

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL



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

9 July 2013

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

You are hereby summoned to attend an Ordinary Meeting of the Halton Borough Council to be held in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall on Wednesday, 17 July 2013 commencing at 6.30 p.m. for the purpose of considering and passing such resolution(s) as may be deemed necessary or desirable in respect of the matters mentioned in the Agenda.

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

Chief Executive

-AGENDA-

Item No.		Page No.
1.	CHESHIRE FIRE SERVICE A representative from Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service will address Members on the use of Fire Sprinklers	
2.	COUNCIL MINUTES	SEE MINUTE BOOK
3.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
4.	THE MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	
5.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
6.	LEADER'S REPORT	
7.	MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD a) 14 May 2013 b) 23 May 2013 c) 13 June 2013 d) 27 June 2013	SEE MINUTE BOOK
8.	MINUTES OF THE MERSEY GATEWAY EXECUTIVE BOARD	SEE MINUTE BOOK
9.	MINUTES OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD	SEE MINUTE BOOK
10.	QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 8	
11.	MATTERS REQUIRING A DECISION OF THE COUNCIL a) Joint Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan - Adoption of Plan - KEY DECISION (Minute EXB 13 refers)	1 - 10

Executive Board considered the attached report:-

The attachments can be viewed via the following links:

Report on Consultation Modifications

<http://moderngov.halton.gov.uk/documents/s29822/Appendix%201%20-%20Report%20on%20Consultation%20on%20Mods.pdf>

Inspector's Final Report

<http://moderngov.halton.gov.uk/documents/s29823/Appendix%202%20-%20Inspectors%20Final%20Report.pdf>

Waste Local Plan

<http://moderngov.halton.gov.uk/documents/s29990/Revised%20Appendix%203%20-%20Waste%20Local%20Plan.pdf>

RECOMMENDED: That Council

- 1) note the results of public consultation on the proposed modifications to the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan that was undertaken between November 2012 and January 2013 (Appendix 1);
- 2) welcome the report from the Planning Inspector which concluded that, subject to the proposed modifications, the Plan “meets the criteria for soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework” and “provides an appropriate basis for waste planning for Merseyside and Halton over the next 15 years” (Appendix 2);
- 3) agree that the Waste Local Plan (Appendix 3) be adopted as part of the statutory development plan by each of the districts on a single date which shall be one working day after the final (sixth) Full Council resolution has been received;
- 4) note that several of the adopted Unitary Development Plan saved policies (listed in paragraph 4.11, Table 2 of the report) will be replaced by Waste Local Plan policies including the site allocations; and
- 5) grant delegated authority to the Operational Director, Policy, Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Physical Environment Portfolio Holder to make minor typographical changes to the Waste Local Plan, prior to its final publication.

<p>b) Annual Reports of Policy and Performance Boards 2012/13</p> <p>To consider the attached report.</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: That the 2012/13 Annual Reports, submitted from the Policy and Performance Boards, be received.</p>	<p>11 - 46</p>
<p>c) Highway Improvements at A 558 Daresbury Expressway under the Department for Transport's Local Pinch Point Programme (Minute EXB 32 refers)</p> <p>Executive Board considered the attached report:-</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: That</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the award of £1.675m grant funding for the Daresbury Enterprise Zone/East Runcorn Housing Access Improvement Scheme under the DfT's Local Pinch Point Programme be noted; 2) Council be recommended to approve the inclusion of the LPPP scheme into the Council's Capital Programme at a total estimated cost of £2.394m to be phased over 2013/14 and 2014/15; and 3) in accordance with Procurement Standing Order 1.8.4, Procurement Standing Order 4.1 (Competition Requirements) be waived, and design and scheme preparation services be procured from Mott MacDonald Ltd for reasons of urgency as set out in the report. 	<p>47 - 52</p>
<p>d) Halton Housing Strategy 2013-18 - KEY DECISION (Minute EXB 30 refers)</p> <p>Executive Board considered the attached report:-</p> <p>RECOMMENDED: That Council be recommended to approve the revised Housing Strategy, attached at Appendix A and supporting evidence document attached at Appendix B.</p>	<p>53 - 122</p>
<p>e) Library Strategy 2013-16 - KEY DECISION (Minute EXB 31 refers)</p>	<p>123 - 146</p>

Executive Board considered the attached report:-

RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) Council be recommended to approve the Library Strategy 2013/16; and
- 2) any further editorial changes/corrections required following the close of consultation be delegated to the Strategic Director, Communities, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood, Leisure and Sport.

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

SEE MINUTE BOOK

- a) Children, Young People and Families - yellow pages
- b) Employment, Learning, Skills and Community - cream pages
- c) Health - blue pages
- d) Safer - pink pages
- e) Environment and Urban Renewal - green pages
- f) Corporate Services - salmon pages
- g) Business Efficiency Board - white pages

13. COMMITTEE MINUTES

SEE MINUTE BOOK

- a) Development Control - pink pages
- b) Regulatory - blue pages

14. PART II

In this case the Board has a discretion to exclude the press and public and, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, it is **RECOMMENDED** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, having been satisfied that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

15. MATTERS REQUIRING A DECISION OF THE COUNCIL

- a) Former Crossville Depot, Runcorn and land at Earle Road, Widnes Waterfront Regeneration (Minute EXB 15 refers)
The Executive Board considered the attached Part II report:-

RECOMMENDED: That Council note the changes made under the powers of delegation as detailed in the report.

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REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 23rd May 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Policy & Resources

PORTFOLIO: Physical Environment

SUBJECT: Joint Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan (WLP) - Adoption of Plan

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is four-fold:
- 1.2 To report back on the results of public consultation on the proposed modifications to the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan that was undertaken between November 2012 and January 2013.
- 1.3 For Members to receive the report from the Planning Inspector which concluded that, subject to the proposed modifications, the Plan “meets the criteria for soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework” and “provides an appropriate basis for waste planning for Merseyside and Halton over the next 15 years.”
- 1.4 For Members to agree that the Plan (Appendix 3) be formally adopted as part of the statutory “development plan” under planning legislation and that this should take place on a single date one working day after the last of the six Councils has approved the Plan for adoption.
- 1.5 For Members to note that from the date of adoption, several of the adopted Unitary Development Plan saved policies (listed in Table 1 of this Report) will be replaced by Waste Local Plan policies including the site allocations.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Council be recommended

- (1) To note the results of public consultation on the proposed modifications to the Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan that was undertaken between November 2012 and January 2013 (Appendix 1).
- (2) To welcome the report from the Planning Inspector which concluded that, subject to the proposed modifications, the Plan “meets the criteria for soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework” and “provides an appropriate

basis for waste planning for Merseyside and Halton over the next 15 years” (Appendix 2).

- (3) To agree that the Waste Local Plan (Appendix 3) be adopted as part of the statutory development plan by each of the districts on a single date which shall be one working day after the final (sixth) Full Council resolution has been received.**
- (4) To note that several of the adopted Unitary Development Plan saved policies (listed in paragraph 4.11, Table 2 of this Report) will be replaced by Waste Local Plan policies including the site allocations.**
- (5) To grant delegated authority to the Operational Director Policy, Planning and Transportation in consultation with the Physical Environment Portfolio Holder to make minor typographical changes to the Waste Local Plan prior to its final publication.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Government planning policy requires Local Plans to address sustainable waste management. Through Planning Policy Statement 10 (Planning for Sustainable Waste Management) and the National Planning Policy Framework, local authorities, either individually or as a group, are required to put in place a Local Plan that provides a policy framework and land allocations for new waste management infrastructure to meet the identified needs of each Council.
- 3.2 Following full Council resolutions Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St. Helens and Wirral entered into a joint arrangement to prepare the joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (WLP). Work commenced in 2006 and Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (Merseyside EAS) has co-ordinated the plan preparation process including several public consultation stages.
- 3.3 The WLP is primarily focused on (i) providing new capacity and new sites for waste management uses and (ii) delivering a robust policy framework to control waste development. The scope of the WLP is to deal with all controlled waste including commercial and industrial, hazardous, construction, demolition, excavation and local authority collected waste and this amounts to several million tonnes of waste requiring collection, recycling, treatment and disposal each year.
- 3.4 The WLP aims to deliver significant improvements in waste management across the sub-region whilst also diverting waste from landfill. Specifically, the WLP will, through its land allocations and policies, provide Districts with a high degree of control to direct the waste sector

to the most appropriate locations primarily on allocated sites. It will also provide industry with much greater certainty in terms of bringing forward proposals that are more likely to be acceptable to the Districts and is supported by a robust and detailed evidence base.

3.5 The WLP principally contains:

- A Vision statement to guide future waste management decision taking over the next 15 years;
- Strategic objectives and a Spatial Strategy to guide delivery of the Vision;
- Controlling and enabling Development Management Policies designed to provide certainty in planning decisions;
- Site allocations for both local and sub-regional sites which are broadly distributed across all six Council areas;
- An Implementation and Monitoring Framework.

3.6 Following a total of five public consultations at the various stages of WLP preparation, the published WLP was submitted by the six Councils for Public Examination by an Independent Planning Inspector in February 2012. The hearing sessions for the Examination were held over a two-week period by the Planning Inspector, Elizabeth Ord, in June 2012.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Agreed Modifications to the Published Plan and Results of Consultation

4.2 As a result of the Public Examination process, a number of modifications were discussed between the representors, the Waste Planning Authorities and the Inspector. These were approved by Members between September and November 2012. The modifications were the subject of a further public consultation held between November 2012 and January 2013.

4.3 During the consultation, 23 representations were received in total from 15 organisations and two individuals. The representations were classified as “positive”, “negative” or “neutral” with respect to the modifications. “Neutral” responses were mainly those which stated that the representor had noted the contents of the consultation but had no comment to make in response. 11 representations were neutral, seven were positive and five were negative.

4.4 Following consideration of all of the representations received the Inspector decided to recommend no further changes to the Plan as a result of the consultation. The Inspector concluded that the Plan “meets the criteria for soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework”. The WLP itself can be viewed at Appendix 3 and also at <http://www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk>. The Inspector’s report is

provided at Appendix 2 whilst the full archive of supporting documents can be found at <http://merseysideeas-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal>. A short report on the Consultation Responses is provided at Appendix 1.

4.5 **Adoption**

4.6 The WLP will need to be formally adopted, like all other statutory planning documents, by each of the six Districts to become part of the adopted statutory development plan. Each District should do this through a Full Council resolution. Because this is a joint plan a single adoption date must be agreed. Given that the Full Council dates vary between Districts it is recommended that adoption takes place on a single date one working day after the last of the six Councils has approved the Plan for adoption. On the basis of the current programme of Full Council meetings this is anticipated during July 2013 (see Table 1 below).

4.7 Table 1. Targets dates for adoption meetings

	Target Cabinet date		Target Council date
Halton*	23-May		17-Jul
Knowsley*	29-May		26-Jun
Liverpool*	05-Jul		17-Jul
Sefton	20-Jun		27-Jun
St.Helens	29-May		10-Jul
Wirral	13-Jun		15-Jul

*provisional dates

4.8 Following the Council's intention to adopt the WLP the process for adoption set out in statute will be followed. Members should note that under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 any person aggrieved by the local plan may make an application to the High Court under section 113 of the Act within six weeks of adoption on the grounds that (a) the document is not within the appropriate power; or (b) a procedural requirement has not been complied with.

4.9 Following adoption, progress and compliance with the Plan will be monitored by Merseyside EAS staff and the Districts in accordance with the Implementation and Monitoring Plan.

4.10 **Replacement of Unitary Development Plan Policies (UDP)**

4.11 Table 2 shows which policies from existing District Unitary Development Plans will be replaced by new policies from the Waste Local Plan

Table 2. Existing UDP policies to be replaced

District	Waste Policies to be replaced	Date UDP
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		Adopted
Halton	MW3, MW7, MW8, MW9, MW10, MW11, MW12, MW13, MW14, MW15, MW16, MW17, S9	7th April 2005
Knowsley	MW4, MW5, MW6	June 2006
Liverpool	EP3, EP4, EP5, EP6, EP7, EP8	13 th Nov 2002
St.Helens	WD1, WD2 (Policies WD3, WD4 & S11 previously deleted)	2nd July 1998
Sefton	EMW6, EMW7, EMW8	29th June 2006
Wirral	WMT1, WMT2, WM1, WM2, WM3, WM4, WM5, WM6, WM7, WM8, WM9, WM10	February 2000

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Previous Consultation

5.2 The Joint Merseyside and Halton Joint Waste Local Plan is the product of substantial public, business and stakeholder consultation. The table below lists the previous consultation periods.

Public Consultation	Date
Issues and Options Report.	March to April 2007 – 6 weeks
Sites and Spatial Strategy Report	November 2008 to January 2009 - 8 weeks
Preferred Options Report	24 May to 4 July 2010 – 6 weeks
Preferred Options 2 (New Sites) Report	9 May to 20 June 2011 – 6 weeks
Publication	25 November 2011 to 20 January 2012
Examination	18 June to 29 June 2012
Proposed Modifications	1 November 2012 to 10 January 2013

5.3 Financial Implications

5.4 Budgetary provision has already been made to complete the preparation of the WLP including Public Examination and printing costs. The joint preparation of the WLP has not only delivered significant financial savings to the Districts compared to preparing individual waste plans but has also been an effective example of how the Districts have fulfilled their new Duty to Co-operate.

5.5 Financial implications of implementation and monitoring of the WLP have also already been agreed with each District through the existing planning services and via the joint core service provided by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service. There is a commitment to regular monitoring and review of the Plan and any financial implications arising will be reported at the appropriate time.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton**

6.2 This report has no direct implications for children and young people in Halton. Indirectly, the Waste Local Plan places sustainability at its very core, protecting valuable resources for future generations and promoting the most sustainable methods of waste handling and treatment.

6.3 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

6.4 Each developed site will generate employment benefits for the surrounding area. The estimated total number of direct jobs to be created as a result of development of the Waste Local Plan's allocated sites is 500-700 with additional indirect jobs estimated at up to twice this number. Temporary jobs related to construction of facilities are expected to total 25-400 per site, depending on the scale of the facility being built.

6.5 A Healthy Halton

6.6 There are concerns about environmental nuisance, odours, emissions and the effects that waste facilities may or may not have on the health of residents. The Waste Local Plan has been supported by an independent review of this matter. Scientific and medical consensus is that there are no direct health issues arising from the normal and proper operation of modern waste facilities. The Waste Local Plan encourages the use of more efficient and precautionary technologies.

6.7 A Safer Halton

6.8 The main implication, aside from the health aspects noted above, is the consideration of increased traffic movements in the vicinity of any developed site. The inclusion of design policies helps to ensure new facilities are safe and secure in operation.

6.9 Halton's Urban Renewal

6.10 A great deal of effort has been directed by the Council into changing perceptions about Halton that stem from its industrial legacy. A prime concern is the impact on inward investment in the Borough. Waste facilities must be designed to a high standard of quality and mitigate against all environmental nuisance that is associated with waste facilities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Due to the increasing number of private sector planning applications for waste treatment facilities and the pressing need for Merseyside and Halton to secure new infrastructure for sustainable waste management it is vital that rapid progress is maintained with the Waste Local Plan. Adopting the Waste Local Plan will allow the policies to be used in determining planning decisions will therefore greatly assist the Districts in making those decisions.

