

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 31st March 2011

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director - Resources

SUBJECT: Adoption of the Sustainable Community Strategy 2011 – 2026

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 A new Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) that covers a 15 year period (2011-2026) has been produced (Appendix A). The SCS outlines what the Council and Halton Strategic Partnership will do to enhance the quality of life for local communities through enhanced economic, social and environmental activity across the Borough. This report seeks Executive Board approval to proceed to adoption of the SCS by Full Council.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Council be recommended to adopt the Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-2026.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Halton's existing SCS expires on 31 March 2011. There remains a duty to prepare an SCS (Section 4.1 of Local Government Act 2000) and a wider duty to co-operate, to be placed on councils and other local agencies, is due to be introduced via the Localism Bill.

3.2 The SCS is a long term plan that will guide the Council and Halton's Strategic Partnership over the next 15 years and it is important to remain aspirational in outlook. In the short term, the financial climate may constrain the ability to deliver change on the ground. This uncertainty will be dealt with via a separate 'living' SCS 5 year delivery plan that has been prepared, but needs to be given the opportunity to evolve as services transform (see section 3.5 below).

3.3 Consultation

The new SCS has been produced through extensive research of baseline data, subsequent analysis, and then policy formulation. This process was followed by wide consultation with Elected Members and partners to identify key themes and related strategic objectives. This has included reporting on the detail of the emerging strategy to all Policy and Performance Boards during the September 2010 meeting cycle.

An extensive public consultation took place between 29 November – 24 January 2011, using a number of methods which ensured that the SCS

and other documents (Core Strategy and Local Transport Plan 3) reached as many interested parties as possible. For example, the consultation database, public exhibitions, online materials, information at libraries and HDLs, and the In Touch / Inside Halton Magazines were all utilised to get community engagement information out to localities.

- 3.4 A variety of consultation responses on the SCS were received from individuals and organisations and covered a full range of issues. For example: the priority themes and objectives chosen; problems, causes and issues to tackle in delivery; cross cutting challenges touching on a number of priority areas. A 'Results of Consultation' document has been prepared and each comment has had, as is appropriate, a response explaining any resultant change to the SCS together with an explanation of actions the Council is taking to deal with the issues raised.

3.5 SCS Delivery Plan

The SCS is accompanied by a separate 'living' five year delivery plan that sets out the policy responses the Partnership intends to implement to tackle the Borough's challenges. The delivery plan outlines what success would look like and steps that could be taken to ensure success. The five year delivery plan needs the flexibility to evolve as the services provided by the public sector transform. For this reason it is recommended the delivery plan remains as a working document to allow restructuring at the national, regional and city region levels to be taken into account (examples include the restructuring of the NHS and public health delivery, implementation of Local Economic Partnerships, implications of several parliamentary bills such as Localism and Policing and Social Responsibility Bills).

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 This new edition of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) will look over a longer time period than the previous plan allowing strategic planning over 15 years to 2026. This will bring major plans into alignment, such as the Core Strategy and Local Transport Plan, allowing coordinated delivery.
- 4.2 The SCS will impact upon all policy areas and have wide ranging impacts on, but not exclusively, social inclusion, poverty, equality and diversity, physical development, environmental quality and health care.

5.0 **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

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

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

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

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

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

6.3 A Healthy Halton

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

6.4 A Safer Halton

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

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

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

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 It is vital that both the Council and Halton Strategic Partnership continue to be clear about priorities for service delivery and that this strategy receives ratification by Elected Members.

7.2 Absence of an SCS will:

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

7.3 These risks can be mitigated by the adoption of the SCS and its implementation, monitoring and ultimate delivery.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

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

9.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

9.1 This decision is required to adhere with statute. Halton's existing SCS expires on 31 March 2011. There remains a duty to prepare an SCS (Section 4.1 of Local Government Act 2000) and a wider duty to co-operate, to be placed on councils and other local agencies, is due to be introduced via the Localism Bill.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

10.1 A 'do nothing' approach has been considered and rejected due to non-conformity with statute. An overriding need exists for the different agencies and service providers operating in Halton to cooperate to deliver workable, long term answers to Halton's key challenges. The SCS provides the framework for this cooperation.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

11.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy will be implemented from April 2011.

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

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