



Property Services Department

SERVICE PLAN

April 2007 to March 2010

Advanced Draft – 08.02.07

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

To meet Halton's most pressing needs, the Borough Council has identified **6 key priorities**, which, as detailed within the Council's Corporate Plan, are: -

- **A Healthy Halton**
- **Halton's Urban Renewal**
- **Halton's Children & Young People**
- **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**
- **A Safer Halton**
- **Corporate Effectiveness & Business Efficiency**

The primary purpose of Service Plans is to provide a clear statement on what individual services are planning to achieve and to show how this contributes towards achieving the corporate priorities of the Council. They are an essential tool for making key decisions about future service provision and the level of resources required. Additionally the service plan is designed to enable the public, Elected Members and staff to monitor how well this part of the Council is performing in improving the quality of life for local people.

2.0 SERVICE PROFILE

2.1 Purpose

Property Services exists to provide Corporate support to all areas of the Council in relation to the management, maintenance and development of the Council's property portfolio and regeneration schemes. The Department comprises the following three teams: -

OPERATIONS

Manages and implements capital projects, repairs & maintenance and facilities management.

STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT

Forward planning for acquisitions, disposals, major works and repairs & maintenance, budgeting & financing property and property related services, estate management of all properties, including management of the Council's Retail Markets.

OFFICE SUPPORT & CUSTOMER RELATIONS

Providing the Helpdesk function, customer liaison with Client departments and data management.

In exercising its functions Property Services acts as a corporate landlord by providing, maintaining and managing the Council's accommodation including: -

- Provision of a safe and efficient working environment for all employees.
- Provision of Depots for Neighbourhood Services
- Provision of Other Council buildings e.g. for Leisure, Culture and Social services.
- Provision of all property related services to schools that are 'opted in'.
- Policing standards for those schools that have 'opted out'.
- Managing Major work programmes on Corporate Property for both Capital and Maintenance Programmes
- Management of Widnes and Runcorn markets.
- Managing a sizeable investment portfolio.

In addition to these landlord functions the Property Services Department also plays a significant supporting role in: -

- Raising capital via property rationalisation and disposal to balance the Council's capital programme.
- Regeneration projects.
- The regeneration and redevelopment of the Widnes, Runcorn and Halton Lea town centres.
- Acting as a Building Consultancy for the delivery of the Council's Capital Works and Maintenance programmes.
- Carrying out the Landlord function to the Corporate, Educational and Non-Operational Estate.
- Acting as Property Consultant to all our users.

- Providing Professional support to other areas of the Council's operations including the Economic Development Zone, Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park, New Mersey Crossing, Castlefields and other regeneration working parties and projects.

The activities and functions of the Property Service Department underpin every aspect of the Council's work by ensuring that its land, buildings and property portfolio are managed effectively. This in turn facilitates the delivery of front-line services that benefit those who live, work, and visit the Borough.

2.2 Key Messages

GREEN ENERGY

Under the terms of our latest Electricity contract we are able, on all invoices that attract VAT of 17%, opt not to pay the Climate Change Levy, but rather invest it in the provision of green energy. This gives us the ability to purchase green energy from renewables at no, extra cost to the Council.

CAPITAL WORKS

The Building Schools for the future initiative, which affects Halton from 2008, is a major area of work that is impacting on Property. We have an active involvement in the initial stages of this process alongside Education, in working up the outline feasibilities that will be required, in order to submit bids for funding. This is an area that needs addressing now with Education in order to put things in place. Once this process commences we will have the need for additional resources for the first stages of this work, this is estimated at 50% of a person for at least a 2-year period. Dependent on the procurement route for this initiative it is feasible that additional resources may be needed in the future.

Going through a tender process on each project may appear to deliver good value for money, however there is an alternative option available, which has the potential to deliver efficiency savings.

Partnering is a form of procurement that has come to the fore in recent years and is backed by central government. In essence you enter into an agreement with one or more consultants/contractors, the numbers being dependent on the level and amount of capital works that are programmed over say a five-year period. There is a tender process at this stage in order ensure that best value is being achieved. These contractors then become involved in the capital schemes almost at feasibility stage, their expertise in build-ability issues adds value to the process, which in turn can lead to efficiency savings.

