

Public Document Pack

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL



*Municipal Building,
Kingsway,
Widnes.
WA8 7QF*

10th October 2006

**TO: MEMBERS OF THE HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

You are hereby summoned to attend an Ordinary Meeting of the Halton Borough Council to be held in the Runcorn Town Hall on Wednesday, 18 October 2006 commencing at 6.30 p.m. for the purpose of considering and passing such resolution(s) as may be deemed necessary or desirable in respect of the matters mentioned in the Agenda.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David W R'.

Chief Executive

-AGENDA-

1. COUNCIL MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Council held on 19th July 2006.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. THE MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

5. LEADER'S REPORT

6. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

a) 20th July 2006

b) 7th September 2006

c) 21st September 2006

7. MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE

a) 20th July 2006

b) 21st August 2006

c) 7th September 2006

d) 21st September 2006

8. MINUTES OF THE MERSEY GATEWAY EXECUTIVE BOARD

a) 20th July 2006

9. QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 8

10. MATTERS REQUIRING A DECISION BY COUNCIL

a) Executive Board - 21st September 2006 (EXB38 refers) - Corporate Risk Register

The Executive Board considered the attached report.

RECOMMENDED: That the revised Corporate Risk Register be approved.

b) Executive Board - 21st September 2006 (EXB42 refers) - Joint Merseyside Waste Development Plan Document

The Executive Board considered the attached report.

RECOMMENDED: That subject to the prior adoption of the revised Halton Local Development Scheme 2006/07:

- (1) Halton's formal inclusion in the preparation of the Joint Merseyside Waste Development Plan Document (to be known as the Halton Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, St. Helens Borough Council and Wirral Borough Council Joint Waste Development Plan Document) be approved;
- (2) the necessary financial arrangements be put in place to fund Halton's contribution to the Joint Merseyside Waste Development Plan Document for the next three financial years, commencing with the current financial year 2006/07; and
- (3) the Operational Director – Environmental and Regulatory Services (OD-ERS) be given delegated authority to determine all matters as indicated in column 1 of the table below in accordance with column 2 of the same table (other than those matters indicated to be determined by full Council).

1.	DECISION MAKER 2.
Agreement to join, fund and progress progress joint Waste DPD	Full Council
SEA Scoping Report	OD – ERS
Interim SEA	OD – ERS
Approval Issues and Options for public consultation	OD – ERS
SEA Report to accompany Preferred Options	OD – ERS
Approval of Preferred Options for public consultation	Full Council
Submission of Waste DPD	Full Council
Final Adoption of Waste DPD	Full Council

**c) Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods Policy and Performance Board
Annual Report**

To consider the attached report.

11. CHANGES TO BOARD/COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

In accordance with Standing Order No. 30(4), Council is advised of the following changes to Board membership:

Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board (PPB) – Councillor Howard replaced Councillor Nolan;

Healthy Halton PPB – Councillor Howard replaced Councillor Fraser; and

Appeals Panel – Councillor Howard replaced Councillor Edge.

12. CHANGES TO APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Council is advised of the following changes in appointments to outside bodies, which have been made in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation (Matters Relating to Council Policy – 17):

Ineos Chlor Community Forum – Councillor Nelson replaced Councillor Swain;

Rocksavage Community Liaison Group – Councillor Nelson replaced Councillor Swain; and

Groundwork Mersey Valley – Councillor Wallace replaced Councillor Morley.

13. MINUTES OF POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARDS AND THE BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD

- a) Children and Young People - Cream Pages
- b) Employment, Learning and Skills - Yellow Pages
- c) Healthy Halton - Grey Pages
- d) Safer Halton - Pink Pages
- e) Urban Renewal - Green Pages
- f) Corporate Services - Salmon Pages

g) Business Efficiency Board - White Pages

14. COMMITTEE MINUTES

a) Development Control - Pink Pages

b) Standards - White Pages

c) Regulatory - Blue Pages

d) Appointments - White Pages

e) Statutory Joint Scrutiny Committee - Grey Pages

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REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 21st September, 2006

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Corporate & Policy

SUBJECT: Corporate Risk Register

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to ask the Executive Board to review the Corporate Risk Register and to make such changes as it considers necessary.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the revised Corporate Risk Register (attached as Appendix A) be approved and submitted to full Council at their next meeting.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council's Strategic Risk Management framework requires the Executive Board to review the Corporate Risk Register periodically. The Corporate Risk Register as reviewed by officers is therefore attached hereto for the Board's consideration.
- 3.2 In terms of reviewing the Register, it is not proposed that any new risks be added to the Register at the present time (although the risk in relation to Civil Contingencies has been reworded to reflect the fact that the position has moved on considerably as the Council has taken steps to implement the legislation). There is a brief commentary beside each risk which will hopefully give members a flavour for what has changed in relation to that risk since the last report.
- 3.3 The Council's Strategic Risk Management framework also requires that an annual report is submitted to Full Council on the management of Corporate Risk. Subject to Executive Board approving the Corporate Risk Register it is therefore recommended that the Register be submitted to Council at its meeting on the 18th October 2006.

4.0 POLICY, FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None except as identified in the Risk Register itself.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

5.1 Regular monitoring and management of the key corporate risks is essential to the proper management of the authority. The details of the risks and the control measures proposed are set out in the register attached.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

6.1 None at the present time.

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

7.1 None

APPENDIX A - Corporate and Strategic Risk Register - September 2006

Risk No	Risk Identified	Impact	Likelihood	Risk Score	Risk Control Measures	Assessment of Residual Risk with Control Measures Implemented			Responsible Person	Timescale for Review	Progress Comments	Date
						Impact	Likelihood	Risk Score				
1	Partnerships – Ineffective and Poorly controlled partnership working leads to a lack of accountability and ineffective use of resources resulting in failure to achieve outcomes/objectives	3	4	12	Action Plan required setting out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures • Central Register of Partnerships • Governance Standards • Clear Targets/Outcomes • Audit Programme • Risk Analysis 	3	2	6	Ian Leivesley	3 monthly	Initial report will go to corporate Services PPB in September.	14/8/6
2	Partnerships – Failure by NHS bodies to agree provision of resources for health prevention leads to failure of health prevention programmes resulting in the health of local people failing to improve to the levels of other areas.	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get NHS bodies to fully commit (both energy and resources) to priorities and health prevention agenda • Lobby NHS Bodies to allocate funding • The Council has been consulted and involved in the health service deliberations to reconfigure their services. • Influencing the development of the community strategy. 	4	3	12	Dwayne Johnson/ Daniel Seddon	3 monthly	Structural Change in relation to health continues to mean that this is a high risk area.	14/8/6

