

Public Document Pack



Executive Board

Thursday, 16 November 2023 2.00 p.m.
The Boardroom, Municipal Building

S. Young

Chief Executive

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

PART 1

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Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion or voting on the item.	
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*Please contact Gill Ferguson 0151 511 8059 or gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Committee is on Thursday, 7 December 2023*

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 19 October 2023 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), Dennett, M. Lloyd Jones, J. Lowe, T. McInerney, Nelson, P. Nolan, Thompson and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Harris

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, S. Young, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, H. Roberts, S. Wallace-Bonner and K. Butler

Also in attendance: S. Scott, C. Deadman, N. McGrath – Halton Housing Trust

**ITEMS DEALT WITH
UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

EXB37 MINUTES

Action

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB38 URGENT DECISIONS

The Executive Board received a report from the Chief Executive, which provided information on the urgent decisions taken since the last meeting of the Board.

It was noted that the Council's Constitution gave authority to the Chief Executive to take urgent decisions, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Operational Director Finance and/or the Operational Director Legal and Democratic Services, where necessary.

One urgent decision had been made since the last meeting of the Board and full details were published on the Council's website.

RESOLVED: That the urgent decision taken since

the last meeting of the Executive Board be noted.

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

N.B. Councillor Wright declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business as she is a member of Halton Housing Trust Board.

EXB39 HALTON HOUSING TRUST ANNUAL REPORT

The Board received the Halton Housing Trust's (HHT) Annual Report, which provided an update on their activities since the last report to Executive Board.

The Chair welcomed Sam Scott, Group Chief Executive and colleagues Clive Deadman and Neil McGrath, who jointly presented the report to the Board – *Annual Report to HBC Executive Board, October 2023.*

The report outlined the key priorities over the next two years until 2025 and also some of the key achievements over the past year and , which included:

- 20 maintenance technicians had received additional training to enable them to multi skill;
- 853 households had been supported to secure £2m of additional income by providing support to apply for under claimed benefits;
- The hardship fund had delivered over £30k of crisis funds targeting food and fuel poverty;
- Completion of Halton Housings largest development scheme – the independent living scheme (Hazlehurst) in Runcorn; and
- Achieved IIP Investing in People Gold and Investing in Wellbeing Silver.

RESOLVED: That the Board thanked Halton Housing Trust for the presentation and noted the report.

DEPUTY LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB40 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION INVESTMENT ZONE - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which sought approval for Halton to become part of the Liverpool City Region Investment Zone (IZ). The IZ would include a tax site for occupier benefits which would operate for 5 years from April 2024 alongside business rates retention for a period of

25 years. The site would sit within the existing Enterprise Zone and would be used to promote the delivery of the Sci-Tech Daresbury masterplan.

Reason(s) for Decision

A decision is required to enable the Council to enter into the necessary legal agreements to facilitate the Investment Zone and associated Tax Incremental Financing processes.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Consideration was given to Sci-Tech Daresbury remaining an Enterprise Zone and not becoming an Investment Zone. On balance it was felt that the opportunity to access additional grant funding and tax incentives through the Investment Zone was more likely to accelerate the next [phase of delivery and provide potential for future investment and Tax Incremental Finance that could support the requires land acquisition and infrastructure to deliver the masterplan.

Implementation Date

A Memorandum of Understanding is expected to be signed ahead of the commencement of Investment Zone status in April 2024.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the report;
- 2) supports the progress made on the Investment Zone and approves the Council entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with LCR Combined Authority as required;
- 3) gives delegated authority to the Executive Director for Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Major Projects, to take the necessary steps to participate in the LCR Investment Zone;
- 4) approves the sign off of the allocation of Sci-Tech Daresbury as part of the LCR Investment Zone; and
- 5) authorises the Operational Director - Finance to enter into and manage the processes required to facilitate the Business Rates Retention and Tax Increment Financing processes.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB41 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director: Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, which provided an update on the progress made within the Council's Transformation Programme. Work had continued to develop the projects set out in Appendix A of the report, as well as the associated delivery plans, which would provide a framework to assess project feasibility.

The Board noted that:

- during September there had been a focus on engaging with employees and a number of workshops had taken place; and
- the recruitment of transformation resources to support the Children's Social Care programme had been undertaken and appointments had been made.

RESOLVED: That the Board noted the contents of the update.

EXB42 RE-TENDERING OF COUNCIL INSURANCE POLICIES

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Finance, which sought approval to commence a procurement process to re-tender the insurance policies that were due to expire. The current contracts were due to expire on 31 March 2024 and based upon current premium levels, the total cost of the services was expected to exceed £1,000,000 over the maximum contract duration of five years.

The Board noted that prior to the procurement process, a review of the Council's insurance programme would be completed, and relevant alternatives considered to establish the most appropriate programme for the Council. This would include reviewing components such as extent of cover, levels of self-insurance and indemnity limits.

It was proposed that the procurement would be undertaken by accessing a framework agreement for insurance services managed by the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation. The Council's insurance broker would support the tender evaluation process by completing a comprehensive evaluation of tender submissions on behalf of the Council and make recommendations.

RESOLVED: That

Operational
Director - Finance

- 1) approval be given to commence a procurement exercise for the following Council insurance policies:
 - Combined Liability
 - Medical Malpractice
 - Engineering and inspection
 - Property
 - Motor
 - Computer
- 2) the Operational Director – Finance, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, be delegated to deal with any matters relating to the procurement of this contract.

EXB43 DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented two applications for discretionary non-domestic rate relief, under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, for consideration.

It was noted that under the amended provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council was able to grant discretionary rate relief to any business ratepayer. This relief had previously only been available to organisations that were a registered charity, a community amateur sports club or a not for profit organisation.

The report outlined details of the applications from Steve Morgan Foundation and Have a Heart Foundation, in relation to their respective addresses. Appended to the report was the potential annual cost to the Council of granting the discretionary rate relief.

RESOLVED: That

Operational
Director - Finance

- 1) the application for 15% discretionary rate relief from the Steve Morgan Foundation in respect of premises at Bridgemere House, with effect from 1 April 2022, be approved;
- 2) the application for 15% discretionary rate relief from Have a Heart Foundation in respect of premises at 103-104 Chadwick Road, with effect from 1 April 2022, be approved; and
- 3) the application for 15% discretionary rate relief from

Have a Heart Foundation in respect of premises at 110-111 Runcorn Shopping Centre, with effect from 1 April 2022, be approved.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB44 FLOATING SUPPORT SERVICE PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director - Adult Services, that sought approval to commence a new procurement process for the supply of a Floating Support Service. The proposed contract would be for an initial three years (plus 2 x 12 month extension periods) commencing 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2027, in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.3.5. The estimated value of the contract was £1,870,000 over a five year contract.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the Board approves this Preliminary Estimates report to commence a new procurement process for a Floating Support Service in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.3.5.

Executive Director
of Adult Services

EXB45 AMENDED ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Adults, which set out amendments to the Property Pool Plus (PPP) Allocations Policy. The aspiration remained that the local authorities would continue to facilitate a single lettings approach for scheme partners and customers when allocating and letting social housing across the city region.

The Board was advised that the participating local authorities and housing associations wanted to ensure that the allocations policy was fit for purpose and supported the strategic city region wide aspirations around social housing and therefore a review of the PPP had been undertaken. The revised policy incorporated a significant number of changes to various elements of the scheme including the qualification, criteria and priority banding system. Full details of the changes, revised scheme and the upgrade to the IT system, were outlined in the report.

Due to the scale of the change and the required preparatory work, it was requested that the scheme would

be closed to new applications for a period of one month before the launch of the revised scheme. It was also recommended that there would be a pause in property advertising for a two-week period prior to the launch to allow partner Housing Association landlords time to update property shortlists under the scheme rules.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the Board approve the amended Property Pool Plus Allocations Policy.

Executive Director
of Adult Services

COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO

EXB46 REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT SERVICE CONTRACT

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

EXB47 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

- 1) whether Members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and
- 2) whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government

Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB48 DISPOSAL OF LAND LOWLANDS ROAD RUNCORN

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, which sought approval to the revised disposal price for the disused trumpet loop land in Runcorn.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) the reconsidered valuation figure be approved;
- 2) the disposal of the freehold interest in disused land behind Picow Engineering that was once busway/trumpet loop road in Runcorn Station Quarter be approved; and
- 3) the Executive Director for Environment and Regeneration be authorised to arrange for all required documentation for the transactions to be completed to the satisfaction of the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

MINUTES ISSUED: 26 October 2023

CALL-IN: 2 November 2023 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 2 November 2023.

Meeting ended at 2.40 p.m.

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	16 November 2023
REPORTING OFFICER:	Operational Director, Finance
PORTFOLIO:	Corporate Services
SUBJECT:	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 – 2026/27
WARD(S):	Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To establish the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2024/25 to 2026/27.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 1) the Medium Term Financial Strategy presented in Appendix 1, be approved;**
- 2) the 2024/25 base budget be prepared on the basis of the underlying assumptions set out in the Strategy;**
- 3) the Reserves and Balances Strategy presented in Appendix 2 be approved; and**
- 4) the award of Council Tax Support for 2024/25 remains at the 2023/24 level of 21.55%.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out a three-year projection of the Council's resources and spending. It has been based on information that is currently available. The most recent Public Sector Spending Review was published at the end of October 2021, setting Government Departmental Expenditure Limits for the following three financial years. The growth of 3.3% set out in the Spending Review was subsequently increased to 4.8% for 2023/24 at the Local Government Finance Settlement in February 2023. It is unclear whether the 2024/25 Grant Settlement will use the previously agreed growth of 3.3%, or whether this will be reviewed within the context of continued high inflation. Details of the 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement are expected to be released in late December 2023 on a provisional basis, with a final settlement expected in January 2024.

- 3.2 The uncertainty regarding 2024/25 financial resources means the financial information included within the MTFS is based on a large number of assumptions and best estimates. The financial forecast will be updated as and when further information is known.
- 3.3 There is considerable uncertainty surrounding Local Government Funding in 2024/25 and beyond. The Fair Funding Review, which changes how funding is apportioned between councils, was originally proposed in 2016 and has been repeatedly delayed. There has been no confirmation from Government as to when or whether this will be adopted. The proposed Business Rates Baseline Reset and a move to 75% Business Rates Retention have also been postponed indefinitely by Government.
- 3.4 High inflation is impacting upon Council services during 2023/24, with significant cost increases being incurred for utilities and social care contracts. The proposed officers' pay award for 2023/24 is in excess of the level predicted when this years' budget was set and will add to these inflationary pressures.
- 3.5 Appendix 1 details the Medium Term Financial Strategy from 2024/25 – 2026/27 which has been produced using a prudent estimate of the financial conditions over the course of the next three years.
- 3.6 Although the projections in the Strategy must be treated with a considerable degree of caution, they show there is continued need to implement a significant level of budget savings over the next three years.
- 3.7 The Strategy provides initial guidance to the Council on its financial position into the medium term. It assumes the achievement of budget savings proposals totalling £4.051m relating to 2024/25 and 2025/26, which Council approved on 1st February 2023. In addition, the Strategy also assumes the achievement of budget savings proposals arising from the Transformation Programme approved by Council.
- 3.8 Adopting a prudent view, the Strategy identifies that further revenue budget savings of approximately £3.743m, £0.495m and £1.347m are required over the next three years. As a result, a total of £5.586m will need to be removed from the Council's budget, by reducing spending or increasing income. This represents 4% of the 2023/24 net budget.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The MTFS represents the “finance guidelines” that form part of the medium term corporate planning process. These guidelines identify the financial constraints which the Council will face in delivering its key objectives, and are an important influence on the development of the Corporate Plan, Service Plans and Strategies.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The MTFS provides a guide to projected funding resources and spending requirements over the three year term. The grant amounts included in the MTFS are based on the latest information provided by Government. As new information comes to light the forecast of future income streams will be updated. Decreases to funding resources will create further budget pressures for the Council in delivering its key objectives.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 The revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities. Reductions of the magnitude identified within the Strategy may have a negative impact upon the delivery of those priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The MTFS is a key part of the Council's financial planning process, and as such minimises the risk that the Council fails to achieve a balanced budget.

7.2 The financial forecast is presented on a prudent basis but there is continued uncertainty around Government support, funding levels and the high cost of inflation. This will be reviewed on a constant basis to help mitigate the increased level of risk.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no direct equality and diversity issues.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct climate change issues.

10.0 REASON FOR THE DECISION

10.1 To seek approval for the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2024/25 to 2026/27.

11.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

11.1 The alternative option of not maintaining a Medium Term Financial Strategy has been considered. However, this would not follow good financial management practice, as the Medium Term Financial Strategy is a key element in informing the Council's financial planning and budget setting processes.

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

12.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27 will be implemented from 1st April 2024.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Local Government Grant Settlement 2023/24	Revenues and Financial Management Division, Halton Stadium, Widnes	Steve Baker

Appendix 1

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 – 2026/27

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out a three-year projection of the Council's resources and spending covering the period 2024/25 to 2026/27. The projections made within the MTFS must be treated with caution and require continuous updating as the underlying assumptions behind them become clearer.
- 1.2 The MTFS represents the "finance guidelines" that form part of the medium-term corporate planning process. These guidelines identify the financial constraints which the Council will face in delivering its key objectives, and are an important influence on the development of the Corporate Plan, Service Plans and other Strategies.
- 1.3 Beyond 2023/24 there is great uncertainty regarding the funding of local government. A number of major reviews to local government finance have been repeatedly delayed and there has been no firm commitment by the current Government as to whether these reviews will go ahead.
- 1.4 The following measures will continue to be considered throughout the period covered by the MTFS:
 - **Fair Funding Review** – This is a review of how cumulative local government funding should be apportioned between councils. The last review was in April 2013 and since then cuts made to local government have been made on a percentage basis. This approach has had the impact of protecting those authorities less reliant on Government grant funding, whilst those councils which are more reliant (such as Halton) have had to deal with larger cuts in funding on a per head basis. The Fair Funding Review was due to be implemented in the 2021/22 financial year but was postponed due to the impact of Covid-19.

To date, only one indicative formula, relating to Adult Social Care, which will form part of the Fair Funding Review has been published. The formula suggests that deprivation will have a lower weighting under the new system, which would disadvantage authorities such as Halton. As the Spending Review 2021 covers the following three financial years and no further details of Fair Funding have been published, it has been assumed that the Review will not be implemented during the period of the MTFS..

- **75% Business Rates Retention** – It was anticipated that the percentage share of retained rates at a local level was to be set at 75% from the 2021/22 financial year. This was postponed and there has been no new commitment from Government that this will still go ahead. It was confirmed at Spending Review 2021 that Halton will continue to be part of the Liverpool City Region Business

Rate Pilot until 2024/25 with 100% retention. For the purpose of the MTFS it is assumed that 100% rate retention will apply for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

- **Business Rates Baseline Reset** – A reset of the business rates baseline was due to take place in 2021/22. Halton has seen a high level of growth in business rates since the previous reset in 2013 and would be expected to lose funding from a reset in the baseline. It is not known if there will be a transition process put in place to protect authorities from too high a loss in funding from an increase to the baseline position. The reset was postponed due to Covid-19, and it is unclear when this will now take place. It has been assumed for the purpose of this report that the reset will not take place within the timescale covered by the MTFS.
- **Comprehensive Spending Review** – The Spending Review was published on 27 October 2021, covering the next three financial years. It was announced that Local Government will receive an increase in Core Spending Power of approximately 3% per year between 2022/23 and 2024/25, amounting to an additional £1.6bn of funding per year nationally. The increase for 2023/24 was revised to 4.8% at the Local Government Finance Settlement in February 2023. It is unclear whether the increase in Core Spending Power will return to 3.3% for 2024/25 or whether this will be reviewed due to continued high inflation. No details of how this funding will be distributed in 2024/25, or whether it will be ring-fenced to specific services, was released. Full details are expected to be published as part of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement in December 2023.
- **Autumn Statement 2023** – The Chancellor is expected to deliver the Autumn Statement on 22 November 2023 which will provide an update on Government plans for tax and public spending based on the latest forecast from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR).
- **Social Care Reform** – The Government published a Plan for Health and Social Care in September 2021, focussing on the level of contributions that individuals will need to make towards their care by introducing a £86,000 cost cap for care costs and changing the thresholds at which the Council must contribute to care costs. In the Autumn Statement 2022, Government announced that these reforms had been postponed, with the funding already allocated remaining with Local Authorities to fund current pressures within Adult Social Care. Also announced in the September 2021 Plan was a move towards a Fair Cost of Care Policy which would ensure that the rates that Councils pay to providers of Adult Social Care are sustainable and do not require cross-subsidisation. These reforms have been postponed until October 2025. For the purposes of the MTFS, it has been assumed that both of these measures will come into force in the 2025/26 financial year, although this will be kept under review.

2.0 Local Government Finance Settlement 2023/24

- 2.1 Government announced the 2023/24 final Local Government Finance Settlement on 06 February 2023. Details included:

- **Council Tax** – The Council Tax referendum threshold was set at 3% with authorities allowed to raise a 2% additional precept to fund Adult Social Care services. It was confirmed that these limits will remain the same for 2024/25.
- **Settlement Funding Assessment** – In 2023/24, Halton was allocated a Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) of £55.488m, made up of £52.169m business rates baseline funding and £3.319m top-up grant funding. Due to the operation of the Liverpool City Region Business Rate Pilot, Halton are able to retain any business rates income received in excess of the business rates baseline. In 2023/24, it is anticipated that £57.336m of business rates will be received, meaning that Halton will retain £5.167m of funding above the business rates baseline.
- **New Homes Bonus** - The final legacy payment was received in 2022/23 and the 2023/24 amount was based on single-year figures. This resulted in a significant reduction in funding to only £9,000. There is considerable uncertainty around the future of this funding stream.
- **Social Care Support Grant** – Government announced an additional £1.185bn of funding to cover both Adult’s and Children’s Social Care, plus an additional £160m to equalise the impact of the Adult Social Care Precept. The total value of the grant (including the existing Winter Care Pressures Grant and the newly rolled-in Independent Living Fund Grant) to Halton in 2023/24 was £11.6m.
- **Other Social Care Grants** – Government announced an additional £300m Adult Social Care Discharge Fund, and a £562m Adult Social Care Sustainability and Improvement Fund. The value of this funding to Halton in 2023/24 was £1m and £1.5m respectively.
- **Lower Tier Services Grant** – The Lower Tier Services Grant was abolished in 2023/24.
- **Services Grant** – This is non-ringfenced funding distributed via the 2013/14 Settlement Funding Assessment formula. Nationally, the value of the grant reduced from £822m to £464m in 2023/24. This represents a reduction in funding for Halton of £1m to £1.460m.
- **Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA)** – Although Halton’s SFA increased by 5.66% between 2022/23 and 2023/24, it is not the case that funding has been increasing over the longer-term. Since 2010/11, Halton’s SFA has decreased by 3.1% in cash terms, and 28.8% once inflation has been taken into account. This is the equivalent of a cut in funding of £899 per household in Halton over the last 13 years.

3.0 Council Tax Support

- 3.1 Funding to support council tax discounts is received from Government through a grant included in the Settlement Funding Assessment. Every council is

responsible for implementing a local scheme to offer council tax discounts to those residents who may have been eligible to this previously through Council Tax Benefit.

- 3.2 The Halton scheme uses as a basis the previous regulations relating to Council Tax Benefit, which ensures that support for claimants with disabilities, claimants with children, and claimants who are working is maintained. At the end of the existing support calculation, a reduction of 21.55% is made from every non-pensioner award of benefit, to cover the shortfall in the Government grant funding for Halton's scheme.
- 3.3 Council Tax Support Grant is not separately identifiable within Settlement Funding Assessment. It is assumed the level of funding will move in line with the Council's overall Settlement Funding Assessment.
- 3.4 The MTFS assumes that the level of Council Tax Support given to existing claimants will remain at the rate of 21.55% for the period of the MTFS. It also assumes that Council Tax Support funding will not be shared with Parish Councils.

4.0 Business Rate Retention Scheme

- 4.1 The aim of the business rates retention scheme is to promote economic development and generate future growth in business rates. The Council will only be rewarded if it increases its local share of business rates above a pre-set baseline. Conversely if the local share of business rates collected falls below the baseline position, this would be to the Council's detriment.
- 4.2 An estimate of the Council's share of retained business rates will be provided to DLUHC in January 2024.
- 4.3 The business rates baseline was due to be reset in 2021/22, but this was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. No new date has been given for the implementation of the reset, although as Spending Review 2021 has given a three-year indicative settlement, it has been assumed that this will not take place within the timescales covered by the MTFS.

100% Business Rates Retention – Pilot Scheme

- 4.4 As part of the Liverpool City Region, the Council has signed up to being a member of a pilot scheme for 100% business rates retention. The pilot scheme has been in operation since April 2017.
- 4.5 The pilot scheme results in Halton no longer being in receipt of Revenue Support Grant (RSG) through the Settlement Funding Assessment. RSG will be replaced by the additional business rates retained. In addition, the Improved and Additional Better Care Fund has been included in the pilot and funded by business rates retained.

- 4.6 DLUHC has confirmed the operation of the pilot scheme should be at no financial detriment to participating councils, therefore for as long as the pilot scheme operates Halton will be no worse off financially than it would have been if it was still operating under 49% rates retention.
- 4.7 Operation of no financial detriment within the pilot scheme means that any LCR authority who report a deficit as a result of the pilot will at first be reimbursed from other member pilot authorities who report a surplus as a result of the pilot. Only when any available surplus has been exhausted will Government step in and provide financial support.
- 4.8 Since the introduction of the pilot scheme all LCR authorities reported a betterment position as a result of retaining 100% business rates, therefore surplus income from the pilot scheme has previously been used to balance the Council's revenue budget.
- 4.9 All authorities were due to move to 75% business rates retention in 2021/22, but the Government announced in July 2020 that this would be postponed. It has been assumed in the forecast that the 100% pilot scheme will continue for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

5.0 Settlement Funding Assessment

- 5.1 In 2023/24 DLUHC allocated Halton a Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) of £55.488m. This was made up of £52.169m business rates baseline funding and £3.319m of top-up grant funding. Top-up grant funding is received as the Council's funding baseline is greater than the business rate baseline i.e. the Council's needs are greater than the business rates it is estimated it can generate.
- 5.2 Table 1 shows the forecasts for business rate growth retained for the next three years and the difference between each of the years.

Table 1 – Business Rate Retention

	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
Projected Business Rates Income	57,336	61,178	62,401	63,649
Business Rates Surplus / (Deficit)	1,933	0	0	0
Section 31 Grants and Top-Up Multiplier Adjustment	13,473	14,376	14,663	14,956
Funding for Covid-Related Business Rates Reliefs	2,915	0	0	0
Top-Up Funding	3,319	3,541	3,612	3,684
Forecast Business Rates Retained (Incl. Top-Up Funding)	78,976	79,095	80,676	82,289
Increase / (Decrease) in	0	119	1,581	1,613

Business Rates Retained				
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6.0 Council Tax Forecast

- 6.1 For 2023/24 the council tax for a Band D property in Halton is £1,675.29 (excluding Police, Fire, LCR and Parish precepts), which is expected to generate income of £60.714m.
- 6.2 When setting council tax levels, higher increases reduce the requirement to make budget savings. However, there are other factors that need to be considered when determining the appropriate increase in council tax. These factors include:
- Halton has the 4th lowest council tax level in the North West for 2023/24.
 - Halton's 2023/24 council tax is £58.04 (3.4%) below the average council tax set by unitary councils in England.
 - Inflation - the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as at September 2023 (latest available) is currently at 6.7% and the Retail Price Index (RPI) is at 8.9%.
- 6.3 The 2024/25 Council Tax Base shows an increase of 168 Band D equivalent properties to a total of 36,409, assuming a collection rate of 97%. The increase in the Tax Base will result in an increase of £0.281m of council tax income.
- 6.4 In 2023/24 the Council utilised £1.190m of council tax surplus income to balance the budget. It is estimated that there will be £0.234m of surplus available to fund the 2024/25 budget.
- 6.5 For the purposes of this strategy it is assumed the Council will apply a council tax increase of 2.99% in 2024/25. It is further assumed there will be a 2% increase for the Adult Social Care precept in 2024/25.
- 6.6 Table 2 below estimates the net amount of council tax income that will be produced for various percentage increases in Halton's Band D council tax for the next three years and assumes no change in council tax base beyond 2024/25. It has been confirmed that the council tax referendum limit will be 3% in 2024, with the option of an additional 2% increase to fund Adult Social Care services. The MTFS assumes that these limits will reduce to 2% and 1% respectively for 2025/26 onwards. The maximum increase in the last two years of the forecast would therefore be 3%.

Table 2 – Additional Council Tax Income 2024/25 to 2026/27

Projected Increases in Council Tax Income	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
0%	-	-	-
1%	640	647	653
2%	1,281	1,306	1,333
3%	1,921	1,979	2,038
4%	2,562	2,664	2,771
5%	3,202	3,363	3,530

7.0 Three-Year Financial Forecast

- 7.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) provides a forecast of the increase in revenue expenditure that will be required over the next three years in order to maintain existing policies and programmes. In effect, this represents an early estimate of the standstill budget requirement using the information that is currently available.
- 7.2 The Council's financial position over the course of 2024/25 – 2026/27 is extremely uncertain due to the continuing impacts of high inflation and the ongoing political uncertainty surrounding the future of local government funding. This forecast uses prudent estimates based on the information that is currently available. Figures should be treated with caution and will need to be continually updated as new information becomes available.
- 7.3 For the purposes of this forecast it has been assumed that the Fair Funding Review will not be implemented within the next three years. It has also been assumed that Halton will continue in the 100% business rates retention pilot scheme during 2024/25 and 2025/26.
- 7.4 It has been assumed that council tax will rise by 2.99% in 2024/25 which is currently the maximum allowed without a local referendum, plus an additional precept for Adult Social Care of 2%. For 2025/26 onwards it has been assumed that the referendum limit will revert to 2% with a 1% additional increase for the Adult Social Care Precept. For the final two years of the forecast, it is assumed that council tax will rise by 1.99%, plus the additional 1% precept. Any increase in council tax below these levels would lead to an increase in the required level of budget savings.
- 7.5 The Retail Price Index (RPI) rate of inflation for August 2023 was 9.1%. 2% has been included for general price inflation in the 2024/25 forecast, with 8% added to domiciliary care, residential care and direct payment budgets. £5.222m of inflationary costs have been added to the forecast in 2024/25. Inflation of 2% has been added to prices for 2025/26 and 2026/27, in line with the Bank of England's inflation target. 6% inflation has been applied to income budgets for 2024/25 to match the estimated pay increases, reducing to 2% in each subsequent year.
- 7.6 The pay award for officers has not yet been finalised for 2023/24 and is unknown for all staff categories from 2024/25 onwards. For the purposes of the

forecast an increase of 4% has been applied for 2024/25, with 2% applied in each subsequent year. An additional 2% has been built into the 2024/25 figures to reflect the shortfall between the increase in pay budgets for 2023/24 and the current pay offer.

- 7.7 Employer pension contribution rates are due to decrease by 0.6% to 20% in 2024/25. They will remain at this figure for the 2025/26 financial year. The next triennial valuation is due to be undertaken by Cheshire Pension Fund during 2025/26, which will set the employer contribution rates for the following three years. For the purpose of the forecast, it has been assumed that the contribution rate will not change in 2026/27.
- 7.8 It has been assumed that there will be no change to the grant funding received from Government, with the exception of increases to the Social Care Grant and Adult Social Care Sustainability and Market Improvement Fund in 2024/25 which have already been announced on a national basis. If the funding is apportioned in the same way, Halton's allocation of these grants is due to increase by £1.837m and £1.657m respectively.
- 7.9 Changes to the contributions that individuals make towards their care costs was due to come into force from October 2023. These measures consist of a new cap on care costs per person of £86,000, and changes to the savings limit and income threshold which will entitle more people to help with the cost of their care. These changes have now been deferred until October 2025. It was anticipated that councils would also move towards increasing the rates paid to providers of Adult Social Care under new Fair Cost of Care legislation. This has also been deferred. It has been assumed that additional costs from the above changes to Adult Social Care costs and funding will impact on the Council in the 2025/26 financial year. £2.320m has been added to the forecast to reflect this.
- 7.10 The forecast includes the budgetary consequences of previous budget decisions, including one-off savings and the use of reserves to balance the 2023/24 budget. These add £0.120m and £3.156m respectively to the forecast for 2024/25. During 2022/23, a three-year budget savings programme was agreed by Council. £2.822m of these savings are anticipated to be achieved in 2024/25, reducing the forecast budget gap.
- 7.11 The net revenue costs associated with the capital programme are included in the forecast. It is estimated that there will be an increase in costs of £0.150m in 2024/25. The forecast assumes that any new capital projects which are approved over the medium term will be self-funded through capital grants, capital receipts or will generate revenue savings to fund the cost of borrowing.
- 7.12 A key assumption that has been used in constructing the forecast is that total spending in the current year is kept within the overall budget. In particular, it can be difficult to control 'demand-led' budgets such as Children's and Adult Social Care as well as many income streams, as reflected in reported overspends against budgets in the current year. At the end of Quarter 2, the projected budget overspend for 2023/24 is £8.108m. In this context it is

important to consider the contingency for uncertain and unexpected items. Due to the considerable uncertainty in inflation, interest rates and demand-led budgets, the spending forecast includes a contingency of £0.5m in 2024/25, £2.0m in 2025/26, and £2.0m in 2026/27, and an allowance for increased service demand of £4.6m in 2024/25, £1.6m in 2025/26, and £1.5m in 2026/27.

