in some cases gets worse in absolute terms. The SCS focuses on early intervention and prevention initiatives, particularly for obesity, alcohol and drug harm, mental health, cancer and circulatory disease.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Making Halton safer is a key priority for the SCS, aiming to ensure that Halton's communities, businesses and visitors enjoy access to a safe environment with reduced fear of crime, increased community cohesion, and reducing reported crime and anti-social behaviour. Safeguarding vulnerable people from all forms of abuse is an essential strand of the SCS.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

It is proposed that this priority area becomes "Environment and Regeneration in Halton" to give the theme a wider focus covering issues beyond urban renewal such as environmental quality, climate change, and digital infrastructure and accessibility. Through the identification of key areas of change, those major development projects affecting the Borough over the SCS period, the SCS caters for the renewal and enhancement of the Borough's built and green environment, with a particular focus on housing areas, employment land and the Borough's centres.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 It is vital that rapid progress is made on the Sustainable Community Strategy to ensure that Halton Strategic Partnership continues to be clear about its priorities for service delivery, setting out the steps needed to bring about improvements to those areas of greatest concern to the people of Halton.

7.2 Delay to the SCS will:

- Reduce the Partnership's ability to take account of the local community's aspirations, needs and priorities;
- Have serious implications for Partnership co-ordination between all the public, private, voluntary and community organisations that operate locally.
- Potentially reduce the effectiveness of the Partnership through fragmentation of strategies.

7.3 These risks are mitigated by a monthly review of all significant risk factors highlighted by the project's risk assessment.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Building stronger communities through community engagement must continue to be a key outcome for the strategy. The Halton Strategic Partnership is already committed to equality regardless of age, sex, caring responsibility, race, religion, marital status, maternity issues, gender reassignment, socio economic need, sexuality or disability. A Community Impact Review and Assessment (CIRA) will be undertaken on the document to ensure the strategy does not discriminate, promotes equality for all, and meets the duties under the Equality Act 2010.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
A Community Strategy for a Sustainable Halton 2006-2011	Municipal Building, Widnes	Tim Gibbs
Refresh SCS 2006-2011 (published September 2009)	Municipal Building, Widnes	Tim Gibbs



Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-2026 Draft



Halton Strategic **PARTNERSHIP**

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Foreword

We all know that little can be achieved without different agencies and service providers putting their heads and talents together to come up with workable, long term answers to some of Halton's many challenges. We have made considerable progress since we produced our first Community Strategy in 2002. However, much remains to be done.

The environment around us is always changing, therefore we must adapt by constantly improving our services to meet our communities' needs and aspirations that are impacted on by these changes. We must also take time to prepare our local communities for the future by encouraging them to take a level of responsibility for their own growth and development, to be more resilient whilst at the same time building on and respecting our local environment and its heritage.

National, regional and local influences linked to the environment, economy and social change will increasingly demand a strategic approach across organisational and community boundaries plus flexibility to deal with these new challenges. The current financial climate and its wider impact makes forecasting the future very difficult. This means that it is even more important that we all look forward beyond these next few months and the uncertainty which they present, to plan the best ways to address concerns and aspirations and seize the opportunities offered in the medium and longer term.

Change requires a shared vision and agreement across local organisations and communities to take difficult decisions in order to create better lives and stronger communities across Halton. Our shared vision and how we will achieve it, is outlined in detail within this strategy.

I would like to stress that this is a draft strategy and we need your feedback to help us ensure that we produce a final document that reflects all possible views on a way forward so that together we can build an even better Halton in the future.

Councillor Rob Polhill
Chair, Halton Strategic Partnership
Leader, Halton Borough Council

What is a Sustainable Community Strategy?

A key role for local authorities and their partners is to produce a Sustainable Community Strategy for their area. This should aim to enhance the quality of life of local communities through actions to improve the economic, social and environmental well being of the area and its inhabitants. It must also:

- co-ordinate the actions of the council and of the public, private, voluntary and community organisations that operate locally;
- focus and shape the existing and future activity of those organisations so that they effectively meet community needs; and
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development both locally and more widely;
- allow local communities to express their aspirations, needs and priorities.

It must have four key components:

- a long-term vision for the area focusing on the outcomes that are to be achieved;
- an action plan identifying shorter-term priorities and activities that will contribute to the achievement of long-term outcomes;
- a shared commitment to implementing the action plan, and proposals for doing so;
- arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the action plan, for periodically reviewing and reporting progress to local communities.

This is Halton's third Sustainable Community Strategy and whilst we can take pride in what has been achieved to date, there is still much more to do. This document sets out a vision of the Halton we would like to see emerge by 2026. It sets out the steps we need to take together to bring about real improvements that will change lives for the better. Those steps concentrate on the things that matter most to most people. The Strategy is about focusing on the issues that will make the biggest difference in the long-term.

A key purpose of this Strategy is to ensure that the resources available to the Halton Strategic Partnership Board (HSPB) are targeted and used effectively to bring about improvements in the borough. This means:

- Being clear and agreeing what needs to be done so we are all pulling in the same direction;
- Working together with local communities to make a difference
- Listening and responding to what matters most to people locally and telling people what we are doing;
- Targeting activity to where we can make the most difference;
- Doing the kind of things that experience has shown will really work and be successful;

- Measuring progress, letting people know how we are doing, and adjusting where necessary to keep on track.

Unless we work together and get smarter at how we use our resources, the improvements set out in this Strategy will not happen.

How was this strategy developed?

This Strategy has been developed in consultation with local residents and partners within Halton Strategic Partnership, including the voluntary sector. It is supported by detailed statistics and information about the borough, and sets out our vision and priorities, focusing on major issues which, if addressed, would make a real difference by 2026.

It is based on a significant body of research and consultation and outlines some key goals, some headline actions and key performance measures by which we will be judged. It aims to guide the development and implementation of more detailed plans and actions to be undertaken by partners including the Council, the Police, Health Agencies, Job Centre Plus and others. Everyone has a role to play in making it happen in Halton. Working together we can make a difference and build a better future for the borough.

Some examples of the available **evidence that this Strategy takes into account include:**

- State of the Borough Report 2010
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and health profile for Halton
- Halton Community Safety Strategic Assessment
- Single Economic Assessment 2009.
- Updated Borough Profile
- Evidence prepared to support the Core Strategy and Local Development Framework
- Public consultation gathered in the development of the Core Strategy, Local Transport Plan and Children & Young People's Plan

We **listened and consulted** – we collated, reflected on and analysed responses to consultation exercises conducted with local people

The Partnership and its Priorities

The Halton Strategic Partnership Board (HSPB) works to ensure that actions delivered by a whole range of groups and organisations are properly 'joined up' and make a real difference to the lives of local people.

This Sustainable Community Strategy provides an overarching framework within which different partnerships, organisations and groups can co-operate together, commit to common goals and work towards improving life for people in the borough.

The following organisations and agencies are members of the Halton Strategic Partnership and have been involved in developing Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy:

NHS Halton & St Helens
Halton Borough Council
Cheshire Constabulary
Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service
Halton Housing Partnership
Halton Sports Partnership
Riverside College Halton
Cheshire Police Authority
Halton Voluntary Action
Jobcentre Plus
Faith Community
Greater Merseyside Connexions Service
North West Development Agency
Halton Association of Secondary Heads
Halton Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise
Government Office North West

The Specialist Strategic Partnerships (SSPs)

There are five thematic Specialist Strategic Partnerships (SSPs) that sit underneath and report to the Halton Strategic Partnership Board. These are well established, each leading on one of the agreed five key priority themes of the Halton Strategic Partnership. Each is a multi agency partnership made up of representatives of agencies and services that have a key role in delivering the aims and objectives of the Specialist Strategic Partnership.

Their work is informed by key data and intelligence, consultation with the public and the expertise of partners. Each Specialist Strategic Partnership has developed a detailed delivery plan outlining the key work streams for their partnership.

These priority themes and their respective aims are as follows:

- **A Healthy Halton**

To create a healthier community and work to promote well being and a positive experience of life with good health, not simply an absence of disease, and offer opportunities for people to take responsibility for their health with the necessary support available.

- **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

To create an economically prosperous borough that encourages investment, enterprise and business growth, and improves the opportunities for learning and development together with the skills and employment prospects of both residents and workforce so that they are able to feel included socially and financially.

- **A Safer Halton**

To ensure pleasant, safe and secure neighbourhood environments, with attractive, safe surroundings, good quality local amenities, and the ability of people to enjoy life where they live.

- **Children and Young People in Halton**

Halton's ambition is to build stronger, safer communities which are able to support the development and learning of children and young people so they grow up feeling safe, secure, happy and healthy, and are ready to be Halton's present and Halton's future.

- **Environment and Regeneration in Halton**

To transform the urban fabric and infrastructure, to develop exciting places and spaces and to create a vibrant and accessible borough that makes Halton a place where people are proud to live and see a promising future for themselves and their families.

This Sustainable Community Strategy looks at how each of the themes link together and impact on each other. The Strategy recognises the importance of a number of key crosscutting themes that are common across all Partnership activity. Some of the partnership working activity taking place across the Halton Strategic Partnership includes

- Providing for the ageing population
- Narrowing the gap between deprived and non-deprived areas within the borough addressing health and socio-economic inequality.
- Improving educational attainment and increasing access to training opportunities for those living in deprived areas
- Improving access to services such as social and leisure facilities, supermarkets, health services and transport.
- Understanding how knowledge and perceptions of health related issues can affect the local population
- Reducing social isolation

- Maximising community resources and facilitating effective community engagement and participation
- Integrating delivery of services
- Increasing community satisfaction with Halton as a place to live.
- Increasing focus on community involvement in public sector activities in Halton.
- Running services effectively and efficiently to meet customer needs and increase public satisfaction with all public services in Halton.

Each Strategic Partnership has responsibility for all aspects of performance management within their theme and ensures proper oversight, scrutiny and accountability of all activities that take place under the auspices of the Partnership and this Sustainable Community Strategy.

How will we make it happen in Halton?

The Halton Strategic Partnership Board is responsible for delivering this Sustainable Community Strategy and in doing so is committed to the following:

Community focus, participation and engagement

The Partnership also works to improve the quality of life at a neighbourhood level. It does this by working through the seven geographical Area Forums established by the Council and supported by the partners. Each Area Forum has its own budget to help deliver improvements in their local area and all projects are expected to support one or more of the five priorities for Halton outlined in this Strategy.

Halton already has many front line services organised on a neighbourhood basis. Community Support Officers, policing, community development workers, housing management, street-scene teams and youth workers are organised on an area basis. Children's Centres will also co-ordinate service delivery at a local level. Residents, businesses and visitors are our primary focus in improving the way we deliver our services. We are committed to putting our community first in what we do and how and when we do it and in providing value for money when delivering services.

Improvement in the quality of life enjoyed by local people can only come about if the community is involved in making it happen. Solutions to problems are often dependent on local knowledge. The experiences of local residents and service users can help inform future service development. We will continue to engage with local people and help them to get involved in decision-making. We will also keep our communities informed about what we are doing and will continue to develop new and innovative ways to be more accountable to communities through consultation and open and transparent decision-making processes.

The Partnership is committed to an inclusive approach to community engagement through its strategy and network arrangements. Full details are available on the Partnership website www.haltonpartnership.net

Narrowing the gap

Halton overall offers a high quality of life but, as in other similar boroughs, the quality of life varies across the area from one neighbourhood to the next. The more deprived areas of the borough often suffer from poorer health, higher unemployment and lower educational attainment. Our aim is to create successful neighbourhoods, where people are safe, have good housing, a good quality environment, with access to good schools, services and economic opportunities and have strong and healthy communities. We will work together to improve all neighbourhoods within Halton, but we will particularly target the most deprived areas, to reduce the gap in the quality of life, health, prosperity and wellbeing between those neighbourhoods and the rest of the borough.

Regional Context

We recognise that Halton is not insular or isolated. Halton can only succeed as part of a thriving and successful Liverpool City Region and wider North West. This Sustainable Community Strategy builds upon the wider strategic developments which are taking place in the North West. Partners from Halton play a key role in shaping sub-regional and national plans and arrangements. This connectivity – both strategically and operationally - is an important part of the Halton approach.

Managing Risk

The partnership has adopted a Risk Management Strategy and has a Strategic Risk Register in place which sets out the risk management objectives, the role and responsibilities for risk management of the Board and individual Specialist Strategic Partnerships. The Partnership's risks can be broadly categorised as either "strategic" or "operational". Strategic risks cover those threats or opportunities which could impact upon the achievement of medium and long-term goals. For each identified risk, plans are in place to minimise the effects.

Resources

All the objectives and targets outlined here are achievable. How well and how quickly this happens depends crucially on the availability of resources and how smartly they are used. That means money, people, physical resources, proper intelligence and information, allied with the strength of will to use them in the best way.

Money

The organisations that make up the Partnership already spend hundreds of millions of pounds of public money each year in Halton. Much of this goes to maintain essential services like health care, policing, schools, transport and waste collection that we tend to take for granted. The way money is spent on these statutory services – 'mainstream budgets' – must continue to be focused on the achievement of the specific objectives and improvement targets within this Strategy. The Sustainable Community Strategy provides a tool to help partners focus their budgets.

The Strategy also provides a framework to help identify and secure additional funding for the borough from a variety of sources. It sets out shared policy objectives along with clear aims and targets across the five agreed key themes. This gives a framework in which partners can make budgetary decisions that reflect Halton's priorities.

People & Assets

Allied to cash, the efforts, skills and determination of people living and working in the borough are key to success. This applies to individuals interested or already active in helping their local community as well as to those who work in public, voluntary and other organisations serving Halton. We need to boost skills and knowledge and stimulate confidence and motivation that will strengthen the borough's capacity to help itself. We must ensure that we are organised and co-operate in ways that are effective and deliver real benefits.

Also, we need to provide better ways for people to work collaboratively and across organisational boundaries to increase their own job satisfaction and their impact on the challenges they deal with.

Most of the steps we need to take in moving Halton forward will involve some use of land, buildings, equipment and materials. Hundreds of millions of pounds are currently invested in publicly owned physical resources of various kinds within the borough. We need to make optimum use of these assets, cutting out any unnecessary duplication and ensuring they are well adapted to local requirements.

In particular we have to respond to the desire of people to access a range of services through a single portal. The advent of Halton Direct Link, Health Care Resource Centres, extended schools and Children's Centres provide models of exemplary service delivery which are highly valued by local people. Increasingly, partners will need to look at much greater efforts towards co-location and joint use of facilities. Not only is this more cost efficient, but it gives partners a proper customer focus.

Data and Intelligence

Without proper information, and making it easily accessible to people, we are working in the dark in trying to bring about improvement in Halton. This covers information about local needs and conditions, and what people think is most important for their communities. It is about the information we need to understand what is likely to work well in achieving our targets for Halton. It's about keeping people – local people and partner organisations – in the picture about the progress we are making together. The Partnership has made a big commitment to improving the way information is gathered, used and shared. Of particular note are:

A) A data 'Observatory' that holds key statistical information on all aspects of living conditions in Halton. The Observatory provides data at a variety of spatial levels – super output area, ward, neighbourhood and district level – and allow for comparison with our neighbours and regional and national averages. It will greatly help people to understand the geography and nature of disadvantage in Halton.

B) The Partnership has a database of consultation and community engagement in Halton. This will enable people to access a rich source of attitudinal data on a range of issues. It will also help people to plan and execute better community engagement in the borough.

C) The Partnership website provides an easy to access source of material on all aspects of the Halton Strategic Partnership's work throughout the borough. The site covers the full range of activities from events and award ceremonies to new policy changes. There are dedicated sections for each of the priority areas that outline the aims and objectives plus provide access for meeting minutes. There is also a newly added policy section, developed to keep partners up to date with any changes.