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of draft health outcome measures for inclusion in the future preparation of a health Local Area Agreement. • Regular performance monitoring at both the Health Performance Board and Chief Officers Group. 							
3	<p>People – Single Status/JE –failure to implement an agreement on single status with Trade Union agreement leads to an unstable employee relations climate, resulting in possible industrial action, recruitment and retention problems and equal pay challenges.</p>	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open and regular communication with Staff, Trade Unions and Managers • Link to financial forecasts and make financial provision (provision made in budgets for 2005/6, 2006/7 & 2007/8) • Effective Project Management • Trade Union Consultation/ Involvement through membership of Steering Group 	4	3	12	Ian Leivesley	3 monthly	Process is now well under way. Recent court cases on back pay may make agreement at the end of the process more difficult.	14/8/6

4	People – Lack of effective Management /Leadership Development arrangements leads to managers/organisation failing to achieve full potential resulting in underperformance	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational Development Programme (required) • Member Development Programme 	3	2	6	Ian Leivesley	3 monthly	<p>MSC and ILM 5 courses have been introduced. The MSC is now in its second year. The Year 2 intake for the MSC was over subscribed showing the high level of demand for this course</p> <p>The Council won the Municipal Journal award for its work on Member Development, and is also short listed for the APSE award.</p>	14/8/6
5	Stakeholders – Community Engagement – Failure to communicate effectively and engage local community participation in service planning, design, and delivery leading to complaints and tensions and conflict on specific initiatives resulting in loss of reputations, alienation of people from local government reduced collectivism and more individualistic opting out	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective LSP • Effective and inclusive Area Forums • Use of Halton 2000 • Research and Intelligence Unit • Community Development Team 	4	3	12	Ian Leivesley/ Dwayne Johnson	3 monthly	<p>The Council has developed its youth consultation arrangements (Youth Forum, Youth Parliaments, proposals for a YouthBank etc). The Council has developed its consultation links with the Business Community through the Business Forum (which also links strongly with Risk 14 and the Council's role in promoting business continuity)</p> <p>The Council has</p>	14/8/6

											recently adopted a Community Engagement Strategy and set up a stakeholder consultation group to ensure consistent consultation and stakeholder engagement	
6	Finance – Failure to effectively align resources to corporate objectives leads to a lack of focus on priorities resulting in failure to deliver objectives	3	4	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link Budget Process to Service Planning • Service Planning • Review of Corporate Priorities/Community Plan • Communication of Priorities to Staff/Members/Managers to achieve buy-in • Meet Gershon Targets 	2	3	6	Ian Leivesley	3 monthly	The 2007/08 Budget will be a significant challenge for the authority. Strategic Directors have started work looking at their respective budgets.	14/8/6
7	Mersey Gateway – Lack of effective project management leads to uncontrolled costs, delays and lack of credibility resulting in cancellation/delay of the project. Potential abortive development cost of up to £15m secured by Council borrowing.	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of experienced Project Director and early involvement of professional advisors • Project Structure based on PRINCE2 control procedure under the governance of the Procurement Group involving key members, officers, and 	4	2	8	Dick Tregoe	3 monthly	The Project Director is now in place. The arrangements for the various professional advisers have been reviewed. The Governance arrangements of the project have been amended by the creation of a dedicated sub-committee of the	14/8/6

					professional advisors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Plan and regular monitoring of plan and periodic independent gateway reviews • Delivery within the Funding framework agreed with Government reviewed at regular intervals 						Executive Board to drive this project forward.	
8	Major Projects – (e.g. EDZ, 3MG, Widnes Waterfront, Castlefields, Canal Quarter) Ineffective Project Management of major projects leads to delay increased costs resulting in failure to regenerate borough	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Development Group • Individual Project Management Groups • Project Teams • Performance Management Reports • Partnering Arrangements • Project Management Training for officers 	3	2	6	Dick Tregoea	3 monthly	Significant progress continues to be made. Arrangements for the necessary CPOs at Castlefields have been approved by the Executive board and are underwritten y an Indemnity from the NWDA. In relation to the 3MG the Council will need to consider the structural arrangements for the project soon, and decide whether to establish a company with partners in the project to run the rail freight park.	14/8/6
9	IT – Lack of disaster recovery arrangements leads to an interruption	4	2	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disaster recovery plan needed (and requires resourcing) 	4	1	4	Ian Leivesley	3 monthly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT being restructured to provide greater 	6/9/06

	of IT facilities in the event of a disaster resulting in the inability to deliver frontline services				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Continuity Plans needed for IT and service areas 						<p>focus on Disaster Recovery (DR). DR Plan to be in place October 2006.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Applications priority list – first draft of top 14 applications produced. • Criteria required to prioritise key corporate applications agreed by ICT Services Management Team • Provisional hardware infrastructure matrix produced to enable external organisations to provide indicative costs for the support arrangements for the 14 prioritised applications. 	
10	Employee Wellbeing – Failure to implement effective health, safety and wellbeing strategies leads to unsafe, unhealthy and poorly motivated workforce resulted in	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Safety Policy • Wellness Room • Stress Risk Assessments • Absenteeism procedures 	3	2	6	Ian Leivesley/ Dwayne Johnson	3 monthly	An Employee Welfare group was established earlier in the year, comprising of frontline staff, Managers and the Trade Unions. An action plan has been produced and it has	14/8/6