- 7.13 During the 2023/24 budget setting process, the Council approved budget savings proposals which covered three financial years. These approved savings have been included in the forecast for 2024/25 (£2.702m) and 2025/26 (£1.349m). In order to further reduce the budget gap, it is proposed that a percentage reduction is applied to the most significant discretionary budgets, comprising non-contractual supplies and services, property maintenance, and highways maintenance.
- 7.14 In recent years, a significant amount of reserves have been utilised to help balance the Council's budget and thereby avoid making permanent budget savings. As a result, reserves are now at a very low level and therefore the forecast assumes that £2m will be provided in both 2025/26 and 2026/27 in order to replenish reserves.
- 7.15 On 01 February 2023, Council approved a Transformation Programme with the aim of making significant changes to the organisational culture and the way that services are delivered over a three-year period, enabling the Council to reach a long-term, sustainable financial position. The target budget reductions which are anticipated to be generated by the Programme total £20m between 2024/25 and 2026/27. The forecast also assumes part-year savings of £2m in each preceding year, from the early implementation of these savings. Any underachievement of the Transformation Programme savings presents a significant risk to the Council's ability to set a balanced budget in future years.

Table 3 – Medium Term Spending Forecast 2024/25 – 2026/27

Increase in Spending Required	Year on Year Change £'000		
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Full Year Effect of Previous Year's Budget	3,156	0	0
Capital Programme	150	1,000	1,000
Pay and Price Inflation	9,126	4,303	2,990
Service Demand Pressures	4,600	1,600	1,500
Contingency	500	2,000	2,000
Other Additional Costs	349	194	-184
Fair Cost of Care Implementation	0	2,320	0
Social Worker Academy	0	350	0
Increased Insurance Premiums	124	0	0

Supplies and Services Savings	-889	0	0
Property Maintenance Savings	-247	0	0
Highways Maintenance Savings	-443	0	0
Replenish Reserves	0	2,000	2,000
End of Business Rates Pilot	0	0	4,332
Increase in Social Care Grant Funding	-3,493	0	0
Agreed Savings	-2,702	-1,349	0
Transformation Targets	-4,000	-8,000	-8,000
Total Increase	6,231	4,418	5,638

8.0 The Funding Gap

8.1 At this level of spending there is a funding gap with the forecast level of resources. Table 4 demonstrates the forecast gap between spending and forecast resources at different levels of council tax increase.

Table 4: Funding Gap with a given % increase in Council Tax

	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
Increase in Net Spend Forecast (Table 3)	6,231	4,418	5,638
Decrease (Increase) in Business Rates Retained (Incl. Top-Up) (Table 1)	-119	-1,581	-1,613
Increase in Council Tax Base (Para 6.3)	-281	-610	-617
Decrease (Increase) in Council Tax Surplus (Para 6.4)	956	234	0
Funding Gap Before Council Tax	6,787	2,461	3,408
Funding Gap After Council Tax Increase at Various Levels			
0%	6,787	2,461	3,408
1%	6,176	1,832	2,761
2%	5,566	1,192	2,088
3%	4,957	538	1,390
4%	4,347	-128	666
5%	3,743	-798	-78

- 8.2 The table shows that total savings of £3.743m are forecast to be needed to balance next year's budget, assuming a 4.99% increase in council tax. This amounts to a 2.8% reduction to the 2023/24 net budget.
- 8.3 If the ability to raise council tax by up to 3% without a referendum, plus an additional 2% for Adult Social Care is extended beyond 2024/25, it is possible that the Council may be able to set a balanced budget in 2025/26 and 2026/27 without making further savings. This is, however, contingent upon spending next year not exceeding the 2024/25 budget, the achievement of planned savings of £2.702m and £1.349m in over the next two financial years, the Transformation Programme achieving its target savings of £20m between 2024/25 and 2026/27, and inflation returning to the Bank of England's target rate of 2%. It is considered more likely that the referendum limit for council tax will return to 2% in 2025/26, and that the additional allowed precept for Adult Social Care will reduce to 1%. Council tax increases of 2.99% in 2025/26 and 2026/27 would require an additional £0.495m and £1.347m of savings to be found. This would lead to a total funding gap of £5.586m over three years, representing 3.97% of the 2023/24 net budget.
- 8.4 This represents a significant challenge for the Council to balance its budget. As a result, every aspect of the Council's budget needs to be scrutinised to identify potential savings. In addition, all opportunities will continue to be taken to generate additional income from charging for services or attracting additional funding, in order to reduce costs whilst maintaining levels of service delivery.

9.0 Capital Programme

- 9.1 The Council's capital programme is updated regularly throughout the year. Table 5 summarises the fully funded capital programme for the next two years.

Table 5 – Capital Programme

	2024/25 (£'000)	2025/26 (£'000)
Spending	32,355	10,071
Funding:		
Prudential Borrowing	17,701	2,692
Grants	13,254	5,979
Capital Receipts	1,400	1,400
Total Funding	32,355	10,071

- 9.2 The current system of capital controls allows councils to support and fund the capital programme by way of prudential borrowing. Such borrowing is required to be:
- prudent
 - affordable, and
 - sustainable

- 9.3 The capital programme is underpinned by the Capital Strategy agreed by Council in March 2023.
- 9.4 The Council has used prudential borrowing provided that the cost of borrowing has been covered by revenue budget savings and the spending forecast continues this assumption.
- 9.5 In previous years the Council has been extremely successful in attracting capital grants and contributions. In this way, the Council has been able to undertake significant capital expenditure without financing costs falling on the revenue budget and this approach will continue.

10.0 Reserves and Balances

- 10.1 The Council's Reserves and Balances Strategy is attached in Appendix 2. It sets out the Council's strategy in respect of the level of reserves and balances it wishes to maintain, by reference to the financial needs and risks associated with the Council's activities.
- 10.2 The level of balances and reserves will be reviewed as part of the budget monitoring and final accounts processes.

11.0 Conclusions

- 11.1 High inflation, increasing service demand and recruitment difficulties are three of the main issues having a negative impact upon the Council's budget position. The Council has used significant amounts of reserves over recent years to help provide a balanced budget position and avoid making permanent budget savings. This approach is no longer sustainable given the low level of reserves remaining and therefore it is essential that future spending requirements are managed in line with available budget.
- 11.2 This Strategy highlights that considerable budget savings will be required over the next three years in order for the Council to deliver balanced annual revenue budgets. The successful implementation of the Transformation Programme and delivery of the planned £20m of savings is essential, if this position is to be achieved and the Council's finances are to be placed on a sustainable footing.
- 11.3 Alongside the Transformation Programme the MTF5 assumes continued support from Government. There is a risk that the Strategy will not be achieved if Government fail to support local authorities through funding for increasing levels of service needs.
- 11.4 The Business Rates Retention Scheme and Fair Funding Review carry further risks to the funding available to the Council over the medium and longer term. The lack of certainty provided by Government means that it is very difficult to predict both the timing and extent of the impact upon the Council's budget of potential future funding changes.

- 11.5 The future levels of savings required will be directly influenced by the decisions made concerning council tax increases. Council tax increases will reduce the level of savings required, although the legislative requirements regarding council tax referendums will restrict the Council's scope to implement these increases.
- 11.6 The Medium Term Financial Strategy provides a framework and underlying assumptions which will be used in the preparation of the 2024/25 annual budget. It has been based upon information that is currently available, however, revisions to the Strategy will need to be made as new developments take place and new information becomes available.
- 11.7 Appendix 2 sets out the Council's Strategy in respect of the level of reserves and balances it wishes to maintain, by reference to the financial needs and risks associated with the Council's activities.

RESERVES AND BALANCES STRATEGY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following sets out the Council's Strategy in respect of the level of reserves and balances it wishes to maintain, by reference to the financial needs and risks associated with the Council's activities.
- 1.2 The overall strategy is to provide the Council with an appropriate level of reserves and balances in relation to its day to day activities and to ensure the Council's financial standing is sound and supports the achievement of its long term objectives and corporate priorities.
- 1.3 The Operational Director, Finance will undertake quarterly reviews of the level of reserves and balances and take appropriate action in order to ensure the overall Strategy is achieved. The outcome of the reviews will be reported to the Executive Board and will be used to inform the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), the annual budget setting process and the final accounts process.
- 1.4 The Strategy concentrates upon the Council's key reserves and balances, being those which may potentially have a significant affect upon the Council's financial standing and its day-to-day operations.

2.0 RESERVE BALANCES

- 2.1 It has been the Council's policy to maintain general balances at a reasonable level, based upon the financial risks and challenges it faces. This is particularly important at the current time, given the increasing demand-led pressures upon Children's Services and Adult Social Care. The Council has used reserves in helping to provide balanced budget positions, but the level of reserves is now such that using reserves in this way is no longer sustainable. This forecast assumes that in years 2 and 3 there is a need to start replenishing reserves. As at 30 September 2023 the balance of the Council's general reserve was £5.147m.
- 2.2 In addition to the general reserve the Council holds earmarked reserves set aside for specific purposes. As at 30 September 2023 the balance of earmarked reserves was £95.928m, a breakdown of which is presented below. It should be noted that the Mersey Gateway reserve of £73.524m is ringfenced for the Mersey Gateway project. Of the remaining £22.404m reserves, only £1.926m is available to support the Council's general fund revenue budget.

Category	Balance 30 September 2023 £'000s
Future Revenue Commitments	1,926
Mersey Gateway	73,524
Grants	11,054
Capital	1,180
Contractual	8,244
Total	95,928

3.0 PROVISIONS

Sundry Debtors

- 3.1 The Council makes provision for bad and doubtful debts based upon an annual review of outstanding debts profiled by age and the associated risks of non-payment, depending upon the types of debt.
- 3.2 Past experience has shown that after 43 days (the period covering the initial stages of recovery action) the likelihood of sundry debts being paid reduces significantly and therefore the risk of them not being recovered increases greatly. Increased provision will therefore be made for all sundry debts outstanding for more than 43 days.
- 3.3 The bad debt provisions in respect of sundry debtors at 31 March 2023 totals £5.294m.

Council Tax / Business Rates (NNDR)

- 3.4 Bad debt provisions are made in respect of Council Tax and National Non Domestic Rate (NNDR) debts. The bad debt provisions (Council Share) in respect of Council Tax and NNDR debtors at 31 March 2023 totals £14.685m.
- 3.5 The levels of bad debt provisions held are considered prudent in relation to the current level and age profile of outstanding debts. But they will be reviewed annually, particularly in the light of the prevailing economic climate. Therefore appropriate provisions will be made to minimise the risk of financial loss to the Council.
- 3.6 The Council is also required to hold a provision for NNDR valuation appeal claims. The provision as at 31 March 2023 totals £1.977m.

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 16 November 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director – Finance

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Councilwide Spending as at 30 September 2023

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To report the Council's overall revenue and capital net spending position as at 30 September 2023 together with a 2023/24 forecast outturn position.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That;

- (i) All spending continues to be limited to only absolutely essential items;**
- (ii) Executive Directors continue to take urgent action to reduce or defer spending for the remainder of the current financial year, or secure additional funding;**
- (iii) Progress with implementation of the three years approved budget savings outlined in Appendix 4, be noted;**
- (iv) Council be requested to approve the revisions to the Capital Programme as set out in paragraph 3.20.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Revenue Spending

- 3.1 Appendix 1 presents a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 30 September 2023 and Appendix 2 provides detailed figures for each individual Department. In overall terms, net Council spending as at 30 September 2023 is £3.572m over budget. The outturn forecast for the year estimates that net spending will be over budget by £8.108m.
- 3.2 The forecast continues to show overspend positions across the majority of departments. The figures reflect a prudent yet realistic view of spend and income levels through to the end of the year.

- 3.3 The Q2 position is a slight improvement on that reported at Q1. The forecast outturn at that point was an estimated overspend against budget of £8.416m. Whilst that position shows a marginal improvement at Q2, it is still clear that a lot needs to be done over the remaining six months of the year to reduce the level of net spend.
- 3.4 The biggest pressure on the budget continues to be within the Children & Families Department, where forecast net spend for the year has increased by £0.681m over the past three months. This is predominantly as a result of increased spend against agency staff and staffing costs over and above the budgeted establishment.
- 3.5 Offsetting this increase in spend is a forecast gain in interest income through to 31 March 2024. The Council's capital cash reserves continue to be in a strong position and the estimate of cash held is greater than expected at this point which has allowed the Council to invest with favourable interest rates. As a result, the net interest income generated within Corporate & Democracy has increased by £0.696m.
- 3.6 As reported at Q1 the level of available reserves the Council holds (see para 3.15) is low and insufficient to meet such a significant overspend position. Whilst the forecast outturn has improved over the last three months it continues to be unsustainable for the Council and action needs to continue to reduce spending across all departments.
- 3.7 Included within the departmental figures is the cost of the 2023/24 pay award. This has been estimated at an increase of £1,925 or approximately 6% (excluding on-costs) for all staff with the exception of senior officers where a pay award of 3.5% has already been agreed. Any increase above the £1,925 proposed award will place further strain on the Council's budget.
- 3.8 One of the main contributory factors to the forecast deficit position for the year is the cost of agency staff. This is mostly evident within the Children & Families Department and the Care Homes Division. Whilst considerable work is ongoing to support recruitment and retention of permanent staff, the impact is not yet being felt of any major reduction to agency numbers. A recruitment and retention scheme has been introduced for Children's social care workers and there is also a rolling recruitment programme in place within the four Council run care homes. Analysis of agency spend for the first two quarters of the year together with comparative analysis of 2022/23 costs is included in the table below. It shows an increase in costs over the last three months, which if it continues at the current rate will mean estimated agency costs for the year will be similar to last year.

Agency Staff Spending

	2023/24			2022/23
	Q1	Q2	Total	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adult Social Care	1,176	1,339	2,515	5,677
Chief Executives Delivery Unit	118	114	232	23
Children & Family Services	1,395	1,506	2,901	6,315
Community & Greenspace	44	75	119	130
Economy, Enterprise & Property	92	71	163	452
Education, Inclusion & Provision	107	102	209	31
Finance	18	23	41	31
ICT & Support Services	0	1	1	0
Legal & Democratic Services	193	182	375	473
Planning & Transportation	45	48	93	225
Public Health & Public Protection	0	1	1	249
Total	3,188	3,462	6,650	13,605

- 3.9 Inflation as at September 2023 is running at 6.7% for CPI and 9.1% for RPI. Future forecasts for inflation remain varied, however, the general view is that rates will reduce by around 3.0% over the next six months. Longer term rates remain under review and will be reflected in the Council's medium term financial forecast.
- 3.10 High pay and price inflation rates continue to have a serious negative impact upon the Council's financial position. There therefore continues to be an urgent need for all departments to cut any non-essential spending and to implement any agreed or proposed efficiencies as soon as possible.

Revenue - Operational Spending

- 3.11 Operational net spending for the first six months of the year is higher than the budget to date by £3.572m Based on current forecasts it is estimated net spend will be over the approved budget for the year by £8.108m if no further corrective action is taken.
- 3.12 Within the overall budget forecast position for the quarter, the key budget variances are as follows;

(i) Children and Families Department:-

The projected outturn forecast is for the Department to overspend by £8.560m against a net budget of £32.063m. Forecast net spend has increased by £0.681 over the last three months.

Staffing

Employee costs are £1.525m above budget at the end of Quarter 2. There continues to be a heavy reliance upon agency staff to fill vacancies across the structure including Social Workers, Practice

Leads and Divisional Managers. This combined with a number of agency staff recruited in addition to the current staffing structure is the cause of this overspend. Social worker recruitment is proving difficult due to an extremely competitive market and highly inflated agency pay rates. Spend on agency staff at the end of Quarter 2 is £2.900m or 51% of employee budget to date. The final outturn for employee costs is expected to be £3.439m overspent. This is £0.537m more than was forecast at quarter 1 and is due to the increased numbers of agency staff, including senior manager roles, along with the extension of agency staff to the end of the financial year that were previously due to end in November 23.

Within the employee forecast spend to the end of year, an element has been included for the 2023/24 pay award (yet to be agreed) based on the latest available information. The forecast also assumes there will be reduced reliance upon agency staff as the year progresses and take-up of the recruitment and retention scheme takes effect.

Supplies & Services

Supplies and Services expenditure is £0.532m above budget at the end of Quarter 2 with a forecast outturn variance against budget of £1.022m. Additional growth was provided of £0.314k to cover the increase in court costs and related legal spend. However, supplies and services is diverse and high levels of spend relating to a number of areas including nursery fees, consultancy, translation costs, equipment and travel are adding pressure to this budget. The outturn position has increased by £0.153m since quarter 1, with the majority of this relating to IT computer licensing, in particular the renewal of the Eclipse contract.

Out of Borough Residential Care

Out of Borough Residential Care continues to be the main budget pressure for the Children and Families Department as the costs of residential care have continued to rise year on year. This budget was given additional growth of £4.052m for this financial year to alleviate the pressure, however, residential care remains £1.313m over budget at the end of quarter 2, with an anticipated outturn of £2.776m over budget at the end of the year. Forecast spend for the year is expected to be £1.963m greater than in 2022/23.

The main reason for such a high increase in spend can be attributed more to the rise in costs of individual packages rather than an increase in numbers in care. For example, there are currently six children with packages costing over £9k per week. The table below illustrates the trend towards numbers of children accommodated in higher cost packages, with the numbers in lower cost packages reducing.

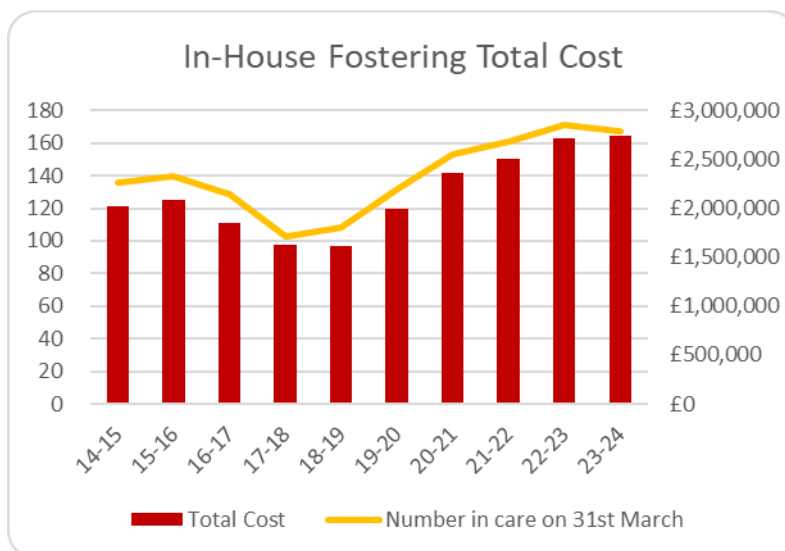
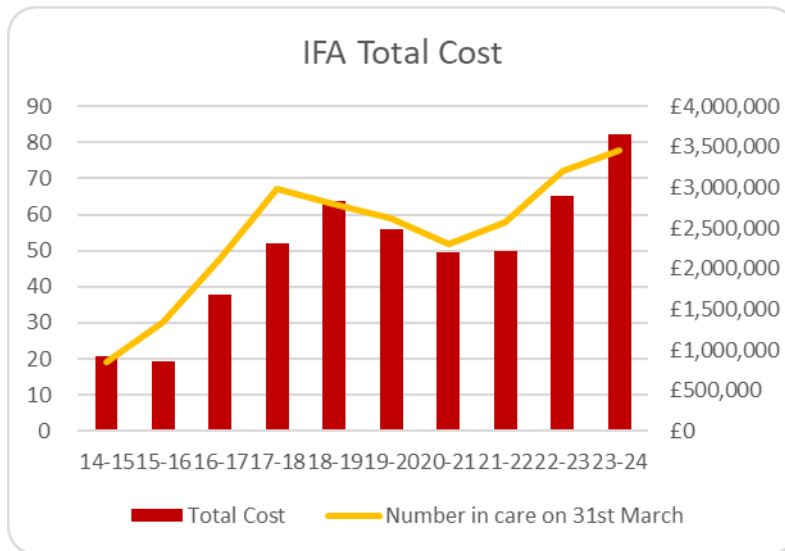
Provision	Weekly Costs	30th September 2023		30th June 2023	
		No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year	No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
Residential	£2000 - £3000	4	768,400	6	876,000
Residential	£3001 - £4000	9	1,606,255	7	1,306,075
Residential	£4001 - £5000	7	1,549,874	9	1,942,736
Residential	£5001 - £13720	29	10,381,554	24	8,946,076
Secure	£6397 - £8137	0	0	0	0
Leaving Care	£443 - £7175	16	1,750,828	17	2,175,930
Parent & Child	£2000 - £5500	5	393,882	4	530,234
Total:		70	16,450,793	67	15,777,052

Work to reduce the numbers in residential care has so far avoided additional costs of £1.824m by the timely transfer of placements to lower cost Leaving Care packages, the reduction of additional support packages where possible, and re-unification of young people with their families where appropriate. It is hoped that continued scrutiny will bring down the current projected costs of residential placements, but the costs will remain high and continue to be a considerable pressure on the budget.

Foster Care Provision

Although in-house fostering provision has increased enabling more young people to be accommodated in house, recruitment has slowed lately which is consistent with the market in general. Increasing numbers of children in care and insufficient in-house fostering provision has meant increased reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's). Higher numbers of children placed within IFA provision and increased IFA rates has resulted in an outturn forecast overspend of £0.611m. Spend in this area is expected to be around £0.769m more than was the case in 2022/23.

The graphs below show the increased demand and spend on IFA placements whereas in house provision has become static over the last two financial years.



(ii) **Adult Social Care Directorate:-**

Community Care

Community Care expenditure is over budget profile at the end of Quarter 2 by £0.576m and is anticipated to be overspent against budget by £1.173m at the end of the financial year. This is a reduction in the forecast of £1.476m reported at Q1. The main reason for the overspend is the increased uptake of Direct Payments, further details are provided below. This is a better position than reported at Quarter 1 due to the recovery plan which is being actioned. To date it has realised savings of around £1.3m (full year effect) however, some of those savings have been negated by increased demand for services and/or the increased cost of packages of care due to increasing needs.

Residential & Nursing Care

The Summer months witnessed a slight decrease in the number of residential & nursing placements compared to the start of the

financial year, however, numbers started to increase from August and now stand at 500 placements. The average, for this financial year is 492 placements compared to 477 placements for the same time last year (April-September 2022), an increase of 3%. At the current average weekly rate this equates to 0.735m per annum.

The average cost of a package of care has increased 9% from £864 in April to £942 in September suggesting an increase in the complexity of care packages. Not only is demand increasing but complexities of care are too, exerting further pressure on the budget. This is reflective of a borough with an ageing population in a deprived area.

Direct Payments

The demand for Direct Payments continues to increase, often as a default position due to the current domiciliary provider being unable to pick up additional care packages. Agency usage via direct payments results in a higher hourly rate, some as much as £28 per hour (42.7%) compared to the domiciliary provider rate of £19.61 per hour. Some agencies also charge different rates for weekends and double time for Bank Holidays placing further pressure on the budget.

Domiciliary Care & Supported Living

Currently there are 718 service users receiving a package of care at home compared to 705 in April, a slight increase of 1.8%. However, there are more service users in receipt of domiciliary care now than during 2022/23 The average number for the first half of this financial year is 709 compared to 690 for the same period last year, an increase of 2.8%.

The average cost of a package of care has increased from £417 in April to £442 in September, an increase of 6%. The full year effect of the increase in numbers illustrated above is circa £0.3m based on current average unit costs.

Care Homes

The quarter 2 spend across the Division is over budget profile by £0.639m. The forecast for the end of year is an estimated outturn position of £1.466m over budget, this is however, a much improved position from the £1.914m forecast reported at quarter 1.

The reduction of £0.448m in the forecast outturn position relates to receipt of Market Sustainability Improvement Fund grant of £0.232m to help with workforce capacity. In addition, it is currently forecast there will be less demand for agency staffing over the second half of the year.

Employee related expenditure is over budget profile at the end of quarter 2 by £0.594m, with the expected outturn position being £1.338m over budget.

There remains a high number of staff vacancies across the care homes. A proactive rolling recruitment exercise is ongoing within the care homes and is supported by HR. The aim is to speed up the recruitment process to fill all current vacancies within the care homes and reduce reliance upon agency staff.

(iii) Education, Inclusion and Provision

It is expected that departmental net spend for the year will be £0.767m higher than the total budget of £8.614m.

Schools Transport is the main budget pressure for Education, Inclusion and Provision. Whilst the Council has a statutory responsibility to provide Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils with transport, the demand for transport is increasing in line with the increasing number of pupils with SEN within the Borough.

The table below provides a breakdown between in-borough and out-of-borough transport provision.

	2023-24 as at Q2				
Area	No. of Users	Budget £'000	Projected Spend £'000	Variance £'000	Average Cost per User
In Borough	402	1,104	1,478	(374)	£3,676
Out of Borough	116	426	1184	(758)	£10,207
Total	518	1,530	2,662	(1,132)	

At quarter 2 there are 518 service users, the majority of which attend schools within the Borough. Both are overspending compared to budget, however, the out-of-borough forecast overspend is far greater than that for in-borough and the average cost per user is nearly three times as much. The demand for the School Transport service is increasing in line with the increasing number of pupils with SEN within the Borough.

(iv) Community and Greenspaces

The net department spend is forecast to be over budget for the year by £0.564m, an improvement on the forecast budget variance of £0.740 reported at quarter 1.

The main reasons for the adverse budget variance is due to a shortfall on forecast income against budget. Sales income for the

year is expected to underachieve compared to the budgeted income target. Shortfalls in income in the Leisure Centres and the Stadium, plus a reduction in room hire at Community Centres and Libraries are forecast to contribute towards lower income levels. A shortfall in School Meals SLA income is also forecast by year-end however, this may be mitigated by reduced staffing costs.

(v) **Corporate and Democracy**

To date Corporate and Democracy net spend is £2.270m under the budget to date and it is currently forecast that net spend for the year will be below budget by £4.717m.

Included within the above figures are both general and specific contingency budgets. This includes a contingency for continuing budget pressures within social care services and recognises that efforts to control and reduce spending within these areas is part of a longer term plan. It is currently forecast that the contingency of £3.271m will help support overspending areas elsewhere within the budget, but this may be dependent upon other calls on the contingency budget arising.

Interest rate rises by the Bank of England have increased the amount of interest income which the Council is able to generate from its cash investments. It is currently forecast that by year-end the Council will be able to generate an additional £1.007m in interest income than was forecast at budget setting. This position is helped by the Council maintaining higher cash reserves than expected at the time the budget was set.

Collection Fund

- 3.13 Council tax collection for the first half of the year is 53.9%, down 0.52% on this point last year. Cash collection for the year to date is £42.4m, this includes £1.3m collected in relation to previous year debt.
- 3.14 Business rates collection for the first half of the year is 56.4%, down by 5.2% on this point last year. Cash collected for the year to date is £34.1m, this includes £0.7m collected in relation to previous year debt.

Review of Reserves

- 3.15 As at 31 March 2023 the Council's General Reserve was £5.147m, which represents 3.6% of the Council's total net budget. This is considered to be a minimum level required given the overall size of the Council's budget..
- 3.16 As at 30 September 2023, the balance of Council earmarked reserves stood at £95.928m, of which £73.524m relates to the Mersey Gateway project, therefore the Council's remaining reserves total £22.404m.

- 3.17 Summarised below are the earmarked reserves held at 30 September 2023, categorised into the reasons for which they are held

Category	Balance as at 30/09/2023 £'000s
Future Revenue Commitments	1,926
Mersey Gateway	73,524
Grants	11,054
Capital	1,180
Contractual	8,244
Total	95,928

- 3.18 The Mersey Gateway reserve is ringfenced to the Mersey Gateway project. They currently form part of the five year review of the project with the Department for Transport and a decision will be made shortly regarding their future use. It is currently expected that a share of the balance will be earmarked for the Council, with the remainder being returned to the Department for Transport.
- 3.19 The current value of reserves held for future revenue commitments is a major concern. The balance of £1.926m is not sufficient to meet the forecast outturn overspend position for the year. A share of Mersey Gateway reserve will help with this, but it is clear there needs to be a significant reduction in spending by all departments over the coming months to reduce the forecast outturn overspend.

Capital Spending

- 3.20 The Capital Programme has been revised to reflect a number of changes in spending profiles and funding as schemes have developed and these are reflected in the Capital Programme presented in Appendix 3. The schemes which have been revised within the programme are as follows;
- i. Schools Capital
 - ii. Police Station Demolition
 - iii. Woodend – Former Unit 10
 - iv. Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development
 - v. Changing Places.
- 3.21 Capital spending at 30 September 2023 totalled £20.118m, which represents 90% of the planned spending of £22.336m at this stage. This represents 30% of the total Capital Programme of £31.777m (which assumes a 20% slippage between years).

Approved Savings

- 3.22 On 01 February 2023, Council approved budget savings for the three years from 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2026. The purpose of approving savings for the latter two years, was to provide the necessary time required to plan and deliver certain savings.
- 3.23 Progress with delivering all three years' savings has been reviewed and Appendix 4 provides details of the savings along with RAG rated information regarding the action taken to date to implement them.
- 3.24 At this stage the majority of savings are on track for implementation, although in a number of cases additional work is required or alternative savings may need to be identified.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 As at 30 September 2023, net revenue spend is £3.572m over the budget to date.
- 4.2 The forecast outturn currently estimates that spending will be £8.108m over budget for the year, which would have a severe impact upon the Council's reserves.
- 4.3 It is therefore essential that all departments continue to ensure all spending continues to be restricted to only essential items throughout the remainder of the financial year.
- 4.4 Executive Directors should continue to take urgent action to reduce spending and/or increase income generation, in order to minimise the outturn overspend.

