

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 8 April 2010

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director Resources  
Strategic Director Adult and Community

**SUBJECT:** Locality Working

**WARDS:** Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To consider joint recommendations from Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board and the Business Efficiency Board for the development of locality working in Halton following the end of the Neighbourhood Management pilots.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- (1) the report on Locality Working in Halton be considered; and**
- (2) the following recommendations are adopted subject to any changes that Executive Board may wish to make:**
  - i. Councillors for each Area Forum area consider the suggestions in the report on Locality Working (appended) for refreshing the way in which public meetings are conducted in order to increase attendance and engagement.**
  - ii. Area Forums are renamed to emphasis the new approach (working title Locality Area Forums)**
  - iii. each Locality Area Forum establishes a Locality Partnership Board to meet at least 3 times a year comprising local councillors and partner agencies.**
  - iv. each locality area forum conducts an annual review in consultation with partner agencies to identify priority actions for the area.**
  - v. a Locality Working Co-ordinating Group be established for the whole Borough with at least one Councillor from each area forum, and representatives of key partners to review the operation of these arrangements twice yearly**
  - vi. a sum of £45,000 is top-sliced from the combined budget of the Area Forums annually to supplement the funding for Community Development support to the forums.**
  - vii. a marketing strategy is developed for locality area forums.**

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board considered the future of Neighbourhood Management after the expiry of the current funding and concluded:

*That the Executive Board be recommended to accept Option 1 – complete closedown, and a Working Party be set up with the Business Efficiency Board to consider the future of locality working in Halton.*

This was reported to the Council's Executive Board on 3 December 2009 which resolved:

- (1) Executive Board support the creation of a Working Group to consider how locality working should operate and be funded in Halton when Neighbourhood Management funding ceases to be available from Central Government; and*
- (2) the Working Group receive evidence from a wide range of partners across Halton and report their findings to the Local Strategic Partnership and Executive Board*

Nominations to the working group were confirmed following the meeting of the Business Efficiency Board on 11 November 2009, and meetings have taken place on 26<sup>th</sup> November, 15<sup>th</sup> December, 13<sup>th</sup> January, 3<sup>rd</sup> March and 11<sup>th</sup> March 2010. A number of key partner agencies were invited to the January meeting to enable them to contribute their views to the review. The chair of the working group Councillor Philbin met resident representatives from the 3 neighbourhood boards accompanied by Councillors A. Lowe, E. Cargill and P. Browne. A further meeting with voluntary sector representatives took place on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

The working group has considered the scope of the review, the lessons from the Neighbourhood Management pilot and options for taking forward locality working. It is also looked at whether and how any future arrangements might be supported from within existing resources. It made recommendations to roll out locality working to the whole Borough based on the current Area Forum footprint. These recommendations were endorsed by a joint meeting of the Business Efficiency Board and Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

### **4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD AND THE BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD**

The full report and recommendations are appended.

## **5.0 RESPONSE FROM PARTNERS**

The report and recommendations of the joint boards on Locality Working are in the public domain and were considered by the Neighbourhood Management Board at its meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2010. There was a very strong view from the 3 representatives of registered social landlords present (Halton Housing Trust, LHT, and Riverside) that there should be a resident presence on the locality partnership boards so that residents had some direct input to strategic decision making. Similar views were expressed by resident members of the Neighbourhood Management Partnerships. Any further comments or representations from partners or residents will be reported at the Executive Board meeting.

## **6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The Council and its partners have made policy commitments to narrow the gap between the more deprived areas and the rest of the Borough. Locality working is one way of addressing this and would be consistent with government policy as set out in the Communities in Control White Paper

## **7.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

Whilst it is recommended that additional funding be allocated to the Community development team, this can be drawn from within the existing Area Forum budget, and so there will be no net effect on the Council budget.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

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

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

### **8.3 A Healthy Halton**

### **8.4 A Safer Halton**

### **8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

Locality Working should aim to support the delivery of our objectives under all of the Council's key priority areas. It will link into locality working arrangements adopted in individual service areas.

## **9.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

There are risks relating to the government's and regulators' expectations in respect of community empowerment and addressing inequalities,

including narrowing the gap. Whilst these issues are taken into account in the above arrangements, the effect may not be sufficient to satisfy external expectations, possibly resulting in red flags or influencing future funding decisions

## **10.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

There are no new issues with regard to race, gender, age, ability or sexual orientation in this report. It remains the responsibility of area forums to ensure that arrangements are made to enable everyone in the community to take part. In appropriate cases this may be achieved through separate consultation exercises that are reported to the forum.

