



Executive Board

**Thursday, 19 June 2008 2.00 p.m.
Marketing Suite, Municipal Building**

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

Chief Executive

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

PART 1

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1. MINUTES	
2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal or personal and prejudicial interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda no later than when that item is reached and, with personal and prejudicial interests (subject to certain exceptions in the Code of Conduct for Members), to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on the item.	
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In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 19 June 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Environment

SUBJECT: The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to describe the content and purpose of the Strategy and to seek the Board's approval of it to support and evaluate the Mersey Gateway Scheme.

1.2 The report will cover the following:

1. The reason for commissioning the Strategy
2. How the strategy will be used
3. The areas covered by Strategy
4. Outputs and outcomes
5. How the Strategy evolved
6. A summary of the Strategy's proposals
7. Using the Strategy in Council policy documents

2.0 RECOMMENDATION, it is recommended that

1. **the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy is agreed as a document that demonstrates the potential regeneration opportunities arising from the Mersey Gateway Scheme;**
2. **the Strategy is used to support the case for the Mersey Gateway Scheme;**
3. **the Strategy is used by the Council as Local Planning Authority to judge the potential regeneration benefits that may arise from the Mersey Gateway Scheme in consideration of planning applications made to it and in response to consultation from the Department of Transport; and**
4. **authority is given to the Strategic Director Environment, with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transportation, Regeneration and Renewal, to make minor amendments as are necessary before publication.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Reasons for Commissioning the Strategy

3.2 The adopted vision for the Mersey Gateway Scheme is that it will be 'more than just a bridge' as it will act as a catalyst for urban regeneration and economic development that may not have occurred without it.

- 3.3 The land use changes that will occur as a result of the construction of the new bridge and its approach roads together with the de-linking of the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge from the strategic road network offer regeneration opportunities.
- 3.4 Therefore in early 2007 consultants were invited to bid for the task of preparing a regeneration strategy that would create a vision for change in areas affected directly and indirectly by the MG Scheme. This strategy would then inform planning documents and regeneration initiatives prepared by the Council and inspire private companies to invest in these areas.
- 3.5 However, the Regeneration Strategy would have to draw a distinction between regeneration and economic outputs directly associated with the Mersey Gateway Scheme itself and the regeneration benefits attributable to the land use changes that come about as a result of the building of the Scheme.
- 3.6 As a result GVA Grimley, together with their sub-contractor consultants EDAW and Watermans were appointed to prepare the Strategy.
- 3.7 How the Strategy will be Used
- 3.8 The economic impact of the Mersey Gateway Scheme itself (without taking into account the anticipated land use changes) has been the subject of a separate study by consultants Amion (Amion 2008 – Wider Economic Impact Report) The Amion report measures the accessibility benefits of the Mersey Gateway in terms of jobs created, against the construction phase and operational phase of the project across a much wider sub regional area. This is based on evidence that improvements to the strategic highway network will enhance the flow of labour and materials that will enable the growth of important sectors of the economy.
- 3.9 The Regeneration Strategy is a separate study that looks instead at the opportunities for regeneration that will be created as a result of the construction and opening of the new bridge and the de-linking of the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge from the strategic highway network. These regeneration opportunities can be divided as follows:
- Direct land use changes, land and businesses lost and gained
 - Direct regeneration opportunities arising from land use and access changes
 - Indirect regeneration opportunities due to changed traffic flows through the Borough and proximity to a new strategic highway link across the sub region
- 3.10 It is clear therefore that the Regeneration Strategy does not deal with the overall economic, and regeneration impact of the MG Scheme and this affects how it will be used as follows:

- To support the case for the MG Scheme by describing and measuring land use changes and regeneration opportunities arising directly and indirectly from the construction and operation of the Scheme.
- To evaluate the benefits that the Scheme will bring to the prosperity and amenity of the localities within the Borough and as a whole

3.11 This information can then be used by the Council, acting as a local planning authority to help judge the various Planning Applications and Transport and Work Act Applications that will together constitute the planning permissions for the MG Scheme.

3.12 Subsequently the Strategy will also be used as evidence at a future public inquiry, likely to be held by the Secretary of State before planning permissions and other powers are granted.

3.13 The Areas Covered by the Regeneration Strategy

3.14 The Regeneration Strategy is confined to areas of the Borough that were considered to be the subject of greatest direct and indirect land use effects as a result of the Mersey Gateway and the de-linking of the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

3.15 Five distinct 'impact areas' have been defined that form the basis of the Strategy. The first three were selected on the basis of direct relationships with the MG Scheme.

- Southern Widnes, including West Bank
- Runcorn Old Town
- Astmoor Industrial Estate

3.16 The last two were selected due to indirect impact of the Scheme due to redefined patterns of movement and accessibilities.

- Halton Lea Shopping Centre
- Rocksavage including Ashville Industrial Estate

3.17 Outputs and Outcomes

3.18 The Regeneration Strategy states that the Mersey Gateway provides a real catalyst for change in helping to shape a new future for many of the places influenced by it. This it states will deliver a range of outputs and outcomes some of which that are related to the physical regeneration opportunities, are as follows:

- Create new local employment floorspace for a range of local and new incoming businesses that will strengthen the local economy.
- Enable people from current states of worklessness into new employment
- Enhance access and opportunities for greater vocational training, education and life-long skills development
- Enhance the vitality and viability of the Borough's three town centres

- Develop new leisure destinations and recreational activities that will encourage more active communities leading to wider social benefits including preventative health measures and social inclusion objectives.
- Greater walking, cycling and public transport priorities
- New uses for previously developed land, including contaminated land, for new greenspace, public realm, employment and residential uses.
- Creating new and investing in existing residential areas.
- Deliver a step change in quality public realm, greenspace and environmental and bio diversity quality and fundamentally change perceptions of the place in which to live, work, invest and visit.

3.19 How the Regeneration Strategy Evolved

3.20 The Strategy has been based on a comprehensive evidence base summarised in Section 2 and 3 of the Report and compiled in Appendix A to the Report. This contains information on

- Population and Local Economy
- Profile of multiple deprivation
- Historic development
- Constraints on land including contamination
- Character profiles for the 5 'impact areas' describing their problems and opportunities
- The strategic significance of the Mersey Gateway in regional, sub-regional and local policy
- The wider economic and regeneration impacts as measured by the Amion study 2008. (Mersey Gateway Orders and Applications Environmental Impact Assessment – Wider Economic Impacts – Technical Report – Amion Consulting 2008)

3.21 This evidence base led to the identification of problems, issues and opportunities that could be tackled by the regeneration opportunities arising from the Mersey Gateway Scheme. This led to the establishment of a vision and objectives that would address these problems, issues and opportunities. These are set out in Section 4 of the Strategy. They are divided between 'Priority Objectives' to set the framework for the Strategy and 'Impact Area Objectives' that specify key objectives in the five impact areas of West Bank, Runcorn Old Town, Astmoor industrial Estate, Halton Lea and Rocksavage and Clifton.

3.22 The next stage was to develop and evaluate alternative options for consideration by the Council's Officer Steering Group and by public consultation. A series of 3 consultation events were held at the Catalyst Museum, Halton Lea and the Brindley between February and March 2008. These options were appraised in terms of their ability to meet the 'Priority Regeneration objectives' (and hence the overarching objectives for the Mersey Gateway), their economic impact and their contribution to sustainability objectives (and the results of the initial Sustainability Appraisal). All options were subject to an iterative development appraisal in order to

assess them in terms of both delivery and affordability. This is all set out in Appendix B of the Strategy –‘The Options Report’.

- 3.23 The outcome of the options generation, consultation and appraisal is the preferred options for each of the Mersey Gateway ‘Impact Areas’. These are described in Section 5 of the Strategy.
- 3.24 The Impact Areas of West Bank, Runcorn Old Town and Astmoor are divided into likely phases of development. The first phase describes the situation during and immediately after the construction of the new bridge and the de-linking of the Silver Jubilee Bridge. The second phases deal with the regeneration opportunities that will arise primarily from the re-configuration of the land pattern in these areas. The third phase adds the later development opportunities that will arise from the increased prosperity and quality of these areas. This will include re-development of outdated and under-used sites and premises that are not directly affected by the Mersey Gateway Scheme works.
- 3.25 Development Appraisal
- 3.26 The preferred options have been subjected to a development appraisal that compares the cost of implementing the options with the value they generate. Where there is a funding gap the report sets out sources of possible public funding subsidies that could be used to pay for infrastructure costs and land remediation works for example, that may be necessary to make development economically viable. This is set out in Section 6 of the Options Report (Appendix B)
- 3.27 Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment.
- 3.28 The Strategy’s options have been assessed in accordance with European and National legislation against sustainability objectives and for their potential impact on European sites of nature conservation importance. The latter Habitat Regulations Assessment is necessary because of the proximity of the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area for migratory birds.
- 3.29 The results of these assessments are set out in Appendix C and D of the Strategy.
- 3.30 Using the Strategy in Council Documents.
- 3.31 An important consideration for the Council will be how the Regeneration Strategy can be taken forward to implement the regeneration opportunities that it contains. This will twofold.
- 3.32 Planning– The Strategy’s development proposals will be adapted and incorporated into the Council’s Local Development Framework, the next generation of plans that will replace the current Halton Unitary Development Plan.

- 3.33 The Strategic proposals for focusing development in the 'impact areas' where the regeneration effects of the Mersey Gateway Scheme are expected to be felt most strongly should be reflected in the 'spatial vision' of the Core Strategy.
- 3.34 More detailed land use, highway public realm and public transport proposals will be incorporated into 'Supplementary Planning Documents' for Southern Widnes and Runcorn Old Town and perhaps, Astmoor if appropriate.
- 3.35 The sites that will be made available for new housing and employment development can be formally allocated in 'Development Plan Documents' that will provide the future supply of land for houses and jobs to 2021 and beyond.
- 3.36 Regeneration – The Strategy will be an important influence on the Council's future regeneration and economic development policies and could be used to bid for existing and future grant aid from European funds and national and regional agencies.
- 3.37 Local Transport Plan – Transport and Highway Schemes in the Regeneration Strategy may be included within the next LTP and partially funded through it, if necessary.
- 3.38 Sustainable Transport Strategy – This strategy is being prepared by consultants appointed by the Council to inform the overall planning process for the Mersey Gateway Scheme. It will also describe sustainable transport policies and potential schemes that will demonstrate how the Mersey Gateway will enable sustainable transport to be enhanced.
- 3.39 The Mersey Gateway Regeneration Scheme and the Sustainable Transport Strategy will work in tandem to ensure that the regeneration opportunities enable the necessary walking, cycling and public transport links to be integrated into new development and transport routes. This will be particularly important to take advantage of the proposed new bus, cycling and walking routes across the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

4.0 POLICY, RESOURCE AND OTHER ISSUES

- 4.1 The policy issues have been covered in this report. The resource issues have been mentioned briefly in relation to the probable need for gap funding from public sources to reduce some of the development opportunities described in the Strategy.
- 4.2 All indications of the costs of the development opportunities are described in the Options Report Section in Appendix B of the Strategy.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 5.1 Children and Young People in Halton

- 5.2 The improved quality of the environment, increased population supporting local schools, and increased employment opportunities within the 'impact areas' will all support the life quality and chances of children and young people who live in these areas and the wider Borough.
- 5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton
- 5.3 The Strategy (para 6.4) plans for a net gain of some 1,180 jobs locally (within Halton) and 3,039 additional jobs across a wider area in terms of multiplier and supply chain effects.
- 5.4 The Strategy also seeks to retain the existing employment areas wherever possible and practical.
- 5.5 For learning and skills the Strategy sets out a number of practical examples that will contribute to this priority (para 6.10).
1. Increasing accessibility to Riverside College through new pedestrian and cycle routes.
 2. Enhanced accessibility of Runcorn Station through a new hierarchy of sustainable movement will allow education and training facilities to be accessed further a field.
 3. Potential to work with Ineos as part of an alternative energy project at Rocksavage and the educational benefits this would bring.
- 5.6 The Strategy also states that as part of the implementation of the Strategy, vocational training and skills development could also be provided by linking new construction to apprenticeships as part of local labour agreements.
- 5.7 A Healthy Halton
- 5.8 Paragraph 6.26 of the strategy sets out the following contributions:
- A new waterside boulevard will be created providing valuable amenity space to encourage healthy lifestyles;
 - The provision of new pedestrian and cycle routes will encourage active lifestyles;
 - The provision of a new Neighbourhood Centre in West Bank area could provide new health provision facilities as part of a multi-use facility;
 - Resident consultation revealed support for the downgrading of redundant infrastructure (particularly associated with the Silver Jubilee Bridge) contributing to quality of life objectives; and
 - The scale and ambition of change will crucially transform perceptions of these places to be of genuine and greater choice as places to live, work and visit – such investment is crucial in raising aspirations with proven health benefits.
- 5.9 The Primary Care Trust has been engaged in the production of the Strategy.

5.10 A Safer Halton

5.11 Paragraph 6.29 of the Strategy states:

'Improvements to the design and planning of streets and spaces, to sensitive design standards and principles, will encourage a greater feeling of well-being and inclusiveness. Mixed use areas will serve to increase vitality and viability and will ensure that there are a greater number of people around at different times of the day.'

5.12 Halton's Urban Renewal

5.13 As the Regeneration Strategy is concerned with urban renewal than the implications for this priority are evident throughout the document.

6.0 Risk Analysis

6.1 A decision by the Executive Board to approve the Strategy in order to support the Mersey Gateway Scheme and to judge it through the development control purposes is in itself low risk.

6.2 However the implementation of the proposals described in the Strategy may require public gap funding and the future availability and quality of this is uncertain at this stage. A full risk assessment may only be necessary when the implementation of some of these regeneration opportunities is brought forward for approval in the future.