What is Halton Like?

Halton is a largely urban area of 118,700 people (2009 population estimate). Its two biggest settlements are Widnes and Runcorn that face each other across the River Mersey, 10 miles upstream from Liverpool. The population of Halton was in decline for over a decade, but has recently started to increase. This in part is due to a concerted effort to build new houses, particularly larger executive homes in Sandymoor (SE Runcorn) and Upton Rocks (NE Widnes) to try to stem population decline, to provide a more balanced housing stock, and retain wealth in the community. It is also in part due to increased inward migration. The population is projected to grow to 122,900 in 2023.

The number of jobs in the borough is largely the same as it was 10 years ago but the proportion employed in manufacturing has fallen and the reliance on a small number of large employers is beginning to be reduced. The wealth of the Borough has improved overall during the last 10 years as illustrated by rising numbers of detached houses, rising car ownership, increases in professional and managerial households in parts of the borough. There are currently approximately 52,000 employee jobs in Halton, of which 37,900 are full time.

Halton shares many of the social and economic problems more associated with its urban neighbours on Merseyside. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for 2007 is one of the most comprehensive sources of deprivation indicators, as some 37 different indicators are used. It shows for example that overall, Halton is ranked 30th nationally (a ranking of 1 indicates that an area is the most deprived), which is third highest on Merseyside, behind Knowsley and Liverpool, and 10th highest in the North West, although this is an improvement on being fifth highest in 2004). Other authorities, St Helens (47th), Wirral (60th) and Sefton (83rd), are all less deprived compared to Halton.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation for 2007 suggests that deprivation has improved in the borough, since ranking 21st in 2004 there has been a decrease in 2007 to the 30th most deprived Authority in England. The proportion of Halton's population in the top category (i.e. the top 20% of super output areas) has also decreased from 50% in 2004 to 47% in 2007. However, there is still room for improvement. Halton's concentration of deprivation has improved from 20th worst in England in 2004 to 27th in 2007. Concentration is a key way of identifying hot spots of deprivation within an area. Of England's 975 'Super Output Areas', which form the top 3% most deprived areas within England, eight are situated in Halton. The most deprived neighbourhood in Halton is ranked 306th out of 32,482 and is situated in Runcorn. Much has been done but clearly there is still much to do.

Since 2000, a range of research has been carried out by partners, which has highlighted key challenges and opportunities facing Halton. This research tells us that Halton is:

- an area where over 70% of people are satisfied with their local area as a place to live

- an area whose population is projected to grow by 4% (2008-2026), with a large increase in the older population
- tackling deprivation, however it still remains one of the most deprived areas in the North West with unemployment rates higher than the North West and National rates
- an area where health issues are still evident with life expectancy lower than the North West and England averages
- an area with plenty of open space; 12 areas within Halton have been designated with Green Flag awards
- improving it's GCSE results and reducing the number of 16 to 18 year olds Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).
- an area with a diverse and prospering economy, with increasing average incomes for residents, improvement in skills and with higher rates of employment in the manufacturing sector
- an accessible and convenient place to live and work
- an area which provides a functional base for the community
- an area offering many innovation and development opportunities to improve quality of life

More detailed information on these issues can be found in the [State of the Borough Report](#)

What you told us

In 2006 and 2008 the Council commissioned a Place Survey that asked Halton residents about the quality of life in the borough. Building on the 2008 Place Survey, the partnership commissioned a workshop to enhance the Partnership understanding of the results of the Place Survey, but using qualitative research to achieve a greater depth of understanding and provide an insight into what needs to change to improve Halton, the Area. This work is underpinned by the continued Halton2000 (Halton's citizens panel) surveys and the extensive ongoing consultation and engagement activities across the borough. This has been taken into account when developing Halton's vision for our third Sustainable Community Strategy.


Respondents told us that generally the factors they felt to be most important in making their local area a good place to live are:

- Low levels of crime
- Clean streets
- Health services

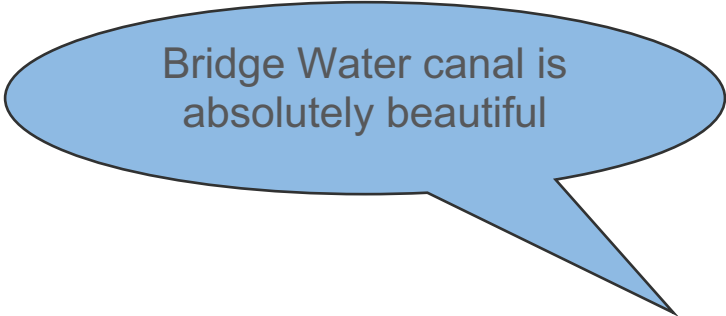
Research in 2009 showed that the following were the best things about living in Halton.

- The People – neighbours, family and friends
- Parks
- Green/leafy, well landscaped, quiet
- History
- Schools
- Shopping
- Children's Facilities
- Transport – local buses/links to other parts of country

(Source Ipsos Mori 2009)



Phoenix Park is
absolutely fantastic

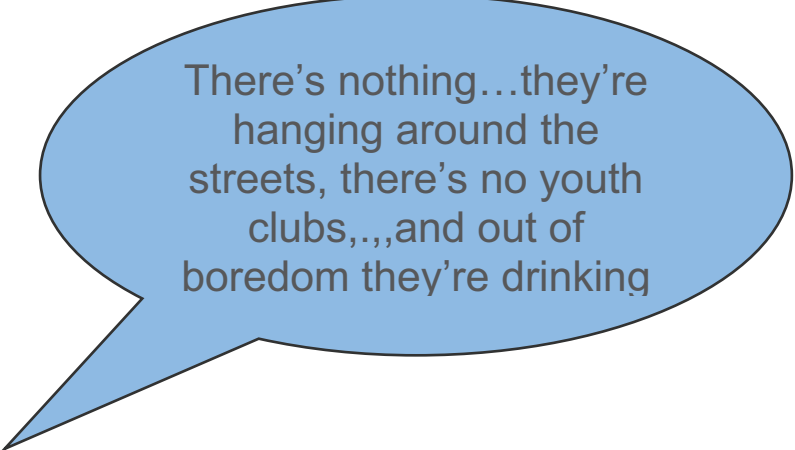


Bridge Water canal is
absolutely beautiful


Research in 2009 showed that the bad things about living in Halton for our residents include:

- Lack of things for young people to do (mostly teenagers, but also children)
- Crime and ASB - drugs, lack of respect, parenting skills, unruly youths, lack of policing
- Job prospects
- Environment (pollution, traffic, cleanliness, lighting)
- Community facilities in general – centres, shops
- Lack of facilities inc shops in Runcorn vs Widnes (investment focused in Widnes)
- Buses
- Health services – no hospital, length of time for GP appt, lack of dentists
- Local schools
- Lack of influence in local decision making
- Lack of visible policing
- Housing landlord issues

(Source Ipsos Mori 2009)



There's nothing...they're hanging around the streets, there's no youth clubs,,,and out of boredom they're drinking



You can't get a doctor's appointment unless you're really dvina

You Said, We Did

In response to the issues that have been raised in consultation with residents in Halton, we have worked in partnership to deliver improvements. Examples for each priority include:

A Healthy Halton

You said – You can't get a doctors appointment and there are no hospital A&E facilities

We did – Developing Planned Health Services and Developing Urgent Care Services now form an integral part of the PCTs Commissioning Strategic Plan for Halton and St. Helens. The PCT and partners have held a number of community events to help them to understand the detail underpinning these issues.

Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

You said – We need more job prospects

We did – The 3MG 528,000 sq ft chilled distribution facility is now fully operational - and is the centre piece of the 44 acre 3MG development. Of the 377 new jobs created at the new 3MG Tesco distribution centre in Widnes, 75 per cent went to Halton residents. Thirty eight percent of the new starters from the Halton area were previously unemployed and 111 of the new starters were Halton People into Jobs clients.

A Safer Halton

You said – More needs to be done to tackle anti-social behaviour

We did - RESPECT weeks – These campaigns aim to develop and build a stronger and more co-ordinated approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and associated environmental problems within communities where the perception of crime and ant-social behaviour is highest. The programme brings together a wide variety of agencies and organisations who, with the help of local residents, tackled a host of crime and environmental issues. They also look at ways to bring the community closer together with sporting and healthier lifestyle activities for both young and older people alike. The Respect programme has provided a focus for partners to tackle problems such as crime and anti-social behaviour, improving job training opportunities and reducing litter and fly tipping. The Respect weeks of action have pulled together activities linked to crime reduction and environmental improvements; activities for children and young people; opportunities for employment, education and training; and health and older people's projects. Ultimately, Respect Weeks of Action engage local people with local partners and deliver real results on the ground to enable some of our most deprived communities to thrive.

Children & Young People in Halton

You said – There is a lack of things for young people to do

We did – £2.5 million secured from the Big Lottery Fund has helped to transform the former Kingsway Health Centre, a listed building, into a place where young people can have fun and chill out in a safe environment. The centre, designed and named by young people - a suggested name is 'The Buzz' - involves a total investment of £3 million. The project has been developed by young people, Halton Borough Council, the Youth Service and Connexions, with partners including the primary care trust, Halton Voluntary Action and the Co-operative.

Other features include internet facilities, space for advice and support on issues relevant to their needs, access to a gym, and gardens designed to link outer and inner areas. Services will be available on site which will promote volunteering, education, employment and training, and good teenage health.

Environment and Regeneration in Halton

You said – There is a lack of facilities, including shops

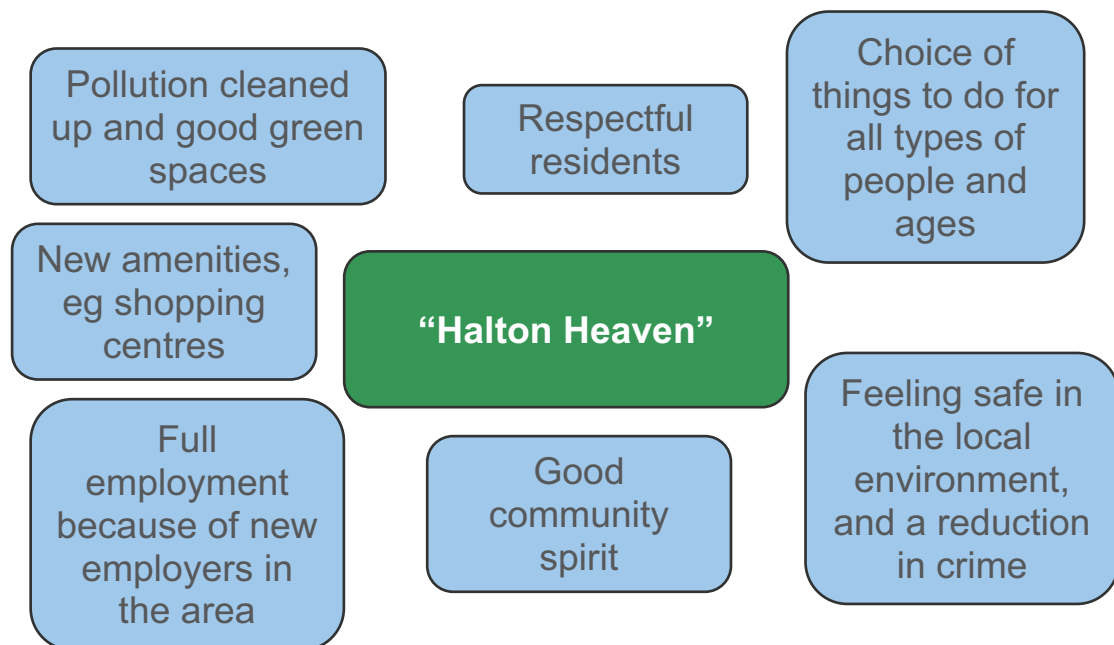
We did – The opening of Phase 1 of the Widnes Shopping Park now provides the diversity of shopping offer that residents in the borough have desired for a long time. The 250,000 ft² development opened at Easter 2010 and more development is yet to follow. Retailers have witnessed a significant growth in business, surpassing their original expectations

What sort of place do we want Halton to be?

Vision

Halton will be a thriving and vibrant borough where people can learn and develop their skills, enjoy a good quality life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment; the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential; greater wealth and equality; sustained by a thriving business community; and within safer, stronger and more attractive neighbourhoods.

In 2009, you told us that you had the following aspirations for Halton



(Source Ipsos Mori 2009)

A Healthy Halton

Aim

To create a healthier community and work together to promote well being and a positive experience of life with good health, not simply an absence of disease, and offer opportunities for people to take responsibility for their health with the necessary support available.

Objectives

- To understand fully the causes of ill health in Halton and act together to improve the overall health and well-being of local people
- To lay firm foundations for a healthy start in life and support those most in need in the community by increasing community engagement in health issues and promoting autonomy
- To reduce the burden of disease and preventable causes of death in Halton by reducing smoking levels, alcohol consumption and by increasing physical activity, improving diet and the early detection and treatment of disease
- To respond to the needs of an ageing population improving their quality of life and thus enabling them to lead longer, active and more fulfilled lives.
- To remove barriers that disable people and contribute to poor health by working across partnerships to address the wider determinants of health such as unemployment, education and skills, housing, crime and environment

What will we do to achieve these objectives?

- Reduce health inequalities
- Concentrate on the areas in Halton with the worst health outcomes. (*The target will be to reduce early deaths.*)
- Reduce harm caused by alcohol and tobacco
- Halt the rising trend of obesity
- Improve mental health
- Promote independence of older people and vulnerable groups
- Increase community engagement in health issues and promote autonomy
- Increase physical activity, improve diet and early detection and treatment of disease
- Address the wider determinants of health such as unemployment, education and skills, housing, crime and environment.
- Safety, Equality and Efficiency: Planned and Urgent Care
- Reduce death rates, focussing on premature deaths by cancer and circulatory disease

Key Achievements

- Health statistics for 2009 indicate that the health inequalities gap between Halton and the other part of the PCT footprint, St. Helens is closing. In 2006 the gap in female mortality between Halton and St. Helens was 19.9%, in 2009 it was 8.6%. In 2006 the gap for males was 7% and in 2009 it was 4.5%.
- Over the past last ten years there has been a fall in death rates from all causes and in early deaths from cancer and from heart disease and stroke. Official verified death rates for 1998 to 2007 show Halton well above the England average.
- Halton has improved its smoking quit rate year on year for the past 5 years. Halton and St. Helens now has the 4th highest quit rate in the North West at 1104.74 per 100,000.

Two examples of the successes gained through working in partnership around the health priority are outlined below:

Health Checks Plus Programme

On the 1st October 2009 the Health Checks Plus Scheme was launched. This scheme is part of a five year delivery plan that will see the whole adult population of Halton and St. Helens PCT (approximately 223,000 people aged 20 years and over) having a Health Checks Plus assessment on a five year basis.

This scheme complements the national offer of “Free NHS Health Checks” with the “plus” element including trigger questions related to the early detection of other major illnesses such as cancer and depression. The assessment also takes the opportunity to ask questions related to identifying any social/ housing or carers’ needs.

87% of GP practices have committed to delivering this scheme for their practice population and throughout 2010/11 we will commission additional capacity across a variety of community settings to ensure we are reaching and offering assessments to those whom would benefit the most. These locations could include:

- Community health service clinics
- Pharmacies
- Mobile units
- Acute Trusts (under the Health Promoting Hospitals banner).

Smoking

Smoking has a major impact on cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (bronchitis and emphysema) and cardiovascular disease.