5.0 POLICY AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 There are a number of financial risks within the budget. However, the Council has internal controls and processes in place to ensure that spending remains in line with budget as far as possible.
- 7.2 A budget risk register of significant financial risks has been prepared and is monitored on a quarterly basis.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1072

10.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act

Summary of Revenue Spending to 30 September 2023

APPENDIX 1

Directorate / Department	Annual Budget £'000	Budget To Date £'000	Actual To Date £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn (Overspend)
Adult Social Care	22,382	11,048	11,270	(222)	(451)
Care Homes	9,742	4,259	4,898	(639)	(1,466)
Community Care	20,708	9,815	10,391	(576)	(1,173)
Complex Care Pool	4,267	-1,033	-1,165	132	682
Adults Directorate	57,099	24,089	25,394	(1,305)	(2,408)
Finance	4,440	2,888	3,071	(183)	(248)
Legal & Democratic Services	1,749	906	922	(16)	(90)
ICT & Support Services	2,047	720	950	(230)	(260)
Chief Executives Delivery Unit	-1,527	-1,223	-1,362	139	57
Chief Executives Directorate	6,709	3,291	3,581	(290)	(541)
Children & Families	32,063	13,248	17,303	(4,055)	(8,560)
Education, Inclusion & Provision	8,614	4,158	4,064	94	(767)
Childrens Directorate	40,677	17,406	21,367	(3,961)	(9,327)
Community & Greenspace	26,429	6,373	6,657	(284)	(564)
Economy, Enterprise & Property	1,858	957	857	100	204
Planning & Transportation	8,272	1,787	1,987	(200)	(385)
Environment & Regeneration Directorate	36,559	9,117	9,501	(384)	(745)
Corporate & Democracy	-1,637	-636	-2,906	2,270	4,717
Public Health Directorate	1,473	227	129	98	196
Total Operational Net Spend	140,880	53,494	57,066	(3,572)	(8,108)

Adult Social Care

APPENDIX 2

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	15,664	7,818	7,967	(149)	(301)
Premises	535	290	300	(10)	(20)
Supplies & Services	860	583	568	15	20
Aids & Adaptations	37	19	11	8	10
Transport	228	114	155	(41)	(80)
Food Provision	201	100	100	0	0
Agency	678	337	337	0	0
Supported Accommodation and Services	1,357	699	706	(7)	(10)
Emergency Duty Team	110	55	65	(10)	(20)
Transfer To Reserves	357	0	0	0	0
Capital Financing	44	0	0	0	0
Contacts & SLAs	577	402	407	(5)	(10)
Housing Solutions Grant Funded Schemes					
Homelessness Prevention	357	126	126	0	0
Rough Sleepers Initiative	157	37	37	0	0
Total Expenditure	21,162	10,580	10,779	(199)	(411)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-803	-402	-400	(2)	0
Sales & Rents Income	-454	-300	-296	(4)	(10)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-1,537	-535	-579	44	90
Capital Salaries	-121	-61	-61	0	0
Housing Schemes Income	-591	-591	-591	0	0
Total Income	-3,506	-1,889	-1,927	38	80
Net Operational Expenditure	17,656	8,691	8,852	(161)	(331)
Recharges					
Premises Support	583	292	292	0	0
Transport Support	575	288	349	(61)	(120)
Central Support	3,667	1,833	1,833	0	0
Asset Rental Support	13	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-112	-56	-56	0	0
Net Total Recharges	4,726	2,357	2,418	(61)	(120)
Net Departmental Expenditure	22,382	11,048	11,270	(222)	(451)

Care Homes

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
<u>Madeline Mckenna</u>					
Employees	668	295	351	(56)	(101)
Other Premises	122	50	49	1	2
Supplies & Services	16	7	7	0	(7)
Food Provison	43	21	22	(1)	(3)
Total Madeline Mckenna Expenditure	849	373	429	(56)	(109)
<u>Millbrow</u>					
Employees	1,984	904	1,046	(142)	(320)
Other Premises	151	71	92	(21)	(30)
Supplies & Services	43	16	19	(3)	(12)
Food Provison	75	37	38	(1)	(2)
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-15	-15	-15	0	0
Total Millbrow Expenditure	2,238	1,013	1,180	(167)	(364)
<u>St Luke's</u>					
Employees	2,725	1,106	1,251	(145)	(337)
Other Premises	208	79	79	0	(10)
Supplies & Services	46	19	18	1	(3)
Food Provison	118	30	45	(15)	(32)
Total St Luke's Expenditure	3,097	1,234	1,393	(159)	(382)
<u>St Patrick's</u>					
Employees	1,752	774	1,037	(263)	(584)
Other Premises	191	89	73	16	16
Supplies & Services	43	18	26	(8)	(20)
Food Provison	112	33	46	(13)	(26)
Total St Patrick's Expenditure	2,098	914	1,182	(268)	(614)
<u>Care Homes Divison Management</u>					
Employees	285	137	125	12	4
Supplies & Services	0	0	1	(1)	(1)
Care Home Divison Management	285	137	126	11	3
Net Operational Expenditure	8,567	3,671	4,310	(639)	(1,466)
<u>Recharges</u>					
Premises Support	285	143	143	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	890	445	445	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	1,175	588	588	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	9,742	4,259	4,898	(639)	(1,466)

Community Care

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Residential & Nursing	17,214	7,952	8,049	(97)	(211)
Domiciliary Care & Supported living	10,487	4,840	4,678	162	351
Direct Payments	13,609	6,281	6,839	(558)	(1,209)
Day Care	375	173	194	(21)	(45)
Total Expenditure	41,685	19,246	19,760	(514)	(1,114)
Income					
Residential & Nursing Income	-10,860	-5,012	-5,164	152	329
Community Care Income	-2,141	-988	-856	(132)	(215)
Direct Payments Income	-957	-442	-360	(82)	(147)
Income from other CCGs	-126	-63	-63	0	(26)
Market Sustainability & Improvement Grant	-1,497	-748	-748	0	0
Market Sustainability Workforce Grant	-972	0	0	0	0
Adult Social Care Support Grant	-4,357	-2,178	-2,178	0	0
War Pension Disregard Grant	-67	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-20,977	-9,431	-9,369	(62)	(59)
Net Operational Expenditure	20,708	9,815	10,391	(576)	(1,173)
Recharges					
Premises Support	0	0	0	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	0	0	0	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	0	0	0	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	20,708	9,815	10,391	(576)	(1,173)

Complex Care Pool

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Intermediate Care Services	3,608	1,663	1,584	79	284
Oakmeadow	1,170	571	517	54	122
Community Home Care First	1,530	532	532	0	0
Joint Equipment Store	829	346	346	0	0
Development Fund	670	0	0	0	670
HICafs	3,226	1,303	1,261	42	85
Discharge Schemes	1,921	960	960	0	0
Contracts & SLA's	3,320	291	261	30	84
Carers Breaks	450	206	147	59	119
Carers Centre	354	177	177	0	0
Residential Care	1,246	623	623	0	0
Domiciliary Care & Supported Living	3,713	1,857	1,857	0	0
Total Expenditure	22,037	8,529	8,265	264	1,364
Income					
BCF	-12,762	-6,381	-6,381	0	0
CCG Contribution to Pool	-2,864	-1,416	-1,416	0	0
ASC Discharge Grant	-1,921	-1,431	-1,431	0	0
Transfer from reserve	-223	-223	-223	0	0
Total Income	-17,770	-9,451	-9,451	0	0
Net Operational Expenditure	4,267	-922	-1,186	264	1,364
Recharges					
Premises Support	0	0	0	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	0	0	0	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	0	0	0	0	0
ICB Contribution Share of Surplus	0	0	132	(132)	(682)
Net Departmental Expenditure	4,267	-922	-1,054	132	682

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	6,453	3,030	3,011	19	48
Insurances	910	800	921	(121)	(184)
Supplies & Services	364	250	296	(46)	(94)
Rent Allowances	35,500	14,686	14,686	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,748	600	569	31	68
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	23	23	0	0
Discretionary Social Fund	310	10	5	5	7
Discretionary Housing Payments	300	108	108	0	0
Household Support Fund Expenditure	654	653	653	0	0
Energy Bills Support	41	41	41	0	0
LCR Levy	2,241	1,121	1,121	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	17	0	0	0	17
Bad Debt Provision	77	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	48,685	21,322	21,434	(112)	(138)
Income					
Other Fees & Charges	-344	-195	-188	(7)	(10)
Burdens Grant	-60	-60	-88	28	28
Dedicated schools Grant	-123	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Liability Order	-541	-474	-475	1	3
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	0
Schools SLAs	-295	-295	-301	6	6
LCR Reimbursement	-2,241	-1,121	-1,121	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-400	-67	-67	0	0
Rent Allowances	-34,800	-13,865	-13,623	(242)	(363)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-35	-49	14	25
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-300	-93	-93	0	0
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-515	-268	-276	8	17
Universal Credits	-5	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Admin Grant	-204	0	0	0	0
Household Support Fund Grant	-654	-52	-52	0	0
Energy Bills Support	-245	-245	-245	0	0
Alternative Fuel	-57	-57	-57	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-121	121	184
Reimbursements & Other Grants	-159	-110	-110	0	0
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-82	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-41,252	-16,937	-16,866	(71)	(110)
Net Operational Expenditure	7,433	4,385	4,568	(183)	(248)
Recharges					
Premises Support	268	134	134	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,069	1,034	1,034	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,330	-2,665	-2,665	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,993	-1,497	-1,497	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	4,440	2,888	3,071	(183)	(248)

Legal Services

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	1,436	755	703	52	76
Agency Costs (Locums)	0	0	375	(375)	(575)
Supplies & Services	164	130	131	(1)	(5)
Civic Catering & Functions	26	13	2	11	3
Legal Expenses	218	100	166	(66)	(207)
Transport Related Expenditure	11	6	0	6	3
Total Expenditure	1,855	1,004	1,377	(373)	(705)
Income					
School SLA's	-92	-92	-78	(14)	(14)
Licence Income	-284	-142	-121	(21)	12
Reimbursement & Other Grants	0	0	0	0	25
Fees & Charges Income	-70	-34	-33	(1)	(1)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-393	393	593
Total Income	-446	-268	-625	357	615
Net Operational Expenditure	1,409	736	752	(16)	(90)
Recharges					
Premises Support	58	29	29	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	282	141	141	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	340	170	170	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,749	906	922	(16)	(90)

ICT & Support Services Department

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employee Expenditure	8,126	3,800	3,965	(165)	(320)
Supplies & Services Expenditure	1,012	660	675	(15)	(29)
Capital Finance	78	25	12	13	27
Computer Repairs & Software	1,333	1,050	1,124	(74)	(85)
Communication Costs	13	6	38	(32)	(41)
Premises Expenditure	175	119	116	3	9
Transport Expenditure	3	1	1	0	1
Total Expenditure	10,740	5,661	5,931	(270)	(438)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-996	-50	-85	35	168
Schools SLA Income	-610	-600	-605	5	10
Total Income	-1,606	-650	-690	40	178
Net Operational Expenditure	9,134	5,011	5,241	(230)	(260)
Recharges					
Premises Support	557	279	279	0	0
Transport	16	8	8	0	0
Central Support	1,797	899	899	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-10,951	-5,477	-5,477	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-7,087	-4,291	-4,291	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,047	720	950	(230)	(260)

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	2,795	1,297	1,196	101	53
Employees Training	117	58	44	14	5
Apprenticeship Levy	300	150	162	(12)	(50)
Supplies & Services	303	100	47	53	81
Total Expenditure	3,515	1,605	1,449	156	89
Income					
Fees & Charges	-211	-120	-104	(16)	(31)
Schools SLA	-533	-533	-532	(1)	(1)
Total Income	-744	-653	-636	(17)	(32)
Net Operational Expenditure	2,771	952	813	139	57
Recharges					
Premises Support	117	59	59	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,023	512	512	0	0
Asset Rental Support	53	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,491	-2,746	-2,746	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-4,298	-2,175	-2,175	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-1,527	-1,223	-1,362	139	57

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	11,460	5,689	7,214	(1,525)	(3,439)
Other Premises	476	217	151	66	131
Supplies & Services	1,084	563	1,095	(532)	(1,022)
Transport	113	26	106	(80)	(221)
Direct Payments	1,016	453	435	18	30
Commissioned services to Vol Orgs	224	81	73	8	15
Residential Care	13,505	5,505	6,818	(1,313)	(2,776)
Out of Borough Adoption	30	15	0	15	30
Out of Borough Fostering	3,050	1,377	1,728	(351)	(611)
In House Adoption	461	129	121	8	15
Special Guardianship Order	2,221	1,010	1,108	(98)	(225)
In House Foster Carer Placements	2,670	1,262	1,299	(37)	(75)
Lavender House	230	91	91	0	0
Home Support & Respite	340	220	191	29	71
Care Leavers	271	139	138	1	3
Family Support	53	26	52	(26)	(53)
Contracted services	3	2	2	0	0
Early Years	275	231	375	(144)	(195)
Emergency Duty	124	5	20	(15)	(89)
Youth Offending Services	255	42	76	(34)	(77)
Total Expenditure	37,861	17,083	21,093	(4,010)	(8,488)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-31	-3	0	(3)	(4)
Sales Income	-4	-2	-1	(1)	(3)
Rents	-76	-42	-40	(2)	(4)
Reimbursement & other Grant Income	-539	-212	-173	(39)	(61)
Transfer from reserve	-47	-47	-47	0	0
Dedicated Schools Grant	-50	0	0	0	0
Government Grants	-7,571	-4,788	-4,788	0	0
Total Income	-8,318	-5,094	-5,049	(45)	(72)
Net Operational Expenditure	29,543	11,989	16,044	(4,055)	(8,560)
Recharges					
Premises Support	339	169	169	0	0
Transport Support	15	7	7	0	0
Central Support	3,290	1,645	1,645	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-1,124	-562	-562	0	0
Net Total Recharges	2,520	1,259	1,259	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	32,063	13,248	17,303	(4,055)	(8,560)

Education, Inclusion & Provision

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	7,464	3,568	3,446	122	184
Premises	28	14	9	5	0
Supplies & Services	1,245	709	665	44	60
Transport	6	0	0	0	0
Schools Transport	1,588	794	1,138	(344)	(1,132)
Commissioned Services	1,654	515	327	188	72
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	10	0	0	0	10
Independent School Fees	6,728	3,679	3,679	0	0
Inter Authority Special Needs	604	382	382	0	0
Pupil Premium Grant	220	22	22	0	0
Nursery Education Payments	7,467	3,655	3,655	0	0
Capital Financing	1	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	27,015	13,338	13,323	15	(806)
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-101	-100	-173	73	73
Government Grant Income	-856	-428	-428	0	0
Schools SLA Income	-445	-223	-263	40	66
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	0	0	-40	40	40
Transfers from Reserves	-134	-25	-25	0	0
Dedicated Schools Grant	-18,730	-9,364	-9,364	0	0
Inter Authority Income	-483	-207	-207	0	0
Total Income	-20,749	-10,347	-10,500	153	179
Net Operational Expenditure	6,266	2,991	2,823	168	(627)
Recharges					
Premises Support	281	140	140	0	0
Transport Support	441	220	294	(74)	(140)
Central Support	1,609	807	807	0	0
Asset Rental Support	17	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	2,348	1,167	1,241	(74)	(140)
Net Departmental Expenditure	8,614	4,158	4,064	94	(767)

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	17,085	7,607	7,428	179	358
Premises	3,685	1,483	1,479	4	8
Supplies & Services	1,598	837	882	(45)	(90)
Hired & Contracted Services	607	231	286	(55)	(111)
Book Fund	140	86	86	0	0
Food Provisions	371	117	181	(64)	(127)
School Meals Food	1,965	841	858	(17)	(32)
Miscellaneous Transport Costs	117	55	68	(13)	(26)
Other Agency Costs	601	182	209	(27)	(53)
Other Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
Waste Disposal Contracts	6,885	106	57	49	98
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	67	18	14	4	8
Grant to Norton Priory	172	86	87	(1)	(1)
Capital Financing	201	41	0	41	83
Total Expenditure	33,494	11,690	11,635	55	115
Income					
Sales Income	-3,962	-1,950	-1,402	(548)	(1,095)
Fees & Charges Income	-5,752	-3,488	-3,614	126	251
Rental Income	-221	-98	-108	10	19
Government Grant Income	-695	-646	-774	128	256
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-665	-383	-389	6	12
SLA Income	-2,391	-2,260	-2,139	(121)	(242)
Internal Fees Income	-592	-96	-176	80	161
Capital Salaries	-173	-46	-46	0	0
Transfers From Reserves	0	51	51	0	0
Total Income	-14,451	-8,916	-8,597	(319)	(638)
Net Operational Expenditure	19,043	2,774	3,038	(264)	(523)
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,825	913	913	0	0
Transport	2,046	1,027	1,047	(20)	(41)
Central Support	3,856	1,933	1,933	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-540	-274	-274	0	0
Net Total Recharges	7,386	3,599	3,619	(20)	(41)
Net Departmental Expenditure	26,429	6,373	6,657	(284)	(564)

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,311	2,666	2,633	33	65
Repairs & Maintenance	1,940	983	990	(7)	(11)
Premises	122	110	116	(6)	(10)
Energy & Water Costs	1,768	680	570	110	207
NNDR	793	684	645	39	39
Rents	170	127	128	(1)	(1)
Economic Regeneration Activities	37	3	3	0	0
Security	509	187	202	(15)	(30)
Supplies & Services	356	183	190	(7)	(14)
Supplies & Services - Grant	838	262	262	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	105	53	53	0	0
Capital Finance	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	38	38	38	0	0
Total Expenditure	11,987	5,976	5,830	146	245
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-840	-409	-449	40	81
Rent - Commercial Properties	-906	-356	-334	(22)	(43)
Rent - Investment Properties	-44	-22	-20	(2)	(5)
Rent - Markets	-852	-429	-406	(23)	(46)
Government Grant	-1,229	-318	-318	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-990	-413	-416	3	6
Schools SLA Income	-300	-284	-235	(49)	(49)
Recharges to Capital	-251	-63	-70	7	14
Transfer from Reserves	-732	-732	-732	0	1
Total Income	-6,144	-3,026	-2,980	(46)	(41)
Net Operational Expenditure	5,843	2,950	2,850	100	204
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,006	1,003	1,003	0	0
Transport	23	12	12	0	0
Central Support	1,710	856	856	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-7,728	-3,864	-3,864	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,985	-1,993	-1,993	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,858	957	857	100	204

Planning & Transportation Department

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,149	2,260	2,393	(133)	(251)
Efficiency Savings	-100	-100	-100	0	0
Premises	211	117	85	32	65
Hired & Contracted Services	115	183	208	(25)	(50)
Supplies & Services	133	64	125	(61)	(123)
Street Lighting	1,766	390	213	177	355
Highways Maintenance - Routine & Reactive	1,583	382	535	(153)	(306)
Highways Maintenance - Programmed Works	1,712	509	394	115	230
Fleet Transport	1,410	645	748	(103)	(207)
Bus Support - Halton Hopper Tickets	52	24	5	19	38
Bus Support	458	231	231	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	31	30	30	0	0
NRA Levy	73	72	71	1	2
LCR Levy	882	441	441	0	0
Contribution to Reserves	359	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	13,834	5,248	5,379	(131)	(247)
Income					
Sales & Rents Income	-101	-38	-23	(15)	(30)
Planning Fees	-738	-374	-301	(73)	(146)
Building Control Fees	-242	-121	-58	(63)	(126)
Other Fees & Charges	-932	-527	-467	(60)	(119)
Grants & Reimbursements	-179	-206	-206	0	0
Government Grant Income	-197	-177	-177	0	0
Halton Hopper Income	-54	-13	-1	(12)	(25)
Recharge to Capital	-317	-108	-13	(95)	(190)
LCR Levy Reimbursement	-882	-441	-441	0	0
Contribution from Reserves	-489	-489	-489	0	0
Total Income	-4,131	-2,494	-2,176	(318)	(636)
Net Operational Expenditure	9,703	2,754	3,203	(449)	(883)
Recharges					
Premises Support	509	254	254	0	0
Transport	591	265	320	(55)	(111)
Central Support	1,432	716	716	0	0
Asset Rental Support	686	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-885	-443	-443	0	0
Transport Recharge Income	-3,764	-1,759	-2,063	304	609
Net Total Recharges	-1,431	-967	-1,216	249	498
Net Departmental Expenditure	8,272	1,787	1,987	(200)	(385)

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	361	181	179	1	0
Contracted Services	39	20	6	14	0
Supplies & Services	131	66	75	(10)	0
Premises Expenditure	5	5	8	(3)	0
Transport Costs	1	0	-27	28	28
Members Allowances	946	473	450	23	0
Interest Payable - Treasury Management	1,099	550	550	(0)	0
Interest Payable - Other	271	136	57	79	157
Bank Charges	144	72	93	(21)	(100)
Audit Fees	342	171	171	0	0
Contingency	3,271	1,636	0	1,636	3,271
Capital Financing	2,259	2,259	2,293	(34)	(34)
Contribution to Reserves	4,332	4,332	4,332	0	0
Debt Management Expenses	20	10	6	4	4
Precepts & Levies	221	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	13,442	9,909	8,192	1,717	3,326
Income					
Interest Receivable - Treasury Management	-4,085	-2,043	-2,546	503	1,007
Interest Receivable - Other	0	0	-10	10	20
Other Fees & Charges	-153	-76	-109	32	0
Grants & Reimbursements	-255	15	8	8	364
Government Grant Income	-1,469	-734	-734	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-7,156	-7,156	-7,156	(0)	0
Total Income	-13,118	-9,994	-10,547	553	1,391
Net Operational Expenditure	324	-85	-2,355	2,270	4,717
Recharges					
Premises Support	8	4	4	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	870	460	460	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-2,817	-1,015	-1,015	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-1,939	-551	-551	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-1,615	-636	-2,906	2,270	4,717

Public Health

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	4,629	2,210	2,150	60	120
Premises	6	0	0	0	0
Supplies & Services	255	143	135	8	16
Contracts & SLA's	7,006	2,922	2,917	5	10
Transport	4	2	1	1	2
Other Agency	23	23	23	0	0
Total Expenditure	11,923	5,300	5,226	74	148
Income					
Fees & Charges	-71	-134	-143	9	18
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-44	-160	-164	4	8
Transfer from Reserves	-1,242	0	0	0	0
Government Grant Income	-11,117	-5,791	-5,802	11	22
Total Income	-12,474	-6,085	-6,109	24	48
Net Operational Expenditure	-551	-785	-883	98	196
Recharges					
Premises Support	156	78	78	0	0
Transport	20	10	10	0	0
Central Support	2,330	1,165	1,165	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-482	-241	-241	0	0
Net Total Recharges	2,024	1,012	1,012	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,473	227	129	98	196

Capital Programme as at 30 September 2023

Appendix 3

Directorate/Department	2023/24 Capital Allocation	Allocation to Date	Actual Spend to 30 Sept 2023	Total Allocation Remaining	2024/25 Capital Allocation	2025/26 Capital Allocation
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
CHILDRENS DIRECTORATE						
Asset Management Data	15	0	0	15	0	0
Capital Repairs	1,040	644	644	396	0	0
Asbestos Management	22	0	0	22	0	0
Schools Access Initiative	44	7	7	37	0	0
Small Capital Works	142	60	60	82	0	0
Basic Needs Projects	601	0	0	601	0	0
Cavendish School	605	1	1	604	0	0
Astmoor Primary	300	175	30	270	0	0
Ashley School	500	26	26	474	0	0
Kingsway Academy	30	0	0	30	0	0
Oakfield Primary	370	219	219	151	0	0
St Basils Primary	250	0	0	250	0	0
St Peter & Paul High School	356	0	0	356	0	0
The Brow Primary	115	0	0	115	0	0
Victoria Road Primary	250	105	105	145	0	0
Westfield Primary	220	186	186	34	0	0
Woodside Primary	340	14	14	326	0	0
SEMH Free School	239	0	0	239	0	0
Brookfields School	300	0	0	300	0	0
SCA unallocated	19	0	0	19	0	0
TOTAL CHILDRENS DIRECTORATE	5,758	1,437	1,292	4,466	0	0
ADULT DIRECTORATE						
Disabled Facilities Grant	650	360	358	292	600	600
Stair lifts (Adaptations Initiative)	200	100	85	115	270	270
RSL Adaptations (Joint Funding)	300	80	60	240	270	270
Telehealthcare Digital Switchover	300	0	0	300	0	0
Millbrow Refurbishment	200	40	37	163	0	0
Madeline Mckenna Refurb.	1,000	20	14	986	0	0
St Luke's Care Home	100	25	24	76	0	0
St Patrick's Care Home	100	0	44	56	1,200	0
TOTAL ADULTS DIRECTORATE	2,850	625	622	2,228	2,340	1,140
ENVIRONMENT and REGENERATION DIRECTORATE						
Total Bridge & Highway Maintenance	3,133	114	114	3,019	0	0
Integrated Transport	549	0	0	549	0	0
CRSTS	7,140	1,148	1,148	5,992	0	0
SJB – Decoupling	0	0	0	0	0	0
Runcorn Busway	239	68	68	171	0	0
East Runcorn Connectivity (ERC)	1,577	1,488	1,488	89	0	0
A56 Reconstruction	947	0	0	947	0	0
Dukesfield ATL (Waterloo Bridge)	0	1,493	1,493	-1,493	0	0
LCWIP Phase 2 Daresbury	5,783	842	842	4,941	0	0
ATF3 Murdishaw to Whitehouse	3,000	0	0	3,000	0	0
ATF4 Widnes Town Centre Accessibility	122	0	0	122	0	0
SUD Green Cycle	0	2	2	-2	0	0
Street Lighting	876	7	7	869	200	200
Lighting Upgrades	1,269	121	121	1,148	0	0
Silver Jubilee Bridge - Lighting	531	0	0	531	0	0
Risk Management	578	1	1	577	120	120
Fleet Vehicles	6,280	1,240	1,240	5,040	1,147	1,423
Mersey Gateway - Land Acquisition	839	5	5	834	0	0
Mersey Gateway - Crossings Board	33	0	0	33	0	0
Mersey Gateway - Handback Land	23	7	7	16	0	0
Widnes Loops	0	3	3	-3	0	0
Stadium Minor Works	34	17	18	16	30	30
Brookvale Pitch Refurbishment	28	14	13	15	0	0

Capital Programme as at 30 September 2023...continued

Directorate/Department	2023/24 Capital Allocation	Allocation to Date	Actual Spend to 30 June 2023	Total Allocation Remaining	2024/25 Capital Allocation	2025/26 Capital Allocation
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Halton Leisure Centre	15,056	7,528	8,014	7,042	15,285	0
Open Spaces Schemes	851	82	45	806	600	600
Children's Playground Equipment	105	53	15	90	65	65
Upton Improvements	13	0	0	13	0	0
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12	2	1	11	0	0
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340	30	0	340	340	340
Runcorn Town Park	284	142	106	178	310	280
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,023	512	20	1,003	964	0
Pickerings Pasture Café	520	250	0	520	0	0
Litter Bins	20	5	0	20	20	20
3MG	151	12	12	139	0	0
Murdishaw	30	0	0	30	0	0
Equality Act Improvement Works	282	84	84	198	300	300
Foundry Lane Residential Area	2,634	1,303	1,303	1,331	0	0
Police Station Demolition	406	0	0	406	0	0
Kingsway Learning Centre Improved Facilities	36	0	0	36	0	0
Roof Top Garden	35	0	0	35	0	0
Property Improvements	223	23	23	200	200	200
Woodend - Former Unit 10 Catalyst Trade Park	200	161	161	39	0	0
Runcorn Station Building Development	515	30	30	485	0	0
Waterloo Building	93	0	0	93	0	0
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	17	0	0	17	126	0
Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development	291	0	0	291	0	0
Changing Places	212	52	52	160	0	0
Town Deal	2,740	585	586	2,154	8,542	3,654
TOTAL ENVIRONMENT and REGENERATION DIRECTORATE	59,070	17,424	17,022	42,048	28,249	7,232
CHIEF EXECUTIVE DIRECTORATE						
ICT Rolling Capital Project	700	350	184	516	700	700
Halton Smart Microgrid	11,000	0	0	11,000	0	0
Transformation Programme	5,000	2,500	998	4,002	1,000	1,000
TOTAL CHIEF EXECUTIVE DIRECTORATE	16,700	2,850	1,182	15,518	1,700	1,700
TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME	84,378	22,336	20,118	64,260	32,289	10,072
Slippage (20%) Carried Forward	-16,876				-6,458	-2,014
Slippage Brought Forward					16,876	6,458
TOTAL	67,502	22,336	20,118	47,384	42,707	14,515

Progress Against Agreed Savings

APPENDIX 4

Adult Social Care

	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
ASC1	Housing Solutions	474	Remodel the current service based on good practice evidence from other areas.	0	0	125	✓	Expected to be achieved in 2025/26 budget year
ASC2	Telehealthcare	680	Explore alternative funding streams such as Health funding or Disabled Facilities Grants.	0	170	0	✓	Expected to be achieved in 2024/25 budget year
			Increase charges / review income.	0	170	0		
			Cease the key safe installation service.	0	15	0		
ASC11	Dorset Gardens Care Services	471	Cease onsite support and transfer to the domiciliary care contract.	275	0	0	u	To be achieved in current year, although full-year savings not realised
ASC17/18	Quality Assurance Team	395	Review the activities of the Quality Assurance Team, given there are fewer providers for domiciliary care and the transfer of four care homes into the Council.	35	0	0	✓	Current year savings achieved, and 2024/25 savings on target
			Merge the service with the Safeguarding Unit.	0	50	0		







ASC12	Meals on Wheels	33	Increase charges to ensure full cost recovery. A procurement exercise will also be completed for the provision of food.	33	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Charge increase implemented
ASC16	Shared Lives (Adult Placement Service)	115	Engage with an external agency currently operating Shared Lives to take over the running of this service. It is anticipated that this would provide an improved service.	0	58	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Expected to be achieved in 2024/25 budget year
ASC19	Voluntary Sector Support	N/A	Review the support provided by Adult Social Care and all other Council Departments, to voluntary sector organisations. This would include assisting them to secure alternative funding in order to reduce their dependence upon Council funding. A target saving phased over two years has been estimated.	0	200	100	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Expected to be achieved in the relevant budget years

ASC4	Positive Behaviour Support Service	349	Increase income generated in order to ensure full cost recovery, through increased service contract charges to other councils. Review the Integrated Care Board contribution for Adults, to ensure the full recovery of related costs.	0 0	100 150	0 0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Expected to be achieved in 2024/25 budget year
ASC6	Bridge Builders	250	Restructure and incorporate within the Care Management front door service, introducing the services currently offered by Bridge Builders to all new referrals.	120	0	0	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	To be achieved in current year, although full-year savings not realised
ASC5	Mental Health Outreach Team	376	Streamline the service and focus on higher needs requiring joint funding from the Integrated Care Board.	140	0	0	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Currently under review, full-year savings will not be realised
ASC21	Mental Health Team Carers Officer	38	Commission the Carers Centre to complete all Carers assessments or undertake the function through the Initial Assessment Team.	38	0	0	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	To be achieved in current year, although full-year savings not realised