7.0 Equality and Diversity Issues

7.1 The consequences of the implementation of the Regeneration Strategy on a variety of social factors is dealt with by the sustainability appraisal in Appendix C

8.0 List of Background Papers under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

<u>Document</u>	<u>Place of Inspection</u>	<u>Contact Officer</u>
Mersey Gateway Orders	Planning Division	Andrew Pannell
Environmental Impact Assessment Wider Economic Impacts Technical Report Amion Consulting 2008	Rutland House	

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 19 June 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Corporate & Policy

SUBJECT: Sub National Review Consultation

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Executive Board on the Sub-National Review (SNR) consultation document.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Executive Board approves the attached consultation response.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 A consultation document entitled “Prosperous Places” on the Sub-National Economic Development and Regulation Review was published on 31st March 2008.

3.2 There is a twelve-week consultation, which runs until 20th June.

3.3 In summary, there are a number of key issues that are set out in the review:

- A statutory economic development duty for Local Authorities to undertake an economic assessment of an area, either jointly with other authorities or on their own;
- Reform of the Local Authority Business Growth Initiative;
- Making LAA’s the main delivery agreement between central and local government;
- Extending the powers of passenger transport authorities;
- Formalising arrangements for collaborative working between neighbouring local authorities and partners in the form of multi-area agreements;
- Outlines the option to establish permanent sub-regional structures;
- Aligning regional strategies i.e. a single Regional Strategy;
- Redefining regional strategic priorities and targets;

- Proposals for greater scrutiny of RDA's
- Abolishing Regional Assemblies, but acknowledging that Local Authorities will still need to work collectively at a regional level.

3.4 The Consultation Document is divided into five chapters:

- Chapter 1 – Responding to the Consultation
- Chapter 2 – Securing Prosperity in a changing economy (covering the SNR Policy Context)
- Chapter 3 – Stronger Partnerships for Regional Growth
- Chapter 4 – Integrating Regional Strategies to promote growth
- Chapter 5 – Strengthening Sub-Regional Economies – the Local Authority

3.5 Government is asking for views on 15 questions. The Executive Board is advised that the Head of External Funding is leading on the development of a sub-regional response. A copy of the latest draft of this response is attached, (as at 4th June 2008). Additional commentary specific to Halton, is highlighted under each of the consultation questions as appropriate.

3.6 The response is contained in Appendix 1.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 When the SNR was published in July 2007 it set out proposals for the devolution of economic development and appeared to present opportunities for Local Authorities to shape the economy of their place through the introduction of an Economic Development Duty. Up until the publication of this document, there had been little guidance or consultation produced by Government.

4.2 The policy proposals set out in the consultation are, potentially far-reaching. Local Authorities have long sought greater responsibility for local economic development, both individually and in collaboration. A number of proposals in the SNR strengthen the role of Local Authorities in this regard and the document should generally be welcomed as an opportunity to further promote appropriate devolution of powers to Local Authorities at both the sub-regional and local levels.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 In addition, the SNR proposes that where there is a demand, Government will work with Local Authorities to establish statutory sub-

regional arrangements for economic development activity. Members will need to reflect on the fact that a statutory body would remove the requirement for lead authorities and accountable bodies when implementing sub-regional programmes.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Not applicable

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Government is proposing that an Integrated Regional Strategy would be supported through Local Authorities being placed under a statutory duty to prepare an assessment of the economic conditions of an area, which in turn should inform locally developed strategies.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Not applicable

6.4 A Safer Halton

Not applicable

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Not applicable

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

A low risk is associated with additional responsibilities being given to Local Authorities and whether adequate resources will follow. One such example would be the development of a local economic assessment. The risk of lack of adequate resources will be reduced through ongoing dialogue with Government to ensure that assumptions outlined in the document are more realistically calculated.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Not applicable

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Prosperous Places: Taking forward the Review of the Sub national Economic Development and Regeneration	External Funding Office, Municipal Building, Kingsway, Widnes	Wesley Rourke

Draft 4th June 2008

Prosperous Places: Taking forward the Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration -

Liverpool City Region response.

Introduction

The Liverpool City Region welcomes the opportunity to respond to the SNR consultation document. The comments and responses outlined in this document reflect the views of the sub regional partnership. Throughout our response the term sub-regional partnership is used to encapsulate the views of the following:

Private Sector
Third Sector
Local Authorities (The Liverpool City Region Cabinet)
Higher Education Sector
Local Transport Plan Partnership
LSC

Our response is based on the proposition that by working together collaboratively at a sub-regional we can add value to addressing the needs and opportunities within our respective Local Authority boundaries. For a number of years, the Liverpool City Region has been pursuing many of the principles set out in the Sub-National Review. For example, The City Region already collaborates on an annual basis to produce a Merseyside Strategy and Action Plan for delivery, as well as to undertake an Economic Review of the sub-region (The Merseyside Economic Review). Recently, our collaboration on economic regeneration issues has been extended through the establishment of an Integrated Inward Investment Agency. To build on this, the sub regional partnership board (TMP) is established as the Economy Board as part of the new City Region Governance model. Our developing Multi Area Agreement is focusing on Employment, Economic Development and Enterprise in the first instance with the addition of key transport and housing elements. We, therefore, welcome proposals to formally delegate responsibility for economic regeneration and we would point to the good progress we have made in recent years to strengthen our city-regional partnership governance structures to make this possible.

1. Consultation questions:

Chapter 3 – Stronger partnerships for regional growth

Q1. How should RDAs satisfy themselves that sufficient capacity exists for programme management and delivery at local or sub-regional level?

RDAs should apply clear and transparent criteria that is jointly developed and agreed with the North West Leaders' Forum to assess

capacity for programme management and delivery at the sub regional and local level.

Local authority and sub regional capacity in undertaking statutory economic assessments and delivering economic growth will be a critical element to implementing the SNR. There should be a memorandum of understanding, contract or SLA between RDA and local authorities/MAA/sub regions to clarify respective roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and to make clear what should be delivered in return for delegation of funding as well as the precise scope of any local discretion. Resources will need to be provided to ensure that Local Authorities can adequately fulfil their obligations to strategic partners through continuing to develop appropriate programme management systems and open decision-making structures.

In addition for RDAs to move away from a delivery focussed project management role towards a more strategic programme approach, there will need to be significant changes within RDAs. RDAs should bring forward proposals to the Regional Leaders Forum to demonstrate how these capacity issues/changes will be addressed.

We would seek assurances that arrangements were in place to ensure that RDAs recruited, in good time, people with the appropriate technical expertise to take on the new responsibilities that the new duties will bring. Equally, RDAs may consider seconding staff to learn from and embed good practice from the management and delivery of existing regeneration programmes.

The Liverpool City Region has a track record of successful programme management and delivery in this regard with a number of examples where it has demonstrated a proven track record of managing and delivering complex programmes aimed at growing the economy of the sub-region.

Examples include at sub regional level the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park, a £110m programme from 2002 – 2008 and at local level the Urban Regeneration Company Liverpool Vision, an £800m programme running from 1999 to 2008, as well as the Housing Market Renewal Programme worth £500 million over the next three years. The Liverpool City Region Development Plan and the Action Plan for the City Region highlight the direction of travel we are taking to develop a Single Investment Framework for the city-region

In addition mature collaborative partnerships within the Liverpool City region have made decisions regarding the prioritisation of major investment through Objective 1 Structural Funds during the last decade and more recently around major transport schemes as part of the RFA process.

Draft 4th June 2008

New RFA guidance in 2008 should seek advice on transport, housing and regeneration investment but not on ERDF resources for which a clear process is already in place. To achieve a 'joined up' approach to providing strategic advice this process should not be led by three different regional organisations as it was in 2005/06.

Halton - welcomes the consultation document. For many years Halton has played its part in developing strong collaborative working across the sub-region.

Q2. Do you agree that local authorities should determine how they set up a local authority leaders' forum for their region, and that the Government should only intervene if the required criteria are not met or if it failed to operate effectively? If not, what would you propose instead?

Yes, the NWRA/NWDA response provides details on the North West Leaders' Forum structure being developed which the Liverpool City Region fully supports.

The North West region's sustainable economic development sub-group should play a role in promoting inter-regional collaborative working through integrated regional and sub-regional plans.

Halton – Agrees that the role and function of the Leaders' Forum should be determined by Local Authorities for Local Authorities.

Q3. Are the proposed regional accountability and scrutiny proposals proportionate and workable?

The consultation document provides little detail on proposals for scrutiny by parliamentary committee and limited information regarding scrutiny at the regional level. Existing scrutiny powers at the regional level must be strengthened if local authorities and other partners are to effectively hold the RDA and other regional bodies to account within the region.

The Regional Leaders' Forum should develop the Single Regional Strategies in conjunction with RDAs and it should NOT be possible for RDAs to submit a strategy to Government that has not been agreed by the Regional Leaders Forum.

We would also seek an improvement to the existing scrutiny arrangements by seeing greater emphasis placed on the assessment and scrutiny of future plans rather than just a retrospective view of existing plans and activities.

RDAs' accountability to parliament will remain with the Secretary of State for BERR. However, we feel that given the need to reflect on wider economic regeneration issues, it is appropriate to obtain an input from

Draft 4th June 2008

other Government departments, for example, DCLG. Equally the responsibility for the regional development of the country does not reside with nor is it dependent upon one Government department. The current proposals might narrow the focus to an analysis of GVA and productivity indicators to the exclusion of wider wellbeing and sustainable development aims.

Any parliamentary committee that is established to scrutinise the regional tier should include representation from the Regional Leaders' Forum.

Halton – agree with the comments

Chapter 4 – Integrating regional strategies to promote growth

Q4. Do you agree that the regional strategy needs to cover the elements listed at paragraph 4.13? Are there other matters that should be included in the regional strategy to help in the delivery of key outcomes?

We agree that the policies and spatial priorities in the Single Regional Strategy need to cover the elements outlined in paragraph 4.13. however we do not feel that the consultation document adequately reflects the relationship between social and economic regeneration. The document does not pick up on, for example, the impact of health inequalities on levels of economic prosperity.

The key drivers of economic performance need to be drawn out, for example, the document needs to further reflect on transport as a major contributor to economic growth and prosperity.

We welcome, for example, Eddington's focus on the links between city regions and where there is greatest demand for transport. We would continue to use the devolution of economic development as a means of identifying transport demands based on sub-regional economic priorities and providing the opportunity to test options accordingly

The document makes little reference to emerging arrangements on the adult skills agenda and this will need to be considered fully as part of the sub national review and in developing a Single Regional Strategy. Paragraph 3.33 outlines the desire to build on Sub Regional Employment and Skills Boards to agree shared priorities – the Liverpool City region supports this approach and would wish to see the Skills resources included in any future RFA exercise.

In addition we would wish to highlight the potential mismatch in regard to outcome measures arising from the bringing together of respective regional strategies.

Current regional economic strategies focus on 'hard' economic development indicators for example, there needs to be a balance/ equal weighting given to 'softer' sustainable development indicators as measures of success.

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Halton – our discussions on our emerging Core Strategy express the need to link economic growth with wider social deprivation issues such as health, educational attainment, transport and housing.

Q5. Do you agree with the way in which we propose to simplify the preparation of the regional strategy, as illustrated in the figure (on page 35), in particular allowing flexibility for regions to determine detailed processes? If not what other steps might we take?

The flow chart is a helpful simplification of the process, however the timings identified appear unrealistic; whilst it may be possible to agree strategic priorities within a relatively short timeframe, initiatives requiring statutory or legislative input will take longer. The review of RSS is an example of this.

Also, the sequencing between the preparation of the first regional strategy and the next round of advice on regional Funding Allocations is unhelpful. RFA guidance is anticipated in summer 2008. Regional funding priorities and advice will be established in spring 2009 in advance of the development of the first regional Strategy. Moving forward partners clearly wish to see development of the Regional Strategy before outlining a delivery plan and allocating resources to deliver that plan.

We would also wish to see greater emphasis on sub-regional priorities shaping and influencing the regional strategy, so we welcome the fact that statutory local authority economic assessments will be input to the development of the regional strategy, alongside other key evidence bases, e.g. Local Transport Plans. Again the timing of this would need to be clear to ensure that local authority economic assessments are produced in time to inform the development of the Regional Strategy.

Halton – any proposals to reduce timetable is welcomed. We are concerned that RFA allocations will be decided (2008) before the Regional Strategy process begins in Spring 2008. We need to maximise the opportunity to feed in local assessment data into regional strategy-making processes.

Q6. Do you think that the streamlined process would lead to any significant changes in the costs and benefits to the community and other impacts?

A more streamlined process could aid understanding and involvement of stakeholders, with the complex and extremely long process for developing the current RSS causing confusion, attrition and disengagement for the public.

A high level strategy may result in impacts not being identified through the SA/SEA. Lack of robust and comprehensive evidence and subsequent analysis, due to the desire for a concise high level strategy, would result in the SA being unable to assess all the potential interactions and relationships between policies and priorities, resulting in critical impacts for sustainable development.

Halton – Guidance on the development of our Local Development Framework places emphasis on the need to formulate a robust and rigorous evidence base to substantiate any future initiatives and actions. The process could provide a mechanism for aligning sub-regional and local success measures and outcomes.

Chapter 5 – Strengthening sub-regional economies – the role of local authorities

Q7. Which of the options for the local authority economic assessment duty (or any other proposals) is most appropriate?

Liverpool City Region partners support option 1. We support the preparation of a set of core indicators which would be accompanied by a menu of indicators which would be used flexibly to reflect the relative scale of problems and distinctiveness of areas across the sub-region.