Halton has improved its smoking quit rate year on year for the past 5 years. Halton and St Helens now has the 4th highest quit rate in the North west at

1104.74 per 100,000. Halton and St Helens has stretched their smoking target for next year and will have the second highest target in the North West.

- Stop smoking advisors now work in hospitals, pharmacies and 13 GP Practices in Halton.
- Pharmacists are incentivised to deliver stop smoking advice and have quitters.
- The stop smoking rate for pregnant women has improved this year with 22.5% staying quit at time of delivery in the first 2 quarters of 2009/10 compared to 25.5% in 2008/9.
- Advice and support on smoke free homes is given to pregnant women and significant others in the lives of pregnant smokers.
- Midwives have baby clear monitors and routinely test all babies in the womb for raised carbon monoxide levels due to a smoky atmosphere and then offer advice on smokefree homes.
- There is a 100% compliance with smoke free public places enforcement.
- The National Support Team for Tobacco Control recognised robust partnership working around tobacco control in Halton and St Helens.
- Additional funding has gone into tobacco control for 2010/11 from the PCT.

Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Aim:

To create an economically prosperous borough that encourages investment, enterprise and business growth, and improves the opportunities for learning and development together with the skills and employment prospects of both residents and workforce so that they are able to feel included socially and financially.

Objectives

- To develop a strong, diverse, competitive and sustainable knowledge-based local economy.
- To foster a culture of enterprise and entrepreneurship and make Halton an ideal place to start and grow economic activity
- To develop a culture where learning is valued and raise skill levels throughout the adult population and in the local workforce
- To promote and increase the employability of local people and remove any barriers to employment to get more people into work
- To maximise an individual's potential to increase and manage their income, including access to appropriate, supportive advice services.

What we will do to achieve these objectives?

- Develop and encourage investment in new and growing sectors of Halton's economy
- Strengthen local enterprise and business support
- Promote and market Halton as a place to do business
- Targeted investment in skills, a vibrant employment market and creating a strong culture of entrepreneurship.
- Ensure that no area of Halton has unemployment at more than 20% above the borough average
- Reduce the number of adults of working age claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods
- Encourage digital inclusion and life skills
- Tackle worklessness through help and support to reduce welfare dependency
- Tackle the low wage economy and financial exclusion
- Encourage the growth of new businesses and improve business survival
- Improve the borough's skill base, including vocational and managerial qualifications.
- Support for young people to achieve through education, employment or training

Key Achievements

- Halton's unemployment rate fell at twice the rate as that for the England and the north west between August 2009 and August 2010.
- The proportion of Halton's working age population qualified to at least Level 2 or higher increased from 60% to over 68% between 2007 and 2009, exceeding the target set.
- Halton's not in education, employment or training (NEET) figures have fallen from 13.2% in 2008 to 9.15% in 2010.

Examples of the successes gained through working in partnership around the Employment, Learning & Skills priority are outlined below:

Tesco 3MG Pre-employment skills and recruitment programme

The 528,000 sq ft chilled distribution facility is now fully operational - and is the centre piece of the 44 acre 3MG development. Of the 377 new jobs created at the new 3MG Tesco distribution centre in Widnes, 75 per cent were taken by Halton residents. Thirty eight percent of the new starters from the Halton area were previously unemployed and 111 of the new starters were Halton People into Jobs clients.

Managers at Tesco praised the quality of candidates from Halton. More than 4,000 people applied for the jobs with almost 1,300 interviews offered. The recruitment process was supported by the Halton Employment Partnership who successfully worked with Tesco during the recruitment process to enable local people to get local jobs.

The Halton Employment Partnership is supported by Halton Strategic Partnership and partners include Halton Borough Council, Job Centre Plus, Riverside College, Sector Skills Councils and The Skills Funding Agency.

Halton Employment Partnership organised 31 pre-recruitment sessions during the project to support local people into work. The sessions included tips on making job applications and preparing for interviews. Tesco Human Resources staff set up a recruitment centre at the Stobart Stadium, Halton, with the help of Halton Borough Council and Halton Employment Partnership. Halton Employment Partnership staff then spent a number of weeks at the Stadium supporting the Tesco interview process while other staff organised the interview schedules.

Halton Employment Partnership also recently helped international firm Norbert Dentressangle who have also recently set up a recycling centre on 3MG, to recruit 12 members of staff.

Help for Halton's young people Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET).

In 2008/09 the proportion Halton's young people that were not in education, employment or training in Halton stood at 13.2%. Since then, a concerted programme of innovative and focused work by a range of partners in Halton has

seen the figure reduced to 10.3%. An example of the work done is that by Riverside College working closely with the Connexions Service to provide access to a range of vocational programmes for NEET young people in Halton. Examples of the wide range of vocational opportunities include business administration, health & social care, bricklaying, painting and decorating, hospitality and catering.

To encourage young people to engage and sustain their participation in the programme, coaching and mentoring services are offered alongside the vocational element of the programme delivered by the college.

The Enterprising Halton Programme.

Launched in April 2007 the Enterprising Halton Programme has provided bespoke advice, support and start-up grants for local residents setting-up their new businesses in the borough. Since its start the programme has helped 379 new business start-ups in Halton, which in turn have created 111 new jobs in addition to the business owners. Since April 2009 just over 50% of businesses set-up have been in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods of the borough. The programme is now recognised as best practice across the region and elements of it have been adopted elsewhere in several places.

A Safer Halton

Aim

To ensure pleasant, safe and secure neighbourhood environments, with attractive, safe surroundings, good quality local amenities, and the ability of people to enjoy life where they live.

Objectives

- To investigate and tackle the underlying causes of crime and disorder and respond effectively to public concern by reducing crime levels, with a particular focus on reducing the levels of crime that disproportionately affect some of the more deprived areas.
- To tackle alcohol and drug/substance misuse problems, and the resulting harm that is caused to communities, families and individuals
- To tackle the problem of domestic abuse in all its forms, supporting the victims and their families and taking enforcement action against perpetrators.
- To safeguard adults who are more vulnerable within the community to physical, financial, sexual and emotional abuse and vulnerable children who are often part of families where there are drug and alcohol problems or where relationships are abusive or violent
- To consult and engage with communities to identify problems and put in place effective measures to address them, with a particular focus on promoting community cohesion and adopting a zero tolerance to all forms of hate crime within Halton, so that no-one is unfairly victimised
- We will work together to reduce fear of crime and increase public confidence in the police, council and other agencies to respond to reports of crime and anti social behaviour and tackle any potential tensions within communities, in particular those that may lead to extremist activity.

What will we do to achieve these objectives?

We will

- tackle alcohol related crime and anti social behaviour through greater enforcement activity, focused on the night time economy and in other problem areas
- tackle drug abuse and drug related crime, through provision of effective treatment services and interventions for users and taking appropriate enforcement action. Collaborative working through Ashley House is central to success
- deliver a wider integrated offender management programme to repeat offenders. This will involve a partnership approach to offer support to perpetrators, such as access to drug and alcohol treatment services to help them to change their behaviour. Where this approach fails we will take appropriate enforcement action.
- tackle serious acquisitive crime, including burglary, personal and business robbery and vehicle crime with a focus on bringing offenders to

justice, targeting prolific offenders, providing accessible crime prevention advice, responding to victims, promoting 'Crimestoppers', disrupting the stolen goods market and delivering 'Smartwater' property marking neighbourhoods within those high risk communities.

- tackle public perceptions of drug dealing in the borough through undertaking a Mapping exercise to show where drug perceptions are out of line with actual drug-related activity and making the public aware of police activity to tackle drugs
- tackle domestic abuse within Halton, through support to the victim and their families and taking appropriate action to deal with offenders. In particular we need to identify interventions that work to address repeat offenders where current approaches are not working.
- safeguard adults, identify abuse early and work together to put in place effective measures to address these
- safeguard vulnerable children, in particular those that come from families where there is a history of domestic abuse or drug and alcohol problems. Adopt a 'think family' approach, to ensure that we tackle the underlying causes and not just address the problem.
- improve local conditions and encourage people to get involved to help shape what happens in their local area via the continued provision of Locality Area Forums, Police Community Action Meetings (CAMs), Homewatch Schemes and 'Face the People' Sessions.
- support our diverse community where all residents are able to live without fear of abuse or hate crime

Key Achievements

In 2010, we saw the following reductions in crime compared to the same time period in 2008

- Vehicle crime has reduced by 29% and criminal damage by 34%
- Overall crime reduction of 16% in Halton, (1875 fewer victims of crime)
- Domestic burglary down 16%
- Motor vehicle theft down 23%
- 20% reduction in the number of criminal damage reported incidents
- 27% reduction in the re-offending rate of our most prolific and priority offenders
- 14% improvement in the perception of anti social behaviour from the Places Survey carried out in 2009 compared to the 2007 survey results.

Examples of the successes gained through working in partnership around the Safer Halton priority are outlined below:

Operation StaySafe

This has been successfully delivered each month within Halton since May 2009. The project has focussed primarily on Children and Young people whose whereabouts and behaviour has placed them at risk of significant harm.

Particularly those consuming alcohol and those involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. Numerous young people have been taken to a place of safety and referred on to partnership agencies such as alcohol and drug programmes

for support. This approach has been instrumental in preventing repeat behavioural patterns by addressing the root cause of their behaviour through alcohol and drug programmes and parenting programmes to help parents and carers support young people more effectively. The project has recorded large reductions in Police calls for service and reduced hospital admissions. In 2009/10, 58 young people were brought to a place of safety, 1662 young people were spoken to and 444 quantities of alcohol were seized.

Burglary Days of Action

This project started in a bid to help local residents in Halton protect their homes from burglary by providing advice on how to keep their homes safe and by handing out Smartwater property marking kits. The aim of the Burglary Days of Action is to engage directly with those communities that are most at risk of becoming victims of burglary, bringing the services of the Community Safety Team to those areas identified as being most in need of support. We provide targeted crime reduction and fire safety advice and in doing so raise the profile of the Safer Halton Partnership providing reassurance to local communities and reduce the fear of becoming a victim of crime and or anti-social behaviour. The Community Safety Team provides an enhanced service to victims of burglary according to their needs within the borough of Halton compared to other areas within Cheshire. The Burglary Day of Action is supported by targeted campaign material to raise community awareness of the issues associated with burglary, doorstep crime and fire safety identified hotspot locations across Runcorn and Widnes.

Justice seen Justice Done

This is a government programme which is about opening up the criminal justice service and making it more transparent to the public. There are a number of elements to this work including:-

- Sentencing Outcomes - Court results from the Simple Speedy Summary Courts are published on a monthly basis to ensure that the public are aware that offenders are punished for their behaviour. The results focus on the cases that have a high community impact ie, drink driving, drugs, criminal damage, shoplifting etc.
- Community Payback - Offenders now wear high visibility orange jackets and the community have the opportunity to have a say on what work offenders do in their area.
- Community Cashback - the community were given the chance to have a say on how seized assets from criminal area spent in their community. 2 projects in Halton have been funded via this scheme.
- Community Crime Fighters - Active community members have been trained and given information about the standards they should expect from the criminal justice service.

Children & Young People in Halton

Aim:

Halton's ambition is to build stronger, safer communities which are able to support the development and learning of children and young people so they grow up feeling safe, secure, happy and healthy, and are ready to be Halton's present and Halton's future

Objectives

- Every Young Person is successful when they leave school
- Children and young people will do well whatever their needs and wherever they live
- Children and young people are physically, emotionally and sexually healthy.
- Children and young people will feel safe at home, in school and in their communities

- See the [Children's and Young Peoples Plan](#) for more detail.

What will we do to achieve these objectives?

- Promote emotional health of children and young people
- Promote positive activities for young people
- Support the teenage pregnancy strategy
- Support the childhood obesity strategy
- Support for young people to achieve through education, employment or training
- Remove socio-economic barriers to early development
- Continue to improve educational attainment
- Reduce child poverty
- Encourage a healthy weight for children
- Create opportunities / facilities / amenities for children and young people
- Ensure that low cost transport options are available to allow children and young people to access the activities that matter to them.

Key Achievements

- The proportion of young people attaining 5 A*-C GCSEs rose by 17 percentage points between 2006 and 2010. (based on provisional results)
- Halton's not in education, employment or training (NEET) figures have fallen from 13.2% in 2008 to 9.15% in 2010.
- Children and young people's satisfaction with local parks and play areas has risen from 42% in 2008 to 52% in 2010.

Examples of the successes gained through working in partnership around the children and young people priority are outlined below:

Partnership Working Between Job Centre Plus and Children's Centres in Halton.

As a result of the rise in unemployment and estates issues, a service is now available offering access to lone parent advisors from Job Centre Plus at all Halton's Children's Centres. Each Centre has community development workers working alongside the Job Centre Plus advisers for at least half of each day and this has made a huge difference to advisers being able to offer a full package of support around the family. Some of the benefits arising from this partnership include:

- Improved joint working between organisations to the benefit of families as a whole
- Parental engagement – Community Development Workers are informing and supporting Job Centre Plus advice sessions
- Effective fast track referrals to Halton People Into Jobs, Citizen's Advice Bureau, Adult Learning and Job Centre Plus funded training
- A whole support network 'on site' to work with families in a family friendly environment

Prince's Trust in the local community:

The Halton 43 Prince's Trust team worked in partnership with Halton Borough Council to renovate the Park Family Centre in Castlefields, Runcorn. They decided to take on this challenge to support their local community and develop new skills. The team of 10 young people aged between 16 and 25 raised money themselves and were supported through neighbourhood management. The Park Family Centre was officially re-opened in February and was attended by members of the Fire Authority, local councillors, the staff from Halton Brook Children's Centre, Castlefields residents and friends and family of the team members. All team members gave a speech and were presented with a certificate in recognition of their achievements. The young people's hard work and dedication has now paid off because they have now been awarded an Outstanding Achievement Award for the best community project in Halton.

Child Safety Programme

This Programme was developed as a result of the review of child deaths in Halton. These reviews identified a number of preventable factors that caused the deaths of babies and young children through injury, accidents or suffocation following sleeping with the baby. The programme consists of multi agency training for front line staff to highlight the potential hazards and explore how agencies could work more effectively together. A Child Safety directory has also been developed, along with a resource pack and pocket guide for front line workers from a range of agencies, which was informed by social marketing research. The directory and pocket guide have been well received and are being used to improve safety for young children.

Environment and Regeneration in Halton

Aim:

To transform the urban fabric and infrastructure, to develop exciting places and spaces and to create a vibrant and accessible borough that makes Halton a place where people are proud to live and see a promising future for themselves and their families.

Objectives:

- Diversify Halton's economy achieving high standards of sustainability, tackling climate change, minimising waste generation and maximising reuse, recycling, composting and energy recovery.
- Work with partners to provide a well connected, sustainable and accessible borough, including the provision of the Mersey Gateway. Ensuring a variety of safe efficient travel and infrastructure options for people, goods, communications and freight.
- Conserve, manage and enhance Halton's physical and natural assets in order to maximise community and other benefits by improving environmental quality.
- Promote and enhance the built environment to create high quality, commercial areas that meet the needs of the local population and business community, and positively contribute to the image of the borough.