	increased staff dissatisfaction, demotivation, and problems of low staff retention and productivity										now been agreed that the group will produce strategies for a range of employee welfare issues and employee benefits. It is anticipated that in 2006 new policies will be developed on the basis of the strategies.	
11	Waste – Failure to develop a cogent Waste Management Strategy leads to a failure to meet Government Targets resulting in increased cost of waste disposal (impacting on the Council's ability to deliver other services)	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a Joint Waste Strategy • Formal local authority and private sector partnership • Internal procurement Group and Joint Waste Steering Group • Effective Management of agreed Project Plan • Consultation with key stakeholders • Review at Regular Intervals. 	3	3	9	Dick Tregear	3 monthly	Concerns over the capacity of the Partnership with Warrington to deliver this project have led the Council to withdraw from that Partnership. The Council is now working with the Mersey Waste Disposal Authority with a view to becoming a party to a Merseyside solution for Waste.	14/8/6
12	Educational Attainment – Failure to close the gap between Educational Attainment in the Borough and Educational attainment nationally undermines the Council's efforts to improve life chances and employment for	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies and Resources in place • Effective liaison and communication arrangements with schools • Performance monitoring, targeting and management 	3	3	9	Diana Terris	3 monthly	Educational attainment has been agreed as a 'priority for action' with Ofsted, CSCI and Audit Commission. Action Plan has been established and is subject to performance monitoring. This remains a challenging	14/8/6

	young people				arrangements						and complex agenda.	
13	Children's Services Integration – – Failure to deliver improved (measurable) outcomes for Children & Young People via the establishment of effective partnerships to deliver the Children Act requirements	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redesigned C&YP Strategic Planning Arrangements Clear shared Vision and project plan 'Migration to Children's Trusts' Full engagement of all partners at a senior level (including schools) Clear PMF with outcomes focus 	3	2	6	Diana Terris	3 monthly	Significant progress has been made. A Children's Alliance Board has been established, with 4 Task Groups (each with a Business Plan) reporting to it. Halton's Safeguarding Board is established completing the transition from ACPC. A performance management framework to deliver Children's Services Integration/Every Child Matters has been agreed by all key stakeholders.	14/8/6
14.	Resilience in the event of Civil Contingencies – Failure to implement robust civil contingency arrangements leads to the Council being unable to sustain a resilient community and	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing Emergency Plan Partnership Working Performance Management Implementation Plan Business Continuity Plans for Services 	3	2	6	Ian Leivesley	3 monthly	A Community Risk Register is now in place. Business Continuity Plans have been produced, with Action Plans to support their delivery. The Council takes an active role in the Local	14/8/6

	services in the event of a major disaster											Resilience Forum, It also has strong links with the regional arrangements. The Council has submitted a bid for Bacon status in relation to its work in this area.	
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REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 21st September 2006

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Environment

SUBJECT: Joint Merseyside Waste Development Plan Document (to be known as the Halton Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, St Helens Borough Council and Wirral Borough Council Joint Waste Development Plan Document)

WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report seeks a recommendation that Council approve Halton's inclusion in the preparation of a Joint Merseyside Waste Development Plan Document (DPD) in collaboration with the other Merseyside Authorities of Liverpool, St Helens, Wirral, Sefton & Knowsley. The Waste DPD would allocate sites for waste related development as well as providing detailed policies. The report also seeks a recommendation that the Council agrees Halton's contribution to the funding of future stages of the preparation of the Waste DPD for a three year period and that delegated authority be granted to the Operational Director ERS to determine certain stages of the DPD's production.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Council be recommended that subject to the prior adoption of the revised Halton Local Development Scheme 2006/07

- i) Halton's formal inclusion in the preparation of the Joint Merseyside Waste Development Plan Document (to be known as the Halton Borough Council, Liverpool City Council, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, St Helens Borough Council and Wirral Borough Council Joint Waste Development Plan Document) be approved;
- ii) the necessary financial arrangements be put in place to fund Halton's contribution to the Joint Merseyside Waste DPD for the next three financial years, commencing with the current financial year 2006/07;
- iii) the Operational Director – Environmental and Regulatory Services (OD – ERS) be given delegated authority to determine all matters as indicated in column 1 of the table below in accordance with column 2 of the same table (other than those matters indicated to be determined by Full Council).

1	Decision maker
Agreement to join, fund and progress joint Waste DPD	2 Full Council
SEA Scoping Report	OD - ERS
Interim SEA	OD - ERS
Approval Issues and Options for public consultation	OD - ERS
SEA Report to accompany Preferred Options	OD - ERS
Approval of Preferred Options for public consultation	Full Council
Submission of Waste DPD	Full Council
Final adoption of Waste DPD	Full Council

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 It is a statutory requirement for local authorities to include policies for waste management within their new Local Development Frameworks (LDF). Planning Policy Statement 10 'Planning for Sustainable Waste Management' states that as part of their Local Development Documents, planning authorities should set out policies and proposals for waste management in line with the Regional Spatial Strategy and ensure sufficient opportunities for the provision of waste management facilities in appropriate locations, including for waste disposal.
- 3.2 As a consequence of the European Landfill Directive, the Government requires diversion of a significant amount of waste from landfill and development of an integrated and sustainable waste management system. New waste treatment facilities must be built in order to manage the increasing quantities of waste diverted. The Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) acts as a mechanism for achieving the diversion of biodegradable municipal waste from landfill, however there is also a need to manage other wastes in more sustainable ways. Authorities face significant fines if they fail to divert the biodegradable municipal waste away from landfill.
- 3.3 The Merseyside authorities (Liverpool City Council, Knowsley Council, Sefton Council, St. Helens Council and Wirral Council) have agreed to prepare a Joint Merseyside Waste Local Development Document, for adoption by 2010. It will set the planning framework and site specific allocations for waste management facilities for the 10 to 15 years from its anticipated adoption date.
- 3.4 A dedicated team has been established within Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (EAS) which will deliver the Waste DPD on behalf of the each of the Districts. Consultants will be engaged to deliver key tasks and will be managed by Merseyside EAS. A site selection procedure involving each Merseyside local authority and the Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority (MWDA) has already been delivered by consultants.
- 3.5 It is a priority to meet Government targets for managing waste in a more sustainable manner. In particular, Merseyside needs to reduce its reliance on

landfill by providing alternative facilities for recycling, reprocessing, treatment and disposal. The Regional Waste Strategy sets objectives, targets and appropriate timescales for these changes, which are reinforced by draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) policy.

