

HALTON STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday, 17 February 2010 at the Karalius Suite, Stobart Stadium, Widnes

Present:

Board Members:	Councillor Rob Polhill	HBC
	(Chairman)	
	Colin Billingsley	Job Centre Plus
	Councillor Marie Wright	HBC
	Diane Sproson	Greater Merseyside Connexions Service
	Fiona Johnstone	NHS Halton and St Helens
	Rev. Ray Jones	Faith Communities
	Terry Parle	Halton Sports Partnership
	Mike Fry	Community Empowerment Centre
	Beth Edwards	Community Empowerment Network
	Councillor John Swain	HBC
	Nick Atkin	Halton Housing Trust
	Chris Koral	Northwest Development Agency
	Councillor Dave Cargill	Police Authority
	Michael Sheehan	Riverside College
	Richard Strachan	Cheshire Police
	Eric Hudson	Chamber of Commerce
	Jane McCusker	GONW

Advisors to the Boards

David Parr	HBC
Rob Mackenzie	HBC
Sally McDonald	HBC
Andrew Pannell	HBC
Andy Guile	Halton Voluntary Action Together

In Attendance:: Andrew Pladgeman (Chamber of Commerce)

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Hignett (HBC), Shelah Semoff (HSP), Andrew Burgess (NHS Halton & St Helens), Gerald Meehan (HBC), Kevin Mothersdale (LSC), Evan Morris (Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service), John Rowlands (Schools Sector)

102 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2009 having been printed and circulated were agreed as a correct record.

103 THE STOBART'S GROUP

The Board received a verbal presentation from Mr Steve O'Connor on the Stobart Group. The Stobart Group was establishing itself as the UK's front runner in the rapidly developing multimodal freight, logistics and warehousing sectors. The Group operated from around 40 sites across the UK and into Continental Europe and Ireland. It was reported that Tesco had announced plans for a new distribution centre in Widnes, Cheshire to serve stores in the North West of England. The new fresh food facility in Widnes would provide an increased capacity to serve a growing network of stores across the region as well as enhanced staff facilities and positive environmental impacts. The site also offered access to an alternative transport infrastructure, including port and rail which would allow exploration of future opportunities to reduce freight travelling by road.

A Stobart Group brochure, a 3Mg Multimodal Gateway dvd and leaflet was circulated at the meeting.

The following points/comments arose from the discussion:-

- It was noted that supermarkets such as Asda and Tesco used their own vehicles. However, the Stobart Group had a facilitating role to get the best value from a logistic offering and by demonstrating they could do it more effectively were able to move a variety of retail products on their behalf;
- In respect of the new jobs on the 3MG distribution site in Widnes, it was noted that it was anticipated that there would be 12 weeks training. Some of the training would be in other cold stores throughout the country which would involve a considerable amount of travel during the induction period. However, some of the training would be undertaken locally;
- The impact and influence the Stobart Group had in reducing freight on the road was noted. It was also noted that their biggest challenge was weather conditions;
- The numerous benefits for Halton from the recycling facility at the new Tesco Distribution Centre was noted; and
- The contingency plans that had been put in place at the site was noted. It was suggested that it would be beneficial for the Stobart's Group to work in partnership with Cheshire Police on contingency planning.

In conclusion, the Partners thanked Mr O'Connor for his attendance at the meeting and the difference his Group had made to the area to date. In response, Mr O'Connor thanked Halton Borough Council and the North West Development Agency for their support.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the presentation and comments raised be noted; and
- (2) Mr O'Connor be thanked for his attendance and informative verbal presentation.

104 WNF PROJECT REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The Board considered a report which gave an update on the planned review exercise that would take stock of current progress for a number of SSP projects.

The Partners were advised that there were currently approximately 70 projects running, either fully or partly funded by WNF which superseded NRF. A number were given approval to run over two years, subject to a performance review at the end of year one.

It was reported that this month, the Board would need to agree spend for the financial year 2010/2011. As the Partnership's Accountable Body, the Council's Executive Board would need to endorse these recommendations the following month. Initially, it was envisaged that colleagues from the Council's External Funding would undertake a simple review prior to the meeting to ascertain progress to date and provide feedback to the two Boards, giving information to help make decisions about continuation of funding. However the timescales had made this impractical.

The Partners were further advised that the review was intended as a light-touch process, working with the Partnership Team and partner organisations to inform and guide future funding decisions. It would take place between April and August 2010 to look in more detail at such issues as:

- Exit/Forward strategies;
- Identification of best practice;
- Performance Management/Record Keeping;
- Success of the project/lessons learned; and
- Recommendations for future projects.