7.2 Delay to the Waste Local Plan will:

- Increase costs to the Districts in the future through the cost of landfill disposal and financial penalties.

- Have a knock on effect of Waste Local Plan project timescales with resultant increases in costs of plan preparation.
- Have very serious implications for the soundness of each of the District's emerging Core Strategy documents.
- Result in a continuation of an industry-led approach to the location of new waste facilities rather than the pro-active plan-led approach proposed within the Waste Local Plan.
- Reduce the Council's ability to resist applications of the wrong type and in the wrong places

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

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for this project and is available at www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk. Where appropriate, action has been taken on the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment.

9.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

9.1 Government policy (PPS10) requires that waste must be dealt with in a sustainable way. The Council is producing a Joint Waste Local Plan for the Merseyside sub-region. Drafting of the Plan has reached the stage where the policy framework contained in the Waste Local Plan needs to be subject to public scrutiny.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

10.1 The Waste Local Plan has been prepared through a multi-stage process. Previous public consultation stages have been completed and these are detailed in section 5.2.

10.2 These reports document the evolution of the Plan and the options for policies and sites that have been considered and rejected. The results of the public consultation, engagement with stakeholders, industry and the Local Authorities and, detailed technical assessments have all been used to inform the preparation of the Local Plan. The Preferred Options stage reports set out the alternative options considered.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

11.1 The Joint Merseyside Waste Local Plan is scheduled to be adopted by all the six partner Districts in the summer of 2013.

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

All documents are available here: http://merseysideeas-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/public_docs/wdpc_docarchive

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Broad Site Search Final Report (SLR Consulting September 2005)	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Initial Needs Assessment (Land Use Consultants September 2005)	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Agricultural Waste Survey (Merseyside EAS April 2007)	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
North West Commercial and Industrial Waste Survey Final Report (Urban Mines May 2007)	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
North West Construction, Demolition and Excavation Waste Final Report (Smith Gore July 2007)	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Revised Needs Assessment Report (SLR Consulting December 2007) [Needs Assessment Version 2]	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Merseyside Radioactive Waste Arisings Review (Merseyside EAS December 2007)	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Planning Implications Report (Merseyside EAS January 2008) [Needs Assessment Version 3]	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Review of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Waste Management Facilities (RPS April 2008).	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Review of Health Impacts from Waste Management Facilities (Richard Smith Consulting June 2008).	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs

Equality Impact Assessment (Merseyside EAS July 2008).	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
North West Regional Broad Locations Nov 08.	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Survey for Landfill Opportunities in Merseyside (Merseyside EAS - 2008).	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
All Sites Scored.xls - Built Facilities sites long list prepared for Spatial Strategy & Sites report.	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
All sites to be assessed for Landfill.xls	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Built Facilities Site Search Methodology Preferred Options.	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Built Facilities Site Search Methodology Preferred Options 2.	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
St Helens sub-regional sites assessment	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Sustainability Appraisal – Phase 1 (Mouchel Parkman (2006-7).	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Capita Symonds 2008-9).	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Habitats Regulations Assessment (Scott Wilson 2007-present).	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Sustainability Appraisal – Phases 2 & 3 (Scott Wilson 2007-present).	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs

Review of Relative Sustainability of Waste Management based on Mass-Burn or Two-Stage Recovery of Energy from Waste (Juniper Consulting 2009).	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Risk Assessment for EfW Options for MSW in Merseyside & Halton November 2009	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Revised Needs Assessment (Merseyside EAS November 2009) [Needs Assessment version 4].	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Issues and Options Report (March 2007).	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
The Halton Council, Liverpool City Council, Knowsley Council, Sefton Council, St Helens Council and Wirral Council Joint Waste Development Plan Document Spatial Strategy and Sites Report. (Merseyside EAS November 2008)	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Spatial Strategy and Sites Q and A Document	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
Spatial Strategy and Sites Summary Report	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
The Halton Council, Liverpool City Council, Knowsley Council, Sefton Council, St Helens Council and Wirral Council Joint Waste Development Plan Document Preferred Options Report (MEAS Dec 2009)	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs
WasteDPD Preferred Options 2 Report	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	Tim Gibbs

Annual Report of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator 2012/13

It has been another busy year for our Policy and Performance Boards with the combined effects of budget reductions and changes taking place across all areas of the public sector taking up much of their time.

Despite that there has been much good work done with topics ranging from “Apprenticeships” to “Falls Prevention” being undertaken. It is even more important for the PPBs to monitor the Council’s performance given the diminishing resources it has at its disposal. The recent all member Seminar looking at the Council’s budget projections over the next few years clearly demonstrated that difficult choices will have to be made. The Council will not be able to do everything it has always done and will not be able to maintain the excellent performance it has done across many services. The PPBs will have an important role in how those choices are made.

Ensuring the Borough gets the best out of the new arrangements for health will still be a key role for the Health PPB. A role that it has performed admirably over recent years. Our new Public Health responsibilities are a key component in those new structures. Similarly the Safer PPB will continue to play a key role in overseeing the community safety agenda, alongside our representatives on the Police and Crime Panel.

Reviewing the on-going effects on the Borough of the Welfare Reform agenda will also be a key challenge for many of the PPBs but particularly the Employment Learning Skills and Community PPB who have chosen that issues as a topic for the next year. Our Children and Young People PPB will continue to review our work on “Inspiring Families” whilst the development of the Mersey gateway will no doubt become an increasing focus for the Environment and Urban renewal PPB.

The Corporate PPB will no doubt keep a watchful eye on the overall finances as well as the impact of the changes in Council Tax and the introduction of our Discretionary Support Scheme.

I would like to thank the Chairs of the PPBs for their regular attendance the Chairs' meetings. I have found them very helpful in carrying out my role. I hope also that people have found "Scrutiny News" useful. Suggestions for future articles are always gratefully received.

We have many challenges ahead of us but I am sure we are up to them and as always act in the best interests of the Halton community.

Tony McDermott

Scrutiny Co-ordinator

**ANNUAL REPORT
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD
APRIL 2012 – MARCH 2013**



Cllr. Mark
Dennett
Chairman
Children &
Young People
PPB

“I always like to start by looking back over the previous twelve months. A number of the issues we have looked at in year like the use of pupil premium, changes to the adoption process and the joint health & well being strategy for Halton, have been as a direct result of an ever-changing policy landscape from central government. We have been making sure that not only do we react to the pace of change, but we are also ahead. In fact it was noted that Halton is only one of two authorities in the North West to meet both of the government’s targets for adoption.

The educational attainment of our children and young people was once again, fantastic! I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our students who did so well, and also thank the parents, carers and teachers who supported them in achieving these fantastic results. The results show Halton’s continued commitment to drive up standards and improve the opportunities available to all of our young people as they move into adulthood.

During the year the board started two pieces of scrutiny topic work. The first is looking into the mental health and well being of our young people. Many of our children are under increasing pressures both at school and home and there is increasing anecdotal evidence that mental health and well being issues are increasing. The second work topic is looking at how we can increase the independent living skills for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in Halton.

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

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

Councillor Mark Dennett

Chairman, Children, Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board □

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2012/13 the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors M. Dennett (Chairman) Cllr Horabin (Vice Chairman), E. Cargill, Cassidy, Fraser, P Hignett, Hodge, K Loftus, Logan C Plumpton Walsh, Woolfall and Co-optee Miss E. Lawler.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to the work of the Council (and its partner agencies within Children's Trust Arrangements) in seeking: to ensure that children and young people in Halton have the best possible start in life and opportunities to fulfil their potential and succeed; and to scrutinise progress against the Corporate Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

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

Annual Review of Halton's Children and Young People Plan

The Annual Review of the Halton Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014 was considered. The plan has been agreed as the joint strategy of partners within the Halton's Children's Trust. It details how partners will co-operate to improve children's wellbeing and outlines the vision and aspirations for children and young people in the Borough. It provides the strategic direction and demonstrates how the Board will work together to commission services to address locally identified needs and better integrate provision

The key priorities for the Children's Trust are as follows:

- Improve outcomes for children and young people through embedding integrated processes to deliver early help and support;
- Improve outcomes for children and young people through effective joint commissioning; and
- Improve outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people by targeting services effectively.

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The Board considered Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the five priorities identified through the use of the information and intelligence available through the JSNA and local consultation. The five agreed priorities include improved child development, reduction in harm from alcohol and prevention and detection of mental health conditions.

The Board also considered reports on Children's Emotional Health and Wellbeing.

Summary of Education Attainment and Progress 2012

The main headlines for Halton were excellent again this year, with performance as a whole exceeding that of previous years:

In particular the following successes were highlighted:

- The number of reception aged pupils who achieved 6+ points in Personal Social and Emotional Development and Communication Language and Literacy was 6% higher than the previous year;
- There was an increase in attainment at the nationally expected level 2b+ in reading, writing and maths;
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in English and Mathematics combined at level 4+ rose by a further 6% to 84%, placing attainment in Halton's primary schools 5% higher than national outcomes;
- There was also an increase in the higher level 5s;
- In 2012 the gap between the attainment of FSM and non-FSM at level 4+ in English and maths combined reduced by 8% compared to the previous year;
- Halton's 5+ A* - C GCSEs including English and Maths was 59%, an increase of 3% compared to 2011 and 9% higher than 2010. This placed Halton in line with the 2012 national average (59%) by this indicator and above the attainment of statistical neighbours (56%).
- In Key Stage 4 there had been a further rise in the DfE attainment floor standard from 35% to 40%. All secondary schools in Halton exceeded this threshold.

Service Plans

This year the Board continued to take significant steps forward in the way it engaged with the service planning process. The PPB Members identified issues and activities they hoped could be prioritised in the service plans for 2011/2014

WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2012/13

The Board decided that during the municipal year (2012/13) it would carry out a Topic reviews examining the following area:

- joint scrutiny topic on Apprenticeships with the Employment Learning, Skills and Communities PPB; and
- how we can further develop the effectiveness of Independent Living Skills, talk to children and young people with ASH in Halton

Children and Families

Members regularly considered matters relating to Safeguarding in particular in the work of the Halton Children's Trust and Safeguarding Children's Board. Members also received reports on complaints and the compliments services had received and the learning from these and the approach in Halton to addressing the Troubled Families project.

Children in Need, Contract, Referral and Assessment Analysis

Members have scrutinised referral and assessment activity and in relation to referrals during 2011/12 there had been 1132, which was a reduction on the on the previous year of 1395. There had also been a reduction of 13% for completion of assessments within 10 days.

The total number of open CiN cases as of 31st March 2012 was 706 which was an increase of 7% on last year.

Climbie & Regulation 33 Visits

There are two Children's Homes in the Borough requiring 24 visits a year, carried out by Members, who are enhanced CRB checked and fully trained. Regulation 33 Visits also take place enabling scrutiny of care homes for children.

Adoption – members received and discussed the adoption scorecard which contained information on Halton performance, they also discussed the Government's expectations in terms of the timeliness of adoption processes and the number of children in care of other local authorities places in the borough.

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work, please contact Ann McIntyre on 0151 511 7332 ann.mcintyre@halton.gov.uk



**ANNUAL REPORT
CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD
APRIL 2012 – MARCH 2013**

'I would like to thank my Vice Chair Joe Roberts and all of the Members of the Board for the contribution which they have made during the past year. The Board has faced a challenging Agenda, and has been involved in scrutinising the localisation of Council Tax Support, technical reform of Council Tax, and the abolition of the Discretionary Social Fund. It has also had the opportunity to play a part in the formulation of a Single Equality Scheme.

I would also like to thank the Council's staff for their hard work in delivering its objectives against the background of reducing resources and considerable change'

Councillor Bob Gilligan – Chairman of Corporate Policy & Performance Board.

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2012/2013, The Board comprised of eleven Councillors – R. Gilligan (Chairman) J. Roberts (Vice Chair) E. Cargill, M. Dennett, S. Hill, C. Loftus, A. Lowe, A. McInerney, N. Plumpton Walsh, G. Stockton and K. Wainwright.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to Resources, HR and Training, ICT, Property, Democratic Services, Legal Services, Communications and Marketing, Stadium, Civic Catering, Procurement, Corporate Complaints and Area Forums. The Board also has responsibility for monitoring the performance of the Reporting Departments which during the last year were Legal and Democratic Services including Communications and Marketing, Human Resources, Financial Services, ICT and Support Services, and the Policy and Performance Divisions.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met seven times during the year. Set out below are some of the main initiatives upon which it has worked during that time.

LOCALISATION OF COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

The July meeting received a Report dealing with the detailed implications of the Welfare Format 2012, and submitting a localisation of Council Tax scheme for consideration and public consultation.

The Government had announced as part of a 2010 spending review that it would localise support for Council Tax from 2013/14 and reduce expenditure on the benefit by 10%. The provisions for the localisation of Council Tax support were included in the Local Government Finance Bill which was then before Parliament. Each Council would have to draw up its own scheme but the Government had said that there would be a 10% overall reduction in the amount of expenditure of the scheme. For Halton, this meant that there would be approximately £1.4 million less paid out to help towards Council Tax. The Report considered the costs and implications and presented funding alternatives to Members. Although the scheme would have to be in place by April 2013, arrangements would have to be completed by October 2012 to enable the setting of Council Tax and Billing process to be carried out.

The Board agreed with the proposals in the Report and recommended that the draft scheme be submitted to Executive Board for consideration and approval for public consultation. The full scheme would then be provided to all Members.

The results of the public consultation exercise were brought back to the Board in October.

Since the publication of the Report, Government had announced a grant of £100,000,000 to be divided between Councils across the country to assist with the shortfalls they would be experiencing in 2013/14. This would mean that £266,000,00 would be allocated to Halton subject to a number of criteria being met. Having debated the matter fully, the Board agreed that they would not recommend using the allocation of £266,000,00 based upon the information they had available to them at the meeting. The Executive Board subsequently accepted that recommendation.

TECHNICAL REFORM OF COUNCIL TAX

Also at the October meeting, the Board considered a Report which detailed a number of technical changes to Council Tax billing. Proposals gave billing authorities greater discretion over the relief strong Council Tax available in respect of second homes and some empty properties. The

proposed changes would:-

Give Billing Authorities the power to levy up to full Council Tax on properties designated as second homes;

Replace exemption classes A and C with discounts, the amounts of which would be for the Billing Authorities to determine;

Allow Billing Authorities to levy an empty properties premium in respect of dwellings liable for Council Tax;

Allow Authorities to publish on line the information to be supplied with demand Notices;

And reduce the discount on long term empty properties to 0%.

Following debate, the Board resolved that Executive Board be recommended to approve the proposed changes to Council Tax discounts and Billing as outlined in the Report. That recommendation was subsequently approved by Executive Board.

ABOLITION OF DISCRETIONARY SOCIAL FUND

A special meeting of the Board was convened in December to consider a Report which sought views in relation to the abolition of the Discretionary Social Fund and asked Members to make recommendations to the Executive Board. Members were reminded that Government had abolished Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants and suggested that local schemes be developed by each local authority. Grant would be provided by Government to do this.