Research has indicated that at least 5% savings can be achieved through this procurement route once successful partnerships are up and running, these savings could be realised in lower capital costs on projects, this is difficult to measure however as all projects are unique in nature so assessments have to be made on floor area costs. Alternatively better quality products could be delivered which will offer savings in the life cycle costs over a period of time.

Partnering is currently the form of procurement which is coming to the fore, the risk of not going down this route is that in time all the quality contractors will be in partnering arrangements, as such there will not be many that are readily available to go through a traditional tender process.

Under the new CPA regime there is far more emphasis placed on the use of resources, moving down the route of partnering will help to demonstrate that as an authority we are utilising what resources are available for capital procurement in the most cost effective way possible.

A partnering focus group has been set up which is looking into partnering as a procurement route. This group reported back to Executive in late 2005 to suggest a way forward with the partnering agenda for Halton.

If it is felt that partnering holds to many unknowns, then a more efficient method of traditional procurement is to use the Office for Government Commerce (OGC) select lists. Consultants and contractors have already tendered rates for work and complied with European requirements. This would save some significant costs but more so a lot of time and effort. Again the Department is investigating this alternative method of procurement.

2.4 Repairs and maintenance

The requirement for local authorities to achieve efficiency gains as detailed within the report "Delivering Efficiency in Local Services" produced by the Office of the deputy Prime Minister in Autumn 2004.

- Investment and disposal decisions will have to be based on option appraisal and whole life costing.
- Depreciation to be included in the budgets.
- The need to show a strategy and funding for reducing the backlog of repairs and maintenance.
- The ability to show interest gained by investing the proceeds of capital disposals as an efficiency gain. Versus the loss of revenue if the asset was an investment property gaining revenue.

The revised CPA's Financial Management requirements within the Use of Resources Key Line of Enquiry will have a very significant effect on the way Assets are managed in future. Adequate provision will have to be made for repairs and maintenance.

We currently have a maintenance backlog of priority 1 work circa £4m, the current budget provision is having little impact on reducing this backlog, If an additional £500k were available per annum this could have the affect of reducing this backlog over a period of say 5 years. This would also have the result of producing efficiency gains by a reduction in breakdowns and response maintenance costs. Additional resources would be needed to manage an increase in the budget however which we estimate would need to be an increase of £20,000 to the consultants fees budget.

2.5 Energy

When the existing fixed price contracts run out in 12 and 18 months time we will face a significant price rise in the region of 45% due to the recent increases in energy costs, this must be budgeted for.

Currently we are spending circa £750k on energy therefore an increase of circa £340k will be required within an 18 month period, this can be broken down into an additional amount of £200k in 06/07, and a further £140k in 07/08

The Authority has recently adopted a new energy policy, which is aimed at implementing measures to reduce energy consumption. Research figures provided by the Energy efficiency Office of the Department of the Environment suggest a minimum energy saving of 10% can be achieved when a dedicated energy officer is in post.

With anticipated costs on energy being £1.1m/annum, not including street lighting, within 18 months we recommend that the equivalent of 50% of a person be employed to deal with energy related matters.

2.6 Management of illegal Travellers

The contractors used in association with the eviction process have not undergone any tender process as up until relatively recently the need for them was quite limited. However since April 2005 the activity of illegal travellers has been far greater than in the past and over £50,000 has been spent in half a year, as such we suggest that the contract is put out to tender and a budget heading is created for this area of work.