ASC15	Learning Disability Nursing Team	424	Cease provision of this service. The service is a Health related function rather than Adult Social Care, but this is a historical arrangement. The Integrated Care Board would need to consider how they want to provide this function.	0	424	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Expected to be achieved in 2024/25 budget year
ASC14	Care Management Community Care Budget	18,982	Attract £500k investment from the pooled budget (BCF) from 2024/25. Undertake work in years 1 and 2 to reduce reliance upon contracted services from 2025/26. Services are currently in the process of being redesigned on a “Strengths Based Approach” ie. focused upon prevention.	0	500	1,000	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Expected to be achieved in the relevant budget years
Total Adult Social Care Department				641	1,837	1,225		

Finance

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
F1	Client Finance	109	Increase by £3 per week the charge to clients for the Appointeeships Service to ensure full cost recovery.	45	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Implemented in April 2023 and income budget increased accordingly
F6	Income Control	118	Removal of payment kiosks which are now significantly under-utilised and in need of replacement. The ceasing of annual rental and licence costs will provide a saving. Residents can instead make payments for council tax etc. via the numerous Paypoint outlets across the Borough.	20	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Implemented April 2023 and expenditure budgets reduced accordingly
F8	Insurance	1,043	Reduction in the insurance budgets, following a review of claims history over recent years with advice from the Council's insurance broker. The majority of claims are provided for via self-insurance, with external policies providing cover for exceptional or potentially high cost claims.	135	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Implemented April 2023 and expenditure budgets reduced accordingly

F9	Internal Audit	300	Restructure in light of potential retirements over the next two years within the Internal Audit Team.	0	0	50		Planned restructure to take place during 2024/25 and to be implemented 1 April 2025
F11	Purchase to Pay	27	Increase in the target income budgets for the Early Payment Scheme (£15k) and the Corporate Card Programme rebate (£15k)	30	0	0		Implemented 2023/24 income budgets increased accordingly
F12	Benefits Processing & Administration	216	Deletion of a 1.0fte vacant Housing Benefit Officer Post and a 0.5fte vacant Visiting Officer Post.	55	0	0		These two vacant posts accepted for a saving in 2023/24 and can be deleted from the structure.
F13	Discretionary Support Scheme	221	Review the roles, procedures and structure of the team.	0	25	0		A review of the DSS structure will be undertaken in 2024/25.
F15	Business Rates	-26	Increase the charge to Halton Chamber of Commerce for providing billing and collection of Business Improvement District (BID) income.	2	0	0		2023/24 operating agreement between the Council and Halton Chamber of Commerce still to be agreed.
F16	Concessionary Travel	1,892	Due to a decrease in passenger numbers following Covid, it is considered that the budget for concessionary travel costs can be reduced. The budget was underspent by £421k (20%) in 2021/22. A reduction in this	150	0	0		On Target

			budget will not prevent any eligible concessionary passenger from still being able to travel.					
F17	Council Tax	84	Increase the charges applied when a court summons is issued by 30% (£23), to achieve full cost recovery over the three year period.	40	40	40	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On target, summons cost increased for 2023/24
F17 Cont.	Council Tax	N/A	Establish a new post dedicated to reviewing council tax exemptions. It is considered at least a 3% reduction in Single Person Discount awards could be achieved, generating approximately £150k of additional council tax income, less the cost of the new post.	116	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Post appointed to and review of exemptions to commence over the next quarter.
F18	Financial Management - Treasury Management	1,152	Closer management of medium- to long-term cash balances will give greater opportunity to invest in higher interest bearing accounts due to increasing interest rates.	300	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Interest payable on target to achieve increased target.
Total Finance Department				893	65	90		



Legal and Democratic Services

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
L4	Marketing, Design and Communications	45	Review the frequency of production of Inside Halton, as part of the wider consideration of the Council's communications strategy required for the Transformation Programme	0	15	0		The marketing and communications team has now moved within the Chief executives Delivery Unit so that they can review the frequency of production.
L5	Mayoral Services	102	Review the various budgets comprising the Mayoral function, with a target to achieve a 20% savings across these.	20	0	0		Looking at alternative ways to run the events and bring operations in line with other local authorities who have more independent/self-funded events. The savings should be on track to be met by the end of the year.
Total Legal Services Department				20	15	0		





ICT and Support Services

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
ICT3	External Clients	N/A	Recharge the Youth Offending Services for the full cost of ICT services which are hosted by Halton, but have not thus far been recharged. This approach has been agreed by the Cheshire and Warrington partner councils.	232	0	0	U	Final figure still to be agreed with partner councils.
Total ICT and Admin Department				232	0	0		

Chief Executives Delivery Unit




Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
PPPE1	Apprenticeships	198	Reduce the budget which provides for apprenticeship salaries by 50%. More apprenticeships will therefore be attached to vacant posts which are already budgeted for. This may particularly help to fill vacancies in areas where recruitment is difficult.	99	0	0		Reflected within the 2022/23 budget.
PPPE4	Organisational Development & Performance	383	Explore whether Organisational Development / Learning and Development activities could be rationalised and restructured to reduce cost, given there is currently a vacant post within the team.	65	0	0		Restructures to the team are currently being considered to help develop and change the way Organisational Development/Learning is carried out.
Total PPPE Department				164	0	0		



Children and Families

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
C1	Ditton and Warrington Road Daycare Centres	52	Closure of Ditton and Warrington Road daycare centres, given the significant on-going net losses at both centres. Sufficient alternative provision exists nearby, as well as in the adjoining nursery schools.	26	26	0		The daycare centres closed in August 23. The daycare centres will continue to be overspent in 23-24, however the savings should be realised in 24/25.
C2	Children's Centres	1,293	Reduce the opening hours of Children's Centres.	12	0	0		Initial indicators suggest saving unlikely to be made, but awaiting further clarification from Divisional Manager
			Review the operation of Windmill Hill Children's Centre, where there is the potential to save on premises and staffing costs.	0	0	22		Initial indicators suggest saving unlikely to be made, but awaiting further clarification from Divisional Manager
			Target to generate at least 5% additional income by increasing a range of charges at Children's Centres.	20	0	0		



C3	Children with Disabilities and Inglefield	858	Explore the potential for selling Inglefield and then purchase two bungalows within the community to provide a more appropriate setting.	0	112	0	U	Initial indicators suggest saving unlikely to be made, but awaiting further clarification from Divisional Manager
Total Children & Families Department				58	138	22		

Education, Inclusion and Provision

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
EIP1	Education Psychology Service	339	There is excess demand from schools for the Education Psychology Service. The service is valued and there is opportunity to expand our offer and generate additional income.	0	52	0		On target to be achieved
EIP2	SEN Assessment Team	82	Consideration will be given to funding the full service costs from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.	0	80	0		To be reviewed
EIP5	Commissioning	148	Review with Health colleagues how the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Carers could instead be provided by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) as they are commissioned by the Integrated Care Board.	0	148	0		To be reviewed





EIP5	Commissioning	291	Additional funding for Youth Grants has been confirmed for three years from the DfE Holiday Activity and Food Programme grant, therefore core budget can be released.	40	0	0		On target to be achieved
EIP9	Education Welfare Service	396	There has been increased buy-back of this service from schools and as a result the income budget can be increased.	60	0	0		On target to be achieved
Total Education, Inclusion and Provision Department				100	280	0		

Community and Greenspace

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
COMM1	The Brindley Theatre	64	Reduce Box Office opening hours from 10am-5pm Monday-Friday to 10am-2pm. Currently 80% of tickets are purchased online or by telephone and this is increasing each year.	10	0	0		Box Office core opening hours were reduced to 5 hours (Mon – Fri) 10am – 3pm. They will be realigned to 4 hours daily 11am – 3.00pm (Mon – Fri) from 1 September onwards.
			Replace all non-LED lighting in the building. This is estimated to reduce on-stage energy costs by 75%.	10	0	0		No LED lighting has yet been installed but is planned for later in the financial year.
COMM3	Sport & Recreation	471	Restructuring the roles and responsibilities of the Sports Development Team	0	36	0		On track to meet savings identified for 2024/25.
COMM4	Stadium & Catering Services	751	Franchise the concourse only catering services to an external operator.	50	0	0		
			An organisational restructure is currently being implemented for Stadium & Catering Services to reflect recent service changes.	40	0	0		






Ref.	Service Area	Net	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current	Comments
COMM6	Area Forums	170	Reduce the base budget provision to £50k temporarily for one year, with all unspent monies in 2022/23 (currently £120k) being carried forward to be spent by the relevant Area Forums in 2023/24. The base budget position will then be reviewed for 2024/25.	120	-120	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Implemented in 2023/24 budget setting.
COMM5	Stadium & Catering Services – School Meals	12	Cease to deliver the school meals service, which has made significant losses of over £200,000 for a number of years and is forecast to make a similar loss by year-end. Work would be undertaken with schools over the next two years to support them to secure an alternative means of delivery, whether in-house or via an external provider.	0	0	12	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Work underway in school meals being delivered through alternative means
Total Community & Environment Department				230	-84	12		

Economy, Enterprise and Property

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
EEP1	Capital Works Team	N/A	Increase the level of fee income by increasing the percentage charged or charging by time, including those works not currently charged for.	10	0	0		On target.
EEP4	Cleaning Services – Council Buildings	580	Review cleaning arrangements, with a focus on only emptying bins and cleaning toilets daily.	0	100	0		Until the accommodation review is complete, only limited savings will be made in 2024/25
EEP2	Caretaking & Security Services	641	A review and restructuring of caretaking arrangements.	0	52	0		Restructure will take place in 24/25. It is anticipated the full saving will not be met in year.
			Reduce security cover at Halton Lea to provide opening/closing and then static guarding 7.00am to 7.30pm Monday to Friday, and 9.30am to 3.00pm on Saturdays to cover the opening hours of Halton Direct Link.	35	0	0		Cannot achieve savings for security due to anti-social behaviour in Halton Lea. Police have advised security is kept on site until this is resolved.

EEP5	Corporate Buildings	927	Generate additional rental income by providing additional office space for external organisations at Rutland House, by letting out the remaining three floors.	120	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Reflected in 2023/24 budget.
EEP6	Facilities Management	165	Restructure the team in light of an expression of interest for retirement.	44	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Reflected in 2023/24 budget.
EEP8	Technical Support & Market Team	392	Restructuring of the team	98	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Reflected in 2023/24 budget.
Total Economy, Enterprise & Property Department				307	152	0		

Policy, Planning and Transportation

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
PPT1	Fleet Management & Maintenance	400	Reduction in the annual contribution to the Fleet Replacement Reserve.	40	0	0		Budget has already been removed and saving will be met in full
PPT2	Transport Coordination	484	Reduction in the provision of subsidised bus grants. Currently, 14 bus services are subsidised through contracts where there are no commercial services. Passenger utilisation of routes would be assessed to see where reductions can be applied with the least impact upon services.	50	0	0		Budget has already been removed but the expenditure is expected to see a significant rise as mentioned in the Q1 report. However, this is being met by a contribution from Mersey Gateway.
PPT4	Schemes and Maintenance	1,056	Reduction of 6% in the programmed road maintenance budget.	60	0	0		Budget has already been removed and saving will be met in full
PPT5	School Crossings	70	Approach the Schools Forum to seek a contribution of at least 50% towards funding the school crossing patrol service, which is a non-statutory service.	35	0	0		Still waiting to take a report to Schools Forum to discuss further action
PPT6	Traffic	N/A	Consider introducing civil traffic enforcement for traffic violations. Employ private sector civil enforcement	0	150	0		This is a complex piece of work to take forward, it requires DfT to grant powers to Halton. The

			officers to issue fines and generate income. It would take 12 months to apply for powers from the DFT and put the scheme in place. The Environment & Urban Renewal Policy & Performance Board will consider this via a Topic Group.					project also needs resourcing, and the department is still awaiting capacity from the Accelerated Growth project. No savings were eligible for 23/24 financial year.
Total Policy, Planning & Transportation Department				185	150	0		

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 16 November 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director – Finance

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

TITLE: Treasury Management 2023-24 Half Year Update

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update regarding investment and borrowing activities undertaken during the first half of the financial year to 30 September 2023, as required by the Treasury Management Policy.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Economic Outlook

3.1 The following analysis of the economic situation has been provided by Link Asset Services, the Council's treasury management advisors.

3.2 During the six months ended 30 September 2023

- Interest rates rose by a further 1%, taking the Bank Rate from 4.25% to 5.25% and, possibly, the peak in the cycle.
- Short, medium and long-dated gilts remain elevated as inflation continued at higher levels than forecast.
- There was a 0.5% month on month decline in real GDP in July, mainly due to more strikes.
- CPI inflation fell from 8.7% in April to 6.7% in August, its lowest rate since February 2022, but still the highest in the G7.
- Core CPI inflation reduced to 6.2% in August from 7.1% in April, which had been a 31 year high.
- There was a cooling in labour market conditions, but no evidence yet that it has led to an easing in wage growth.

3.3 The 0.5% month on month fall in GDP in July suggests that underlying growth has lost momentum since earlier in the year. Some of the weakness in July was due to there being almost twice as many working days lost to strikes in July (281,000) than in June (160,000).

- 3.4 The 0.4% month on month rebound in retail sales volumes in August is not as good as it looks as it partly reflected a pickup in sales after the unusually wet weather in July. Sales volumes in August were 0.2% below their level in May, suggesting much of the resilience in retail activity in the first half of the year has faded.
- 3.5 As the growing drag from higher interest rates intensifies over the next six months, we think the economy will continue to lose momentum and soon fall into a mild recession. Strong labour demand, fast wage growth and Government handouts have all supported household incomes over the past year. With CPI inflation past its peak and expected to decline further, the economy has got through the cost-of-living crisis without recession. But even though the worst of the falls in real household disposable incomes are behind us, the phasing out of financial support packages provided by the Government during the energy crisis means real incomes are unlikely to grow strongly. Higher interest rates will soon bite harder too. We expect the Bank of England to keep interest rates at the probable peak of 5.25% until the second half of 2024. Mortgage rates are likely to stay above 5.0% for around a year.
- 3.6 The tightness of the labour market continued to ease, with employment in the three months to July falling by 207,000. The further decline in the number of job vacancies from 1.017m in July to 0.989m in August suggests that the labour market has loosened a bit further since July though the supply of labour is still 0.3% below its pre-pandemic February 2020 level.
- 3.7 CPI inflation declined from 6.8% in July to 6.7% in August, the lowest rate since February 2022. The biggest positive surprise was the drop in core CPI inflation, which declined from 6.9% to 6.2%. That reverses all the rise since March and means the gap between the UK and elsewhere has shrunk (US core inflation is 4.4% and in the Euro-zone it is 5.3%).
- 3.8 In its latest monetary policy meeting on 20 September, the Bank of England left interest rates unchanged at 5.25%. The weak August CPI inflation release, the recent loosening in the labour market and the downbeat activity surveys appear to have convinced the Bank of England that it has already raised rates far enough.
- 3.9 The yield on 10-year Gilts fell from a peak of 4.74% on 17th August to 4.44% on 29th September, mainly on the back of investors revising down their interest rate expectations. But even after their recent pullback, the rise in Gilt yields has exceeded the rise in most other Developed Market government yields since the start of the year. Looking forward, once inflation falls back, Gilt yields are set to

reduce further. A (mild) recession over the next couple of quarters will support this outlook if it helps to loosen the labour market (higher unemployment/lower wage increases).

- 3.10 The pound weakened from its cycle high of \$1.30 in the middle of July to \$1.21 in late September. In the first half of the year, the pound bounced back strongly from the Truss led Government last Autumn. That rebound was in large part driven by the substantial shift up in UK interest rate expectations. However, over the past couple of months, interest rate expectations have dropped sharply as inflation started to come down, growth faltered, and the Bank of England called an end to its hiking cycle.
- 3.11 The FTSE 100 has gained more than 2% since the end of August, from around 7,440 on 31st August to 7,608 on 29th September. The rebound has been primarily driven by higher energy prices which boosted the valuations of energy companies. The FTSE 100's relatively high concentration of energy companies helps to explain why UK equities outperformed both US and Euro-zone equities in September. Nonetheless, as recently as 21st April the FTSE 100 stood at 7,914

Interest Rate Forecast

- 3.12 The following interest rate forecast has been provided by Link Asset Services.

Link Group Interest Rate View	25.09.23												
	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26
BANK RATE	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.00	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75
3 month ave earnings	5.30	5.30	5.30	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.00	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80
6 month ave earnings	5.60	5.50	5.40	5.10	4.60	4.10	3.60	3.10	2.90	2.90	2.90	2.90	2.90
12 month ave earnings	5.80	5.70	5.50	5.20	4.70	4.20	3.70	3.20	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00
5 yr PWLB	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.40	4.20	4.00	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.50
10 yr PWLB	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.60	4.40	4.20	4.00	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.50	3.50
25 yr PWLB	5.40	5.20	5.10	4.90	4.70	4.40	4.30	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.80
50 yr PWLB	5.20	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.50	4.20	4.10	3.90	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.60

Short Term Borrowing Rates

- 3.13 The bank base rate has increased steadily from 4.25% on 31st March to 5.25% on 30th September 2023.

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Base Rate	4.25	4.25	4.50	5.00	5.00	5.25	5.25
Call Money (Market)	4.15	4.15	4.40	4.90	4.90	5.20	5.15
1 Month (Market)	4.25	4.35	4.65	4.95	5.30	5.30	5.25
3 Month (Market)	4.45	4.70	5.00	5.40	5.50	5.55	5.55

Longer Term Borrowing Rates

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1 Year (Market)	4.85	5.15	5.55	6.40	6.05	6.10	5.80
10 Year (PWLB)	4.35	4.55	4.97	5.25	5.14	5.19	5.28
25 Year (PWLB)	4.70	4.90	5.29	5.33	5.33	5.44	5.66

- 3.14 Market rates are based on suggested rates provided by Link Asset Services. The PWLB rate shown is the Fixed Term Certainty Rate for a new loan with the principal repayable on maturity.

Borrowing and Investments

Turnover during the period

	No of deals	Turnover £m
Short Term Borrowing	2	10
Short Term Investments	15	155

Position at month-end

	Mar £m	Apr £m	May £m	Jun £m	Jul £m	Aug £m	Sep £m
Total Borrowing	187	182	182	182	182	182	182
Total Investments	(92)	(82)	(112)	(117)	(117)	(117)	(112)
Call Account Balance	(10)	(12)	(22)	(17)	(13)	(9)	(12)

Investment benchmarking

	Benchmark Return	Performance Apr - Sep	Investment Interest Earned
Benchmark	%	%	£000
7 day	4.72	3.06	287
1 month	4.86	4.61	56
3 months	5.16	4.86	602
6 months	5.44	4.66	698
12 months	5.70	4.84	336
Over 12 months	-	2.55	339
Property Fund	-	3.94	197
Total			2,515

- 3.15 The above table shows the Council has underachieved on all benchmarks over the first six months of the year. This is due to two reasons. Firstly, that the Council only uses institutions with a very high credit quality, and secondly that the above figures show the interest earned over the last six months, whereas the benchmarks are based on new investments. In a rising rate environment this will cause a lag in the interest rates received, especially for longer duration investments. There are no benchmarks available for the Council's investment in the CCLA property fund, or for investments held over 12 months.

Budget Monitoring

Net Interest at 30th September 2023			
	Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Variance (o/spend)
	£000	£000	£000
Investments	(1,778)	(2,515)	737
Borrowings	550	550	-
Net Total	(1,229)	(1,966)	737

- 3.16 Due to the increase in interest rates during the period and larger than expected investment balances, the Council has generated an additional £737,000 net income over budget in the first half of the year from its treasury management activities. This is expected to increase further in the second half of the year, due to the investments balance continuing to be available.

New Long-Term Borrowing

- 3.17 No new long-term borrowing has been taken in this period.

Policy Guidelines

- 3.18 The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2023/24, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy, was approved by Council on 08 March 2023. It sets out the Council's investment priorities as being:
- Security of capital
 - Liquidity
 - Yield
- 3.19 The Council will therefore aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity. In the current economic climate and the heightened credit concerns it is considered appropriate to keep the majority of investments short term and to ensure all investments are in line with Sector's credit rating methodology.

Treasury Management Indicators

- 3.20 It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. The Council's approved Treasury and Prudential Indicators were set out in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and are reviewed in Appendix 1.

Debt Rescheduling

- 3.21 No debt rescheduling was undertaken during the quarter.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The financial implications are as set out in the report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 The main risks with Treasury Management are security of investment and volatility of return. To mitigate these, the Council operates within a clearly defined Treasury Management Policy and annual borrowing and investment strategy, which sets out the control framework.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

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

10.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

Treasury and Prudential Indicators – 2023/24 – Quarter 2

Prudential Indicators	2022/23	2023/24	
	Full Year Actual £000	Original Estimate £000	Quarter 2 Estimate £000
Capital Expenditure	26,761	50,230	79,898
Net Financing Need for the Year <i>(Borrowing Requirement)</i>	7,311	19,719	37,856
Increase / (Decrease) in CFR <i>(Capital Financing Requirement)</i>	(2,412)	8,090	20,126
Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream <i>(Proportion of cost of borrowing to Council's net revenue)</i>	5.8%	4.4%	3.3%
External Debt <i>(Borrowing plus PFI and lease liabilities)</i>	540,350	517,713	527,713
Operational Boundary <i>(Limit of which external debit is not expected to exceed)</i>	559,675	552,679	552,679
Authorised Limit <i>(Limit beyond which external debit is prohibited)</i>	630,824	627,133	627,133

Maximum Principal invested > 365 days	Investment	2022/23	2023/24
	Limit £000	Actual £000	Estimate £000
Principal Sums Invested over 365 days	40,000	26,700	25,000

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 16th November 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director, Finance

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Determination of Council Tax Base 2024/25

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Council is required to determine annually the Council Tax Base for its area and also the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes.
- 1.2 The Council is required to notify the Council Tax Base figure to the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the Environment Agency by 31st January 2024. The Council is also required to calculate and advise if requested, the Parish Councils of their relevant Council Tax Bases.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- (i) **Council be recommended to set the 2024/25 Council Tax Base at 36,409 for the Borough, and that the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the Environment Agency be so notified; and**
- (ii) **Council be recommended to set the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes as follows:**

Parish	Tax Base
Hale	667
Halebank	534
Daresbury	212
Moore	341
Preston Brook	370
Sandymoor	1,606

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council Tax Base is the measure used for calculating and setting the level of Council Tax to be charged. It is used by both the billing authority (the Council) and the major precepting authorities (Cheshire Fire Authority, Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority), in the calculation of their Council Tax requirements.
- 3.2 The Council Tax Base figure is arrived at in accordance with a prescribed formula, and represents the estimated full year number of chargeable dwellings in the Borough, expressed in terms of the equivalent of Band D dwellings.
- 3.3 The Council Tax Base (Tax Base) is calculated using the number of dwellings included in the Valuation List, as provided by the Valuation Office Agency, as at 16 October 2023. Adjustments are then made to take into account the estimated number of discounts, voids, additions and demolitions during the period 16 October 2023 to 31 March 2024.
- 3.4 The Tax Base calculation includes an element for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (the replacement for Council Tax Benefit). The estimated amount of Council Tax Reduction payable for 2024/25 is converted into the equivalent number of whole properties, which are deducted from the total properties.
- 3.5 The Tax Base calculation also includes an element for Care Leavers Discretionary Discount. The estimated amount of Care Leavers Discount payable for 2024/25 is converted into the equivalent number of whole properties, which are deducted from the total properties.
- 3.6 The Tax Base calculation also includes an element for Foster Carers Discretionary Discount. The estimated amount of Foster Carers Discount payable for 2024/25 is converted into the equivalent number of whole properties, which are deducted from the total properties.
- 3.7 An estimated percentage collection rate is then applied to the product of the above calculation to arrive at the Council Tax Base for the year.
- 3.8 Taking account of all the relevant information and applying a 97.0% collection rate, the calculation for 2024/25 provides a tax base figure of **36,409** for the Borough as a whole.

- 3.9 Taking account of all the relevant information and applying a 97.0% collection rate, the appropriate Council Tax Base figure for each of the Parishes is as follows;

Parish	Tax Base
Hale	667
Halebank	534
Daresbury	212
Moore	341
Preston Brook	370
Sandymoor	1,606

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council Tax Base will enable the Council to set the level of Council Tax to be charged for 2024/25.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCILS PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

None.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

None.

6.4 A Safer Halton

None.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 There would be significant loss of income to the Council if the Council Tax Base were not agreed, as it would not be possible to set the level of Council Tax to be charged for 2024/25.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 None.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Council Tax Base Working Papers	Halton Stadium	Stephen Baker

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 16 November 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Directorate Performance Overview Reports for Quarter 2
2023 - 24

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report the Council's performance for the second quarter period to 30th September 2023.
The reports detail progress against key objectives / milestones and performance targets, and describes factors affecting each of the Directorates.

2.0 RECOMMENDED:

- 1) Executive Board note the information contained in the reports**
- 2) Consider the progress and performance information and raise any questions or points for clarification.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 It is essential that the Council maintains a planning and performance framework that allows the identification and on-going monitoring of key activities and performance measures that meet organisational needs. Performance management will also continue to be important in our demonstration of value for money and outward accountability.
- 3.2 The Directorate Performance Overview Reports provide a strategic summary of the key issues arising from performance in the relevant quarter for each Directorate and being aligned to Council priorities or functional areas. Such information is central to the Council's performance management arrangements and the Executive Board has a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability.
- 3.3 Information for each of the Council's Directorates, including the implementation of high-risk mitigation measures, is contained within the following appendices:

Appendix 1 – Chief Executives Directorate

Appendix 2 – Children and Young People Directorate

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Council's Performance Management Framework will continue to form a key part of the Council's policy framework.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 These reports would also be available to support future scrutiny arrangements of services by Members and Inspection regimes for Ofsted and Adult Social Care.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Existing and future performance frameworks at both local and national level are linked to the delivery of the Council's priorities.

6.2 The provision of Directorate Overview Reports to Executive Board, that include progress in relation to objectives/ milestones and performance indicators will support organisational improvement and accountability.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The Council performance management framework allows the authority to both align its activities to the delivery of organisational and partnership priorities and provide appropriate information to all relevant stakeholders in accordance with the "transparency agenda".

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Not applicable.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Not applicable.

10 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTIONS 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Not applicable

Directorate Overview Report – Chief Executives Directorate

Reporting Period: Quarter 2 - 01st July to 30th Sept 2023

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of issues and progress against key service objectives/milestones and performance targets, during the second quarter of 2023/24 for service areas within the remit of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board.
- 1.2 It covers key priorities for development or improvement in the various functional areas reporting to the Board in relation to the Council's priority of Corporate Effectiveness and Business Efficiency i.e.:
- Financial Services
 - Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit
 - ICT Infrastructure
 - Legal and Democracy
 - Catering, Stadium and Registration Services
 - Property Services
- 1.3 The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress to date is explained within Section 8 of this report.

2.0 Key Developments

- 2.1 There have been a number of developments during the period which include:-

Financial Services

2.2 Benefits Division

Processing Times

At 30th September 2023 processing times for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction were as follows: new claims 24.97 days and changes in circumstances 20.05 days.

Department for Works and Pensions - Data Share Memorandum of Understanding

The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) share claimant data with the Council's Benefit Service relating to new claims for DWP benefits and changes in circumstances. This helps the Council administer housing benefit and council tax reduction claims, and the DWP passes this information to the Council on a daily basis. As part of the of data sharing process the Council have to sign an annual Memorandum of Understanding with the DWP to confirm that it is complying with a number of safeguards relating to the security and integrity of information that the DWP transfers to the Council. Currently the DWP is undertaking an audit of all local authorities in England and Wales with regards to the terms and conditions of the data share memorandum of understanding, and Halton is providing evidence demonstrating that it is adhering to the requirements of the memorandum of understanding.

Universal Credit Implementation

The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) statistics indicate at 10th August 2023 there were 16,138 people within Halton claiming Universal Credit. The table below shows the Universal Credit caseload in Halton on a quarterly basis over the past 17 months.

Universal Credit caseload	
Date	Caseload
1 st April 2022	15,262
30 th June 2022	15,283
30 th September 2022	15,533
31 st December 2022	15,581
31 st March 2023	15,817
11 th May 2023	15,969
8 th June 2023	16,057
13 th July 2023	16,072
10 th August 2023	16,138

2.3 Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance Division

Supplier Invoice Processing Performance

At the end of Quarter 2, 91.32% of all supplier invoices paid in 2023/24 had been settled within 30 days. This represents an improvement on 2022/23 performance despite the Purchase to Pay Team continuing to operate at reduced capacity since the start of the year.

Insurance tender

The Council is to retender a range of insurance policies which are due to expire on 31 March 2024. All available contract extensions have been taken up on the Council's combined liability, medical malpractice, and engineering policies. The Council therefore has no option but to go out to tender for these policies. The motor vehicle, property and computer policies are at the end of their initial three-year contract terms. Extension options are available. However, the Council's insurance broker, has advised that the Council may achieve a better overall outcome if all the Council's main policies are retendered at the same time. This can be more attractive to insurers as it spreads out their risk if they hold all the Council's policies.

The Council's Procurement Team and insurance broker will support the tender process, which will be conducted in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015. A competitive tender exercise will be undertaken using a Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation framework. This framework is widely used by local authorities for insurance services. The Council's broker has advised that it is a difficult market at present for various reasons (inflation, increasing loss costs, global tensions, slow supply chain recovery), and are therefore advising that the Council budgets prudently for an increase in premium of between 5% and 10% on 2023/24 premiums. The outcome of the tender exercise is likely to be known towards the end of February 2024.

