



**Environment and Urban Renewal Policy  
and Performance Board**

**Wednesday, 13 March 2013 6.30 p.m.  
Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David WR'.

**Chief Executive**

**BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

<b>Councillor John Gerrard (Chairman)</b>	<b>Labour</b>
<b>Councillor Keith Morley (Vice-Chairman)</b>	<b>Labour</b>
<b>Councillor John Bradshaw</b>	<b>Conservative</b>
<b>Councillor Frank Fraser</b>	<b>Labour</b>
<b>Councillor Pauline Hignett</b>	<b>Labour</b>
<b>Councillor Andrew MacManus</b>	<b>Labour</b>
<b>Councillor Stan Parker</b>	<b>Labour</b>
<b>Councillor Pauline Sinnott</b>	<b>Labour</b>
<b>Councillor Dave Thompson</b>	<b>Labour</b>
<b>Councillor Bill Woolfall</b>	<b>Labour</b>
<b>Councillor Geoff Zygadlo</b>	<b>Labour</b>

*Please contact Gill Ferguson on 0151 5118059 or e-mail [gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk](mailto:gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk) for further information.  
The next meeting of the Board is on a date to be agreed.*

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

**Part I**

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Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion or voting on the item.	
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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:** Environment and Urban Renewal Policy & Performance Board

**DATE:** 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Policy and Resources

**SUBJECT:** Public Question Time

**WARD(s):** Borough-wide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To consider any questions submitted by the Public in accordance with Standing Order 34(9).
- 1.2 Details of any questions received will be circulated at the meeting.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That any questions received be dealt with.**

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Standing Order 34(9) states that Public Questions shall be dealt with as follows:-

- (i) A total of 30 minutes will be allocated for dealing with questions from members of the public who are residents of the Borough, to ask questions at meetings of the Policy and Performance Boards.
- (ii) Members of the public can ask questions on any matter relating to the agenda.
- (iii) Members of the public can ask questions. Written notice of questions must be given by 4.00 pm on the working day prior to the date of the meeting to the Committee Services Manager. At any one meeting no person/organisation may submit more than one question.
- (iv) One supplementary question (relating to the original question) may be asked by the questioner, which may or may not be answered at the meeting.
- (v) The Chair or proper officer may reject a question if it:-
  - Is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the Borough;
  - Is defamatory, frivolous, offensive, abusive or racist;
  - Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or

- Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.
- (vi) In the interests of natural justice, public questions cannot relate to a planning or licensing application or to any matter which is not dealt with in the public part of a meeting.
- (vii) The Chairperson will ask for people to indicate that they wish to ask a question.
- (viii) **PLEASE NOTE** that the maximum amount of time each questioner will be allowed is 3 minutes.
- (ix) If you do not receive a response at the meeting, a Council Officer will ask for your name and address and make sure that you receive a written response.

Please bear in mind that public question time lasts for a maximum of 30 minutes. To help in making the most of this opportunity to speak:-

- Please keep your questions as concise as possible.
- Please do not repeat or make statements on earlier questions as this reduces the time available for other issues to be raised.
- Please note public question time is not intended for debate – issues raised will be responded to either at the meeting or in writing at a later date.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

None.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

None.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton** - none.

6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton** - none.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton** – none.

6.4 **A Safer Halton** – none.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal** – none.

**7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 None.

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

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

**REPORT TO:** Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Chief Executive

**SUBJECT:** Executive Board Minutes

**WARD(s):** Boroughwide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The Minutes relating to the relevant Portfolio which have been considered by the Executive Board and Mersey Gateway Executive Board are attached at Appendix 1 for information.
- 1.2 The Minutes are submitted to inform the Policy and Performance Board of decisions taken in their area.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Minutes be noted.**

## **3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 None.

## **4.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 None.

## **5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **5.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

None

### **5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

None

### **5.3 A Healthy Halton**

None

### **5.4 A Safer Halton**

None

### **5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None

**6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 None.

**7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 None.

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

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

**APPENDIX 1**

**Extract of Executive Board and Mersey Gateway Executive Board Minutes Relevant to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board**

**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2012**

**HEALTH AND ADULTS PORTFOLIO**

**EXB116 AMENDMENT TO HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY**

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, on the amendment to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy as it related to the treatment of Armed Forces personnel.

The Board was reminded that the Council's Housing Allocations Policy (the Policy) was approved on 3 March 2011. It was implemented with effect from 9 July 2012, when the new Choice Based Lettings Scheme, 'Property Pool Plus', went live in Halton. In order to give preference to local residents, the Policy contained a requirement for applicants to demonstrate a 'local connection'. Details of the current criteria for this 'local connection' was set out in Appendix 1.

As part of the Government's commitment to supporting the Armed Forces through the Military Covenant, new regulations came into force in August 2012 relating to Armed Forces personnel and the 'local connection' criteria. Where local authorities decide to use a local connection requirement as a qualifying criterion, they must not apply that criterion to certain defined categories of Armed Forces personnel, (which were detailed in the report), so as to disqualify them from an allocation of social housing.

The Board was advised that the sub regional Choice Based Lettings Group had proposed an amendment to the Policy in order to follow the spirit of the regulation. This would ensure that those defined categories of Armed Forces personnel were not disadvantaged in terms of securing accommodation. A similar recommendation would be presented to the respective Cabinet's of each of the partner authorities.



It was noted that further changes to the Policy would be considered as a consequence of new freedoms contained in the Localism Act 2011 and recent revisions to the Housing Allocations Code of Guidance. In addition, other changes to improve and clarify the existing Policy had been identified and it was proposed that partner authorities collaborate on a common consultation exercise to seek views on a number of options which were listed in the report.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) subject to the unanimous agreement of the authorities participating in the sub regional Property Pool Plus scheme, the Council's Housing Allocations Policy be amended to include the additional wording in italics set out in Appendix 1, to exempt Armed Forces personnel from the local connection criteria;
- 2) consultation be undertaken for the purpose of further amending the Housing Allocations Policy to take account of provisions within the Localism Act 2011 and the new Housing Allocations Code of Guidance; and
- 3) a further report on the outcome of the consultation be submitted to the Board for consideration.

Strategic Director  
- Communities

#### EXB117 RECONFIGURATION OF HOMELESSNESS SERVICE AT ORCHARD HOUSE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which provided an update on the reconfiguration of Orchard House.

On 12 July 2012, the Board had approved a proposal to enter into negotiations with Nightstop to reconfigure the service at Orchard House to provide an integrated Crisis Intervention Service for young people. A service delivery proposal was received on 19 October 2012 with a submitted proposal based on a five member staffing rota at a cost of £241,000. However, as the proposal was £44,866 in excess of the current budget, Officers advised Nightstop that they could not proceed with the service reconfiguration.

It was noted that Community Integrated Care (CIC), the current service provider, had indicated that they would not wish to enter into any long term agreement for the

provision of homeless services, although a previously agreed variation to extend their contract to 31 January 2013 meant that they would continue to do so in the interim.

The Homelessness Scrutiny Group considered a number of options for Orchard House which were:

- Retain status quo and continue to provide hostel service at Orchard House and existing Nightstop service through Halton YMCA;
- Open tender for integrated Crisis Intervention Service at Orchard House; or
- Request waiver to standing orders to negotiate the reconfiguration of Orchard House as an integrated Crisis Intervention Service with Depaul UK.

Members discussed the options and a number of concerns that were raised were detailed in the report. It was reported that the Scrutiny Group recommended the first option - to retain the status quo - until further information was known about the position with the Cosmopolitan Housing Association and the funding application for the Widnes hostel. It was noted that CIC had indicated their willingness to work with the Borough Council to provide a service at Orchard House, so long as they were delivering the Belvedere service.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board agree to maintain the status quo and continue to provide a hostel service at Orchard House and existing Nightstop service through Halton YMCA; and
- 2) a further waiver of Procurement Standing Orders be agreed for an extension of the existing contract(s) with Community Integrated Care until 31 October 2013, in line with the preferred option.

Strategic Director  
- Communities

**ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PORTFOLIO AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO**

EXB119 THE LIVERPOOL CITY REGION SUSTAINABLE ENERGY  
ACTION PLAN

The Board considered a report of the Strategic

Director, Policy and Resources, on the Liverpool City Region Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP).

The Board was advised that a SEAP had been prepared for the City Region by the Merseyside Advisory Service (MEAS) and consultants, ARUP. The SEAP was officially launched in July 2012 and had been welcomed by both the public and private sectors, including potential investors and energy companies, as it provided a larger scale and more co-ordinated response to the energy agenda for the City Region. The SEAP set out a number of prioritised actions across the City Region to deliver a low carbon economy with potential to add value to a number of investment opportunities and projects, which were outlined in the report.

The Board noted that a benefit of the City Region SEAP Programme was to provide the framework within which Districts could take forward their own energy aspirations. The SEAP was a live document and would be updated periodically as and when required. The report provided details on the governance and reporting arrangements, opportunities for projects across the sub-region and the various stages of development of the low carbon projects within the Borough.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Liverpool City Region Sustainable Energy Action Plan be endorsed as the programme and framework for the City Region to advance its sustainable energy actions; and
- 2) the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board receive progress reports on the SEAP Programme as and when appropriate.

Strategic Director  
- Policy &  
Resources

#### EXB120 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COVENANT OF MAYORS AND CLIMATE LOCAL

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the Liverpool City Region Covenant of Mayors and 'Climate Local'.

The report outlined the benefits and implications of signing up to two climate change commitments. The European Commission launched the Covenant of Mayors (the Covenant) in 2008 to endorse and support the efforts

deployed by local authorities in the implementation of sustainable energy policies. The Covenant was a charter of key commitments, outlined in the Adhesion Form attached at Appendix B. It was noted that to date, Liverpool City Council was the only City Region authority to have signed up.

'Climate Local' was launched by the Local Government Association in June 2012 as a replacement to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. This also required the signing of a commitment to address climate change but had a wider scope than the Covenant, as it addressed climate resilience and the management of future impacts of climate change such as extremes of weather. A copy of this agreement was attached at Appendix C.

It was noted that the European Union target was a 20% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2020. The report provided details on the implications for Halton Borough Council, the development of the Council's Carbon Management Plan, Low Carbon Plan and the Sustainable Energy Action Plan. Progress on the latter had been reported elsewhere on this agenda.

RESOLVED: That the Board endorse the Council's signing of the EU Covenant of Mayors 'Climate Local'.

Strategic Director  
- Policy &  
Resources

## **EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 10<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2013**

### **TRANSPORTATION PORTFOLIO**

#### **EXB124 EXTENSION OF EXISTING HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENT AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS**

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the extension of the existing highways improvement and maintenance contracts.

The Board was advised that the existing contracts with both Lambros and Amey for improvement and highway maintenance, would expire on 31 March 2013. The Executive Board Sub Committee had previously agreed the procurement of a combined highways contract, and in line with national guidance, Halton and Warrington Borough Councils embarked on a joint procurement process for a single contractor to undertake the service for both authorities, under separate contracts.

The report advised Members that the Procurement

process had been extended, so as to seek legal advice on an issue relating to TUPE and pension provision which had been raised by one of the tenderers. A realistic start date for the new contract was considered to be 1 June 2013 and therefore there was a need to urgently extend the current arrangements before the return of any tenders for the new contract, in order to avoid any suggestion of impropriety.

On that basis, the Board was advised that the Chief Executive had approved the award of two month extensions to Lambros and Amey on 17 November 2012, with the terms and conditions of both extensions having been agreed with the respective organisations.

RESOLVED: That the waiver to Procurement Standing Orders Parts 1 and 3, granted by the Chief Executive, in respect of approval of award of 2 month extensions of existing contracts for Highways Maintenance and Improvement be noted.

#### EXB124 BYELAWS UNDER SECTION 66 OF THE LAND DRAINAGE ACT 1991

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which informed them of recent changes to the Council's regulatory powers under the Land Drainage Act 1991 (as amended by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010).

The Board was advised that amendments to the Land Drainage Act (LDA) transferred certain powers from the Environment Agency to Halton Borough Council, as Lead Local Flood Authority for the area. The Flood and Water Management Act amended Section 66 of the LDA to allow local authorities to make byelaws for the following purposes:

- To secure the efficient working of a drainage system in its area;
- To regulate the effects of a drainage system on the environment; and
- To secure the effectiveness of flood risk management work.

It was noted that guidance on a set of Model Land Drainage Byelaws had been issued on the making of byelaws under Section 66 of the LDA, and were broadly similar to those operated by the Environment Agency; these

were attached at Appendix 1. The Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board had considered the Council's new duties and powers in relation to ordinary watercourse regulation and endorsed the approval of a set of Land Drainage Byelaws for Halton by Executive Board. It was further noted that the report provided information on the procedure for making byelaws and the legal and resource implications. In addition, Appendix 2 contained information on the procedure and proposed timetable, including consultation, for the making of Byelaws under Section 66 of the LDA.

RESOLVED: That a consultation exercise be undertaken in connection with the draft Land Drainage Byelaws for Halton.

Strategic Director  
- Policy &  
Resources

EXB126 REPORT OF WAIVER OF PROCUREMENT STANDING ORDERS, FOR HIGHWAY WORKS AT CLIFTON COURT, RUNCORN

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the waiver of Procurement Standing Orders for highway works at Clifton Court, Runcorn.

The Board was advised that in May 2012, a contract in the sum of £10,272 was awarded to WPI Surfacing Ltd for the completion of carriageway works at Clifton Court, Runcorn. The works had been necessary to complete the formal adoption of the street, after the developer had gone into liquidation approximately seven years earlier, leaving the carriageway construction incomplete.

It was reported that, whilst the price was marginally in excess of the threshold of £10,000 set under Procurement Standing Order 1.8.2, to avoid further delay and the risk of the residents withdrawing their financial support for the scheme, and acting on advice from the Head of Procurement, Operational Director emergency approval was used, and the works were ordered from WPI Surfacing Ltd. These works were satisfactorily completed on 12 June 2012, and Clifton Court formally adopted on 18 June 2012.

RESOLVED: That the waiver granted under Procurement Standing Order 1.8.2 – Operational Director Approval, in respect of a contract to complete highway adoption works at Clifton Court, Runcorn be noted.

**RESOURCES PORTFOLIO AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO**

EXB129 MARKETS UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which updated Members on the changes in the management of the Borough's markets and proposals for improvements.

The Board was reminded that in February 2012, the Council's policy that the Widnes markets (indoor and outdoor) and the outdoor Runcorn market were regarded as key assets in Halton's town centres was re-affirmed. In April 2012, the Council aligned the management of the town centres and markets within a more clearly defined economic regeneration brief, bringing together town centre management, markets operations and town centre regeneration.

It was reported that since April 2012, new markets regulations and a written protocol had been introduced, along with new procedures and the tightening up of issues such as encroachment and the display of goods. A number of marketing and promotions events had also taken place during the year, as detailed in the report, and it was noted that overall, the markets remained vibrant.

The report detailed proposals for improvement works for both the indoor and outdoor markets, and it was further noted that these had been considered and supported by the Corporate Policy and Performance Board.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Members note the changes made to the management of the markets;
- 2) the proposed actions set out in sections 3.6 to 3.12 of the report be supported;
- 3) the Operational Director for Economy, Enterprise and Property be authorised, in consultation with the Physical Environment Portfolio Holder and Resources Portfolio Holder to take decisions in relation to the proposed improvement works outlined in section 3.16 of

Strategic Director  
- Children and  
Enterprise

the report; and

- 4) the proposed improvement works will not exceed £40,000.

## **EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 24<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2013**

### **NEIGHBOURHOOD LEISURE AND SPORT PORTFOLIO**

#### **EXB137 HALTON HOUSING STRATEGY 2013-2018 - DRAFT - KEY DECISION**

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities on a draft of Halton's Housing Strategy 2013-18, for public consultation.

The Board was advised that the Local Government Act 2003 required local authorities to produce a housing strategy, to give an overview of housing in their district and to set out priorities for action. The strategic housing role was defined in the document Homes For the Future (2007) as providing "leadership, planning and delivery".

It was noted that there had been significant achievements since the last Housing Strategy was published in 2008, and these were detailed in the report. The Draft Housing Strategy 2013-18 had taken a slightly different approach from previous years, in that two documents had been produced. These were attached to the report, the first being a short easy to read document which focused on the strategic objectives, priorities and planned activities for the next three years (Appendix A) and a supported evidence paper setting out the context in which the Strategy had been developed (Appendix B).

The Draft Strategy contained three overarching strategic objectives with priorities within each, as set out in the report. It will be the subject of a seven week consultation period with partners, stakeholders and residents.

#### Reason(s) for Decision

Under Part 7 of the Local Government Act 2003, local authorities were expected to produce a Housing Strategy, which gave an overview of housing in their district and set out priorities for action.

#### Alternative Options Considered and Rejected



Not applicable.

Implementation Date

May 2013.

RESOLVED: That the content of the Draft Housing Strategy be approved and the arrangements for public consultation, as outlined in paragraph 3.4.1 of the report, be noted.

Strategic Director  
- Communities

**EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 7<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2013**

**MERSEY GATEWAY EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 24<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2013**

**MGEB13 MERSEY GATEWAY - PROPOSED PROCUREMENT BUDGET - DRAFT FINAL TENDER TO FINANCIAL CLOSE**

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive which gave details of the current position relating to the Mersey Gateway Project Development Budget covering the concluding phase of the procurement process from the Evaluation of the Draft Final Tender to Financial Close.

The Board was advised that the actual funding required to progress procurement to the Draft Final Tender stage was £12.9m and the additional £500k had been included in the outline budget set out in Appendix 1 to the report. The budget continued to come under pressure because of additional work which had required considerable input from the project's legal and financial advisers. It was reported that the activity of the project team was largely dependent on reacting to the discussions with the three main bidder consortia with the aim of driving best value bids. The selection of the Preferred Bidder would also influence the amount of work required to be undertaken before Financial Close. The Project Team were, however committed to progressing only those tasks which were deemed critical to the procurement process of the Project and the resources in the core team were being utilised fully before consultants were deployed.

The Board was further advised that on 30 August 2012, the Project Team (in conjunction with HBC Finance) had written to the Department for Transport (DfT) requesting an increase in the Department's contribution towards

preparation costs for the Mersey Gateway scheme by utilising the forecast underspend within the £86m capital grant. The DfT had responded on the 14 December 2012 agreeing to advance £5m in 2012/13 from the agreed capped £86m of development cost funding. The funding, however was to be made available in the form of £3m of revenue grant and £2m of capital grant, which should assist the Council in terms of the current discussions with the Audit Commission (now Grant Thornton) surrounding the issue of capitalisation of Mersey Gateway Development Costs. The DfT had since requested that their contribution must be claimed and utilised during the current financial year.

It was reported that the relaxation provided access to the approved grant for the additional development costs and would assist the Council to conclude procurement. The budget was now being allocated based on £5m being sufficient to reach Financial Close. However current projections indicated that it would be prudent to consider contingency arrangements to cover delivery risk in the event that £5m was proved to be inadequate. A contingency of an additional £1m was thought to be appropriate to cover the level of uncertainty. A request had also been made within the letter for an additional £1m contingency amount in addition to the £5m contribution. Although the DfT remained silent on this, the Project Team recommended approaching the Department for a response on this particular issue should further funding prove to be necessary to achieve Financial Close.

In conclusion, it was reported that the initial allocation of the £5m budget was set out in Appendix 1 to the report for approval. The projections were based on £5m being sufficient to cover the work assumed to be required to achieve Financial Close before the end of October 2013. Any delay was likely to result in additional funding being required and this was indicated in the table at Appendix 1. It was noted that the allocation of the budget between the task headings included in Appendix 1 was work in progress and as such may alter slightly. However, it was reported that such changes would be reported to the Board. In addition, it was reported that the resource levels within the Core Project Team were over capacity and no further opportunities existed to re-distribute consultant tasks internally.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) The report be noted; and

- (2) The proposed budget for the Mersey Gateway Development Costs up to Financial Close be approved.

Chief Executive

MGEB14 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

- 1) Whether Members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and
- 2) Whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

MGEB15 DRAFT SUBMISSION TO CLOSE THE COMPETITIVE DIALOGUE PROCESS

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive which explained that the Competitive Dialogue process was now in the final stages. Plans were being implemented to

close dialogue and to invite the three Bidders to submit their Final Tenders which would form the basis for a Preferred Bidder selection. The report advised the Members of the progress made in settling key issues that would enable this action to be taken.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) The progress made towards completing the Competitive Dialogue phase of procurement be noted; and
- (2) Delegated authority be granted to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, the Portfolio Holders for Transportation and Resources, Operational Directors for Policy, Planning and Transportation, Legal and Democratic Services, Financial Services and the Mersey Gateway Project Director to determine when it is appropriate to close dialogue formally and to invite Final Tenders.

Chief Executive

**REPORT TO:** Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Chief Executive

**SUBJECT:** Specialist Strategic Partnership minutes

**WARD(s):** Boroughwide

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 The Minutes relating to the relevant Portfolio which have been considered by the Environment and Urban Renewal Specialist Strategic Partnership are attached at Appendix 1 for information.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Minutes be noted.**

**3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 None.

**4.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None.

**5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

**5.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

None

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

None

**5.3 A Healthy Halton**

None

**5.4 A Safer Halton**

None

**5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None

**6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 None.

**7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 None.

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

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

## Environment and Regeneration (E&R SSP) Meeting Minutes

**Willow Room, Municipal Building, Widnes**

**5<sup>th</sup> February 2012**

### **Present:**

Mick Noone (Chair)	(MN)	Halton Borough Council
Ian Boyd	(IB)	Halton Borough Council
Eleanor Carter	(EC)	Halton Borough Council
Rhian Davitt	(RD)	HCA
Hayley Dooley	(HD)	Job Centre Plus
Debbie Houghton	(DH)	Halton Borough Council
Allison Kirk	(AK)	Norton Priory Museum
Clare Olver	(CO)	Mersey Forest
Jimmy Unsworth	(JU)	Halton Borough Council

### **Apologies:**

Cllr John Gerrard	(JG)	Halton Borough Council
Alan Graham	(AG)	Halton Borough Council
Claire Griffiths	(CG)	PlusDane Housing
Andrew Sharp	(AS)	STFC – Daresbury Labs
Karen Wickstead	(KW)	Cheshire Constabulary
Jim Yates	(JY)	Halton Borough Council

				<b><u>Actions</u></b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies, Minutes &amp; Matters Arising</b>	1.1	The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct record.	<b>JU</b>
		1.2	It was noted that promotion of Green Deal/ Viridis could be part of a package including Collective Switching. JU agreed to progress	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Presentation on the Mersey Forest Plan</b>	2.1.	Clare Olver from the Mersey Forest gave an excellent presentation to the group outlining the background, role and function of the Mersey Forest and the draft consultation plan that is currently being developed.	
		2.2.	The Mersey Forest is a partnership made up of seven local authorities (Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Warrington), Natural England, the Forestry Commission, the Environment Agency. Landowners, businesses and local communities.	

		2.3	The partnership advises and helps landowners, but does not own any land itself.	
		2.4	The partnership is coordinated by a dedicated team with each Local Authority having an officer and elected representative on the steering group.	
		2.5	Under the new Planning regulations, it must be taken as a material consideration in any planning decisions.	
		2.6	The Mersey Forest plan is refreshed every 10 years and it out for consultation at the moment, finishing in April 2013 with the formal launch due to take place in November during National Tree week.	
		2.7	JU agreed to find out who was coordinating the response from HBC and to feed this to the group.	<b>JU</b>
		2.8	The importance of including the Mersey Gateway team was also noted.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Environmental and Housing update</b>	3.1	DH gave an overview of many of the funding schemes currently available, and initiatives such as Green Deal and issues such as SEAP and the Covenant of Mayors.	
		3.2	A note of this comprehensive overview is attached to these minutes.	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Local Sustainable Transport Fund update</b>	4.1	The joint Halton/St Helens/Warrington bid is to build cross-boundary links and the focus in Halton is the Daresbury Enterprise Zone. In addition to the provision of new bus services, the bid will also look at marketing greenways, cycling, walking and improving cycle routes.	
		4.2	It was noted that an Active Travel Fund is available to support sustainable transport to and from employers and it was agreed that JobCentre Plus help promote this.	<b>RT/HD</b>
		4.3	It was noted that Arriva have applied for financial support to purchase a further 10 gas buses via the next round of the Green Bus Fund. The buses are more expensive to buy but cheaper to run. Eco Manager has also been installed in a number of buses.	



		4.4	Travel planning services to individuals and businesses were discussed, along with an update on the Real Time Information work.	
5.	<b>Any other business</b>	5.1	It was noted that JU is updating the waste management strategy. It was agreed that this circulated around the group.	
		5.2	It was agreed that the ongoing cycling consultation be shared with colleagues from The Mersey Forest.	
		5.3	RD gave an update from the HCA:  £10bn housing guarantees to be managed by DCLG to encourage delivery of new affordable homes (to be built by March 2015), and private rented units;  £100m Build to Rent fund – This is loan/equity provided to developers for schemes which provide new market rented properties. Units need to be on site by March 2015;  Firstbuy Round 2 –Developer allocations announced – potentially includes 5 sites in Halton, comprises 2012 units to be built across the NW;  Empty Homes Round 2 – Liverpool City Region to coordinate 1 bid by 25th March 2013. Plus Dane are leading the bid on behalf of the City Region. There is potential to link this to Runcorn Old Town. Priority is to bring empty commercial units back into use as affordable housing;  Custom Build – Bidding round open and there is potential for Plus Dane to submit a scheme adjacent to Lakeside/ ‘The Barge’ site;  HCA land holdings at Sandymoor – Currently Galliford Try are on site installing infrastructure to open up the site for future housing development. The scheme will be marketed shortly, with the intention that c.100 units will commence on site by March 2014.	

<b>6.</b>	<b>Next Meeting &amp; Future Diary Dates</b>	6.1	Future meetings for 2013 have been booked as follows:	
		6.1.1	7 <sup>th</sup> May, 11am, Willow Room Municipal Building, Widnes	
		6.1.2	6 <sup>th</sup> August, 11am, Willow Room, Municipal Building, Widnes	
		6.1.3	5 <sup>th</sup> November, 11am, Willow Room, Municipal Building, Widnes	

### **Fuel poverty DECC funding £115,000**

Funding is predominately to give grants to vulnerable households for heating and insulation measures. Grants are targeted at owner occupiers and private tenants who are in receipt of means tested benefits or have a low income (less than £15,860) and who have inefficient boilers and/or need insulation and who have either a dependent child, older person or someone with a disability or limiting long term illness living in the property. (a leaflet promoting the scheme is attached). The grant is being administered by Energy Projects Plus and all measures must be installed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. Grants, which are allocated on a first come, first served basis to eligible applicants, can be accessed through the Save Energy Advice Line on 0800 043 0151. Grants are available Borough-wide but some targeted promotion work will take place in Appleton ward which has the highest levels of fuel poverty in the Borough.

The funding will also be used to purchase a property specific energy database which will enable the authority to target Green Deal/ECO and other initiatives more effectively.

### **Also other funding we got on green deal with Liverpool**

Halton has also secured £40,000 of funding through the LCR City Deal to provide show homes to help promote the benefits of Green Deal. It is hoped that as part of the targeted grant promotion work in Appleton to identify 2 properties to receive a full package of Green Deal work so that the energy savings can be measured and the "Golden Rule" tested.

### **Housing Green Deal/Eco work in Halton**

Jim Yates of HBC is having discussions with Eon to develop an ECO model (he will be able to provide more info on this) – he has also been in talks with Armistead Solutions. We have also set up and are facilitating a meeting with Registered Providers to explore the feasibility of a joined up approach to ECO and Green Deal.

### **Warm Homes, Healthy People**

The authority has been successful in securing over £80,000 from the Department of Health under the second round of its Warm Homes, Healthy People programme. The fund is to be used to support vulnerable people through the winter months of 2012/13. Projects that will benefit include:

**Healthy Homes Network** – a portion of the money will be used to fund Halton's contribution to the local Save Energy Advice Line administered by Energy Projects Plus on behalf of Merseyside and Cheshire LAs; it will also be used for further funding for Heat Aware visits which provide tailored energy advice within the home and a small portion has been used to develop promotional materials including thermometers for the Network.

*Winter Survival packs* – includes identification of vulnerable people who need additional support when temperatures drop and development of a supply and delivery network of in house and local support providers;

*Expansion of telecare service* - purchase and delivery of ambient temperature sensors

*Achieving affordable Warmth training programme* – delivery of intensive full day training sessions for front line RP staff so that they can deliver practical and relevant advice to residents within the home.

### **SEAP and Covenant of Mayors** – HBC agreed to sign.

Covenant of Mayors is a European charter of commitments, signed by the local authority Mayor or other authorised representative. The key commitments are:

- To go beyond the objectives set by the EU for 2020, reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by at least 20%;
- To submit a Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) within one year of signing, outlining how the objectives will be reached;
- To submit with the SEAP a Baseline Emission Inventory (BEI);
- To submit an implementation report at least once every two years;
- To organise community 'Energy Days' to encourage energy efficiency; and
- To attend and contribute to the annual EU Conference of Mayors for a Sustainable Energy Europe (this has been confirmed as optional with the Covenant of Mayors Office).

The scope of the local SEAP is action at a local level within the competence of the local authority, covering the whole geographical area of the authority, with the main target sectors being buildings and transport.

Signing the Covenant allows access to alternative European funding schemes and advice/support from the Covenant of Mayors Office.

Liverpool Council signed the Covenant in October 2011 and are the only Liverpool City Region authority to do so to date. The City Region SEAP, launched in July 2012, included as a key recommendation that all LCR authorities sign the commitment. A total of 33 UK local authorities are registered as signatories.

### **Viridis**

Registered providers from across the Merseyside sub-region are looking at joint schemes to take advantage of ECO and other funding in order to improve housing stock. Each registered provider has contributed to the costs of a project manager post to develop the project. Each registered provider has been asked to identify their programmes for 13/14, most of which have now been received. Looking at each RP doing an archetype profile and identifying best measures to suit each property type. Also looking at joint working on behavioural change and sharing best practise.

**REPORT TO:** Environment & Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director Policy & Resources

**SUBJECT:** Performance Management Reports for Quarter 3 of 2012/13

**WARDS:** Boroughwide

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To consider and raise any questions or points of clarification in respect of performance management for the third quarter to December 2012.
- 1.2 Key priorities for development or improvement in the period 2012-15 were agreed by Members in April 2012 and included in Directorate Plans, for the various thematic areas and service functions reporting to the Environment & Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board. The report details progress against service objectives/ milestones and performance targets, in relation to the Environment and Regeneration priority and describes factors affecting the service.

**2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the Policy and Performance Board**

- 1) Receive the third quarter performance management reports;**
- 2) Consider the progress and performance information and raise any questions or points for clarification; and**
- 3) Highlight any areas of interest and/or concern where further information is to be reported at a future meeting of the Policy and Performance Board.**

**3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Departmental objectives provide a clear statement on what the services are planning to achieve and to show how they contribute to the Council's strategic priorities. Such information is central to the Council's performance management arrangements and the Policy and Performance Board has a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability.
- 3.2 In line with the revised Council's Performance Framework for 2012/13 (approved by Executive Board in 2012/13), the Policy and Performance Board has been provided with a thematic priority based report; which identifies the key issues arising from the performance in Quarter 3 as shown in Appendix 1.

3.3 The report has been structured using the following thematic areas agreed by Members and aligned to the following service functions, these being:

- Economic Regeneration(Development and Investment Services)
- Environmental (Open Spaces & Waste Management Services)
- Highways, Transportation and Logistics ( Mersey Gateway/ Core Strategy, Transport, Bridge and Highway Maintenance, Highway Development, Flood Risk Management)
- Physical Environment (Statutory Plans and Housing Issues)

3.4 The full Departmental quarterly reports are available on the Members' Information Bulletin to allow Members access to the reports as soon as they become available within six weeks of the quarter end. This also provides Members with an opportunity to give advance notice of any questions, points or requests for further information that will be raised at the PPB meeting to ensure the appropriate Officers are available. Departmental quarterly monitoring reports are also available via the following link

<http://hbc/teams/PERFIMP/PolicyandResourcesQMR/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no other implications associated with this report.

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 Departmental service objectives and performance measures, both local and national are linked to the delivery of the Council's priorities. The introduction of a Priority Based Report and the identification of business critical objectives/ milestones and performance indicators will further support organisational improvement.

6.2 Although some objectives link specifically to one priority area, the nature of the cross - cutting activities being reported, means that to a greater or lesser extent a contribution is made to one or more of the Council priorities.

