

Halton Local Area Agreement:

Introduction

A Local Area Agreement (LAA) is three-year agreement, based on local Community Strategies that set out the priorities for a local area agreed between Central Government (represented by Government Office North West - GONW) and a local area, represented by its Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) – in our case the Halton Strategic Partnership. LAAs relax central government constraints and allow better decision-making at the local level. Greater freedoms provide the opportunity to think innovatively, and develop new solutions to local priorities.

This LAA has been prepared in accordance with these principles. The Community Strategy is key, and provides an overarching framework through which the corporate, strategic and operational plans of all the partners can contribute. The LAA provides a mechanism by which key elements of the strategy can be delivered over the next three years.

Background

Making Halton a better place to live and work presents some major challenges and opportunities for us all. This LAA sets out the steps we need to take together to bring about real improvements that will change lives for the better. In particular, we need to achieve real progress on five strategic themes that are set out clearly in the Community Strategy and mirrored in this LAA:

- A Healthy Halton
- Halton's Urban Renewal
- Halton's Children and Young People
- Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton
- A Safer Halton

These priorities have been derived from what local people feel is important, and from the facts and figures about conditions in Halton.

Halton is a largely urban area of 118,900 people. Its two biggest settlements are Widnes and Runcorn that face each other across the River Mersey, 10 miles upstream from Liverpool. The population of Halton was in decline for over a decade, but has recently started to increase. Between 1991 and 2002 the estimated Borough population decreased by 6,500 people from 124,800 to 118,300 in 2002. However, in 2003 there was a small increase in the population and between 2003 and 2004 the estimated population increased by 500 people.

As a result of its industrial legacy, particularly from the chemical industries, Halton has inherited a number of physical, environmental and social problems. The Council has been working hard to resolve these issues ever since the Borough was formed in 1974. Gaining unitary status in 1998 has helped to co-ordinate more activity over a wider front and increased the resources the Council, and its strategic partners, have been able to invest in Halton. However, there still remains much to be done.

Halton shares many of the social and economic problems more associated with its urban neighbours on Merseyside. The latest Index of Multiple of Deprivation (IMD) for 2004, not only contains some of the latest data available, but also is one of the most comprehensive sources of deprivation indicators, as some 37 different indicators are used. It shows for example that overall, Halton is ranked 21st nationally (a ranking of 1 indicates that an area is the most deprived), but this is 3rd highest on Merseyside, behind Knowsley and Liverpool, and 5th highest in the North West. St Helens (36th), Wirral (48th) and Sefton (78th,) are way down the table compared to Halton.

The Index of Multiple of Deprivation for 2004 suggests that Deprivation has improved in the Borough. In 2004 the IMD ranked Halton as 21st most deprived Authority in England for rank of average score compared to a rank of 16th in the 2000 Index. The proportion of Halton's population in the top category (i.e. the top 10% of wards in 2000 and the top 20% of super output areas in 2004) has also decreased from 54% in 2000 to 50% in 2004. However, there is still room for improvement. Halton's concentration of deprivation has gone up from 38th position in 2000 to 20th worse in England in 2004. Concentration is a key way of identifying hot spots of deprivation within an area. Within Halton there are 6 super output areas in the top 975 Super Output Areas in England, i.e. within England's top 3% most deprived. The highest neighbourhood is ranked 193rd out of 32,482 and is situated in southern Widnes. Clearly there remains much to do.

Bespoke research to get a better picture of life in Halton was commissioned in 2005. The Local Futures Group produced a 'State of the Borough' Audit of economic, social and environmental conditions. This is a timely and necessary assessment of the challenges and issues that face Halton. Performance is assessed according to how well the borough scores on a range of carefully selected benchmark indicators of economic, social and environmental well being. It provides a perspective on the state of Halton by looking at how it compares with other districts, how it rates within the North West region, and also how it performs compared to the country as a whole.

The Audit demonstrates that the borough is performing well in terms of its current economic performance and structure. However, the level of human capital and trends in economic growth may present problems for the future. This is particularly so given the district's poor performance in terms of social and environmental indicators, which may create difficulties attracting the best qualified people to the borough. Halton's performance on education and skills, and low levels of home ownership points to problems of inclusiveness, with groups of residents not sharing in the current levels of economic prosperity.

Moving Forward

This local area agreement sets out a clear vision of making changes across many issues that will make a big difference to life in Halton. It aims to give people opportunities and choice. We want to build people's aspirations and abilities so they can exercise greater control and choice in their lives. Having done so we want to ensure we provide the quality of life and opportunities locally so that people choose to live and work here. This approach mirrors that set out in the recently adopted Community strategy.

The key challenge is how best to frame the response to the major issues that Halton faces through the LAA. To do this we intend to focus heavily on those challenges and

through the LAA to channel extra resources year on year into efforts to achieve challenging targets in each chosen priority area. We know that normally, LAAs are based upon four blocks established around the shared priorities for Government: However, the priorities agreed for the Community Strategy were framed with the advent of the LAA in mind. They largely mirror the four blocks, with the addition of Urban Renewal. Local flexibility in how LAAs are structured is allowed. Therefore, the starting point for the Halton LAA is that it is being framed around our agreed five priorities from the Community Strategy rather than the four blocks.

The strategic framework of the LAA is largely drawn from the Community Strategy. The following sections summarise our strategy and approach.

