Public Document Pack

Executive Board

Thursday, 18 December 2008 12.00 p.m.
Marketing Suite, Municipal Building

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. DECLARATIONS 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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(B) CONNEXIONS TRANSITION - KEY DECISION	**8 - 14**

Please contact Lynn Cairns on 0151 471 7529 or e-mail lynn.cairns@halton.gov.uk for further information.

The next meeting of the Committee is on Thursday, 15 January 2009

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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.

Agenda Item 3a

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 18th December 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children & Young People's Directorate

SUBJECT: Halton Youth Service – Future Commissioning Arrangements

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To consider proposals to secure improved outcomes for young people through the future commissioning arrangements of Halton Youth Service.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION that:

2.1 steps are taken to secure future commissioning of Halton Youth Service;

2.2 existing arrangements for commissioning Halton Youth Service from Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Ltd are extended to 30th September 2009;

2.3 commissioning of Halton Youth Service is separate but aligned with the commissioning of 'connexions service'; and

2.4 the timescale for the contract should align with that of the 'connexions services' and should cover the period 30th September 2009 to 31st March 2012 with an option of an extension to the contract for a further period of up to 3 years. The contract will accommodate an appropriate break clause in the event of poor performance or reduced financial capacity to commission the service to the level previously agreed.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Halton Youth Service

3.1.1 In June 2002 Executive Board agreed:

- The principle of the Youth Service transferring to Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership; and
- That a first stage transfer takes place from September 2002 with staff seconded to the Connexions Service. The second stage full transfer to take place from April 2003.

3.1.2 In March 2003 Executive Board further approved the Partnership Agreement for the management of the Youth Service by Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership.

3.1.3 The contracting of Halton Youth Service to Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership has proven to be successful with the Youth Service now demonstrating improved performance against national performance indicators. Additionally, the improved engagement with young people evidenced through the Youth Cabinet, Borough Youth Forum, UKYP and the Youth Bank is testimony to the transformation that has occurred in the Borough in placing young people at the centre of our efforts to develop services around their needs.

3.1.4 The contracted period for the commissioning of the Youth Service ends on 31st March 2009.

3.2 Youth Matters

3.2.1 In 2006 the Government launched ‘Youth Matters’ a key policy directive which promoted a vision of integrated support structures and services for teenagers which promoted and sought to secure access to positive activities and high quality information, advice and guidance. This would be delivered within a framework of integrated and targeted youth support, with local flexibility for service redesign.

3.2.2 As a consequence of ‘Youth Matters’ Local Authorities are responsible and accountable for youth policy in their area and are taking responsibility for integrated planning and commissioning of the full range of services for teenagers from universal activities through to more specialist and targeted support. This will enable, over time, universal and targeted services to work closely together to provide integrated support for Young People and to improve outcomes for them.

3.2.3 “Youth Matters” also made it clear that the support and guidance services provided by Connexions should now ‘go local’ so that they can be more fully included and integrated with the whole range of services for young people and their parents and carers. It is intended that the ‘localisation’ of Connexions services will be achieved through the development of an integrated Youth Support strategy at the local level; this will enable a greater coherence of service to young people and their parents / carers and provide greater efficiency in the way services are procured and delivered locally.

3.2.4 The guidance contained in ‘Youth Matters’ has subsequently been confirmed in legislation through the Education and Inspections Act 2007 and will be further embedded in the forthcoming Education and Skills Act.

3.2.5 More recently the publication of PSA Delivery Agreements and in particular PSA 14 focuses upon the objective to 'increase the number of children and young people on the path to success' and has at it's heart the drivers to secure '**increased participation and resilience**' by young people measured by their engagement in education, employment and training (EET) and, more participation in positive activities. Additionally it seeks to '**tackle negative outcomes**' as measured by indicators of substance misuse, reduction in the under 18 conception rate, and the reduction in the number of first-time entrants to the criminal Justice System aged 10-17.

3.2.6 Mechanisms for securing progress against the objectives contained in PSA 14 include delivery of high quality opportunities and activities for young people to secure their engagement in positive activities and to include diversionary activities to prevent them engaging in 'at risk' or anti-social behaviours in the community. Traditionally this has been delivered through Youth Clubs but additionally is increasingly now being secured through more creative routes should as detached outreach, 'On the Streets' provision, activities running on Friday and Saturday evenings, and integrated delivery of engagement activities by partner agencies, including the police and the Youth Offending Team.

4 JOINT AREA REVIEW

4.2 In April 2008 OFSTED undertook a Joint Area Review of services to children and young people in the Borough. While the inspection focused upon the contribution of services in ensuring children and young people are effectively cared for and achieving the best possible outcomes, further investigations were also carried out in the areas of health and integrated youth support.

4.3 The additional investigation into integrated youth support particularly focused upon the impact of this provision on young people's involvement in planning and delivery of local services, their engagement in youth work and in addressing the level of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET).

4.4 The inspection reported the following in terms of major strengths:

- Good and improving engagement by young people in youth support services;
- Commitment and action among partners to integrate key aspects of youth support and development;
- Continued improvement in the performance of the youth service;
- Very responsive approaches to young people's involvement in relevant decision making; and

- Good early identification and intensive support for young people at risk of not progressing into education, employment or training.

4.5 Important weaknesses were identified as:

- Some important strategic and operational planning issues yet to b e resolved; and
- A small but significant proportion of young people fail to sustain their involvement in education, employment or training.

4.6 While focusing upon many positive developments the report emphasises the need locally to progress to 'determining a single management structure' and also to 'review job tasks and identifying and modelling best practice in order that the skills and experiences of both personal advisers and youth workers operating in a broader range of settings can be more effectively utilised.

5 'CONNEXIONS SERVICES'

5.1 On the 25th March 2008 the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families wrote to Local Authorities notifying them of interim arrangements for the delivery of 'connexions services' and for undertaking assessments for young people with learning difficulties from 1st April 2008. The Education and Skills Bill currently before Parliament, proposes that legal responsibilities be brought into line by effecting the transfer of the statutory responsibility of 'connexions services'.

5.2 'Connexions services' are currently provided by Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Ltd, and have been commissioned by the 6 Merseyside Local Authorities since the 1st April 2008. Steps are currently underway for the future commissioning of 'connexions services' and this is subject to separate consideration by Executive Board on 18th December 2008.

6 PROPOSAL

6.2 Consideration needs to be given to the future commissioning of Halton Youth Service within the context of Youth Matters, PSA 14, and the future commissioning arrangements for 'connexions services'.

6.3 Members will already be aware of the steps being taken to commission 'connexions services' across the City Region in partnership with the other 5 Merseyside Local Authorities. At this stage Halton Borough Council is the only Local Authority to have taken steps previously to commission external providers to deliver it's Youth Service. As a consequence it was not appropriate to include the commissioning of Halton's Youth Service within the specification drawn up for the 'connexions services'. However, it is evident, that within the developing

Integrated Youth Support arrangements currently being drawn up, that there will need to be a closer alignment, if not integration of the Youth Service and Connexions workforce, to secure maximum benefit of service support to young people.

6.4 As a consequence of the above it is proposed that the commissioning of Halton Youth Service is aligned with the process of commissioning of 'connexions services' and is secured within the framework of a single City Region commission with an additional local dimension specific to Halton. This would ensure the delivery of 'connexions services' and Halton Youth Service by a single provider.

7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.2 Work is progressing to develop an Integrated Youth Support Strategy which effectively co-ordinates service delivery to young people in a way which takes account of their needs and views, avoids duplication, and which provides targeted support to those young people who need more support to overcome barriers to accessing opportunities to which they are entitled. Young people have contributed to the developing Integrated Youth Support Strategy, and a Young People's conference was held earlier this year to seek their ideas and views. Ongoing engagement is secured through the Borough Youth Forum and through developing Young People's Advisory Groups. One such group is the newly formed Young People's Advisory Group for Sexual Health.

7.3 Government expectations are that services will be delivered within a framework of integrated planning, commissioning and delivery wherever possible and informed by young people's views.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

8.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The effective delivery of integrated and targeted support to young people is crucial to the delivery of key outcomes for young people, which include:

- Reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training;
- Reduce the under 18 conception rate;
- Reduce the number of first time entrants to the criminal justice system; and
- Reduce the number of young people involved with substance misuse

8.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The work of Personal Advisors and Youth Workers in supporting young people, in providing access to positive activities, in the provision of impartial information and advice coupled with raising aspirations to improve enterprise are important skills young people in Halton will need to access future employment and learning opportunities.

8.3 **A Healthy Halton**

High quality information, advice and guidance will inform young people on the benefits and options in adopting healthy lifestyles.

8.4 **A Safer Halton**

Personal Advisors and Youth Workers, working within the Integrated Youth Service agenda in Halton, and working closely with young people to both equip them to be safe but also to challenge young people's actions and behaviours in order for Halton to be a safer place to live.

8.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

'Places to go and things to do' is at the heart of service redesign for young people. The creation and development of high class youth facilities is key securing the engagement of young people in positive activities.

9.0 RISK ANALYSIS

A strategic risk assessment has been undertaken, as Appendix 1.

10.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Equality and Diversity issues will be at the forefront of developments and will be addressed as part of the service specification developments.

10.1 **Reason(s) for decision**

Arrangements for the future delivery of services to young people will affect all young people aged 13 – 19 in the Borough. It will also include the targeting of specialist services to vulnerable young people to enable them to access their universal entitlement.

10.2 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

None

10.3 **IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

It is intended that the new contractual arrangements will take effect from 1st October 2009.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Education and Inspections Act 2006	Grosvenor House	Lorraine Butcher
Youth Matters	Grosvenor House	Lorraine Butcher
Aiming High for Young People: A Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities (DCSF – 2007)	Grosvenor House	Lorraine Butcher
Education and Skills Bill	Grosvenor House	Lorraine Butcher

Agenda Item 3b

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 18^{th} December 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children & Young People's Directorate

SUBJECT: Connexions Transition

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide Executive Board with information on the arrangements for the future commissioning of 'connexions services'.

2.0 RECOMMENDED that:

2.1 The existing contract with Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership is amended to cover the period to 30^{th} September 2009, pending the completion of procurement processes;

2.2 The new contract for 'connexions services' should cover the period 30^{th} September 2009 to 31^{st} March 2012 with an option of an extension to the contract for a further period of up to 3 years, but for the contract to accommodate an appropriate break clause in the event of poor performance or reduced financial capacity to commission the service to the level previously agreed;

2.3 Halton Borough Council is the lead Authority for procurement of the new arrangements on behalf of the 6 participating Local Authorities; and

2.4 Halton Borough Council becomes the contract holding Authority on behalf of the 6 participating Local Authorities from the City Region for the new contract when awarded with the appropriate cross Authority commitments.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Youth Matters

3.1.1 "Youth Matters" required that by April 2008, responsibility for Commissioning Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and the funding that goes with it to be devolved to Local Authorities working through children's trusts, schools and colleges. Local Authorities are expected to lead a genuinely collaborative approach and develop new arrangements for delivering IAG that clearly meet the needs of Young People in the area. These arrangements will be planned and implemented in a way that not only supports the delivery of the 14 - 19 learning entitlement but are integrated into a wider set of youth support services for teenagers and their parents.

3.1.2 Local Authorities are responsible and accountable for youth policy in their area and are taking responsibility for integrated planning and commissioning of the full range of services for teenagers from universal activities through to more specialist and targeted support. This will enable, over time, universal and targeted services to work closely together to provide integrated support for Young People and to improve outcomes for them.

3.1.3 "Youth Matters" also made it clear that the support and guidance services provided by Connexions should now 'go local' so that they can be more fully included and integrated with the whole range of services for young people and their parents and carers. It is intended that the 'localisation' of Connexions services will be achieved through the development of an Integrated Youth Support Strategy at the local level; this will enable a greater coherence of service to young people and their parents / carers and provide greater efficiency in the way services are procured and delivered locally.

3.1.4 More recently the publication of PSA Delivery Agreements and in particular PSA 14 focuses upon the objective to 'increase the number of children and young people on the path to success' and has at it's heart the drivers to secure **'increased participation and resilience'** by young people measured by their engagement in education, employment and training (EET) and more participation in positive activities. Additionally, it seeks to **'tackle negative outcomes'** as measured by indicators of substance misuse, reduction in the under 18 conception rate, and the reduction in the number of first-time entrants to the criminal Justice System aged 10 - 17.

3.2 Connexions Services

3.2.1 On 25th March 2008 the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families wrote to Local Authorities notifying them of interim arrangements for the delivery of 'connexions services' and assessments for young people with learning difficulties from 1st April 2008. The Education and Skills Bill, currently before Parliament, proposes that legal responsibilities be brought into line by effecting the transfer to Local Authorities of the statutory responsibility of 'connexions services'. Specifically these include:

- The provision of 'connexions services' under Section 114 of the Learning and Skills Act;

- ❖ The conducting of assessments relating to learning difficulties under Section 140 of the Act; and
- ❖ The provision of careers services under Sections 8 and 9 of the Employment and Training Act 1973.

3.2.2 In preparing for implementation of these arrangements in November 2007 the Executive Board agreed the following:

(1) To commission Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership, as a strategic and delivery partner in the Children and Young People's Partnership, to deliver 'connexions services' to all 13 – 19 year olds for the period from April 2008 to March 2011, initially;

(2) To collaborate with partner Local Authorities in the City Region to jointly commission shared services that underpin and provide additional value to local Connexions Services for the same period, initially;

(3) To review the Local Authority's position as a member of Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Limited to ensure that accountability to the Local Authority is maintained avoiding conflicts of interest. (Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Board is reviewing its structure and Governance in view of the impending changes):

(4) To consider, where appropriate, commissioning other services from Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership or other providers to meet the needs of young people as identified in local plans;

(5) To confirm that the indicative grant allocation, (and when known the actual grant allocation), for Connexions is passported to Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership for the period 2008 - 2011 in line with a specified service requirement, and that the Local Authority will seek agreement from it's Strategic Partnership to this undertaking; and

(6) To act as Guarantor to the Merseyside Pension Fund in respect of a share, based on population, of the Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Limited.

3.2.3 Progress towards these arrangements has been overseen by a Transition Steering Group which comprises:

Chief Executives – Halton, Liverpool, St Helens
Directors of Children's Services – Knowsley, Sefton, Wirral
Chair – Chief Executive of Halton Borough Council

The work of the Transition Group receives the support of the Liverpool City Leaders Group.

3.2.4 In 2008 legal advice received by the participating Local Authorities indicated that the commissioning of Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership could only occur for 2008 / 2009 and that EU procurement regulations would need to be followed from 2009 onwards. As a consequence work has been underway to secure the commissioning of 'connexions services' from 2009 - 2011.

3.2.5 To assist in this work support has been secured from the Merseyside Improvement Partnership (MEIP) which is funding consultants to advise on the details of the specification and procurement process. That work is nearing completion and the next stage will lead into procurement through a process of open competitive dialogue. Additional resources are being sought from the Merseyside Efficiency and Improvement Partnership to fund the project management costs associated with this work.

3.3 Contractual Arrangements

3.3.1 For the period 1st April 2008 until 31st March 2009 arrangements have been in place for Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council to be the contract holding Authority (on behalf of the 6 Merseyside Local Authorities) with Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Ltd.

3.3.2 From the period of the new contract it is proposed that Halton Borough Council becomes the contract holding Authority on behalf of the 6 Merseyside Local Authorities. Contracts will be held with the respective 5 Local Authorities to ensure prompt payment on a monthly basis to Halton BC for their share of the contractual commitments with the provider of 'connexions services'. A model for this arrangement is already in place with Wirral MBC.

3.3.3 Halton's role in becoming the contract holding Authority on behalf of the 6 participating Local Authorities will be undertaken on a 'cost neutral' basis ie. No additional costs will be incurred by HBC in undertaking this role. Any costs incurred will be re-charged to the participating 6 Local Authorities.

3.3.4 The current contract is worth approximately £17.5m, and is funded from the LAA 'single pot', allocations of which have been confirmed until 30th March 2011.

3.3.5 Consideration has been given to the length of any new proposed contract and whether it should be limited by the period of the current funding round. It is proposed, that due to the scale of the contract, and the extensive preparations undertaken across the 6 Local Authorities that letting the new contract for the remaining period of ABG would represent poor value for money. It is therefore proposed that the new contract to be let should run for the period from 30th September 2009 until 31st March 2012 with a further proposed option of extension for up to 3 years. Contractually, an appropriate break clause would be included in the contract enabling it to be reduced or ceased subject to appropriate consideration of factors relating to performance or financial sustainability.

3.3.6 No changes in status will occur to the pension arrangements for staff as a result of Halton BC becoming the contracting Authority with the Provider. Wirral MBC will remain as the administering body for the Merseyside Pension Fund to which current employees of Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Ltd contribute.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Since the 1st April 2008 funding for ‘connexions services’ has been directed to Local Authorities through the LAA ‘single pot’. Agreement had previously been secured to passport the indicative allocation to enable the commissioning of ‘connexions services’ collaboratively with the 6 Merseyside Authorities. It was anticipated that the commissioning arrangements would be for 3 years from 1st April 2008 to 31st March 2011. More recent legal advice has confirmed that the current arrangement for commissioning Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership could only be secured for 1 year, and that EU Procurement Regulations would need to be followed thereafter.

4.2.1 Funding would be committed for a period beyond the existing funding period covering the period up to 31st March 2012. Notwithstanding this Local Authorities will continue to have statutory duties for the delivery of ‘connexions services’.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

5.1 Children and Young People in Halton

5.1.1 The success of the Connexions Service is crucial to the delivery of the Every Child Matters Outcomes. One of the key Connexions outcomes is to reduce the number of 16 - 18 year olds in Halton who are not in employment, education or training. This target is currently within the suite of LAA targets and has recently been announced as part of PSA Delivery Agreement 14 – 19 - to increase the number of children and young people on the pathway to success.

5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

5.2.1 The work Connexions Personal Advisers undertake is crucial to the future prosperity of young people in Halton. Impartial information and advice coupled with raising aspirations to improve enterprise are important skills young people in Halton will need to access future employment and learning opportunities.

5.3 **A Healthy Halton**

5.3.1 High quality information, advice and guidance will inform young people on the benefits and options in adopting healthy lifestyles.

5.4 **A Safer Halton**

5.4.1 Connexions working within the Integrated Youth Service Agenda in Halton works closely with young people to both equip them to be safe but also to challenge young people's actions and behaviours in order for Halton to be a safer place to live.

5.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

5.5.1 Connexions work with a range of partners and are committed to the urban renewal agenda currently taking place in Halton.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

A strategic risk assessment has been undertaken.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Equality and Diversity issues will be at the forefront of developments and will be addressed as part of the service specification developments.

8.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

Arrangements for the future delivery of services to young people will affect all young people aged 13 to 19 in the Borough. It will also include the targeting of specialist services to vulnerable young people to enable them to access their universal entitlement.

9.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

None.

10.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

It is intended that the new contractual arrangements will take effect from 1st October 2009.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
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Aiming High for Young People: A Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities (DCSF – 2007)	Grosvenor House	Lorraine Butcher
Education and Skills Bill	Grosvenor House	Lorraine Butcher

Agenda Item 4a

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 18 December 2008

REPORT FROM: Strategic Director Health and Community

SUBJECT: Housing Strategy 2008/11

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek the Executive Board's approval of the draft Housing Strategy 2008/11 (attached as Appendix A).

2.0 RECOMMENDED: that the Executive Board approves the Housing Strategy 2008 to 2011.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The statutory guidance "Creating Strong and Prosperous Communities", published by Government in July 2008, encourages local authorities to take full and proper account of housing as part of the strategic vision for the area and puts greater emphasis on housing's contribution to creating sustainable communities through a local authority's Sustainable Community Strategy.

3.2 The guidance gives local authorities greater discretion about how, when and in what format they document their housing strategy representing a move away from the more prescriptive "fit for purpose" criteria against which strategies were previously assessed. Whatever format is chosen, strategies are expected to:

- fully reflect the wider vision of the authority and its partners;
- reflect a clear and evidenced approach, and;
- provide a strong focus on how partners will deliver their commitments.

3.3 The draft Housing Strategy attached at Appendix A has been the subject of consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including local Registered Social Landlords, relevant Council departments, voluntary organisations, estate agents and Government Office for the North West (GO-NW). The document has also been posted on the Council's website inviting comments from members of the public. In addition the Strategy was presented to the Local Strategic Partnership Board in May 2008, and the Urban Renewal PPB in November 2008.

3.4 Of particular importance was the feedback received from GO-NW, which gave advanced warning of emerging guidance, specifically the need to demonstrate how the Housing Strategy will deliver on the priorities contained within the Sustainable Community Strategy. The priorities within the revised Housing Strategy have consequently been re-organised to mirror those of the Community Strategy to clearly illustrate the strategic alignment between the two documents.

Housing Strategy Objectives

3.5 The objectives listed below have been developed to meet housing needs as evidenced by the Halton Housing Needs Survey 2006, to meet specific Government targets such as the Decent Homes Standard and the introduction of Choice Based Lettings, and to reflect emerging Government priorities such as the housing/worklessness agenda, reducing overcrowding, and increasing knowledge and understanding of local housing markets.

3.5.1 Priority 1 – A Healthy Halton

- Achieve a year on year reduction in the proportion of non decent private sector homes occupied by vulnerable households
- Improve conditions in the private rented sector
- Increase the number of people on income based benefits who live in energy efficient homes (NI 187)
- Improve the provision of supported housing for an ageing population
- Improve equality of access to housing adaptations

3.5.2 Priority 2 – Halton's Urban Renewal

- Monitor progress towards delivery of the decent homes target in the social rented sector
- Ensure plans are in place to meet Decent Homes Plus (subject to an agreed standard being introduced by Government
- Increase the supply of affordable housing in the Borough in line with the recommendations of the Housing Needs Survey
- Introduce Choice Based lettings by 2010
- Update data on condition of the private sector stock
- Complete the regeneration of the Castlefields estate
- Commission consultants to undertake research to establish and prioritise the regeneration needs of New Town estates
- Work in partnership with local authority partners to improve the housing offer in the Liverpool City Region

3.5.3 Priority 3 – Children and Young People

- Complete the review of the Homelessness Strategy
- Reduce the level of overcrowding within social rented housing

3.5.4 Priority 4 – Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

- Maximise the employment related benefits of physical improvements/refurbishment works
- Expand programme of housing construction/improvement training activity
- Deliver increased employment outreach activity with RSLs through JobCentre Plus and Halton People into Jobs

3.5.5 Priority 5 – A Safer Halton

- Work with housing providers to reduce the incidence and perceptions of Anti Social Behaviour
- Conduct research into long term vacant dwellings in Halton with a view to participating in the development of a sub regional Empty Homes Strategy

3.6 Although it is intended that the Strategy remain valid through to 2011, the pace of change in the housing market and the economy at present is such that it may prove necessary to review the document earlier.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Housing Strategy will set the context for future policy development relating to housing and will have a significant influence on related policies e.g. Planning and Supporting People policies.

5.0 FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The financial implications are outlined in the Action Plan on page 51 of the Strategy.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 Delivery of the Strategy will require the support of the Homes and Communities Agency, the new organisation formed from the merger of the Housing Corporation and English Partnerships that becomes operational this month. At this stage the policy and investment priorities of the new organisation are unknown, but Halton will seek to raise its profile through early discussions.

6.2 In recent years the Council's housing capital programme has benefited from some capital growth funded from Council resources. The prevailing economic climate and housing market downturn could impact on the ability of the Council to maintain such support, which may delay the achievement of some targets.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

7.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The Housing Strategy aims to increase the supply of affordable housing, reduce overcrowding and improve housing conditions which will have a beneficial impact on families with children and improve access to housing for young people.

7.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The Strategy aims to maximise the role of housing investment in reducing worklessness in deprived communities.

7.3 A Healthy Halton

The Housing Strategy aims to improve the quality of housing in the Borough and improve access to adaptations, which will have a positive impact on the health of residents, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

7.4 A Safer Halton

The Strategy aims to reduce the incidence of Anti Social Behaviour on social housing estates by working with RSL partners to implement the Respect agenda.

7.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The Strategy aims to improve the quality of housing, which will contribute to the regeneration of the Borough.

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

8.1 None

HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Health and Community Directorate

Draft Housing Strategy

2008 to 2011

This Strategy has been developed in collaboration with our partners from Halton Housing Partnership.

Arena Housing Association

Cosmopolitan Housing Association

Halton Housing Trust

Liverpool Housing Trust

CDS Housing Association

Riverside Housing Association

Halton YMCA

William Sutton Homes

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FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce Halton's Housing Strategy for 2008 to 2011. Much has changed in the last few years, notably, the transfer of the former Council stock to Halton Housing Trust (HHT). This bold move on the Council's part unlocked the potential for major improvements to the 6,500 dwellings. I am pleased to report that HHT are well on the way to delivering on the promises made to tenants at transfer.

We have also made significant improvements to the services we offer to vulnerable people including homeless people and those requiring adaptations to their home, increased our understanding of Halton's housing needs and markets through a Housing Needs and Market Assessment and strengthened our partnerships with other organisations through the regeneration of Castlefields and development of a sub regional housing strategy.

We are proud of what has been achieved. However, we are not complacent and recognise that much work is still to be done to achieve our overall vision for housing in Halton:

Vision for Housing in Halton
"Halton offers a broad range of good quality housing which meets the needs of existing communities, helps attract new residents to the Borough and contributes to the creation of balanced and sustainable communities."

This vision can only be achieved through collaboration with our partners and we will strive to build on our current record of success in working in partnership with housing providers and key agencies to deliver housing and related services. Supporting this is a commitment to work with other local authorities and regional partners to help tackle the housing and wider economic and regeneration challenges facing the North West.

The Council would like to thank all the individuals and organisations who contributed to the development of this Strategy, which I now commend to you.

We welcome your views on any aspect of this Strategy. If you wish to comment or have any other queries relating to housing, please contact the Housing Strategy Team on 0151 907 8300.

Councillor Marie Wright – Executive Board Member for Community

PART ONE – SETTING THE SCENE

This part of the Housing Strategy seeks to place the Borough's housing needs in the wider context. It describes how housing contributes to community priorities identified in Halton's Community Strategy, explains how the Strategy has been influenced by national, regional and sub regional priorities, and illustrates how the Council is working with it's partners to develop and realise the aims of the Strategy.

SECTION 1
HOUSING IN ITS COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE CONTEXT

Introduction

This Strategy identifies the most pressing housing needs in the Borough and prioritises actions to meet those needs. However, it is recognised that housing is influenced by and impacts on many other aspects of our daily lives and, therefore, the strategy has to work in parallel with many other plans and initiatives that collectively seek to create thriving and sustainable communities.

One of the Council's main roles is to provide community leadership to ensure a co-ordinated approach to this challenge, not only by different parts of the Council but also by its partners. At the highest level this is achieved through the production of a Community Strategy by the Halton Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

A Community Strategy for a Sustainable Halton

The LSP brings together key representatives from all major organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors that are vital to realising Halton's potential. Its role is to agree a common purpose and set of priorities designed to bring about real improvements to peoples lives, providing a framework to drive the activities of all partner organisations. These priorities are set out in the Partnership's second Community Strategy "Making it Happen for Halton" with the key objectives to be delivered through Halton's Local Area Agreement.