Members and Officers had worked together and consulted the Department for Work and Pensions and had liaised with other local authorities about the approach to the issue. All local authorities appeared to be developing their own schemes. As a result the Board was presented with a Draft Scheme for both Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants for consideration and comment. It was the consensus of the Board that grant rather than loan schemes should be adopted and it was also recommended that the Council should avoid cash payments wherever possible and develop voucher and pre- paid card systems which would help with the prevention of abuse of the process. It was also agreed that the maximum number of claims per claimant per year would be set at two.

Members felt that as the scheme would be introduced for the first time in

April 2013, it would be beneficial to set up a working group until such time as the scheme was fully developed. This was agreed and invitations to participate would be sent to all Members of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board. The Executive Board accepted the recommendations of the PPB.

DRAFT SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME 2013/15

A Report submitted in January informed Members of the draft Revised Single Equality Scheme which would last from 2013/15. Whilst the Equality Act 2010 did not impose a duty to produce an equality scheme, it was considered good practice nationally to have such a scheme in place.

The Scheme which was proposed conveyed the Council's commitment to all of the protected characteristics as set out in the Act, and all legislative changes had been incorporated into the new draft. It was intended that the Scheme be a living document as the sections illustrating Halton's demographic information, the Workforce Profile and information about equality directives could be updated annually and therefore contained in one document. Ideally, the Scheme would also contain a section to be updated annually which would describe other examples of the Council's Equality and Diversity activities and achievements during a given year. This together would ensure that the Council would always have an up to date scheme on the Intranet and Internet.

The Document was welcomed by the Board and submitted to Executive Board for final approval which was duly given.

PERFORMANCE ISSUES

During the course of year the Board considered in detail the performance of the reporting departments. Issues which were overseen by the Board during the year included:-

Accidents statistics
Sickness Absences
School Catering and the operation of the Stobart Stadium.

Significant improvements were noted, as was the substantial take-up of school meals in the Borough

WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

The Board received reports during the year on all of the topics which it had

	<p>identified for examination during 2012/13, mainly:-</p> <p>Locality working Halton's Strategic Partnership Markets.</p> <p>Thanks were due to the Chairs of those groups, Councillors A. Lowe, Roberts and Wainwright respectively.</p> <p>Moving into 2013/14, it was envisaged that topic work would focus on a review of the Council's Complaints system, and a consideration of issues surrounding the Discretionary Social Fund.</p>
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**ANNUAL REPORT
EMPLOYMENT LEARNING, SKILLS AND COMMUNITY POLICY AND
PERFORMANCE BOARD
APRIL 2012 – MARCH 2013**



Cllr. Sue Edge
Chairman

Introduction from Councillor Sue Edge

Chair of the Employment Learning, Skills and Community Performance Board

This has been my third year as Chair of this committee, and this year has perhaps been both the most challenging and rewarding to date. This is because a number of national legislative and policy changes have specifically impacted on the Employment Learning and Skills and Community agendas. For example, the Localism Act is making us reflect on how we manage our community assets, (libraries and community centres), as well as our relationships and responsibilities in supporting community groups. The Government's welfare reforms place added pressure on our Employment, Learning and Skills services as we strive to help people improve their employment opportunities in a difficult economic climate. That said, through Halton's ELS and C PPB we have overseen a number of positive activities aimed at helping people to find work, growing our local businesses and increase the skills and qualifications of our residents. The review below provides a snapshot of these activities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Member colleagues for their valuable contributions and the support they have shown throughout the year. I feel that we have a really good balance between new and established Council Members on this committee and there is a wide range of experience and knowledge around the table, which really does ensure that the quality of the discussions is excellent.

I would also like to thank officers for working with me to develop an interesting and important range of topics and agenda items for consideration.

Although, it is unlikely that the challenges we face will recede in the next Municipal Year, I am confident that this PPB will continue to explore new and innovative ways of working to ensure that we provide the best possible Employment, Learning, Skills and Community services to the people of Halton.

I look forward to continuing this you in the next Municipal Year

Councillor Sue Edge

Chair, Employment, Learning, Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2012/13, the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors Edge (Chair) C Plumpton Walsh (Vice Chair), Cassidy, Howard, Lloyd-Jones, Logan, McManus, Parker, Roberts, Rowe Zygodllo

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met four times during the year. Set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on:

Library Services

The Board received a report on the library service achievements for the period up to 31 March 2013. It was reported that the library service undertook a CIPFA evaluation of the service in October 2012, and overall satisfaction was shown that 94% of users rated the service as good / very good. In addition it was noted that there had been 82,000 visits recorded in the last year.

The following highlights had contributed to the positive results:

- Runcorn Library opening in April 2012;
- Supporting Change Lottery Funding at Halton Lea Library;
- Community Pathfinders Project at Halton Lea and Widnes Library;
- Reading activities project;
- Reading families project;
- Library strategy;
- Home delivery service; and
- Koha library management system.

Community Services

The Board received an annual report on Community Centres. Members learned that the Centres provide programmes of community activities, varying models of community cafés and service outlets, i.e. children's centres, youth centres and day services. Many centres act as a community hub and are often a central point at the heart of communities for residents to enjoy chosen activities and receive services in their neighbourhoods.

International Festival of Business 2014

The Board were informed of proposals for the development of an International Festival of Business in the Liverpool City Region and were also advised of the opportunities that the event could bring to the Borough. The Festival takes place in June and July 2014.

The event had been described as a Mini Shanghai Expo and will bring together world and UK cities for 61 days of themed events, exhibitions and showcases. It is anticipated that the Festival would attract 250,000 visitors from across the globe and bring £100 million worth of investment.

Apprenticeships

The Board received a report which provided an update on apprenticeships in Halton. It was reported that apprenticeships took between one and four years to complete and covered 1,400 job roles in a wide range of industries.

Earlier in the Municipal year, Members at participated in an Apprenticeships Topic Group which had been used to make recommendations to the Executive Board on key actions needed to develop an apprenticeships culture in the borough.

Common Inspection Framework for Further Education and Skills

The Board received a report which provided details of the new Further Education Common Inspection Framework, advising Members on the preparations which were underway within the Employment, Learning and Skills Division should they receive a two day notification of inspection and informed the Board on how they could support the Ofsted inspection process.

City Deal – Employment Learning and Skills

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise which provided an update on the implementation of the Liverpool City Region Deal (LCRD)

and outlined how it related to Halton's Employment, Learning and Skills priority. It was reported that the Liverpool City Region Deal was launched with Government on 5 July and was signed off on 18 September. The Deal includes the following:

- establishment of a Skills for Growth Bank;
- piloting payment by results in the skills system;
- customer choice in the Work Programme;
- extension of New Enterprise Allowance eligibility; and
- Youth Unemployment Task Force.

Members were advised that the Deal and the associated Implementation Plan were a culmination of a significant amount of effort from colleagues across the City Region and Government and indicated the desire of the City Region to work together cohesively to drive the economic growth of the City Region.

Global Entrepreneurship Week

The Board considered a report which informed Members of the activities and events which took place in Halton during Global Entrepreneurship Week (12th – 18th November 2012).

Hidden Unemployment

The Board received a report produced by Sheffield Hallam University entitled the "Real Level of Employment". It was reported that this was the fourth report in the series and attempted to identify 'hidden' groups of unemployment in addition to those groups that were officially counted.

Business Improvement Districts

The Board received a report which provided a view of the first five years of the Business Improvement District (BID programmes at Astmoor and Halebank Industrial Estates). The report detailed the measures that had been put in place to secure a positive vote from the business community to continue to deliver the programmes for a further 5 years.

It was reported that BIDs were a partnership between local authorities and local businesses to provide additional services or improvement to a specific area funded by an additional levy to the non-domestic rates.

Members were advised that all rate payers in the BID area had the opportunity to vote on the proposed BID and approval of a BID had 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. It was reported that BIDs were completely private sector lead so local businesses had control over how the resources of the BID were spent. Local businesses could therefore develop local solutions to address local issues and by investing collectively in those solutions they could make a real impact on their business area.

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work, please contact Wesley Rourke on 0151 511 8645 or e-mail: Wesley.rourke@halton.gov.uk

Annual Report

Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

April 2012- March 2013



Cllr John Gerrard
Chair

"I would like to thank all of the Members of the Environment and Urban Renewal PPB for their effort and support throughout my first year as Chair.

Members have played a significant role in the continued regeneration of the Borough and its environment in these particularly challenging times.

Over the last 12 months, the Board has responded to, and dealt with, a wide range of issues which demonstrates their level of commitment and positive attitude in reacting swiftly and effectively to matters that are brought before them. These, combined with the Board's experience and abilities help support a continuing improvement in the quality of life in Halton and the opportunities afforded to our communities."

Councillor Gerrard
Chair, Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2012/13 the Board comprised eleven Councillors:-

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

The Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board's primary function is to focus on the work of the Council (and its partners) in seeking to bring about the Environmental and Urban Renewal of the Borough. It is also charged with

scrutinising progress against the Corporate Plan in relation to the Environment and Regeneration Priority.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to the following areas:

- Highways, Transportation and Logistics (including road maintenance, street lighting, road safety, traffic management, supported bus services and flood risk management)
- Landscape Services, Parks & Countryside, Cemeteries & Crematoria
- Environmental and Regulatory Services
- Major Projects
- Economic Regeneration and Business Development
- Waste Management and Waste Strategy
- Derelict and contaminated Land
- Housing Strategic Policy
- Sustainability, Climate Change and Biodiversity
- Physical Environment and Planning policies

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The Board met 5 times during the year. As well as considering Executive Board decisions relevant to the work of the Environment and Urban Renewal Board, agreeing the Service Plans of the relevant Departments and monitoring their general activities and performance against them, set out below are some of the main activities and issues which have come before the Board during the year.

The Board received, considered reports, agreed decisions and put forward relevant actions on the following issues:-

Corporate Responsibilities

- Minutes of the Environment and Regeneration SSP.
- Regular progress reports on achieving targets contained with the Sustainable Community Strategy for Halton.
- Updates on Business Plans for the period 2013-16 and the Directorate priorities, objectives and targets for the services that fell within the remit of the Board for this period. It also considered and commented on Quarterly Monitoring reports which detailed progress against service objectives/milestones, performance targets and factors affecting the services that fell with the remit of the Board.

Highways and Transportation

- Nominations were agreed for Members to sit on the Council's Public Transport Advisory Panel for the 2012/13 Municipal Year. These were Councillors Gerrard, Morley, Stockton, Bradshaw and Woolfall.
- It was also agreed that the Chair and Vice-Chair would sit on the Consultation Review Panel as may be required from time to time.
- Feedback on the results of a consultation exercise that had been undertaken on the proposed withdrawal of subsidised bus services in 2012-13. Members noted the proposal to reduce the budget by £70,000.
- An objection raised to the proposed Traffic Regulation Order to introduce 20mph speed limits on roads in Hale Village.
- An objection to proposed waiting restrictions in Russell Court, Farnworth had been received following public consultation. It was agreed to implement an "At Any Time" waiting restrictions and a report be submitted to the Executive Board.
- Objections following public consultation for various locations across Widnes and Runcorn, including Cowan Way, Upton Lane, Green Lane, Cawfield Avenue, Primrose Close, Alder Avenue, Birch Road, Acacia Avenue, Lockett Road, Church Street, Upper Mersey Road and Mersey Road, Widnes, along with Kenilworth Avenue, Penrhyn Crescent and Ludlow Crescent Runcorn.
- Objections concerning off street parking places in Runcorn Town Centre.
- The Annual Road Traffic Collision and Casualty report showing overall progress on reductions. The Board was informed of the budget cuts from government which raised concerns with regard to the achievement of further casualty prevention. PPB Members were also informed of on-going work to review the use of fixed safety cameras and it asked for regular updates.
- The results of the National Highway and Transportation Survey for 2012. It was agreed a further "proposals" report be prepared and brought back to a later meeting.
- A petition signed by six residents from Coronation Road had been received. This concerned surface water drainage associated with a Doctors' surgery car park. It was noted that the Open Spaces Department had recently undertaking work and it was requested that the situation be monitored and Ward Members be informed.
- Recent changes to the Council's regulatory powers under the Land Drainage Act 1992 and endorsement was given to a proposal to consult on a set of local land drainage byelaws.
- Update on flood risk management issues and progress being made in relation to the Council's duties under the Flood and Water Management Act.

Economic Regeneration and Business Development

- Proposals for the development of an International Festival of Business in the Liverpool City Region and the opportunities that this could present for Halton. It was agreed to support Halton's participation in this initiative.

Environmental and Regulatory Services

- A report showing the benefits and implication of signing up to two climate change commitments:- 1) the EU Covenant of Mayors, which committed the Council and its Partners to preparing a Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP); and 2) the Local Government Association's 'Climate Local'. It was agreed to recommend, to the Executive Board, that both these commitments be signed.
- An outline on how Halton's SEAP would sit underneath that being prepared by the Liverpool City Region, and how through the LEP's Low Carbon Economy committee, it be implemented.

Environmental Sustainability

- The PPB were advised that the Waste Topic Group had met in February 2013 concerning charges for the collection of bulky items and the provision of new and replacement wheeled bins, and agreed that the proposed charges should be presented to the Executive Board.

Physical Environment and Planning

- Updates for the Local Development Scheme, which gave target dates for production of the Local Development Framework and Development Plan Documents.
- The Neighbourhood Planning process as brought in by the Localism Act 2011, and it was agreed responses to any requests be in accordance with the relevant legislation.
- Overview of the next key document to be produced in Halton's Local Development Framework, the "Site Allocations and Development Management Local Plan".
- An overview of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and a proposal to investigate whether a CIL financial charge on new development was a viable option in Halton.

Communities

- The draft Housing Strategy for 2013-2018, as part of the wider consultation process, as well as fully supporting the draft strategy, the Board wished an additional priority be added to support the promotion of welfare and debt advice within the housing sector.
- Information concerning the Armed Forces Community Covenant and the Board was advised that Halton was part of the pan Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, and Warrington pact. The Board requested regular monitoring reports on progress on the key themes and pledges agreed as part of the Covenant.

WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2013/2014

The Board is asked to consider whether it wishes to carry out Topic Reviews for the 2013/14 Municipal year at its next or subsequent meetings.

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work please contact Mick Noone on 0151 471 7370 or mick.noone@halton.gov.uk

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Health Policy and Performance Board

Annual Report

April 2012 - March 2013



As Chair of the Health Policy and Performance Board I would like to thank all Members of the Board for their valued contribution to the Board's work over the last 12 months. I would particularly like to thank Cllr Joan Lowe as Vice Chair of the Board and Cllr Sandra Baker for their massive contribution, help and support whilst undertaking one of the most challenging scrutiny topics we have ever done in terms of the Vascular Services review.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Officers and Partners for their time and contributions to the scrutiny topics and for providing performance and update reports.

As usual, 2012/13 proved to be a very busy year taking on scrutiny of our own social care and health services plus Homelessness and Women's Aid accommodation along with NHS plans to move Vascular Surgery away from our immediate area.

During the course of the year the Board have been actively involved and consulted on a range of issues from policy developments and scrutiny reviews to being kept informed and offering views on the many changes taking place locally as a result of national changes.