Provide sustainable, good quality, affordable and adaptable residential accommodation to meet the needs of all sections of society

What we will do to achieve these objectives:

- Work with partners and the local community to support The Mersey Gateway scheme to fully realise its benefits;
- Improve the retail offer and the environment within town centres to attract inward investment and increase footfall;
- Upgrade and fully utilise the borough's rail, road, commercial waterways, power and digital infrastructure in order to maximise the potential for economic development;
- Adapt to climate change;
- Reduce municipal landfill to bring it in line with regional and national rates;
- Improve household recycling rates to bring it in line with regional and national rates;
- Improve public satisfaction with litter & refuse and doorstep recycling
- Continue to reduce CO₂ emissions within the borough, including from industry and road transport;
- Develop more affordable and decent housing, with a special focus on the need for extra care housing

- Improve public transport information and local bus services
- Maintain a hierarchy of Parks and open spaces;
- Long-term priorities include the development or regeneration of:
 - Sandymoor
 - Daresbury
 - Windmill Hill
 - Castlefields
 - Canal Quarter
 - Widnes Waterfront
 - West Bank
 - 3MG
 - Runcorn Docks

Key Achievements

- Halton has achieved 12 Green Flag awarded Parks.
- Phase 1 of the 250,000 ft² Widnes Shopping Park development opened at Easter 2010. Retailers have witnessed a significant growth in business, surpassing their original expectations and residents now have greater diversity of shopping offer

Examples of the successes gained through working in partnership around the Regeneration & the Quality of Halton's Environment priority are outlined below:

Wild About Halton

The 'Wild About Halton' project ran from 2002 – 2009, reconnecting people with nature. Working with schools and community groups through a variety of mediums including the internet, the project detailed the environmental role of local nature reserves in Halton. Emphasis was placed on developing an educational resource centred on the school curriculum. This enabled Community involvement in the management of the reserves.

The project has seen the development facilities to enable people to view highlights from the local nature reserves.

The Castlefields Programme

In 2001, a Partnership was formed to address the many problems of Castlefields. A Masterplan for the area was approved which combined more than 50 individual projects ranging from the demolition of 800 ugly deck-access flats to be replaced with 540 smart new residences of mixed tenure; to the creation of the award-winning Phoenix Park with its diverse leisure facilities and Pavilion; from extensive environmental improvements to the development of a new 'state of the art' local centre with health facilities. This regeneration programme has now become a beacon of achievement for its ability to transform what was once classed as an unpopular and undesirable place into an environment where people are proud and happy to live. Many of Castlefields' problems have now been addressed. The development programme continues to be driven by the strong commitment of the Partnership, with residents being consulted along the way to ensure the right type and quality of accommodation is built and that access and safety initiatives have been put in place. The programme has attracted a number of national awards,

including 'RENEW Northwest Exemplar Learning Programme' and 'Chartered Institute of Housing: Excellence in Delivering Regeneration Award.

Recycling

In recent years changes in waste management practices have seen improvements in recycling services to local communities. Recycling and composting of household waste has now reached a total of 30% (in 2009/10) with the help of Halton residents. A 3 year Waste Action Plan was drafted which set out plans for Halton's waste collection infrastructure required to deliver the aims of Halton's Municipal Waste Management Strategy, based on an extension of kerbside collection services for garden waste and multi materials recycling.

Following the approval of the Plan, a pilot scheme introduced the kerbside collection of plastics, cans, paper, card and glass to approximately 6,000 households in the borough. The results were to be used to inform future decisions on the extension of the service to other areas of the borough. Following the successful pilot, extensions to the Kerbside Multi-Material Recycling Scheme took place in 2008/09 and 2009/10. The garden waste collection service has also been extended.

In 2009/10 the delivery of a pilot scheme to reward residents for recycling received approval. The scheme, administered by RecycleBank, commenced in October 2009 and was implemented to 10,000 properties. Halton Borough Council became the first authority to apply an incentive scheme to an existing collection service, and the second in the country to launch the scheme. Following a successful pilot the 'rewards for recycling' scheme was rolled out to all areas of the borough from the summer of 2010. Figures have shown that in areas where the opt in reward scheme has been introduced, recycling has increased.

Halton's two Household Waste Recycling Centres are now operated under a Merseyside and Halton partnership contract and further improvements in site facilities are planned, for example the sites are now Designated Collection Facilities for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE).

So what are the challenges?

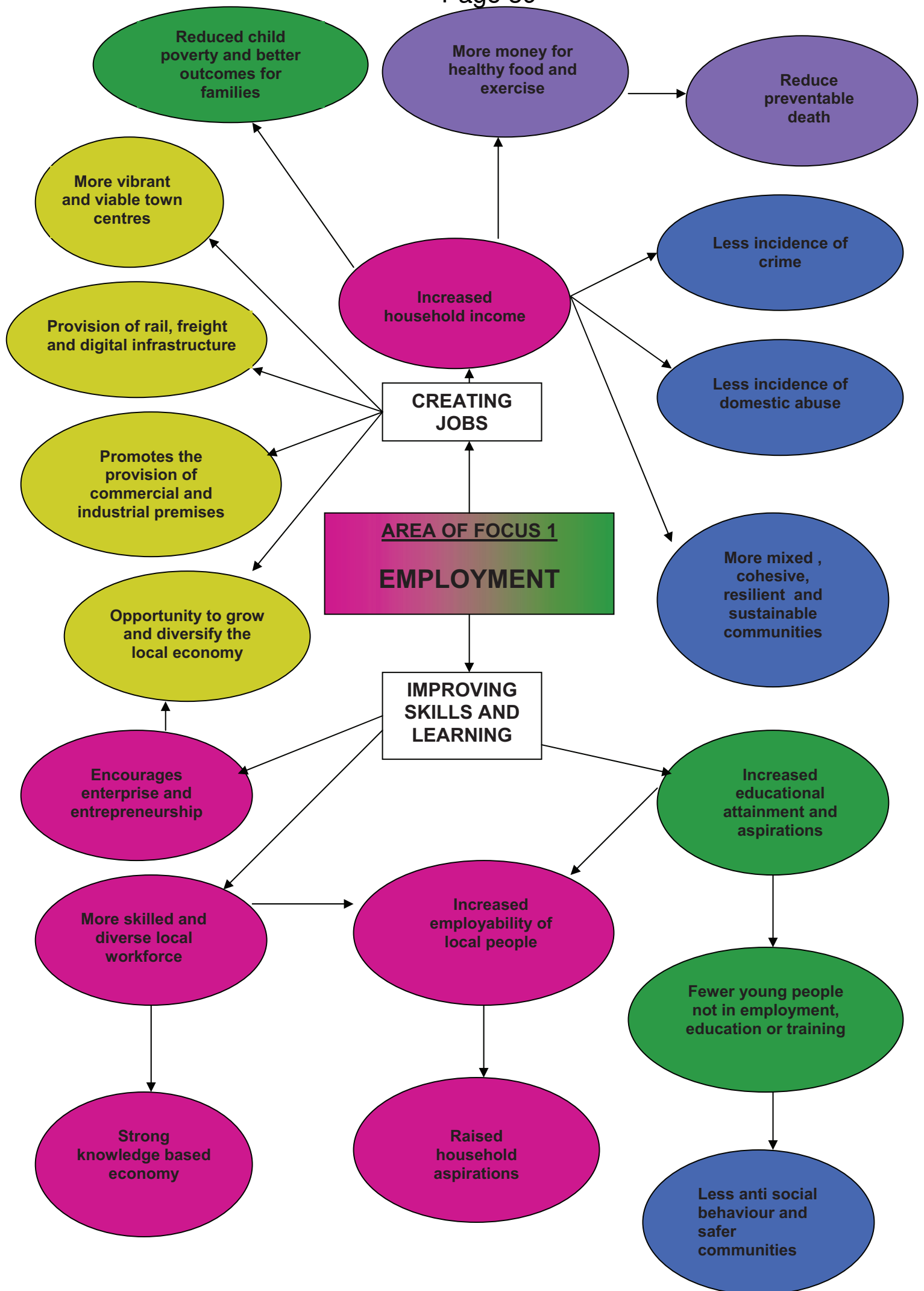
Analysis of consultation carried out with residents and the collation of data and information has helped to guide the selection of Halton's priorities. These long-term priorities can best be addressed by partnership working rather than by a single organisation working alone. It is also felt that by focussing on these things we will make the best progress towards achieving the common goals set out in this Strategy. Our priorities are at the heart of our vision and take into consideration the needs, interests and aspirations of our local community. Together we have identified our common concerns and we are committed to work together to create a better quality of life for all.

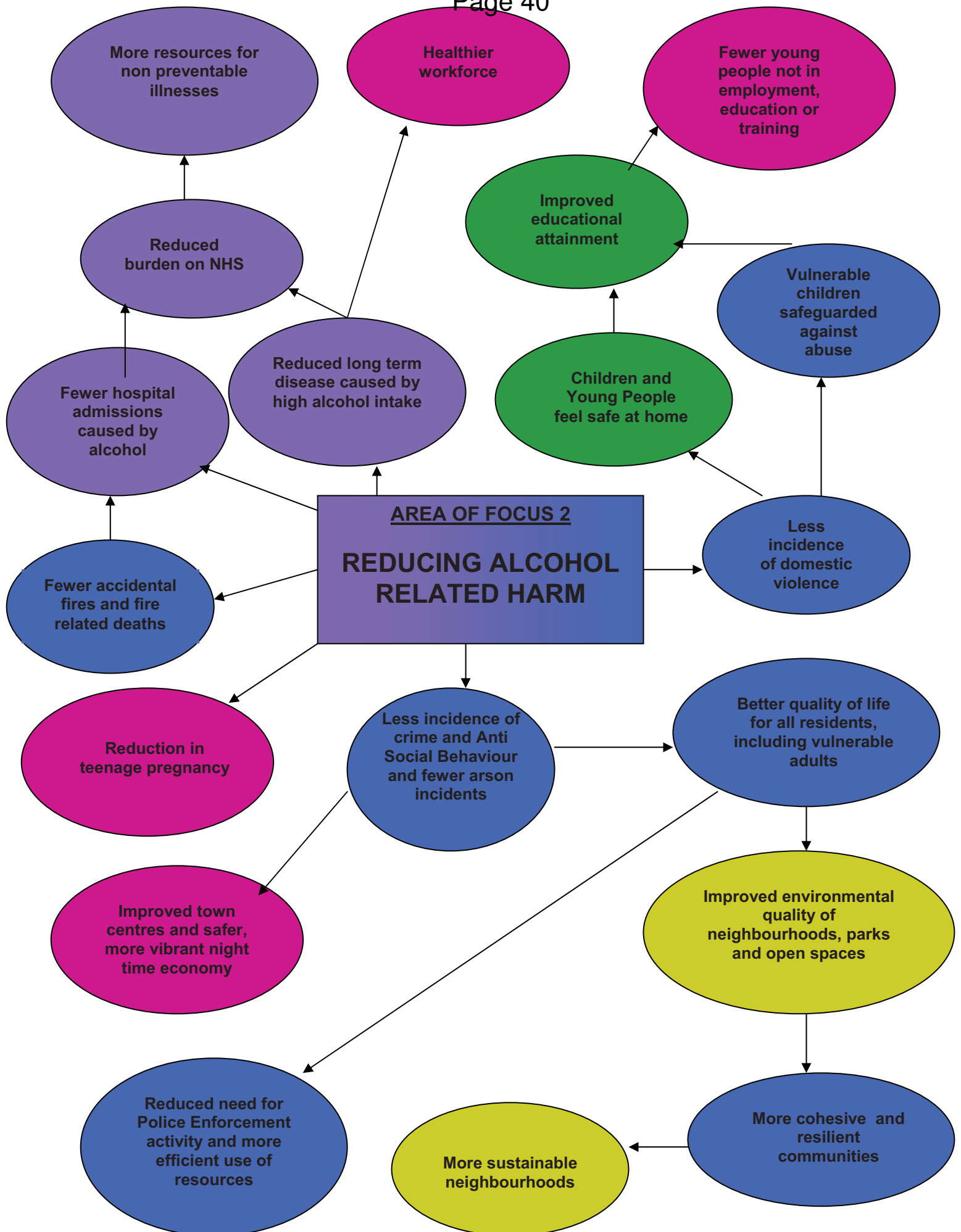
As a partnership we believe there are key underlying causes to a number of the issues that Halton faces. By working together to tackle these at the root and as a priority it is likely to have a much greater impact than addressing the effects that can be caused after the fact.

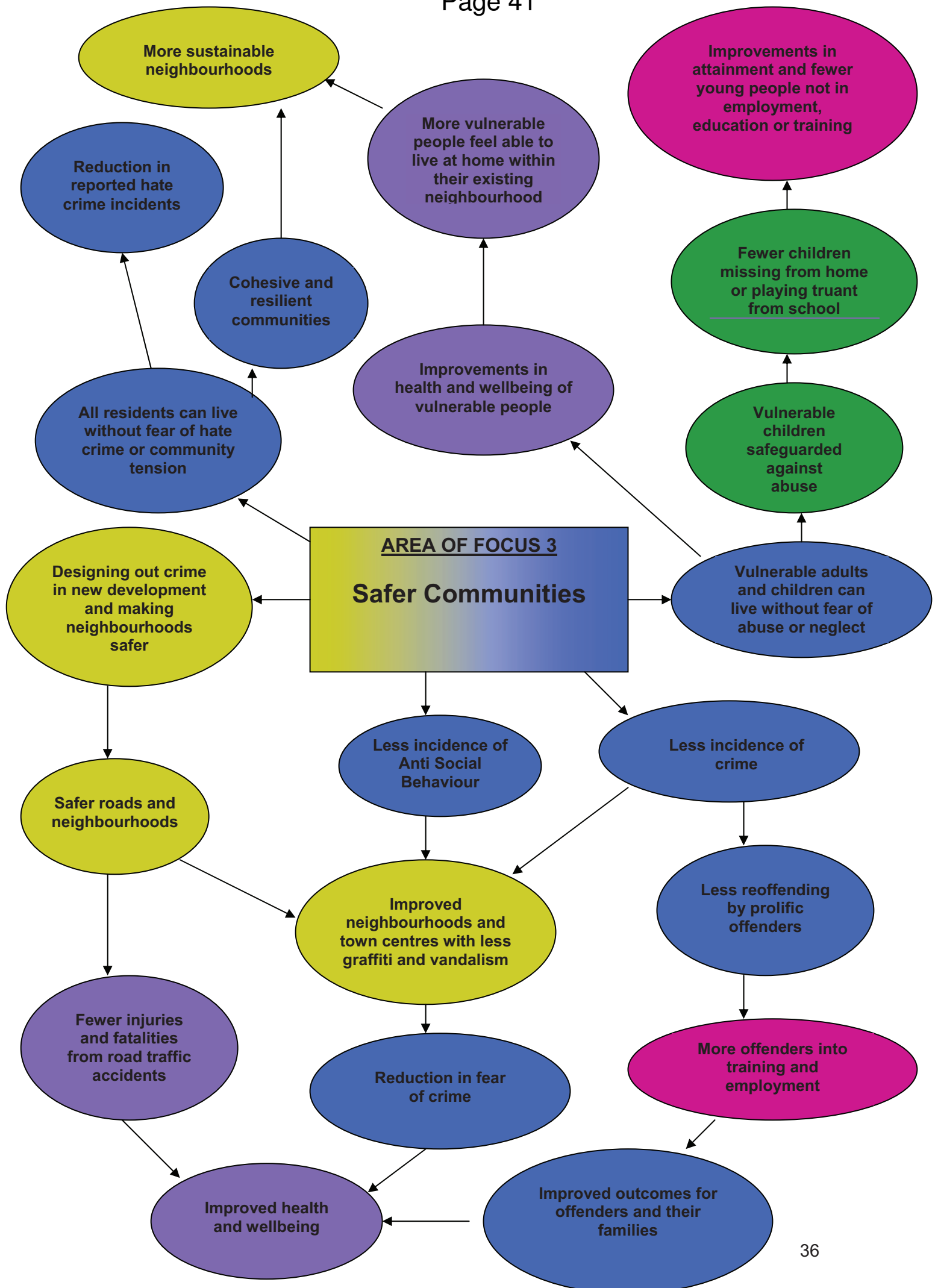
The key underlying causes we will focus on are:

- Employment (tackling jobs, skills, aspirations, young people not in employment, education or training)
- Reducing alcohol-related harm
- Safer communities

These three issues have been selected as areas of focus due to the significant contribution they can make to tackling the objectives within each of the five priority areas. This is illustrated by the cross linkages shown on the diagrams on the following three pages. A summary of each underlying issue follows these diagrams.







