

Public Document Pack



Executive Board

Thursday, 15 January 2009 2.00 p.m.
Marketing Suite, Municipal Building

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

Chief Executive

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

PART 1

Item	Page No
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.	
3. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO	
(A) OFSTED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (APA) OF SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN HALTON - KEY DECISION	1 - 11

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, 29 January 2009

Item	Page No
4. CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO	
(A) ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN	12 - 70
5. PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION, REGENERATION AND RENEWAL PORTFOLIO	
(A) TO SEEK NOMINATIONS TO SERVE ON THE INEOS LOCAL LIAISON FORUM	71 - 73
6. QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO	
(A) CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE	74 - 104

In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 15 January 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director
Children and Young People

SUBJECT: OFSTED Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of Services to Children and Young People in Halton

WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To formally report to the Executive Board the outcome of the statutory Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services in Halton undertaken by OFSTED.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

(1) **Executive Board note the performance ratings arising from the Annual Performance Assessment of services to children and young people in Halton undertaken by OFSTED.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 OFSTED undertakes an Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of Children's Services in all council areas. This was published on the 17th December 2008 (see Appendix 1).

3.2 That APA draws on evidence from fieldwork undertaken by OFSTED including School Inspections; the Joint Area Review conducted in 2008; the Children and Young People's Plan; other inspectorates findings, along with the council's own self-assessment.

3.3 The Assessment grades the Council in seven key areas. The grades are 4 (outstanding); 3 (good), 2 (adequate) and 1 (inadequate).

3.4 In summary, the Council received the following gradings.

Assessment judgement area	APA grade
Overall effectiveness of children's services	3
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	4
Enjoying and achieving (Education and Learning)	4
Making a positive contribution	4
Achieving economic well-being	2
Capacity to improve, including the management of	4

services for children and young people	
--	--

4.0 The findings of the inspectors included the following issues:

4.1 Being Healthy

4.1.1 The contribution of services to improving Healthy outcomes for children and young people is good.

4.1.2 There are been outstanding improvement in performance in reducing child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Specialist and Non Specialist waiting times during the last year.

4.1.3 All schools are participating in National Healthy School Status.

4.1.4 Teenage conceptions and infant mortality remain as a challenge.

4.2 Staying Safe

4.2.1 Services are rated as outstanding by Ofsted. Safeguarding arrangements, policy and procedures are judged as outstanding.

4.3 Enjoying and Achieving

4.3.1 Services in the field of Education are judged outstanding. This is an improvement from 'good' in 2007. The proportion of Young People achieving 5 or more A* to C grades in GCSE has increased significantly to above the national average (2nd best nationally in terms of performance improvement) . Secondary Attendance improvement is also the second best nationally.

4.3.2 There has been a narrowing of the gap for vulnerable children.

4.3.3 Improvements at Key Stage 2 (end of Primary school) was the second best nationally.

4.4 Making a Positive Contribution

4.4.1 This area was judged outstanding; with rates of re-offending falling rapidly; access to Youth Services expanded and consultation and engagement of young people well founded.

4.5 Achieving Economic Well Being

4.5.1 This was judged to be adequate. There is a strong 14 – 19 partnership, with more young people moving on to Further Education. More children in Care are in employment, education and training.

4.5.2 There has also been a reduction in 3% in seventeen year olds not in employment, education and training.

4.5.3 More work is needed to increase numbers of young people in employment, education and training; and improve level 2 and level 3 qualifications.

4.6 **Capacity to improve / Service Management**

4.6.1 This is viewed as outstanding. Children's Services are described as well led and in a strong position to improve further. Management of these services is viewed as rigorous, with a drive for further improvement. Excellent partnership arrangements, and positive relationships are at the heart of the 'outstanding' rating.

4.7 **Conclusion:**

Halton's performance is particularly impressive in gaining four grades of 'outstanding' in Safeguarding; Enjoying and Achieving; Making a Positive Contribution; and Capacity to Improve. Halton is the only council in the Northwest to achieve this. However, given recent events of Haringey and specifically the circumstances surrounding the death of Baby P, it is imperative that the Council continues to develop its services, ensuring they remain fit for purpose, particularly in the field of child protection. With this in mind work is underway to review services for vulnerable children and young people and their families, and how we continue to best meet their needs. A report is being prepared for the Executive Board which will make recommendations for further improvements in working practices. This will be reported before March 2009.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

'Narrowing the gap' for a range of vulnerable children is at the heart of the Council's activities, the APA confirms progress is being made in this regard.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Children and Young People

The APA demonstrates a high level of performance in delivering services to children and young people across the board.

8.2 Employment Learning and Skills

The APA shows the Council and it's partners need a determined effort to bring down NEET figures further.

8.3 A Healthy Halton

The judgement of the APA is 'good' in this area.

8.4 A Safer Halton

Safeguarding is judged as outstanding.

The work of the Safer Halton Partnership will be augmented by representation from the Halton Safeguarding Children Board.

8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The improvement in young people's experience of services and their attainment levels will assist Halton's continued economic renewal, and offer resilience for the turn down in the economy.

9.0 REASON FOR DECISION

Statutory reporting process.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Not applicable.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Immediate.

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

Document

Place of Inspection

Contact Officer

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0161 618 8207
Direct F 0161 618 8514
North_ap@ofsted.gov.uk



17 December 2008

Mr Gerald Meehan
Strategic Director for Children and Young People
Halton Borough Council
Municipal Building
Kingsway
Widnes
Cheshire
WA8 7QF

Dear Mr Meehan

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Halton Borough Council 2008

This letter summarises the findings of the 2008 annual performance assessment (APA) for your council. The evaluations and judgements in the letter draw on a range of data and information which covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. As you know, the APA is not based on an inspection of your services and, therefore, can only provide a snapshot based on the evidence considered. As such, I am grateful to you for assuring the quality of the data provided.

Performance is judged on a four point scale as detailed in the handbook. I should emphasise that the grades awarded are based on an overall 'best fit' model. For instance, an outstanding judgement of Grade 4 reflects that overall most aspects, but not necessarily all, of the services in the area are working very well. We know that one of the features of outstanding provision is the drive for greater improvement and no council would suggest, and nor would Ofsted, that a judgement of outstanding indicates that everything is perfect. Similarly within a judgement of inadequate overall, Grade 1, there could be some aspects of the overall service that are adequate or even good. Judgements are made in a rounded way, balancing all of the evidence and giving due consideration to outcomes, local and national contexts, priorities and decision-making.



The following table sets out the grades awarded for performance in 2008.

Assessment judgement area	APA grade
Overall effectiveness of children's services	3
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	4
Enjoying and achieving	4
Making a positive contribution	4
Achieving economic well-being	2
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	4

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate*

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 3

Halton Borough Council delivers services for children and young people that exceed minimum requirements and are good overall. The council's capacity to improve is outstanding. This confirms the grade awarded in the recent JAR. Since the APA in 2007, services have continued to improve in many outcome areas. Standards in educational achievement have improved significantly at GCSE and the rate of progress over time is impressive. The council has made excellent progress in reducing waiting times for those requiring child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). Performance in reducing the overall number of young people not in employment, education or training has slowed recently, as has the rate of improvement in the percentage of young people achieving Level 2 qualifications by the age of 19. The council has acknowledged that these aspects of delivery require further improvement and has taken robust action to accelerate progress. Early evidence indicates improvements are being achieved. The views of children and young people are given great importance at a strategic level and assist in the planning and shaping of services. Most children and young people, including those from vulnerable groups, are positive about the services they receive.

Being healthy

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There has been outstanding improvement in performance in reducing CAMHS specialist and non specialist waiting times during the last year. The performance of the service is now better than that found in similar council areas. ▪ All schools are participating in, and most (88%) are achieving the National Healthy Schools status. These proportions are significantly better than those for similar council areas. ▪ The health needs of looked after children and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well met.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Despite a fall in the rate of teenage conception in 2006 the council's performance remains below that of similar councils and the England average. ▪ There is a high infant mortality rate.

Staying safe

Grade 4

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths

- The recent JAR judged safeguarding arrangements to be outstanding. Children benefit greatly from highly effective policies and procedures which ensure levels of risk are kept to a minimum.
- An exceptionally low number of children aged 0 to 15 are killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents. A significant reduction (-88%) has been achieved since the baseline year which is significantly better than statistical neighbours (-51%) and national (-52%) averages.
- The quality of early intervention is excellent and there is a wide range of responsive and locally-based services for children and families.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 4

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths

- The proportion of young people achieving five or more A* to C grades in GCSE is now above that found in similar council areas. The rate of improvement is faster than the national average.
- Improvement in secondary attendance was the second best achieved nationally showing significant and impressive improvement for the fourth consecutive year.
- Strong improvements in levels of attainment and attendance for vulnerable children and young people has considerably narrowed the gap between these groups and others of similar age, for example, all looked after children attained the expected Level 4 in English at the end of Key Stage 2 and all of those entered for GCSE obtained at least five A* to G grades. This is significantly better than the national average for that group of 63.7%.
- Improvements in Key Stage 2 tests in 2007 were the second best achieved nationally.
- There has been an impressive increase in progress made by children in secondary schools. The contextual value added scores for these learners exceeds the national average by a considerable margin.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Despite improved results in English at Key Stage 3 in 2007, progress in this subject is significantly below that of similar councils. |
|---|

Making a positive contribution

Grade 4

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rates of re-offending are falling more rapidly than in similar areas. They are now 7.8% lower than in similar areas and nearly 1% lower than the national average. ▪ The number of young people (35%) accessing publicly funded youth services is significantly greater than the national average (28%). ▪ The recent JAR judged that consultation and engagement of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in school councils and local decision-making is genuine and well founded. ▪ The number of looked after children contributing towards their reviews is better (98%) than statistical neighbours (96%) and national averages (91%). |
|--|

Important weaknesses and areas for development

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 2

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area underestimate a number of important weaknesses and overvalue the areas where progress has been made. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

Major strengths

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a strong 14–19 strategy based on good collaboration and a clear focus on partnership. The proportion of young people in Year 11 moving on to further education is improving and the number of apprenticeships is rising. ▪ There has been a marked improvement in the proportion of looked after children engaged in employment, education or training. ▪ The proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds whose current activity is not known, at 4.8 % is lower than statistical neighbours and the national average and has dropped significantly this year. |
|---|

- Due to targeted work there has been a 3% reduction from 14.85% to 11.85% in 17-year-olds in not in employment, education or training. This remains a high figure but the rate of reduction is good overall.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- The proportion of young people aged 16 to 18 who are not in employment, education or training at 11.5% is well above the national and above similar councils.
- The proportion of young people achieving Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 remains below that in similar council areas. Earlier progress in improving performance at Level 2 has not been maintained.

Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services

Grade 4

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is outstanding. This confirms the judgement awarded in the recent JAR. The impressive GCSE results have set a solid base for improved achievement at A Level in the next few years. Management of these services is rigorous and the council's ambition to significantly improve the life chances for children and young people in the area is at the heart of the council's drive for improvement. Children's services are well led and in a strong position to maintain their impressive track record of securing improvements. Collaborative partnership working is strong and there is a well established commissioning of services from voluntary and community groups. Children and young people are very well engaged in service development. Value for money is good and improving; service review is leading to better outcomes at the same or reduced cost, for example in school effectiveness. Since the previous APA, the council has maintained and improved its performance in almost all areas. However, the council acknowledges that the number of young people not in employment, education or training needs to reduce more rapidly. New leadership and governance arrangements, a new 14–19 strategy and increased investment provide some indication of the council's commitment to this.

Major strengths

- The recent JAR judged capacity to improve to be outstanding.
- Sustained high outcomes and improvement in safeguarding and positive contribution.
- Significant and rapid improvement in GCSE results.
- Excellent response to waiting times for CAMHS non-specialist services.
- Priorities for improvement are securely based on good consultation with children, young people and communities.

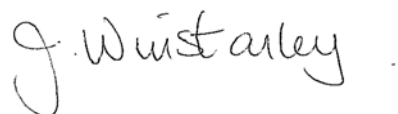
Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Increase the numbers of young people achieving Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications by the age of 19.

The children's services grade is the performance rating for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will also provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment to be published by the Audit Commission.

We are grateful for the information you provided to support this process and for the time given by you and your colleagues during the assessment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 15 January 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Directorate Corporate & Policy

SUBJECT: Asset Management Plan

WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek the Board's approval to the 2008-2011 Asset Management Plan.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) the 2008-2011 Asset Management Plan and its appendices be formally adopted; and**
- (2) the Corporate Services Portfolio Holder be formally designated as the Council's Lead Member for Asset Management issues.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Formal Asset Management processes have been in place in HBC since 2002 and this plan revises and updates that plan to meet with current local and national requirements.
- 3.1.2 The plan is a robust method of managing our Land and Property assets to meet the needs of both the community at large and to assist and support directorates deliver the Council's priorities.
- 3.1.3 To date the plan has been submitted to the Corporate Policy and Performance Board which supported its content and recommended its approval.
- 3.1.4 The Plan has also been considered and approved by the Corporate Asset Management Working Group (AMWG) in its present form.
- 3.1.5 Best practice also suggests that an Executive Board Member should be specifically identified to take the Corporate Lead on Asset Management issues and it is therefore recommended that the Corporate Services Portfolio Holder be nominated to undertake that role.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Asset Management Plan demonstrates Halton's commitment to manage its assets in the most appropriate manner using the most appropriate assets.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Asset Management Plan assists the Council in delivering its objectives and in providing value for money.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton** – Provides for services to be delivered in the most effective manner.
- 6.2 **Corporate Effectiveness and Efficient Service Delivery** - Provides for services to be delivered in the most effective manner.
- 6.3 **A Healthy Halton** – Provides buildings that are fit for occupation and delivery of services
- 6.4 **A Safer Halton** – By taking action at the most appropriate time it reduces the risk of having vacant properties that are subject of vandalism and nuisance to the local community

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 The plan contains no significant risks.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Not applicable.

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

- 9.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.



It's all happening in Halton

Asset Management Plan 2008

Managing property as a resource for the Borough



TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
PROFILE OF HALTON	4
Location	4
People	4
Business	5
INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT	6
Strategic Asset Management	6
The Asset Management Plan (AMP)	6
Corporate Planning Framework, Goals & Objectives	7
A Community Strategy For A Sustainable Halton 2006 – 2011	7
The Corporate Plan 2006 – 2011	7
Harder Test Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)	8
Procurement Policy & Improvement Plan	8
The Best Value Performance Plan 2007 – 8	8
The Role of Overview & Scrutiny in Halton	9
Departmental Service Plans	9
Organisational Framework	9
Current Asset Base (excluding highways)	10
CORPORATE ASSET POLICY	11
Corporate Asset Objectives	11
Data And Performance Management Systems	11
Communication, Consultation And The Stakeholder	13
Suitability & Sufficiency	13
Impact of Government Policy and Statutory Responsibilities	14
The Resource Context	16
CHANGES IN THE ENVIRONMENT & IMPLICATIONS FOR PROPERTY	17
Market For External Provision	17
Other Factors	17
SERVICE DELIVERY & ACCOMMODATION NEEDS	18
Overview	18
Council Services	18
New Working Practices In The Council	18
Agencies & Joint Accommodation	19
EXISTING PORTFOLIO AND CURRENT PERFORMANCE	19
Statement of Portfolio	19
Performance	19
Statutory & Regulatory Codes	22
REVIEW AND CHALLENGE	22
Gap Analysis	22
Review of Asset Strategy, Property Objectives & Delivery Mechanisms	22
Review Of Roles & Responsibilities For Property	22
Review Of Decision Making Process	22
Key Challenges In Asset Management Planning	23
OPTIONS APPRAISAL PROCESSES	23
Strategic Options	23
Options Appraisal	24
Preferred Strategy Options	24
ASSET MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME	25
2006 Accommodation Strategy	25
Asset Transfer Policy	25
Suitability and Sufficiency Surveys	25
Depot Reorganisation	25
Capital Programme	25
Revenue Programme	25
Responsibilities For Implementation	26
Timetable For Implementation by the Asset Management Working Group	28
Overall Programme	29
CONCLUSION	29

FOREWORD

Welcome to Halton Council's Asset Management Plan (AMP) covering the period 2008 to 2011.

The AMP is an important document providing a strategic overview of the Council's property and land assets in addition to the systems, processes and policies in place to manage and maintain them. The effective use of these assets plays an important part in the achievement and delivery of the Council's core priorities. The AMP is intended to be used as a tool to help maximise the deployment and use of land, buildings and other assets to support service delivery.

As a major owner of land and buildings it is important for us to be able to clearly justify why we hold such interests and what overall benefit is derived from them. I believe this plan provides a sound basis to enable us to demonstrate that.

It will be important to regularly review this plan and I look forward to working with the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board when they undertake that work. It is only by regularly reviewing what we hold that we can be sure we are getting best value.

Our Property Team has a key role in assessing, with its customers, the condition, suitability and sufficiency of the Authorities property portfolio ensuring value for money across all directorates.

Any comments on this Plan would be welcome and should be sent to Ian Leivesley, Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy at ian.leivesley@halton.gov.uk

Councillor Mike Wharton
Corporate Services Portfolio Holder and Lead Member for Asset Management.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Halton Borough Council has a large property portfolio valued at approximately £256m with over 275 significant property assets ranging from car parks to arts and sports centres. The Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy has overall responsibility for managing the Council's property portfolio and producing and reviewing this Asset Management Plan. Regular reports on progress will be made to both the Lead Executive Board Member and the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board.

The Plan identifies the Council's strategy for maximising the potential of its asset base. It also identifies the organisational arrangements for implementing its Corporate Asset Policy, identifies critical success factors and assesses current performance.

There are a number of objectives outlined within the plan, however some of the key ones are repeated here as they capture the overall intention of the plan –

- to develop and secure a corporate approach to the use, management, procurement and 'ownership' of property assets
- to develop and maintain a strong organisational framework for corporate asset management
- to commission, oversee and implement a regular review of all property assets (Property Review), reporting back with recommendations and decisions including identifying surplus assets suitable for reuse or disposal
- to challenge the existing use of, need for and performance of all property assets and to monitor and report on performance in support of continuous improvement
- to identify and secure efficiency gains and savings through the strategic management of all property assets
- to work with existing partners and identify new partner opportunities to jointly use each others property assets
- to improve buildings and other assets in accordance with the needs of the Disability Discrimination Act and to ensure equality of access to services and employment opportunities for all

The AMP outlines how the Council intends to achieve its corporate asset objectives through an overview of how it responds to external and internal pressures; government and statutory requirements, the current property market, together with the data we hold on our assets and the information we receive from our users. This will allow the Council to identify future needs for delivery of high quality services, meeting the requirements of the whole community. The overall aim is to ensure the best use of land, buildings and other assets so that the Council can deliver good quality and accessible public services to the residents of the Borough.

PROFILE OF HALTON

Halton Borough Council is a small Unitary Authority providing the full range of local government services within the Borough. The Borough of Halton covers 7,937 hectares and incorporates the towns of Widnes and Runcorn in addition to the villages of Hale, Moore, Daresbury and Preston Brook.

Location

Located within the M62 and M56 corridors and straddling the River Mersey, Runcorn and Widnes have superb communication links by road, rail, sea and air. Situated between Manchester International and Liverpool John Lennon Airports and close to the Port of Liverpool, all major European and international markets are within easy reach of the Borough of Halton.

