



Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-2026 1 April 2011



Halton Strategic **PARTNERSHIP**

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Foreword

We all know that little can be achieved without different agencies and service providers putting their heads and talents together to come up with workable, long term answers to some of Halton's many challenges. We have made considerable progress since we produced our first Community Strategy in 2002. However, much remains to be done.

The environment around us is always changing, therefore we must adapt by constantly improving our services to meet our communities' needs and aspirations that are impacted on by these changes. We must also take time to prepare our local communities for the future by encouraging them to take a level of responsibility for their own growth and development, to be more resilient whilst at the same time building on and respecting our local environment and its heritage.

National, regional and local influences linked to the environment, economy and social change will increasingly demand a strategic approach across organisational and community boundaries plus flexibility to deal with these new challenges. The current financial climate and its wider impact makes forecasting the future very difficult. This means that it is even more important that we all look forward beyond these next few months and the uncertainty which they present, to plan the best ways to address concerns and aspirations and seize the opportunities offered in the medium and longer term.

Change requires a shared vision and agreement across local organisations and communities to take difficult decisions in order to create better lives and stronger communities across Halton. Our shared vision and how we will achieve it, is outlined in detail within this strategy.

Councillor Rob Polhill
Chair, Halton Strategic Partnership
Leader, Halton Borough Council
March 2011

What is a Sustainable Community Strategy?

A key role for local authorities and their partners is to produce a Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for their area (there remains a duty to prepare an SCS (Section 4.1 of Local Government Act 2000). This should aim to enhance the quality of life of local communities through actions to improve the economic, social and environmental well being of the area and its inhabitants. It must also:

- co-ordinate the actions of the council and of the public, private, voluntary and community organisations that operate locally;
- focus on and shape the existing and future activity of those organisations so that they effectively meet community needs;
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, locally and more widely; and
- allow local communities to express their aspirations, needs and priorities.

It must have four key components:

- a long-term vision for the area focusing on the outcomes that are to be achieved;
- an action plan identifying shorter-term priorities and activities that will contribute to the achievement of long-term outcomes;
- a shared commitment to implementing the action plan, and proposals for doing so;
- arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the action plan, for periodically reviewing and reporting progress to local communities.

This is Halton's third Sustainable Community Strategy and while we can take pride in what has been achieved to date, there is still much more to do. This document sets out a vision of the Halton we would like to see emerge by 2026. It sets out the steps we need to take together to bring about real improvements that will change lives for the better. Those steps concentrate on the things that matter most to most people. The Strategy is about focusing on the issues that will make the biggest difference in the long-term.

Unless we work together and get smarter at how we use our resources, the improvements set out in this Strategy will not happen. A key purpose of this Strategy 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 what needs to be done.
- Working together with local communities to make a difference
- Listening and responding to what matters most to people locally and telling people what we are doing;
- Targeting activity to where we can make the most difference;
- Doing the kind of things that experience has shown will really work and be successful;
- Measuring progress, letting people know how we are doing, and adjusting where necessary to keep on track.

How was this strategy developed?

This Strategy has been developed in consultation with local residents and partners within Halton Strategic Partnership, including the voluntary sector. It is supported by detailed statistics and information about the borough, and sets out our vision and priorities, focusing on major issues which, if addressed, would make a real difference by 2026.

Based on a significant body of research and consultation, it outlines some key goals and headline actions by which we will be judged. It aims to guide the development and implementation of more detailed plans and actions to be undertaken by partners including the Council, the Police, health professionals, Job Centre Plus and others. Everyone has a role to play in making it happen in Halton. Working together we can make a difference and build a better future for our Borough.

Some examples of the available **evidence that this Strategy takes into account include:**

- State of the Borough Report 2010.
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and health profile for Halton.
- Halton Community Safety Strategic Assessment.
- Single Economic Assessment 2009.
- Updated Borough Profile.
- Evidence prepared to support the Core Strategy and Local Development Framework.
- Public consultation gathered in the development of the Core Strategy, Local Transport Plan and Children & Young People's Plan.

We **listened and consulted** – we collated, reflected on and analysed responses to consultation exercises conducted with local people.

The Partnership and its Priorities

The Halton Strategic Partnership Board (HSPB) works to ensure that actions delivered by a whole range of groups and organisations are properly 'joined up' and make a real difference to the lives of local people.

This Sustainable Community Strategy provides an overarching framework within which different partnerships, organisations and groups can co-operate together, commit to common goals and work towards improving life for people in the borough.

The following organisations and agencies are members of the Halton Strategic Partnership and have been involved in developing Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy:

NHS Halton & St Helens
Halton Borough Council
Cheshire Constabulary
Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service
Halton Housing Partnership
Halton Sports Partnership
Riverside College Halton
Cheshire Police Authority
Halton & St Helens Voluntary and Community Action
Jobcentre Plus
Faith Community
Greater Merseyside Connexions Service
Halton Association of Secondary Heads
Halton Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise

The Specialist Strategic Partnerships (SSPs)

There are five thematic Specialist Strategic Partnerships (SSPs) that sit underneath and report to the Halton Strategic Partnership Board. These are well-established, each leading on one of the five agreed key priority themes of the Halton Strategic Partnership. Each is a multi-agency partnership made up of representatives of agencies and services that have key roles in delivering the aims and objectives of the Specialist Strategic Partnership.

Their work is informed by key data and intelligence, consultation with the public and the expertise of partners. Each Specialist Strategic Partnership has developed a detailed delivery programme outlining the key work streams for their partnership.

These priority themes and their respective aims are as follows:

- **A Healthy Halton**

To create a healthier community and work to promote well being and a positive experience of life with good health, not simply an absence of disease, and offer opportunities for people to take responsibility for their health with the necessary support available.

- **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

To create an economically prosperous borough that encourages investment, enterprise and business growth, and improves the opportunities for learning and development together with the skills and employment prospects of both residents and workforce so that they are able to feel included socially and financially.

- **A Safer Halton**

To ensure pleasant, safe and secure neighbourhood environments, with attractive, safe surroundings, good quality local amenities, and the ability of people to enjoy life where they live.

- **Children and Young People in Halton**

Halton's ambition is to build stronger, safer communities which are able to support the development and learning of children and young people so they grow up feeling safe, secure, happy and healthy, and are ready to be Halton's present and Halton's future.

- **Environment and Regeneration in Halton**

To transform the urban fabric and infrastructure, to develop exciting places and spaces and to create a vibrant and accessible borough that makes Halton a place where people are proud to live and see a promising future for themselves and their families.

This Sustainable Community Strategy looks at how each of the themes link together and impact on each other. It recognises the importance of a number of key cross-cutting themes that are common across all Partnership activity. Some of the partnership working activity taking place across the Halton Strategic Partnership includes:

- Providing for the ageing population.
- Transformation towards a low carbon economy.
- Acting on climate change through behaviour change; more energy efficient homes; products which consume less energy; more renewable energy and microgeneration; sustainable low carbon transport; more efficient use of water; and by producing less waste.
- Narrowing the gap between deprived and non-deprived areas within the borough addressing health and socio-economic inequality.
- Improving educational attainment and access to training opportunities for those living in deprived areas.
- Improving access to services such as social and leisure facilities, supermarkets, health services and transport.

- Understanding how knowledge and perceptions of health related issues can affect the local population.
- Reducing social isolation.
- Maximising community resources and facilitating effective community engagement and participation.
- Integrating delivery of services
- Increasing community satisfaction with Halton as a place to live.
- Increasing focus on community involvement in public sector activities in Halton.
- Running services effectively and efficiently to meet customer needs and increase public satisfaction with all public services in Halton.