#### **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Not applicable.

#### **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Not applicable.

- 9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTIONS 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**
- 9.1 Not applicable.

## Environment & Urban Renewal PPB Thematic Performance Overview Report

Reporting Period: **Quarter 3 – Period 1 October to 31 December 2012**

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of issues and progress against key service objectives/milestones and performance targets, during the third quarter of 2012/13.
- 1.2 Key priorities for development or improvement in 2012-15 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans, for the various functional areas reporting to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy & Performance Board:
- Economic Regeneration
  - Environmental
  - Highways, Transportation & Logistics
  - Physical Environment ( Statutory Plans and Housing Issues)
- 1.3 The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress to date is explained within the Appendix (section 8). Please note initials have been provided to indicate which Operational Director is responsible for the commentary to aid Members during Policy and Performance Board scrutiny of the report. A key is provided at the end of the report in the Appendix (section 8).

### 2.0 Key Developments

There have been a number of developments during the period which include:-

#### **2.1 Economic Regeneration (WR)**

##### **2.1.1 Regeneration**

The formal process to secure a further five year Business Improvement District Programme at Astmoor and Halebank Industrial Estates is well advanced.

Business Improvement Districts or BIDs are a partnership between local authorities and local businesses to provide additional services or improvements to a specific area funded by an additional levy to the non-domestic rates.

All ratepayers in the BID area have the opportunity to vote on the proposed BID Programme. Approval of a BID has to meet two tests.



Firstly a simple majority of those voting in the BID ballot must vote in favour. Secondly, those voting in favour must represent a majority by rateable value of the rateable properties of those voting.

The process by which businesses are balloted to ascertain their views with respect to the creation, or continuation, of a BID is strictly governed by statute. The following timetable has been, therefore, put in place to satisfy the requirements of the relevant legislation :-

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>
December 04 2012	Notice given to ballot holder (HBC) to hold BID Ballot.
December 05 2012	Ballot holder instructs Electoral Reform Society (ERS) of intention to ballot.
January 03 2013	ERS receives list of eligible BID businesses + wording for covering letter.
January 17 2013	Formal '42 Day Notice' of ballot issued to Department for Communities and Local Government.
January 31 2013	Ballot papers distributed by ERS.
February 28 2013	Close of Ballot.

The delivery of the ERDF 4.2 Business Support Programme is scheduled to commence in January 2013. In readiness for a January roll out a small Project Team has been created made up of a part-time Project Manager (in post) and a full time Project Support Officer (offered to existing Council staff as a secondment opportunity).

The Halton element of the pan-Merseyside ERDF 4.2 Business Support Programme will consist of firstly, a comprehensive business diagnostic which will generate a detail 'Strategic Plan for Growth' for each participating business. The 'Strategic Plan for Growth' will suggest further specific interventions which will enable the company to grow and achieve second stage growth.

The Business Improvement & Growth (BIG) team does not have the capacity or skill sets to deliver one to one, face to face business support. Expert consultancy support will, therefore, be procured utilising the Council's Matrix SProc.Net portal. The Matrix SProc.NET is a procurement portal employed by all Merseyside Local Authorities to source consultancy services.

The Team has, therefore, in partnership with Knowsley, Wirral and Sefton Councils, participated in numerous events to ensure that the programme has access to a ready supply of suitable consultants. It is anticipated that a company, consortia or group of consultants will be appointed in January 2013 to begin the diagnostic element of the programme with local companies.

### **2.1.2 Funding**

During the quarter we achieved the following:

- Received 27 new funding enquiries
- Helped to secure £11.6million in external grant funding; this included £9.77m from Regional Growth Fund and £1.81m from Growing Places Fund for Sci-Tech Daresbury, as well as a number of smaller amounts from WREN and the National Lottery.

#### Big Lottery Fund - Reaching Communities Programme

Currently supporting the following projects at Outline Proposal Stage:

- The Canal Boat Adventure Project/Woodlands Play Centre
- Halton CAB
- Catalyst SDC
- Community Safety Team

We have also now had five stage one passes, which is an achievement in itself, and are now supporting these projects with Full Stage bids

- Halton Community Transport
- Delamere Centre
- Power in Partnership
- Nightstop
- Groundwork Cheshire

#### Big Local Trust

£1m has been allocated to Windmill Hill over the next 10 years. External Funding is supporting the Advisory Group to get the programme established with the local community.

#### Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)

Sankey Canal: Working on a Round 1 bid to HLF for late 2013 as well as leading on consultation and grant criteria.

Norton Priory Museum Trust: supporting a stage 2 bid for £3.5m, with match funding target of £1million.

St Marie's Church redevelopment has passed at full stage, with an award of £800,000.

## **2.2 Environmental (CP)**

### **2.2.1 Environmental Enforcement**

During this last Quarter, Officers issued 65 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for waste related offences, taking the total issued this financial year to 221. There were also 6 successful prosecutions for waste and environmental offences, taking the total so far this year to 35.

Following a review, the Council's FPN levels have been amended and set at the upper level allowed under legislation. The increased levels have been introduced to act as a further deterrent to individuals committing waste and environmental offences.

The new FPN levels are set out in the table below:

Description of Offence	Amounts available under legislation	HBC Amount
Litter	Can be set at local level £50-£80	£75 if paid in 10 days £80 thereafter
Street Litter Control Notice	Can be set at local level £75-£110	£100 if paid in 10 days £110 thereafter
Street Litter Clearing Notice	Can be set at local level £75-£110	£100 if paid in 10 days £110 thereafter
Unauthorised Distribution of Free Printed Matter	Can be set at local level £50-£80	£75 if paid in 10 days £80 thereafter
Offences in relation to Waste Receptacles	Can be set at local level £60-£80	£75 if paid in 10 days £80 thereafter
Offences under Dog Control Orders	Can be set at local level £50-£80	£75 if paid in 10 days £80 thereafter
Failure to Produce a Waste Transfer Note	Set by Statute £300	£275 if paid in 10 days £300 thereafter
Failure to produce a Waste Carrier's Licence	Set by Statute £300	£275 if paid in 10 days £300 thereafter

## 2.2.2 Open Space Services

### Parks for People bid

In late December 2012 the service was informed that it had been successful with its 'Parks for People' bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for £1.3 million for Runcorn Hill & Heath Park.

The funding will deliver an upgraded park with better facilities and represents the biggest investment in it since the 1920s. The Parks for People money will do for Runcorn Hill what a previous lottery grant did for Victoria Park in the previous decade.

The HLF grant will allow infrastructure such as paths and fences to be upgraded and improved. The important lowland heathland will also be improved. A new park centre/café will be created, a club house created for the model boat club and the shelter at the bowling greens will be refurbished.

The project that will now commence to bring about the improvements will take 5 years.

### New Cremators

Procurement of two new cremators for Widnes Cemetery began in Q3. It is expected that the new cremators will be in situ by September 2013.

## **2.3 Highways, Transportation & Logistics (MN)**

### **2.3.1 Highway & Bridge Maintenance**

In his Autumn Statement, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that £215m of additional capital funding would be provided to local highway authorities, to help renew and repair the network in England. £140m would come in 2013/14, with the remaining £75m following in 2014/15. The funds are distributed on the basis of the Department's existing highways maintenance capital funding formula.

Halton Borough Council (HBC) will receive an additional £355k for 2013/14 (18% increase above Local Transport Plan Highway Maintenance Block) and £187k for 2014/15 (10% increase).

Delivery of major bridge maintenance work within the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) Complex using DfT Major Maintenance Capital funding is on-going. The major work to refurbish and repaint the above deck steelwork at the Runcorn end and to replace the pedestrian parapet on the footbridge has now been completed.

The 2012/13 carriageway structural reconstruction programme has been completed. It is expected that one further small scheme and pre patching works prior to next year's surface dressing programme will be addressed in Q4.

Phases one and two of the 2012/13 footway reconstruction programme have been completed with Phase three well underway.

Tenders for the provision of highway improvement and maintenance works in Halton and Warrington have been received from 5 organisations. The financial and quality aspects of these submissions are currently being evaluated with a view to award of the Contract in early March 2013 and contract start on 1 June 2013.

### **2.3.2 Highway Network Improvement**

The Depart for Transport (DfT) has invited Councils to apply for a share of the £170 million Local Pinch Point Fund to remove bottlenecks on the highway network.

This funding forms part of an additional £1.5 billion investment announced by the Government, to improve the road network and reduce congestion, Halton has been asked to respond on behalf of the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) authorities and proposes to include within the submission, schemes within the Borough boundary.

The funding follows on from an earlier £100m fund for similar schemes on the Highway Agency's strategic road network, in which funding was granted for a scheme to improve capacity of M56 Junction 11 at Daresbury.

## **2.4 Physical Environment (MN)**

### **2.4.1 Development Management Summary**

Applications Received – 130 (includes applications withdrawn and returned)

Applications on hand (undecided) - 134      Applications Decided – 123

Below is a summary of major applications received (but not necessarily decided) over the last quarter:

<b>REF</b>	<b>PROPOSAL</b>
12/00445/FUL	Proposed re-plan of plots 14 - 48 (phase 2), of the previously approved scheme 09/00512/FUL, reducing the total number of units on the development by one to 73 no. at Land To The Northern Extent Of, St Aidan's Drive, Widnes.
12/00448/FUL	Proposed installation of new and replacement gas exchanger plant at Ineos Enterprises Ltd, Sulphuric Acid Plant, Rocksavage Works, Runcorn.
12/00457/FUL	Proposed remediation and extension of allotments via the import of material to provide a clean capping layer at Allotment Gardens, Heath Road, Runcorn.
12/00458/FULEIA	Proposed development and erection of a wood fuelled Biomass Combined Heat and Power Plant and ancillary infrastructure development at Stobart Park/3MG, Widnes.
12/00473/FUL	Proposed replacement of boundary fence and gate posts at Leigh Recreation Ground, Lower House Lane, Widnes.
12/00492/S73	Proposed renewal of Planning permission 09/00509/S73 for the erection of a block of 10 no. apartments at Community Centre, Vine Street, Widnes.
12/00511/FUL	Proposed development of a Class A1 neighbourhood foodstore (1556 GIA) with 74 associated car parking spaces (amendment to proposal permitted under application Ref.11/00240/FUL) on Site Of Former, Vestric House, West Lane, Runcorn.
12/00516/FUL	Proposed erection of portal framed building for use as raw materials reception along with new tallow farm to replace existing tallow farm and new vehicle wash facility to replace existing vehicle wash facility at Granox Ltd, Desoto Road, Widnes.

REF	PROPOSAL
12/00524/OUT	Outline planning application (with all matters reserved) for demolition of existing public house and the erection of a two thousand square metre, three storey nursing home at Hallwood Raven, Eagles Way, Runcorn.
12/00535/FUL	Proposed erection of new portal frame workshop and reconstruction of existing access road at Wernick Hire Ltd, Kingfisher Business Park, Brown St, Widnes.
13/00011/S73	Proposed variation of condition 57 of BERR permission 01.08.10.04/8C (Halton Ref 07/00068/ELC) to vary (by increase) the maximum amount of Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) which may be transported by road to the energy from waste facility (EfW) from 85,000 tonnes per annum up to 480,000 tonnes per annum at Ineos Chlor South Parade, Runcorn. And to place an obligation on the operator of the EfW facility to report annually to Halton Borough Council the actions taken to secure the delivery of RDF by rail and or water over the previous 12 month period together with recommendations for the year ahead at Runcorn Energy From Waste Facility Barlow Way, Off Picow Farm Road, Runcorn.

## **2.5 Housing Issues (PMcW)**

### **2.5.1 Homelessness & Housing Strategy**

The reconfiguration of Homelessness Services is continuing. All service users have been relocated from Halton Goals and the service ceased to operate on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2012.

Following the withdrawal of Cosmopolitan Housing Association from its housing development commitments in Halton (covered in the last Report), Halton Housing Trust has submitted a number of substitute development proposals to the Homes and Communities Agency, including proposals for extra care housing and a homeless hostel in Widnes. The outcome of these funding bids is awaited.

The Department of Health recently launched a £160m funding programme, to be managed by the Homes and Communities Agency, which is focussed on developing housing provision for older people and the disabled who have care and support needs. Bids are being prepared for submission.

Work is on-going to develop Halton's Housing Strategy, with a view to presenting a draft report to Exec Board on 24 January 2013, prior to commencing stakeholder consultation during February and March which will include reports to the relevant PPBs

### **2.5.2 Supported Housing**

Quarter 3 has seen the successful opening of Naughton Fields Extra Care Housing Scheme. Naughton Fields offers high quality purpose built housing for people over 55. The development consists of 47 two bedroom apartments and in partnership with Halton Housing Trust will deliver an exciting new opportunity for people in the borough.

## **3.0 Emerging Issues**

A number of emerging issues have been identified during the period that will impact upon the work of the Council including:-

### **3.1 Economic Regeneration (WR)**

#### **3.1.1 Investment & Development**

The Halton Core Strategy was adopted in December 2012. This document sets out a spatial vision and strategic policies to guide physical development, regeneration and investment within the Borough until 2028.

Whilst the Department has already begun to align its functions and service delivery to reflect new spatial plan priorities, such as through the recent restructure of development and investment services, further adjustment will be required over the next 12 months to ensure the department is focused on enabling delivery of the plan and securing maximum local economic benefits. Going forward this will create new service objective (and associated milestones) for the department including:

- Managing transition of resources from delivery of older regeneration programmes to developing and delivery of programmes within the Core Strategy key areas of change;
- Developing a refreshed departmental offer to changing patterns of inward investment opportunities;

#### **3.1.2 External Funding**

The team is currently undertaking an analysis with Community Development Team of funding enquiries received between September and November 2012 with a view to exploring income generation opportunities.

Work is continuing to facilitate a Funding Update group for the Council, to look at areas of duplication and gaps in service provision, and also to explore joint training opportunities.

A training plan is being developed for 2013 to encourage self-sustainability for groups and Council colleagues to include Awards for All, Heritage Lottery Fund and How to Write High Quality bids.

Training sessions now booked as follows:

January 31<sup>st</sup> - Awards for All surgeries with Community Development Team

February 1<sup>st</sup> - Esmee Fairbairn Foundation surgeries

February 13<sup>th</sup> - Heritage Lottery Fund overview session

The service is continuing to support the JV Partnership at Sci-Tech Daresbury to source match funding and to develop a funding strategy for the site.

### **3.2 Environmental (CP)**

#### **3.2.1 Open Space Services**

The exceptionally wet weather continued through Quarter 3. This compounded the issues that the service was already facing and has resulted in additional costs.

Water damage to open space infrastructure has been significant with culverts becoming blocked and pond edges breaking up. Winter playing pitch maintenance has been severely affected.

### **3.3 Highways, Transportation & Logistics (MN)**

#### **3.3.1 Winter Maintenance**

The winter maintenance season for highways commenced on 10 October 2012. By the end of December, 20 gritting runs had been undertaken using 440 tonnes of grit. Approximately 1250 tonnes of grit is stockpiled and stock levels continue to be monitored with a view to replenishing at the appropriate time.

#### **3.3.2 Highway Development**

Following the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) consultation exercise early last year, the implementation of the Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) schedule of the Flood and Water Management Act may now be delayed until April 2014 or later. The legislation as currently drafted, carries through the recommendations of the Pitt Report, and includes the setting up of a local SuDS Approval Body (SAB) to consider and approve sustainable drainage proposals from developers and to adopt and maintain those systems in the future.

#### **3.3.3 Street Lighting**

Electricity rates will increase from 1 April 2013 by about 10%. It has been necessary to apply for extra funding to cover the increase of £115k. This is only for one year and the rate in future years is still unknown, but it is likely to be increase further.



#### 4.0 Risk Control Measures

- 4.1 Risk control forms an integral part of the Council's Business Planning and performance monitoring arrangements. During the development of the 2012/13 Business Plan, the service was required to undertake a risk assessment of all key service objectives with high risks included in the Directorate Risk Register.

As a result, monitoring of all relevant 'high' risks will be undertaken and progress reported against the application of the risk treatment measures in Quarters 2 and 4.

#### 5.0 Progress against high priority equality actions

- 5.1 There have been no high priority equality actions identified in the quarter.

#### 6.0 Performance Overview

The following information provides a synopsis of progress for both milestones and performance indicators across the key business areas that have been identified by the Directorate.

##### [6.1 Economic Regeneration](#)

##### **Key Objectives / Milestones**

##### **Development & Investment Services**

Ref	Milestones	Q3 Progress
EEP 2	Agree the restoration strategy for St Michaels Golf Course and commence Phase 2 by <b>July 2012</b> .	
EEP 2	Complete the second phase of warehouse development on Stobart land and the improvements to Foundry Lane access by <b>March 2013</b> .	

##### **Supporting Commentary**

##### **St. Michaels Golf Course Restoration**





The restoration strategy for St Michaels Golf Course is on schedule, with the 3 month exclusivity agreement between Halton Borough Council (HBC) and Mersey Valley is now in place.

Officers are due to meet with Mersey Valley on the 8th January to receive an update on intended programme of work by Mersey Valley. Due diligence work will continue by HBC to ensure best value and to inform decision to commence to lease at the end of the exclusivity period.

### Stobart land and Foundry Lane Developments

The land remediation of phase 2 of is well underway with over £3m spent to date. On completion of the land remediation Stobart will look to start the warehouse development (subject to securing a tenant). However this is expected to be completed by March 2015.

#### Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	11/12 Actual	12/13 Target	Q3	Current Progress	Direction of travel
<b><u>DIS LI 01</u></b>	Occupancy of HBC Industrial Units.	72%	85%	81%		
<b><u>DIS LI 02</u></b>	Occupancy of Widnes Market Hall.	85%	90%	92%		

#### Supporting Commentary

##### DIS LI 01

A campaign to further promote our industrial units which has resulted in an improvement in the quarter from 72% to 81%. However, looking across the portfolio, the property sector as a whole is fragile.

##### DIS LI 02



Occupancy rate as at the end of December 2012 is 92%. 14 stalls are vacant out of 184 stalls. Occupancy rates may be affected by the continuing economic recession which is still adversely affecting businesses. Many traders within the market are struggling financially and are close to leaving the market in the New Year.

However, there are 15 applications which will be considered in mid-January 2013 which demonstrates that there are businesses still looking to be located within the market.

## 6.2 Environmental

### 6.2.1 Open Spaces

#### Key Objectives / Milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q3 Progress
CE 5	Runcorn Hill Park (Parks for People bid) - Work up bid to 'Second Round' submission stage (subject to success of First Round) - <b>March 2013.</b>	
CE 5	Woodland Expansion - Additional 200m2 of Woodland planted Borough wide - <b>March 2013.</b>	

### Supporting Commentary







#### Runcorn Hill Park Funding

The Council was informed that it has been successful with its bid in late December 2012 and external for funding of £1.3 million has been secured for Runcorn Hill & Heath Park.

#### Woodland Expansion

Planting plans were completed in Quarter 2. Planting commenced in Quarter 3 and will continue into Q4.

### Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	11/12 Actual	12/13 Target	Q3	Current Progress	Direction of travel
CE LI 13	Greenstat-Survey, Satisfaction with the standard of maintenance of trees, flowers and flower beds. (Previously EAR LI8). (%)	97.5	78	100%		
CE LI 18	Satisfaction with the standard of cleanliness and maintenance of parks and green spaces. (Previously EAR LI2). (%)	95.9	92	97.4%		
CE LI 19	Number of Green Flag Awards for Halton (Previously EAR LI3).	12	12	12		

### Supporting Commentary

#### CE LI 13 & 18



Figure is from the latest Greenstat Survey with at least 40 questionnaires are completed every quarter at a number of different parks.



#### CE LI 19

Green Flag Awards are made in Q1 and remain static until they expire in Q1 2013/14. Parks will be submitted for the 2013/14 award in Q4 of 2012/13.

### 6.2.2 Waste Management

#### Key Objectives / Milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q3 Progress
CE 6	Publish a revised Waste Management Strategy - <b>March 2013</b> .	
CE 6	Continue to review and assess the effectiveness of projects and initiatives to help improve energy efficiency and reduce CO2 emissions - <b>March 2013</b> .	

CE 6	Develop and publish a Waste Communications Plan and implement actions arising from the Plan - <b>March 2013</b> .	
CE 7	Continue to develop Action Plans and Protocols with External Agencies to effectively prevent and tackle a range of waste and environmental offences - <b>March 2013</b> .	

### Supporting Commentary

#### Publication of Revised Waste Management Strategy

A review of the Waste Management Strategy has commenced and an updated Strategy will be produced as per the milestone date.

#### Energy Efficiency and CO<sub>2</sub> Reduction

An energy management toolkit has been created to help building managers monitor energy usage in all council buildings fitted with automatic meter reading. An internal energy consumption monitoring and reporting process has now been introduced to help reduce energy consumption within corporate buildings.







#### Waste Communications Plan

A draft Waste Communications Plan has been produced and the implementation of actions contained within the Plan will commence ahead of the milestone date.

#### Waste and Environmental Offences

As reported in previous quarterly reports, joint working arrangements with external agencies have been on-going through this financial year and will continue. Officers are currently working on a programme of activities in partnership with a number of Housing Associations to reduce fly-tipping and other waste related problems.

### Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	11/12 Actual	12/13 Target	Q3	Current Progress	Direction of travel
CE LI 14	Residual household waste per household (Previously NI191). (Kgs)	655.18 Kgs (Estimated Cumulative)	700 Kgs Cumulative	475 Kgs		
CE LI 15	Household waste recycled and composted (Previously NI192). (%)	38.42% (Estimated)	40%	39.73%		
CE LI 16	Municipal waste land filled (Previously NI193). (%)	61.36% (Estimated)	61%	58.57%		

### Supporting Commentary




#### CE LI 14, 15 & 16

These are estimated figures and waste is subject to seasonal variation, however, indications at this stage are that these targets will be met.

### 6.3 Highways, Transportation & Logistics

#### 6.3.1 Mersey Gateway

##### Key Objectives / Milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q3 Progress
PPT 07	Bidders submit draft final tenders. <b>November 2012</b>	
PPT 07	Issue Invitation to Submit Final Tender. <b>February 2013</b>	
PPT 07	Deadline for return of tenders. <b>March 2013</b>	

#### Supporting Commentary

##### Mersey Gateway – Final Tender Submission & Evaluation









Draft final tenders were received on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2012.



Invitation to submit final tenders will take place in February 2013 after the Commercial and Technical Dialogue teams have evaluated the draft final tenders.

The Project Team intend to close dialogue on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013 and issue the invitation to submit final tender.

#### 6.3.2 Transport

##### Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	11/12 Actual	12/13 Target	Q3	Current Progress	Direction of travel
<b>PPT LI 02</b>	Increase MOT test facility turnover by 3% per annum (£)	213,789	192,757 (+3%)	173,379		
<b>PPT LI 18 (Ex NI 178)</b>	Bus service punctuality, Part 1: The proportion of non-frequent scheduled services on time (%):					
	a) Percentage of buses starting route on time	96.56%	97.7%	97.43%		
	b) Percentage of buses on time at intermediate timing points	87.30%	86%	92.09%		
<b>PPT LI 20</b>	No. of passengers on community based accessible transport	253,682	267,000	202,357		

Ref	Measure	11/12 Actual	12/13 Target	Q3	Current Progress	Direction of travel
<b><u>PPT LI 22 (Ex NI 177)</u></b>	Number of local bus passenger journeys originating in the authority area in one year (000's)	6,060	6,200	4,134		

### Supporting Commentary

#### **PPT LI 02**

Income receipts have remained above expected levels despite the reduced national economic growth forecast.

#### **PPT LI 18 (a)**

This indicator continues to perform well and has seen a very slight increase on Q2 2012/13 figures.

#### **PPT LI 18 (b)**

The indicator continues to perform well and it is expected the indicator will achieve above expected levels for this year.

#### **PPT LI 20**


Passenger numbers have increased during Q3 as expected. The increase is due to school journeys and season journeys during the Christmas period. It is anticipated the target figure will be achieved for this year.

#### **PPT LI 22**

Patronage on During Q3 has improved on Q2. This is due to seasonal increase. However it is anticipated the indicator will not achieve expected levels for the year. Operators have identified that patronage has dropped due to the current economic climate and the need to reduce operational mileage.

### **6.3.3 Bridge & Highway Maintenance**

#### **Key Objectives / Milestones**

Ref	Milestones	Q3 Progress
PPT 05	Review progress, revise SJB maintenance strategy document and deliver 2012/13 major bridge maintenance works programme. <b>March 2013</b>	





### Supporting Commentary

#### Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) Maintenance Strategy

The 2012/13 works programme is progressing. All above deck and below deck SJB refurbishment works in this year's programme have been completed. Replacement of the SJB footbridge parapet is complete. The new parapet at 1.8m high is 0.4m higher than the original parapet.

A new phase of SJB Complex major bridge maintenance works will commence in February 2013 but as this is confined to below deck level, the traffic management consequences will be much reduced.

### Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	11/12 Actual	12/13 Target	Q3	Current Progress	Direction of travel
<b><u>PPT LI 01</u></b>	Number of third party compensation claims received due to alleged highway / footway defects	127	110	105		
PPT LI 14	Damage to roads and pavements (% dangerous damage repaired within 24 hours).	94.4%	98%	80%		

### Supporting Commentary

#### PPT LI 01


There have been 105 3rd party claims up to Q3. Although this is less than the Q3 total in 2011/12 (107) it would appear very unlikely that the 2012/13 target will be met. It should be noted however that the numbers of successful claims remains a low proportion of all claims received.

#### PPT LI 14

The fall in performance on this measure is largely as result of more inspections being undertaken due to additional resources being made available. However those repairs that are safety critical continue to be given priority. Additionally the manner in which this nature of reactive maintenance is delivered will be rationalised in the new Highways term contract which is effective from June 2013 and will bring performance back in line with target.

### 6.3.4 Highway Development

#### Key Objectives / Milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q3 Progress
PPT 09	To deliver the 2012 /13 LTP Capital Programme. <b>March 2013</b>	

#### Supporting Commentary





##### Local Transport Plan (LTP) Capital Program 2012/13

The highway maintenance block of the capital programme is now complete. Integrated transport improvement schemes are currently being delivered including local safety scheme minor works and walking / cycling / bus improvements focused on neighbourhood centres in the Ditton and Grange areas.

The scheme to upgrade Halton Lea South bus station is now complete and the programme of other bus stop improvements continues at locations across the Borough. This includes the provision of new shelters and street furniture at Greenoaks bus station.

### 6.3.5 Traffic / Road Safety

#### Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	11/12 Actual	12/13 Target	Q3	Current Progress	Direction of travel
<b><u>PPT</u></b> <b><u>LI 12</u></b>	Average number of days taken to repair street lighting fault: non DNO (Street lights controlled by the authority). (Previously BVPI 215a).	6	5	5		
<b><u>PPT</u></b> <b><u>LI 13</u></b>	Average number of days taken to repair street lighting fault: DNO (Street lights controlled by the energy provider). (Previously BVPI 215b).	29	30	29		

#### Supporting Commentary

##### PPT LI 12 & 13

Currently on target but performance can reduce during the darker nights due to an increased number of faults being reported and an increased workload.



### 6.3.6 Flood Risk Management

#### Key Objectives / Milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q3 Progress
PPT 08	Flood Risk Management (FRM) - to manage the risk of local flooding (i.e. flooding arising from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses) across the Borough by delivering a programme of FRM schemes for 2012/13 <b>March 2013</b>	?

#### Supporting Commentary

£6k was provisionally allocated in the Medium Term Programme to continue survey and investigation works for the Pickerings Pasture scheme but this was allocation could not be drawn down. This has meant that it is uncertain if the target deadline will be achieved by the date specified.

It should be noted that this funding may not be required and will be the subject of discussions with the Environment Agency (EA), as mentioned above. This is because the EA have advised that following completion of the initial investigatory report, which they funded, and after further consideration by their officers, the Pickerings Pasture scheme would not qualify for Flood Defence Grant in Aid funding as properties are not affected by the potential flooding in case of failure of the protection works.

The Environment Agency have offered to assist us in establishing which part of the Agency would be the relevant funding provider for the scheme (probably one of the contamination protection teams).

### 6.4 Physical Environment (MN/PMcW)

#### Key Objectives / Milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q3 Progress
PPT 01	Progress the Core Strategy towards Adoption. <b>October 2012</b>	✘
PPT 01	Progress the Waste Development Plan Document (DPD) to adoption. <b>February 2013</b>	✔
PPT 01	Progress Climate Change Strategy towards adoption. <b>June 2012</b>	✘
PPT 02	Update the State of the Borough Report. <b>July 2012</b>	✔

#### Supporting Commentary

##### Core Strategy & Waste Development

The Core Strategy Local Plan was adopted by Full Council in December 2012.

A public consultation on the modifications was over the period 14 November 2012 to 10 January 2013. Following the consultation, representations have been forwarded to the Inspector and her report is awaited, which if positive will allow the Waste DPD to be adopted.

### Climate Change Strategy









Progress towards adoption continues to be made. The Strategy is being amended to reflect recent Executive Board decision to adopt the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP) and Local Government Association's Climate Local commitment.

### State of the Borough Report

The updating of the State of the Borough is an on-going process as data becomes available. The staged release of the Census data will require updates throughout the financial year. As each section is updated it will incorporate products such as the Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and unemployment summary.

To aid this various profiles have been made available at: [www.halton.gov.uk/research](http://www.halton.gov.uk/research)

### Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	11/12 Actual	12/13 Target	Q3	Current Progress	Direction of travel
<b><u>PPT LI 06</u></b> <b><u>(Ex NI157)</u></b>	% Processing of planning applications as measured against targets for: a) 'major' applications b) 'minor' applications c) 'other' applications	25%	60%	11.76%		
		34.29%	80%	34.38%		
		54.79%	80%	69.7%		
<b><u>PPT LI 07</u></b>	To ensure a five year rolling supply of housing land available for 2, 000 homes over 5 years. Measure as supply of ready to develop housing sites (%).	128.8	100	N/A	N/A	
<b><u>PPT LI 08</u></b> <b><u>(Ex NI170)</u></b>	To regenerate 5 hectares of urban sites per annum for the next five years.	N/A	5ha	5ha		N/A

### Supporting Commentary

#### PPT LI 06

As part of the Wave 3 Efficiency Review additional resource has been put into the staffing of the daily duty rota that deals with general planning queries from the public. This allows Area Planning Officers to spend more time on case work and will result in improved performance. Recruitment is underway for additional staff resources.

**PPT LI 07**




The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is prepared annually and the final report made available on the Council's website by the end of quarter 4 2012/13. The SHLAA 2012 (for the year 2011/12) indicated that there is sufficient residential land available to meet the Boroughs five year housing land supply.

**PPT LI 08**

A number of brownfield sites across the Borough have either been granted planning consent or works commenced on site. Examples include Widnes Waterfront, 3MG, Polar Ford redevelopment at Halton Lea, Halton Road housing scheme.

### 6.4.2 Housing Issues

#### **Key Objectives / Milestones**

Ref	Milestones	Q3 Progress
CCC 1	Work with the Council's Planning Department to introduce an affordable housing policy within the Local Development Framework. <b>Mar 2013</b> (AOF18 )	
CCC 1	Introduce a Choice Based Lettings scheme to improve choice for those on the Housing Register seeking accommodation. <b>September 2012</b> (AOF 18)	
CCC 2	Continue to negotiate with housing providers and partners in relation to the provision of further extra care housing tenancies, to ensure requirements are met (including the submission of appropriate funding bids). <b>March 2013</b> (AOF18 & 21)	

#### **Supporting Commentary**

##### **Affordable Housing Policy**

The 5 Boroughs Partnership has successfully completed its first full quarter of service since the redesign of the Acute Care Pathway. Initial findings have been extremely positive in both the quality and the timeliness of delivery of care. Progress will continue to be monitored.

The redesign of the Later Life and Memory Service for older people is currently being undertaken. Findings from an agreed pilot in Wigan have been analysed and implementation plans for Halton have been developed. The redesign will be in place by April 2013.

##### **Choice Based Lettings**

The Property Pool Plus scheme was formally launched in July 2012.

##### **Extra Care Housing**

Bids have been submitted to the Homes and Communities Agency for two extra care schemes, each of 50 units, on land at Halton Brook and Pingot. The outcome of the bids is awaited.