We support the creation of an economic assessment duty for local authorities and would wish to see any assessment underpin the development of city region strategic priorities and decisions re investment priorities through the City Region Economy Board. However, there is an underlying principle that the role of Local Government goes beyond acting merely as a vehicle for producing a local economic assessment, but rather to giving Local Government the duty for leading on promoting and driving the economic prosperity of the local area.

The development of sub-regional and local economic assessments should not be regarded as mutually exclusive. Our view is that a city regional assessment will inform and augment the quality of local assessments to provide effective input to the development of a Regional Strategy.

It is important that there is consistency in the data used to provide evidence base at local, sub regional and regional levels.

There is, however, a need for a rigorous analysis at a sub-regional and local level. There is recognition that macro and micro economic issues will need to be picked up at the appropriate spatial level. One example might be in regard to skills areas of deprivation are more likely to pick up lower level skills, whereas sub-regional/regional working will focus on higher-level skills. Similarly GVA and productivity will require a sub-regional, regional or indeed national treatment. Local assessments will often pick up 'fine grain' information which could be missed by a wider geographical assessment.

Examples of the types of indicators that it would be useful to capture include:

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Indicator	Scope	Source	Notes
Retail 'All-risk' Yields (in city centres)	By place	VOA	-
Rental values	By place, by commercial type	VOA	-
Reduce person delay due to congestion (min)	By place	Merseyside Local Transport Plan	-
Travel-to-work figures	Destination and source of employment	Merseyside Local Transport Plan	-
Improve Business Friendliness Index Score	By place	Business Liverpool	The data for this indicator is collected using a bespoke annual survey of Liverpool businesses. Discussions for a booster survey to cover Merseyside are planned
	By place, by sector	Nomis, annual	-
	By place, by sector	Nomis, annual	-
GVA per job filled, GVA per hour worked (workforce productivity)	By place, by sector	ABI and annual population survey, annual. Nomis, annual survey of hours and earnings, annual	Possible issues surrounding GVA per hour worked methodology (relatively high levels of sampling error in some datasets).
Increase amount of investment into the LCR	By place, by sector	Inward Investment team	Is currently tracked by TMP inward investment team
	By place	Nomis, Annual Population survey, quarterly	-
Reduce workless-ness in LCR (IB/IS/JSA)	By place, by benefit type	Nomis, Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS), quarterly.	DCLG definition of workless-ness is likely to be adopted
Percentage of employees receiving job-related training in previous 13 weeks	By place	Annual Population Survey, nomis, quarterly	-

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Improve Index of Multiple Deprivation score in key wards	By place	DCLG, 2-4 years.	-
Employment rate (working age)	By place, by gender, by ethnicity	APS and LFS, Nomis	The monitoring of employment by ethnicity will be dependent upon securing a dataset that does not have a large sampling error.
Population	By place, by age	APS, Mid-year population estimates	-
Increase number of day visits, overnight stays and international overnight stays in the LCR	By place	Merseyside Destination Management Plan, Merseyside Waterfront Regional Park programme	-
Increase contribution of Tourism sector to the LCR economy	By place	Merseyside Destination Management Plan, Merseyside Waterfront Regional Park programme	-

Indicator	Scope	Source	Notes
City-Region Image Tracking	-	-	Indicator methodology is currently under review
Increase Total Early stage entrepreneurial Activity (TEA)	By place	-	-
Increase number of exporting companies and value of exports	By place, by sector	-	-
Proportion of GVA spent on R&D in Merseyside	By sector (including HEI and public)	-	-
Graduate Retention in LCR	-	Mid-year population estimates	Awaiting introduction of indicator into mid-year population estimate dataset
Reduce per capita CO2 emissions	By sector	NWDA	-
Increase GVA contribution of ETS sector to economy of the LCR	-	ABI, yearly. Dependant upon agreeing on appropriate SIC definition	-

Halton – we also favour option 1 as it allows for consistency of approach and an opportunity to benchmark data within and across regions

Draft 4th June 2008**Q8. What additional information or support do local authorities consider valuable for the purpose of preparing assessments?**

The document sets out assumptions regarding the funding of assessments. How have these assumptions been made? Government needs to acknowledge that some resource will be required to implement the new duty. Resources will be required at both a sub-regional and local level, to allow Local Authorities to utilise and benefit from the valuable sources of information, knowledge and expertise available through close working with other strategic partners and sectors.

Local Authorities in the Liverpool City Region have developed local economic assessments through, for example economic development strategies and it would be unfair to expect Local Authorities that have already been doing this work to effectively subsidise those that have not through 'efficiency savings'. Again the 1% efficiency saving assumption appears arbitrary. We would propose an allocation based on size/population.

We would also wish to see consistency in the statistics produced and that these statistics would be produced over a longer period. Similarly there also needs to be consistency in the type and level of key indicators applied.

We also feel that Government should be consistent in the tools it uses to find solutions to economic development issues. One example of this inconsistency is how, on the one hand, Government promotes a commissioning based approach based on need to tackling problems, but on the other promotes a competitive bidding approach such as the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative

Halton – we agree that the figures appear to be arbitrary and do not reflect the real costs of undertaking this piece of work.

Q9. How should lead local authorities engage partners, including district councils, in the preparation of the assessment?

Local authorities will engage with local partners through existing mechanisms e.g. the LSP. It will be important that assessments are 'joined up' at the sub regional and regional levels so engagement of sub regional and regional partnership structures will also be important.

Halton – it is suggested that Halton already has strong partnership arrangements in place; the development of the Community Strategy, LSP thematic group baseline reports and accompanying action plans serve to demonstrate our evidence base led approach to identifying issues facing the borough and developing solutions with partners to address these problems.

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Q10. Which partner bodies should be consulted in the preparation of the assessment?

LSPs and existing sub regional partnerships include all the necessary partners who should be consulted..

Halton - we propose a duty to consult with the Business Community from the perspective of understanding the Market/gathering market intelligence

Q11. Should any duty apply in London and, if so, which of the proposed models is most appropriate?

No Comment other than to ask whether there are examples of best practice that can be applied to other parts of the country?

Halton – no further comment

Q12. Do you agree that there is value in creating statutory arrangements for sub-regional collaboration on economic development issues beyond MAAs? What form might any new arrangements take?

There is value in this. The Liverpool City Region sees the value in creating statutory arrangements for sub regional collaboration. The new governance and delivery model for the Liverpool City Region demonstrates our commitment to fully utilising the powers, freedoms and flexibilities presented in the SNR with the potential of moving towards a statutory City Region Cabinet. The key activities that the city region governance model will oversee go beyond economic regeneration including Skills and Employment, Housing and Transport and also include Environment and Waste; Safer Communities and Health and Social Care;

Liverpool City Region partners are committed to economic regeneration as a key focus for delivery and so have moved quickly to establish an Economy Board, with a single agency approach to Inward Investment.

Halton – a statutory body for the sub-region requires further discussion with sub-regional partners in line with the need to be accountable to its potential membership.

Q13. What activities would you like a sub-regional partnership to be able to carry out and what are the constraints on them doing this under the current legislation?

The new governance and delivery model for the Liverpool City Region demonstrates our commitment to fully utilising the powers, freedoms and

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flexibilities presented in the SNR. The key activities that the city region partnership (led by the Leaders Cabinet) will carry out through six City Region Boards are: Economic regeneration; Skills and Employment; Housing and Spatial Planning; Transport; Environment and Waste; Safer Communities and Health and Social Care;

Constraints on delivering these activities through current legislation are starting to be articulated through the MAA development Merseyside would question the use of current procurement practices, for example, the DWP prime contractor approach which places constraints on a more commissioning based approach to delivering services.

and, further legislation may be required to facilitate some types of delegation from RDAs and to ensure that the local levers to coordinate activity to meet the city region's need around skills for example, from Jobcentre Plus and the future Skills Funding Agency.

A further constraint relates to differing approaches expressed by Government departments concerning the incorporation of transport in sub-regional governance structures. Reference is made to Integrated Transport Authorities being subsumed by regional collaborative arrangements, and yet it is not clear whether BERR would support this. A dialogue between the two departments is key to ensuring that the Local Transport Bill and guidance adequately reflects this.

Halton – we note the comments

Q14. How would a sub-regional economic development authority fit into the local authority performance framework?

The Liverpool City Region is developing a multi area agreement that will address this by ensuring that within a context of need for democratic accountability, MAA and LAA performance indicators will be complementary. The MAA will demonstrate the added value of collaborating at a sub-regional level. Part of this approach includes consultation with respective Local Strategic Partnerships to facilitate the integration of Local Authority Performance Frameworks into sub-regional plans.

Halton – we note the comments

Q15. Should there be a duty to co-operate at sub-regional level where a statutory partnership exists? To whom should this apply?

Yes - all relevant local authorities, the RDA, new Homes and Communities Agency, new Skills Funding Agency, DWP, Jobcentre +, Environment Agency, Network rail Highways Agency and others should have a duty to co-operate. This should be consistent with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 which sets out a comprehensive list of those that have a duty to co-operate with a Local Area Agreement .

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Halton – we have advocated wider accountability and duties, which is reflected in the above response

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 19.06.2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Corporate & Policy

SUBJECT: Application for Twinning Grant

WARD(S): Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to give details of 1 application being made to the Twinning Grant Fund.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the following grant be awarded to:
- (a) £1,850 Widnes Football Development Forum

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 In April 1996, Halton Borough Council set up a Grant Fund to assist in enabling all members of the community to access and gain benefit from the Council's International Links.
- 3.2 Since 1996, a number of groups have accessed the fund to undertake exchange visits to Marzahn-Hellersdorf in Germany; Leiria in Portugal; Usti-nad-Labem in the Czech Republic; and Tongling City in China, including the Halton Swimming Team; Halton Youth Service; PHAB; St. Chad's School, and Fairfield High School who have hosted teachers and pupils from Tongling previously. These links have resulted in a number of reciprocal visits from each town.
- 3.3 Participants in previous exchanges have found that the benefits of learning about another culture and language are immense. A wide range of activity in the Borough has been facilitated by the provision of grant aid and has given an opportunity to those who would not otherwise be able to participate.
- 3.4 The application received from Widnes Football Development Forum, requests support for a visit to Marzahn-Hellersdorf during 27th-29th June 2008. They have been asked to attend a football competition,

hosted by Berlin Football team. They will take 22 people over to Marzahn-Hellersdorf.

- 3.5 The visit will provide an opportunity for players to represent Halton in the Twin Town. They also expect to forge a partnership for future exchanges and a condition of the grant is a return trip to take place in 2009.
- 3.6 The applicant has identified total costs of £4,775.60. This is broken down into Travel £2925.60, Accommodation £1,250 and Insurance £600. (Match funding declared £1,850)
- 3.7 The team will be using club funds £350, contributions from participants £1,000 and has been fundraising for the visit totalling £500

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The application is in line with the borough's European Strategy, in particular the promotion of international links, which seeks to offer the opportunity to participate to the whole population of Halton.
- 4.2 The application will also make a major contribution to the Local Strategic Partnership Key Priorities Healthy Halton and Employment, learning and skills

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 In reaching a decision concerning the level of grant to be awarded, Members are requested to note that the twinning grant budget is frequently oversubscribed. Also, in preparation for a reduction in European funding after 2006, the Council is also placing emphasis on developing economic (transnational), as well as cultural and social twinning links, and as a result, there will be added pressure on the budget in this financial year.
- 5.2 Members are also advised that the guidance given to applicants is that any grant awarded will not usually exceed £3,000. Grants normally support up to a maximum 75% of the total costs of the project.
- 5.3 The group has declared no past funding from the Town Twinning Funding programme,

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 Measures are in place to minimise risks to the delivery of the project. For example, the as part of the terms and conditions of grant applicants are required to complete a risk assessment proforma.

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 7.1 The project focuses on promoting the Council's priority 'Healthy Halton' for people in Halton; encouraging, cooperation between people in Halton and Germany

8.0 REASONS FOR DECISION

- 8.1 The maximum funding that the Town Twinning programme is 50%. Therefore it is proposed to match the £1,850 that the group have raised through their own funds

9.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 n/a.

10.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

- 10.1 27th-29th June 2008.

11.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 n/a

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 19 June 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Environment

SUBJECT: Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Executive Board of the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and seek retrospective approval of Halton response that has been submitted to the Government Office for the North West.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the importance of the content of the Regional Spatial Strategy is noted in relation to the development of the emerging Halton Local Development Framework.**
- (2) Halton's response to the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes, detailed at Appendix 1, are endorsed.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Due to the new status of Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) as part of the 'development plan', as set out in the new Planning and Compulsory Act 2004, the issues arising in the new RSS are of importance to Halton Borough Council in the production of the new Halton Borough Local Development Framework (LDF) and in decisions on planning applications.
- 3.2 The Secretary of State's response to the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) represents the latest, and an advanced, stage in the production of a new regional plan for the North West. The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes were issued for public consultation in March 2008, with the period for comments running until 23 May. The SoS's Proposed Changes were issued in response to the publication of the Panel Report into Draft RSS (March 2007) which was itself issued subsequent to the Examination in Public (EiP) into the draft document that was held between 31st October 2006 and 15th February 2007. The EiP considered the content of the Submitted draft RSS (January 2006).