People

The 2006 mid-year population estimates show the combined resident population increasing from 118,800 to 119,500 who live in 54,859 households, giving an average house occupancy of 2.17.

An estimated 287,400 people live within a twenty minute drive of the centre of the Borough of Halton. This equates to 116,600 households of which 72% are owner occupiers and 14% are engaged in professional or managerial occupations. Within 30 minutes the population increases to 868,000 individuals or just over 252,100 households.

Within the Borough of Halton 65.8% of households are owner occupied (2001 Census). 19.7% of the population are engaged in professional or managerial occupations whilst a further 24.1% of people work within manufacturing or elementary occupations (Annual Population Survey 2006).

The Halton unemployment rate in May 2007 was 2.9%, down 0.3% on the previous year's figure of 3.2%. This compares with a figure of 2.5% in the North West and 2.1% in Great Britain. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2007 ranks Halton as 30th highest out of 354 local authorities, in the previous IMD 2004 Halton ranked 21st, showing an improvement over the intervening years. The IMD 2007 ranks all the Census Super Output Areas (SOAs) in Halton, giving an overall impression of the depth of deprivation for a district.

The 2001 Census showed that 21.5% of the resident population of Halton has a limiting long-term illness (LLTI), lower than the Greater Merseyside figure of 23.4%, but higher than the North West (20.7%) and Great Britain (18.2%) figures.

20.2% of the population in Halton have no qualifications (13.8% in Great Britain) whilst 16.8% of people hold a Level 4 Qualification (Equivalent to a degree) compared to 27.4% nationally.

Business

Halton has a diverse, dynamic and growing economic base. International companies such as Diageo, O2, Ineos Chlor Group, Atos Origin, YKK, AEGON, BNFL and Yokogawa power the economy of Widnes and Runcorn.

With plenty of affordable space to grow, a superb workforce and a brilliant location between Liverpool and Manchester, the area is one of the North West's major business hubs.

- Over the last five years over 150 new companies have created more than 6,000 new jobs. Recent investors include BNFL, TNT, Lidl UK and international insurance group AEGON.
- The call centre industry is thriving within Halton. O2 (formerly BT Cellnet) employs over 1,700 people in Runcorn.
- 26% of all exports originating from Greater Merseyside are produced in Halton. Halton is by far the largest exporter in the sub-region.
- Halton has the highest proportion of businesses in the knowledge driven production sector in the North West and 9th Highest in Great Britain.
- In terms of GVA per head productivity, Halton is the most prosperous area in Greater Merseyside and the 4th most prosperous in the North West, above the Cheshire, regional and national averages.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

Strategic Asset Management

The process by which the Council ensures that the land and buildings that it owns or occupies (its asset base) are optimally structured in the best corporate interest of the Council. The asset plan has the customer at the centre of the process, all actions seek to ensure that environmentally and ergonomically our property provides the highest level of service possible.

An effective strategy ensures that the asset base is suited in terms of quality, location, fitness for purpose and cost effectiveness to facilitate the achievement of the Council's corporate goals and objectives.

Strategic Asset Management delivers the Asset Management Plan which supports the provision of Council services and has clear, direct links to the Council's six priorities identified in The Corporate Plan 2006-2011, linking together with departmental priorities identified within the Departmental Service Plans.

The Asset Management Plan (AMP)

Property assets require a structured, long term approach to their management for several key reasons:

1. They are expensive both in terms of their capital value and their annual running costs.
2. They require careful management throughout their whole lives to ensure that they provide best value in terms of maintenance, income generation and effective use
3. It takes time to properly determine new accommodation needs, to procure them and to bring them into use.
4. They are inflexible in time unlike cash assets any actions require time to implement

Through the Corporate Asset Policy, this AMP identifies the Council's strategy for maximizing the potential of its asset base. It also describes the Council's organisational arrangements for implementing its Corporate Asset Policy and identifies critical success factors and assesses current performance.

Asset Management has to:-

- Consider and regularly review the sufficiency, suitability, condition and cost of existing property.
- Consider and regularly review the use of administrative buildings having particular regard to developments in technology and the potential for introducing innovative and flexible working arrangements, actively pursuing those opportunities arising when considering support services and service delivery arrangements.
- Seek ways of supplementing the limited resources available within the Capital Programme.
- Challenge the reasons for retaining non-operational property.

- Identify on an ongoing basis properties that are surplus to requirements and how they may be considered with regard to sale or potential transfer to the community / third sector.

In addition, the assets not held for direct service delivery, such as those let for commercial use or held for use by community groups should :-

- Produce maximum income for the Council or otherwise, through their usage, make a contribution to the social, economic or environmental aspects of the borough by promoting and aiding development of new or fledgling businesses.
- Be retained if they have strategic importance, such as the potential to influence physical and economic regeneration within the borough.

By providing a strong approach to asset management it provides significant support to the achievement of the Council's corporate objectives. The Asset Management Plan (AMP), therefore, supports the delivery of Council services and has clear and direct links to the priorities set out in key strategic documents and departmental service plans.

This plan provides the driving force to ensure the council continually assesses, refines and improves the asset base, as a vital component in the delivery of improved services. It is more than just a property issue, by providing adequate resources to its implementation it has the capacity to be the catalyst for change and a major influence in the delivery of service objectives.

Accurate and current data on the asset base, supported by performance indicators and benchmarking information, identifies those properties which fall short of required standards and which should be disposed of or refurbished. This information will also help improve property performance and inform the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The AMP provides the Council with the opportunity to challenge its traditional approach to the extent and use of its asset base. It also provides the means by which a more imaginative approach can be brought to dealing with existing problems, in order that the property portfolio becomes a positive and valued asset.

Corporate Planning Framework, Goals & Objectives

A number of key strategies and strategic documents direct the delivery of services to the people of Halton and these include the following :-

A Community Strategy For A Sustainable Halton 2006 – 2011

this is an overarching strategy aimed to enhance the quality of life of local communities through actions to improve the economic, social and environmental well being of the area and its inhabitants.

The Corporate Plan 2006 – 2011

outlines goals the Council and the Borough aim to achieve to help build a better future for Halton. It concentrates on the challenges and priorities planned over the next five years to help improve the quality of life for people in Halton. The vision remains constant, that Halton will be a thriving and vibrant Borough where people can learn and develop their skills; enjoy a good quality of life with good health; a high quality, modern urban environment; the opportunity for all to fulfil their potential;

greater wealth and equality, sustained by a thriving business community; and safer, stronger and more attractive neighbourhoods.

Relating to each of the corporate plan objectives, the asset management plan contributes as shown:-

Healthy Halton	Promotes the vision to create ready access to a wide range of social, community, cultural, social and sporting assets.
Halton Urban Renewal	Encourages the creation and sustainability of a 21st century business environment with the required variety and quality of sites, premises and infrastructure that can support high levels of investment and economic growth.
Halton's Children and Young People	Advances a culture where property assets are central in providing safe environments and communities in which the young person's future is given positive focus through lifelong learning and potential employment opportunity.
Employment Learning & Skills in Halton	Central to fostering enterprise by identifying potential development opportunities.
A Safer Halton	Contributes to the processes of design and delivery of well built, well maintained and safe neighbourhoods which in turn provides the opportunity to deal with anti social behavioural hotspots.
Corporate Effectiveness and Efficiency	Confirms the council wide ethos of property assets being central to the quality and efficiency of all services.

Harder Test Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)

the Council was assessed by the Audit Commission in 2006 and was able to demonstrate overall compliance with the relevant key lines of enquiry regarding use of resources. A robust AMP, adopted and implemented is vital to support the services of the Council and maintain its current status.

Procurement Policy & Improvement Plan

places procurement in the overall context of the Council's Corporate Plan and demonstrates the links to strategic priorities, identifying and implementing practices that will ensure continuous improvement in procurement through challenge, comparison, collaboration and partnering

The Best Value Performance Plan 2007 – 8

is an important element of the Council's approach to improvement planning and delivering best value. It is an integral part of the organisation's corporate planning arrangements, as such the plan provides an assessment of the Council's

overall performance in relation to those statutory indicators that form the national Best Value Performance Indicator data set.

The Role of Overview & Scrutiny in Halton

the Council’s Policy and Performance Boards (PPB’s) carry out its overview and scrutiny function. The Boards monitor performance, review policy and hold the Executive to account. The Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board will review annually the effectiveness of the Council’s Asset Management arrangements. As the effective use of the Council’s assets has a clear link to the delivery of services across the authority all PPB’s therefore have an interest in good asset management.

Departmental Service Plans

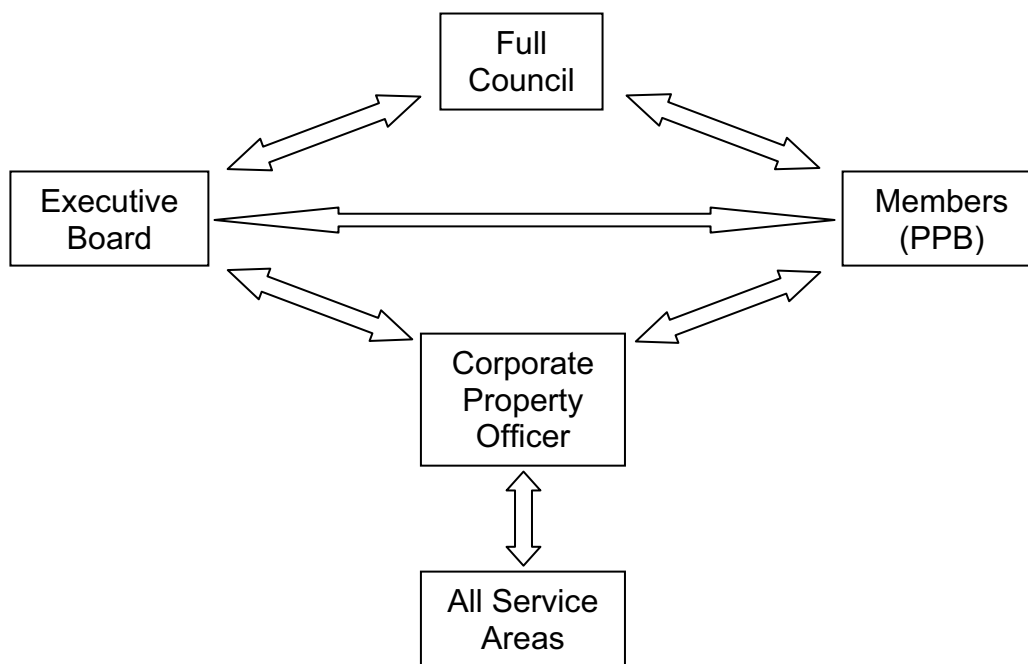
inform this plan, by reference to the accommodation requirements necessary to deliver and improve each individual service, allowing the corporate strategy to address, holistically the corporate objectives and vision.

Organisational Framework

The corporate asset management planning process was established in the Council’s Corporate Asset and Capital Strategy Management Plan (2002). In essence the Strategic Director – Corporate & Policy, as Acting Corporate Property Officer (CPO), is the focal point of the process. Each directorate, through their respective service plans, provide input to the plan via the CPO, there is then a clear accountability to the Management Team reported directly to that body through it’s weekly meetings. Reports are then made, at Member level, to the Executive Board held fortnightly and the Policy & Performance Board (PPB) on a six week cycle.

The terms of reference relating to asset planning issues have been adopted by the Management Team and are attached as Appendix 1.

The present asset management organisational arrangement is indicated below:



Current Asset Base (excluding highways)

The Boroughs Assets	Number	Value (£)
Car Parks (off street)	14	561,295
Cemeteries / Crematoria	4	499,000
Community / Youth Centres	14	3,011,525
Children's Centres	4	2,243,700
Depots / Workshops	2	2,023,400
Entertainment Centres	1	7,771,650
Farms (Tenanted)	1	379,600
Housing (HRA) Property	1	813,600
Industrial Estate	5	8,298,675
Land & Building(s)	20	4,142,111
Land Only	57	16,425,236
Land Only (CRA1)	2	0
Land Only (CRA3)	9	0
Libraries/Museums/Galleries	4	2,118,500
Lifelong Learning Facility	2	5,474,550
Markets	2	5,653,300
Mooring / Fishing	1	200,250
Non HRA Housing	1	284,000
Office/Admin Buildings	13	8,256,500
Offices - Commercial	2	594,000
Parks	17	43,170
Playing Fields (Inc. Changing)	15	3,772,515
Public Conveniences	2	176,800
Residential Homes/Day Centres	9	6,579,200
Schools	65	157,634,952
Shops - Commercial	5	719,000
Sports Centres/Swimming Pools	4	17,720,000
Waste / Recycling	1	217,500
TOTALS	277	255,614,029

CORPORATE ASSET POLICY

Corporate Asset Objectives

In addition to the corporate asset management objectives that are drawn from the documents and strategies outlined in the section headed Corporate Planning & Organisational Framework the following objectives exist that relate purely to the asset management function.

- to develop and deliver an Asset Management Plan annually
- to develop and secure a corporate approach to the use, management, procurement and 'ownership' of property assets
- to further develop and maintain a strong organisational framework for corporate asset management
- to commission, oversee and implement a regular review of all property assets (Property Review), reporting back with recommendations and decisions including identifying surplus assets suitable for reuse or disposal
- to challenge the existing use of, need for and performance of all property assets and to monitor and report on performance in support of continuous improvement
- to identify and secure efficiency gains and savings through the strategic management of all property assets
- to ensure that corporate asset management information is effectively communicated to all stakeholders
- to consider and promote new ways of working and incentives for the more efficient use of space, property and energy
- to form clear linkages between strategic asset management and the Medium Term Financial Plan
- to work with existing partners and identify new partner opportunities to jointly use each others property assets
- to deploy assets in support of partnerships which maximise opportunities for Halton and its people
- to improve buildings and other assets in accordance with the needs of the Disability Discrimination Act and to ensure equality of access to services and employment opportunities for all
- to deploy assets in support of partnerships which maximise opportunities for Halton and its people
- Report on performance of property assets against key National Property. Performance Management Initiative Performance Indicators – (NaPPMI)
- Make property information more available through extended access to the P2.net property system using the Council's intranet.

Data And Performance Management Systems

The Council recognises that modern local government requires a highly integrated approach to knowledge management, the Council's approach continues to evolve for various reasons such as the publication of new research, guidance, legislation and performance indicators; alongside improvements in technology.

The asset management information database (Concerto P2.net) is the major part of the property management information structure. The software has been developed in conjunction with a number of local authorities (including Halton Borough Council) and incorporates many of the innovations which aid the legislative processes, e-government and Property Services own desire to improve service provision to their clients. There is an emphasis on communication within the software, with the capability to automatically generate performance indicator information to the

appropriate areas. It is fully web based allowing secured access for consultants, clients and users direct from site.

The system includes:-

- a site module, providing comprehensive information on each property, its condition and with regard to schools suitability and sufficiency detail. In addition this module is used to maintain all information relating to leases, rents, ownership, responsibilities, asset valuations and rates of return.
- extensive project planning tools, allowing full import and export facility with Microsoft Projects, enabling the full range of projects to be effectively managed including risk analysis capability, relating to property management
- an energy module enabling all energy costs and usage to be recorded, monitored and managed
- full work ordering, invoicing and payment system with integral interface to the council's financial package, Agresso, providing commitment budgeting facility, and by dynamic linkage to site information providing greater control of programmed maintenance
- performance indicator measurement and automated notification, incorporating links to other software packages where appropriate, including those located outside Property Services
- complete property oriented helpdesk function
- mail tracking system
- equipment register
- case register linked to legal service function
- incident log
- visit log
- time recording

Future development of the system will include an asbestos register, a legionella monitoring and register function, a document management system and automated links to the MapInfo system of GIS that the council uses.

The Computer Aided Design (CAD) database is presently being expanded, the intention is to create a complete record of "intelligent" drawings for the property portfolio which can then be linked to the Concerto P2.net system providing a seamless interface between graphical and data systems. A CAD viewing system is currently being developed as a module of Concerto P2.net.

Whilst the information in the database is extensive, there are still areas of data that require updating and verification This creates a number of resource issues associated with maintaining the system. Additionally the development of further reports, which again will have resource issues, is necessary in order to best utilise the data held to provide 'business intelligence' and apply it to the making of informed decisions.

With the changes in legislation and the requirements of e-government it is essential that our consultants/partners and client departments share access to the database(s) used by the department, allowing both read and write access, by maintaining the Concerto P2.net suite of software this facility can be made available.

The ability to pull together data from various sources allows for more meaningful performance indicators to be devised at a local level and the potential for increased benchmarking with other users. This will allow Property Services to provide a more efficient and robust analysis of data. The commitment of the Council to move forward with the e-procurement requirements of the government make it essential that all property related issues can be directly integrated with minimum interfacing.

Communication, Consultation And The Stakeholder

Senior Level

The Executive Board Member for Corporate Services has the specific responsibility for all property related issues within his portfolio, the CPO communicates via the Management Team through it's weekly meetings, reports are then made, at Member level, to the appropriate board held at regular intervals and the Policy & Performance Board (PPB) on a six week cycle.

Internal

Property Services consults with stakeholders at a number of levels. The priority objectives of each service department are identified in the relevant service plan and reflected within Property Services' Service Plan. Regular meetings with service departments, throughout the year, deal with other management and asset management issues as and when they arise.

The Accommodation Review was carried out by Property Services in 2006, adopted as the strategy for the Council it will be reviewed at regular intervals and will form the basis for future occupancy discussion and agreement for all property occupied by a service. The present arrangement, where all recruitment involving increasing accommodation need has to be approved by the CPO. This arrangement will be reviewed during 2008/9 as more progress is made towards hot-desking / home-working.

Additionally, Property Services communicates with occupiers of buildings, providing copies of reports and advising on how to resolve any issues raised by building audits, surveys and other performance monitoring.

External

The Council has embraced the provision of the "one stop shop", with four Direct Link offices serving the borough. Centralising the telephonic service of the council through the Contact Centre has enabled the communication process to be streamlined with many calls being satisfactorily resolved at this first point of contact.

Suitability & Sufficiency

The system in place for school suitability and sufficiency surveys, which forms part of reports to The Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF previously DfES) is well-established. Assessments cover location, security, accessibility, space, fixtures and fittings, image, environment, health & safety and particular service requirements. A non-school suitability assessment, Framework For Determining Suitability And Sufficiency Of Assets (FDSSA) attached as Appendix 2, has been developed and recently approved by Management Team for use in the borough, and will be actioned during 2008/9 with the results fed back through the Asset Management Working Group.

Impact of Government Policy and Statutory Responsibilities

Service Transformation: A better service for citizens and businesses, a better deal for the taxpayer (Sir David Varney report December 2006)

Sir David Varney reported that the leading edge of the new service economy that has emerged is much slicker, more immediate, more convenient to the citizen and less intrusive on the busy citizen's time. The focus is increasingly on the 'totality of the relationship' with the citizen. Public sector bodies are encouraged to deliver citizens and businesses a more joined up service.

The council is able to clearly demonstrate that it has been proactive in its approach to these challenges via its Direct Link (One Stop Shop) programme, which is transforming services for Halton's population and businesses. The Direct Link programme will deliver more joined up services across council departments and with key partners (e.g. Halton & St Helens PCT). The direct link centres already provide a face to face contact for council services across all directorates.