Employment

This relates to jobs, skills, enterprise, aspirations and young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Halton has the 28th highest unemployment claimant rate out of 326 local authorities in England. In the past the mismatch in the needs of local, new and incoming businesses and the skills of Halton's local people has meant that opportunity and need have been out of balance, contributing to the continuing widespread deprivation in Halton.

Increasing the employability of local people through improving skills and educational attainment is vital if local people are to gain maximum benefit from proposed and emerging major projects such as 3MG, Widnes Waterfront, Daresbury and the Mersey Gateway. Securing inward investment for each of these will help to grow and diversify the local economy, creating new jobs and raising aspirations for local people.

Reducing alcohol related harm

The latest Alcohol Profiles for England show that Halton is amongst some of the worst areas in the country in terms of months of life lost due to alcohol, alcohol specific and attributable mortality and hospital admissions due to alcohol.

Reducing the harm caused by alcohol misuse not only helps to reduce hospital admissions and consequently the burden on the NHS, it can also have a significant impact on building safer, more sustainable communities. For example, alcohol misuse is often a contributory factor during incidents of crime and anti social behaviour. Tackling the issue would help to reduce crime and anti social behaviour, leading to improvements in the quality of life of Halton residents and in the quality of parks and open spaces.

Similarly, alcohol has been shown to be a factor in about 40% of domestic violence incidents in Halton. The presence of domestic abuse in a household can have a catastrophic effect on family life and the well being and educational attainment of children within the household.

Safer communities

Halton is becoming a safer place with overall crime reducing, however we know that there is more to do, not only to further cut crime but to let residents know what we are doing and help tackle fear of crime. We also need to tackle some of the more hidden crime and work with residents and their families to tackle domestic abuse, abuse of vulnerable adults and children and alcohol and substance misuse.

We recognise the impact that crime and feeling safe have on people's lives, how being a victim of crime/abuse often leads to poor attainment, lack of confidence and ability to gain employment and also the blight that can be brought to neighbourhoods and families whose lives can often be made miserable through anti social behaviour and alcohol abuse. Alcohol or drug

abuse not only blight lives in the shorter term, often leading to violence and criminal damage, they store up longer term health problems for users.

We understand that realising these priorities will be challenging. Some we may find easier to achieve and others a bit harder. However, we want to do everything we can to achieve our vision and by working together we can avoid duplication of effort and develop effective, targeted responses to our key priorities. We will provide the focus and leadership needed to steer us towards our long-term goals. By working in this way, we can build on the significant amount of good work already being done in our borough.

Cross cutting Issues

This strategy tries to take a positive view of the future. It will be better to shift our focus to prevention measures, to promote positive lifestyles and the many excellent aspects of life in Halton. This includes more timely interventions to help people at the times when they most need support. At the same time a number of issues that cut across the key priority areas contained within this Strategy must be kept in mind as we meet the challenges faced within each priority area.

Embracing diversity

The Partnership is determined to deliver its vision of a better future for Halton's people. We are committed to equality for everyone regardless of age, sex, caring responsibilities, race, religion, sexuality, or disability. We are leaders of the community and will not tolerate discrimination, victimisation or harassment for any reason. There is a commitment to equity and social justice from all Partners.

The Partnership aims to create a culture where people of all backgrounds and experience feel appreciated and valued, and as a Partnership we are committed to a programme of action to make this policy fully effective.

In order to stress the importance of this area a Halton Equalities, Engagement and Cohesion Partnership has been created reporting directly to the Board. A key focus of its work is to ensure mainstream service delivery is adequately meeting the needs of the diverse communities of Halton. Equity and accessibility are the two key drivers of how we do things.

Child and Family Poverty

Many local partnerships have had considerable success in tackling child and family poverty. But meeting the challenge of eradicating it requires additional effort from all partners to prioritise tackling child and family poverty and improve outcomes for disadvantaged children and their families.

Whilst poverty can be measured by income, it is a much broader issue. Therefore, the European Union's working definition of poverty has been adopted;

“Persons, families and groups of persons, whose resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the Member State to which they belong.”

This recognises that poverty is not just about income but about effective exclusion from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities, such as:

- Income poverty
- Service poverty (difficulty in accessing and benefiting from quality services e.g. housing, health, education and leisure)

- Participation poverty (affecting the ability to
 - participate in the community
 - engage in social activities
 - have a negative impact on experience of education and training and
 - affect transition to independence).

In response to the Child Poverty Act 2010, Halton has worked alongside its partners in the Liverpool City Region to develop a Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment and multi agency Child and Family Poverty Strategy for Halton.

Social Exclusion

This is about what happens when people face a multitude of problems such as poor housing, high crime, poor health, worklessness, discrimination and poor relationships. These problems link and reinforce each other creating a vicious circle for people. Often they are clustered in specific neighbourhoods. Focused work based on the needs of each neighbourhood will help us to close the gap between the most deprived parts of the Borough and the rest, with regards to health, education, employment and crime.

According to the latest Index of Multiple Deprivation in 2007 Halton has again improved its overall deprivation score but it remains amongst the 30 most deprived areas of England. Halton has become less deprived overall on a national scale but the gap between the most affluent and deprived areas of the borough is growing. Serious progress must be made to increase wealth and to narrow the gap for those who are most disadvantaged if residents are to enjoy the quality of life that many others take for granted.

Overall poverty, unemployment and material deprivation have diminished in crude terms. However, Halton continues to display high rates of benefit dependency, which may increase in the current economic climate. At the same time many people are still not claiming their full entitlements which would allow them to enjoy a minimum standard of living. Therefore, information, advice, guidance and advocacy are crucial in allowing people to access the help they need to navigate an extraordinarily complicated benefits system. This is not only beneficial for the recipients themselves but also for the local economy as research shows that most transfer payments are spent locally. Halton is also characterised by high levels of personal debt, with up to 10% of households struggling to support debt levels. This in turn impacts on people's health and well being and the positive contribution they can make to the local economy. Debt advice and innovative community finance initiatives are a continuing need within Halton.

Economic Climate

The adverse economic climate now has major implications for us all. The Halton Strategic Partnership has a role to put in place measures to support residents and businesses and where possible provide intervention measures to try and prevent house repossessions, loss of jobs, etc. Where they do occur we need to ensure services are there to help pick up the pieces, whether this is access to

training, benefits, debt advice, target hardening against burglary, alcohol abuse support or counselling.

Climate Change

Halton is developing a Partnership Climate Change Strategy and has agreed to reduce per capita carbon emissions from business including the public sector transport and housing as a key part of this work. Partners and organisations are committed to work together to encourage and influence residents, businesses and other organisations to make CO2 reductions and also to put our own house in order.

There has already been much progress around tackling climate change, including work on housing and tackling fuel poverty, work with business on environmental management and work with schools on carbon management. Halton is committed to the Carbon Strategy and Reduction Plan and a target of reducing CO2 by 10% by 2015. As part of the strategy, we have invested in a number of areas to reduce energy costs and consequently CO2 emission reductions.

Sustainability

The goal of sustainable development – integrating and improving environmental, economic and social outcomes both now and in the future – is at the heart of the strategy. This Strategy sets the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental well-being of Halton through to 2026 that will contribute to the overall sustainable development across the UK.

Part of Halton's success has been its ability to change and evolve, and its resilience in the face of adversity. It has had to cope with the loss of much of the manufacturing industry it formerly depended on. The effect of this was dramatic, leading to population loss and a legacy of deprivation across the communities of Halton. However, the position has stabilised and welcome signs of an improvement can now be seen. This resilience is the key to the future. The Halton Strategic Partnership sees this as one of the strengths on which a sustainable future can be built.

The vision for the future is of a Halton that can sustain itself. This is a place where people want to live and work. It is somewhere that provides a high quality living environment, sensitive to a range of needs, and recognises the diversity of its residents. This Strategy is all about giving people opportunities and choice. We want to build people's aspirations and abilities so they can exercise greater control and choice in their lives. Having done so we want to ensure we provide the quality of life and opportunities locally so that people choose to live and work here.

Housing

The priorities set out within the Halton Housing Strategy mirror the priorities contained within the Sustainable Community Strategy.

It is recognised that many housing objectives can make a contribution to more than one of the Sustainable Community Strategy's aims and objectives. This is a summary of some of the main areas that link to the Sustainable Community Strategy. A full breakdown of these areas is set out in the table attached to the Housing Strategy.

Partnership working will be key to this process and we will endeavour to work with partners across local authority boundaries to seek joint solutions to common issues and to help shape City Region Policy.

There is an emerging affordability issue in the Borough, caused by the relationship between house prices and local incomes. Consequently the demand for social rented housing has increased in recent years but the number of available social rented dwellings has declined. Equally the private rented sector cannot fully meet the demands of those unable to afford to buy or access social rented housing due to low supply and high rents.

Other housing issues include a mismatch between reduced demand for private sector terraced housing and the number of terraces available (which could result in market decline in poorer areas) and the predicted demographic change in the elderly population which is likely to result in increased demand for supported housing and related services.

Private sector housing in Halton is generally in good condition although there are concentrations of older terraced housing with the potential to fall into decline without investment by the owners. However the condition of privately rented property is generally poorer.

Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) met the 2010 target of making all homes decent, which in turn should improve energy efficiency. Although vacancy levels are generally comparable with national and regional figures the proportion of private sector dwellings vacant for more than six months is a growing cause for concern.

Overcrowding is higher in the social rented than owner occupied sectors, though there is potential to alleviate this through making better use of the housing stock.

Although homelessness remains an issue in Halton, the number of people presenting themselves as homeless, has dropped considerably since the last Housing Strategy was produced. Recent prevention service developments for homeless people are proving successful and should have a positive impact on acceptances and the number of people in temporary accommodation.

Worklessness is an issue on many social housing estates across Halton and the Partnership is working with Registered Social Landlords to develop projects aimed at tackling worklessness on these estates.

Provision for Gypsies and Travellers has been improved, with the development of a 14 pitch transit site.

Supply and demand analysis for particular client groups reveals a need for increased accommodation for the elderly, particularly extra care accommodation, making better use of the existing stock of adapted dwellings and a range of accommodation for people with mental health problems offering varying levels of support.

The Council is likely to receive a reduced capital allocation and there is uncertainty over the levels of funding available for adaptations and new supported housing schemes.

Transport

A good quality transport system is critical in continuing to build a strong and vibrant Halton. Transport plays a vital role in connecting our everyday activities together, from cycling to school, catching the bus to work or using the train to visit friends and family in neighbouring towns and cities. Transport is a vital part of this Strategy and the latest Local Transport Plan (LTP3) has been developed alongside this and other partnership documents to ensure that transport planning and policy is closely linked to the developments under each of the priority areas.

LTP3 also needs to connect Halton into the wider Liverpool City Region and the Northwest to enable the people of Halton to access a wide range of employment, leisure and education opportunities.

Halton has a substantial transport network that is constantly undergoing improvement. Significant public investment matched by the train and bus companies over the past 10 years has provided a modern and extensive public transport network. Examples include a modernised railway station at Runcorn and a newer accessible bus fleet. During this period we have also implemented quality transport corridors where provision for bus, walking and cycling has been greatly enhanced.

There are improved rail links to other parts of the country, a road network where safety and maintenance are improving along with improvements for freight distribution. A comprehensive 'greenways' network is being delivered that provides for generally car free routes for walking, cycling and sometimes horse riding. Also many streets have had enhanced pedestrian provision.

We have seen the development of the Mersey Gateway Project that is currently awaiting final approval following a public inquiry. This would provide a new road crossing of the River Mersey and free the existing congested Silver Jubilee Bridge for use by local traffic, public transport, walking and cycling.

A strong transport network can attract investment, new businesses and jobs to Halton, and can contribute to a stronger and healthier borough, by providing transport links not only to the residents of Halton but the increasing number of visitors to the area.

Transport is a key element to emerging commercial sites such as the 3MG site in Widnes, where new road access has been provided along with proposed new rail sidings. Road improvements have also been implemented for Widnes Waterfront and Daresbury Science and Innovation Campus. These sites are bringing significant new employment opportunities to Halton.

In preparation for the Local Transport Plan 3 Halton has continued to take account of not only regional and national policies, but also European initiatives, all of which ultimately determine what happens in Halton. This includes a whole range of areas such as education, social services, the economy and environment, regeneration, health, planning, safety and leisure.

Five Year Delivery Programme

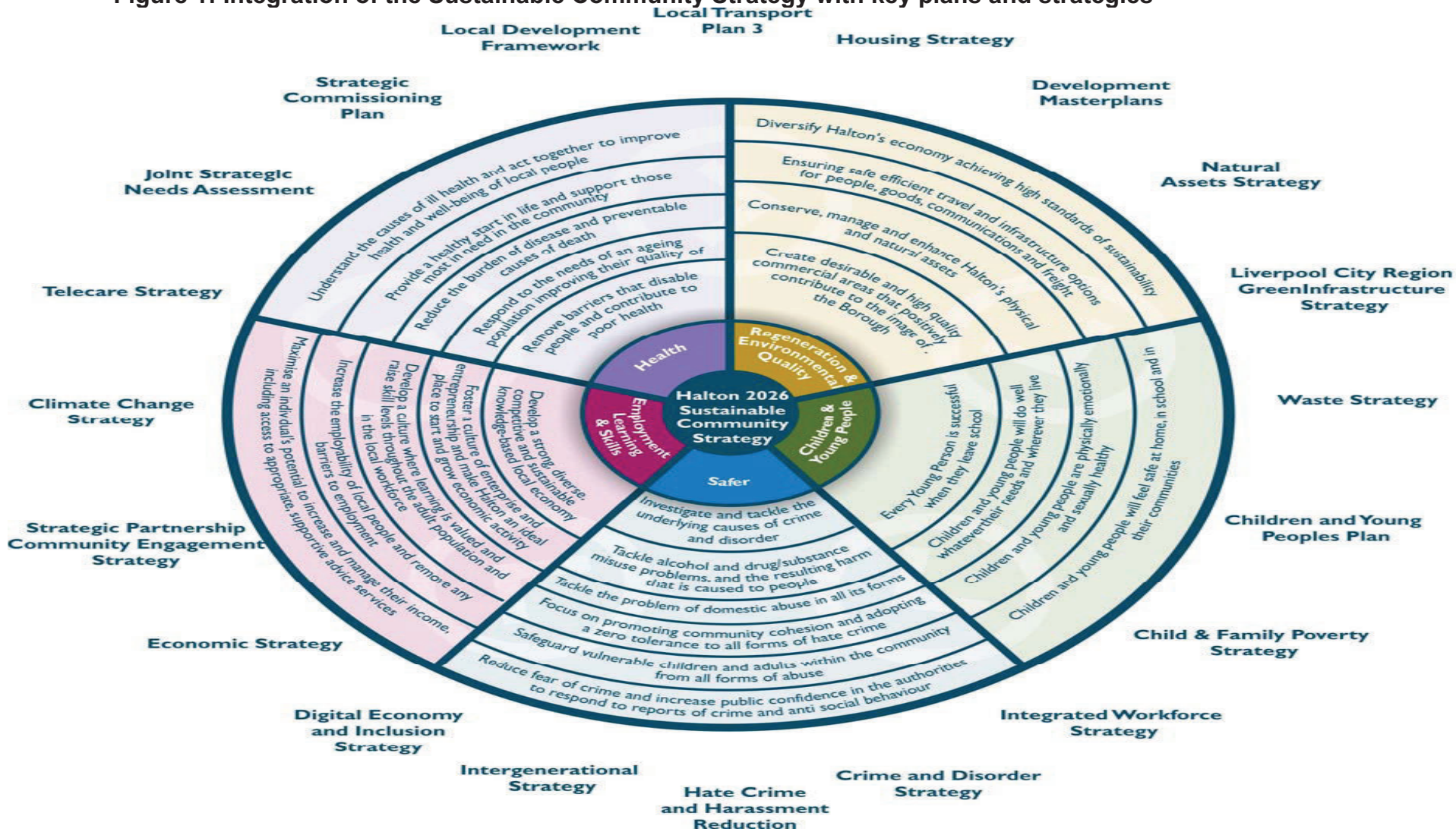
The issues that this Sustainable Community Strategy intends to tackle are long term, difficult issues. It can take many years for the work undertaken today to make a difference. Early intervention and prevention in health is a prime example. It can take several years of hard work before we will see a decrease in patients attending GP Surgeries and hospitals with established illnesses and a reduction in those smoking and drinking to excessive levels.