Adult Social Care – Financial Assessments

Work is continuing to provide adult social care service clients with the facility to complete their financial assessment applications via a secure online portal. The system is easy to use and includes a range of animations to explain to the individual why certain questions are being asked. Providing this reasoning, especially around some of the financial questions, helps to take away the worry many service users currently experience when being asked to share personal information. The portal will give an instant indication to the user about how much they would need pay towards a care package. Providing this upfront estimate allows the service user to make a much more informed decision when considering their care options. Assistance with completing the online form will be given to anyone that requires it.

The system is currently in the final stages of testing. It is anticipated that a phased roll out of the system will commence in the next couple of months. The following link will be provided on the Council's website for clients to access prior to the new system live. It provides a short

video explaining how the financial assessment process will work [Online financial assessment process](#).

2.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division

2023/24 Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring

For the financial year to 30 June 2023, overall Council operational net spending was £29.4m against a budget of £27.2m, resulting in an overspend position to date against budget of £2.2m. The forecast position for the year to 31 March 2024 was an estimated overspend of £8.4m.

Capital spending at 30 June 2023 totalled £9.6m, which is 90% of the planned spending of £10.7m at this stage. This represents 17% of the total Capital Programme of £56.2m (which assumes a 20% slippage between years).

The updated financial forecast and picture of net spending to 30 September 2023 will be reported to Executive Board on 16 November 2023.

2022/23 Statement of Accounts

The draft version of the 2022/23 Statement was published on the Council's website on Wednesday 04 July 2023. The Council's external auditor Grant Thornton UK LLP has commenced the audit of the accounts, the aim being to finalise the audit by the end of December and report the Audit Findings Report to the Audit & Governance Board on 20 March 2024.

Council Tax and Business Rate Collection

Council tax collection for the first half of the year is 53.9%, down 0.52% on this point last year. Cash collection for the year to date is £42.4m, this includes £1.3m collected in relation to previous year debt.

Business rates collection for the first half of the year is 56.4%, down by 5.2% on this point last year. Cash collected for the year to date is £34.1m, this includes £0.7m collected in relation to previous year debt.

2.5 Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

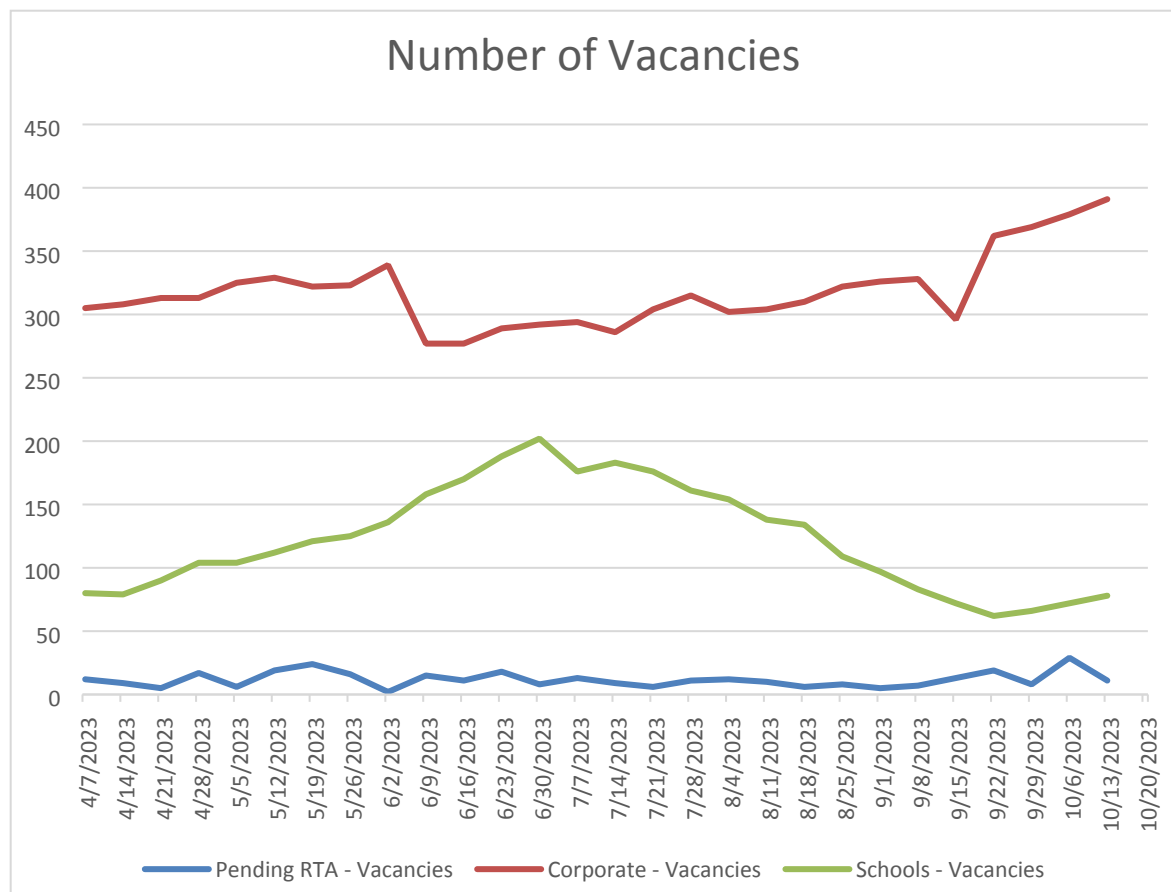
Three services within the HR Operations Division (Resourcing & Recruitment, Payroll & Pensions and Employment Relations) remain under significant pressure in the current year. Additional demand persists across all areas. The new service configuration of HR Operations (Resourcing & Recruitment, Payroll & Pensions and Employment Relations, Health and Safety) is working collaboratively to deliver what is now required by the wider Council. This is informed by work within the Transformation programme together with business as usual.

The Employment Relations Team has been restructured to implement a HR Business Partnering Model that will be effective towards the end of Quarter 3, with recruitment to a remaining vacant post taking place.

Despite significant challenges in terms of volume, the service has delivered positive results across the recruitment and initial pay administration of a large number of new recruits across Halton schools in time for the start of the new academic year as well as successfully managing to avoid impact on corporate recruitment during the busy school recruitment period.

The Division has supported the Children’s Directorate to recruit to the vacancies of Executive Director Children’s (DCS) and Operational Director Children’s Social Care. Furthermore the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration and Operational Director Economy, Enterprise & Property required senior recruitment processes to run and complete. Three successful appointments were secured and delivered collaboratively with North West Employers with one taking place solely in house.

Recruitment demand remains consistently high. With the school recruitment push at an end, we are seeing a significant upswing in demand for the processing of corporate vacancies, as can be seen in the graph below:



At the time of writing, there are 391 Council vacancies in the recruitment workflow inclusive of usual recruitment, ‘Adults Always On’ recruitment, and an ‘Indeed’ campaign. In addition, there are 78 school vacancies in progress.

Tough labour market conditions continue to bring challenges in the resourcing of many service areas across the organisation. To continue to address the consistent issue, resourcing workflows remain continuously under review. A trial was carried on of an ‘indeed’ campaign to work on quick turnaround recruitment adapting to the labour market which is currently progressing 51 vacancies with 5 in pre-checks currently taking place.

The Communications and Marketing service continues to support a range of organisational initiatives, including the Reimagine Halton Transformation Programme, with a current focus on staff engagement through a series of ‘Chats about Change’; also continuing support for projects within the programme, including the current recruitment drive to posts within Children’s Services and upcoming recruitment to support Accelerated Growth. Elsewhere, following a successful launch of the first Family Hubs in Widnes, the service is actively supporting the launch of the Runcorn Family Hub, while developing plans to progress the roll out of the family hub model across the borough. Interviews for the vacant Communications

Officer post will take place on 19 October, which, subject to appointment, will increase capacity within the team.

2.6 ICT and Administration

The key development of note this quarter has been the **disaggregation of the central administrative service**.

As noted within the emerging issues with the Q1 report the considerable project of the disaggregation of the Shared Administrative Support Service was initiated with the objective of moving all staff out of the centre to then be placed within individual teams and services. This disaggregation removes the central control of all staffing within the service and releases the management responsibility back into the directorates.

The proposed 'to be' operating model now will allow services to be 'responsible for their own administration processes.

It was proposed to transfer the management of existing administration team members directly to the managers of the service areas they currently support.

To make savings identified within the analysis of the current operating model, a number of managerial roles have now been disestablished, these managerial responsibilities will pass to service managers.

The majority of administration staff will stay within their existing substantive post reporting to their existing administration line manager (currently HBC4 senior administration officer).

The objective of the approach taken by the project team within the service was that of minimal disruption of the day-to-day tasks currently undertaken by administration staff, administration staff currently receive daily task requests from service personnel, and this will continue.

As noted service managers will now be responsible for their own administration resource and will be able to manage that resource in their own way according to the current and future requirements of their service.

Each Executive Director within the newly developed executive officer structure will receive full time support from a dedicated Personal Assistant, the current executive level support structure contains limited FTE equivalent posts arising from historic agreements with previous post holders, this structure is no longer fit for purpose and was subject to a previously agreed management team report and has now taken place.

Service managers will be responsible for directing and monitoring the work of their own administration resource.

Service managers will be responsible for recruiting and training their own administration staff.

Arranging sickness and holiday absence cover for administration staff will be the responsibility of service managers.

All sickness, welfare, disciplinary, time recording, mileage claim, expense claim and staff induction processes relating to administration staff will be the responsibility of service managers.

Improvements to administrative processes to increase efficiency will be the responsibility of service managers to identify, develop and deploy.

The table below defines the dates of transfer and subsequent removal of the association between the central service and the directorates associated.

Team	Target Transfer Date	Trajectory
Children's Centre Reception staff	01/10/2023	Transfer completed
Education	01/10/2023	Transfer completed
CICCL/AFS	01/10/2023	Transfer completed
Adult Social Care	01/11/2023	Transfer date agreed
iCART	01/11/2023	Transfer date agreed
Children's Safeguarding	01/11/2023	Transfer date agreed
CIN	01/11/2023	Transfer planning in progress
RTH and Municipal Reception staff	01/12/2023	Transfer planning in progress
Ground Floor Municipal	01/12/2023	Transfer planning in progress
Central Admin	01/12/2023	Transfer planning in progress
Stadium	01/12/2023	Transfer date agreed

This has been a considerable undertaking carried out by the service to smoothly initiate and control this level of change for a service that has successfully saved the authority millions of pounds in reduced spend over the period of its delivery tenure, the efforts of the teams and associated management should be noted.

The Customer Journey: A newly initiated transformation programme aimed at defining and improving the associated customer experience for both internal as well as external users of council services. The programme will have the primary objective of improving the initial contact and service delivery options open to residents inclusive of Face to Face, Telephone and Digital means. This also should be focused upon challenging, improving and developing upon internal process and the delivery of services administratively and well as through qualified expert service.

2.7 Legal and Democracy

In July, the Council received notification from the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) of its intention to carry out an inspection of our arrangements for ensuring compliance with the Regulations of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).

IPCO submitted a series of questions which were answered in detail by Legal Services. The response proved satisfactory to IPCO, who were content with the Council's arrangements. A revised RIPA policy, which was already being worked on, was submitted to and approved by Executive Board in September.

Recruitment of a new Taxi Licensing Enforcement Officer was successfully carried out in Quarter 2, and the postholder is already proving to be a valued member of the team.

An appointment has been made to one of the 2 vacant Child Care Solicitors posts, and the successful candidate will be joining the team shortly.

2.8 Catering - School Meals

As a result of schools being notified that from the 31 March 2025 Halton will no longer be providing a catering provision, we have seen a number of schools make enquiries regarding TUPE transfer to alternative catering providers. Two schools will be leaving Halton Catering service from November 2023.

Two alternative providers presented their offering directly to schools at two separate open days hosted at the Stadium.

2.9 Stadium

The stadium management team continue to engage with the Transformation team in reimagining the Stadium, its commercial viability and sustainability.

Key performances indicators are in the process of being developed along with the associated data collection systems.

These will be focused on stadium usage/occupancy and customer satisfaction. The initial data received on the customer satisfaction surveys reads as follows.

- 89% of returns rated the stadium in terms of 'Quality of Venue' between 4 and 5 stars.
- 93% of returns rated the stadium in terms of 'Quality of Catering' between 4 and 5 stars.
- 89% of returns said they would likely or very likely use the stadium again.
- 84% of customers would likely or very likely recommend the stadium to others.

(1 star being very poor and 5 stars being excellent)

Overall, 79% of customers rated the stadium very good or excellent.

The recently purchased event stage, canopy, sound & lighting system was utilised for the inaugural newly branded 'Live & Direct' events.

The test event saw 4 local artists perform in front of a packed crowd receiving praise from all the artists involved along with a positive news story from the international All Music Magazine - *"a perfect start to this new venue here at Halton Stadium", "and it has a feel very similar to a smaller O2 Academy venue."*

Following the success of this event we are in the process of developing a programme of live music and entertainment events, utilising links with existing stakeholders, whilst also pursuing new relationships with promoters and artists.

2.10 Registration Services

The Registration Service is working with HBC ITC Service's, HBC Income and Stopford (an external Registration Management System provider) - to technically develop and allow online appointments for Births, Deaths, Marriage and Civil Partnerships. This use of automation in improving the customers journey is aligned with the "Reimagining Halton" transformation agenda. The Registration Service currently has a fulltime vacancy for a Senior Registration Officer, which is being advertised for a second time due to there being no suitable applicants so far.

2.11 Property Services (Operations)

St Patrick's Nursing Home Redevelopment

Design development works ongoing in respect of proposals to build a new 16 bed extension and refurbish the remaining accommodation. Works planned to be carried out in 2 phases with an estimated works cost of £2.6m. Planning application submitted. Now looking at options to decarbonise the building as part of the scheme and in respect of this we are intending to submit a bid for additional funding to the government's decarbonisation fund, which opens on October 10th.

St Luke's Nursing Home Refurbishment

Design development works ongoing in respect of proposals to refurbish existing accommodation in 4 phases, estimated works cost of £1.1m. Now looking at options to decarbonise the building as part of the scheme and in respect of this we are intending to submit a bid for additional funding to the government's decarbonisation fund, which opens on October 10th.

Proposed New Leisure Centre Moor Lane

The contract start date was 9th January 2023, works are progressing well, the reduced dig is complete, foundations and drainage now installed the steelwork is erected, the ground works to the pool hall is being carried out and the roof sheeting is being installed. Works are on programme, contractual completion date is 3rd February 2025.

Camden Buildings, High Street- refurb to create digital/creative hub (57-59)

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022, the design has now progressed to RIBA stage 4, and the project is now out to tender, with a return date of October 22nd. It is anticipated that a start on site will be made in the New Year. An initial soft strip together with some enabling works has now been completed this being required ahead of the main works starting on site.

Camden Buildings, High Street- refurb to create digital/creative hub (63-65)

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022, the design has now progressed to RIBA stage 3, and we are looking to move to stage 4 in due course. The purchase of 63 has now been completed so design works to 63/65 will recommence in the new financial year.

Brookvale Rec- Proposed Refurbishment works

A feasibility study has been received ; Consideration in respect of the most appropriate course of action is currently being considered by the Sports Development team.

Pickering Pastures- Proposed new pavilion building

The feasibility report has been updated to reflect the increasing costs, the budget estimate for the project is £520k. Executive board approval was obtained in April to proceed with the project. Works are now being progressed in respect of preparing the planning application, which will be submitted in due course.

Cavendish School - 2 class extension

Works are on site and progressing well, anticipated completion is February 2024.

The Brindley- Proposed extension

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022, following which design development has now progressed through RIBA stage 4. The preferred option has been agreed with a budget cost estimate of £5.6m. Planning approval has been obtained. Works are now progressing with preparing the tender documentation, project to be tendered via the Chest in due course, anticipated start on site is late January.

Runcorn Library redevelopment

Design development works ongoing to create an NHS Health & Education hub. RIBA stage is now complete and we are now preparing to proceed with the design to RIBA stage 4, the budget cost is £1.8m.

Elite House- Redevelopment

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022. We are currently working on securing an operator who will feed in to the design process in due course. The Town Deal funding is insufficient to carry out the desired scheme, as such there is a bid in to the combined Authority for additional funding, this can only be progressed however once an

operator is in place and the design developed. The RIBA stage 2 report has been issued, once an operator is in place the design will move to RIBA stage 3.

Changing Places Facilities

Funding has been secured for 3 Changing Places facilities which were originally planned to be in Victoria Park, Shopping City and the Stadium respectively. The works within the Stadium are now complete and the facility available for use. Planning approval has been obtained for the project in Victoria Park, the work is currently on site with an estimated completion towards the end of October. The project in Shopping City has stalled however due to the owners not committing to contributing to the funding therefore approval has now been obtained to install the facility in Halton Lea Library as an alternative, this tender was won by Parklands and the works have recently started on site with a completion due in early November.

Unit 10 Refurbishment

Works are complete other than the gas main by Cadent, though this has not affected handover of the internal work which is now complete. and Tarmac have now taken occupation following their own fit out work their own fit out.

Decarbonisation Projects

Funding bids are to be submitted in early October for decarbonisations works at both St Pat's and St Luke's care homes as previously mentioned, together with schemes at Runcorn Town Hall, Kingsway Learning Centre and Picow Farm depot, all with the intension of electrifying the heat and hot water provision and moving away from gas.

Education maintenance programme 2023/24

The 2023/24 Education maintenance programme was approved by Council in March. The programme consists of 13 separate projects with an estimated cost of circa £780k. The majority of the projects are now complete with only 3 projects outstanding, all of which will be completed by year end.

Corporate Maintenance programme 2023/24

The 2023/24 Corporate maintenance programme has been approved by the Asset Management Working Group. Circa 20 projects on the list, some now complete others at various stages of progress, the intension being all funding will be expended by year end.

Education SEMH Resource base projects

There are 6 schools where we are upgrading the facilities to create Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) resource bases for both KS1 & KS2 groups. 3 of the projects are now complete, at Oakfield, Victoria Road and Westfield Primaries, the 3 others at Astmoor, Ditton Nursey and Woodside are all to be complete by year-end.

3.0 Emerging Issues

3.1 A number of emerging issues have been identified during the period that will impact upon the work of services including:-

3.2 Finance - Benefits Division

Department for Works and Pensions – real time information

Every month the Council's Benefit Service has to produce a file of its housing benefit caseload, which includes the claimant's name and address, whether it is a new claim, or there has been a change of circumstance, or there has been no change, and then send it to the DWP. This information allows the DWP to measure a local authority's performance in terms of how quickly (in days) it processes new claims and changes in circumstances. Over the last 6 months the DWP has been engaging with the software suppliers who provide council's with their benefit systems and tasked them with making modifications to their systems to enable real time information to be supplied from the local authority benefit system to the DWP. From November 2023 the process of local authority's providing real time housing benefit information to the DWP is going live nationally, and this will provide the DWP with up to date claimant information.

3.3 Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance Division

Transforming Public Procurement Bill

The Procurement Bill, which will reform the existing public sector procurement rules, is continuing to progress through Parliament. Once it has completed its passage and received Royal Assent, which should be within the next few weeks, there will then need to be secondary legislation (regulations) to bring some elements of the Bill and the wider regime into effect. Affected bodies, such as the Council, will be given a minimum of six months' notice before 'go-live', which is currently anticipated to be in October 2024. Existing procurement legislation will apply until the new regime goes live and will also continue to apply to procurements started under the old rules. Guidance will be provided to practitioners to cover the transition from the old to the new regulations, and a comprehensive programme of learning and development will be available to support professionals to implement the changes.

As previously reported, it remains uncertain as to what extent the changes will impact on the Council's procurement arrangements. However, it is important to note that the new regulations will only apply to above threshold (i.e. higher value) procurement activity. The majority of the Council's procurement is below threshold and will therefore continue to be governed by the Council's Procurement Standing Orders.

3.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division

Enforcement Agent Fees

The Ministry of Justice have completed a review of the fees that can be recovered from debtors by enforcement agents (EAs) when using the procedures under the Taking Control of Goods Regulations 2013 and the Taking Control of Goods (Fees) Regulations 2014. The fees were introduced in 2014 by the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007.

Proposed uplift to the fees recoverable (subject to legislation being passed) under Regulation 4 of the Taking Control of Goods (Fees) Regulations 2014 Enforcement other than under a High Court Writ are as per the table below.

FEE STAGE	CURRENT FIXED FEE	5% UPLIFT
COMPLIANCE STAGE	£75	£79
ENFORCEMENT STAGE	£235	£247
SALE OR DISPOSAL STAGE	£110	£116

3.5 Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

The 2023/24 pay award remains unresolved. The Unison industrial action ballot has closed, however other formal ballots are still taking place. Formal notification of the ballot outcomes at a national level have yet to be announced, therefore the pay award negotiations are still ongoing and the implementation of the pay award will be delayed until the 2024 calendar year. It should be noted that the level of pay increase although potentially matched with last year will put extreme pressure on the Council budget.

Use of agency workers continues to remain consistently high in the Council, particularly in Adults and Children's Services where labour market conditions remain extremely tight. This also relates to a consistently high number of vacancies in the staffing establishment (see recruitment update in Key Developments above). A dedicated workstream within the Transformation Programme is now focused on this business issue, adding challenge and capacity to operational service areas to seek solutions to bring usage and associated spend down, the 'indeed' campaign mentioned above being one stream of that work. Additionally there has been an Agency Contract Manager post created in HR Operations to support managers to reduce their agency usage where possible.

3.6 ICT

The previous report discussed the development of the **Microsoft Cloud journey** for the authority and the development of new ways of working through the use of new technologies and what is about to be a step change in the way IT or the Cloud Technology stack is delivered into and through the authority.

We talk about Office 365 and again as users we are focused upon the laptop's or the tablets, we use on a daily basis which is perfectly understandable. But it must be understood that the technologies we are now moving forward with are considerably more than that.

The technology divisions and the wider services linked to the department have redesigned the way in which the authority's data will be managed, the way in which its digital security will be dealt with, the way in which we access technologies.

With further projects looking to reduce the scale of the data centre footprint and the way in which the considerable and complex network that secures our daily access will work to simplify and develop new ways of working into the future.

The elephant in the room currently is when will Office 365 be launched within the authority and when will the newly contracted Dell laptop devices be released. It is important to remember when undertaking such considerable change everything else that supports the device and the use of a small element of the Microsoft Product set involves.

Over the last 12 months the teams have had to individually move peoples SharePoint sites and deal with the complexities of how data is shared within the authority in order to upgrade these sites and personal document libraries to the SharePoint online systems and the One Drive personal libraries. Thousands of libraries and over 1000 individual libraries have already been moved, with many more to go.

Over 2300 applications reside within current systems and a colossal amount of work is being undertaken to reduce and define those systems that will take us forward and essentially will work within the new environments.

As we all understand digital security is an essential element to any online strategy and before any devices are released this must be as controlled as we can make it for the security and safety of our clients and staff.

Finally, Telephony Skype for business have served the authority cost effectively in many iterations for over 14 years, the authority fully owned this product set and has maintained a low-cost solution not only for internal and external calls but this has operated within our contact centre dealing with Hundreds of Thousands of call annually. Add to this the complexity of hundreds of dedicated response groups and emergency lines for Social Care and all other services linked to a number range of over 5'000. The swap over to teams is not something we can complete overnight.

The small team linked to this project has made considerable efforts in lining all of this complexity together with a large number of associated projects and daily service demand.

The department aims to release a small number of devices to officers across the authority from November the 6th, this trial period will last approximately 2 weeks. The devices will be brought back in, and feedback will be analysed.

It is proposed by the 23rd November a larger scale trial will be released across key teams across Adults, Children's, Economy and the Chief Executives Directorate to analyse the final build. If everything goes to plan, then the wider training and deployment plan will be initiated Early in the new year together with new self-service platforms and support solutions.

Project delivery updates will be detailed within ongoing monitoring reports.

3.7 Legal and Democracy

The considerable work pressures in the Childrens Social Care area are continuing. The legal team will shortly see a lot more work generated as a result of the Accelerated Growth Fund, and arrangements are in place for the recruitment of a temporary solicitor to deal with the demand.

3.8 Catering - School Meals

In light of the fairly recent decision to cease the HBC School Meals service from 31 March 2025. Recruitment and retention is still a real concern. Staff turnover is at an all time high and motivating staff is becoming more difficult.

The school meals service will request from each school an expected catering transfer date to ensure we have resource capacity and avoid delays.

3.9 Stadium

Contractual Negotiations

- Everton FC (due to budget constraints – contract terminated)
- Widnes FC
- Halton Table Tennis
- DCBL Sponsorship

Atlas Security (Term Contractor)

The Stadium management team have raised a number of concerns over recent months. These have been highlighted directly with the Account Manager from Atlas as a risk and options are being considered regarding future arrangements.

Widnes Vikings

Overall attendances have reduced in the season 2023 up to the 30/09/23.

- Actual Attendance Average 1721
- Declared Attendance Average 2625

The impact of the low attendances for 2023 include.

- Reduced Income generation from secondary spend.
- Staging costs remain same unless contractual arrangements are reviewed to reflect the current levels of attendance. (Transformation programme)

3.10 Registration Services

The Registration Service is working with HBC ITC Service's, HBC Income and Stopford (an external Registration Management System provider) - to technically develop and allow online appointments for Births, Deaths, Marriage and Civil Partnerships. This use of automation in improving the customers journey is aligned with the "Reimagining Halton" transformation agenda. The Registration Service currently has a fulltime vacancy for a Senior Registration Officer, which is being advertised for a second time due to there being no suitable applicants so far.

3.11 Property Services (Operations)

Protect Duty

The 'Protect Duty', more commonly known as Martyn's Law is due to come in to force later in the year. The legislation will place a requirement on those responsible for certain publicly accessible buildings, locations and venues to consider the threat from terrorism and to implement appropriate and proportionate mitigation measures.

It will mainly focus on the requirement to undertake risk assessments of the various locations following which plans must be put in place in respect of implementing appropriate mitigation measures. The impact of this is that it may likely mean the introduction of measures such as public address voice alarm (PAVA) systems in certain venues where not already installed together with the enhancement of other factors such as street furniture, e.g. bollards, to prevent vehicular access to certain areas.

Accommodation review

With the new agile approach to working since the COVID pandemic, i.e. with office based staff only needing to be in the office for a minimum of 40% of the time, subject to service requirements, our main office accommodation is now significantly underutilised which gives us an opportunity to rationalise our office bases. Following on from a report produced in January 2023 in to our accommodation, a Member working group has been set up to look at the various options available to us in respect of rationalising our accommodation. Work is now being carried out looking at the feasibility of various options, once complete recommendations will be put forward to ensure the space is used more effectively in the future and to help generate revenue savings. Future updates will be given as this work progresses.

Carbon emission targets

Halton's Climate Change Action Plan has set a target for the Council's own carbon emissions to reach net zero by 2040 in line with the Liverpool City region. Two bids to the next round of the Public sector decarbonisation scheme will be submitted in early October, the first covering St Luke's and St Pat's care homes the second covering, Runcorn Town Hall, Kingsway Learning Centre and Picow Farm depot.

4.0 High Priority Equality Actions

- 4.1 Equality issues continue to form a routine element of the Council's business planning and operational decision making processes. Additionally the Council must have evidence to demonstrate compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which came into force in April 2011.
- 4.2 The Council's latest annual progress report in relation to the achievement of its equality objectives is published on the Council website and is available via:

<http://www4.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/Equality-and-Diversity.aspx>

5.0 Performance Overview



- 5.1 The following information provides a synopsis of progress for both milestones and performance indicators across the key business areas that have been identified by the Directorate.
- 5.2 It should be noted that given the significant and unrelenting downward financial pressures faced by the Council there is a requirement for Departments to make continuous in-year adjustments to the allocation of resources in order to ensure that the Council maintains a balanced budget.
- 5.3 Whilst every effort continues to be made to minimise any negative impact of such arrangements upon service delivery they may inevitably result in a delay in the delivery of some of the objectives and targets contained within this report.

Financial Management




Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Objective
FS 01	Set the Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Recommend Council Tax.


Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary

Report 2024-27 Medium Term Financial Strategy to Executive Board - November 2023.		On target to report the Medium Term Financial Strategy to Executive Board in November 2023. The financial forecast is being regularly updated.
Report 2024/25 revenue budget, capital programme and council tax to Council - March 2024.		Work has commenced with Management Team and the Transformation Board to develop efficiency targets for 2024/25 onwards. This is in addition to 2024/25 and 2025/26 savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

Ref	Objective
FS 02	To effect financial prudence by assisting managers to control their budgets by monitoring spending and providing timely and accurate financial reports.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Provide monthly financial reports to budget holders within 8 days of month end.		Reports all issued on schedule to date.
Provide quarterly financial monitoring reports to Operational Directors for inclusion in Performance Monitoring Reports.		Quarter 1 reports are in the process of being finalised and will be shared with Operational Directors for inclusion in Performance Monitoring Reports.
Provide quarterly monitoring and forecasting reports on the overall budget to Executive Board.		Quarter 1 monitoring report on the overall budget will go to Executive Board on 16 November 2023.

Ref	Objective
FS 03	Provide for public accountability by reporting the Council's stewardship of public funds and its financial performance in the use of resources by preparing the statutory Statement of Accounts in accordance with the latest accounting standards.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Publish the Statement of Accounts following external audit and the Annual		The draft accounts were published and shared with the External Auditor

Governance Statement by 30th September 2023.	on 04 July 2023. The audit of accounts commenced at the start of October and expected to be finalised at the end of December. Audit Findings Report is expected to be reported to Audit & Governance Board in March 2024.
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Ref	Objective
FS 04	Make best use of cash resources available to the Council and meet its statutory responsibility by setting, implementing and monitoring the Treasury Management Policy.













Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Establish Treasury Management Policy and report to Council - March 2023.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Treasury Management Policy reported to Council on 08 March 2023
Provide monitoring reports to Executive Board on a bi-annual basis.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Treasury Management update to 30 September 2023 will be reported to Executive Board 16 November 2023.