Vision

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

Priorities

- **A Healthy Halton** - To create a healthier community and work to promote well being - a positive experience of life with good health
- **Halton's Urban Renewal** - To transform the urban fabric and infrastructure, to develop exciting places and spaces and to create a vibrant and accessible borough
- **Halton's Children and Young People** - To ensure that in Halton children and young people are safeguarded, healthy and happy
- **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton** - To create an economically prosperous borough that encourages investment, entrepreneurship, enterprise and business growth
- **A Safer Halton** - To ensure pleasant safe and secure neighbourhood environments where people can enjoy life.

Approach

- **Closing the gap** between the most deprived communities in the borough and in Halton overall.
- **Tackling inequality** and promoting community cohesion, so that no community is disadvantaged.
- **Making what we do sustainable** so that our quality of life is protected and enhanced for the benefit of current and future generations.
- **Investing in preventative activity** that stops problems occurring rather than paying for actions to fix things that are going wrong. We need to invest more in success, rather than in failure.

Principles

- **Leadership** – the Partnership's role is to give clear strategic leadership to the borough and enable people to make the necessary contribution to make a difference.

- **Fair and inclusive** – promoting equal access to opportunities and facilities. This includes the need to positively target activity at the most deprived geographical areas or particular groups of people.
- **Good value** – being economical, efficient and effective in delivering 'Best Value' for the public.
- **Collaborative** – this is about collective responsibility for making things better and embedding partnership approaches in everything that we do.
- **Evidence-based** – ensuring we learn from best practice elsewhere and make good use of research about what works in addressing the borough's priorities.

Strategic Focus

This LAA is concerned with addressing social exclusion. This is about what happens when people face a multitude of problems such as poor housing, high crime, poor health, worklessness, discrimination and poor relationships. The people of Halton, and a focus on responding to their full range of needs, are the key cross cutting theme that underpins this strategy. The needs analysis allows us to anticipate likely changes and plan accordingly. We want to sustain progress and increasingly provide a much greater range of opportunities, and the ability to take advantage of them. We want to sharpen up service delivery and focus on the things that will make the most difference. The key measure of whether service delivery is transformed is how far and how fast we can narrow the gap in outcomes for the most disadvantaged in Halton, as measured by comparison with both Halton and national averages. Our ways of working will focus on:

- Poverty and material deprivation
- Choice and quality in neighbourhoods and housing
- Equality of opportunity for everyone and ending discrimination.
- Responding to the needs of older people as the population ages
- Policies and programmes that look forward and help to achieve sustainable development

The LAA has developed out of the established partnership structure and strategic planning process. It is important that it adds value to the established landscape of partnership plans and activity. It can do this by helping to refocus current activity and drive concerted actions on key challenges, neighbourhoods and target beneficiaries. Using evidence and intelligence we intend to close the gap between the most deprived people and places and national norms.

Transformational Issues

The question that the Halton Strategic Partnership has been addressing is: What added value can be brought by an LAA to existing partnership frameworks and activity? The partnership believes that the answer lies in using the LAA to focus on a small number of issues, which, if we were successful at addressing, would make a

significant improvement to the quality of life in the Borough. These transformational issues have been identified on the basis of two criteria:

- those where progress has not been as significant as we would have liked – identified from statistics, public perception and concern, areas for focus in recent LSP reviews.
- those which would have a positive impact across a range of our objectives and targets.

We want the LAA to bring a greater concerted effort to those key issues. We want the LAA to focus on our most intractable problems, and in doing so make a significant impact upon them. It has been agreed that the following four areas best fit the two criteria outlined above - Employment & Skills; Alcohol Harm reduction; Anti-Social Behaviour; and, Liveability

We intend to use the “energy” and focus an LAA brings to make measurable progress in those intractable areas. Our intention is to use these as a means to exemplify the joined up nature of how the Halton Strategic Partnership addresses key issues which cut across all five blocks of the LAA. The following table gives a summary of the current position on the four transformational issues

Alcohol Harm

Why is this an issue?

Alcohol misuse can be a source of considerable harm. The National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy identifies certain critical harms connected to alcohol misuse:

- Health – up to 22,000 premature deaths per year
- Crime and antisocial behaviour – 1.2 million associated violent incidents per year
- Loss of productivity and profitability – calculated at £6.4bn. per year
- Harms to family and society – between 780,000 and 1.3 million children are affected by parental alcohol problems

Halton itself suffers from more than its fair share of alcohol related issues. A recent study on alcohol misuse in the North West conducted by the North West Public Health Observatory, highlights Halton’s position against some of the key indicators for alcohol. On all indicators Halton ranks in the worst 5 districts (out of 43 areas)

During 2005 an alcohol survey of year 10 and 11 pupils in Halton was carried out.

These were a few of the results:

- A higher than average proportion of 15-16 year olds are drinking alcohol in Halton – 92%. (North West 88% and 93% across Cheshire).
- 40% of teenagers surveyed claim to drink in pubs.
- 50% of teenagers surveyed claim to get their alcohol from their parents.

How will we work to address this issue across the LAA?

The cost of alcohol misuse, both social and economical provides serious cause for concern in Halton, particularly given the latest statistics. We know that if we can reduce alcohol harm across the borough we will make an impact on improving a range of associated issues. For example, these would include health, crime and community safety, employment, liveability, regeneration and educational attainment.