With such a long term strategy, the way we deliver needs to be flexible, to cater for the unforeseen and allow partners to adapt to constantly evolving legislative and financial structures.

The five year term delivery programme sets out our starting point and targets for improvement over five years to help us to deliver on our priorities. It is intended that the 5 year Delivery Programme is updated every five years up to 2026 to keep pace with changes in local needs, priorities and available resources.

The Halton Sustainable Community Strategy has been prepared in the context of other key local plans and strategies. It does not stand alone in isolation; it is an overarching high level strategy that is supported by a multitude of detailed strategies that deal with specific topics and coordinate the delivery of services and projects. In this respect this SCS has been prepared to dovetail with other key Partnership plans and strategies. Figure 1 shows this relationship, the SCS forms a central core surrounded by the specific plans that allow the Halton Strategic Partnership to deliver improvements that make a real difference to the people of Halton.

Figure 1: Integration of the Sustainable Community Strategy with key plans and strategies



Performance Targets

The targets contained within the delivery plan are a first step towards aligning our vision for Halton in 2026. If we succeed in achieving our targets they will translate into real improvements for local people, building on the work done to date.

This is why it is important to know how we are doing and what progress we are making in meeting the improvement targets we have set ourselves. By monitoring progress closely we can identify and build on successes, provide necessary assistance or support where progress has not met expectations, and adjust our efforts and resources to adapt to changing circumstances.

A range of high level outcomes have been set in the Strategy. These provide a benchmark and clarity in how our progress can be measured in the future. For all five themes there are several key objectives and a small number of key targets for each. In particular these reflect key desired outcomes. Together these form a 'score card' for the Sustainable Community Strategy.

We want to be judged by what we do and not by what we say. Every year progress will be reviewed and the performance will be published in our Annual Report. This will allow for scrutiny of the work of the Partnership. Local people are the best judges of how well we are doing. The Partnership works on their behalf and they are best placed to venture an opinion on how the quality of life in Halton rates. As well as the Annual Report the Partnership will survey residents at regular intervals to track public perceptions of how well the Strategy is being implemented. This regular dialogue is a key part of our performance-monitoring framework. We genuinely want to know what people think of the things we do, how we go about tasks and what we should pay attention to in the future.

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 4 November 2010

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director,
Environment and Economy

SUBJECT: Proposed Policy for Vehicle Access
Crossings over Footways and Verges

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to a revised policy for vehicle access crossings over footways and verges that will:
- establish criteria for the approval of the location and construction of new vehicle access crossings;
 - incorporate revisions to the existing enforcement policy;
 - help to resolve problems experienced in recovering the Council's costs in relation to enforcement.

The existing policy was approved by the Executive Board on 16 November 2000 (following a report to Policy and Performance Board (Planning, Transportation and Development) on 11 October 2000). Whilst it has been in use for ten years, its scope is limited largely to issues relating to the enforcement of unsafe and non-approved access crossings and does not include more detailed procedural matters in connection with the construction of new access crossings.

- 1.2 A proposed revised policy was considered by the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on 25 November 2009 who endorsed the recommendations in the report to refer the policy to the Executive Board for Approval.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

(1) the revised policy and procedure for the construction and enforcement of vehicle crossings over footways and verges which covers:

- (a) criteria for acceptance;**
- (b) the application procedure;**
- (c) the incorporation of crossings into structural maintenance programmes;**
- (d) the procedure for enforcement of non-approved crossings;**

as set out in Appendix 1 to this report, be approved.

(2) for the avoidance of doubt, and subject to the provisions of Section 184(9) of the Highways Act 1980, the Council shall construct any or all access crossings within the Borough and recharge the costs to the frontage property owner.

(3) complaints and notifications regarding illegal access crossings continue to be prioritised for enforcement on the basis of risk to highway users, with those in an unacceptable position or with hazards such as channel ramps being given priority.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The approval, construction and recovery of expenses in connection with vehicle access crossings over footways and verges are set out in Section 184 of the Highways Act 1980. Highway Authorities have powers to carry out work to prevent damage to the footway and verge and recover any associated costs. The proposed policy that is the subject of this report contains detailed practices and procedures for the administration and enforcement of vehicle access crossings in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

3.1.2 This report is set out as follows:

- Background to the issues;
- Commentary on the proposed policy;
- Implications of the proposed policy;
- Risk analysis.

- Appendix 1 – The Proposed Policy
- Appendix 2 – Sample Letters for Application Procedure
- Appendix 3 – Sample Letters for Enforcement Notice
- Appendix 4 – Enforcement Procedure Flowchart
- Appendix 5 – Scheme of Reimbursement

3.2 Background

3.2.1 A vehicle access crossing across a footway, cycleway or verge must be properly constructed, to prevent damage to the surface or to any utility apparatus situated within the footway. The practice of vehicles repeatedly crossing footways, which have not been strengthened may result in a potential hazard to pedestrians and other road users, as well as additional maintenance costs being incurred by the Council. In some cases, property owners place objects such as blocks of wood, metal ramps and even concrete in the road channel to enable them to mount the kerb. These practices could cause serious injury to road users and damage to vehicles and may also result in claims for compensation being brought against the Council.

- 3.2.2 Since July 2006 it is estimated that approximately 200 'illegal' access crossings have been recorded by the Council's highway inspectors on their routine highway safety inspections. Of these, 58 have been recorded since April 2010. It must be noted however that, due to resource constraints, only those crossings which are deemed to pose a hazard for highway users will have been identified for action.
- 3.2.3 Halton Council, acting as Highway Authority, has powers to construct a vehicle access crossing to prevent damage to a footway or verge and in doing so must take account of the safe access and egress from premises and the need to facilitate the passage of traffic along the Highway. Therefore, in some instances, it may not be feasible to provide a vehicle access crossing in a particular location for road safety reasons.
- 3.2.4 The provision of a new vehicle access onto a classified road requires planning approval. In addition, in line with a recommendation of the Pitt Review on sustainable drainage, since October 2008 householders wishing to install paving over their front gardens to create a driveway must apply for planning permission unless the area is less than 5 square metres or if the surface is permeable or drains to soakaway.
- 3.2.5 The proposed policy contains procedures for the construction of vehicle access crossings and the recovery of associated costs, in three main circumstances:
- Where an owner or occupier of premises requests the Council to construct a new crossing (or alter an existing crossing);
 - Where the Council constructs a new access crossing to premises within a footway reconstruction scheme;
 - Where a report is received or upon routine inspection it is noted that an owner or occupier is crossing the footway or verge without an approved vehicle access crossing being formed.
- 3.2.6 The Council's Housing Adaptations Policy includes criteria for recommending the provision of a crossing to assist disabled access to a property. The Disabled Facilities Grant does not cover work outside property boundaries (for example within the Highway) and unfortunately, there is no funding currently identified to cover the cost of crossing provision, or to offer reduced rates to residents to implement any recommendations made. There are also no proposals to offer residents who may be on benefits any financial assistance other than the monthly payment terms described in the policy.

3.3 Commentary on the Proposed Policy

(The proposed policy is included as Appendix 1)

3.3.1 Criteria for acceptance of a vehicle access crossing:

There is currently no guidance in relation to the circumstances under which a crossing may or may not be allowed. The adoption of formal criteria will make it clearer, both for owners and occupiers and for the Council's representative when assessing a location to avoid misunderstandings and ensure that new driveways and crossings are both safe and sustainable.

The proposed policy covers matters relating to:

- The size of the area available within the curtilage of the property to park a vehicle. Sufficient space is necessary to avoid obstructing the highway;
- Ensuring adequate visibility to ensure safe access and egress;
- The situation of the crossing in relation to road junctions etc.;
- The impact on existing parking and the use of the street;
- The circumstances and /or locations when planning permission is required.

3.3.2 Procedure for requesting a new vehicle access crossing:

The practice for owners and occupiers to apply to the Council for a vehicle access crossing, to be constructed at their own expense, has been in place for several years. The proposed policy will formalise the current practice and procedures. Subject to the provisions of Section 184(9) of the Highways Act 1980, the Council shall construct any or all access crossings within the Borough.

At present, an occupier will contact the council to request the construction of an access crossing. Engineering staff will visit the site, carry out a survey, and raise a quotation for the cost of construction plus an administration charge which is sent to the applicant. The quotation is based upon prices contained within the Schedule of Rates for Minor Improvement Works and is valid for a period of three months. If the applicant chooses to proceed with the construction of the access crossing, they can either pay in full, in advance, or enter into a 12 or 24 month payment plan by Direct Debit.

3.3.3 Incorporation of new vehicle access crossings into planned structural maintenance schemes.

It is current practice to offer owners and occupiers the opportunity to have a vehicle access crossing to their property incorporated into a planned footway reconstruction scheme, if they do not already have this facility. This is to be formalised in the new policy. Because the crossing is constructed as part of programmed maintenance works, the owner or occupier is only liable for the cost of the additional works involved to create the crossing. For example, in some cases this will

just be the cost of drop-kerbing to form the access, in some cases, the crossing may be free of charge.

Should anyone who is crossing the footway 'illegally' refuse the offer of a crossing at reduced cost and continue to cross the newly constructed footway, then enforcement action would follow as set out in paragraph 3.3.4 below.

On occasion, owners / occupiers have been reluctant to proceed with an application (as described in 3.3.2) and pay for a new access crossing, preferring to wait until the footway outside their property is reconstructed, when they may be offered a crossing at reduced cost or free of charge. This situation is far from satisfactory and may prolong the use of an unauthorised access crossing with the consequent risks to highway safety. It may also prompt enforcement action to be taken, together with the associated administrative costs that entails. In order to encourage owners / occupiers to apply to have a crossing constructed as soon as it becomes necessary, it is proposed within the policy, to introduce a formalised scheme of reimbursement, whereby, if the footway is reconstructed within 2 years of an owner / occupier having paid for an access crossing, then on request, a refund of costs in accordance with the schedule in Appendix 5 will be made. In practice, this has occurred only rarely; with on average only a couple of householders being reimbursed each year during the course of the footway reconstruction programme.

Because the site of the crossing has already been recently strengthened, there is effectively a saving to the overall cost of the total reconstruction scheme and therefore the reimbursement of cost will be borne by the structural maintenance budget.

3.3.4 Enforcement of 'illegal' crossings and recovery of costs.

Where an occupier of premises is crossing the footway or verge without a properly constructed vehicle access crossing having been formed, the Council has powers to serve notice on both the owner and occupiers stating that they intend to construct a crossing and recover the cost from the owner or occupiers or to impose conditions on the use of the footway or verge. An occupier may opt to stop crossing the footway or verge and sign a declaration to this effect.

If the location of the crossing is considered to be unsafe, usually this will mean directing the occupier to cease crossing the footway or verge. If the crossing continues to be used, the Council may prevent its use through the placement of a bollard or barrier.

Despite the existence of a policy for enforcement of 'illegal' access crossings, it has often been a difficult and lengthy process to secure compliance with the notice served and to recover costs incurred. Therefore it is proposed to include the following measures within the proposed policy to encourage occupiers to comply:

- A copy of the letter and Notice will be sent to **all** occupiers of a property. This should assist the recovery of costs;
- An application form for construction of a new crossing will be sent with the letter and notice;
- Where a property is known to be rented, the enforcement letter and notice will be sent to both the occupiers and owner of the property. This should assist in securing compliance and with the recovery of costs.
- The scheme of reimbursement described in 3.3.3 should provide additional reassurance to owners and occupiers and encourage compliance;
- In the event that costs cannot be recovered, except by recourse to litigation, the Council's Land Charges section be advised, to enable a land charge to be attached to the property which would allow costs to be recovered when the property is sold.

Sample letters in respect of enforcement action are included in Appendix 3.

3.3.5 Operation of the proposed Policy

The policy will be implemented on a Boroughwide basis.

Due to the variability of site conditions, the criteria for acceptance of a vehicle access crossing cannot be entirely prescriptive and must allow a degree of latitude for interpretation by engineering staff on site. The criteria outlined in the policy will be used to guide the acceptability and subsequent approval of access crossings.

When a report of a unauthorised access crossing is received, or a request for action for repair, or defects are noted during routine inspection, the Highway Superintendent / Inspector will establish the course of action to be pursued, e.g. repairs under general maintenance or enforcement action in accordance with the Policy and 3.3.4 above.

In order to make efficient use of existing resources, it is recommended that enforcement action will be prioritised on the basis of risk to highway users. Unauthorised access crossings in locations which are deemed unsafe and those which utilise ramps or other obstructions, presenting a hazard to road users, will be given priority. This continues the current practice. Enforcement action against all unauthorised access crossings would entail a significant increase in demand on existing resources.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Approval of these proposals will establish a new policy for the approval, construction and recovery of expenses in connection with vehicle access crossings over footways and verges in accordance with current practices. The existing policy for enforcement of 'illegal' access crossings is amended and incorporated into the new policy.

Subject to the provisions of Section 184(9) of the Highways Act 1980, it is the policy of the Council to construct any or all vehicle access crossings within the Borough. This is to ensure a correct and consistent standard of construction of vehicle access crossings and to protect the Council's interests.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Resource Implications

The cost of constructing vehicle access crossings is generally borne by the owner or occupier of the property, as described above. Except for those access crossings incorporated into structural maintenance schemes (paragraph 3.3.3 above), a 15% charge is levied in addition to the cost of construction. This is to cover costs of processing the application (where relevant) and instigating and administering the work. The charge is set at this level to avoid discouraging occupiers from applying for a crossing to be constructed. Also, the Highways Act allows authorities to "recover expenses reasonably incurred by them" in enforcing the construction of a crossing following the serving of a notice.

As described in 3.3.5, enforcement action will be prioritised on the basis of risk to highway users in order to make efficient use of current manpower resources. This means that Halton will not necessarily take enforcement through the notice procedure, for every non-approved vehicle access crossing.

There is a potential reduction in the incidence and cost of third party insurance claims in relation to footway tripping accidents, resulting from the removal of illegal obstructions on the highway and reducing the potential for footway damage.

Paragraph 3.3.3 describes proposals to reimburse owners / occupiers with part or full costs where, on the rare occasion, footway reconstruction works are undertaken within two years of a crossing having been constructed and paid for by them. In recent years, this has only amounted to approximately £1000 per year. Any refund of cost would be borne by the structural maintenance scheme allocation, generally from the highways capital budget.