The Strategy was informed by a new State of the Borough Audit produced in 2005. The findings highlighted some significant improvements since the first Community Strategy was produced whilst recognising that there is still much to be done to overcome the physical, environmental and social problems inherent in the Borough, many of which are rooted in its industrial past. For example:

- After years of decline the population has increased slightly in recent years and is projected to remain stable for the next ten years.

- Halton's overall ranking in the Index of Multiple Deprivation has improved (from 16th most deprived Local Authority area in England in

2000 to 21st in 2004).[1] However, some localities exhibit higher concentrations of deprivation than others with 6 Super Output Areas in the worst 3% nationally.

- Claimant unemployment in the Borough has fallen from 5.0% in January 2000 to 3.1% in November 2005. However, Halton still had the 5th highest claimant rate in the North West in November 2005 and the employment rate (i.e. the proportion of the potential workforce actually working) at 68.5% is significantly lower than the England average of 74.7%.

- Life expectancy has increased in the past decade for both males and females but has not kept pace with other areas and Standardised Mortality Rates for all causes and ages is 24% above the national average.

- GCSE passes in the Borough are improving but the proportion of pupils gaining no GCSE passes at 4% in 2005 is still higher than the national average of 2.6%.

The Audit concludes that although "the Borough is performing well in terms of its current economic performance and structure….the level of human capital and trends in economic growth may present problems for the future. This is particularly so given the district's poor performance in terms of social and environmental indicators, which may create difficulties in attracting the best qualified people to the borough. Halton's performance on education and skills, and low levels of home ownership points to problems of inclusiveness, with groups of residents not sharing in the current levels of economic prosperity."

After extensive consultation to gauge the public perception of the real issues in Halton the following five strategic priorities were identified and subsequently adopted by the LSP partners.

- **A Healthy Halton**

- **Halton's Urban Renewal**

- **Children and Young People in Halton**

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

- **A Safer Halton**

A series of baseline reports has been produced, one for each of the strategic priorities, which are used to determine future policy and investment decisions by the Council and its partners and five Specialist Strategic Partnerships have been established to design and deliver strategies and action plans to address priorities.

[1] The IMD 2007 shows that Halton's rank has improved from 21st most deprived local authority area to 30th overall, although the results for individual domains provide evidence of a widening gap between the most deprived and least deprived parts of the Borough.

Although housing is not a strategic priority in itself, it is nevertheless key to delivering some of the objectives contained within them as illustrated in the table on page 47.

The Neighbourhood Level

The Partnership also works to improve the quality of life at a neighbourhood level, through seven Area Forums established by the Council and supported by the LSP partners. A Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy has been produced for each area, highlighting the concerns of local people and outlining actions to be taken. Each area has devolved resources to draw on to help deliver these actions.

In addition, three neighbourhood management pilots have been set up in Central Widnes, Hallwood Park/Palacefields and Castlefields/Windmill Hill funded by the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund. The aim of the pilots is to address problems in these neighbourhoods by managing and co-ordinating resources and services to achieve a greater combined impact with a particular emphasis on engaging and empowering local communities

Corporate Delivery

The Corporate Plan presents the Council's response to how it will help implement the Community Strategy. This is achieved through a framework consisting of a hierarchy of Directorate, Divisional and Team Service Plans that are directly aligned to ensure that the strategic priorities are cascaded down through the organisation through outcome focused targets. This framework is known as "The Golden Thread" and is illustrated at Appendix 1.

The five strategic priorities are also mirrored in the make up of the Council's Policy and Performance Boards which, together with the Executive Board, provide political leadership of the Council.

Progress in achieving the objectives contained in the Service Plans is reviewed regularly as part of the Council's performance management culture, and further scrutiny is exercised by Members through the Policy and Performance Boards.

The Council's performance in delivering services has been given an "excellent" four star rating under the Audit Commission's Performance Assessment framework.

SUMMARY

The Council and its partners have clearly set out their goals and priorities and put in place the delivery mechanisms for achieving them. This Strategy is one of many which seek to contribute to that process.

SECTION 2
THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

Introduction

A number of important developments in national housing policy have occurred since the last Housing Strategy was produced in 2005. The Barker review of Housing Supply recommended substantial increases in housing supply and increased investment in social housing in order to deliver stability in the UK housing market and meet the housing needs of future generations. The review has been the driving influence for much of the Government's Housing and Planning policy since its publication, not least the Government's Housing Green Paper published in July 2007.

Housing Green Paper "Homes for the Future: more affordable, more sustainable"

The green paper sets out the Government's proposals to increase the supply of housing and make it more affordable and environmentally sustainable. Key proposals are:

- New targets to deliver 2 million additional homes by 2016 and 3 million by 2020, and a target for all new housing to be zero carbon by 2016.

- Expansion of the New Growth points and the development of new eco towns with the opportunity for northern regions to bid.

- Introduction of a Housing and Planning Delivery Grant to incentivise high growth and encourage local authorities to do more to bring empty properties back into use.

- Opportunities for local authorities to have greater involvement in the delivery of affordable housing either through Local Housing Companies and other joint venture vehicles or direct development.

- An expectation that local authorities will provide discounted or free land for housing development and that Registered Social Landlords will place greater reliance on borrowing powers to allow resources to be more widely distributed. .

The green paper reaffirms the commitment to build at least 60% of new development on brownfield land and to continue support for the decent homes programme and Housing Market Renewal, albeit with greater targeting of funding to areas facing deep seated structural challenges. Halton has participated in the submission of a joint expression of interest with other Merseyside authorities to become a growth point.

Housing Act 2004

The Housing Act 2004 introduced a number of housing policy changes that have had a direct impact upon local policy and procedures, including:

- Replacement of the “Fitness Standard” as a means of measuring minimum acceptable house condition standards with a new “Housing, Health and Safety Rating system”;

- The introduction of mandatory licensing for certain types of Houses in Multiple Occupation;

- New powers for local authorities to take over the management of long term empty dwellings;

- A requirement for local authorities to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in their area and to produce a strategy to meet those needs;

Sustainable Communities – the Five Year Plans

Following the publication of the Sustainable Communities Plan in February 2003, the Government published a series of 5 year plans to support the implementation of the Plan, the key features of which are summarised below:

Sustainable Communities: Homes for All

- Continued investment in the Growth areas in London and the South East;
- Measures to assist social housing tenants and first time buyers into owner occupation through new initiatives such as HomeBuy and the First Time Buyers Initiative;
- A target for all local authorities to introduce Choice Based Lettings in their area by 2010;
- Additional investment to tackle low demand outside the Pathfinder areas.

The Plan is supported by a partner document *“Sustainable Communities: People, Places and Prosperity”* which aims to give local people a greater say in decisions which affect them, promote good governance, tackle disadvantage and make places cleaner, safer and greener.

Sustainable Communities: Settled Homes, Changing Lives A Strategy for Tackling Homelessness

- Continued emphasis on homelessness prevention;
- Encouraging local authorities to make greater use of the private sector to provide settled accommodation;
- A target for local authorities to halve the number of people living in temporary accommodation by 2010;
- Investment to improve standards in hostels.

Housing and Regeneration Act 2008

The Act, which received royal assent in July 2008, contains provisions to merge English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation to form the Homes and Communities Agency to oversee most housing related programmes. The Act also:

- Creates a new regulator of social housing, the Tenants Services Authority, which will aim to improve the level of service that social tenants receive and ensure that they have more choice and influence in matters central to their everyday lives.
- Supports the delivery of three million new homes by 2020 to meet growing demand and rising aspirations
- Provides for the establishment of new settlements like eco-towns, and for simplifying the ways in which the Homes and Communities Agency would facilitate delivery of these projects
- Improves the rights of Gypsies and Travellers living on local authority owned sites.

SECTION 3
THE REGIONAL AND SUB REGIONAL CONTEXT

NW Regional Housing Strategy

Resources for housing activity continue to be allocated to local authorities and housing associations according to the priorities set out in the Regional Housing Strategy. The North West's Strategy was revised in 2005. Although the four main themed priorities listed below remain broadly the same, a number of sub priorities have been introduced to further target resources to areas deemed to be in greatest need e.g. West Cumbria, Furness, Blackpool, Fleetwood and Morecambe.

1. Delivering Urban Renaissance
2. Providing affordable homes to maintain balanced communities
3. Delivering decent homes in thriving neighbourhoods
4. Meeting the needs of communities and providing support for those who need it.

Furthermore, 4NW (formerly North West Regional Assembly - NWRA) has indicated that due to rapid house price rises greater emphasis will be placed on the delivery of affordable homes. These changes represent a significant challenge to the delivery of Halton's housing ambitions. The NW resource allocation remained static for the period 2006/7/8 and Halton's share of the pot reduced as investment was incrementally re-focussed on those areas exhibiting more extreme problems of affordability and low demand. This is a trend that is likely to continue.

4NW is further developing Priority 4 through the introduction of a Regional Homelessness Strategy and Regional Supported Housing Strategy. The Council, along with other authorities in the region, is contributing to the development of these documents through attendance at consultation events.

At the time of writing Halton's Housing Strategy, the North West Regional Housing Strategy is in the process of being reviewed. Indications are that the new Regional Strategy will place greater emphasis on how housing can support and drive economic growth in preparation for the move to a Single Regional Strategy (incorporating Regional Economic, Spatial and Housing Strategies) and that it will be more of an overarching document that sets out the overall priorities for the region, with sub regional housing strategies detailing how these priorities are to be delivered at the sub regional level and, therefore, having a significant influence on future resource allocations.

Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy

During 2007 the Council collaborated with other local authorities in the Liverpool City Region to commission and contribute to the development of a Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy (LCRHS). The aim of the Strategy is to provide an investment framework for housing development across the City Region to help support and drive the economic growth ambitions of the Liverpool City Region Development Plan, which in turn was produced to help fulfil the challenge to bridge the economic output gap between the North and South of the country laid down in the Northern Way Growth Strategy.

The development of the LCRHS encompassed a number of research projects which have greatly increased our understanding of Halton's housing market and its interaction with neighbouring housing markets.

The first stage of the work, carried out in 2005/06 by Ecotec, defined three housing markets within the City Region on the basis of travel to work patterns, demographic information and housing market conditions. There is some overlap between the three Housing Market Areas (HMAs), described as "Zones of Flexibility", for example Halton is contained within both the Northern (Liverpool focused) and Eastern (Warrington focused) HMAs.

The second stage of the work was completed by a consortium of consultants led by GVA Grimley and includes Housing Market Assessments for each of the three areas, an Identification of Vulnerable Housing Markets report, and a report on BME and Gypsy/Traveller Households in the City Region. Key findings from these pieces of work are summarised below:

Housing Market Assessments

The Housing Market Assessments consisted of an assessment of the existing housing stock in each HMA and its ability to meet future demands based on demographic and economic forecasts.

Northern HMA (Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton, West Lancashire and Wirral)

The area has the greatest potential for economic growth but faces the most acute stock imbalance, environmental and multiple deprivation issues. Without intervention to address these issues, the full benefits of expected economic growth will not be captured in the area.

Eastern HMA (Halton, St Helens, Vale Royal and Warrington)

The area is the most diverse and as a whole offers the most balanced housing market. There are, however, emerging issues of affordability in the Southern part of the area, coupled with regeneration challenges and a need to build balanced housing markets within Halton and St Helens.

Vulnerable Housing Markets

This research builds upon earlier work on low demand undertaken by the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at Birmingham University and uses an index of housing, quality of place, quality of life and socio economic factors to map the 15% most vulnerable housing markets in the City Region.

The areas identified correlate precisely with the existing New Heartlands intervention areas, but also include smaller concentrations of underlying market vulnerability in areas of Knowsley, Halton, St Helens, West Lancashire and Ellesmere Port.

Within Halton the areas specifically identified are around the Widnes waterfront from West Bank to Crow Wood, Central Widnes around Kingsway and the largely social rented estates around Ditton and Hough Green. It is felt that market vulnerability in these areas stems from multiple deprivation and low quality of life and the Strategy recommends that housing interventions in these areas should be part of wider, comprehensive programmes of neighbourhood change.

In Runcorn, the vulnerable markets identified correlate with the New Town estates. Vulnerability in these areas is thought to be attributable to poor access to services combined with structural weaknesses in the choice of housing, implying that housing led intervention is more appropriate.

BME/Gypsy and Traveller Households

This research consisted of a review of the challenges and responses to BME and Gypsy and Traveller communities at City Region level. The findings show a link between concentrations of multiple deprivation and areas with significant BME populations, particularly in localised areas of Liverpool. The research also recognises the recent growth in migrant workers entering the Northern HMA, particularly in Liverpool and Sefton and identifies a shortfall in provision of authorised caravan pitches across the City Region.

Strategy Recommendations

The Strategy identifies seven Strategic Enablers as the building blocks to meet the Strategy’s vision to create sustainable communities.

In summary, the Strategy recommends continued prioritisation of investment in the New Heartlands pathfinder area and other inner urban areas of Liverpool. Outside these areas, the strategy recommends cross boundary working within each HMA to prioritise investment in housing growth and regeneration in the 15% most vulnerable housing markets based on criteria such as levels of deprivation, potential contribution to economic growth and co-existence of other regeneration programmes.

In terms of housing growth, the Strategy recommends the development of 74,700 additional homes in the Northern HMA over the period 2006-21 (with 24% affordable housing provision), and in the Eastern HMA 25,900 new dwellings are recommended (with 22% affordable housing). It is further recommended that provision in these areas also includes larger “aspirational” house types to compensate for an historical undersupply of this dwelling type and to capture a high proportion of growth associated with managerial and professional occupations, a policy which has been adopted in Halton for some years.

SECTION 4
WORKING WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

Regional and Sub Regional Partners

The Housing Strategy has already given some examples of how we have worked with our partners in the wider region and sub region to help shape and influence policy development. Cross boundary working is an area that has grown in significance since the last Strategy was produced and is expected to continue to grow. Halton continues to play an active part in the following cross authority/agency groups:

- The North West Housing Forum
- The Merseyside Housing Forum
- The Liverpool City Region (formerly Merseyside) Planning and Housing Officers Group
- The M62 Corridor Group
- The Merseyside Supporting People Cross Authority Group
- The NW Regional Implementation Group (Supporting People)
- The Cheshire Homelessness Forum
- The Merseyside Homelessness Forum
- The Cheshire Chief Executives’ Advisory Group on Gypsies and Travellers
- The Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy Steering Group.
- The Mid Mersey Housing Group

We are also currently working with a number of authorities across the City Region to pilot a sub regional Home Movers survey which should provide a continuous tool to monitor migration patterns and provide first hand information on home movers motivations for the housing choices they make.

Local Partners

Partnership working is not confined to cross authority groups and we recognise that successful delivery of the Housing Strategy at a local level is dependent on the support we receive from our colleagues throughout the Council and external organisations and agencies which share in our goals and vision for the Borough.

In particular, we work with local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) both through the Housing Partnership, which acts as a sub group to the Local Strategic Partnership, and on an individual basis to meet specific housing needs. Examples include the development of a Common nominations agreement and joint working to develop Choice Based Lettings.

We are also grateful to residents who have helped to shape this Strategy through their participation in the Housing Needs Survey, West Bank Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment which also included consultation with local members, businesses and voluntary organisations in the area and through stakeholder consultation conducted via the Council's website.

SUMMARY

The Government and the Regional Housing Board have identified the "big issues" for housing for the next decade. Halton does not necessarily exhibit these problems to the same degree as other areas, and the challenge for Halton, therefore, is to develop solutions and secure resources for local problems that are not reflected in national or regional policy.

We recognise the contribution that our partners can make to this process and will seek to maximise the opportunities that Partnership working can offer. This includes working across local authority boundaries to seek joint solutions to common issues and to help shape sub regional policy development.

PART TWO
HOUSING IN HALTON

This part of the Strategy provides a current picture of housing in Halton and anticipates the future needs of the Borough's existing residents and potential future population, taking into account gaps in supply and demand. The information presented in this part of the Strategy has been used to inform the priority areas for action which are described in Part 3.

The information is presented in five sections, structured as follows:

1. the evidence base that has been used to inform our understanding of housing in the Borough,

2. an analysis of Halton's housing markets across all tenures,

3. the condition of the housing stock in all tenures,

4. the needs of particular sections of the community,

5. service developments and key performance information

SECTION 1
THE EVIDENCE BASE

Since the last Strategy was completed in 2005 much work has been undertaken to build on our understand4ing of Halton's housing market and the housing issues faced by residents.

The most significant was a Housing Needs Survey and Market Assessment that was completed by David Couttie Associates at the end of 2005. The Survey has enabled the Council to develop a comprehensive understanding of housing issues and the data provided has since been utilised in the development of various Strategies and Plans across the organisation. The findings are referred to throughout the rest of this section.

It is, not, however the only source of information that has been used to inform the Housing Strategy, which also draws on the findings from:

- Eastern and Northern City Region Housing Market Assessments 2006 (GVA Grimley)

- Vulnerable Housing Markets report 2007 (GVA Grimley)

- BME and Gypsy and Traveller Households report 2007 (Deloittes)

- Cheshire Partnership Area Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Related Services Assessment 2007 (University of Salford SHUSU)

- Merseyside Social Housing Demand Study 2005 (DTZ Pieda)

- West Bank Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment 2006 (RDHS Ltd)

- Private Sector House Condition Survey 2002 (MSC Ltd)
- Multi Agency Monitoring reports (Shelter)
- Worker Registration Scheme

The information is supplemented by a wealth of other data routinely collected such as house price data from the Land Registry, RSL stock data, vacancy data from Council Tax and RSLs, GSCE and KS3 statistics, benefit claimants etc. This data has enabled the Council to complete ad hoc discrete research projects such as neighbourhood profiles and on issues such as empty homes.

SECTION 2
HALTON'S HOUSING MARKET

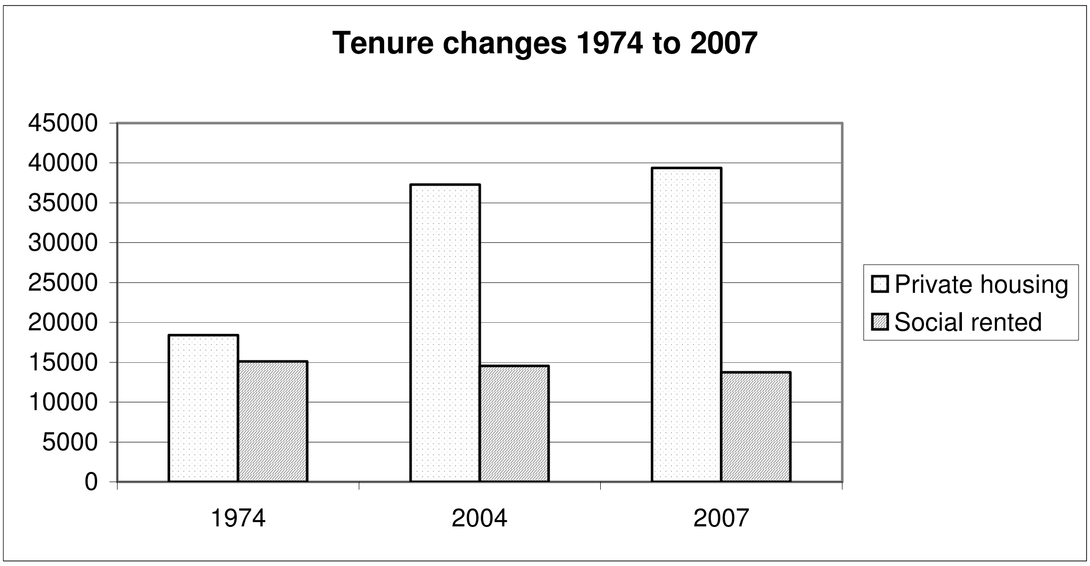
Before presenting a picture of Halton's housing market, it is necessary to give a flavour of the current housing stock position as at April 2007.

Tenure Profile

There has been a 5.5% reduction in the number of social rented dwellings on 2004 numbers, mainly due to the redevelopment of the Castlefields estate in Runcorn which has witnessed the demolition of a large number of deck access flats and an almost corresponding increase of 6% in private sector dwellings, mainly attributable to the development of executive style dwellings in Upton Rocks, Widnes and Sandymoor in Runcorn.

Despite this shift, social rented housing at 26% of the total housing stock, still represents an unusually large sector when compared to the North West and the whole country where the proportion of social rented dwellings is 18% for both (Survey of English Housing 2005/06), due to the development of Runcorn New Town in the 1970s.

The following graph illustrates the gap that has opened up between the private and social rented housing sectors since 1974 when social rented housing was at its peak, representing 45% of the housing stock.



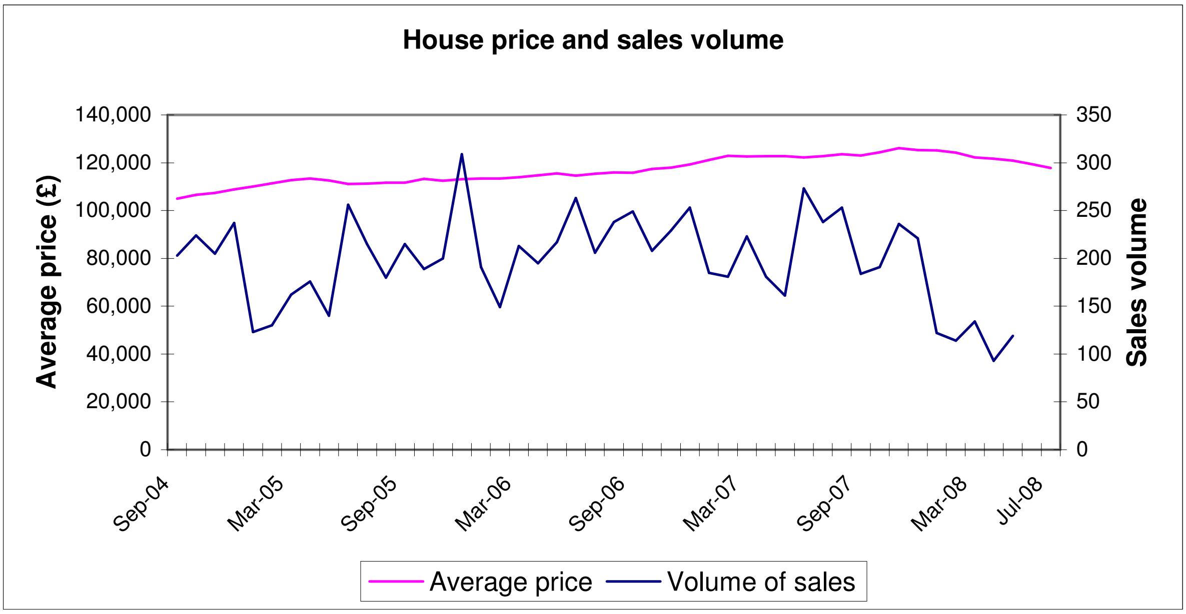
The Housing Needs Survey confirmed our estimation that the Borough has a very small private rented sector, representing only 4.1% of the total stock compared to 9% in the North West and the national figure of 12% (Survey of English Housing 2005/06). These properties are owned by approximately 600 different landlords with very few landlords having sizeable portfolios.

House Prices

The most readily available and up to date information on house prices is from the Land Registry House Price Index. This uses sales data on all residential housing transactions, whether for cash or with a mortgage, to capture monthly and annual changes in average house prices. The data is adjusted to take account of seasonal changes and to provide a “like for like” comparison to reflect changes in the sample of properties from one month to the next and is, therefore, not merely the average price of properties that happen to be sold that month as was previously reported by the Land Registry. This change in the way average prices are calculated means that the data produced in the last Housing Strategy is not comparable as average prices appear much reduced.

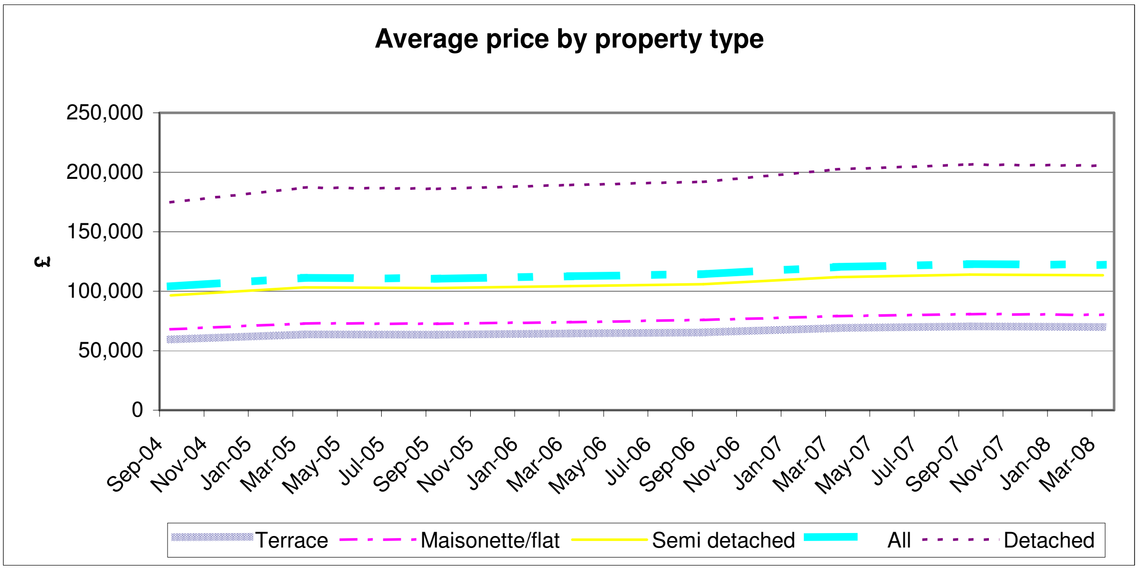
Nevertheless, we have started our analysis from September 2004, the period at which the analysis in the last Strategy left off.

The graph below illustrates average sales price trends and volume of sales for all property types over the period September 2004 to July 2008.

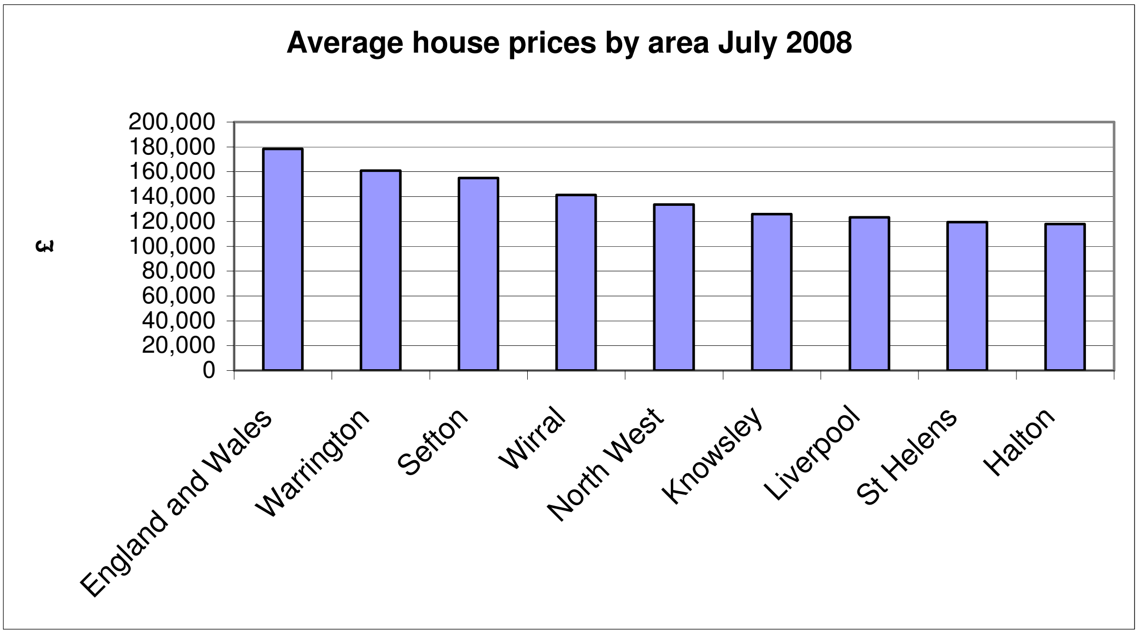


The graph illustrates a recent downturn in Halton’s housing market which reflects the national picture. Average house prices reached a peak in November 2007 at £126,129, representing a 20% increase on September 2004 levels. Since then, average prices have decreased by 6.6% and the volume of sales has reached a record low.

