

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 5 March 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Corporate and Policy

SUBJECT: State of Borough Report 2009 and Review of Community Strategy

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To present the findings of the 2009 State of the Borough report and its implications for the mid-term review of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: That

- (1) the revised State of the Borough report be noted; and**
- (2) the Policy and Performance Boards be consulted on a mid-term review of the Sustainable Community Strategy.**

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy was adopted in 2006. It contains a long-term vision and objectives with targets for the period 2006-2011. Since it was prepared:

- (1) A national indicator set and local area agreements have been introduced.
- (2) Statutory Guidance under the Local Government and Public Health Act has been issued.
- (3) There have been revisions to underpinning policies and strategies such as the Children and Young People's Plan.

3.2 It is therefore necessary to conduct a mid-term review of the Sustainable Community Strategy. It is intended that this is an update, not a complete revision. Surveys to date confirm that the underlying vision and priorities remain relevant. The main areas for review will be:

- (1) To explain the vision, providing a clearer picture of what we want Halton to be like in 2025 (to meet the requirement of statutory guidance).

- (2) To update the indicators and targets for each priority. The targets should include LAA targets and any other local targets we feel relevant. At present there are differences in indicators and targets between the LAA and Community Strategy that need to be rationalised. For example, the LAA targets all age all cause mortality (number of deaths) the Community Strategy targets life expectancy.
 - (3) To review the section on cross-cutting issues which picks up social exclusion and poverty.
- 3.3 The five Specialist Strategic Partnerships have been consulted and work has commenced on the mid-term review. A consultation draft will be available for consideration by partners, SSPs and PPBs with a view to a final version being approved at the Halton Strategic Partnership Board in May and Council in July.
- 3.4 Evidence to date suggests that priorities for Halton have not changed. This will be validated by the Places Survey and an updated State of the Borough report (see below). Widespread engagement is therefore not planned for this mid-term review. However, in 2010 work will commence on a full review and roll forward of the strategy with wide engagement, linking up with work being done on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

4.0 STATE OF THE BOROUGH 2009

- 4.1 As part of the preparation for the mid-term review the State of the Borough report has been updated. It is important to note that much of the data reflects the situation before the current economic downturn due to the time lag in the availability of statistics.
- 4.2 The final 'scorecard' – shown in Table 22 – assesses the state of Halton in terms of the three main dimensions of sustainable development. There have been no significant changes since the last report. The scores represent the quintile where the district falls on each of the measures ('A' representing the strongest performance, ranging to 'E' representing the weakest).
- Economic Development – Halton scores a 'C' overall, and against the region, however, its performance is mixed. Halton scores well on aspects of economic development relating to productivity (A – up from B in 2004), business and enterprise (A) and industrial structure (A). The Borough performs less well in terms of its human capital where the scores slip to an 'E'. There may be implications for future economic development, and the continued low score of an 'E' on economic change is still a cause for concern. The results in this sector are very similar to 2004.

- Social Development – In the context of Great Britain as a whole, Halton scores an ‘E’. Halton still performs poorly on most indicators of social profile. The borough also performs poorly when compared regionally, recording lower scores for all indicators except inequality where it is in the mid quintile.
- Environment – Halton’s performance is mixed for the environment, with an overall score of a ‘B’. It performs well in terms of housing affordability and floorspace change, scoring an ‘A’ in both. The Borough also performs above average in terms of connectivity, with a score of a ‘B’ when compared to the nation. It performs less well in terms of services, amenities and the natural environment, although it’s mostly better than the region for these measures.

4.3 The most significant changes since 2008 are:

- Unemployment rate has risen to 3.6% (Oct 2008) from 2.9% (Oct 2007), however the long term unemployed rate has decreased to 10.4% from 11.3%, *table 7: labour market*.
- Offences per 1,000 population has increased since the last report to 63.7 (2007-2008) from 41.7(2006-2007). Halton’s total crime score has increased with its ranking worsening from 79 to 65 nationally, *table 16: crime*.
- Halton’s commercial and industrial floorspace rank has fallen since the last report. Currently Halton is ranked 50 out of 375 (2007) compared to a rank of 22 (2006) in the last report, *table 18: commercial and industrial property*.
- Halton’s local amenities rank has improved since the last report where it had a rank of 219 out of 376 (2007). Currently Halton is ranked 109 out of 376 (2008). This is mainly due to improved GCSE results, *table 20: Services and Amenities*.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The opportunities and challenges facing Halton are well-known. The Sustainable Community Strategy sets out the steps we need to take to bring about real improvement and how we will measure progress. The LAA is a set of targets agreed with Government which reflects the Community Strategy. The mid-term review is an opportunity to bring these together in a single coherent document.

The State of the Borough report provides further evidence to support our priorities. It does not, however, fully reflect the impact of the economic downturn. The recession should not deflect us from our long-term ambitions but may affect the pace at which we can move forward.

6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The Sustainable Community Strategy is the primary policy document for the Council and its partners who have a statutory duty to have regard to it.

7.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

The delivery of the Strategy will require the application of resources by all the partners in Halton, and consideration of impact on priorities is already part of the Council's budget setting process.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

The Community Strategy sets out our priorities for Children and Young People, Employment Learning and Skills, Healthy Halton, Safer Halton and Urban Renewal in Halton.

9.0 RISK ANALYSIS

9.1 The key risks to the revision of the Strategy are lack of consensus. This is mitigated by consulting key partners and PPBs.

9.2 The risks to delivery of the Strategy are set out in the Partnership Risk Register.

10.0 QUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

10.1 Addressing inequality is a key theme in the Strategy.

11.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

11.1 None.