- 3.3 Halton has played a full and active role at all stages of RSS production and has had some notable successes in influencing redrafting of the emerging document to reflect our priorities. This has occurred in co-ordination with the Merseyside Policy Unit (MPU) who have also submitted comments regarding emerging RSS on behalf of the Merseyside authorities, including Halton.
- 3.4 The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes detail recommendations for amendments to emerging RSS in relation to the proposals contained in the Panel Report. Many of the Panel's suggested changes have been accepted by the Secretary of State (SoS), however, on occasion the SoS has rejected the recommendation of the Panel and made a different recommendation. Where this has happened, full reasons have been given in the Proposed Changes document.
- 3.5 It is anticipated that the final version of RSS will be published in mid 2008.
- 3.6 It has been frequently mentioned from the time of the EiP that draft RSS was produced very rapidly and this has led to deficiencies in the policy content of the document. The Panel previously stated that they did not feel that the content of emerging RSS was satisfactory, even if altered in line with recommendations. They therefore recommended that RSS be the subject of an early and wide ranging review. This has been endorsed in principle by the Secretary of State, with a Partial Review of RSS to take place to cover matters of housing policy, Housing Market Areas, regional car parking standards, waste policies (specifically regionally significant waste management facilities), broad locations for renewable energy and accommodation for travelling showpeople, gypsies and travellers. A Project Plan has already been issued, with the Partial Review expected to be completed by the end of 2010.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 As the SoS's response to the Panel Report represent such an advanced stage in Plan preparation, it has to be recognised that there are now limitations to which changes to RSS can be influenced and expected. For example, it would be inappropriate to 'go over old ground' regarding matters that have already been fully considered by the Panel and the SoS. However, it is appropriate for Halton to make representations regarding clear material changes to RSS in light of changes proposed by the SoS in relation to the individual policies, explanatory text and spatial diagrams within the document. These representations would need to be considered by the SoS and any changes that are considered to be appropriate would then need to be made prior to RSS being adopted.
- 4.2 The section of this report below after paragraph 4.5 therefore 1) details the main recommendations made by the SoS that may have policy

implications for Halton Borough Council; 2) where appropriate, proposes representations (either objections or clarifications) that Officers suggest should be made in response to the SoS's recommendations in order that Halton's policy position can be fully taken into account. The suggested wording for these representations is given for endorsement at Appendix 1.

- 4.3 The broad basis for Halton's suggested objections to the SoS's Proposed Changes can be summarised as follows: 1) seek clarification regarding the status of selected third tier town/ cities in Policy RDF1 (Spatial Priorities); 2) request a better definition of "exceptional substantial strategic change" within Policy RDF4 (Green Belts); 3) seek clarification regarding whether the sub regional employment land figures detailed in table 6.1 which relate to Policy W3 (Supply of Employment Land) represent a ceiling. Seek a precise definition of what "2005 supply" in row 1 of the table includes; 4) Object to Policy RT2 (Managing Travel Demand) by seeking the inclusion of the Silver Jubilee Bridge; 5) Object to Policy RT6 (Ports and Waterways) explanatory text by seeking the inclusion of Weston Docks; 6) object to the Regional and Liverpool City Region Key Spatial Diagrams because these are incorrect in relation to the Widnes (with access to the West Coast Main Line (Liverpool Branch)) indicative Inter Modal Freight Terminal location i.e. Ditton. The former shows this at Runcorn and latter omits it completely; 7) object to a) the failure to publish the Implementation Plan alongside the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes in connection with Policy RT10 (Priorities for Transport Management and Investment) b) the omission of the Mersey Gateway Bridge from the Plan and in particular Policy LCR1 (Liverpool City Region Priorities); 8) Object to the omission of Halton (i.e. Daresbury) as a location for Regionally Significant Economic Development in Policy LCR1.
- 4.4 In addition to the objections and clarifications above, it is also of note that RSS places several potentially onerous requirements at the local level in terms of Plan production and scheme justification. This will have staff resource implications. For example, the requirement for Habitat Regulatory Assessment has been passed disproportionately to the local level, a multi-modal transport model may need to be produced for the Borough and Halton needs to incorporate effective policies promoting Code for Sustainable Homes and the Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) standards. There is also a requirement to undertake a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).
- 4.5 The content of RSS can broadly be divided into six key areas in accordance with chapters of the document, these being 1) Spatial Development Principles and the Regional Spatial Framework; 2) Working in the North West; 3) Living in the North West; 4) Transport; 5) Environment, Minerals and Waste; 6) The Sub Regional Strategies,

including the Liverpool City Region. Each of these is now considered in turn:

1) Spatial Development Principles and the Regional Spatial Framework

Development Principles

- The Panel's recommendations have largely been accepted, meaning that there are substantial changes to the Development Principles set out in RSS. A single overarching policy identifies 8 spatial principles; 8 following policies (DP2-9) expand upon each of these. Most notably, Policy DP4 promotes a sequential test to development, with first choice being existing buildings within settlements and previously developed land and buildings, suitable infill as the second choice and the development of other well located land as third choice.

Spatial Priorities and the Settlement Hierarchy

- The SoS proposes to delete Table 7.1, which provided the settlement hierarchy for the Region, and included Runcorn and Widnes as 'Regional Towns and Cities'. Associated Policy RDF1 has been reworded to refer to named towns and cities as part of a three tier priority for growth and development. The first priority is the regional centres of Manchester and Liverpool, with second priority being inner areas surrounding the regional centres, including Housing Market Renewal Areas. Widnes and Runcorn are now within a third priority of named towns and cities. This third priority contains 6 towns/ cities in bold text (Carlisle, Chester, Crewe, Lancaster, Preston and Warrington) out of the 29 listed. It is considered that clarification is required regarding whether these emboldened centres are prioritised and, accordingly, a representation has been drafted at Appendix 1.
- Policy RDF2 refers to Key Service Centres, however, this deals with centres in rural areas.

Green Belt

- The Panel have recommended changes to the policy in relation to the Green Belt, this includes the presumption against exceptional substantial strategic change to the Green Belt before 2011 within Merseyside, Cheshire, Greater Manchester or Lancashire. There appears to be no definition of 'exceptional substantial strategic change' within emerging RSS, with this to be considered on a case by case basis. However, the policy appears to contradict explanatory text at paragraph 5.26, so a representation has been drafted at Appendix 1 to seek clarification. The policy goes on to say that LDFs may provide for detailed changes in Green Belt boundaries to accommodate the expansion of Liverpool John Lennon Airport (LJLA). In the case of Halton, this would entail considering whether land would need to be removed from the green belt in relation to the LJLA eastern runway extension. Co-ordination

with Liverpool City Council upon this matter would be advisable in order to ensure 'soundness' of our LDF documentation.

2) Working in the North West

Employment Land

- Table 6.1 provides figures for the Provision of Employment Land. The SoS has agreed with the Panel in principle and has therefore recommended a number of significant changes to this table as the approach taken by the NWRA was considered to be inconsistent and flawed. The table now refers to 'all' employment land; this means that Merseyside and Halton now require an extra allocation of 476ha of employment land (including any additional Regionally Significant Economic Development sites). This is a higher figure than had been suggested by the Panel but lower than that in Submission Draft RSS. However, the explanatory text to the policy usefully clarifies that Inter Modal Freight Terminals, such as Ditton or Newton-le-Willows do not form part of this quantum of allocation.
- There are two matters that need clarification regarding this table, these being whether the sub regional figures for employment land in table 6.1 represent a ceiling and what the definition of existing employment land in the table includes. A representations in relation to these matters has been drafted at Appendix 1.
- The SoS recommends that local authorities should review their employment land portfolio every three years, which is more onerous than national advice. The fact that RSS only provides a land figure for the Greater Merseyside sub region emphasises a need for cross-boundary working in order to disaggregate this to the local authority level. This is a challenge, because presently Liverpool, Wirral and St Helens Councils have 'gone it alone' in carrying out their own employment land reviews. However, Halton has been working in partnership with Sefton, Knowsley and West Lancashire Councils to overcome this problem and the four authorities recently commissioned BE Group to undertake a Joint Employment Land Study. Part of this commission entails BE Group disaggregating the sub-regional figures to the local level.
- The SoS has followed the Panel recommendation that table 8.1, which set out the broad locations for Regionally Significant Economic Development Sites (which included South East Halton), should be deleted. To facilitate this, the SoS has recommended amendments to associated Policy W2. In accordance with the Panel recommendation, this policy is now criteria based, however it now only states that Regionally Significant Economic Development Sites will be located close to transport nodes within certain areas, the relevant location in Halton's case merely stating the urban areas of the Liverpool City Region, rather than the Panel's previously recommended 'Halton'. All reference to a location in Halton has now therefore been removed. Refer to the Liverpool City Region section below for further comments in this regard and an objection at Appendix 1.

- An additional test has been added that Regionally Significant Economic Development Sites should not be used for development that could be accommodated elsewhere and should not be developed in a piecemeal manner. The Council will now be required to demonstrate that Daresbury meets the criteria set out in this policy before allocating it as a Regionally Significant Economic Development site within the LDF.
- Knowledge based services (such as Daresbury) should be clustered close to significant research establishments.
- The SoS has accepted the Panel recommendation and removed reference to 'reserve sites', which had included Daresbury and were intended to be held back to accommodate 'investment that would otherwise be lost to the Region'.
- It is of note that Inter Modal Freight Terminals are considered under a separate policy, RT8; this is considered below under the Transport chapter.

Retail

- Policy W5 of the RSS provided the retail hierarchy for the North West. Halton and the Merseyside Policy Unit (MPU) made representations at the EiP for the inclusion of Widnes and Halton Lea within the second tier of retail centres of this policy. Unfortunately, neither the Panel nor the SoS were persuaded by the argument put forward for their inclusion and they have not been named in this second tier. However, it should be noted that Policy W5 encourages investment of an appropriate scale in non-named centres, and this was a change to policy wording as a direct result of a separate representation by Halton. Additionally, Table 8.4, which had set out the indicative floorspace for each sub-regional grouping of authorities, has been deleted. This deletion means that Halton is no longer within a grouping of local authorities containing larger retail centres, which may have taken a larger slice of the indicative floorspace suggested by Table 8.4.

3) Living in the North West

Residential

- The Secretary of State has included a new policy on residential density, broadly in accordance with the Panel's recommendation but with one important difference. The proposed policy indicates that the density of new residential development should not be less than 30 dwellings per hectare (dpha) net and in urban areas it should be higher, particularly in locations that are within walking distance of good public transport services. The previous draft of this policy indicated that the dpha in urban areas should be at least 40, with higher densities in more accessible locations.
- RSS has indicated that at least 70% of residential development should take place on previously developed land (pdl) in the North West. It provides new indicative pdl targets for each authority or grouping of local authorities. The new pdl target for residential

development for Halton with St Helens has been confirmed to be at least 65%.

- There are no changes in relation to recommendations regarding Halton's housing figures, with this remaining at 9,000 dwellings between 2003 and 2021. This is equivalent to an average of 500 dwellings per annum. The Council has strongly supported these housing figures throughout the production of the RSS. It is to be assumed that this annual average requirement will continue for a limited period beyond 2021.
- The SoS has clarified that the total of 416,000 dwellings to be provided between 2003 and 2021 for the whole Region (and therefore also by individual Local Authority) should now no longer be regarded as a ceiling in line with the Government's approach to housing set out in the Housing Green Paper. Paragraph 7.19 provides clarification as to when the principle of exceeding the stated figures might be applied. These are where there is evidence of need, demand, affordability and sustainability and where it would fit with relevant local and sub-regional strategies.
- Policy L2 indicates that Local Authorities should undertake Strategic Housing Market Assessments; in Halton's case this would need to be done in conjunction with St Helens and Warrington who also fall within the Mid Mersey sub-region. The policy states that a comprehensive approach to overcoming increasing issues of affordability should be adopted. In line with PPS3, an affordable housing target will be expected to be included within the Partial Review.
- Accommodation for travelling showpeople, gypsies and travellers is not currently dealt with by RSS and this will be addressed by the Partial Review.

4) Transport

- Policy RT1 (Integrated Transport Networks) states 'Transport problems in the region should be examined on a multi-modal basis to develop sustainable, integrated and accessible solutions for all users'. Other guidance such as Transport Assessment also emphasises this approach of managing person trips rather than just traffic, and may lead us, along with neighbouring authorities to need to produce a multi modal transport model for the borough, which has significant resource implications.
- Paragraph 8.3 makes a presumption against new road building, which may have implications for the Mersey Gateway. Whilst it is possible that this may be balanced by a successful reintroduction of a reference to MGB in RSS (see bullet point below in relation to Policies RT10 and LCR1) it will be vital to prove that the scheme will deliver network and demand management, and an increased role for public transport, which are the key strategies for dealing with congestion mentioned by this paragraph.
- Parking standards shown are to be reviewed in the current RSS Partial Review. This is welcomed as the standards shown are

limited and place Halton's parking standards on a level with other Merseyside authorities. The new guidance is expected to have more flexibility based on accessibility and location.