How will we work differently?

No single partnership or agency can act alone on such a complex issue. In order to meet the significant challenge of reducing the harm caused by alcohol the different components of the partnership structure in Halton must recognise the relevance of alcohol to their core business and must include it as a cross-cutting issue.

A multi-agency task group has been established and a comprehensive Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy developed. An Alcohol Intervention officer is about to be appointed, whose primary purpose will be to ensure the delivery and implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan.

How do we propose to deliver on this area?

In order to deliver on this area of the LAA we intend to focus on 5 key priorities, which bring together the strategic priority areas identified in Halton's Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy. These are **Health, Crime and Licensing, Children and Young People, Workplace and Communities and Regeneration**. Under each area we have picked the key outcomes and targets that we feel the LAA can help us to achieve. This action plan will be monitored and delivered by the Alcohol Task Group and will sit alongside the main Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy and action plan. Relevant SSPs will also need to take responsibility for outcomes relating to their priority area.

Employment & Skills

Why is this an issue?

Since the mid 1990's the number of people employed in the United Kingdom has risen. However, for some areas of the country such as Halton, this masks the stubbornness of the rates of economic inactivity that have largely stayed the same. Despite a concentration on residents who are unemployed, there is a much larger group of working age people that are economically inactive, many of which want to work. In May 2006 36% of the Halton population were economically inactive.

The analysis of the spatial concentration of economically inactive in Halton shows that 6 wards have inactivity rates at or in excess of 25% - Castlefields, Windmill Hill, Halton Lea, Kingsway, Riverside and Grange.

How will we work to address this issue across the LAA

The LAA mirrors the strategic priorities of the Community Strategy which were arrived at through extensive consultation with both the community and partners and research and analysis into the prevailing conditions within the borough. Although the worklessness agenda and associated strategy lie within the Employment, Learning and Skills Strategic Priority, inroads can only be made to addressing the issue through a comprehensive cross partnership and multi-agency approach.

The structure of government funding often prevents pooling as national organisations lack freedom due to the existence of nationally delivered schemes. This is an area for further consideration within the context of this Local Area Agreement.

How will we work differently?

It is evident that there is a need to achieve a step change in employment related work if the level of worklessness in Halton is to be significantly reduced. The key elements in achieving this should include -

- A formal recognition that worklessness and not just JSA claimants should be the focus.
- Targeting will be necessary to achieve step change – both in terms of groupings and geography.
- To be effective, interventions will need to be holistic and personalised to individual peoples needs – this must involve a full range of partners all working together.
- Enterprise must be put at the heart of addressing worklessness.
- Connectivity with jobs must be improved
- More work needs to be done to address the basic skills gaps
- There is substantial scope for the voluntary sector to be developed in employment related activity, particularly social enterprise
- stronger link needs to be made between investment opportunities and local labour market

How do we propose to deliver on this agenda?

Whilst Halton has made great strides in the creation of new jobs and the general reduction in unemployment the gap between individuals and the labour market in some instances has not improved as much for certain groups. It is our intention to specifically target certain key groups and tailor interventions to their needs:

- Over 50s
- Economically inactive women
- Lone parents with dependent children
- Young long term unemployed

- Sick and Disabled

There is clear evidence that the more general borough wide approach towards unemployment has produced real progress. However, there is now a need to focus on those areas where unemployment and worklessness remains stubbornly high and where levels of worklessness are way above the borough average.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Why is this an issue?

The government has made a commitment to tackle anti-social behaviour. Social responsibility, respect for others and appropriate community behaviour are fundamental requirements of a thriving and successful community. The majority of our communities recognise this and contribute positively to community life, however, a minority do not. The conduct of this minority adversely affects the ability of people to enjoy the communities and facilities where they live, work and visit. This is not acceptable. This behaviour is often termed anti-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour is not welcome in Halton and will not be tolerated.

How will we work to address this issue across the LAA?

The Anti-social Behaviour Strategy relies for its success on the commitment and complementary working practices of a number of partner agencies within Halton Borough Council. It is therefore an overarching strategy embracing all 5 strategic priorities in achieving the strategic vision.

How will we work differently?

Survey data provides information in four key areas:-

- Misuse of Public Space
- Disregard for community / personal well-being
- Acts directed at people
- Environmental damage

These are robust categories that encompass the experiences of people living, visiting and working in Halton. The LAA will develop a rounded response to ASB through:

- Integration of the strategy into the statutory framework for joint agency co-operation set out in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- Accessing partnership resources to maximise service provision
- Ensuring commitment to a Borough-wide response to Anti-social Behaviour
- Facilitating the flow of appropriate information to enable effective interventions.
- Recommending the realignment of mainstream resources to improve multi-agency service delivery and response to Anti-social Behaviour
- Continuous improvement of the multi-agency response by developing common protocols and assessment pathways
- Addressing the capacity, knowledge and skill requirements of key staff

How do we propose to deliver on this area?

Prevent & Deter

- Identifying those perpetrators of ASB. or those at risk of becoming perpetrators of ASB. and intervening at an early stage to bring about behavioural change.
- Identifying appropriate routes to divert the focus of groups and individuals, towards positive activity.
- Minimising the opportunity for anti-social behaviour by addressing the factors that support it. These may be physical e.g. 'uncared for' environment, or

social e.g. influenced by alcohol or substance misuse.