The chart overleaf shows the average price trend over the period by property type. All property types experienced steady price increasesof around 20% from September 2004 to November 2007 at which point they have gradually fallen.. Average prices at July 2008 stand at £198,082 for a detached property, £109,299 for a semi detached, £67,459 for a terraced property and £77,260 for a flat or maisonette



The chart below compares average house prices in Halton with other Merseyside authorities, its near neighbour of Warrington and the regional and sub regional averages. As shown prices in Halton are well below the national average, below the regional average and below neighbouring authorities.



Indeed findings from the Housing Market Assessments show that Halton has the lowest “average income to house price ratio” of all the Merseyside authorities at 1:4.3.

Affordability

Although prices in the Borough are still low by national levels, the Housing Needs Survey completed at the end of 2005 points to an affordability issue arising from the relationship between local incomes and the realistic supply of the cheapest stock available.

The survey found that the cost of getting a first foot on the property ladder and the type of entry level property available varied in different locations of the Borough as illustrated in the table below.

The figures shown in the table are based on 95% mortgage availability and a 3 times gross income to lending ratio.

Area[2]	Income thresholds (£)		
	1 bed flat	2 bed flat	2 bed terraced
West Widnes	15,400	30,100	21,900
Central Widnes	37,200	38,500	22,900
North and East Widnes	28,500	35,400	29,300
Runcorn West	-nd-	-nd-	23,300
North and East Runcorn	-nd-	-nd-	22,600
Sandymoor and Daresbury	-nd-	30,100	22,600
South Central Runcorn	-nd-	-nd-	24,400

-nd- no data available
Source: DCA House Price Survey November 2005

The findings indicated that income levels of around 76% of the new households who had formed in the 2 years prior to the survey were below the level necessary to be able to buy in the local market and that the ability of concealed households (i.e. those looking to form a separate household in the next 3 years) was very limited. The cheapest 2 bed terrace in the Borough required an income of £21,900 and 79% of concealed households surveyed earned less than £20,000.

Low income was not the only problem revealed by the survey. Concealed households were asked about the levels of savings available to meet deposit and legal costs in their new home. Of those responding to the question, 65% had less than £1,000 savings, adequate only to meet a rent deposit and first months rent in the private sector. Only 7% had over £5,000 savings, the level adequate to purchase one and two bedroom accommodation.

The survey used the ODPM Basic Needs Assessment Model recommended in Good Practice Guidance to calculate an annual affordable housing shortfall of 176 units. This unmet need equates to 53% of the annual housing target in existing Regional Planning Guidance, which has now been superceded by the Regional Spatial Strategy. However, the consultants recommended an affordable housing target of 25% on qualifying sites would be more sustainable and deliverable given the circumstances of the local housing market, with an equal balance between rent and intermediate market housing within this target. The precise nature of affordable units sought from individual sites will, however, have regard to overall market conditions and the tenure mix in the locality.

[2] Areas and corresponding wards - West Widnes (Hough Green, Ditton, Broadheath, Hale), Central Widnes (Kingsway, Appleton, Riverside), North and East Widnes (Birchfield, Farnworth, Halton View), Runcorn West (Grange, Halton Brook, Heath, Mersey), North and East Runcorn (Castlefields, Norton North, Norton South, Halton View), Sandymoor and Daresbury (Daresbury), Soth Central Runcorn (Beechwood, Halton Lea)

The development of an Affordable Housing Policy needs to be closely linked to the development of Halton's Local Development Framework and, in particular, the Core Strategy. Until such time as the Core Strategy is adopted we will explore all potential mechanisms to increase the amount of affordable housing provision in the Borough.

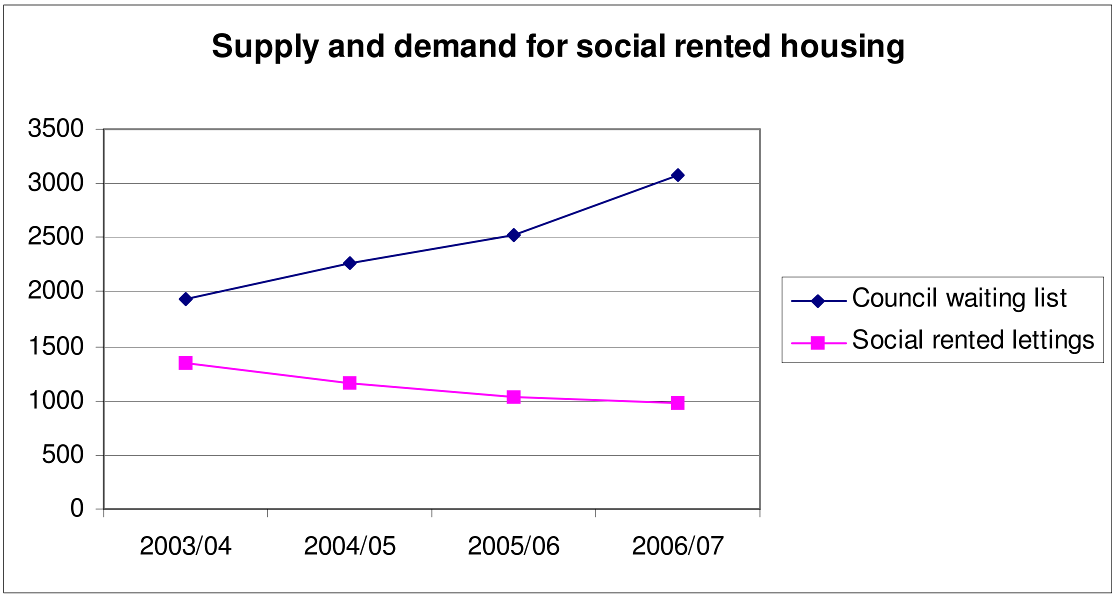
For example we are seeking 10% affordable housing contributions as part of the contractual conditions on Greenfield development sites adjacent to the Castlefileds regeneration area.

In addition, the Council has recently been awarded Growth Point Status. This non-statutory designation will see the Council, together with its partners, work up a Programme of Development to promote additional housing and economic growth and to set out a programme for tackling affordability, sustainability and other issues.

Rented Property

The proportion of social rented property in the Borough compared to the private sector makes it the most realistic alternative for households who are unable to afford to buy a property. The Housing Needs Survey found that demand for private rented property was extremely low (the preference of around 1% of all households looking to move in the next 3 years) and that, in any case, access was restricted by price with the cheapest rent levels at £315 pcm and 41% of new forming households unable to afford more than £260 pcm.

Whilst social rented housing remains the most affordable tenure with average weekly rent levels of £57.37 for a 3 bedroom house, the stock supply is slowly reducing and there is evidence of increasing divergence between supply and demand, as demonstrated in the chart below which shows the number of people on the Council's waiting list at the beginning of each financial year and the total number of lettings in the social rented sector for each year (incorporating RSL and former Council stock).



Source: Housing Investment Programme HSSA returns

There has been a 59% increase in the number of households on the Council's waiting list since 1st April 2003 and a 27% decrease in social rented lettings since that period. Anecdotal evidence from RSL partners suggests that the inability of social housing tenants to afford to buy a home on the open market is restricting movement away from the sector resulting in lower vacancies and that newly forming households are increasingly turning to the social rented sector to meet their housing needs as they are unable to get a foot on the property ladder, thereby boosting waiting list numbers.

Short Term Demand

The Housing Needs Survey provides a great deal of information on the moving intentions of both existing households and those who wish to form a new household in the next 3 years.

The scale of movement implied by the findings was around 5.3% per annum but this would rise to 8.1% if all those who wanted to move were able to do so. Over 50% of households who indicated that they wished to move but were unable to do so stated that this was because they were unable to afford to buy a home.

Whilst owner occupation was unsurprisingly the preferred tenure for existing households, the Survey revealed healthy demand for social rented housing from households in all tenures, with the highest demand (after existing social housing tenants) coming from the private rented sector (47%) and owner occupiers without a mortgage (25%), many of whom will be older households looking for more suitable accommodation. Over 60% of newly forming (concealed) households stated a preference for owner occupation with 38% preferring social rented housing.

Demand from existing households was greatest for a 3 or 4 bedroom detached or semi detached house with the area around the new development at Upton Rocks in Widnes proving highly popular, followed to a lesser extent by Runcorn Old Town/Weston Point. Concealed households, on the other hand, were more likely to need a 1 or 2 bedroomed flat, maisonette or terrace with the Runcorn New Town estates (where there is a high concentration of social rented accommodation) being the favoured locations.

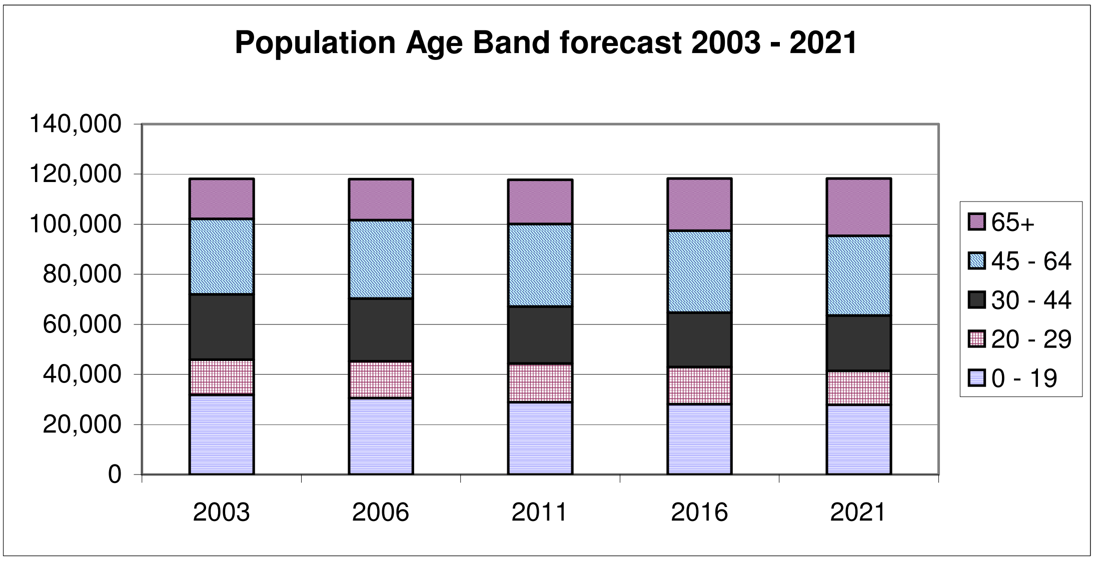
Whilst the need expressed for flats is higher than the existing stock levels and volume of sales, the level of preference for this property type was found to be low.

Long Term Demand

The long term picture for housing demand is based on population projections, forecast demographic change and migration patterns.

Since the last Housing Strategy was published in 2005 there has been a slight up turn in the total population of the Borough, which had previously been in slow decline. This is thought to be partly attributable to the Council's policy of encouraging the development of large, executive style dwellings attracting new households to the Borough, who may not have otherwise considered a move to the area due to the lack of housing choice.

Whilst the population is forecast to remain stable to 2021, demographic changes in the structure of the population, as shown in the graph below, are likely to have a significant impact on the demand for housing.



Between 2003 to 2021 there is forecast to be a decline in the younger age groups with the most significant being a 15% drop in the 30 to 44 year age category. Projected growth in the 45 to 64 age range may impact on the demand for market housing. However, the most substantial impact is likely to come from the 65 and older age group, where a 42% increase is expected to 2021. This is likely to influence demand for supported housing such as extra care accommodation, support services and adaptations to existing dwellings.

Migration

Short term migration patterns in the Borough are fairly evenly balanced with a similar number of people planning to leave Halton in the next 3 years to the number of people who had moved into the Borough in the 3 years prior to the Survey.

Of households who had recently moved to the Borough, the majority (56%) were owner occupiers with a mortgage, a quarter of which had moved from Liverpool and 15% from Warrington. The main reasons given for moving into the Borough were employment related (either due to a new job or to ease commuting) and to move to a larger home.

Out migration patterns were found to differ for existing and newly forming households. Almost a quarter (24%) of existing households were planning to move outside the North West with those who wished to remain in the region favouring a move to Warrington or Cheshire. The single most common reason for wanting to move away from the Borough was to live in a better area or due to increased housing choice. Over half of the concealed households seeking a move outside Halton were motivated by access to employment with City Centre locations such as Liverpool (39%) and Manchester (9%) favoured as well as a move outside the region (22%).

Housing Growth

Halton has embraced the Government's growth ambitions and in conjunction with our partners in St Helens and Warrington has been declared a Growth Point. This will result in a 20% increase in the number of new homes built on floor targets from the recently published Regional Spatial Strategy, which for Halton is 500 units per annum for the period 2003 – 2021.

Growth Point status is a significant achievement for the mid Mersey region which will allow the area to capitalise on the economic growth anticipated from projects such as Omega on the Halton/Warrington border and Daresbury Science Park by ensuring strategic fit between the housing and employment offer. It also gives us the opportunity to deliver new affordable housing to help meet the need identified by the Housing Needs Survey and the targets recommended by the Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy.

The partners are currently in the process of developing a detailed delivery programme which will include working with the new Homes and Communities Agency to ensure that opportunities for the provision of affordable housing are maximised. A major challenge for the successful delivery of housing growth and the creation of sustainable communities is to ensure that the appropriate infrastructure is in place. Officers from Transport, Education, Environment and Major Projects were engaged at an early stage of the bidding process and a working party has been formed to formulate a bid for Community Infrastructure Funding.

SUMMARY

- There is an emerging affordability issue in the Borough, caused by the relationship between house prices and local incomes.
- Demand for social rented housing has increased in recent years but the number of social rented dwellings becoming available for letting has declined.
- Currently the private rented sector cannot fully meet the needs of households unable to buy and access social rented housing due to high rents and low supply.
- There is a mismatch between demand for private sector terraced housing and the number of terraces available for purchase which could result in market decline in poorer areas.
- Predicted demographic change is likely to result in increasing demand for supported housing and related services for the elderly.
- Halton's status as a Growth Point area with St Helens and Warrington offers the opportunity to tackle issues of affordability and access to the housing market.

SECTION 3 – HOUSING CONDITIONS IN HALTON

Due to resource constraints the Council has been unable to commission a new Private Sector House Condition Survey since the last Housing Strategy was published. Consequently, much of our understanding is based on the last Survey undertaken in 2002, although the Housing Needs Survey provides some useful information on stock condition across all tenures to supplement and update the findings.

- Approximately 2.5% of properties in the private sector are unfit, a much lower proportion than the regional figure of 6.6% and national figure of 4.9% (HSSA 2006). They are equally distributed between Runcorn and Widnes and are concentrated in the older dwelling stock built before 1964.

- Whilst the majority (56%) of private sector dwellings are either detached or semi detached houses, the Borough has a higher proportion of terraced accommodation (34%) than the national average of 27%.

- As might be expected the size of dwellings in the owner occupied sector is larger than the rented sector with 89% of properties with four or more bedrooms privately owned and 86% of bedsits and one bedroom flats in the rented sector. Similarly, a larger proportion of the rented sector is made up of terraces or flats then the owner occupied sector.

- Generally conditions are worse in the private rented sector. Over a third (36%) of private sector tenants found their current accommodation inadequate, with 34% needing full or upgraded central heating.

- Overall, 15.5% of households surveyed in the Housing Needs Survey found that their current home was inadequate with over half of these stating that their home needs improvement or repair and over a third that their home is too small. Satisfaction levels in the social and private rented sectors were significantly lower than the owner occupied sectors.

Decent Homes and Decent Homes Plus

The Government is committed to a reduction in the number of non-decent homes occupied by vulnerable owner occupiers. Since the last private sector house condition survey was undertaken prior to the requirement for local authorities to monitor progress towards this target, our assessment that decency levels stand at 65.7% is derived from the model produced by the Government based on the findings of the English House Condition Survey.

The Council published a new Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy in April 2007 which targets resources towards vulnerable households living in non decent accommodation and will help towards achieving this target.

For social rented homes, the Government's target is to eradicate non decency by 2010 and this target is reflected in Halton's Local Area Agreement. At April 2007, the proportion of Housing Association stock that did not meet the standard was 34.3%, with the vast majority of these being the former council stock. The new landlord, Halton Housing Trust, has embarked on a multi million pound programme of improvement and expects to meet the 2010 target.

The Government has indicated that it would like to see a more ambitious definition of decency and has recommended that a more aspirational "Decent Homes Plus" target be set for achievement at a later date. The new target would be better aligned to the wishes and expectations of occupants and would include:

- A more ambitious thermal comfort criterion
- Accessibility standards for elderly and disabled people
- Internal noise insulation within and between dwellings
- Standards for the external environment such as communal areas

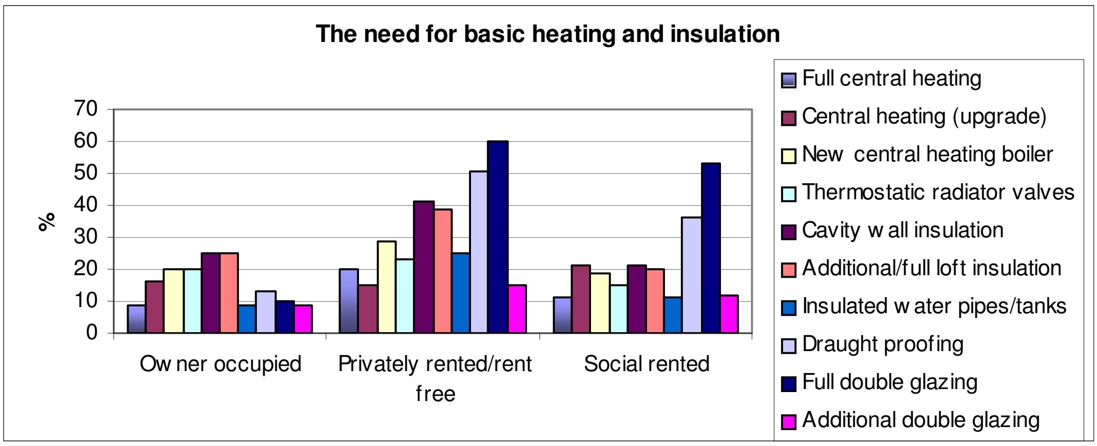
We will work with RSLs through the Halton Housing Partnership to establish how they are planning to meet the new standard.

Energy Efficiency

In 1996 the Government introduced the Home Energy Conservation Act and required Authorities to produce plans to achieve a 30% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from dwellings within each Borough over a 10 year period. Although committed to working toward this target, Halton expressed doubts that a 30% reduction could be achieved due to –

- Inadequate financial resources to support this objective.
- High energy efficiency levels had already been achieved in the former Council stock due to past investment, meaning that further gains would be disproportionately expensive.

Nevertheless the Council has over the last few years developed a number of initiatives in partnership with Energy Projects Plus which provides the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre for Merseyside & Cheshire, insulation contractors, providing discounted energy efficiency products, free energy advice and grant aid, and it estimates that by 2006 it had achieved a 19% reduction in emissions. The graph below shows the need for basic heating and insulation facilities by tenure as identified by households who responded to the Housing Needs Survey.



Source : Housing Needs Survey 2006

Quite clearly there is wide disparity between tenures with the private rented and, to a lesser extent, social rented stock having greater need for all basic facilities, but particularly for double glazing, draughtproofing and loft and cavity wall insulation. The Decent Homes programme will help to improve conditions in the RSL stock and the Council is endeavouring to improve standards in the private rented sector through a "carrot and stick" approach using enforcement powers and the Landlord Accreditation Scheme. The requirement for RSLs to produce Energy Performance Certificates for their stock will provide improved baseline data on energy efficiency from which we can measure progress towards meeting the Government's target.

However, there is also scope to encourage improvements in the owner occupied sector, with a quarter of households needing cavity wall and loft insulation and a fifth who would benefit from a new central heating boiler, through continued promotion, advice and grants for vulnerable households.

Castlefields Regeneration

In the RSL sector, the regeneration of the Castlefields estate remains a strategic priority for the Council and it continues to work in partnership with Liverpool Housing Trust, CDS, the Housing Corporation and English Partnerships to secure the necessary investment to complete the redevelopment.

The ten year Masterplan, agreed in 2003, is now well underway, with the first two phases of demolition and improvement of deck access blocks completed and a new recreational facility provided at Phoenix Park as well as changes to the layout of the estate designed to improve the safety of residents.

The regeneration programme is having a real impact and the commitment of the partnership to deliver the step change required is already transforming the neighbourhood. However, this momentum must be maintained if the Masterplan vision is to be achieved. The renewal of the existing housing stock is key to achieving this vision, however, the Masterplan also includes an extensive programme of projects to deliver the holistic regeneration of the area, including the redevelopment of the existing local centre and creation of a new Village Square, forecast to be completed by 2011.

The partners' commitment to Castlefields will not cease at the end of the physical works. The new Neighbourhood Management initiative, which has been introduced by the partnership, will provide a continuation strategy to ensure the sustainability of the area into the future.

West Bank NRA

In 2005 the Council commissioned consultants to undertake a Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment of the West Bank area of Widnes, following concerns that the area was at risk of housing market failure. However, since the start of the study house prices and demand for the area have increased significantly and the proximity of the area to the planned new Mersey Gateway bridge has prompted the Council to commission further studies on the wider regeneration opportunities arising from the Mersey Gateway development. Any action, therefore, resulting from the Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment has been deferred until this wider piece of work has been completed.

Other regeneration priorities

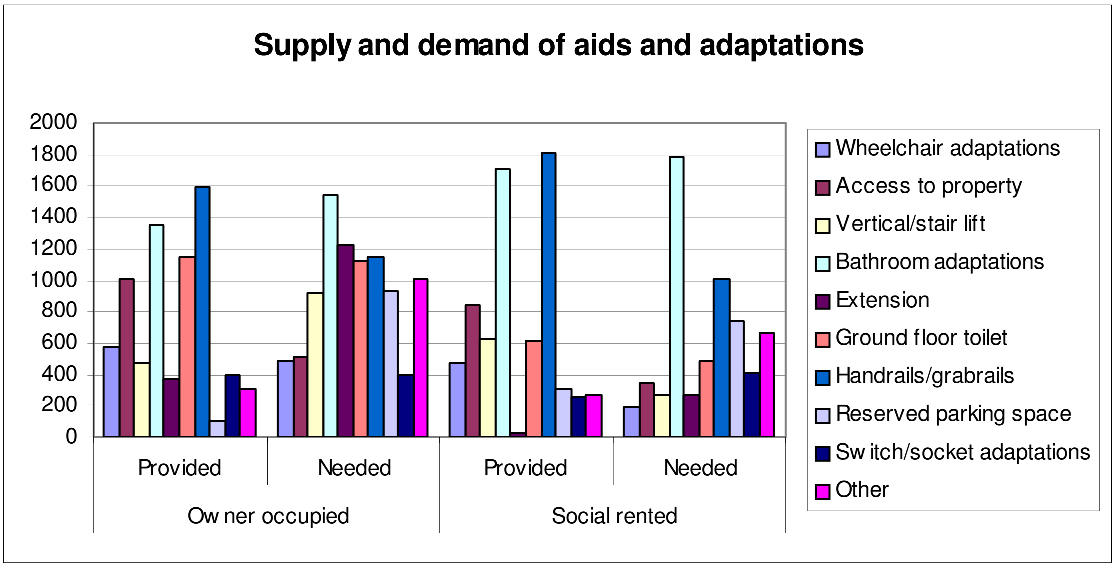
The ongoing transformation of Castlefields is testament to what can be achieved with the right level of investment and support from our partners and we are keen to replicate this success in other New Town estates which are experiencing similar issues to Castlefields prior to regeneration and which have been identified as having vulnerable housing markets by the Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy.

Subject to resources, the intention is to commission specialist consultants to examine the New Town estates in more detail and advise on the best course of action to secure their long term sustainability. Following this piece of work, we will be looking to establish partnership arrangements with the newly developed Homes and Communities Agency to revitalise the areas identified as most in need.

Aids and adaptations

The Housing Needs Survey also provides useful information on the provision of and demand for aids and adaptations. In all 13.5% of homes in the Borough have been adapted to some degree, with higher proportions in RSL property (22.0%) than the owner occupied (9.3%) and private rented stock (4.1%).

The chart below is calculated from responses about the provision and need for adaptations in the Housing Needs Survey. It clearly shows that despite extensive investment in adaptations, there is still much to be done to keep pace with demand, particularly regarding more expensive adaptation work such as bathroom adaptations and ground floor extensions.



Source: Housing Needs Survey 2006

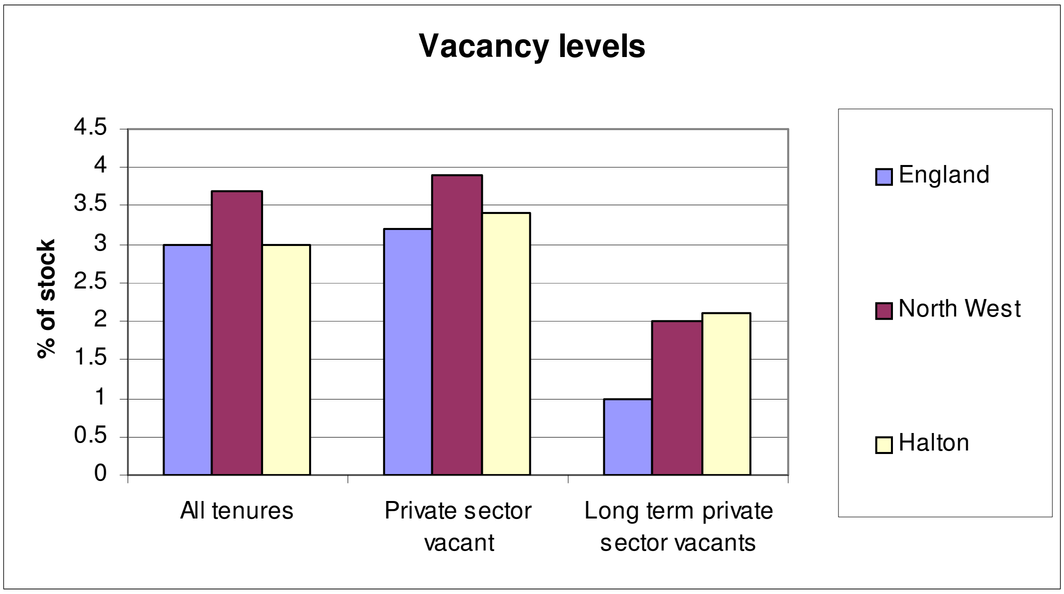
A significant finding of this part of the survey was that only 45% of properties that had been adapted for wheelchair use were occupied by households containing somebody who used a wheelchair. It is this sort of anomaly that has prompted the Council to begin to develop an Adapted Housing Register to facilitate better matching between adapted properties and households requiring adaptations. We are also working closely with registered social landlords to develop a joint funding protocol to ensure that a more equitable service is delivered to residents regardless of tenure.