Each Strategic Partnership has responsibility for all aspects of performance management within their theme and ensures proper oversight, scrutiny and accountability of all activities that take place under the auspices of the Partnership and this Sustainable Community Strategy.

How will we make it happen in Halton?

The Halton Strategic Partnership Board is responsible for delivering this Sustainable Community Strategy and in doing so is committed to the following:

Community Focus, Participation and Engagement

The Partnership works to improve the quality of life at community levels. It does this by working through the seven geographical Area Forums established by the Council and supported by the partners. Each Area Forum has its own budget to help deliver improvements in their local area and all projects are expected to support one or more of the five priorities for Halton outlined in this Strategy.

Halton already has many front line services organised on a community basis. Community Support Officers, policing, community development workers, housing management, street-scene teams and youth workers are organised on an area basis. Residents, businesses and visitors are our primary focus in improving the way we deliver our services. We are committed to putting our community first in what we do and how and when we do it and in providing value for money when delivering services.

Improvement in the quality of life enjoyed by local people can only come about if the community is involved in making it happen. Solutions to problems are often dependent on local knowledge. The experiences of local residents and service users can help inform future service development. We will continue to engage with local people and help them to get involved in decision-making. We will also keep our communities informed about what we are doing and will continue to develop new and innovative ways to be more accountable to communities through consultation and open and transparent decision-making processes.

The Partnership is committed to an inclusive approach to community engagement through its strategy and network arrangements. Full details are available on the Partnership website www.haltonpartnership.net.

Narrowing the Gap

Halton overall offers a high quality of life but, as in other similar boroughs, the quality of life varies across the area from one neighbourhood to the next. The more deprived areas of the borough often suffer from poorer health, higher unemployment and lower educational attainment. Our aim is to create successful neighbourhoods, where people are safe, have good housing, a good quality environment, with access to good schools, services and economic opportunities and have strong and healthy communities. We will work together to improve all neighbourhoods within Halton, but we will particularly target the most deprived areas, to reduce the gap in the quality of life, health, prosperity and wellbeing between those neighbourhoods and the rest of the borough.

Regional Context

We recognise that Halton is neither insular nor isolated. Halton can only succeed as part of a thriving and successful Liverpool City Region and wider North West. This Sustainable Community Strategy builds upon the wider

strategic developments which are taking place in the North West. Partners from Halton play a key role in shaping sub-regional and national plans and arrangements. This connectivity – both strategically and operationally - is an important part of the Halton approach.

Managing Risk

The partnership has adopted a Risk Management Strategy and has a Strategic Risk Register in place which sets out the risk management objectives and the role and responsibilities for risk management of the Board and individual Specialist Strategic Partnerships. 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. For each identified risk, plans are in place to minimise the effects.

Resources

All the objectives and targets outlined here are achievable. How well and how quickly this 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.

Money

The organisations that make up the Partnership already spend hundreds of millions of pounds of public money each year in Halton. Much of this goes to maintain essential services like health care, policing, schools, transport and waste collection that we tend to take for granted. The way money is spent on these statutory services – 'mainstream budgets' – must continue to be focused on the achievement of the specific objectives and improvement targets within this Strategy. The Sustainable Community Strategy provides a tool to help partners focus their budgets.

The Strategy also provides a framework to help identify and secure additional funding for the borough from a variety of sources. It sets out shared policy objectives along with clear aims and targets across the five agreed key themes. This gives a framework in which partners can make budgetary decisions that reflect Halton's priorities.

People & Assets

Allied to cash, the efforts, skills and determination of people living and working in the borough are crucial to success. This applies to individuals interested or already active in helping their local community as well as to those who work in public, voluntary and other organisations serving Halton. We need to boost skills and knowledge and stimulate confidence and motivation that will strengthen the borough's capacity to help itself. We must ensure that we are organised and co-operate in ways that are effective and deliver real benefits. We also need to provide better ways for people to work collaboratively and across organisational boundaries to increase their own job satisfaction and their impact on the challenges they deal with.

Most of the steps we need to take in moving Halton forward will involve some use of land, buildings, equipment and materials. Hundreds of millions of pounds are currently invested in publicly owned physical resources of various kinds within the borough. We need to make optimum use of these assets, cutting out any unnecessary duplication and ensuring they are well adapted to local requirements.

There is a strong commitment to tackling climate change and completing the evolution to a low carbon local economy. The Council is demonstrating leadership in the use and refurbishment of operational assets. Examples include installing voltage optimisers in buildings, a programme of lighting and boiler control improvements, installation of Multi Functional devices across the Council's buildings and the setting up of a Green Champion Network. Additionally, where refurbishment has been necessary, energy efficient measures have been installed. The improvements at Runcorn Town Hall have included an increase in insulation to the roof, double glazing and cladding, solar shading, photovoltaic tiles, sensory lighting, water saving WCs, water saving taps and heating control zoning.

In particular we have to respond to the desire of people to access a range of services through a single portal. The advent of Halton Direct Link, health care resource centres, extended schools and Children's Centres provide models of exemplary service delivery that are highly valued by local people. Increasingly, partners will need to look at much greater efforts towards co-location and joint use of facilities. Not only is this more cost efficient, but it gives partners a proper customer focus.

Data and Intelligence

Without proper information, and making it easily accessible to people, we are working in the dark in trying to bring about improvement in Halton. This covers information about local needs and conditions, and what people think is most important for their communities. It is about the information we need to understand what is likely to work well in achieving our targets for Halton. It's about keeping people – local people and partner organisations – in the picture about the progress we are making together. 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' that holds key statistical information on all aspects of living conditions in Halton. The Observatory provides 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.

B) The Partnership has 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.

C) The Partnership website provides an easy to access source of material on all aspects of the Halton Strategic Partnership's work throughout the borough. The site covers the full range of activities from events and award ceremonies to new policy changes. There are dedicated sections for each of the priority areas that outline the aims and objectives plus provide access for meeting minutes. There is also a newly added policy section, developed to keep partners up to date with any changes.

What is Halton Like?

Halton is a largely urban area of 118,700 people (2009 population estimate). 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. This in part is due to a concerted effort to build new houses, particularly larger executive homes in Sandymoor (SE Runcorn) and Upton Rocks (NE Widnes) to try to stem population decline, to provide a more balanced housing stock, and retain wealth in the community. It is also in part due to increased inward migration. The population is projected to grow to 122,900 in 2023.

The number of jobs in the borough is largely the same as it was 10 years ago but the proportion employed in manufacturing has fallen and the reliance on a small number of large employers is beginning to be reduced. The wealth of the borough has improved overall during the last 10 years as illustrated by rising numbers of detached houses, rising car ownership, increases in professional and managerial households in parts of the borough. There are currently approximately 52,000 employee jobs in Halton, of which 37,900 are full time.

Halton shares many of the social and economic problems more associated with its urban neighbours on Merseyside. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for 2007 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 30th nationally (a ranking of 1 indicates that an area is the most deprived), which is third highest on Merseyside, behind Knowsley and Liverpool, and 10th highest in the North West, although this is an improvement on being fifth highest in 2004). Other authorities, St Helens (47th), Wirral (60th) and Sefton (83rd), are all less deprived compared to Halton.

This Index suggests that deprivation has improved in the borough, as Halton ranked 21st overall nationally in 2004. The proportion of Halton's population in the top category (i.e. the top 20% of super output areas) has also decreased from 50% in 2004 to 47% in 2007. Halton's concentration of deprivation has improved from 20th worst in England in 2004 to 27th in 2007. Concentration is a key way of identifying hot spots of deprivation within an area. Of England's 975 'Super Output Areas', which form the top three per cent most deprived areas within England, eight are situated in Halton. The most deprived neighbourhood in Halton is ranked 306th out of 32,482 and is situated in Runcorn. Much has been done but clearly there is still much to do.