- 3.6 The preparation of a joint Merseyside Waste DPD provides economies of scale in the collection of data and development of consistent policies across the sub-region to enable the effective determination of planning applications for new waste facilities and the identification of potential sites.
- 3.7 Recently Officers of Halton Borough Council advised the other Merseyside authorities that they would like to participate in the preparation of the Joint Waste DPD. It would be beneficial for Halton to become involved in this joint process because it would facilitate co-ordinated sub-regional working that is encouraged by regional planning. Additionally, specialist skills, knowledge and advice required to produce a Waste DPD does not exist 'in house' within the Council and would therefore need to be provided by consultants. It would entail a significant financial cost to prepare the DPD on our own, but the preparation of a joint DPD would result in a comparative financial saving (see section 5.0 below).
- 3.8 Whilst Officers have given an informal expression of interest to join the Joint Merseyside Waste DPD, this remains to be formally confirmed by resolution of Halton Council. Under Council Standing Orders, such a resolution needs to be approved by Full Council due to the joint working arrangements needed. It would also require an amendment to the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) which is the work programme for the Halton Local Development Framework. That matter is therefore subject to a separate report to this Executive Board.
- 3.9 The Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (EAS) supported by consultants has been charged with the task of delivering the Waste DPD on behalf of the Merseyside Districts. Halton currently employ EAS to provide advice regarding selected local and sub-regional environmental matters. The Joint Waste DPD work is progressing in close co-operation with the Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority's (MWDA) own programme for the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy (JMWMS). These timescales do not fit comfortably with the Waste DPD programme set out below at section 4, but delay is not an option due to the financial exposure and risks associated with LATS penalties and increased costs of municipal solid waste disposal. Inevitably there will be tensions between the Waste DPD and the JMWMS as a consequence of the timing of the two processes.
- 3.10 A major issue during preparatory work on the Waste DPD has therefore been the need to establish as close a relationship as possible between the Waste DPD and the implementation by the MWDA of the Joint Municipal Waste Disposal Strategy. However it is very important to make a clear distinction between the objectives of the two processes:

- The objective of the Waste DPD is to put in place a sub-regional statutory policy framework within which each of the Districts can make decisions over planning applications for all types of waste in Merseyside. This policy framework will cover the period 2010 to 2020 or 2025 and will contain site-specific allocations, sustainable waste management principles and criteria-based policies for all waste streams including municipal solid waste.
- The objective of the JMWMS is to put in place a strategy whereby the MWDA can procure and build facilities to treat the municipal solid waste generated by the people of Merseyside and meet the needs of the Waste Hierarchy – in particular the challenging requirements for an increase in recycling and reduction in residual waste sent to landfill.

3.11 The matter of partnership working between Halton Borough Council and MWDA was subject to a separate Executive Board report on 7 September 2006 entitled 'Waste Management – the Next Steps' and a further report to this Executive Board.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Waste DPD aims to provide a statutory policy framework within which planning decisions can be taken by each of the Merseyside Districts and Halton for waste management proposals for all waste streams. It can provide:

- a co-ordinated approach to waste planning in the Merseyside sub-region;
- a joint and consistent approach to determining the range of facilities needed;
- the opportunity to identify facilities that can be used at the sub-regional level; and
- a level of certainty to the waste industry to assist them in bringing forward development proposals in the right place at the right time.

4.2 In taking a long-term approach the Joint Waste DPD will have substantial benefits for the private sector in reducing planning risk and uncertainty. It will facilitate the delivery of sustainable waste management across Merseyside (and Halton) thereby helping to reduce the financial costs and penalties of non compliance with European and Government targets. It will also ensure that waste facilities are located in the most appropriate places by taking full account of the social, human, environmental and economic constraints during the plan preparation process.

4.3 Due to the strategic nature and scale of the waste challenge in Merseyside, planning for the required modern facilities must therefore be undertaken at the sub-regional level thereby giving rise to significant benefits and economies of joint working. As it is a statutory planning document, there are no shortcuts in the planning process, which must be compliant with both the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive.

- 4.4 Waste planning is a specialist area and the approach taken uses external consultants and the Environmental Advisory Service, working with the Local Authorities to prepare policies that can then be used across Merseyside, and Halton. The resulting DPD will be adopted by each Local Authority and incorporated into each Authority's Local Development Framework (LDF). Decisions on individual planning applications for new facilities will be made by each Local Authority, using the common criteria established through the joint DPD.
- 4.5 The current governance arrangements for the joint planning work are based on existing Merseyside member and officer structures. St. Helens Council acts as accountable body and lead Chief Executive on waste management and is responsible for taking reports from the Waste DPD Steering Group of senior officers to Merseyside Chief Executives and Leaders on key issues and providing feedback. The Merseyside Co-ordinating Committee is the key member level body. These arrangements may be subject to review in the light of further Government guidance on the joint planning process.
- 4.6 The statutory regulations reserve decisions in relation to the preparation of joint planning documents to the Full Council. In order to meet some of the milestones in the programme, particularly in relation to approval of the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and Interim SA, it will be necessary to seek delegated authority for the Operational Director, Environmental and Regulatory Services (OD - ERS) to approve several steps outlined below. Consultation on the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report would begin in October and following stages in the Joint DPD process would include the production of an Interim Sustainability Appraisal and public consultation on Issues and Options Papers. It is anticipated that Issues and Options public consultation would take place during January/ February 2007 with further stages to follow accordingly. The stages in DPD production, with the required decision maker, and associated timescales, are:

Key Milestone	Expected Timetable	Council Decision Making Level
Agreement to join, fund and progress joint Waste DPD	October 2006	Full Council
SA/SEA Scoping Report	October 2006	OD - ERS
Interim SA Report	December 2006	OD - ERS
Approval of Issues and Options Report for public consultation	December 2006	OD - ERS
Sustainability Appraisal Environment Report to accompany Preferred Options Report	September 2007	OD - ERS
Approval of Preferred Options Report for public consultation	September 2007	Full Council
Submission of Draft Waste DPD/ Sustainability	June 2008	Full Council

Appraisal Final Report to Full Council		
Adoption and Publication of Waste DPD	April 2010	Full Council

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Full Council agreement is needed to prepare a joint DPD, this is set out in the Local Authorities (Functions and responsibilities)(Amendment)(No2) Regs 2005, which state that "In connection with the discharge of functions under any of sections 28-31 (joint local development documents and joint committees) of the 2004 act, the actions designated by para 4c (the para 4c actions) shall not be the responsibility of an executive of the authority." Para 4c states: "the actions designated by this paragraph are - (a) the making of and agreement to prepare one or more joint development plan documents."

