

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

**DATE:** 6 January 2010

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director (Environment)

**SUBJECT:** APSE Performance Networks Year 11 (2008/9)  
annual report (Parks, Open Spaces, Horticultural  
Services)

**WARDS:** All Wards

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To demonstrate how the Landscape Services Division and The Parks and Countryside Service performed during Year 11 of the APSE Performance Network's Benchmarking process in relation to Parks, Open Spaces and Horticultural Services.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That The APSE Performance Networks report be accepted.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Association for Public Sector Excellence (APSE) is the UK's largest benchmarking club. Benchmarking is carried out through APSE Performance Networks using criteria that is deemed to be consistent and reliable by the Audit Commission.

3.2 The Landscape Services Division joined the APSE Performance Networks Benchmarking group in year 2 of its existence (2000/1). Since that time the Division has submitted data, which is used to compare its performance against other Local authorities. From year 8 data has also been gathered from the Parks and Countryside Service and submitted to APSE.

3.3 Council's are grouped into Families so that they can be compared on a more equal basis. Halton currently sits in Family Group H2/3.

3.4 The year 11 (2008/9) data was submitted to APSE in July 2009. Following a validation process a report was received by the Divisional Manager for Landscape Services in November 2009.

3.5 Based on the year 11 data submitted which demonstrates an overall improvement Halton was nominated for 'Best Performing Council' and 'Most Improved Performer' in relation to its delivery of Parks, Open Spaces and Horticultural Services. It was a finalist in both categories

having previously been a winner for Most Improved Performer in 2007 and in 2008.

- 3.6 In appendix 1 a table shows how Halton's Landscape Services has compared with other local authorities in year 11.

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

##### 4.1 **Children and Young People in Halton Borough Council**

The APSE report demonstrates that the Landscape Services Division is providing quality play facilities.

##### 4.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton Borough Council**

The APSE report demonstrates through its Human Resources and People Management indicator that the Landscape Services Division promotes learning and skills amongst its staff.

##### 4.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The APSE report demonstrates that the Landscape Services Division and the Parks and Countryside Service are providing quality parks and open spaces, which promotes use.

##### 4.4 **A Safer Halton**

The APSE report demonstrates that investment is being made to security measures in Halton's parks.

##### 4.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

The APSE report demonstrates that quality maintenance is being delivered which contributes directly to Halton's Urban renewal.

#### 5.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

- 5.1 There are no risks associated with this report.

#### 6.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 6.1 No significant Equality and Diversity Issue have been identified.

#### 7.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 Appendices



## Appendix 1

High scoring Authority	
Average scoring Authority	
Low Scoring Authority	

	APSE PI		Halton Score 2007 - 8	Halton Score 2008 - 9	Average Score	Notes
1	Hectares of maintained public open space per 1000 head of population.		6.81	6.81	4.21	It is not surprising the Halton has higher than average hectares of public open space. This is a legacy of contaminated land reclamation and the Runcorn New Town.
2	Number of Hectares Maintained per FTE front line employee.		11.76	13.10	8.38	Landscape Services front line staff manage the third highest number of hectares per person. This measure demonstrates a high level of productivity.
3	Percentage of Staff Absence.		8.55%	5.90%	4.71%	Prior to September 2005 Landscape Services was one of the best performers in terms of sickness absence typically scoring under 3%. After the BVS payment became part of salary sickness figures rose. Much work has been done within the Division to bring the sickness absence figures down. They are continuing to fall but a couple of cases of serious illness have kept figures above 6%. See 22 for figure excluding long term.
4	Quality Assurance and Consultation Score		72	72	70.84	This score is derived from a number of factors including quality awards, Green Flag Parks and robust management systems.

	APSE PI		Halton Score 2007 - 8	Halton Score 2008 - 9	Average Score	Notes
5	Human Resources and People Management		86	87	57.55	This score is derived from a number of factors including the amount of training given to staff, the qualifications help by staff, Apprentices and the EDR process. The highest scoring authority gained 87 points. The Landscape Services Division was the second highest scoring Council.
6	Customer Survey (satisfaction)		96%	84.90%	74%	This score is taken from the Greenstat System. Although there has been a drop in satisfaction compared to the previous year the score is still very high. Halton is the third best performing Council.
7	Output Specification		56.67	56.67	51.88	It is important to view this alongside the cost indicators, 11, 14 and 17 as it demonstrates that the actual work undertaken on the ground is of a higher standard than average for a lower cost. In measuring this indicator factors such as frequencies of operation and types of finish (e.g. boxed off grass) are taken into consideration.
8	Environmental Practices		46.57	45.40	38.95	This score is reached by examining factors such as recycling, composting and reduction of pesticide use. Due to a very wet year more pesticide had to be used which has resulted in a slight dip in performance. However Halton still remains in the top quartile of performers.
9	Playgrounds per 1000 Children		1.72	1.87	3.74	Halton has less playgrounds per 1000 children than most authorities. However with regards to the quality of the playgrounds that we have, we are the best performer (see 28).
10	Cost of Service per Hectare of		£3,629	£3,312	£6,470	This includes the cost of the Landscape Services Division and the Parks and Countryside Service combined along