## 7.0 Financial Statement

## COMMUNITY &amp; ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

Revenue Budget as at 31st December 2012

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget To Date £'000	Actual to Date £'000	Variance To Date (overspend) £'000
<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>				
Employees	11,457	8,625	8,977	(352)
Other Premises	1,200	858	720	138
Supplies & Services	1,377	1,078	842	236
Book Fund	245	169	156	13
Promotional	260	255	253	2
Other Hired Services	925	598	582	16
Food Provisions	861	589	518	71
School Meals Food	1,656	884	830	54
Transport	43	39	39	0
Other Agency Costs	121	88	65	23
Waste Disposal Contracts	5,113	2,414	2,364	50
Leisure Management Contract	1,493	870	886	(16)
Grants To Voluntary Organisations	72	63	64	(1)
Grant To Norton Priory	222	222	224	(2)
Rolling Projects	286	68	68	0
Transfers To Reserves	10	0	0	0
Capital Financing	59	9	8	1
<b>Total Spending</b>	<b>25,400</b>	<b>16,829</b>	<b>16,596</b>	<b>233</b>
<b><u>Income</u></b>				
Sales Income	-1,948	-1,402	-1,333	(69)
School Meals Sales	-2,173	-1,066	-1,129	63
Fees & Charges Income	-2,393	-1,787	-1,587	(200)
Rents Income	-178	-159	-124	(35)
Government Grant Income	-31	-38	-43	5
Reimbursements & Other Income	-476	-377	-392	15
Schools SLA Income	-2,037	-1,931	-1,969	38
Internal Fees Income	-123	-72	-37	(35)
School Meals Other Income	-369	-261	-279	18
Meals On Wheels	-193	-145	-154	9
Catering Fees	-226	-169	-64	(105)
Capital Salaries	-101	-75	-69	(6)
Transfers From Reserves	-298	-17	-17	0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-10,546</b>	<b>-7,499</b>	<b>-7,197</b>	<b>(302)</b>
<b>Net Controllable Expenditure</b>	<b>14,854</b>	<b>9,330</b>	<b>9,399</b>	<b>(69)</b>

<b>Recharges</b>				
Premises Support	1,329	832	833	(1)
Transport Recharges	2,343	1,848	1,852	(4)
Departmental Support Services	9	0	0	0
Central Support Services	2,757	2,080	2,079	1
Asset Charges	2,459	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-307	-307	-307	0
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>8,590</b>	<b>4,453</b>	<b>4,457</b>	<b>(4)</b>
<b>Net Departmental Total</b>	<b>23,444</b>	<b>13,783</b>	<b>13,856</b>	<b>(73)</b>

**Comments on the above figures:**

In overall terms the Net Operational budget is £73,000 over budget profile at the end of the third quarter of the financial year.

Staffing related expenditure is over budget profile by £352,000, although this is primarily due to the £513,000 savings target for premium pay, staff turnover and terms and conditions budget reductions. Agency staff is still being used to keep services running at full capacity in the Open Spaces and Waste Management Divisions with expenditure of over £252,000 so far. In Open Spaces this has been necessary to cover up to ten long term illnesses, but this is now diminishing. Waste Management have also had a number of long term illnesses and two of these will continue for at least the rest of this financial year. One recent return to work should reduce agency costs slightly for the remainder of the year. Most other employee costs are under budget profile across the department with exception of the Stadium Catering and Matchdays.

Other Premises costs and Supplies and Services are both currently under budget profile. Advertising spending across the department remains low as does purchasing of dustbins and repairs of equipment in school kitchens. Expenditure incurred on utilities and Rates is still lower than expected at this point of the year.

Expenditure on food provisions for both catering and school meals remain lower than anticipated though related sales for catering also remain low, so adversely affecting related income. Internal Catering Fees Income is also under budget profile due to the continuing trend of reduced internal orders for catering across the council as a whole. School Meals incomes continue to benefit from the recent price increase of school meals and school breaks are also expected to over achieve against target.

Fees & Charges income is still under achieving on its budget target across most divisions of the department, mainly due to an unachievable target on Open Spaces, suite hire at the Stadium and a fall in Trade waste within Waste Management partly due to companies going into administration. Income budgets are currently being investigated to determine if they can be realigned to reflect more accurately income levels generated from the service provided.

Rental income will be considerably reduced this current financial year due to Everton Football Club no longer using the Stadium. The annual effect of this will be in the region of £ 50,000.

## COMMUNITY & ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

### Capital Projects as at 31 December 2012

	2012/13 Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation To Date £'000	Actual Spend To Date £'000	Allocation Remaining £'000
Stadium Minor Works	30	18	18	12
Stadium Disability Works	25	12	12	13
Children's Playground Equipment	96	88	34	62
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340	20	20	320
Arley Drive (Upton)	72	20	6	66
The Glen	5	1	2	3
Crow Wood	12	0	0	12
Open Spaces Schemes	150	87	52	98
Runcorn Cemetery Extension	71	38	61	10
Installation of 5 Multi Use Games Areas	29	15	0	29
Dev of Facilities at RTH Park	73	73	75	(2)
Playground Runcorn Hill Park	48	43	44	4
Litter Bins	28	18	23	5
Cremators At Widnes Crematorium	350	0	0	350
Runcorn Busway Works For Gas Powered Buses	90	0	0	90
Castlefields Recycling Scheme	30	0	0	30
	1,449	433	347	1,102

**ECONOMY, ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY DEPARTMENT**  
**Summary Financial Position as at 31 December 2012**

SUMMARY FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2012

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Expenditure to Date £'000	Variance to Date (overspend) £'000
<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>				
Employees	4,493	3,546	3,606	(60)
Repairs & Maintenance	2,585	2,051	2,164	(113)
Energy & Water Costs	626	532	476	56
NNDR	854	813	763	50
Rents	683	624	647	(23)
Marketing Programme	98	27	27	0
Promotions	41	29	28	1
Supplies & Services	1,332	852	807	45
Agency Related Payments	90	33	33	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>10,802</b>	<b>8,507</b>	<b>8,551</b>	<b>(44)</b>
Sales	0	0	0	0
Fees & Charges	-319	-283	-284	1
Rent - Markets	-806	-629	-609	(20)
Rent - Industrial	-613	-484	-447	(37)
Rent - Commercial	-1,099	-874	-784	(90)
Government Grant Income	-913	-791	-791	0
Transfer from Reserves	-45	-220	-220	0
Recharges to Capital	-754	-167	-118	(49)
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-662	-471	-471	0
Schools SLA Income	-684	-647	-629	(18)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>-5,895</b>	<b>-4,566</b>	<b>-4,353</b>	<b>(213)</b>
<b>NET OPERATIONAL BUDGET</b>	<b>4,907</b>	<b>3,941</b>	<b>4,198</b>	<b>(257)</b>
Premises Support	1,518	1,151	1,151	0
Transport Support Costs	47	33	33	0
Central Support Service Costs	2,057	1,579	1,579	0
Asset Rental Support Costs	3,464	8	8	0
Repairs & Maintenance Recharge Income	-2,393	-1,795	-1,795	0
Accommodation Recharge Income	-3,344	-2,508	-2,508	0
Central Supp. Service Rech Income	-1,833	-1,416	-1,416	0
<b>Total Recharges</b>	<b>-484</b>	<b>-2,948</b>	<b>-2,948</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>4,423</b>	<b>993</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>(257)</b>

**Comments on the above figures:**

The expenditure for employees is above budget as staff savings targets are not being achieved. This is due to an insufficient level of staff turnover compared to staff vacancies across the Division and will be closely monitored throughout the financial year.

A recent reduction in the Repairs & Maintenance budget has resulted in an in-year overspend. This is only temporary and is restricted to the current financial year as a retendering exercise has been carried out (which will result in a reduction of planned maintenance expenditure) ensuring the budget is balanced in future years.

Energy and water costs are under budget as a result of improvements that are currently being implemented throughout the Council. Business rates are under budget due to the revaluation of various properties within the Council.

In order to ease budget pressures only necessary spending on supplies and services has occurred in year.

Rental Income (including Markets; Industrial Estates & Commercial) is currently showing a shortfall due to vacant units across all three areas. Work is being carried out to promote these units and there is a possibility that activity levels will change as the financial year progresses. Budgets will be monitored closely throughout the year to make sure the financial impact is limited and action taken to balance the Directorate budget at year-end.

In overall terms it is anticipated that net expenditure will be above the overall departmental budget by year-end, primarily as a result of the shortfalls in income outlined above. Steps will therefore need to be taken where possible to reduce expenditure to offset the shortfalls in income.



**PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT****REVENUE BUDGET AS AT 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012**

	Annual Budget	Budget To Date	Actual To Date	Variance To Date (overspen d) £'000
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure				
Employees	6,050	4,670	4,713	(43)
Other Premises	230	117	102	15
Hired & Contracted Services	1,697	827	821	6
Supplies & Services	369	153	149	4
Street Lighting	1,656	970	951	19
Highways Maintenance	2,160	1,188	1,177	11
Bridges	92	92	94	(2)
Fleet Transport	1,259	1,207	1,206	1
Lease Car Contracts	694	642	642	0
Bus Support – Halton Hopper Tickets	170	155	156	(1)
Bus Support	575	351	361	(10)
Out of Borough Transport	51	34	32	2
Finance Charges	407	486	486	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	75	75	75	0
NRA Levy	62	46	45	1
Mersey Gateway	5,176	3,051	3,051	0
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>20,723</b>	<b>14,064</b>	<b>14,061</b>	<b>3</b>
Income				
Sales	-247	-256	-289	33
Planning Fees	-486	-260	-230	(30)
Building Control Fees	-182	-136	-115	(21)
Other Fees & Charges	-395	-323	-387	64
Rents	-8	-6	-6	0
Grants & Reimbursements	-3,634	-501	-496	(5)
School SLAs	-38	-38	-37	(1)
Recharge to Capital	-3,248	-2,345	-2,345	0
	-702	0	0	0
Contribution from Reserves				
Total Income	-8,940	-3,865	-3,905	40
<b>Net Controllable Expenditure</b>	<b>11,783</b>	<b>10,199</b>	<b>10,156</b>	<b>43</b>

<b>Recharges</b>				
Premises Support	832	486	496	(10)
Transport Recharges	518	425	407	18
Asset Charges	8,498	0	0	0
Central Support Recharges	3,007	2,256	2,256	0
Departmental Support Recharges	546	0	0	0
Support Recharges Income – Transport	-3,993	-3,313	-3,321	8
Support Recharges Income – Non Transport	-4,254	-1,937	-1,938	1
<b>Net Total Recharges</b>	<b>5,154</b>	<b>-2,083</b>	<b>-2,100</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Net Departmental Total</b>	<b>16,937</b>	<b>8,116</b>	<b>8,056</b>	<b>60</b>

**Comments on the above figures:**

In overall terms revenue spending at the end of quarter 3 is below budget profile. This is due to a number of expenditure and income budget areas.

Staffing is above budget due to savings targets not being fully met within Bridge & Highway Maintenance, Logistics, and Policy & Strategy divisions. There are also efficiency savings targets within the Policy & Strategy division which will not be achieved until 2013/14 following the implementation of the Policy, Performance, Marketing & Communications workstream.

Other Premises is below budget to date mainly due to a lower than expected utility bills within Logistics Division.

Supplies & Services is below budget due to a combination of small variances to date across Logistics Policy & Strategy and Traffic, Risk & Emergency Planning divisions.

Fees & Charges income is above income target partly due to MOT fees performing better than anticipated at this point in time. The remaining variance relates to Traffic Management where there have been additional road closures, higher than expected number of defects and overstays by Statutory Undertakers. It is anticipated that this will not continue as Statutory Undertakers are taking action to improve their efficiency and standards of work to avoid incurring these charges and challenging/refusing to pay invoices. This has been evidenced recently by the fact that very few United Utilities reinstatements are now failing their inspection. This additional income will offset not being able to achieve savings originally anticipated from switching off street lighting. This is due to increased standing charges from the energy supplier as a result of the feed in tariffs.

At this stage it is anticipated that overall-spend will be lower than the Departmental budget at the financial year-end.

## POLICY, PLANNING &amp; TRANSPORTATION

**Capital Projects as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012**




	2012/13 Capital Allocation £'000	Allocatio n To Date £'000	Actual Spend To Date £'000	Allocation Remaining £'000
<b>Local Transport Plan</b>				
<b>Bridges &amp; Highway Maintenance</b>				
Bridge Assessment, Strengthening & Maintenance	5,245	4,023	4,356	889
Road Maintenance	1,578	1,180	1,420	158
Total Bridge & Highway Maintenance	<b>6,823</b>	<b>5,203</b>	<b>5,776</b>	<b>1,047</b>
<b>Integrated Transport</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>416</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>588</b>
Total Local Transport Plan	<b>7,661</b>	<b>5,619</b>	<b>6,026</b>	<b>1,635</b>
<b>Halton Borough Council</b>				
Early Land Acquisition Mersey Gateway	13,481	8,070	8,055	5,426
Development Costs Mersey Gateway	3,500	1,528	1,528	1,972
Street lighting – Structural Maintenance	200	160	94	106
Risk Management	167	120	99	68
Total Halton Borough Council	<b>17,348</b>	<b>9,878</b>	<b>9,776</b>	<b>7,572</b>
<b><u>Grant Funded</u></b>				
Surface Water Management Grant	172	0	0	172
Contaminated Land –Heath Road Allotments	48	2	9	39
Growth Points	380	380	380	0
Mid Mersey Local Sustainable Transport - Infrastructure	10	2	2	8
Total Grant Funded	<b>610</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>S106 Funded</b>				
Asda Runcorn	165	154	156	9
Evertie – Derby/Peelhouse	15	0	0	15
Norlands Lane	15	0	0	15
Total S106 Funded	<b>195</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>39</b>
Total Capital Programme	<b>25,814</b>	<b>16,035</b>	<b>16,349</b>	<b>9,465</b>

The LTP allocation includes a carry forward from 11/12 of £113,000 for Integrated Transport

Work is being undertaken with regards to the capital and revenue split for Mersey Gateway so the allocation above may change in the future.




## 8.0 Appendix – Explanation for use of symbols

Symbols are used in the following manner:

<u>Progress</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Performance Indicator</u>
<b>Green</b> 	Indicates that the <u>objective is on course to be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that the annual target <u>is on course to be achieved</u>.</i>
<b>Amber</b> 	Indicates that it is <u>uncertain or too early to say at this stage</u> , whether the milestone/objective will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that it is <u>uncertain or too early to say at this stage</u> whether the annual target is on course to be achieved.</i>
<b>Red</b> 	Indicates that it is <u>highly likely or certain</u> that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	<i>Indicates that the target <u>will not be achieved unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken</u>.</i>

Direction of Travel Indicator

***Where possible performance measures will also identify a direction of travel using the following convention***

<b>Green</b> 	<i>Indicates that <b>performance is better</b> as compared to the same period last year.</i>
<b>Amber</b> 	<i>Indicates that <b>performance is the same</b> as compared to the same period last year.</i>
<b>Red</b> 	<i>Indicates that <b>performance is worse</b> as compared to the same period last year.</i>
<b>N/A</b>	<i>Indicates that the measure cannot be compared to the same period last year.</i>

### **Key for Operational Director lead:**

MN – Mick Noone, Operational Director, Policy, Planning & Transportation

CP – Chris Patino, Operational Director, Community & Environment

PMcW – Paul McWade, Operational Director, Commissioning & Complex Care

WR – Wesley Rourke Operational Director Economy Enterprise & Property

**REPORT TO:** Environment & Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Communities

**PORTFOLIO:** Environmental Sustainability

**SUBJECT:** Waste Topic Group Meeting

**WARD(S):** Borough-wide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with a copy of the notes of a meeting of the Waste Topic Group and to make recommendations arising from the meeting in respect of the Council's charges for the collection of bulky items and the provision of new and replacement wheeled bins.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That**

- 1. members receive and comment upon the report; and**
- 2. the proposed increases in charges for the collection of bulky items and the provision of new and replacement wheeled bins, as set out in the report, be presented to the Executive Board for approval.**

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Waste Topic Group met on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013. (The notes of the meeting are attached as Appendix 1). At this meeting, Members considered information provided by the Divisional Manager for Waste and Environmental Improvement relating to charges for the collection of bulky items and the provision of new and replacement wheeled bins. Charging for these services is included within the Council's Household Waste Collection Policy that came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011.

#### Charges for Wheeled Bins

3.2 Members were advised that the numbers of residents requesting replacement wheeled bins has significantly reduced since the introduction of the charge. In 2010/11 there were 2,640 requests for bins, however, this fell to 749 in 2011/12 and, based upon figures to date, will fall again to an estimated 657 requests in 2012/13.

3.3 It is believed that the introduction of the charge has resulted in residents taking more responsibility for their bin and has also deterred residents from contacting the Council and to request additional bins.

3.4 The current charge for a residual waste wheeled bin is £20. Members of the Topic Group were advised that the current charge did not cover the full costs of purchasing and delivering bins, which is circa £30. Members were also provided details of the charges made by other local authorities. Following a discussion and consideration of the information presented, Members agreed to recommend an increase in the charge for new and replacement bins to £25.00 from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.

Charges for the Collection of Bulky Household Items

3.5 The table below shows Halton’s current charges in comparison to the charge made by other Council’s within the local region.

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Bulky Items Collection Charge - 2012/13</b>
Halton Borough Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £15 for up-to five items</li> <li>• £30 for between six and ten items</li> </ul>
Cheshire West and Chester Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Charge per unit: £15</li> <li>• Up to four units per collection</li> </ul>
Wirral Borough Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £20 for up to 6 separate items</li> </ul>
Knowsley MBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £15 for up-to five items</li> <li>• £30 for between six and ten items</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
Warrington Borough Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £20 for up to 3 items</li> <li>• Additional items at £6.67</li> <li>• A maximum of 5 items per collection</li> </ul>

3.6 Halton’s current charge for the collection of bulky household items is £15 for up to 5 items and a further £15 for additional items (up to a maximum of 10). Members were advised that the current charges did not cover the full costs of providing the service, which is circa £20. Following a discussion, and consideration of the information presented, Members agreed to recommend the following charges for the collection of bulky household items from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013;

- £20 for the collection of up to 3 bulky household items
- Additional items at £5.00 per item
- A maximum of 10 items per collection

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The proposed increase in charges will have a positive financial implication, in that, based upon 2012/13 requests, income from the collection of bulky items will increase by £10,205 per annum and income from the provision of new and replacement wheeled bins will increase by £3,285. The additional income received will be used to offset current spend.

#### **5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no new policy implications as a result of this report.

#### **6.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no other implications as a result of this report.

#### **7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### **7.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

No direct impact

##### **7.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

No direct impact

##### **7.3 A Healthy Halton**

No direct impact

##### **7.4 A Safer Halton**

No direct impact

##### **7.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

No direct impact

#### **8.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

8.1 The key risks with increasing the charges for wheeled bins is that it could causes hardship to some households and that it could be deemed, in certain circumstances, the Council is imposing an unreasonable charge. This risk is mitigated by the mechanism that is in place to waive the charge for bins that have been lost or stolen in exceptional circumstances.

**9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 9.1 The increase in charges proposed in this report is not intended to have either a positive or negative impact upon equality and diversity or apply differently to any particular group. The Waste and Environmental Improvement Division will continue to invite and seek feedback on its waste collection services and policies and will respond to any suggestion of differential impact.

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

- 10.1 Household Waste Collection Policy Report to Executive Board on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2011.



**NOTES OF A MEETING OF THE WASTE TOPIC GROUP  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2013 AT RUNCORN TOWN HALL**

**Present : Cllr Gerrard (Chair)  
Cllr Sinnott  
Cllr Zygadllo  
Cllr Bradshaw  
J Unsworth (Divisional Manager – Waste)**

		<b>ACTION</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies</b>  Cllr Thompson	
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Waste Management Update</b></p> <p>1) Waste Treatment Contracts</p> <p>JU updated Members on the procurement of the Merseyside and Halton Resource Recovery Contract (RRC). JU advised that the initial stages of the evaluation of the two submissions received was nearing completion and that a decision to move forward with a proposed preferred bidder was expected to be made shortly. JU advised that whichever of the two bidders were successful, the reception point for waste would be outside of the borough.</p> <p>JU explained the background to Halton's partnership with the Merseyside Authorities.</p> <p>JU advised Members that the Council was looking for a solution to divert waste from landfill in the interim period leading up to the commencement of the RRC and officers were currently undertaking a tendering exercise.</p> <p>2) Alternate Bin Collection Scheme</p> <p>JU informed Members that the roll-out of the Alternate Bin Collection (ABC) scheme was continuing, with a further 3,000 properties being added in the coming weeks.</p> <p>JU confirmed that the ABC scheme would be introduced to all wheeled bin properties within the borough. The borough-wide roll-out will require a full reconfiguration of existing waste collection schedules and this exercise will be completed once the future reception points for residual waste is known.</p>	

		<b>ACTION</b>
	<p>3) 'No Side Waste' Policy</p> <p>JU provided Members with copies of stickers that would be used as part of the enforcement of the Council's 'no side waste' policy.</p> <p>The stickers would be placed on bins where residents had presented additional waste alongside their bins for collection, or had overfilled their wheeled bins.</p>	
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>HWRC Permit Scheme</b></p> <p>JU provided Members with information showing the number of permits issued since the introduction of the Vehicle Permit Scheme.</p> <p>Members were advised that the scheme continues to operate successfully and with very few complaints.</p> <p>JU advised that whilst information was not available to show the full extent of its impact, the scheme is helping reduce levels of waste deposited at the Council's two Centres.</p>	
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Scrutiny and Development of Waste Policies</b></p> <p><u>Waste Charges</u></p> <p>Following on from discussions at the previous Topic Group meeting, Members reviewed the charges for the collection of bulky items and the provision of new and replacement wheeled bins. JU circulated information to Members with regard to Halton's current charges and those for other regional local authorities.</p> <p>1) <u>Charges for New and Replacement Wheeled Bins</u></p> <p>JU advised Members of the costs to the Council of purchasing and delivering wheeled bins.</p> <p>Whilst consideration was given to maintaining the charge at the current level, Members agreed to recommend that the charge for the provision of new and replacement wheeled bins should be increased from £20 to £25. In making this recommendation, Members took into account the costs incurred by the Council, the importance of increasing income given the Council's financial difficulties and also that mechanisms are in place to deal with circumstances where a charge would impose a significant hardship on a household.</p>	

		<b>ACTION</b>
	<p>2) <u>Charges for the Collection of Bulky Household Items</u></p> <p>JU advised Members that in reviewing the charges for the collection of bulky items they should consider that the current charge did not cover the Council's costs of collection and also that the income was significantly below budgetary targets.</p> <p>JU also provided information to show that the introduction, and subsequent increase in charges, did not lead to an increase in incidents of fly-tipping in the borough.</p> <p>After discussing and fully considering the information presented, Members agreed to recommend the following charges for the collection of bulky household items;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £20 for the collection of up to 3 bulky household items</li> <li>• Additional items at £5.00 per item</li> <li>• A maximum of 10 items per collection</li> </ul>	
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Garden Waste Collections</b></p> <p>Following on from the discussion at the previous meeting of the Topic Group, JU proposed to Members that further work should be carried out with regards to examining the options and the impacts of charging for green waste collections.</p> <p>A brief discussion took place on the potential benefits and dis-benefits of charging for this service and it was agreed that the matter would be discussed further at a future meeting of the Group.</p>	
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>A.O.B</b></p> <p>Councillor Gerrard asked that the Council consider the potential opportunity of providing a skip collection service. JU to investigate and report back to the Group.</p>	<b>JU</b>

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Environment and Urban Renewal Policy Performance Board/ Employment Learning and Skills PPB
<b>DATE:</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> March 2013
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Strategic Director Children and Enterprise
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Leader's Portfolio
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	International Festival of Business 2014
<b>WARDS:</b>	Borough Wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of proposals for the development of an International Festival of Business in the Liverpool City Region, and to advise Members (at an early stage) of the opportunities that the event could bring to the borough.

**RECOMMENDATION: That Halton's participation in The International Festival of Business 2014 be supported.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **3.1 Background**

The International Festival for Business is an international gathering of the world's most inspiring businesses taking place in Liverpool in June and July 2014. It will provide a global forum where industries in key sectors such as advanced manufacturing, low carbon, and life sciences, professional and financial services can come together to trade ideas, products and contacts.

The International Festival has been conceived as a key component of the Lord Heseltine and Sir Terry Leahy review: "Rebalancing Britain – Policy or Slogan" and is supported by the Liverpool City Region LEP, Wirral MBC, UK Trade & Investment, the Department for Business Innovation & Skills, The British Chambers of Commerce and the Peel Group.

Described as 'Mini Shanghai Expo' it will bring together world and UK cities for 61 days of themed events, exhibitions and showcases. The expo will be the largest event of its kind in the UK since the Millennium Fair of 2000, held at the Millennium Dome, and the Festival of Britain in 1951. It is anticipated that the Festival will attract 250,000 visitors from

across the globe and bring £100 million worth of investment. A brochure is appended to this report.

The International Festival of Business will be themed around three core business sectors:-

- LOW CARBON: One of the world's growth industries, valued in the UK alone at £112 billion and worth over £3.2 trillion globally.
- GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS: A thriving and highly competitive sector and the backbone of international trade.
- KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY: The industries that are shaping our future, comprising the varied worlds of creative and digital, advanced manufacturing, life sciences and financial and professional services.

The Festival will attract international business leaders, entrepreneurs, innovators, investors and policy makers and act as a launch pad for commercial success by providing opportunities for companies of all sizes to engage with new networks and make global deals. The North American and the BRIC economies (Brazil, Russia, India and China) will be particularly targeted.

A major cultural festival will also take place alongside the Festival of Business.

To date three launch events are planned:-

- 25<sup>th</sup> February 2013 in London which is targeted at high profile attendees such as Ambassadors, Trade Envoys etc.
- 18<sup>th</sup> March 2013 at ACC Liverpool, an evening event for 500 people aimed at a northern UK audience
- 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013 as part of Accelerate 2013 at ACC Liverpool. 400 UK entrepreneurs and high growth businesses will be invited to a gala dinner

A draft version of the calendar of events will be available late spring/early summer 2013. First key sponsors and speakers anticipated to be announced early March 2013. We have an opportunity to contribute to the calendar of events.

### **3.2 A Role for the Borough Halton**

Given the concentration of both business and facilities which fall broadly within the sector designation of 'the knowledge economy' in the Borough it is proposed that two, possibly three, themed events are planned to take place within Halton during the Festival.

In consultation with the Chamber of Commerce, discussions have commenced with both The Heath Business and Technical Park and Daresbury Science and Innovation Campus to hold events during the Festival. It is also proposed that one of the bi-annual Economic Forums be held during the Festival.

- 3.3** Clearly the focus will be on business; Halton might wish to consider supporting a 'do business day' which picks up on the theme of growing innovation and entrepreneurship, a key ingredient at both the Heath and Daresbury. This is a great opportunity to show case businesses and assets that the borough has to offer in a global context and Halton's involvement in the Festival has received favourable recognition from Liverpool Vision, the event coordinators.

## **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The International Festival of Business 2014 will deliver tangible benefits to the local business community and in so doing contribute to the realisation of a number of the Council's key strategic objectives described in the Community Strategy

## **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

It is proposed that a sum not exceeding £5,000.00 be allocated from existing budgets to support the delivery of two\three events in Halton during The International Festival of Business.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

Improving business sustainability and performance will create more employment opportunities for the Borough's young people

## **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

The International Festival of Business will make a positive contribution to employment generation across the City Region

## **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

No implications

## **6.4 A Safer Halton**

No implications

## **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

The International Festival of Business will be an opportunity to showcase a number of development opportunities in Halton to a national and international business audience.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

The International Festival for Business has set itself ambitious targets in terms of the numbers of visitors expected to visit the City Region and the volume of events which are proposed to take place during June and July 2014.

Considerable responsibility lies, therefore, upon the principal organisers, Liverpool Vision, to secure sufficient sponsorship and contributing partners to deliver the Festival

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

There are no equality and diversity issues

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

None under the meaning of the Act.

**INTERNATIONAL  
FESTIVAL OF  
BUSINESS  
2014**



**it's liverpool**



# WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF BUSINESS?





The International Festival of Business is a global gathering of the world's most inspiring businesses; an arena where pivotal industries converge to trade ideas, products and contacts.

The festival will be a showcase for business with hundreds of world-class events from June to July 2014 in Liverpool. It will attract 250,000 visitors from across the globe, and bring £100 million worth of investment.

It is an urban festival of commerce, bringing together cities from the North to the South, East to the West in 61 days of events, exhibitions, showcases and celebrations.

It is about realising the potential of recovery. It is an imperative summed up by Martin Luther King as **the fierce urgency of now.**

**I WANT BRITAIN  
TO BE THE PLACE  
INTERNATIONAL  
BUSINESSES GO TO...**

GEORGE OSBORNE

## WHY BRITAIN?

Where else?

Britain is a top destination for inward investment in Europe and its economic strength makes it a gateway to international markets.

With 1,000 new jobs created each week, a rich and flexible labour market and a strong skills base, the British Isles offer an outstanding record of achievement and credentials from which to build this world-class event.

**Great Britain: a home for international business.**

## WHY LIVERPOOL?

Liverpool is a city reborn. With approximately £6 billion of major investment since 2000, Liverpool's economy has grown faster than that of the UK.

Liverpool is, quite simply, Britain at its best. Not only is it the UK's third most popular tourist destination internationally, the city has established itself as a global brand recognised the world over.

What is more, Liverpool is no stranger to a spectacle. Over the last few years, the city has become renowned for hosting or participating in major world-class events.

- **European Capital of Culture 2008:** brought 15 million tourists to the city to marvel at its cultural offering – 25 per cent of whom were visiting the city for the first time.
- **World Expo in Shanghai, 2010:** the Liverpool pavilion attracted 770,000 visitors over six months and served to further cement Liverpool's strong and growing relationship with China.
- **Global Entrepreneurship Congress in March 2012:** brought 3,000 international delegates and a host of high-profile speakers to the city, in an inspiring festival of ambition that celebrated and unleashed the will to win.
- **The Sea Odyssey Giant Spectacular in April 2012:** using the city as a stage, this three-day, 27-mile long, unrivalled display of street theatre captured the imagination and hearts of those in Liverpool and beyond.

With its experience, aspirations and global reputation, Liverpool is the ideal venue for an International Festival of business.

**Put simply, if there's one place to do business in 2014, it's Liverpool.**

## CREATING THE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF BUSINESS

The International Festival of Business will offer something for everyone, from those attending the wealth of business events, to those looking to benefit from the many cultural activities on offer.

It will be the must-attend event for:

- Multinational corporations
- High-growth firms
- Entrepreneurs
- Cities
- Policy makers
- Tourists
- Inward investors

## THEMES OF THE INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF BUSINESS

### 01 CITIES

Recognising the fundamental role of cities in stimulating innovation and driving economic growth, the International Festival of Business will be an urban celebration, with an urban feel.

### 02 SECTORS

Activity will be focused around three high-value core business sectors:

- **LOW CARBON:** One of the world's growth industries, valued in the UK alone at £112 billion and worth over £3.2 trillion globally.
- **GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS:** A thriving and highly competitive sector and the backbone of international trade.
- **KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY:** The industries that are shaping our future, comprising the varied worlds of creative and digital, advanced manufacturing, life sciences and financial and professional services.

### 03 CULTURE

The International Festival of Business is not just a place to forge connections, make deals and learn. A vibrant cultural festival will add a distinctive and stimulating backdrop, providing inspiration of a different kind for those from the city region and abroad.

# 01 CITIES



# 02 SECTORS



# 03 CULTURE



# THE EVENTS

The International Festival of Business will be built on:

- Events organised by Liverpool as a centrepiece for the Festival.
- Events brought to Liverpool under the impetus of the Festival.
- Events organised by local, regional and national groups using the banner of the Festival.



## SIGNATURE EVENTS

The Festival will be underpinned by a series of signature events across Liverpool, the Wirral and the wider North West, including the Wirral International Trade Centre.

### THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE HUB

- Signature installation running over one week in which UK and world cities, corporations and business organisations can showcase their assets.
- A strong seminar programme will underpin the event to ensure practical advice and inward investment opportunities for visitors.
- A celebration of the rich tapestry of national and international business and promote international inter-sectoral links.

### ACCELERATE 2014

- Three-day festival focused on high-growth businesses – built around a national search for the top 250 businesses which are transforming the economic landscape.
- Emphasis on entrepreneurship – in celebrating the passion, performance and power of some of the countries greatest enterprise exhibits.
- Leaders of industry will offer their expertise and knowledge and visit some of the local celebrations taking place in the enterprise community.

### MAYORS' SUMMIT

- Gathering of international mayors to debate urban best practice and the role of cities in driving national and international growth.
- Showcase of the world's finest cities, their unique business offers and their role in shaping the global economic future.

## NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

During the International Festival of Business we will be attracting a series of both national and international events to the city.

These will range from:

- High-profile opening and closing events
- CEO Summits
- Entrepreneur Festival
- Annual Conferences
- Exhibitions
- Award ceremonies
- Thought leadership seminars

## GRASS ROOTS EVENTS

The International Festival of Business will be a springboard for a series of events spearheaded by business organisations, universities and individual operations.

These events will support the festival by offering major practical advice for businesses throughout the period.

They will include:

- Conferences
- Seminars
- Business breakfasts
- Workshops
- Panel discussions
- Hackathons
- Discussion groups
- Networking events
- Lectures



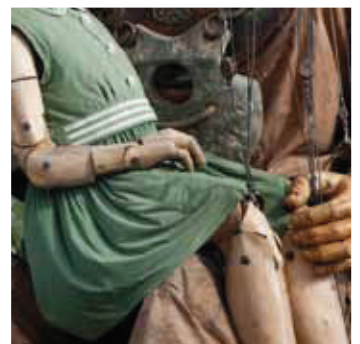
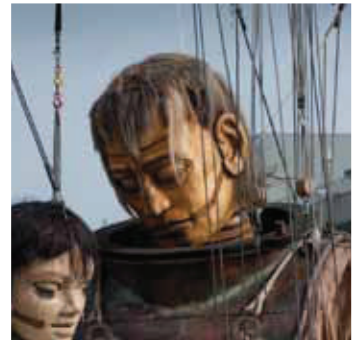
INTERNATIONAL  
FESTIVAL OF  
BUSINESS  
2014

# THE CULTURAL FESTIVAL

The cultural festival will underpin the International Festival of Business, with a rich programme of cultural activities.

Liverpool will look to create a visual spectacle through:

- Dressing the city and Festival venues
- Food festivals
- Curated exhibitions
- Keystone exhibits
- Street theatre
- Projections





Liverpool's International Festival of Business will be:

A global gathering where international business minds can broaden their horizons, access new global markets and cultivate fresh ideas to inspire profitability.

The festival will act as a launch pad for commercial success by providing opportunities to engage with new networks and make global deals.

It will bring together innovators from key sectors, united by a will to win and an ambitious desire to gain competitive advantage.

This is an event that will open the doors to global opportunity.

If there's one place in the world to do business in 2014.

**It's Liverpool,  
It's Britain.**

**BE A PART OF IT.**

## STEPS TO 2014

In the coming months, the Festival team will pull together:

- A powerful group of patrons
- A high-profile launch at Downing Street
- National and regional event organiser briefings
- The brand and marketing collateral

## HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

There are a number of ways to get involved in the Festival which include:

- Sponsorship
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phone 0151 600 2900

email [imccarthy@liverpoolvision.co.uk](mailto:imccarthy@liverpoolvision.co.uk)

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Liverpool Vision  
10th Floor, The Capital  
39 Old Hall Street,  
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**it's liverpool**



<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Environment and Urban Renewal Policy & Performance Board
<b>DATE:</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> March 2013
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Strategic Director, Communities
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Neighbourhood, Leisure and Sport
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Draft Halton Housing Strategy 2013-2018
<b>WARD(S)</b>	Borough-wide

## 1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present Halton's Housing Strategy 2013-18 as a draft for public consultation.

## 2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That PPB note and comment on the content of the draft Housing Strategy and evidence paper**

## 3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### 3.1 **Background**

3.1.1 Under Part 7 of the Local Government Act 2003 local authorities are expected to produce a Housing Strategy which gives an overview of housing in their district and sets out priorities for action.

3.1.2 The 2003 Act states that:

"A local housing strategy is the local housing authority's vision for housing in its area. It sets out objectives and targets and policies on how the authority intends to manage and deliver its strategic housing role and provides an overarching framework against which the authority considers and formulates other policies on more specific housing issues."

3.1.3 That strategic housing role is defined, in the Department for Communities and Local Government's 2007 document Homes for the future: more affordable, more sustainable, as providing "vision, leadership, planning and delivery to:

- assess and plan for current and future housing needs of the local population,
- make the best use of existing housing stock,



- plan and facilitate new supply,
- plan and commission housing support services which link homes to support and other services that people need to live in them, and
- have working partnerships that secure effective housing and neighbourhood management."

3.1.4 The statutory guidance "Creating Strong and Prosperous Communities" published in July 2008 reaffirmed this expectation and placed greater emphasis on housing's contribution to the authority's vision for sustainable communities as set out in its Sustainable Communities Strategy.

3.1.5 The guidance states that local authority housing strategies must:

- fully reflect the wider vision of the authority and its partners;
- reflect a clear and evidenced approach and
- provide a strong focus on how partners will deliver their commitments.

3.1.6 There have been significant achievements since the last Housing Strategy was published in 2008 including:

- Successful delivery of phase 2 of the Castlefields regeneration programme, this has so far resulted in £30 million of new development replacing the last deck access dwellings remaining in the Northwest.
- A further £5 to £10 million of development is being sought for Castlefields in the proposed draft strategy.
- Halton Housing Trust delivered on its commitment to bring all former council housing stock up to the Decent Homes Standard 12 months ahead of the Government's 2010 target date.
- Since that time the Trust has developed a comprehensive neighbourhood investment programme which will see £262 million investment in the former Council stock between 2009 and 2015 and has built its first new affordable homes in the Borough.
- Development of an additional 256 new affordable homes bringing approximately £30 million of external investment into the Borough. This includes the development of an additional extra care scheme in Halton. The outcome of further pending investment bids to the HCA are due to be reported by February, 2013.
- Crisis intervention in the form of emergency support has helped prevent homelessness for over 600 families over the last three years.
- Clearance of all backlogs in adaptations in 200 socially rented homes.;

- Development and implementation of a new Homelessness Strategy with increased emphasis on prevention which has drastically reduced levels of statutory homelessness to an all time low.
- In the last financial year, 187 appeals on benefit decisions were attended by the Council's welfare rights team with an 84% success rate. These have resulted from referrals through the improved tenancy sustainability service offered by the Housing Solutions team.
- Since January 2010, The Housing Solutions dedicated Mortgage Rescue Adviser has provided advice to 187 households and as a result 94 cases were prevented from repossession.
- Through the Castlefields Regeneration programme approximately 15 apprenticeships/ traineeships has been secured through construction of new build homes and external makeover of retained projects. As the Programme has been 'on the ground' for over 10 years several phases of apprentices have graduated into permanent employment. The creation of the Village Square has created further local job opportunities. Additional the involvement of HPIJ within the Programme has created/safeguarded a further 139 jobs.

### **3.2 Draft Halton Housing Strategy 2013 - 2018**

3.2.1 The draft Strategy takes a slightly different approach from previous years in that two documents have been produced. The Strategy itself (Appendix A) is a short, easy to read document which focuses on the strategic objectives, priorities and planned activities for the next three years which are detailed in an action plan. This is supported by an evidence paper (Appendix B) which sets out the context in which the Strategy has been developed and brings together key data and information on housing issues and services which have helped to shape the strategic objectives and priorities.

3.2.2 It is important to note that the draft Strategy has been developed in a time of rapidly declining resources for public services generally and for housing, in particular, due to the discontinuation of the Regional Housing Pot which previously was the main funding stream for the housing capital programme. Consequently the strategy reflects a realistic assessment of what can be achieved within existing and likely future resources. However the strategy means we can provide an evidence base when potential funding streams become available in the future and we will continue to explore all sources of funding on an ongoing basis to ensure we deliver the Strategy.

### **3.3 Housing vision, objectives and priorities**

3.3.1 The Strategy contains three overarching strategic objectives with

priorities within each as set out in the paragraphs below. The objectives are designed to contribute to the vision for housing:

### **Housing vision**

Halton offers a broad range of good quality housing which meets the needs of existing communities, helps attract new residents to the Borough and contributes to the creation of sustainable communities.

#### **3.3.2 Strategic objective 1 – To plan for and facilitate housing growth and support economic growth**

Priority 1A: To increase the supply of market and affordable housing through partnership working and support to developers and Registered Providers;

Priority 1B: To support the implementation of the Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan.

#### **3.3.3 Strategic objective 2 – To meet the housing and support needs of Halton's communities and promote choice**

Priority 2A: To increase the supply of housing for vulnerable people;

Priority 2B: To review Gypsy and Traveller pitch provision;

Priority 2C: To prevent homelessness;

Priority 2D: To improve access to social housing and home ownership and promote choice;

Priority 2E: To target housing support to those who need it most

#### **3.3.4 Strategic objective 3 – To improve housing conditions and make the best use of the housing stock**

Priority 3A: To complete the regeneration of Castlefields estate;

Priority 3B: To explore the implications of private rented sector growth;

Priority 3C: To improve the energy efficiency of housing and tackle fuel poverty;

Priority 3D: To make the best possible use of the existing housing stock.

### **3.4 Next steps**

3.4.1 The draft Strategy is the subject of a seven week consultation period with partners, stakeholders and residents between 4th February and 22nd March 2013. This has been achieved through distribution to various partnerships, including the appropriate Policy and Performance Board and stakeholder groups, other local authorities and a copy will be placed in Halton Direct Links, main Council libraries and on the Council's website.

3.4.2 The Strategy has also been publicised via the usual media outlets including the Civic magazine which is distributed to every household

in the Borough. A questionnaire attached as Appendix C to this report has been developed to collate feedback from the consultation process.

- 3.4.3 Barring the need for any major changes to the document as a result of the consultation, it is intended that the Strategy will be presented to Executive Board for consideration before May 2013.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Housing Strategy will set the context for future policy development relating to housing and will have a significant influence on related policies and strategies e.g. Homelessness Strategy and Tenancy Strategy

#### 5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The financial implications of delivering the Strategy are outlined in the Action Plan contained in the draft Strategy. In particular the delivery of affordable housing is dependent on future levels of resources from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). At the time of writing Government announcements regarding future funding levels for the HCA are awaited although it is not clear when such announcements will be made.

- 5.2 The draft Strategy is deliverable within staffing resources prevailing at the time of writing, however, any change in staffing levels as a result of the need to make efficiency savings could impact upon successful delivery of the Strategy.

#### 6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

##### 6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The Housing Strategy aims to increase the supply of affordable housing and improve housing conditions which will have a beneficial impact on families with children among other household groups.

##### 6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None directly although programmes to increase the supply and energy efficiency of housing could result in additional jobs and skills for the Borough.

##### 6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

A number of priorities contained within the Strategy e.g. around fuel poverty, provision of supported housing and improving conditions in the private sector will have positive health benefits for some of Halton's most vulnerable residents.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

A number of priorities contained in the Strategy e.g. prevention of homelessness and regeneration of Castlefields will contribute to the creation of safer and stronger communities.

6.5 **Halton’s Urban Renewal**

The draft Strategy aims to promote housing growth and support economic growth in the Borough which will have a positive impact on the built environment.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 As described in 5.2 above the draft Strategy is capable of delivery within existing staffing resources, however, a reduction in staffing levels of relevant staff as a result of the need to make efficiencies could impact upon delivery of the Strategy.

7.2 Delivery of some of the Strategy is dependent on the continued availability of resources from external funding streams e.g. from the Homes and Communities Agency. Future reductions in funding levels could impact upon the ability to deliver some of the targets contained in the Action Plan.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The Strategy specifically aims to meet the housing needs of vulnerable people due to age or disability and will therefore have positive impacts for these groups.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Housing Strategy 2013-18	Runcorn Town Hall (second floor)	Joanne Sutton
Housing Strategy evidence paper	Runcorn Town Hall (second floor)	Joanne Sutton



**A Housing Strategy for Halton**

**2013 to 2018**

**Consultation Draft**

**February 2013**

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# Foreword

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Halton's Draft Housing Strategy 2013-18 has been prepared following a time of rapid change for all forms of housing.

Halton's previous Housing Strategy (2008-2011) pre-dated the economic downturn and subsequent housing market decline. It achieved and exceeded many of the targets set for it, including:



- Successful delivery of phase 2 of the Castlefields regeneration programme, this has so far resulted in £30 million of new development replacing the last deck access dwellings remaining in the Northwest;
- Development of an additional 256 new affordable homes bringing approximately £30 million of external investment into the Borough. This includes the development of an additional extra care scheme in Halton. The outcome of further pending investment bids to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) are due to be reported by February, 2013;
- Since the Bond Guarantee System was introduced in 2009, 67% are ongoing, 15% ended without a claim and 18% ended with the bond being claimed;
- Crisis intervention support in the form of emergency support over the last three years has helped prevent homelessness for over 600 families;
- Clearance of all backlogs in adaptations in 200 socially rented homes;
- Development and implementation of a new Homelessness Strategy with increased emphasis on prevention which has drastically reduced levels of statutory homelessness to an all-time low;
- Since January 2010, the Housing Solutions dedicated Mortgage Rescue Adviser has provided advice to 187 households and as a result 94 cases were prevented from repossession;
- Halton Housing Trust delivered on its commitment to bring all former council housing stock up to the Decent Homes Standard 12 months ahead of the Government's 2010 target date. Since that time the Trust has developed a comprehensive neighbourhood investment programme which will see £262 million investment in the former Council stock between 2009 and 2015 and has built its first new affordable homes in the Borough.

The next strategy seeks to take account of the changed economic climate, reduced public investment and legislative challenges such as Welfare Reform, the Localism Bill and changes to planning law.

Some of the housing issues in Halton include:

- Securing investment to build new homes or improve existing ones.
- Rebalancing the housing market to meet people's needs and aspirations.
- An ageing population.

To address the issues we face, we will need to continue to prioritise and innovate. The new strategy has to encourage growth if we are to realise the vision for housing in Halton.

We would welcome your comments on the strategy outlined in this document and the supporting evidence paper.

Yours sincerely,

CLlr Phil Harris

Executive Board Member for Housing Strategy.

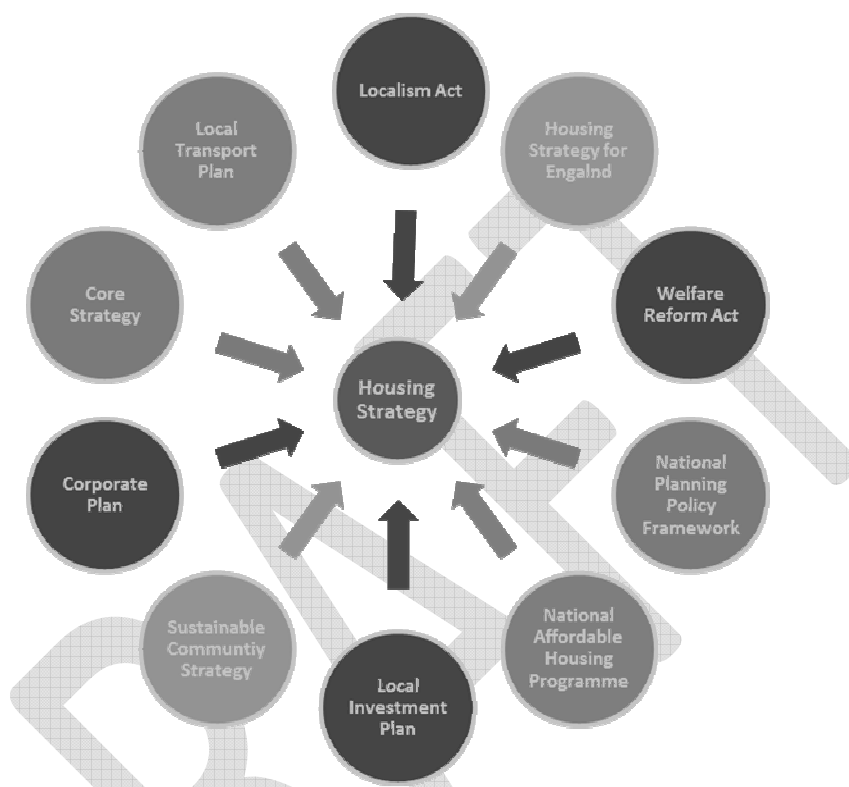


Should you have any questions or comments relating to the document, please send these to Joanne Sutton, Principal Policy Officer, Halton Borough Council, Runcorn Town Hall, Heath Road, Cheshire, WA7 5TD. E-mail: [joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk). Please submit any comments by no later than noon on Friday 22nd March, 2013.

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# Context

Halton’s Housing Strategy has been developed in the context of a wide range of national, regional and local policies, strategies and plans as summarised in the diagram below. Further details of how these influence the Strategy can be found in the Housing Strategy evidence paper.



Housing services play a cross cutting role in meeting Halton’s priorities set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy, as demonstrated in the table below.

<b>A Healthy Halton</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Improving housing conditions and energy efficiency</li> <li>•Maintaining independence through adapting property</li> </ul>
<b>Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Introducing new technologies in energy efficiency projects</li> <li>•Apprenticeships and local labour in housing contracts</li> </ul>
<b>A Safer Halton</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Removing category 1 hazards within the home</li> <li>•Tackling anti social behaviour on estates</li> </ul>
<b>Children &amp; Young People in Halton</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Reducing overcrowding</li> <li>•Preventing homelessness</li> </ul>
<b>Environment and Regeneration in Halton</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Tackling obsolete housing</li> <li>•Provision of new affordable housing</li> </ul>

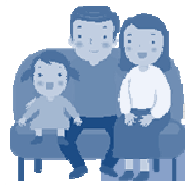
# Housing issues

The key housing issues which influence this Strategy are examined in detail in the Housing Strategy evidence paper. They can be summarised under three main themes as illustrated below. These themes have influenced the development of our three overarching strategic objectives and the priorities within each of these, as described in more detail in the next section.



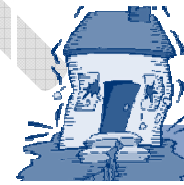
## Housing market

- Growing affordability problems
- Reduced access to mortgage availability
- Growing private rented sector



## People

- Ageing population
- Predicted growth in population
- Smaller household size
- Increasing levels of homelessness



## Housing stock

- Poorest conditions in private rented sector
- Fuel poverty increasing
- Sizeable proportion of underoccupation in social rented stock

# Our vision, objectives and priorities

## Our vision for housing in Halton

Halton offers a broad range of good quality housing which meets the needs of existing communities, helps attract new residents to the Borough and contributes to the creation of sustainable communities.

To help achieve the vision, we have adopted three strategic objectives each containing a set of priorities as detailed below. The Strategy goes on to explain why each of the priorities has been selected, what we hope to achieve and how we plan to achieve it.

### Strategic objective 1:

To plan for and facilitate housing growth and support economic growth

- Priority 1A: To increase the supply of market and affordable housing through partnership working and support to developers and Registered Providers
- Priority 1B: To support the implementation of the Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan

### Strategic objective 2:

To meet the housing and support needs of Halton's communities and promote choice

- Priority 2A: To increase the supply of housing for vulnerable people
- Priority 2B: To review future Gypsy and Traveller pitch provision
- Priority 2C: To prevent homelessness
- Priority 2D: To improve access to social housing and home ownership and promote choice
- Priority 2E: To target housing support to those who need it most

### Strategic objective 3:

To improve housing conditions and make the best use of the housing stock

- Priority 3A: To complete the regeneration of Castlefields estate
- Priority 3B: To explore the implications of private rented sector growth
- Priority 3C: To improve the energy efficiency of housing and tackle fuel poverty
- Priority 3D: To make the best possible use of the existing housing stock

**Priority 1A: To increase the supply of market and affordable housing through partnership working and support to developers and Registered Providers**

<b>Why is this a priority?</b>	<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	<b>How do we plan to achieve it?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipated population and household growth</li> <li>• Need to encourage immigration to support economic development projects</li> <li>• Core Strategy target of an average of 552 additional homes per annum</li> <li>• Level of need identified in Strategic Housing Market Assessment and as set out in evidence paper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average of 552 additional homes built per annum</li> <li>• A realistic target of 100 additional net affordable homes per annum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of the Core Strategy</li> <li>• Identification of development sites through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment</li> <li>• Update Site Allocations Supplementary Planning Document</li> <li>• Implementation of Affordable Housing Policy</li> <li>• Partnership working and support in securing funding</li> </ul>

**Priority 1B: To support the implementation of the Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan**

<b>Why is this a priority?</b>	<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	<b>How do we plan to achieve it?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to achieve economies of scale and consistency of approach</li> <li>• Effective targeting to areas most in need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet targets in Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active participation in LCR structure and programmes</li> </ul>

Priority 2A: To increase the supply of housing for vulnerable people		
Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 43% projected population growth in people aged 65 and over between 2008 and 2023</li> <li>• Need for older people to maintain independence</li> <li>• Need for more adapted and adaptable housing</li> <li>• Shortage of suitable housing for other groups needing specialist provision e.g. Adults with Learning Difficulties, people with Physical and Sensory Disabilities</li> <li>• Need to rebalance temporary accommodation for young, single people so that there is provision on both sides of the Borough</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximise number of extra care units over the Strategy period (minimum of 100 by 2015)</li> <li>• Increase in the number of wheelchair accessible dwellings and homes built to Lifetime Homes Standard</li> <li>• Provide supported housing in Widnes for the single homeless in Widnes.</li> <li>• Provide additional accommodation for adults with learning difficulties and physical disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify suitable sites for older persons housing and provide support for funding bids</li> <li>• Implement aspiration in Design of New Residential SPD for new developments of 10 dwellings or more to provide 10% wheelchair standard dwellings</li> <li>• Encourage development of homes that meet Lifetime Homes standard in line with the Core Strategy</li> <li>• Commission supported housing for single homeless people in Widnes</li> <li>• Commission 10 bungalows for adults with physical and learning difficulties</li> <li>• Partnership working and support to developers in securing funding</li> </ul>

<b>Priority 2B: To review future Gypsy and Traveller pitch provision</b>		
<b>Why is this a priority?</b>	<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	<b>How do we plan to achieve it?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Planning Policy Framework places a duty on local authorities to identify sites for five years worth of Gypsy and Traveller provision</li> <li>Under the Housing Act 2004 local authorities are expected to periodically assess the need for Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation in their area</li> <li>Last assessment was completed in 2007</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Up to date assessment of need</li> <li>Identify sufficient site provision to meet assessed need for next five years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participate in Cheshire wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment</li> <li>Incorporate Gypsy and Traveller provision in development of Site Allocations Development Plan Document</li> </ul>

<b>Priority 2C: To prevent homelessness</b>		
<b>Why is this a priority?</b>	<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	<b>How do we plan to achieve it?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to minimise impacts of Welfare Reform Act 2012</li> <li>To avoid social impacts of homelessness</li> <li>To reduce the cost and impact of placing families in temporary accommodation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To at least reduce levels of statutory homelessness to 2010/11 levels (78 presentations, 37 of which owed the full statutory duty) over the Strategy period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake strategic review of homelessness</li> <li>Update Homelessness Strategy</li> <li>Engage with stakeholders and partners via the Homelessness Forum to minimise the impact of Welfare Reform Act 2012</li> </ul>

### Priority 2D: To improve access to social housing and home ownership and promote choice

Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To improve transparency of the allocations system</li> <li>To improve neighbourhood sustainability</li> <li>Due to difficulties getting a foot on the housing ladder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A fair and transparent allocations system that promotes choice</li> <li>Increase the range and awareness of intermediate housing products to assist more first time buyers access the market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor and develop sub regional Choice Based Lettings system</li> <li>Implement the Affordable Housing Policy which includes a proportion of intermediate housing</li> <li>Develop a Marketing Strategy to promote the various forms of home ownership available</li> </ul>

### Priority 2E: To target housing support to those who need it most

Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to ensure value for money in housing support services</li> <li>Scrutiny of supported accommodation suggests that some residents may not need support services offered</li> <li>Need to ensure fair access to accommodation based support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the quality and fitness for purpose of temporary accommodation for single, homeless people</li> <li>Supported housing is offered to those in greatest need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reconfigure existing provision of housing for single homeless people</li> <li>Improve accommodation for people fleeing Domestic Violence</li> <li>Introduce a Housing Support Gateway system and undertake effective monitoring of the system</li> </ul>



<b>Priority 3A: To complete the regeneration of the Castlefields estate</b>		
<b>Why is this a priority?</b>	<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	<b>How do we plan to achieve it?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to build on success of 10 year Masterplan</li> <li>• Continue the momentum of delivery of new mixed tenure homes</li> <li>• Some deck access flats remain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of at least 350 new (predominantly private) homes by 2023</li> <li>• Provision of a further 150 new affordable homes by 2015/16 (included within targets above)</li> <li>• Physical enhancement and energy efficiency improvements to 500 retained two storey system built homes by 2016</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development and implementation of action plan for next 10 years</li> <li>• Neighbourhood extension of Lakeside and Canalside</li> <li>• Continue to take strategic leadership role within the Castlefields Regeneration Partnership</li> </ul>

<b>Priority 3B: To explore the implications of private rented sector growth</b>		
<b>Why is this a priority?</b>	<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	<b>How do we plan to achieve it?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced mortgage availability</li> <li>• Reduced availability of social housing</li> <li>• Conditions in private rented sector generally worse</li> <li>• New power to discharge statutory homelessness duty through an offer of private rented accommodation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of accredited landlords from 39 to 50 by end of Strategy period</li> <li>• Increase the number of accredited properties from 141 to 200 by end of Strategy period</li> <li>• Policy position on use of PRS to discharge statutory homelessness duty agreed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of Private Rented Sector project plan</li> <li>• Consider implementing new flexibilities to discharge statutory homelessness duty through private rented sector (including carrying out suitability assessment)</li> </ul>

<b>Priority 3C: To improve the energy efficiency of housing and tackle fuel poverty</b>		
<b>Why is this a priority?</b>	<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	<b>How do we plan to achieve it?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on health</li> <li>• Fuel poverty increasing</li> <li>• Positive impact on climate change</li> <li>• Need to maximise household incomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve SAP ratings in private sector stock</li> <li>• Minimise levels of fuel poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued development of Healthy Homes Network</li> <li>• Develop new Affordable Warmth Strategy</li> <li>• Promote Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation</li> <li>• Develop and implement HECA further report and progress reports</li> </ul>

<b>Priority 3D: To make the best possible use of the existing housing stock</b>		
<b>Why is this a priority?</b>	<b>What do we want to achieve?</b>	<b>How do we plan to achieve it?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of welfare reform</li> <li>• Impact of empty homes</li> <li>• Potential to maximise New Homes Bonus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximise the opportunities for underoccupying social tenants to find accommodation best suited to their needs</li> <li>• Bring 25 long term empty homes back into use over the Strategy period</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support RPs in their implementation of the National Homeswap schemes</li> <li>• Review the Halton Tenancy Strategy</li> <li>• Work with RPs to identify empty properties suitable for lease/acquisition using HCA empty homes funding</li> <li>• Undertake survey of owners of empty homes to establish what support can be provided</li> <li>• Develop a more proactive approach to bringing empty</li> </ul>

		homes back into use
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## Housing Strategy for Halton 2013 to 2018: Action Plan

### Objective 1: To plan for and facilitate housing growth and support economic growth

Priority	Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Resources	Success measures and outcomes
To increase the supply of market and affordable housing through partnership working and support to developers and Registered Providers	Implement Core Strategy	From 2013	HBC Planning Department	Staff time	Average of 552 additional homes built per annum
	Update Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment annually	Annual assessment	HBC Planning Department	Staff time	
	Update Site Allocations Supplementary Planning Document	2014/15	HBC Planning Department	Staff time	
	Implement Affordable Housing Policy	2013 onwards	HBC Planning and Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	Average of 100 additional affordable homes built per annum
	Support Registered Providers in securing funding for the delivery of the Affordable Housing Programme	As and when support required	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time HCA resources	25% of new developed built as affordable housing subject to site viability assessments
To support the implementation of the Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan	Participate in and support sub regional projects originating from LCR Housing and Spatial Planning Group	As and when required	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	Meet targets in Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan

**Objective 2: To meet the housing and support needs of Halton's communities and promote choice**

Priority	Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Resources	Success measures and outcomes
To increase the supply of housing for vulnerable people	Increase the supply of housing for older people through identification of sites, supporting Registered Provider funding bids and procure support and care services	Throughout period of the Strategy	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	HCA funding (capital) Revenue implications for housing support and care services (amount dependent on bids)	100 units of additional older persons housing over the Strategy period
	Implement aspiration in Design for New Residential SPD for new developments of 10 dwellings or more to provide 10% wheelchair standard dwellings	As and when planning applications received	HBC Planning	Staff time	Aspirational target of 30 wheelchair accessible dwellings built per year (subject to site viability)
	Encourage development of homes that meet Lifetime Homes standard in line with Halton's Core Strategy	As and when planning applications received	HBC Planning	Staff time	Aspirational target of 25% increase in the number of homes built to Lifetime Homes standard (subject to site viability)
	Commission supported housing scheme for single homeless in Widnes	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time Revenue implications for housing support service	Development completed by 2014
	Commission 10 bungalows for rent for adults with physical disabilities and learning difficulties	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time Council or HCA grant	Development completed by 2014

Priority	Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Resources	Success measures and outcomes
To review future Gypsy and Traveller pitch provision	Participate in Cheshire wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Planning and Development Services)	Staff time Approx £8,000 contribution to be identified	Identify sufficient site provision to meet assessed need for next five years
	Incorporate Gypsy and Traveller provision in Site Allocations Development Plan	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Planning and Development Services)	Staff time	
	Deliver an additional 12 permanent pitches adjacent to existing transit site	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Planning and Development Services)	Staff time HCA funding (£800k)	New 12 pitch site completed
To prevent homelessness	Undertake strategic review of homelessness	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	To maintain the number of statutory homeless acceptances to no more than a 10% increase per year of 2011/12 levels ( 64 acceptances)
	Update Homelessness Strategy	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	
	Engage with stakeholders and partners via the Homelessness Forum to minimise the impact of the Welfare Reform Act 2012	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	
To improve access to social housing and home ownership and promote choice	Monitor and develop sub regional Choice Based Lettings scheme	Throughout period of Strategy	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time Running costs (£125k pa)	Provision of a cost effective, fair and transparent allocations system that promotes choice Percentage of bids within each banding Number of private homes let through system
	Implement the Affordable Housing Policy which includes a proportion of intermediate housing	2013	HBC Planning Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	50% of units delivered through affordable housing policy to be intermediate housing (subject to demand and viability)
	Develop a Marketing Strategy to promote the various types of low	2013	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	Develop a Marketing Strategy to promote the various types of low

Priority	Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Resources	Success measures and outcomes
	cost home ownership products and support Government initiatives such as New Buy				cost home ownership products and support Government initiatives such as New Buy
To target housing support to those who need it most	Reconfigure existing provision of housing for single homeless people	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	Improve the quality and fitness for purpose of temporary accommodation for single, homeless people.
	Review existing provision of supported accommodation for households fleeing domestic violence	2013/14	Operational Director (Prevention and Assessment)	Staff time Possible capital and/or revenue funding	Dependent on outcome of review
	Introduce Housing Gateway Support system and undertake effective monitoring of the new system	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time Staff costs Annual IT costs	Supported housing services are provided to those in greatest need

**Objective 3: To improve housing conditions and make the best use of the housing stock**

Priority	Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Resources	Success measures and outcomes
To complete the regeneration of the Castlefields estate	Implement 10 year action plan	Throughout period of Strategy	HBC Major Projects	Staff time	Delivery of at least 350 new (predominantly private) homes by 2023 Provision of a further 150 new affordable homes by 2015/16 Physical enhancement and energy efficiency improvements to 500 retained two storey system built homes by 2016
	Neighbourhood extension of Lakeside and Canalside	2015/16	HBC Major Projects	Staff time Other (?)	
	Continue to take strategic leadership role within the Castlefields Regeneration Partnership	Ongoing	HBC Major Projects	Staff time	
To explore the implications of private rented sector growth	Implement Private Rented Sector project plan	2013/14	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time Promotional budget (£5k from Homelessness Prevention fund)	Increase in the number of accredited landlords from 39 to 50 by end of Strategy period Increase the number of accredited properties from 141 to 200 by end of Strategy period Policy position on use of PRS to discharge statutory homelessness duty agreed
	Consider implementing new flexibilities to discharge statutory homelessness duty through private rented sector	2013	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	
To improve the energy efficiency of housing and tackle fuel poverty	Continued development of Halton Healthy Homes Network	Ongoing	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time	Improved SAP ratings in private sector stock from 56 to 60 by time of next Private Sector Stock Condition survey
	Develop new Affordable Warmth Strategy	Ongoing	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time	
	Promote Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation	October 2013 – ongoing thereafter	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time	
	Develop and implement HECA further report and progress	March 2013 – progress reports every two years	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time	



Priority	Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Resources	Success measures and outcomes
	reports	thereafter			
To make the best possible use of the existing housing stock	Support Registered Providers in their implementation of the National Homeswap schemes through promotion on HBC website and CBL systems	2012/13 and ongoing	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	Maximise opportunities for underoccupying social tenants to find accommodation more suited to their needs
	Review the Halton Tenancy Strategy	September 2013	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	
	Work with RPs to identify empty properties suitable for lease/acquisition using HCA empty homes funding	2012/13/14	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time	Bring 25 long term empty properties back into use through direct intervention over the Strategy period
	Undertake survey of empty homes to establish what support can be provided by the Council	2013/14	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time Postage costs (contribution from Homelessness Prevention Fund)	
	Develop a more pro-active approach to bringing empty homes back into use	2013/14	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time Budget to carry out works in default (?)	