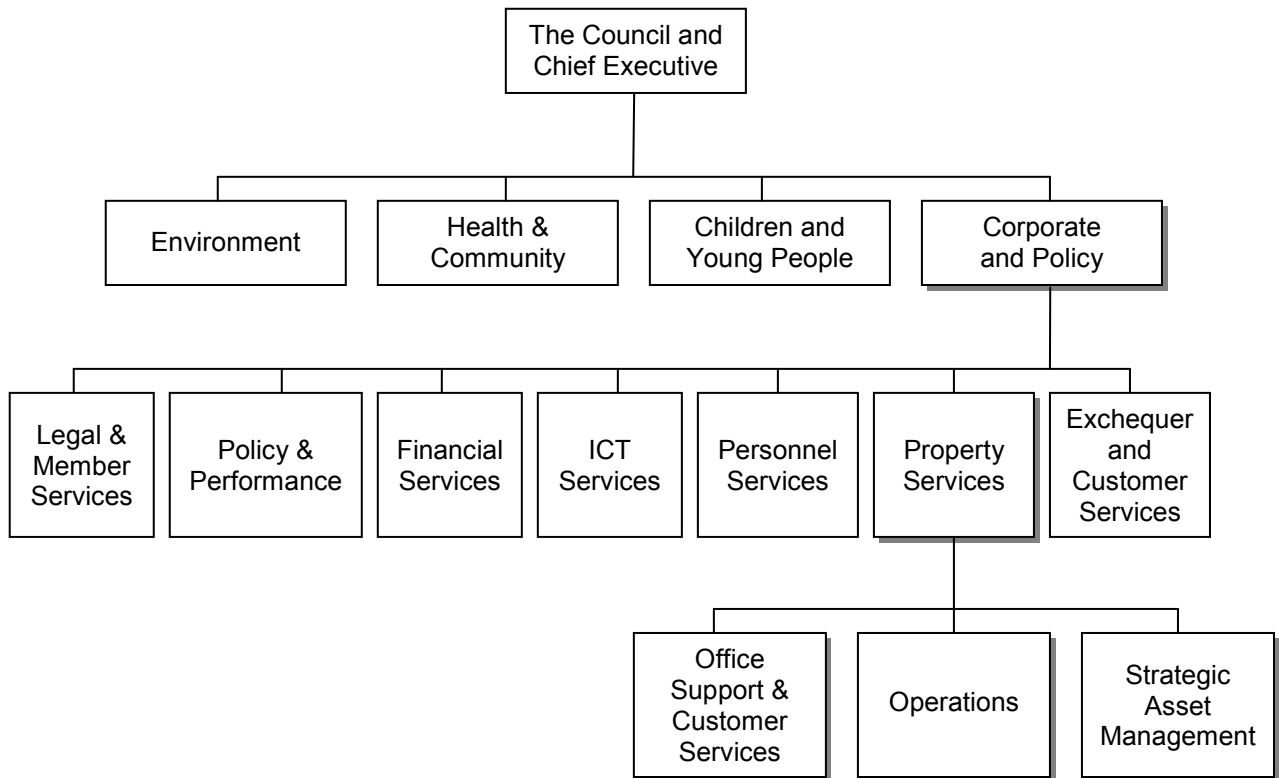
2.7 DDA Works

The DDA imposes mandatory requirements on the authority. We have had access audits carried out on all our premises, which indicates a level of spend in the region of £2.5m to put our stock in a state where we are fully complying with the act. Our current budget for the next 5 years is £200k/annum. We therefore are significantly under funded in this area, and our buildings will not fully comply for numerous years if funds are not increased. We recommend an increase of £200k per annum over the next 5 years, this should then see the required works come down to zero, as it is estimated that the remaining £500k worth of work will be undertaken during the normal works programmes. The lack of compliance will leave us at risk from claims from the public under the terms of the act, the extent of which are unknown at this time.

2.8 Staffing Changes

A further Valuer has been recruited to assist with managing the level of consultant commissions to deal with Castlefields, Ditton Strategic Rail freight Park, New Mersey Crossing. The new post will also add resources to the search for value raising opportunities within the property portfolio.

2.3 Organisation Structure



Staffing

	F.T.E	Headcount
Managerial	11	11
Professional/ Technical	12	12
Administrative/ Clerical	5	5
Front Line	11	11
Total		

3.0 AIMS OF THE SERVICE

The Council has identified six key strategic priorities that are detailed within the introduction to this plan. Whilst the majority of Council services will contribute in some way to each of these priorities those that are most relevant to Property Services, and the Service Aims associated with them are: -

Strategic Priority 6 : **Corporate effectiveness and business efficiency**

Area of Focus (36)

Ensuring that the Council's land and property portfolio is managed effectively

Departmental Service Aim 1

Maintain and deliver an Asset Management Plan that meets the needs of the Council in terms of its strategic priorities and provides appropriate facilities, that reflect community needs.