The Board have had the opportunity to comment on a number of proposals and developments including the establishment of a Health and Wellbeing Service, the re-configuration of Care Management Services and the establishment of an Integrated Adults Safeguarding Unit.

Cllr Ellen Cargill, Chair

Health Policy and Performance Board Membership and Responsibility

The Board:

Councillor Ellen Cargill (Chairman)

Councillor Joan Lowe (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Sandra Baker

Councillor Mark Dennett

Councillor Margaret Horabin

Councillor Chris Loftus

Councillor Geoff Zygadlo

Councillor Valerie Hill

Councillor Miriam Hodge

Councillor Pauline Sinnott

Councillor Pamela Wallace

Local Involvement Network (LINK) representation is through co-optee John Chiocchi

The primary responsibility of the Board is to focus on the work of the Council and its Partners, in seeking to improve health in the Borough. This is achieved by scrutinising progress against the aims and objectives outlined in the Council's Corporate Plan in relation to the Health priority.

The Board have met five times in 2012/13. Minutes of the meetings can be found on the [Halton Borough Council website](#)

This report summarises some of the key pieces of work the Board have been involved in during 2012/13.

GOVERNMENT POLICY- NHS AND SOCIAL CARE REFORM

NHS Halton Clinical Commissioning Group (HCCG) - Progress on Authorisation

During the year, Simon Banks, Chief Officer of HCCG, became a regular attendee at the Board, keeping Members informed of progress with CCG Authorisation as well as information about recruitment to the Executive Team and Lay Member appointments.

Close to Home – An inquiry into Human Rights in Home Care

In May, the Board considered a report which gave a summary of the findings and recommendations from the Equality and Human Rights Commission Inquiry into Older People and Human Rights in Home Care. Halton Borough Council contributed to the Inquiry and were highlighted a couple of times within the report by the Commission as having best practice within this area e.g. via use of the "Dignity Challenge" approach.

There were a total of 25 recommendations within the report. As a result, it was decided that an in-house self-assessment exercise should be conducted. The results of the self-assessment were presented to the Safeguarding Adults Board where it was acknowledged that many of the recommendations were already in place in Halton. However further developments were progressed to further strengthen Halton's approach to dignity and human rights.

Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board

During the course of 2012/13 the Health PPB received regular updates on developments from the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board including the minutes of Board meetings. Over the last twelve months the Shadow Board, which will become statutory as from 1st April 2013, has dealt with a wide range of topics including; the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Children and Young People's Plan Review, Welfare Reform, HCCG Authorisation and the development of local Wellbeing Areas.

Caring for our Future: Reforming Care and Support

In September, the Board considered a report which gave a summary of the White Paper "Caring for our Future: Reforming Care and Support" which sets out the vision for a reformed care and support system, by:

- focusing on people's wellbeing and support them to stay independent for as long as possible;
- introducing greater national consistency in access to care and support;
- providing better information to help people make choices about their care;
- giving people more control over their care;
- improving support for carers;
- improving the quality of care and support; and
- improving integration of different services.

Following this report to the Board it was decided that a Self-Assessment should be conducted against the recommendations outlined in the White Paper. It was reported that the Self-Assessment showed that Halton was in a strong position to respond to these recommendations and a number of actions were identified to strengthen Halton's position.

Public Health Update

As from April 2013, Public Health will transfer from the NHS into Local Authorities. During the year a lot of work has taken place to ensure a smooth transition. In March the Board received a report from the Director of Public Health on the latest

developments including the transfer of staff, contracts and budgets as well as looking at some of the projects that the Public Health team have been working on during the transition year.

SERVICES

Community Wellbeing Model in General Practice

The Board received a report regarding the Community Wellbeing Model in General Practice (CWP). Members were advised that a CWP model looks beyond traditional disease models in health care in order to include the factors that have been shown to generate health and wellbeing in individuals and communities. The CWP model has been underpinned by the ongoing research in the areas of salutogenesis, health assets, resilience and capability all of which focus on creating positive adaptation, protective factors and assets that moderate risk factors and promote wellbeing in individuals and communities.

Integrated Adults Safeguarding Unit

In May a report was provided to the Board relating to the establishment of a 12 month pilot for an Integrated Adults Safeguarding Unit. It was reported that the Unit would be developed using a hub and spoke model. It would be multi-agency, efficient, flexible and responsive to the needs of the local population. The Unit would lead on adults safeguarding and dignity work across the health and social care economy.

Re-configuration of Care Management Services

Members of the Board were informed of changes to the delivery of Adult Social Care in Halton by the reconfiguration of assessment and care management services.

The reconfiguration involved the restructure of the current care management teams to create a dedicated multi-disciplinary duty function team. An Initial Assessment Team (IAT) is now responsible for all referrals, screening, signposting and initial assessments. There are two Operational teams dealing with complex work, (one in Widnes and one in Runcorn) which are locality based care management teams with workers aligned to GP practices. The new model was launched in June 2012.

Health and Wellbeing Service

In January 2013, the Board considered a report which gave details of the work being undertaken to establish a Health and Wellbeing Service via partnership working

arrangements between the Local Authority, HCCG and Bridgewater Community NHS Trust. The new system would embody localism, with new responsibilities and resources for the Borough Council to improve the health and wellbeing of our population, within a broad policy framework set by the Government.

The Partnership Agreement set out a two phased approach to implementation as set out below:

Phase 1 of implementation focused on three areas, as follows:-

- the development of older peoples' services and pathways;
- a review of falls prevention services and associated pathways; and
- the development of the Community Wellbeing Practice model.

Phase 2 of implementation involved examining the wider determinants of public health and influences on health inequalities. This development took a 'Life Course' approach and work took place across adult social care, health, children and young people's services to develop a new Health and Wellbeing Service model. This new model is due for implementation from April 2013.

Reconfiguration of Domestic Abuse Accommodation Services

In November, Members were given an update on the progress of the Homelessness Scrutiny Topic Group and the recommendations for the reconfiguration of Domestic Abuse accommodation services. Following discussion, it was resolved that a further report be submitted to the Executive Board recommending the development and implementation of the preferred Hub and Spoke service delivery option, providing accommodation within a 24 hour hostel and additional move-on accommodation with floating support.

POLICY

Intimate Relationships and Sexual Health Needs Policy, Procedure and Practice

The Board considered a report which detailed the revised Intimate Relationships and Sexual Health Policy, Procedure and Practice. The original policy "Sexual Health Policy, Strategy and Guidelines" was developed in 2003, with subsequent reviews undertaken in 2009 and 2010.

The policy review was undertaken to ensure that all managers, staff and volunteers within the Communities Directorate had current and concise procedures, for

addressing a range of sexual health issues that staff members may encounter with service users.

Positive Behaviour Support Service Policy, Procedure and Practice

At its May meeting, Members received a report which gave details of the Positive Behaviour Support Service Policy Procedure and Practice document. This had been developed in order to provide information and guidance to stakeholders on how to access the service, eligibility and how referrals and assessments would be dealt with by the team.

Gypsy and Traveller sites - Pitch Allocations Policy, Procedure and Practice

The Board received a report setting out the revised policy, procedure and practice for the allocation of pitches on the Council's Gypsy and Traveller sites, which included the permanent site, known as Riverview, located in Widnes and the transit site located in Astmoor, Runcorn.

Adult Social Care User Survey 11/12

In September the results of the Adult Social Care User Survey were presented to the Board. This was the second year that the statutory survey had been undertaken. Some of the highlights included:

- Overall satisfaction levels (Q1) for respondents extremely satisfied or very satisfied (67.7%) with the care and support they receive has increased in comparison to 2010/11 (61.7%).
- Quality of life also demonstrates a positive movement with more individuals reporting a better quality of life in general, compared to 2010/11.

Intergenerational Strategy

The Board considered a draft copy of the Halton Intergenerational Strategy and Action Plan. The Board was advised that the framework aimed to begin the process of developing and implementing a co-ordinated approach towards intergenerational activity in the Borough. It was reported that there were already a range of examples of intergenerational work in Halton within the framework; however, this had often been carried out in isolation and not as an overall strategic approach.

Revised Subject Access requests Policy, Procedure and Practice

In September, the Board received a report detailing the revised subject access requests Policy, Procedure and Practice. The Data Protection Act gives individuals rights to have access to their own personal information. Individuals can send a subject access request (SAR) which requires the authority to tell them about the personal information we hold about them, and to provide them with a copy of that information. In most cases, you must respond to a valid subject access request within 40 calendar days of receiving it. Following a detailed review there is now one streamlined policy and procedure instead of two separate policies for Children and Enterprise and the Communities Directorates. The policy and procedure document has been written to reflect the revised process.

It was reported that by having a more streamlined process in place, responses to SARs would be dealt with more efficiently, and therefore give an improved service to both children and adults who were requesting information.

Health and Wellbeing Strategy

In November 2012, the Board received a report on the emerging Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The Strategy, which is based on robust evidence and the views of local residents and service users, identifies five priorities for action. These are:

- Prevention and early detection of cancer;
- Improved child development;
- Reduction in the number of falls from adults;
- Reduction in the harm from alcohol; and
- Prevention and early detection of mental health conditions.

SCRUTINY REVIEWS

Homelessness Service

During 2011/12 a scrutiny review of homelessness services had taken place.

Following the review, the Working Group made a number of recommendations which were presented to the PPB in September 2012. These are outlined below:

- Deliver on the actions arising from the visits to temporary accommodation schemes;
- Secure efficiency savings through new contracts with Halton YMCA for the YMCA hostel and Nightstop and de-commissioning of Y's Up advice and guidance;

- Secure efficiency savings through a new contract with Plus Dane for floating support services;
- Achieve efficiencies through the reconfiguration of remaining hostel provision for single people in order to improve the distribution of services across the Borough, prioritise access to services for individuals to whom the Council has a statutory duty, increase focus on homelessness prevention to assist individuals to resolve housing issues;
- Consider moving to a crisis intervention model for young homeless people in order to maximise the potential for young people to return home to their family; and
- Consider benefits of alternative models of provision for those escaping domestic violence.

Falls Prevention

During 2011/12 a scrutiny review of falls prevention also took place. The review was a successful and a worthwhile exercise in terms of covering all the outputs and outcomes from the initial topic brief and gaining a thorough knowledge of Falls Prevention in Halton.

It was recognised that although the scrutiny review of Falls Prevention was very positive, improvements could be made in certain areas. Therefore, as a result of the review, an action plan consisting of 19 recommendations have been developed and these will be presented to Board in June 2013.

Vascular Services

A response was received from the Secretary of State (SoS) for Health following a formal referral made to him in October 2012 regarding the proposals for the future development of vascular services across Cheshire and Merseyside not being in the interests of the health service in the area.

The SoS had asked the Independent Reconfiguration Panel (IRP) to undertake an initial review of the referral made and on the advice of the IRP decided not to agree a full review.

The implication of this decision is that the proposal for an arterial centre based at the Countess of Chester will now proceed. However there is some acknowledgement that there will be some considerable challenges to be met prior to implementation and it has been acknowledged that the Board should be fully involved and informed of developments throughout the design phase.

The Board will certainly keep a close eye on developments moving forward.

PERFORMANCE

During the course of the year the Board received information on quarterly monitoring reports and were provided with information on progress in achieving targets contained within the Sustainable Community Strategy for Halton. Other examples of Performance related information reported to the Board included:

- Quality Accounts;
- Performance Monitoring for the Learning Disability Partnership Board; and
- Environmental Health Annual Report.

WORK TOPICS FOR 2013/14:

Mental Health

Significant numbers of people suffer mental health problems such as depression.


Mental Health problems account for the single largest cause of ill health and disability in the Borough and can have a significant impact on a person's ability to lead a full and rewarding life.

The current economic climate and welfare reforms are likely to increase the levels of people suffering from mental distress. However, through a range of evidence based interventions to promote mental and emotional wellbeing this is amenable to change.

Therefore a scrutiny review of Mental Health provision in terms of prevention and promotion will be undertaken during 2013/14. It will examine interventions and materials that are already in place to address this key area and will look at their effectiveness in meeting the needs of the local population.

*Report prepared by Diane.Lloyd, Principal Policy Officer (Health), People and Communities Team
Email Diane.Lloyd@halton.gov.uk*

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 <p>Cllr. Shaun Osborne Chairman</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ANNUAL REPORT SAFER HALTON POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD APRIL 2012 – MARCH 2013</p>
	<p>This year has seen significant change, with the abolishment of the Police Authority and the election of the new Police and Crime Commissioner, John Dwyer, and the publication of the Police and Crime Plan for Cheshire for 2013-16.</p> <p>The Board has had a very challenging programme of monitoring, scrutiny, and policy development in these times of change, as ‘Safer Halton’ is a truly cross-cutting agenda. I believe it is making a considerable contribution to improving the way the Council and its partners work together to improve the quality of life in Halton.</p> <p>I would like to thank everybody who has contributed to the work of the Board in 2012/13 and to Members who have given up their time to serve on Topic Groups. I want to offer particular thanks to Cllr Plumpton Walsh for his help and support during the last 12 months and Mr B Hodson from the Police Authority.</p> <p>Councillor Shaun Osborne Chairman, Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board</p> <p>MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES</p> <p>During 2012/13 the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors Osborne, Plumpton Walsh, Edge, J Gerrard, Gilligan, Hill, Lea, Lloyd Jones, M Ratcliffe, Nolan and Sinnott.</p> <p>The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to Community Safety, Domestic Abuse, Safeguarding Adults, Environmental health and the Safer Halton Partnership.</p> <p>Topic Groups for 12/13:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Night Time Economy • Finalise the recommendations of the Anti Social Behaviour in the Private Rented Sector topic Group

	<p>REVIEW OF THE YEAR</p> <p>The full Board met 5 times during the year.</p> <p>The main initiatives of the Board's work for 2012/13 are as follows: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The election of the new Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire and establishment of the Police and Crime Panel. • Night Time Economy Scrutiny Review • Update of the Directorate Business Plan 2013 – 16 <p>Overview and Scrutiny</p> <p>The Board continued its scrutiny and policy development role, the Anti-Social Behaviour in the Private Rented Sector Topic Group was completed and a Scrutiny Group looking at the Night Time Economy was established. This Topic Group is looking at what works well in Halton's night time economy and what could be improved to provide a safe, accessible, well managed night time economy, that meets the needs of residents and businesses and attracts visitors to the borough.</p> <p>The Anti-Social Behaviour in the Private Rented Sector Topic Group recommended that the existing landlord accreditation scheme be retained and promoted to all landlords and enforcement action taken, where appropriate, against failing landlords. The Night Time Economy topic group is on-going and is due to report its recommendations later in 2013.</p> <p>John Dwyer has now been elected as Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Cheshire. A new Police & Crime Panel (Panel) has been established, with two Halton representatives, Cllr Osborne and Cargill, which scrutinises the activities of the PCC. There is also a new un ring fenced 'Community Safety Fund,' paid directly to the PCC. However this fund will be pass ported directly back to the Community Safety Team under a twelve month Service Level Agreement. The primary aim of the SLA is to focus the funding on tackling and reducing anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service outlined proposals to save £650,000 through changes to fire service operations across Cheshire, including those at Widnes and Runcorn. The Fire Service stated that the proposals will maintain similar capacity and improve response times.</p> <p>The Communities Directorate Business Plan was reviewed by members and the priorities for 2013 – 16 were agreed as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce alcohol abuse and domestic violence; • Safeguarding, including Consumer Protection and quality assurance of residential and domiciliary care providers in Halton; and • Community Safety.
	<p>Domestic Abuse</p> <p>The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities which provided members with an awareness of the increasing acknowledgement that initiatives aimed at ending domestic abuse and violence also needed to target and engage with men as the primary perpetrators of abusive behaviour. There is an existing statutory perpetrator programme run by probation services who take</p>