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# Glossary

Affordable Housing	Housing at a price below private market prices, which includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing.
Affordable Rented	Housing let by Registered Providers of social housing at a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent.
Assured Tenancy	Introduced by the Housing Act 1988, assured tenancies are a form of residential tenancy that give a degree of security so that the tenant cannot be evicted without a reason. At the time of writing, they are the main form of tenancy used by Registered Providers of social housing.
Assured Shorthold Tenancy	Assured Shorthold Tenancies are the most common form of tenancy offered by private landlords. The tenancy is granted for a fixed period of time (usually 6 months) following which the tenancy usually converts to a Periodic tenancy which is automatically renewed every 2 months. The landlord can terminate the tenancy at any point by issuing a section 21 notice, which effectively gives the tenant two months notice to leave, however a court will not enforce the notice unless at least six months have elapsed from when the initial tenancy was granted.
The Bedroom Standard	The Bedroom Standard is the most commonly used measure of overcrowding and underoccupation. A standard number of bedrooms is allocated to each household in accordance with its age/sex/marital status composition and the relationship of the members to one another. A separate bedroom is allocated to each married or cohabiting couple, any other person aged 21 or over, each pair of adolescents aged 10 - 20 of the same sex, and each pair of children under 10. Any unpaired person aged 10 - 20 is paired, if possible with a child under 10 of the same sex, or, if that is not possible, he or she is given a separate bedroom, as is any unpaired child under 10.
Choice Based Lettings	Choice Based Lettings is a method of allocating social housing which involves available properties being advertised locally and interested applicants expressing an interest or “bidding” on advertised properties. The property is then offered to the bidder with the highest level of assessed need.
CORE	The Continuous Recording of Lettings and Sales in Social Housing in England (known as CORE) is a national data collection system which records a wide range of information on social housing lettings and sales and the households they are let or sold to. The system provides valuable information for the development of national and local housing policies.
Concealed household	The Halton Strategic Housing Market Assessment defines concealed households as those that need or are likely to form within the next two years. Typically they are currently housed with family or friends and are an important element in considering future need for affordable housing.
Decent Homes Standard	The previous Government set a target that all social housing must meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. To meet the standard homes must meet the statutory minimum standard for housing (i.e. free from category 1 hazards under the HHSRS – see below), must be warm and weatherproof and have reasonable modern facilities.
Extra care housing	Extra care housing is a form of specialised housing scheme, usually for older people, which provides a range of care and support services on site. It differs from sheltered housing in that it provides a higher level of on site support and includes care services.
Homebuy	Homebuy is the term used by the Government to describe the various different types of shared ownership and shared equity products available to help people buy their own home.
Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)	The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is the national housing and regeneration agency for England. It provides investment for new and improved affordable homes and regeneration projects. It is also the main regulatory body for Registered Providers of social housing.
Household reference person	The Strategic Housing Market Assessment uses the term Household Reference Person to describe the person completing the SHMA survey form on behalf of the household.
Housing, Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)	The Housing, Health and Safety Rating System replaced the fitness standard as the Principal means of assessing housing conditions in 2004. It uses a risk based scoring approach to assess hazards within the home. The presence of “category 1” hazards indicates that the home is below the statutory minimum standard.
Housing Market Area	A geographical area which is relatively self contained in terms of reflecting peoples choice of location for a new home.
Indices of Multiple	The English Indices of Deprivation measures relative levels of deprivation in small areas of

Deprivation	England called Lower Layer Super Output Areas. It combines a number of indicators, chosen to cover a range of economic, social and housing issues, into a single deprivation score for each small area in England. This allows each area to be ranked relative to one another according to their level of deprivation. The data is produced at Lower Super Output Area level, of which there are 32,482 in the country.
Intermediate housing	Intermediate housing is housing provided at prices and rents above those of social rent but below market rents and prices. Examples include shared ownership, affordable rents and shared equity products.
Landlord Accreditation	Landlord Accreditation schemes are voluntary schemes, often run by local authorities, which encourage good standards in the private rented sector by allowing owners to apply for accredited status to demonstrate that they are a responsible landlord.
Local Development Framework (LDF)	The Local Development Framework (LDF) is the collective name for the local authority's Core Strategy and related planning policies. The National Planning Policy Framework published in 2012 replaces Local Development Frameworks with local plans.
Local Housing Allowance (LHA)	The Local Housing Allowance (LHA) arrangements are a way of working out Housing Benefit for people who rent from a private landlord. LHA rates are based on the size of household and the area in which a person lives to work out the amount of rent which can be met with HB. HB paid under the LHA arrangements is normally paid to the tenant, who will then pay the landlord.
Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)	A Partnership that brings together representatives from local statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors to address local problems, allocate funding and discuss local strategies and initiatives. In Halton the LSP is often referred to as the Halton Strategic Partnership.
New Town Estates	Runcorn's New Town estates sprang up in the late 1960s following the designation of Runcorn as a New Town area in 1964. They were developed as overspill estates to tackle a housing shortage in Liverpool. Initially managed by the Runcorn Development Corporation, the housing was transferred to a variety of housing associations in 1974, following the disbanding of the Corporation.
Older People	In general for the purposes of this document the term "older people" refers to any person aged 65 or over unless otherwise stated. However some housing schemes for older people will accept people over the age of 55.
Private Sector Stock Condition Survey	Local authorities have a statutory duty to keep housing conditions in the area under review. Stock Condition Surveys are the principle means of assessing those conditions. They provide vital evidence to support the development of housing strategies and housing assistance policies. Government guidance recommends that local authorities undertake stock condition surveys every 3 to 5 years.
Regional Spatial Strategy	Regional Spatial Strategies were introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as a means of providing a spatial vision and strategy specific to each region in the country. They set housebuilding targets for each local authority area which were expected to be reflected in local planning policies. Regional Spatial Strategies were abolished by the Coalition Government in July 2010 so that top down targets for house building no longer exist.
Registered Provider	Registered Provider is the new term for providers of social or affordable housing who are registered with the Homes and Communities Agency. They were previously referred to as Registered Social Landlords. They are almost always non profit making Housing Associations or Trusts, although in recent years some private developers have started to build and manage affordable housing and so have also registered with the HCA.
Shared Ownership	Shared Ownership schemes are used to help people to get a foot on the housing ladder by allowing them to buy a proportion of a home with a mortgage while the other proportion is rented, usually from a Registered Provider.
Sheltered housing	Sheltered housing refers to specialist housing schemes, usually for older people, that either have a warden living on site or have access to 24 hour emergency assistance through an alarm system.
Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAA) are a key component of the evidence base to support the delivery of sufficient land for housing to meet the community's need for more homes. The aim of a SHLAA is to identify enough developable land in the area on which to deliver new housing for at least the next five years.
Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMA)	Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMA) is a study of the operation of a Housing Market Area (HMA) and of housing need within the area. Since HMAs cover more than one local authority area SHMAs are usually carried out in conjunction with other local authority areas. Government recommends that all local authorities undertake SHMAs on a periodic

	basis to inform development of their planning and housing policies and has produced guidance for their use.
Supported accommodation/housing	Supported accommodation is a catch all phrase that refers to any type of accommodation that offers on site support to enable occupants to live independently. Examples include young persons hostels, extra care housing and sheltered housing.
Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS)	The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) is prepared by local strategic partnerships (LSPs) as a set of goals and actions which they, in representing the residential, business, statutory and voluntary interests of an area, wish to promote. The SCS should inform the Local Development Framework (LDF) and act as an umbrella for all other strategies devised for the area.
Vulnerable people	There is no one definition of vulnerable people which covers all contexts. For safeguarding purposes a vulnerable adult is described as a person: “ Who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.” However a broader definition is sometimes used by Government for the purposes of allocating resources which can include anyone aged 65 or over, disabled people, claiming benefits and/or families with children under 5.

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## Foreword

This document sets out a comprehensive overview of housing in Halton in 2012/13. It is intended to provide the evidence base to Halton's Housing Strategy 2013 to 2018 which describes the Council's housing priorities for the coming five years. The findings from the evidence paper have been used as a basis on which to consult with stakeholders and the wider public with a view to developing these future priorities.

The evidence paper sets housing in its policy context and takes account of the wide range of housing reforms introduced by the Coalition Government since 2010 including the Government's Housing Strategy for England; the Localism Act 2011 and Welfare Reform Act 2012.

It uses a range of information sources to build a comprehensive picture of housing including Halton's Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Private Sector Stock Condition Survey and local statistical returns as well as national datasets such as the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.

I have pleasure in commending the document to you.

Councillor Phil Harris  
Executive Board Member for Housing Strategy

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Further information on this paper and the separate Housing Strategy 2013-18 can be obtained by contacting Joanne Sutton, Halton Borough Council on 0151 511 8750 or emailing: [joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk](mailto:joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk). This evidence paper is available in different formats upon request.

## Part One – Resources

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### Introduction

In common with many public service areas, Housing budgets have seen substantial reductions over the last 12 to 18 months as a result of the Government policy of deficit reduction. This will, inevitably, impact on our ability to deliver the same level of service that residents have come to expect. The current position with regard to financing the Housing service is set out in this part of the document.

## Funding for Council Housing services

### Regional Housing Pot

Until April 2011 the Regional Housing Pot was the main source of funding for the Housing Capital Programme, for the most part, funding assistance for housing renewal (grants and loans) and energy efficiency. The Regional Housing Pot funding stream came to an end in April 2011 along with the disestablishment of regional governing bodies. Consequently, the Council's ability to deliver a housing capital programme which adequately meets the needs identified in this evidence paper has been severely compromised. This will be reflected in the Council's Housing Strategy Delivery Plan which will set out our priorities and ambitions for housing in the context of a realistic level of future resources.

### New Homes Bonus (NHB)

The New Homes Bonus replaced the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant in April 2011. The intention of NHB is to act as an incentive for local authorities to deliver housing growth by match funding six years worth of Council Tax for each new home built. An additional £350 is paid annually for each affordable home that is built and the grant applies to empty properties that have been brought back into use.

For 2012/13, the authority was awarded £856,871 in New Homes Bonus. While this funding is of course welcome, it is top sliced from the Local Authority Grant Settlement so in effect is not really new money. The funding is not ring fenced for housing use.

### Supported housing funding

There have been changes to the way that supported housing is funded. In 2011 the ring fence was removed for Supporting People services nationally and the funding was subsumed into Council's Area Based Grant allocation. In Halton, this has resulted in a 7.6% decrease in the funding available for supported housing services on 2010/11 levels. The allocation for 2012/13 is shown in the figure 1.1 below.

### Housing funding 2012/13

Delivery of the housing service in 2012/13 will be supported through a variety of different funding pots as illustrated in figure 1.1 below which shows monetary allocations for housing where these are known. The nature of the funding sources available illustrates an emphasis on services designed to support vulnerable people while there is little funding available for other elements of the strategic housing service e.g. improving housing conditions, bringing empty homes back into use and commissioning research for future strategic development.

#### *Figure 1.1 – Funding sources for strategic housing delivery 2012/13*

The table below shows the allocation of capital resources for housing related activity for 2012/13.

	2012/13 Capital Programme
Disabled Facilities Grants (incl. capitalised salaries)	735,000
Energy Promotion	6,000
Stair lifts	250,000
Registered Providers Adaptations (Joint Funding)	550,000
Choice Based Lettings	28,946
Extra Care Naughton Fields	463,186
Bungalows at Halton Lodge	464,000
Sensory Hub	15,000



<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,512,132</b>
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The Council will also seek to maximise resources from ad hoc grant opportunities as and when they arise. For example, the Department of Health's Warm Homes, Healthy People funding stream provided funding for emergency heating and advice schemes to support vulnerable people to keep their homes warm during the winter months of 2012/13.

## **Other Housing funding**

### **National Affordable Housing Programme**

Registered Providers have agreed four year programmes with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to deliver 320 affordable homes in Halton over the next four years. Unfortunately, the way the new funding model is structured means that it is not possible to provide a monetary value at local authority level.

### **Get Britain Building**

The Get Britain Building scheme was announced in the Government's Housing Strategy as a £400 million investment fund designed to kickstart pipeline developments which have stalled but are otherwise ready to start or progress. The fund which provides commercial loans is mostly aimed at small and medium sized builders whose developments have come to a halt due to the uncertain market conditions. A prospectus providing further details was published in December 2011. Two schemes in Halton were originally shortlisted but now look unlikely to proceed.

### **Homelessness Grant**

Halton provides support for homeless people through an annual grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), which for 2011/12 was £50,000. Specific funding of £65,000 has also been allocated in the form of a one off grant for the Mortgage Rescue Scheme to provide support for households in danger of losing their home due to mortgage arrears. In addition, the Cheshire wide Partnership Group has been successful in securing £30,000 from DCLG to assist with the development of prevention initiatives. Halton is also involved with the Merseyside sub regional group which was awarded £470,000 by CLG to develop prevention initiatives such as the No Second Night Out scheme.

### **Future resources**

It is anticipated that future investment will be limited to funding Disabled Facilities Grants and support for other vulnerable groups and that the local authority role in housing may increasingly be more about facilitating and co-ordinating rather than direct investment of resources.

## Part Two - Context

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### National Policy

#### Laying the Foundations: The Housing Strategy for England

The Housing Strategy for England was launched on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2011. It sets out, in one overarching document, the Government's plans to address problems in the country's housing market through increasing the supply of homes, reforming social housing, supporting growth in the private rented sector, encouraging local authorities to bring empty homes back into use and improving choice and housing support. Much of the Strategy restated policies that had already been announced, however, there were some new initiatives designed to breathe life into the country's stagnant housing market. Among the most significant announcements were:

- A new £400 million "Get Britain Building" fund for small and medium sized developers whose developments have come to a halt due to uncertain market conditions;
- Introduction of a mortgage indemnity scheme to provide 95% mortgages on new build homes for first time buyers struggling to secure mortgage finance through conventional means;
- A competitive bidding process to encourage large scale, locally planned and community driven development;
- Plans to release enough public sector land to build 100,000 new houses through a "buy now, pay later" deal with developers;
- Consultation on reducing the length of time that must elapse before developers can seek to renegotiate section 106 agreements with local planning authorities;
- £100 million match funding to help bring empty homes back into use, with a further £50 million for those areas worst affected by empty properties;
- Consultation on increasing Right to Buy discounts with plans for every home sold to be replaced by a new home;
- Proposals to reform stamp duty to support large scale investment in the buy to let market;
- An allocation of £400 million for homelessness prevention and the launch of a ministerial working group to address the causes of homelessness;
- A new deal for older peoples housing and encouraging local authorities to make provision for a wide range of housing types including specialised housing for older people.

#### Localism Act 2011

The Localism Act received Royal Assent on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2011. The Act sets out plans to give communities and local authorities greater powers and freedoms and introduces new Community Rights such as the Community Right to Challenge the delivery of local authority run services; the Community Right to Bid for assets of community value and the Community Right to Build small developments in their area without the need for planning permission. The Act also introduces a General Power of Competence for local authorities to do anything not specifically forbidden by law and paves the way for neighbourhood planning and directly elected mayors.

The Act also contains a number of Housing reforms which will impact directly on the Council's local authority strategic housing role, including:

- Giving local authorities greater freedom to decide who is eligible to apply for social housing. More recently, the Government has issued new guidance for allocation schemes which, amongst other provisions, gives greater priority for housing to ex servicemen and women. The Property Pool Plus allocations policy is in the process of being reviewed in light of the new guidance.
- Introduction of new fixed term tenancies for social housing tenants and requirement for the local authority to produce a Tenancy Strategy to guide Registered Providers in their use. This is considered in more detail later in this evidence paper.

- The power for local authorities to discharge their statutory homelessness duty through an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector without the applicant's consent.

The Act also changes the regulatory framework for Registered Providers by abolishing the Tenant Services Authority and placing greater emphasis on tenant involvement in regulation with remaining regulatory functions transferring to the Homes and Communities Agency.

### **Welfare Reform Act 2012**

The Welfare Reform Act received Royal Assent on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2012. The Act has been described as the biggest shake up of the benefits system in 60 years. It aims to simplify the system and create the right incentives to get people into work by ensuring that no individual is better off by not working.

Key features of the Act that will have the most significant impact on Halton's residents are:

- Introduction of Universal Credit. The level of Universal Credit is to be capped at £26,000. While it is estimated that only a small number of Halton residents will see their income reduce as a result of the cap, some will be very significantly affected (up to £500 per week). In addition, Housing Benefit is to be included in Universal Credit and will consequently be paid directly to tenants of social housing. There are fears that this will lead to an increase in rent arrears which, in turn, could lead to a rise in homelessness and could impact upon the ability of Registered Providers to secure private investment at competitive rates to maximise their capacity to deliver additional affordable housing.
- Replacement of Disability Living Allowance with a Personal Independent Payment (PIP) for those of working age. Halton, which has been selected as a pilot area for the scheme, has a disproportionate amount of disabled residents and the change to PIP will involve a reduction in the numbers of those receiving financial assistance.
- Changes to Housing Benefit including the introduction of an under occupancy penalty for households whose homes are deemed to be too large for their needs. Described as the "Bedroom Tax", this change will have a very significant impact in Halton, where it is estimated that as many as 3,000 social housing tenants could lose benefits. The situation is compounded by a shortage of smaller properties in the Borough to facilitate downsizing. Changes to Local Housing Allowance (LHA), most significantly the extension of the age threshold for the shared accommodation rate from 25 to 35. This will affect around 234 claimants in Halton, whose benefit entitlement will reduce from £91.15 to £53.54 per week. Private tenants will also be affected by plans to uprate LHA by the Consumer Price Index rather than the Retail Price Index currently used.

It is too early to assess the impact of other reforms such as the ongoing reassessment of Incapacity Benefit claimants against the stricter criteria of the Employment Support Allowance, changes to Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans and forthcoming reforms to Council Tax benefit which will include a 10% cut in scheme funding and "localised" benefit schemes.

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2012. It sets out, in a more condensed version of previous guidance, the Government's planning policies and how it expects these to be applied and aims to simplify the country's planning system to achieve sustainable development.

The NPPF replaces the need for Local Development Frameworks with Local Plans which local authorities must develop to meet objectively assessed needs and which must have sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change. For housing development, it reaffirms the requirement to assess need through a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (preferably developed in conjunction with other authorities in the Housing Market Area) and to identify opportunities to meet that need through the development of a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

The framework has a clear emphasis on growth and on accelerating the planning process. A key challenge for the development and delivery of Local Plans will be how to balance the need for rapid housing and economic growth with the need to protect Green Belt and to promote the highest possible standards of sustainable development.

## Affordable Rents

Affordable rent is the new rent model which the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) expect that Registered Providers will adopt for new build housing and for an agreed proportion of existing stock as it becomes vacant. Affordable rents are set at up to 80% of market rents in the area. The additional income raised through affordable rents is to be invested in new housing development and it is anticipated will help fund the shortfall as a result of significant cuts to the HCA National Affordable Housing Programme. While this could lead to an increase in rent levels for some tenants and could result in a two tier system whereby tenants in similar properties are paying different rents, it is likely that the impact in Halton will not be as great as in higher value areas due to relatively low private rents in the Borough.

## Sub Regional context

### Liverpool City Region Housing and Spatial Planning Forum

Halton Borough Council is represented on the Liverpool City Region Housing and Spatial Planning Forum, which acts as an advisory group to the Liverpool City Region Cabinet on housing and planning issues. The Forum provides the mechanism for the co-ordination of activity between the participating local authority areas and is a key delivery agent in developing and implementing the priorities contained within the Local Investment Plan described below.

Examples of sub regional projects overseen by the Forum include:

- Development and implementation of the sub regional Choice Based Letting Scheme Property Pool Plus (described in more detail later in this evidence paper);
- A co-ordinated approach to delivery of the successful bids to HCA to bring empty homes back into use, including development of a standardised lease agreement and inspection report;
- Co-ordination of affordable housing delivery and stalled/pipeline sites with a view to maximising funding opportunities to kickstart development.

The Group provides an opportunity to pool knowledge, experience, skills and resources from participating local authority areas with a view to maximising housing investment, choice and provision for the city region area and support the economic potential of the sub region.

### Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan 2

The Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan (LIP) 2011-15 builds on the success of the interim plan for 2010/11 which has helped to secure over £80m of housing and regeneration investment in the City Region. The LIP has three primary roles:

- As a prospectus for housing and regeneration investment in the Liverpool City Region;
- To clarify the City Region's priorities to support economic growth whilst maintaining the momentum of regeneration;
- Inform HCA's business plan by setting clear priorities for future investment in the City Region.

The Plan identifies the challenges facing the City Region and the priorities for action, including:

- Raising the quality of and diversification of the housing offer as a means to harness economic potential;
- Bringing long term empty properties back into use as a means of increasing the supply of affordable housing;
- Addressing housing market failure in the core conurbations of Liverpool, Wirral and Sefton and also prioritise investment in the areas with greatest economic potential and market strength;
- Working with Registered Providers to ensure an appropriate mix of development based on evidence from Strategic Housing Market Assessments;
- Making best use of the existing stock, including developing measures to address under occupation;
- Developing opportunities for institutional investment in the private rented sector;
- Meeting the needs of an ageing population and supporting vulnerable people;

- Maximising the development opportunities presented by public landholdings in the City Region.

## Local Context

### Halton’s Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-2026

Halton’s Sustainable Community Strategy sets out the vision for the Halton that the Council and its partners, under the umbrella of the Halton Strategic Partnership, would like to see emerge by 2026.

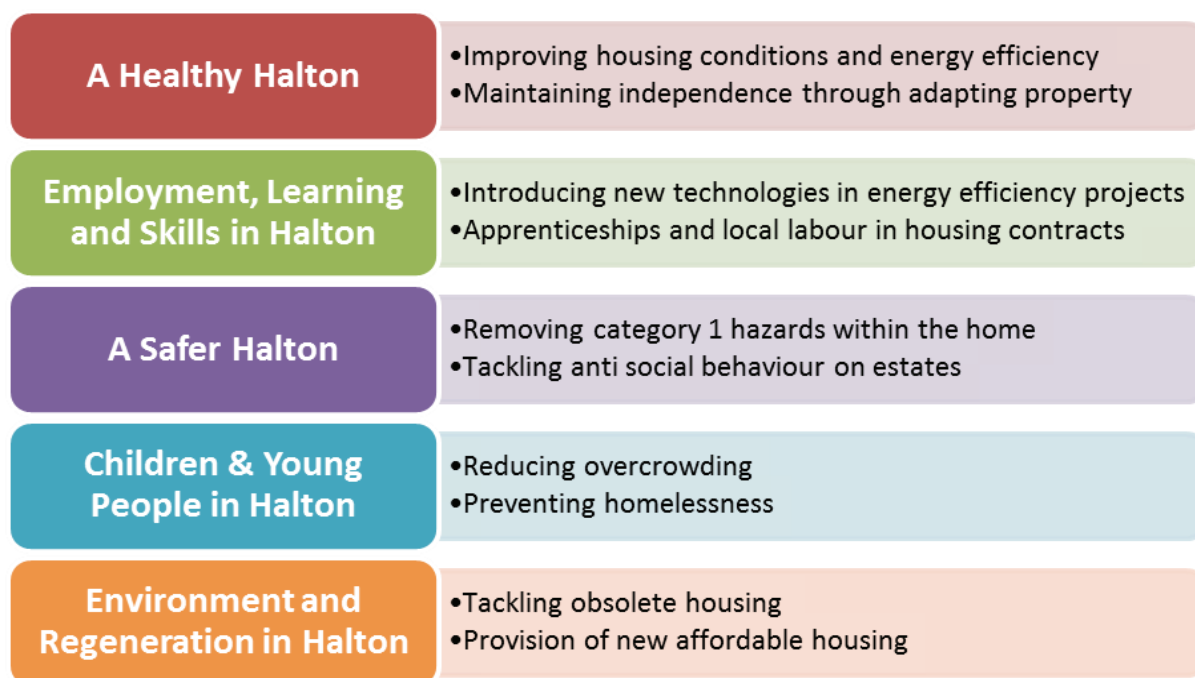
The Strategy’s five priority themes are:

- A Healthy Halton
- Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton
- A Safer Halton
- Halton’s Children and Young People
- Halton’s Environment and Regeneration

Housing has a significant contribution to make to each of the five priority themes as illustrated in figure 2.1

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Figure 2.1 – Housing’s contribution to Halton’s priorities



### Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan presents the Council’s response to how it will help implement the Community Strategy. This is achieved through a framework consisting of a hierarchy of Directorate, Divisional and Team Service Plans known as “the Golden Thread” that are directly aligned to ensure that the strategic priorities are cascaded down through the organisation through outcome focused targets.

The five strategic priorities are also mirrored in the make up of the Council’s Policy and Performance Boards which, together with the Executive Board, provide political leadership of the Council.

Progress in achieving the objectives contained in the Service Plans is reviewed regularly as part of the Council's performance management culture, and further scrutiny is exercised by Members through the Policy and Performance Boards.

### **Halton's Core Strategy**

Halton's Core Strategy was adopted in November 2012 having been through Examination in Public and having been subject to examination by the Planning Inspectorate. The Strategy sets a minimum housing requirement of 9,930 net additional homes between 2010 and 2028, equating to 552 dwellings per annum. It is anticipated that almost 60% of the dwellings over the Strategy period are to be built in Runcorn. An average of at least 40% of new residential development should be developed on previously developed (brownfield) land over the period.

New homes will be delivered from a variety of sources including from sites currently available for housing development where work is either underway, planning permission has been granted or the site has been allocated for residential development and from sites which have the potential to contribute to housing land supply e.g. identified housing opportunities within Key Areas of Change (i.e. 3MG site at Ditton, South Widnes, East Runcorn and West Runcorn), new housing or mixed use allocations in subsequent Development Plans and appropriate windfall development. In accordance with Government guidance the Council will seek to maintain a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land. The Strategy identifies opportunities to develop 1,400 homes in Daresbury and 1,400 homes in Sandymoor in Runcorn East and 1,500 homes in Runcorn West, mainly on the Runcorn Waterfront site.

The Core Strategy contains an affordable housing requirement of 25% of the total residential units proposed on schemes comprising 10 or more dwellings (net gain) or 0.33 hectares or greater for residential purposes. The Council will seek to secure an equal split between social/affordable rent tenures and intermediate housing tenures across the Borough. Provision of affordable housing must meet the identified housing needs as set out in the most up to date Strategic Housing Market Assessment and is to be provided in perpetuity. The affordable housing contribution may only be reduced where robust and credible evidence is provided to demonstrate that the affordable housing target would make the scheme unviable.

An Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document has been adopted to support the policy which provides additional guidance for all parties involved in the delivery of affordable housing through the planning system.

## Tenancy Strategy

In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, Halton has developed a Tenancy Strategy which sets out what types of tenancies the Council recommends that Registered Providers should offer locally, the length of those tenancies and the circumstances in which they should be offered and renewed. The Strategy, which was formally adopted by the Council in September 2012, recommends that Providers continue to offer Lifetime tenancies but recognises that Providers may wish to make use of the new fixed term tenancies introduced by the Localism Act to make the best use of their housing stock. Where this is the case, the Strategy advises that fixed term tenancies should be for a minimum of five years and are not suitable for:

- Existing social housing tenants who became assured tenants prior to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 and who are transferring to another property;
- Where the property is part of a supported housing development that provides specialist accommodation for particular client groups, including sheltered housing.
- Where the tenant is someone over the prevailing state retirement age.
- Where the property is located in an area of very low demand and/or high multiple deprivation where the local authority has serious concerns about the long term sustainability of the area. In these circumstances, the local authority will initiate discussions with the relevant Provider(s) to request that they temporarily suspend the use of fixed term tenancies in that area.
- Where a tenant with a secure or assured tenancy is required by a Provider to move due to redevelopment e.g. they are being required to move, not seeking to do so.

The Strategy also recommends that in most cases fixed term tenancies are renewed upon review, particularly where the household contains children or has been offered in response to particular set of vulnerabilities and the household is still assessed as being vulnerable or the property has been adapted to meet the needs of a disabled person and that person still resides in the property and needs the adaptations. The circumstances in which it is recognised that Providers may not wish to renew the tenancy are where:

- There has been a substantial improvement in the household's financial circumstances to the extent that continued occupation of the property by the household would present a conflict with the charitable objectives or primary purpose of Providers to provide housing for those in necessitous circumstances.
- There has been a change in the composition of the household which has resulted in the household under occupying the accommodation.
- An adapted property is no longer suitable for the tenant's needs e.g. where adaptations have been provided for a disabled person who is no longer resident in the property, the adaptations are no longer required, and there are other families needing this type of adapted accommodation.

In the latter two circumstances the Strategy advises that Providers should seek to offer suitable alternative accommodation in their own or another Provider's stock. The Council does not expect fixed term tenancies to be used as a means of enforcing tenancy conditions but recognises that there may be cases where enforcement action is so far advanced that it may not be appropriate to renew the tenancy.

# Part Three – Halton’s Housing

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## Overview

### Tenure

Halton’s housing stock can be characterised by a relatively high proportion of social rented properties (around 25%), resulting from the development and subsequent transfer of housing in Runcorn’s New Town estates, and a private sector skewed towards lower value, semi detached and terraced homes. Figure 3.1 illustrates the growth in the private sector (20% in the 12 years from 1999 to 2011) and the steady decline in the total social housing stock of around 15%. As illustrated in the chart, the Council transferred its housing stock to a newly created Housing Association, Halton Housing Trust, in December 2005.

#### *Figure 3.1 – Halton’s housing stock from 1999 (from HSSA returns)*

More recently the Borough has witnessed a dramatic growth in the private rented sector, from only 4% of the total housing stock at the time of the 2001 Census to 10%. It is thought that this is due to limited mortgage availability and long waiting lists for social housing fuelling demand for the sector, and the availability of Buy to Let mortgages and concept of housing as a long term investment fuelling supply. This growth has included the Council examining its approach to the sector as part of a Member led scrutiny review, which is described later in this document.

Census data from 2011 allows us to compare Halton’s stock profile with that of national and regional housing profiles and with neighbouring local authorities as shown in figure 3.2 below. As illustrated, Halton has a larger than average social rented sector and a relatively small private rented sector.

#### *Figure 3.2 - Sub regional tenure comparison (Census 2011)*

### Property values

The stock profile in Halton is skewed towards lower value properties, with 68% of dwellings in Council Tax Bands A or B, as illustrated in figure 3.3 below.

#### *Figure 3.3 – Breakdown of Council Tax Bands in Halton*

Analysis of Council Tax Band by ward, as illustrated below, reveals that the lowest value stock is concentrated unsurprisingly in the wards containing the highest proportions of social housing. Higher value properties are concentrated in Birchfield, Daresbury and Hale wards.

#### *Figure 3.4 – Council Tax bands by wards*

### Empty Homes

The proportion of long term empty private homes in Halton at around 1.5% to 2.2% is consistent with Regional figures and those of neighbouring local authorities. Figure 3.5 below shows the number of vacancies over 6 months in both the private and social rented sectors.

#### *Figure 3.5 – Vacancies over 6 months*

Analysis of the geographical spread of all empty homes reveals no neighbourhood or street level “hotspots”, however, the three wards with the highest proportions: Mersey (6.61%), Riverside (5.63%) and Appleton (4.49%) are those containing more properties in Council Tax Bands A and Band private rented properties suggesting a connection between these factors. The Council takes



action to remedy empty homes where a complaint is received and is supportive of initiatives to reduce the number of empty homes as and when funding is available. For example the Council has recently worked with Halton Housing Trust to secure HCA funding to bring 8 empty homes back into use through acquisition. Additional resources would be needed to take a more pro active approach.