Ref	Objective
FS 05	Ensure that the Capital Programme is affordable, prudent, and sustainable by setting and monitoring prudential borrowing indicators.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Establish and report prudential indicators to Council - March 2023.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Prudential indicators reported to Council on 08 March 2023.
Provide monitoring reports to the Executive Board on a bi-annual basis.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Position to 30 September 2023 will be reported to Executive Board 16 November 2023.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
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FS LI 01	Receive an unqualified external audit opinion on the accounts	Yes	Awaited			N/A	External audit expected to provide the audit opinion in November 2023.
FS LI 02	Receive an unqualified VFM opinion from the Council's External Auditor	Yes	Awaited			N/A	External audit not expected to provide VFM opinion until November 2023 at the earliest.
FS LI 03	Proportion of Council Tax that was due that was collected	94.14%	94.25%	53.9%			This is down by 0.52% on the same point last year
FS LI 04	The percentage of Business Rates which should have been received during the year that were received	96.18%	97.50%	56.4%			This is down 5.2% on the same point last year.
FS LI 05	Average time for processing new claims (Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reduction)	23.71	18	24.79			The Benefits Service is suffering unprecedented levels of staff sickness, in addition three members of staff have recently left. The Division is in the process of recruiting 3 Benefit Officers.
FS LI 06	Average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances	9.55	8	20.5			The Benefits Service is suffering unprecedented levels of staff sickness, in addition three members of staff have recently left. The Division is in the process of recruiting 3 Benefit Officers.
FSLI 07	Proportion of all supplier invoices paid within 30 days	91.13%	92.0%	91.32%			Invoice payment performance is up compared to 2022/23, although remains behind



	(including disputed invoices)						the target for the year. Performance during the rest of the year will be influenced by whether the team is fully resourced. At present it is carrying one vacancy and a recruitment process is about to commence.
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Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit



Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Objective
CXDU 01	To enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of corporate training opportunities through the design and implementation of appropriate learning interventions, to include the development of bespoke Learning & Development offerings to individual service areas.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Promote and take forward the delivery of actions identified within the Organisational Development Strategy September 2023	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The strategy has been reviewed, tailored accordingly, and is now aligned with the Transformation Programme requirements
Regular engagement with Management Team to identify areas of challenge and develop appropriate strategic responses June, September, December 2023, and March 2024.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This is scheduled periodically.
Embed knowledge and skills gained from Senior Leadership and Management Development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This will be particularly targeted to supporting Transformation projects.

Programmes (MBA / MSc) December 2023.		
Reconfigure Leadership and Management development in the organisation to align with Transformation Programme principles December 2023.		Leadership & Management cohort established at Level 5, utilising the apprenticeship Levy to fund the qualification
Monitor the embedding of knowledge and skills gained through previously delivered in-house modular Leadership and Management development activity. Ongoing and report in December 2023.		Important to ensure return on investment and to inform future programmed support. However, due to reduction in resource it is unlikely to be achieved in 2023

Ref	Objective
CXDU 02	Implement the Apprenticeship Policy to support the establishment of apprenticeships across the Council, and optimise return on the Apprenticeship Levy.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Establish 20 new apprentice placements within Council services, utilising existing vacancies, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation March 2024.		There is currently no specific resource in position to help to achieve this target. Rectification is planned by resource being placed in the Organisational Development Service, however a model of funding needs to be secured first to enable this. This is currently being examined. There are currently 6 new hire apprentices in the Council, with the last one recruited in March 2023. Other initiatives are currently being explored within the Transformation Programme.
Establish 20 new existing employee apprenticeships to enable up-skilling in		4 conversions this quarter, taking total up to 6 in this current financial year.

a range of business areas, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation March 2024.		
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Ref	Objective
CXDU 03	Optimise the use of the Agency Worker contract across Council services, to secure ongoing reductions in the incidence and cost of agency usage, and to ensure that correct and appropriate resourcing solutions are being deployed across Council services.



Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Review and consider most appropriate resourcing mix in collaboration with service management in areas of highest agency usage (Transformation Programme) December 2023.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Currently a key strand of Transformation Programme and dedicated resource created in HR Operations. Refer to Emerging Issues above for more information.

Ref	Objective
CXDU 04	Work with high demand service areas to develop and implement effective recruitment programmes, optimising labour market engagement to attract high quality candidates.



Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Identify service areas with highest consistent recruitment demand, turnover, and low attraction rates. Develop tailored solutions. (Transformation Programme) December 2023.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Now a key strand of Transformation Programme. Detailed and specific campaigns running to meet requirements. Refer to Key Developments and Emerging Issues above for more information







Ref	Objective
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CXDU 05	Develop and implement an organisation wide change programme – The Future Work Programme - to evaluate and introduce revised working practices following to meet the requirements of the changing labour market and employee expectation in the post-pandemic environment (to include use of accommodation, HR policy and practice, wellbeing support, application of technology)
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Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Use findings of Corporate Accommodation Review (2023) to determine available workspace capacity and develop optimum balance of 'staff to space'. December 2023.		Corporate Accommodation Review in progress, overseen by Asset Management Working Group. This will be supported by Transformation Programme Resources that are currently being recruited the Accelerating Growth project.
Develop contractual model to meet business requirements of 'staff to space' balance. March 2024		Work for Q4 2023/24.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/ 23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXDU LI 01	Average FTE days lost to sickness	12.98 (Days)	9.5 (Days)	5.32 (Days)			Slightly better outturn than at Q2 of 2022/23 (5.96). Refer to narrative in Key Developments above around the implementation of HR Business Partnering to increase effectiveness in this area.




CXD U LI 02	Percentage of Employees without sickness	66.45	70.00	79.36			Higher than same period last year and better than outturn for whole of 2022/23. Also refer to comment against LI 01 above.
CXD U LI 03	Total Full Time Equivalent Staffing Establishment (Indicator for information only)	3,204	For information Only	3211	For information Only	For information Only	Reported for information purposes only.
CXD U LI 04	Total Staff (head count) (Indicator for information only)	4,127		4151			
CXD U LI 05	Total Agency Worker Usage (number of placements – year to date)	766	650	447			Outturn continues to be driven by high usage in Children's and Adults Services, resulting from labour market conditions, however usage across other areas to cover vacancies although reduced in comparison to last year is still more prevalent.
Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXD U LI 06	Total Agency Worker Cost (cumulative gross cost – year to date)	£8.34 m	£5.0m	4.69m			See LI 05 immediately above. <i>(Please note, the 22/23 actual has been updated to include 'off-contract' spend and has therefore</i>




							<i>increased from £8.5m previously reported)</i>
CXD U LI 10 9	The percentage of top 5% of earners that are: a) Women	61.45 %	55%	60.5%			Fluctuation exists in (a), (b) and (c), due to turnover. It should be noted that recruitment in to the top 5% of earners is not generally high volume, and as such scope for significant change over time is low.
	b) From BME communities	2.7%	2.0%	2.74%			
	c) With a disability	0%	8.0%	0%			
CXD U LI 10	No of staff declaring that they meet the definition of disability within the Equality Act 2010 as a % of the total workforce.	1.25%	10.00%	1.74%			Fluctuation exists due to turnover and the indicator outturn reflects self-declaration. The 10% target reflects the wider Halton community. Despite the mismatch, it is important that this continues to be monitored.
CXD U LI 11	Minority Ethnic community staff as % of total workforce.	0.99%	1.00%	1.39%			Shows improvement fluctuation exists due to turnover and outturn tends to hover around target level.
Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXD U LI 12	Average time to recruit (Applicant Tracking System reported figure)	19 Days	12.2 Days	14.1 Days			Outturn demonstrates the number of days taken from vacancy

							<p>closing date to completion of recruitment. Improvement in this outturn is reflective of changes to processes and remove of some checks for recruitments where they are not required, rather than operating a universal approach as has been the case historically.</p>
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Key Objectives / milestones



Ref	Objective
ICT 01	Constantly evaluate and improve the usability, resilience, control and flexibility of the Council's Client interaction, Data Communications and Management, Hardware and Software provision.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Continued Enhancement and delivery of the E5, M365, Azure platforms to enhance and deliver new technologies into the authority - March 2024.		Significant progress continues to be made in the delivery stages of Office 365 and Azure Cloud services. Many user data sets have been migrated and will continue through Q2/3 when it is envisaged will be completed.
Delivery of the Front Door transformation programme delivering changes in process, customer contact and customer journey - March 2024.		As defined within the body of text, the project is now underway with considerable efforts being made to define and design both procedural and technical definitions and designs
The continued development of the Records Management Unit enhancing all opportunities and creating a		Ongoing development has included enhancing support for Information Management and prevention of data



central fulfilment centre within - March 2024.		loss, which includes enhancements that have been implemented in respect of hybrid mail.
Development of Interactive Services, through integration with the Contact Centre and One Stop Shop's - March 2024.		An evolving programme of work moving now at pace - development of the project documentation and objective set is now underway and will be reported against as the department evolves and changes with the delivery of the objectives in line with the transformation objectives for the department
Management and development of commercial ICT opportunity within desktop, hosting and DR provision - March 2024.		The continued development and delivery of the Finance solution into partners within the city region continues with additional services and deliveries continually sought
Continued compliance with Central Government and NCSC Security guidelines and compliance requirements – March 2024.		Actively monitored by DLUHC/NCSC and external audit – progress has been good through Q1, on target.


Ref	Objective
ICT 02	The implementation of a range of new corporate wide facilities including Web services, records & document management, business process workflow, corporate desktop portal, Information governance and Security Compliance process.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Delivery, deployment and Management of the E5, M365, Azure managed cloud platforms, enhancing user experience. - March 2024.		Ongoing preparatory work in the form of workshops with support staff provided by contracted support organisation. Most initial configuration of the Councils Microsoft Azure Tenant has been completed, currently working on the development of the end user experience, which is expected to be completed by the end of Q2. As within the body of text
Continued development and internal, commercial use of the Print Unit, Records management Unit - March 2024.		Ongoing development has included enhancing support for Information Management and prevention of data loss, which includes enhancements that have been implemented in



		respect of hybrid mail. The transfer of land search functions now complete and transfer of post, income and budget in process and delivery through the RMU is now underway.
Continued development of Contact Centre and One Stop Shop Services/Facilities/Integration with Authority wide process - March 2024 .development and internal, commercial use of the Print Unit, Records management Unit - March 2024 .		With the advent of the Front door/Customer Journey transformation programme, the department will evolve at pace and begin to report against developments over the coming months as the objectives are set.
The development of improved information governance and Security compliance in line with government guidelines - March 2024 .		This has been built into the configuration of the Councils Microsoft Tenancy and will continue to be enhanced and reported via the SIRO reports to Management Team. These changes will continue to evolve as the deployment of the new transformed ICT platform matures. This is part of a gradual change programme supported by the Councils ICT Security Programme to minimise disruption to users, while enhancing capabilities and improving the Councils security and compliance position.





Ref	Objective
ICT 03	The implementation of a range of new corporate wide facilities including cloud and web service solutions, records & document management enhancement, business process development, customer service provision.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
The delivery of the Front Door transformation programmes across Admin and Support Services - March 2023 .		The disaggregation of the Administrative Support Division is now underway as part of the transformation programme greater detail within the body of this report.
The delivery of new and enhanced IT Security Management and Compliance systems/facilities across		Most preparatory work has been completed. The onboarding of a Security Operations Centre will be the priority for Q2 and Q3

the authority's user base - March 2024.		
The delivery of new and enhanced technology provision across the authority's user base - March 2024.		Users have already been migrated for their email and calendar facilities. These will now be further enhanced to ensure improved data loss prevention and security of the council's information assets with the recently introduced MFA and background security measures.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
ICT LI 01	Average availability of the Council's M365 Systems (%).	N/A	99.9%	TBA	TBA	TBA	This new KPI relates to the new M365 platform currently under development - availability stats are unavailable at this stage but as the deployment progresses this stat will become valid
ICT LI 02	Security Incidents across quarter	N/A	TBA	TBA	TBA	TBA	In line with the delivery of the new M365 platform this statistic will be monitored by new systems currently under development – Again to evolve with the programme of work.
ICT LI 03	Service Desk Call Resolution	86.56%	90%	90%			The Service Desk continues to be challenging with a reduced staffing due to vacancy and sickness however there are plans (integrated with the Customer Journey project and M365 delivery) to automate 'self-help' process

ICT LI 04	Average working days from delivery to completion of a new Laptop.	1 (Days)	1 (Days)	TBA	TBA	TBA	Again, a new KPI that will evolve with the considerable programme of work underway. With the advent of the new Dell Laptop contract completed mid-June, this new stat will evolve with the M365 role out plan.
ICT LI 05	Number of resolved customer contacts – Contact Centre	27500	27000				The level of calls into the contact centre continues to rise, with seasonal and service dependant increases as the financial strain upon residents increases. Along with the increase in services offered by the team.
ICT LI	Number of resolved contacts – One Stop Shop's	15500	15500				The level of foot fall into the Shops continues to rise, with seasonal and service dependant increases as the financial strain upon residents increases.

[Legal & Democracy](#)



Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Objective
LD 01	To ensure that decision makers are supported through the provision of timely and accurate advice and information and are kept informed of changing legislation and responsibilities.





Milestone	Progress s Q2	Supporting Commentary
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Review constitution - May 2023.		The revised Constitution was approved at Annual Council
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Ref	Objective
LD 02	To provide efficient and effective Democratic Support Services that provides Elected Members, as key decision makers, with the necessary information, support and training opportunities to fulfil their individual potential and management and governance role effectively.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
To ensure that all members have been given the opportunity of a having a MAP meeting where desired.		All Members have been offered a MAP meeting.
To induct all new members by October 2023.		The new Members have been inducted.



Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
LD LI 01	No. Of Members with Personal Development Plans (54 Total).	54	54	54			All Members have been offered a MAP. Take up is a matter of personal choice.
LD LI 02	Percentage of Members attending at least one organised	52 98%	54 100%	30 55.6%			Reasonable progress has been made, but as always attendance is a


	Training Event.						matter of personal choice for Members.
LD LI 03	Average Time taken to issue prosecutions from receipt of full instructions (working days).	10 (Days)	10 (Days)	10 (Days)			In two cases, there was a delay in reviewing files due to pressures of other work. The client department was kept aware and prosecutions were issued in a timely manner after receipt of full instructions.
LD LI 04	Average time taken to file application for Care proceedings at Court from receipt of all written evidence from client department (working days).	3 (Days)	3 (Days)	3 (Days)			The target has been met.
LD LI 05	% of Executive Board minutes published within 5 working days after the meeting.	100%	100%	100%			The target has been met.

Key Objectives / milestones















CE 05	To routinely use customer feedback to drive forward service improvement in the Registration Service
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
Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Ensure our services are available to those who wish to or who need to use them by providing accessible information in a range of ways (e.g. written information, online services).		Monitoring and reviewing our lessons learned based on customer feedback, comments and complaints
Seek the views of the local community and make adjustments to our service delivery when appropriate, based on customer feedback, to improve the service going forward. Where feedback cannot be acted upon, an explanation will be given.		You Said... We Did..... outcomes are published

Ref	Objective
CE 06	Develop a Stadium Business Plan and Marketing Strategy to make the Stadium more commercially viable.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Business Plan & Marketing Strategy		This will be heavily focused around the Transformation recommendations. Once Management have received these they will plan accordingly and produce/develop KPIs that are relevant.

Key Performance Indicators





Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q2 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CE LI 10	Registration Service - Births - 98% registered within 42 days	100%	100%	100%			Figures in line with expectation.
CE LI 11	Registration Service - Deaths with MCCDs (no coronial involvement) - 90% registered within 5 days	87%*	100%	98.39%			Where the service has not met the required 90% KPI, this is due to GPs signing death certificates on day 4 or later. 99.40% customers seen early 9or on time within 10 minutes of appointment time.
CE LI 12	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Primary Schools.		75%	73.1%			This figure will be revised after October Census to get a more accurate number of pupils on FSM.
CE LI 13	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Secondary Schools.		60%	65.6%			This figure will be revised after October Census to get a more accurate number of pupils on FSM.
CE LI 14	Take up of school lunches (%) – primary schools.		60%	54.6%			This figure will be revised after October Census to get a more accurate number of pupils on roll.
CE LI 15	Take up of school lunches (%) – secondary schools.		50%	52.31%			This figure will be revised after October Census to get a more accurate number of pupils on roll.
CE LI 16	Room Occupancy –	12.34%	40%	31.8%			New KPI for monitoring occupancy rates. Note the summer




	Meetings (Box Level)						months is historically down in line with school holidays. This rate is expected to rise from September.
CE LI 17	Room Occupancy – Conferences (Bridge & Karalius)	50.19%	60%	53.9%		 	New KPI for monitoring occupancy rates. Note the summer months is historically down in line with school holidays. This rate is expected to rise from September.

Property Services


Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Objective
EEP 07	Corporate Resources: To provide an effective corporate property service



Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Ensure the leisure centre is on track on 31st March 2024 both in terms of time and cost by project managing it throughout the year.		Leisure Centre is currently on track in terms of time and budgets
Ensure the contractor commences on site with the major upgrade works at both St Patrick's and St Luke's by 1st Sept 2023 .		Works at both St Patricks and St Luke's have been delayed as a result of the decarbonisation bids that are to be submitted in October. Once the outcome of same is know the projects will be able to progress
Ensure all the projects are progressed in line with the school maintenance programme and are delivered by 31st March 2024 .		The majority of projects are now complete with only 3 outstanding all of which are due to be completed on site and final accounts finalised by 31 st March 2024
Ensure all the projects are progressed in line with the corporate maintenance		All projects for corporate buildings are progressing, and the budget will

programme and are delivered by 31st March 2024.		be fully expended by 31 st March 2024
Submit a decarbonisation funding bid in conjunction with the Combined Authority by October 2023 and be successful in having the funding approved by 31 st March 2024.		Funding bid on track for submission by October 10 th 2023. There will be 2 separate bids, one covering the care homes and the other covering, Runcorn Town Hall, Kingsway Learning Centre and Picow Farm Depot.
Ensure there is a wide and varied mix of commodities and services on offer in the Market and ensure occupancy levels are maintained or increased by 31st March 2024.		There is a good and varied mix of commodities available at Widnes Market, various events took place over the summer to help increase the footfall.
Ensure all necessary servicing, and repairs and maintenance is carried out within our properties by 31st March 2024 and ensure building managers are satisfied with the service provided.		All servicing, repairs and maintenance at corporate properties is ongoing. All servicing for 23/24 will be completed by 31 st March 2024. Building managers are periodically provided with questionnaires to ensure they are happy with service provided.




Ref	Objective
EEP 09	Corporate Priority: To design, manage and improve processes to generate increasing value for customers and other stakeholders. To undertake Employee Reviews for all staff

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
All EDRs to be completed by September 23		All departmental EDRs completed

Ref	Objective
EEP 10	Corporate Priority: To design, manage and deliver a place-based business support programme for Halton Commission support sessions to provide advice and guidance based on initial diagnostic.

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Scheme in Place September 2023		Scheme fully designed with commissioning commenced and now called the Business Support Service
Scheme finalised March 2025		On track for March 2025 completion

Ref	Objective
EEP 11	Corporate Priority: Secure funding, support procurement and ground-breaking to take place for Ultraviolet at Sci Tech Daresbury Commissioning of Ultraviolet

Milestone	Progress Q2	Supporting Commentary
Funding Secured Q3 2023 / 2024		The Joint Venture have agreed terms with The Chrysalis Fund and discussions are ongoing with the CA to secure Investment Zone funding.
Procurement Q4 2023 / 2024		The project is being tendered using the Procure Partnerships Framework. Initial phase was completed this quarter and the tender will be put to market in Q3.
Groundbreaking Q1 2024 2025		Currently on target for a start on site in April 2024.

Key Performance Indicators

OPERATIONAL ISSUES	BASELINE POSITION	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 1	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 3	INTERVENTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
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Climate change agenda and carbon emissions	CO2 emissions for 2021/22 amount to 9327 tonnes	Reduce emissions by 1%	Reduce emissions by 5%	<p>Submit a funding bid and obtain funding to carry out decarbonisation works to various buildings.</p> <p>Continue to deliver the LED lighting replacement programme.</p> <p>Carry out further rationalisation of our property portfolio to reduce emissions.</p> <p>Help carry out education programme for officers and Members alike</p>
Level of satisfaction with repair & maintenance service delivered via the FM team	75% of surveys returned were rated as either good or excellent	80% Of surveys returned rated as either good or excellent	85% Of surveys returned rated as either good or excellent	<p>Issue questionnaires to building managers in order to rate the level of service provided.</p> <p>Continue to deliver a repairs and maintenance service in a timely manner, with quality contractors.</p> <p>Continue with the procurement of contractors, when necessary, based on best value principles.</p>

7.0 Financial Statements

Finance Department

Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2023

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	6,453	3,030	3,011	19	48
Insurances	910	800	921	(121)	(184)
Supplies & Services	364	250	296	(46)	(94)
Rent Allowances	35,500	14,686	14,686	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,748	600	569	31	68
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	23	23	0	0
Discretionary Social Fund	310	10	5	5	7
Discretionary Housing Payments	300	108	108	0	0
Household Support Fund Expenditure	654	653	653	0	0
Energy Bills Support	41	41	41	0	0
LCR Levy	2,241	1,121	1,121	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	17	0	0	0	17
Bad Debt Provision	77	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	48,685	21,322	21,434	(112)	(138)
Income					
Other Fees & Charges	-344	-195	-188	(7)	(10)
Burdens Grant	-60	-60	-88	28	28
Dedicated schools Grant	-123	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Liability Order	-541	-474	-475	1	3
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	0
Schools SLAs	-295	-295	-301	6	6
LCR Reimbursement	-2,241	-1,121	-1,121	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-400	-67	-67	0	0
Rent Allowances	-34,800	-13,865	-13,623	(242)	(363)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-35	-49	14	25
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-300	-93	-93	0	0
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-515	-268	-276	8	17
Universal Credits	-5	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Admin Grant	-204	0	0	0	0
Household Support Fund Grant	-654	-52	-52	0	0
Energy Bills Support	-245	-245	-245	0	0
Alternative Fuel	-57	-57	-57	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-121	121	184
Reimbursements & Other Grants	-159	-110	-110	0	0
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-82	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-41,252	-16,937	-16,866	(71)	(110)
Net Operational Expenditure	7,433	4,385	4,568	(183)	(248)
Recharges					
Premises Support	268	134	134	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,069	1,034	1,034	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,330	-2,665	-2,665	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,993	-1,497	-1,497	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	4,440	2,888	3,071	(183)	(248)

Comments on the above figures

As at the end of September 2023 the department is reporting a forecasted overspend of £0.183m, it is expected net spend for the year will be over the approved budget by £0.248m

Staffing forecasts for the year include an estimated amount for the 2023/24 pay award which will be higher than the 4% increase included in the 2023/24 budget.

Despite this it is expected staffing costs to be lower than budget due to vacancies and some spend being reallocated against external grant where possible.

Rent allowances continue to be an area of concern. Increased demand for supported accommodation results in increased costs for the Council over and above the housing benefit grant received. This should ideally net to zero, however Government will only support up to a nominal

figure after which, 60% will come from housing benefits and the remaining 40% is up to the Council to support. The impact of this can be seen from the £0.363m forecasted overspend by the end of the 2023/24 financial year.

The insurance budget is also under significant pressure, new contracts are out for tender and there has been an increase in costs across all policy premiums, resulting in an estimated overspend of £0.184m in the current financial year. The additional cost of this will be funded from the insurance reserve.

The most notable area of underspend against budget is concessionary travel, where net spend will be approximately £0.068m lower than budget at financial year-end., down from the forecast in quarter 1. Concessionary travel has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic as overall usage levels are still lower than pre covid levels. It is envisaged that support for operators to ensure sustainability of bus routes will drop towards the end of the year which may increase the overall outturn position, this will be reviewed at further points later in the year.







Approved 2023/24 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

**FINANCE DEPARTMENT
APPENDIX A**

Progress Against Agreed Savings

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
F1	Client Finance	109	Increase by £3 per week the charge to clients for the Appointeeships Service to ensure full cost recovery.	45	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Implemented in April 2023 and income budget increased accordingly
F6	Income Control	118	Removal of payment kiosks which are now significantly under-utilised and in need of replacement. The ceasing of annual rental and licence costs will provide a saving. Residents can instead make payments for council tax etc. via the numerous Paypoint outlets across the Borough.	20	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Implemented April 2023 and expenditure budgets reduced accordingly
F8	Insurance	1,043	Reduction in the insurance budgets, following a review of claims history over recent years with advice from the Council's insurance broker. The majority of claims are provided for via self-insurance, with external	135	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Implemented April 2023 and expenditure budgets reduced accordingly

			policies providing cover for exceptional or potentially high cost claims.					
F9	Internal Audit	300	Restructure in light of potential retirements over the next two years within the Internal Audit Team.	0	0	50		Planned restructure to take place during 2024/25 and to be implemented 1 April 2025
F11	Purchase to Pay	27	Increase in the target income budgets for the Early Payment Scheme (£15k) and the Corporate Card Programme rebate (£15k)	30	0	0		Implemented 2023/24 income budgets increased accordingly
F12	Benefits Processing & Administration	216	Deletion of a 1.0fte vacant Housing Benefit Officer Post and a 0.5fte vacant Visiting Officer Post.	55	0	0		These two vacant posts accepted for a saving in 2023/24 and can be deleted from the structure.
F13	Discretionary Support Scheme	221	Review the roles, procedures and structure of the team.	0	25	0		A review of the DSS structure will be undertaken in 2024/25.
F15	Business Rates	-26	Increase the charge to Halton Chamber of Commerce for providing billing and collection of Business Improvement District (BID) income.	2	0	0		2023/24 operating agreement between the Council and Halton Chamber of Commerce still to be agreed.
F16	Concessionary Travel	1,892	Due to a decrease in passenger numbers	150	0	0		On Target

			<p>following Covid, it is considered that the budget for concessionary travel costs can be reduced. The budget was underspent by £421k (20%) in 2021/22. A reduction in this budget will not prevent any eligible concessionary passenger from still being able to travel.</p>					
F17	Council Tax	84	<p>Increase the charges applied when a court summons is issued by 30% (£23), to achieve full cost recovery over the three year period.</p>	40	40	40	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On target, summons cost increased for 2023/24
F17 Cont	Council Tax	N/A	<p>Establish a new post dedicated to reviewing council tax exemptions. It is considered at least a 3% reduction in Single Person Discount awards could be achieved, generating approximately £150k of additional council tax income, less</p>	116	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Post appointed to and review of exemptions to commence over the next quarter.

			the cost of the new post.					
F18	Financial Management - Treasury Management	1,152	Closer management of medium- to long-term cash balances will give greater opportunity to invest in higher interest bearing accounts due to increasing interest rates.	300	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Interest payable on target to achieve increased target.
Total Finance Department				893	65	90		

Chief Executive's Delivery Unit**Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2023**

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	2,795	1,297	1,196	101	53
Employees Training	117	58	44	14	5
Apprenticeship Levy	300	150	162	(12)	(50)
Supplies & Services	303	100	47	53	81
Total Expenditure	3,515	1,605	1,449	156	89
Income					
Fees & Charges	-211	-120	-104	(16)	(31)
Schools SLA	-533	-533	-532	(1)	(1)
Total Income	-744	-653	-636	(17)	(32)
Net Operational Expenditure	2,771	952	813	139	57
Recharges					
Premises Support	117	59	59	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,023	512	512	0	0
Asset Rental Support	53	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,491	-2,746	-2,746	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-4,298	-2,175	-2,175	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-1,527	-1,223	-1,362	139	57

Comments on the above figures

With the formal introduction of the Transformation Programme, the Chief Executive's Delivery Unit (previously Policy, People, Performance & Efficiency) is undergoing a period of change. In Q1 the net spend outturn performance was forecast at £0.042m under budget, there has been a marginal increase to this forecast as the forecast outturn is now estimating net spend to be £0.057 below the approved budget.

Despite employee spend being £0.101m below budget due to vacancies, there are restructures in place to change the current model, which will help identify and tackle the issues the Council is facing with rising agency costs. The apprenticeship levy overspend against budget has been reduced to reflect the spend across the initial 6 months of the financial year.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

Capital Projects as at 30 June 2023

	Annual Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Expenditure				
Transformation Programme	5,000	2,500	998	4,002
Total Capital	5,000	2,500	998	4,246

Comments on the above figures

The Transformation Programme has begun within the Council, a number of staff are now in post and consultancy work has begun. Moving further into 23/24 it is expected these costs will increase as more staff are introduced into the programme work on programme themes gathers pace.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DELIVERY UNIT

APPENDIX A

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
PPPE 1	Apprenticeships	198	Reduce the budget which provides for apprenticeship salaries by 50%. More apprenticeships will therefore be attached to vacant posts which are already budgeted for. This may particularly help to fill vacancies in areas where recruitment is difficult.	99	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Reflected within the 2022/23 budget.
PPPE 4	Organisational Development & Performance	383	Explore whether Organisational Development / Learning and Development activities could be rationalised and restructured to reduce cost, given there is currently a vacant post within the team.	65	0	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	Restructures to the team are currently being considered to help develop and change the way Organisational Development/Learning is carried out.
Total PPPE Department				164	0	0		

ICT and Administration DepartmentRevenue Budget as at 30 September 2023

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employee Expenditure	8,126	3,800	3,965	(165)	(320)
Supplies & Services Expenditure	1,012	660	675	(15)	(29)
Capital Finance	78	25	12	13	27
Computer Repairs & Software	1,333	1,050	1,124	(74)	(85)
Communication Costs	13	6	38	(32)	(41)
Premises Expenditure	175	119	116	3	9
Transport Expenditure	3	1	1	0	1
Total Expenditure	10,740	5,661	5,931	(270)	(438)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-996	-50	-85	35	168
Schools SLA Income	-610	-600	-605	5	10
Total Income	-1,606	-650	-690	40	178
Net Operational Expenditure	9,134	5,011	5,241	(230)	(260)
Recharges					
Premises Support	557	279	279	0	0
Transport	16	8	8	0	0
Central Support	1,797	899	899	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-10,951	-5,477	-5,477	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-7,087	-4,291	-4,291	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,047	720	950	(230)	(260)

Comments on the above figures

At the end of September 2023 the department is expected to exceed the annual approved budget by £0.260m. A marginally increased forecasted overspend from the original position in Q1 (£0.199m). This is due to additional security costs over a 3 year period moving from the capital fund into the revenue stream.