It was intended that this would be reviewed by colleagues from the Council's External Funding who would start the evaluation process on the efficacy of WNF funding during its lifetime and start to inform planning for projects to be funded under possible future funding rounds.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted:
- (2) support be given for the implementation of the evaluation/review exercise; and
- (3) the review should make sure of evaluation work already carried out by SSPs.

- (4) the review exercise be completed by August 2010.
- (5) The offer of support from Cheshire Police in the form of staff time was welcomed.

105 WNF FINANCIAL SUMMARY UPDATE

The Board considered a report which gave an update on the latest spend profile for Working Neighbourhood Fund (WNF) and drew attention to several other financial matters.

The Partners were advised that if project profiles had slipped from 2009/10 to 2010/11 compared to budget allocations, and they wished to carry over funds, a strong business case must be put before the relevant SSP Chair and Chief Executive of the Accountable Body as well as submitting a new SLA to the Partnership Team.

The Partners were further advised that they should make every effort to ensure a full spend of WNF allocations by March 2011. As the end of current WNF funding was only 15 months away, Partners were encouraged to look at how they could mainstream good practice and maximise benefits for Halton. The suggested review and evaluation exercise would, in part, identify those staff fully supported by WNF and would look at exit strategies for post March 2011.

The following comments arose from the discussion:-

- It was suggested that there could be a separate approvals processes for under spends and over spends;
- That all project managers notify the Partnership Team of any under spends and the reason for the under spend to enable the team to formulate recommendations to address the issue;
- It was suggested that robust processes were required to identify project outcomes and ensure they were delivered within the spending target;
- It was agreed that identified under spends could be re-allocated to other projects; and
- The importance of ensuring project spend according to original SLA profiles was noted.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Projects would not be permitted to carry over funds into the financial year 2011/12, unless there are truly exceptional circumstances. Approvals for slippage will be delegated to the

LSP Performance and Standards Sub-group to which requests should be directed; and

- (2) projects notify the Partnership Team of potential carry overs and under spends for the 2009/10 financial year. Carry overs will be subject to the approval of the SSP Chairs, Chief Executive of the accountable body, and a revised SLA submitted to the Partnership Team.

106 LAA DELIVERY PLANS

The Board considered a report which made a proposal that the financial plans for each of the five strategic priorities in order to support the delivery of Halton's Local Area Agreement; and the need to start the consultation processes for the new Sustainable Community Strategy; and the approval of the funding allocations contained within them.

RESOLVED; That

- (1) the allocation of the Working Neighbourhood Fund and Safer and Stronger Communities Fund for 2010/11 referred to in the report be approved subject to endorsement by the accountable body (the Borough Council);
- (2) delegated authority be granted to the Chair to approve amendments as necessary; and
- (3) SSP Chairs take forward the work necessary to develop new action plans for the thematic partnerships.

107 ANNUAL REFRESH AND REVIEW

The Board considered a report which informed Partners of the progress being undertaken to meet the Government's deadline for a refreshed 2008 – 11 Local Area Agreement (LAA).

The Partners were advised that due to the timescale involved with the process of refreshing the 2001-11 LAA, it was not possible to bring the final document back to a Board meeting. The next meeting of the Lead Officer Group was due to take place but the baseline data for a number of indicators would not be available at that time (Places Survey results). Therefore it will be close to the 12 March deadline before the draft agreement is finalised. The next meeting of the Board was not due to take place until after the deadline. The final version, would therefore be emailed out to Board Members, who would then be given an opportunity to comment and agree.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the progress with the refresh of the LAA be noted; and

- (2) an electronic endorsement of the final refreshed 2008-11 LLA be agreed.

108 LPSA PROPOSALS

The Board considered a report which gave advise on the process for approving LPSA2 funding proposals which had been agreed with SSP chairs and the Partnership's Accountable Body.

The Partners were advised that there were no time limits set for spending the LPSA2 funds and therefore the Chair's decision to delay approvals until additional information was available was seen as a positive way forward, ensuring the Partnership focussed resources where they were needed most and would produce the best results for Halton's residents.

The Board was further advised that the Partnership Team had been requested to arrange an extraordinary meeting of the SSP Chairs Group at the end of March. The Partners were asked to endorse the revised timetable and confirm their decision to delegate authority for approvals to the Chair's Group.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the revised timetable be endorsed; and
- (2) approval for proposals be delegated to the SSP Chairs Group.

109 DEVELOPMENT SESSION FEEDBACK AND DECISIONS

The Board considered a report which provided Partners with feedback from the Development Session which took place on 25 January 2010 and provided for discussion, the first draft of a Partnership Development Plan.

The Board was advised that the session had taken place on 25 January at the Northwest Fire Command Centre, Lingley Mere, Warrington. Following the workshops a development plan was started and shared with those present. The draft plan was attached to the report and the Board was asked to discuss its contents. Any comments and/or amendments would be included in it's final version to be brought back to the Board in May for agreement, following it being shared with the thematic partnerships.