A survey of owners of long term empty private sector homes undertaken in 2009 revealed that around 41% required investment to bring them back into use, although in the majority of cases improvement or modernisation work was already underway. The majority of respondents indicated that they anticipated that the property would be occupied within a 12 month period, only 10% thought it would still be empty due to either the level of work required or current market conditions.

The number of long term vacant properties in the social housing stock varies greatly from year to year as illustrated above. However, the numbers are heavily influenced by the current state of play with regard to regeneration programmes. For example, the increase in 2011 is due largely to the number of properties awaiting demolition in Castlefields as part of the ten year Masterplan. Consequently, the number of social housing properties empty for more than 6 months, which under normal circumstances represents less than 1% of the total social housing stock, is not a cause for concern.

## New housing

Figure 3.6 illustrates the number of newly built properties in the Borough as reported in Housing Flows Reconciliation returns. The chart demonstrates the impact of the recent economic downturn on new build completions, which have fallen by over 500% on peak levels in 2005/06 and fall way below the former target of 500 per annum set out in the now defunct North West Regional Spatial Strategy.

*Figure 3.6 – New build completions 2000 onwards*

Source: DCLG Housing Flows Reconciliation returns

The chart also demonstrates growth in social housing developments over recent years, part funded by the Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA) National Affordable Development Programme. Registered Providers in Halton have agreed their development programmes with the HCA for the four year period 2011 to 2015, resulting in the following planned new developments.

	<b>1 Bed Flat</b>	<b>2 Bed Flat</b>	<b>2 Bed Bungalow</b>	<b>2 Bed House</b>	<b>3 Bed House</b>	<b>Total</b>
Runcorn	0	38	7	26	48	119
Widnes	39	116	5	11	30	201
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>320</b>

In addition to the above, a new 47 unit extra care scheme at Naughton Fields, Liverpool Road, Widnes funded from 2008/11 National Affordable Housing Programme has recently been developed.

Halton's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment allows us to forecast the number of total expected completions for Runcorn and Widnes for the four years to 2016/17. Note that at this stage tenure is unknown so these figures include both market and affordable anticipated housing development.

	Approx Completed Units 2013/14	Approx Completed Units 2014/15	Approx Completed Units 2015/16	Approx Completed Units 2016/17
Runcorn	232	502	688	560
Widnes	338	328	441	165

The Council is keen to fulfil its role in facilitating new housing development through the Local Development Framework and has prepared a comprehensive list of potential housing development sites that are likely to come forward over the next 15 years. These are contained in a document called the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, which is updated annually. This can be viewed at <http://www3.halton.gov.uk/environmentandplanning/planning/294413/>.

## The Housing Market

### House prices

Average house prices in Halton are lower than regional averages and significantly lower than national averages as illustrated in figure 3.7. Based on provisional estimates at quarter 3 2012 the average house price in Halton was £133,550 which was £23,693 lower than the North West average.

#### *Figure 3.7 – Average house prices*

Source: Land Registry

Historically house prices in Halton along with those in Knowsley have tended to be the lowest in the Liverpool City Region. However latest figures (quarter 3 2012) suggest that local average house prices have overtaken Knowsley and St Helens and are more on a par with Liverpool as shown in Figure 3.8.

#### *Figure 3.8 – Sub regional comparison of average house prices (Quarter 3 2012)*

In common with the regional and national position, the economic downturn and consequential housing market conditions has led to a dramatic decrease in the number of sales as demonstrated by figure 3.9, declining by almost 60% between the peak at quarter 3 2007 and the corresponding quarter in 2011.

#### *Figure 3.9 – Average sales*

Source: Land Registry

Analysis at ward level at figure 3.10 reveals the disparity in house prices across the Borough. Average house prices in Daresbury and Birchfield which have a high proportion of new build, executive style homes are almost four times as much as those in the area with the lowest average house price in quarter 3 2011 (Halton Lea). Average house prices in wards containing New Town estates and those with a high proportion of smaller terraces and private rented stock (e.g. Appleton and Mersey) are unsurprisingly lower.

#### *Figure 3.10 – Average House Prices Quarter 3 2011*

Source: Land Registry

### Rent levels

The Halton Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) used CORE data on new social lettings and Valuation Office Data to compare the relative rent levels in the social and private rented stock. Figure 3.11 illustrates this differential.

#### *Figure 3.11 – Average monthly private and social rent levels 2009/10*

As shown, social rents were found to equate to around 58% of prevailing market rents, indicating the potential impact of the new affordable rent regime which, if rents are raised to the full 80% threshold, would see the average monthly rent for a 3 bedroom social rented property rise to around £460 per month. The SHMA also found that rent levels in the social housing sector were increasing at a much faster rate (up by around 27% on 2004/05 levels) than private rents, which had remained relatively static over the same period.

### Affordability

The Halton Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2011 collected a range of information regarding household financial circumstances relevant to their ability to afford market housing in order to assess the level of annual affordable housing need. In summary, the findings were that:

- Average gross household income was £25,662 with a much lower median income level of £18,954.
- Average household savings were £3,756 (taking into account non mortgage debts) but again the median was much lower at £290.
- Around a third of households were in debt and a further quarter had no savings.
- Average equity was £95,138 and 1,588 households were in negative equity.
- An estimated 4,307 new households were likely to form in the next two years.
- Around 40% of these had an income of less than £10,000 and 81% less than £20,000.

Using the affordability criteria below, the survey found that around 32% of households were unable to afford home ownership. When taking into account the need for a 20% deposit requirement this figure increased to 46.5%.

*“Assessing whether a household can afford home ownership - A household is considered able to afford to buy a home if the residual cost is no more than 3.5 times the gross household income. The residual cost is calculated by deducting any capital that is available for use towards home ownership (e.g. savings or equity) from the overall cost of the home.”*

Using the Government recommended model which takes into account backlog and newly arising need and likely future supply, the survey assessed a need for 891 affordable homes per annum for the next five years, 65% for social/affordable rent and the remaining 35% split between intermediate rent, shared ownership and low cost home ownership. This figure represents a significant increase on the 2006 Housing Needs Survey which estimated a need at that time for 176 affordable homes per annum, clearly demonstrating the impact that the economic downturn has had on the housing market. However, given an overall average target of 552 new homes within Halton’s Core Strategy delivery of 891 affordable homes per annum appears unrealistic.

Analysis of median house prices compared to average incomes reveals that Halton has an affordability ratio of 4.8, lower than the regional ratio of 5.2 and significantly lower than the national affordability ratio of 7.0. Figure 3.12 below illustrates how the affordability ratio has increased since the house price boom at the turn of the century.

*Figure 3.12 – House price to income affordability ratio*

The SHMA also estimated the income levels required to access two bedroomed accommodation in the owner occupied, private rented and social rented sectors without subsidy in Runcorn and Widnes, with the results shown in figure 3.13.

*Figure 3.13 – Indicative income required to purchase/rent without subsidy***Supply and Demand for housing**

Information on the supply and demand for social housing can be obtained from the annual English Local Authority Statistics on Housing (formerly Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix) which collects data on the number of people on the Council's waiting list and the number of homes available for letting during the year. Figure 3.14 below illustrates the widening gap between the number of people registered for social housing and the total available lettings during the year, indicating the impact of recent housing market conditions on mobility within the sector.

*Figure 3.14 – Supply and demand for social housing*

Further analysis of the waiting list reveals the need for smaller one and two bedroom accommodation, as illustrated in figure 3.15 below. This is reflective of smaller household sizes and the number of single and couple households on the waiting list. The drop in the number of applications in 2012 as shown in the graph below reflects the fact that at the time the data was collected Halton Housing Trust was midway through a re-registration exercise in preparation for the move to Choice Based Lettings.

*Figure 3.15 – Housing waiting list – number of bedrooms required* Source: ELASH/HSSA returns - NB Prior to 2005 data for 1 and 2 beds was combined.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment collected information on tenure aspirations and expectations of existing and concealed households who indicated that they needed or were likely to move within the next two years.

*Figure 3.16 – Aspirations and expectations of households looking to move*

The results, illustrated in figure 3.16, reveal the strength of demand for home ownership but the much lower expectation that this would be attained, particularly from concealed households. Social housing was also in demand but households felt that this was more attainable. There was relatively low demand for private rented housing although the responses to the question of expectation reveal the extent to which the private rented sector is seen as attainable and is to some extent “plugging the gap” in meeting housing need. The survey revealed little demand for shared ownership, however, the relative scarcity of intermediate housing in Halton could have had a bearing on this.

Perhaps unsurprisingly there was a high level of demand for three or four bedroomed detached or semi detached housing amongst existing households. Three quarters of existing households expected to move within Halton with the Birchfield/Farnworth/Halton View area reported as the most popular location.

Only 55% of concealed households expected to move within Halton and while demand was also high for a detached or semi detached house, 56% expected that they would move to a flat or maisonette with similar proportions willing to accept one bedroom accommodation.

## Housing Conditions

### Decent Homes

The Decent Homes Standard uses four broad criteria to assess housing conditions, that is that housing should:

- A - be above the legal minimum standard for housing (measured by the presence of category 1 hazards under the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System), and
- B - be in a reasonable state of repair, and
- C - have reasonably modern facilities (such as kitchens and bathrooms) and services, and
- D - provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (effective insulation and efficient heating).

Just over a quarter (26.2%) of private sector dwellings in Halton failed the Decency Standard at the time of the latest Private Sector Stock Condition Survey, equating to 10,500 dwellings. This was significantly lower than the national rate of 36.3% (English House Condition Survey 2006) and the North West rate of 37% (“Establishing a Decency Baseline for the Private Sector in the North West”). The most common reason for failing the Standard was due to a poor degree of thermal comfort affecting over half of non decent properties followed by the need for repair and the presence of a Category 1 hazard. Only 300 properties failed due to a lack of modern facilities. This is illustrated in figure 3.17 which gives a comparison of the proportions failing the standard for each reason in the owner occupied and private rented stock and with national figures from the English House Condition Survey 2006.

#### *Figure 3.17 – Proportion of homes failing the decent homes standard by reason for failure*

The total cost to remedy each criteria is as follows:

- Category 1 hazards - £21 million
- In need of repair - £18 million
- Lacking modern facilities - £3 million
- Thermal comfort - £9 million

Higher rates of non decency are found in Runcorn than Widnes (27.8% compared to 24.5%) with pre 1919 terraced stock more likely to be affected.

Around 29% of vulnerable households living in the private rented sector were found to live in non decent homes, equating to 4,420 households, with vulnerable households living in Runcorn more likely to be living in non decent homes than those in Widnes. Other households that were more likely to live in non decent homes include households with an income of under £10,000 (35%) and those where the head of household is under 25 (41%).

Halton Borough Council collects annual data from Registered Providers related to the condition of their stock. Data for 2011 reveals that all social housing stock in Halton met the Decent Homes Standard and none contained category 1 hazards under the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System. It can, therefore, be concluded that the social housing stock in Halton is in good condition.

### Category 1 hazards

The Housing, Health and Safety Rating System replaced the Fitness Standard in 2004, as the principal method of assessing housing standards for local authorities. It adopts a risk based scoring approach which measures the likelihood and severity of certain hazards occurring within the home, with those properties scoring above a certain threshold deemed to contain Category 1 hazards.

The Halton Stock Condition Survey found that 4,400 dwellings contained Category 1 hazards with 3,900 being houses and an estimated 500 flats. This represents 11% of the private sector stock which is significantly lower than the national and regional figure (23.5% and 44% respectively).

Almost two thirds of all category 1 hazards identified by the survey were attributable to excess cold with falls on the level and falls on stairs being the second and third most common hazard. Figure 3.18 shows the results of the survey in relation to all Category 1 hazards.

*Figure 3.18 – Reason for category 1 hazards in private properties*

The survey found that Category 1 hazards are more prevalent in terraced houses (47% of terraced stock) and flats (32% of flats) and that the proportion of properties containing Category 1 hazards increases according to the age band of the dwelling, with 26% of pre 1919 dwellings containing Category 1 hazards compared to 3% of dwellings built post 1990.

A higher rate of Category 1 hazards was found in Runcorn than Widnes (12% compared to 10%). Higher rates were also found in dwellings occupied by households with an income under £10,000 (15%), on benefit (14%), where the head of household is under 25 (23.5%) or over 65 (12%) and for households containing someone with a disability (13%).

Figure 3.19 illustrates the cost of remedying Category 1 hazards, ranging from a total cost of £20 million, averaging £4,800 per dwelling, just to remedy the hazards to £80 million for comprehensive repair to all dwellings containing Category 1 hazards, at an average of £17,900 per dwelling. Although total costs to remedy hazards in the private rented sector are lower, the average cost per dwelling just to remedy category 1 hazards at £6,200 is higher than for owner occupied properties at £4,400 per dwelling.

*Figure 3.19 – Cost to remedy category 1 hazards*

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**Energy efficiency**

The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) uses a scale of 1 to 100 to assess the relative energy efficiency of dwellings with higher ratings indicating higher levels of energy efficiency. The Private Sector Stock Condition Survey undertaken in 2009 found that on average energy efficiency levels in the private stock (owner occupied and rented) were higher than the national and regional averages (Average SAP rating of 56 in Halton compared to 49 and 51 respectively). It found that there had been a significant improvement on the average SAP rating of 48 recorded by the previous Stock Condition Survey undertaken in 2003, indicating substantial improvements in the energy efficiency of the stock in the intervening period.

Figure 3.20 shows the distribution of SAP ratings for each tenure and compares these with the national distribution using data from the English House Condition Survey 2009.

*Figure 3.20 – Distribution of SAP ratings in the private sector*

The least energy efficient dwellings are, unsurprisingly, pre 1919 terraces and the most energy efficient dwellings are post 1990 purpose built flats. There was no difference between SAP ratings for Runcorn than those for Widnes.

National Indicator 187 measured the proportion of households on an income related benefit living in dwellings with SAP ratings below 35 and 65 and above. The last survey completed found that 6.8% of households in receipt of an income related benefit live in a dwelling with a SAP rating below 35 and that 24.2% live in a dwelling with a SAP rating of 65 and over.

Figure 3.21 illustrates the improvements that would be necessary to bring all private sector homes up to standard. As shown, virtually all 40,100 properties in the sector would benefit from some type of improvement with loft insulation (whether full or top up) required to around 97% of dwellings to bring up to current recommended levels of 270mm. Obviously, not all of these dwellings would need or qualify for financial support to carry out these improvements but, as an indication, the total cost of installing all these measures is £54.3 million, equating to an average of £1,350 per dwelling.

*Figure 3.21 – Energy efficiency measures needed (owner occupiers and private rented)*

## Castlefields Regeneration

The Castlefields Regeneration Partnership was established in 2002 to tackle serious decline and deprivation on the Castlefields New Town estate in Runcorn. Founding partners include local residents, Halton Borough Council, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), Liverpool Housing Trust (LHT) and Plus Dane Group. As it has embraced new opportunities the partnership has grown to include NHS Halton & St Helens, partner contractors Cruden Construction and Seddon, John McCall architects, Sutcliffe engineers, Bradley Demolition, developer Keepmoat, local artists and the business community.

Over its ten year lifespan, 1,203 deck access units have been demolished, with a further 80 units programmed for demolition in 2012. These have been replaced by 747 new build homes, with 80 new homes currently under construction and a further 400 homes planned over coming years. In December 2011 the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the Village Square opened with completion of new shops and flats, this was followed in March 2012 with the opening of a new Community Centre and extensive public realm. A new health centre was opened in May 2012, with a formal grand opening in the summer 2012. Other environmental improvements continue to be delivered within the neighbourhood. A first phase of intervention covering a proportion of the 500 two-storey system built houses was announced in March 2012, this will include external wall and roof cladding to improve the energy efficiency of the properties and the visual amenity of the neighbourhood.

This year, residents will determine priorities for the next ten years and create a continuing action plan. The partnership is committed to the long-term future of Castlefields and in 2012 will deliver a significant public art commission, develop the first private housing for outright sale and introduce innovative energy efficiency technologies to existing homes.

The Partnership is naturally proud of its achievements in transforming the once low demand area of Castlefields to an area of choice for homeseekers and its efforts have been rewarded with a Housing Excellence Award for Best Partnership of 2012. In addition, Castlefields was shortlisted for the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors North West Award for the Village Square development and the UK Housing Award for Partnership of the Year.

## The Private Rented Sector

As mentioned earlier in this document, the private rented sector is the fastest growing housing sector in Halton and in the current economic climate is to an extent filling the gap in meeting housing needs as a result of limited mortgage availability and reduced mobility in the social housing sector. This is borne out by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which found that a much higher proportion of households expected that their next move would be to privately rented accommodation than expressed the sector as their tenure of choice.

Despite this growth it must be remembered that private rented housing still forms only a small proportion of the housing stock when compared to other areas as demonstrated in figure 3.2 earlier in this document with an estimated 5,000 properties in Halton owned by private landlords.

The vast majority of landlords are responsible and the Council will continue to develop pro active working relationships with those landlords who wish to improve the standard of their properties and management approaches through voluntary accreditation (described below).

However, other than for certain categories of Houses in Multiple Occupation (of which there are very few in Halton) the sector is largely unregulated. Evidence from the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey reveals that private tenants are more likely to live in a property containing a Category 1 hazard than owner occupiers (17% of private rented compared to 10% of owner occupied housing) and that a third of private tenants live in homes which do not meet the Decency Standard compared to a quarter of owner occupiers.

Levels of energy efficiency are also lower in the sector with average SAP ratings of 53 compared to 57 for owner occupied housing. The Energy Act 2011 states that by April 2016 private landlords cannot unreasonably refuse requests from their tenants for consent to have energy efficiency improvements carried out where financial support is available for example through the Green Deal or

Energy Company Obligation. The Act further requires that by April 2018 all privately rented properties should be brought up to minimum standards of energy efficiency (likely to be set at Energy Performance Certificate rating E).

In addition, the termination of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy was the second highest reason for homelessness in the Borough in 2011/12, the numbers having trebled on the previous year, which is in part likely to be as a result of changes to the Local Housing Allowance introduced as part of the current agenda of welfare reform.

The Localism Act 2011 gave local authorities the power to discharge their statutory homelessness duty through an offer of private rented accommodation. At the time of writing the Council has yet to consider its position on this, however, if this policy is adopted locally the accommodation offered will, in accordance with Government Guidance, at least meet suitability standards.

In common with many other local authorities, the Council takes a dual approach to the private rented sector with, on the one hand, the accreditation scheme rewarding “responsible” landlords while on the other the Council uses its enforcement powers to take action against less scrupulous landlords whose properties do not meet a satisfactory standard. These two approaches are described in more detail below.

### **Landlord Accreditation Scheme**

Halton’s Landlord Accreditation Scheme has been running for approximately seven years. It is a free and voluntary scheme which offers a range of benefits to qualifying landlords including fast tracking of benefit applications, insurance discounts, seminar invitations and general guidance and support. Landlords must meet required minimum standards to be eligible for accreditation covering the condition of their properties and management standards.

56 landlords have applied for accreditation covering 308 properties out of a total of around 5,000 in the sector. Out of these 34 landlords have reached the required standards to be accredited. A database of known private landlords with properties in Halton has been compiled and these are written to periodically to encourage them to seek accreditation. The scheme is also publicised in newsletters and the Council’s website.

All known landlords are invited to a quarterly Landlords’ Forum which provides opportunity for formal discussion on a wide range of relevant issues and for landlords to network and informally discuss issues of common interest. Forum meetings are generally well attended and provoke lively discussion and interesting debate.

### **Enforcement**

Local authorities have a range of powers at their disposal to deal with poor conditions and nuisance in the private rented sector. Halton’s Environmental Services team deal with a wide range of enforcement issues, not just housing, including noise nuisance and air and environmental quality. On receiving a complaint from a private tenant, the team will carry out an inspection of the property and if it is found to be below the minimum standard will contact the landlord to request that the remedial works are carried out. In most cases this informal approach works as the landlord quickly responds to the request. However, in some isolated cases, enforcement action, usually involving issuing statutory compliance notices under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, is necessary.

### **Scrutiny Review into the Private Rented Sector**

In 2011 elected members from the Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board undertook a scrutiny review into the Private Rented Sector. The review was prompted by a number of complaints of anti social behaviour from private sector tenants and what was felt to be an inadequate response from absentee private landlords.

Members made a number of recommendations including piloting a more pro active approach to the sector, promoting Council services to tenants and landlords in those areas, encouraging landlords to register contact details and apply to join the accreditation scheme and tenants to report any issues with their property to the Council so that they can be taken up with the landlord and, where necessary, enforcement action taken.

An officer working group has been set up to take forward the recommendations.



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## Part Four – Halton’s People

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### Overview

#### Population

The latest ONS mid year population estimates (2010) indicate that there are 119,300 people resident in the Borough. Halton has experienced population growth since 2006 as a result of a combination of higher levels of natural change (more births than deaths) which have outweighed lower (albeit sustained) levels of net out migration. Another factor in this may have been the delivery of larger, more aspirational housing at Upton Rocks in Widnes and Sandymoor in Runcorn which has helped to enhance the housing offer at the upper end of the scale and attracted new residents who may not otherwise have moved to the area.

The overall population is projected to grow to 121,400 by 2018 and 122,900 by 2023 (4% on the latest estimates from 2008) although this growth is lower than the regional and national growth projections of 5% and 11% respectively.

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#### Age

Comparison of the age profile of Halton residents with regional and national figures shows a population skewed towards younger people as illustrated in figure 4.1. For example, an estimated 19% of Halton’s residents are under the age of 15 compared to 17.5% regionally and nationally and there are lower proportions of people aged 75 and over. This relatively young population structure is partly as a consequence of the movement of young families to the Runcorn New Town estates. However, these first generation New Town residents are getting older and are expected to reach retirement age in the period to 2026.

#### *Figure 4.1 – Age profile of the population*

Data from the Office of National Statistics shows the projected change in the population by age band to 2023, as below:

- Younger people (0 - 14 year olds) - population projected to grow by 7% (2008 - 2023)
- Working age (16 - 64 year olds) - population projected to decline by 6% (2008 - 2023)
- Older people (65+) - population projected to grow by 43% from 16,900 in 2008 to 24,200 in 2023

Of particular significance to housing provision is the projected growth in the older population. The housing needs of older people will be explored in more detail later in this evidence paper.

#### Ethnicity

The 2010 Strategic Housing Market Assessment confirmed that Halton has a very small black and minority ethnic (BME) population with 97.6% of households describing themselves as White British. Although the number of respondents was too small to produce wholly reliable results the survey does suggest a small growth in the White Other population, which might be expected as a result of the accession of new member states into the European Union over recent years and also of Mixed Race populations. The survey also found that as a whole BME households are:

- typically larger than households headed by a White British/Irish person (an average of 2.74 people compared to 2.37 within the White population);
- less likely to rent accommodation (both social and private) and are far more likely than average to be owner occupiers with a mortgage (59% compared to 39% for White households);
- notably less likely than White households to contain a household member with a support need;

- record an average household income of £33,480 which is higher than the comparative figure for White households of £25,512. However, it should be noted that there are a greater proportion of working age BME households in Halton than there are White working age households.

It is important to note that the response to the survey from BME households was small (46 responses) and so the above findings should be treated with a degree of caution, however, the last Housing Needs Survey in 2006 also recorded similar findings.

## Households

At 2011 there were 53,300 households living in Halton, representing a 11% increase since the 2001 Census and an 16% increase since the 1991 Census. Figure 4.2 below illustrates the dramatic increase. While recent population growth will be a factor in this increase, the main reason is a fall in household size.

### *Figure 4.2 – Number of households in Halton*

The SHMA found that the overall average household size in the Borough was 2.4 persons but that there were differences according to tenure as illustrated in figure 4.3 below.

### *Figure 4.3 – Average number of people in household by tenure*

Analysis of household composition as illustrated in figure 4.4 emphasises the differences between each tenure. Of particular interest is the fact that 45% of households living in social housing are non pensioner single or couple households who, if living in accommodation with two or more bedrooms and claiming Housing Benefit, are likely to be affected by the underoccupation penalty as part of the forthcoming welfare reforms. It is also interesting to note the disproportionate amount of families with children, particularly lone parent households, living in the private rented sector where, as we have already seen, housing conditions tend to be the poorest.

### *Figure 4.4 – Household composition by tenure*

## Economic analysis

### Deprivation

Halton is ranked 27<sup>th</sup> most deprived area out of 326 local authority areas according to the 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation. This has worsened slightly from a rank of 29<sup>th</sup> from the IMD 2007 although there has been little change in the deprivation score.

The most deprived ward in Halton is Windmill Hill, while the least deprived ward in Halton is Birchfield. 26% of Halton's population live in areas that fall in the top 10% most deprived nationally, this is more than the national figure (10%) but lower than the Liverpool City Region figure (31%).

The ward with the most improved average IMD score between 2007 and 2010 in Halton (therefore the largest decrease in deprivation) is Halton Lea. Halton Castle, Windmill Hill and Halton Lea have seen the largest improvements in the Barriers to Housing and Income domain. The wards with the highest ranking for Barriers to Housing domain are Beechwood, Daresbury and Heath which is presumably indicative of a lack of affordable housing, particularly in the first two areas.

### Unemployment

Halton continues to have high levels of unemployment compared to regional and national rates. Latest figures show that 18.7% of the resident working age population claim out of work benefits, compared to 15% for the North West and 11.9% nationally (Feb 2012). Employment Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefit make up the largest proportion of these (10.3% of the working age population) followed by Job Seekers Allowance (5.8%).

12.2% of 18-24 year olds claim Job Seekers Allowance, a third of whom have been claiming for over 6 months.

Figure 4.5 below uses data from the SHMA to illustrate the economic status of the household reference person living within each tenure. As might be expected, the majority of housing owned without a mortgage is occupied by retired people and a third of social housing tenants are retired. The chart also shows the high proportions of unemployed people living in rented accommodation.

*Figure 4.5 – Economic status of household reference person by tenure*

## Income

The SHMA used data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings for 2004 and 2009 to assess the median income of residents in full time employment. The results, illustrated in figure 4.6 below, show the gap between annual earnings of Halton residents and those living in the North West and Great Britain.

*Figure 4.6 – Annual gross income of full time employed residents 2004 and 2009 – median income (SHMA)*

More recent data from the Office for National Statistics allows us to compare the median weekly gross pay for full time workers in 2012 with neighbouring local authorities. The results, illustrated in figure 4.7 reveals the extent to which the Borough lags behind surrounding areas.

*Figure 4.7 – Median weekly gross income 2012 (full time workers) (ONS)*

## Health and Housing

The links between health and housing are wide ranging and well documented. Improving housing conditions and the energy efficiency of housing can bring numerous health benefits as highlighted in the 2010 Marmot Review of Health Inequalities “Fair Society, Healthy Lives”. This study found that countries with more energy efficient housing have fewer excess winter deaths and that there is a strong relationship between cold housing and cardio vascular and respiratory disease. For example, it found that children living in cold homes are more than twice as likely to suffer from a variety of respiratory problems than children living in warm homes and that cold housing negatively affects children’s educational attainment, emotional well being and resilience to illnesses.

The relationship between health and housing is not just confined to the energy efficiency of housing. The removal of hazards in a property can help to reduce the number of accidents in the home, in turn removing the need for unnecessary hospital admissions and surgery and maintaining the independence of the occupier.

There are also links between housing and mental health. For example, fuel poverty, poor quality housing and overcrowding are associated with stress, anxiety, depression and poor mental health and studies have shown a relationship between insecurity of tenure and poor mental health.

## Need for adaptations

The SHMA found that an estimated 15,104 households in Halton contained someone with a support need, representing 29% of all households in the Borough. People with a walking difficulty were the most predominant group, affecting 7,902 households (15% of all households) as shown in figure 4.8.

*Figure 4.8 – Households containing someone with a support need*

Respondents were asked to indicate whether there was a need for adaptations to their existing accommodation or a need for additional support services, with the results illustrated in figure 4.9 below. The results show requirements for a wide range of adaptations or support with help maintaining the home, provision of a level access shower and other bathroom/toilet alterations being

the most common. In the social rented sector the Council, working in partnership with Registered Providers, has been successful in clearing the backlog of requests for adaptations that had built up over a number of years. However there remains a level of need in the owner occupied and private rented stock although the figures shown in 4.8 below need to be treated with a degree of caution since they are based on survey respondents' assessment of need rather than an assessment by a qualified Occupational Therapist.

*Figure 4.9 – Adaptations/support services needed*

### **Demand for supported housing**

The SHMA collected information about the moving intentions of households and, in particular, asked respondents who were seeking a move whether they would be seeking supported housing. The vast majority (over 90%) indicated that they would not, however, those that did anticipate moving to supported housing expressed a preference for sheltered housing with a warden, as indicated in figure 4.10.

*Figure 4.10 – Demand for supported housing*

These figures must be viewed with some caution as whilst the postal survey did provide definitions of the different types of housing, the subtle differences may not have been fully understood. It is interesting to note, however, that demand for extra care accommodation evidenced through the SHMA, at 154, is significantly higher than that found by the last Housing Needs Survey undertaken in 2006, perhaps reflecting a growing awareness of this type of supported housing. This is not dissimilar to the estimate produced in 2008 by Tribal Consulting which looked at the potential demand for extra care based on care homes admissions and those in receipt of significant community care packages.

The Tribal study estimated an immediate demand for 137 additional units of extra care, rising to 196 in 2017. The study was based on 2008 based population projections which have turned out to underestimate the numbers of older people in Halton compared to the 2011 based population forecasts.

### **Updating the population assumptions in the Tribal study produces a revised demand estimate of 199 units in 2011, rising to 272 in 2021, which reduce to 112 and 185 when existing extra care provision is netted off. Fuel Poverty**

The current definition of fuel poverty deems that a household is in fuel poverty if it must spend more than 10% of its income on maintaining a satisfactory heating regime. Whether a household is in fuel poverty or not is determined by the interaction of a number of factors, notably:

- The energy efficiency of the property;
- The cost of energy;
- Household income;
- The size of the property relative to the number of adults in the household.

Latest figures from the Department of Energy and Climate Change (2010) suggest that approximately 18.1% of households in Halton are in fuel poverty, equating to 9,420 households. This proportion is lower than the regional figure but higher than national levels, as illustrated in figure 4.11, which also shows the steep rise in the proportions of households in fuel poverty from 2008 to 2009, equating to over 1,800 households. This is likely to be due to the impact of rising fuel costs at a time when income levels have remained static, or in some cases fallen. Current levels are likely to be higher still due to significant increases in fuel costs since 2009.

*Figure 4.11 – Proportion of households in fuel poverty (DECC)*

The geographical distribution of fuel poverty reveals that low value areas containing high proportions of private sector housing (e.g. Appleton, Ditton and parts of Heath, Kingsway and Mersey wards)

have higher levels of fuel poverty (between 25% and 35% of households). It is interesting to note that despite relatively lower income levels, levels of fuel poverty in the Runcorn New Town estates are not as high as might be expected. This is likely to be due to the relative age of the housing stock and the impact of improvement programmes to bring homes up to the Decent Homes Standard.

## Space issues

### Overcrowding

Findings from the Halton SHMA indicate that around 915 households (1.7% of all households) are classed as overcrowded using the bedroom standard (the most commonly accepted method of assessing overcrowding). Data from the Survey of English Housing (SEH) suggests that nationally levels of overcrowding stand at 3.0%.

There are a disproportionate number of households classed as overcrowded living in rented accommodation as shown in figure 4.12 below, where proportions exceed 3% of households in both social rented and private rented sectors compared to less than 1% of owner occupied accommodation.

*Figure 4.12 – Number of households living in overcrowded accommodation*

### Underoccupation

Figure 4.13 illustrates the number of people underoccupying their accommodation by at least one bedroom (using the bedroom standard) by tenure and by type of household. Underoccupancy levels are around 54% for owner occupied and social rented stock but are higher (62%) for households living in the private rented sector.

*Figure 4.13 – Underoccupancy levels (by 1 or more bedrooms)*

As might be expected, single person and couple households are more likely to underoccupy their accommodation, however, it is interesting to note that 5,679 non pensioner households underoccupy social rented accommodation. It is likely that a sizeable proportion of these households claim Housing Benefit and will, therefore, lose some of this benefit as a result of the underoccupancy penalty to be introduced in April 2013 as part of the Welfare Reform Act.