- Policy RT2 (Managing Travel Demand) makes reference to tackling the most congested parts of the motorway network. This should also include reference to other strategic routes such as the Silver Jubilee Bridge and an objection has been drafted accordingly at Appendix 1.
- Policy RT5 (Airports) now includes reference to airport boundaries. It states that 'Airport boundaries, as existing or as proposed, should be shown in Local Development Documents. Development that would impede the operational requirements of an airport should not be permitted within this boundary.' This needs to be considered in conjunction with Policy RDF4 (Green Belts) which has already been discussed above.
- There is a policy dealing with Ports and Waterways, which seeks to optimise the use of these assets and makes reference to the Manchester Ship Canal. It appears that this includes Weston Docks but clarification has been sought in this respect. Port operators should produce land surface access plans and port boundaries, as existing or proposed, should be shown in Local Development Documents.
- A new policy, RT8, which deals with the development of inter-modal freight terminals is included in line with the Panel's recommendation, except that this is now located within the Transport chapter rather than Working in The North West. 3MG is listed within the policy as Widnes (with access to the West Coast Main Line (Liverpool Branch)). The policy indicates that a review of green belt boundary in the Local Development Framework would be justified in order to accommodate an inter-modal freight terminal in accordance with this policy. It is of note in this respect that a further broad location for a facility is indicated for Newton-le-Willows. Proposals for inter-modal freight terminals should satisfy several criteria, including that 'Sites should be allocated and planning permission granted only where the local planning authority is satisfied that interchange between transport modes is the primary purpose of the development.' It is of note that both the North West and Liverpool City region key diagrams are incorrect in relation to 3MG and an objection is drafted accordingly at Appendix 1.
- Policy RT10 sets out the priorities for Transport Management and Investment. The wording for this policy has been changed so that schemes for which funding has been allocated, and those that are under investigation or proposed for investigation, are listed in a separate Implementation Plan. This means that Table 10.2 (Transport Investment Priorities) has been deleted and proposals within that table and that were intended to be shown on the sub-regional diagrams (including The Mersey Gateway and the Silver Jubilee Bridge) are no longer part of RSS but are intended to be part of the Implementation Plan. An up to date version of the Implementation Plan has not been produced alongside the SoS's

Proposed Changes and a previous draft version made no reference to schemes in table 10.2. However, clarification of the broad type of schemes that might be included as part of the Implementation Plan is given at paragraph 8.37. The Mersey Gateway's current status with the DfT is "Programme Entry" (the next stage would be "conditional approval"). Therefore as the scheme does not yet have full approval there seems to be no guarantee it will always be referred to in the adopted RSS via the Implementation Plan referred to in paragraph 8.37. The uncertainty surrounding the detailed content of the Implementation Plan is unacceptable and it should have been published alongside the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes. An objection dealing with this matter is drafted at Appendix 1, which also cross refers comments regarding the Liverpool City Region policies.

5) Environment, Minerals and Waste

Regional Parks

- The policy dealing with Regional Parks identifies three broad areas of search, including the North West coast and the Mersey Basin, both of which may encroach into Halton. It is likely that the Halton Core Strategy will have to develop this matter further, for example in co-ordination with work being undertaken by other organisations in relation to the Weaver Valley and Mersey Waterfront Regional Parks.

Waste

- The SoS has agreed to recommendations made by the Panel and has made amendments to the tables accompanying Policy EM13, in relation to the provision of waste management facilities (non-hazardous commercial and industrial waste, hazardous waste and municipal waste). Halton's waste arisings have been moved from being shared with Warrington to being shared with Merseyside. This is in line with the decision by the Council to work with the Merseyside Authorities on a Joint Waste DPD, as opposed to Warrington Borough Council. Policy EM13 states that regionally significant waste facilities may be needed to serve the Mersey Belt, which includes the Manchester and Liverpool conurbations. As has been indicated above, the Partial Review will identify broad locations for regionally significant waste management facilities.

Energy Conservation

- Local authorities should reduce energy requirements by incorporating policies promoting Code for Sustainable Homes and the Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) standards.

Decentralised and Renewable Energy

- At least 10%, 15% and 20% of the electricity supplied within the region should be from renewable energy sources by 2010, 2015 and

2020 respectively. Broad locations for renewable energy generation will be identified as part of the Partial Review. A new policy has been included which deals with Plans setting targets for decentralised sources of supply. These are supplies of small scale and would locally serve a development or site.

Habitat Regulatory Assessment

- As a general point, it is of note that the SoS's proposed changes scatter reference to the need to carry out Habitat Regulatory Assessment at various points throughout the document e.g. in relation to the policies dealing with airports and ports. This is a potentially onerous requirement which has been 'bounced' to the local level and will affect Halton due to the presence of the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area. It is an unfortunate consequence of the HRA process being carried out late in the production of RSS rather than forming an integral part of the process. MPU have commented to this effect, so it is not necessary to repeat their concerns.

6) Sub Regional Strategies

Liverpool City Region

- To a certain extent, this section provides co-ordination with the other topic based parts of RSS considered above. However, in doing so it is Officer opinion that there are some notable omissions in the primary Liverpool City Region policy LCT1.
- It is of note that the SoS proposes that Vale Royal and West Lancashire are now moved into the Liverpool City Region and references to Warrington have been removed. This is to avoid areas of overlap. Vale Royal has been moved into a sub area including Chester and Ellesmere Port, which reflects local government reorganisation in 2009.
- A bullet point is included within Policy LCR1, which states that plans and strategies should 'maximise the employment potential of the Strategic Investment Areas (SIAs) and Economic Development Zones (EDZs)'; this would include Widnes Waterfront. It also includes a bullet point to 'improve the City Region's internal and external transport links in line with the priorities for transport investment and management set out in Policy RT10'. However, as explained above, table 10.2, which included reference to the Mersey Gateway Bridge, the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the Halton Curve, has been removed by the SoS. This underlines the importance of a site specific reference to major transport schemes being included within the Liverpool City Region Policy LCR1. The Panel had previously rejected Halton Borough Council's and MPU's requests to include reference to Mersey Gateway Bridge, citing duplications with policies elsewhere. Quite clearly, this duplication would no longer exist in RSS and therefore an objection has been worded accordingly at Appendix 1.

- Similar to the point above, Policy W2 in the employment chapter has removed reference to Merseyside (including Ellesmere Port and Halton) as a suitable location for Regionally Significant Economic Development. This has been replaced with the more generic 'Liverpool City Region'. The primary Liverpool City Region policy LCT1 should complement W2 by being more specific regarding suitable locations in the Liverpool City Region and therefore an objection has been drafted accordingly.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 RSS is expected to be adopted in mid 2008. Once adopted it will form part of the 'Development Plan' and will be used in the making of decisions on planning applications.
- 5.2 Emerging RSS also has implications for the production of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and in particular for the Halton Core Strategy. As the key document within the LDF, the Core Strategy is currently being produced and covers the period to 2026. Each of the recommendations highlighted above will have to be considered within the Core Strategy and, where appropriate, changes will have to be made. This will need to be done to ensure that the Core Strategy remains in general conformity with the RSS, as required by PPS 12.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 Children and Young People in Halton
As part of the Development Plan, RSS would support key objectives a) ensure that children and young people in Halton enjoy a healthy lifestyle; b) to ensure that all children and young people in Halton grow up and thrive in safe environments; and e) to ensure that all children and young people in Halton have positive futures after school by embracing life long learning, employment opportunities.
- 6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton
RSS would support key objectives a) to foster a culture of enterprise and make Halton an ideal place to start and grow economic activity and d) to develop a strong, diverse, competitive and sustainable knowledge based local economy.
- 6.3 A Healthy Halton
RSS would support key objective c) to promote a healthy living environment.
- 6.4 A Safer Halton
RSS would support key objective c) to create and sustain better neighbourhoods that are well designed, well built, well maintained, safe and valued by the people that live in them, reflecting the priorities of residents.

- 6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal
RSS would support all key objectives a) – e).

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 At this stage it is not possible to determine the exact content of the RSS, as the document has still to be finalised. Therefore there will continue to be risks associated with the use of the emerging RSS within planning policy production. However, given that the existing RSS (March 2003) will be superseded upon adoption of the emerging RSS, there is little option but to work with this risk.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Not applicable

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
The Planning and Compulsory Act 2004	Planning & Policy Division Rutland House	Neil Macfarlane
Submission Draft RSS	Planning & Policy Division Rutland House	Neil Macfarlane
Panel Report	Planning & Policy Division Rutland House	Neil Macfarlane
SoS's Response to Panel Report	Planning & Policy Division Rutland House	Neil Macfarlane
PPS 3: Housing	Planning & Policy Division Rutland House	Neil Macfarlane
PPS 12: Local Development Frameworks	Planning & Policy Division Rutland House	Neil Macfarlane

APPENDIX 1

PROPOSED COMMENTS TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE'S RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

Proposed Change Reference no.	Policy/ Paragraph/ Diagram	Proposed HBC Response
R4.2	RDF1 (Spatial Priorities) and associated para 5.4	<p>Clarification required. The policy contains six emboldened towns/ cities under the third priority for growth (Carlisle, Chester, Crewe, Lancaster, Preston and Warrington). Explanatory text at paragraph 5.4 explains that these towns have particular advantages and that unbridled growth is not proposed for these locations but that opportunities should be harnessed in sustainable ways.</p> <p>It is unclear whether these six towns are truly prioritised relative to others within the third priority for growth, effectively creating tiers 3a and 3b within the policy or whether the “priority” referred to by the Secretary of State in the reasons for changes merely means that the six towns need to be treated differently. As such, clarification is sought.</p>
R4.13	RDF4 (Green Belts) and associated para 5.26	<p>Clarification required. The policy refers to “exceptional substantial strategic change” to Green Belt boundaries. No definition of this terminology is given, with the matter to be considered on a case by case basis. However, explanatory paragraph 5.26 refers to the different phrase “exceptional substantial change” which adds to confusion. Explanatory text to the policy should give a better explanation of how “exceptional substantial strategic change” would be assessed and, if necessary, how this differs to “exceptional substantial change”.</p>
R5.3 and R5.6	W3 (Supply of Employment Land) and Table 6.1 (Provision of Employment Land 2005-2021)	<p>Clarification required. Whilst it may be interpreted that the employment land supply figures in Table 6.1 Provision of Employment Land 2005-2021 (hectares) represent ceilings for future provision this is not definitively stated in either the policy, table or explanatory text. Given changes made to regional housing</p>

		figures in that they are no longer to be regarded as ceilings and the clear link between housing and employment in order to achieve sustainable growth, clarification regarding whether the employment land figures represent a ceiling or not is therefore essential. An explanation of how “2005 Supply” in table 6.1 is defined and what it entails should be given.
R7.5	RT2 (Managing Travel Demand)	Objection. The second sentence of the policy should be changed to: ‘...including M6, M56, M60 and M62 and other strategic routes such as that provided by the Silver Jubilee Bridge’
Not referenced but changes made	RT6 (Ports and Waterways) Paragraph 8.24	Objection. The reference to the Manchester Ship Canal should include Weston Docks within Halton Borough. Accordingly, reference to the Port of Weston should be included in the final sentence of paragraph 8.24.
R5.11	Key Regional Spatial Diagram and Liverpool City Region Key Diagram in connection with Policy RT8 (Inter-Modal Freight Terminals)	Objections. 1) Key Regional Spatial Diagram. Albeit that it is acknowledged that this diagram is for illustrative schematic purposes it is of note that the rail freight location referred to in Policy RT8 (Inter-Modal Freight Terminals) as Widnes (with access to the West Coast Main Line (Liverpool Branch)) is shown on the diagram as adjoining Runcorn and not Widnes. This minor drafting error should be corrected. 2) Liverpool City Region Spatial Diagram. This diagram omits a rail freight location at Widnes (with access to the West Coast Main Line (Liverpool Branch)) in connection with Policy RT8 (Inter-Modal Freight Terminals). This drafting error should be corrected.
R7.11 and R12.1	RT10 (Priorities for Transport Management and Investment) and RSS Implementation Plan LCR1 (Liverpool City Region	Objection. Table 10.2 which detailed Transport Investment Priorities and Schemes within the Regional Funding Allocation Programme, amongst others, has been deleted and is to be incorporated into an Implementation Plan in accordance with explanatory text at

	Priorities)	<p>paragraph 8.37 and Policy IM1 (Implementation). An up to date version of the Implementation Plan has not been made available with the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes. Notwithstanding the presence of paragraph 8.37, there is uncertainty regarding the detailed content of the Implementation Plan. This is unacceptable, as the Implementation Plan should have been published alongside the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes that recommended what would appear to be significant changes to an earlier draft of it. There are vitally important transport investment schemes that require a 'hook' from the development plan.</p> <p>Given that table 10.2 has been deleted, it is essential that the most important transport investment schemes for the sub-regions are referred to within the Sub Regional Strategies sections of RSS. It is of note with regards to the Liverpool City Region that paragraph 12.4 of the Panel Report states "We have omitted the site specific references to transport schemes which MPU propose (Mersey Gateway, light rapid transit); the Transport chapter of the draft RSS deals with lists of proposed schemes and priorities..." In our opinion, the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes means that this rationale for exclusion no longer applies.</p> <p>In Halton's case the Mersey Gateway (New Mersey Crossing) should be referred to within Policy LCR1. RSS should be read as a whole and, as such, this should be done in conjunction with a cross reference to Policy RT10. Reassurance is also required that major maintenance works to the Silver Jubilee Bridge and the reinstatement of Halton Curve would be included in the Implementation Plan.</p>
R5.10 and	W2 (Locations for Regionally Significant Economic Development)	<p>Objection. Policy W2 has been amended to refer to Regionally significant economic development being located close to transport nodes within the urban areas of, amongst others, the Liverpool City</p>

R12.1	LCR1 (Liverpool City Region Priorities)	<p>Region. This varies the Panel’s recommendation, which referred to “Merseyside (including Ellesmere Port and Halton)”. Whilst this change is not objected to per se in Policy W2, it is considered that as emerging RSS is currently worded, insufficient locational direction is given regarding suitable locations for regionally significant economic development. This view is taken in full knowledge of W2 providing criteria against which locations for regionally significant economic development would need to accord.</p> <p>RSS should be read as a whole and, as such, reference to Halton as a suitable location for regionally significant economic development should be inserted into a bullet point of Policy LCR1 and cross referred to Policy W2. Policy LCR1 would then complement W2 in the appropriate manner.</p>
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REPORT TO: Executive Board
DATE: 19th June 2008
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Health and Community
SUBJECT: Halton Housing Trust Progress Report
WARD(S): Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 In accordance with the monitoring framework agreed prior to housing stock transfer, this report provides a further update on Halton Housing Trust's progress since the last report to Board on the 19th July 2007.

2.0 RECOMMENDED – That the progress set out in the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Nick Atkin, Chief Executive of Halton Housing Trust, will attend the meeting to present the attached report that sets out progress to date in delivering some of the key “pledges” made prior to stock transfer, and progress in meeting the Housing Corporation's regulatory framework.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no policy implications arising from this report.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

5.1 Children and Young People in Halton

None identified.