Employee costs for the year are expected to exceed the budget position by approximately £0.320m. This is based on increased employee costs from the proposed 2023/24 pay deal plus staff turnover saving targets not currently being achieved. In the 2024/25 financial year the Administration Staff will be disaggregated, and their respective budgets will move to the service areas, however for the current financial year, the budgets will remain in the ICT and Administration Department for reporting purposes.

The over achievement of income against Fees and Charges relates to external client income for traded services. This is for Agresso implementation and support at partner sites. There is also marginally higher MFD usage within schools which has offset lower than budgeted SLA uptake, with the shift to academies and increased fees this is likely to continue to worsen. With a number of agency staff across the Council, the department is continuing to recharge licence costs for non HBC staff to their respective departments, this should help budget holders more readily see the impact agency staff are having on Council's finances as there is not just the direct fees to be considered, there is strain on a number of other services and existing contracts which do come at additional costs.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

Capital Projects as at 30 September 2023

	Annual Capital Allocation	Allocation to Date	Actual Spend	Total Allocation Remaining
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure				
ICT Rolling Capital Project	700	350	184	516
Total Capital	700	350	184	651

Comments on the above figures

The ICT and Admin Department has a rolling budget of £0.700m for capital needs each year. The capital allocation will be reduced by £0.218m to fund a new laptop contract with Dell. The new hardware will be able to function without the use of VDI, meaning all Council staff utilising laptops should see an increase in performance allowing them to carry out their work more efficiently. In recent years there has been a shift into user-based subscription costs for Microsoft Office and other software licences, meaning that the IT department in future years will be less reliant on the capital allocation and there will be a significant strain on the revenue funds.

ICT AND SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
ICT3	External Clients	N/A	Recharge the Youth Offending Services for the full cost of ICT services which are hosted by Halton, but have not thus far been recharged. This approach has been agreed by the Cheshire and Warrington partner councils.	232	0	0	U	Final figure still to be agreed with partner councils.
Total ICT and Admin Department				232	0	0		

Legal and Democratic Services Department**Revenue Budget as at 30 September 2023**

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	1,436	755	703	52	76
Agency Costs (Locums)	0	0	375	(375)	(575)
Supplies & Services	164	130	131	(1)	(5)
Civic Catering & Functions	26	13	2	11	3
Legal Expenses	218	100	166	(66)	(207)
Transport Related Expenditure	11	6	0	6	3
Total Expenditure	1,855	1,004	1,377	(373)	(705)
Income					
School SLA's	-92	-92	-78	(14)	(14)
Licence Income	-284	-142	-121	(21)	12
Reimbursement & Other Grants	0	0	0	0	25
Fees & Charges Income	-70	-34	-33	(1)	(1)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-393	393	593
Total Income	-446	-268	-625	357	615
Net Operational Expenditure	1,409	736	752	(16)	(90)
Recharges					
Premises Support	58	29	29	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	282	141	141	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	340	170	170	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,749	906	922	(16)	(90)

Comments on the above figures

As at the end of September 2023 the department is reporting a small net overspend against budget. It is currently forecast that net spend for the department will be over the approved budget by approximately £0.090m at the end of the financial year. This is slightly improved position from the end of Q1 where the forecasted net spend outturn was £0.099m over budget.

Employee costs for the year are still expected to marginally be below the approved budget. This is a result of the number of vacancies that exist within the department but mitigated by agency costs.

The main area of concern for the department is the volume of agency costs resulting from hard to fill vacant posts. It is expected these costs will be in the region of £0.575m at the end of the financial year. This figure has increased due to additional staffing resources required for Children's Care Orders and clearing a backlog of cases. Whilst it has been agreed that these costs will be funded from reserves it is important that the Council takes action to begin to reduce reliance on agency usage.

Within the forecast £0.207m overspend against budget of legal expenses, there is an estimated £0.233m costs relating to the contracting of barristers, most of which again, are due to the limited number of staff available to clear an increasing caseload. The impact of the transformation and recovery work in Children Services, along with increased support from the recruitment team and graduate rolls, should help alleviate the pressure seen in this area. However, the impact will likely not be seen immediately.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT**APPENDIX A**

Ref	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
L4	Marketing, Design and Communications	45	Review the frequency of production of Inside Halton, as part of the wider consideration of the Council's communications strategy required for the Transformation Programme	0	15	0	U	The marketing and communications team has now moved within the Chief executives Delivery Unit so that they can review the frequency of production.
L5	Mayoral Services	102	Review the various budgets comprising the Mayoral function, with a target to achieve a 20% savings across these.	20	0	0	U	Looking at alternative ways to run the events and bring operations in line with other local authorities who have more independent/self-funded events. The savings should be on track to be met by the end of the year.
Total Legal Services Department				20	15	0		

Community and GreenspaceRevenue Budget as at 30 September 2023

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	17,085	7,607	7,428	179	358
Premises	3,685	1,483	1,479	4	8
Supplies & Services	1,598	837	882	(45)	(90)
Hired & Contracted Services	607	231	286	(55)	(111)
Book Fund	140	86	86	0	0
Food Provisions	371	117	181	(64)	(127)
School Meals Food	1,965	841	858	(17)	(32)
Miscellaneous Transport Costs	117	55	68	(13)	(26)
Other Agency Costs	601	182	209	(27)	(53)
Other Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
Waste Disposal Contracts	6,885	106	57	49	98
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	67	18	14	4	8
Grant to Norton Priory	172	86	87	(1)	(1)
Capital Financing	201	41	0	41	83
Total Expenditure	33,494	11,690	11,635	55	115
Income					
Sales Income	-3,962	-1,950	-1,402	(548)	(1,095)
Fees & Charges Income	-5,752	-3,488	-3,614	126	251
Rental Income	-221	-98	-108	10	19
Government Grant Income	-695	-646	-774	128	256
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-665	-383	-389	6	12
SLA Income	-2,391	-2,260	-2,139	(121)	(242)
Internal Fees Income	-592	-96	-176	80	161
Capital Salaries	-173	-46	-46	0	0
Transfers From Reserves	0	51	51	0	0
Total Income	-14,451	-8,916	-8,597	(319)	(638)
Net Operational Expenditure	19,043	2,774	3,038	(264)	(523)
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,825	913	913	0	0
Transport	2,046	1,027	1,047	(20)	(41)
Central Support	3,856	1,933	1,933	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-540	-274	-274	0	0
Net Total Recharges	7,386	3,599	3,619	(20)	(41)
Net Departmental Expenditure	26,429	6,373	6,657	(284)	(564)

Comments on the above figuresFinancial Position

The net department spend is £0.284m over budget at the end of Quarter 2 and the estimated outturn overspend against budget for 2023/24 is £0.564m.

Net employee spend is estimated to be under the approved budget at the end of the financial year. The forecast outturn includes the pay increase proposal of £1,925 for all grades (a 3.5% increase for DM and above scales has already been agreed). Whilst the proposed pay deal is over what had been included within the budget this is mitigated by the number of vacancies within leisure services and reduced casual usage in line with 2022/23 actual data.

Food Provisions is overspent due to the increasing inflationary food costs from suppliers.

Whilst it is currently forecast that waste disposal spend will be within the approved budget for the year this comes with a certain amount of caution. Waste disposal forecast cost is based on estimated tonnage of waste and the department is still waiting on invoices to be presented for previous years.

Sales income for the year is expected to underachieve compared to the budgeted income target. Shortfalls in income at the Stadium, school meal sales plus a reduction in room hire at Community Centres and Libraries are forecast to contribute towards lower income levels.

Additional grant Income has been received from Sport England under the Swimming Pool Support Fund initiative to ensure the continued provision of leisure centres in the Borough.

School Meals SLA income is forecast to underachieve over the course of the year, but this will be mitigated by reduced staffing costs.

Trade Waste fee charges are expected to overachieve with the increased uptake of green waste collections.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

Capital Projects as at 30 September 2023

Project Title	2023/24 Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Stadium Minor Works	34	17	18	16
Brookvale Pitch Refurbishment	28	14	13	15
Halton Leisure Centre	15,056	7,528	8,014	7,042
Open Spaces Schemes	851	426	137	714
Children's Playground Equipment	105	53	15	90
Upton Improvements	13	0	0	13
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12	2	1	11
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340	30	0	340
Runcorn Town Park	284	142	106	178
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,023	512	20	1,003
Pickerings Pasture Café	520	250	0	520
Litter Bins	20	5	0	20
Totals	18,286	8,978	8,324	9,962

Comments on the above figures**Halton (Moor Lane) Leisure Centre**

The project is making good progress and on track. Total project cost has increased slightly due to increase in provisional sum items. Totals costings for the project are continually being reviewed.

Open Spaces

This covers spending on a variety of externally funded projects: Birchfield Gardens refurbishment, Upton Rocks access works, The Big Halton Forest, and some small minor works contracts. Spending is behind target due to capacity issues.

Children's Playground Equipment

This is an ongoing project which includes spend on improvements within the Borough's playgrounds.

Upton Improvements

Open space improvement works undertaken. Work has been delayed due to capacity issues.

Crow Wood Park

The main contract is now completed, outstanding balance will cover final and retention payments.

Landfill Tax Credits Schemes

Currently used to support improvements for a rolling programme of existing playgrounds/open space schemes across the Borough.

Runcorn Town Park

Project to renew park infrastructure. Project is ongoing with 2 contracts on site. Carry forward to complete work in season and for contingency payments. INEOS funding of £300k was deferred - £10k each to 2023/24 & 2024/25 plus £280k to 2025/26.

Wigg/Spike Island Recovery Works





The programme was slightly behind due to staff capacity issues. However, a consultancy is in place and have begun site investigation works ahead of finalising designs/contract documentation for tender.

Pickerings Pasture Café

Creation of Café Facility at Pickerings Pasture, a Local Nature Reserve (LNR), which would be operated as a franchise. The Council has been asked to include £520k within the Council's Capital Programme to fund the construction of the café facility. Funded over seven years, the capital financing cost would be £87,500 per annum. This sum could be realised through a bid to the Environment Fund (paying £87,500 pa for seven years). Once completed and opened the café would generate income for the Council from the franchise rental, which could be used to offset the running costs of Pickerings Pasture.

COMMUNITY & GREENSPACE DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
COMM 1	The Brindley Theatre	64	Reduce Box Office opening hours from 10am-5pm Monday-Friday to 10am-2pm. Currently 80% of tickets are purchased online or by telephone and this is increasing each year. Replace all non-LED lighting in the building. This is estimated to reduce on-stage energy costs by 75%.	10 10	0 0	0 0		Box Office core opening hours were reduced to 5 hours (Mon – Fri) 10am – 3pm. They will be realigned to 4 hours daily 11am – 3.00pm (Mon – Fri) from 1 September onwards. No LED lighting has yet been installed but is planned for later in the financial year.
COMM 3	Sport & Recreation	471	Restructuring the roles and responsibilities of the Sports Development Team	0	36	0		On track to meet savings identified for 2024/25.
COMM 4	Stadium & Catering Services	751	Franchise the concourse only catering services to an external operator. An organisational restructure is currently being implemented for Stadium & Catering Services to reflect recent service changes.	50 40	0 0	0 0		
COMM 6	Area Forums	170	Reduce the base budget provision to £50k temporarily for one year, with all unspent monies in 2022/23 (currently £120k) being carried forward to be spent by the relevant Area Forums in 2023/24. The base budget position will then be reviewed for 2024/25.	120	-120	0		Implemented in 2023/24 budget setting.
COMM 5	Stadium & Catering Services – School Meals	12	Cease to deliver the school meals service, which has made significant losses of over £200,000 for a number of years and is forecast to make a similar loss by year-end. Work would be undertaken with schools over the next two years to support	0	0	12		Work underway in school meals being delivered through alternative means

Ref.	Service	Net	Description of Savings	Savings Value			Current	Comments
			them to secure an alternative means of delivery, whether in-house or via an external provider.					
Total Community & Environment Department				230	-84	12		

Revenue Operational Budget at 30 September 2023

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,311	2,666	2,633	33	65
Repairs & Maintenance	1,940	983	990	(7)	(11)
Premises	122	110	116	(6)	(10)
Energy & Water Costs	1,768	680	570	110	207
NNDR	793	684	645	39	39
Rents	170	127	128	(1)	(1)
Economic Regeneration Activities	37	3	3	0	0
Security	509	187	202	(15)	(30)
Supplies & Services	356	183	190	(7)	(14)
Supplies & Services - Grant	962	262	262	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	105	53	53	0	0
Capital Finance	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	38	38	38	0	0
Total Expenditure	12,111	5,976	5,830	146	245
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-840	-409	-449	40	81
Rent - Commercial Properties	-906	-356	-334	(22)	(43)
Rent - Investment Properties	-44	-22	-20	(2)	(5)
Rent - Markets	-852	-429	-406	(23)	(46)
Government Grant	-1,229	-318	-318	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-990	-413	-416	3	6
Schools SLA Income	-300	-284	-235	(49)	(49)
Recharges to Capital	-251	-63	-70	7	14
Transfer from Reserves	0	-732	-732	0	1
Total Income	-5,412	-3,026	-2,980	(46)	(41)
Net Operational Expenditure	6,699	2,950	2,850	100	204
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,006	1,003	1,003	0	0
Transport	23	12	12	0	0
Central Support	1,710	856	856	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-7,728	-3,864	-3,864	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,985	-1,993	-1,993	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,714	957	857	100	204

Comments on the above figures

Budget monitoring is undertaken on a monthly basis with budget holders to ensure that unapproved overspends are avoided, developing action plans to achieve efficiencies and address areas of budget pressure.

Finance works closely with the department to manage and analyse underspending to identify potential savings that could help meet current and future years' priorities.

Comparison to Previous Quarter

Economy, Enterprise & Property outturn has improved from a forecasted outturn of £0.125m over budget to £0.204m under budget at the end of the financial year with a current figure of net spend being £0.100m under budget for the second quarter of the year. A positive variance of £0.329m.

Supporting Information

The Department consists of 154fte of which 66fte are core funded, with a staff turnover savings target of £0.134m. There has continued to be delays in recruiting across the department, and so the projection is currently that the department will be under budget by £0.065m at financial year-end.

By carefully monitoring the accounts, the department has utilised grant/external funding where possible to try and relieve the pressure on the core Council budget. This is reflected in employee expenses this quarter where various projects have been identified and staff time has been charged accordingly. This process will continue throughout the year. As in Quarter 1 it is important to note that forecasts include an allowance for the 2023/24 pay award.

As inflation is running much higher than originally predicted at the time of budget setting, the department will be expected to absorb any price increases that may arise from within the budget allocations made. This is proving difficult for repairs and maintenance due to the continued increase in the price of materials. The Repairs and Maintenance programme is constantly under review to keep within budget.

However, there is a risk that unexpected events may occur which require expenditure to be incurred, that has not been allocated for.

The Asset Management Service has incurred one off expense this year, due to the vacant unit at The Hive, that was previously occupied by Frankie & Benny's. Costs relating to NNDR, Repairs and Maintenance and Service Charges have had to be paid by HBC until the unit is leased.

Due to the energy costs budget increasing significantly in 2023/24, the department is forecasting that it will be £0.207m under budget in year as costs have not risen as much as expected, but costs are still predicted to be £0.502m higher than 2022/23, which is an increase of over 50%. The forecast will change over the following two quarters depending on the change in energy usage over this time.

This financial year has witnessed an increase in the security costs. This is due not only to inflation, but the need for additional security in Halton Lea, due to anti-social behaviour. The need for security at all locations is reviewed on a regular basis and if necessary, advice is provided from the Police.

As in previous years, and the long recovery from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the financial challenges of commercial property rent continue to present a significant financial challenge, though the second quarter of the year has seen an increase in the amount of commercial property income. This is due to Agency Staff within Asset Management being able to focus predominantly on the rent reviews and licence fees.

There is also a focus within the team to fill the vacant properties within the portfolio. The current projection is that the income target will not be achieved by £0.046m. This is a £0.144 lower than the figure projected in Quarter 1.

Due to adverse trading conditions in the retail sector which have been made worse due to inflation and increased utilities costs, the department is projecting to under achieve on market rental income targets this budget year. The occupancy rate is approximately 89%.

The School Cleaning Service Level Agreement (SLA) is not covering its costs this budget year due to the need to employ agency staff to cover sickness and leave and the pay award. A review of SLA charges has been undertaken ahead of the next budget year. The demand for the service is also decreasing as schools move to Academies.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

Please see Appendix A for details of progress towards achieving budget efficiency savings agreed by Council in February 2023.

Capital Projects as of 30 September 23

	Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Expenditure				
3MG	151	12	12	139
Murdishaw	30	0	0	30
Equality Act Improvement Works	282	84	84	198
Kingsway Learning Centre Improved Facilities	36	0	0	36
Halton Lea TCF Roof Top Garden	35	0	0	35
Property Improvements	223	23	23	200
Waterloo Building Runcorn	93	0	0	93
Woodend - Former Unit 10 Catalyst Trade Park	200	161	161	39
Foundry Lane Residential Area	2634	1303	1303	1331
Police Station Demolition	406	0	0	406
Runcorn Station Building Development	515	30	30	485
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	17	0	0	17
Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development	291	0	0	291
Changing Places	212	52	52	160
Town Deal	2,740	585	586	2154
Total Capital	7,865	2,250	2,251	5,614

Murdishaw – The department has worked in partnership with Onward Homes to develop a community scheme which includes the establishment of a new CIC who will run a new venture from the former boxing club. A scheme of environmental improvements has been initiated across the estate with some signage improvements completed. Discussions are ongoing with Community Development and Murdishaw Community Centre to make improvements to the external space and refurbish the allotment space to allow for the local community to develop its allotment project.

Equality Act Budget- It is anticipated that the equality act budget will be fully spent by year end as the department have a number of projects that are currently on site or have yet to start which should be complete by year end.

Kingsway Learning Centre - There are plans for a PA system to be installed in October.

Property Improvements- It is anticipated that the Property Improvement budget will be fully spend by year end, the department have a number of projects which have been allocated to that budget, some of which are on site some of which have yet to commence on site nevertheless they will be complete by year end.

Waterloo Centre - Approval has now been obtained to demolish the building, as such works will commence prior to Christmas with the demolition. Final costings will be known during quarter 3.

Woodend - All works are complete except for the installation of the new gas supply which has been ordered and will hopefully be done prior to Christmas. The cost of the gas supply is circa £40k.

Foundry Lane – Project progressing on schedule with all ground remediation works now complete. Slight underspend against projected expenditure at 2022/23 year-end due to remediation works delays incurred during Q2 and Q3. Expenditure will fall back into line in 2023.

Police Station Demolition – Legal are in the process of finalising the coverage payment for Cheshire Police

Runcorn Station Building Development –A detailed delivery programme up to Approval In Principal stage has been produced and is 3 weeks ahead of schedule. A sponsor’s instruction has also been sent to partners to be signed off.

UKSF – Halton submitted an Investment Plan to the CA for three strands of its UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme – Town Centres; Local Culture, Arts and Heritage; Green, Resilient, Safe Communities. This amounts to £608k up to March 2025 and is a mix of capital and revenue.







Runcorn Waterfront Development - Preparation work is currently ongoing in respect of getting all the tender documentation ready to go through a procurement exercise in respect of the demolition of both Belvedere and Churchill Hall. It is hoped that the tender documents will be issued via the Chest in November with a realistic start on site not being until the New Year.


Changing Places - The changing places facility at the Stadium is now complete and operational. Works are progressing well on site at Victoria Park with completion due in late October. Works have also started on site at Halton Lea Library, completion being due by the end of November.

The Town Deal programme –. The Town Deal programme covers a number of projects to strengthen the town centre economy, including Brindley Theatre Enhancement, Creative and Digital Skills Centre, Health and Education Hub, High Street Connectivity, Town Centre New Homes, Station Enterprise Facility, and Unlock Runcorn. Business cases for all projects have been submitted and approved. Work will continue on site for the next 3 years.

ECONOMY, ENTERPRISE AND PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A




Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
EEP1	Capital Works Team	N/A	Increase the level of fee income by increasing the percentage charged or charging by time, including those works not currently charged for.	10	0	0		On target.
EEP4	Cleaning Services – Council Buildings	580	Review cleaning arrangements, with a focus on only emptying bins and cleaning toilets daily.	0	100	0		Until the accommodation review is complete, only limited savings will be made in 2024/25
EEP2	Caretaking & Security Services	641	A review and restructuring of caretaking arrangements.	0	52	0		Restructure will take place in 24/25. It is anticipated the full saving will not be met in year. Cannot achieve savings for security due to anti-social behaviour in Halton Lea. Police have advised security is kept on site until this is resolved.
			Reduce security cover at Halton Lea to provide opening/closing and then static guarding 7.00am to 7.30pm Monday to Friday, and 9.30am to 3.00pm on Saturdays to cover the opening hours of Halton Direct Link.	35	0	0		
EEP5	Corporate Buildings	927	Generate additional rental income by providing additional office space for external organisations at Rutland House, by letting out the remaining three floors.	120	0	0		Reflected in 2023/24 budget.
EEP6	Facilities Management	165	Restructure the team in light of an expression of interest for retirement.	44	0	0		Reflected in 2023/24 budget.

EEP8	Technical Support & Market Team	392	Restructuring of the team	98	0	0		Reflected in 2023/24 budget.
Total Economy, Enterprise & Property Department				307	152	0		




8.0 Application of Symbols

Symbols are used in the following manner:

Progress Symbols

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Performance Indicator</u>
Green		Indicates that the <u>objective is on course to be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.
Amber		Indicates that it is <u>uncertain or too early to say at this stage</u> whether the milestone/objective will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.
Red		Indicates that it is <u>highly likely or certain</u> that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.

Direction of Travel Indicator

Green		Indicates that performance is better as compared to the same period last year.
Amber		Indicates that performance is the same as compared to the same period last year.
Red		Indicates that performance is worse as compared to the same period last year.
N / A	N / A	Indicates that the measure cannot be compared to the same period last year.

Children and Young People – Directorate Overview Report – Quarter 2

Reporting Period: Quarter 2 2023-24

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of issues and progress that have occurred during the period of the report towards the priority of Children and Young People (CYP). The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress is explained within Appendix 1 (section 6).
- 1.2 Please note names have been provided to indicate which officer is responsible for the commentary to aid Members, as requested by the Children and Young People Policy and Performance Board. A key is provided in Appendix 1 (section 6).

2.0 Key Developments

- 2.1 **Priority Education Investment Area (PEIA) Funding:** PEIA funding has been determined and commissioning of services and providers has been completed for 3 of the strands (Improving outcomes at EYFS, KS2 and KS4). All schools have been informed of their selection to be involved in all activities and launched events have now been held. Over 90% of identified schools have now confirmed their engagement with other schools requesting involvement if spaces become available due to the strength of the offer. The attendance strand has now been finalised, with the appointment of attendance support offices and a data analyst approved. The appointment process is now underway with an anticipated start date in January 2024. All work is expected to conclude by March 2025.
- 2.2 **School Attendance:** Since the last report (Q1) an Attendance Framework document has been developed with schools, the local authority's Department for Education Attendance Adviser, Children's Social Care, and other key partners key in helping to improve school attendance in Halton. This has been issued to all schools and sets out a three-stage graduated approach to helping to improve attendance at Halton's schools. In addition, officers took a proposal to the Department for Education's Priority Education Investment Area Board (PEIA) on 29th September 2023 to bid for additional resources to support children, young people, families, schools and the local authority in tackling persistent absence in school. This was approved in principle by the PEIA Board, and it is anticipated that the DfE will fund 5 x School Attendance Support Officers who will work with families and schools to help improve the attendance of those children and young people who are persistently absent, 2 x 0.5 FTE Assistant Educational Psychologists to support families and school staff, 1 x 0.6 FTE Data/Performance Officer to provide attendance data to ensure support is targeted appropriately and that DfE receive update reports on progress, together with an Administrative Officer to support the function. These posts will be recruited to during the autumn term 2023 for a January 2024 start, and will run until 31st March 2025, and will sit within the Education Welfare Service.
- 2.3 **Team Around the School:** This project successfully launched earlier this year with visits to all secondary schools within the authority- we are now on the second round of visits. These multi-agency meetings include a wide variety of professionals including the school improvement service, educational psychologists, Virtual School, early help, mental health support, specialist teachers and education welfare who visit each school to discuss and support children and young people, who are at risk of exclusion, as well as offering support to schools to improve practice. We also ask for external support from Cheshire Police and the Youth Justice Service, if they are involved with the young people spoken about. These meetings will continue

throughout the academic year. They have evolved to also discuss children with extreme persistent absence and emotional based school non-attendance. Throughout the year, we will look to enhance this offer further to clusters of primary schools, although we have set a date to support one particular Primary already.

- 2.4 **Virtual School Annual Report:** The Virtual School annual report has been published and highlights the key areas of focus for the new academic year including increasing the number of care leavers in education, employment and training and the development of an 'engagement hub' to provide bespoke support, challenge and guidance for all vulnerable children including those with a Social Worker.
- 2.5 **SEND Assessments: Improvements to EHCPs-** Significant work has been undertaken in 2023 to improve both the timeliness and the quality of EHCPs. Timeliness of EHCPs had been declining steadily from the autumn term 2022 and in April 2023, had reached a low of 12.9%. This was due to staffing inconsistencies in the SEND assessment team, impacting upon the capacity of the team and absences impacting adversely. A robust staffing recovery plan was devised and implemented and from Spring onwards, the added management supervision and added staff capacity began to impact positively on timeliness performance. Improved performance reporting systems were implemented, and weekly monitoring of timeliness introduced. This demonstrated week on week performance, and an overall improvement trajectory which as of October 2023, indicates that timeliness has improved to a much healthier 58.3%. The wider application process for considering and processing requests for statutory assessment has been reviewed and improved, ensuring it is a more robust and consistent process, resulting in over 40% of requests for assessment being declined- meaning that we are only assessing those children who genuinely require assessment. A comprehensive Quality Assurance process has now been implementing using the reviewed framework and QA tool for EHCPs. The multi-agency QA group have met 4 times and audited cases from all age ranges, sectors and types of need. The finding from these audits have been fed back to contributors and the impact noted in the later QA audit sessions, where newer plans were considered to be of a much higher standard. Themes for improvement were identified across Education, health and social care, and fed back to Education and Health colleagues. These findings are also being shared with social care.
- 2.6 **SEND Sufficiency-** Resource Bases, Free School for SEMH and added Specialist Places within borough. Phase one of the SEND Sufficiency Strategy is now in implementation stage and this academic year almost 100 additional resource base places have been added across both primary and secondary settings, creating specialist provision for learners with SEMH, ASC, SLCN and complex needs. We anticipate that this added capacity and expertise will take pressure off both the mainstream and specialist sector and reduce the requirement to seek out of borough placements for our most vulnerable learners. In addition, we anticipate the opening of a Free School for SEMH Secondary learners from September 2024. This will ultimately create up to 35 places in this area, over a two year phased period, again reducing the requirement for Out of Borough placements. Further to this, we have completed scoping exercise with Ashley School and Brookfields School, with a view to adding to their cohort of learners, from September 2025 onwards.
- 2.7 **Delivering Better Value (DBV).** The Department for Education's DBV in SEND programme aims to support local authorities and their partners to improve delivery of SEND services for children and young people whilst working towards financial sustainability. Halton is one of 55 Local Authorities in this programme, which is intended to provide dedicated technical support and funding to the local areas which have opted to participate. We have worked extensively with colleagues from Newton Europe, the DfE and CIPFA to complete a range of diagnostic

tasks, also conducting a number of key sessions with representatives from all key stakeholder agencies and parents/ carers. During November 2023 a grant application to bid for up to £1 million funding will be submitted and we will learn about the success of this bid during March 2024. Ultimately the intention is to identify opportunities to support children with SEND earlier with the right support, at the right time. It also will mitigate risks to offer and enable the system to work collectively with greater efficiency, developing long term changes to systems, which will allow timely and cost effective interventions to be delivered quickly.

- 2.8 **Halton's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment:** This report has been reviewed for 2023-24. It shows that Halton continues to provide a sufficient, flexible and high-quality early years and childcare market. Despite the challenges being faced by the early years sector, new provisions are opening up and parents and carers continue to have a wide choice of high quality and affordable childcare services. However, the Early Years sector have identified that there are continuing concerns around recruitment and retention of staff, the high numbers of children coming into settings with SEND and the reduction of numbers of children. There are also concerns around the increasing costs of fuel and overheads, which are not reflected in the funding figures. Given the changes to childcare coming into effect from 2024 with childcare being offered from 9 months of age and an expansion of offer for two year olds this may pose some challenges both nationally and locally. Officers are working closely with the sector to forecast and monitor demand and ongoing sufficiency of the new expansion of offer.
- 2.9 **Wellcomm Screening:** Wellcomm screening is currently in process of being rolled out into all primary schools in Halton by the end of March 2025. This academic year 25 schools are currently engaging in the project through the Priority Education Investment Area work. Talk Boost training is due to commence in November 2023.
- 2.10 **The Halton Lea 'Right to Succeed' Project:** This project is part of the Steve Morgan foundation and working with Liverpool city region. Halton Lea was the ward that was identified 18 months ago to work in to improve outcomes for children and families. A hub model approach will be delivered and aligned with Halton's family Hub model. The programme has completed the discovery phase and has now moved into dedicated steering groups looking at education and wider services. The Right to Succeed education strand continues to make good progress, with services and activities commissioned and agreed with all schools and delivery successfully underway in 100% of identified schools within the region.
- 2.11 **Family hubs:** Halton has launched first Family Hub with Kingsway Family Hub which was launched in July! Excitingly Halton is one of 75 local authorities to be eligible for Family Hub funding to transform existing provision into family hubs model and framework. Early help leads coordinate the hub offer and working closely with all partners to deliver the new model. A steering group has been set up and will progress the different work streams and feed into the group. Year one funding has been rolled over. Branding is now in place which was coproduced with children and families Governance structure of accountability has been suggested and ready for management sign off. The vision is that an Early Help Partnership board will offer scrutiny, challenge and support to many streams of work within early help and prevention including family hubs, supporting families, right to succeed, early help assessments, reducing parental conflict and parenting. Runcorn family Hubs will be launched on 25th October. There will be an open/fun day held at Brookvale children centre and throughout the other centres on the 26th and 27th October 2023.