Empty Homes

On 1st April 2008 1,661 properties were vacant in Halton, 1,354 of which were in the private sector equating to 3.4% of the private sector stock and 2.1% had been vacant for at least 6 months. This represents an increase on 2007 figures when 1.5% of the private sector stock had been vacant for more than 6 months.

It is natural to expect that a certain proportion of properties will be empty at any one time due to market "churn". However, a concentration of long term empty homes in a neighbourhood can be indicative of a failing housing market and the often poor condition of long term vacancies can have a negative impact on the overall visual aesthetics of the neighbourhood and, consequently, serve to perpetuate market decline.

The graph below illustrates that while the proportion of total vacant dwellings is below national and regional proportions, the proportion of long term private sector dwellings is slightly higher than the regional proportion and significantly higher than the national proportion, based on snapshots taken on 1st April 2007 for national and regional figures and 1st April 2008 for Halton. This is a cause for concern and we intend to undertake more detailed research into the reasons why dwellings are vacant for lengthy periods with a view to participating in the development of a sub regional Empty Homes Strategy, as specified in the Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy Action Plan.



Source: Housing Investment Programme HSSA 2007 and 2008

The Council recognises the contribution that long term vacancies can have on neighbourhood decline and has established a working group to address any vacant properties that pose a particular problem within a neighbourhood, by encouraging owners to bring them back into use, and through the use of enforcement powers if necessary.

Overcrowding and underoccupation

The Housing Needs Survey included a broad assessment of over and under occupation based on a detailed analysis of family composition data. The number of bedrooms required in each household was established, allowing for age and gender of occupants based on the "bedroom standard" used by the Survey of English Standard. Any dwellings without sufficient bedrooms to meet the requirement was classed as overcrowded and dwellings with more than one spare bedroom above the requirement categorised as underoccupied.

Using this assessment criteria, 2.8% of all households were found to be overcrowded, which is slightly higher than the national figure of 2.5% (EHCS 2005/06) and 38.1% of households were found to under occupy their homes.

The survey found that there is some disparity between tenure types as shown in the table below.

Tenure	% under occupied	% over occupied
Owner occupier with a mortgage	40.0	2.2
Owner occupier no mortgage	58.0	1.3
Private rent / rent free	25.8	4.4
(Former) council rented	21.4	5.8
RSL rented	19.5	3.9
Shared ownership	19.1	0.0
Tied to employment / Other	41.7	0.0

As shown in the table, households who rent their homes from a social or private landlord are twice as likely to be overcrowded than owner occupiers. Although the levels of under occupation in the owner occupied sector are significantly higher than the rented sectors, the finding that a fifth of social rented dwellings are under occupied demonstrates the potential for landlords to alleviate over crowding within their own stock by encouraging under occupying households to move to smaller dwellings through use of incentives or prioritising applications to move.

In December 2007 the Government launched its Overcrowding Action Plan which identified £15 million of funding to be invested in 38 trailblazer schemes, one of which is in Liverpool.

The Action Plan also contains a commitment for Government to update the current overcrowding standard which has been in place since 1935 to the bedroom standard. We will work with RSLs via the Housing Partnership to ensure that their allocation policies reflect this and explore measures designed to make the best use of the housing stock, drawing on the experience of the Liverpool trailblazer.

SUMMARY

- The private sector stock is in generally good condition although there are concentrations of older terraced housing with the potential to fall into decline without investment by the owners, and conditions of privately rented property are generally poorer.
- RSLs are on target to meet the 2010 target of making all homes decent, which in turn should improve the sectors comparison in terms of energy efficiency with the private sector.
- There is a high demand for aids and adaptations both in the private sector and social rented sector.
- Although vacancy levels are generally comparable with national and regional figures the proportion of private sector dwellings vacant for more than 6 months is a growing cause for concern.
- Overcrowding is higher in the social rented than owner occupied sectors, though there is potential to alleviate this through making better use of the housing stock.

SECTION 4 – HALTON'S COMMUNITIES

Community Cohesion

Local Government is expected to provide community leadership and to work with partners to promote community cohesion. Understanding what makes a cohesive community is complex, however, the Local Government Association defines a cohesive community as one in which:

- There is a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities;
- People's diversity (background, circumstances) is appreciated and positively valued;
- People experience similar life chances whatever their background;
- Strong and positive relationships exist between people from different backgrounds.

In 2007 the Audit Commission completed an assessment of community cohesion in Halton. The findings show that barriers to community cohesion in the Borough centre around issues such as:

- poverty and deprivation impacting on access to services and participation,
- inter-generational myths and conflicts,
- anti social behaviour,
- the pace of demographic change resulting from Eastern European migration,
- young people not in education, employment or training
- an over reliance on the manufacturing sector which creates a risk should the future employment sector change.

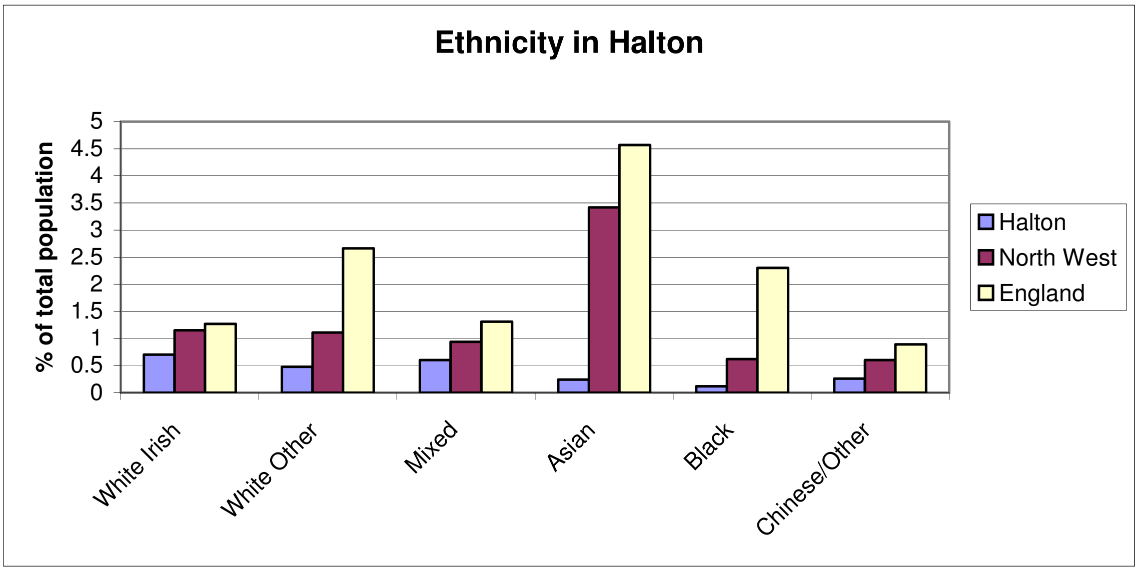
Almost all of these issues are reflected either directly or indirectly in the priorities of the Community Strategy. Demographic change as a result of in migration from Eastern Europe is, however, a relatively recent phenomenon and is examined in more detail below. A Community Cohesion Officers Group, in which housing plays an integral part, has recently been established comprising officers from across the Council and representatives from the wider Local Strategic Partnership to take forward the Cohesion agenda.

Ethnic Minorities

The 2001 Census showed that Halton has a very small Black and Minority Ethnic population as illustrated in the graph overleaf. There are no organised faith or ethnically based community groups in the Borough, consequently, meaningful engagement with BME communities is a considerable challenge. However, results from the Housing Needs Survey give an indication of the particular housing needs of BME households, (including White Irish and White Other categories) and reveal some interesting findings.

On the whole, BME households are more affluent than White British households with higher incomes and more savings. BME households tend to be larger than White British households with a generally younger age profile. They are more likely to live in larger accommodation and more likely to have access to a car or van.

The findings suggest that BME households are more transient as they are more likely to have lived in their current home for a short period of time and those households who have moved in the last 3 years are more likely to have migrated into the Borough than White British households.



Source: Census 2001

However, BME households are less likely to be satisfied with their current accommodation, with the main reason given that the accommodation is too small (overcrowding at 4.7% is higher than for all households at 2.8%) and they are 3 times more likely to live in private rented accommodation, which generally displays the poorest housing conditions.

Eastern European migration

Whilst official statistics point to a comparatively low ethnic minority population, the demographic of that population has changed considerably since the accession of the A8 European states to the European Union in 2004. The Workers Registration Scheme helps to give an indication of migration levels, although it is widely recognised that the scheme is likely to underestimate the number of migrant workers due to restrictions on the type of workers required to register. Figures show that between May 2004 and March 2007 there were 1,525 registrations in Halton, 83% of which were from Poland, with the majority listing their occupations as warehouse operative. Analysing the number of WPS registrations as a percentage of the working age population, Halton (at 2.03%) has the largest proportion of working age people migrating from the A8 countries of all the greater Merseyside authorities.

Gypsies and Travellers

Gypsies and Travellers are widely reported to be amongst the most marginalised ethnic groups in the country. In Halton there is currently one permanent Council run Gypsy site with the capacity to accommodate 22 families and a warden, which is currently undergoing refurbishment to upgrade facilities and infrastructure. Great strides have been made in engaging with the travelling community both on this site and two smaller privately run sites through a dedicated Gypsy Liaison Officer.

We have also been working in partnership with other local authorities across Cheshire to commission a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Related Services Assessment (GTAA), facilitated by a joint funded county wide Gypsy and Travellers co-ordinator's post which is hosted by Halton and overseen by the Cheshire Chief Executives Advisory sub group on Gypsies and Travellers.

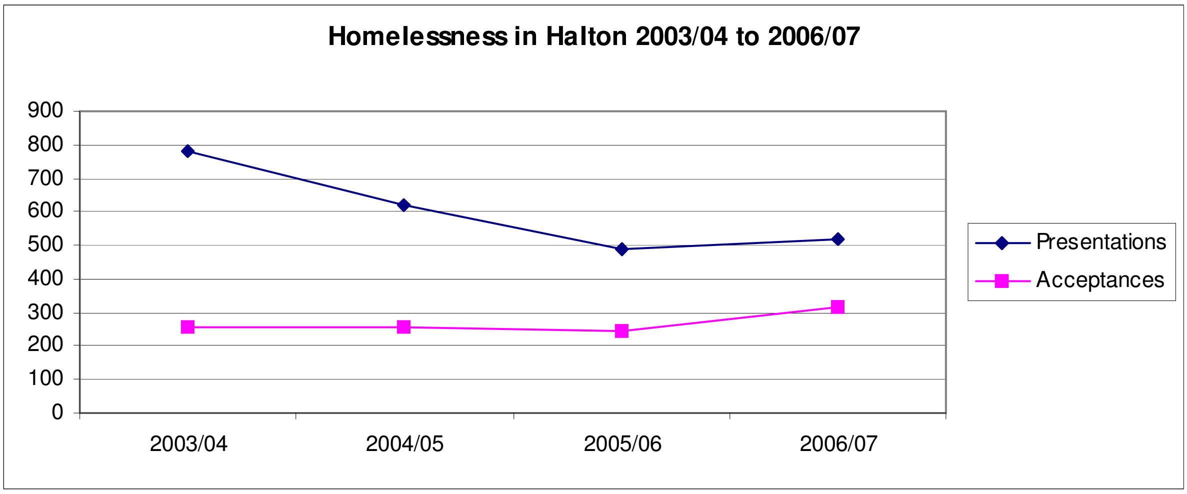
The assessment found that across the county there is a need for the development of 25 to 37 transit pitches to accommodate transient Gypsies and Travellers and a need to develop an estimated 112 – 155 additional residential pitches across the partnership by 2016. The GTAA also highlighted a need for 17 pitches for Showpeople sites. The Council is already contributing toward meeting this identified need with the development of a transit site, providing 14 pitches, due for completion in Autumn 2008.

The findings of the needs assessment will feed into the development of a countywide Gypsy and Traveller Strategy, which will set out planned development of additional provision. The information from the GTAA will be incorporated into the Local Development Framework (LDF) and the Regional Spatial Strategies. (RSS).

Homeless people

At the time Halton's last Housing Strategy was published homelessness presentations had reached an all time high of 780 for 2003/04. Since that time presentations have fallen considerably to 517 for 2006/07, although the number of people accepted as unintentionally homeless and in priority need at 315 was higher than those accepted during the peak period (257), as illustrated in the graph overleaf.

Analysis of the categories of households accepted as statutorily homeless reveals some interesting trends since 2003/04. Households either with dependent children or expecting a child still form the majority of acceptances (77%), however the number of 16 and 17 year olds accepted as homeless in 2006/07 has reduced by four times on 2003/04 figures, now making up only 3% of acceptances and the number of households accepted due to vulnerability caused by old age, physical disability or mental illness has increased by over 6 times on 2003/04 levels, now making up 12% of acceptances.



Source: P1E data

There are also some differences between the two periods relating to the reasons for homelessness. The proportion of acceptances due to parents no longer being willing or able to accommodate has taken a slight downward turn from 29% of acceptances to 25% in 2006/07, although the proportion due to other relatives or friends unable to accommodate remains the same at 12%. The proportion of acceptances due to non violent relationship breakdown has also decreased slightly from 10% of acceptances in 2003/04 to 7% in 2006/07, although the number of domestic violence cases, unfortunately, increased slightly in 2006/07 on previous years figures.

The second single main reason for homelessness, due to termination of an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, has remained fairly constant in terms of numbers over the four year period from 2003/04 to 2004/05, but has decreased as a proportion of all acceptances from 22% in 2003/04 to 17% in 2006/07. The number of households made homeless as a result of mortgage arrears has increased by 500% since 2003/04, now making up 6% of all acceptances, indicative of the financial struggle faced by many households due to inflated house prices and steadily increasing interest rates.

Service developments for homeless people

Following the transfer of the former Council stock in December 2005, Halton Housing Trust has operated the homelessness service on behalf of and under a contract with the Council. However, the statutory and strategic responsibility for homelessness remains with the Council.

During the course of 2007 a number of new homelessness initiatives have been introduced.

A **Prevention Team** has been set up to help people threatened with homelessness through measures such as mediation with the landlord, referral to relevant support agencies e.g. CAB or to help secure alternative accommodation e.g. in the private rented sector.
The **Rent Deposit Scheme** helps improve access to the private rented sector for people threatened with homelessness by providing a deposit and, in some cases, advance rent. The scheme has proved highly successful.
The **NightStop scheme**, developed in partnership with Halton YMCA, aims to prevent homelessness for 16 to 25 year olds by placing them with volunteer “host” families. The scheme is currently in the developmental stages and is due to be launched in 2008.

Worklessness

The relationship between housing and work has been a high priority for successive governments with the introduction of various regeneration programmes and funding regimes. Most recently, New Deal for Communities and the Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders have been at the forefront of tackling areas of housing market decline and worklessness.

However, the debate about the links between housing tenure and labour market status has intensified following the publication of Professor Hill’s report “Ends and Means: the future roles of social housing in England”, which concluded that more could be done to improve the services tenants receive and widen the range of choice available by bringing support for housing and work together.

The recent government approved Pathfinder City Employment Strategies (Halton is part of the Liverpool Pathfinder) is an initiative to better coordinate and innovate in the delivery of employment activity in the wards with the highest worklessness rates. In Halton there are 6 wards – Castlefields, Grange, Halton Lea, Kingsway, Riverside and, Windmill Hill, which have a high correlation to areas where most of Halton's housing problems and social housing are located.

Halton has long since recognised the relationship between housing and worklessness. Indeed, a key component of the Castlefields master plan as originally developed was the delivery of an extensive skills and employability programme. Unfortunately it has proved extremely difficult to secure the external funding needed to enable the programme to be delivered on anything like the scale that is needed. However, the advent of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund is now enabling an increase in activity in the area with the Urban Renewal and Employment Learning and Skills Specialist Strategic Partnerships (SSPs) combining core resources to deliver enhanced activity.

To further bring together housing and employment initiatives the Employment Learning and Skills SSP is attended by a representative from the Halton Housing Partnership, which in turn is now attended by the Council's Enterprise and Employment Manager.

The links between employment and neigbourhood management in Halton are also increasing. The sub national review explicitly states that 'objectives for neighbourhood renewal need to be sharply focused on the economic drivers of deprivation in disadvantaged areas'. Recently a joint Neigbourhood Management and Employment Learning and Skills SSP research project has been exploring the very local issues and barriers that residents face in the most deprived areas. This intelligence will be used to restructure the employment and skills offer including greater links to housing issues with a view to making it more accessible and effective. We are currently developing a number of projects supported by the Working Neighbourhoods Fund around routes into the employment and digital inclusion.

Looking to the future, real opportunities do exist for integrated activity, particularly through more employment outreach work with the RSLs from Jobcentre Plus and Halton People into Jobs. This will seek to engage people and to encourage and motivate them to look for employment. This will be complimented by an increased training and skills development offer linked to local business needs. There is also increasing scope to enable RSLs to employ and train local people with costs met by external funding, thus enabling local people to both improve their skills and invest their own time in the improvement of their neighbourhoods. We will keep a watching brief on the Advanced Housing Options pilots which incorporate Connexions, debt advice and housing advice to identify good practice that could be replicated in Halton.

We will measure our success in this area via Halton's Local Area Agreement which contains a commitment to reduce the number of working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods.

Older People

There is predicted to be a 42% increase in the number of people aged 65 and over by 2021 and the numbers of very elderly people aged 80 plus are forecast to increase by 1,500 (40.5%) over the same period.

Current provision amounts to 550 units provided in 18 sheltered housing schemes, 1,421 homes linked to dispersed community alarms, and only one extra care scheme comprising 40 units in Runcorn. The Commissioning Strategy for Older People has highlighted a need to develop a wider range of housing options, including extra care and retirement housing across tenures, to prevent over reliance on residential care, which is currently the main form of provision for frail elderly people and older people with mental health problems or a learning disability. This is supported by the authors of the Housing Needs Survey report which states:

" ……….the population profile and population projections outlined in ….. this report would suggest a need for extra care provision. Current demand for sheltered housing, if not met, may develop into demand for extra care housing over time."

Provision of extra care housing in the Borough is hindered by the limited availability of developable or publicly owned land and the costs associated with land purchase, remediation and/or conversion or demolition of an existing scheme or building. In early 2008 we commissioned consultants to develop a commissioning Strategy for extra care housing in Halton which identifies potential delivery options. As an interim solution we have developed a Community Extra Care service that will offer some of the benefits of extra care but in a service users own home.

The Housing Needs Survey collated information from existing older person households who wished to move in the next three years and from households who had elderly relatives who would be likely to move to the Borough in the next three years. The collated data gives an overall combined requirement (based on preferences) for sheltered housing as shown overleaf.

	Private Market	**Affordable sector**	**All sectors**
Existing households	42	245	287
In-migrant households	271	190	461
Total	**313**	**435**	**748**

People with a physical or sensory disability

The Housing Needs Survey reveals a high number of people with a physical or sensory disability in the Borough, broken down below. It should be noted that respondents were able to indicate more than one category of disability, therefore, the numbers stated are not mutually exclusive. Also, the responses are based on individuals' own assessment of their disability and, therefore, not all will appear in official statistics (the current Supporting People Strategy identifies 7,228 people with a sensory or physical disability in Halton, 6,622 of which are receiving some form of care or support.)

Walking difficulty (not in wheelchair)	9,237
Visual/hearing impairment	6,529
Wheelchair user	1,826
Other physical disability	3,653

Most of these needs will be met within the existing housing stock, and one way to achieve this is to make the best use of the existing stock of adapted dwellings. The Council is currently developing a register of adapted housing in the Borough and of households who require adaptations in order to better facilitate matching.

Future provision of adaptations will be assisted by the Government's recent "National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society" which aims to see all new homes built to Lifetimes Homes Standard by 2013, by making the standard a mandatory part of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

We have also improved services for this client group with the introduction of a Home Improvement Agency to assist clients through the Disabled Facilities Grant and Renovation Grants process. Current service developments include proposals to merge the Agency and the Grants department with the Independent Living Team to ensure a more streamlined, effective and timely service for clients.

People with mental health problems

In 2007 Halton produced its first Accommodation and Support Strategy for People with mental health problems which revealed a higher than average need for specialist accommodation offering varying levels of support.

The Strategy identified that people with severe and enduring mental illness are more likely to live in general needs rented accommodation and are more likely to live alone and that there is a link between homelessness and mental illness. Examination of homelessness statistical returns bears this out with a marked increase over recent years of people accepted as homeless and in priority need due to a mental illness.

The Housing Needs Survey identified a total of 1,858 people (around 1.5% of the population) with a mental health problem contained within 1,777 households. Of these, 65% indicated that the problem was serious enough for them to require care or support but currently 18% (220 people) were not receiving sufficient care or support, with the main needs being for personal care (43%), support to establish social contact/activities (41%), and looking after the home (32%).

Adults with a Learning Disability

520 people with a learning disability are known to the Council and health services with the majority living with family. The Housing Needs Survey found a slightly higher level of people aged 16 or over with a learning disability, at 635, although as the Survey is based on a household's self assessment of their circumstances it is likely to reveal the full range of disability including those with low level needs.

Accommodation based provision for this client group is proportionately higher than national averages, however, it is projected that the number of potential ALD clients requiring supported living will increase over the next five to ten years due to the number of clients living with elderly carers. The Housing Needs Survey found a shortfall in the number of adults with learning disabilities who stated that they require care and support but are not currently receiving sufficient levels of care or support. This is further evidenced by the low vacancy levels across supported living schemes and a waiting list of clients requesting access to these services.

Halton is currently producing an Accommodation Strategy for adults with learning disabilities which will attempt to address this shortfall.

Teenage Parents

Independent research undertaken in 2005 on the needs of teenage parents did not reveal a need for specific accommodation for this client group which accords with the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy and Homelessness Strategy. However, the findings, which included a lack of communication and difficulty accessing services prompted the Council to establish a floating support scheme for young people aged 16 to 25 (including teenage parents) living with parents or relatives. The aim of the scheme is to offer support to young people while they remain at home and to adopt a planned approach to help them find and sustain their own accommodation.

Care Leavers

The needs of young people leaving care, together with young people at risk and single homeless people was identified as the number one priority for additional provision in the current Supporting People Strategy. As a result, a 6 bed unit of accommodation for young single homeless people was developed in Widnes in 2006.

A protocol has been agreed between the Council and major housing providers in the Borough to provide accommodation to vulnerable young people, including 16 and 17 year olds and those leaving care, and to ensure that the Council fulfils its corporate parenting responsibilities. The protocol will assist case workers to identify suitable accommodation as part of the Pathway Plan for young people leaving care. An important feature of the agreement is that, where the young person is under 18, the Council will hold the tenancy in trust.

Domestic Violence

Halton Borough Council, the Crime and Disorder Unit and Halton Women's Aid have endorsed a zero tolerance campaign against domestic violence. In 2007/08, 12% of households accepted as statutorily homeless were homeless or threatened with homelessness due to domestic violence, equating to 38 households.

Despite provision for this client group in Halton being above the national average, securing temporary accommodation can sometimes be problematic. Much effort has been put into enabling families experiencing domestic violence to remain in their own home through the use of a sanctuary scheme which provides a tailored package of home security. Not only does the sanctuary scheme avoid the upheaval of families having to move, but it is more cost effective than rehousing families, with the average cost to adapt a home being £800 compared to an average of £3,500 to rehouse families. Consequently, resources can be stretched so that more families in need can benefit.

Additionally, Supporting People have commissioned an outreach worker via the St Helens Accommodation Project to help clients suffering from domestic violence with housing and support issues.

Offenders

Halton's provision for this client group is considerably lower than the national average. There are currently three services that can support 11 offenders, however, 7 of these units are delivered within homeless services for single people. Only one service is specifically for ex-offenders and as such this is the only service able to accept serious offenders.

Halton also has no specific services for offenders with a mental disorder, though all local services for people with mental health problems accept mentally disordered offenders, subject to their exclusion policies which usually relate to serious offenders.

However, Halton does liaise with local prisons to ensure that accommodation is secured for those prisoners from Halton considered to be vulnerable and in priority need before their release date. RSLs have given a commitment to assist the Police in rehousing prolific and persistent offenders into suitable accommodation.

Halton is also a member of the Halton Multi-Agency Protection Panel, chaired by Cheshire Police. This enables housing to be involved in the multi-agency approach required for high risk offenders, and to ensure that as far as is possible, suitable accommodation is secured.

People who misuse drugs and alcohol

Halton's level of provision for people with drug problems is slightly higher than both regional and national averages, thanks to the provision of a 4 unit accommodation based scheme and the provision of 7 units of floating support There is no accommodation based support for people with alcohol problems.

However, support services for people with drug and alcohol problems have improved with the opening of a "one stop shop" for drug and alcohol users in Widnes offering a wide range of treatment options and facilities.

People with HIV/Aids

Halton has a very low number of people who are known to have HIV or AIDs. Halton and St Helens Primary Care trust currently commissions services for people with HIV/AIDs from two voluntary agencies and the Council currently has no plans to develop client specific services at a local level due to the low numbers involved. However, the needs of this client group are regularly monitored by Halton's Supporting People Team and discussions have taken place within the Merseyside Cross Authority group to identify the potential to commission a sub regional service

SUMMARY

- Halton has a very small Black and Minority ethnic population, although the demographics of that population are rapidly changing due to Eastern European migration.
- The Council is improving provision for Gypsies and Travellers in accordance with the recommendations of the Cheshire Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment, with the development of a 14 pitch transit site.
- Recent prevention service developments for homeless people are proving successful and should have a positive impact on acceptances and number of people in temporary accommodation.
- The Council is working with RSL partners to develop projects to tackle worklessness on social housing estates.
- Supply and demand analysis for particular client groups reveals a need for increased accommodation for the elderly, particularly extra care accommodation, making better use of the existing stock of adapted dwellings and a range of accommodation for people with mental health problems offering varying levels of support.

SECTION 5 – WIDER SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS

Introduction

The purpose of this section of the Strategy is to examine developments in other service areas which have a direct impact on housing in the Borough.

Lettings and nominations

Since transfer of the housing stock, the Council has maintained a waiting list for housing in the Borough and adopted an allocations policy, both of which are administered under contract by Halton Housing Trust. We have also developed a nominations agreement with seven RSLs operating in the Borough to ensure that all major housing providers contribute to meeting the needs of households who are afforded reasonable preference under the Council's policy.