In the near future there may be a need for reduction in the number of single purpose facilities and a move to more multi-purpose properties, better equipped for the future. These would improve the customer interface and experience whilst delivering property rationalisation opportunities, more effective services for customers with real and lasting service improvements/efficiencies. The Council is already in discussions with other public sector providers in the Borough to increase the use of shared buildings in order to meet these requirements

The Quirke Review : Community Ownership and Management of Public Asset (May 2007)

The Review's terms of reference were to identify ways of overcoming barriers to the community management of assets. The theme was taken up in the Local Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' in the context and overall statement that "the aim is to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives".

The Quirke Review was published as 'Making Assets Work' in May 2007 and the Government's response 'Opening the Transfer Window' published the following week. The principal findings of the Review were that:

- asset transfer should take place where it can realise social or community benefits without risking wider public interest concerns;
- in appropriate circumstances, the benefits of asset transfer can outweigh the risks involved;
- risks can be managed by drawing on the experience of others.

The Government's response was to accept the Quirke Review in full and included five main actions:

- i.) publication of new guidance to Local Authorities on corporate asset management, with specific reference to guidance on the transfer of assets (likely to be published in April 2008);
- ii.) preparation of a toolkit on risk management involved in the transfer process;

- iii.) provision of greater access to expert advice and organisational development on the management of assets to community organisations, through local providers. The council could be such a provider, or agent;
- iv.) smaller investment of public funds through specialist financial intermediaries with the ability to achieve high leverage ratios. A demonstration programme is to be launched in selected areas as models for others to follow;
- v.) a major campaign to spread the word especially to community groups, taking a bottom up approach such as the proposed 'Community Call for Action'.

Although the Council has, over a number of years prior to the Quirke report, followed similar principles in leasing a number of its premises to third sector organisations at subsidised rents it recognises that a formal policy on such an issue would be of benefit to both those organisations and the Council.

The Corporate Services PPB has established a Topic Group (of members) to develop the policy and will, in conjunction with the Asset Management Working Group via the Management Team, be making recommendations to the Executive Board during 2008/09.

Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (March 2007)

The need to reduce CO₂ emissions is widely accepted on both environmental and financial grounds. Far from being a threat, energy efficiency provides a huge opportunity for the council.

The objective of The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) 2002/91/EC is to promote the improvement of the energy performance of buildings within the European Community. Implementing the EPBD will encourage owners and tenants to choose energy efficient buildings when seeking new accommodation and to improve the performance of buildings they occupy. Implementation of the Directive is seen as an important contribution to reducing carbon dioxide emissions as part of the UK climate change programme.

From October 2008 public sector occupiers of larger buildings (exceeding 1000m²) will need to display an Display Energy Certificate (DEC) in a prominent place clearly visible to the public. The DEC shows the energy performance of a building based on actual energy consumption. The DEC must show the "asset rating" of the building, which is a numerical indicator of the amount of energy estimated to meet the different needs associated with a standardised use of the building.

With about 75 buildings (including schools) having a useable floor area of 1000m² or more, the impact on the council in financial terms has yet to be fully determined. It is hoped that the initial outlay of using an Accredited Energy Assessor (at approximately £1,500.00 per property) to produce the Certificates will be far out weighed by the greater level of awareness of energy use in the council's buildings and that any investment opportunities identified, if taken up, would recover the cost in most cases.

Health and Safety Legislation

Policies and procedures are in place that meet the requirements of legionella prevention, asbestos identification and management, fire regulation and DDA compliance. Risk assessments and surveys of all buildings have now been carried out and are used to progress schemes of management and reduction of risks and where schemes are carried out to remove or reduce risks as far as is practicable and economic. Ongoing management and review of risk assessments is built into regular work programmes.

In summary, Property Services keeps up to date with legislation and guidance on Government practice issued by a wide range of government and partner organisations. By doing so the use of the council's assets can be planned in such a way as to anticipate and quickly react to best practice for the benefit of Halton.

The Resource Context

The council has a track record of sound financial management. A culture of best value has been long rooted in service and resource planning. Today the council's strategies build on the successes, continuing priorities regarding savings and efficiencies will be addressed. Two areas which, in the next three years, are to be considered are:

- *property*: savings in office space are being targeted including the introduction of suitability and sufficiency audit and continued accommodation review
- *procurement*: moving forward further efficiencies, firmly based on Gershon principles, that will allow the Council to release both finance & resources that can be redirected towards front line services. Partnering contracts for Runcorn Town Hall and John Briggs House are two examples of this new approach.

The strategy is incorporated into the council's overall approach to improvement and includes a number of initiatives that will deliver increased value for money – home/mobile working, process improvement, shared services and improved property management.

The council's medium term financial strategy considers resources over a three year period and is based upon:

- The Corporate Plan
- Departmental Service Plans and the financial impact of these strategies
- Financial factors that will affect the council over the next three years
- Cost of capital investment, in line with any Investment Strategy
- Anticipated levels of Government support
- Overall availability of resources
- Levels of Council Tax

Details of the capital programme can be found in the council's Capital Strategy which should be read in conjunction with this Asset Management Plan (the capital programme for 2007-08 was £29m). The council has committed the following financial resources to its asset management priorities:

- £1.4m to address programmed maintenance
- £200k per annum for DDA related schemes

In addition to mainstream capital and revenue funds the council also bids for Challenge Funds (e.g. European Funds, Working Neighbourhood Fund etc).

CHANGES IN THE ENVIRONMENT & IMPLICATIONS FOR PROPERTY Market For External Provision

The Council has a good track record in making efficiency savings and has, over the past five years, redirected some £7.5m of those savings towards its priorities. However, it recognises that in a tight financial framework it needs to continually look for further efficiency savings. In order to ensure that the organisation remains focused on the need for greater efficiency, the Council has created a Business Efficiency Board of elected members with the following terms of reference:

- To draw up and oversee a programme of reviews aimed at securing continuous improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of Council services.
- To promote partnership working and collaboration with other public and private bodies where that supports the Council's Efficiency Strategy.
- To oversee the Council's preparations for any CPA or subsequent corporate assessment process.
- To monitor performance against the Council's Efficiency Strategy, particularly in relation to the identification of cashable and non-cashable gains.
- To ensure the Council has processes in place to benchmark its activities and to learn from best practice to ensure continuous improvement in its performance.
- To monitor the implementation of the Council's procurement strategy.
- To act as the Council's Audit Committee.
- To act as the Council's Closure of Accounts Committee.

The Council continues to work with neighbouring Authorities in Merseyside and Cheshire on identifying collaborative programmes which identify potential efficiency savings, and is working closely with the Regional Centre of Excellence.

The Business Efficiency Board of members is mirrored by a corporate group of officers chaired by the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy, which is charged with co-ordinating and implementing the Council's agreed policy in this area.

The Council is currently considering the method of procuring its Property Service function and a final report detailing options and making recommendations will be published during 2008/9

Other Factors

There are a number of external influences for change which will affect the provision of council property and property services and include:

- The Building Schools for the Future programme
- Primary Schools Capital Programme
- The Government's Extended Services agenda-facilities fit for the future in local communities;
- Preparing for the governments mandatory Carbon Reduction Commitment in 2010
- Changes in legislation
- Government guidance on Asset Management in Local Authorities

- The Urban Land Institute's (ULI) document titled 'Ten Principles for Creating Value from Local Government Property' dated 2006, which focuses on local authorities' operational estates. (The document is intended to promote a debate among local authority decision makers and commercial and property principals as to the contribution that local authority property can make to the delivery of modern local government services)
- Integration of services within the council and the PCT through Children's Trust arrangements

SERVICE DELIVERY & ACCOMMODATION NEEDS

Overview

Accommodation is distinct from property requirement, the council must have accommodation whereas it does not necessarily need property.

The Council has, over the years, carried out a number of reviews of its office accommodation needs, but this has always proved difficult, primarily because of the ever-changing landscape of local government and the public sector more generally. The Base Budget Review Working Party identified 'accommodation' as a possible area for savings / rationalisation and an accommodation review was carried out in 2006 (concentrating on the major administrative centres) and a strategy was adopted in 2007

The purpose of the strategy is to:

- Set some objectives around the future accommodation decisions the Council needs to make
- Look at the current make-up of the Council's office accommodation
- Make proposals for the rationalisation of that accommodation
- Assess the financial impact of those proposals
- Make efficiency savings

A major step forward in the way accommodation needs are met, is the introduction of the Accommodation Criteria Process (see Appendix 3) which requires accommodation impact to be considered before recruitment is undertaken.

Council Services

Council services are subject to constant review, an essential element of the process is the planning of individual projects within overall programmes and the consideration of the many support elements to services - Information & Communication Technology (ICT), Property Services, Human Resources, Communications & Marketing.

Recognition and incorporation of these elements within service plans has taken place at a micro rather than macro level. The preparation and review of Departmental Asset Management Plans, to inform and support corporate property strategy, will assist the process and identify opportunities for rationalisation at individual and wider service levels.

New Working Practices In The Council

The introduction of the Working Flexibly For You Strategy 2007 – 2010 sets out the business context for new working practices. Recognition of the potential for flexible and home working does not negate the need for detailed service consideration by

managers prior to implementation, the consequential effects on accommodation requirements.

Increased adoption of remote working, using touch down facilities in offices shared with other services, will remove individual work spaces but require wider provision of adequate flexible shared facilities.

Agencies & Joint Accommodation

The council already has shared accommodation with two main partners, Halton & St Helens PCT and The 5 Boroughs Partnership (a large mental health trust providing specialist services to the boroughs of Halton, Knowsley, St Helens, Warrington, Wigan and Leigh) in addition to shared accommodation for the Community Safety Team, made up of Police and Council representation. The council also leases space in Halton Hospital, Whiston Hospital and Warrington Hospital to deliver services.

Examples of shared use are:

Halton & St Helens PCT

- Catalyst House – leased by HBC shared by PCT
- Pingot Centre – leased by HBC shared by PCT
- Runcorn Town Hall – owned by HBC shared by PCT
- Independent Living Centre – leased by PCT shared by HBC
- The Bridges – owned by PCT shared by HBC

The 5 Boroughs Partnership

- Vine Street Centre – owned by HBC shared by 5 Boroughs
- St John's Centre – owned by 5 Boroughs shared by HBC

EXISTING PORTFOLIO AND CURRENT PERFORMANCE

Statement of Portfolio

The council holds a diverse and widespread portfolio of land and property assets throughout the borough which includes operational property (e.g. offices, administration buildings, day centres, libraries, schools and youth centres etc.) and non-operational/investment property (e.g. shops, offices, industrial estates, farms, agricultural land and allotments etc.).

There are 277 property assets with a total asset value of £255.61m – ([See Page 11](#)) . Operational properties, assets supporting front line service delivery, account for over 45% of the value of the asset base whilst 22% (67 assets) of the total property asset value comprises the schools portfolio. Non-operational assets account for only 33% of the total property assets.

Asset values are based on the book value of the Council's assets, for financial purposes. Approximately 25% of assets are re-valued each year, on a rolling programme.

Performance

Performance measurement is a foundation, it has not become an end in itself and the fundamental objectives of performance management – improved service delivery together with increased accountability – remain the target outcomes.

In addition to the currently evolving set of asset management PI's (NaPPMI – previously COPROP), the Council has an Action Plan for Asset Management (APAM)

2008-11, see Appendix 4, for use as a tool to monitor performance. Whilst it's primary function is identification of all key actions and co-ordination of asset management activity, an emphasis on 'measures of success' has been introduced to enable a focussed annual review of activity to assess performance and feed the results into and improve future activity.

The Council also recognises the importance of actively managing its performance in reducing energy consumption generally, and specifically in all its operational properties. The council has signed up to the Local Authority Carbon Management Programme and has established an action plan setting out measures to reduce carbon. Past experience from other authorities in the Carbon Management Programme suggests the biggest usage of carbon is from buildings therefore this area offers the greatest scope for carbon reductions and subsequent financial savings. For example, an Energy Audit was carried out at the Stobart Stadium Halton the results of which indicated that through a combination of good housekeeping and some technical improvements, savings of approximately £16,000 from the current £120,000 energy bill could be made. Given the Council's current spend on energy (excluding schools) is in the region of £1.5m, a similar reduction across the Council's buildings could save in the region of £150,000 to £200,000 per annum.

Runcorn Town Hall is presently being refurbished and as part of this exercise an Energy appraisal has been carried out in order that maximum efficiencies are achieved. Similarly the Building Schools for the Future Programme will also provide further opportunities to create more energy efficient school premises over the five-year life span of the action plan

Required maintenance information is compiled using the results of condition surveys. Funding is targeted at urgently required maintenance and significant success has been achieved in this category of work, however, there is still a considerable amount of less urgent work identified as requiring action over the next five years.

The resulting Required Maintenance figure across the council's portfolio of land and property assets stands at £4.9m (at 31/03/07) which compares to the 2005/06 out turn value of £5.2.

Looking ahead, the intention is to maintain a balance of 70% programmed maintenance to 30% response maintenance on the council's operational estate

The council continues to review various options with a view to addressing the required maintenance liability on its operational portfolio (excluding schools) within a period of 5 to 8 years.

The following approaches could be used to address these options:

- delivery of further office accommodation rationalisation opportunities
- disposal of property that is surplus to operational requirements
- re-investment of capital receipts from any disposals

The delivery of the council's Building Schools for the Future and Primary Capital Programmes will in the medium term play a key role in addressing the required maintenance on the schools portfolio.

See Appendix 5 for details of NaPPMI indicators.

Statutory & Regulatory Codes

Access to public buildings

The council's 2006/07 submission in respect of Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) 156 reported that 59.38% (i.e. 38 out of its 64 existing public buildings [falling within the definition of BVPI 156] were fully accessible to and suitable for disabled people [in accordance with the 1991 Version of the Building Regulations Approved Document M]. For 2007/08 the target has been set at 63.00%.

Access Audits have been completed for the all corporate buildings and Accessibility Plans prepared, although it should be noted that some of these fall outside the Government's definition for BVPI 156. Capital funding in the region of £200k has been approved for the two year period to April 2010 and a programme to target DDA improvements is well under way.

REVIEW AND CHALLENGE

Gap Analysis

Gap Analysis is required to highlight the key property and asset management changes essential to progress from the existing circumstances and allow future property needs and Property Services requirements to be met.

This analysis will be developed through a workshop during 2008/9, involving the Corporate Property Officer, the Asset Management Working Group and Property Services. The analysis will, in summarising the key property issues and changes needed, indicate relative levels of priority in order that informed decisions can be made.

The CPO will examine the results in relation to the performance of the Council's assets and identify any gaps in asset service provision and likely forecasted requirements for the next 3 to 5 years. This will enable a structured consideration of the suitability of an asset, whether it is underused or has become surplus.

It is considered essential that the Council's complete property portfolio be reviewed in a strategic and pro-active manner. Therefore the CPO will develop a rolling review of all the Council's property assets. Each year, a review will take place alongside the annual valuation process. This will also involve consultation with the relevant Strategic Directors, Operational Directors and Portfolio Holder through the Asset Management Working Group, being the immediate stakeholders and users.

Review of Asset Strategy, Property Objectives & Delivery Mechanisms

The process of review is reliant on the gap analysis process, challenging the asset management practices can then provide a more streamlined approach to all property related matters.

Review Of Roles & Responsibilities For Property

Setting up the appropriate groups to carry out the gap analysis should be a priority but will require a genuine commitment to the asset management process with ownership at the most senior management and member levels.

Review Of Decision Making Process

The Asset Management Working Party is the principle decision making body for submission to Management Team and Council where appropriate. The CPO will

strengthen the role taking a more prominent position within the council and enforcing the protocols established within the AMWG

Key Challenges In Asset Management Planning

Despite the fact that a formal review process relies on the correct hierarchy being in place, it is possible to identify our ongoing corporate challenges. These are: -

- Respond to the continuing challenge of the CPA Use of Resources requirements for 2008.
- Respond to the new challenges of the CAA requirements for 2009 onward
- Further embed asset management planning with business planning at corporate and service levels. The role and contribution of property needs to be more explicit in business plans by improving the engagement of service managers and Members in asset and capital investment planning.
- Link asset management performance with service delivery performance.
- Use our property portfolio as a driver and enabler of change in the organisation.
- Address the community asset transfer initiative, using it as an opportunity to engage with the community and deliver corporate and service objectives.
- Adequately resource major corporate initiatives, e.g. Office Accommodation Strategy, including home working policies.
- Measuring and benchmarking property performance.
- The development of the capital programme process needs further refinement.
- Further develop the mechanism for corporate prioritisation of all new capital investment needs irrespective of which of the Service Directorates claims precedence.
- Prepare for the impact that full asset depreciation will have when introduced as part of the Whole of Government Accounts agenda.
- Continue to develop an approach to asset management planning which will ensure the AMP is a “living” document that reflects organisational priorities and best practice.
- Use of annual report to review progress and influence programmes

OPTIONS APPRAISAL PROCESSES

Strategic Options

Given the many issues highlighted within this plan, the council must consider a number of generic options that will help it to address the asset management issues that it faces. These options may include:-

- Existing in house management and traditional council investment
- Management contracts with other public sector bodies
- Prudential Accounting (borrowing)
- Companies at Arm's length from the council
- Joint Venture Companies
- Non-profit distributing organisations (Trusts)
- Public, Private Partnerships and Private Finance Initiatives
- Grants from external organisations

- Outsourcing to the private sector
- Rationalising the Portfolio
- Hot desking & working from home
- Shared accommodation

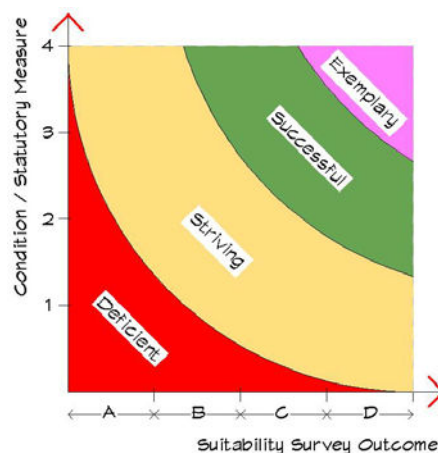
From the options detailed above there may not be a single solution, the council will probably need to identify a preferred mix of solutions to resolve the asset management problems that it faces in an attempt to close the gap between the current provision and future medium / long term requirements of the property portfolio. In addition, the preferred mix of solutions must be in line with any consultation that will be undertaken in support of the process.

Options Appraisal

Options appraisal has, in the main, been an informal process within the council to date. A formalised options appraisal approach is now essential to meet both the requirements of council services and legislative processes.

The council will introduce a new process, Improved Planning For Property (IPP), to begin to address present shortfalls in options appraisal / asset management. (See Appendix 6) .Data is presently collected regarding condition of property and from this a required spend projection for maintenance and rectification can be made, additionally legislative obligation is recorded which can be factored into the calculation. With the proposed introduction of a suitability survey (FDSSA) the second part of the equation will become available, allowing a realistic approach to options appraisal.

Using the collected data, each asset can be scored against these criteria and then plotted on a Property Performance Factor diagram (shown below) with other properties within the same property category (e.g. administrative buildings, libraries etc) which will allow priorities to be identified.



Preferred Strategy Options

Improved Planning for Property allows an objective view to be taken, the results need to be considered within the corporate strategic process and include due regard to the Service Plan delivery. All service asset management plans will also contribute to the process.

The options relating to the categories of property are detailed in the Improved Planning for Property document.