The following points arose from the discussion:-

- It was suggested that the 'Responsibility' column in the Partnership Development Plan be completed before it is circulated for discussion; and
- It was noted that there needed to be a clear communication framework in place.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the draft Partnership Plan be endorsed in principle;
- (2) SSP Chairs ensure the plan is discussed at thematic partnership level and their comments included in the Plan;
- (3) SSPs take ownership of the Plan once agreed by the Board; and
- (4) The final Development Plan be brought back to the Board meeting in May for agreement.

110 HBC ENGAGEMENT AUDIT FEEDBACK

The Board considered a report which informed the Partners of a corporate community engagement audit framework developed in the Borough Council and highlighted the need to review the partnership Community Engagement Strategy.

It was reported that the partnership had published a Community Engagement Strategy, Toolkit and Network in October 2005 and set out to review the strategy in three years, which was now overdue. The Community Engagement Network was established and has supported operational engagement activity in particular, delivering training for front line officers but a strategic role in co-ordinating joint activity across agencies had not been realised. The consultation register was not well utilised and required improvements.

In addition, the Council had developed a corporate community engagement audit and analysis framework and had completed an assessment. Information was gathered on a questionnaire, responses collated electronically and considered against an analysis framework. This provided an organisational understanding of engagement activity within the Borough Council and provided a robust baseline for reviewing arrangements.

The audit defined community engagement activity on four levels:-

- Information Giving;
- Consultation;
- Deciding Together; and
- Acting Together.

These four layers indicated activity from low level engagement to high end involvement in decision making and the delivery of services.

The framework was available to be shared with partners who may wish to undertake their own audit. Similarly, some other local authorities have been developing frameworks and Halton was hosting a learning exchange seminar on 18th March 2010 for the regional empowerment partnership. Halton would

be presenting its framework along with colleagues from Wirral, Salford and Cumbria.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Partners consider making use of the Audit Framework within their own organisations; and
- (2) a review of the partnership Community Engagement Strategy, the Community Engagement Network and the existing consultation register be undertaken.

111 CAA IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Board considered a report which provided information on the improvement plan that had been developed following the publication of Halton's Comprehensive Area Assessment report in December 2009.

The Partners were advised that the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) had been launched in April 2009, with the first CAA report for each local authority received in December. CAA replaced the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and focused on the delivery of outcomes across public services in Halton rather than simply the performance of the council.

The Partners were further advised that Halton's CAA report included an area assessment of how well local public services were delivering better outcomes for local people, focusing on the agreed set of priorities and how likely it was that these would improve in the future. In addition, it included an organisational assessment of the council's use of resources and managing performance.

It was reported that the CAA utilised a system of green and red flags within the area assessment to highlight, respectively, areas of exceptional performance and areas of concern where significant action was needed to deliver improvement. Halton did not receive any green flags but received a red flag for teenage conceptions.

The issues raised in Halton's CAA have formed the basis of the improvement plan which was appended to the report. For each area of concern, the strategies and activities that were in place and about to be launched to deal with the issue had been briefly outlined and would be used as the basis of work around this year's CAA.

The latest version of the plan had been submitted to Government Office North West as part of the LAA review process.

The Action Plan had raised a number of issues relating to young people and adults in respect NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). It was reported to the meeting that Riverside College, with the new Leadership Team

had received a good Ofsted report and a number of aspects had been marked as outstanding. The Partners congratulated Mr Sheehan, his team and students for their excellent achievement. It was reported that the progress the College had made was contributing to addressing the issues raised in the Action Plan with links to apprenticeships, creating opportunities for employment etc. In addition there had been a reduction in the number of NEET as young people had been able to access different activities at the College.

In response, Mr Sheehan thanked everyone for their support and indicated that the College were looking forward to obtaining an outstanding Ofsted report in the near future and that they could make a positive difference to people in the community,

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the comments raised and the content of the improvement plan be noted; and
- (2) the Board place on record its congratulations to everyone at Riverside College for their achievements to date.

112 CORE STRATEGY - UPDATE

The Board considered a report which sought to provide a summary of the key issues raised during the public consultation on the Core Strategy Preferred Options in autumn 2009. The report also gave information on the next stages in the process towards adoption of the Core Strategy, currently programmed for December 2011.

Appended to the report was the Core Strategy Preferred Options Consultation List of Respondents (Appendix 1) and the Analysis of Key Issues arising from the Core Strategy Preferred Options Consultation (Appendix 2),

The report advised that of the 51 submissions received, the nature of the matters raised ranged from single issues on very specific topics to extensive commentaries on the entire content of the Core Strategy, including supporting documents. Complimentary comments were received on the quality of the Core Strategy Preferred Options documentation and also on the high level of detail contained within individual policies in the document. Many of the respondents expressed general approval of the content of the Core Strategy and the overall direction for future development, before going on to highlight concern with specific policies or with the promotion of certain sites/areas of the Borough. Support was also received for a number of specific policies within the document. It was reported that such comments should not be overlooked as they recorded where stakeholders had endorsed certain policy approaches as drafted in the Preferred Options document.