5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Halton Housing Trust is a major employer in the Borough and a range of employment and skills opportunities are available.

5.3 A Healthy Halton

Housing plays a key part in the health of individuals and grants to support community living are provided by the Council.

5.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified.

5.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

Housing is an important contributing factor to some parts of the areas renaissance.

6.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 Regular meetings between the Chief Executive of Halton Housing Trust, the Strategic Director of Health and Community and officers of Halton Borough Council take place to discuss a range of issues and to explore risks.

7.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 A range of joint partnerships are being considered, for example, joint training and work with migrants.

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

None identified.



Halton Housing Trust Report to Halton Borough Council Progress Assessment & Position Statement: May 2008

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report is presented to provide a position statement 2½ years following the transfer of the Council's housing stock to Halton Housing Trust (HHT). It provides an update on progress following the earlier position statements given to the Council in accordance with the monitoring framework agreed prior to transfer.
- 1.2 The report identifies progress made in the establishment of both the Trust and the delivery of its key service areas.

2 Pledges to Customers

- 2.1 Good progress has been maintained in the delivery of the 100 pledges made in the 'Offer Document to Tenants'. Progress is monitored against each pledge with a designated manager identified to ensure each pledge is delivered and progress to date recorded.
- 2.2 The pledges range from those that were achieved at transfer (such as security of tenure and the maintenance of rights including the Right to Buy) as well as others, which relate to investment, which can potentially be across a 30 year period.
- 2.3 Regular summary updates of progress are reported in the customer newsletter "Haltonhousing". A detailed monitoring report is also formally reported to the Trust's Board, the Housing Corporation and internally through the Trust's management team.



2.4 The current position is:

- 69 pledges have been met
- 29 pledges are in progress
- 2 pledges have yet to be commenced
- There are no pledges behind schedule or where the targets have been missed.

3 Investment Programme

3.1 Delivery of the Investment Programme is progressing well, with all four partners reaching their optimum capacity. In 2007/08 investment of over £15.4 million in our homes delivered:

- Over 1,000 new kitchens
- 952 new bathrooms
- 1,294 electrical upgrades
- Over 100 rewires
- 4,200 loft insulations
- 5,668 new double glazed windows
- 2,400 external works/improvements

3.2 By March 2008 over 5,000 properties had some form of either internal or external works completed. Customer satisfaction with the programme is currently averaging well in excess of 90% and the quality of the work is achieving similar performance levels.

3.3 In 2008/09 the Trust will invest a further £18m in improving our customer's homes. This is broken down as shown in the following table



Programme for April 2008 – March 2009		
	Properties	Spend (£ M)
Internal Works	1,553	10.2
External Works	945	2.4
Windows	1,374	1.7
Other/Acceleration	N/A	3.7
Total		18 million

3.4 The Trust's Board have recently approved the acceleration of our investment programme. This will mean we are able to deliver our investment programme approximately 12 months ahead of schedule at no additional cost. This will ensure the Trust not only meets the Decent Homes Standard but more importantly exceeds this through the delivery of the Halton Standard as specified by our customers.

3.5 To date the Trust has recovered £3.2m of VAT incurred on the investment programme through the VAT Shelter arrangement. A further £3.0m is due to be recovered during 2008/09, which will result in an estimated payment to the Council of £1.5m. As outlined in the Transfer Agreement the Trust would welcome further discussions with the Council to explore any housing projects the VAT receipts could be used for.

4 Inspection

4.1 The Trust has recently completed its first housing inspection. This was undertaken by the Audit Commission during the week commencing 12th May 2008. This is arguably the biggest single test as well as opportunity the Trust has faced since its creation. Work has already been ongoing in the form of our six corporate priorities to prepare for this.

4.2 The scope of the inspection covered:



- *Tenancy and Estate Management* – with a clear emphasis upon the voids and ASB elements including front end lettings (sign up) and voids standards, ASB, grounds maintenance, estate services, communal areas, security and environmental standards
- *Stock Investment and Asset Management* – including investment programme, response repairs, aids and adaptations, voids and gas
- *Value for Money* – benchmarking costs, procurement, partnerships, longer term direction, cost vs. quality of services and customer involvement in decision making process
- *Access and Customer Care* – telephone, customer contact points (including reception areas), email and letter responses, website, Enquiries, Complaints and Compliment's (ECC's), service standards, satisfaction, customer involvement and publications
- *Diversity* – use of customer profiling data, tailoring services to individual needs and Housing Code of Practice compliance
- *Housing Income Management* – including current and former customer arrears, rechargeable repairs, leaseholder and service charges, shops and garages and sundry debtors
- *Prospects for Improvement* – assessing our plans for future improvements and track record of delivery underpinned by an effective performance management framework

4.3 The Trust communicated the inspection process to a cross section of key stakeholders. A number of key stakeholders were supportive throughout the process and a particular note of thanks to the Council for their role and positive support.

4.4 The inspection built upon the previous progress made by the Trust in the delivery of the Service Improvement Plan (SIP) which was developed following the Baseline Service Review undertaken shortly after transfer in May 2006.



- 4.5 The original SIP detailed 679 weaknesses. Following a comprehensive review this number was reduced to 527. This was through removal of areas of duplication and one off items covered elsewhere. At 1st April 2008 good progress has been made in meeting the targets in the SIP:
- All 88 short term wins have been achieved
 - 133 of 154 medium term wins identified have been achieved
 - 15 of the 47 long terms wins have been successfully achieved. The remainder of the long term wins are on target for completion by the end of August 2008
- 4.6 The headline feedback from the Inspection team has been:
- Recognition of real and substantial change across the organisation
 - A customer focused culture across our services – access to services, information for customers and the delivery processes
 - Enthusiastic, positive and committed staff
 - A number of positive messages on the leadership role of the Board and senior managers
- 4.7 The Trust has provided the Audit Commission with a good statement of our position and our plans for the future. The Inspection Team have commented upon the self awareness and honesty with which we approached the whole process.
- 4.8 The draft report and score is due to be issued during June 2008. The Trust then has 10 working days following receipt of the draft report to submit its formal response. The report is then finalised and shared with the Trust in July 2008. It is anticipated that the report will be published during August 2008.
- 4.9 As part of our ongoing approach to be a transparent and open organisation, the Trust will ensure the Council is kept fully updated as



the inspection process progresses. As a key partner, arrangements have also been made to ensure the Council receives a full copy of the inspection report prior to publication.

5 Corporate Plan

5.1 The first Corporate Plan for the Trust focussed upon the first 2 years of the organisation. As this expires at the end of 2008 work has now commenced on the development of the Corporate Plan for 2009 onwards.

5.2 A Project Plan has been agreed by the Trust's Board. This includes a clear emphasis to enable the Plan to be developed with an increased emphasis upon wider consultation with a cross section of our customers and stakeholders.

5.3 The new Corporate Plan will focus on the role and remit of the Trust post the delivery of its investment programme.

6 Annual Review

6.1 The Trust has just published its annual review for 2007/08. This is in the process of being circulated to all customers, key stakeholders and Councillors. This provides a useful summary of some of the key achievements by the Trust over the last year.

7 Housing Corporation Regulatory Compliance

7.1 The Housing Corporation as Lead Regulator for Housing Associations is taking a keen interest in the development of the Trust. Since transfer the Trust has received regular regulatory visits to assess progress against the Regulatory Code.



- 7.2 The Housing Corporation is due to publish the Trust's second Housing Corporation Assessment in autumn 2008. This has been delayed to take account of the outcomes from the inspection by the Audit Commission.
- 7.3 The Trust has commissioned an external review of our Performance Information (PI) collection processes. This has ensured they are externally validated and provide confidence in the accuracy of the reported data.
- 7.4 The assessment measures the extent to which housing associations manage their business effectively across three main areas; these are whether the organisation is financially viable, properly governed and properly managed. An appropriate traffic light colour is then allocated. The Trust has previously been assessed as having three green traffic lights for all three areas.

8 Governance Update

- 8.1 It is a requirement of the Trust's constitution that there is a regular review of the membership of the Board. The Board is made up of 5 customers, 5 independents and 5 nominees from the Local Authority.
- 8.2 At the next AGM in September 2008, 3 of the longest serving customer Board Members and 2 of the longest serving independent Board Members are required to retire from the Board. Both the election and recruitment processes are due to commence imminently. In addition the Trust will also be recruiting for 1 independent Board Member following a resignation earlier in the year.



- 8.3 Customer Board Members are appointed through an election process (the customers retiring from the Board can stand for re-election). A leaflet is due to be sent to all our customers advising them of these opportunities and drop in sessions are being held at a variety of locations over the next few weeks so that customers can find out in more detail what being a Board Member actually involves.
- 8.4 Independent Board Members are selected by a recruitment process (the retiring Board Members can apply to come back on to the Board).
- 8.5 As part of the continued development of the Trust's governance arrangements, a skills analysis has been undertaken. The recruitment process will seek to ensure these skills gaps are filled.
- 8.6 The Board now has a well established Committee structure, which allows devolution of the more detailed governance reviews to a Customer Services Committee and a Resources Committee. Separately there is an Audit, Performance and Quality Committee, which receives reports from Internal and External Auditors.
- 8.7 One of the pre-transfer pledges agreed with customers prior to the Trust going live, was to establish two area committees. These were to consist of six customers, two elected members and two independents. These committees, which became known as Halton Housing Community Voice (HHCV), were set up as part of the Trust's wider commitment to customer involvement. They were aimed at providing customers with an opportunity to be involved in the management of services through participation in the development of new policies, consideration of requests for funding from community groups and in the review of performance information.



- 8.8 Further consultation with customers indicated that they wanted three committees to be set up to mirror the Trust's Area Housing teams. The first Committee was established in May 2006 in Widnes East. This Committee first met in May 2006. There have been five subsequent meetings, all of which have been poorly attended.
- 8.9 The Trust has tried on numerous occasions to recruit for the two remaining committees for Widnes West and Runcorn. This has utilised a variety of approaches including advertisements, posters, flyers, targeted recruitment letters to Tenants and Resident Associations, our Customer Panel and advertisements at our Customer Conference. Although this recruitment drive generated some limited interest we were unsuccessful in recruiting sufficient members to establish the two remaining committees.
- 8.10 In response, members of the Widnes East HHCV recommended that it be expanded to cover the whole of the borough. The Trust's Customer Services Committee approved this recommendation in January 2007. The recommendation also included that the venue for HHCV meetings be rotated around the borough. It also increased the membership of the one committee to nine customers, 3 elected members and 3 independents. Once again the Trust made determined efforts to recruit to the revamped Committee. Despite this, levels of customer attendance have continued to be low with no more than eight customers in attendance. Clearly this has meant that the HHCV model has not achieved the intended outcomes.
- 8.11 Clearly this was not a situation that could continue indefinitely. The structure and format of HHCV has been considered by the Trust's Governance Review Working Group. This Group includes two customer Board Members. A decision has been taken in consultation



with the existing HHCV members to replace HHCV with a customer steering group.

- 8.12 The intention is that this new group will hold a number of the same responsibilities as HHCV's including the consideration and approval of Tenant and Resident Association grant requests (from a budget of £2.5k), the monitoring of performance and the review of new policies. In addition the new steering group will have a budget of £10k for 2008/09 to be spent on environmental improvements. The composition of this new group will be comprised of Trust customers. The first meeting of this new steering group will take place in early June 2008.
- 8.13 The Trust's customers have been instrumental in shaping these new arrangements. This revised structure reflects their preferences for customer involvement at this level and forms a key part of the Trust's revised Customer Involvement Strategy approved by our Board in December 2007.
- 8.14 The possibility for Board Member remuneration is a relatively new option. Whilst it is left to the discretion of each Housing Association as to how it proceeds on this matter, the Housing Corporation expects that the issue is properly debated and considered by each organisation. Clearly if there are difficulties in recruiting or retaining skilled and experienced Board Members, there might be a case for introducing such payments. However, there can be a range of other factors which need to be considered.
- 8.15 Following an independent external review the Board has decided to defer remuneration until such a time when a business case can be made to remunerate the whole Board.



9 Access to Services

- 9.1 In October 2007, the Trust began a customer profiling exercise alongside our STATUS Survey. As at April 2008 profiling information has been collected for 47% of our customer base (i.e. not just the named tenant).
- 9.2 A project plan has been developed to increase the profiling data to 85% of our customers by June 2008. We have already started to use this information to tailor the delivery of services to customers with particular needs and will be extending its use to ensure we have accurate representation in customer involvement activities and the decision-making process of the Trust.
- 9.3 Over the next 6 months the Trust will be using the customer profiling data to further develop and widen representation and involvement from a cross-section of our customer base. The overall purpose being to ensure that the type and subsequent delivery of services truly reflects our customers' needs
- 9.4 Our Customer Handbook, which is currently being hand delivered to every home provides useful information about all our services. The handbook has been devised in collaboration with customers and is supported by a suite of leaflets available at all of the Trust's access points and online. Our website has also been substantially overhauled and now provides a range of services and useful information
- 9.5 Office opening times have been changed in line with customer consultation. Further work is planned to ensure customers are still satisfied and to assess the demand for evening and weekend openings. Offices have improved facilities including toilets and play



facilities. All Trust offices are DDA compliant. Access is also available through the Halton Borough Council Direct Link offices.

