

**REPORT TO:** Corporate Policy & Performance Board

**DATE:** 4<sup>th</sup> September 2012

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director Resources

**PORTFOLIO:** The Leader

**SUBJECT:** HSP Topic Group Review

**WARDS:** All

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide members with a copy of the Topic Group Review report on the Halton Strategic Partnership recently undertaken by elected members on that Group.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

**(1) Members comment upon the content of the report and, dependent upon their views, recommend the HSP Topic Group Review Report to the Council's Executive Board for approval.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Board, as part of their topic programme, took a decision to examine the role and function of the Halton Strategic Partnership (Halton's LSP) and identify where opportunities exist for future development and closer collaboration with the Council.
- 3.2 A group of elected members was selected and a programme of meetings arranged around the topic. At the first meeting, Terms of Reference for the group were established for the group as follows:
- Understanding the Future Role of the HSP
  - Asking does it meet the Council's Partnership check list requirements for "Partnerships"
  - What its short and long term objectives are
  - How they dovetail and inter-relate to the Council
  - How its ongoing activities can be effectively scrutinised and how it is held to account.
- 3.3 During the meetings, the history, purpose, membership, objectives, activities and role of the Halton Strategic Partnership (HSP) were

considered. Members also put forward proposals for how the relationship between the PPBs and the HSP could be strengthened, how agendas could be more closely interrelated and how ongoing activities could be effectively scrutinised. A report structure was agreed at the second meeting, with an agreement to prepare a draft report for discussion by Topic Group members prior to presentation to Corporate Services PPB in September.

- 3.4 Members also considered the context and background to why the Halton Strategic Partnership was established and the role it has played to date.
- 3.5 Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) were established as non-statutory bodies following the Local Government Act 2000, as the best way of promoting the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of communities. LSPs consist of a range of public, voluntary and community, and private sector organisations working with the local community on issues that impact on the local area.
- 3.6 In Halton, the LSP has badged itself as the 'Halton Strategic Partnership' (HSP). The HSP has been in existence since 2001. The HSP built on the previous good work of the original 'Halton Partnership' which had been instrumental in developing and managing successful applications for Single Regeneration Budget funding, amongst other initiatives.
- 3.7 Membership of the HSP is drawn from representatives from across key sectors and organisations within the Borough and was recently revised in March 2012 to reflect the changes taking place within the structure of the public sector as a result of changes in policy from central government.
- 3.8 Sitting underneath the main board of the HSP are five Specialist Strategic Partnerships (SSPs) The SSPs each take responsibility for co-ordinating the partnership agenda around each of Halton's 5 Strategic Priorities of Health, Children & Young People, Employment Learning & Skills, Environment and Regeneration and Safer Halton. The SSPs report back to the HSP on progress on outcomes and targets.
- 3.9 There are also a number of other thematic groups sitting underneath the HSP which take responsibility for co-ordinating some of the cross-cutting issues of the HSP such as Equality, Engagement & Cohesion, Transport, Housing and Child & Family Poverty. These also report back to relevant SSPs and the HSP on progress and activities.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 As part of the Local Government Act 2000, a statutory duty was place upon local authorities to prepare and publish a Sustainable Community

Strategy (SCS) for their area, in consultation with partner agencies and other sectors. Despite their non-statutory role, guidance on the formation of LSPs was issued 2001 recommended LSPs as the most appropriate body to undertake the production of an SCS. Sustainable Community Strategies are intended to provide a 10-30 year strategic vision for the area, and also underpin the land use planning process. Since 2001 the HSP has been the vehicle for developing and overseeing the SCS. Halton revised and refreshed its 3<sup>rd</sup> SCS in April 2011.

4.2 Our SCS sets out a clear vision and aims for Halton as:

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

4.3 The SCS also establishes the five key strategic priorities of:

- A Healthy Halton
- Environment and Regeneration in Halton
- Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton
- Children & Young People in Halton
- A Safer Halton

4.4 The SCS for Halton forms part of the 'Golden Thread' hierarchy of plans running through HBC from the SCS, down through the Council's Corporate Plan and the Directorate Service Plans. The five priorities are also embedded throughout the work of the partners in Halton.

4.5 The HSP has also had a significant role to play in Halton in helping to discharge The Duty to Involve, which came into force in April 2009, placed a statutory obligation on councils, requiring them to consult and involve individuals, groups, businesses or organisations likely to be affected by their actions and inform, consult and involve citizens in decision-making where appropriate. At one stage it appeared that the coalition government was planning to repeal the duty to involve, but the Localism Bill repeals only a separate set of requirements relating to local democracy. The HSP has been, and continues to be a useful vehicle for undertaking the statutory obligation.

4.6 LSPs have also traditionally been viewed as one of the main ways through which local authorities have exercised a wider 'community leadership' role, as reinforced by the 2006 White Paper Strong and Prosperous Communities, the 2007 Local Government and Public

Involvement in Health Act, and the Total Place programme of the previous government, which is continuing on in many senses through current initiatives such as Community Budgets and Troubled Families.