Since 2000, a range of research has been carried out by partners, which has highlighted key challenges and opportunities facing Halton. This research tells us that Halton is:

- an area where over 70% of people are satisfied with their local area as a place to live.
- an area whose population is projected to grow by 4% (2008-2026), with a large increase in the older population.

- tackling deprivation, however it still remains one of the most deprived areas in the North West with unemployment rates higher than the North West and National rates.
- an area where health issues are still evident with life expectancy lower than the North West and England averages.
- an area with plenty of open space; 12 areas within Halton have been designated with Green Flag awards.
- improving it's GCSE results and reducing the number of 16 to 18 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET).
- an area with a diverse and prospering economy, with increasing average incomes for residents, improvement in skills and with higher rates of employment in the manufacturing sector.
- an accessible and convenient place to live and work.
- an area which provides a functional base for the community.
- an area offering many innovation and development opportunities to improve quality of life.

More detailed information on these issues can be found in the [State of the Borough Report](#).

What you told us

In 2006 and 2008 the Council commissioned a Place Survey to ask residents about the quality of life in the borough. Building on the 2008 Place Survey, the Halton Strategic Partnership Board commissioned a workshop to enhance the Partnership's understanding of the results of the Place Survey, using qualitative research to achieve a greater depth of understanding and provide an insight into what needs to change to improve Halton, the area. This work is underpinned by the continued Halton2000 (Halton's citizens panel) surveys and the extensive ongoing consultation and engagement activities across the borough. This has been taken into account when developing Halton's vision for our third Sustainable Community Strategy.


Respondents told us that generally the factors they felt to be most important in making their local area a good place to live are:

- low levels of crime
- clean streets
- health services


Research in 2009 showed that the following were the best things about living in Halton.

- The People – neighbours, family and friends
- Parks
- Green/leafy, well landscaped, quiet
- History
- Schools
- Shopping
- Children's Facilities
- Transport – local buses/links to other parts of country

(Source Ipsos Mori 2009)



Phoenix Park is
absolutely fantastic

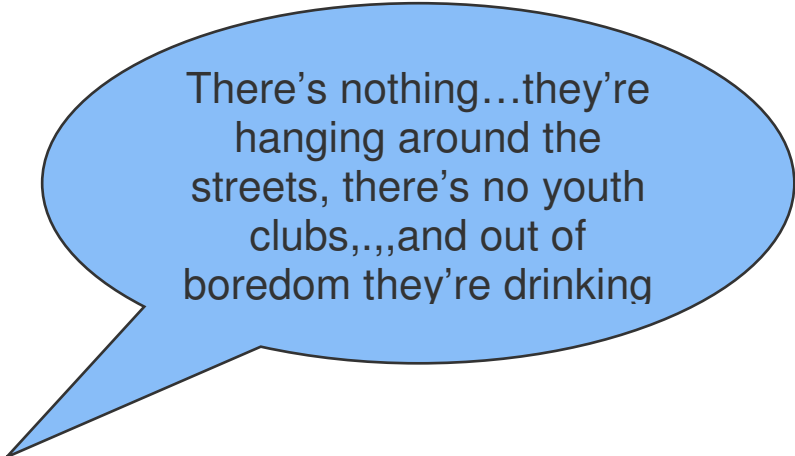


Bridge Water canal is
absolutely beautiful


This research also showed that the bad things about living in Halton for our residents include:

- Lack of things for young people to do (mostly teenagers, but also children).
- Crime and anti-social behaviour - drugs, lack of respect, parenting skills, unruly youths, lack of policing.
- Job prospects.
- Environment (pollution, traffic, cleanliness, lighting).
- Community facilities in general – centres, shops.
- Lack of facilities including shops in Runcorn versus Widnes (investment focused in Widnes).
- Buses.
- Health services – no hospital, length of time for GP appointments, lack of dentists.
- Local schools.
- Lack of influence in local decision making.
- Lack of visible policing.
- Housing landlord issues.

(Source Ipsos Mori 2009)



There's nothing...they're hanging around the streets, there's no youth clubs,,,and out of boredom they're drinking



You can't get a doctor's appointment unless you're really dvina

You Said, We Did

In response to the issues that have been raised in consultation with residents in Halton, we have worked in partnership to deliver improvements. Examples for each priority include:

A Healthy Halton

You said – You can't get a doctors appointment and there are no hospital Accident & Emergency facilities.

We did – Developing Planned Health Services and Developing Urgent Care Services now form an integral part of the PCTs Commissioning Strategic Plan for Halton and St. Helens. The PCT and partners have held a number of community events to help them to understand the detail underpinning these issues.

Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

You said – We need more job prospects.

We did – The 3MG 528,000 sq ft chilled distribution facility is now fully operational - and is the centre piece of the 44 acre 3MG development. Of the 377 new jobs created at the new 3MG Tesco distribution centre in Widnes, 75 per cent went to Halton residents. Thirty eight percent of the new starters from the Halton area were previously unemployed and 111 of the new starters were Halton People into Jobs clients.

A Safer Halton

You said – More needs to be done to tackle anti-social behaviour.

We did - RESPECT weeks – These campaigns aim to develop and build a stronger and more coordinated approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and associated environmental problems within communities where the perception of crime and ant-social behaviour is highest.

The programme brings together a wide variety of agencies and organisations who, with the help of local residents, tackled a host of crime and environmental issues. They also look at ways to bring the community closer together with sporting and healthier lifestyle activities for both young and older people alike.

The Respect programme has provided a focus for partners to tackle problems such as crime and anti-social behaviour, improving job training opportunities and reducing litter and fly tipping. The Respect weeks of action have pulled together activities linked to crime reduction and environmental improvements; activities for children and young people; opportunities for employment, education and training; and health and older people's projects.

Ultimately, Respect Weeks of Action engage local people with local partners and deliver real results on the ground to enable some of our most deprived communities to thrive.

Children & Young People in Halton

You said – There is a lack of things for young people to do.

We did – £2.5 million secured from the Big Lottery Fund has helped to transform the former Kingsway Health Centre, a listed building, into a place where young people can have fun and chill out in a safe environment. The centre was designed and named by young people – it is known as CRMZ (Central RMZ) - involves a total investment of £3 million. The project has been developed by young people, Halton Borough Council, the Youth Service and Connexions, with partners including the Primary Care Trust and Halton Voluntary Action.

The features of CRMZ include internet facilities, space for advice and support on issues relevant to their needs, access to a gym, and gardens designed to link outer and inner areas. Services will be available on site which will promote volunteering, education, employment and training, and good teenage health.

Environment and Regeneration in Halton

You said – There is a lack of facilities, including shops.