The current policy is based on a traditional points system, however, the Council and RSL partners are working together to ensure that Choice Based Lettings is introduced in the Borough, in line with the Government's target for all authorities to operate a choice based system by 2010.

Anti social behaviour

In a recent borough wide survey of residents measuring satisfaction with their neighbourhoods, 44% felt that anti social behaviour was a problem in their area. The Safer Halton Partnership has adopted a no tolerance approach to anti social behaviour and launched "Promoting Positive Behaviour - Halton's Anti Social Behaviour Strategy 2007 – 2009" early in 2007. The Strategy advocates a holistic approach which focuses on three specific areas:

- Prevent & Deter
- Protect & Punish
- Rehabilitate

We are working with RSLs under the umbrella of the Safer Halton Partnership to deliver on a number of projects that will help achieve the aims of the Strategy. These include: the development of community watch schemes; providing a rapid response to anti-social behaviour; enhancing the Council's public protection responsibilities to protect communities by taking the necessary legal action against persistent anti-social behaviour offenders; working with communities to address the experience and effects of anti-social behaviour; and providing diversionary activities for young people, as well as improving our support for families. Family support will be key to looking at the causes of anti-social behaviour, as support from parents and carers is needed to address some young peoples' behaviour.

The Partnership has been successful in securing funds from the Government's Respect Task Force to commission a floating support scheme and parenting practitioner specifically to work with families who exhibit low to medium level anti social behaviour problems. The programmes are designed to challenge the behaviour of these families, which, if successful, will have a positive impact on the communities where they live and prevent any future risk of eviction due to anti social behaviour. In addition a Family Intervention Project has been developed to support families whose accommodation is more imminently under threat due to anti social behaviour. The project offers either outreach support or a more intensive dispersed service for families with the most challenging problems who are very close to eviction or have already been evicted.

Work with partner agencies such as RSLs to develop an Information Sharing Protocol to help facilitate these projects is well underway. We also plan to work with RSLs to develop a suite of performance indicators to help measure the success of these preventative measures and to promote our success in tackling anti social behaviour.

Neighbourhood management

Neighbourhood management aims to “close the gap” between some of the most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the Borough by putting local communities at the heart of public service decision making. Using funds from the Government’s Safer and Stronger Communities Fund, three neighbourhood management pilots have been established in Halton, with the intention that, if successful, the approach will be rolled out to other neighbourhoods. The work of the pilots is overseen by the Halton Neighbourhood Management Partnership Board, established in March 2007, which reports to the Halton Strategic Partnership.

The Private Rented Sector

Though the Borough’s private rented sector is small, Halton is committed to improving conditions for private tenants, which tend to be disproportionately worse than for any other sector. We are taking a two pronged approach based on encouragement, through the provision of a Landlord Accreditation Scheme and financial assistance for private sector landlords to bring empty property back into use and enforcement to ensure private rented dwellings meet the minimum required standards, including those newly imposed by the Housing Act 2004.

Planning policies

The adopted Regional Spatial Strategy (2003) sets a target for the provision of 330 (net) new dwellings per annum for Halton. However, the Strategy is in the advanced stages of a review and the new (net) dwelling target for Halton is set to increase to 500 dwellings per annum for the period 2003-2021. The recent Growth Point announcement means that the mid Mersey region will be expected to deliver an additional 20% new dwellings on emerging targets.

Current planning policies are contained within Halton’s Unitary Development Plan. However, work to replace this document with a Local Development Framework (LDF) is underway. It is anticipated that a Core Strategy for the LDF will be adopted in 2009, followed by a series of Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents to implement Core Strategy principles.

Modernising Halton's adaptations service

Early in 2007, work began on proposals to improve the adaptations service to ensure that it is more efficient, equitable, accessible, responsive and timely. The work included the appraisal of alternative service delivery options including outsourcing or integration and/or co-location of the Home Improvement Agency, Grants service and Independent Living Team and detailed examination of business processes to eliminate duplication and minimise delays. The decision was taken to integrate all three teams into one management division and form the Halton Home Improvement and Independent Living Services which has been relocated to one site in Widnes.

As discussed earlier in the document, work is also underway to develop a joint funding protocol with local registered social landlords for adaptations to their stock, ensuring that a more equitable service is provided regardless of tenure.

Key Performance Information

Like all areas of the Council, the housing service must work within a performance framework which measures the effectiveness of what we do, enables comparison with other Councils and ensures that the service we provide continually improves. Key performance information is presented at Appendix 2 of this document.

From April 2009, the current inspection regime (incorporating Comprehensive Perfomance Assessment, Joint Area Review etc) will be replaced by a Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). The CAA recognises the place shaping and strategic leadership roles of local authorities and supports a more area based, outcome focused approach to ensuring that the right services are delivered to local communities. Housing plays a critical role in delivery of these services and we intend to work closely with our partners, particularly social landlords, to consider how the quality of services they deliver impact upon the area and quality of life for citizens who live there.

PART 3 – DELIVERING THE VISION

Introduction

This final part of the Strategy focuses on the activities required to deliver the vision for housing described in the foreword, taking into account identified local needs , and the wider regional and sub regional context described in Part 1. Part 3 is presented in the following 3 sections:

Section 1 – the resources likely to be available to the Council and a summary of past resource activity

Section 2 – Priorities for action and options for meeting the priorities

Section 3 – Housing Strategy Action Plan 2008 to 2011

Section 4 – Monitoring, consultation and feedback

SECTION 1 – RESOURCES

Since the Council transferred its stock in December 2005 it no longer has a Housing Revenue Account and, as predicted in the last Housing Strategy, capital resources from the Regional Housing Pot have reduced considerably. It is considered likely that this trend will continue for the foreseeable future, making meeting the priorities identified in the Strategy an even greater challenge.

The following table shows the new resources available to the Council for housing purposes over the last 3 years.

Housing Investment (£000s)	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Share of Regional Pot	2,820	1,009*	889
DFG Subsidy	317	383	385
General Fund Capital	125	0	300
Gypsy Site Grant	435	0	0
Total resources	**3,697**	**1,392**	**1,574**

* Reduction in share of RHP due to transfer of housing stock

Housing expenditure in the Borough is supplemented by Regional Housing Pot investment allocated by the Housing Corporation to fund the development of new dwellings by RSLs, which for the last 3 years has concentrated on housing development for rent and shared ownership as part of the regeneration of the Castlefields estate in Runcorn.

Investment via the Housing Corporation £000s	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
RSL Development	3,580	2,700	5,800

In addition, Halton Housing Trust is in the process of upgrading the former council stock, with investment of £129 million. The Trust is confident that all of the 6,100 homes will meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard by the target date of 2010.

Future resources

The Government announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 that it is increasing investment in housing nationally to meet the growth expectations of the Housing Green Paper, published in July 2007, and to increase the supply of affordable housing nationally. For the North West this means a 16% increase on previous funding levels bringing in £801 million for 2008 – 11. However, this increase is the lowest rise of all regions and it is accompanied by minimum outputs for the North West to deliver a 35% increase in the number of new social rented units and a 26.7% increase in the number of new units for low cost home ownership.

At the time of writing the Strategy, the Council is facing a 30% cut in resources for 2008/09. Due to the increased emphasis on delivery of affordable housing, indications are that resources through the Housing Corporation's National Affordable Housing Programme will increase. It is not clear at this stage how this will impact on future funding levels in Halton but the likely scenario is presented below:

RHP allocation – likely scenario £000s	**2008/09**	**2009/10**	**2010/11**
Protection on 2006/08 resources	70%	70%	56%
	622	622	498

An added complication is that Government is currently reviewing the distribution formula for DFG subsidy. It is unknown at this stage what impact this will have on Halton's DFG subsidy for future years.

Predicted total resources £000s	**2008/09**	**2009/10**	**2010/11**
Borrowing approval	622	622	498
DFG Subsidy	385	385	385
Total	1,007	1,007	883

Given the erosion of resources and the limited availability of funding from other sources within the Council, Halton has decided that the full Housing allocation should be made available for housing purposes, with non housing developments being funded from other sources as set out in the Council's capital strategy.

The Housing Corporation has recently announced resource allocations for the next 3 years from the National Affordable Housing Programme, with £11.8 million allocated to housing. This will enable the development of 287 new dwellings, half for rent and half for shared ownership under the New Build HomeBuy programme, with 207 to be built in the Castlefields area of Runcorn.

Housing Corporation (£000s)			
	2008/09	**2009/10**	**2010/11**
RSL development	4,748	5,682	1,350

Supporting People funding

Since 2003/04 Supporting People resources have been the single funding source for delivery of housing related and floating support to residents. In 2005/06 the distribution formula used to allocate Supporting People resources to local authorities was reviewed. It is unclear at the time of writing the Strategy what impact this will have on Halton's allocation for 2008/09 since it has not been confirmed at what stage the new distribution formula will take effect.

SUMMARY

- Government expenditure on housing is set to increase nationally, however, this will be specifically targeted at housing growth and affordable housing at the expense of private sector renewal.
- The Council is likely to receive a reduced capital allocation over the term of the Strategy.
- Resources will increasingly be targeted at specific interventions developed at a sub regional level.
- There is uncertainty over the levels of funding available for adaptations and new supported housing schemes.

SECTION 2 – HOUSING PRIORITIES

The priorities for housing mirror the priorities contained within Halton's Community Strategy. The following table describes how the objectives of this Housing Strategy can contribute over the next 3 years to meeting the objectives and targets for Halton's communities.

It is recognised that many housing objectives can make a contribution to more than one of the Community Strategy's aims, however, within the table we have shown the link to the community objective where housing can play the most significant part.

Following on from this Section 3 contains the Housing Strategy Action Plan which demonstrates how we intend to deliver on the priorities identified.

Housing Strategy's contribution to Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy

Housing and Community Priority	Overall aim	Relevant key objectives	Relevant improvement targets (in Community Strategy)	Related housing objectives
A Healthy Halton	To create a healthier community and work to promote well being – a positive experience of life with good health (not simply an absence of disease) and offer opportunities for people to take responsibility for their health with the necessary support available.	To promote a healthy living environment and lifestyles to protect the health of the public, sustain individual good health and well-being, and help prevent and efficiently manage illness	All social housing to have affordable heating systems and insulation levels that exceed the national minimum guidelines.	Achieve a year on year reduction in the proportion of non decent private sector homes occupied by vulnerable households. Improve conditions in the private rented sector. Increase the number of people on income based benefits who live in energy efficient homes.
		To remove the barriers that disable people and contribute to poor health through ensuring that people have ready access to a wide range of social, community and housing services…that enhance their quality of life		Improve provision of supported housing for an ageing population. Improve equality of access to housing adaptations.

Housing and Communit y Priority	Overall aim	Relevant key objectives	Relevant improvement targets (in Community Strategy)	Related housing objectives
Halton's Urban Renewal	To transform the urban fabric and infrastructure, to develop exciting places and spaces and to create a vibrant and accessible borough that makes Halton a place where people are proud to live and see a promising future for themselves and their families.	To support and sustain thriving neighbourhoods and open spaces that meet people's expectations and add to their enjoyment of life	Ensure the decency standard is met by all social housing Ensure 50% of all new housing is built on brownfield sites	Monitor progress towards achieving decent homes target in the social rented sector. Ensure plans are in place to meet "Decent Homes Plus" (subject to agreed standard being introduced by Government) Increase the supply of affordable housing in the Borough in line with the recommendations of the Housing Needs Survey. Introduce Choice Based Lettings by 2010. Update data on condition of the private sector stock.
		To enchance, promote and celebrate the quality of the built environment in Halton including tackling the legacy of contamination and dereliction, to further improve the Borough's image		Complete the regeneration of the Castlefields estate Commission consultants to undertake research to prioritise regeneration of the New Town estates Work in partnership with local authority partners to improve the housing offer in the Liverpool City Region.

Housing and Community Priority	Overall aim	Relevant key objectives	Relevant improvement targets	Related housing objectives
Children and Young People in Halton	To ensure that in Halton children and young people are safeguarded, healthy and happy, and receive their entitlement of high quality services that are sensitive to need, inclusive and accessible to all	To ensure all children and young people in Halton grow up and thrive in safe environments, communities, homes and families	To reduce the number of care leavers who live in temporary accommodation to below 15%	Complete Homelessness review and new Homelessness Strategy. Reduce levels of overcrowding within social rented housing.
Employment, learning and skills in Halton	To create an economically prosperous borough that encourages investment, entrepreneurship, enterprise and business growth, and improves the education, skills and employment prospects of our residents and workforce so they can all share in the opportunities Halton affords.	To promote and increase the employability of local people and remove any barriers to employment to get more people into work	Increase employment rate by 2% Reduce economic inactivity rate by 10% Ensure unemployment rate in any ward is less than 20% above the national average.	Maximise the employment related benefits of physical improvement/refurbishment works Expand programme of housing construction/improvement training activity Deliver increased employment outreach activity with RSLs through Job Centre Plus and Halton People into Jobs

Housing and Community Priority	Overall aim	Relevant key objectives	Relevant improvement targets	Related housing objectives
A Safer Halton	To ensure pleasant, safe and secure neighbourhood environments with attractive, safe surroundings, good quality local amenities and the ability of people to enjoy life where they live.	To create and sustain better neighbourhoods that are well designed, well built, well maintained, safe and valued by the people who live in them, reflecting the priorities of residents	Reduce levels of expressed fear of crime and anti social behaviour by 25% Raise satisfaction levels with the neighbourhood area where people live to above 63% Implement a local management scheme in all neighbourhoods in Halton	Work with housing providers to reduce the incidence and perceptions of anti social behaviours on social housing estates. Conduct research into long term vacant dwellings in Halton with a view to participating in the development of a sub regional Empty Homes Strategy

SECTION 3 - HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2008 to 2011

Priority 1 – A Healthy Halton

What we are going to do	How we are going to do it	Target	By when	Outcomes	Resources needed	How we will measure success
Achieve a year on year reduction in the proportion of non decent private sector homes occupied by vulnerable households	Commission House condition survey to establish accurate baseline data. Target major works assistance in accordance with new Private Sector Renewal Strategy.	Commission House Condition Survey 130 homes improved in year 1 81 homes improved in year 2	2009 2009 2010	Completed House Condition Survey Baseline data established Improved conditions for vulnerable households	Cost of survey estimated at £50K. Provision of grants and loans reliant on continued funding from Regional Housing Pot at current levels.	Annual Housing Investment Programme returns. Successive House Condition Surveys
Improve conditions in the private rented sector	Promotion of Landlord Accreditation Scheme and Accredited Landlord Grants Use of enforcement powers as appropriate	Receive 10 full applications for accredited landlord status per year Increase satisfaction levels in the private rented sector to 70%	2010 2010	Increased awareness of Landlord accreditation Scheme Increased satisfaction with private rented sector	As above.	House condition survey Future Housing Needs Surveys Level of complaints from private tenants Improvements made to achieve accredited statu
Increase the number of people on income based benefits who live in energy efficient homes	Promotion of energy efficiency grants and other initiatives in partnership with Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre	Conduct survey to establish baseline Establish yearly targets from baseline	2009 2009	Baseline data established Improved conditions and improved financial position for vulnerable households	Annual contribution to Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre (approx £10 - £15k)	Annual surveys
Improve provision of supported housing for an ageing population	Establishment of a multi disciplinary team to identify potential sites and develop funding bids for extra care housing scheme and reviewing existing sheltered housing provision to determine if continues to be strategically releavnt	Establish multi disciplinary team Agree use of section 106 powers for new developments to be considered for extra care Review existing sheltered housing provision	2008 2009 2009	Development of extra care housing scheme, preferably in Widnes	Development of scheme will require Housing Corporation or Dept of Health investment in the region of £5m. Ongoing revenue costs to be met by Supporting People.	Construction and occupation of units.
Improve equality of access to housing adaptations.	Develop protocol with RSLs to share cost of disabled adaptations	Develop protocol 43 adaptations to RSL stock in year 1 11 adaptationss to RSL stock in year 2	2008 2009 2010	Improved joint working arrangement with RSLs established Backlog of adaptations to RSL stock cleared Improved service to RSL tenants	Dependent on outcome of agreement.	Monitoring by Older Persons Local Implementation Team and Housing Partnership. Annual Housing Investment Programme returns

Priority 2 – Halton's Urban Renewal

What we are going to do	How we are going to do it	Target	By when	Outcomes	Resources needed	How we will measure success
Ensure all social housing stock in the Borough meets Decent Homes standard	RSLs well on way to delivering the target but local authority has a role in continuing to monitor progress	100% of social housing stock meets Decent Homes standard	2010	All homes in social rented sector decent	RSL reserves/borrowing powers No resource implications for local authority	Annually alongside collection of data for Housing Investment Programme (HIP)
Ensure plans are in place to meet Decent Homes Plus (subject to standard being introduced by Government)	Joint work with RSLs to ensure that the target is incorporated into planning	100% of social housing stock meets Decent Homes Plus standard	To be agreed	Plans in place for all social rented homes to meet Decent Homes Plus	RSL reserves/borrowing powers No resource implications for local authority	Baseline established through Housing Partnership. Annual monitoring alongside collection of HIP data
Increase the supply of affordable housing in the Borough in line with the recommendations of the Housing Needs Survey	Deliver in excess of 500 net dwellings per year in line with emerging Regional Spatial Strategy Work with developers and partners on growth point Participate in sub regional initiatives	To deliver 25% affordable housing on qualifying sites	Annual	Increase in affordable housing units	None from internal resources. Funding for sub regional initiatives subject to outcome of competitive bidding processes from CLG and NWRA respectively	Housing Flows Reconciliation return to ODPM. Housing Investment Programmes annual returns Future Housing Need Surveys and Strategic Housing Market Assessments
Introduce Choice Based Lettings by 2010	Evaluate options to form partnership with existing scheme Seek agreement of partners on selected options Develop and consult on selected model	Agreement reached with partners on chosen model Consultation with customers and stakeholders completed Go live	Jan 2009 Dec 2009 April 2010	Choice Based Lettings in place in Halton	Funding levels will depend on chosen option/model. At time of writing potential funding implications for the Council are being examined.	Scheme live
Update data on condition of the private sector stock	Commission Private Sector Stock Condition Survey Develop process to monitor grant applications using GIS	Stock Condition Survey completed Continuous monitoring system in place	2009 2009	Completed Stock Condition Survey	Survey likely to cost approximately £50k. Need to identify capital resources from 2008/09 budget.	Completed survey Findings reported to executive Board
Complete the regeneration of the Castlefields estate	Work with RSLs to ensure successful delivery of phase 3 of the programme	Delivery of: 66 units in year 1 88 units in year 2 2 unit in year 3	 2009 2010 2011	Completion of Masterplan Improved conditions and housing choice for residents of Castlefields	Reliant on successful bids to Housing Corporation for NAHP resources	Annual Housing Investment Programme returns
Commission consultants	Work with English	Completed research	2010	Evidence base to support	Survey likely to cost	Report on findings to

to undertake research to prioritise regeneration in the New Town estates	Partnerships and RSLs to identify funding and develop brief	Spatial priorities identified and agreed	2010	spatial priorities and attract funding	approximately £50k. Need to identify capital resources	Executive Board
Work in partnership with local authority partners to improve the housing offer in the City Region	Implement Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy Action Plan in partnership with Eastern HMA LAs Participate in pilot of Home Movers Survey Jointly explore all available funding opportunities	To develop Joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment and s106 Planning Obligations Paper for Eastern HMA To develop Multi Area Agreement targets for Liverpool City Region	2011 2009	Improved housing offer within Liverpool City Region Improved joint working arrangements with local authority partners Improved understanding of housing markets	Funding implications for discreet projects yet to be determined Funding for Movers Survey identified for initial 12 month pilot (approx £4k)	Full implementation of Action Plan Monitoring reports from MIS on Movers Survey Monitoring of Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy

Priority 3 – Children and Young People in Halton

What we are going to do	How we are going to do it	Target	By when	Outcomes	Resources needed	How we will measure succes
Complete Homelessness review and Strategy	Collate relevant data from stakeholders Review needs and provision Develop Strategy	Draft Strategy for approval by Exec Board Approved Strategy in place Strategy implementation	Dec 2008 Mar 2009 2009 onwards	Completed Strategy Improved services for homeless households and those at risk of homelessness Children and young people supported in stable accommodation	None as developed within existing resources	Strategy endorsed by Exec Board
Reduce level of overcrowding within social rented housing	Work with RSLs to develop policies that make best use of the housing stock	To reduce levels of overcrowding in the social rented sector to 4%	2011	Reduced levels of overcrowding Children and young people supported to thrive	May need resources to develop financial incentives to encourage households underoccupying accommodation to move to a smaller dwelling	Future Housing Needs Surveys and Strategic Housing Market Assessments

Priority 4 – Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

What we are going to do	How we are going to do it	Target	By when	Outcomes	Resources needed	How we will measure success
Maximise the employment related benefits of physical improvement/refurbishment works	Inclusion of provisions within procurement contracts Exploration of employment related conditions in section 106 agreements.	Standard employment and training clauses in use as part of procurement processes. Section 106 standard clauses in operation.	April 2010	Reduced worklessness	Once taken on training should be accessible through national train to gain system	Reduced worklessness in priority wards
Expanded programme of housing construction/improvement training activity	Partnership working between Employment Learning and Skills SSP and Housing Providers Forum	50 training places 30 people into jobs	April 2010	Reduced worklessness	Additional activity above ELS SSP core funding will require further funding to be secured such as WNF, ESF, DWP, LSC	Reduced worklessness in priority wards
Delivery of increased outreach activity with RSLs through JobCentre Plus and Halton People into Jobs	RSLs, JCP and HPiJ joint planning group	250 people engaged with Information Advice and Guidance	April 2011	Reduced worklessness	Containable within existing resources	Reduced worklessne in priority wards

Priority 5 – A Safer Halton

What we are going to do	How we are going to do it	Target	By when	Outcomes	Resources needed	How we will measure success
Work with housing providers to reduce the incidence and perceptions of Anti Social Behaviour on social housing estates	Ensure that RSL's are signed up to the Respect Standard and the CDRP information Sharing Protocol Examine RSL existing performance framework and agree consistent data collection processes Develop suite of performance indicators to measure outcomes from preventative work Working with partner agencies and the local media to promote action/success in tackling ASB.	Reduce perceptions of ASB by 12%	2011	Consistent approach to data collection Analysis of success of invest to save measures	Contained within existing resources	Customer Satisfaction Surveys Data feedback from LAA's
Conduct research into long term vacant dwellings in Halton with a view to participating in the development of a sub regional Empty Homes Strategy	Analyse Council Tax records to map reasons why dwellings are empty and ascertain potential to develop interventions to bring back into use	To complete research Participate in development of a Sub regional Housing Strategy	Late 2008 2010	Completed research and annual updates Sub regional empty homes strategy Fewer long term empty homes	Contained within existing resources	Annual updates of research Annual Housing Investment Programr return

SECTION 3 – MONITORING, CONSULTATION AND FEEDBACK

Consultation

This Strategy has not been produced in isolation and we are grateful to our partners on the Housing Partnership Board for their commitment to continuously improve the housing offer and services in Halton. We also wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Halton residents who have taken the time to participate in the Housing Needs Survey and other resident surveys that have helped shape the strategic direction for housing in Halton.

The Strategy has produced in consultation with the stakeholders listed at Appendix 4.

Monitoring arrangements

The Housing Strategy Action Plan will be the key document by which delivery of our objectives will be monitored and progress tracked. Officers will monitor progress against the targets set on a quarterly basis and will review and, where necessary, update the Action Plan. Progress, and any changes to the Action Plan, will be reported annually to the Housing Partnership and the Health Policy and Performance Board. The Council will also comply with any requirements set out by Government Office for progress reporting.

Service user feedback

We currently use a number of mechanisms to monitor the quality of our services and user satisfaction. These include tenant satisfaction surveys and satisfaction surveys for private sector grant applicants. In addition, the Council has developed a citizen’s panel, Halton 2000, members of which were instrumental in determining the five community priorities.

More recently we have sought the views of service users via focus group sessions on their experience of the homelessness service which will inform a forthcoming review of service delivery and the wider Homelessness review.

SUMMARY

The priorities of the Housing Strategy mirror those of Halton's Community Strategy and contribute to achieving those priorities as follows.