	<p>referrals from criminal courts. However there is a significant gap in service provision for many domestic abuse perpetrators and members supported a new voluntary treatment programme which will be operated to the same rigorous standards as the statutory programme. This scheme should make a considerable impact to the lives of domestic abuse victims and their children.</p> <p>Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults</p> <p>The Board endorsed the establishment of a 12 month pilot for an Integrated Adults Safeguarding Unit within Halton. The Unit provides a hub and spoke model which is flexible and responsive to the needs of the local population. The Unit leads on adult safeguarding and dignity at work and is 50/50 funded by health and social care. Following the 12 month pilot an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Unit will take place.</p>
	<p>Community Safety</p> <p>The Board supported the establishment of a Neighbourhood Resolution Panel in the Grange ward, which is one of 15 English pilot areas. The Panel is designed to resolve anti-social behaviour and low level crime affecting local communities, including neighbour disputes, noise and nuisance parking. The Panel is made up of volunteers trained in restorative justice who facilitate meetings between victim and offenders. The scheme has empowered the community to take ownership and reduce the fear of crime in the area.</p> <p>The Board received a very informative presentation from the Halton Credit Union, which has issued over 25,000 loans since its establishment in 2002 and has over 4,000 active adult members and junior members from two of the borough's schools. Their role is seen as particularly important in these times of austerity and with the benefits reforms imminent.</p>
	<p>Environmental Health</p> <p>The Board considered a report on how well Halton's food businesses were performing against the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme, which Halton was the first authority in Cheshire and Merseyside to launch in April 2011. In total there are 1051 registered food premises in Halton of which 822 have been included in the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme. Businesses are scored 0-5, with 5 being the highest rating. The rating is based on how hygienically the food was handled; the structure and cleanliness of the building and how well business was managed and its track record. All ratings are published on the internet site www.food.gov.uk/ratings</p> <p>The Board was advised of the current regulatory arrangements to control the safety and hygiene of cosmetic treatments which pose a risk of infection or physical injury in the borough. The treatments included tattooing, body piercing, botox injections and teeth whitening. It was noted that treatments were generally well controlled by Halton's Environmental health Department when they were carried out in commercial premises, however problems did arise when unlicensed activities were carried out in domestic homes.</p>
	<p>Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work, please contact Paul McWade (0151 471 7437) or email at paul.mcwade@halton.gov.uk.</p>

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 27 June 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Policy and Resources

PORTFOLIO Transportation

SUBJECT: Highway Improvements at A558
Daresbury Expressway under the
Department for Transport's Local Pinch
Point Programme

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to inform Members of the award of grant funding through the Department for Transport's (DfT) Local Pinch Point Programme (LPPP) for road junction improvements on the Daresbury Expressway, to seek approval to the inclusion of the scheme into the Council's Capital Programme and to seek a waiver of standing orders in respect of the procurement of scheme design services.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) Executive Board welcomes the award of £1.675M grant funding for the Daresbury Enterprise Zone / East Runcorn Housing Access Improvement Scheme under the DfT's Local Pinch Point Programme;**
- (2) Executive Board recommends the Council to approve the inclusion of the LPPP scheme into the Council's Capital Programme at a total estimated cost of £2.394M to be phased over 2013/14 and 2014/15; and**
- (3) in accordance with Procurement Standing Order (PSO) 1.8.4, PSO 4.1 (Competition Requirements) be waived and design and scheme preparation services be procured from Mott MacDonald Ltd. for reasons of urgency as set out in this report.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1** On 21st February 2013, the Council submitted a bid for funding from a total fund of £170M made available by the DfT for local highway schemes under their Local Pinch Point Programme (LPPP). The Programme is aimed at removing bottlenecks on local highway networks and improving access to development sites to support growth and create additional jobs and housing.

3.2 Halton's bid comprised a package of schemes designed to increase traffic capacity at three existing junctions on the A533 Daresbury Expressway, aimed at increasing traffic capacity at key highway access points to the Daresbury (SciTech) Enterprise Zone and east Runcorn strategic housing development sites as follows:

- Junction with A56 Chester Road – extension of turning lanes at traffic signals;
- Junction with Innovation Way – conversion of existing roundabout junction to traffic signal layout;
- Junction with Pitts Heath Lane – carriageway widening on roundabout approaches and provision of segregated turning lanes.

3.3 The estimated cost of the schemes is £2.394M and in accordance with the funding bid rules, a 30% local contribution toward the total cost of schemes would be required. The bid sought funding of £1.675M from the DfT's LPP Programme to be matched by the following local contributions:

- £0.6M Of funding from the Homes and Communities Agency as advance S106 Planning Agreement payments in relation to their new housing developments at Sandymoor; and
- £119,000 of Council funding, primarily staff costs, which will contribute to the scheme design, procurement and works supervision.

3.4 On 22nd March as part of the Budget proposals, the DfT announced that ten LPPP schemes across the country, would be 'fast-tracked' under a first tranche of the programme, including the Council's proposals for the Daresbury Expressway access improvements. The anticipated funding profile, included within the bid was as follows. Schemes must be delivered by March 2015:

	2013/14	2014/15	Total
DfT LPPP Grant	£1,145,000	£530,000	£1,675,000
HCA S106 Funding	£600,000	£0	£600,000
HBC Capital Funding	£60,000	£59,000	£119,000
Total	£1,805,000	£589,000	£2,394,000

3.5 Full approval for the Council's application to the LPPP fund was confirmed in a letter from DfT on 20th May. The maximum capped funding contribution of £1.675M will be available in 2013/14 as a one-off payment and is subject to the Council agreeing to the following conditions:

- Complete & return quarterly monitoring reports detailing progress and expenditure;

- Share any scheme savings with DfT on the basis of the approved funding split;
- Notify DfT of changes in the scope of the project, In the case of significant changes to the project, DfT reserve the right to reconsider their decision on funding;
- Undertake an evaluation of the scheme, proportionate to its size and scale;
- Display the DfT corporate logo on scheme publicity and promotional material.

3.6 The basis of the bid was that all works can be undertaken within the existing Highway boundaries and that is still the case, however, recent discussions through the SciTech Daresbury Joint Venture Partnership have indicated that development land adjacent to Innovation Way *may* be made available for one of the junction improvements that could be beneficial to both the design and cost of this particular scheme. Discussions with partners are underway to progress this option which, if productive, will necessitate a planning application. This in turn would also require a notification to DfT as a change of scope of the project, however, as the changes are considered largely beneficial, and the scheme delivery date would not extend past the DfT's stated deadline.

3.7 The Council's framework consultants, Mott MacDonald Ltd worked closely with officers on the preparation of the LPP Bid as they have previously been involved in the production of supporting transportation documentation for the East Runcorn and the Daresbury Enterprise Zone. It was intended at bid stage that Mott Macdonald Ltd. would continue to provide the highway design and project management support through the implementation stages of the programme to utilise their invested knowledge in the project, and thereby minimise scheme preparation costs and programme. However, the Engineering Consultancy Framework Contract, under which services had previously been procured, expired at the end of April, unfortunately prior to confirmation of the DfT's scheme approval.

3.8 In accordance with PSO 1.8.1, and in order to minimise delays to the implementation of the project that may have consequences in relation to meeting the DfT's funding conditions, it is proposed that PSO 4.1 (Competition Requirements) be waived for reasons of urgency, to enable preparatory surveys, scheme design and project management services to proceed for this LPPP Scheme.

3.9 This waiver would be in respect of this scheme only, covering the period of scheme design and implementation, and in accordance with the LPPP fund bid and the approval letter from DfT. Mott MacDonald Ltd. have provided a detailed scope of services and an estimate of the cost of services to be provided, which is based on reduced charge-out rates from those previously applied under the Framework Contract. The rates compare favourably with those charged by other civil engineering consultants on similar current projects and, we understand, are

commensurate with rates that will be applied under other regional procurement contracts that are being prepared but have yet to be formally enacted. The estimated cost of services is £130,925, (which includes a sum of £23,750 for third-party costs of surveys and investigations). This estimated sum is below the EU Procurement threshold for Services and therefore does not fall within the requirements of the Public Contracts Regulations.

3.10 The costs of scheme design and preparation were included in the overall scheme costs outlined in the LPPP funding bid and will be borne from the 30% match funding contributions, principally from the HCA S106 contributions outlined in paragraph 3.3. Subject to Council's approval, the scheme and its funding streams will be managed through the Capital Programme.

3.11 As described in paragraph 3.9, Mott MacDonald has reduced the charge-out rates for staff engaged on this project by an additional 5% compared with previous Framework rates. These rates compare favourably with those charged under other current consultant commissions and Mott MacDonald have provided corroboration that they are commensurate with rates recently submitted under competitive conditions.

3.12 The conditions of the former Mott MacDonald Consultancy Framework would apply, with detailed monthly invoices submitted for works undertaken and completed on this commission. These financial payments would be reported in the usual manner on the Council's website.

3.13 Preparatory work in advance of scheme design has commenced with a view to commencing construction under a phased approach in the autumn of 2013. In order to meet the timescales for delivery, the bid was prepared on the basis that construction of the schemes would be procured via the Council's new Highway Improvement and Maintenance Term Contract. This approach provides significant programming benefits and enables construction risks and costs to be managed through early contractor involvement in the delivery of the schemes.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are no policy implications in relation to this report. The proposals to improve access to employment and housing in the Daresbury Enterprise Zone area are in accordance with the Council's Corporate Strategy and are listed within Halton's Core Strategy, evidenced by the Infrastructure Plan and the East Runcorn Transport Study.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Resource Implications – Paragraph 3.4 and 3.5 of this report sets out details of the grant allocations and local contributions and outlines an

anticipated funding profile across the two financial years, for inclusion in the Council's Capital Programme. Government funding for the scheme is capped at £1.675M and the Council is responsible for managing and controlling all project costs.

Scheme delivery will be managed through a combination of existing staff resources and the Council's framework consultants Mott MacDonald. Construction will be carried out utilising the Highways Improvement and Maintenance Term Contract which has been procured specifically for this type of work and services.

As described in paragraph 3.5, these junction improvements can be delivered within existing Highway boundaries, however, if land is made available for dedication as Highway by the SciTech Daresbury Joint Venture, there may be design, programme and cost benefits to the Innovation Way scheme to be realised.

Social Inclusion and Sustainability Implications – These schemes will provide additional traffic capacity at existing junctions at the gateway to the Daresbury Enterprise Zone and east Runcorn housing area, effectively future-proofing the transport network and encouraging sustainable growth in jobs and housing in this key development area of the Borough.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

N/A

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The highway improvement schemes will increase highway network capacity at the gateway to the Daresbury Enterprise Zone, removing obstacles to future growth and 'high-value' job creation.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

N/A

6.4 A Safer Halton

Increased traffic capacity at these junctions will reduce the potential for congestion, delays and consequent driver frustration, as the Enterprise Zone develops and journey numbers increase, resulting in a safer highway network.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The highway improvement schemes will increase highway network capacity and improve access to the Daresbury Enterprise Zone, encouraging development and growth in this key employment and housing development area of the Borough.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 The key risks associated with the delivery of these schemes are in relation to meeting the DfT's funding conditions as regards project programme and cost overruns. These are mitigated to a large extent by procuring design and construction services through the use of existing framework and term contracts which enables work to proceed quickly, under agreed terms and conditions and without delay to the programme.
- 7.2 The design consultants have a history of involvement in the formulation of the required network improvements in the east Runcorn area and have prepared the preliminary design layouts for the bid submission. They are therefore well placed to progress the detailed design work. The new Highway Term Contract enables early contractor involvement in the design process, which will assist in the management of project risks in respect of both programme and cost.
- 7.3 It is planned to implement the schemes within a phased approach which provides for flexibility in programming and controlling the cost of construction of each junction improvement. It is currently envisaged that construction work will be complete by April 2014, well in advance of the timescales set for scheme delivery under the DfT's grant conditions.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Accessibility and connectivity are essential issues for equality and diversity. The design of these schemes will include measures to facilitate barrier-free movement around this area of the Borough for all modes of transport and highway users.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Local Pinch Point Fund Application Pack. DfT 3 Jan 2013.	Rutland House Halton Lea, Runcorn	Dave Cunliffe
Local Pinch Point Fund Application Form. Halton: Daresbury Enterprise Zone/ East Runcorn housing-A558 access improvements	HBC Website	Dave Cunliffe
Local Pinch Point Fund – Full Approval Letter. DfT 20 May 2013	Rutland House Halton Lea, Runcorn	Dave Cunliffe

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 27 June 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Communities

PORTFOLIO: Neighbourhood, Leisure and Sport

SUBJECT: Halton Housing Strategy 2013/18

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a finalised version of Halton's Housing Strategy 2013/18 for adoption.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) the Board approves the revised Housing Strategy (Appendix A) and supporting evidence document (Appendix B); and**
- 2) the Council be recommended to approve the revised Housing Strategy.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 At its meeting on the 24th January 2013 the Board received a report setting out the principal elements of the draft Housing Strategy 2013/18 and its supporting evidence paper. The Board approved the documents for consultation purposes.

3.2 A formal consultation exercise was undertaken between the 4th February and 22nd March to seek the views of partners, stakeholders and residents. This included the following awareness raising measures –

- Presentation to the Environment and Urban Renewal, Health and Safer PPBs
- A questionnaire on the Council's website
- Copies placed in Halton Direct Links and Council libraries
- Articles in the Civic magazine and local press
- Copies sent to Housing Associations, and raised at the Halton Housing Partnership and Housing Visioning Group

3.3 In addition to comments received from internal Directorate Management Teams and the PPBs, the consultation received comments from Riverside, Halton Housing Trust and Liverpool Housing Trust, and 39 responses to the on-line survey (4 of which were from Members and 1 from a Council employee).

3.4 In the main the comments received did not raise new issues, but sought to expand and add emphasis to existing information already in the evidence paper, particularly around the Welfare Reforms. Where possible the text has been amended to accommodate these comments, but the Strategy itself is largely unchanged.

3.5 It must be said that the Strategy is being introduced at a time of rapidly declining resources for public services generally, and for housing in particular, and consequently the Strategy seeks to portray a realistic assessment of what can be achieved within existing and likely future resources. However the information gathered in developing the Strategy means we can provide an evidence base to support funding bids should additional resources become available in the future.

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 such as the Homelessness Strategy and Tenancy Strategy, linking also to the Core Strategy and Affordable Housing SPD.

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). Further clarity about this is expected to emerge through the Comprehensive Spending Review announcement on the 26th June.

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 and 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. Construction and other investment offers the opportunities for increased jobs and apprenticeships locally.