Departmental Service Aim 2

Ensure the proper prioritisation of scarce resources to address a £4 million maintenance backlog.

Departmental Service Aim 3

Provide and maintain an effective energy evaluation system that seeks to minimise consumption.

Departmental Service Aim 4

Identify surplus property for disposal in order to fund the part of Council's Capital Programme. (Current requirement £2.5 million per annum).

Departmental Service Aim 5

Maintain and enhance the Council's property Portfolio within a strategic framework to ensure financial prudence and the maximisation of investment returns.

Area of Focus 37

Ensuring that the council's buildings are safe and accessible, meet the needs of service users and the organisation, and comply with legislative requirements.

Departmental Service Aim 6

Provide all employees and Elected Members of the Council with adequate and fit for purpose accommodation

Departmental Service Aim 7

Ensure the Council's built environment complies with all relevant legislation for example the Asbestos Regulations 2003 and Disability Discrimination Act

Departmental Service Aim 8

Provide equality of access to Council services for all members of the community

4.0 FACTORS AFFECTING THE SERVICE

4.1 External Factors

The table below identifies those external factors that will, or are likely to, impact upon the service during the period of this plan.

Key Developments	Timeframe	Comments
<i>Political (Local)</i>		
1. Restructuring / business focus / partnerships	2007 – 10	Impact upon property requirements as yet unknown.
2. Home-working	2007 – 10	Impact upon property requirements as yet unknown.
3. New Mersey Crossing	2007 – 14	Resource implications for site assembly
4. Widnes Waterfront	2007 – 10	Resource implications for land acquisition and development site disposal.
5. Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Terminal	2007 - 10	Resource implications to deal with infrastructure delivery and development opportunities.
6. Castlefields Regeneration	2007 – 10	Resource implications of dealing with the various partnerships and land transactions
7. Building Schools for the Future	2007 -10	Resource implications for dealing with the large quantum of capital works this will generate.
<i>Economic</i>		
8. Budget pressures / ODPM Efficiency Review	2007 – 10	Expectation by Govt for all authorities to make efficiency savings of 2.5 p.a. to 2008.
9. Move to whole of Government Accounts	2007 - 10	Depreciation of property values to be included in accounts as a cost to the Authority. This will have a significant effect on the need to deal with maintenance issues as they add to the depreciation.
10. Available land for disposal	2007 – 10	The quantum of available land and its value is diminishing
<i>Social</i>		
11. 24/7 access to services	2007 - 10	Impact upon accessibility and security of Council buildings outside of normal office hours
<i>Technological</i>		
12. Development of thin client	2007 –10	Staff training issues and the operational implications of a central information file on the server
13. Asset Management software	2007 - 10	Need to provide and implement software to meet needs of service and CPA

4.2 Service Review and Developments

If partnering is adopted as a means of procurement research has indicated that at least 5% efficiency savings can be achieved over the traditional form of procurement. If this was to be achieved, based on the anticipated spend in 05/06, there are potential efficiency gains of £700,000, however it is not anticipated that all contracts would be procured via this route, still efficiency gains have the potential to be in the region of £350,000 per/annum

We have this year brought all the management of the heating & ventilation servicing back in-house, which is envisaged to produce an efficiency gain in the order of 2% to 3%, circa £7,000per/ annum

4.3 Efficiency Improvements

Over the past few years Property Services have had a framework agreement in place with Cassidy & Aston whereby the full range of consultant services have been available. From April 2006 we started looking at alternative procurement methods for dealing with major works, and have now concluded that the most appropriate option is to utilise the OGC Buying Solutions framework agreements for consultant services.