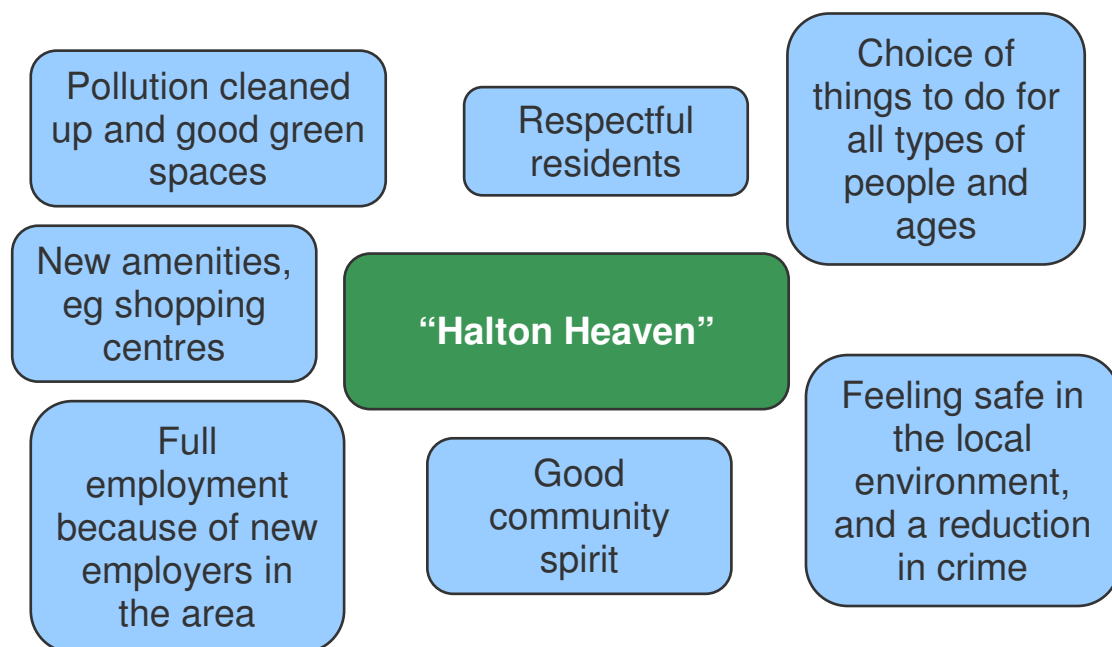
We did – The opening of Phase 1 of the Widnes Shopping Park now provides the diversity of shopping offer that residents in the borough have desired for a long time. The 250,000 ft² development opened at Easter 2010 and more development is yet to follow. Retailers have witnessed a significant growth in business, surpassing their original expectations.

What sort of place do we want Halton to be?

Vision

Halton will be a thriving and vibrant borough where people can learn and develop their skills, enjoy a good quality 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 neighbourhoods.

In 2009, you told us that you had the following aspirations for Halton:



(Source Ipsos Mori 2009)

Priority Themes

A Healthy Halton

Aim

To create a healthier community and work together to promote well being and a positive experience of life with good health, not simply an absence of disease, and offer opportunities for people to take responsibility for their health with the necessary support available.

Objectives

- To understand fully the causes of ill health in Halton and act together to improve the overall health and well-being of local people.
- To lay firm foundations for a healthy start in life and support those most in need in the community by increasing community engagement in health issues and promoting autonomy.
- To reduce the burden of disease and preventable causes of death in Halton by reducing smoking levels, alcohol consumption and by increasing physical activity, improving diet and the early detection and treatment of disease.
- To respond to the needs of an ageing population improving their quality of life and thus enabling them to lead longer, active and more fulfilled lives.
- To remove barriers that disable people and contribute to poor health by working across partnerships to address the wider determinants of health such as unemployment, education and skills, housing, crime and environment.
- To improve access to health services, including primary care.

What will we do to achieve these objectives?

- Reduce health inequalities.
- Concentrate on the areas in Halton with the worst health outcomes, specifically reducing early deaths.
- Reduce harm caused by alcohol and tobacco.
- Halt the rising trend of obesity.
- Improve mental health.
- Promote independence of older people and vulnerable groups.
- Increase community engagement in health issues and promote autonomy.
- Increase physical activity, improve diet and early detection and treatment of disease.
- Address the wider determinants of health such as unemployment, education and skills, housing, crime and environment.
- Improve Safety, Equality and Efficiency: Planned and Urgent Care.
- Reduce death rates, focussing on premature deaths from cancer and circulatory disease.

Key Achievements

- Health statistics for 2009 indicate that the health inequalities gap between Halton and the other part of the PCT footprint, St. Helens is closing. In 2006 the gap in female mortality between Halton and St. Helens was 19.9%, in 2009 it was 8.6%. In 2006 the gap for males was 7% and in 2009 it was 4.5%.
- Over the last ten years there has been a fall in death rates from all causes and in early deaths from cancer, heart disease and strokes.
- Halton has improved its smoking quit rate year on year for the past five years. Halton and St. Helens now has the fourth highest quit rate in the North West at 1104.74 per 100,000.

Two examples of the successes gained through working in partnership around the health priority are outlined below:

Health Checks Plus Programme

On the 1st October 2009 the Health Checks Plus Scheme was launched. This is part of a five year delivery plan that will see the whole adult population of Halton and St. Helens PCT (approximately 223,000 people aged 20 years and over) having a Health Checks Plus assessment on a five yearly basis. This scheme complements the national offer of “Free NHS Health Checks” with the “plus” element including trigger questions related to the early detection of other major illnesses such as cancer and depression. The assessment also takes the opportunity to ask questions related to identifying any social/ housing or carers’ needs.

As many as 87% of GP practices have committed to delivering this scheme. Throughout 2010/11 we will commission additional capacity across a variety of community settings to ensure we are reaching and offering assessments to those whom would benefit the most. These locations could include:

- Community health service clinics;
- Pharmacies;
- Mobile units;
- Acute Trusts (under the Health Promoting Hospitals banner).

Smoking

Smoking has a major impact on cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (bronchitis and emphysema) and cardiovascular disease.

Halton has improved its smoking quit rate year on year for the past five years. Halton and St Helens now has the fourth highest quit rate in the North West at 1104.74 per 100,000. Halton and St Helens has stretched their smoking target for next year and will have the second highest target in the North West.

- Stop smoking advisors now work in hospitals, pharmacies and 13 GP practices in Halton.
- Pharmacists are incentivised to deliver stop smoking advice and help quitters.

- The stop smoking rate for pregnant women has improved this year with 22.5% staying quit at time of delivery in the first two quarters of 2009/10 compared to 25.5% in 2008/9.
- Advice and support on smoke-free homes is given to pregnant women and significant others in the lives of pregnant smokers.
- Midwives have baby clear monitors and routinely test all babies in the womb for raised carbon monoxide levels due to a smoky atmosphere and then offer advice on smoke-free homes.
- There is a 100% compliance with smoke-free public places enforcement.
- The National Support Team for tobacco control in Halton and St Helens recognised robust partnership working around tobacco control.

Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Aim:

To create an economically prosperous borough that encourages investment, enterprise and business growth, and improves the opportunities for learning and development together with the skills and employment prospects of residents and the workforce so that they are able to feel included socially and financially.

Objectives

- To develop a strong, diverse, competitive and sustainable local economy.
- To foster a culture of enterprise and entrepreneurship and make Halton an ideal place to start and grow a business.
- To develop a culture where learning is valued and skill levels throughout the adult population and across the local workforce can be raised.
- To promote and increase the employability of local people and remove barriers to employment to get more people into work.
- To maximise an individual's potential to increase and manage their income, including access to appropriate, supportive advice services.

What we will do to achieve these objectives?

- Increase the number of local businesses, particularly in expanding knowledge-based sectors of the economy.
- Have higher levels of digital inclusion and access to superfast broadband internet.
- Good physical access to a university technical college campus.
- Increase the proportion of local workforce employed in growing sectors of the economy.
- Increase the rates of new business start-up and survival.
- Grow the proportion of the Halton economy provided by local SMEs.
- Encourage a culture of entrepreneurship amongst our young people.
- Make greater use of procurement and planning processes to support the delivery of targeted employment and training opportunities.
- Encourage employers in growing sectors of the economy to (re)locate in Halton.
- Reduce the number of residents without basic literacy and numeracy skills (Level 2).
- Increase skill levels throughout the local workforce to meet the needs of new and growing employment opportunities.
- Increase the use of vocational and managerial qualifications to improve our skills base.
- Increase the proportion of local residents and workforce in possession of high level (level 4) and digital skills.
- Reduce the number of residents in receipt of welfare benefits, especially in our most disadvantaged communities and neighbourhoods.
- Reduce the number of our young people that are Not in Education Employment, or Training ('NEET').
- Increase the number of apprenticeships offered by local employers.