Protect And Punish

- Use of civil and criminal legal remedies where appropriate:
- Harassment Notices and Orders, Anti-social Behaviour Orders, Injunctions, Housing Related Measures, Crack House Closures. Fixed Penalty Notices for Disorder and Litter etc.
- Providing support to the vulnerable and ensuring that complainants and witnesses are supported and informed throughout the process.

Rehabilitation

- Encouraging and reinforcing positive citizenship and pro-social behaviour, including activities aimed at wide groups e.g. community projects and citizenship programmes within schools as well as other activities targeted at groups who are at risk of social inclusion.
- ASB. is not age restricted and adult education is equally important in shifting attitudes.
- Take this work to the street or neighbourhood level, a factor recognised by the national 'Respect' agenda, will be crucial in making this strategy work

Liveability

Why is this an issue for Halton?

The visual quality of an area, namely the way an area looks, including levels of litter and rubbish, scruffiness of gardens and the prevalence of high rise flats or open space, is of crucial importance in determining quality of life in a local area.

A recent Mori poll which asked people what most needs improving in their own local area, found liveability issues are still top of the public priority list, well ahead of health and education. In Halton, the opinions of 2,500 local residents were surveyed in 2005. Removing rubbish, and cleaning the streets and verges was felt to be the biggest environmental improvement, which could be made. In the 2005 LSP consultation, residents thought that one of the most effective factors in improving the environment was to 'improve local parks and make them safer and tidier'.

How will we work to address the issue across the LAA?

The quality of the local environment impacts on people's health, their fear of crime, and the social and economic vibrancy of the area. Poor quality spaces are visible indicators of decline and disadvantage. Graffiti, street litter, abandoned vehicles, dog fouling drag down a local area and there is evidence that their presence signals a spiral of decline, which can undermine communities. It is only through partners working together to tackle these issues and their causes, that we are to bring about improvements in the liveability agenda and quality of life for local residents.

How will we work differently?

Working in partnership delivering joint initiatives has proven to particularly effective and this approach will be developed across partner agencies, and in particular through the Safer Halton Partnership. The recent police drug raids, were supported by other partners, who following the raids, successfully helped to deliver local environment improvements, and re-assure the local community.

Three of the more deprived areas of the Borough have been selected for the neighbourhood management pilot. A neighbourhood management board has been established and neighbourhood boards will soon follow. By tailoring services to meet the needs of local communities across the LAA, it is hoped that we can make a significant difference to their quality of life. Neighbourhood management is seen as an

opportunity for partners to work more closely together and pilot new ways of working, which if successful can be rolled out across the Borough.

How do we propose to deliver on this area?

The recently revised Safer and Stronger Communities Fund Agreement, sets out a number of liveability targets across the Borough and more specific targets for the neighbourhood management pilots areas. The SSCF Agreement will be monitored by the performance management group, of the Safer Halton Partnership (SHP) and the SHP, engagement and liveability task group, which will take the lead in delivering on the liveability agenda

Obviously, this is merely a very short summary position. At Annex F is a more detailed position paper on each of these topics.

Developing the LAA

The process to develop the LAA was important. It was vital that the process was inclusive. Many people and groups were involved so we could build a clear picture on what was important and how we should go forward. The LAAs timescales meant that there has been limited scope to involve residents directly in the LAA negotiation. However, the community strategy was built upon a 12-month period of intense engagement with residents, the voluntary and community sector, and other partners. Some of the key steps included:

- A review of our achievements since the first Community Strategy was launched four years ago, and an honest assessment of how well partnership arrangements have worked
- A new State of Halton report was commissioned to look objectively at statistical conditions and changes and trends in social, economic and environmental conditions
- A major telephone survey of residents (3000 people) backed up by focus groups was carried out to seek their views on what life is like, and should be like, in Halton
- A review of regional and national strategies, and those of partners, was carried out to assess the likely impact of this activity in Halton
- An inclusive process of debate and discussion on the way forward took place with members, officers, officials and volunteers of all the organisations involved with the partnership
- A thematic assessment of the challenges facing the borough, and a thorough review of outcomes, outputs and targets was carried out. These helped to demonstrate how the strategy and partnership working could make a difference in the future.

This process of engagement with people and partners was vital. More specifically, Halton established a Lead Officer Group to lead the development of the LAA. This is made up of key leaders from all partners, including the VCS. This cross agency corporate steering group - has met regularly to co-ordinate the development of the LAA and ensures a consistent and holistic approach. In addition, a wide variety of organisations, teams and individuals have been involved in developing the detail for each of the blocks. This process has been actioned through the SSPs – our well-established thematic working groups. Wherever possible we have ensured that the work has been integrated into existing cross-agency structures, e.g. the Older

Peoples Local Implementation Team. Within each block various methods have been used to engage people – workshops, mini-conferences etc. Regular activities have involved monthly LOG meetings to discuss the focus and content of the LAA, backed up by regular meetings with GONW to test this; thematic partnership meetings to discuss the detail, agree outcomes, map resources and relationships, and identify enabling measures; all partner seminars and workshops to develop coherence and consensus around the overall agreement; and a micro-website for as part of an overall communication effort to keep all partners in touch with progress (already set up on www.haltontpartnership.net).