ASSET MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

2006 Accommodation Strategy

As part of the asset management process the Council undertook a full review of its occupation of corporate office accommodation including costs, space utilisation and types of ownership. This provided the Council with sufficient information to produce an initial two phased development to accommodate Health and Community in Runcorn Town Hall and John Briggs House. The major refurbishment of Runcorn Town Hall has produced an efficient building in all respects for the next 25 years and provides a good example of how customer's needs have been integrated by design. A more minor refurbishment of John Briggs House, which is a much smaller traditional building has resulted in a re-organisation of accommodation to meet the needs for the foreseeable future. The principles adopted in the Strategy will be applied to all administrative buildings on a programmed basis.

Asset Transfer Policy

The Corporate Services PPB has established a Topic Group (of members) to develop the policy and will, in conjunction with the Asset Management Working Group via the Management Team, be making recommendations to the Executive Board during 2008/09.

Suitability and Sufficiency Surveys

The non-school suitability assessment, Framework For Determining Suitability And Sufficiency Of Assets (FDSSA) provides a pro forma that enables managers to assess, against set criteria the suitability / sufficiency of the space they presently occupy which will inform the AMWG to allow incorporation in future accommodation requirements.

Depot Reorganisation

Following on from the Accommodation Strategy a review of the Council's depot requirements will be undertaken in 2008/09.

Capital Programme

The council has a five year capital programme, detail of which is contained in the council's Capital Strategy. Prioritisation of schemes is also a part of that strategy. The current disposal strategy requires Property Services to dispose of 2½ million pounds of assets to support the capital programme

Revenue Programme

In the past it has not been shared throughout the organisation but will now be reported through the Asset Management Working Group. The programme is formulated from Condition Surveys, but in future will be further influenced by the results of the suitability / sufficiency surveys.

Responsibilities For Implementation

The Corporate Property Officer in conjunction with the Asset Management Working Group is responsible for implementing all actions. Policy decisions will be developed through the Policy and Performance Board with formal decisions being made by the Executive Board.

The difference between success and failure will be the ability to concentrate on the business benefits from the start and then remain focussed when more difficult decisions are required.

“Good organisation arrangements are a prerequisite to successful asset management, whether it is for alignment with corporate objectives or for improved performance. In its absence, it is unlikely that any of the outcomes described elsewhere in this document can be achieved.” *

It is generally acknowledged that there should be a “single point” of contact for corporate procedure, advice and standards on asset management. In smaller organisations, whilst this can be one person, it is more common for an asset management team to take this responsibility. Whilst all actions would not necessarily emanate from this team it remains vital that the asset management working group has a clear and current overview of the asset situation across the organisation which will allow clear current and consistent guidance whilst retaining the ability to intercept and identify issues and problems at an early stage.

There should be clear demarcation between asset management and property management, ideally asset management functions should be provided separately from day to day property management.

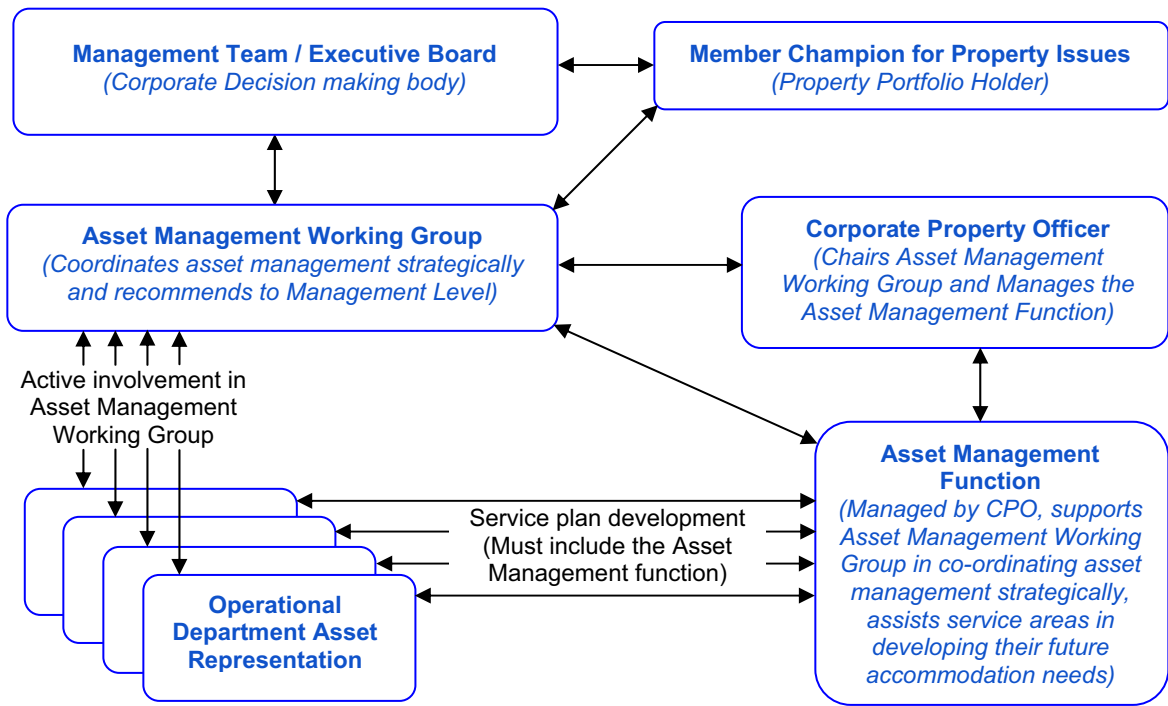
Good communication channels within the organisation are being created from high-level corporate policy right down to operational delivery. The council has long held the view that it not acceptable to put systems in place: without regular review and monitoring to ensure communication remains effective.

The asset strategy will be integrated with the capital strategy and current financial planning of the authority. without which neither will be effectively delivered.

Many asset led initiatives require great input from other resource areas to be successful. For example, the success of space utilisation or hot-desking initiatives will rely just as much on new ways of working, skills and competences and the development of IT as it does on the fabric and design of office space. The exact method for engaging other support functions will vary, dependent on the specific project but will at all times channel itself corporately through the Asset Management Working Group.

There are a number of roles that are being further developed within the council, corporately there is a desire to move to a structure similar to that shown below which identifies the key roles and responsibilities to facilitate a successful approach to asset management.

* RICS Public Sector Asset Management Guidelines – A Guide To Best Practice (January2008)



This simple structure identifies the key roles and responsibilities that need to be present to facilitate a successful corporate approach to asset management. Clearly there are also many other mechanisms that will need to be in place to enable this structure to succeed, such as consultation methodologies and decision-making structures in the wider organisation. The asset management approach will stand or fall on the wider structure and management of the organisation, particularly the level of corporate involvement. In all cases these roles will follow on through the Asset Management Working Group.

Timetable For Implementation by the Asset Management Working Group

The following table is a summary of the actions required to deliver good asset management strategy within the council. This is a high level view, indicating priority and timing, of those actions identified in the Action Plan For Asset Management in addition to corporate goals which impact on asset management.

Asset Management Strategy And Plan Actions	Timing	Priority
Undertake a council wide review of property function with emphasis on delivery of service	Immediate	1
Investigate the role of Corporate Landlord (CL), carry out option appraisal for move to CL status. Report to MT	Immediate	1
Produce and implement detailed action plan for developing corporate asset management practices and procedures to meet with CAA compliance (2008/09)	Immediate	1
Incorporate existing and introduce Service Asset Management Plans which must include remaining accommodation efficiency statements	Short	1
Revise and update a council wide Office Accommodation Strategy with a view to make CSR savings of 3% year on year for the next three years	Short	1
Develop, introduce and ensure compliance with improved Capital Appraisal Priority Selection process, previously under utilised	Short	1
Develop and implement a corporately acknowledged maintenance programme for all assets where council has direct maintenance responsibilities	Short	1
Introduce systems to ensure proper maintenance of assets covered by delegated budgets, including schools	Short	1
Develop and deliver improved and extended property and property services performance management systems including data services	Short	1
Develop robust policies to address all environmental issues relating to assets	Short	1
Explore and develop opportunities for shared use with the Council's existing partners and identify other potential partnerships	Short / Medium	2
Undertake Strategic Review of Non-Operational Property	Medium	2
Undertake a programme of portfolio reviews and challenge the use of assets, reporting on their fitness for purpose in meeting corporate objectives.	Medium / Long	2

Link financial and asset planning at strategic and operational levels	Short	2
Develop a Community Buildings Strategy to further transfer of assets to the third sector	Short	2

Timing and Priority Key:

Timing	Definition
Short Term	< 3 years
Medium Term	3 – 5 years
Long Term	> 5 years

Priority	Definition
1	High Priority
2	Medium Priority
3	Low Priority

Overall Programme

Effectively this section of the plan is the next step in the business process and strictly speaking is not a part of the actual Asset Management Plan. If the plan is accepted as a strategy providing a clear statement of direction for the asset base then the programme will ultimately detail works required to move the council forward.

After reviewing the asset base in some detail, relating the practical implication of the plan, specific projects will have to be developed in order to fully implement the strategy. This may need to be in stages having assessed both the corporate objectives and affordability. In any event the programme must be financially robust and fully integrated into the council's overall budget planning.

CONCLUSION

This document is intended to show where and how the council has progressed the asset management function in its business processes, moving to a five year type of planning which is constantly monitored and updated rather than previous documents which effectively were stand alone one year publications.

Accordingly, the plan indicates organisational arrangements required to move the process forward which over the next five year period, will address the asset management issues faced by the council. This plan must be subject to regular review to ensure that the council, throughout its hierarchy, maintains a strategic approach to the management of its assets. In addition, this will involve the council working with its partners to co-ordinate asset management actions to achieve shared objectives. An annual review will be brought to the Policy & Performance Board.

The 2008 AMP details many initiatives where the council's land and property assets contribute to the discharge of the council's strategic aims and objectives. It is about how the council's second most expensive resource (after staff) is presently and will in the future be managed and developed in such a way as to provide value for money and property that is both fit for purpose and relevant for the council's customers in the next five years and beyond



It's all happening in Halton

Appendices To The Asset Management Plan 2008

Managing property as a resource for the Borough



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Appendix 1	Management Team Asset Planning – Terms of Reference	2
Appendix 2	Framework for Determining Suitability and Sufficiency of Assets	3
Appendix 3	Accommodation Criteria	11
Appendix 4	Action Plan for Asset Management (APAM) 2008-11	13
Appendix 5	NaPPMI Reports	20
Appendix 6	Improved Planning for Property	24

**MANAGEMENT TEAM
ASSET PLANNING - TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Purpose of Group

1. To ensure that the Council is operating effectively, it's Asset Management Plan.
2. To ensure that the Council is operating effectively, it's Capital Strategy - in conjunction with the Capital Development Steering Group.
3. To maintain and progress the Council's Land Strategy.
4. To maintain and progress the Council's Accommodation Strategy.
5. To maintain and progress the Council's Maintenance Strategy.

Objectives

- A. To ensure comprehensive and effective Asset Plans and Strategies are produced to enable Members to approve.
- B. To meet all statutory, Government and Council deadlines for the completion of asset and capital plans and strategies, to maximise income from the central government and other sources.
- C. To rigorously evaluate, in conjunction with all relevant bodies, the capital and asset plans, strategies and bids for capital funding and ensure they fulfil the corporate objectives.
- D. To pursue all opportunities to work in partnership with outside organisations such as the PCT and maximise the use of the public sector estate including schools.
- E. To ensure the Council is effective and efficient in the use and management of it's physical assets (including all operational property).
- F. To ensure that the Capital Programme is co-ordinated and delivered both on time, and within budget.
- G. To ensure that each significant capital project has a named project leader who will be accountable for the project from inception to completion.
- H. To provide reports to the appropriate bodies and Members.
- I. Review annually the Asset Management report prepared by Property Services

Membership of the Group

Strategic Director - Children & Young People
Strategic Director - Corporate & Policy
Strategic Director - Environment
Strategic Director – Health & Community
Corporate Property Officer
Operational Director - Legal, Organisation Development & Human Resources
Operational Director - Policy & Performance
Operational Director - Financial Services
Plus co-opted members to provide specialist input as appropriate

FRAMEWORK FOR DETERMINING SUITABILITY AND SUFFICIENCY OF ASSETS

Contents

Introduction	3
Principles Of The Framework	4
Assessment Categories:	4
1 Functional Suitability	4
2 Space Utilisation	6
3 Physical Condition	7
4 Compliance With Statutory Standards	8
5 Energy Performance	8
Proposed Overall Ranking Procedure	9
Scoring For Assessments	9
Overall Ranking System	10

Introduction

The Council has to ensure its estate is efficiently managed and brought to an optimum size and condition consistent with the need for present service delivery and planned future developments. If the Council is to develop an effective approach to asset management, resulting in realistic and cost effective capital programming and asset management planning, it needs it's database detailing the extent, value, utilisation and condition of the estate to be as accurate as practicable

The Council has never undertaken a suitability and sufficiency survey of its non-educational property portfolio other than minor consideration as part of the accommodation review in 2006

This paper is not designed to set standards or priorities but rather, to outline an appropriate, objective methodology, bringing together various inter-related elements of property appraisal into a single system; the Asset Suitability Template.

This appraisal includes assessments relating to:-

- an asset's ability to provide the services required, measured as the functional suitability
- how the asset is occupied, measured as space utilisation
- the ongoing maintenance implications, measured as the physical condition
- the statutory requirements applicable to the asset, measured as statutory compliance
- how energy savings have been implemented, measured as energy performance

The collection of this data is designed to provide the Corporate Property Officer with an indication of the asset's future procurement options as well as its suitability for future investment. Where any category returns a ranking of C or D, regardless of overall ranking, this will be reported to the Corporate Asset Management Working Party.

An asset weighting (multiplier) will be a key tool in determining whether an asset is or should become surplus to requirements and is shown at the end of the document.

Principles Of The Framework

The various elements of one survey may interact with elements of another, thus it is essential that double counting is avoided. The following approach should therefore be applied: -

- i) If the physical condition and/or functional suitability assessments result in a breach of statutory or safety requirements, the defect should be recorded against statutory compliance;
- ii) If the physical condition is reasonable, but the functional performance is poor, the costs should be attributed to functional suitability;
- iii) If the poor physical condition leads to low functional performance the cost should be attributed to physical condition.

Consistency in assessment across the wide range of properties within the Council's portfolio is essential if useful comparisons are to be made, consequently The Communities & Local Government A-B-C-D appraisal system will be adopted.

The success of any property appraisal exercise will depend primarily upon establishing an effective team approach, involving representation for the service team responsible for the operational management of the asset, together with support from professional disciplines. Any survey should be carried out as objectively as possible. It is accepted however that in assessing function and space, the surveys may rely heavily upon subjective assessment.

Assessment Categories:

1 Functional Suitability

A 'whole site' assessment should be undertaken for each property/facility. Such an overview will provide the Council with valuable information that identifies which facilities are of vital importance to effective and efficient service delivery, and will enable a list of assets to be drawn up that require further investigation.

The following factors will need to be considered: -

- The location of the asset in terms of its relationship to the centres of population of it's customer base, local transport, amenities, etc
- Site characteristics and access
- Balance of service provision within facility
- Relationship of different service providers using facility

A **departmental** functional suitability assessment will determine how effectively a building (or part of a building) supports the delivery of a specified service.

Key factors that should be considered are: -

- *Space relationships* – the 'critical dimensions' for the function and the relationship of spaces within a facility should be satisfactory

- *Delivery of Services* – the range of services provided should be suitable for the function
- *Amenity (Customers)* – the level of service afforded to customers should be acceptable by modern standards, the public should gain a favourable impression of the facility and external features such as entrances, reception areas, etc should be appropriate to function
- *Amenity (Staff)* – the working conditions of Council staff should also be acceptable by modern standards, the ability to maintain services should not be compromised by poor accommodation
- *Location* – the location of the facility (i.e. in terms of its relationship to other service providers,
- *Environmental conditions* – internal aspects such as heating, lighting, ventilation, noise, etc, should be maintained to an acceptable level
- *Overall effectiveness* – the overall balance of service provision within the facility should not constitute an impediment to its function

Functional suitability ranking

The ranking, although essentially subjective, will be a hybrid of both the whole site and departmental assessments, and will indicate: -

- A High degree of satisfaction**
- B Acceptable / reasonable; no major changes necessary to facility**
- C Below an acceptable standard**
- D Unacceptable in its present condition**
- X An additional rating added to the D ranking should be used to indicate that the facility is so below standard (or so impossible or impractical to improve) that nothing but total rebuild or replacement will suffice**
- Y An additional rating added to either C or D ranking where Y is the time that situation can be tolerated**
- Z An additional rating added to either C or D ranking where Z is the cost to raise to rank of B**

Where a facility scores a C or D ranking, an assessment should be made to consider: -

- i.) how long conditions C or D can be allowed to continue (by determining this, the urgency to improve functional standards can be gauged)
- ii.) an indication of the costs that may be required in bringing the facility to a standard which would achieve a B ranking

Where this category returns a ranking of C or D, regardless of overall ranking, this will be reported to the Corporate Asset Management Working Party.

2 Space Utilisation

Space utilisation is a key contributor towards efficient asset management. The Council's objective has to be to hold no more space than is absolutely necessary to satisfy the reasonable demands of the present function of a facility with due regard to future planned requirements. (Up to 5 years).

The identification of under-used space and/or spare capacity and its costs, closely associated with appropriate feasibility and rationalisation studies, will enable potentially substantial revenue savings to be made. These savings should then be reinvested to enhance or extend other services. Because of the substantial savings that can be made through eliminating under-used space, and taking advantage of spare capacity, space utilisation exercises should be given a high priority in assessment of the council's asset base.

It must be appreciated that space utilisation is an area that is both complex and sensitive, as it may touch issues arising from territorialism and departmentalism within the authority. For this reason it is critically important that all users understand the true costs of the space they occupy and the benefits that can arise from space rationalisation. Space utilisation exercises usually require the expertise of those with necessary planning and design skills together with end-users' knowledge of service delivery requirements and constraints, in a close working environment.

For this reason, it is deemed appropriate that a 'broad brush' approach be used, based upon pragmatic observation and experience of service requirements. A space utilisation study constitutes a 'snapshot' in time. Any resulting works will be dependent of the nature of the service affected and completed within a tight timescale.

The results of on-the-spot observations are brought together on a plan of a facility and the areas of under-utilisation are then identified and agreed. From this, floor areas can be measured and potential savings in property overheads ascertained for reporting to the Corporate Asset Management Working Party.

At this stage, initial reaction to the plans may be an attempt to justify and defend the present situation. Indications may be offered as to just how impossible it is to release space because the areas are too small, too dispersed or locked due to the structure of the building, positioning of stairwells, and so on. In most situations, however, space can be 'unlocked' if functions are re-organised and brought into line with requirement for effective service delivery. A more determined and radical approach will often give greater rewards.

Space utilisation has shown it may be possible to relocate a function, service or whole department into the space released by another. It may also be possible to generate capital through the re-use or disposal of redundant sites, and additional revenue may be obtained from letting spare accommodation to other users or reducing the general costs associated with property. A case could be made for a spend to save solution.

The following scale will be used in the final ranking calculation:-

Empty	0
Underused	2
Overcrowded	3
Adequate	4

3 Physical Condition

A broad knowledge of the physical condition of the asset is an essential factor in the whole of effective asset management planning and has strong links to the Corporate Capital Strategy.