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

<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
<b>1.0</b> Notes of working group meetings	Municipal Building Kingsway Widnes	Rob MacKenzie Operational Director Policy and Performance 0151 471 7416 <a href="mailto:rob.mackenzie@halton.gov.uk">rob.mackenzie@halton.gov.uk</a>
<b>2.0</b> Succession and Sustainability: the case for locality partnership working in Halton beyond March 2010.		
<b>3.0</b> Community Development Service Delivery - presentation		

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**LOCALITY WORKING IN HALTON**

**RECOMMENDATIONS OF JOINT MEETING OF BUSINESS EFFICIENCY  
BOARD AND CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE  
BOARD**

**18 MARCH 2010**

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## **2. INTRODUCTION**

From April 2006 to March 2010 Halton received a government grant to establish neighbourhood management. This funding was used to establish 3 pilots in disadvantaged parts of the Borough. In view of the impending expiry of this funding, the Council established a working party with members drawn from the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board, and the Business Efficiency Board to consider the future of locality working in Halton.

The working party met on 5 occasions, and consulted partners, residents and voluntary sector representatives who had served on the Neighbourhood Management Board.

## **3. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS FOR LOCALITY WORKING**

The working group recommends that locality working should be rolled out across the whole Borough based on the current Area Forum geography, but with greater links to partners as follows:

- i. Area Forum meetings continue as now as an open public forum three times a year, with a freshened format
- ii. The public Area Forum meetings are renamed to emphasise the new approach (working title “Locality Area Forums”)
- iii. Regular meetings take place between partner agencies and councillors in each area forum 3 times a year as “Locality Partnership Boards”
- iv. A Borough wide co-ordinating group of councillors (all the forum areas to be represented) to meet with senior representatives of partner organisations twice a year to review arrangements and discuss any commonly occurring issues

Each of these elements is described in more detail below:

## **4. LOCALITY PARTNERSHIP BOARDS**

Locality Area Forum members should meet regularly with partner organisations operating at the locality level. These partnership boards could take place at the same time as the Area Forum pre-agenda meetings, so avoiding the need for additional meetings. Examples of the partners who might be expected to attend are:

- Neighbourhood police sergeant
- RSL estate manager or equivalent
- Fire service – nominated watch leader
- PCT – public health team nominee for the area
- Job Centre Plus
- HBC Children’s services – locality manager
- HBC adults and older people
- HBC streetscene team leader
- Probation service (community payback)

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The precise composition of these Boards will vary from one Forum area to another taking into account local factors.

The purpose of these meetings would be:

- i. To co-ordinate future activity .The Council and all partner agencies should identify their own plans affecting the forum area in the forthcoming 12 months (or so). This would enable us to support one another and get better value for the public pound. For example if Job Centre Plus plan to run a particular campaign aimed at helping residents in a particular neighbourhood to find work, other partners may be able to support in a variety of ways
- ii. To identify any areas for joint action that are not necessarily picked up by day to day services, but which the statistics, or local opinion identify as priorities (e.g. high rates of cancer or high rates of housing repossessions)
- iii. To provide a joint response to local problems and issues as they arise – reactive and bottom up.

Through these discussions, and those in other meetings, a small number (say 3 to 5) of key priorities and actions will be agreed for the locality forum area over the coming year (or maybe longer). Partners will remain in control of their own funding streams, but the partnership boards will look for opportunities to match fund on a project by project basis.

#### **5. PUBLIC LOCALITY AREA FORUM MEETINGS**

The public locality area forum meetings will continue 3 times a year as now. Partners will continue to be welcome to attend. However, given the modest attendances at many meetings, it is time to consider if there are ways in which the meetings could be made more attractive. Some suggestions for consideration by each forum are:

- i. Theme the meetings, with presentation and discussion on a single topic per meeting where possible. This could be publicised to any known groups or individuals with a particular interest in the specific theme so as to broaden attendance. This would recognise that people are more likely to attend a meeting if it concerns something in which they have a direct interest. Themes could be agreed a year in advance, in discussion with partners, and may reflect the priorities identified in the locality action plan (see above).
- ii. Adopt a more informal meeting style with more opportunity for interaction outside the set piece public meeting format. For example 30 minutes could be set aside as a surgery session where residents can drop in and chat informally to councillors, officer and partners without necessarily having to go through the stress of speaking in public. This would also get some of the smaller items out of the way leaving space in the main meeting for more in depth discussions.