Key milestones in the process include:

- An early decision to align our Community Strategy with the LAA blocks. We were also able to use the consultation that had been done on the Community Strategy to inform the LAA.
- Extensive briefing across sectors; putting in place the appropriate project management structures and disciplines; identifying lead officers and forming working groups and teams;
- Across agencies and across the 5 blocks stimulating thinking to clarify our ambitions and develop them into a cohesive statement, together with identifying the key challenges to Government and ourselves;
- 14 July – an all-partners conference at Halton Stadium to agree the ambitions and the challenges;
- July/August – cross agency teams for each block focused on developing the outcomes framework for the block; identifying appropriate indicators, and proposals for pooled funding and freedoms and flexibilities.
- September – meetings of the Halton Strategic Partnership Board and the Council’s Executive Board Cabinet to endorse the LAA.

Involving the communities of Halton

The voluntary and community sector (VCS) are an integral part of the structure and activities of the Halton Strategic Partnership, and have been since its inception. In addition, the Partnership has spent a considerable time over the last year in developing a radical new approach to community engagement in the borough. The VCS plays a powerful role in developing the LAA, and will do so in its implementation. The HSP Board has already agreed that compact-plus principles will underpin the governance and operation of the LAA. HVA Together (the CEN) has taken the responsibility of working with partners to develop the Statement of Community Involvement that maps out the principles of this relationship in the LAA. This is attached at Annex D.

We have worked closely with HVA Together to involve the voluntary and community sectors in the development of the LAA. At the outset there were briefings with the HVA Together Executive. In September, HVA Together organised a series of Forum meetings which focused on developing the LAA and the involvement of groups and individuals. Representatives of groups and networks have been involved both in the Lead Officers Group and the SSPs developing each block.

In response to developing the LAA and the subsequent challenge to deliver and achieve the outcomes, HVA Together has established its forums, corresponding to the blocks. This enables it to select its nominees to the SSPs and also provides a forum for them to debate issues and give feedback. Within the agreement we have outcomes and indicators to show the growth and vibrancy of the sector and its capacity to contribute to the delivery of the LAA.