4.7 Since the general election in May 2010, the context for local partnership working has changed. Alongside substantial cuts in public spending and a drive towards ever greater efficiencies, councils and their partners have been responding to:

- the Localism Act, with its plans for extended 'community rights' to challenge for services, changes to the planning system, and elected mayors for 12 major cities
- radical plans for NHS reform and for transfer of public health responsibilities to local government
- the Police and Social Responsibility Bill, and proposals for directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners
- the Big Society agenda
- Treasury and Cabinet Office proposals for public service reform, such as the Open Public Services White Paper and the Local Government Finance Reform Bill.

4.8 While the coalition government places less emphasis than the previous government on formalised local partnership arrangements, collaboration and joint working remain a key part of the national agenda on health reform, policing, and economic development. LSPs, in their own right are not statutory bodies - therefore, their success depends on the voluntary participation of partners. That said, increasingly the performance of a range of public agencies is being judged by government on their achievements through partnership working. Partnership relationships are central to government plans to delivering on the government decentralisation and localism agenda.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Support for the Halton Strategic Partnership and associated SSPs is currently met from within Halton Borough Council. This includes the time of one full time Partnership Officer with support from the Lead Policy Officer for Corporate and Organisational Policy, as well as support from Policy Officers to each of the SSPs. Additional resource also comes in the form of support as needed from council's Communications and Marketing team, Committee Services, Finance and Research and Intelligence

5.2 In addition to staff time, there are costs associated with meeting the running costs of Partnership activity, including room hire, refreshments, printing etc. These have previously been met via Working Neighbourhoods Funding (WNF), however, the removal of the funding means that from 2013 onwards these costs will need to be met elsewhere.

- 5.3 The Policy and Strategy Division currently responsible for providing the majority of Partnership Support are currently undergoing an Efficiency Review of the service, the outcome of which, and its impact on Partnership delivery, is not yet known.
- 5.4 One of the recommendations contained within this report is that the possibility of partners making either a financial or in-kind contribution is explored from the 2013/14 period onwards in order to recognise the strategic importance and contribution the HSP makes in improving outcomes for partners and residents of Halton and to alleviate some of the financial burden on Halton Borough Council in these times of diminishing resources.
- 5.5 Partnership working between councils and other local agencies could have potential in redesigning public services and commissioning to ensure good outcomes for residents at lowest cost, particularly critical at these times of austerity and dramatic cuts in public sector funding. This is something that will need to be explored further by the Partnership.
- 5.6 All of the recommendations contained within the report are either procedural improvements to process as a way of improving communications and strengthening links between Council members and the HSP, or will be facilitated as part of the normal Partnership work programme development cycle. As such all can be met from within existing resources.

## **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCILS PRIORITIES**

### **6.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

The Halton Strategic Partnership is responsible for developing and overseeing Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out Children and Young People as a key priority. Activity undertaken by the SSP for Children and Young People is reported back to the HSPB.

### **6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

The Halton Strategic Partnership is responsible for developing and overseeing Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out Employment, Learning and Skills as a key priority. Activity undertaken by the SSP for Employment, Learning and Skills is reported back to the HSPB.

### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

The Halton Strategic Partnership is responsible for developing and overseeing Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out Health as a key priority. Activity undertaken by the Health and Wellbeing Board is reported back to the HSPB.

#### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

The Halton Strategic Partnership is responsible for developing and overseeing Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out Safer Halton as a key priority. Activity undertaken by the Safer Halton SSP is reported back to the HSPB.

#### **6.5 Environment & Regeneration in Halton**

The Halton Strategic Partnership is responsible for developing and overseeing Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy which sets out Environment and Regeneration as a key priority. Activity undertaken by the SSP for Environment and Regeneration is reported back to the HSPB.

### **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Partnerships, along with the rest of the public sector are faced with the additional pressure of managing a significant reduction in resources – both in terms of support staff and also the money available for joint activities (performance-related grants etc.) – at a time when, if anything, even greater effort needs to be put in to keep partners 'at the table'. LSPs, in their own right are not statutory bodies - therefore, their success depends on the voluntary participation of partners.

7.2 While an individual agency can be responsible and held accountable for its outputs, accountability is difficult to assess in relation to partnerships delivering complex outcomes. This is because of the practical and conceptual difficulty of knowing what difference the contributions each of the partners made to the final outcome, and the fact that most issues, (such as health, crime, environment etc.), are also the responsibility of non-public sector bodies and the general public themselves. Holding a partnership to account for non-delivery of complex outcomes is therefore complicated.

7.3 The HSP offers an opportunity to join up partner activities and maximise resources which is more critical than ever at these times of austerity and dramatic cuts in public sector funding. The challenge is therefore to develop and harness the power of the partnership to achieve this opportunity

### **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The Equality Act 2010 brings together into one Act all previous legislation around Equality and Diversity. Under the Duty a public authority must, in carrying out its functions, take into account the need to: -

- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conflict that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

8.2 The Act defines a number of characteristics which are protected: -

- (a) Age
- (b) Disability
- (c) Gender reassignment
- (d) Marriage and civil partnership
- (e) Pregnancy and maternity
- (f) Race
- (g) Religion or belief
- (h) Sex
- (i) Sexual orientation

8.3 An Equality Impact assessment has not been undertaken at this stage.