An appraisal should be carried out for each physical block (taken from data collated during the programmed condition surveys). The average overall condition of each element should be estimated to be in one of four categories, ranging from A to D, with a rating X applied where the condition falls into the categories C or D.

Broadly, the ranking is categorised as: -

- A The block can be expected to perform adequately to its full normal life**
- B The block is sound, operationally safe and exhibits only minor deterioration**
- C The block is operational but major repair or replacement will be needed soon, i.e. within three years (building elements) and one year (engineering-based elements)**
- D The block runs a serious risk of becoming unusable**
- X A rating added to C or D to indicate that it is impossible to improve without replacement**

Following categorisation of the asset, the costs of appropriate measures to upgrade a C or D condition to the B level minimum should be recorded. Condition B is deemed as an operationally acceptable standard for all building and engineering elements.

A vital outcome of this assessment is the need to realistically consider whole life costs within asset management and capital investment and apply the conclusions.

4 Compliance With Statutory Standards

To bring an asset up to an acceptable level of safety can often be both costly and disruptive. However a property assessment would be incomplete without any indication of the level of future investment required to comply with statutory standards such as fire safety or the Disability Discrimination Act.

A broad-brush approach should be applied in order to relate the existing condition of the property to the following classifications: -

- A The asset complies fully with all latest statutory requirements and BS guidance (invariably a new building)**
- B Existing buildings that comply with statutory requirements**
- C A building which falls short of A and B**
- D Areas within a building that are significantly below either A or B**
- X A further assessment to be added to C or D to indicate, because of the nature of the building, improvements to structural fire precautions and means of escape are either impracticable or too expensive to implement**

5 Energy Performance

Energy performance is an increasingly important factor in determining the overall efficiency of a property.

The part of the framework appraisal is designed to target attention to specific areas, using the following definitions: -

- A The asset is constructed in accordance with the requirements of latest Building Regulation documentation and Approved Document L – Conservation of Fuel and power**
- B A building which has undergone a co-ordinated conservation programme resulting in: -**
 - i.) thermal insulation (including draught-proofing) to economic limits with effective modern controls of heating**
 - ii.) all services examined and changed (where necessary) to maximise efficiency**
 - iii.) equipment regularly maintained and a record of reasonable energy management**

- C A building in which some energy measures have been incorporated largely on an ad hoc basis. Only a low level of equipment maintenance and some energy management measures in place.**
- D A building in which no energy conservation has been carried out. Energy management is non-existent.**

Proposed Overall Ranking Procedure

Once the assets have been assessed under the above categories it is possible for the Corporate Property Officer to produce a relative indication of the assets overall suitability.

The method proposed is based on a “paired comparison” approach. This is where a team of decision makers consider the merits of any two items and compare the contribution each makes relatively to the overall objective.

Weighting factors will be applied in line with the needs and requirements of the council, most often these will be as identified within the corporate asset management plan.

Scoring For Assessments

For assessments of Functional Suitability, Physical Condition, Compliance with Statutory Standards and Energy Performance, scores are :-

Assessment	Score
A	5
B	4
C	3
D	2
C(X)	1
D(X)	0

For assessments of Space Utilisation, scores are :-

Assessment	Score
Empty	0
Underused	2
Overcrowded	3
Adequate	4

Suggested weighting, in line with the required prioritisation of the asset management plan would be as follows:-

Category	Weighting
Functional Suitability	0.49
Physical Condition	0.27
Statutory Standards	0.10
Energy Usage	0.08
Space Utilisation	0.06

(These weightings can be amended whilst retaining the principles outlined here, however the total must always be 1.00)

Overall Ranking System

By summing the five weighted scores, the overall ranking for the property may be ascertained: -

Overall Score	Overall Rank	Definition
> 4.50	A	High degree of satisfaction
3.50 – 4.50	B	Acceptable / reasonable; no major changes necessary to facility
2.50 – 3.49	C	Below an acceptable standard
1.50 – 2.49	D	Unacceptable in its present condition
0.50 – 1.49	C (Y/Z)	Below an acceptable standard, where separate assessment of Y/Z should be made. Y is the time that situation can be tolerated and Z the cost to raise to rank of B
< 0.50	D (X/Y/Z)	Unacceptable in its present condition, where separate assessment of X/Y/Z should be made. X to be used to indicate that the facility is so below standard (or so impossible or impractical to improve) that nothing but total rebuild or replacement will suffice or Y should be time that situation can be tolerated and Z the cost to raise to rank of B

ACCOMMODATION CRITERIA

In the event of a Directorate identifying a need for additional staff resources the following decision process should be followed. In doing so the aim is to identify the best corporate solution for accommodating the new requirement.

1. Are the functions of the new posts suitable for tele-working, home-working or hot-desking?

If Not

2. Are other teams within that Directorate suitable for transferring to one of the above working methods in order to free up the required space?

If Not

3. Are there any areas of accommodation within the Directorate that are yet to be opened out into an open plan environment which may produce the required space?

If Not

4. Is there space available in office accommodation currently owned and occupied by the Borough Council?

If Not

5. Is there space available in any other suitable Halton owned property?

If Not

6. Is there space available in premises already rented by the Council?

If Not

7. Is there an arrangement can be entered into with Partner organizations to jointly deal with mutual accommodation issues?

If not then premises of the most appropriate tenure will be sought as close as possible to existing centres of operation. The Executive Board Member for Corporate & Policy will have to be satisfied that the above process has been rigorously followed and will need to approve the proposed solution to all accommodation applications.

ACTION PLAN FOR ASSET MANAGEMENT (APAM) 2008-11

Corporate Considerations

The Corporate Objectives			
<i>Asset Management Task(s)</i>	<i>Outturn Data 2007-08</i>	<i>Action - Assessing Success 2008-11</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Ensure the Asset Management Plan and all decisions relating to land and property concur with: i) Corporate goals and objectives of the Council ii) The Corporate Plan iii) The Council's Procurement Policy iv) Departmental Service Plans	Co-ordination achieved through asset management processes and regulated by Council Standing Orders although Departmental Service Plans have not been integrated	AMP 2008 published in February 2008. All Council documents relevant to AMP addressed, all Departmental Service Plans to have the AMP section approved prior to publication	CPO OD AMWG DM
Develop policy response to third sector transfers	Asset Transfer Policy investigated in 2007, informal arrangement in various areas of the borough	PPB Topic Group	PPB CPO AMWG

Financial Context			
<i>Asset Management Task(s)</i>	<i>Outturn Data 2007-08</i>	<i>Action - Assessing Success 2008-11</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Ensure expenditure on all assets reflects Best Value. DCLG aims & objectives – value for money, financial return, service return	Regulated by Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.	New national PI's to be used to review.	CPO OD DM
Ensure asset management assists in achieving Comprehensive Spending Review savings	Identification of efficiencies as part of asset management processes	Continually identify efficiency targets and log achievements Concerto P2.net	CPO

Organisation			
<i>Asset Management Task(s)</i>	<i>Outturn Data 2007-08</i>	<i>Action - Assessing Success 2008-11</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Ensure asset management is understood at corporate level and that strategic input is received as required	Continuous involvement as part of asset management processes	Initiate quarterly Asset Management Working Group (AMWG) meetings during 2008/11. Seek further input from officers and members	CPO AMWG
Ensure that everyone involved in asset management planning is aware of their roles and responsibilities	Continuous involvement as part of asset management processes	Continue to ensure and enhance understanding of roles during 2008/11	CPO
CPO to make comment on all Executive Board and Management Team reports relating to land/property issues	Executive Board and Management Team minutes have been made available	CPO to attend all Executive Board and Management Team meetings where property issues are discussed	CPO EB MT

Performance Management			
<i>Asset Management Task(s)</i>	<i>Outturn Data 2007-08</i>	<i>Action - Assessing Success 2008-11</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Collect and report on local performance indicators (PI's)	Not previously collected	Local PI's to be developed and collected during 2008/11	CPO
Adopt the new NaPPMI indicators, where appropriate. Monitor continuing IPF consultation.	ODPM 'Best Value' indicators were discontinued. New NaPPMI national PI's evaluated.	Implement relevant NaPPMI indicators introduced in 2007/8 throughout 2008/11 Link new PI's through Concerto P2.net in 2008/11	CPO
Continue use of the Carbon Trust programme	Energy efficiency works carried out in capital programme for Runcorn Town Hall	Continue energy efficiency initiatives through the capital programme, extend study to programmed maintenance works through 2008/11 Detailed analysis to be carried out on turnout results at Runcorn Town Hall, John Briggs House and Catalyst House	CPO PS

Planning & Implementation (Operational)

Data Management			
<i>Asset Management Task(s)</i>	<i>Outturn Data 2007-08</i>	<i>Action - Assessing Success 2008-11</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Finalise development and roll-out of asset management software – Concerto P2.net. Ensure data entry accuracy.	Major modules of software in place, capacity problems have caused some delays in data entry.	Finalise data entry to existing modules. Thereafter develop modules to other asset management processes, e.g. DDA database, asbestos database links to GIS, CAD package.	CPO PS

Asset Planning			
<i>Asset Management Task(s)</i>	<i>Outturn Data 2007-08</i>	<i>Action - Assessing Success 2008-11</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Develop asset strategy for all operational buildings. Reflect shared service property, remote working, shared use of facilities, strategic partnerships and other possible crosscutting initiatives	Evolving strategy for accommodation of operational services.	Continue to monitor developments, including, and reflect evolving operational asset strategy during 2008/11	CPO MT AMWG
Review depot requirements	Development from the Accommodation strategy	Look at and appraise the various options during 2008/11. Carry out essential maintenance only in the meantime	EB MT
Refine policy with regard to Surplus Assets	Various properties identified	Carry out full option appraisal and publish results with regard to all surplus property. Continuous review to produce programme of disposal	CPO PS AMWG
Develop Asset Management Plan (AMP) and Action Plan For Asset Management (APAM)	AMP 2002 in place. Initial planning for AMP 2008/11 undertaken	AMP 2008 and APAM 2008/11 published in February 2007. APAM to be updated annually	CPO AMWG
Ensure that all internal stakeholders are aware of the AMP and how they in turn can contribute to the AMP	Corporate awareness of the existence of AMP as part of the legislative process	Further embedding as part of asset management process during 2008/11	CPO MT AMWG
Ensure that the AMP is closely linked to financial planning and budgeting and integrates with the Capital Strategy	Continuous as part of asset management processes	Continuous as part of asset management processes	CPO MT AMWG

Communication & Consultation			
<i>Asset Management Task(s)</i>	<i>Outturn Data 2007-08</i>	<i>Action - Assessing Success 2008-11</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Ensure that a copy of the AMP is available for inspection on the Council's web-site. Ensure that hard copies are available for those who do not have access to a computer	The AMP 2002 was controlled issue, with both electronic and hard copies available, distribution limited.	The AMP 2008/11 published in February 2008. Thereafter to be made available on website and in hard copy	CPO C&M
Ensure consultation takes place with internal & external stakeholders and users regarding property-related issues	Informal processes exist	Attendance at various service groups etc through 2008/11	CPO

Implementation of Programme			
<i>Asset Management Task(s)</i>	<i>Outturn Data 2007-08</i>	<i>Action - Assessing Success 2008-11</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Implement Capital Programme	Ongoing as part of asset management processes	Ensure effective implementation in terms of budget and time. Management Team scrutiny	CPO PS MT EB
Implement Programmed Maintenance	Ongoing as part of asset management processes	Ensure effective implementation in terms of budget and time.	CPO PS
Implement items identified in this APAM during 2008/11	Development of APAM	Implement APAM items during 2008/11	CPO

Project Appraisal And Prioritisation			
<i>Asset Management Task(s)</i>	<i>Outturn Data 2007-08</i>	<i>Action - Assessing Success 2008-11</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Promote, where possible, shared use of facilities and partnership opportunities with other internal and/or external parties	Sharing with Halton & St Helens PCT and The 5 Boroughs Partnership	Continue to investigate any other possibilities with existing partners and pursue potential new partnerships during 2008/11	CPO MT EB

Project Appraisal And Prioritisation			
<i>Asset Management Task(s)</i>	<i>Outturn Data 2007-08</i>	<i>Action - Assessing Success 2008-11</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
When considering option appraisal and project design, take into account whole life costing and other prioritisation criteria	These items have been increasingly researched, considered and reported in recent capital appraisals	Improve consideration of whole life costing issues, developing a whole life costing protocol, and other prioritisation criteria during 2008/11	CPO PS

Monitoring And Review

General			
<i>Asset Management Task(s)</i>	<i>Outturn Data 2007-08</i>	<i>Action - Assessing Success 2008-11</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Quarterly review of APAM to ensure actions are being implemented. Annual review and update of APAM outturn and/or actions		Quarterly and annual review with consequent update of APAM as appropriate	CPO AMWG
AMWG to refer any identified issues of concern to the Management Team and Cabinet as necessary	AMWG only exists from 2008	AMWG to refer any issues of concern to Management Team and Cabinet. CPO to be present at meetings.	CPO AMWG
Monitor and review both forward planning and prioritisation of investment in Council assets	Ongoing as part of asset management process	Continue to monitor during 2008/11	CPO AMWG
Capital Programme monitoring - monthly by Capital Development Steering Group (CDSG) and quarterly by Management Team / Executive Board	CDSG focussed on a number of major projects. For example no C&YP projects were considered	Role and responsibilities of CDSG and AMWG to be clarified and formal monitoring/reporting arrangements to be in place	CPO CDSG AMWG MT EB
Monitor Programmed Maintenance and Response Maintenance including comparison of both	Costs of both are available at all times via the Concerto P2.net system.	Continue to monitor during 2008/11	CPO PS
Monitor all NaPPMI and other local PI's	New NaPPMI national PI's evaluated.	Introduce, where appropriate, local PI's and monitor NaPPMI during 2008/11	CPO PS

Property Reviews			
<i>Asset Management Task(s)</i>	<i>Outturn Data 2007-08</i>	<i>Action - Assessing Success 2008-11</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Implement a programme of Property Reviews	Property reviews now in place individually	Formalise Property Review Programme and present reports to AMWG	CPO AMWG
Carry out annual inspections of operational and investment properties (latter let on full repairing terms) to check condition / identify repairs, dilapidations, Health & Safety issues etc	Undertaken on informal basis only.	To become a specific element of the programme Undertake annually during 2008/11	CPO PS
Inspect all tenanted investment properties on lease expiry	Undertaken on informal basis only.	Inspect all investment properties on lease expiry as a specific element of the programme	CPO PS
Carry out project completion evaluations on all major capital projects 6-months after works complete	Undertaken on informal basis only.	All schemes to be formally evaluated 6-months after completion. Lessons learned to be recorded on Concerto P2.net	Project Officers PS(FM) CPO
Annual Inspection / Survey of all properties (excl. investment) to be undertaken to maintain an accurate medium term financial plan	Previous condition survey information used, costs not current	Develop module within Concerto P2.net during 2008 – Data to be used to formulate Programmed Maintenance Plan	PS CPO
Conduct and review Suitability and Sufficiency surveys on the corporate portfolio	Survey Procedure approved at MT in January 2008	Carry out surveys commencing in 2008, review as necessary.	PS CPO AMWG
Accommodation review	Last carried out in 2006, various relocations resulted and refurbishment of Runcorn Town Hall. Leases renegotiated.	Review success / impact of remote working, shared services and shared use initiatives during 2008/11	CPO MT
Transfer of Assets to the third sector	Asset Transfer Policy investigated in 2007, informal arrangement in various areas of the borough	PPB Topic Group	CPO AMWG
Carry out appraisals of land / property licences to maximise income and identify surplus assets for disposal	Management of grazing licences, garage plots and the like., regularised	Continue rolling appraisal during 2008/11	PS

Property Reviews			
<i>Asset Management Task(s)</i>	<i>Outturn Data 2007-08</i>	<i>Action - Assessing Success 2008-11</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Monitor Investment portfolio in relation to performance / returns and to review land / property leases to ensure any returns are maximised	Performance / returns monitored as part of asset management processes	Continue to monitor returns during 2008/11. Review all leases during 2008/11	CPO PS
AMWG annual review of property portfolio, to include: 1) review of operational assets' condition, suitability & sufficiency etc 2) review of non-operational assets to check reasons for holding assets remain valid 3) analyse investment portfolio returns 4) identify vacant / surplus assets for disposal	Ongoing as part of asset management processes	Continue annual reviews in 2008/11. Identify surplus properties for disposal. Confirm that property holdings address the Corporate Objectives	CPO AMWG

Statutory Considerations			
<i>Asset Management Task(s)</i>	<i>Outturn Data 2007-08</i>	<i>Action - Assessing Success 2008-11</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Ensure DDA data is recorded and regularly reviewed; and any public complaints and other compliance issues resolved	DDA works five year programme now three years complete. Reviews ongoing as part of asset management processes	Final two year s of programme to be addressed 2008/10 Continue the monitoring of compliance recording any access issues / complaints. On-line reporting system to be developed to be considered	PS
Ensure Asbestos register is kept up to date and annual inspections are undertaken to meet statutory regulations	Inspections undertaken and paper based system in place. Review ongoing as part of asset management processes	Integrate asbestos register electronically as part of Concerto P2.net in 2008/11	PS
Ensure Legionella training, risk assessments and monitoring checks are carried out and records kept	Review ongoing as part of asset management processes	Continue all Legionella-related items during 2008/11	PS DM
Fire Risk Assessments for all operational buildings	Review ongoing as part of asset management processes	Continue review during 2008/11 as part of asset management processes	PS DM

Statutory Considerations			
<i>Asset Management Task(s)</i>	<i>Outturn Data 2007-08</i>	<i>Action - Assessing Success 2008-11</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Ensure that Health & Safety risk assessments are reviewed and updated as required (at least annually)	Ongoing as part of asset management processes	Continue review during 2008/11 as part of asset management processes	CPO DM

Key To Abbreviations

Internal organisation

AMWG = Asset Management Working Group

C&M = Communications & Marketing

CDSG = Capital Development Steering Group

CPO = Corporate Property Officer (Ian Leivesley)

DM = All Divisional Managers

PPB = Policy & Performance Board

MT = Council Management Team

OD = All Operational Directors

PS = Property Services

PS(FM) = Property Services Facilities Management

EB = Executive Board

External organisation

DCLG = Department for Communities and Local Government

IPF = Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA)

NaPPMI = National Property Performance Management Initiative (formerly known as the COPROP initiative)

Other

AMP = Asset Management Plan 2008-11

PI = Performance Indicator

DDA = Disability Discrimination Act 1995

UPRN = Unique Property Reference Number

NaPPMI Reports

PMI Performance Indicator 1A

(% Gross internal floor space in condition categories A – D)

Category	A	B	C	D
Administration	30.39%	56.61%	5.66%	7.35%
Commercial Property	18.92%	8.31%	57.71%	1.81%
Direct Service Property	27.15%	40.81%	19.76%	12.29%
Indirect Service Property	27.32%	51.62%	18.46%	2.60%
Industrial Estates / Units	7.13%	88.07%	0.52%	4.28%
Investment Property	4.89%	84.82%	3.81%	6.48%
Land / Buildings	0.00%	99.36%	0.48%	0.16%
Non-Council	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Office & Administrative	12.97%	59.66%	15.28%	12.09%
Property (Residential Support)	0.76%	91.17%	2.16%	5.91%
Surplus Assets	8.84%	86.34%	3.79%	1.03%