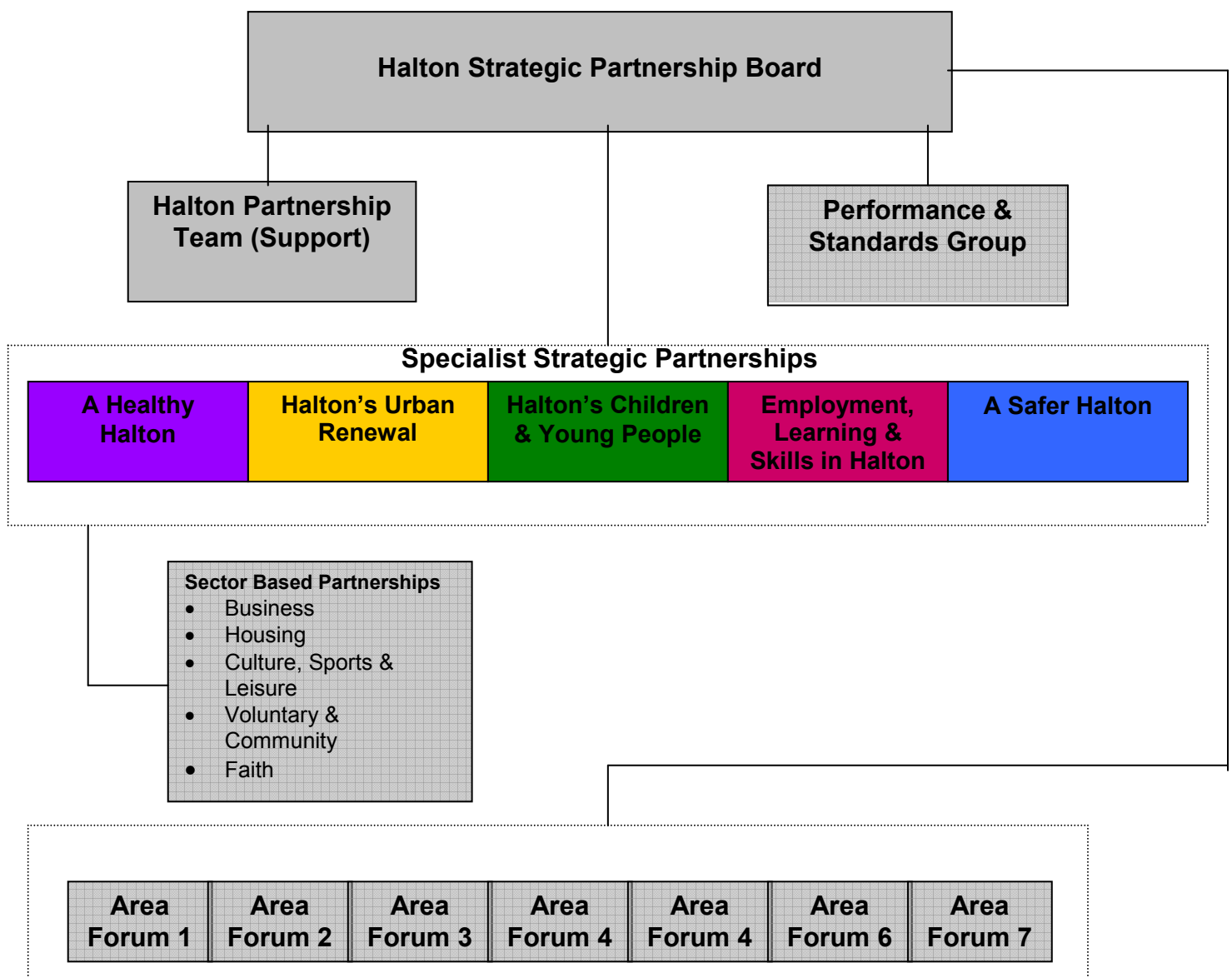
Governance

Halton already has in place well established and robust partnership arrangements. These are based on a Strategic Board supported by five thematic partnerships, a performance management group and a number of specialist subsidiary partnerships. This includes representation at all levels by all stakeholders including significant representation from the voluntary and community sectors. The structure has been recently reviewed, refreshed and rationalised through an overhaul of governance arrangements supported by Manchester Business School. The current governance structure is considered wholly fit for purpose, and can be represented as follows:



Halton Strategic **PARTNERSHIP**

The Virtual Organisation



The Partnership structure is robust and well established. The recent governance review took place in the knowledge of the advent of LAAs and was framed accordingly. It is proposed that the LAA will be managed through the existing partnership structure, which along with the adopted performance management framework is considered wholly fit for purpose.

Funding

Halton partners have noted the funding arrangements for LAAs. The mandatory pooling by Government of a number of external funding streams is welcomed. It is felt that this will simplify the performance management arrangements, reduce the transaction costs of programme management and lead to efficiencies.

The Halton Strategic Partnership does not propose to pool any other funding streams within the LAA in Year 1. Some local and specific pooling of funding by partners will take place, as indeed it does now. However, we do not seek to embed these pooling arrangements within the auspices of the Agreement. Instead Partners will concentrate their efforts on wider moves to align appropriate budgets behind the Agreement. This position will be reviewed for Years 2 and 3 of the Agreement and we may seek to pool additional funding in later years of the agreement where this is helpful in achieving the outcomes agreed.

Partners are committed where appropriate to align the use of resources (including funds, personnel, buildings and land use) to support the aims of the LAA. Annex A outlines our current thinking on aligning and pooling funding in the LAA. Our approach has been mainly to align funding in this first year.

Enabling Measures

Halton takes a pragmatic view of the opportunity offered to negotiate freedoms and flexibilities. The development process has identified a number of key enabling measures, which would benefit the LAA in its operation. These potential freedoms and flexibilities are summarised in Annex C of the Agreement, and will be the subject of negotiation with GONW.

Sustainability

The focus in Halton is to build a sustainable community that balances and integrates social, economic and environmental progress; that meets current expectations and prepares for future needs; and that respects the diversity of the place and people. Sustainability is about linking cohesion into the mainstream of service delivery and ensuring that our vision can be delivered over time and in the face of conflicting demands and diminishing resources. It involves more than changing plans and policies as it involves changing hearts and minds. What is important is that foundations are properly and securely laid at the outset for enabling any project or initiative to make an impact into the future. The LAA has been developed by adopting this approach.

In short, we want to build a sustainable community that balances and integrates social, economic and environmental progress; that meets current expectations and prepares for future needs; and that respects the diversity of the place and people. The Partnership has identified the following components as being crucial to success.

- (a) *Respect and Enjoyment*
- (b) *Thriving Places*
- (c) *Well Planned*
- (d) *Accessibility*
- (e) *Well Served*
- (f) *Well Run*

Resources Management

All the objectives and targets of the LAA are set out in the Outcomes Framework, attached at Annex B. How well and how quickly progress happens depends crucially on the availability of resources and how smartly they are used. That means money, people, physical resources, proper intelligence and information, allied with the strength of will to use them in the best way. A key purpose of the LAA is to ensure that the resources available are targeted and used effectively to bring about improvements in the borough. This means:

- Being clear and agreeing about what we need to achieve so we are all pulling in the same direction
- Maximising the funding we can generate or draw in to benefit Halton and developing our own resources and the capacity to help ourselves
- Co-operating to be more effective, cutting out duplication and waste, and pooling the budgets, knowledge and efforts of different organisations and groups where this makes sense
- Listening and responding to what matters most to people locally
- Targeting what we do to where it can make most difference
- Doing the kind of things that experience has shown will really work and be successful
- Checking on progress, letting people know how we are doing, and adjusting where necessary to keep on track

To underpin this, the Partnership has made a big commitment to improving the way information is gathered, used and shared. Of particular note are:

- a) A data observatory has been set up to hold key statistical information on all aspects of living conditions in Halton. This will keep data at a variety of spatial levels – super output area, ward, neighbourhood and district level – and allow for comparison with our neighbours and regional and national averages. It will greatly help people to understand the geography and nature of disadvantage in Halton. It will be especially useful in informing the spatial targeting of activity under this LAA.
- b) The Partnership is setting up a database of consultation and community engagement in Halton. This will enable people to access a rich source of attitudinal data on a range of issues. It will also help people to plan and execute better community engagement in the borough - a key underpinning of this LAA.