### Impact of welfare reform

Part two of this evidence paper described the changes to Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance as a result of the Welfare Reform Act. Using information from the Council's Housing Benefit department and the SHMA it is possible to estimate the number of households who will be affected by the changes, as follows:

Change	Estimated number of households affected	Extent of impact
Introduction of Universal Credit	104 cases identified by HB as to be potentially "capped"	Total payments capped at £26,000 – loss of income for some households very significant (as much as £500 per week) Housing Benefit is first to be capped Payments made direct to claimant – possible increase in rent arrears and homelessness. Monthly payments could cause budgeting issues for households
Replacement of Disability Living Allowance with Personal Independence Payment (PIP)	It is estimated that 10,600 Halton residents claim DLA	The change to PIP will involve a reduction in the numbers of those receiving financial assistance. Claimants could be put off by face to face interview. Those receiving low rate care element unlikely to qualify. Losing DLA will result in loss of disability premiums awarded as part of other benefits.

Replacement of Incapacity Benefit with Employment Support Allowance	Exact numbers are unknown but Halton has a disproportionate amount of people claiming Incapacity Benefit	ESA is designed to reduce the number of people who are classified as unable to work. A large proportion of appeals to date have been successful, however, there is a very long wait for appeals (up to 12 months)
Extension of the Single Room Rent Allowance to 35	234	£37.61 reduction in weekly LHA entitlement
Underoccupancy penalty	SHMA suggests this may affect: 2,311 under occupying by one bedroom, 725 under occupying by 2 bedrooms 92 under occupying by 3 bedrooms	Those under-occupying their social housing property by one-bedroom to lose 14% of their HB and those under-occupying by two or more bedrooms to lose 25%.

The figures above show the extent to which Halton's households are likely to be impacted by welfare reforms. The implications of these changes for some of Halton's households and for the organisations who support them are likely to be significant. The expected impacts include an increase in rent arrears as households struggle to balance household budgets which could, in turn, put pressure on landlords to take action in order to minimise a build up of arrears. Registered Providers in Halton have been pro active in engaging with tenants who are likely to be affected and in many cases have expanded their in house financial support services available to ensure that their tenants are fully prepared for the changes.

There are also potential impacts for Council services resulting from a potential increase in homelessness applications and need for temporary accommodation including Bed and Breakfast (the costs of which are considered on the next page) and in demand for welfare benefits advice.

The impacts are likely to be further compounded by the localisation of Council Tax from April 2013 which will require some households who previously received 100% Council Tax benefit to make a contribution to accommodate a 10% reduction in Government funding and the transfer of the Social Fund from Department for Work and Pensions to local Councils which will also reduce the amount of funding available for Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants. The scheme will also replace cash payments to claimants with alternative forms of payment e.g. vouchers.

## Homelessness

### Levels of homelessness

In common with other local authority areas, homelessness in Halton is on the increase. In 2011/12, 154 households applied to the authority as homeless compared to 78 for the whole of 2010/11. Of these 154 households, 64 were found to be unintentionally homeless and in priority need compared to 37 in 2010/11. Almost half of those accepted as statutorily homeless in 2011/12 were single women with at least one child and 35% in this period were between the ages of 16 and 24. Generally only a small number of ethnic minority households apply as homeless (4 in 2011/12), however, this is in keeping with the low proportions of ethnic minorities living in Halton.

### Trends

Figure 4.14 illustrates changes in levels of homelessness over the last 5 years. It shows how homelessness has increased in 2011/12 compared with the previous year but also how 2010/11 had seen a very significant decrease on the three years before that. Total applications in 2007/08 were over three times as high as the number of applications in 2010/11. This is almost entirely due to the success of the authority's preventative approach to homelessness which is described in more detail below.

*Figure 4.14 – Homelessness trends*

## Reasons

Figure 4.15 below illustrates the reasons behind homelessness and how these have changed over time, largely as a result of the preventative work referred to above. In particular, the number of households made homeless as a result of parents or others no longer willing or able to accommodate has reduced by 87%. While there have also been decreases in homelessness for other reasons, it is worrying to note that the main reason for statutory homelessness is domestic violence affecting 15 households so far in 2011/12, however this could reflect the increased need for crisis intervention and less opportunity for preventative work.

The termination of assured shorthold tenancies is the second biggest reason for homelessness in 2011/12, the numbers having trebled on the previous year. These trends are perhaps indicative of the current economic climate and, possibly, the impact of impending welfare reform which could encourage private landlords to evict tenants who are claiming Housing Benefit in favour of those who are working.

*Figure 4.15 – Reasons for homelessness*

## Repossessions

Much work has been done over recent years to stem the rise in repossessions and the number of orders granted has decreased by 55% from a peak in 2008, as illustrated by figure 4.16. The number of repossession claims and orders in 2011 was lower than they were in the years leading up to economic downturn.

*Figure 4.16 – Annual mortgage possession claims and orders made*

The number of landlord possessions has also been in decline, as illustrated in figure 4.17 below. However, figures for 2011, reveal that the number of claims submitted and orders made has started to creep back up, which is consistent with the increase in homelessness caused by termination of Assured Shorthold Tenancies for the same period.

*Figure 4.17 – Annual landlord possession claims and orders made*

## Costs of homelessness

According to figures released by the Department for Communities and Local Government the average cost to the local authority of statutory homelessness is £5,500 per household. This compares to an estimated cost of preventing homelessness of £500 per household as illustrated in the table below.

	What's involved	Approximate costs
Statutory homelessness	Single person presenting as homeless on the day would warrant a full homeless assessment consisting of; Housing Solutions Adviser time Temporary Accommodation Provision Homeless investigation – contacting relevant agencies etc. to clarify information submitted Homeless Decision If accepted, securing suitable accommodation to discharge homeless duty	£5,500
Prevention	Single person threatened with homelessness (ordered to leave within period of time)	£500



	Prevention assessment Prevention options offered to client – BGS, Prevention fund, Negotiation with parents / landlord to sustain tenancy.	
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The Council started to develop its preventative approach (examined in more detail below) in 2007/8. At that time the Council regularly temporarily placed homeless households in bed and breakfast accommodation to fulfil its interim duty to accommodate households while investigations were taking place. This practice has virtually ceased due to the wide range of prevention measures the authority now uses. As an example in April 2008 to August 2008 bed and breakfast costs to the authority were £133,252. Costs for the same period in 2012 were nil.

The costs associated with the various prevention options available are as follows:

<b>Prevention option</b>	<b>Average cost</b>
Bond Guarantee Fund	£500
Prevention fund (assists with deposits, minor repairs, rent arrears etc)	Up to £500
G.I.F.T (Furniture incentive scheme for 18-25 year olds)	£100
Discretionary Housing Benefit – HB payment to assist clients experiencing financial difficulties etc.	£10 to £25 per week for an agreed period of time
Mortgage Rescue Scheme – Assist tenants and homeowners to remain within their homes	Up to £3,000
No second night Out – Halton is one of the six sub regional authorities to sign up to the service to tackle rough sleeping.	Externally funded

## Prevention

Figure 4.18 illustrates the authority's success at preventing homelessness and enabling potentially homeless people to remain in their current home as reported to the CLG as part of the local authority's P1E return. As shown the main measure used is crisis intervention in the form of emergency support which over the last three years has helped prevent homelessness for over 600 families.

### *Figure 4.18 - Homelessness prevention measures – household able to remain in current home*

Figure 4.19 below details the prevention measures that have necessitated a move to alternative accommodation. It illustrates the success of the Bond Guarantee Scheme and the relationship the authority has developed with accredited private landlords in providing alternative accommodation for potentially homeless people. It also demonstrates the role that providers of supported housing schemes play in alleviating homelessness.

### *Figure 4.19 – Homelessness prevention measures – household assisted to obtain alternative accommodation*

## Rough sleeping

Halton participates in the annual Cheshire rough sleepers count. Despite rigorous searches of likely sleeping places, to date, no actual rough sleepers have been encountered on the night of the counts. This is not to say that rough sleeping does not occur in the Borough, merely that the annual snapshot has not uncovered a problem to date.

## The Housing Needs of specific groups

### Introduction

A model to assess the housing needs of specific client groups was developed by the now disestablished regional assembly (known latterly as 4NW). The specific accommodation based needs for each client group are illustrated in figure 4.20 below. The model points clearly to a substantial need for specialist accommodation for older people, particularly the frail elderly. However, the model should be treated as indicative only and not as a definitive statement of need. For example the Council's Accessible Homes Register provides detailed information on the number of disabled awaiting suitably adapted housing and the type of housing they need. This is shown at figure 4.21 below. The Council has responded to this identified need and at the time of writing plans to develop a 100 units of extra care housing in Halton are well advanced.

Other vulnerable groups identified as having unmet accommodation needs are single homeless people, people with mental health issues and those with drug and alcohol problems. There is also a need to review accommodation provision for adults with learning disabilities in terms of the suitability and accessibility of current provision and a need to develop a planned approach to moving to independent, supported accommodation for those living with ageing parents or in unsuitable housing.

*Figure 4.20 – Accommodation based support needs*

*Figure 4.21 – Halton BC Accessible Homes Register (number of clients awaiting suitably adapted housing)*

### Gypsies and Travellers

Halton has two Council owned Gypsy and Traveller sites. The well-established Riverview site at Widnes has 23 permanent pitches, including a pitch for the resident warden. The site underwent substantial refurbishment in 2008. In 2009, the authority's first transit site was opened in Runcorn offering 14 pitches. There are also two authorised privately run sites, and a third site operating under a temporary planning permission. This gives a current total of approximately 56 pitches in Halton.

Under the Housing Act 2004 all Councils have a statutory duty to undertake periodic assessments of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show People in their area. The last assessment, which was undertaken by University of Salford's Housing and Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) in 2007, was a sub regional assessment involving all Cheshire authorities and St Helens. It found a need for between 28 and 32 additional pitches in Halton, which equates to a third of the total need identified for the Cheshire Partnership area. The authority has gone some way to meet this need through the subsequent development of a transit site.

As well as the statutory duty to undertake periodic needs assessments, new Government Guidance in "Planning Policy for Traveller Sites" (DCLG: March 2012) requires local authorities to maintain a five year deliverable supply of residential pitches for Gypsies and Travellers sufficient to meet the identified need within their development plan documents. In preparation for this, the Cheshire Partnership plans to update its need assessment in 2013. The assessment will include travelling showperson sites.

The Homes and Communities Agency had recently awarded £850k to the Council to develop a further 12 pitch site which will make a significant contribution to meeting existing identified needs.

### Older People

The SHMA provides further details on people over the state retirement age prevailing at the time the survey was completed. In particular, the study used demographic modelling to predict changes in the population of older people. It estimated an increase of 6,000 households made up solely of people of pensionable age between 2010 and 2026, increasing the proportion of older person households from 23% to 30% as illustrated in figure 4.22.

*Figure 4.22 – Growth in older person households 2010 - 2026*

Clearly, this increase will have significant implications for housing provision and related care and support services. The SHMA recommends that the local authority ensure that housing strategies and policies meet the needs of older people by:

- Ensuring that an appropriate percentage of new housing supply will meet the needs of older people and their carers in terms of size, location and design;
- Improving the condition of existing properties so that older people have homes which are warm and secure;
- Working with others to ensure flexible and tailored support for those who need it.

These issues will be addressed through the development of an Older Persons Commissioning Strategy planned for 2013. This will include services to older persons in Halton – including an older persons housing strategy.

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## Part Four – Halton’s Services

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### Homelessness Services

#### Homelessness Prevention

The Council’s Housing Solutions Team deals with cases of statutory homelessness but the focus of its work is on preventing homelessness from occurring. A wide range of preventative services are offered, including:

##### Mediation

As already described family breakdown is a primary cause of homelessness, often arising from problems between parents and adult children. Therefore, Housing Solutions work closely with families to re-establish relationships and enable the young person to continue living in the family home where this is appropriate. In April 2011, Housing Solutions received Government funding to recruit a dedicated Young Persons Officer to deal specifically with 16 and 17 year olds and enable a more focussed effort on this kind of work. In 2010/11 the Officer dealt with 97 advice cases, preventing homelessness in 58 cases and in 2011/12 the Officer prevented 55 young people from becoming homeless from a total caseload of 75.

##### Supported Lodgings (Nightstop)

The Nightstop service has developed a supported lodgings scheme providing very short-term accommodation for young people together with a mediation service which aims to resolve issues which have led to the breakdown in family relationships. The accommodation is provided by a volunteer host family – a network of volunteer hosts have been recruited to ensure appropriate placements are available for young people, whilst more suitable short-term housing is found or until mediation leads to the young person returning to the family home.

##### Domestic Abuse Sanctuary Scheme

This scheme enables victims of domestic abuse to remain in their home by fitting enhanced security measures where it is safe to do so, is the victim’s choice and the perpetrator does not live in the accommodation. The sanctuary measures required are based on individual needs and include repaired, reinforced or replacement doors, hinges and windows, door and window lock and alarms and security lighting. The Council is currently working with partner agencies to develop a Halton Sanctuary Scheme with Registered Providers taking responsibility for the installation of sanctuary measures within their properties and the Council funding sanctuary measures within private sector properties. Halton also has a refuge for women fleeing domestic violence managed by Women’s Aid.

##### Bond Guarantee Scheme

In an effort to increase prevention of homelessness, a Rent Deposit Scheme was launched in 2007. The scheme was developed to assist homeless individuals and families to access private rented sector (PRS) accommodation by providing the deposit required by landlords. The scheme was very successful but costly so was changed in 2009 to become a Bond Guarantee Scheme (BGS). The scheme now provides the written promise of the deposit amount should it be required at the end of the tenancy. BGS allows the Council to assist more households into the PRS as no funds are released unless the landlord has reason to claim on the bond for rent arrears or property damage.

For each bond that is provided, there is a written agreement in place, which the tenant, landlord and Council all sign up to. It sets out what the bond can/cannot be used for and makes clients aware that they are responsible for the bond and will be invoiced for any reasonable claim, which ensures they are accountable for their own conduct during the tenancy. The agreement also details the importance of the client saving for their own deposit to eventually replace the need for the bond guarantee.

Of the 328 tenancies created since the introduction of the BGS in 2009, 67% are ongoing, 15% ended without a claim and 18% ended with the bond being claimed (either in part or in full). In the early days of the BGS the criteria was very loosely applied and nearly 100% of those who applied for a bond were granted one. Since this time the criteria has been tightened and therefore, the number of bonds granted has decreased. The decrease in Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates has also affected the scheme as it is now more difficult for households to find affordable accommodation in the private rented sector.

In 2010/11, 75% of claims on bonds were either partly or wholly due to rent arrears. In an effort to reduce this, changes to the scheme's processes were made. Applications for direct payment of housing benefit to the landlord were increased (since April 2011 72% of all BGS tenancies had direct payments secured) and greater restrictions were placed on the amount of shortfall clients were permitted.

#### **Mortgage support**

The current economic climate has led to an increased number of people finding themselves in mortgage difficulty. In response to this, Halton established a Repossessions Action Plan and Working Group to bring together the work of various agencies in the borough in preventing repossessions. Housing Solutions also has a dedicated Mortgage Rescue Adviser who since January 2010, has provided tailored advice to 187 households and as a result 94 cases were prevented from repossession.

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#### **Home Essentials Fund**

The lack of furniture and essential equipment can make people reluctant to move from temporary accommodation and can contribute to abandonment of new tenancies. In Halton, this is particularly the case for younger people. In an effort to help towards the cost of setting up a new home, the Council has established a Home Essentials Fund, which those aged 16-25 can access if they have become unintentionally homeless and have been provided temporary accommodation in one of the borough's hostels. The Council will purchase items (up to a total value of £300) from a set list on behalf of the customer to help towards the costs of fully furnishing their new home when they move on.

Since June 2011, 10 young people moving on from hostel accommodation have been provided with essential home items, including microwaves, toasters, bedding and cookery items up to a total value of £300.

#### **Tenancy sustainment**

Housing Solutions advise or refer customers to other organisations for advice on a range of tenancy sustainment issues to ensure early intervention in the homelessness risk process. In the midst of the current economic climate, one of the key services is that of advice and assistance on debt, welfare rights and money management issues (which are provided in the most part by the Council's own Welfare Rights Service and the Citizens' Advice Bureau. In addition, individual Housing Associations offer services to their own tenants).

The Council's Welfare Rights Service acts as a buffer to homelessness presentations by providing both a preventive and reactive service. The team provides both welfare benefits and debt advice to a specialist level. In terms of debt provision, advice is given from basic debt negotiation through to attending court possession hearings. With regard to income maximisation, the team will carry out simple benefit checks, some form completion and, if people are wrongly refused benefits, assistance with reconsiderations and appeals is offered. Particularly with regard to disability benefits, benefit decisions are often incorrect and in the last financial year, 187 appeals were attended with an 84% success rate. The team also provides a specialist service, funded through MacMillan Cancer Support, to people suffering from Cancers and their immediate families and carers.

#### **Service developments**

Following an internal review of the Housing Solutions service undertaken late in 2011, the authority is currently changing the way it delivers homelessness services so that customers can now receive appropriate advice and assistance at the point of initial contact rather than having to wait for an appointment with a Housing Solutions Advisor.

### **No Second Night Out**

Halton is participating in the Liverpool City Region No Second Night Out project. Utilising funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government, the project aims to ensure that by the end of 2012 no one will live on the streets of Liverpool City Region and no individual arriving on the streets for the first time will sleep out for more than one night. It plans to do this by providing a single contact point for reporting rough sleepers and developing a comprehensive menu of services for each local authority area so that tailored support can be offered to rough sleepers to assist them to come indoors. The service works directly with the Housing Solutions Service and external agencies to tackle and address rough sleeping.

### **Scrutiny review**

Elected Members undertook a scrutiny review of Homelessness services in early 2012. The purpose of the review was to examine the provision of temporary accommodation in the Borough and review the extent to which it met housing need and provided value for money. There were a number of conclusions and recommendations arising from the review, the most significant of which was the need to rebalance provision of temporary accommodation for young, single homeless people across both sides of the Borough. This has resulted in the closure of the Runcorn based scheme Halton Goals. Plans to develop a 37 bedroom hostel on the Widnes side of the Borough by 2014 are underway.

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## **Allocations**

### **Choice Based Lettings (CBL)**

Choice Based Lettings is a relatively new approach to allocating property, which gives homeseekers greater control over the property they are offered as it requires them to express an interest in homes which are advertised locally.

Halton is a partner in Liverpool City Region's sub regional Choice Based Lettings Scheme, Property Pool Plus. The scheme, which went live in Summer 2012, includes five local authority areas and 22 Registered Providers across the City Region. A common allocations policy has been agreed which uses a banding system to prioritise applications for rehousing. Each local authority partner has selected a delivery agent who will manage allocations and maintain the CBL waiting list on their behalf. Halton Housing Trust has been selected as the delivery agent locally and transitional arrangements to move applicants for rehousing from the waiting lists of local Providers to the new IT system are well underway.

It is hoped that Choice Based Lettings will offer a more transparent and streamlined service to households seeking social housing. Support arrangements are in place for households who may experience difficulty in adapting to the new system and "bids" and allocations will be closely monitored to ensure that no one group of people is unfairly disadvantaged.

## **Private Sector Housing**

### **Housing Renewal**

Historically the Council has allocated significant resources to housing renewal in the form of grants and loans for vulnerable homeowners. Since the last Strategy was published in 2008 784 households have received financial assistance from the Council to help improve their homes at a total investment of £2.441 million. However in the current financial climate regrettably there are no longer funds available to finance this work although funding for Disabled Facilities Grants continues to be available.

## Energy Efficiency

### Introduction

For a number of years the Council has worked in partnership with Energy Projects Plus, a local environmental charity, to deliver energy advice and assistance to Halton residents. Until recently, this has included the management of two locally developed initiatives: the Energy Zone scheme, which provided discounts for insulation works and HEARTH, which provided emergency heating for people with heart and respiratory conditions and which complemented the Health through Warmth Scheme described below. Unfortunately, due to the loss of the Regional Housing Pot which funded these schemes, they were discontinued in April 2011. However, the authority continues to work with Energy Projects Plus to maximise the benefits of national and regional schemes for Halton residents and to capitalize on funding opportunities, as described below.

### Warm Front

The Government's Warm Front scheme provides heating and insulation measures for vulnerable households living in energy inefficient dwellings. The scheme comes to an end later this year and will be replaced with the Green Deal described below. Through the Halton Healthy Homes Network, the Council is promoting the scheme to residents to ensure that those who are eligible benefit from the scheme before it comes to an end.

### Green Deal

The Green Deal is essentially a framework which allows private companies to offer households energy efficiency improvements with no upfront costs, with the cost of the work recouped through savings in energy bills. The scheme, which is expected to be introduced in October 2012, could see firms such as B and Q or Marks and Spencer becoming Green Deal providers. Their role would be to offer a finance plan to the householder to pay the initial costs of the work which would be recommended by an accredited adviser and carried out by an accredited installer. The householder's contractual relationship, however, would be with the Green Deal Provider.

An essential element to Green Deal is that the expected financial savings are equal to or greater than the cost of the plan (this is known as The Golden Thread). It is, therefore, not suitable for all types of work or properties and, since, the plan is interest bearing, it may not be suitable for those on very low incomes.

However, the Council recognises the potential benefits of Green Deal for households who may not have qualified for means tested assistance and will work with Green Deal Providers and other organisations involved to promote the scheme. As an example, Halton has recently been awarded funding through the Government's City Deal programme to undertake energy efficiency improvements to two properties to act as Green Deal demonstrator projects through regular monitoring of energy savings resulting from the work.

### Energy Company Obligation

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) will replace the existing Community Energy Savings Programme (CESP) and Carbon Emission Reduction Target (CERT) managed by energy companies in 2013.

Unlike the Green Deal, which requires households to pay for the measures over time, ECO places an obligation on gas and electricity suppliers to achieve energy savings through a smaller range of measures and expects them to subsidise or fully meet the cost of these measures. There are three elements to ECO which have different eligibility criteria as outlined below.

*ECO Carbon Saving*

This element of ECO is a grant available to any household requiring solid wall insulation or cavity wall insulation that requires additional work to allow the insulation to be installed (“hard to treat cavity wall insulation”). The grant amount will vary across different suppliers but is expected to be mixed together with Green Deal finance to meet the total cost of the work. Other measures such as glazing, draughtproofing or replacement external doors can be added to the improvement package and may attract additional grant from the supplier.

#### *ECO Affordable Warmth*

This element of ECO is a grant available to private sector households in receipt of qualifying benefits. Measures eligible for the grant include loft and cavity wall insulation, insulation for solid walls and rooms in the roof, replacement glazing, new and replacement heating systems and renewable energy heating measures. The government plans to extend the current data sharing agreement between benefits agencies and utilities to enable eligible households to be targeted directly to encourage take up.

#### *ECO Carbon Saving Communities (CSCO)*

This element of ECO is a grant, aimed at reducing fuel poverty, that is available to any household within designated low income areas (those lower layer super output areas, LSOAs, identified as the lowest ranked 15% within the Indices of Multiple Deprivation). Halton has 33 such areas within its boundaries. To tackle rural fuel poverty CSCO can also be offered to households in receipt of qualifying benefits who live in rural communities with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants. Measures included in CSCO include loft and cavity wall insulation, insulation for solid walls and rooms in the roof, replacement glazing, new and replacement heating systems and draughtproofing.

### **Health through Warmth**

The Health Through Warmth (HTW) scheme was set up by npower in 2000 in partnership with the NHS and National Energy Action (NEA). HTW operates through a locally based referral partnership which seeks to help vulnerable people whose health is adversely affected by cold, damp living conditions. This is achieved by facilitating the installation of appropriate energy efficiency and heating measures, along with the provision of related advice and information.

Clients are referred by health and other key community workers who have attended locally based awareness sessions offered by HTW. HTW Merseyside (including Halton), delivered by Energy Projects Plus, commenced in late 2003 and to date has received over 4,800 referrals and secured over £4m in third party funding in addition to over £0.5m from npower’s crisis fund. Key partners are the health sector, local authorities, and community support frontline staff who attend an awareness session and refer into the HTW scheme. Over 1,000 frontline staff have attended awareness sessions, though not all have made referrals into the referral system.

### **Warm Homes, Healthy People**

Halton Borough Council was awarded funding under the Department of Health’s Warmer Homes, Healthy People programme to support vulnerable residents through the winter of 2011/12. The funding enabled two energy efficiency programmes to be offered to residents. The Emergency Heat Scheme provided emergency heating systems and repairs for residents and the Heat Aware scheme enabled tailored advice on reading meters and understanding heating controls and energy bills to be delivered within resident’s homes. The funding was also used to establish and launch the Halton Healthy Homes Network described below.

### **Halton Healthy Homes Network**

The Halton Healthy Homes Network was officially launched at an event held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2012 at Stobart Stadium, Widnes. The event was a great success and the Network now boasts 80 members from a number of different organisations including the council and many of its partners in the statutory and voluntary sectors and community groups. The aim of the Network is to increase awareness of the health implications of poor housing and fuel poverty so that front line staff from the council and partner organisations and community advocates are able to identify those at risk and signpost them to organisations who can offer appropriate assistance.

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in tackling poor housing conditions and reducing levels of fuel poverty in Halton – frontline staff, managers, elected members and community



representatives are all encouraged to join. The network is virtual and communication is mostly sustained via email. It is intended that the Network will continue to develop and in time become the main communication source and delivery vehicle for partnership working relating to housing conditions and fuel poverty. Initially it will have a key role to play in ensuring that relevant front line staff and community advocates are fully aware of the Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation.

### **Affordable Warmth Strategy**

Halton's Affordable Warmth Strategy was developed in 2010 with the assistance of National Energy Action and Energy Projects Plus. A wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations were also involved in the development of the Strategy. The Strategy has five main aims:

- To raise awareness and understanding of fuel poverty;
- Establish effective referral systems amongst agencies in Halton;
- Improve the housing stock so that it is affordably warm;
- Maximise incomes and improve access to affordable fuel;
- Ensure co-ordination and monitoring of the Strategy.

Steady progress has been made in implementing the Strategy's Action Plan including providing fuel poverty training to front line staff, developing an e-learning training programme and introduction of web based information for householders. The development of the Halton Healthy Homes Network will, it is hoped, enable further progress to be made, particularly in relation to establishing referral systems, however, other aims e.g. improving the housing stock remain more of a challenge due to funding constraints.

### **Merseyside REECH scheme**

Halton has been allocated European Regional Development Funding as part of the Merseyside REECH (Renewables and Energy Efficiency in Community Housing). This will enable external insulation/cladding to be installed at over 60 socially rented properties on the Castlefields estate in Runcorn. A key focus of the scheme is to develop the skills of local people to undertake such retrofit work.

In addition to the REECH scheme Registered Providers have accessed funding under the Community Energy Savings Project to deliver energy efficiency improvements to housing stock in Halton Brook, Grangeway and Ditton and Halton Housing Trust has developed renewable heating schemes in some of their properties in Runcorn. The Council is working with Providers to explore and maximise opportunities presented by the Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation.

## **Adaptations**

### **Home Improvement Agency**

The Halton Home Improvement Agency assists households whose homes are being adapted with the help of a Disabled Facilities Grant with a wide range of services, including:

- Providing a list of reputable local builders;
- Giving advice about housing options and conditions;
- Drawing up plans for the adaptation work;
- Liaising with contractors and others involved in carrying out and inspecting the work;
- Help to obtain other support services.

### **Registered Provider protocol**

Historically tenants of social housing have had to wait longer for major housing adaptations from their landlord due to funding constraints. Recognising this inequality, the Council and Registered Providers reached an agreement in 2008 whereby the Council would provide additional financial help Providers to increase the number of tenants benefitting, and to reduce waiting times. A match funding approach was agreed with the Council paying 50% of the cost of the eligible adaptation work.

To encourage ease of participation by Providers the scheme has some flexibility and in particular the agreement offers two routes of organising and delivering the adaptations, either through the Provider or through the Council's Home Improvement Service. In the first two years the scheme has been

running, over 200 properties have been adapted, and the Council plans to maintain this progress for the foreseeable future, albeit with reduced funding levels. In 2011/12, the fourth year of operation, twelve Providers had signed up to the joint funding agreement and those that have declined to date hold very little housing stock within the Borough meaning that the majority of social housing tenants in Halton requiring major adaptations should benefit from this funding. The agreements with Providers are due for renewal in April 2012 and it is the intention of the Council to renew these agreements, subject to the availability of resources.

### **Accessible Housing Service**

The Accessible Housing Service aims to provide a link between the Council's Home Improvement & Independent Living Services and housing providers. It works in partnership with all Providers with stock in Halton to enable a better match for disabled applicants to accessible and adapted homes when they become available in the borough. This means that individuals do not have the disruption of adaptations being completed and at a time of increasing financial pressures nationally it is a better use of Council and Registered Provider resources. Disabled applicants of any age from all property tenures are assessed when they have applied for housing to any of the providers, and available void adapted properties are also assessed to try and match applicants to the accommodation best suited to their needs. It is intended that the service will eventually be integrated with the IT system for the sub regional Choice Based Lettings scheme.

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### **Anti Social Behaviour**

Halton's Community Safety Team responds to complaints of anti social behaviour and takes action against perpetrators where appropriate. They also work closely with Registered Providers of social housing to take an estate based approach to the issue. This approach as well as the introduction of a number of support services for young people has led to significant reductions in the number of incidents in recent years, particularly those perpetrated by young people. For example, in 2011/12 the total number of incidents fell by 12.43% on the previous year's figure while youth anti social behaviour fell by 19.6% in the same period. There has been a corresponding reduction in residents' perceptions that anti social behaviour is a problem as evidenced by a residents survey undertaken in October 2011. Whilst partnership working with Registered Providers and agencies like the Police have reduced anti social behaviour, the Council is not complacent and continues to work to reduce anti social behaviour across Halton.

### **Supported Housing**

In recent years the Council has undergone a process of rationalising services to create efficiencies. This has involved ongoing reviews of service provision in line with the available budget to ensure that resources are focused on those most in need. Current priorities within Halton are the provision of appropriate supported housing for older people, people with physical disabilities and learning difficulties.

### **Partnership working**

The Council has a strong track record of partnership working, both at a multi disciplinary level (through the Halton Strategic Partnership Board) and at a single issue, multi agency level. Examples of successful partnership working on housing issues include the following.

### **Halton Housing Partnership**

Halton's Housing Partnership meets on a bi monthly basis and discusses a wide range of housing and related issues. The meetings are regularly attended by representatives of Providers with the largest stockholdings in Halton as well as a range of Council Officers with an interest in housing and the relevant Executive Board Members. The group is represented on the Halton Strategic Partnership Board to ensure a two way flow of information between the two groups. Recent and current issues

being taken forward by the group include financial inclusion, the impact of welfare reform, particularly as a result of the underoccupation penalty and development of the Tenancy Strategy.

### **Strategic Housing Visioning Group**

A review of the Halton Housing Partnership in Summer 2012 resulted in the formation of a new partnership between Halton Borough Council and Registered Providers to focus on high level, strategic issues, known as the Strategic Housing Visioning Group. The group has initially adopted three key themes to focus on:

- Housing and Economic Development
- Welfare Reform and Employment
- Health and Well Being

It is intended that the group will have a long term focus on contemporary and forthcoming developments affecting housing and will oversee the work of the more operationally focused Halton Housing Partnership.

### **Liverpool City Region (LCR) Housing and Spatial Planning Forum**

As previously mentioned the LCR Housing and Spatial Planning Forum is a sub group of the Liverpool City Region Cabinet and advises the Cabinet on housing and spatial planning issues. The Forum, which is attended by the Portfolio Holder for Housing Strategy, meets on a bi monthly basis and was instrumental in the development of the Local Implementation Plan which will guide housing investment in the sub region and has also successfully delivered on joint projects related to empty homes, kickstarting stalled housing developments, energy efficiency for hard to treat properties and Choice Based Lettings.