In addition, the comments had been divided between four types of respondent as follows:

- Agencies with no particular development interest = 18;
- Developers/land owners with a specific interest = 14;
- Democratic institutions = 10; and
- Members of the public = 9.

It was reported that the key issues to be resolved during the production of the next version of the Core Strategy had been drawn from all of the comments received during the consultation period. The comments had been analysed and initial responses and proposed ways of dealing with these matters in the Core Strategy and wider LDF had been drafted. The key issues and responses were set out in full at Appendix 2.

A summary of additional consultation and discussions with a number of key agencies undertaken by the Spatial Planning team was provided in the report.

It was reported that the next stage in the production of the Core Strategy was known as the Publication Stage, in which the Council was required to complete in order to be in accordance with Regulation 27 of the relevant regulations. At this stage, the Council must publish a plan which it believes to be 'sound', which means that it feels that the content of the plan is:

- Justified – in relation to the evidence base and is also the most appropriate strategy for the area;
- Effective – meaning that the plan can be delivered, but is also flexible enough to deal with changing circumstances; and
- Consistent – with National Policy.

At the Publication stage, the Core Strategy would be published for a statutory minimum period of six weeks where formal representations could be lodged which challenged the Council's belief that the plan was 'sound'.

Following on from the six week representation period at the Publication stage, the Core Strategy would then be submitted to the Secretary of State who would appoint an independent Planning Inspector to examine the soundness of the plan. Any representations received at the Publication stage would be submitted to the Planning Inspector to be considered alongside the soundness of the plan at the Examination. The Core Strategy timetable was set out in the report.

The following comment arose from the discussion:-

- Clarity was sought on whether there would be any changes in the green belt?

In response it was reported that changes to the green belt were not part of the document.

In conclusion, the Chairman reported that Mr Andrew Pannell was attending his last meeting of the Board prior to taking early retirement. The Partner's took the opportunity to extend its best wishes to him for the future.

RESOLVED: That the next steps in producing the Core Strategy and comments raised be noted.

113 LOCALITY WORKING

The Board considered a report which updated the Partners on the progress made to date with the review of Locality Working.

It was reported that the Council's Executive Board on 3 December 2009 had resolved:

- “ (1) Executive Board support the creation of a Working Group to consider how locality working should operate and be funded in Halton when Neighbourhood Management funding ceases to be available from Central Government; and
- (2) the Working Group receive evidence from a wide range of partners across Halton and report their findings to the Local Strategic Partnership and Executive Board.”

The meetings of the working group had taken place on 26th November, 15th December and 13 January. A number of key partner agencies were invited to the January meeting to enable them to contribute their views to the review. The chair of the working group had also made arrangements to hear from resident representatives on neighbourhood boards.

So far, the working group had considered the scope of the review, the lessons from the Neighbourhood Management pilot and some of the options for taking forward locality working. It had also looking at whether and how any future arrangements might be supported from within existing resources. There was a strong feeling that any arrangements should benefit the whole Borough, and much of the discussion had centred on the use of the Area Forum footprint.

The Partners were advised that the working group would need to report its findings back to the Council's Policy and Performance Board, which would make a recommendation to Executive Board. Any constitutional changes would need to be approved by a full meeting of the Council. It was currently the aspiration that this process be completed in April, but there was a balance to be struck between the desire to have something in place from the beginning of April to succeed Neighbourhood Management, and the need for thorough consideration leading to a sound recommendation. A full report would then be brought back to the Halton Strategic Partnership Board at the May meeting.

The Partners were further advised that any comments could be sent to the Partnership Team prior to the report being brought back to the May meeting.

It was noted that there would need to be recommendations for the Board to consider in the near future.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

114 RISK REGISTER

The Board considered a report which informed the Partners of the work required to ensure the Partnership's Risk Register was completed in line with Audit Commission requirements.

The SSP Chairs were requested to ensure the Partnership Risk Register was considered at a future meeting of their thematic partnerships, with a completed Register returning to the Board for endorsement at its next meeting on 19 May 2010.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the process needed to ensure completion of the Partnership's Risk Management Register be endorsed; and
- (2) SSP's be encouraged to take ownership of the Register and ensure its completion following discussions with their thematic group.
- (3) The Council's Head of Risk and Emergency Planning be invited to a future meeting to provide a briefing on risk management.

Meeting ended at 11.15 a.m.