OCG Buying Solutions are an independent arm of the Treasury and all the frameworks have been put in place in full compliance with EU procurement rules and demonstrate best value. There are four different construction related frameworks, each having a number of approved consultants in place, thus we have access to a variety of providers.

Given this proposed new method of service delivery we are also looking at amending the way we fee clients for our services. In the past fees have been based on an all-inclusive percentage, covering our own costs together with all sub consultants costs. We are intending however to split these down to ensure full transparency in the fee structure. Property Services fees for capital works will be separated out from consultant costs and be based on a time charge basis. An overall fee budget will be given to clients at the outset of capital projects covering all fees, Property Services project management element of which will fluctuate slightly but will generally be in the order of 3% of the contract value where external consultants are used.

4.4 National, Regional & Sub-Regional Focus

The revised CPA's Financial Management requirements within the Use of Resources Key Line of Enquiry will have a very significant effect on the way Assets are managed in future. The main property issues emerging are as follows:

-

- Adequate provision will have to be made for repairs and maintenance.
- Investment and disposal decisions will have to be based on option appraisal and whole life costing.
- Depreciation to be included in the budgets.

- The need to show a strategy and funding for reducing the backlog of repairs and maintenance.
- The ability to show interest gained by investing the proceeds of capital disposals as an efficiency gain. Versus the loss of revenue if the asset was an investment property gaining revenue.

4.5 Equal Opportunities

Halton Council is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and combating discrimination and victimisation within all aspects of its service delivery, policy development and as an employer. This commitment is reflected in a range of policies, strategies and framework documents that underpin the work of the Council in its day-to-day operation and in the services it delivers.

The Council fully supports the broad principles of social justice and will oppose any form of discrimination and oppression. Council policy will apply to all of those who come into contact with it, i.e. those who presently use directly provided services of services provided on the Council's behalf; potential users of services; other agencies and professional; employees and job applicants; and the general public.

During the course of 2006 – 07 all Council Services conducted Equality Impact Assessments to examine the equality implications of all policies, procedures and practices within their area.

As a result this department developed an Equalities Action Plan, which is subject to an annual review, that identified a number of low / medium priority areas for action that will be taken during the lifetime of this plan (refer section 6.3).

4.6 Unforeseen Developments

Whilst every effort has been made to identify those developments that may influence or impact upon the service during the life of this plan the possibility exists that unforeseen developments may occur that need to be considered as and when they arise. Such developments will be detailed and commented upon as appropriate in the sections dealing with key developments or emerging issues within the relevant Service Plan Quarterly Monitoring Reports.

In addition to the normal reporting cycle the service may also report 'by exception' to the appropriate Policy and Performance Board when unforeseen developments occur. Where a more immediate decision is required due to the pressing nature of the unforeseen development, this will be referred to Management Team and the Executive Board for attention. The respective Policy and Performance Boards will be kept informed of any developments of this nature.

All reports to the Policy and Performance Boards with the exception of Part II items, are publicly available documents and can be accessed through the Council's website at <http://www2.halton.gov.uk/>

5.0 RESOURCES

5.1 Budget Summary and Service Costs

Information to follow

5.2 Future Staffing Requirements

In order to deliver the Council's adopted Energy Policy there is a need to appoint a full time Energy Efficiency Officer. There is also a need for extra resource to deal with the number of large redevelopment schemes and their associated CPO's. Schemes such as Widnes Waterfront, 3MG Rail Freight Park, Castlefields, etc.

Year	Managerial	Professional/ Technical	Administrative/ Clerical	Front Line
2007/08	4	21	16	7
2008/09	4	22	16	7

Refer to the Corporate and/or Directorate Workforce Plans regarding future workforce requirements

5.3 Future ICT Requirements

Currently all work stations need, and have, PCs. Both the hardware and software is of varying age and capacity. Both elements need continuous upgrading in an efficient manner to meet changing circumstances and improvements in technology. Current levels of budgetary provision will deal with these issues through time, however it will inevitably add pressure to the already stretched resources of IT Services.

5.4 Future Accommodation/Property Requirements

There are no accommodation issues anticipated within the plan period for the Property Services establishment. Should any unforeseen developments arise that necessitate additional requirements these will be reported either by exception or through the normal quarterly reporting cycle.