Priority 1 – A Healthy Halton

- Achieve a year on year reduction in the proportion of non decent private sector homes occupied by vulnerable households
- Improve conditions in the private rented sector
- Increase the number of people on income based benefits who live in energy efficient homes
- Improve the provision of supported housing for an ageing population
- Improve equality of access to housing adaptations

Priority 2 – Halton's Urban Renewal

- Monitor progress towards delivery of decent homes target in the social rented sector.
- Ensure plans are in place to meet Decent Homes Plus (subject to agreed standard being introduced by Government
- Increase the supply of affordable housing in the Borough in line with the recommendations of the Housing Needs Survey
- Introduce Choice Based lettings by 2010
- Update data on condition of the private sector stock
- Complete the regeneration of the Castlefields estate
- Commission consultants to undertake research to prioritise regeneration of New Town estates
- Work in partnership with local authority partners to improve the housing offer in the Liverpool City Region

Priority 3 – Children and Young People

- Complete Homelesness review and new Strategy
- Reduce the level of overcrowding within social rented housing

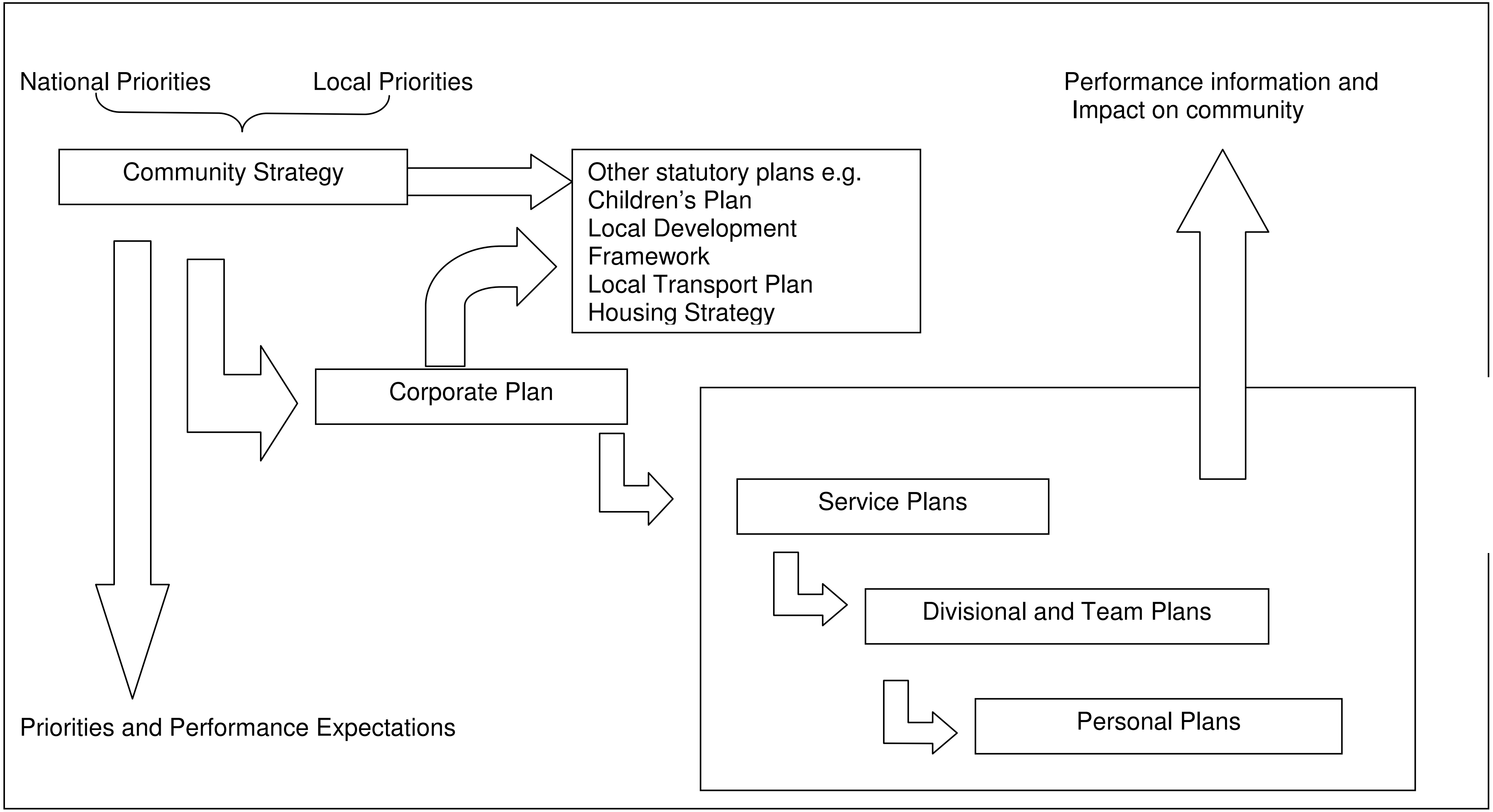
Priority 4 – Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

- Maximise the employment related benefits of physical improvements/refurbishment works
- Expand programme of housing construction/improvement training activity
- Deliver increased employment outreach activity with RSLs through JobCentre Plus and Halton People into Jobs

Priority 5 – A Safer Halton

- Work with housing providers to reduce the incidence and perceptions of Anti Social Behaviour
- Conduct research into long term vacant dwellings in Halton with a view to participating in the development of a sub regional Empty Homes Strategy

Halton's Strategic Planning Framework



Appendix 2

Key Performance Indicators

PI number	Title	2005/06		2006/07		2007/08
		Target	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**	**Target**
BVPI 64	The number of private sector vacant dwellings that are returned into occupation or demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority	2	0	2	2	2
BVPI 183a	The average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation of households which include dependent children or a pregnant woman and which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need (weeks)	2	1.69	1.8	5.33	3
BVPI 183b	Average length of stay in hostel accommodation (weeks)	0	0	0	0	0
BVPI 202	The number of people sleeping rough on a single night within the area of the authority	0	0	0	2	0
BVPI 203	The % change in the average number of families (which include dependent children or a pregnant woman) placed in temporary accommodation under the homelessness legislation in the current financial year compared with the average from the previous year	15	10.85	10	18.75	-15
BVPI 213	The number of households, who approached the local housing authority's housing advice service(s), and for whom housing advice casework intervention resolved their situation	New indicator for 2005/6 No target set	0	1.06	0.42	1.42
BVPI 214	Proportion of statutory homeless households accepted as statutory homeless by LA within last 2 years	New indicator for 2005/6 No target set	4.1	4.5	1.24	1.2

Progress on HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2005/06 – 2007/08

Target	Timescale	Milestones	How Measured	Funding Implications	Capital Cost to Council of Meeting Objective (£000s)			Links to Community Strategy, Corporate and Service Plan objectives	Progress against target
Improving Housing Conditions					**2005/ 06**	**2006/ 07**	**2007/ 08**		
Ensure all social housing stock in the Borough meets the decent homes standard.	By 2010.	Reduction of 30% in numbers of non-decent homes by 2007, and elimination by 2010.	RSL and Council stock data, ODPM returns.	No implications for Council. Transfer of Council stock in 2005 will secure necessary resources (approx. £85m) to meet target, and other RSLs have included funding in maintenance programmes to meet their target.	nil	nil	nil	2F 1 1C 1	Aggregate non-decency levels of 35%. On course to meet the 2010 target.
Achieve a year on year reduction in the proportion of non decent private sector homes occupied by vulnerable households	Ongoing.	Establish accurate baseline data to measure progress. Review renewal policy in 2005 to consider need for change to achieve target.	House condition survey in 2007.	Cost of survey estimated at £50K. Provision of grants and loans reliant on continued funding from Regional Housing Pot at current levels.	2,250	700	750	2F 1 2F2 1C1	Private Sector Renewal Policy has been amended to target Decent Homes Standard.. It has not been possible to undertake a Private Sector Stock Condition Survey due to ongoing resource constraints.
Improve the energy rating of private sector stock.	By 2010.	Improve SAP rating from 48 to 50.	House condition survey in 2007.	As above.	75	75	75	1C 1 4A 1	See above re: delay in undertaking condition survey.

Target	Timescale	Milestones	How Measured	Funding Implications	Capital Cost to Council of Meeting Objective (£000s)			Links to Community Strategy, Corporate and Service Plan objectives	Progress against target September 2006
Meeting Identified Housing Needs					**2005/06**	**2006/07**	**2007/08**		
Achieve planning target for net new housing provision.	By 2008	Achieve 330 net new dwellings per year over duration of Strategy.	Housing Flows Reconciliation return to ODPM.	None.	nil	nil	nil	2F 5G	The Council has achieved in excess of the RPG target of 330 net new dwellings per year over the period of the Strategy. 2005 – 405 dwellings 2006 – 741 dwellings 2007 – 419 dwellings
Secure additional housing for the single homeless to meet the needs identified in the homelessness and Supporting People strategies.	By 2007	a) Secure 5 units for young homeless by 2005, and b) secure 24 units of floating support for young homeless.	Homelessness Forum and Supporting People Core Strategy Development Group (CSDG).	Capital and revenue funding for a) is included in 2005/06 budgets. Revenue support for b) is included in the Supporting People 5 year strategy as the first priority.	100	nil	nil	4D 2 4A 1 5C 1	6 units built in Widnes for young homeless - opened Jan 06. A floating support scheme with 20 spaces for young people was commissioned in Feb 2006
Improve housing provision for those with a physical/sensory disability.	By 2007	Secure the development of at least 5 units of supported accommodation.	PSD LIT and Supporting People monitoring.	Provision included in 2005 /06 capital programme, support costs to be met by savings from placements outside the borough.	225	nil	nil	3A1 4D1 4D2 5C1	A review of housing needs for this client group resulted in development proposal being cancelled.

Target	Timescale	Milestones	How Measured	Funding Implications	Capital Cost to Council of Meeting Objective (£000s)			Links to Community Strategy, Corporate and Service Plan objectives	Progress against target Sept 06
					2005/ 06	**2006/ 07**	**2007/ 08**		
Improve housing provision for mental health clients.	By 2008	Secure new housing to meet needs identified in Accommodation Strategy.	Mental Health LIT. Supporting People CSDG.	Financial provision made in 2006/07/08 to fund identified accommodation needs.	nil	300	300	3A1 4D1 4D2 5C1	Mental Health Team developing accommodation strategy – exact nature and scale of need still to be clarified.
Improve extra care housing provision for older people	By 2008	Secure 1 further scheme of extra care housing for rent of approx. 40 units.	Supporting People CSDG.	Approx. £3m capital support from the Housing Corporation or Dept. of Health. Revenue built into the Supporting People Strategy.	nil	nil	nil	4D 2 5G	Bids for DoH and Housing Corporation funding have been unsuccessful to date. The outcome of a bid under the 2008/11Housing Corporation bid round is awaited.
Determine the need to introduce an affordable housing policy.	By 2006	Undertake housing needs survey in 2005.	Survey findings.	Cost of survey to be funded from 2005/06 capital programme.	70	nil	nil	2F 2	Housing Needs Survey completed June 06. Need to develop an Affordable Housing Policy established from survey findings.
Improving Services									
Establish a Home Improvement Agency.	By 2005	Secure necessary funding and comply with ODPM/Foundations requirements.	Accreditation by Foundations organisation.	Revenue Budget provision has been made in 2005/06.and Supporting People funding secured.	nil	nil	nil	4D 3 4A 1 4D1 3A1	Complete.

Target	Timescale	Milestones	How Measured	Funding Implications	Capital Cost to Council of Meeting Objective (£000s)			Links to Community Strategy, Corporate and Service Plan objectives	Progress against target
					2005/ 06	**2006/ 07**	**2007/ 08**		
Improve equality of access to housing adaptations.	By 2006	Agree DFG funding protocol with RSLs.	Monitoring by Older Persons Local Implementation Team.	Grants will be restricted to funding awarded by ODPM.	650	650	650	3A 1 4D 1	Progress delayed due to Government review of DFGs. Review has now been resumed with aim to agree funding protocol by end of 2008.
Develop joint working with RSLs to combat anti social behaviour.	By 2006	Establish a joint working group and introduce joint training programme with RSLs.	Monitored by Housing Partnership.	Costs to be contained within existing organisational budgets.	nil	nil	nil	5C 1 5D	A joint approach to Anti Social Behaviour has been introduced by the Anti Social Behaviour Strategy which all major RSLs have signed up to.
Establish a Landlord Accreditation Scheme.	By 2006	Formal launch of scheme.	Monitoring by Local Strategic Partnership.	NRF funding secured for 2-year pilot.	nil	nil	nil	2F	Scheme established and launched in August 2006. 16 landlords have achieve accreditation status, covering 92 properties.
Refresh housing needs data.	By 2005	Completion of housing needs survey.	Findings reported to Health Policy and Performance Board.	To be funded from 2005/06 budget.	Included above	nil	nil	2F 2	Housing Needs Survey completed 2006. Findings reported to Urban Renewal PPB on 20/09/06 followed by members seminar.

Target	Timescale	Milestones	How Measured	Funding Implications	Capital Cost to Council of Meeting Objective (£000s)			Links to Community Strategy, Corporate and Service Plan objectives	Progress against target
Developing the Strategy					**2005/**	**2006/**	**2007/**		

					06	07	08		
Determine need for specialist housing /support for BME households.	By 2006	Complete analysis of available data (and commission new research if needed)	Findings included in next strategy review.	None unless new research commission needed.	nil	nil	nil	5D 5C 1	Housing Needs Survey includes analysis of BME housing needs which has been fed into new Strategy
Improve monitoring of housing market changes.	By 2006	Full implementation of database and GIS system, ability to produce regular monitoring data.	Monitoring by Local Strategic Partnership.	NRF funds secured for 2-year development programme.	nil	nil	Nil	2F 2	Scheme fully implemented and able to produce monitoring reports. However, some RSLs are using own resources for in house monitoring.

Total of above costs	**3,405**	**1,725**		**1,775**

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Appendix 4

List of consultees and contributors

The following departments and organisations have helped to shape and influence this Strategy and we are grateful for their contributions:

Registered Social Landlords
Halton Housing Trust
Riverside
Liverpool Housing Trust
Arena
Cosmopolitan
CDS
William Sutton Homes
Places for People
Housing 21

Voluntary organisations
Halton YMCA
Age Concern
Shelter
Citizens Advice Bureaux
St Helens Accommodation Project
Warrington Law Centre
Halton GOALS
CIC
Addaction
Link Up
Alternative Lighthouse Projects

Estate agents
Abbeyfords
Dixon Webb
Michael C. Adams
Edwards Grounds
Mark Nicolas Estates
Harlequin Homelets
Martin and Co.
Peacock Property

Council Departments
Children and Young People Directorate
Planning
Corporate Policy
Major Projects
Social Services
Economic Development
Major Projects
External Funding
Supporting People
Transport
Neighbourhood Management
Community Safety Team
Drug and Alcohol Action Team
Housing Benefits
Homelessness Prevention Team
Independent Living Team

Other
Government Office North West
Connexions
General public via Council website
Halton's Local Strategic Partnership Board

Appendix 5

How to find out more

Report	Contact	Organisation	Tel. No.	Web Site
Community Strategy 2006 - 2001	Shelah Semoff Shelah.semoff@halton.gov.uk	Halton Borough Council	0151 907 8300	www.halton.gov.uk
Corporate Plan 2006 - 2011	Shelah Semoff Shelah.semoff@halton.gov.uk	As above	As above	As above
Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004	Richard Stevens richard.stevens@halton.gov.uk	As above	0151 907 8300	N/A
Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy 2007	Mike Cryan Mike.Cryan@merseyside.org.uk	Merseyside Policy Unit	0151 237 3537	N/A
Eastern and Northern City Region Housing Market Assessments 2007	As above	As above	As above	As above
Vulnerable Housing Markets Report 2007	As above	As above	As above	As above
BME and Gypsy and Traveller households report	As above	As above	As above	As above
Halton Unitary Development Plan	Andrew Pannell andrew.pannell@halton.gov.uk	Halton Borough Council	0151 907 8300	www.halton.gov.uk

Report	Contact	Organisation	Tel. No.	Web Site
Halton Housing Needs Survey 2006	Joanne Sutton joanne.Sutton@halton.gov.uk	Halton Borough Council	0151 907 8300	www.halton.gov.uk
Cheshire Partnership Area Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation and Related Services Assessment 2007	Dawn Taylor dawn.taylor@halton.gov.uk	As above	As above	N/A
Merseyside Social Housing Demand Study 2005	Steve Williams steve.williams@halton.gov.uk	As above	As above	N/A
West Bank Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment 2006	Phil Brown phil.brown@halton.gov.uk	As above	As above	N/A
Halton Homelessness Strategy 2003 - 2008	Terry Upton Terry.upton@halton.gov.uk	As above	As above	www.halton.gov.uk
Shelter Multi Agency Monitoring reports	As above	As above	As above	N/A
Halton Supporting People Strategy	Angela McNamara angela.mcnamara@halton.gov.uk	As above	As above	www.halton.gov.uk
Halton Private Sector Housing Condition Survey 2002	Phil Brown phil.brown@halton.gov.uk	As above	As above	N/A
Halton Supported Housing Needs Survey 2002	Steve Williams steve.williams@halton.gov.uk	As above	As above	N/A

Report	Contact	Organisation	Tel. No.	Web Site
Accommodation and Support Strategy for Older People in Halton	Mark Holt mark.holt@halton.gov.uk	Halton BC/Halton PCT	As above	N/A
Halton Learning Disabilities Partnership Housing and Support Options 2003-2008	Marie Mahmood marie.mahmood@halton.gov.uk	Halton BC	As above	N/A
Merseyside Housing Demand Study 2003	Steve Williams steve.williams@halton.gov.uk	As above	As above	N/A
Castlefields Regeneration Masterplan	Chris Leyshon chris.leyshon@halton.gov.uk	As above	As above	www.castlefields.info
Local Strategic Partnership	Shelah Semoff Shelah.semoff@halton.gov.uk	As above	As above	www.haltonpartnership.net
Halton Teenage Pregnancy Strategy	Andy Dunleavy andy.dunleavy@halton-pct.nhs.uk	Halton PCT	01928 593672	www.halton-health.nhs.uk
NW Regional Housing Strategy	Kerry Bates kerry.bates@4nw.org.uk	4nw	01942 776942	www.4nw.org.uk
Land Registry House Price Data	See web site	HM Land Registry	0151 473 6137	www.landregistry.gov.uk

Agenda Item 5a

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 18 December 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Health & Community

SUBJECT: Independent Living Services

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To inform the Executive Board about a range of issues surrounding the Independent Living Services.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Executive Board:

i) **Approve the contingency plans outlined in the report;**

ii) **Approve the planned carry forward into the 2009/10 budget as described in 3.8.1 within the report.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Halton has high levels of disability and a population profile that is ageing relatively more than the UK as a whole. One of the key areas of work that is essential to support people remain living either in their own homes or a more suitable house, is the ability to make improvements or adaptations to their properties and this report describes the improvement in the amount of work being delivered by the Halton Home Improvement and Independent Living Service and the current expenditure.

3.2 The tenure of people also affects the sorts of service they can access. Registered Social Landlords have a considerable waiting list for adaptation work and the type of tenure should not determine whether people get the adaptations they need. The Council has provided additional funding to improve this. There are many factors that indicate the level and type of work required. Some of the changes we have made in the service over the last year as well as economic factors mean we need to respond differently. Some of these factors and solutions are explored below.

3.3 The Disabled Facilities Grants is a mandatory grant for adaptations to the homes of disabled people. For a number of reasons, which are discussed later in the report, it appears that demand for major adaptations in the private housing sector may be levelling out at the present time. However, it is likely that this will create sufficient demand to fully spend the Disabled Facilities Grants allocation funded by the government together with some Council match funding. It is unlikely, however, that all of the growth funding provided this year will be used for Disabled Facilities Grants but some contingencies linked to the major adaptations process are identified in this report. This fact was reported to the Executive Board on 10 April 2008 and it was acknowledged that this funding would probably need to be phased over a two year period.

3.4 Investment in the provision of adaptations enables people to continue to live at home, reduces the level of personal care support required and avoids admission to residential care. In Halton there has been a significant reduction in admissions to residential care and an increase in the numbers of older people helped to live at home from 82 per thousand population in 2002/03 to 125 per thousand in 2006/07. National research has also demonstrated the value of the provision of adaptations in reducing risk of falls and consequent hospital admissions and in supporting prompt hospital discharge. Indeed Halton remains one of only two Council's in England not to have reported any delayed discharges since the guidelines were introduced.

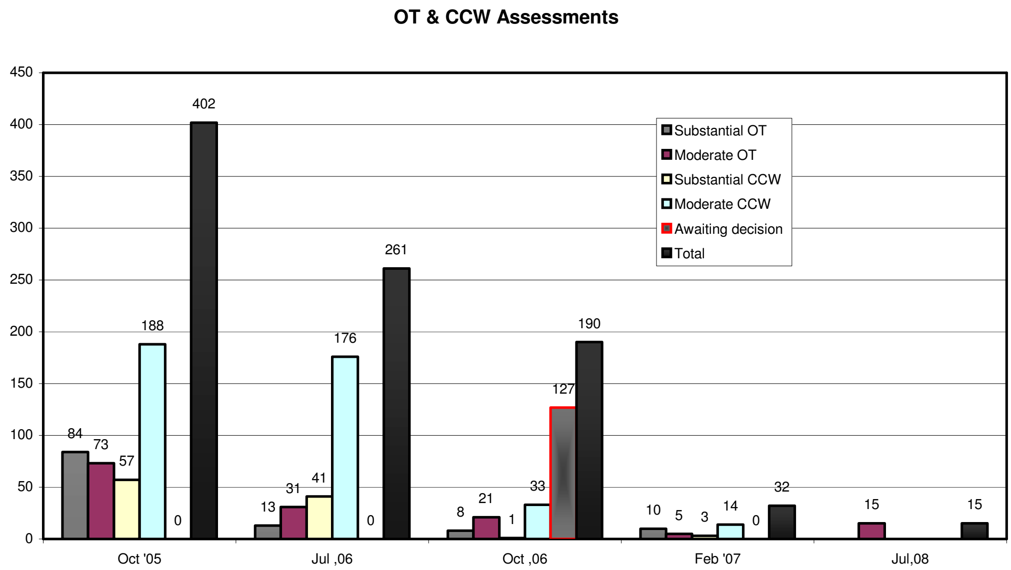
3.5 **SERVICE TRANSFORMATION**

3.5.1 During 2007/08 extensive work was undertaken to transform the adaptations service from a complex service, characterised by delays and high levels of service user dissatisfaction, provided by staff in three parts of the Directorate to one integrated, efficient service, with single line management and based in one office. The Halton Home Improvement and Independent Living Service (HHIILS) was therefore established in April 2008.

3.5.2 **Assessment Waiting Times**

The waiting list for assessments by Occupational Therapists (OT) and Community Care Workers (CCW) has been significantly reduced from 402 in 2005 to 15 in July 2008 as in Graph 1.

3.5.3 **Graph 1: Waiting list for occupational therapist and CCW assessments**



3.5.4 **Design waiting times**

In the last couple of years the Council's Home Improvement Agency (HIA) and Grants Team have managed the impact of the reduction in the OT and CCW assessment waiting times. This resulted in an increase in requests for Disabled Facilities Grants, including an increase in requests for smaller adaptations. The service had a six to eight month waiting list for design work in July 2007. The use of consultancy design workers funded by means of fee charges from the Council DFG allocation has now reduced the backlog of adaptation work and the Agency are currently able to respond to referrals without delay.

3.5.5 So far this year 15 service users have withdrawn their applications for Disabled Facilities Grants. Table 3 shows the reasons for withdrawal, most of which cannot be predicted and can result in a considerable reduction in expenditure against the Disabled Facilities Grants budget. The estimated cost of these withdrawn cases is £167,000.

Table 3: Adaptation applications withdrawn 2008/09

No of service users	Reason for withdrawal of application
3	Admitted to residential care
3	Do not want the adaptation that has been recommended
4	Moving to alternative accommodation
4	Deceased
5	Do not want to proceed with adaptations

3.5.6 **Accessible Homes Register**

A register, to match people requiring an adapted property with vacant adapted properties, has been in operation since September 2007. So far six matches have been made estimated at £110k in new adaptation work, this has, therefore, avoided the requirement to be processed through our adaptations service. This process reduces the disruption to the disabled person, enabling them to move into an adapted property with minimal delay. Using the register does, however, reduce requests for Disabled Facilities Grants.

3.5.7 **Partnership agreement with Registered Social Landlords**

The partnership agreement with the Registered Social Landlords allocated £467k to them to completed housing adaptations on a 50:50 funding basis. This was agreed in June 2008. Unfortunately, some of the Registered Social Landlords were slow to sign up to the agreement. This has led to delay for some of the Registered Social Landlords in beginning to carry out work under the agreement, while others are well underway with this. Some of this funding will need to be vired into the 2009/10 budget.

3.6 **CONTINGENCY PLANS**

3.6.1 **Major and minor work assistance**

It is recommended that an additional £70,000 be transferred from the adaptations budget to continue to meet the demand for major and minor works assistance. The work undertaken using this assistance includes repair of badly leaking roofs and replacement of unsafe electrical installations and these are targeted at vulnerable people on low incomes. However the extent of the work likely to come in is difficult to predict as for example one case completed this year was for work in excess of £40,000 whilst others may be for as little as £1,000.

3.6.2 **Semi-permanent ramps**

Currently semi permanent ramps are provided as a short-term measure to facilitate hospital discharge. These are then eventually replaced with a concrete ramp if there is a long-term need for this type of provision. The appearance of the semi-permanent ramps is preferable to concrete ramps and some users have been unhappy when plans have been made to replace the semi-permanent ramps provided to meet urgent need. Components of these ramps can be recycled when no longer required, increasing efficiency savings and making properties more attractive to non-disabled people. It is recommended that the sum of £137,000 be allocated to fund semi-permanent ramps already provided through the community equipment service.

3.6.3 **Stair Lifts**

To speed up provision of stair lifts, meeting the need of some people and enabling others to access the bedroom and bathroom while awaiting major adaptations, these lifts are now provided under a contract by Liftable and have been removed from the Disabled Facilities Grants process. So far £72,000 has been spent out of a budget of £94,000 and 29 lifts provided. It is anticipated that assessed need will exceed the available budget. To continue to provide stair lifts in this way it is recommended that £50,000 is transferred to this budget.

3.6.4 **Modular Buildings**

Plans to install modular buildings in previous years have not been achieved due to difficulties convincing some Registered Social Landlords of the viability of these structures and the need to identify suitable service users and properties for the use of such solutions. There are currently two cases under consideration where the use of a modular building would be appropriate. In one case the adaptation is a bathroom and the other a bedroom. One of the modular buildings is for a Registered Social Landlord tenant and in that case plans are being drawn up and it is anticipated the building will be complete within the financial year. It is currently estimated that to complete these two projects will cost in the region of £80-85k. The budget for modular buildings was reduced to £40k this year. It is recommended that an additional £45,000 be secured for this purpose.

3.6.5 **Design work**

Currently additional design work for the Home Improvement Agency is funded through fees using a proportion of the adaptation budget. It is recommended that this arrangement continues at a cost of £10,000 for the remainder of 2008/09 until there is more clarity about the level of adaptation work required. This would enable us to purchase additional services, without the commitment to fund permanent staff.

3.6.6 **Top ups**

Currently if service users are eligible for DFG but are assessed as having a contribution to make, or where work is in excess of grant maximum DFG and they are unable to meet their contribution, an application is made to HHIILS and the contribution may be met from the Minor Adaptations budget. Last year this was overspent by £167,000. Currently £23,000 has been spent on top ups and work is being processed where the estimated required top ups would amount to a further £32,000. Of course new applications could still be received within the financial year. It is recommended that £60,000 is transferred to meet this expenditure.

3.7 **SUMMARY OF ALL CONTINGENCY PLANS**

Table 4 summarises recommended possible contingencies to ensure the Disabled Facilities Grants budget and additional funding allocated by the Council is fully spent in 2008/09.

3.7.1 **Table 4: Summary of recommended contingencies**

Type of work completed	**Current Budget In £'000**	**Recommended Additional funding from DFG /Adaptation Budget In £'000**
Major & Minor Work Assistance	200	70
Semi-permanent ramps	0	137
Stair lifts	92	50
Modular buildings	40	45
Additional Design Work	0	10
Tops Ups	0	60
Total Additions		**372**

3.8 ANTICIPATED TOTAL EXPENDITURE 2008/09

Table 5 shows anticipated expenditure from the adaptations budget based on the current work being processed by the service, the RSL partnership funding committed and the implementation of all of the contingency plans.

3.8.1 **Table 5: Anticipated Total Expenditure 2008/09**

(Figures are in £'000)

Type of expenditure	Total anticipated expenditure
Anticipated spend on DFGs	650
Partnership funding already allocated	100
Recommended contingencies	372
Total expenditure	**1.122**
Combined grants budget 2008/09	**1.573**
Planned carry forward for 2009/10 Budget	**451**

3.9 FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN SERVICES

3.9.1 "Adapting for Independence" Conference

This conference was held in Widnes, on 16 October 2008 and provided an opportunity to learn more about the modernised adaptation service, to hear about the legal aspects of provision of equipment and adaptations and the benefits to service users and professionals of these services. The conference was extremely well attended with representatives from all over the North West and feedback was very positive.

3.9.2 Members seminar

This seminar was held on 13 November 2008. It updated members on developments within the service and provided an opportunity to meet with officers, discuss particular case scenarios and obtain a clearer understanding for members and officers of the complexities and constraints of the work of the service. It also provided an opportunity to consider the future aspirations of members for the service. This seminar will be repeated on 19 February 2009.

3.9.3 **Therapy Review**

A review of therapy services is currently being undertaken in partnership with Halton and St Helens PCT and it is anticipated that this will provide further opportunities for service improvement, for example, in relation to hospital discharge pathways.

3.9.4 **Modernisation of Registered Social Landlord properties**

In partnership with the RSLs a process has been developed to ensure service users awaiting assessment for adaptations are prioritised so that their needs are met appropriately when for example, bathrooms are refurbished as part of the RSLs ongoing modernisation programme.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Policies and procedures for the provision of adaptations are currently being updated and reviewed in response to the service changes introduced. Policies for the provision of semi permanent ramps and modular buildings will need to be incorporated in to these documents.