- Greater levels of investment by local businesses in training their workforce in new skills.
- Expand the number of high-value jobs on offer in the local economy.
- Fewer families living in poverty.
- Fewer people experiencing financial exclusion.
- Fewer people claiming out of work benefits.
- Wider access to high quality information advice and guidance ('IAG') on personal finance and debt.

Key Achievements

- Halton's unemployment rate fell at twice the rate as that for England and the North West between August 2009 and August 2010.
- The proportion of Halton's working age population qualified to at least Level 2 or higher increased from 60% to over 68% between 2007 and 2009, exceeding the target set.
- Halton's not in education, employment or training (NEET) figures have fallen from 13.2% in 2008 to 9.15% in 2010.

Examples of the successes gained through working in partnership around the Employment, Learning & Skills priority are outlined below:

Tesco 3MG Pre-employment skills and recruitment programme

The 528,000 sq ft chilled distribution facility is now fully operational - and is the centre piece of the 44 acre 3MG development. Of the 377 new jobs created at the new 3MG Tesco distribution centre in Widnes, 75 per cent were taken by Halton residents. Thirty eight percent of the new starters from the Halton area were previously unemployed and 111 of the new starters were Halton People into Jobs clients.

Managers at Tesco praised the quality of candidates from Halton. More than 4,000 people applied for the jobs with almost 1,300 interviews offered. The recruitment process was supported by the Halton Employment Partnership who successfully worked with Tesco during the recruitment process to enable local people to get local jobs.

The Halton Employment Partnership is supported by Halton Strategic Partnership and partners include Halton Borough Council, Job Centre Plus, Riverside College, Sector Skills Councils and The Skills Funding Agency.

Halton Employment Partnership organised 31 pre-recruitment sessions during the project to support local people into work. The sessions included tips on making job applications and preparing for interviews. Tesco Human Resources staff set up a recruitment centre at the Stobart Stadium, Halton, with the help of Halton Borough Council and Halton Employment Partnership. Halton Employment Partnership staff then spent a number of weeks at the Stadium supporting the Tesco interview process while other staff organised the interview schedules.

Halton Employment Partnership also recently helped international firm Norbert Dentressangle, which recently set up a recycling centre on 3MG, to recruit 12 members of staff.

Help for Halton's young people Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET).

In 2008/09 the proportion of Halton's NEET young people stood at 13.2%. Since then, a concerted programme of innovative and focused work by a range of partners in Halton has seen the figure reduced to 10.3%. An example of the work done is that by Riverside College working with the Connexions Service to provide access to a range of vocational programmes for NEET young people in Halton. Examples of the wide range of vocational opportunities include business administration, health & social care, bricklaying, painting and decorating, hospitality and catering.

To encourage young people to engage and sustain their participation in the programme, coaching and mentoring services are offered alongside the vocational element of the programme delivered by the college.

The Enterprising Halton Programme.

Launched in April 2007, the Enterprising Halton Programme has provided bespoke advice, support and start-up grants for local residents setting up their new businesses in the borough. The programme has helped 379 new business start-ups in Halton, which in turn have created 111 new jobs in addition to the business owners. Since April 2009, just over 50% of new businesses set up have been in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods of the borough. The programme is now recognised as best practice across the region and elements of it have been adopted elsewhere in several places.

A Safer Halton

Aim

To ensure pleasant, safe and secure neighbourhood environments, with attractive, safe surroundings, good quality local amenities, and the ability of people to enjoy life where they live.

Objectives

- To investigate and tackle the underlying causes of crime and disorder and respond effectively to public concern by reducing crime levels, with a particular focus on reducing the levels of crime that disproportionately affect some of the more deprived areas.
- To tackle alcohol and drug/substance misuse problems, and the resulting harm that is caused to communities, families and individuals.
- To tackle the problem of domestic abuse in all its forms, supporting the victims and their families and taking enforcement action against perpetrators.
- To safeguard adults who are more vulnerable to physical, financial, sexual and emotional abuse and vulnerable children who are often part of families where there are drug and alcohol problems or where relationships are abusive or violent.
- To consult and engage with communities to identify problems and put in place effective measures to address them, with a particular focus on promoting community cohesion and adopting a zero tolerance to all forms of hate crime within Halton, so that no-one is unfairly victimised.
- We will work together to reduce fear of crime and increase public confidence in the police, council and other agencies to respond to reports of crime and anti social behaviour and tackle any potential tensions within communities, in particular those that may lead to extremist activity.

What will we do to achieve these objectives?

- Tackle alcohol related crime and anti social behaviour through greater enforcement activity, focused on the night time economy and in other problem areas.
- Tackle drug abuse and drug related crime, through provision of effective treatment services and interventions for users and taking appropriate enforcement action. Collaborative working through Ashley House is central to success.
- Deliver a wider integrated offender management programme to repeat offenders. This will involve a partnership approach to offer support to perpetrators, such as access to drug and alcohol treatment services to help them to change their behaviour. Where this approach fails we will take appropriate enforcement action.
- Tackle serious acquisitive crime, including burglary, personal and business robbery and vehicle crime with a focus on bringing offenders to justice, targeting prolific offenders, providing accessible crime prevention advice, responding to victims, promoting 'Crimestoppers', disrupting the stolen goods market and delivering forensic property marking solutions within high-risk communities.

- Tackle public perceptions of drug dealing in the borough through undertaking a Mapping exercise to show where drug perceptions are out of line with actual drug-related activity and making the public aware of police activity to tackle drugs.
- Tackle domestic abuse within Halton, through support to the victims and their families and taking appropriate action to deal with offenders. In particular we need to identify interventions that work to address repeat offenders where current approaches are not working.
- Safeguard adults, identify abuse early and work together to put in place effective measures to address these issues.
- Safeguard vulnerable children, in particular those that come from families where there is a history of domestic abuse or drug and alcohol problems. Adopt a 'think family' approach, to ensure that we tackle the underlying causes and not just address the problem.
- Improve local conditions and encourage people to become involved in helping shape what happens in their local area via the continued provision of Locality Area Forums, Police Community Action Meetings (CAMs), Homewatch Schemes and 'Face the People' sessions.
- Support our diverse community where all residents are able to live without fear of abuse or hate crime.

Key Achievements

In 2009-10, we saw the following reductions in crime compared to the same time period in 2008-09:

- Vehicle crime has reduced by 29% and criminal damage by 34%.
- Overall crime reduction of 16% in Halton, (1875 fewer victims of crime).
- Domestic burglary down 16%.
- Motor vehicle theft down 23%.
- 20% reduction in the number of criminal damage reported incidents.
- 27% reduction in the re-offending rate of our most prolific and priority offenders.
- 14% improvement in the perception of anti social behaviour from the Places Survey carried out in 2009 compared to the 2007 survey results.

Examples of the successes gained through working in partnership around the Safer Halton priority are outlined below:

Operation StaySafe

This has been successfully delivered each month within Halton since January 2009. The project has focussed primarily on children and young people whose whereabouts and behaviour has placed them at risk of significant harm. Of particular interest are those consuming alcohol or involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

Numerous young people have been taken to places of safety and referred on to partnership agencies such as alcohol and drug programmes to help parents and carers support young people more effectively. The project has recorded large reductions in police calls for service and has also reduced hospital admissions. In 2009/10, 58 young people were brought to a place of safety, 1662 young people were spoken to and 444 quantities of alcohol were seized.

Burglary Days of Action

This started in a bid to help local residents in Halton protect their homes from burglary by providing advice on how to keep their homes safe and by handing out forensic property marking solution kits. The aim of the Burglary Days of Action is to engage directly with those communities that are most at risk of becoming victims of burglary, bringing the services of the Community Safety Team to those areas identified as being most in need of support.