5.2 Halton's financial contribution to the costs of preparing the joint Waste DPD has been shown as £117,807 for the first three years of the project. This includes a payment for the last financial year 2005/06 which would be paid during the current financial year (2006/07). This is a reflection of preparatory works that have already commenced. Payments would be divided up as follows:

2005/06	£23,101 (to be paid in year 2006/07)
2006/07	£60,190
2007/08	£34,516
2008/09	to be arranged

5.3 As mentioned in section 3, these figures would compare favourably with the cost of Halton undertaking the DPD on its own. Funding for 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 payments would be sourced from the Council's latest award of Planning Delivery Grant (PDG). Additional funding would then need to be sourced for 2008/09 and beyond from mainstream Council budgets.

5.4 Whilst much of the work for the Joint Waste DPD would be undertaken by Consultants, with co-ordination by the EAS, a certain amount of administration and co-ordination would also be required to be undertaken by Halton Council Officers in Planning and Policy.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 The major risk to the Council is the financial penalty that would be incurred if the authority fails to meet landfill reduction targets. Minimising planning delays in delivering the necessary infrastructure is an essential risk minimisation measure.

6.2 There should be no legal risks to the Council from the production of these documents, so long as the statutory procedures for their preparation are met. Environmental risks will be considered as part of the Sustainability Appraisal. These evaluate the impact of the policies and proposals on social, economic

and environmental factors according to European Union and Government regulations.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising from this report.

8.0 REASONS FOR DECISION

8.1 These are set out in sections 3, 4, 5, and 6.

9.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

9.1 These are set out by virtue of sections 3, 4, 5 and 6.

10.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

10.1 The agreement to joint working on the Waste DPD would be effective from the date of Full Council approval. The inclusion of the Joint Waste DPD in the revised Local Development Scheme (see separate Executive Board report) would come into effect from 15/11/06 or from the date on which the Council receive notification from the Secretary of State in accordance with Regulation 11 (2) of The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, whichever is earlier.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Planning Policy Statement 10 'Planning for Sustainable Waste Management'	Planning & Policy Division Rutland House	Neil Macfarlane
Planning Policy Statement 10 Companion Guide - 'Planning for Sustainable Waste Management'	Planning & Policy Division Rutland House	Neil Macfarlane
Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West	Planning & Policy Division Rutland House	Neil Macfarlane
Local Authorities (Functions and responsibilities)(Amendment)(No2) Regs 2005	Planning & Policy Division Rutland House	Neil Macfarlane
Regional Waste Strategy for the North West (NWRA 2004)	Planning & Policy Division Rutland House	Neil Macfarlane

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REPORT TO: Council

DATE: 18th October 2006

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy

SUBJECT: Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods Policy and Performance Board's Annual Report 2005-2006

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To receive the Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods Policy and Performance Board's Annual Report for 2005-2006.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the 2005-2006 Annual Report submitted from the Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods Policy and Performance Board be received.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Article 6 of the Constitution requires each of the Policy and Performance Boards (PPBs) to submit an Annual Report to Council outlining their work, making recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.

Five of the six Annual Reports were considered at the last Council meeting: the Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods PPB Annual Report was not included as it had, at that time, yet to be considered by the Safer Halton PPB under the new decision making structure.

The Annual Report has now been considered and agreed by the Safer Halton PPB.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

None.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.



Cllr Shaun
Osborne
(Chairman)

**ANNUAL REPORT
SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE
NEIGHBOURHOODS POLICY
AND PERFORMANCE BOARD
JULY 2005 – MARCH 2006**

“ The last Municipal year has again been both an interesting and challenging one for the Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods Policy & Performance Board. There has been considerable progress within the organisation of the Board in order to develop further our policy formation and scrutiny roles. The members of the board should be congratulated for their efforts in adapting quickly to changing roles.

Prior to the beginning of the financial year the Policy and Performance board received details of the budget proposals for 2005/06.

The Board noted the national and local financial settlements, consequences of data losses, pressure on local government to passport money into education and the expectation from central govt that Council Tax increases would be held to low, single figures. It was immediately clear that the financial pressures would hit hard at members concerns to develop policy in order to improve the Councils direct services in the short term and resolved that cuts in expenditure in the following year would be unacceptable. In future years we would be anticipating financial growth to maintain and improve our service to the public.

Members of the Board have worked diligently with our excellent officers to bring about effective change and improvement to many of the important direct services, despite financial pressures.

During the course of the year services within the remit of the SAAN Policy & Performance Board have received independent national recognition and awards for development and performance. These services are now recognised as areas of ‘best practice’ bringing representatives of other local authorities from across the UK to Halton in order to learn from our experiences.

The Board will further develop this year and continue to improve services for the residents of the Borough.”

**Councillor Shaun Osborne
Chairman, Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
Policy and Performance Board**

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2004/05 the Board comprised ten Councillors – Councillors Cllr Osborne (Chairman), Cllr Nelson (Vice Chairman), Cllr Dennett, Cllr Marlow, Cllr Morley, Cllr Philbin, Cllr E Ratcliffe, Cllr Redhead, Cllr Swift, Cllr Thompson.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to waste collection and disposal, waste minimisation, recycling, environmental health, consumer protection, Registration, Agenda 21 strategy, derelict land reclamation, neighbourhood services, landscape improvement and management (including parks and open spaces) and the development of area based environmental improvement projects to complement area forum agenda.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met 5 times during the year, set out below are some of the main activities and issues that the Board has worked on during the year.

ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING PARTIES

At a special meeting of the Environment Policy and Performance Board on 17th February 2004 the following list of suggested topics were approved for examination/review within the 2004/5 work programme of the new PPB:

- Managing continuous improvement in the delivery of bereavement services;
- Anti Social Behaviour
- Contaminated land;
- Waterfront areas;
- Waste Management Strategy.
- Alcohol

The following working groups were established to consider the above topics identified for scrutiny;

- Parks and Open Spaces
- Waste
- Contaminated Land
- Anti Social Behaviour
- Bereavement Services
- Alcohol

In addition, it was agreed that an annual report on progress and expenditure by the Area Forums be submitted to an appropriate meeting of the Board.

The above Working Parties met on a regular basis throughout the year and reported to the Policy and Performance Board in order to inform the decision making progress.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

Waste Management

Waste Management remains one of the most challenging issues facing the Council, given the EU and UK targets which impose new requirements upon LA's and demand a major step change in levels of recycling and diversion of waste from landfill disposal. Halton's targets under the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) have a far greater regulatory and cost impact than the statutory recycling performance standards imposed on Halton so far and in order to meet these challenges a major new waste management treatment facilities infrastructure will be required. The Division was successful in acquiring direct financial support from central government to commission technical and financial consultants as part of the on-going evaluation of options for Halton. Joint working arrangements between Halton and Warrington Borough Councils were further developed in 2005/06 with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two authorities.

During the course of the year the Board received several reports concerning the development of the waste management services and the Council's Municipal Waste Management Strategy. The requirements to enter into new contracts for waste disposal and associated services in 2008 emphasised the need to ensure that the project to secure a new contract is driven forward effectively and efficiently. This, together with the need to develop and monitor performance in an area of considerable financial and government interest was recognised in a new Waste Management Staffing Structure that was detailed in a report to the Board in January 2006.

With the support of the Board the Waste Management Division continued to utilise all statutory provisions available to it for the purpose of addressing issues of littering, graffiti and other forms of environmental nuisance within the boundaries of the Borough.

Bereavement Services/Consumer Protection/Registration Service

During the course of the year the Board received several reports on meetings of the Bereavement Services Working Party and was able to contribute to the ongoing development of policy in this sensitive area of the Council's activity.

The Board recommended that the Executive Board supported the roll-out of the government driven Consumer Direct Contact Centre in the North West (CD). This has led to the re-direction of all initial telephone enquiries from Halton's consumers to CD from February 2006 and early indications are that Halton's consumers are receiving an enhanced service, that Halton's advisors are able to deal with the more complex issues and engage with the harder to reach groups locally, and that cashable efficiency savings have been delivered – all from supporting this one initiative.

As part of the modernisation of the civil registration service, the Board

recommended that the Executive Board deregulated the marriage room at the Register Office in Runcorn Town Hall. This was linked to the review of fees for civil weddings with the result that more realistic income streams (based on cost recovery) may be expected for 2006/2007. Additionally, recommendations were made regarding the provision of civil partnership registrations (a new statutory duty that fell to the Council from December 2005). This led to the seamless introduction of civil partnership registrations in Halton.

PROJECTS AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Landscape Services

In September 2005 the Landscape Services Division began the implementation of 'Streetscene' a neighbourhood approach to the delivery of front line landscape maintenance and street cleansing services. Six Neighbourhood Spaces Manager posts were created (5 from existing positions) and each was given a geographic area of responsibility based around the Area Forums. Presentations were given to the each Area Form and to the SAAN P&P Board which explained how 'Streetscene' would work. Since September 2005 two distinct workforces have been integrated, new job descriptions issued, new work plans developed, new vehicle branding introduced and many local improvements implemented. In the first 3 months of 2006 the Streetscene Operation collected 383,940 kg of litter and waste from the streets, parks and open spaces of Halton.

As part of the back-up arrangements for 'Streetscene' the Landscape Services Division completed a re-furbishment and undertook improvements to its Picow Farm Depot. New front line office facilities have allowed managers to work more effectively and to increase front line productivity.

Throughout 2005/6 work has continued on the restoration and enhancement of Victoria Park utilising a £1.6m grant from Heritage Lottery Fund. The past year has seen the completion of a new Junior Children's Play Area, a new lake (on the site of an earlier original), the restoration and enhancement of the War Memorial, the creation of the Appleton Garden, the restoration of park buildings and the completion of a new Park Pavilion. Work will continue through 2006/7.

The Wild About Halton project has continued to support the Borough's Natural Assets Strategy. In 2005/6 the project established a powerful working relationship with the 'City Learning Centres', organisations designed to support and linked to existing educational establishments. Through a project called the 'Artery of Life' the Learning Centres have assisted the Wild About Halton Project to promote Halton's Green Spaces as outdoor field centres using pioneering techniques involving technologically advanced teaching aids such as data loggers and hand held computers. High Schools from surrounding Borough's within Greater Merseyside and Cheshire are now visiting Halton to conduct educational field visits which is helping to promote a positive image of the Borough. Events run as part of the project have continued to attract increasing numbers of participants from local areas and further a-field.

Unfortunately funding for the Waterfront Maintenance Team (established in July

2004 for 2 years with NWDA funding from Mersey Waterfront Regional park project) came to an end and further funding could not be secured. The team was disbanded in March 2006. Throughout 2005/6 the team had been responsible for major enhancements to the Waterfront Estate bringing sites up to the Green Flag Award Standard. Improvements were carried out at Runcorn Promenade, Wigg Island, Victoria Promenade and Spike Island. Spike Island and Wigg Island were submitted for a Green Flag Award in Feb 2006. Judging will take place in May/June. The work that was undertaken by the Waterfront Team has been redistributed to other 'Streetscene Teams' but obviously maintenance frequencies have had to be reduced.

In the last months of the 2005/6 period the new Phoenix Park in Runcorn which forms part of the Castlefields redevelopment was completed. This state of the art park includes a new Children's Play Area, a Skate Park, Climbing Boulder and a Pavilion. The park has site based staff in the form of a Ranger and a Site Based Gardener.

The Landscape Services Division continued to facilitate the activities of Friends of Parks Groups. In the year 2005/6 a new Friends Group was established for Hale Park. Since its establishment a master plan for the park has been drawn up and many site improvements delivered. Elsewhere the Friends of Crow Wood Park have continued to bid for funding to complete the enhancement of their local facility. In 2005/6 the Phase 1 Improvements were completed. Crow Wood Park now has a new central boulevard that links it to The Bongs, a new Ball Court and a Skate Ramp with Youth Shelter. On the adjacent area 'The Bongs' many small scale environmental improvements have been delivered including improvements to the vegetation alongside Halton View Bridge to remove a litter trap.