5.0 **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The recommendations in this report are part of comprehensive plans to modernise the adaptation service. They represent innovative and efficient ways of using resources and will ultimately improve provision for service users in Halton. Failure to implement at least some of these contingencies could result in budget under spend and lead to delays in service provision.

5.2 The recommendations in this report have been discussed with Finance who have raised no objections to the proposals.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

Major and minor works assistance and energy efficiency grants are available to householders and children living in these properties would benefit from these services. DFGs are provided for disabled children. All of the contingency plans discussed in this report will be available to and have the potential to benefit disabled children, improving their independence at home.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None identified.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Through improvements to independence and the standard of housing all of the services discussed in this report have the potential to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Halton.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Through provision of equipment and adaptations and improvements to home standards these services have the potential to improve safety and reduce the risk of falls and injury to carers.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

Through grants and loans these services provide the opportunity for home renovations, improving the quality of life for individuals and the standard of housing stock within Halton.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The major risk is the inability to fully spend the grant budgets, particularly the Disabled Facilities Grants budget. Some of the contingencies, for example, the Partnership Agreement with the Registered Social Landlords depend on match funding and the joint safer handling post depends on the commitment of the PCT.

7.2 Monthly meetings monitor expenditure against budget and the contingencies will be regularly discussed and reviewed.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The measures outlined in this report will improve the adaptation service available to all service user groups and across all tenures.

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

Document	**Place of Inspection**	**Contact Officer**
Housing Capital Programme Executive Board Report 10/04/08	Municipal Building, Widnes	Dwayne Johnson Strategic Director Health & Community

 Agenda Item 6a

REPORT TO: EXECUTIVE BOARD

DATE: 18th December 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Corporate and Policy

SUBJECT: Economic Downturn

WARDS: Borough-wide

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the implications of the economic downturn for Halton and for the Borough Council.

2. RECOMMENDED THAT:

i. The Board considers how the Council can respond to the economic downturn.

ii. A task-group of members and officers is established to co-ordinate a response.

3. BACKGROUND

The economic downturn started as a credit crunch in the banking sector which rapidly affected housing markets and is now beginning to affect the wider economy. Within the sub-region we have seen:

- Jaguar at Halewood and Vauxhall at Ellesmere Port cut production and reduce workforce

- The construction industry is suffering with David McLean going into receivership and Redrow closing its Halton office, with a loss of 70 jobs.

A number of major developments have been affected, with the ING scheme in Chester postponed and Kings Dock and Garden Festival sites in Liverpool affected by McLean's demise.

The downturn has had direct consequences for residents with increased unemployment and repossession of houses. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the newly unemployed are widely distributed across the Borough which has not always been the case in the past. It has been speculated that this may be the result of residents who commuted out of the Borough to the regional financial centres losing their jobs.

4. LOCAL ECONOMIC IMPACT TO DATE

Halton's economy has diversified considerably in the past 15-20 years and is no longer so vulnerable to potential problems with any one industry. It is relatively dynamic within the North West economies, ranked 5th for productivity within NW England. The chemical industry has shed hundreds of jobs since the 1980s recession as it becomes more automated, and therefore any impact this one industry may have would be far less than in the 1980s when unemployment locally reached 18%.

According to Oxford Economics Vulnerability Index (July 2008) Halton is one of the least vulnerable areas in the North West, whereas Chester and Macclesfield feature in the top ten most vulnerable districts in England. This is largely because of the impact on financial services, and the position may change as the recession bites in other sectors.

It is too early for the impact to have been fully felt in Halton, and there is a time lag before data is published for the relevant period. However, there is and emerging picture:

- Halton's unemployment rate is currently at 3.6% (October 2008) which is higher than the North West rate of 3.0%. Castlefields ward currently has the highest rate (6.2%).
- Halton's unemployment rate has had an increase of 0.7% from Oct 2007 to Oct 2008. The only ward to show a decrease in this time is Windmill Hill (-0.2%), although it still has the second highest rate in the Borough. The largest increase was in Mersey ward (+1.7%).
- Small scale redundancies from a business (1 this month, 2 next etc) can be very hard to pick up. As such, statistics tend to understate the true position as they pick up only the larger numbers. So far in 2008 the business development team has logged 466 redundancies which compares with 277 in 2007 and 162 in 2006.
- Property enquiries to the Economic Regeneration department have fallen by 35%. Conversions of these enquires into sales/lettings are down 25%
- Companies are increasingly enquiring about grant assistance as it becomes more difficult to gain bank finance.
- Although the average house prices in Halton have increased in the last quarter from £147,086 (Apr-Jun 08) to £157,123 (Jul-Sep 08), the number of sales has dropped from 399 to 273. For the same period in 2007 (Jul-Sep 07) sales numbered over 700.
- There is no current, up to date information on changes to housebuilding rates. However, discussions with housebuilders suggest, not surprisingly, that there has been a significant impact on building rates. On sites under construction, work has slowed, and in some cases sites have been mothballed. New sites with existing planning permission are not being started.
- Planning applications between January and November 2008 were 33%

down on the same period in 2007, and Building regulation applications suffered a 15% fall over the same period.
- There has been a 200% increase in mortgage repossessions (59 in October 2008 compared to 19 in October 2007)

Some more detail is included in the appendix, although the speed of change in the economy is largely outpacing the collection and reporting of statistical data.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL SERVICES

A number of services have already experienced the impact of recession. Other effects will take longer to emerge. Some examples:

- The increase in mortgage repossessions has led to an increase in homelessness.

- The number of Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit claimants has increased.

- The number of people seeking benefits and debt advice from the Welfare Rights Service has increased. More people are visiting the Benefits Express, particularly to seek debt advice.

- The collection rate for Business rates has fallen, above and beyond any reduction due to the increase in the empty property rate.

- The number of reports of domestic violence has increased.

- Rental income from industrial, commercial and retail property is falling as a result of increased vacancy, increased arrears and lower rents achieveable from new lettings.

- Reduced fee income from planning and building regulation applications, s38 inspections, local searches etc.

- Reduced income from s106 planning agreement contributions which reduces the capital available for infrastructure and other works.

- Reduced capital receipts from sales of council land as a result of deferring sale or lower values. This will limit the resources available for new capital schemes, with potential consequences for BSF, and the Castlefields centre, for example.

- It will be more difficult to reduce the number of our young people not in employment education and training if there are fewer job opportunities. Similarly, it will be more difficult to help those with learning disabilities or mental health problems to find work, as they require additional support.

Whilst not necessarily related to the recession, the rise in energy and fuel costs is having an added impact on Council costs and is also hitting residents and local businesses.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES

Other services in Halton will also be affected. Some possible effects are:

- An increase in acquisitive crime (thefts from cars are reported to have increased).
- A possible increase in demand for Mental Health Services (stress related).
- A possible increase in alcohol misuse creating more demand on the Health Service.
- Increased demands on the community and voluntary sector, e.g. the CAB

7. REGIONAL RESPONSE

The pre-budget report has set the context for a number of initiatives:

- A Joint Regional Economic Council has been established with representatives from government, agencies like the NWDA, local government and the private sector.
- 4NW (the successor to the Regional Assembly) and GONW have asked for capital projects to be identified which are held up only by lack of finance.
- 4NW and the IDeA are collecting examples of early responses by Local Authorities so that good practice is shared.
- The 2001-06 Objective 2 programme has been extended, initially by 6 months to June 2009, to allow more time for schemes to be completed.

8. RESONSES IN HALTON

(a) Help for the unemployed/potentially redundant

The Employment Learning and Skills Partnership has been allocated £5.8m of Working Neighbourhood Fund between April 2008 and March 2011. This will be used to support worklessness, enterprise and skills. The activity includes –

- Basic skills development
- Updating the Halton Employment Charter course (generic employability)
- Skills development of unemployed to meet the needs of businesses
- Finance and debt advice
- New apprenticeship programme
- Expansion of care leavers employment programme
- New neighbourhood employment officers (linked to neighbourhood management)
- Business start up programme
- New support to stop people falling out of work due to illness
- Waged training schemes
- Specialised courses e.g. inspiring women, childcare qualifications.

This programme was developed before the current recession, and as with all our activities, it will be necessary to consider whether additional activity will be required, and what implications that has for our current resource allocations.

(b) Help to businesses

The Council will pay invoices much more quickly to help business finances (the target for payment is now 10 days rather than 28).

Consideration could be given to the treatment of companies in arrears with business rates or rent, although any reduction in income as a result would have serious financial consequences for Council services.

(c) Help to stimulate the economy

The Council will continue to promote urban renewal schemes to provide work for the construction industry and will work with the government and its agencies to identify funding opportunities in the context of the commitments made in the pre-budget report.

Where the private sector's response has been to pull back from developments, the Council has put in place a coherent response to work with them to identify replacement and gap funding from sources such as the North West Development Agency, ERDF, the Homes and Community Agency (formerly English Partnerships) and the Council's own resources. This strategy has not been successful in every case, however, with developers such as Langtree (managed workspace on the Widnes Waterfront) not progressing developments for which they had acquired land.

Wherever possible the Council is progressing with its development commitments (3MG, Castlefields) and seeking new opportunities (the mid-Mersey Growth Point (GONW) and the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy (HCA)). Additionally it is approaching the NWDA and HCA regeneration agencies to ensure that all applicable opportunities are seized, particularly new initiatives which might help to keep schemes moving forward

(e.g. sites purchase by HCA to ensure that new housing developments progress.)

(d) Help with housing

For those who are at risk of losing their homes, the Council has recently redesigned its Homelessness Service with an emphasis on early intervention and prevention.

Options are being explored to avoid repossession in cases of Council tax arrears by including reference to debt advice in arrears letters. This will be piloted with a limited number of cases in January to establish the likely increase in demand it will place upon the advice service.

Opportunities to increase the amount of affordable housing are being explored with Registered Social landlords and funding bodies. It is hoped to make use of the unsold stock belonging to housebuilders.

(e) Helping with debts and maximising income

Both the Council's Welfare Rights Service and voluntary sector agencies like CAB are under pressure from increased demand. There is an opportunity to review arrangements to ensure that best use is being made of current investment in these services. Steps have already been taken to increase the take-up of pension credits, income support, and council tax discounts by identifying potential claimants through housing and Council tax claims. This approach is also being used to identify families eligible for free school meals. There has been considerable interest from other local authorities in this approach.. The Take Up Team are pursing a number of other initiatives to help families to take up their entitlements.

Initiatives introduced by other Council's include encouraging take-up of tax credits by Council employees (this could be extended to partners like the PCT)

(f) Help with keeping warm

Reduced incomes and increased heating costs present a real challenge especially to the elderly or families with very young children. There is an opportunity to review the pathways by which households obtain help and advice and to link services relating to energy efficiency, fire safety and benefit advice to ensure effective signposting.

Birmingham is investing in community programmes to increase insulation in homes which will also assist the local construction industry to keep working as large scale projects are shelved.

9 POWER TO ACT

Government ministers have recently taken the opportunity to remind Local Authorities of their power under the Local Government Act 2000 to do anything they consider likely to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area unless explicitly prohibited elsewhere in legislation (the so called “Power of Wellbeing”).

10 CONCLUSION

The recession is affecting Halton residents and businesses. The picture is still developing rapidly. Residents working in the regional financial centres probably felt the initial impact, but as the recession spreads down through the economy it is likely to have a more widespread impact. On the bright side, Halton is not thought to have one of the most vulnerable economies. Individual Council services are responding to the changing picture of need and demand, but a strategic overview of the Council's response is required, and it may become necessary to consider deploying resources differently to support our response. It is therefore recommended that a task group of senior members and officers is set up to consider the options, some of which are outlined in this report, with a view to reporting back to Executive Board early in the new year. This group may wish to consult with partner agencies as part of its deliberation.

11 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The recession will have a direct impact on our ability to achieve many of the targets we had set for Halton.

12 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The recession will have direct financial implications for the Council in reduced revenue and capital receipts. There will also be a need to review how it will affect the cost of services (particularly those which are demand led) and priorities for investment.

13 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

12.1 Healthy Halton

There is a direct relationship between affluence and health outcomes. Therefore the recession my have an adverse effect on health. There may be increased demand for service, for example, in relation to mental health.

12.2 Urban Renewal in Halton

The recession has slowed housebuilding and may affect regeneration schemes such as Widnes Waterfront.

12.3 Children and Young People

There is likely to be an increase in child poverty and the stress of redundancy and unemployment may impact on families. Employment opportunities for young people will be reduced.

12.4 Employment, Learning and Skills

Increased unemployment and financial problems for employers will have significant impact on our objectives for employment, learning and skills.

12.5 Safer Halton

It is possible that certain types of crime will increase during the recession.

14 RISK ANALYSIS

The risks to Halton are that the recession will adversely affect local communities. The measures in this report are aimed mainly at mitigating this impact.

15 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

There is a danger that the gaps between the most deprived areas of Halton and the rest of the Borough will increase.

IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

National Overview

- Its 16 years since the last recession in the early 1990s, which in turn was 8 years after the one before that in the mid 1980s

- Both these earlier recessions lasted 5 quarters (a recession is measured as negative growth for at least 2 consecutive quarters). However both took 14 quarters, i.e. three and a half years, before consumer spending patterns recovered to pre – recession levels.

- There have been 255 recessions worldwide since 1870. Two-thirds have lasted one year while 12% lasted 2 years or more.

- Consensus is that this recession will be deeper than first thought and longer lasting. The UK economy has the highest % in international trade than other top economies and therefore the recession here could last either shorter or longer because of this factor. It depends on how quickly other world economies recover. Falling oil and energy prices suggest this recession may be over sooner, but the global scale of this one suggest its far more complex this time.

- Unemployment peaked in both the 1986 and 1992 recessions at 10% of the workforce, but up to 70% of households were indirectly affected by being related to, or known to, an unemployed person.

- Unemployment and downward consumer sales figures have only just begun to work their way through.

- Economists believe London and the South East will be the areas most affected this time as they have shown the most volatile growth during the past decade or more. The financial sector in the City of London could lose 65,000 jobs, but these people commute to work from all over south east England. No one area will feel the full impact. North West regional finance centres, such as Chester and Liverpool, are equally vulnerable to job losses.

- The second sector most affected so far, is construction and property. Mortgage lending is down 50% in a year, but down 70% for new purchases. First time buyers are not yet gaining access to the housing market as cash–rich buy-to-let buyers are taking advantage of lower prices.

- Retailing will suffer as people refrain from spending – see later section.

- Manufacturing, especially in expensive goods like cars is being affected. The high oil prices in the summer of 2008 has affected demand for smaller, more fuel-efficient vehicles, but it has taken the car industry, especially in the US a long time to realise their gas-guzzlers are no longer in demand. They face a difficult task in re tooling their factories to build smaller cars. Both mass car manufacturers on Merseyside are vulnerable, with perhaps the Ellesmere Port factory more so as its parent company, General Motors, is facing huge losses in the USA.

- The impact of the recession will exasperate already struggling or failing industries, e.g. beer sales in pubs. The problems Woolworths or MFI face are longer running than this recession, but are likely to mean their final demise from the High Street.

- Companies trim their budgets to save and advertising or media costs are among the first to go. Many firms try to keep staff on as long as possible so the effect can be a slow trickle on to the unemployment market unless the whole company goes under.

- The industries most likely to be initially affected by the credit crunch and squeeze on disposable incomes are financial services, real estate, other business services, construction and retail and other consumer related industries. Heading into 2009, the sectoral and thus geographic pattern of impact will change as the wider economy begins to slow.

- Outside of central London, a number of smaller centres show up as being particularly vulnerable. These include Chester, Bournemouth, Calderdale and Macclesfield. These tend to be relatively prosperous areas, all of which have high concentrations of jobs in banking and auxiliary services.

Consumer spending behaviour

- Recessions affect different people in different ways. There is some evidence from early focus group work that about a third of the national population are confident they can ride out the recession and don't intend to change their spending patterns, though some express a more cautious approach to business confidence and may think twice about that third short holiday break. Not surprisingly these people are the more affluent.

- About 38% admit to cutting back on purchases or to trading down. Sales figures for Aldi and Lidl are up whereas those for Waitrose or Sainsburys are down. Going out is reduced as there is a tendency to eat out less and stay at home more with a DVD rather than visit the cinema. Sales of pizza home deliveries are up, while some restaurants will feel the pinch.

- Another group – about 28% of the population, admit to significant cutting back. These are the lower income families who find their finances are significantly reduced. Halton will have more in these two latter groups than the first due to the socio- economic characteristics of its population profile.

- Whereas overall expenditure on cultural and leisure activities is curtailed, this has been more in the eating out and pub visits categories than visits to cinemas.

- Demand on local health services will increase, particularly mental health, when stress over losing a job or house will increase dramatically. Fear of losing a job also increases stress levels and more people work longer hours to show their employer that if there are to be redundancies, they should be spared.

- Demand will increase significantly for benefit and debt advice. See a later section for the impact the Halton CAB has reported recently. Housing waiting lists will also increase significantly.

- Future tax rises may mean that these changes to consumer behaviour are long term as most people will have less disposable income available.

How Halton may be affected.

- According to Oxford Economics Vulnerability Index (July 2008) Halton is one of the least vulnerable areas in the North West:

Local Authority	**North West Vulnerability Rank**
Chester	1
Macclesfield	2
South Lakeland	3
Trafford	4
Sefton	5
Stockport	6
Vale Royal	7
Bolton	8
Manchester	9
Warrington	10
Eden	11
Carlisle	12
Congleton	13
Allerdale	14
Blackpool	15
Wigan	16
Ellesmere Port and Neston	17
West Lancashire	18
Salford	19
Liverpool	20
Chorley	21
Wyre	22
Oldham	23
Preston	24
Wirral	25
Hyndburn	26
Tameside	27
Rossendale	28
St Helens	29
Bury	30
South Ribble	31
Rochdale	32
Lancaster	33
Halton	**34**
Barrow-in-Furness	35
Burnley	36
Crewe and Nantwich	37
Ribble Valley	38
Knowsley	39
Pendle	40
Fylde	41
Blackburn with Darwen	42
Copeland	43

- About a third of Halton's residents travel out of the Borough to work. They will be affected by the economies in these towns, such as Liverpool, Chester and Warrington. Both Chester and Ellesmere Port have 40% of their respective workforce engaged in vulnerable industries (finance or car manufacturing).

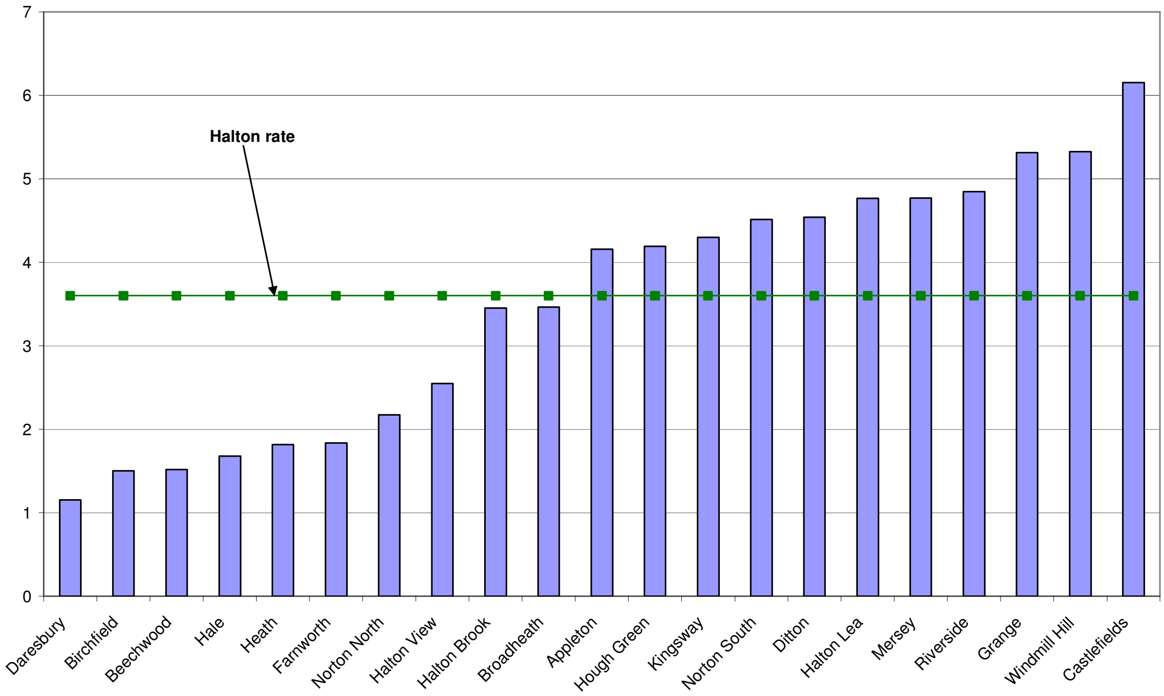
APPENDIX

- The manufacturing corridor stretching from the Mersey to the Humber is thought to be vulnerable but not as much as the West Midlands. So far its been London and the South East most affected, with Crawley experiencing the highest % increase in unemployment. However this is more to do with its location close to Gatwick airport and the failure of holiday companies than its New Town status.

- Halton's economy has diversified considerably in the past 15-20 years and is no longer so vulnerable to potential problems with any one industry. It is relatively dynamic within the North West economies, ranked 5th for productivity within NW England. The chemical industry has shed hundreds of jobs since the 1980s recession as it becomes more automated, and therefore any impact this one industry may have would be far less than in the 1980s when unemployment locally reached 18%.

- Halton's unemployment rate is currently at 3.6% (October 2008) which is higher than the North West rate of 3.0%. Castlefields ward currently has the highest rate (6.2%) (see chart below).

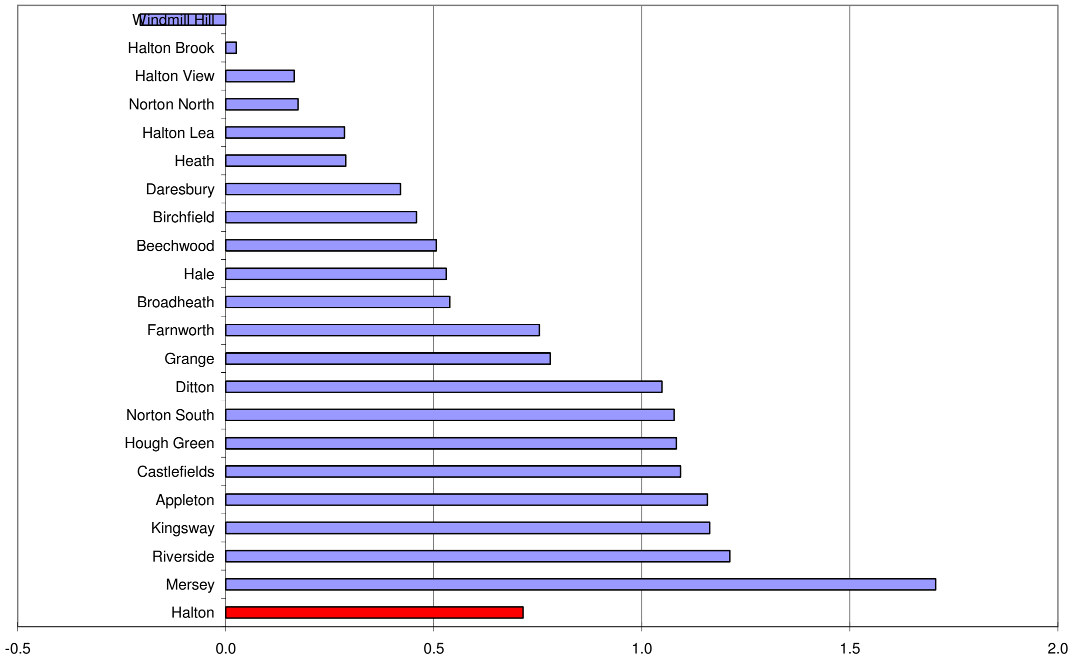
Ward Unemployment Rates (%) Oct 08



- Halton's unemployment rate has had an increase of 0.7% from Oct 2007 to Oct 2008. The only ward to show a decrease in this time is Windmill Hill (-0.2%), although it still has the second highest rate in the Borough. The largest increase was in Mersey ward (+1.7%).

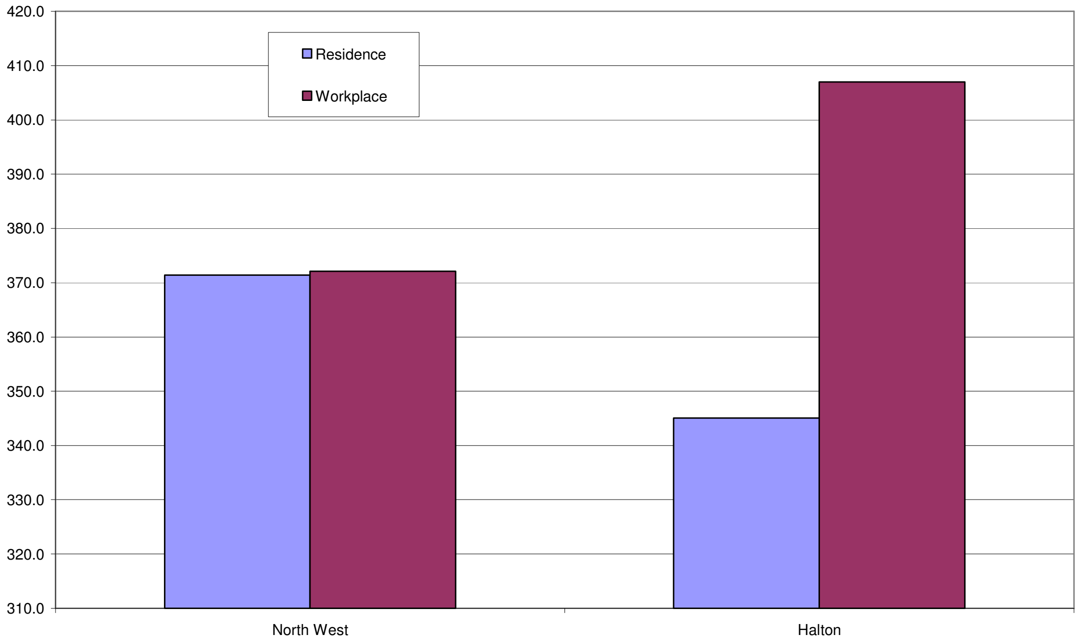
APPENDIX

Change in Unemployment Rates Oct 07 to Oct 08



- The latest Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) shows the continuing trend that people working in Halton earn more on average than those living in Halton.