	APSE PI		Halton Score 2007 - 8	Halton Score 2008 - 9	Average Score	Notes
	Maintained Land (including CEC)					with Central Establishment recharges.
12	Cost of Service per 1000 head of Population		£24,710	£22,551	£26,954	Halton has a relatively small population in relation to the amount of open space that it has. Therefore when cost is measured in this way we do not appear to be as inexpensive as indicators 11, 14 and 17 show. However even when measured in this way we are still below average.
13	Cost of Service per Household		£55.00	£50.00	£61.00	See notes in 12.
14	Maintenance cost per hectare of maintained land (including CEC)		£3,001	£2,815	£5,357	This indicator shows the cost of the Landscape Services Division's operational arm. Halton score is the third lowest on cost.
15	Maintenance Cost per 1000 head of population.		£20,435	£19,169	£20,880	Halton has a relatively small population in relation to the amount of open space that it has. Therefore when cost is measured in this way we do not appear to be as inexpensive as indicators 11, 14 and 17 show. However even when measured in this way we are still below average.
16	Maintenance Cost per household (Including CEC).		£45.00	£43.00	£47.00	See notes in 15.
17	Charge per hectare (category B Parks)		£2002	£2083	£4,917	Category B parks are parks such as Crow Wood Park, Hough Green, Rock Park and Phoenix Park. Halton's score is the lowest on cost.

	APSE PI		Halton Score 2007 - 8	Halton Score 2008 - 9	Average Score	Notes
18	Charge per Hectare (Secondary Schools)		£1,096	£1,166	£2,494	The Landscape Services Division offers the second lowest cost service to Secondary Schools. The service provided to school's makes a small return, which is reinvested into the Council's parks and open spaces. With increasing budget pressures it may be an option to increase the school charges by a rate greater than inflation in order to maximise income.
19	Charge per Hectare (Primary Schools)		£1,188	£1,234	£2,047	The Landscape Services Division offers the forth lowest cost service to Primary Schools. The service provided to school's makes a small return, which is reinvested into the Council's parks and open spaces. With increasing budget pressures it may be an option to increase the school charges by a rate greater than inflation in order to maximise income.
20	Charge per Hectare (RSL Land)		£7,844	£8,139	£4,664	The Landscape Services Division charge for maintenance to HHT was the highest in the family group. This is explained by the fact that in 2005 when the housing stock transferred the new organisation (HHT) went for a very high specification for landscape maintenance. For example prior to 2005 the Landscape Services Division was below average in terms of cost. In the new HHT contract which commenced in April 2009 the specification was lowered. The Landscape Services Division failed in its bid for the HHT contract although it did provide the cheapest cost. The Year 11 APSE report will be the last one that includes HBC in this indicator as we no longer deliver this service.

	APSE PI		Halton Score 2007 - 8	Halton Score 2008 - 9	Average Score	Notes
21	Charge per Hectare (high maintenance highway land)		£1,112	£1,135	£3,242	The Landscape Services Division offers the second lowest cost service for highway land maintenance.
22	Percentage of staff absence excluding long term.		3.24%	1.57%	1.96%	There has been a significant improvement over the previous year and as shown by this indicator when long term absence is discounted the Landscape Services Division is within the average score.
23	Total staff costs as a percentage of total cost.		69.10%	68.88%	62.11%	This indicator demonstrates that most of the budgets of the Landscape Services Division are spent on salaries. This in turn demonstrates the commitment to having staff at the front line delivering a service to the public.
24	Front Line Staff Costs as a percentage of total cost.		55.56%	56.68%	48.59%	See notes above
25	Number of FTE non Front Line employees per 100 hectares maintained.		1.85	1.85	2.36	This indicator is designed to show how many back office staff there are in the service. As can be seen from the score the Landscape Services Division has a low ratio of non front line staff.
26	Hectareage of local nature reserve per 1000 head of population		1.20	1.20	1.51	Although Halton has 10 Local Nature Reserves, which is more than most authorities have, they tend to be relatively small which accounts for the average score for this indicator.
27	Average NPFA Play		51.61	51.78	27.10	The score is taken from an independent assessment of our



	APSE PI		Halton Score 2007 - 8	Halton Score 2008 - 9	Average Score	Notes
	<b>Value Score of Children's Playgrounds.</b>					Playground facilities using NPFA scoring methodology. Halton is the highest scoring authority which reflects the investment that has been made in the Borough's playgrounds since 2000.
<b>28</b>	<b>Number of Public Events per 1000 head of population.</b>		<b>4.38</b>	<b>4.28</b>	<b>0.85</b>	This score is based upon the number of events that the Parks and Countryside Service put on in public parks. Halton is the second highest scoring authority.

A copy of the full APSE Performance Networks Report is available in the Members Room.