Managing Risk

The Partnership recognises the scale of its ambition and is realistic in its expectations of what can be achieved given the scale of resources being deployed. It also recognises that risk management must be an integral part of the performance management framework and business planning process. This will increase the

probability of success (and reduce the likelihood of failure) by identifying, evaluating and controlling the risks associated with the achievement of its objectives.

The risk management process focuses attention and resources on critical areas, provides more robust action plans and better informed decision-making. It also fosters a culture where uncertainty does not slow progress or stifle innovation and ensures the commitment and resources of the Partnership to produce positive outcomes.

As part of implementing this LAA the Partnership will use its agreed Risk Management Strategy and establish a Strategic Risk Register. This will set out the risk management objectives, the role and responsibilities for risk management of the Board and individual SSPs, and will categorise risks and the approach to risk management action plans.

The risk management objectives include the;

- Adoption of Risk Management as a key part of the LAA
- Identification, evaluation and economic control of strategic and operational risks
- Promotion of ownership through increased levels of awareness and skills development

The Partnership's risks can be broadly categorised as either "strategic" or "operational". Strategic risks cover those threats or opportunities which could impact upon the achievement of medium and long-term goals. The review of strategic risks will be carried out in October/November 2006 when the LAA has been adopted. This will be followed up by an assessment of operational risks through each of the SSPs as part of their Action Planning of the LAA implementation process.

Equality & Diversity

The Partnership is determined to deliver its vision of a better future for Halton's people. We are committed to equality for everyone regardless of age, sex, caring responsibilities, race, religion, sexuality, or disability. We are leaders of the community and will not accept discrimination, victimisation or harassment. This commitment to equity and social justice is clearly stated in the adopted equal opportunities policy of the Partnership, and covers this LAA.

The Partnership wants to create a culture where people of all backgrounds and experience feel appreciated and valued. Discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, disability, age or any other unjustifiable reason will not be tolerated. As a Partnership we are committed to a programme of action to make this policy fully effective.

Partners will work collaboratively to develop effective procedures and policies to combat all forms of unlawful discrimination and to share good practice. They will ensure that all services are provided fairly and without discrimination. Reasonable adjustments will be made so that services are accessible to everyone who needs them. People's cultural and language needs will be recognised and services will be provided which are appropriate to these needs. Partners will monitor the take up of services from different sections of the population. The information collected will be used to inform service planning and delivery. Equality Impact Assessments will also be carried out on Partnership policies and services to assess how policies and

services impact on different sections of the community. The results of the Equality Impact Assessments will highlight areas for improvement, which will be dealt with through the Partnership Improvement Plan.

Priority Areas

In order to focus on “closing the gaps” we needed to identify a coherent set of priority geographic areas. In the past, available analysis has largely been at ward level. We now have excellent information available at the ward level of around 25,000 people and are developing information at the “Super Output Area” level of around 3,000 people

The following wards have been selected as those for which “closing the gap” targets across the LAA will be monitored. The wards were identified on the basis of census and IMD data:

- Castlefields
- Windmill Hill
- Halton Lea
- Riverside
- Kingsway
- Appleton

Progress in outcomes will be monitored to evidence “closing the gap” between these wards and Halton average outcomes. These wards have amongst the highest Multiple Deprivation Index scores in Halton and in England. All six wards have unemployment rates above the Halton average of 3.5%. All priority wards have Long Term Limiting Illness above the national rates.

For some targets, there are additional parts of Halton with poor outcomes in particular areas. In these cases the individual target specifies which additional areas are involved. During the first year of the Agreement, we will refine this analysis to look at smaller Super Output Areas to identify patches of poor outcomes within wards across Halton, and looking at neighbourhoods which “make sense” to local people.

Detailed maps of the key target outcomes across Halton, down to “Super Output Area” level, are being developed as part of the Halton Data Observatory development. These will enable very targeted approaches to achieving improvements in these outcomes. Some of our neighbourhoods face particularly widespread and deep difficulties. Areas of Halton have already benefited from local initiatives such as SRB. We will use a new government grant (the Neighbourhood Element) to co-ordinate local services and support community engagement, starting in neighbourhoods in the six eligible LAA priority wards. It will employ innovative neighbourhood management practices and models to deliver sustainable change. This will include the reconfiguration of local public services so that they better meet the needs of local people, and thereby help to close the gap by reducing a number of deprivation differentials, which exist between the area and more affluent parts of Halton.

Performance management arrangements

The LAA sets out clear targets for outcomes in the five thematic block areas and on key cross-cutting transformational issues. The Halton Strategic Partnership Board (HSPB) has delegated responsibility for developing and monitoring delivery of the annual LAA Action plan to the Performance and Standards Group (PSG). The PSG

will review delivery of the LAA targets and operational plan actions on a six-monthly basis, with lighter-touch intermediate quarterly reviews of financial performance. The HSPB and PSG are supported by a dedicated performance management capacity from the Halton Strategic Partnership Team. The existing performance management framework of the Partnership has been updated and revised to take account of the needs of LAA management. This is attached at Annex E.