Officers from the Landscape Services Division have been asked to address numerous professional bodies to share the Borough's best practice. Many authorities have visited the Division to learn about its activities.

Furthermore;

- Satisfactory delivery of landscape maintenance and street cleansing services.
- Further improvements to high profile public spaces, e.g. roundabouts and major traffic routes.
- Continued improvements to formal parks in line with the 5 year Management Plans
- Maintained school grounds maintenance contract, a total of 47 schools representing over 70% of the Borough Total.
- Secured nominations for APSE Service Team of the year 2005 and for APSE Most Improved Council of the Year 2005.
- Secured 5 Green Flag Awards (Hough Green Park, Rock Park, Runcorn Hill Park, Pickerings Pasture and Victoria Promenade).

Waste Management

The Waste Management Division contributed towards the successful implementation of the 'Streetscene' initiative. The resulting transfer of the neighbourhood cleansing operation into Landscape Services enabled the Division to focus upon the more strategic waste management functions, including graffiti removal, fly-tipping and major highway and strategic route cleansing. At the same time it allowed the Division to concentrate on other functions such as BVPI recording, enforcement, and waste strategy development. The Government has set a national standard for cleanliness which states that the proportion of unacceptable sites for 2005/06 should be below 15%. The changes made in the last year saw Halton's figure improve from 17% in 2004/05 to 8% in 2005/06.

Throughout the year there were a number of successful prosecutions for fly tipping and illegal disposal of trade waste. The Division continues to work closely with other sections of the Council and other external agencies to adopt a more co-ordinated approach to litter prevention and enforcement activities and will be embracing new legislation that will increase the authorities powers to tackle environmental nuisance and crime. Through NRF funding the Division acquired mobile surveillance equipment to support its enforcement and litter prevention activities. This will enable cameras to be installed at known 'black spots' in both neighbourhood and remote areas of the borough to deter fly tipping and other environmental crime. The erection of a network of signs will support the campaign by informing the public of the penalties for fly tipping and will act as a visible deterrent to discourage this practice. The signs will also increase residents awareness of the Council's efforts to tackle environmental crime, a matter frequently raised at Area Forums.

As part of the Council's waste minimisation activities, the Division successfully secured Halton's involvement in a government backed Home Composting campaign for a third year in 2005/6. The scheme secured external funding for every resident in Halton to purchase a choice of home composters at highly subsidised rates. The object of this scheme was to work with WRAP (Waste Resource Action Programme) in order to test how successful home composters are and the effect they have on reducing levels of household waste produced in the borough. Over 400 local authorities applied for this project but Halton was one of only 22 in the country to be successfully chosen in this scheme, which also offered support by way of marketing, advertising, promotional incentives and a dedicated home compost expert to offer advice to residents. The scheme was very successful with more than 1600 residents purchasing a home composting unit in the last year.

The Division operates a successful service that sees abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours of being reported. With NRF funding a further development of the service is to involve partnership working with the Police and Fire Service. This will see improved removal response times and an increase in the number of dangerous and nuisance vehicles removed.

The Division, with direct financial support from Defra, continues to make

progress on the development its next stage waste management strategy. In the last year external consultants were commissioned and have produced a further series of reports to assist the Council in determining and procuring the most favourable long-term sustainable waste management solution for Halton.

Halton's Recycling and Household Waste Centres continue to be amongst the top performing in the country and our overall recycling and composting performance of 23% remains above the regional average and in line with the national average.

Bereavement Services/Consumer Protection/Registration Service

On 1 April 2005 the Consumer Protection Division (which comprises the above Services) joined the Health and Partnerships Department of the new Health & Community Directorate, following on from the Council's Strategic Management Review. Later in the year, the Consumer Protection Service re-located its office base from Grosvenor House, to Rutland House. Front-line service delivery continued seamlessly during these changes.

During the course of the year work on phase 1 of the preparation of the western strip of Widnes cemetery for burial ground was begun and completed. In November 2005 evidence was provided to a public planning enquiry to ensure that land adjoining Widnes cemetery was protected in case it was required to extend the present cemetery grounds

The Consumer Protection Service took the regional lead on a research project identifying how youngsters gain access to alcohol, a project for which external funding was secured. Combating the sale of alcohol and other restricted products to children continues to be a high priority for the service.

The Registration Service received an inspection from Her Majesty's Inspector of Registration in August 05. The Inspector's subsequent report concluded that Halton's plans for the implementation of modernisation changes, including the new web-enabled registration systems for Registrations, Births, Deaths and Marriages, were well on schedule. This was evidenced when, in December 2005, the Registration Service registered Halton's first civil partnerships.

WORKING PARTY ACTIVITIES

Parks and Open Spaces

In 2005/6 the Waterfront Parks and Open Spaces working party broadened its remit and took on the task of investigating existing standards of quality of management and maintenance throughout all open spaces.

The working party met twice during the year and examined the funding and on-going improvement and development works planned for park sites.

Waste

This working party was established to provide member input into the development of policy on the provision of the authority's waste collection, recycling, disposal and street cleansing services and litter prevention, education and enforcement measures by evaluating the options for achieving the targets and pledges contained within the authority's Municipal Waste Management Strategy and Litter Plans.

The working party considered matters arising out of the Council's Municipal Waste Management Strategy and the continuing developments with regard to the Council's public and private sector waste partnerships. The working party also discussed a range of matters relating to the Street Cleansing services, and in particular the Division's enforcement activities.

Contaminated Land

Contaminated land inspection

The Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy, published in 2001, is the core document for the implementation of the Contaminated Land Regime. This sets out the overall approach taken in Halton and how the specific characteristics of the borough determine the key issues and work programmes. A working party was established to overview and scrutinise the ongoing development and implementation of this significant strategy for the inspection of contaminated land under the chairmanship of councillor Philbin

The major piece of work has been to scrutinise work on the a review of the existing Strategy for the inspection of contaminated land and progress on projects arising from that strategy and the recommendations of the Lancaster study into factors the affecting health in Halton

Environmental Health has a core list of sites that are at varying stages of investigation and assessment under the formal contaminated land regime (Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990). The sites are those which the Council has had involvement with prior to Part IIA coming into force in 2001 and those which have been selected from those identified under work in line with the Council's Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy.