We provide targeted crime reduction and fire safety advice and in doing so raise the profile of the Safer Halton Partnership providing reassurance to local communities and reduce the fear of becoming a victim of crime and or anti-social behaviour. The Community Safety Team provides an enhanced service to victims of burglary according to their needs. Burglary Days of Action is supported by targeted campaign material to raise community awareness of the issues associated with burglary, doorstep crime and fire safety identified hotspot locations.

Justice seen Justice Done

This is a government programme which is about opening up the criminal justice service and making it more transparent to the public. There are a number of elements to this work including:-

- Sentencing Outcomes - Court results from the Simple Speedy Summary Courts are published on a monthly basis to ensure that the public are aware that offenders are punished for their behaviour. The results focus on the cases that have a high community impact, such as drink driving, drugs, criminal damage, shoplifting etc.
- Community Payback - Offenders now wear high visibility orange jackets and the community have the opportunity to have a say on the work that offenders do in their area.
- Community Cashback - the community was given the chance to have a say on how seized assets from criminals are spent in their community. Two projects in Halton have been funded via this scheme.
- Community Crime Fighters - Active community members have been trained and given information about the standards they should expect from the criminal justice service.

Children & Young People in Halton

Aim:

Halton's ambition is to build stronger, safer communities which are able to support the development and learning of children and young people so they grow up feeling safe, secure, happy and healthy, and are ready to be Halton's present and Halton's future

Objectives

- Improve outcomes for children and young people through effective joint commissioning.
- Improve outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people by targeting services effectively.
- Improve outcomes for children and young people through embedding integrated processes to deliver early intervention.

The safeguarding of our children and young people is a key priority across the Trust and runs through all work conducted through the Trust.

See the [Children's and Young Peoples Plan](#) for more detail.

What will we do to achieve these objectives?

- Ensure that positive outcomes for children and young people are at the heart of the strategic planning and commissioning process.
- Increase the number of young people participating in volunteering and other positive activities.
- Increase the range of activities available for our children and young people.
- Embed Team Around the Family across Halton.
- Tackle domestic abuse within Halton, through support to the victims and their families.
- Safeguard vulnerable children, in particular those that come from families where there is a history of domestic abuse or drug and alcohol problems. Through 'Team around the Family', we will ensure that we tackle the underlying causes and not just address the problem.
- Increase the percentage of vulnerable groups in education, employment and training.
- Tackle the high rate of under 18 conceptions.
- Reduce infant mortality rates.
- Reduce the proportion of children in poverty.
- Improve the emotional health of our children and young people.
- Improve breastfeeding rates.
- Reduce the percentage of young people who consume alcohol.
- Tackle the rise in overweight and obese children and young people.
- Increase the stability of placements for children in care.
- Increase the number of parents with substance misuse issues receiving support.

- Reduce the percentage of young people charged or cautioned with offences.
- Increase the percentage of young people eligible for free school meals achieving Level 3 by age 19.

Key Achievements

- The proportion of young people attaining 5 A*-C GCSEs rose by 17 percentage points between 2006 and 2010.
- Halton's Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) figures have fallen from 13.2% in 2008 to 9.15% in 2010.
- Children and young people's satisfaction with local parks and play areas has risen from 42% in 2008 to 52% in 2010.
- Successful establishment of Team Around the Family Model of early help and prevention across Halton since April 2010.
- Narrowing of the gap in achievement of 5 A*-C GCSEs between most affluent and deprived neighbourhoods of Halton between 2008 and 2010.
- Development of Central RMZ (CRMZ) youth hub facility.
- Establishment of Young People's Travel Forum that has resulted in local young people working directly with lead officers from local bus companies.

Examples of the successes gained through working in partnership around the children and young people priority are outlined below:

Partnership Working Between Job Centre Plus and Children's Centres in Halton.

As a result of the rise in unemployment and estates issues, a service is now available offering access to lone parent advisors from Job Centre Plus at all Halton's Children's Centres. Each Centre has community development workers working alongside the Job Centre Plus advisers for at least half of each day. This has made a huge difference to advisers being able to offer a full package of support around the family. Some of the benefits arising from this partnership include:

- Improved joint working between organisations to the benefit of families as a whole.
- Parental engagement – Community Development Workers are informing and supporting Job Centre Plus advice sessions.
- Effective fast track referrals to Halton People Into Jobs, Citizen's Advice Bureau, Adult Learning and Job Centre Plus funded training.
- A whole support network 'on site' to work with families in a family friendly environment.

Prince's Trust in the local community:

The Halton 43 Prince's Trust team worked in partnership with Halton Borough Council to renovate the Park Family Centre in Castlefields, Runcorn. They decided to take on this challenge to support their local community and develop new skills. The team of 10 young people aged between 16 and 25 raised money themselves and were supported through neighbourhood management.

The Park Family Centre was officially re-opened in February 2010 and was attended by members of the Fire Authority, local councillors', the staff from Halton Brook Children's Centre, Castlefields residents and friends and family of the team members. All team members gave a speech and were presented with a certificate in recognition of their achievements. The young people's hard work and dedication has now paid off because they have now been awarded an Outstanding Achievement Award for the best community project in Halton.

Child Safety Programme

This Programme was developed as a result of the review of child deaths in Halton. These reviews identified a number of preventable factors that caused the deaths of babies and young children through injury, accidents or suffocation following sleeping with the baby. The programme consists of multi agency training for front line staff to highlight the potential hazards and explore how agencies could work more effectively together.

A Child Safety Directory has also been developed, along with a resource pack and pocket guide for front line workers from a range of agencies, informed by social marketing research. They have been well received and are being used to improve safety for young children.

Environment and Regeneration in Halton

Aim:

To transform the urban fabric and infrastructure, to develop exciting places and spaces and to create a vibrant and accessible borough that makes Halton a place where people are proud to live and see a promising future for themselves and their families.

Objectives:

- Guide the development of a high quality and sustainable built environment to support Halton's new low carbon economy.
- Provide a well connected, sustainable and accessible borough, including the provision of the Mersey Gateway. Ensure a variety of safe efficient travel and infrastructure options for people, goods, communications and freight.
- Conserve, manage and enhance Halton's physical and natural assets in order to maximise community and other benefits by improving environmental quality.
- Achieve high standards of sustainability by tackling climate change. Minimise waste generation and maximising the reuse, recycling, composting and energy management and recovery from waste resources.
- Provide sustainable, good quality, affordable and adaptable residential accommodation to meet the needs of all sections of society.

What we will do to achieve these objectives:

- Work with partners and the local community to support The Mersey Gateway scheme to fully realise its benefits.
- Improve the retail offer and the environment within town centres to attract inward investment and increase footfall.
- Upgrade and fully utilise the borough's rail, road, commercial waterways, power and digital infrastructure in order to maximise the potential for economic development.
- Adapt to climate change.
- Reduce municipal landfill to bring it in line with regional and national rates.
- Improve household recycling rates to bring it in line with regional and national rates.
- Improve public satisfaction with litter and refuse and doorstep recycling.
- Continue to reduce CO₂ emissions within the borough, including from industry and road transport.
- Develop more affordable and decent housing, with a special focus on the need for extra care housing.
- Improve public transport information and local bus services.
- Maintain a hierarchy of parks and open spaces and increase their use and function;
- Long-term priorities include the development or regeneration of:
 - Sandymoor
 - Daresbury

- Windmill Hill
- Castlefields
- Runcorn Old Town Centre
- Widnes Waterfront
- West Bank
- 3MG
- Runcorn Docks

Key Achievements

- Halton has achieved 12 Green Flag awarded parks.
- Phase 1 of the 250,000 ft² Widnes Shopping Park development opened at Easter 2010. Retailers have witnessed a significant growth in business, surpassing their original expectations and residents now have greater diversity of shopping offer.