The costs resulting from enforcing non compliance are currently borne by existing revenue budgets. It is hoped that these costs will be reduced as

the proposed Policy provides more avenues and more robust procedures for the recovery of costs as set out in section 4 of the policy.

5.2 Legal Implications

The proposed policy has been drafted to enable the prescribed powers under Section 184 of the Highways Act 1980 to be applied in cases of non-approved vehicle access crossings.

5.3 Community Impact Review & Assessment (CIRA)

A CIRA is not considered relevant to this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

There are no implications in respect of children and young people.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

There are no implications in respect of employment learning and skills.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

There are no implications in respect of health.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Encouraging owners and occupiers of premises to apply for the construction of vehicle access crossings, and taking enforcement action in respect of non-approved crossings which present a hazard to road users should result in a safer highway environment.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The construction of vehicle access crossings where required will contribute to an improved streetscape and better and safer environment for Halton's residents.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

The key risks associated with the approval of the proposed Policy relate to the availability of human resources to manage the enforcement of non-approved vehicle access crossings together with the number of applications from owners and occupiers requesting crossings. Staff and administration costs are recovered through the application of the 15% charge. If the number of enforcement actions and applications increases significantly, the amount of staff time currently available to undertake the administration of the process may prove insufficient. The prioritisation of enforcement action according to risk will continue to control the workload however, this will be monitored as the effects of the new Policy become known.

The proposed Policy provides opportunities in three key areas:
Clear criteria governing acceptable locations for vehicle access

crossings that can be agreed with applicants or used to enforce refusal of non-approved crossings; improved procedures enabling unsafe access crossing situations to be addressed; improved procedures to assist in the recovery of costs following the serving of notices in relation to non-approved access crossings.

A full risk assessment is not considered necessary in this instance.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 A Community Impact Review has been undertaken in relation to the proposed Policy. There are no direct implications in relation to the recommendation, however, improvements in the quality of the footway network will indirectly be of particular benefit to those members of the public who are elderly or disabled.

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

There are no Background Papers under the meaning of the Act.

Appendix 1

Revised policy and procedure for the construction and enforcement of crossings over footways and verges

(Note: Existing policy in relation to enforcement action (approved in October / November 2000) and which is to be retained is shown underlined in section 4 below)

1. Criteria for acceptance of a crossing

Only those access crossings which comply with the requirements outlined below should be permitted:

Relating to highway safety:

- The size of curtilage available – a large car must be able to fit within the curtilage of the property without overhanging the footway (or cycleway or highway verge), to avoid causing a hazard to pedestrians (or cyclists or obstruct access to services). As a general rule the space required within the curtilage for a standard car will be 4.8m x 2.4m but this may increase depending on the specifics of the site;
- There must be sufficient visibility when exiting and entering the driveway in accordance with appropriate highway standards. These take the form of visibility splays and stopping sight distances, which vary depending on the type and speed limit of road;
- The access crossing should usually be situated a minimum of 1.8m from the end of any curve radius leading into or out of a junction, whilst still complying with visibility criteria. However, there may be exceptions on lightly trafficked estate roads, providing that road safety is not compromised.
- It is considered that, where parallel parking alongside the kerb occurs on a road, this should not preclude the provision of an access crossing, and an appropriate number of marked bays may need to be removed. It may also be necessary to install an 'H bar' marking to prevent obstruction of the access, where there are no marked bays or loading restrictions. However, parking bays situated perpendicular to the carriageway are usually privately owned, and access crossings behind these will generally not be permitted, except where a single landowner is involved.

Relating to planning:

- Planning permission is required to create an access onto a highway that is a classified road (A, B or C class). The type and speed limit of certain roads (together with the highway safety criteria above) may mean that they are unsuitable for a private vehicle access crossing. This would be established during the planning application process. It should be noted, that other factors, such as visual amenity are taken into consideration when assessing a planning application.

- Planning permission is required if a new or replacement driveway within a property is greater than five square metres surface area, unless it is constructed using permeable (or porous) surfacing, such as gravel, permeable concrete block paving or porous asphalt, or if the rainwater is directed to a lawn or border to drain naturally or to soakaways within the property boundaries. This is to reduce the impact of surface water flooding and on pollution of watercourses. Further advice is available in “Guidance on the Permeable Surfacing of Front gardens” (Department of Communities and Local Government).

2. Application procedure

This procedure is in accordance with Section 184 of the Highways Act 1980. An owner or occupier may request the Council to construct an access crossing at their own expense, provided it is considered acceptable (in highway and planning terms as outlined above). It should be noted that under Section 184(11) Highways Act 1980 the highway authority may approve the request for the construction of an access crossing with or without modification, or may propose alternative works, or reject the request. In determining how to exercise their powers under this subsection, the Authority shall have regard to the following:

- (a) the need to ensure, so far as practicable, safe access to and egress from premises; and
- (b) the need to facilitate, so far as practicable, the passage of vehicular traffic in highways.

Road safety, planning and utility apparatus issues may preclude the construction of an access crossing at the location requested.

Where appropriate, the householder will be advised that planning permission will be required if the drainage criteria cannot be met or if the proposal is on a classified road.

The application is required to be made by the submission of a letter or e-mail request to the Lead Officer – Highway Maintenance. It is proposed that future applications may be submitted via an online application form.

Subject to a satisfactory site survey and compliance with the criteria shown in section 1 of this Policy, a letter, as shown in Appendix 2A, incorporating a quotation for the construction of the crossing will be sent for acceptance, and signing by the occupier(s), or by the owner if a tenanted property. If the applicant chooses to proceed with the construction of the access crossing, they can either pay in full, in advance, or enter into a 6 or 12 month payment plan by Direct Debit. Once payment has been received, or a payment plan has been accepted, works will usually be programmed for completion within 8 weeks.

If the site survey or consultation with Development Control Staff indicates that there would be road safety or planning issues that would warrant a refusal, then a letter will be sent to the occupier(s) (and owner if a tenanted property),

indicating the reasons why (See Appendix 2B). Should the occupier(s) then cross the footway illegally, enforcement would follow as set out below.

3. Incorporation of access crossings into the Council's Footway Structural Maintenance Programme

For planned footway maintenance programmes it is proposed that a letter be sent to occupier(s), and to the owner where known in relation to a tenanted property, notifying them of the proposed works (see Appendix 2C) and offering them the opportunity to have a legally constructed vehicle access crossing, if they do not already have one, either at a reduced cost or free of charge, depending on the scope of the works carried out. The owner or occupier would be liable for only the cost of the additional works involved to create the crossing above the cost of the maintenance works.

Should anyone who is crossing the footway illegally, refuse the offer and continue to cross the newly constructed footway, then enforcement would follow as set out below.

4. Enforcement and Recovery of Costs (Note: Existing policy in relation to enforcement action and which is to be retained is shown underlined)

Where a non-approved crossing of the footway or verge exists in a location where it would be possible and feasible to construct an acceptable crossing, the Council as Highway Authority, and following the serving of a notice in accordance with Section 184(7) of the Highways Act 1980, will construct a crossing and recharge the costs to the owner or occupier of the premises.

The following measures are proposed to provide occupiers with information about all alternatives open to them, encouraging them to comply with the notice and also to maximise the Council's ability to recover its costs:

- Where a property is rented the enforcement letter and notice is to be sent to both the occupier(s) **and** owner, if a tenanted property, to provide the Council with additional scope for recovery of the costs;
- Enforcement letters and notices will be served on **all** occupiers of a property;
- The enforcement letter will be accompanied by:
 - (a) an application form setting out the procedure for applying for an access crossing; and
 - (b) a pro-forma declaration whereby occupiers undertake to cease using the non-approved access crossing;
- The occupier(s) (and the owner, if a tenanted property) will be informed of the scheme of reimbursement that should a programmed structural footway maintenance scheme be carried out within 2 years of them having paid for a crossing, then a partial or full refund will be offered, depending on the scope of the work carried out (as described above). This will hopefully encourage them to pay for the crossing and avoid the need for legal proceedings; and

- In the event of the costs being written off, the Council's Land Charges Section be advised to enable a land charge to be attached to the property, which would allow for the costs to be recovered when the property is sold.

Where it is deemed that on the grounds of highway safety and / or planning implications, that an access crossing is unacceptable, a letter will be sent to the occupier(s) instructing them to cease using the crossing, as shown in Appendix 3. If the occupier(s) persists in using the access crossing, physical measures, such as bollards, may be used to prevent further use.

The enforcement procedure will be applied as shown on the flow chart in appendix 5.

Enforcement action is recommended where:

- (i) A crossing is considered to be detrimental to road safety / or may have planning implications making it unacceptable:

- **Action** - *Where it is deemed that on the grounds of highway safety and / or planning implications, that an access crossing is unacceptable, a letter will be sent to the occupier(s) instructing them to cease using the crossing, as shown in Appendix 3. If the occupier(s) persists in using the access crossing, physical measures, such as bollards, may be used to prevent further use.*

- (ii) The owner/occupier of the property takes/permits a vehicle across the footway to gain access to their property.

- **Action** - Serve notice on owner/occupier stating intention to construct access crossing and recharge costs.
- *Where a property is rented the enforcement letter and notice is to be sent to both the occupier(s) **and** owner, if a tenanted property, to give additional scope for recovery of the costs;*
- *Inform the occupier(s) (and the owner, if a tenanted property) that should a programmed structural footway maintenance scheme be carried out within 2 years of them having paid for a crossing, then a partial or full refund will be offered, depending on the scope of the work carried out (as described above). This will hopefully encourage them to pay for the crossing and avoid the need for legal proceedings; and*
- *In the event of the costs being written off, the Council's Land Charges Section be advised to enable a land charge be attached to the property, which would allow for the costs to be recovered when the property is sold.*

- (iii) The owner/occupier has deposited an object in the channel to aid access thus creating a hazard to persons lawfully using the highway.

- **Action** – Remove hazard and serve notice on owner/occupier stating intention to construct access crossing and recharge costs.
- Also apply the last 3 bullet points in ii)

(iv) The access is defective and has been constructed recently by the owner / occupier and not Halton Borough Council on their behalf.

- ***Action*** - Serve notice on owner/occupier stating intention to reconstruct access crossing and recharge costs.

- Also apply the last 3 bullet points in ii) above

Other (non enforcement) action is proposed

i) Where the access is defective (unless patently brand new).

- ***Action*** – Repair under Routine Maintenance Programme.

Any enforcement action taken will be pursued under the Highways Act 1980 Section 184. Action under this section should:

- Eradicate the unlawful incursion onto the footway, the obstruction of gullies, and danger to highway users (i.e. damaged surfaces, concrete, wood etc in the channels) and,
- Reduce maintenance costs, and damage to buried pipes, cables etc.

It should also be noted that any access on a classified road would require planning approval prior to any works being undertaken.

This will ensure a correct and consistent standard of construction of access crossings and protect the Council's interests.

5. Operation of the Policy

It is proposed that the policy be implemented on a Boroughwide basis.

Where a complaint or report of a non-approved crossing has been received by the Council, the area will be visited by a Highway Superintendant/Inspector to establish what course of action is to be pursued e.g. repaired under general maintenance or by enforcement action.

Where a problem is identified by a Highway Superintendant/Inspector during a routine inspection, again this will be dealt with either by general maintenance or by enforcement.

Where enforcement action is pursued a standard letter and notice will be served as set out above.

Where an access crossing has been constructed incorrectly, enforcement action may be taken however old the access crossing may be. However, the Council will only be able to recover expenditure against the person who built (or authorised the building of) the defective crossing.

Appendix 2A – Vehicle Access Crossing Quotation Letter

Dear [Applicant],

HIGHWAYS ACT 1980 SECTION 184 VEHICLE ACCESS CROSSING AT [LOCATION]

I refer to your recent application and set out below a quotation for the construction of a vehicle access crossing, which is subject to the following:

1. Halton Borough Council acting as Highway Authority is required to carry out all works within the highway.
2. The cost to construct an access crossing at the above address will be **£[Cost including administrative costs and VAT]**, payable by you, in full, in advance of any work taking place. Alternatively, the cost can be spread over a 12 or 24 month period under a Bank Direct Debit. If you would like to proceed with the works, please sign the enclosed acceptance form and return it with a cheque for the full amount or the completed Direct Debit form (if required).
3. The quotation comprises the [*construction of a new / widening an existing*] vehicle access crossing consisting of [X] No. dropped kerbs and [Y] No. transition kerbs including the formation of footway as marked and agreed on site. The quotation is fixed for a period of three months. Requests for work to be carried out after the expiry date of this quotation will be subject to a review of cost.
4. The Council will be responsible for locating and arranging for the adjustment of public utility services should this be necessary. However, all work will be confined to the adopted highway (footway, kerb, verge or carriageway) and will not include any work on privately owned land. The Council reserves the right to refuse to carry out the work if utility work proves prohibitively expensive.
5. The works will be carried out by the Council's contractor to the appropriate specification.
6. If you are not the owner of your home, you must obtain permission from your landlord for the work to be carried out. The signature of your landlord, or his authorised representative, must be included on the acceptance form. If your landlord wishes to pay for the cost of the works, they should complete and return the forms with payment.

Please note, this offer of construction of a vehicle access crossing, does not infer the right to construct a hard standing within the curtilage of your property, as this is covered under separate planning legislation. The attached sheet gives further information on this matter.

Yours faithfully

Lead Officer Highway Maintenance

*Enclosed: Acceptance Form
Direct Debit Form
Planning Information Sheet*

Appendix 2B – Vehicle Access Crossing Refusal Letters

To the Occupier(s)

Dear Sir / Madam,

**HIGHWAYS ACT 1980 SECTION 184 HIGHWAYS ACT 1980
VEHICLE ACCESS CROSSING AT [LOCATION].**

I refer to your recent application for a vehicle access crossing. Unfortunately, I am unable to agree to the construction of an access crossing at the location requested on the grounds of highway safety/planning considerations, for the following reason(s):

[STATEMENT OF REASONS]

I attach a copy of Section 184 of the Act, together with a copy of Schedule 14 of the Act for your information and records.

Yours faithfully

Lead Officer – Highway Maintenance

To the Property Owner(s)

Dear Sir/Madam

**HIGHWAYS ACT 1980 SECTION 184 HIGHWAYS ACT 1980
VEHICLE ACCESS CROSSING AT [LOCATION]**

I refer to your tenant's recent application for a vehicle access crossing. Unfortunately, I am unable to agree to the construction of an access crossing at the location requested on the grounds of highway safety /planning considerations, for the following reason(s):

.

[STATEMENT OF REASONS]

I attach a copy of Section 184 of the Act, together with a copy of Schedule 14 of the Act for your information and records.

Yours faithfully

Lead Officer – Highway Maintenance

Appendix 2C – Notification of Planned Structural Maintenance scheme

To the Occupier(s)

Dear Sir / Madam

PROPOSED FOOTWAY RECONSTRUCTION, [SCHEME NAME / LOCATION]

As part of the Council's current structural maintenance programme, it is proposed to reconstruct the footway outside your property.

As part of the work, there is an opportunity for you to have a vehicle access crossing constructed to your property if one does not already exist. Please note that it is an offence under Section 184 of the Highways Act 1980 to permit / take a vehicle across a footway to gain access to a property, unless the footway has been strengthened to protect both the footway and any utility apparatus that lies beneath it.

The cost of this crossing to you would be significantly less than what you would have to pay if an application were to be made after the footway has been reconstructed.