The performance management framework is comprehensive, strategic and operational. It will test the vision and approach of the LAA, including its preventative, sustainable and targeted aspects, and the priorities. This will include taking account of existing and emerging borough wide, regional and national frameworks and initiatives that provide useful information and intelligence about the performance of Halton. It is designed to plan, monitor and review in a timely manner and will include targeted and LAA-wide evaluations. During the first year of LAA we will develop an annual trajectory for each of the three years of the Agreement, building on the trajectory analysis produced for the LSP review in 2006.

Our thematic partnerships – the SSPs - will be responsible for the delivery of the relevant “block” outcomes of the LAA. SSPs will review their arrangements to ensure these are “fit for purpose” to ensure delivery of the LAA. Responsibility for individual targets in the LAA will be clearly designated in the action plan to be developed before the spring, with particular lead partners and named lead officers. Each partner’s normal accountability and corporate governance procedures apply to the initiatives they take responsibility for.

All action plans will include appropriate tracking of performance at six-monthly or more frequent interval (except where outcome data is only available annually – for example, for school examination results). A “monitoring level” will also be set for targets: this will be the level that triggers performance management action. The PSG will agree all targets and “monitoring levels” through its oversight of annual action plans.

Ladder of intervention

Our annual planning cycle is designed to fit with the established budgetary and project management cycles of partners in Halton. In summary, the planning cycle for the LAA is as follows:

Timing	Activity	Outputs
July- Sept	Annual review of progress against LAA outcome targets and delivery of previous year’s action plan	Report to HSP Board Annual report. Financial report.
Aug – Oct	Draft action plans submitted by SSPs (covering proposed activities, outcomes and funding arrangements). PSG to challenge prioritization and plausibility.	Feedback to SSPs. Report to HSP Board on draft plans, including recommendations for changes. Financial report.

Nov	Mid-year (Apr-Sept) update on spending and activities (against action plan) from SSPs.	Exception / summary report to HSP Board. Performance report. GONW Monitoring Meeting
Dec	Finalised action plans submitted by SSPs. PSG challenge as appropriate.	Final proposed operational plan to HSP Board. Financial report.
Feb/March	Quarter 3 (Oct-Dec) update on spending and activities (against action plan) from SSPs	Exception / summary report to HSP Board. Financial report.
May	End of year update on spending and activities (against action plan) from SSPs	Exception / summary report to HSP Board. Performance report.

Tackling under-performance will be the greatest challenge for the performance management regime in the wider LAA context. A three-stage process is proposed for the LAA. This ladder of intervention will be reviewed over time. However, from the outset we intend to put in place systems which provide clear monitoring and reporting and make available a mutually accountable and supportive approach to enable partners to improve performance. This reporting would result in a clear picture of performance against the LAA in our annual report and then provides the basis for future planning as LAA implementation rolls forward.

For specific funding streams, performance management action could be triggered when performance against a particular target fails to achieve the agreed "monitoring level".

- Stage 1 If a six monthly monitoring report shows that performance against the action plan or a particular target has failed to achieve the agreed "monitoring level", the lead partner will be expected to take appropriate action, working as appropriate with other agencies. It will be asked to report on progress to the relevant SSP within three months.
- Stage 2. If a six monthly monitoring report shows that performance against the action plan or target has failed to achieve the agreed monitoring level for two consecutive six monthly periods, the SSP will be expected to agree with the relevant agencies a plan to tackle the under-performance. It will be asked to report on progress to the PSG within three months.
- Stage 3. If performance continues to fall below expected levels despite action by the SSP, the PSG will nominate one of its members to agree a revised plan to tackle under-performance, details of which will be reported to the PSG within three months.

The PSG will retain the right, in consultation with the relevant SSP, to trigger performance management action at either Stage 1, 2 or 3 in other circumstances where there is evidence of under-performance against target. The PSG will report every six months to the Board on all performance management actions, and

especially those at Stages 2 and 3. These arrangements will be implemented and tested during the first year of the LAA 2006/7.

Partnership Strategies and Plans

Delivering on the LAA also means ensuring that all our strategies and plans fit together. The main strategies and plans which underpin our priorities are:

- Local Development Framework.
- Integrated Equality & Diversity Policies.
- Economic Development & Tourism Strategy.
- Town Centre Strategies.
- Local Transport Plan.
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Plan
- Education Development Plan.
- Children & Young People's Plan.
- Health Strategy.
- Sport Strategy.
- Joint Commissioning Strategy for Older People.
- Air Quality Action Plan.
- Climate Protection and Sustainable Energy Strategy.
- Household Waste Management Strategy.
- Halton Community Strategy.
- Crime and Drugs Strategy.
- Housing Strategy.
- The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services
- Healthy Schools Standards and Plan
- Local Safeguarding Children Board Plan
- Looked After Children Strategy
- Building Bridges Strategy for Children with Disabilities
- Halton and Warrington Youth Justice Plan
- The Local Delivery Plans of the Health Trusts
- Cheshire Fire Service Plan
- Cheshire Constabulary Plan
- Cheshire Probation Plan
- Cheshire Criminal Justice Board Plan
- Safer Halton Partnership Plan

The LAA is linked to this whole range of other plans, strategies and reports. These fit together as a system designed to achieve progress on Halton's key strategic priorities and to deliver improvement for local people.

Annexes

- A. Financial table
- B. Outcomes Framework
- C. Enabling Measures
- D. Statement of community Involvement
- E. Performance Management Framework
- F. Transformational Issues