PMI Performance Indicator 1B

Required maintenance cost expressed

- as total cost in priority level 1-3
- as a % in priority level 1-3
- overall cost per m² GIA

Administration

Priority Level	1	2	3	4	Total
Total cost in priority levels 1-3	£82,738.68	£894,469.18	£79,330.80	£1,630,586.90	£2,687,125.56
% in priority levels 1-3	6.18%	9.59%	2.43%	81.79%	100%
Overall cost per m2 GIA	10.68£/ m ²	115.45£/ m ²	10.24£/ m ²	210.45£/m ²	346.82£/m ²

Commercial Property

Priority Level	1	2	3	4	Total
Total cost in priority levels 1-3	£14,106.26	£23,640.41	£29,114.39	£170,232.73	£237,093.78
% in priority levels 1-3	0.70%	5.61%	51.89%	28.55%	100%
Overall cost per m2 GIA	4.81£/m ²	8.07£/m ²	9.94£/m ²	58.10£/m ²	80.92£/m ²

Direct Service Property

Priority Level	1	2	3	4	Total
Total cost in priority levels 1-3	£1,777,595.68	£1,937,994.56	£6,535,453.79	£37,342,340.31	£47,593,384.34
% in priority levels 1-3	10.50%	3.54%	17.57%	68.39%	100%
Overall cost per m2 GIA	4.66£/m ²	5.08£/m ²	17.13£/m ²	97.89£/m ²	124.76£/m ²

Indirect Service Property

Priority Level	1	2	3	4	Total
Total cost in priority levels 1-3	£91,198.54	£243,459.74	£225,196.70	£2,969,686.79	£3,529,541.77
% in priority levels 1-3	1.83%	6.85%	6.26%	85.06%	100%
Overall cost per m2 GIA	2.06£/m ²	5.50£/m ²	5.08£/m ²	67.03£/m ²	79.67£/m ²

Industrial Estates / Units

Priority Level	1	2	3	4	Total
Total cost in priority levels 1-3		£15,468.55	£48,286.02	£921,338.92	£985,093.49
% in priority levels 1-3	%	9.28%	%	90.72%	100%
Overall cost per m2 GIA	£/m ²	1.05£/m ²	3.26£/m ²	62.29£/m ²	66.60£/m ²

Investment Property

Priority Level	1	2	3	4	Total
Total cost in priority levels 1-3	£56,990.12	£149,486.12	£22,110.34	£773,681.56	£1,002,268.14
% in priority levels 1-3	2.91%	18.02%	1.46%	77.61%	100%
Overall cost per m2 GIA	5.87£/m ²	15.39£/m ²	2.28£/m ²	79.65£/m ²	103.19£/m ²

Land / Buildings

Priority Level	1	2	3	4	Total
Total cost in priority levels 1-3	£50.67		£152.02	£31,573.22	£31,775.92
% in priority levels 1-3	0.16%	%	0.48%	99.36%	100%
Overall cost per m2 GIA	0.02£/m ²	£/m ²	0.06£/m ²	13.31£/m ²	13.39£/m ²

Office & Administrative

Priority Level	1	2	3	4	Total
Total cost in priority levels 1-3	£185,885.70	£508,167.78	£71,020.44	£1,890,386.51	£2,655,460.44
% in priority levels 1-3	4.20%	15.07%	6.96%	73.77%	100%
Overall cost per m2 GIA	4.00£/m ²	10.92£/m ²	1.53£/m ²	40.63£/m ²	57.08£/m ²

Property (Residential Support)

Priority Level	1	2	3	4	Total
Total cost in priority levels 1-3	£47,252.36	£31,024.74	£324,404.52	£350,873.99	£753,555.61
% in priority levels 1-3	6.25%	1.75%	46.39%	45.62%	100%
Overall cost per m2 GIA	3.32£/m ²	2.18£/m ²	22.80£/m ²	24.66£/m ²	52.96£/m ²

Surplus Assets

Priority Level	1	2	3	4	Total
Total cost in priority levels 1-3	£2,317.35	£52,826.51	£17,127.59	£565,011.42	£637,282.87
% in priority levels 1-3	0.52%	7.45%	2.37%	89.66%	100%
Overall cost per m2 GIA	1.09£/m ²	24.89£/m ²	8.07£/m ²	266.26£/m ²	300.32£/m ²

All Properties

Priority Level	1	2	3	4	Total
Total cost in priority levels 1-3	£2,258,498.57	£3,856,537.58	£7,353,980.50	£46,651,786.64	£60,120,803.29
% in priority levels 1-3	3.76%	6.41%	12.23%	77.60%	100%
Overall cost per m2 GIA	4.29£/m ²	7.33£/m ²	13.98£/m ²	88.66£/m ²	

PMI Performance Indicator 1C

Annual percentage change to total required maintenance figure over previous year

Figures not available for 2006-7

PMI Performance Indicator 1D

- *total Spend on maintenance in financial year -*
- *total spend on maintenance per square metre GIA -*
- *percentage split of total spend on maintenance between planned and reactive maintenance – 73% planned / 27% reactive*

- i.) Total spend on maintenance in 2007/08 - £3,213,202.20
- ii.) Total spend on maintenance m² (GIA) - £8.69/m²
- iii.) Percentage split of total spend on maintenance, planned / reactive maintenance – 73%:27%

PMI Performance Indicator 2A

Energy Costs / Consumption

Electricity - £3.66/m² which equates to 44.37 kWh/m²

Gas - £1.35/m² which equates to 57.91 kWh/m²

PMI Performance Indicator 2B

Water costs (£/m²) and consumption (volume/m²)

Water - £0.70/m² which equates to 0.23 m³/m²

PMI Performance Indicator 2C

CO₂ emissions (tonnes/ m²)

0.032 t/m²

PMI Performance Indicator 3A and B

Suitability of corporate buildings

Not presently measured

PMI Performance Indicator 4A

Building accessibility surveys

- % of portfolio by GIA with an access audit by a competent person

85.97% of properties have an access audit, carried out by competent person

PMI Performance Indicator 4B

Building accessibility surveys

- number of properties with an access audit by a competent person

75 properties have an access audit, carried out by competent person

PMI Performance Indicator 4C

Building accessibility surveys

- % of portfolio by GIA with an accessibility plan in place

85.97% of properties have an access audit, carried out by competent person

PMI Performance Indicator 4D

Building accessibility surveys

- number of properties with an accessibility plan in place

75 properties have an accessibility plan in place

PMI Performance Indicator 5A and B

Sufficiency (Capacity and Utilisation) Office Portfolio

Not presently measured

PMI Performance Indicator 6A

Spend – Gross property costs of the operational estate as a % of the gross revenue budget

6.63% of the gross revenue budget

PMI Performance Indicator 6B*Spend – Gross property costs per m² by CIPFA categories*

Non-Operational Assets	£/m²
Commercial Property	23.13
Industrial Estates / Units	2.70
Investment Property	3.53
Land / Buildings	1.54
Surplus Assets	12.65

Operational Assets	£/m²
Direct Service Property	26.95
Indirect Service Property	62.21
Office & Administrative	202.64
Property (Residential Support)	810.28

PMI Performance Indicator 7A*Time Predictability, Design*

62.5% of projects where the actual time between Commit to Design and Commit to Construct were within, or not more than 5% above the time predicted at Commit to Design stage

PMI Performance Indicator 7B*Time Predictability, Post Contract*

63.0% of projects where the actual time between Commit to Construct and Available for Use were within, or not more than 5% above the time predicted at Commit to Construct stage

PMI Performance Indicator 7C*Cost Predictability, Design*

37.5% of projects where the actual cost at Commit to Construct were within +/- 5% of the cost predicted at Commit to Design stage

PMI Performance Indicator 7D*Cost Predictability, Post Contract*

81.0% of projects where the actual cost at Available for Use were within +/- 5% of the cost predicted at Commit to Construct stage

IMPROVED PLANNING FOR PROPERTY

Property Performance Factor Assessment

All assets should meet or address corporate key themes detailed within The Corporate Plan 2006 – 2011 helping to deliver the council's priorities thus improving both efficiency and effectiveness.

The following factors must be addressed for each asset on an individual basis:

Condition

The condition survey for the asset gives an overall condition (category A-D), for the purpose of this procedure each category is given a score as follows:

Condition	Score
A	4
B	3
C	2
D	1

Legislative

The various statutory requirements applicable to assets are given a score as follows:

Legionella

Factor	Score
Current Legionella Risk Assessment Survey	3
No Legionella Risk Assessment Survey	0
All actions in survey addressed	1
Any actions outstanding	0

Asbestos

Factor	Score
Current Type 2 Asbestos Survey	3
Current Type 1 Asbestos Survey	2
No Asbestos Survey	0
All actions in survey addressed	1
Any actions outstanding	0

Fire Risk

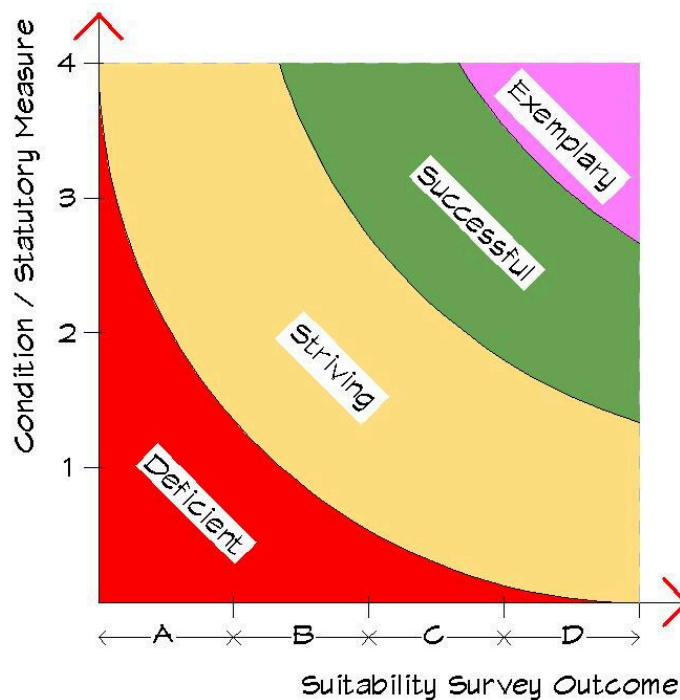
Factor	Score
Current Fire Risk Assessment	3
No Fire Risk Assessment	0
All actions in assessment addressed	1
Any actions outstanding	0

Access Audit (DDA)

Factor	Score
Current Access Audit	2
No Access Audit	0
All actions in audit addressed	2
Outstanding Priority A Items	0
Outstanding Priority B Items	0
Outstanding Priority C Items	1

The scores within each section are to be added together, each section total should then be added and averaged, this score will enable the asset to be placed in the Property Performance Factor diagram (see below), measured against the Suitability Ranking (Framework For Determining Suitability And Sufficiency Of Assets), which will allow future actions to be determined.

Property Performance Factor Diagram



Specific Considerations

The system is generic, it is appreciated that there may be specific comments or questions that will apply to some assets. Any comment regarding future plans, both for the service and asset should be noted and external influences such as leasing agreements detailed.

Grading Illustration

Deficient

Consider disposal, the asset will have poor suitability and both its condition and compliance with statutory duty would require large financial investment.

In considering disposal, due regard must be given to how the service will be delivered if the asset is disposed of. Additionally, covenants or other restrictions on alternative use must be accounted for or alternatively if there is potential for alternative use within the authority.

If it is not possible for the service to be delivered in an alternative manner then the investment will have to be made.

Assets should not be retained purely for political gain or sentiment.

Striving

If the service need is great enough to justify retention of the asset, then funding needs to be identified to allow improvement in condition and statutory compliance and/or suitability. Any investment should be measured against the value of the asset and the cost of replacement.

If service need cannot be demonstrated then the asset should be considered in the same way as a deficient asset.

Successful

These assets are providing good service and are performing well, however there may be scope for improvement and in any event should not be allowed to deteriorate. Investment will still be required to address condition and any changes in the council's business methods.

Exemplary

Exemplary assets can be considered as low priority for immediate action but should always be monitored to ensure that performance is maintained at a high level.

Essentially these properties will be less than five years old or will have been refurbished to meet need.

CORPORATE AND SERVICE OBJECTIVES

Any options appraisal exercise must have due regard to all the council's objectives and the individual service plans. Whilst assets can be measured the process must not be carried out in isolation.

REPORT: Executive Board

DATE: 15 January 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director - Environment

SUBJECT: To Seek Nominations to Serve on the Ineos Local Liaison Forum

WARDS: Boroughwide

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the requirements of and to nominate Elected Members to serve on the Forum.

2. RECOMMENDED

That the Executive Board nominates 4 Elected Members to serve on the Forum.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Prior to commencing development on the Energy from Waste CHP Plant which, was consented by the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform there is a requirement to satisfy the terms of the associated planning obligation.

3.2 The Local Liaison Forum (LLF) is required by virtue of the terms of the Section 106 Agreement entered into between Halton Borough Council and INEOS Chlor Limited: That agreement says:-

“The owner agrees not to Implement the Permission until it has submitted to the Council a scheme detailing the membership and frequency of meetings to be held by a local liaison forum and the Council has approved in writing the said scheme and to carry out the scheme in accordance with the Council’s approval unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Council.”

3.3 The purpose of the Forum will be to act as conduit between INEOS ChlorVinyls, Halton Borough Council and community stakeholders from those areas located nearest to the Energy from Waste CHP plant in order to keep residents fully informed during construction of the plant and to respond to queries raised. INEOS ChlorVinyls have agreed to extend the duration of the Forum to cover operation of the plant for as long as it is deemed beneficial.

3.4 Membership of the LLF is proposed as;

Halton Borough Council – 1 officer
Halton Borough Council – 4 elected members
INEOS ChlorVinyls -4 representatives (including 1 administrative position)
Main Construction Contractor – 1 representative
Environment Agency -1 representative
Health & Safety Executive – 1 representative
Halton & St Helens Primary Care Trust – 1 representative
INEOS Site Community Forum – 1 representative

- 3.5 It is intended that the Forum will be established in spring 2009 and meet bi-monthly. It is intended that the Council will review the purpose and need for the Forum, periodically.

4. POLICY

The LLF will help to contribute to the implementation of the extant planning permission and assist with community engagement.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 Children and Young People-None
- 6.2 Employment Learning and Skills- None directly, although the implementation of the development will help secure existing jobs as well as creating a number of temporary construction posts.
- 6.3 A Healthy Halton- None
- 6.4 A Safer Halton-None
- 6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal- None

7. RISK ANALYSIS

None.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

The Forum will enhance community engagement and help enable accessibility to information for all.

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

Documents

Copies of planning permission and legal agreement can be viewed at the Council's offices at Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn.

REPORT TO: Executive Board
DATE: 15 January 2009
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Health & Community
SUBJECT: Customer Service Excellence
WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To outline progress to consider and develop the Government's Customer Service Excellence Standards.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Executive Board:

- i) **Support the process to achieve accreditation as outlined in the report;**
- ii) **Approve the Customer Services Strategy.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Earlier this year the Cabinet Office launched its approach to improving standards within Customer Services. The aim of Government is for "public services to be efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empower - with the citizen always and everywhere at the heart of public service provision". Standards and a toolkit therefore have been prepared and Local Authorities expected to achieve accreditation through a Nationally recognised process in some ways replacing the Charter Mark.

3.2 As a first stage the Government expects all Public and Private Sector Contact Centres to adopt the standards and achieve accreditation. All organisations must fully adopt and achieve accreditation for Contact Centres during 2009 or demonstrate progress to achieve accreditation. Thereafter it expects that all services with a customer focus should be accredited. Potentially this could mean a significant number of teams and services within the Council.

3.3 The Corporate Services PPB Working Group had already addressed a range of issues surrounding Customer Care and complaints and tasked the Strategic Director, Health & Community with producing a plan to address the standards.

3.4 A small officer working group was therefore established to examine the issues.

4.0 **PROGRESS TO DATE**

4.1 **Customer Service Excellence**

4.1.1 To start the process, the group have undertaken a piece of work which worked through each one of the criteria sections within the toolkit and apart from the time the work took to complete it also highlighted the signification work that was required to achieve full accreditation across all Directorates. Therefore it was concluded that undertaking a full accreditation across all Directorates would be extremely resource intensive, both from a staffing perspective and a financial perspective. The danger being that significant resources could be committed to this area without fully understanding the systems and business case.

4.1.2 The assessment system accredits on a service/team basis rather than on a wider Directorate basis so should the Council decide to assess itself it will need to prioritise and be confident that it meets the criteria. There are 5 criteria with 57 elements of which Council's need to achieve an 80% compliance. The compliance outcome ranges from Compliance Plus through to remedial action for non-compliance.

4.1.3 The group therefore have focused their efforts and attention on working towards developing our customer services within the HDL and Revenue/Benefits and assessing our progress at a Corporate Level.

4.1.4 The group have considered working with one of the assessing organisations and meetings with CSE Assessment Services have taken place to better understand the process. CSE use a web-based assessment tool, as well as site visits to assess against the Cabinet Office criteria. Officers are more familiar with such systems being similar to the CPA and Equality Systems.

4.1.5 Subject to Standing Orders, the group wish to procure an organisation to assess the Council's Customer Services against HDL and Revenue/Benefits as a combined assessment and separately a corporate assessment. The latter would provide the foundation for a wider assessment of the other services within the Council. If successful, this would mean HDL and Revenue/Benefits being accredited under the Cabinet Offices Standards. This learning could then be applied across the Council and assist with a wider accreditation within other Directorates.

4.2 **Customer Services Strategy**

4.2.1 Having a Council Customer Services Strategy is essential so that customers can be confident of the service standards we provide. It is also a pre-requisite of the accreditation process.

4.2.2 Work on producing a Council Customer Services Strategy has been undertaken and attached is the final draft for comment.

4.2.3 The Corporate Services PPB Working Group support both the processes outlined in this report and the Strategy.

5.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Failure to progress this agenda will impact upon our CAA assessment but more importantly the standards of service we provide to our customers.

5.2 Assessing progress at a Corporate level is not a service that needs to be accredited, however, it underpins all the standards of service we apply and we must be confident that we have all the necessary policies and procedures in place.

6.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There will be a cost for undertaking the initial assessments and these will be contained within existing budgets.

6.2 Future accreditation will need to be considered within budget allocations.

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

7.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

To improve access to high quality services for children & young people in Halton.

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

To improve access to information about employment, learning and skills opportunities in Halton.

7.3 **A Healthy Halton**

To improve and enhance access to services and facilities in Halton to maintain existing good health and well-being.

7.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified.

7.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

8.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

8.1 Failure to examine the way people currently access Council services could result in people who are hard to reach failing to access services they want and need.

8.2 Accrediting all teams and services at the same time could cost the Council significant sums of money, it is therefore proposed that we test our approach first within the HDL and Revenue/Benefits Service and use the learning to plan future areas of accreditation.

9.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

9.1 To ensure that information about all Council services is easily accessible and available to all customers.

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

None identified.



Customer Service Strategy 2008 – 2011



Making it Happen – Improving Customer Services in Halton

Supporting the Councils Corporate Plan 2006-11

FOREWORD

This strategy is about our vision for the future of Customer Services in Halton. It is a vision that puts our citizens at the heart of public service provision and will drive customer focused change that will help us achieve services for all that are efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering.