6.0 SERVICE PERFORMANCE

Plans are no use if they do not produce real results. We need to set targets and measure our performance to know if we are achieving the improvements intended. Various types of indicator are used here to do this:

- Objectives and Key Milestones. These show the major events in the work of the Department that are planned to take place during 2007–10, such as the launch of new initiatives, production of key plans and strategies and progress on major projects†
- Performance Indicator Targets. These show performance on indicators that are prescribed by central Government as part of their drive to ensure that councils deliver best value in serving their local communities.
- Local Performance Indicators. These show performance on indicators that the Department or the Council has adopted locally themselves and those adopted from national and other sources.
- Local Public Service Agreement Targets. Such targets are the result of an agreement between the local authority and the Government. This agreement sets out the authority's commitment to deliver specific improvements in performance and the Governments commitment to reward these improvements.
- National Floor Targets. These are targets that set a minimum standard for disadvantaged groups or areas or a narrowing of the gap between such areas and the rest of the country.

† Against each key objective the overall initial and residual risk assessment (before and after the risk control measures have been identified) is shown. The risk mapping exercise scores the potential impact on the key objective (severity) and the likelihood (probability) of the risks happening to arrive at a number. This is represented by a number with the associated level of assessed risk.

Risk Score	Overall Level of Risk
1 – 4	LOW
5 – 10	MEDIUM
11 – 16	HIGH

6.1.1 Key Service Objectives

Corporate Priority: 6	Corporate Effectiveness & Business Efficiency
<i>Key Area Of Focus: 36</i>	<i>Ensuring that the Council's land and property portfolio is managed effectively</i>

Service Objective: PS O1	Review of Property Assets for potential disposal					
Key Milestone(s) (07/08)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual review to produce disposal programme 					
Key Milestone(s) (08/09)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual review to produce disposal programme 					
Key Milestone(s) (09/10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual review to produce disposal programme 					
Risk Assessment	Initial	MED	Responsible Officer	Head of Strategic Asset Management	Linked Indicators	
	Residual	MED				

Service Objective: PS O2	Reduce backlog of maintenance on property portfolio (currently £5.1M)					
Key Milestone(s) (07/08)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £4.9Million 					
Key Milestone(s) (08/09)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £4.8Million 					
Key Milestone(s) (09/10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> £4.7Million 					
Risk Assessment	Initial	MED	Responsible Officer	Head of Strategic Asset Management	Linked Indicators	
	Residual	MED				

Corporate Priority: 6	Corporate Effectiveness & Business Efficiency
<i>Key Area Of Focus: 37</i>	<i>Ensuring that the council's buildings are safe and accessible, meet the needs of service users and the organisation, and comply with legislative requirements.</i>

Service Objective: PS O3	Fulfil requirements of Asbestos Audits and Management Regulations					
Key Milestone(s) (07/08)	▪ Confirm 100% compliance					
Key Milestone(s) (08/09)	▪ Confirm 100% compliance					
Key Milestone(s) (09/10)	▪ Confirm 100% compliance					
Risk Assessment	Initial	LOW	Responsible Officer	Head of Strategic Asset Management	Linked Indicators	
	Residual	LOW				

Service Objective: PS O4	DDA Works Corporate (Non Schools) subject to funding (currently £200k per annum)					
Key Milestone(s) (07/08)	▪ Complete 60% of Priority 2 works					
Key Milestone(s) (08/09)	▪ Complete 75% of Priority 2 works					
Key Milestone(s) (09/10)	▪ Complete 90% of Priority 2 works					
Risk Assessment	Initial	MED	Responsible Officer	Head of Operations	Linked Indicators	
	Residual	MED				

6.1.2 Other Service Objectives

Corporate Priority:	Corporate Effectiveness & Business Efficiency		
<i>Key Area Of Focus: 36</i>	<i>Ensuring that the Council's land and property portfolio is managed effectively</i>		
Service Objective: PS O5	Review Value of Property Assets for Councils accounts		
Key Milestone(s) (07/08)	▪ Annual Review of Value		
Key Milestone(s) (08/09)	▪ Annual Review of Value		
Key Milestone(s) (09/10)	▪ Annual Review of Value		
Responsible Officer	Head of Strategic Asset Management	Linked Indicators	