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 Delivery of some elements of the Strategy is dependent on the continued availability of resources from external funding streams e.g. from the HCA. 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 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

9.1 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.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

10.1 Not applicable.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

11.1 2013/14 to 2017/18.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Housing Strategy	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

Contents

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Previous Strategy's achievements	4
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Our vision, objectives and priorities	8 - 15
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Foreword

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

The draft 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.



Previous Strategy's achievements

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.

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.



In particular, it is expected that the following could have a major impact upon the deliverability of the Strategy:

- Welfare Reform Act 2012 - it is estimated that 1 in 5 social housing tenants will be affected by the underoccupancy penalty. Taken together with other reforms such as direct payments, the benefits cap and localisation of Council Tax benefits it is highly probable that rent arrears will increase. This will have a knock on effect on the ability of Registered Providers to attract finance for new housebuilding at competitive rates as well as impacting upon levels of homelessness.
- Affordable Housing Programme - The programme will subsidise social housing development until 2015 when the current programme comes to an end. It is unclear at this stage whether grant subsidy will be available to help fund affordable housing schemes post 2015. If, as suspected, direct grant subsidy comes to an end delivery of affordable housing post 2015 is likely to pose a considerable challenge for Registered Providers, particularly in light of welfare reforms and direct benefits payments which, as highlighted above, are likely to adversely impact on Providers revenue streams and consequently their ability to attract affordable private finance.

For this reason it is vital that the Strategy is closely monitored and reviewed as necessary. Regular monitoring will be undertaken via a report to the Halton Housing Partnership and Environment Policy and Performance Board every twelve months. Should a need for major changes to the Strategy be identified this will be the subject of public and stakeholder consultation.

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.

A Healthy Halton

- Improving housing conditions and energy efficiency
- Maintaining independence through adapting property

Employment, learning and skills in Halton

- Introducing new technologies in energy efficiency projects
- Apprenticeships and local labour in housing contracts

A Safer Halton

- Removing category 1 hazards within the home
- Tackling neighbourhood level anti social behaviour

Children and Young People in Halton

- Reducing overcrowding
- Preventing homelessness

Environment and Regeneration in Halton

- Promoting sustainable and mixed tenure neighbourhoods
- Acting as a driver for investment within Regeneration areas

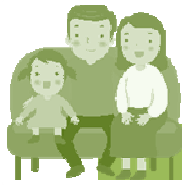
Housing issues

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 older people and 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 access to supported housing 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 with a view to improving standards in the sector
- 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 3E: To work with the Director of Public Health to achieve joint health and housing ambitions

Priority 1A: To increase the supply of market and affordable housing through partnership working and support to developers and Registered Providers		
Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipated population and household growth • Need to encourage immigration to support economic development projects • Core Strategy target of an average of 552 additional homes per annum • Level of need identified in Strategic Housing Market Assessment and as set out in evidence paper • Need for smaller sized affordable dwellings in light of underoccupancy penalty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average of 552 additional homes built per annum • A realistic target of 100 additional net affordable homes per annum • Rebalance social housing stock in terms of bedroom size in light of welfare reforms and as suggested by Strategic Housing Market Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the Core Strategy • Identification of development sites through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment • Update Site Allocations Supplementary Planning Document • Implementation of Affordable Housing Policy • Partnership working and support in securing funding • Interventions and use of local authority powers where necessary to help bring forward sites for new housing • Encourage developers to provide affordable housing of a size suggested by the SHMAA

Priority 1B: To support the implementation of the Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan		
Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to achieve economies of scale and consistency of approach • Effective targeting to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet targets in Liverpool City Region Local Investment Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active participation in LCR structure and programmes

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

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

Priority 2C: To prevent homelessness		
Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need to minimise impacts of Welfare Reform Act 2012 To avoid social impacts of homelessness To reduce the cost and impact of placing families in temporary accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake strategic review of homelessness Update Homelessness Strategy Engage with stakeholders and partners via the Homelessness Forum to minimise the impact of Welfare Reform Act 2012

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"> To improve transparency of the allocations system To improve neighbourhood sustainability Due to difficulties getting a foot on the housing ladder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A fair and transparent allocations system that promotes choice Increase the range and awareness of intermediate housing products to assist more first time buyers access the market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and develop sub regional Choice Based Lettings system Implement the Affordable Housing Policy which includes a proportion of intermediate housing Develop a Marketing Strategy to promote the various forms of home ownership available Promote Home Hub through the Council's website

Priority 2E: To target access to supported housing 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"> Need to ensure value for money in housing support services Scrutiny of supported accommodation suggests that some residents may not need support services offered Need to ensure fair access to accommodation based support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the quality and fitness for purpose of temporary accommodation for single, homeless people Supported housing is offered to those in greatest need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconfigure existing provision of housing for single homeless people Improve accommodation for people fleeing Domestic Violence Introduce a Housing Support Gateway system and undertake effective monitoring of the system

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

Priority 3B: To explore the implications of private rented sector growth with a view to improving standards in the sector		
Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced mortgage availability • Reduced availability of social housing • Conditions in private rented sector generally worse • New power to discharge statutory homelessness duty through an offer of private rented accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Private Rented Sector project plan • Consider implementing new flexibilities to discharge statutory homelessness duty through private rented sector (including carrying out suitability assessment)

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

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

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a more proactive approach to bringing empty homes back into use
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Priority 3E: To work with the Director of Public Health to achieve joint health and housing ambitions		
Why is this a priority?	What do we want to achieve?	How do we plan to achieve it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant health inequalities in social housing and private rented stock • Good quality housing is a wider determinant in four of the five health priorities (cancer, mental health, falls prevention and child development) • Opportunity to maximise integrated working presented by Public Health becoming responsibility of Local Authority • Potential to reduce impact of welfare reform through promotion of healthy lifestyles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities for joint working tackling issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fuel poverty (see Priority 3C); ➤ Falls prevention; ➤ Prompt hospital discharge; ➤ Promoting healthy lifestyles; • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish sub group of Housing Partnership to explore opportunities • Develop an action plan for joint working and adopting principles of Making Every Contact Count

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
	Encourage developers to provide affordable housing of a size recommended by the Strategic Housing Market Assessment	As and when required	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	Reduction in the number of people affected by the Underoccupancy Penalty
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 older people and 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)	At least 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
To review future Gypsy and Traveller	Participate in Cheshire wide Gypsy and Traveller	2013/14	Divisional Manager (Planning and	Staff time Approx £8,000	Identify sufficient site provision to meet assessed need for next five

pitch provision	Accommodation Assessment		Development Services)	contribution to be identified	years New 12 pitch site completed
	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)	
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 cost home ownership products and support Government initiatives such as New Buy	2013	Divisional Manager (Commissioning)	Staff time	Marketing Strategy developed and implemented
	Promote Homes Hub via the	2013	Divisional Manager	Staff time	Link to Homes Hub on the Council's

	Council's website		(Commissioning)		website
To target housing access to supported housing 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 Regeneration Team	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 Regeneration Team	Staff time Other (?)	
	Continue to take strategic leadership role within the Castlefields Regeneration Partnership	Ongoing	HBC Regeneration Team	Staff time	
To explore the implications of private rented sector growth with a view to improving standards in the sector	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 reports	March 2013 – progress reports every two years thereafter	HBC Environmental Protection	Staff time	

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 (?)	
	Establish sub group of Housing Partnership to explore opportunities	June 2013	Director of Public Health	Staff time	Sub group established
	Develop an action plan for joint working and adopting principles of Making Every Contact Count	September 2013	Director of Public Health	Staff time	Action Plan developed

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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.

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

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. This evidence paper is available in different formats upon request.

Part One – Resources

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 Strategic 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

TOTAL	2,512,132
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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

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 2011/15 period.

It is unclear at this stage whether post 2015 grant subsidy will continue to be available to support affordable housing schemes. If, as suspected, grant subsidy is significantly reduced or ends altogether, then Registered Providers will face a considerable challenge to continue building, particularly in light of welfare reforms and the direct benefits payments which are likely to adversely impact on Providers revenue streams and consequently their ability to attract affordable private finance.

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

An annual grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (which for 2011/12 was £50,000) supports Halton's homelessness services. 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 capital investment in housing by the Council will be limited to Disabled Facilities Grants and support for other vulnerable groups, and that the local authority role in housing will increasingly be more about facilitating and co-ordinating rather than direct investment of resources.

Part Two - Context

National Policy

Laying the Foundations: The Housing Strategy for England

The Housing Strategy for England was launched on 21st 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 16th 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 8th 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.

The potential impacts of welfare reform and the activities being undertaken to mitigate the impacts are described in more detail later in this document. However, it is important to note that if, as suspected, the reforms lead to increased rent arrears and increased turnover of social housing, Registered Providers may have difficulty in meeting some of the objectives of this strategy, particularly in relation to the delivery of new affordable housing.

National Planning Policy Framework

The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27th 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.

Health and Social Care Act 2012

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 represents that biggest reorganisation of the National Health Service in 60 years. With effect from 1st April 2013, Primary Care Trusts were abolished, Clinical Commissioning Groups led by General Practitioners took responsibility for commissioning clinical health care services, and responsibility for Public Health transferred to local authorities. In terms of housing services, the latter change presents opportunities for much greater integrated working on health related housing issues such as fuel poverty, falls prevention and child development.

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

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 1st 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

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.

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

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

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)

Social Housing

All social rented housing in Halton met the Decent Homes Standard by the target date of 2010. Following this Registered Providers have continued to invest significant sums in the condition of their housing stock and the communities they serve. This includes:

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.

Other Registered Providers have also invested heavily in their stock in Halton on a range of improvement and cyclical works. Riverside, for example, has invested around £1.7 million each year on its stock. This level of investment, which is informed by stock condition data plus local intelligence and consultation with local residents, is set to continue and is in addition to new affordable housing provision at Murdishaw and Halton Brook.

As well as investing in the physical condition of the stock, Registered Providers are also major players in community investment, awarding funding for projects developed and delivered by and for local communities.

Investment to improve the energy efficiency of housing stock – including provision of external wall insulation on hard to treat properties in Halton Brook and Castlefields and air and ground source heat pumps in Runcorn. These schemes have been made possible through the Government's Carbon Emissions Savings Project and Community Energy Reduction Target. The Council is working with Registered Providers to maximise the opportunities provided by the Energy Company Obligation which has replaced these schemes.

Provision of financial support services for tenants – even before the advent of welfare reform Registered Providers offered support to their tenants to help them manage their household budgets and reduce debt. In most cases these services have been enhanced in the light of welfare reform. This is explored later in this document.

Registered Providers in Halton have actively engaged with the development and ongoing implementation of the Choice Based Lettings service, including contributing to the cost of running the local service which is managed by Halton Housing Trust.

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 1st 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. The Council has noted with interest the development of neighbourhood and borough wide mandatory licensing schemes in various parts of the country. The Council will monitor how these schemes proceed to inform any future policy development.

Part Four – Halton’s People

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.

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 27th 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 29th 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	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

Personal Independence Payment (PIP)		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	Underoccupying by 1 bed = 1 bed Underoccupying by 2+ beds = 561 Total households affected = 2,457	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.

Much work has been undertaken locally by Registered Providers to ensure that their tenants are prepared for welfare reform and to minimise the potential impacts. Examples of the measures being undertaken by Providers is given below.

- Targeted engagement with affected households including written correspondence and home visits;
- Universal information campaigns in local offices, newsletters and on websites;
- Strengthening financial inclusion teams and providing training for other housing staff in basic welfare advice;
- Providing incentives for affected tenants to downsize e.g. to cover moving costs;
- Incentivising sustainable payment methods such as direct debit and maintenance of clear rent accounts;
- Provide support, assistance and guidance to tenants who wish to move to the private rented sector or take in a lodger;
- Redesignation of existing stock where this is appropriate;
- Changes to allocation and local lettings policies – including changing the bedroom criteria to mirror HB regulations and waiving the policy to restrict transfers for tenants in rent arrears where these have built up as a result of welfare reform;
- Implementing income and expenditure assessments for new tenants to ensure they can afford rental payments on offered property;
- Providing pre tenancy workshops for new tenants and other money management courses;
- Referrals for intensive debt advice for high risk tenants.

While each Provider has implemented a slightly different package of measures there has been local co-ordination and consideration of the different approaches through the Halton Housing Partnership (welfare reform is a standing item on the agenda) the Strategic Housing Visioning Group (welfare reform is one of the the 3 key priorities for this group) and a dedicated welfare reform practitioner group chaired by Riverside. This has enabled partners to share best practice, ensure consistent messages are relayed to Halton residents and identify opportunities for efficient and effective joint working.

The impacts of welfare reform will continue to be monitored through these groups and will be used to inform reviews of this Strategy going forward.

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) Prevention assessment Prevention options offered to client – BGS, Prevention fund, Negotiation with parents / landlord to sustain tenancy.	£500

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:

Prevention option	Average cost
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 PIE 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 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.

Part Five – Halton’s Services

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.

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.

Guardian Scheme

In March 2012 the Council's Executive Board approved a pilot Guardian scheme in two of its empty buildings (one a former library in Runcorn and the other the Transporter Bridge House in Widnes). While the aim of the pilots is to provide cost effective security for the buildings (the cost of securing the buildings and carrying out repairs following break ins and vandalism prior to the scheme far

outweigh the upfront cost of converting the buildings for domestic use and ongoing utility costs) a by-product has been that it is an innovative way of utilising existing buildings to provide homes.

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.

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.

All local authorities involved in the scheme have signed the HM Armed Forces Covenant to ensure that service men and women receive priority for social housing.

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 22nd 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.

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.

Development and Investment

The Development and Investment Division takes the lead on delivery of neighbourhood regeneration projects and interventions to bring forward new housing and encourage economic growth. The division has a focus on delivery of physical regeneration as well as securing employment and training opportunities, particularly on Council owned land and within Key Areas of Change as highlighted in Halton's Core Strategy.

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 alasdair.cross@halton.gov.uk 0151 511 7657
Affordable Warmth Strategy 2011-2015	Joanne Sutton joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk 0151 511 8750
Choice Based Lettings (Property Pool Plus) Allocation Policy	Steve Williams steve.williams@halton.gov.uk 0151 511 8859
Core Strategy	Alasdair Cross alasdair.cross@halton.gov.uk 0151 511 7657
Corporate Plan 2011-2016	Lisa Driscoll Lisa.driscoll@halton.gov.uk 0151 511 8012
Design of Residential Development SPD	Alasdair Cross alasdair.cross@halton.gov.uk 0151 511 7657
Housing and Support Strategy for Adults with Learning Difficulties	Liz Gladwyn liz.gladwyn@halton.gov.uk 0151 511 8120
Homelessness Strategy 2009-2013 and Strategic Review of Homelessness in Halton 2008	Patricia Preston patricia.preston@halton.gov.uk 0151 511 8581

Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England 2011	Available from www.gov.uk
Mid-Mersey Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2011 Local Authority Report for Halton Borough Council	Joanne Sutton joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk 0151 511 8750
Private Sector House Condition Survey 2009 Report	Joanne Sutton joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk 0151 511 8750
Scrutiny Review of Homelessness Services 2011/12 Report	Patricia Preston patricia.preston@halton.gov.uk 0151 511 8581
Scrutiny Review of the Private Rented Sector 2012	Joanne Sutton joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk 0151 511 8750
Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment	Alasdair Cross alasdair.cross@halton.gov.uk 0151 511 7657
Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-2026	Lisa Driscoll Lisa.driscoll@halton.gov.uk 0151 511 8012
Tenancy Strategy	Joanne Sutton joanne.sutton@halton.gov.uk 0151 511 8750

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	27 June 2013
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director, Communities
PORTFOLIO:	Neighbourhood, Leisure and Sport
SUBJECT:	Library Strategy 2013-16
WARD(S)	Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To present the library strategy for Halton.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- 1) Executive Board approves the Library Strategy 2013-16;**
- 2) any further editorial changes/corrections required following the close of consultation be delegated to the Strategic Director, Communities in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood, Leisure and Sport;**
- 3) the Council be recommended to approve the Library Strategy 2013-16.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The library service has a statutory responsibility to provide “a comprehensive and efficient library service” as set out in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. There has never been a clear definition of what constitutes “a comprehensive and efficient service” although the national library standards did provide a framework for a time these have now been abolished and local authorities are able to determine the level and priorities of their own library services.