Halton, as a Council, needs to meet the new challenges that the government have put forward in its Customer Service Excellence Standard, produced by the Cabinet Office in February this year, (2008).

Research indicates there are certain areas of particular importance to customers, these are: delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude.

This Strategy aims to lay down how this will be achieved. It will identify methods for continuous improvement by analysing the current capability of the Council and its partners and using these findings to improve on the efficiency, effectiveness, excellence, equitability and empowerment that already exists in relation to customer services within the Council.

This Strategy will help to develop new approaches to address these issues and will do so by basing itself on the governments Customer Service Excellence Standard, which addresses these issues through five main categories: Customer Insight, the Culture of the Organisation, Information and Access, Delivery, and Timeliness and Quality of Service.

It recognises the importance of gaining and understanding the opinion of customers in order to shape the future design of services. It also places value on the input from the staff that deliver these services, and will be looking to find ways to allow individuals and teams to acquire new skills around customer focus and engagement that will enable them to deliver improved services for customers.

The success of the strategy will depend on positive joint action between the various departments of the Council and with other public and private organisations and local voluntary and community sector groups. In particular, we must ensure that our citizens are at the very heart of the decision-making processes about the type and variety of services they want and need. This document is the first step towards that commitment.

CONTENTS

Page No

- 1.0 WHAT IS CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE?**
- 2.0 THE PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY**
 - 2.1 Vision**
 - 2.2 Aims**
 - 2.3 Objective**
 - 2.4 Desired Outcome**
- 3.0 CONTEXT**
 - 3.1 Links with National Strategies, Policies and Plans**
 - 3.2 Links with Local Strategies, Policies and Plans**
- 4.0 WHERE ARE WE NOW?**
 - 4.1 Customer Insight**
 - 4.2 The Culture of the Organisation**
 - 4.3 Information and Access**
 - 4.4 Delivery**
 - 4.5 Timeliness and Quality of Service**
- 5.0 WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE AND WHAT OUTCOMES DO WE WANT TO DELIVER?**
 - 5.1 Customer Insight – Customer Identification, Engagement and Consultation and Customer Satisfaction.**
 - 5.2 The Culture of the Organisation – Leadership, Policy and Culture and Staff Professionalism and Attitude**
 - 5.3 Information and Access – Range of Information, Quality of Information, Access, Co-operative Working**
 - 5.4 Delivery – Delivery Standards, Achieved Delivery and Outcomes, Dealing Effectively with Problems**
 - 5.5 Timeliness and Quality of Service – Standards for Timeliness and Quality, Timely Outcomes, Achieved Timely Outcomes**
- 6.0 MOVING FORWARD**
- 7.0 ACTION PLAN**

1.0 WHAT IS CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE?

Customer Service Excellence is exactly as it says. It is about ensuring that as an organisation we can provide excellent services for customers. Customers are defined in this strategy as being both 'external' and 'internal'. That is, people to whom the Council and its partners outwardly deliver services and those whom the Council and its partners work with and who contribute to part of a process of delivering services. Also, when using the word 'customer', consideration should be given to 'potential' as well as 'existing' customers.

Excellence is linked to being efficient, effective, equitable and empowering. In other words, it means making the best use of resources to provide quality services that meet the needs of customers, in a fair, consistent and informative manner, and placing the customer at the heart of the decision making process with regard to the design and provision of services. To do this it is first and foremost important to be able to know who our customers are. Once we have this 'insight' we can then ask people whether or not they are satisfied with any service they may receive and what their future needs and preferences are.

Research indicates there are certain areas of particular importance to customers, these are: delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude.

By using the Cabinet Office's Customer Service Excellence Standard the Council will test its capabilities, in relation to customer insight, the culture of the organisation, information and access, delivery, and timeliness and quality of service. This will help determine the Council's strengths and weaknesses in relation to these and to look for ways to remove weaknesses and build on its strengths. It will help to explore the skills that are required in the area of customer focus and engagement, which can then drive continuous improvement by building the capacity for delivering improved services. Furthermore, it is a means by which to validate the achievement of excellent standards by openly demonstrating competence, identifying key areas for improvement and making and celebrating those improvements. The Strategy will be a 'living' document, updated to take account of the changing context and learning gained from experience.

2.0 THE PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

2.1 Vision

The purpose of the strategy is to set out a plan to ensure that Halton Council and its partners provide excellent customer service. The vision is to put our citizens at the heart of public service provision in order to drive customer focused change that will help us achieve services for all that are efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering.

2.2 Aims

Halton aims to provide excellent customer focused services through:

Gaining Customer Insight...

- Understanding our customers
- Consulting with customers and using the information we receive to improve services
- Measuring Customer Satisfaction

The Culture of our Organisation...

- Committing to putting customers at the heart of service delivery
- Demonstrating staff are polite and friendly to customers
- Valuing the contribution staff make to delivering customer focused services

Information and Access...

- Providing information about the full range of services we provide to customers and involving them in the design of this provision
- Making our services easily accessible to all customers
- Delivering co-ordinated services with our partners

Delivery...

- Agreeing with our customers a set of service standards at the outset so that they know what they can expect from the service we provide
- Demonstrating that we benchmark and share best practice
- Our commitment to deal effectively with complaints and learn from them

Timeliness and Quality of Service...

- Advising our customers and potential customers about our promises on timeliness and quality of customer service
- Meeting our standards for timeliness and quality of customer service.

2.3 Objectives

The objectives of the strategy over the next 3 years are to:

- Demonstrate leadership and commitment from the top of the organisation downwards by involving Members and senior officers of the Council.
- Review current documentation such as the corporate plan and service plans and other policies and strategies and ensure they reflect good practice and are understood by staff and customers.
- Establish the current capabilities of the Council in relation to customer service excellence by carrying out a corporate self-assessment, using the Cabinet Office self-assessment tool.
- Investigate the possibility of seeking formal accreditation to the Customer Service Excellence Standard in order to demonstrate the Council's competence and acknowledge the achievement of staff by rolling out the assessment process to other services with a view to obtaining accreditation across the board.
- Benchmark with other authorities and public and private sector organisations in order to examine their customer service arrangements, in particular the involvement of customers and staff in the development of services and customer service practices, to determine if there is any good practice that could be used in Halton's arrangements.
- Consult with customers, staff, officers, Members and partners about how they would like to be engaged in the design of services and good customer practice.
- Develop a set of agreed customer service standards outlining our promise to them in particular to interact with them in a polite, professional, informative and timely manner.
- Determine the type and range of customer service information, currently in use and how it is presented to different audiences, in particular hard to reach groups, to ensure it is relevant and easily understood, with a view to improving access by these groups and ensuring they are appropriately engaged in the decision making processes with regard to local services.
- Consider the development of new technology in relation to customer service and the physical location of public service sites in order to make services accessible to as wide a range of customers as possible.

- Determine the need for customer care training and other skills development in order to ensure that staff and partners understand the idea of customer focus and engagement, thus building their capacity for delivering improved services.
- Draw conclusions and make recommendations based on the above in order to develop an action plan through which to deliver the strategy.

Desired Outcome

The further improvement of excellent customer service practices across the Council and with partners, through which customers, staff, officers, Members and partners can develop their role in shaping excellent customer service standards. This will enable them to be confident that it will comprehensively and positively help to drive continuous improvement and allow the Council to achieve customer services that are efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering and of mutual benefit to the business and the individuals and communities the Council and its partners serve.

3.0 CONTEXT

3.1 Links with National Strategies, Policies and Plans

Central Government have been keen to develop customer service practices within local authorities for some time. The introduction of Best Value in 2000, increased this focus, with the emphasis on continuous improvement in all areas of Council business.

This was then superseded by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in which it states in the Framework for Comprehensive Performance Assessment of District Councils from 2006 that:

“...best value Authorities have a statutory duty to put in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in their functions having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness”

Further changes outlined in the White paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities”, by the Department for Communities and Local Government, (DCLG), October 2006, also brought about a revision in the duty of best value. Councils were required to revise the best value duty to secure the participation of citizens and communities in the delivery of local public services, with the DCLG believing that this would help drive up public standards.

There have been other more specific changes relating to customer services such as the introduction of the e-government agenda, (ODPM 2002). This required local councils to e-enable as many of their services and functions as possible. This brought about a radical increase in the use of e-mails and internet for engaging with customers as well as the development of centralised call centres.

Other national Acts and initiatives include those around Community Engagement, Community Cohesion and Equality and Diversity. With regard to the latter there have been fundamental strides to improve equality in recent years around the areas of Disability, Race, Religion, Gender and so forth. This year, 2008, saw the introduction of the Equality and Human Rights Act. These all have fundamental implications for the way in which Councils and all businesses and individuals engage with other people in a fair and equitable way. In terms of customer service and “access” it means that methods will have to be employed to enable disabled people to access services, either physically through the provision of ramps and lifts to allow access to public buildings or through other means for example, to enable blind and deaf people to liaise with the Council. Similarly information should be accessible in other languages for those whose first language is not English.

In February of this year (2008) the Cabinet Office introduced the Customer Service Excellence Standard, effectively replacing the Charter Mark Standard. Its purpose is to put citizens at the heart of public service provision and is a practical tool for driving customer focused change.

It emphasises the need to gain customer insight and the development of an organisational culture that is customer centric. If customers can be properly identified, understood and engaged then improvements in information, access, delivery, timeliness and quality of service should follow.

Even more recently the White Paper “Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power”, (July 2008), announced a review to look across the public sector, private sector and internationally to consider the feasibility and practicality of introducing and extending the idea of redress for citizens where their council services fail to meet agreed standards. The review is also taking a wider look at how the customer can be put at the heart of local service delivery.

Clearly the role of the citizen at the heart of public service provision and customer focused services is of paramount importance to central government and therefore local government as a way of driving continuous improvement and is central to customer service excellence.

3.2 Links with Local Strategies Policies and Plans

The following corporate areas, strategies etc have varying degrees of impact on the elements within the Cabinets Customer Service Excellence Standard.

- Research & Intelligence Unit resource (e.g. demographic, geographic information etc)
Research and Intelligence Unit are able to provide advice on consultation methods/survey design etc)
- State of the Borough Report 2006
- Halton Observatory
- National BVPI survey on satisfaction every 3 years. From October 2008 this will be replaced by the Audit Commission Place Survey.
- BV Satisfaction Survey (Libraries/Leisure developments ensued)
- Citizens Panel
- HDL/Corporate Contact Centre (Corporate Standards)
- Staff Survey/Employee Opinion Survey
- Staff suggestion scheme
- IIP (in key corporate areas?)
- In house Training Programme (customer care and management training etc)
- HR guidance on recruitment procedures
- JDs and Person Specifications
- Workforce Strategy
- Working Flexibly for You Strategy
- Core Briefings(feedback form)/Monthly staff briefing sessions
- EDRs
- Performance Management Framework: recent review revealed the need to work more closely with partners, (work with LSP team, SSPs now started). Performance management training provided. Annual

Performance Plan. Performance Management benchmarking with a 4 star Authority. Performance Monitoring.

- Service planning: Service Planning Guidance provided. QA process enforces the need to utilise customer/community involvement in developing services. Quarterly monitoring reports. Quarterly and annual performance reporting against standards and targets. Monthly BVPI totals. The findings of satisfaction surveys have been fed into service plans and have informed developments.
- Divisional /Team Plans
- BVPIs/National indicators
- Local Indicators
- LAA Targets
- CPA/CAA
- Government standards on best practice
- Base Budget Reviews
- Asset Management Plan/Strategy
- Equalities and Diversity Group: external validation of the Equality Standard for Local Government at Level 3 achieved. There is also equality and diversity training for front line staff and managers.
- Most issues relating to fair treatment are covered by corporate policies including customer care, equal opportunities monitoring, racial incident reporting.
- Engagement Strategy

4.0 WHERE ARE WE NOW?

4.1 Customer Insight

Customer insight is about clearly identifying who our customers are and being able to gain an in-depth understanding of them from recently acquired information. The Council wants to make sure it is effectively identifying customers, consulting with them in a meaningful way and efficiently measuring the outcomes of this approach. This is vital to the Council in order to achieve continuous improvement.

To assist in this the Council has a central Research and Intelligence Unit which holds valuable and useful demographic, geographic and socio-economic information about the residents of the borough. This information can be broken down by various characteristics and segmentation, such as age, gender and so forth and by a variety of methods including, postcode, ward or super output areas. This information is gathered through a variety of sources including census and other central government data and has helped to shape the Council's priorities. In particular a piece of work entitled the State of the Borough Report, (2006), was influential in this process.

The Halton Observatory is another valuable and unique source of information about residents. The Observatory is an interactive information service, accessible via the internet that allows partners in the Halton Strategic Partnership to pool and share information and knowledge on Halton and its local communities. It can be used to select from a number of live, fully interactive applications for analysing and presenting the data, for example, mapping, ranking, comparing, tabling and profiling.

The Research Unit also regularly carries out Citizens Panel surveys through Halton 2000, which is an ongoing panel of Halton residents organised by Halton Borough Council. The panel contains around 2,200 local people who are broadly representative of the local authority area.

The Research and Intelligence team provide a competent range of research services and can also provide advice and guidance on; Research Methodology, Questionnaire Design, Coding, Scanning and Verifying, Data Entry, Inferential Statistical Analysis and Report Production.

Some services also undertake their own research and built up their own detailed profiles and purchased profiling systems.

The annual review of service plans also requires services to identify their customer base. In particular, they are required to say how they deal with equality and diversity issues and ensure they have an understanding of hard to reach groups.

Additionally, individual reviews are undertaken where it is essential to identify the customer base as part of the review process, for example the recent Overview and Scrutiny review of Performance Management has resulted in an Action Plan which includes the introduction of new technology and reporting to allow for a wider range of information being made available to suit the varying range of stakeholders.

Regular consultation is also a fundamental aspects of the way in which the Council engages with its customers. Methods and approaches used include focus groups, surveys and observations and the Council has developed its own Engagement Strategy with partners.

The National Best Value Performance Information survey on satisfaction has been conducted every 3 years since 2000. From October 2008 this will be replaced by the Audit Commission Place Survey. The survey covers a wide range of themes ranging from local areas, local public services, local decision making, voluntary work, respect and consideration and community safety. It will provide some very valuable answers to customer service issues when the results are available in mid – late January 2009, which may save the need for further consultation by other Council departments or partner organisations.

Customer experiences are also analysed through focus groups, mystery shoppers, customer journey mapping and customer complaints. A recent review of the Corporate Complaints review saw the production of a clearer acknowledgement letter to help make customers more aware of what they can expect from the complaint process. This came about in response to customer comments.

4.2 The Culture of the Organisation

A transition is required across the Council and its partners from a service focused to a customer focused culture. Key to this is the ability of the Council and its partners to demonstrate that they value and understand their customers and can then develop operations and procedures to meet customer needs and expectations. It requires staff to have a professional and positive attitude towards customers, lead and supported from the top, with the goal of improving service delivery.

The Councils Corporate Plan clearly states, under the priority of Corporate Effectiveness and Efficient Service Delivery, (Area of Focus number 32), that the Council with its partners aims to:

”Build on our customer focus by improving communication, involving more service users in the design and delivery of services, and ensuring equality of access”,

This goes a long way to demonstrating that there is leadership from the top, supporting the fundamental principals on which to build customer service excellence.

Other corporate policies within the Council also reflect this such as the:

- Corporate Consultation Strategy
- Engagement Strategy
- Corporate Performance Management Framework (including Service Planning)
- Corporate Complaints
- Equality and Diversity Scheme.

This strategy in itself is also a demonstration from the top of the commitment of the Council to achieve excellent customer service practices.

Furthermore, the existence of the central Research and Intelligence Unit indicates support for clear and accurate information, much of which relates to residents and other individuals and communities using the Councils services.

It is important to the Council that staff are given the opportunity to comment on their experiences of work and services and that they are able to do this in a variety of ways, for example, periodically, there is a staff survey. In addition, every member of staff has a six monthly Employee Development Review, (EDR), where they are free to express their opinions about the work or service they are involved in and to ask about training to obtain new skills that are pertinent to their job and can help them improve their level of service delivery. Monthly Core Briefings from senior management also provide the opportunity for staff to respond to key issues, including services delivery issues, via their manager and a feedback form. Opinions can also be voiced through the staff suggestions scheme, the staff forum and 'Chats with the Chief'.

It is important that that the Council can also demonstrate their commitment to developing customer focused services through recruitment, training and development policies. Job descriptions and person specifications for those dealing with customers will, as a rule, state the need for a potential employee to be able to demonstrate their ability to communicate well with others and to be polite and friendly to customers. In addition, there are a number of relevant in-house training programmes relating to customer care and management of customer care and staff issues to assist staff in understanding customer needs and being able to deal with them in a professional and personable way. It is particularly important for front line staff or those in direct contact with the public such as HDL and contact centre staff to have appropriate training, but all staff need a general understanding of what it means to provide excellent customer service.

4.3 Information and Access

Information is important to customers. It is particularly important that it is accurate and as detailed as possible. It should include information relating to the full range of services we provide and include how and when people can contact us, and how our services are run. The management of information is part of the Councils Communication strategy/plan. It is not something that is a one-off exercise. It aims to ensure that information is accurate and regularly updated and that information can be easily understood by customers.

The Council has a comprehensive array of methods for making information available so that people have a choice about how they access it. The Council has for some time run a contact centre, where staff are available to take calls from members of the public relating to a range of services. Customers can also have face to face contact with Council staff, through the Halton Direct Link, 'one-stop-shop' facilities, of which there are two in Widnes and two in Runcorn. The Council provides the public with one number to ring to make enquiries about all Council services. This was previously an '08' number and as such was not recognised by mobile phone operators and therefore was disadvantaging those who could only call from a mobile as this is more expensive. The Council have now updated the number so that it is an 03 number, which means that members of the public calling the Council number will now only pay the same as a local 01 number, whether they are calling from a landline or a mobile. This is a good example of how the Council is continuously trying to improve access and reflects their approach to customer services in general.

Additionally, at a corporate level there is the Communications Unit which deals with media releases for example press and radio. They also produce information leaflets and magazines for general release to the public, such as, 'Inside Halton' and 'Know Your Councillor' and 'A List of Council Services', to help inform people about the range of services. These are free publications delivered to local residents. The Council also has internet facilities for staff and customers that hold the same if not more information.

Information can also be translated for those whose first language is not English, or into Braille for people who can access information in this way. Every effort is made to allow access to facilities and information by hard-to-reach groups. The Environmental Health Section of the Council that deals with food hygiene regulations is a particularly good example of this.

In this case, the 'customers' are the food outlet owners and employees whom they inspect. It is estimated that approximately 50% of these fast food outlets are owned and run by people whose first language is not English. To combat this and ensure that the shop owners understand the regulations leaflets are translated into a number of different languages.

However, it was noticed that a number of the ethnic minorities could not read their language, but understood the spoken language. A member of staff suggested that an interactive DVD be made and taken round with a portable DVD player, so that pictures and sound were available to help in translating and understanding the regulations. This has proved very successful with the customers.