6.2 Performance Indicators and Targets (Statutory & Local Indicators):

Ref ¹	Description	Corp. Plan Priority	Halton 2005/6 Actual	2005/06 Quartiles ² (All England)			Halton 2006/7 Target	Halton 2006/7 Actual	Halton Targets		
				Top	Middle	Bottom			07/08	08/09	09/10
Corporate											
PYSLI 1	% of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days		100%				100%		100%	100%	100%
Cost and Efficiency											
PYSLI 2	Cost Performance on projects over £50k (Contract Let to Practical Completion within 5% of the allotted cost - excluding Client changes)		86				90		90	90	90
PYSLI 3	Occupancy of Industrial Units %		81				85		80	85	90
PYSLI 4	% of rent collected as % of rent due (Excluding bankruptcies and the like)		96				96		95	95	95
PYSLI 5	Occupancy of Market (Widnes) %		90				92		93	94	95
PYSLI 6	% Of rent collected as % of rent due		95				98		95	95	95
PYSLI 7	Occupancy of Market (Runcorn) %		70				90		80	85	90
PYSLI 8	% Of rent collected as % of rent due		90				92		95	95	95

¹ Key Indicators are identified by an **underlined reference in bold type**.

² No quartile data is available for local performance indicators

Ref ¹	Description	Corp. Plan Priority	Halton 2005/6 Actual	2005/06 Quartiles ² (All England)			Halton 2006/7 Target	Halton 2006/7 Actual	Halton Targets		
				Top	Middle	Bottom			07/08	08/09	09/10

Fair Access											
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BVPI 156	The percentage of Authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for and accessible to disabled people		50	74	42	21	41		50	55	60
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Service Delivery											
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PYSLI 9	Time performance on projects over £ 50 K (Contract let to practical completion within a margin of 5% - excluding Client changes)		71				90		90	90	90
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Quality											
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6.3 Equality Action Plan

The Department carried out an Equality Impact Assessment during 2005. A number of actions that needed to be taken were identified but all of these were considered low or medium priority

6.4 Local Public Service Agreement

The most recent Public Service Agreement between the Council and central Government expired in March 2005.

The development of a future agreement is presently subject to negotiation and information will be included within appropriate Service Plans upon the conclusion of such negotiation and any agreement being finalised.

6.5 National Floor Targets

There are presently no National Floor Targets that are relevant to the service.

7.0 PERFORMANCE REPORTING

One of the main purposes of having a Service Plan is to enable the Council and interested members of the public to keep track of how the Council and its Departments are doing and to help councilors and managers see whether the service is performing as planned and achieving its targets.

Progress will be monitored through:

- **Day to day monitoring by Strategic Directors through their regular interaction with Operational Directors;**
- **Quarterly progress reports to the Management Team;**
- **The inclusion of quarterly service plan monitoring reports as a standard item on the agenda of all the Council's Policy and Performance Boards.**

Policy and Performance Board agenda are public documents and can be accessed free using Internet access at any library where assistance with the technology is available if needed.

8.0 STATUTORY & NON-STATUTORY PLANS

The following plans and strategy documents are relevant to this service plan:

[Community Strategy](#)
[Halton BVPP 2006/07](#)

Risk Assessment for Key Service Objectives Initially assessed as 'High' Risk

Key Objective Ref	Initial Risks identified*

*Risk treatment measures associated with the risks identified can be found in the departmental risk register. A commentary will be included in the quarterly service plan monitoring report to indicate the progress

Equality Action Plan

The Department carried out an Equality Impact Assessment during 2005 and a number of actions that needed to be taken were identified. Those yet to be completed that are considered to be high priority are detailed in the table below.

Strategy/Policy/Service	Impact Assessment (High/Low/None)	Action(s) Proposed	Timetable			Officer Responsible
			2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	