3.2 Several authorities have determined the level and priorities of their library services and a number have found themselves subject to legal challenge with their proposals for change being overturned in the courts.

3.3 The Library Strategy defines the priorities for the service in Halton over the next 3 years to ensure we fulfil our statutory responsibilities whilst contributing to the strategic priorities of the Council and delivering the service within available resources. It provides a strong set of priorities so that our financial resources are targeted where

they are most needed and will be most effective.

- 3.4 Since 2009 there have been numerous reports and studies commissioned by government departments and other organisations about what libraries should offer to their communities. This strategy takes into account all previous published reports but focuses on the two current documents which will influence the development of the service in the future. These are:

Universal Offers - The Society of Chief Librarians has recently announced four universal offers which constitute the service areas that modern users regard as integral to public libraries. These are Health, Reading, Information and Digital

Envisioning the Library of the Future – The final report of the Arts Council's research and consultation programme has just been published and provides a strategic framework outlining the vision and role for public libraries.

- 3.5 The strategy has been developed taking these documents into account along with other national and local drivers for change, and the needs and priorities of the local community including information from a number of public and staff consultations. Consultation on the key elements of the strategy is currently taking place and closes on 30th June 2013

- 3.6 The Libraries Vision is supported by five overarching strategic objectives each with specific commitments and goals. The priorities under each of the objectives will be identified in our annual action plan.

3.6.1 **Libraries Vision**

We aim to achieve the best outcomes for the people of Halton and to ensure that the libraries are focal points for the community providing access to free information and resources tailored to local needs, within available resources. We will promote reading, learning and support people to develop their skills and fulfil their potential and encourage participation in the cultural and community life of the borough.

3.6.2 **Strategic objectives**

- **Inspiring a community of readers and learners**

We will engage people with books, reading and learning by providing them with inspiring collections and high quality information resources. We will create opportunities to share the enjoyment of reading and learn together, in libraries, in a relaxed and informal environment.

- **Employment, enterprise and developing online skills**

We will ensure all residents of Halton can learn to access the Internet for free in libraries with appropriate support.

- **Extending access through innovation and new technology**
We will grasp the opportunities offered by new technology to widen access to the library service and attract new audiences. We will put more information resources online and create digital content so that more people are able to discover, access, share, download and re-use our collections and services
- **Providing a relevant and responsive library service**
We will deliver a library service that is highly valued and highly rated by customers for its effectiveness and efficiency
- **Workforce development**
We will develop and maintain an enthusiastic and dedicated workforce with customer service excellence at the heart of our delivery. The library workforce will be welcoming and highly skilled so that using libraries is an enjoyable and enriching experience for everyone.

3.7 **Next Steps**

Feedback from the consultation will be analysed and any editorial changes/corrections will be made as appropriate. Detailed action plans will be developed for each of the five priorities and progress will be reported through the normal monitoring framework.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Library Strategy will set the priorities for the service for the next 3 years to ensure that we fulfil our statutory responsibilities.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Library Strategy will set the priorities for the service so that financial resources are targeted where they are most needed and will be most effective. It provides the context for reviewing the service and an opportunity to consider service delivery within resources available.

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

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The Library Strategy supports the development of reading as a key skill and through subsequent action plans will ensure close working relationships with partners to support the Council's priorities.

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

The Library Strategy identifies the key areas of work to support literacy, learning, access to information and digital inclusion and will ensure a close working relationship with partners to support the Council's priorities.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The Library Strategy will raise the profile of the service to ensure that the library offer complements and supports the work of partners and becomes an integral part of the work to improve the health and wellbeing of the community.

6.4 A Safer Halton

None identified.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The Library Strategy supports the development of facilities for public use and will ensure that services are accessible both physically and virtually are open to all and become focal points of the community within available resources.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The Library Services Strategy does not present any obvious risk however there may be risks associated with the resultant action plans. These will be assessed as appropriate.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 This is in line with all equality and diversity issues in Halton.

9.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

To outline the priorities for the library service in Halton over the next 3 years to ensure we fulfil our statutory responsibilities whilst contributing to the strategic priorities of the Council and delivering the service within available resources.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Not applicable.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

June 2013

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

None under the meaning of the Act.



LIBRARY STRATEGY

2013-2016

April 2013

Foreword

Our library service is successful because it has constantly adapted to meet need. In these times of financial constraint, we will need to be even more innovative if we are to continue to evolve the service with fewer resources in the foreseeable future.

This strategy sets clear ambitions for our library service, which seeks to continue to provide a high quality service with safe and accessible environments, well-equipped to meet the needs of our citizens.

Over recent years we have maintained our commitment to modernise our libraries despite the changed economic climate. Since 2010 almost 15% of all UK libraries have been lost. At a time when other areas have closed libraries we opened a new one in a more accessible location.

Our commitment to introduce Wi-Fi provision in all our libraries and self-service points have been delivered as promised, as was our commitment to 24/7 online access.

In the coming years our aim to further enhance services includes:

- Improving the home delivery service to our more vulnerable citizens who cannot easily visit our buildings, particularly our older citizens
- The introduction of e-book provision. This will form part of our on-going commitment to technological innovation for new and existing users.
- Our commitment to expand library membership and partnership working.
- The development of homework clubs and services to job seekers.
- The digitisation of local history records.

I am confident that the priorities and commitments set out in this, our first library strategy for Halton is responsive to local needs and will ensure that our libraries continue to innovate and develop to enrich the lives of our citizens.

Cllr Phil Harris.
Executive Board Member for Libraries.

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1. Library Services Strategy

The Library Strategy defines the priorities for Halton Libraries over the next 3 years to ensure that we fulfil our statutory responsibilities whilst contributing to the corporate and strategic priorities of the Borough as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

The key challenge is to continuously improve and modernise the way we deliver the service, keeping pace with changes to customer needs and with technological innovations. In order to maintain an efficient and effective service we need to be flexible and responsive to ensure that the challenges facing us over the next few years can be met.

2. Halton Libraries

Halton has a vibrant and innovative library service delivered through 4 public libraries, a mobile library, a satellite facility in Castlefields Community Centre, an outreach service for the housebound and through digital access. The libraries are key resources in their local communities providing books, information and technology which promotes lifelong learning, digital inclusion and celebrates reading. They are important community spaces which offer a welcoming, neutral environment and host a range of cultural activities, events and opportunities for all sectors of the community.

On a national level there were approximately 6 static libraries per 100,000 population in April 2012, the proportion in Halton is significantly lower than this with the 4 library buildings providing our core offer to a population of 125,700. 65% of the population lives within 1 mile of a static library, 94.3 % live within 2 miles.

Access to the Internet and quality assured online resources are available in all libraries through more than 100 public computers/laptops. All the buildings are Wi-Fi enabled providing additional flexibility for customers and also offer self service facilities for borrowing and returning materials. 24/7 access to services is available through a virtual library presence offering an enquiry service and the ability to search for, reserve and renew items remotely via the online catalogue.

The Library Service has a track record of innovation, we were the first public library service in the country to implement a non-commercial library management system which is more cost effective and provides greater flexibility for us to develop and enhance the system to improve the customer experience without significant additional costs. The system will enable us to continue to streamline the process of buying new materials.

Halton Libraries work collaboratively with many partners – we benefit from being members of the NW book purchasing consortium and NW reader development Time to Read Partnership by achieving significant discounts for new materials and a collaborative approach to book promotions, author visits and events. We also have partnership

agreements with Children's Centres, Cheshire Archives Service, Job Centre Plus and we work closely with other council services and health providers and are proactive in developing new partnership opportunities.

We have been successful in attracting external funding through lottery and other grants to refurbish buildings and to work with specific group's i.e. older people, young people and the unemployed.

The service is valued by customers the Public Library Users Survey revealed that 94% of users rated the service as good or very good.

In 2011-2012 a total of 492,003 items were borrowed, there were 141,721 computer sessions and the libraries received 555,703 visits. The number of items borrowed in 2012-2013 has followed the national trend and declined by 12.8% but visits have risen by 11.6% and computer sessions have also risen by 3.6%.

The library service has 61,147 registered members with 16,468 having borrowed items from the libraries in the last 12 months. This equates to 51% of the population who are registered as members, 26.9% who are registered have actively borrowed in the last 12 months however against the total population this reflects a low number, 14% of people borrowing in the last 12 months.

The library services net budget for 2013-14 is £2,423,000. Over the last 3-4 years the service has realised budget savings of approximately £375,000 which have been achieved through reductions in staffing, opening hours and, buildings and procurement efficiencies.

3. Purpose of strategy

Despite recent successes we recognise that the way people are using libraries has changed over the last few years. New technology has brought in a range of different users with demand for new services, whilst book borrowing has been declining. The strategy will provide a focus for the service over the next 3 years. We want to ensure that we have a strong set of priorities so that our financial resources are targeted where they are most needed and will be most effective.

4. Context

Although there has never been a clear definition of what constitutes the statutory requirement of "a comprehensive and efficient library service" as set out in the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act there is detailed research and evidence. As background and context to the current position these documents are detailed in Appendix 1 but the main documents which we have been referenced in the strategy are:-

- **Universal Offers** - The Society of Chief Librarians has recently announced four universal offers which have been developed with partners (Arts Council and The Reading Agency) which constitute the service areas that modern users regard as integral to public libraries. These are Health, Reading, Information and Digital.

The implementation of the Universal Offers is the first integrated national approach to library services defining what public libraries should provide and what users should expect. They also identify where libraries can provide real value to local people and where they will be working collectively to deliver impact in difficult times.

- **Envisioning the Library of the Future** - The Arts Council's research and consultation programme has developed a strategic framework outlining the vision and role for public libraries. "Our libraries are at the heart of our civic society connecting individuals and communities to a rich mix of arts and cultural resources contributing to community"

The final report "Envisioning the Library of the Future" will be published shortly. From the work so far the following themes have emerged as important for libraries in the 21st Century:

- Importance of the physical and virtual library space.
 - The value of libraries to children and young people as space where they learn and gain skills and behaviour in life. Equally important libraries are viewed as places of enjoyment for children.
 - Libraries are trusted gateways to knowledge, culture and information which is curated, trusted and free from commercial interest.
 - The vital role that libraries play in supporting social opportunity and equality.
 - Tension between the desire of some for traditional library services and those wanting to be adopters of new technologies.
- **Future Libraries Programme** - a partnership between the Museum Libraries & Archives Council and the Local Government Group which involved 32 local authorities across the country piloting ten projects to develop and share good practice in delivering innovation in library services. The programme identified four models of reform for library services to help deliver improved efficiency and effectiveness.
 1. Reviewing service location and distribution
 2. New provider models
 3. Shared services across council boundaries
 4. Empowering communities to do things in their own way.

We are committed to providing a comprehensive library service and will explore the feasibility of alternative ways of doing so in the most efficient way possible. We believe there are other ways of delivering services that can improve the quality of the service offer and provide better value for money. Halton already uses shared services and other good practice, however we will continue to explore best practice and learning from

other authorities to inform how we reshape local services in the changed economic climate. This will include continuing to explore opportunities for partnership working to improve quality, efficiency and value for money.

Alongside these documents there are a number of national and local drivers for change.

5. National and local drivers for change

- **Digital revolution** – Technology is transforming the way people interact with each other and the world around them, and libraries can offer access to technology, information and resources to help people develop confidence and skills to be able to interact online.

The provision of computers and access to the Internet is an integral part of the library service and we need to ensure we continuously improve and develop our digital offer, and the skills of staff, to keep pace with technological developments as well as the changing needs of the local community.

Changes to the way Government services are accessed will have a huge impact on how people apply for services and benefits. The majority of transactions will be undertaken online and libraries through free Internet access and skilled support will play an important role in helping people that are digitally excluded get online and to develop digital and information skills.

Demand for resources which can be accessed via wireless networks through handheld and mobile devices is increasing and we need to ensure that the community can benefit from this more flexible approach by offering access to high quality online resources and information. The demand for e-books has increased alongside the ownership of tablet devices and we need to establish the best way to progress the development of this area of the service.

- **Population** – The population of Halton has increased steadily from 118,200 (2001) to its current estimate of 125,700 (2011), this rise was mainly in the working age range (16-64) whilst older people (65+) displayed the largest relative increase of 15%. In the long term (to 2021) Halton's population is projected to grow by 3%, with a 10% increase in children/young people (0-15yr olds), a decline of 5% in working age (16-64) with older people projected to grow a further 33%.

Year	Total	0-15	16-64	65+
2001	118,200	25,600	76,600	16,000
2011	125,700	24,900	82,300	18,500
2021	129,300	27,100	77,600	24,600

Over the next ten years there will be increases in the number of school aged children and older people. The ageing population means more people are at risk of becoming

socially isolated as the proportion of people over the age of 80 increases. The project work we have undertaken with older people in 2012-13 has highlighted the demand for our services with this age group.

The key priority will be to attract new users to the service whilst ensuring we continue to meet the needs of existing users, including changes to family dynamics and working patterns and to prepare for the increase in both children's and older people's use of the service.

- **Skills gap** – the unemployment rate in Halton (% of residents aged 16-64 claiming job seekers allowance) is currently 5.2% (February 2013). This is higher than the North West (4.4%) and the England rate (3.8%).

Libraries support learning and have a clear role in helping develop the skills required for the future workforce. Libraries support mainstream education and provide an informal learning environment that encourages people to participate in activities that contribute to their learning and skills development.

Information about careers and job opportunities, and support for employment through digital job hubs, work clubs, 1 to 1 support, online resources, skills for life and adult literacy resources are part of the libraries offer.

- **Global financial climate** - it is important to have a strong sense of priorities so that our financial resources are targeted where they are most needed and will be most effective. The Council, as a result of the Government led drive to cut public spending and reduce the national deficit, needs to make further reductions to its budget in future years. The Library Service has already made significant cost reductions and through the strategic objectives set out in the strategy will ensure resources are targeted at priority areas as well as exploring collaborative and partnership opportunities to secure cost benefits.

The needs and priorities of the people of Halton are articulated in the Sustainable Community Strategy and libraries have an important role to play in contributing to these priorities.