The construction of this access crossing would be subject to the restrictions detailed on the attached information sheet. If you are not the owner of the property, confirmation of acceptance from your landlord will be required. Please note that not all properties within the maintenance programme area may meet the criteria and therefore it may not be possible to provide an access crossing to every property.

Please note, this offer of construction of an access crossing, does not infer the right to construct a hard standing within the curtilage of your property, as this is covered under separate planning legislation. The attached sheet gives further information.

Should you wish to take up this offer, please contact me on the above telephone number to discuss further.

Yours faithfully

Lead Officer Highway Maintenance

To the Property Owner(s).- if known to be tenanted property

Dear Sir / Madam

PROPOSED FOOTWAY RECONSTRUCTION, [SCHEME NAME / LOCATION]

As part of the current structural maintenance programme, it is proposed to reconstruct the footway outside your property.

I attach a copy of a letter sent to your tenant, offering the opportunity to have a vehicle access crossing constructed to the property, should one be required. Please note the requirement for you to give permission prior to construction of the access crossing.

Yours faithfully

Lead Officer Highway Maintenance

Appendix 3a – Enforcement letter where location is deemed unsafe by the Council as Highway Authority

To the Occupier(s)

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: ILLEGAL ACCESS CROSSING AT [LOCATION].

It has been brought to my attention that you take or permit a vehicle to be taken across the footway to gain access to your property at the above location.

The Council, in appropriate circumstances, can issue notice under Section 184(1) of the Highways Act 1980 to enforce the construction of an access crossing, but only if it is safe to do so. However, in this location it is unsafe because:

[STATEMENT OF REASONS]

Therefore you should cease crossing immediately as failure to do so may result in the Council taking action to prevent access.

If you have any queries or require any further clarification on this matter please contact me on the above on telephone number.

Yours faithfully,

Lead Officer Highway Maintenance

Appendix 3b – Enforcement letter where vehicle access crossing location is deemed acceptable by the Council as Highway Authority

To Occupier(s)

Dear Sir / Madam

**HIGHWAYS ACT 1980 - SECTION 184.
VEHICLE CROSSINGS OVER FOOTWAYS AND VERGES.
[LOCATION]**

It has been brought to my attention that you take or permit a vehicle to be taken across the footway to gain access to your property at the above location. This is an offence under the Highways Act 1980 and should cease forthwith.

A vehicle access across a footway requires a properly constructed access crossing to prevent the footway or any utility apparatus lying under the footway suffering damage as a consequence. These works can only legally be carried out by the Highway Authority or its contractors.

In view of this, I enclose a formal notice stating that Halton Borough Council as Highway Authority intends to construct an access crossing and recover the expenses incurred from you.

Under Section 184(11) of the Act you may request the construction of an access crossing and I enclose herewith an application form to enable you to proceed with this. Upon receipt of your application, a quotation of the cost will be supplied to you.

Should the Council carry out a structural maintenance programme affecting your property within a 2 year period of the access crossing being constructed, you may be eligible to a full / partial refund depending on the work carried out.

Should you no longer wish to cross the footway, please complete and return the enclosed 'undertaking to cease crossing' form, within the Notice period.

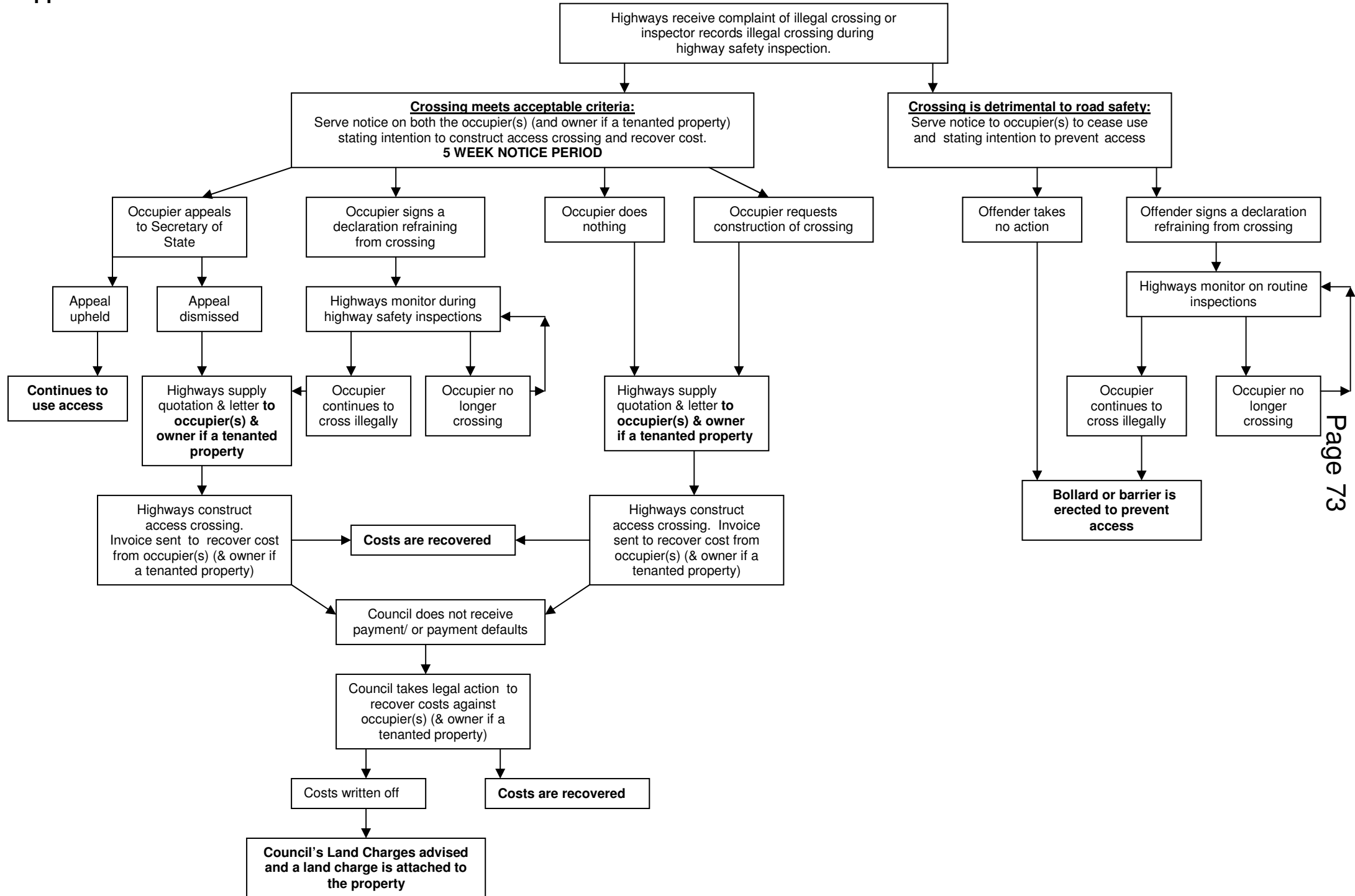
If you are in any doubt as to the meaning of this notice you are strongly advised to obtain your own independent legal advice.

Yours faithfully,

Operational Director

*Enclosed: Formal Notice
Undertaking to cease crossing pro forma
Application form
Planning Information Sheet*

Appendix 4 Enforcement Procedure Flowchart



APPENDIX 5
SCHEME OF REIMBURSEMENT WHERE FOOTWAY RECONSTRUCTION
IS CARRIED OUT WITHIN 2 YEARS OF ACCESS CROSSING
CONSTRUCTION

Anybody affected by the footway maintenance works, who has paid for a legal access crossing within the last 2 years (which is a reasonably foreseeable interval for programming of footway works) will be allowed to claim a full or partial reimbursement of the price paid, depending on the scope and timing of the works carried out. Invoiced costs to occupants who have crossings constructed outside of a maintenance scheme, are based on actual constructional costs plus HBC and contractors' administrative costs. Any reimbursement would be based on the cost of construction only.

In the event of an occupant accepting an offer of a free or reduced cost crossing, directly as part of the scheme, the usual administration fee for the construction of a crossing outside of a maintenance scheme will not be charged.

SCOPE OF FOOTWAY RECONSTRUCTION SCHEME	TYPE OF REFUND (YEAR 1)	TYPE OF REFUND (YEAR 2)
Full reconstruction including kerbs	Full refund.	50% refund
Full reconstruction excluding kerbs	Full refund less costs associated with additional kerbing required to form access crossing,	50% refund less costs associated with additional kerbing required to form access crossing.
Resurfacing including kerbs	Full refund less costs associated with sub base foundation required to form access crossing.	50% refund less costs associated with sub base foundation required to form access crossing.
Resurfacing excluding kerbs	Refund of cost of surfacing only.	50% refund of cost of surfacing only.
Surface course overlay or Surface Dressing	No refund.	No refund.

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 4th November 2010

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Environment and Economy.

SUBJECT: Runcorn Markets

WARDS: Mersey

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To consider the future of Runcorn Markets.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board

- 1. Approves the closure of Runcorn Market with effect from 31st January 2011 in the light of the recent Internal Audit Report (July 2010) and general budget constraints announced in the Spending Review; and**
- 2. Supports the development of proposals to relocate tenants as detailed in 3.12 of the report.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The 2010 Internal Audit report on the Markets, section 2 R1 recommends ***'a review should be undertaken to determine the future viability of Runcorn Market'***
- 3.2 The new Runcorn Market Hall was opened in March 2005, trading on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday to Saturday, with full occupancy albeit that the traders were enjoying a three month rent free period. Before this rent free period had expired two of the key traders (Butcher & Fishmonger) ceased trading and over the following year further traders were lost leaving 75% occupancy. Incentives were offered to new traders including half rent or where the trader would have reasonable set up costs a rent free period. The other traders accepted that these incentives were necessary to encourage new businesses. This had a marginal effect in the short term but there continued to be a gradual decline and incentives had to be offered to existing traders to keep them trading. Currently the Market Hall is 50% occupied with traders paying 50% rents.
- 3.3 Further action was taken to encourage more market activity with the establishment of a Street Market in May 2009; this has been successful from an operational point of view in its own right but is operating at a loss. The Street market has had little or no positive affect on the Market Hall, the only trader who is probably benefitting on Tuesday's is the Café.

- 3.4 It is important to note that the street market does not have its own budget. To date the costs have been met from within existing budgets for both Runcorn and Widnes markets.
- 3.5 **The Street Market.** Between 26th May 2009 to 31st March 2010, the costs were £45,000 (including the purchase of the stalls of £12,000). The income was £14,500 (stalls rent at £15 per day) and as such the loss was £30,500. Looking at annual running costs in the future, the first column in the table below details the costs if it is run on exactly the same basis as it is now. The second column is the proposed running costs which would follow on the introduction of new working arrangements.

Expenditure	£ Existing	£ Proposed
Stalls Purchase*	-	-
Highways signage/diversions	6,000	6,000
Security	11,000	11,000
Markets staff	20,000	6,000
Total	37,000	23,000
Income Total	16,000	16,000
Costs	-21,000	-7,000

Notes

*Forecast replace stalls every 5 years at £12,000 present cost

Reduce Office staff from 7 hours per day to 4.

Reduce market attendants staff from 29 to 14 hours per day.

Security guard hours remain unchanged but it picks up attendant duties as presently happens in the Runcorn Market Hall.

- 3.6 There are a number of options that could be explored that may reduce the loss further. These include –
- Increasing the rent.
 - Traders are casuals so only pay when they attend. We could offer permanent pitches if people are prepared to pay whether they attend or not.
 - We could explore increasing the number of stalls in conjunction with colleagues in Highways.

Coming into the poor weather seasons it is not proposed to explore the first of these. When the idea of the market was initially conceived it was believed that it would operate during the good weather months. It was pleasantly surprising that it continued throughout last winter, albeit on a reduced basis. However, it is proposed to explore the latter two.

- 3.7 Looking to the future, it has been suggested that the street market could operate for at least two days a week. There a number of considerations with such a proposal.

- The market operates on a Tuesday when the Widnes Market is closed. This enables Widnes existing staff to run the street market.
- A small number of the street market traders are from the Widnes Market who can attend due to the Widnes market being closed
- Formal consultation would be needed with the shop owners.
- The need for a further road closure for the second day. However, an alternative to this would be to consider holding the second day off road such as on a car park.

3.8 **Runcorn Market Hall.** The 'headline' financial aspects for 2009/10 show the hall income of just over £25,500 and an expenditure of just under £158,500. However, this includes both street market income of £14,500 and expenditure of £17,000. Taking this income and costs out from the market hall the actual position was

▪	Expenditure	£158,500
▪	Income	£11,000
▪	Loss	£147,500

3.9 A review is underway to improve the performance of the Market Hall. Currently the budgets provide for 20% of the time for the Markets Manager, 20% of the time of the markets officer, a full time attendant and a full time security guard. Since the start of the financial year the security guard has been undertaking duties of the attendant (releasing the attendant to work at Widnes). It is also considered viable that the Markets Manager and markets officer can reduce their attendance to 10% each. All these changes combined will result in reducing the loss in the order of £27,500 per annum, to circa £120,000. In consultation with Accountancy this is likely to lead to a £90,000 saving initially. Undertaking such changes would clearly have an impact on the cost structures of Widnes Market and this is presently going through its own review and the findings will be reported to a subsequent meeting.

3.10 As stated above, a key action in the recent Internal Audit Report (July 2010) was 'a review should be undertaken to determine the future viability of Runcorn Market'. It is clear that despite a number of initiatives to boost the occupancy of the indoor market, its continued operation is not financially viable. That said, the market does provide a vibrant social and economic benefit to the town.

3.11 **Future options** that would seem to be available at this time

- No change. Continued operation of both markets with an operating loss of £127,000.
- Continue the street market and close the market hall. Savings would in part be dependent on finding an alternative use for the hall. A saving initially of £83,000 which could rise to £120,000 dependent upon changes to management arrangements.
- Close both saving £90,000 (again this would in part be dependent on finding an alternative use for the hall), and could rise to £127,000.

- 3.12 In terms of support that can be considered for traders that wish to continue, there are a number of possible options including taking space on the street market (if it continues), relocating to Widnes Market and possibly moving to a shop unit in Runcorn Town Centre. One such option could be the former Tourist Information Centre.
- 3.13 Executive Board Members are advised that this item has been discussed both at the Market's Working Party and Corporate Services Policy Performance Board. The proposal to close Runcorn Market was unanimously supported.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Corporate Plan 'Directing and Developing Resources' chapter makes it clear that the council must be increasingly efficient. It says 'the emphasis is very much on shifting to using resources "smartly" and to use efficiency savings to fund investments in front-line services.' The provision of the markets is very much a front line service but the degree on which it makes a loss does bring into question its long term viability.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The financial and other aspects are dealt with above

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton N/A**
None identified at this time
- 6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**
The market is an area of employment for small businesses
- 6.3 **A Healthy Halton N/A**
None identified at this time
- 6.4 **A Safer Halton**
None identified at this time
- 6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**
The Community Strategy Urban Renewal key objective D is 'to revitalise the town centres into dynamic, well-designed high quality commercial areas that can continue to meet the needs of local people, investors, businesses and visitors.' The market was developed as part of previous regeneration of the town centre and does provide a facility in Runcorn Town Centre and its potential closure should not be allowed to result in the hall being left vacant.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 The two significant risks are financial i.e. continued losses and also regeneration i.e. the impact of the hall staying vacant if it is closed.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 The loss of both markets could be said to have an impact on the local community and its access to facilities. This would be lessened if the street market was continued. It is likely that the most affected people would be disabled and those without private transport who wish to visit an indoor market. However, access to Widnes Market is good via public transport and has plentiful parking nearby.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.