

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board  
**DATE:** 12 February 2009  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director – Health & Community  
**SUBJECT:** Public Art  
**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To seek endorsement of a Public Art Strategy for Halton

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Executive Board:**

- i) **comment on the proposed Strategy identified at Appendix 1;**
- ii) **endorse the Strategy for Halton.**

**3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Employment, Learning and Skills PPB recognised the value of Public Art at a meeting in November 2008 and supported the proposal to develop a strategic approach for its development in Halton.

3.2 The Arts Council agreed to fund consultants to help develop an approach to Public Art in Halton.

3.3 Their brief was to produce a practical, working document, which concentrated on planning issues, recognising opportunities for the short to medium term. The attached document therefore focuses more on tangible projects which can be delivered.

**4.0 WHAT IS PUBLIC ART?**

4.1 National Public Art Think-Tank definition of public art is:

*“The practice of public art is diverse - the term conflates activities that include art, craft and design within the public realm. The spectrum of artistic practice represented by the term encompasses art commissioned as a response to the specifics of the public realm, craft commissioned as part of the designed environment and process based practice that does not rely on the production of an art object”.*

4.2 The National Think Tank defines artists working within public art more specifically as:

- Members of design teams, working collaboratively and contributing to the use and form of developments through research and reflection and propositions in relation to context
- Working to creatively engage with communities in order to explore and articulate issues of significance
- Working as commentators and provocateurs producing either permanent, temporary or process based public art

4.3 As regards to the wider benefits to the community, the National Think Tank sees these as:

- Generating pride in an area
- Increasing sense of ownership
- Developing cultural identity
- Changing an image
- Engaging with local communities
- Creating distinction, character and identity
- Contributing to quality of life, through good design and high quality surroundings

4.4 The Arts Council England hold similar aspirations, and also believe passionately that the role of art and artists should be ever more integral to that process – and in particular need not be slavish to the social and regeneration agendas, but could deliver against their aims and target audience, whilst proactively enhancing, exploring, engaging, challenging and provoking both ‘people’ and ‘place’ in an ongoing process.

## 5.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The intention is for the Public Arts Strategy to be formally adopted by the Council.

## 6.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The action plan costs will be contained within existing budgets.

## 7.0 **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The strategy suggests the creation of a post to kick-start the development of Public Art. It is proposed that this post sits in the Planning Department within the Environment Directorate. The Arts Council have indicated that they will fund a part-time post for 2 years. As such there is no financial risk to the Council. All other actions and opportunities are dependent on funding being identified, but at no extra cost to the Council.

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

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

Public Art through workshops and involvement offer the opportunity to acquire and develop many skills.

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

Opportunities will be developed for Halton's Cultural Industries, and employment opportunities for local artists/designers.

### 8.3 **A Healthy Halton**

None identified

### 8.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified

### 8.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

Public Art will make a strong contribution to the continued regeneration of the Borough, and will attract visitors into Borough.

## 9.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

9.1 In not moving forward, external funding from Arts Council would be lost.

## 10.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

10.1 Any public art work to be commissioned will be advertised in national arts journals. Any community based public art projects will include opportunities For participation by community groups, schools and members of the Public.

## 11.0 **REASON (S) FOR DECISION**

11.1 To develop a strategic and informed approach to public art work in Halton.

## 12.0 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

12.1 Not adopt a strategic approach but continue to add piecemeal pieces of public art work across the Borough.

13.0 **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

13.1 Dependent on drawing up a brief for the post with the partners involved and then advertising.

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

None.