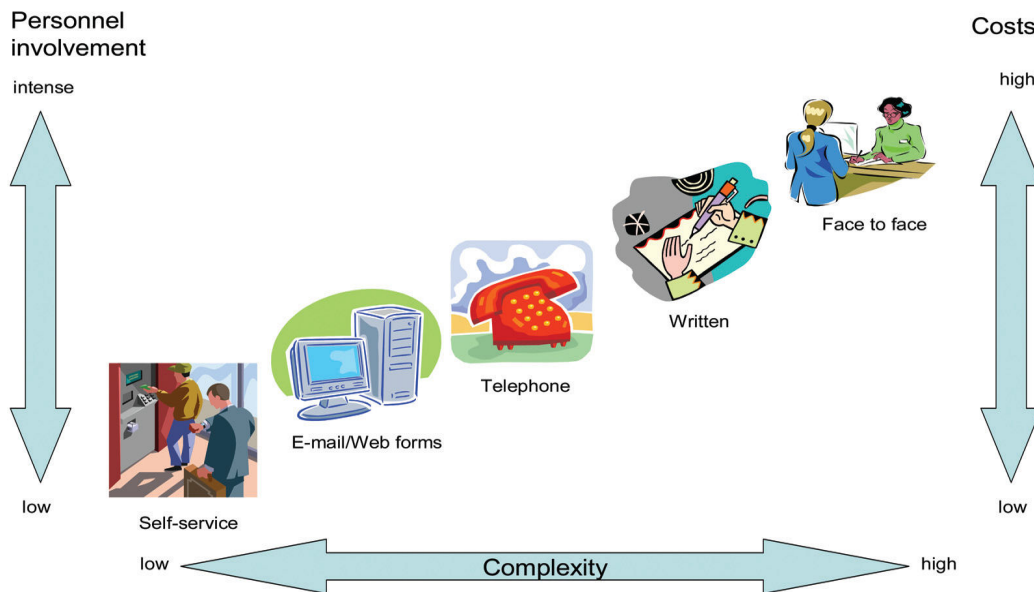
Wherever, possible services work closely with other providers and partners to offer and supply co-ordinated services such as the Children and Young People's Joint Commissioning Strategy Children's Trust. These arrangements have demonstrated benefits for our customers.

Similarly the Revenue and benefits division has co-located with the pension service and established joint visiting, which has led to proven improvements for customers.

The range of methods for delivering services is carefully considered to ensure that customers can access services conveniently and also to ensure the best use of resources. To achieve this, services must focus around the customer needs rather than the service structure.

Access channels (in person, by telephone, by e-mail) and the cost of providing those channels will largely depend on the complexity of the transactions as illustrated in the diagram below:

Diagram 1: *Delivery Methods – Analysis of Options*



Corporate information is reviewed regularly. The Corporate Plan is comprehensively reviewed every 3 years following considerable customer engagement and consultation. Service Plans are also reviewed annually. In addition the HBC website pages are regularly updated by communication champions.

Internally, services use a number of methods to communicate with their staff, one of the most popular being newsletters. The Council have its own corporate staff newsletter called 'In Touch' and several services produce their own newsletters with information specific to their service. The Children and Young People's Directorate also conduct staff surveys and have awards for employees.

4.4 Delivery

The Council considers it extremely important to look at what is being delivered and to ask the question "Is what is being delivered in line with the Council's core business and priorities?" These priorities are based on the national agenda and local need therefore the outcomes will be important to customers. Additionally, if outcomes are not being achieved or if there are problems there needs to be a clearly defined way to deal with these.

The Corporate Plan does this at a strategic level by involving customers in its creation through consultation. It is important therefore that corporate priorities are carried out to the highest possible standard in order to deliver against any promised standards, such as above (see p 12 last paragraph). Any dips or changes from the promised standards should be identified and explained to customers along with the action being taken to put things right and prevent further re-occurrence.

The Council has a number of challenging standards for its main services in the form of National and local performance indicators. There is a system of quarterly monitoring that takes place in relation to service planning, which would highlight customer service standards where appropriate.

In addition a number of services undertake their own monitoring, sometimes on a monthly basis. Benchmarking with other authorities is also a popular way for services to check their standards. However, involving customers in setting, reviewing and raising standards can prove problematic in some areas. Some standards are dictated by central government or other national bodies such as the Health and Safety Executive or the Environment agency, so there is little or no flexibility for customers to set these standards. However, it is possible for more generalised standards, were the Council can agree from the outset what customers can expect from the services provided.

Research shows that on the whole people are satisfied with their dealings with the Council; however, this could be better. The level of satisfaction with Council Services was 55% in 2003/04 and has risen to 58% in 2006/07. It is important that if problems occur they are acknowledged and action taken to

correct them. This links to the issue of culture, in that staff should be supported and empowered to deal with problems.

Research also shows that admitting to and learning from mistakes and putting them right is an important way for public services to gain trust from their customers. Listening to and asking for comments and using feedback such as complaints and making adjustments as a result is important.

4.5 Timeliness and Quality

Quality of information has already been addressed but in this instance it refers more readily to the overall standards of a Customer Service Strategy. The standards by which the Council and its partners as a whole promise to interact with their customers. This plays a major part in developing the customer-focused approach required. It is known from research that the speed of initial contact with the customer and keeping to agreed timescales is vital, but speed must not be at the expense of quality.

There are a number of corporate initiatives that have standards relating to timeliness and quality of service such as the corporate complaints procedure. And a number of services have obtained awards, which have required them to demonstrate good customer service such as ISO Awards, Investors in People, Charter Marks and others. In addition, the councils contact centre and Direct Link shops try to ensure that a customers needs are met at the first point of contact and that the customer is informed about the next steps and given an indication of the likely overall time to achieve the outcomes. This is an important area and an area that the Council needs to develop by setting a number of corporate standards.

5.0 WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE AND WHAT OUTCOMES DO WE WANT TO DELIVER?

The primary aim of this strategy is to improve our Customer services in line with the Customer Service Excellence Standard, produced by the Cabinet Office in February this year, (2008).

5.1 Customer insight – Customer Identification, Engagement and Consultation and Customer Satisfaction

The Council wants to ensure that it:

- has an in depth understanding of the characteristics of our current and potential customer groups based on recent and reliable information.
- has developed customer insight about our customer groups to better understand their needs and preferences
- makes particular efforts to identify hard to reach and disadvantaged groups and individuals and have developed our services in response to their specific needs.
- has a strategy for engaging and involving customers using a range of methods appropriate to the needs of identified customer groups.
- have made the consultation of customers integral to continually improving our service and we advice customers of the results and action taken
- regularly reviews strategies and opportunities for consulting and engaging with customers to ensure that the methods used are effective and provide reliable and representative results.
- uses reliable and accurate methods to measure customer satisfaction on a regular basis.
- analyses and publicise satisfaction levels for the full range of customers for all main areas of our service and we have improved services as a result.
- includes our measurement of satisfaction specific questions relating to key areas including those on delivery, timeliness, information, access and the quality of customer service as well as specific questions which are informed by customer insight.
- sets challenging and stretching targets for customer satisfaction and our levels are improving.
- has made positive changes to services as a result of analysing customer experience, including improved customer journeys.

5.2 The Culture of the Organisation - Leadership, Policy and Culture and Staff Professionalism and Attitude

The Council want to ensure that it:

- demonstrates that there is corporate commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery and leaders in our organisation actively support this and advocate for customers
- uses customer insight to inform policy and strategy and to prioritise service improvement activity

- has policies and procedures which support the right of all customers to expect excellent levels of service
- ensures that all customers and customer groups are treated fairly and this is confirmed by feedback and the measurement of customer experience
- protects customers privacy both in face to face discussions and in the transfer and storage of customer information
- empowers and encourage all employees to actively promote and participate in the customer focused culture of our organisation
- can demonstrate our commitment to developing and delivering customer focused services through our recruitment, training and development policies for staff.
- staff are polite and friendly to customers and have an understanding of customer needs.
- prioritise customer focus at all levels of our organisation and evaluate individual and team commitment through the performance management system.
- can demonstrate how customer facing staff's insight and experience is incorporated into internal processes, policy development and service planning.
- values the contribution our staff make to delivering customer focused services, and leaders, managers and staff demonstrate these behaviours

5.3 Information and Access – Range of Information, Quality of Information, Access, Co-operative working with other providers, partners and communities

The Council wants to ensure it:

- makes information about the full range of services we provide available to our customers and potential customers, including how and when people can contact us, how our services are run and who is in charge
- tells our customers how much they have to pay
- provides our customers with the information they need in ways which meet their needs and preferences, using a variety of appropriate channels
- takes reasonable steps to make sure our customers have received and understood the information
- provides an improved range, content and quality of verbal, published and web based information to ensure it is relevant and meets the needs of customers
- can demonstrate that information we provide to our customers is accurate and complete, and that when this is not the case we advise customers when they will receive the information they requested
- makes our services easily accessible to all customer through provision of a range of alternative channels
- evaluates how customers interact with the organisation through access channels and we use this information to identify possible service improvements and offer better choices

- ensures that where customers can visit our premises in person facilities are as clean and comfortable as possible
- has made arrangements with other providers and partners to offer and supply co-ordinated services, and these arrangements have demonstrable benefits for our customers
- has developed co-ordinated working arrangements with our partners that ensure customers have clear lines of accountability for quality of service
- interacts within wider communities and we can demonstrate the ways in which we support those communities

5.4 Delivery Standards - Delivery Standards, Achieved Delivery and Outcomes, Dealing Effectively with Problems

The Council wants to ensure it:

- has challenging standards for our main services, which take account of our responsibility for delivering national and statutory standards and targets
- monitors and meets our standards, key departmental and performance targets and we tell our customer about our performance
- consults and involves customers, citizens, partners and staff on setting, reviewing and raising of our local standards
- agrees with our customers at the outset what they can expect from the service we provide
- can demonstrate that we deliver the service we promised to individual customers and that outcomes are positive for the majority of our customers
- can demonstrate that we benchmark our performance against complementary organisations and have used that information to improve our service
- has developed and learned from best practice identified within and outside our organisation and we publish our examples externally where appropriate
- has identified any dips in performance against our standards and explain these to customers together with action we are taking to put things right and prevent further recurrence
- has an easy to use complaints procedure which includes a commitment to deal with problems and fully solve them wherever possible within a reasonable time limit
- it gives staff training and guidance to handle complaints and to investigate them objectively and we can demonstrate that we empower staff to put things right
- learns from any mistakes we make by identifying patterns in informal and information complaints and comments from customers and use this information to improve services and publicise action taken
- regularly reviews and improves our complaints procedure taking account of the views of customers, complainants and staff
- ensures that the outcome of the complaint process for customers is satisfactory for them

5.5, Timeliness and Quality of Service – Standards for Timeliness and Quality, Timely Outcomes, Achieved Timely Outcomes

The Council wants to ensure it:

- sets appropriate and measurable standards for the timeliness of response for all forms of customer contact including phone calls, letters, e communications and personal callers
- sets comprehensive standards for all aspects of the quality of customer service to be expected in all dealings with our organisation
- advises our customers and potential customers about our promises on timeliness and quality of customer service
- identifies individual customer needs at the first point of contact with us and ensure that an appropriate person can address the reason for contact deals with the customer
- promptly shares customer information with colleagues and partners within our organisation whenever appropriate and can demonstrate how this has reduced unnecessary contact for customers
- discusses with the customer the next steps and indicates the likely overall time to achieve the outcomes, where service is not completed at the first point of contact
- responds to initial enquiries promptly, If there is a delay advise the customer and take action to rectify the problem
- monitors performance against standards for timeliness and quality of customer service and we take action if problems are identified
- is meeting our current standards for timeliness and quality of customer service and we publicise our performance against these standards
- performance in relation to timeliness and quality of service compares well with that of similar organisations

6.0 MOVING FORWARD

A great deal of positive work has already been done by the Council to try and understand who our customers are, and who our potential customers might be, and to provide the sort of high level standards of service excellence that customers expect; through polite, friendly and well informed staff.

Care is being taken to provide quality information across a range of services and to make sure services are as accessible as possible to the local community. Such access is not just physical, in terms of location or wheelchair access, but also includes various other access channels, from letters and face to face transactions through to access via the telephone and internet. There is also the provision to translate leaflets into languages other than English, or into Braille. This helps to reach a wider range of people, including those classed as 'hard-to reach groups'.

A number of services also demonstrate how good their services are through production of performance information, inspections and the achievement of regionally or nationally recognised awards.

However, whilst a great deal of positive work is taking place to try and consult with and engage customers or potential customers there are still things to be done to continue to improve customer services.

There is a need to further investigate share good practice throughout the Council, especially in relation to the corporate approach. There is a risk that services may be acting in silos and not benefiting from a more corporate approach to customers service excellence through the sharing of good practice, and the possibility that if a service is doing something independently there may be inconsistencies in relation to a corporate approach where one exists.

It is important to consider customer characteristics, needs and preferences and to have a consistent approach to consultation and engagement from which to shape service design and delivery. Corporate elements of customer service excellence need to be clarified to form a consistent basis to ensure that there is greater understanding and knowledge of what does exist in terms of strategies, policies, plans and other documentation that could provide the guidance necessary to form a consistent approach to customer service. Currently, not everyone is clear about corporate approaches or strategies that relate to, or have some impact on, customer focus and customer service excellence. This may be partly due to the fact that whilst a great deal of information does exist corporately in written format, it may be out of date, moreover, some policies and plans appear to be intrinsic ways of working rather than specific written documents. Again this can lead to inconsistency and confusion about the corporate approach. Furthermore, services may be missing out on the opportunity to work with another service or partner over a similar issue, which could potentially lead to a waste of resources.

More importantly, acting independently can result in over consultation or duplication of engagement of the same set of customers. Where consultation and engagement does take place it is not clear that there is a consistent approach, especially to feedback.

It is also necessary to ensure customers are satisfied with what is produced and that information is timely, accessible and of good quality. The standard should also be

clearly supported from the top and be backed up by policies and procedures that treat all customers fairly.

It may be that there are pockets of customer service excellence in individual services and directorates that operate at a standard higher than that of the corporate approach. There is a need to develop awareness of existing information and customer service excellence standards and share them both up and down the organisation although the Corporate Plan does state, under the priority of Corporate Effectiveness and Efficient Service Delivery, Area of Focus number 32, that the Council with its partners aims to: "Build on our customer focus by improving communication, involving more service users in the design and delivery of services, and ensuring equality of access", which goes a long way to supporting the fundamental principals on which to build customer service excellence.

High levels of staff professionalism will also be required, which can only be built from a good knowledge base and training. It will be necessary to ensure that all staff are clear about the new standards. This will require good promotion and a number of training initiatives, for all staff, and Members. How we measure the success of all this will also be important.

Last but not least it will be important that full advantage is taken of new technology, especially in the area of access. It would be useful to ensure that where possible software can be joined up to get the most economic and efficient benefit.

The Action Plan below is designed to compound existing good practice and develop new ways to ensure continuous improve on current levels of customer service.

7.0 ACTION PLAN

Action No.	Action	Key Tasks	Lead Officer or Group	Timescale	Resource
1.	Demonstrate leadership support for the development of a customer focused approach to customer service	<p>Development of a Corporate Customer Services Strategy</p> <p>Approval of (final) draft of Customer Services Strategy by Corporate Services PPB/Executive Board</p> <p>Briefing sessions for Divisional Managers to explain the process by which the Council is seeking accreditation and why.</p> <p>Development of customer service 'champions' in each directorate/division to promote the process</p> <p>Information on customer Services approach to become a regular part of Core and Team Briefings</p>	<p>Members/COMT with support of Members Scrutiny Topic Group and Officer Review Group</p> <p>Strategic Directors</p> <p>Strategic Directors/Divisional Managers</p> <p>COMT/Divisional/Team Managers</p>	<p>September 2008 – March 2009</p> <p>March 2009</p> <p>December 2008- March 2009</p> <p>April 2009</p> <p>April 2009</p>	<p>From existing Resources</p> <p>From existing Resources</p> <p>From existing Resources</p> <p>From existing Resources</p>
2.	Establish the current capabilities of the Council in relation to customer service excellence through a corporate assessment. (This will provide a baseline against which to measure and gain accreditation for other services)	<p>Carry out an initial assessment of several divisions against the Customer Service Excellence Standard to establish corporate and divisional elements of CSE.</p> <p>Two service areas (HDL and Benefits) to assess themselves against the corporate baseline</p>	<p>Officer Review Group</p> <p>HDL /Benefits Manager with Officers Group</p>	<p>September 2008 – November 2008</p> <p>December 2008 - March 2009</p>	<p>From existing Resources</p> <p>From existing resources.</p>

7.0 ACTION PLAN

Action No.	Action	Key Tasks	Lead Officer or Group	Timescale	Resource
3.	Prepare a brief/ specification for a CSE accreditation company	Undertake a benchmarking exercise with another similar authority that has obtained or is working towards a corporate approach to the Standard	Officers Group	January – March 2009	From existing resources.
		Seek approval from Corporate Services PPB/Executive Board	Officer Group/Members Topic Group	January – March 2009	From existing resources.
4.	Prepare for corporate Assessment	Obtain quotes and appoint a company			
		Seek corporate assessment and evaluate outcome and report to Corporate Services PPB/Exec Board	Officer Group with support of senior managers/ divisional managers and CSE champions	April - June 2009 July – August 2009	From existing resources. From existing resources.
5.	Prepare for service accreditations.	Seek accreditation for HDL/Benefits Services	HDL/Benefits Managers with support of senior managers/ divisional managers and CSE champions	September 2009	From existing resources.
		Assess the outcome of accreditation of the first two service areas and develop a roll out plan for the Council to achieve accreditation across other service areas.		October 2009	From existing resources.
		Organise self assessments within their relevant directorate.	CSE champions	November 2009 onwards	From existing resources.

7.0 ACTION PLAN

Action No.	Action	Key Tasks	Lead Officer or Group	Timescale	Resource
5.	Review current corporate strategies, policies, plans and other documents that have relevance to customer service	Ensure strategies and other documentation is relevant and up to date and that any action plans are being progressed and monitored	Officer Review Group	December 2008 – Feb 2009	From existing resources
6.	Develop a set of corporate guidelines in relation to defining customer characteristics and engaging conducting surveys, engaging with customers and feeding back to customers	<p>Promote the use of corporate Research and Intelligence Unit information in order to develop consistent corporate customer profiles.</p> <p>Create an internet site with CSE information e.g. guidelines, documentation etc.</p> <p>Develop and promote the use of the Halton Observatory as a repository for information particularly from partners to ensure consistency with partners</p>	<p>CSE champions with support from Research and Development Unit</p> <p>CSE champions with support from research and development unit</p>	<p>January 2009 onwards</p> <p>January 2009 onwards</p>	<p>From existing resources</p> <p>From existing resources</p>
7.	Establish a methods for sharing good practice across the Council	Establish a CSE network	CSE champions with support from senior managers	April 2009 onwards	From existing resources
8.	Develop a set of corporate Customer Service Standards	Research existing standards used by other authorities or recommended as good practice by professional bodies and create a set of standards.	Officer Group	December 2008 – January 2009	From existing resources

7.0 ACTION PLAN

Action No.	Action	Key Tasks	Lead Officer or Group	Timescale	Resource
9.	Take advantage of new technology	Consult with staff and customers regarding the standards and come to an agreed set. Investigate the potential for improving information management and access	Officer Group and Research and Intelligence Unit Officer Group with HDL, IT and Communications	January – March 2009 April 2009 onwards	From existing resources From existing resources
10.	Investigate the need for training in Customer Service Excellence	Establish the need for and type of customer service training required by partners, Members, officers and other staff (front line and back office) in order to ensure a consistent approach to customer service.	CSE Champions and Corporate Training Section	April 2009 onward	From existing resources