Examples of the successes gained through working in partnership around the Environment & Regeneration in Halton priority are outlined below:

Wild About Halton

The 'Wild About Halton' project ran from 2002 – 2009, reconnecting people with nature. Working with schools and community groups through a variety of mediums including the internet, the project detailed the environmental role of local nature reserves in Halton. Emphasis was placed on developing an educational resource centred on the school curriculum. This allowed community involvement in the management of the reserves.

The project has seen the development facilities to enable people to view highlights from the local nature reserves.

The Castlefields Programme

In 2002, a Partnership was formed to address the many problems of the residential neighbourhood of Castlefields. A Masterplan for the area was approved which combined more than 50 individual projects. Over the last decade approximately 1000 unpopular deck access flats have been demolished, and these have been replaced with around 700 new homes, including the most energy efficient properties in the Borough. The tenure of the neighbourhood has also diversified to create a more mixed and sustainable community. Community facilities have been enhanced with the creation of the award-winning Phoenix Park offering youth activities and educational opportunities from its Pavilion. The new Village Square is due for completion in the summer of 2011 bringing much needed new local shops and a community centre. The addition of a new state-of-heart health centre in spring 2012 will complete the transformation of the old local centre, to put the heart back into the neighbourhood.

This regeneration programme has now become a beacon of achievement for its ability to transform what was once classed as an undesirable place to live into an environment where people are now proud and happy to live. Many of Castlefields' problems have now been addressed.

The regeneration programme continues to be driven by the strong commitment of the Partnership, with residents being consulted along the way to ensure their aspirations are met. The programme has attracted a number of national awards, including the RENEW Northwest Exemplar Learning Programme and Chartered Institute of Housing: Excellence in Delivering Regeneration Award. In 2009, The Castlefields Partnership was one of only four schemes shortlisted by the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) for its Leadership in Regeneration Award.

Recycling

In recent years changes in waste management practices have seen improvements in recycling services to local communities. Recycling and composting of household waste has now reached a total of 30% (in 2009/10) with the help of Halton residents. A three year Waste Action Plan was drafted which set out plans for Halton's waste collection infrastructure required to deliver the aims of Halton's Municipal Waste Management Strategy. This was based on an extension of kerbside collection services for garden waste and multi-materials recycling.

Following the approval of the Plan, a pilot scheme introduced the kerbside collection of plastics, cans, paper, card and glass to approximately 6,000 households in the borough. The results were to be used to inform future decisions on the extension of the service to other areas of the borough. Following the successful pilot, extensions to the kerbside multi-material recycling scheme took place in 2008/09 and 2009/10. The garden waste collection service has also been extended.

In 2009/10 the delivery of a pilot scheme to reward residents for recycling received approval. The scheme, administered by RecycleBank, commenced in October 2009 and was implemented to 10,000 properties. Halton Borough Council became the first authority to apply an incentive scheme to an existing collection service, and the second in the country to launch the scheme.

Following a successful pilot the 'rewards for recycling' scheme was rolled out to all areas of the borough from the summer of 2010. Figures have shown that in areas where the opt-in reward scheme has been introduced, recycling has increased.

Halton's two Household Waste Recycling Centres are now operated under a Merseyside and Halton partnership contract and further improvements in site facilities are planned. The sites are now Designated Collection Facilities for Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE).

Cross Cutting Issues

This strategy tries to take a positive view of the future. It will be better to shift our focus to prevention measures, to promote positive lifestyles and the many excellent aspects of life in Halton. This includes more timely interventions to help people at the times when they most need support. A number of issues that cut across the key priority areas contained within this Strategy must be kept in mind as we meet the challenges faced within each priority area.

Embracing 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 tolerate discrimination, victimisation or harassment for any reason. There is a commitment to equity and social justice from all Partners.

The Partnership aims to create a culture where people of all backgrounds and experience feel appreciated and valued, and as a Partnership we are committed to a programme of action to make this policy fully effective.

In order to stress the importance of this area a Halton Equalities, Engagement and Cohesion Partnership has been created reporting directly to the Board. A key focus of its work is to ensure mainstream service delivery is adequately meeting the needs of the diverse communities of Halton. Equity and accessibility are the two key drivers of how we do things.

Child and Family Poverty

Many local partnerships have had considerable success in tackling child and family poverty. But meeting the challenge of eradicating it requires additional effort from all partners to prioritise tackling child and family poverty and improve outcomes for disadvantaged children and their families.

Whilst poverty can be measured by income, it is a much broader issue. Therefore, the European Union's working definition of poverty has been adopted;

“Persons, families and groups of persons, whose resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the Member State to which they belong.”

This recognises that poverty is not just about income but about effective exclusion from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities, such as:

- Income poverty
- Service poverty (difficulty in accessing and benefiting from quality services e.g. housing, health, education and leisure)

- Participation poverty (affecting the ability to
 - participate in the community;
 - engage in social activities;
 - have a negative impact on experience of education and training; and
 - affect transition to independence).

In response to the Child Poverty Act 2010, Halton has worked alongside its partners in the Liverpool City Region to develop a Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment and multi agency Child and Family Poverty Strategy for Halton.

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. These problems link and reinforce each other creating a vicious circle for people. Often they are clustered in specific neighbourhoods. Focused work based on the needs of each

Neighbourhood working will help us to close the gap between the most deprived parts of the Borough and the rest, with regards to health, education, employment and crime.

According to the latest Index of Multiple Deprivation in 2007 Halton has again improved its overall deprivation score but it remains amongst the 30 most deprived areas of England. Halton has become less deprived overall on a national scale but the gap between the most affluent and deprived areas of the borough is growing. Serious progress must be made to increase wealth and to narrow the gap for those who are most disadvantaged if residents are to enjoy the quality of life that many others take for granted.

Overall poverty, unemployment and material deprivation have diminished in crude terms. However, Halton continues to display high rates of benefit dependency, which may increase in the current economic climate.

At the same time many people are still not claiming their full entitlements which would allow them to enjoy a minimum standard of living. Therefore, information, advice, guidance and advocacy are crucial in allowing people to access the help they need to navigate an extraordinarily complicated benefits system. This is not only beneficial for the recipients themselves but also for the local economy as research shows that most transfer payments are spent locally.

Halton is also characterised by high levels of personal debt, with up to 10% of households struggling to support debt levels. This in turn impacts on people's health and well being and the positive contribution they can make to the local economy. Debt advice and innovative community finance initiatives are a continuing need within Halton.

Digital Inclusion & Digital Infrastructure

New communications technologies not only help businesses trade and develop; they also create opportunities for businesses to develop new applications and

services. These new applications and services increase demand for faster and better communications facilities, which in turn leads to more innovation in applications and services in a development spiral. Connecting people to ICT skills can connect them to new or better jobs, to new forms of communication and social interaction, to community infrastructures and government services, to information to help with homework, to consumer power and convenience. It can save people time and money, open new doors and new worlds. Digital inequality matters because those without the right combination of access, skill, motivation or knowledge to make digital decisions are missing out in all areas of life. And that doesn't just impact on individual lives but on families, communities, on political processes, democracy, public services and the economic and social health of the nation as a whole.

Economic Climate

The adverse economic climate now has major implications for us all. The Halton Strategic Partnership has a role to put in place measures to support residents and businesses and where possible provide intervention measures to try and prevent house repossessions, loss of jobs, etc. Where they do occur we need to ensure services are there to help pick up the pieces, whether this is access to training, benefits, debt advice, target hardening against burglary, alcohol abuse support or counselling.