- 9.6 Arrangements are in place to increase the face to face contact staff have with customers and to increase their presence on estates. This has included an increased use of home visits and participation on estate based events such as the arrears blitzes and the regular programme of estate walkabouts. Our Construction Services Team has been restructured around the three housing management areas. This has improved the sense of ownership in each area, improved performance levels and comparisons between teams, and reduced travelling time/ journeys.
- 9.7 Involvement opportunities are clearly communicated to customers. A series of leaflets are in place, which set out the opportunities to become involved. New customer visits are used to promote opportunities and to identify if people are willing to become involved. The newsletters clearly publicises the opportunities to become involved and to provide feedback.
- 9.8 Improvements have been made to improve access via the telephone system. Customers are provided with direct dial numbers for officers and their local office through any communication. Clear protocols are in place for the use of voicemail, with all staff trained on the system. Changes to the telephone system have been made in response to customer feedback. Customers highlighted the need to reduce the number of options available to them.
- 9.9 The Trust is due to use the customer profiling information to consult with our customers who currently under occupy our larger homes. The results from this will then be used to inform our longer term



regeneration and development plans, which are due to be considered by the Board in November 2008.

10 Environmental Issues

10.1 The Trust recognises that to create and support vibrant and attractive communities it is essential to work in partnership with customers and key partners, providing neighbourhoods where people feel safe and where they want to contribute to the long term sustainability of their community. In each community a dedicated Housing Officer is supported by identified staff within the lettings, income recovery, estate services and construction services teams providing continuity, detailed local knowledge and a customer-centred approach.

10.2 Housing Officers hold regular scheduled estate walkabouts to ensure that any estate management issues can be picked up and resolved immediately. A standard inspection form is completed and all those present on the walkabout receive a copy of the completed pro-forma indicating what issues were identified, what action needs to be taken and who is responsible for delivery and by when. Improvements made include repairs to communal areas and improvements to communal entrances. A small budget has been made available for each Housing Officer from April 2008 to assist in addressing small scale environmental issues identified on these walkabouts, which will assist in addressing customers concerns and low level Anti Social behaviour (ASB) issues.

10.3 The Trust holds an Annual Clean Up Day involving staff at all levels from across the organisation. The aim has been for HHT to roll up its sleeves and focus its resources, in conjunction with customers, to make a real impact in specific neighbourhoods. Examples are: to clear litter, board up empty garages, paint out graffiti, remove weeds, plant



flower beds address fly tipping and renew fencing panels. The next Clean Up Day is scheduled for September 2008 and we are looking to coordinate this with the National Clean Up Campaign and any initiatives being run by Halton BC.

- 10.4 Local staff have worked closely with the Council and customers on alley gating schemes across the borough in order to design-out crime and reduce incidences of ASB. From 2008/09 the Trust has also introduced a locally devolved estate budget of £10,000. This will allow Housing Officers to draw on resources to target hot spot issues on their patch and address environmental issues such as tree pruning, bulb planting and minor gate repairs. The newly formed Customer Forum which replaces the HHCV's will have the final decision on how this money is spent.
- 10.5 The next stage of this process is to introduce mini Neighbourhood Action Plans. These will apply the learning from the Neighbourhood Management Pilots across the Borough
- 10.6 The Trust has also undertaken a number of initiatives with other partners. A recent example was the garage raids in conjunction with Cheshire Police. The operation involved searching around 180 garages and involved around 30 people. The Trust was keen to reassure the local community that positive action was being taken.
- 10.7 The garages were identified in consultation with the local housing associations and also via information received from the local community. The aim of the operation was to enter the garages either using keys or through forced entry in order to search and recover any items from inside that may have been unlawful or stored without authority. As a result of the searches a variety of property was recovered and seized



- 10.8 On 27th May 2008 to coincide with European Neighbours' Day the Trust launched a number of awards for customers who have made a positive contribution to their community. The awards also recognise "good neighbours" who have acted in a positive way to help other groups and individuals within their community.
- 10.9 Trust customers are currently being urged to nominate their neighbours for the awards, as long as they meet the specified criteria in each category. The deadline for nominations is 1st November 2008 and there is a £100 prize as an incentive.
- 10.10 The Neighbourhood Awards are a positive way of increasing a sense of local pride amongst our customers, whilst also helping to improve neighbourhoods at the same time. Not only do these awards promote good neighbourhood relations and community cohesion but they also encourage our customers to become good neighbours all year round.
- 10.11 The Awards are divided into four categories - Good Neighbour Award, Community Award, Youth Award and Taking a Stand Award. In order to nominate a good neighbour, customers must first ensure that they meet all the specified criteria in each category.
- 10.12 Estate management is delivered through an enhanced landscaping contract, which the Trust currently has with the council. This service is currently being reviewed will be subject to a competitive procurement process in October 2008.
- 10.13 Groundwork Merseyside has been commissioned to complete a series of Environmental Estate Action Plans in our neighbourhoods, consulting with customers about environmental improvements they would like to see for their areas. In some areas some 'quick wins'



works have been undertaken in response to the findings, such as at Clapgate Crescent.

10.14 Our estate services team provides a dedicated cleaning and caretaking service to the communal areas of our blocks of flats. In conjunction with Construction Services, this enables the Trust to respond quickly to any issues of concern. The recent acquisition of our new van fleet has also enabled the Trust to increase the visibility of our on site repairs and estate services teams.

10.15 In response to one of the issues raised at the last Executive Board Monitoring Report, the Trust has been developing a range of increasingly environmentally sensitive working practices across all aspects of our work. These include a dedicated recycling facility at Foundry Lane; Clean Up Days; reduced paper and printing working practices; and a full independent assessment of the Trust's carbon footprint by The Carbon Trust.

11 Community Investment

11.1 The Trust has established an annual budget to support/sponsor local community/sports projects.

11.2 This funding enables the Trust to have contact with groups in the local community with whom it would not normally have a relationship with. However a number of these provide support and offer services of the benefit of Trust customers. For example, the sponsorship of a local sports group which in turn enables the Trust to embrace and involve customers including harder to reach groups i.e. young people.

11.3 During 2006/07 and 2007/08 an annual budget of £3,000 was made available for this purpose. Recognising the increasing demand for the



community fund the Trust has increased the annual budget to £4,000 for 2008/09.

- 11.4 In addition the Trust's funders Lloyds TSB agreed as part of the long term financing agreement that they would donate £100,000 to the Trust. The Board agreed that the £100k would be split over four years with an annual allocation of £25k.

12 Enquiries, Complaints and Compliments Process

- 12.1 This process was introduced at the point of transfer. Its purpose is to ensure that there is transparency and consistency in the way that complaints are dealt with.

- 12.2 Although the system has worked well there is always room for improvement and so the Trust undertook a review of the process in 2007. The changes introduced were to ensure the system is easy to access and that the Trust resolves concerns raised at the earliest available opportunity.

- 12.3 The revised policy and procedures were launched with effect from 1st March 2008. The main changes include:

- Establishment of a dedicated Enquiries, Complaints and Compliments Officer (Cath Owens)
- Mandatory home visit for each complaint
- In line with guidelines issued by the Housing Ombudsman the Trust will not consider complaints where our customers are aware of the issue for over 12 months
- Only in exceptional circumstances will an appeal be accepted where this has been submitted outside the 28 day deadline



- Any complainants whose behaviour or actions are not in accordance with the Trust's Customer Code of Conduct will be deemed to be unacceptable and may be excluded or conditions placed on the complaint being pursued through the complaint process. This decision will be made by or in consultation with the Chief Executive or a Director.
- If at any stage the Trust feels our complaints process has been exhausted, we will refer our customers to the Housing Ombudsman
- The Chief Executive or Director may use discretion to fast track a complaint to any stage of the complaints procedure, if the particular circumstances of a complaint are deemed to merit this action

12.4 Improvements have been made to the internal processes to capture and share the learning outcomes from complaints received. The Trust has also recently launched a customer suggestion scheme and customer and employee recognition schemes to encourage and increase the availability and use of informal feedback mechanisms.

12.5 A series of further enhancements are scheduled from 1st October 2008. The Trust is currently evaluating the feasibility of developing the Customer Service Module (CSM) for the Academy system. A detailed project plan has been developed to take into account the work involved and the intensive training requirement in advance of the launch of this new system. Furthermore the launch will coincide with the amendment of the Policy to take account of any feedback arising from the recent housing inspection.

13 Joint Working

13.1 The Trust continues to develop its strategic role across Halton. We contribute to the borough's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and



actively contribute to the work of the LSP Board. In practical terms we contribute to local initiatives on homelessness, crime and disorder, health and employment and to the Neighbourhood Management pilot schemes. We also chair the Halton Housing Partnership Board, help to deliver the Council's Housing Strategy and ensure there is a housing input and gain from other key decision-making groups.

13.2 The Trust continues to be an active member of various strategic bodies working across Halton on matters related to more vulnerable members of the community. Examples include the Children and Young People's Alliance Board, the Equalities and Cohesion Group, Youth Inclusion Support Panel and the Safer Halton Partnership Board

13.3 The Trust has taken a lead strategic responsibility for the development of a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme within the Borough. The move towards a CBL Scheme enhances the level of choice that can be achieved, can lead to increased stability of communities and longer term cohesion. It is anticipated that CBL will be introduced with effect from April 2009.

14 Priorities for 2008/09

14.1 The Corporate Plan and the Corporate Priorities that flow from this are the primary basis against which the Trust allocates resources – both financial and staffing. The Corporate Priorities are set at the same time as the budget and business planning process to ensure these are the primary basis against which resources are determined

14.2 To underpin the practical delivery of the Corporate Plan, each year the Trust agrees a series of Corporate Priorities. These ensure the Plan and the Themes are reflective and responsive to real time challenges facing the organisation. In order to achieve this, 6 core priorities have



been agreed for 2008-09. These are included as Appendix 1 to this report.

15 Homelessness

15.1 The Trust has continued to work with the Council to look at ways to improve the accessibility and quality of homelessness services. This has included an increased emphasis upon preventative initiatives.

15.2 The process review undertaken by the Trust at the Council's request prompted a more fundamental review and internal challenge of the homelessness service provided by the Trust under contract to the Council.

15.3 The review led to the Trust agreeing to transfer the homelessness service and the management of Grangeway Court back to the Council. This is currently in progress with transitional arrangements in place to safeguard existing service levels and is anticipated to be completed by late summer 2008.

15.4 The Trust will continue to manage the nominations and Council's waiting list under contract.

16 Adaptations

16.1 The Trust has been a strong advocate of the approach adopted by the Council in developing an increasingly strategic approach to the delivery of adaptations across the borough. This underpins over £1m invested by the Trust in adaptations for its customers since transfer.

16.2 There is a clear commitment from the Trust to continue to work in close partnership with the Council to ensure we deliver further enhancements



and value for money across this key service area. The Trust also recognises the significant capital allocation the Council has made within its budget for 2008/09 for RSL adaptations. This will make a significant impact upon the existing backlogs and address some of the issues identified within the Housing Needs Survey.

17 Accommodation

17.1 In January 2008 the Trust successfully completed the relocation of Construction Services from Lowerhouse Lane to their new base at Foundry Lane. This signalled the completion of the review of our accommodation and working requirements.

17.2 The next stage is to develop an increasingly mobile approach to the delivery of our services. This will include a heavy emphasis on taking services out to the communities in which our customers live and work. The Trust in conjunction with the Council has already had some early thoughts and discussion on how multi agency services could be delivered using increasingly mobile solutions and facilities.

18 Customer First

18.1 The Trust has invested £250k in an extensive Customer First Programme. This Programme spans 20 months and involves all members of the Trust's staff, Board and key partners.

18.2 The programme is split into three interrelated streams: equality and diversity; customer service; and management development. By adopting an inclusive approach, the Trust can ensure that everyone is aware of the expected standard of delivery of services to its customers. In addition, customers have been consulted on the content of various aspects of the programme and its subsequent procurement to ensure



that it fully reflects customer views and opinions. This also fully takes account of the findings of the Baseline Service Review completed in May 2006.

19 Forthcoming Events

19.1 The Trust has a number of forthcoming events. These include:

- Employee Attitude Survey – May 2008
- Launch of Good Neighbour Awards – May 2008
- Completion of Job Evaluation process – July 2008
- Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey – July 2008
- Clean Up Day – September 2008
- Employee Conference – September 2008
- AGM – 16th September 2008
- Customer Roadshow Conferences – late summer/ early autumn 2008
- Veka Bus Roadshows – through out the year

20 Service Level Agreements

20.1 The Trust has continued to review its Service Level Agreements held with the council since the point of transfer. There is a clear expectation upon the Trust to demonstrate value for money in all its procurement decisions.

20.2 The Grounds Maintenance SLA has been extended from December 2007 to October 2008 to allow time for a comprehensive value for money assessment to be undertaken. The Trust is also exploring the potential to jointly procure this service with a number of other RSL's working in the Halton area.



21 Environmental Improvement Programme

- 21.1 The Trust has commissioned Groundwork Merseyside to undertake a series of consultation exercises. This will include all of our customers to enable an informed Environmental Improvement Programme to be developed and delivered. This applies the learning from the approach adopted in devising the Investment Programme and the way in which customers set the Halton Standard, rather than just relying on the Decent Homes Standard. The objective is for Groundwork Merseyside to work with Housing Officers, partners and customers to identify the key environmental improvements that are required for each area.
- 21.2 To ensure every area receives some improvement works it is intended the areas that have not received any improvements to date will benefit from the first phase of environmental works.
- 21.3 The initial process involves consultation at a very local level utilising a variety of methods from door knocking, letter drops and the use of mobile caravans/ road shows. The process also includes the Area Forums.
- 21.4 The borough has been split into four distinct areas and each area will be consulted with in turn until the full exercise is completed. At the end of each phase of consultation an Area Improvement Action Plan is produced. This summarises the views of customers and identifying practical and budgeted delivery proposals. A copy of the consultation programme and associated timescales is included at Appendix 2
- 21.5 The first and second phase of the consultation has been completed. Estate action plans have been developed for each of these phases. Both action plans have identified a number of key issues that



customers were concerned about in relation to the estate environment.