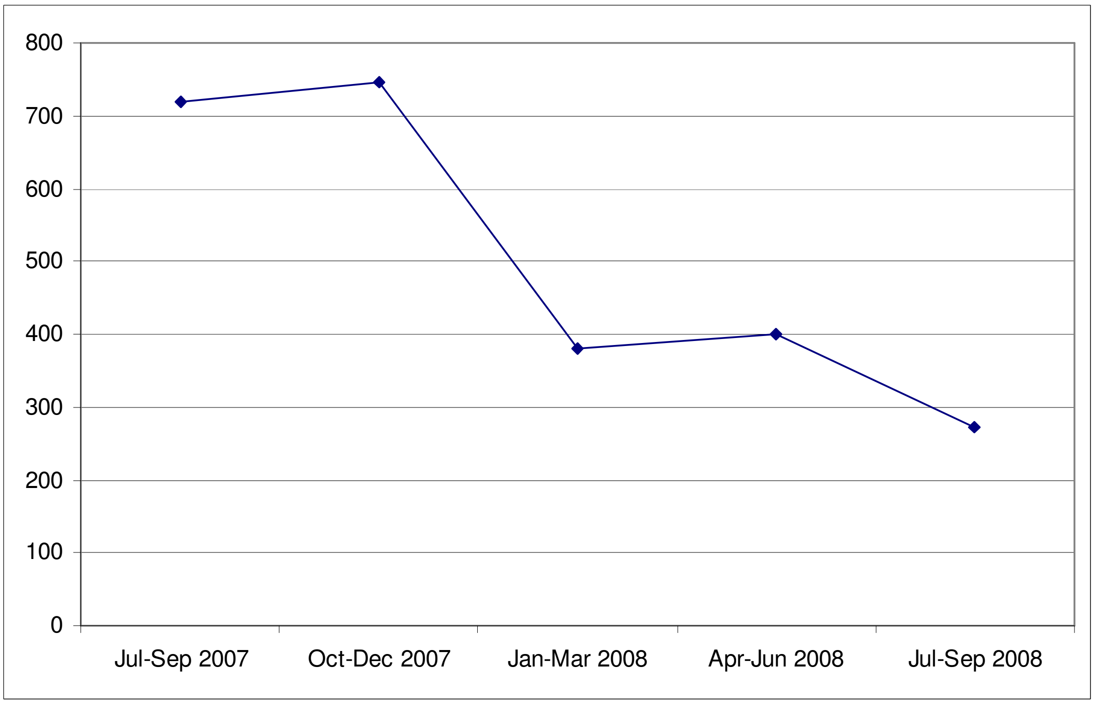
2008 Median Earnings taken from the ASHE survey.



APPENDIX

- Although the average house prices in Halton have increased in the last quarter from £147,086 (Apr-Jun 08) to £157,123 (Jul-Sep 08), the number of sales has dropped from 399 to 273. For the same period in 2007 (Jul-Sep 07) sales numbered over 700.

Volume of house sales in Halton



REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	18th December 2008
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director - Environment
SUBJECT:	Council Response to the Public Consultation on the Merseyside Joint Waste Development Plan Document Spatial Strategy and Sites (SSS) Report
WARDS:	All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 Halton Borough Council is involved in producing a Joint Waste Development Plan Document (DPD) for the Merseyside sub-region. Production has reached the stage where the sites and strategy underpinning the policies contained in the Waste DPD will be subject to public scrutiny. The Regional Spatial Strategy and government policy (PPS10) requires that waste must be dealt with in a sustainable way.

1.2 Over the period 17 November 2008 to 9 January 2009, now extended to 16 January, the Spatial Strategy and Sites (SSS) Report has been placed on public consultation. As a consultee, the Council has prepared a formal response to this consultation.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

(1) the Executive Board approve the content of this report as the formal response of Halton Borough Council to the public consultation on the Halton Council, Liverpool City Council, Knowsley Council, Sefton Council, St Helens Council and Wirral Council Joint Waste Development Plan Document Spatial Strategy and Sites Report.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Waste DPD is being produced by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Services (MEAS) on behalf of the six greater Merseyside districts (Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton, and Wirral). This will be the spatial, land-use planning document for waste-related development in the Merseyside sub-region. It deals with the scale, location and type of facilities required to manage all waste (commercial, industrial, municipal, construction and demolition and hazardous) in Merseyside and Halton. It will set out the spatial strategy for new waste development and include site allocations for new waste facilities. Criteria -based policies will also be included to provide a consistent approach for dealing with waste planning applications across the six relevant authorities.

3.2 Issues Addressed in the Spatial Strategy and Sites Report

3.3 The Spatial Strategy and Sites Report builds on the foundations laid by the first formal consultation, the Issues and Options Report (March – April 2007). Importantly, it takes the key messages from that consultation and has brought new information to bear on these issues through further evidence gathering, technical assessments and informal consultation with stakeholders in the development of the Spatial Strategy and Sites Report. This on-going process has involved regular dialogue with District Planning Officers, Stakeholder Group and Technical Advisory Group amongst others.

3.4 The Spatial Strategy and Sites Report addresses eight key issues:

- Vision.
- Strategic objectives.
- The resource-recovery-led strategy.
- Spatial strategy options.
- Climate change and energy security.
- Site selection methodology.
- Listings and profiles for top scoring sites.
- The need for further technical assessment and search for landfill and land raise.

3.5 Each of these issues is discussed in turn.

3.6 The consultation report contains 14 consultation questions which consultees are asked to respond to. It is important to note that to get the maximum value out of the process that the summary and the full document should be read in full prior to responding.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Vision

4.2 Page 33 of the report sets out the Vision for the Waste DPD. It is the direction of travel and where Merseyside and Halton wish to be with respect to sustainable waste management in 2025. The vision remains substantially unchanged since that presented as Issues and Options stage because excellent consensus was achieved at that juncture. Question 7.1 invites comments on the Vision. The Council agrees with the proposed vision.

4.3 Strategic Objectives

4.4 These are high-level objectives stating what the Waste DPD is seeking to achieve and they are presented in page 35. The strategic objectives remain unchanged for the most part since Issues and Options, though improvements have been made as a consequence of sustainability appraisal and the results of Issues and Options consultation. Question 7.2 (page 35) invites comment on the strategic objectives. The Council agrees with these stated Strategic Objectives.

4.5 Resource Recovery-led Strategy

4.6 Merseyside and Halton are over-reliant on exporting much of its waste to landfill, especially (for MSW) by vehicles into Warrington and Wrexham. This position has to change, as it is inherently unsustainable. Notwithstanding the contractual positions, there is also a big question mark over whether areas adjacent to the Liverpool City Region will, in planning terms, continue to accept waste from Merseyside and Halton.

4.7 The change away from landfill is being driven by a multitude of factors including cost, legislation, environmental concerns, community concerns and impacts, climate change and the severe lack of available landfill. In addition, it is being driven by the need to extract as much useful resource out of the waste we generate. All these factors, along with the evidence base, result in moving waste planning and strategy towards waste minimisation, higher levels of recycling and diversion away from landfill.

4.8 The Spatial Strategy confirms Merseyside & Halton should become net self-sufficient in terms of waste management by 2025. The Spatial Strategy and Sites Report therefore seek to export only as much waste as is imported. Consultation question 8.1 on page 37 seeks comments on this matter. The Council agrees with the proposed strategy.

4.9 Spatial Strategy

4.10 Section 9 presents the pattern of waste facilities or spatial strategy proposed. Table 9.2 includes a facility forecast for the sub-region to 2025. A total of 26 new facilities are required, including 6 landfills, which are not the subject of this consultation. It should be noted that there is a numeric error in this table, which incorrectly shows a total of 27 facilities instead of the 26 that are needed.

4.11 The spatial strategy takes account of land availability, infrastructure requirements, proximity to waste arisings, existing waste facilities and the movements of waste throughout the sub-region. It is also important to ensure that the Waste DPD delivers facilities, which provide a workable operational solution for the sub-region and are a realistic proposition to industry.

4.12 Question 9.1 on page 46 asks for comments on the approach used to define the spatial strategy. The Council agrees with the key criteria used for defining the spatial strategy.

4.13 The report then goes on to present three spatial strategy options. Each of these options is supported by a map to summarise the options (Figures 9.2 – 9.4). Spatial Strategy option 1 – A sub-regional site approach, is chosen as the preferred spatial strategy option. Consultation responses are invited on this in Question 9.2 (page 58). The Council agrees that option 1 should be the preferred spatial strategy option.

4.14 <u>Climate Change and Energy Security</u>

4.15 Consultation questions 10.1 and 10.2 (pages 61 and 62) ask specific questions relating to whether energy from waste such as heat and power should be provided to all major waste development including residential such as district heating schemes or just major non-residential development. The Council feels that “energy from waste” covers too broad a range of technologies (from anerobic digestion through to pyrolysis) to be able to provide a response to this question. Although the recovery of energy from waste is an accepted method of waste treatment it is inappropriate to conclude that these methods could be applied to all major developments, residential or otherwise. The Council therefore has no response to questions 10.1 and 10.2 but comments that the question is too generic.

4.16 <u>Site Selection Methodology</u>

4.17 Consultation question 11.1 (page 67) seeks views on the site selection methodology. Members should note that this method has previously been agreed with the Merseyside Leaders Group. The Council agrees with the method used to identify waste management sites.

4.18 <u>Listings and Profiles for Top Scoring Sites</u>

4.19 Halton has a substantial proportion of the waste facilities that serve the Liverpool City Region and wider geographical area. Halton has a hazardous landfill site at Randle Island, Runcorn operated by Ineos Chlor Ltd. At Shell Green, in Widnes, sewage sludge is taken from seven wastewater treatment plants across the northwest. This s then processed by de-watering and incineration. When operational, Ineos Chlor’s combined heat and power plant at Weston Point, Runcorn, will be able to process 850,000 tonnes of solid recovered fuel from waste each year. In addition to these large scale secondary treatment and disposal facilities, Halton has 18 waste transfer stations located in the Borough. This gives Halton the largest concentration of waste transfer stations, per head of population, in the North West. Halton already makes a significant contribution to the waste treatment and disposal needs of the Merseyside sub-region.

4.20 Areas of Opportunity

4.21 The site method and spatial strategy identifies six broad areas across the sub-region where there are clusters of the better scoring sites. Unsurprisingly many of these are clustered around areas requiring regeneration, clusters of existing waste management facilities or in industrial areas. Consultation question 12.1 (page 69) seeks feedback on the six broad areas of opportunity that have been identified. The Council agrees that, in broad terms, the Area of Opportunity in Halton would cover the locations where waste uses are likely to be acceptable in land use terms.

4.22 As part of the joint Waste Planning Group, Halton must put forward a selection of sites to accommodate waste uses in the sub-region. All districts had to put a minimum of 5 sites into the SSS Report to ensure a sound plan that was flexible enough to accommodate the markets requirements for facilities across the sub-region. Each authority has previously been asked to provide a full list of potential sites, including allocations for other uses. MEAS added further sites to this list from desktop study and discussion with operators and the MWDA (Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority). MEAS then followed a standard appraisal methodology (documented in the SSS Report, Section 11 page 63) to score the suitability of each site put forward. The sites listed for Halton are considered to be the most suitable for waste uses in the borough, despite having some major constraints. If sites are removed from the shortlist it will be necessary to provide alternative sites to maintain a spread of options and ensure a flexible and sound plan.

4.23 There are five sites located in Halton that appear in the Waste SSS report. These sites are in two separate clusters, one cluster on Ditton Road, Widnes and a second cluster on Widnes Waterfront. A distinction is made in site size. Those sites larger than 4.5 ha in area, termed 'Sub-Regional Sites', could house facilities capable of dealing with a significant proportion of waste streams generated in the sub-region. Halton has two sites in this category H2295 and H2309. Sites smaller than 4.5ha in area, termed 'Sites of District Significance', could house facilities capable of dealing with a significant proportion of waste streams generated in individual districts. The merits and shortcomings of each of the Halton sites are considered in the following sections.

Site Ref	Location	Sub Regional Site	Score	Size (ha)	Page in SSS report
H1651	Depot 2, Ditton Road, Widnes	No	9	1.4	100
H1690	Depot 1, Ditton Road, Widnes	No	20	2.2	99
H1875	Site G in Widnes Waterfront SPD,	No	35	3.5	98

	Former ICI Zeneca Site, Tanhouse Lane, Widnes				
H2295	Former Johnson's Lane Landfill Site, Widnes, EDZ	Yes	13	15.2	80
H2309	Site H in Widnes Waterfront SPD Site, Moss Bank Road, EDZ	Yes	18	8.8	79

4.24 For each site the Waste DPD SSS report lists possible waste uses.

4.25 *Top Scoring Sites*

4.26 Question 12.2 (page 73) requests comments on the sites listed in tables 12.3 and 12.4. There are significant deliverability issues with all of the sites listed. These issues may mean these sites are unsuitable for waste management uses and these factors are discussed for each site, in turn, below.

4.27 Question 12.3 (page 77) asks for information on the suitability of sites and waste management uses described in the site profiles contained in the report (pages 79-80 and 98-100). These issues are addressed in the commentary on each site below.

4.28 *Sub-Regional Sites*

Site H2295 known as the Former ICI tip / Johnsons Lane tip. Possible listed uses for this site are as a waste transfer station, re-processor, primary treatment facility, secondary treatment facility, or possibly a resource recovery park. This site has considerable deliverability issues. It doesn't have direct access to the public highway. There are considerable access/ransom issues that could potentially be very difficult and/or expensive to resolve. Development of the site and access would also need to be designed in such a way to allow comprehensive development, with access via all modes on the other land parcels to the south of Moss Bank Road. Depending on the scale of the development it may contribute to traffic capacity issues at various Fiddlers Ferry Road junctions. This site has very significant contamination under laying it. There are accounts of there being radioactive waste on the site. The site may require some very costly further site investigations and remedial works. These issues need to be addressed in advance of any redevelopment, particularly the control of leachate, contaminated with a range of organic compounds, and the assessment of the presence of low level radiologically contaminated material. The description in the SSS Report is wrong as there is a watercourse running through the site

(Johnson's Brook) and the vegetation is best described as poor quality scrubland with stands of birch trees. There are mature poplars on the eastern boundary and in addition there are areas of exposed waste across the site. The site is currently the subject of an investigation by the Environment Agency and it is likely to be designated a 'special site' due to the high levels of contamination and the risk to controlled waters (the Mersey). The EA are investigating the site under the contaminated land regulations on behalf of the Council. The outcome of that investigation is likely to require the appropriate persons to undertake further works that may include remediation. The site is well removed from residential areas and other receptors for possible nuisance issues. Although the Council agrees with the selection criteria and methodology used to select the site, the deliverability issues are of such magnitude that this site may be undeliverable.

Site H2309 known as Site H in Widnes Waterfront SPD Site, Moss Bank Road, EDZ. This site comprises a large area of vacant land and is the former ICI Pilkington Sullivan site plus some of the former ICI tip site above (H2295). Possible listed uses for this site are as a waste transfer station, re-processor, primary treatment facility, secondary treatment facility, resource Recovery Park, or a land raise site. The Council has undertaken site investigation, however, likely further work includes environmental impact assessment and also the monitoring of ground water probably over a year (EA condition) if development is to be bought forward. The Council went out to a number of remediation specialists to get estimates of the remediation costs of this land and from these it is believed that the cost will be in the region of £8.5 million. More recently the Council undertook some site investigations on part of Widnes Warth owned by the Council to locate a new art piece, however, the investigation uncovered further contamination which is very similar to that discovered on this site. The most probable explanation is that this off site contamination is coming from the Pilkington Sullivan (H2309) site and is discharging into the River Mersey via this site. Therefore this site has some considerable contamination issues, which will need to be resolved before development can take place. Another key issue is access with the site not directly accessing an adoptable highway. Currently the site is accessed through a 'blue gate' and there are understood to be restrictions on the use of this as an access point. A number of road improvements will be required in any proposed new road layout, for example, traffic lights to control the junction with Gorsey lane. Land is likely to be required to improve the visibility at the junction to the east and west of the entrance. Development of the site and access would need to be designed in such a way to allow comprehensive development, with access via all modes on the other land parcels to the south of Moss Bank Road. Depending on the scale of the development it may contribute to traffic capacity issues at various Fiddlers Ferry Road junctions. In summary, as the site is a former heavy chemicals manufacturing plant that operated for in excess of 100 years the land has significant contamination issues related to both organic and inorganic compounds impacting groundwater and surface water features.

Considerable further work is required to assess the full impact of the residual contamination and the effects on any future development. Preliminary estimates of remediation costs are high. The site is well removed from residential areas and other receptors for possible nuisance issues and is a significant derelict site that has been disused for over 15 years and will continue to be major environmental hazard unless redevelopment tackles the site. Although the Council agrees with the selection criteria and methodology used to select the site, there are significant deliverability issues. Any development would need to be designed to blend into this waterside location and be in conformity with the principles contained in the Widnes Waterfront SPD. A land raise site would not be supported.

4.29 Sites of District Significance

4.30 Site H1651 (Depot 2, Ditton Road, Widnes). The site description given in the SSS Report is slightly incorrect. The identified site covers at least three current businesses, MJ Burns (metals recycling), Halton Community Transport and part of Feralco (water treatment chemicals manufacture). Possible uses listed for this site are a household waste reception centre (HWRC), waste transfer station (WTS) or re-processor to process recovered recyclable materials. Development of this site would raise potential highways issues relating to queue management (vehicles queuing for access on Ditton Road, causing blocking back and potential shunt accidents). There is also a problem with the standard of access for an intensification of use involving heavy vehicles - poor radii, visibility and junction spacing. These highway concerns are likely to be all the more of an issue during the construction of the Mersey Gateway and potentially thereafter. The Council agrees with the selection criteria and methodology used to select the site. However, a HWRC is unsuitable due to highways issues. Suitable highway safety measures need to be accommodated into the road network to enable the site to be considered deliverable for other waste management uses. Uses also need to be compatible with the Strategic Rail Freight Park (3MG).

4.31 Site H1690 (Depot 1, Ditton Road, Widnes). Possible listed uses for this site are a waste transfer station (WTS) or re-processor to process recovered recyclable materials. This site is adjacent to a key gateway to the borough and also opposite a site with permission for a hotel (the site to the north). There are ongoing efforts to try to ratify the accesses in the vicinity, as there is a problem with access to the site to the west, due to the close proximity of existing accesses. Another consideration is the provision of a right turning lane into the proposed Hotel site opposite and how this will relate to access into an intensification of use of this site. The Council has concerns that intensification of this site for waste processing may lead to excessive numbers of HGVs needing to turn into the site and the queuing space on the road network not being available to accommodate this safely. Any development is likely to contribute to traffic capacity issues. These highway concerns are likely to be all the more of an issue during the construction of the Mersey Gateway and potentially thereafter. The Council agrees with the selection criteria and methodology used to select the site. However, there are significant highway issues that would need to be mitigated. If the highway concerns could be overcome, any facilities would have to utilise high quality design and be totally enclosed within a warehouse with appropriate airborne odour and noise containment and in affect offer overall environmental benefit to the area. Uses also need to be compatible with the Strategic Rail Freight Park (3MG).

4.32 Site H1875 known as Site G in Widnes Waterfront SPD, Former ICI Zeneca Site, Tanhouse Lane, Widnes. The site directly fronts the Canal, Transpennine Trail and the Local Wildlife Site that is the saltmarsh. Possible listed uses for this site are waste transfer station, re-processor to process recovered recyclable materials, primary treatment and secondary treatment. The actual site boundary is slightly different to that shown in the Waste DPD plan due to a land swap and this requires amendment. This site has significant constraints that seriously impact this sites deliverability. The site suffers from contamination and has a number of service constraints with electrical cables and above ground services crossing from the Saffil's site and sub station. It is likely that the cost of diversion will be significant cost to the development. This site is adjacent to a site (the Routledge site) that has a Council resolution from 2005 to grant planning permission subject to a Section 106 agreement for a mixed use development, which includes housing. This site is to the south of a new office development at the Safils plant. The Highways Authority advice is that appropriate improvements need to be made to Tanhouse Lane (for example, alignment, cycle tracks etc - which would ultimately lead into the EDZ boulevard). Any development of the site and appropriate access would need to be designed in such a way to allow comprehensive development, with access via all modes on the other land parcels to the south of Moss Bank Road. Depending on the scale of the development it may contribute to traffic capacity issues at various Fiddlers Ferry Road junctions. Although the Council agrees with the selection criteria and methodology used to select the site, there are significant deliverability issues. The Council regards the proposals as out of character and incompatible with the proposals contained in the Widnes Waterfront SPD.

4.33 Sites on Widnes Waterfront

4.34 There are some general observations on sites within the Waterfront. Two of the sites lie within the area defined as the Widnes Waterfront EDZ and the third (H2295) is adjacent to, but outside the EDZ. These potential sites are considered as being unsuitable, as the introduction of waste and similarly type uses would undermine the Councils regeneration ambitions for the Waterfront. The sites are all also close to the alignment of the Mersey Gateway and will post construction be very visible thus demanding a particularly sensitive or even positive treatment Throughout the area there is also a known power supply issue with substantial investment required to deliver a new primary sub-station and a reinforced supply. Sites H2309 and H2295 both have significant contamination problems and have lain derelict for a considerable period of time.

4.35 If these considerable constraint and considerations could be overcome and be addressed then there may be opportunities to see the sites developed. Private sector interest in the three waterfront sites could deal with the environmental liabilities of the site, generate jobs, remove difficult owner involvement, and allow the Council to seek conditions through planning applications that would see the sites properly equipped for operation and restored. In the case of site H2295 this would include restoration of the site as public open space as per the Widnes Waterfront SPD & UDP. Site H2309 has been described in the Widnes Waterfront SPD as suitable for B2 use, therefore a well designed, modern end use would not be out of place with ambitions for this area

4.36 The areas in which the above sites are located are characterised by existing contamination and surrounded by heavy industrial neighbours, in the case of Widnes Waterfront the presence of Fiddlers Ferry, the Shell Green plant is present. Whilst other property sectors may view these factors negatively the waste sector will be unmoved. Allocation of these sites for specific waste facilities could potentially bring the long-term economic and environmental improvements that the Council seeks without damaging investment confidence. It is acknowledged that the response to the public consultation would need to be carefully worded to ensure only the 'suitable' waste uses on each sites and also that there is no safeguarding policy on the allocations to prevent a better offer being realised.

4.37 <u>The need for further technical assessment and search for landfill and land raise</u>

4.38 Whilst landfill and land raise is not strictly the subject of this consultation in terms of proposals and suggested sites, some information has been presented with respect to the technical work that needs to be undertaken to establish whether Merseyside and Halton offer any potential for new landfill and land raise. Only 3% of consultees wanted Merseyside and Halton to continue to export waste to other areas for landfill. Also 97% of consultees wanted the sub-region to move towards self-sufficiency for sustainable waste management. The most significant need will be for non-inert landfill as inert material can more easily be reprocessed and re-used e.g. landscaping, road construction, site preparation, engineering works, and concrete block manufacture.

4.39 Planning policy requires Merseyside and Halton to undertake a robust assessment of this issue and the public need to be given ample opportunity to comment. This is why the on-going work on landfill and land raise is being presented at this juncture – it provides an opportunity for further discussion as the Waste DPD is advanced.

4.40 Consultation question 12.4 seeks views on opportunities for landfill and land raise on the sites listed in Appendix D (page 157). The Council feels the inclusion of sites EAS0355 and EAS0107 are inappropriately listed here and should be removed. These sites are historic chemical tips with existing environmental problems that the Council is striving to tackle. The land uses and infrastructure of these areas will no longer accommodate landfill or land raise. There are significant environmental designated sites close to these sites (the Mersey RAMSAR) and the Liverpool John Lennon Airport Safety Zone policy would veto landfill / land raise to the risk flocks of birds, attracted to these types of waste site, present to landing aircraft.

4.41 <u>Other Issues</u>

4.42 Consultation question 12.5 (page 135) seeks views on whether sub-regional sites (those greater than 4.5 hectares in area with some limited safeguarding of smaller sites) is the preferred option to ensure that Merseyside and Halton has sufficient certainty to cater for future waste management requirements to 2025.

4.43 The Council feels that all sites should be subjected to a review after each 5-year period of the plan passes. At this review point, if there is no need for the waste facilities proposed on these sites, they should be released for uses other than waste.

4.44 Question 12.6 simply provides consultees with an opportunity to make any wider observations they have on the Spatial Strategy and Sites Report. The Council has no further comments to add in response to this question.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no ‘other implications’ for consideration.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton**

6.2 This report has no direct implications for children and young people in Halton. Indirectly, the Waste Development Plan Document (Waste DPD) places sustainability at its very core, protecting valuable resources for future generations and promoting the most sustainable methods of waste handling and treatment.

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

6.4 The sites eventually allocated through the Waste DPD process will provide economic opportunities, including potentially 500 – 1000 jobs direct in the waste sector, with a much greater number through indirect employment such as the reprocessing sector and social enterprise.

6.5 **A Healthy Halton**

6.6 There are concerns about environmental nuisance, odours, emissions and the effects that waste facilities may or may not have on the health of residents. The Spatial Strategy and Sites Report have been supported by an independent review of this matter. Scientific and medical consensus is that there are no direct health issues arising from the normal operation of modern waste facilities. However, there is little scientific research and experience relating to advanced treatment technologies upon which to draw any firm conclusions with respect to health issues. The Waste DPD does push waste up the waste hierarchy and encourages the use of more efficient and precautionary technologies.

6.7 **A Safer Halton**

6.8 The main implication, aside from the health aspects noted above, is the consideration of increased traffic movements in the vicinity of any developed site.

6.9 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

6.10 A great deal of effort has been directed by the Council into change perceptions about Halton that stem from its industrial legacy. A prime concern is the impact on inward investment in the Borough. Waste facilities must be designed to a high standard of quality and mitigate against all environmental nuisance that is associated with waste facilities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Due to pressing timescales for the preparation of a Single Regional Strategy, the increasing number of private sector planning applications for waste treatment facilities, the urgent progress needed with the Merseyside Waste Disposal (MWDA) procurement process and the pressing need for Merseyside and Halton to secure new infrastructure for sustainable waste management it is vital that rapid progress is maintained with the Waste DPD. Advancing the Waste DPD to a stage where is can start to influence planning decisions will greatly assist the Districts in making those decisions.

7.2 Delay to the Waste DPD will:

- Increase costs to the Districts in the future through the cost of landfill disposal and financial penalties.
- Reduce Merseyside's ability to influence the waste policy content of the emerging Single Regional Strategy.
- Have a knock on effect of Waste DPD project timescales with resultant increases in costs of plan preparation.

- Potentially have a knock on impact on the MWDA planning and procurement processes by increasing uncertainty.
- Have very serious implications for the soundness of each of the District emerging Core Strategy documents.
- Result in a continuation of an industry-led approach to the location of new waste facilities rather than the pro-active plan-led approach proposed within the Waste DPD.
- Reduce the Council's ability to resist applications of the wrong type and in the wrong places

7.3 These risks are mitigated by a monthly review of all significant risk factors highlighted by the project's risk assessment.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared for this project and is available at www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk. Where appropriate, action has been taken on the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment.

9.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

9.1 To respond to consultation which forms part of the statutory process for the formulation and development of Development Plan documents.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

10.1 The are no alternative processes available. If not followed the Plan making process would be un-sound.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

11.1 The response is required by the 16th January 2009.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
The Halton Council, Liverpool City Council, Knowsley Council, Sefton Council, St Helens Council and Wirral Council Joint Waste Development Plan Document Spatial Strategy and Sites Report.	www.wasteplanningmerseyside.gov.uk or Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.	**Tim Gibbs**