The Library Strategy has been developed based on these needs and priorities and through public and staff consultation. In 2012 consultation was undertaken to garner opinion on what this strategy should focus on. A number of priorities were highlighted and are discussed in the following section. A comprehensive Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Public Library User Survey on the current use of the service was also undertaken to ensure we could evaluate existing provision. Information has also been included from Halton 2000 and customer comments forms.

6. Key findings from consultation:

- Satisfaction with library services is high, 62% rated the library *very good* overall, 32% rated the library *good* overall – 94% in total (CIPFA Public Library Users Survey)
- Access to books is the most important service we provide, 329 out of a total of 385 respondents used the service primarily to borrow books.
- 22% of respondents stated the provision of tables and seating is average.
- 35% of respondents said they would borrow e-books but 11% of respondents did not know what e-books were.
- 38% of respondents had heard of the Home Delivery Service with 13% of these having used it.
- 57% of respondents said the Home Delivery Service should be promoted more to customers and volunteers
- Customer service expectations are very high and staff support was rated as the second most important service provided, it will therefore be an important element and a core requirement of any future library provision.
- Access to computer facilities is a fundamental part of the library offer and valued by customers, it was rated as the third most important service provided.
- Library services are viewed as valuable, particularly in providing community meeting and quiet spaces for study, but the extent of the resources and provision available through libraries is not widely understood.

The data gathered from Halton residents about libraries inform us on one level what the needs and expectations are for the service.

- *The current level of satisfaction is high and this needs to be maintained through targeted services.*
- *We need to maintain the core service providing access to books and reading to our existing customers and increase these numbers through outreach. We need to develop new services to encourage readers and improve access to electronic books and online resources.*
- *Workforce development is essential, having the right staff with the right skills, delivering the right services in all libraries.*
- *There is a requirement to maintain library access to the Internet and to offer support for customers new to technology or developing new skills.*
- *Traditional services are the most highlighted in responses but key partnerships and project work needs to be better advocated and the profile of the service as a whole needs to be raised*

The core purpose of the library service is to provide a comprehensive and efficient service that meets the needs of the people who live work and study in Halton, this statutory responsibility together with national and local priorities and influences has led to our vision for the service which is supported by the five strategic objectives which have emerged for the development of the service.

7. Our Vision:

We aim to achieve the best outcomes for the people of Halton and to ensure that the libraries are focal points for the community providing access to free information and resources tailored to local needs, within available resources. We will promote reading, learning and support people to develop their skills and fulfil their potential, and encourage participation in the cultural and community life of the borough.

The vision is underpinned by five strategic priorities

- Inspiring a community of readers and learners
- Employment, enterprise and developing online skills
- Extending access through innovation and new technology
- Providing a relevant and responsive library service
- Workforce development

8. Overview of the strategic priorities:

Inspiring a community of readers and learners – Libraries core purpose is to provide and promote access to books, reading, information and online resources to people of all ages. This strategic priority will ensure that we develop and support reading as a key life skill and provide access to quality resources and a learning support programme to meet the needs of those engaged in developing new skills.

We will increase tailored provision to meet the needs of those groups identified for significant population growth. We will provide access to collections for those who may have special requirements such as materials in alternative formats, in different languages, those struggling with reading or where English is not their first language and those who may be socially isolated.

We will identify sections of the community with low membership or who are hard to reach and will through outreach and targeted provision encourage and develop take up of the service. We will continue to work closely with schools and early years settings to ensure children and young people can benefit from accessing early intervention services, resource materials and develop library and information skills.

We will enhance the health and well-being of the local community by promoting and providing access to self-help resources, health information, outreach collections, signposting

and opportunities for social and recreational reading. We will explore all relevant external funding opportunities. We will work in partnership where appropriate to deliver this strategic priority.

Employment, enterprise and developing online skills – This strategic priority will help people to gain information and communications technology (ICT) skills that will enable them to access government services, new or better jobs, social networking and information to help support study or shop online. We will provide an informal learning environment that encourages people to participate and improve their digital and information literacy skills and gain confidence in using the Internet for everyday transactions and thereby reduce digital inequality. This work will be delivered in partnership where appropriate.

Extending access through innovation and new technology - Technological change is happening at a tremendous pace, this strategic priority will ensure that we keep abreast of developments in order to attract new customers and also to remain relevant to our current customer base. Subject to resources we will introduce new and innovative solutions to enhance the customer experience and help to drive down costs.

Providing a relevant and responsive library service - This strategic priority will help provide appropriate engagement and feedback to ensure we continuously improve the service we deliver. We will identify the hard to reach and vulnerable groups/individuals which we will focus on. To ensure we reach our target audiences we need to increase membership through partnership work, outreach and alternative methods of engagement. We will meet the reading and information needs of those who are unable to visit their local library through an improved and extended Home Delivery Service. We will develop libraries as cultural and community spaces and provide a broad range of creative events including reading groups, author events, local history talks and exhibitions.

Robust methods of seeking and listening to the views of customers will ensure we focus on local needs and requirements. We will continue to develop opportunities for volunteers to engage with the service.

Workforce development – To deliver the Library Strategy we require a workforce that is able to deliver all the digital elements of provision and provide excellent customer service. This strategic priority will ensure we provide a welcoming and highly skilled workforce so that libraries are enriching experiences and provide access to resources and information that the community wants and requires. We will review the current staffing roles and structure and implement change to ensure that we can deliver the priorities of the service.

9. Strategic priorities:

Inspiring a community of readers and learners

We will engage people with books, reading and learning by providing them with inspiring collections and high quality information resources. We will create opportunities to share the enjoyment of reading and learn together, in libraries, in a relaxed and informal environment.

- Through our adoption of the Public Libraries' Universal Reading Offer we will provide a full programme of creative reading promotions and events which will offer opportunities for people to come together to share and extend their reading experiences.
- Residents of Halton will have access to an excellent range and choice of books and other materials, in and through their local library, which meet their reading and information needs.
- Information will be made available in printed and digital formats; the library workforce will act as information navigators to ensure that customers are able to make well-informed judgements about information quality and accuracy.
- Widening participation in learning through strong partnerships.
- Through our adoption of the Public Library Universal Health and Wellbeing Offer we will provide access to mood boosting collections in all our libraries.
- Libraries will be the repository of local history and will act as the collective memory of the borough by conserving, interpreting and making accessible historical documents and other published resources relating to the Halton area.

By 2016 we aim to have:

- Delivered a full programme of activities to commemorate the centenary of WWI.
- Established homework clubs in a two of our libraries.
- Delivered class visits in all of our libraries.
- Established a programme of creative reading opportunities for children and adults based on the Public Libraries' Universal Reading Offer.
- Implemented the new Books on Prescription scheme including the Mood Boosting Books Programme.
- Grown library membership by promoting the service and its core offer to all those who live, work and study in Halton.

Supporting Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan 2011-2016 – Areas of Focus 1, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 13

Employment, enterprise and developing online skills

We will ensure all residents of Halton can learn to access the Internet for free in libraries with appropriate support.

- We will commit to the provision of the Public Library Universal Digital Offer.
- Library members will have free access to the Internet in libraries.
- Libraries will provide support for customers, partnership agencies and their clients to develop and enhance their online skills.
- Libraries will provide access to information online, safely, through trusted sources.
- Libraries will play a key role in enhancing digital skills and digital citizenship so that Halton residents are able to access essential public services online.

By 2016 we aim to have:

- Helped Halton residents become ICT literate in line with Government policy and the Public Library Universal Digital Offer, through a programme of targeted activities including the promotion of www.gov.uk
- All library staff will be able to provide basic online support for job seekers
- Strengthened the relationship between libraries and job centre plus to promote and extend job clubs to all libraries.

Supporting Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan 2011-2016 – Areas of Focus 1, 5, 6, 7, 9 & 13

Extending access through innovation and new technology

We will grasp the opportunities offered by new technology to widen access to the library service and attract new audiences. We will put more information resources online and create digital content so that more people are able to discover, access, share, download and re-use our collections and services.

- Libraries will provide public computers and access to the Internet.
- Technology solutions will be employed to improve the access to the library service. Library members will have 24/7 access to downloadable resources, online subscriptions and digitised collections through the virtual library portal.
- Libraries will keep pace with technological developments in publishing, information provision, social networking and mobile communications to ensure that services are responsive to the evolving needs and expectations of members.

By 2016 we aim to have:

- Developed a strategy to replace and upgrade our public access IT infrastructure subject to resources.
- Moved to a roving customer service model by identifying and securing funding to provide staff with tablets to answer customer enquiries anywhere in the library.
- Streamlined back room procedures by exploiting new technologies to provide greater value for money through direct delivery, e-invoicing and supplier selection.
- Extended the range of e-books and online subscription services available in libraries and explored the options of becoming the hub for all HBC subscriptions.
- Created a virtual library portal bringing together all electronic resources into one online location, including implementing a smart phone app for the library service.
- Enhanced the library catalogue by introducing interactive and personalised features including book reviews, ratings, discussion threads and social tagging.
- Exploited social media to engage new audiences for reading and to keep customers informed of service developments and events.
- Digitised unique resources from the local history collection to increase their availability to historians and researchers.

Supporting Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan 2011-2016 – Areas of Focus 1, 5, 6, 7, 22, & 26

Providing a relevant and responsive library service

We will deliver a library service that is valued and highly rated by customers for its effectiveness and efficiency.

- The library service will seek out and listen to the views of our customers to ensure that services are developed and improved in line with local needs and requirements.
- The library service will work with partners to access hard to reach and vulnerable groups and ensure they are engaged in using our resources.
- The library service will meet the reading and information needs of people unable to visit their local library through the Home Delivery Service.
- Libraries in Halton will be vibrant public spaces that connect people and communities, providing opportunities for people to meet together and participate in the social and cultural life of their local communities.
- The library service will deliver the aims of the strategy within available resources
- Library services will be focused on continually improving provision to customers by collecting and using key performance data to inform service developments. Data will also be used to communicate the value and impact made by the library service.
- Volunteering in the library service will be encouraged and supported. There will be a clear volunteer programme that encourages and supports residents to participate in the library service by sharing their enthusiasm, skills and interests.

By 2016 we aim to have:

- Reviewed information services and resources including re-balancing print and digital resources.
- Completed a review of our Home Delivery Service / mobile library service and implemented the recommendations of the review.
- Developed action plans and service targets in line with strategy outcomes.
- Developed a comprehensive volunteer programme.
- Completed a focus group review of the service against the standards.
- Completed CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) and CIPFA Public Library User Surveys (PLUS) in all libraries and shared the results with customers and staff.
- Targeted library outreach services to those people not currently accessing library services, including hard to reach and vulnerable groups, by developing improved partnerships.

Supporting Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan 2011-2016 – Areas of Focus 22, 24, & 26

Workforce Development

We will develop and maintain an enthusiastic and dedicated workforce with customer service excellence at the heart of our delivery. The library workforce will be welcoming and highly skilled so that using libraries is an enjoyable and enriching experience for everyone.

- The experience of using libraries will be excellent with high levels of customer satisfaction. The workforce will be highly skilled and will respond to changing patterns of library use by delivering more personalised services for customers.
- We will provide access to learning and development opportunities, and offer career progression within a revised staff structure.
- We will deliver a library workforce with the skills and abilities to advocate for the service, and ensure libraries are positioned within the community and able deliver Halton Borough Council priorities.

By 2016 we aim to have:

- Achieved a recognised customer service standard through Customer Service Excellence.
- Created and launched a formal induction training programme for all staff
- Developed an in-house mentoring programme to support staff in achieving professional qualifications from CILIP (The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals).
- Revised our staff structure to facilitate improved service delivery to our customers.

Supporting Halton Borough Council Corporate Plan 2011-2016 – Areas of Focus 21, 22 & 26

10. Delivering the strategy - priorities for action

Action plans for each of the strategic themes will set out the work programme on an annual basis and will contain performance measures and targets. The action plans will be reviewed and progress will be reported in the normal monitoring cycle. Draft action plans for 2013-14 are contained in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1**Draft action plans 2013-14**

Inspiring a community of readers and learners	
Identify Universal Reading Offer spikes for 2013/14 & allocate officers	April 2013
Launch & market Books on Prescription / Mood Boosting Books	July 2013
Set targets for new members and review on a quarterly basis	April 2013

Employment, enterprise and developing online skills.	
Plan work club schedule 2013/14	May 2013
Identify target groups for IT skills development	April 2013
Schedule a programme of IT events / activities in partnership where appropriate	Review annually

Extending access through innovation and new technology.	
Devise project and implementation plan for transition to roving customer service model	Jan 2014
Conduct ICT hardware/software needs analysis for library service	Jan 2014
Implement back room efficiencies	April 2014
Produce social media strategy for library service & integrate with operational activities	April 2014
Develop schedule of digitisation – identifying & prioritising WWI material	April 2014
Investigate HBC subscriptions	Jan 2015
Create consolidated pages on library catalogue website for access to E-books & online subscriptions	July 2013
Develop smartphone application	Dec 2013
Launch interactive library catalogue features	May 2013
Make digitised material available through library website	July 2014
Implement changes to DVD provision	August 2013

Providing a relevant and responsive library service	
Identify potential non-user customer groups & partners for access	April 2014
Implement print / digital proposal & review annually in line with needs & financial resources	Sept 2014
Identify volunteer roles / responsibilities & market offer in line with projects	Oct 2014
Undertake Children's CIPFA Survey	Autumn 2013
Review of current home delivery service/ mobile library & implementation of revised service	June – Dec 2013

Workforce Development	
Identify customer service standard & produce customer service action plan	April 2014
Analyse outcomes of strategy consultation & identify priorities of delivery	June 2013
Devise staff structure options & undertake required processes	Sept 13 - April 14

APPENDIX 2

Statistical information

	Total number of members	
	Active members – March 2013	Registered members - March 2013
Halton Lea	7,765	27,813
Widnes	5,623	22,963
Ditton	1,068	4,132
Runcorn	1,541	3,973
Mobile	471	2,286
TOTAL	16,468	61,147

Ages	Population	Members age profile	
		Active	Registered
0-4	8400	1136	2426
5--9	7400	2565	6673
10--14	7600	1635	6992
15-19	8100	661	4944
20-24	8000	768	5452
25-29	8100	788	5120
30-34	7700	873	4484
35-39	8300	793	3796
40-44	9000	838	3717
45-49	9300	784	3252
50-54	8800	734	2815
55-59	8100	805	2601
60-64	8500	1000	2584
65-69	5800	1084	2449
70-74	4600	755	1616
75-79	3600	502	1146
80-84	2500	330	754
85-89	1300	141	343
90+	600	58	186

	Hours open per week	Issues		Visits		Computer sessions	
		2011-12	2012-13	2011-12	2012-13	2011-12	2012-13
Halton Lea	49.5	219,387	174,140	217,837	203,727	71,795	70,125
Widnes	52.5	191,450	165,058	201,880	256,009	52,875	52,689
Ditton	43.5	34,863	29,771	61,578	61,778	8,072	9,511
Runcorn	36	31,037	45,760	63,480	89,726	8,979	14,530
Mobile	22.75	15,266	14,034	10,928	9,702		
TOTAL	204.25	492,003	428,763	555,703	620,942	141,721	146,855

APPENDIX 3

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