The Part IIA process is long, slow and complicated, ad Halton is now in a position where there are several sites on the verge of the detailed investigation work starting, along with maintaining momentum on more advanced projects. However, all Part IIA work needs input from the EA and Halton finds itself in a position where it is very difficult to progress any of the sites and to produce accurate work programmes. In the last 12 months there has been considerable discussion and negotiation with the EA to ensure that St Michael's Golf Course remains a priority and genuine progress is made.

Key projects

1. St Michael's Golf Course

This is a very public and significant project that is being run by Major Projects

and Environmental Health.

2. Stenhills Quarry

This is one of several former sandstone quarries in Runcorn that have been backfilled in part with waste.

3. Runcorn Hill Quarry

Another of the former sandstone quarries now used as recreational open space; Runcorn Hill has also been partly filled with waste by the Council.

4. Johnson's Lane Landfill

Johnson's Lane Landfill is a large closed landfill formerly owned and operated by ICI Ltd. It was the main disposal site for a wide range of solid and drummed wastes from ICI's manufacturing plants in Widnes and Runcorn.

5. Speke Road Landfill

The closed landfill site that was operated by Cheshire County Council lying alongside Speke Road has problems with leachate.

6. Weston Quarries

The former sandstone quarries at Weston were national headline news in 2000 when the problem of contamination of the adjacent residential properties by chlorinated hydrocarbons arose. The main issue of the contaminated housing has now been settled with the demolition of the majority of the effected properties. However, there are a number of problems remaining, including the effect on groundwater beneath the site.

7. Waterloo Road Area

This area covers a mix of industrial, commercial, vacant and open space land, which historically formed part of the early chemical works in Widnes.

Consumer & Environmental Matters

The remit of this WP is to meet when significant issues need to be reviewed or investigated. During the year there were no such issues referred to the WP and the need to meet did not arise.

Service delivery

The Food Safety Inspection Service

The effective delivery of this key environmental health function is scrutinised by the board firstly by receipt of an annual service delivery plan, which is a mandatory plan, demanded by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and through regular scrutiny of the performance returns. The Food Standards Agency appeared on the scene in 2000 and took over from the audit commission in receiving and publishing the performance figures for local authorities food inspections. The FSA introduced a far more exacting regime of scrutiny with a framework agreement for all local authorities. For a variety of reasons including resources the return to the FSA in this initial year showed a very poor performance and Halton found themselves on the list of worst performing local authorities for food safety and food standards. Quite rightly the board made it clear that this was unacceptable. Making use of overview and scrutiny and offering its support to managers the board set out to:

- Establish the size of the task so that they could recommend the correct level

of resources

- Review working practices to maximise use of available resources
- Maximise use of IT to improve accuracy eliminate any prospect of underreporting

In the longer term the aim was for Halton to be recognised by the FSA as a capable authority who delivers what it promises and any new challenges from them but also flexible enough to meet local needs and challenges. The net result of working with the officers and supporting improvements to the service is that Halton have moved up the performance listings of the FSA and are now in the top 30 or so UK Councils.

Responsible dog ownership

Although there continues to be an improvement owners allowing dogs to defecate in public areas remains a cause of complaint. The board received a report on the inadequacies of the enforcement policy and the potential benefits of moving to a fixed penalty notices. The enforcement policy was strengthened to allow officers to issue notices on a first offence. Although only seventeen fixed penalty notices have been served it has streamlined the system and the immediate threat of issuing one has been an invaluable tool for officers patrolling public spaces.

Health and safety regulation by project working

The board received a report on the changes to health and safety enforcement guidance. The key national targets set for the health & safety regulatory system are to;

- reduce the number of working days lost per 100,000 workers from work-related injury and ill health by 30% by 2010.
- reduce the incidence rate of fatal and major injury incidents by 10% by 2010
- reduce the incidence rate of cases of work-related ill health by 20% by 2010

The need for more-effective progress towards these health and safety targets and increased momentum for better working between central and local government has led the health and safety commission to set out in its strategy a significant change in the way its enforcing authorities – LAs and HSE – interact. The principal aim of the Strategic Programme is a more-effective use of HSE's and LAs' collective resources – working in partnership locally, regionally and nationally – to minimise harm to those in the workplace or those affected by workplace activities by reducing ill health and accidents.

The board endorsed Halton's response to the challenges set by the strategy. The environmental health division is enhancing the current mode of regulation with a series of campaigns around set topics set by the HSE throughout the year that incorporate a number of different strategies to engage local businesses, including but not exclusively, through inspection.

The division will be able to look at local problems within topic areas and plan a

local approach by employing different means of communicating with businesses, including that of enforcement. By planning projects around HSE national media programmes our campaigns can benefit from raised national awareness and allow us to translate these issues to the local situation.

This has proved highly successful and the council in a national were recently commended by the regional director of the HSE to north west authorities, attending a regional road show, as a beacon example for our successful adoption this of new working strategy.

Bereavement Services

The Bereavement Services Working Party met on four occasions during the year. These meetings encouraged member input on policy on a wide variety of cemetery and crematorium issues. Matters of particular significance included policy issues surrounding the Council's strategy for safe headstones; policy on contingency planning for a future Flu pandemic; developing options for the longer-term provision of new grave space in Halton and receiving updates as information trickled through on the subject of mercury abatement and its impact on the crematorium operation.

One of the meetings welcomed members of the local clergy plus local funeral directors, and encouraged an open dialogue aimed at improving our partnership working for the benefit of the members of the community we serve.

Alcohol

Work has progressed on alcohol harm reduction. An Audit has been carried out, a draft strategy is in place which will shortly be presented to a Member Seminar, and an Alcohol Harm Reduction Co-ordinator will shortly be recruited.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Bereavement Services maintained its "Charter for the Bereaved" best value quality standard
- The Consumer Protection Service retained its ISO9001 registered body status

PERFORMANCE ISSUES

There are no relevant performance issues to report upon.

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