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- iii. Rotate meetings around different venues in the forum area to encourage attendance from different wards
- iv. Hold one meeting a year in the daytime for the benefit of those who find it difficult to attend evening meetings, and consider using the daytime meeting as an open forum for local voluntary and community groups to showcase their activities and raise awareness.
- v. Allow attendees to take part and ask questions without the need for three days written notice. This already happens in several area forums and is seen as successful.
- vi. Publicise the forum through all available means, including an annual leaflet explaining what the forum has discussed in the last year, what it has achieved, and its plans for the coming year.
- vii. Consult on the locality. review for the coming year (see below)
- viii. Look for opportunities to involve residents in delivery – current examples would be estate litter picks. Residents can be part of the solution and so feel more involved in their area.
- ix. Councillors will retain control of Locality Area Forum funds (through the lead officer). However, it would help to build trust and engagement if all forums receive regular reports on what proposals have been put forward, the decision made, with reasons, and reports back on the outcome (was it successful?). Most, but not all forums have some form of reporting back already. Schemes could be branded as Locality Area Forum funded (eg through inscriptions or acknowledgements) and a selection included in an annual report leaflet to all households (see publicity at (vi) above).

## **6. LOCALITY REVIEWS**

Locality reviews will be carried out at the beginning of every year. The intention would be to allow for bottom up input via the public forums, and through approaches made by residents to ward councillors, as well as top down identification of partner plans and priorities. The review would look at public opinion, councillors and partners plans and priorities, and any other relevant information. A shared list of say 3 to 5 priorities for the coming year would be identified for all partners. This will allow councillors to influence the work of partners, as well as providing some balance to the important re-active role that forums play in addressing local concerns and problems as they arise.

## **7. SUPPORT FOR THE AREA FORUMS.**

In addition to the current support from the Area Forum Co-ordinator (Janice Weston) and the lead officer, it is recommended that the Community Development team provide additional support for the forums. To ensure that there is adequate support, it is recommended that £45,000 is top sliced off the overall funding for Area Forums. The remaining £555,000 would be distributed amongst the 7 forums on the present per capita basis. The £45,000 would be used to backfill the loss of a



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contribution from Neighbourhood Management funds and in addition increase the establishment by one post.

The role of the Community Development Officers will be to support the meetings of the forum and the partnership board, assist in the development of action plans, assist in the implementation of the plans and support individual projects, monitor progress with plans and projects, and secure public engagement in the activities of the forum, and the projects which it supports.

**8. CLOSING THE GAP**

The working group believes that deprivation exists to a greater or lesser extent in all wards, and therefore there should be no targeting of particular neighbourhoods within the area forum framework. Partners, including the Council, will target individuals in need wherever they live. This may well lead to concentrated effort in particular localities associated with specific problems, and these will be flagged up through the area partnership board, so that different initiatives by different service providers can be co-ordinated.

**9. RISKS**

There are risks relating to government and regulators expectations in respect of empowerment and addressing inequalities, including narrowing the gap. Whilst these issues are taken into account in the above arrangements, the effect may not be sufficient to satisfy external expectations, possibly resulting in red flags or influencing future funding decisions.

**10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS.**

Whilst it is recommended that additional funding be allocated to the Community development team, this can be drawn from within the existing Area Forum budget, and so there will be no net effect on the Council budget.

**11. RECOMMENDED: That**

- i. Councillors for each Area Forum area consider the suggestions in the report for refreshing the way in which public meetings are conducted in order to increase attendance and engagement.**
- ii. Area Forums are renamed to emphasis the new approach (working title Locality Area Forums)**
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- iv. Each locality area forum conducts an annual review in consultation with partner agencies to identify priority actions for the area.**
- v. A Locality Working Co-ordinating Group be established for the whole Borough with at least one Councillor from each area forum, and representatives of key partners to review the operation of these arrangements twice yearly**
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- vii. A marketing strategy is developed for locality area forums.**

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**MEMBERSHIP OF THE WORKING PARTY**

Cllr G Philbin (Chair)  
Cllr P Browne  
Cllr E Cargill  
Cllr S Edge  
Cllr R Gilligan  
Cllr D Inch  
Cllr E Jones  
Cllr D Leadbetter  
Cllr A Lowe  
Cllr S Osborne