These included:

- Youth nuisance
- Anti social behaviour
- Fly tipping
- Landscaping
- Community Facilities

21.6 In addition customers generally want to see the following issues addressed:

- Fencing, boundary walls & gates
- Off street parking & driveways
- On street parking provision.

21.7 In order for the Trust to address these issues due to the costs associated with these types of works, it will need to explore all options available. This will include those relating to procurement, budgetary provision and delivery.

21.8 Work has commenced on addressing some of the issues that have been identified specifically at the following locations:

- Clapgate Crescent
- Coronation House and Centenary House
- Montgomery Road
- Stewards Avenue

21.9 To date £270,500 has been committed from the environmental improvement budget for the above schemes.

21.10 A commitment was made within the Offer Document to invest £6.7 million up to 2015 carrying out major environmental works and



improvements. Allowing for inflation, this commitment has been increased to £7.7 million. The priorities for individual schemes will be identified following consultation with customers.

21.11 The Trust is also pursuing the potential for match funding opportunities that Groundwork Merseyside maybe able to tap into as the process develops. This will ensure we are able to meet the commitment made to invest £6.7 million up to 2015 carrying out major environmental works and improvements in the Offer Document to our customers.

21.12 Clearly there will be some areas and issues that are identified, which are not the responsibility of the Trust to undertake. In such circumstances we will be working with other agencies and organisations to ensure there is an agreed process to address any priorities identified by our customers.

22 Development

22.1 The Trust has appointed PLUS Housing Group as its development partner. PLUS have completed a review of the fifteen potential development sites identified by the Trust. The results of this review were reported to the Trust's Board in May 2008.

22.2 No firm decisions have been taken as to what and where the Trust should develop. A further report will be considered by the Trust's Board in November 2008 following some initial exploratory work into land suitability and demand issues. The Trust is also utilising its customer profiling data to undertake some targeted consultation with customers who currently under occupy their existing home to establish their future preferred housing needs.



23 Right to Buy Receipts & Trends

23.1 In reflecting a similar position across the region Right to Buy (RTB) sales have continued to slow down. This has led to the Trust reviewing the sales assumptions contained within its business plan.

23.2 The table below shows the position to date :

Year	Completions	Average Valuation	Average Discount	Average Proceeds
2005/6 (part)	18	£76,756	£24,786	£51,970
2006/7	79	£80,896	£24,826	£56,070
2007/8	35	£82,093	£26,000	£56,093
2008/9 (projected)	27	£86,963	£26,000	£60,963

23.3 During April 2008 the Trust repaid £1.3M of RTB sale proceeds to the Council as per the RTB Sharing Agreement. This is in addition to a previous payment of £2.7M made during April 2007.

24 Summary

24.1 The Trust has continued to make strong progress in delivering the promises made prior to transfer. The focus over the first 2½ years has been on establishing the foundations for the organisation.

24.2 As we continue to make improvements to our primary business areas and improving core performance the emphasis is now shifting towards considering our longer term new business growth and development opportunities. This will be underpinned through the continued



development of a stronger customer orientated culture throughout the business.

25 Contact

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Chief Executive



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‘Investing in...



Halton
Housing Trust
Delivering quality and excellence for all

Inspection

- Core service areas - housing management, repairs, tenancy services.
- Customer Satisfaction Framework
- Investment Programme
- Customer investment and involvement
- Delivering positive outcomes for customers
- Hard to reach groups
- Equality and diversity

New Business

- Development and regeneration
- Community leadership role
- Construction Services
- Choice and flexibility

VFM and Procurement

- Cashable Savings Project
- Delivery of business plan targets
- Increased awareness of VFM
- Performance management

Environment

- Environmental Improvement Programme
- Grounds maintenance
- Recycling/carbon footprint/green focus

Staff

- Health and wellbeing
- Development
- Satisfaction
- Customer First Programme

Tenancy Management

- Service Baseline Review recommendations
- Disaggregation of service charges
- Targetted estate management

**Appendix 2: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME - WORK
TIMETABLE**

	Jan – Mar 2007	Apr – Jun 2007	July – Sept 2007	Oct – Nov 2007	Jan – Mar 2008	Apr – Jun 2008	July – Sept 2008	Oct – Nov 2008	Jan – Mar 2009
Area 1 - G, M & N	Pre Consult	Consult	Data Analysis	Estate Plan					
Area 2 – F, H & E		Pre Consult	Consult	Data Analysis	Estate Plan				
Area 3 – C, D, A & B					Pre consult	Consult	Data Analysis	Estate Plan	
Area 4 – K & J						Pre Consult	Consult	Data Analysis	Estate Plan

Area 1 – G, M & N – Hale, Halebank, Runcorn Old Town, Weston, Preston Brook, Heath

Area 2 – F, H & E – Stewards Ave, Kingsway, Lugsdale, West Bank, Halton View, Fairfield, Farnworth

Area 3 – C, D, A, B – Montgomery, Ditton, Upton

Area 4 – K & J – Castle Rise, Grange

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 19 June 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children and Young People

SUBJECT: Education and Skills Bill

WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide background information on the Education and Inspection Bill

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) Consideration is given to the impact of the Bill; and**
- (2) Consideration is given to a response to the consultation paper on 'Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver'**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

'Raising Expectations: Enabling the system to deliver'

'We want every 16 and 17 year-old to participate in education or training, and every adult to have the chance to improve their skills in order to improve their skills in order to find work or progress in their current employment. The changing nature of the world economy makes increasing participation in education and training is an urgent necessity' DCSF 2008.

The Education and Skills Bill is a landmark piece of legislation. For the first time in over thirty years, the Government is legislating to change the education leaving age. In doing so, effect is being given to an intention first set out in the Fisher Act of 1918, which proposed that children should remain in at least part-time education until the age of 18, a provision that was never enacted as a result of the period of austerity after the First World War. Almost a century – and two further Acts of Parliament in this area – later, we consider that now is the time to act and to extend educational opportunity to all young people until the age of 18.

- 3.1 The Bill contains measures to encourage more young people to participate in learning post-16 and to achieve higher levels of skill and qualification. The Government proposals go beyond the current aspiration so that by 2013, all 17 year olds, and by 2015, all 18 year olds, are participating in

some form of education or training. As the Leitch Review highlighted, the need for highly knowledgeable and skilled people is growing, to meet the demands of an increasingly high-skilled economy. The availability of low-skilled jobs has declined sharply and will decline further. People with low skills will find it increasingly hard to find sustainable employment.

- 3.2 The Education and Skills Bill sets out to achieve this – new rights for young people to take up opportunities for education and training, and the support they need to take up these opportunities; alongside new responsibilities for all young people – and a new partnership between young people and parents, schools and colleges, local government and employers. The Bill sets out clear aspirations for the future. It has the potential to accelerate change, transforming the experience of the children who, now in their last year of primary school, will be the first cohort to whom the new participation duty will apply.
- 3.3 More than 70% of the UK's working age population in 2020 are already over the age of 16. The Bill's provisions will give adults a second chance to gain the skills they need to thrive throughout their working lives, whether through basic literacy and numeracy training, a first full level 2 qualification or, for those aged 19-25 a first full level 3 qualification. Taken together, the provisions in the Bill will extend opportunity to both young people and adults, to meet the ambition set out in the Leitch Review of achieving world class skills by 2020.
- 3.4 The Bill will legislate to raise the participation age
- Young people will have a duty to participate in education and training post-16, which they will be able to do in a number of different ways, including:
- full-time education, for example, at school or college
 - work-based learning, such as an apprenticeship
 - part-time education or training, if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering more than 20 hours a week.

Central to the duty is the principle that young people may learn by attending more than one provider. This is at the heart of 14-19 reforms. The Bill therefore takes the opportunity to clarify governing bodies' power to arrange for young people to learn elsewhere than on the school site.

Raising the participation age to 18 will mean that there is a focus on preparing every young person throughout their school career for successful progression post-16 on a route that suits their individual needs and interests, as well as achievement within school.

The statutory responsibility for ensuring that there is provision of facilities for young people aged 16 or older, to enable them to participate in valuable learning, lies with the Learning and Skills Council. This Bill will not change

that responsibility. It makes explicit the responsibility of the LSC to ensure that apprenticeships are available to all suitably qualified young people. Local authorities will be responsible for making sure that young people resident in their area participate. They will maintain accurate information about what young people are doing, and will provide support services that are designed to encourage, enable or assist participation. The Bill's provisions will ensure that local authorities' transport plans support young people's participation. Providers of post-16 education and training will be under a duty to tell the Connexions service if young people drop out, so that they can be contacted as soon as possible and offered support to re-engage.

Young people will still be able to work, providing they are engaged in at least part-time education or training. Before employing a 16 or 17 year old for more than 20 hours a week, over more than 8 weeks, employers will need to reassure themselves that the young person is participating, either by providing their own training or checking that the young person has a place on a course. Where they do not have their own accredited training programme, or are not arranging training, they will have to release the young person for the equivalent of a day a week so that they can train elsewhere.

3.5 The Bill will legislate to give local authorities a duty to provide services which will enable, encourage or assist young people to participate

The Bill transfers the statutory responsibility for the service currently known as Connexions to local authorities. This ties in with their responsibility for ensuring that all young people aged 16-18 in their area participate in education or training. They will maintain the information that tells them when a young person is participating, and will provide a service to all 13-19 year olds in their area (13-24 year olds in the case of young people with a learning difficulty) to encourage, enable or assist them to do so.

Transferring the responsibility for Connexions to local authorities will enable them to improve links between Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) services and other services for young people. Local authorities will be required to have regard to the recently issued Quality Standards for information advice and guidance, launched on 31st October. These define our expectations of the information, advice and guidance services that local authorities should provide.

For those young people with statements of special educational needs, local authorities will also have a duty to conduct assessments if the young person is leaving school to learn elsewhere. Local authorities will also have a power to arrange assessments for young people of compulsory school age with special educational needs but without statements who are leaving school to go full-time to further education or training.

- 3.6 The Bill will legislate to make sure that local decision making arrangements take proper account of 14-19 interests

The Bill builds on local authorities existing duty to collaborate with other local partners to secure the wellbeing of children and young people. It sets out that in fulfilling this duty with regard to 14-19 year olds, local authorities must work to secure effective collaboration with providers of 14-19 education and training. The Government will expect this duty to be fulfilled through existing 14-19 partnerships; the Bill's provisions will help to strengthen such partnerships and ensure their sustainability. They will support the raising the participation age policy by ensuring that framework promotes collaboration between employers, providers and commissioners, including common curriculum timetabling, transport, Information Advice and Guidance and workforce development.

To further support local arrangements for 14-19 delivery the Bill legislates to make a small change to the way Schools Forums are convened. Schools Forums, which local authorities must consult on the distribution of revenue funding, will be required to have non-schools members, where they do not already. Through regulations, we will require those non-schools members to include 14-19 and early years representation. This will allow more appropriate consideration of the distribution of 14-19 and early years funding, which is increasingly directed through Schools Forums.

- 3.7 The Bill will legislate to give adults a right to basic and intermediate skills and enable the benefits of adult skills to be measured

The Bill introduces a duty on the Learning and Skills Council to ensure the proper provision of courses for basic literacy and numeracy programmes and courses leading to a first full level 2 qualification, and to ensure that they are provided without tuition fees. This will give adults the right to basic and intermediate skills at no cost to the learner. It also proposes a duty on the LSC to ensure that 19-25 year olds who are undertaking their first full level 3 qualification do not have to pay tuition fees.

- 3.8 The Bill will legislate to rationalise the regulation and monitoring of independent schools and non-maintained special schools

The Bill abolishes the category of 'approved' independent school for the purposes of special educational needs. This will mean that the local authority maintaining a child's statement of special educational needs may place the child in any independent school that meets the independent school standards and can provide the provision set out in the child's statement, without the requirement for the local authority to seek consent from the Secretary of State to the placement. This reinforces a local

authority's statutory duty to ensure appropriate provision is made for children and young people with special educational needs.

3.9 To summarise the Education and Skills Bill seeks to:

Raise the age young people stay in education or training, with a duty on young people to participate and on parents to assist their children to participate

Set out duties on employers to release young people for the equivalent of one day a week to undertake training elsewhere (where the employer does not provide their own training)

Introduce a duty on local authorities to ensure that young people participate and to provide the support service currently known as Connexions

Require local authorities to assess the education and training needs of young people aged 16-19 with special educational needs

Require the Learning and Skills Council to secure the proper provision of courses for learners over the age of 19.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Under the Machinery of Government all post 16 funding with the exception of apprenticeships and Higher Education will be rooted through Local Authorities. LAs will have the responsibility to provide a place for learning for every young person through strategic commissioning

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

5.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The focus upon 'narrowing the gap in educational outcomes for vulnerable children' will be further addressed

5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

5.2.1 *The reforms are intended to address issues raised in the Leitch Report on 2020 skills. The report identified that our skills are "not world class" and that "in 10 years time 75% of jobs will require a level 2 qualification".*

5.2.2 *Half of reported recruitment difficulties are due to skill shortages in:*

- *Communication*
- *Customer handling*
- *Team working*
- *Problem solving*
- *Higher level technical skills*

5.3 A Healthy Halton

To increase the opportunities to develop skills for life all young people in the Borough to the age of 19

5.4 A Safer Halton

Not applicable

5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Not applicable

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 Failure to fully implement the reforms locally in the future could result in learners being forced to access provision out of the borough with a subsequent loss of investment for local provision.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

The Education Bill and the consultation paper 'Raising Expectations: an enabling the system to deliver' for change' promotes equality of opportunity and access to high quality learning provision that can meet the needs of children with diverse needs within their local community.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Raising Expectations: Enabling the system to deliver 14-19 Education and Skills (2008)	Grosvenor House	Judith Kirk
Education and Skills Bill (2008)	Grosvenor House	Judith Kirk