Climate Change

Halton is developing a Partnership Climate Change Strategy and has agreed to reduce per capita carbon emissions from business including the public sector transport and housing as a key part of this work. Partners and organisations are committed to work together to encourage and influence residents, businesses and other organisations to make CO2 reductions and also to put our own house in order.

There has already been much progress around tackling climate change, including work on housing and tackling fuel poverty, work with business on environmental management and work with schools on carbon management. Halton is committed to the Carbon Strategy and Reduction Plan and a target of reducing CO2 by 10% by 2015. As part of the strategy, we have invested in a number of areas to reduce energy costs and consequently CO2 emission reductions.

Sustainability

The goal of sustainable development – integrating and improving environmental, economic and social outcomes both now and in the future – is at the heart of the strategy. This Strategy sets the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental well-being of Halton through to 2026 that will contribute to the overall sustainable development across the UK.

Part of Halton's success has been its ability to change and evolve, and its resilience in the face of adversity. It has had to cope with the loss of much of the manufacturing industry it formerly depended on. The effect of this was dramatic,

leading to population loss and a legacy of deprivation across the communities of Halton.

However, the position has stabilised and welcome signs of an improvement can now be seen. This resilience is the key to the future. The Halton Strategic Partnership sees this as one of the strengths on which a sustainable future can be built.

The vision for the future is of a Halton that can sustain itself. This is a place where people want to live and work. It is somewhere that provides a high quality living environment, sensitive to a range of needs, and recognises the diversity of its residents.

This Strategy is all about giving 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.

Housing

Housing can make a significant contribution to many of the Sustainable Community Strategy's priorities, aims and objectives. For example, poorly insulated and heated homes can have a direct adverse impact on the health of the occupants and can lead to and exacerbate conditions such as asthma and other respiratory disease. Badly designed housing and poor neighbourhood layout can act as a magnet for criminals and create "no go" areas. Overcrowded homes can have an adverse impact on the educational attainment levels of young people.

A quarter of Halton's housing stock is owned by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), with the majority of social housing located in the most deprived wards of the Borough. The stock has received major investment over the last few years to ensure that it meets the Decent Homes Standard. Levels of overcrowding and health problems are higher in the social rented than owner occupied housing. Halton Borough Council and RSLs have been working with partners in the Liverpool City Region to develop a sub regional Choice Based Lettings scheme and common allocations policy, which will give overcrowded households and those with health and social needs high priority for a move to more suitable accommodation.

Just over a quarter of private sector housing does not meet the Decent Homes Standard, with the most common reason being due to poor thermal comfort. While this figure is lower than national and regional averages, it is still a cause for concern, as is the fact that conditions in the private rented stock are significantly worse than other sectors.

The last Housing Needs Survey (conducted in 2006) revealed a housing affordability issue in Halton, caused by the relationship between house prices and local incomes. Consequently the demand for social rented housing has increased in recent years while the number of available social rented dwellings has declined. At the time of writing this Strategy, a Strategic Housing Market

Assessment is being conducted which will provide updated information on affordability and will be used to set targets for provision of affordable housing on new private housing developments.

In common with other areas Halton has an ageing population which will have an increasingly significant impact on demand for older persons housing and related care and support services. In particular there is a need for extra care housing in the Borough which combines independent accommodation with on site care and support, as well as a continuing high demand for adaptations to enable older people to remain in their homes.

Supply and demand analysis also reveals a need for a range of accommodation for people with mental health problems offering varying levels of support.

Although homelessness remains an issue in Halton, the number of households fitting the statutory definition of homeless and being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation has dropped considerably over the last few years. This is largely due to the introduction of a range of initiatives designed to prevent homelessness. These include a Rent Bond scheme to enable households to access private rented accommodation and the appointment of a dedicated officer to facilitate early intervention in potential repossession cases.

Provision for Gypsies and Travellers has been improved, with the development of a 14 pitch transit site. This is in addition to the Council owned Gypsy and Traveller site in Widnes which offers 23 permanent pitches.

Partnership working will be key to addressing the issues highlighted above and we will endeavour to work with partners within Halton and across local authority boundaries to seek joint solutions to common issues.

Transport

A good quality transport system is critical in continuing to build a strong and vibrant Halton. Transport plays a vital role in connecting our everyday activities together, from cycling to school, catching the bus to work or using the train to visit friends and family in neighbouring towns and cities. Transport is a vital part of this Strategy and the latest Local Transport Plan (LTP3) has been developed alongside this and other partnership documents to ensure that transport planning and policy is closely linked to the developments under each of the priority areas.

LTP3 also needs to connect Halton into the wider Liverpool City Region (LCR) and the Northwest to enable the people of Halton to access a wide range of employment, leisure and education opportunities.

Halton has a substantial transport network that is constantly undergoing improvement. Significant public investment matched by the train and bus companies over the past 10 years has provided a modern and extensive public transport network. Examples include a modernised railway station at Runcorn and a newer accessible bus fleet. During this period we have also implemented

quality transport corridors where provision for bus, walking and cycling has been greatly enhanced.

There are improved rail links to other parts of the country, a road network where safety and maintenance are improving along with improvements for freight distribution. A comprehensive 'greenways' network is being delivered that provides for generally car free routes for walking, cycling and sometimes horse riding. Also many streets have had enhanced pedestrian provision.

We have seen the development of the Mersey Gateway Project. This will provide a new road crossing of the River Mersey and free the existing congested Silver Jubilee Bridge for use by local traffic, public transport, walking and cycling.

A strong transport network can attract investment, new businesses and jobs to Halton, and can contribute to a stronger and healthier borough, by providing transport links not only to the residents of Halton but the increasing number of visitors to the area.

Transport is a key element to emerging commercial sites such as the 3MG site in Widnes, where new road access has been provided along with proposed new rail sidings. Road improvements have also been implemented for Widnes Waterfront and Daresbury Science and Innovation Campus. These sites are bringing significant new employment opportunities to Halton.

In preparation for the LTP3 Halton has continued to take account of not only regional and national policies, but also European initiatives, all of which ultimately determine what happens in Halton. This includes a whole range of areas such as education, social services, the economy and environment, regeneration, health, planning, safety and leisure.

Five Year Delivery Plan

The issues that this Sustainable Community Strategy intends to tackle are long term, difficult issues. It can take many years for the work undertaken today to make a difference. Early intervention and prevention in health is a prime example. It can take several years of hard work before we will see a decrease in patients attending GP Surgeries and hospitals with established illnesses and a reduction in those smoking and drinking to excessive levels.

With such a long-term strategy, the way we deliver needs to be flexible, to cater for the unforeseen and allow partners to adapt to constantly evolving legislative and financial structures.

The five year term delivery plan sets out our starting point and targets for improvement over five years to help us to deliver on our priorities. It is intended that the 5 year Delivery Programme is updated every five years up to 2026 to keep pace with changes in local needs, priorities and available resources.

The Halton Sustainable Community Strategy has been prepared in the context of other key local plans and strategies. It does not stand alone in isolation; it is an overarching high level strategy that is supported by a multitude of detailed strategies that deal with specific topics and coordinate the delivery of services and projects. In this respect this SCS has been prepared to dovetail with other key Partnership plans and strategies. Figure 1 shows this relationship, the SCS forms a central core surrounded by the specific plans that allow the Halton Strategic Partnership to deliver improvements that make a real difference to the people of Halton.

The Five Year Delivery Plan is published as a separate supporting document and is designed to be a 'living' document that evolves as services transform and delivery becomes more sophisticated.

Figure 1: Integration of the Sustainable Community Strategy with key plans and strategies

Integration of the SCS with Key Plans and Strategies



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