### Appendix One – related documents

Document	Contact
Affordable Housing SPD	Alasdair Cross <a href="mailto:alasdair.cross@halton.gov.uk">alasdair.cross@halton.gov.uk</a> 0151 511 7657
Affordable Warmth Strategy 2011-2015	Joanne Sutton <a href="mailto:joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk">joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk</a> 0151 511 8750
Choice Based Lettings (Property Pool Plus) Allocation Policy	Steve Williams <a href="mailto:steve.williams@halton.gov.uk">steve.williams@halton.gov.uk</a> 0151 511 8859
Core Strategy	Alasdair Cross <a href="mailto:alasdair.cross@halton.gov.uk">alasdair.cross@halton.gov.uk</a> 0151 511 7657
Corporate Plan 2011-2016	Lisa Driscoll <a href="mailto:Lisa.driscoll@halton.gov.uk">Lisa.driscoll@halton.gov.uk</a> 0151 511 8012
Design of Residential Development SPD	Alasdair Cross <a href="mailto:alasdair.cross@halton.gov.uk">alasdair.cross@halton.gov.uk</a> 0151 511 7657
Housing and Support Strategy for Adults with Learning Difficulties	Liz Gladwyn <a href="mailto:liz.gladwyn@halton.gov.uk">liz.gladwyn@halton.gov.uk</a> 0151 511 8120
Homelessness Strategy 2009-2013 and Strategic Review of Homelessness in Halton 2008	Patricia Preston <a href="mailto:patricia.preston@halton.gov.uk">patricia.preston@halton.gov.uk</a> 0151 511 8581

Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England 2011	Available from <a href="http://www.gov.uk">www.gov.uk</a>
Mid-Mersey Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2011 Local Authority Report for Halton Borough Council	Joanne Sutton <a href="mailto:joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk">joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk</a> 0151 511 8750
Private Sector House Condition Survey 2009 Report	Joanne Sutton <a href="mailto:joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk">joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk</a> 0151 511 8750
Scrutiny Review of Homelessness Services 2011/12 Report	Patricia Preston <a href="mailto:patricia.preston@halton.gov.uk">patricia.preston@halton.gov.uk</a> 0151 511 8581
Scrutiny Review of the Private Rented Sector 2012	Joanne Sutton <a href="mailto:joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk">joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk</a> 0151 511 8750
Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment	Alasdair Cross <a href="mailto:alasdair.cross@halton.gov.uk">alasdair.cross@halton.gov.uk</a> 0151 511 7657
Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-2026	Lisa Driscoll <a href="mailto:Lisa.driscoll@halton.gov.uk">Lisa.driscoll@halton.gov.uk</a> 0151 511 8012
Tenancy Strategy	Joanne Sutton <a href="mailto:joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk">joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk</a> 0151 511 8750

**REPORT TO:** Environment and Urban Renewal  
Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 13 March 2013

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director Policy and Resources

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER:** Transportation

**SUBJECT:** Flood Risk Management - Progress Report

**WARDS:** Boroughwide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on flood risk management issues and inform members of the progress being made in relation to the Council's duties under the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) (F&WMA).

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board notes the progress being made in relation to the Flood and Water Management Act.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### Legislation Update

- 3.1 The F&WMA has been implemented under a phased implementation approach over a period of 2 years by Government. The F&WMA is now fully enacted with the exception of just a few outstanding provisions, which Defra propose to implement in 2013, following the completion of consultation with relevant stakeholders. Of particular note, the introduction of legislation relating to Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) has been delayed and is now scheduled for implementation during 2014.

### SuDS

- 3.2 Members will recall that the Council provided a response to Defra's consultation on proposed SuDS legislation in March last year. Many respondents called for adequate time to prepare for this very significant, new piece of legislation, which will require the establishment of SuDS Approval Bodies (SABs) and new approval procedures. Defra officials are working with stakeholders to address the many issues that arose, in relation to the design, adoption and maintenance of SuDS in new and redevelopments.
- 3.3 In the meantime, surface water drainage provision within new developments continues to be addressed as before, and the water company, United Utilities will continue to adopt conventional drainage systems by agreement until the law is changed.

### Local Flood Risk Management (FRM) Strategies

- 3.4 Section 9 of the F&WMA requires all Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) to develop a strategy for local flood risk in their area. The strategy must cover the following key elements:
- A description of the functions exercised by risk management authorities operating within the Halton Area;
  - An assessment of flood risk in Halton, for the purpose of the Strategy;
  - Details of the objectives for managing local flood risk in Halton; and
  - The measures that are proposed to achieve those objectives, and how and when the measures are expected to be implemented and paid for.

The preparation of Halton's Local Strategy will draw heavily on the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) and the Surface Water Management Plan study (SWMP) that were completed in 2011/12.

- 3.5 Whilst no specific date has been set within the legislation for the local strategies to be adopted, all LLFAs within the North West region are being encouraged to have a draft strategy in place for consultation, by June this year. Halton is working closely with neighbouring authorities in the Cheshire and Mid Mersey Regional Sub Group, on a common strategy document. The Local Government Association has provided a lead on the scope and content of local strategies and has produced a comprehensive guidance document for LLFAs to follow. It is anticipated that the draft Local Strategy will be presented at the June meeting of this Board.

#### Watercourse Regulation

- 3.6 At its meeting in November last year, the Board considered a report setting out changes to the Land Drainage Act, which had resulted in new regulatory powers for the Council of Consenting & Enforcement of works to watercourses. It was anticipated that, as the number of applications for consent had historically been low within Halton, that the workload could be managed within current staffing resources. During the first year of the new powers, this has largely proved to have been the case. To date only two applications for consent have been received and processed, although a further four applications are expected in relation to current new developments. It is anticipated that the workload will continue at this level with new developments (housing and commercial) providing the primary source of applications. Similarly, to date, no enforcement action in relation to watercourses has been necessary.
- 3.7 Proposals to consult on a set of Land Drainage Byelaws for Halton were approved by Executive Board on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2013. The draft Byelaws have been sent to the Environment Agency for informal checking prior to commencing initial consultation with stakeholders in March.

Governance

- 3.8 The governance arrangements for flood risk management across the region that were reported to the Board in January 2012 are now well established. Regular quarterly meetings of the Cheshire and Mid Mersey Regional Sub Group are held, both at a tactical level (FRM officers), and strategic level (Directors and Cabinet / Portfolio Holders). The strategic group reports 'upwards' to the North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC). Councillor Stockton, is one of two C&MM sub-group member representatives on the NW RFCC.
- 3.9 Meetings are also attended by representatives of United Utilities and the Environment Agency. The EA have an 'overview' role and are responsible for monitoring and reporting progress by the LLFAs in relation to the F&WMA duties.

United Utilities Work Programme

- 3.10 At a recent meeting of the C&MM FRM Tactical Group, United Utilities' representative outlined proposals for a series of partnership meetings with LLFAs to share the results of their Sewerage Management Plans and to invite views and comments on future investments on their local networks which will contribute to the formulation of their business plans. This is an opportunity for Local Authorities to influence sewer infrastructure investment in their area, to address local flood risk. UU's timetable was to complete this exercise by March however, dates for these meeting have yet to be set.

FRM Funding and Programme

- 3.11 Funding for FRM and flood defence work comes from a variety of sources. In addition to the Area Based Grant which is paid to all LLFAs, there are nationally and locally funded programmes for capital schemes and projects. These can range in size from a £22M scheme of sea defences for the Fylde coast to £15,000 for small studies and investigation works.
- 3.12 At its meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> January, the RFCC considered Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) indicative funding allocations covering a five year period and approved Local Levy Programme schemes for 2013/14. FDGiA and local levy funds schemes may be proposed by both the Environment Agency and local authorities. The local authority FDGiA allocation for 2013/14 totals £11.563M. The local levy budget for local authorities totals £735K.
- 3.13 Halton's bid for funding for schemes from both 'pots' has been successful in securing the following allocations for local schemes and projects:

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Total
<b>FDGiA Indicative Allocations</b>						
Bridgeway	£8000	£40,000	£40,000	£50,000	£50,000	£188,000



and Lockgate, Runcorn Flood Alleviation Scheme						
Compass Close, Runcorn Flood Alleviation Scheme	£12,000	£30,000	£10,000	0	0	£52,000
Pitville Terrace, Widnes Flood Alleviation Scheme	£6,000	£7,000	£7,000	0	0	£20,000
<b>Local Levy Planned Expenditure 2013/14</b>						
Runcorn & Widnes Culvert Study	£15,000					

It should be noted that under the new 'partnership' funding regime for flood defence works schemes a local contribution towards the overall cost of the scheme is usually required to enable FDGiA schemes to proceed. In its bid, Halton identified local contributions totalling £20K for 2013/14 which we propose to draw down from the FRM Area Based Grant. Future years' contributions are currently expected to be of the order of £30K and consideration will need to be given to re-instating a capital allocation in the Council's Capital Programme if we are to continue to develop and successfully deliver FRM improvement schemes within the Borough.

- 3.14 At this stage, these FDGiA funds are termed 'indicative allocations' only, and further scheme development work will be required early in the year to secure scheme approvals and actual grant monies, via the EA's funding procedures. Due to the allocations being phased over a number of years, grant in 2013/14 is likely to be used on survey, investigation and design that will form the basis for improvement works in future years.
- 3.15 Part of the funding for the national and local capital programmes comes from the 'local levy' on LLFAs. An amount is included within the Council's Formula Grant to cover this. The Environment Agency raises these local levy monies each year from LLFAs and the amount payable by each Local Authority is determined by reference to the Local Authority approved Council Tax base. For 2013/14 the NW RFCC agreed to keep the levy at the same level as previous years, a total of £3.638M for northwest LLFAs. Halton's levy contribution is £58,730.

#### Flooding Incidents in 2012

- 3.16 The year 2012 has been widely reported as the wettest on record for England and Wales. Two significant flooding incidents occurred locally during the year: in August, a period of prolonged and heavy rain, particularly in the south of the Borough, most notably resulted in the early closure of the Creamfields event at Daresbury. Surface water run-off from the fields around Daresbury resulted in internal property flooding at a house located in Chester Road, within Warrington Borough Council's (WBC) administrative boundary. We understand that WBC is undertaking a formal investigation into the circumstances. Joint discussions are underway with the event organisers and WBC to address on-site land drainage issues before this summer's event. Within Halton no internal property flooding was reported, although there were a number of instances of minor road flooding around Moore village, due to land drainage problems which are being looked into.
- 3.17 A further period of heavy rainfall at the end of September, caused widespread flooding problems across the region, but again Halton escaped relatively unaffected. Main issues included flooding of pedestrian subways (at Ridding Lane and Davy Road, Runcorn), which were resolved by clearing blocked drainage systems and some minor road flooding at Moore and Hale villages. There was also evidence of subway & footpath flooding at Keckwick Brook and water impounding at the flood storage basins at Wharford Farm and Oxmoor (Manor Park). The recently completed EA flood defences in Sandymoor, protected properties from flooding during this weather event.
- 3.18 The wettest year has also resulted in an increased number of private garden and open land flooding, due to the land being saturated and causing groundwater seepage. In some instances, problems of land drainage capacity and blockages have come to light. Generally, these are issues for the landowner to resolve, as 'riparian' owner of the drain or watercourse, however, the Department does offer advice and assistance when it is able to do so, always bearing in mind, the regulatory function that the Council performs under the Land Drainage Act legislation.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no specific policy implications in relation to this report. The draft Local Flood Risk Strategy will be presented to the Board for endorsement in due course.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

##### **5.1 Resource Implications**

The proposed capital funding provided through the FDGiA and Local Levy programmes for 2013/14, will require a local financial contribution of approximately £20,000, which will be drawn down from the area based grant, as described in paragraph 3.12.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

There are no implications associated with this report.

### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

The planned capital investment in flood management schemes outlined in paragraph 3.13 will provide protection to residential properties and create a safer environment in those areas that have been affected by flooding in the past.

### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

There are no implications associated with this report.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 With regard to the Local Strategy, whilst there is no specific date specified for its completion and adoption, EA do monitor progress of LLFAs in relation to their duties under the the F&WMA, on behalf of Defra. Consequently, there is an element of reputational risk for the Council if adoption of the proposed Local Strategy is delayed.

7.2 As stated in paragraphs 3.13 and 5.1, local financial contributions, toward the cost of programmed schemes, are required enable them to proceed. There is a risk that FDGiA funding allocations could be withdrawn if local funding allocations are not available. For the 2013/14 programme the local contribution is deemed to be affordable within the current Area based Grant allocation.

7.3 The proposals are not so significant that a full risk assessment is required.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

There are no Equality and Diversity issues in relation to this report.

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

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
Flood and Water Management Act 2010 Progress Report on Implementation 2012 (Defra)	Highways Development Division, Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn	Dave Cunliffe
Framework to assist the development of the Local Strategy for Flood Risk Management, Nov.2011 (LGA)	Highways Development Division, Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn	Dave Cunliffe
United Utilities draft outline for partnership meetings.	Highways Development Division, Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn	Dave Cunliffe
FDGiA Allocation Letter, LA table and Local Levy Allocation 2013/14 (EA Feb.2013)	Highways Development Division, Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn	Dave Cunliffe

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board
<b>DATE:</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> March 2013
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Strategic Director, Communities
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Leader
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Armed Forces Community Covenant
<b>WARD(S)</b>	Borough-wide

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

To inform the Policy and Performance Boards of the Armed Forces Community Covenant (appendix one).

#### 2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.**

#### 3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

##### 3.1 In referring to Armed Forces this encompasses the Army, Royal Navy & Air Force.

Halton is part of a pan Cheshire Covenant covering the Local Authorities of Cheshire East, Cheshire West & Chester, Warrington and Halton. In addition to local authorities, health, probation and job centre plus are involved in supporting the covenant.

The Armed Forces Community Covenant was signed by dignatories representing each of the authorities on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012, Armed Forces Day.

Each Local Authority is required to have a nominated Armed Forces Champion, the Community Development Manager has been designated this role in Halton. The Armed Forces Champion provides representation on a Community Covenant working group that covers the Cheshire area and provides a point of liaison for the forces.

#### 4.0 **ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT**

##### 4.1 The Armed Forces Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between the civilian community and its local armed forces community. It aims to provide awareness of the role of the armed forces, the sacrifices that in service and ex service personnel

and their families make, encourage activities that integrate armed forces and local communities together and continue to foster civic pride in our armed forces.

4.2 The Armed Forces Community Covenant sets out pledges, twenty in total around five key themes:-

- Housing
- Employment & Benefit
- Education
- Health
- Wellbeing

#### 4.2.1 **Housing**

There is evidence that securing accommodation can be difficult, in particular for those leaving the forces. The pledges request priority is given to armed forces personnel with high priority for veterans injured or disabled or their spouse and dependants for widow (ers). Halton's policy supports this approach, this has been tested through support given to an army widow earlier this year and is cited as an example of good practice by the Armed Forces.

#### 4.2.2 **Employment & Benefits**

These pledges identify it can be difficult for service leavers to secure employment and for those with spouses in service, it can be difficult to seek employment as they often have sole responsibility for childcare. Organisations and services that provide employment and benefit support need to identify service leavers and veterans and ensure additional support is offered.

#### 4.2.3 **Education**

Accessing education provision for service families can be outside of routine school admission timetables, sometimes this is linked to whole regiments moving about or could be individual families. Policies should ensure service families are not disadvantaged in accessing schools of their choice by being resident elsewhere. Schools need to also be vigilant in ensuring support for forces children in integrating to a new environment. Where a child has additional needs appropriate support should also be put in place by the relevant council departments in a reasonable timescale.

#### 4.2.4 **Health**

Access and engaging in health support services for veterans is a priority. There are five pledges which set out (regardless of changes in structures for health provision) access to services will be made easier for armed forces and their families to support good physical

health, positive mental health and wellbeing. Health records should indicate if a patient is a current or former service member, places on waiting lists for clinical procedures should be maintained where relocation occurs and the provision of prosthetic limbs will match the standard provided by the Defence Medical Services. Access to mental health services is a key issue and since the Community Covenant was adopted “Live At Ease” has been launched. This is an initiative commissioned by health aimed at veterans and provides wrap around support to issues which are impacting on the mental health and wellbeing of the veteran i.e debt advice, addiction support, counselling, etc. It aims to be a one stop to provide the required support however complex.

#### 4.2.5 **Wellbeing**

Wellbeing cuts across the other four themes however the pledges here are about supporting access to services in communities and support for those who become involved in the criminal justice system. Areas are urged to consider discounts to leisure facilities and other services if possible for the armed forces community. These pledges reinforce the need for partners to work together to ensure signposting and referrals arrangements with appropriate priorities are in place.

#### 4.2.6 **Community Covenant Working Group**

The working group consists of the Armed Forces Champions from the four authorities, the Lieutenant Colonel of 75 Engineer Regiment, a representative from Wirral NHS (currently has strategic lead responsibility for Health Provision for Military Veterans, transferring to York & Humber shortly), Cheshire Probation Service and input from Job Centre Plus. The group is required to undertake annual reviews of the covenant.

There is a national pot of money to support initiatives endorsed through the Community Covenant Working Groups, there is £30 million unallocated at this stage. Any proposals have to be endorsed from the local covenant working group and from there are submitted to the Ministry of Defence. Projects that have been successful vary from small scale community based projects to replacing a scout hut with a community building, the underpinning theme is integration between the forces and civilian communities. £3.7 million has been allocated so far, 200 applications have been submitted with 86 being successful. The deadline for the next round of proposals is 12<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

### 5.0 **WIDER CONTEXT OF ARMED FORCES FOR HALTON**

5.1 It is difficult to know exactly how many in service personnel are from Halton and exactly how many veterans reside here, some work is progressing to provide more accurate figures. Support organisations

for veterans have indicative figures from their membership however, one factor for Halton is there is no garrison located here, hence forces members and their families are intrinsic in our regular communities and not always easy to identify. It is a balance not to contradict the concept of integration for forces members and their families in civilian communities whilst ensuring appropriate support and priority is given.

- 5.2 The armed forces are reducing their personnel, 10,532 will be leaving the forces between September 2012 to June 2013, 63% of these have sought service leaver advice and 237 are from the north west and 520 have stated they wish to resettle in the north west, a total of 820. It is anticipated a further breakdown by local authority areas will be available shortly and will be shared with Chief Executives.

It is anticipated from January 2013 there will be a further 6000 service leavers. As one in five in the forces originate from the north west it is reasonable to estimate 1200 returning to the region.

A service leaver event is being held in Liverpool in November 2012, it is an information event for service leavers wishing to return to the area, the Community Covenant Working Group will be represented there including Halton.

There are a number of support organisations that exist to support veterans, some have a presence established in Halton and others deliver services in the area. A web based directory is due to be launched by December 2012 to provide a comprehensive list of organisations and what support they can offer.

The Council will work with partners to assist and support our armed forces and their families in line with the pledges set out in the covenant.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **Children & Young People in Halton**

Ensuring the school admissions process allocates the appropriate priority for serving families and additional support for special needs children in armed forces families is provided in a reasonable timescale.

### **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Approximately 5000 early service leavers depart the forces each year with 61% being employed at six months following discharge. Over a third of service leavers are unemployed and require additional support when entering the job market.



**A Healthy Halton**

Priority for the health & wellbeing of armed forces and veterans is present in health services in Halton. Traditionally, access to mental health support has been low across the forces however a bespoke service “Live At Ease” has been commissioned to provide additional services to clients and is available to Halton residents.

**A Safer Halton**

Some service leavers and veterans find it difficult to adjust to civilian life and become involved in the criminal justice system. Additional support from custody staff and the probation service are pledges identified in the Community Covenant.

**Halton’s Urban Renewal**

None to report at this stage.

**RISK ANALYSIS**

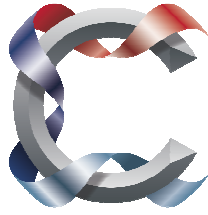
None

**EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

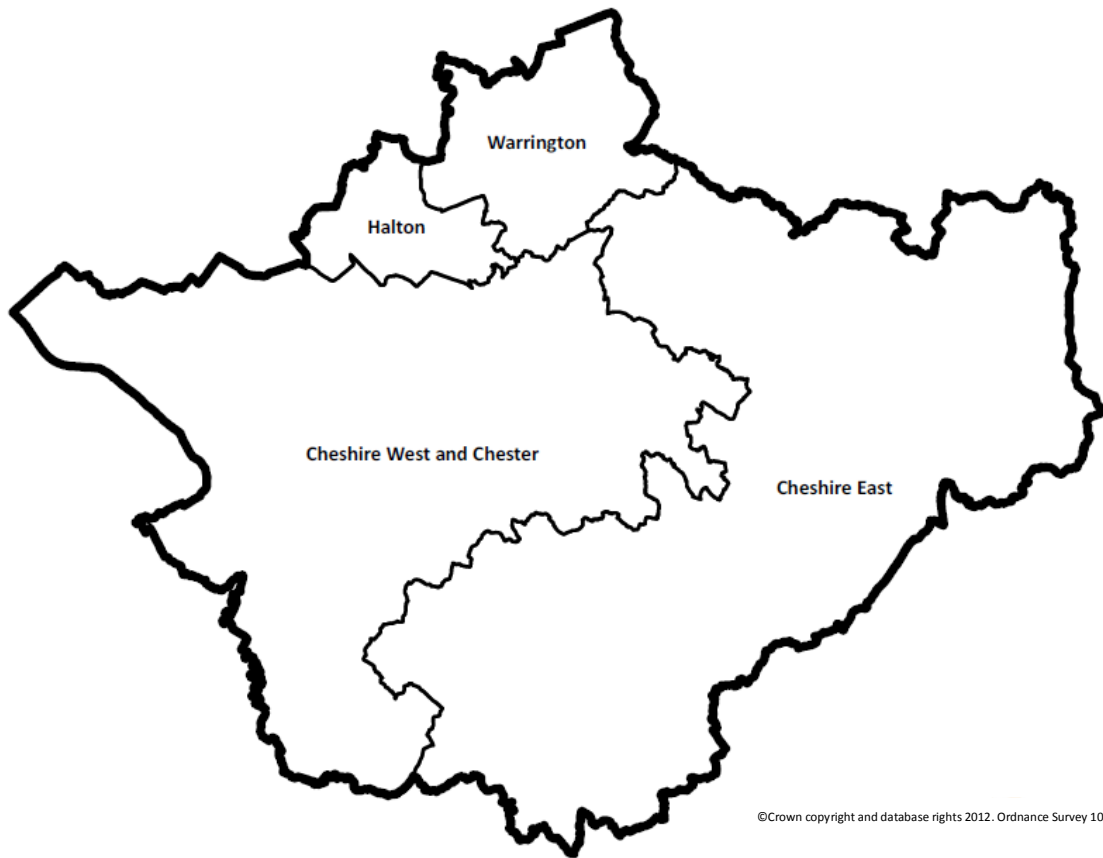
It is incumbent on the authority to ensure Armed Forces Families and Veterans are not disadvantaged and appropriate priorities are awarded in accessing services.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.



## Community Covenant



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## Cheshire, Halton and Warrington

## **Community Covenant General Principles**

The Armed Forces Community Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. It is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant, which outlines the moral obligation between the Nation, the Government and the Armed Forces, at a local level.

The purpose of this Community Covenant is to encourage support for the Armed Forces Community working and residing in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of this Armed Forces Community, particularly those who have given the most. This includes in-Service and ex-Service personnel and their families and widow(er)s in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington.

This publication explains how we will deliver the Armed Forces Community Covenant. It details our intentions, pledges and the approach that we are taking in order to ensure that the Covenant is a success for the Armed Forces, the Public, Private and Third Sectors as well as the wider community. As such, this covenant supersedes all and any previous versions held by individual signatory Local Authorities

The Armed Forces have a long history in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington:

- The Royal Navy assault ship HMS Albion is affiliated to the city of Chester.
- 75 Engineer Regiment has its Regimental Headquarters in Warrington.
- The 1st Battalion, The Mercian Regiment (Cheshire) recruits its soldiers from within the traditional Cheshire boundaries; the regiment has its area HQ at The Castle in Chester. The battalion is the successor to the 22nd (Cheshire) Regiment.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Mercian Regiment has been granted freedom of the Borough of Cheshire East
- B (Cheshire) Company, 4 MERCIAN are located in Widnes.
- D (Cheshire) Company, 4 MERCIAN are located in Crewe.
- C (Cheshire Yeomanry) Squadron are located in Chester.
- The Royal Welsh (The Royal Welch Fusiliers) are located in Dale Barracks, Chester.
- The region's bomb disposal squad is Chester Troop from 521 Squadron, Dale Barracks, Chester. Part of the Royal Logistic Corps, the squadron deals with about 100 call-outs to unexploded ordnance across the region every year.
- B Squadron, 208 Field Hospital are located in Ellesmere Port.

We are immensely proud of our Armed Forces, particularly those from, stationed or returning to Cheshire, Halton and Warrington. We hope that this Covenant will demonstrate our commitment to all of our Armed Service Personnel, Veterans and their Families.

## **Participants**

The following organisations have come together to form a Community Covenant Working Group while additional organisations have come forward to provide advice and support. They have shown their commitment to our Armed Forces Community by signing this Community Covenant:

### Community Covenant Working Group

- The Armed Forces
- NHS Western Cheshire
- NHS Cheshire, Warrington and Wirral
- Cheshire Probation Services
- Cheshire West and Chester Council
- Warrington Borough Council
- Cheshire East Borough Council
- Halton Borough Council
- Jobcentre Plus

### Supporting organisations

- Halton Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise
- Cheshire Army Benevolent Fund
- Combat Stress
- SSAFA
- The Royal British Legion
- Cheshire Constabulary
- SaBRE - Cheshire

Issues affecting the relationship between the Armed Forces community and the civilian community cannot be solved by one organisation alone, nor does it stop at Local Authority boundaries. The potential barriers faced by a member of the Armed Forces community may also be influenced by, or subject to, the systems created by any or all of these organisations. This is why the organisations listed above have made a commitment to work together to ensure that members of the Armed Forces community are not subject to disadvantage when residing or returning to our communities, accessing services or seeking support throughout Cheshire, Halton and Warrington.

Each member of this Armed Forces Community Covenant has a specialist area of knowledge and expertise. By working together we can be greater than the sum of our parts, working holistically to create the best outcomes for all.

## **Aims and Objectives**

The key values identified at a national level through the government's Covenant guidelines have formed the basis of our Community Covenant:

1. Encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces communities in their areas through the development of local actions.
2. Nurture understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces Community.
3. Recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces Community.
4. Encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces Community into local life.
5. Encourage the Armed Forces Community to help and support the wider community.

Furthermore we have identified five recurring themes that we feel we can significantly and positively contribute to. These are not a limit to what we will do but provide some focus to our actions.

- Housing
- Employment and Benefits
- Education
- Health
- Wellbeing

## **How we work**

The Community Covenant Working Group is set up as a network where ideas, issues and best practice can be shared between organisations. Armed Forces Champions from each organisation will act as the first point of contact between organisations to allow the sharing of information and joined up working. Champions have responsibility for facilitating the implementation of the covenant principles and pledges within their organisations. They are also a central point to receive and distribute information within their organisation and externally with partners.

The Community Covenant Working Group will link in to the 42 (NW) Brigade Transition Delivery Working Group which covers Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside. The Community Covenant Working Group will provide local support, taking into consideration the themes, direction and intelligence provided at this highly strategic level.

The Community Covenant Working Group will also seek to engage with relevant organisations from the private, public and charity sectors. Active engagement with these groups will allow expert advice to be sought, working relationships to be built and further progress to be made.

## **Themes and Pledges**

### **Housing**

Both research and anecdotal evidence has shown that access to housing can be a problem, particularly for those leaving service or for the families of those currently serving or recently widowed. Traditionally, Local Authority Housing Policy has placed housing applicants into priority 'bands' to reflect need, with current residency status forming part of the assessment in accordance with the Common Housing Allocations Policy. Those discharged from service, with no medical needs, are therefore placed in a low band.

Those injured during service may also require additional support to adapt housing to help retain independence and remain in their own home, while homelessness is also recognised as an issue that may be faced by those discharged from the Armed Forces.

Pledge: All Local Authorities agree to place members of the Armed Forces in housing need into priority band B (or equivalent) and will not apply residency criteria to armed forces personnel. Those in housing need who have a serious injury, medical condition or disability that has been sustained as a result of their service in the Armed Forces will be placed in Band A (top priority). This commitment will extend to the dependents and widow(er)s of those serving in the Armed Forces.

Pledge: All Local Authorities agree to acknowledge that Service people occupying Service Family accommodation and who have been issued with a Certificate of Cessation demonstrates impending homelessness. In such cases, a possession order is not required before provision of housing assistance.

Pledge: Those in receipt of a War Pension will have part of this income disregarded in the means test when accessing funding from the Disabled Facilities Grant.

Pledge: Some instances of homelessness can be linked to mental health issues. The NHS is committed to ensuring improvement in mental health services for veterans at a regional level. All organisations will follow their lead and work together to support this aim.

### **Employment & Benefits**

The health and wellbeing of people of working age is critical for supporting the local and national economy and positively contributing to society. It's recognised that being in work is generally good for health and wellbeing, while being out of work can lead to poorer physical and mental health.

Accessing employment opportunities and benefits can be challenging for those leaving service or the partners of those in service. There are approximately 5,000 Early Service Leavers leaving the Armed Forces per year with only 61% of these Early Service Leavers being employed at six month following discharge. Those leaving service may have spent the majority of their career with the Armed Forces and may therefore require additional support when entering the job market. Entrepreneurial individuals may also benefit from business advice and support for accessing investment.

Families of those in the Armed Forces may also be required to move frequently. This can make finding employment difficult. Having sole responsibility for child care whilst their partners are serving can also significantly reduce the ability to keep regular employment.

Pledge: Work together to share and distribute information about existing services allowing access to job opportunities, business advice and benefits.

Pledge: Work with Jobcentre Plus Armed Forces Champions along with Third Sector Organisations to signpost extra support to those discharged from the Armed Forces.

Pledge: Cheshire Probation will continue to provide additional support to veteran offenders, including mentoring.

## **Education**

Frequent moves can cause practical issues when enrolling children into school, particularly outside of the school term. These families generally receive good support when a whole regiment moves but it can be more difficult when individual families move.

Children may also require additional support to ease integration into a new school or area and may face additional challenges when a parent is in service.

Pledge: Where possible, ensure that school admissions and local members of the Armed Forces work together before a move takes place.

Pledge: Work with schools and local groups to develop understanding and support for children of those in service. This includes the timely provision of appropriate support for Service Children with Special Educational Needs.

## **Health**

The public health agenda recognises the Armed Forces community as an important demographic to address in terms of health inequalities and specific health behaviours and needs that are related to Service. Health refers to both clinical and non-clinical elements.

Pledge: We will ensure that all parts of the NHS community will offer support to the local Armed Forces community and make it easier for Service personnel, ex-service personnel, families and veterans to access the services, help and support which will be available in a timely and appropriate manner in order to maximise their potential to achieve good physical health and positive mental health and wellbeing. Accordingly, service members and their families required to move or relocate will maintain their position within a hospital waiting list and in accordance with clinical priorities.

Pledge: Regardless of changes to NHS structures and delivery we will aim to ensure that there is a commitment to service user led design in order that the health care needs of veterans are recognised and met.

Pledge: We pledge to raise the awareness among healthcare professionals about the needs of veterans so that these needs are met. To this end Hospital and GP records will indicate that a patient is a current/former service member. The identification of an individual as a former service member may help identify vulnerable individuals who can then be brought to the attention of supporting agencies.

Pledge: In line with the establishment of pilot schemes by Central Government we pledge to improve veterans' access to Mental Health Services

Pledge: The NHS/Primary Care Trust (PCT) pledges that in the provision of prosthetic limbs the NHS/PCT will as a minimum match the standard provided by Defence Medical Services.

## **Wellbeing**

Wellbeing is intrinsically linked in to all of the themes already described, both as a contributor to and an indicator of the state of individuals and our communities. However, each organisation can further support wellbeing in our communities.

Furthermore, we recognise the Armed Forces community as a distinct group that may experience common issues and needs. We aim to fully integrate involvement and consideration of this community, as we do with all stakeholders, as part of our core business, not as an add-on or afterthought.

Pledge: Cheshire Probation will continue to provide additional support to veterans using Veteran Support Officers with specialist awareness training and will continue to work with Veterans in Custody Support Officers from Merseyside and Great Manchester to ensure best practice

Pledge: Partners will work together to promote existing opportunities including Healthy Living Centres, access to mentoring services, and other services available to members of the Armed Forces community.

Pledge: Where possible, partners will work to provide discounts to leisure facilities and promote relevant discount schemes to the Armed Forces community.

Pledge: Armed Forces Champions will work to promote the needs of the Armed Forces community as part of existing services.

Pledges: All organisations aim to encourage a positive and strengthened relationship between the Armed Forces community and the wider community.

Pledge: All organisations will work together in a mutually beneficial way, acting in accordance with the key values of this Community Covenant.

### **Monitoring and Development**

As our communities develop so too will the role of the Community Covenant. It is therefore important to revise this agreement when necessary. Organisations may also create action plans that will be developed and implemented locally to further support the aims and pledges outlined. The core Community Covenant Working Group will formally meet no less than every six months for the first two years to discuss existing pledges, achievements and issues as well as opportunities for development. Until a suitable non-military lead can be identified, this will be led by the Armed Forces Commanding Officer who holds a responsibility for Cheshire. Annual reviews will provide opportunity for additional organisations to officially sign the covenant.