- 2.12 **Pause:** Pause in Halton is now well established, and the first graduation took place on 20th January. The programme works with women who have previously had 2 or more children removed from their care. In September the annual event and celebration was held with huge success. The project has already made significant impact on the women and really made a difference to their lives. Evidence already shows positive outcomes including women moving into adult education and gaining employment. After a sustainability report and constant persistence funding was finally secured in March 23 for another 12 months for the programme. Currently being funding 50/50 by LA and ICB. Divisional Manager for early help and PAUSE practice lead are meeting with partners over the next few months for further sustainability.



3.0 Emerging Issues


- 3.1 **Post 16 Provision:** Variety of choice in types of Post 16 providers and Post 16 provision that can be accessed mid-year is limited in Halton. The sector is made more vulnerable because two Post 16 providers in Halton operate on subcontracts from FE Colleges. During 2022/23 academic year both providers experienced a loss of their subcontracted provision with very limited notice. Both providers secured new contracts, with support from the Local Authority, although for one provider the contract is only initially until December 2023 and for the other the contract limits numbers. We anticipate this second provider will not be able to take any more learners soon. The ongoing issue has been raised with the Combined Authority, who are facilitating a city region wide discussion with a view to progressing the issue to Government level, seeking more localised influence in Post 16 provision commissioning.
- 3.2 **Halton's Childcare Sufficiency:** Whilst Halton's Sufficiency Duty Report shows that Halton continues to provide a sufficient, flexible and high-quality early years and childcare market, there continue to be concerns around the recruitment and retention of staff. The Early Years team are working closely with other LA's within the Liverpool City Region to address this issue. A marketing campaign aimed at attracting Childminders into the profession is also being developed to commence January 2024.
- 3.3 **Governor recruitment and retention:** Taking on the role of a school governor is a key strategic role with increasing demands and accountabilities placed upon the governing board. Due to increasing demands; demographic profile of governors, more people are stepping down from the role leaving vacancies. Recruitment of governors is ongoing with the Chief Executive sharing the importance, value and benefits of being a school governor on social media. Work is ongoing with local businesses, community members and partners to recruit and attract new governors but is a local and national challenge.
- 3.4 **School Improvement Monitoring and Brokering Grant:** The School Improvement Service has historically been funded by the 'School Improvement, Monitoring and Brokering Grant', which has enabled Local Authorities to risk assess, quality assure and provide educational, curriculum and leadership support and challenge to all our maintained schools. This also funded provision for training, briefings and cluster networks for school staff, led by Associate School Improvement Advisors (ASIA) colleagues. Sadly, this grant has been ceased and we therefore need to move towards the service becoming funded through a service level agreement with all schools. This presents risks in engaging all schools and ensuring support is purchased back at a sufficient level to enable them to receive the necessary support, challenge and guidance. The SLA and course and network meeting charges have now been shared with school leaders and goes live for purchasing from Q3. Halton have offered such key services for free and are one of the last authorities to move to a charging system. There are potential benefits that this enables colleagues to work with all schools including academy partners if school leaders wish to commission the function from Halton Local Authority, through a service level agreement.
- 3.5 **Alternative Provision:** Like many areas, Halton have seen an increase in the number of permanent exclusions and an increase in demand for alternative provision. This has placed pressure on particularly Key Stage Three provision at our pupil referral unit and limited options available across Halton or local neighbour regions. We are working with our school partners and wider teams to identify solutions to resolving this pressure and increasing a preventative offer too, with the aim of reducing the need to permanently exclude and meet needs earlier.



4.0 Performance Overview

The following information provides a synopsis of progress for both milestones and performance indicators across the key business areas that have been identified by the Directorate. It should be noted that given the significant and unrelenting downward financial pressures faced by the Council there is a requirement for Departments to make continuous in-year adjustments to the allocation of resources in order to ensure that the Council maintains a balanced budget. Whilst every effort continues to be made to minimise any negative impact of such arrangements upon service delivery, they may inevitably result in a delay in the delivery of some of the objectives and targets contained within this report.









Objective: Improve outcomes for children and young people through effective multi-agency early intervention (PED01)











Ref	Measure	22/23 Actual	23/24 Target	Current	Direction of Travel compared to same Qtr Prev Yr	Quarterly Progress
PED01 01	Increase the number of early help assessments (MAP/PRE-MAP) health/education and other partners are leading on	613 MAP 263 PRE-MAP	N/A	400 MAP 49 PRE-MAP	 Q2 22-23 323 (All)	N/A
<p><i>Supporting Commentary:</i> Val Armor Work is continuing with regards to the roll out programme for training health and education in accessing the system and taking the lead professional role. Runcorn Locality manager is the lead officer in driving this forward however we are yet to see the impact of this on number of health and schools in the lead professional role. We are also going to develop a team around the school approach in collaboration with education colleagues. This will focus on increasing attendance but will also help to support school colleagues with MAP's. Support clinics and weekly working together meetings will oversee the increase in partnership uptake in the borough.</p>						
PED01 02	Improve overall attendance at schools: Primary –Pri PRU – PRU Secondary – Sec Special – Spec Total	LA - 92.12% Pri - 93.86% Sec - 90.38% Spe - 87.62% PRU - 54.61%	95%	LA – 93.62% Pri – 95.62% Sec - 92.10 % Spe - 89.22% PRU – 52.61%	N/A	
<p><i>Supporting Commentary:</i> Debbie Houghton /Scott Middlehurst Attendance across all schools for autumn term 23/24 has improved across all phases which is positive, although the 95% target has not been met other than for primary schools. There has been ongoing support to improve school attendance by the Education Welfare Service and schools supported by other partner agencies. The Education Welfare Service will again trade with schools in 23/24 alongside an increased statutory offer in line with the Government Guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance'.</p>						



Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
PED01a	Work with schools to maintain the level of attendance at Primary and Secondary Schools. Debbie Houghton (March 2024)	
<p><i>Supporting commentary:</i> Debbie Houghton Attendance across all schools for autumn term 23/24 has improved across all phases so attendance for autumn term 23 exceeds the previous attendance for 22/23. The education Welfare Service are continuing to work with schools, parents, pupils and other agencies to help improve school attendance.</p>		

Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
PED01b	Implement Pause project and support women to make positive choices, improving their relationships with their children and preventing further children being taken into care.	
<p><u>Supporting commentary:</u> Val Armor</p> <p>PAUSE in Halton is now over 12 months old and we have celebrated an annual event showcasing the superb work that is being carried out. The project is already having a significant positive impact on the lives of the women involved. The first cohort of women graduated on 20th Jan 23 at a wonderful ceremony highlighting their achievements over the last 18 months. Funding for a further 12 months have finally been secured in March 23. A plan is now in place to secure further funding from partners for 3-5 years. The new cohort of women for 23-24 have been contacted and are in the engagement process of the programme 90% of the women have already signed up to the programme.</p>		
PED01c	Revise Halton's parental offer that will include further developmental of reducing parental conflict training.	
<p><u>Supporting commentary:</u> Val Armor</p> <p>The Parenting officer has been in post since January 2022 and now all referrals for parenting go to one central point. This has made it much easier for partners to understand. There have been three parenting events so far in June 2022, January 23 and April 23 and this will be on a rolling programme so partners in the borough are aware of all of the parenting offer. Talks are still in place with IT to develop our own parenting hub. The reducing parental conflict programme has been rolled out over the past 2 years and over 160 workers have been trained. The aim is to embed this work into the everyday work of frontline practitioners. A new partnership with Amity (training provider) has been established and the parenting coordinator will become a train the trainer and roll this programme out in the next quarter. The success in this parenting role has resulted in the need to look for further funding to have an assistant parenting role to help with the delivery and coordination of the parenting hub. This funding will be aligned with Family Hubs transformation and two scale 5 parenting assistants have now been recruited to, this will enhance the reducing parental conflict agenda. The borough continues to embed nurture principles through all of our parenting work across the workforce.</p>		

Objective: Keeping Children and Young People safe by improving practice (PED02)



Ref:	Measure	22/23 Actual	23/24 Target	Current	Direction of Travel compared to same Qtr Prev Yr	Quarterly Progress
PED02 01	Monitor the rate of referrals to Children's Social Care per 10000 0–18-year-olds (Forecast annualised rate at end of financial year)	617 (prov)	500 (full year)	637 (rate) 405 (total)	 Q2 22-23 316	
<p>Supporting commentary: Claude Madembo <i>We are strengthening the understanding and application of thresholds at the front door to ensure that only children in need of support and intervention at tiers 3 and 4 progress to referrals. There are plans to re-launch threshold document and Multi Agents referral process. We are also working closely with Early Help/ Intervention to prevent children entering statutory services who do not need to. We have an additional health specialist sitting in iCART to support screening and navigating health establishments when sharing information. Work is also beginning with community partners to do more for children and families before referring to Children Social Care by completing comprehensive multi-agency plans (MAPs) for tier 3 cases.</i></p>						
PED02 02	Monitor the rate of children in need (open cases) per 10000 0–18-year-olds (snapshot at end of quarter)	499 (includes care leavers)	500	413 (rate) 1137 (total)	 Q2 22-23 389	
<p>Supporting commentary: Claude Madembo <i>We have re-issued our practice standards clearly articulating frequency requirements of visiting to our children. We will visit children to our set standards and make decisions early during assessments ensuring that cases do not unnecessarily drift or stay open where there is no need for it. We are strengthening our transition decision making points to ensure that only the right cases progress further in the system. Working closely with Early Help soon after assessments cases which do not require statutory services will be transferred. A CIN Reviewing Officer recently appointed will support case progression of CIN cases.</i></p>						
PED02 03	Monitor the rate of children subject to a child protection plan per 10000 0–18-year-olds (snapshot at end of quarter)	70	45	66 (rate) 182 (total)	 Q2 22-23 56	
<p>Supporting commentary: Claude Madembo <i>Working closely with Early Help step down cases will be worked on so that they do not escalate back into statutory services. By strengthening the understanding and application of thresholds at different transition points (contact to referral, referral to assessment/ strategy discussion) we will reduce the number of cases progressing as CP. We have managed to reduce our caseloads per social worker. This is strengthening the quality of our assessments and intervention to reduce number of cases escalating to CP. Practice Improvement Lead and CIN Reviewing Officer are supporting managers in iCART/ DAT to ensure that cases are progressing at the right levels.</i></p>						
PED02 04	Monitor the rate of children in care per 10000 0–18-year-olds (snapshot at end of quarter)	133	90	143 (rate) 395 (total)	 Q2 22-23 131	
<p>Supporting commentary: <i>Halton's rate of CLA has remained above all comparators for the past 13 months. The number of children in care has been impacted by the number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) as an LA. In September 23 there were 29 UASC. There has been an increase in the CLA numbers April-23 to September-23</i></p>						

Ref:	Measure	22/23 Actual	23/24 Target	Current	Direction of Travel compared to same Qtr Prev Yr	Quarterly Progress
PED02 05	Reduce the number of children and young people who enter the care system (financial year, cumulative to end of quarter)	147	68	62	 Q2 22-23 76	
<p>Supporting commentary: Raj Bharkhada Prevent children entering the CIN service by ensuring that Early Help services are targeted towards meeting the needs of the children in the community in conjunction with the front door. We continue to strengthen our working with our early help colleagues. The 12-week plan has seen increased visits and better planning. We anticipate better outcomes moving forward.</p>						
PED02 06	Reduce the average caseload in Children in Need Teams (snapshot end of quarter)	21	18	21	 Q2 22-23 18	
<p>Supporting commentary: Raj Bharkhada Caseloads are continuing to stabilise. We have closed many cases and believe there are some within the system that require closure or stepped down to early Help. We will review the impact of the CIN review manager at the front door in the next few weeks.</p>						
PED02 07	Increase the proportion of missing incidents where a return interview is completed (financial year, cumulative to end of quarter)	70%	85%	53%	 Q2 22-23 46%	
<p>Supporting commentary: Clare Hunt For this period, there have been 98 return interviews completed with 58 young people by the commissioned service. 53% of all incidents have had a return interview and 71% were completed within 72 hours, this is a decrease from the previous quarter. The Declines for return interviews were 87 incidents by 13 young people.</p>						
PED02 08	Reduce the number of children who repeatedly run away in Halton (in last 12 months, snapshot end of quarter)	21	N/A	3	 Q2 22-23 8	
<p>Supporting commentary: Clare Hunt For this reporting period, there has been a total of 184 notifications from the commissioned service. There have been three young people with repeat missing incidents. These three young people have made five or more incidents during the quarter, accounted for 14% of all missing incidents in the quarter. The repeat cohort was made up of 2 males (1 20 miles I Care) and 1 female (20mile). With You's engagement rate with this cohort is 62%, with 2 out of 3 in this quarter engaging with at least one return home interview.</p>						
PED02 09	Reduce the number of children who go missing in the year (number of children recorded as missing in last 12 months, snapshot end of quarter)	357	N/A	96	 Q2 22-23 85	
<p>Supporting commentary: Clare Hunt There has been a decrease of 23% of missing incidents from 240 to 184, as well as a decrease of 33% young people from 143 to 96. The largest percentage of incidents broken down by CYP accommodation status is Home CYP, at 45%, a 5% decrease compared to Q1. This is the same cohort with the highest percentage of incidents as in the previous quarter. Incidents produced by CYP residing in care saw a 4% increase compared to Q1, with 20% of incidents accounted for by this cohort. This is a 23% decrease from Q2 2022. The missing incidents are slightly higher for females compared to males for both the 10-15yrs and 16-18yrs cohorts reported MFH. The under 10 cohort saw an even split between males and females for this quarter. The main reasons for missing identified by young people in the return interviews that caused them to be reported as MFH were boundary issues at home or in care, family conflicts and school issues. These are the same as the professional reasons cited, with the addition of substance misuse and older peer influence.</p>						

Ref:	Measure	22/23 Actual	23/24 Target	Current	Direction of Travel compared to same Qtr Prev Yr	Quarterly Progress
PED02 10	Record the number of young people flagged as at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (snapshot end of quarter)	13	20	23	 Q2 22-23 23	





Supporting commentary: [Raj Bharkhada](#)

Multi-agency meetings are in place and are attended regularly by partner agencies. Social Care is the co-chair for this meeting. We need to ensure that all relevant cases are reviewed by this panel, actions addressed. And where required social workers are to provide a detailed and current risk assessment. All cases are heard at the monthly meeting with a targeted risk management plan for each child. Police and Social Care need to work closely over the next few months to establish good working relationships. Additionally, we have reviewed high risk cases within the service and continue to monitor them regularly.









PED02 11	Record the number of young people flagged as at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation (snapshot end of quarter)	34	12	23 Low 24 Med 13 High (U18's only)	 Q2 22-23 32	
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Supporting commentary: [Raj Bharkhada](#)

Multi-agency meetings are in place and are attended regularly by partner agencies. Social Care is the co-chair for this meeting. We Multi-agency meetings are in place and are attended regularly by partner agencies. Social Care is the co-chair for this meeting. We need to ensure that all relevant cases are reviewed by this panel, actions addressed. And where required social workers are to provide a detailed and current risk assessment. All cases are heard at the monthly meeting with a targeted risk management plan for each child. Police and Social Care need to work closely over the next few months to establish good working relationships need to ensure that all relevant cases are reviewed by this panel, actions addressed. And where required social workers are to provide a detailed and current risk assessment. All cases are heard at the monthly meeting with a targeted risk management plan for each child. Police and Social Care need to work closely over the next few months to establish good working relationships.

Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
PED02a	Embed a systemic model of social work practice across the whole service, social workers, managers and senior leaders.	
<i>Supporting commentary:</i> The 'roll out' of training in support of systemic practice remains ongoing. Systemic principles are being aligned to policy and procedures, including social work practice standards and the supervision policy. Practitioners are beginning to use systemic principles in their work with children and families.		
PED02b	Review and update Workforce Strategy in line with the Knowledge and Skills framework and the Professional Capabilities Framework. Developing the competencies, skills and knowledge of the workforce making them motivated, stable and ambitious will improve the outcomes for families and keep them at the heart of everything we do.	
<i>Supporting commentary:</i> Work is continuing in developing a workforce strategy. A "star chambers" approach has been adopted to align the service structures with the current staffing establishments in Early Help and Children's Social Care.		
PED02c	Implement redevised structure for children and need service to ensure better resilience and management accountability to provide a safe and structured environment for social workers.	
<i>Supporting commentary:</i> The Service structure supporting Children in Need is currently under review.		
PED02d	Implement redevised quality and assurance framework to monitor improvements in practice	
<i>Supporting commentary:</i> Quality assurance and audit systems are in place; these provide accurate narrative on the quality of practice across the Service. The framework for learning, to convert this narrative in to practice improvement, has been strengthened by a small team of Practice Improvement Leads who provide mentoring, training and support to practitioners and first line managers		




Objective: Improve outcomes for Children in Care and Care Leavers (PED03)


Ref:	Measure	22/23 Actual	23/24 Target	Current	Direction of Travel compared to same Qtr Prev Yr	Quarterly Progress
PED03 01	Reduce the number of children who are placed in residential care (snapshot at end of quarter)	40	20	44	 Q2 22-23 43	
<p>Supporting Commentary: There is a significant focus currently in respect of reviewing those children and young people who are placed in a residential placement to ensure that only those children and young people who require this type of placement remain in such placements. Tracker meetings take place to ensure appropriate timely plans are in place for young people moving towards independence as well as reviewing progress. Furthermore, the Care Leavers Accommodation Group continues to meet monthly to discuss all referrals for those young people aged 17 plus who require their own accommodation in line with their Pathway Plan.</p>						
PED03 02	Reduce the number of children who are placed in independent fostering agencies (snapshot at end of quarter)	71	35	95	 Q2 22-23 56	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Placements are tracked through the resource and placements meeting where sourcing Halton's mainstream foster carers is a primary focus. The current level of sufficiency due to increase of looked after children is resulting in the use of Independent Fostering Agencies, and in some circumstances residential, however as foster carers approvals are also tracked there are means to place with in house carers planned. All requests for a fostering placement on Eclipse go to the internal fostering team to ensure best use of resources as well as tracking against new applicants at an early stage and only after this is a referral made to the independent sector. This remains an ongoing area of focus and the fostering team are looking to strengthen their fostering recruitment for in house carer.</p>						
PED03 03	Maintain the percentage of Care Leavers in suitable accommodation (snapshot at end of quarter)	94%	95%	96%	 Q2 22-23 98%	
<p>Supporting Commentary: The Care leaver accommodation group continues to meet monthly and track young people alongside sourcing appropriate accommodation for them to transition into.</p>						
PED03 04	Increase the percentage of Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training (snapshot at end of quarter)	57%	65%	56%	 Q2 22-23 54%	
<p>Supporting Commentary: There has been an increase in the team around personal advisors which going forward will allow more focus in working with the virtual school in sourcing appropriate EET opportunities and supporting Care Leavers to access them.</p>						
PED03 05	Percentage of CIC Residential and Leaving Care placements that have received a Quality Assurance Visit from the Placements Team within the previous 12 months (cumulative from April to end of quarter)	Residential 42% Leaving Care 94.7%	N/A	7 Residential visits 1 Leaving Care visit	N/A	N/A
<p>Supporting Commentary: The increase in the number of placement requests this quarter as well as previous quarter has impacted on the teams ability to complete some planned quality monitoring visits. However, as well as the planned visit there have been a number of responsive visits that have taken place linked to quality concerns from Professionals as well as a result of OFSTED inspection outcome reports</p>						

Ref:	Measure	22/23 Actual	23/24 Target	Current	Direction of Travel compared to same Qtr Prev Yr	Quarterly Progress
PED03 06	Report on the budget spent on independent and out of borough placements for Children in Care (Forecast end of year) (Sarah Riley/Lucy Freaney)	Projected spend forecast for 2022/23 Residential £13,805,604.33 IFA £2,713,219.28 UASC Residential £1,550,840.21 IFA £189,878.55	Projected 9,583,822	Projected spend forecast for 2023/24 Residential £15,777,052 IFA £3,731,551 UASC Residential £1,316,508 IFA £101,463 Total overspend of £3,283,331		










Supporting Commentary:







In order to address these rising costs, the following initiatives have been embedded to help to reduce spend in this area: High-cost tracker meeting, Residential Step Down to Fostering events and an increase in, Supported Lodgings, Commissioned Care Leavers Group and Training Flats. This is in line with other neighbouring local authorities, there have also been an increase in the number of potential Continuing Health Care assessments for the young people in care which may result in joint funding being put in place with Health services.





Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
PED03a	Ensuring all children in care achieve permanency in a timely way.	
Supporting Commentary: <i>The permanence panel is embedded operationally in the service and meets monthly. All CIC are presented at the panel to add scrutiny and oversight to their permanence plan. The revised procedure and TOR for permanence and the panel have been launched and delivered at social care and early help development briefings. Panels are being arranged to review and track children's permanency plans.</i>		
PED03b	Ensure that Safeguarding Unit escalate any delays or concerns using escalate policy	
Supporting Commentary: <i>The Safeguarding Unit use the dispute resolution process to ensure timely and effective planning for our Children in Care and Children who are subject of a Child Protection Plan. The IRO's raise escalations through this process when more informal discussions with the Social Worker and Practice Lead has not led to satisfactory resolution/progress in planning for an individual child.</i>		
PED03c	Review and quality assure the commissioning of services for Children in Care and Care Leavers to ensure that they meet the needs of Halton's population and inform future commissioning decisions	
Supporting Commentary: <u>Jill Farrell</u> <i>Quality assurance visits are carried out with wider teams to identify strengths of offer; areas of development to meet need more effectively and review that the contract requirements are being fulfilled to meet need. Specialist teachers, school improvement colleagues and other teams support this process to monitor quality of provision in relation to quality of education and curriculum offer and interventions and strategies to meet need and plan next steps.</i>		

Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
PED03d	Through the quality assurance of Personal Education Plans (PEP), identify areas of need and support to improve outcomes for individual Children in Care	
<p><i>Supporting Commentary:</i> Ben Holmes</p> <p><i>Autumn term PEPs are now underway, alongside those for children and young people who are new into care. At the end of the Summer Term 2023, 95% of PEPs were completed within timescale in secondary and post 16 (up from 80% in the spring term) and 98% of EY and Primary. These figures are in line or better than the same time last academic year. As a result of the more rigorous QA process introduced in the spring term, it has resulted in an increase in Amber rated PEPs, particularly within Primary. However, the SMART targets training has now been delivered, with further targeted support put in place and a successful conference delivered in Q2 with over 150 delegates from education and social care, which further developed the quality of PEPs. Overall, the most popular requests for Pupil Premium + funding are for Speech and Language support in EY, SEMH in Primary and 1:1 tuition in secondary. A focus this academic year is the development of our offer for Post 16 and more structured strategic support for young people and their schools and carers as they leave care (whether that be at 18, or via an SGO, adoption or returning to parents). We are also looking to rollout a PEP for 2-year-olds.</i></p>		










Objective: Improve the offer for children and young people with disabilities and those with Special Educational Needs (PED04)

Ref:	Measure	22/23 Actual	23/24 Target	Current	Direction of Travel compared to same Qtr Prev Yr	Quarterly Progress
PED04 01	Increase the percentage of Education Health Care Plan assessments completed within 20 weeks (academic year cumulative to end of quarter)	25.8%	75%	58.3%	 Q2 22-23 55.9%	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Charlotte Finch Implementation of the staff recovery plan has impacted positively. Slow but steady improvement has been seen since Spring. In April, timeliness dropped to a worrying low of 12.9%. Most recent data indicate a live performance rate (based on a 12 month rolling cycle) of 58.3, which is significant recovery and put us on track to align with national average within 12 months- should staffing capacity remain stable.</p>						
PED04 02	Reduce the number of incidents of fixed term Suspensions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter)	1218	500	208 instances		
<p>Supporting Commentary: Debbie Houghton/ Scott Middlehurst The number of suspensions for this period is 208 which is slightly lower than at this point last year at 261 although it is already unlikely the target set of 500 will be met. In 22/23 the 1866 suspensions resulted in a loss of 6,784 sessions of attendance lost.</p>						
PED04 03	Reduce the number of children subject to fixed term suspensions (academic year cumulative to end of quarter)	552	350	176 Children		
<p>Supporting Commentary: Debbie Houghton/ Scott Middlehurst We are currently in the first half term of 23/24 and the number of suspensions is 176 children, which is 50% of the target set for 23/24 and slightly higher than at the same point last year of 165. The Team around the School meetings are taking place each week to discuss children with multiple suspensions at risk of exclusion. These meetings are attended by school and other partner agencies including Education Psychologist, Education Welfare Service, Mental Health Support Team, Early Help etc. The aim of the meetings is to provide support and advice to schools to reduce suspensions and exclusions. Common themes raised by school are around persistent disruptive behaviour and internal truancy.</p>						
PED04 04	Reduce the number of children subject to a permanent suspension (academic year cumulative to end of quarter)	39 (but 40 PERM Exc. One child excluded from 2 schools	30	6 Children Perm Excluded in the period		
<p>Supporting Commentary: Debbie Houghton/ Scott Middlehurst In this period we have had 6 permanent exclusions again predominantly KS3 children although we have had 2 year 11 KS4 children. Looking at the reasons for exclusion they are predominantly for persistent disruptive behaviour, but we have had an early number of assaults against adults which is more likely to result in school making the decision to permanently exclude. This number is slightly less than at the same point last year. The number of permanent exclusions is increasing with the actual number for 22/23 as 52 compared to 32 the previous academic year 21/22.</p>						
PED04 05	Report on the proportion of children subject to Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) placed in independent and out of borough provisions (snapshot end of quarter) – long term target is to reduce	8% As of Q3 22/23	3.6%	8.5%	 Q2 22-23 8.1%	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Charlotte Finch Halton continues to place high numbers of EHCP learners OOB in independent settings. This is due to our own settings being at saturation point and possibly in part due to us not having our own SEMH provision. This situation will be positively impacted over the next 12 months by the introduction of almost 100 additional resource base places and the opening of a free school catering for SEMH learners. We should therefore see positive impact in this area in the future, although current trends are concerning.</p>						






Ref:	Measure	22/23 Actual	23/24 Target	Current	Direction of Travel compared to same Qtr Prev Yr	Quarterly Progress
PED04 06	Report on the budget spent on independent and out of borough (OOB) provision for SEND (Forecast end of year)	Total year projected spend £6,726,000	£250000 reduction	£6,728,000	 N/A	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Claire Gurney / Jill Farrell</p> <p>113 pupils are placed at non-maintained and independent schools, overall this represents an increase of 6 placements compared to September 2022. Nineteen of the 113 children were new starters. In Q2 there were 30 referrals received for non-maintained and independent schools with 19 of these parental requests for consultation. The average placement cost has risen to £59,406. Work has continued as an individual local authority as well as collaboratively across Liverpool City Region to mitigate against the uplift requests this year from providers. Of the children on-roll: - Primary Needs: - 40 are Cognition and Learning or have ASC as a primary need, SEMH – 61, Speech, Language and Communication – 5 and Visual Impairment – 7, Key Stages are:- KS1: - 5, KS2: 15, KS3: 39, KS4: 39, KS5: 15</p>						
PED04 07	Increase the percentage of children subject to EHCP placed in mainstream provision (snapshot end of quarter)	51% As of Q3 22/23	65%	32%	 Q2 22-23 49%	N/A
<p>Supporting Commentary: Charlotte Finch</p> <p>Since 2018, EHCP learners in mainstream schools in Halton have been low compared to our Stat neighbours. This number is growing over time, although still lower than we would like it to be. Work on improving the graduated approach, as set out in the Improvement Action plan, should continue to impact positively on this figure over the next 12 months. In 2018 we had 98 earners with EHCPs in mainstream. Since then, the numbers have grown year on year, with by far the greatest growth occurring between 2022 and 2023, when 145 additional EHCPs were educated in mainstream. Now, in 2023 we have 480. This means that 32% of our EHCP learners are now in mainstream, which is an improvement of 4% since last year, when the figure was 28%.</p>						
PED04 08	Monitor the percentage of Special Schools with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding	100%	100%	100%	 Q2 22-23 100%	N/A
<p>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</p> <p>All special schools are rated good or outstanding and provide high quality, inclusive educational provision.</p>						
PED04 09	Increase the percentage of Education Health and Care plans for Child Protection and Children in Care completed in 16 weeks (academic year cumulative to end of quarter)	N/A	75%		N/A	N/A
<p>Supporting Commentary: Charlotte Finch</p> <p>We continue to prioritise vulnerable children for timely assessment. This data is not currently available but will be reported at next quarter.</p>						
Ref:	Milestones					Quarterly Progress
PED04a	Develop and Implement the Social Emotional and Mental Health Strategy (SEMH) by March 2023. Impact to be monitored through the action plan.					
<p>Supporting Commentary: Charlotte Finch</p> <p>We are currently working on this strategy with Nigel Hunt, who has been commissioned to lead on this work. We are exploring opportunities to tie this work in with DBV grant delivery. NH currently exploring pilot opportunities with secondary settings.</p>						
PED04b	Review the current framework of support for children and young people with disabilities, including short breaks provision					
<p>Supporting Commentary: Claire Gurney / Jill Farrell</p>						

Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
<p>There has been 1926.5 hours of short breaks delivered to disabled children this quarter, this is always higher in Q2 due to the play schemes that run through the summer holidays. 189 children have accessed short break activities attending 8 different services: - Play Clubs and Summer Play Schemes, Swimming Lessons, Splash Play, Trips and Visits, Outdoor Activities and Digital Media Workshops. Activities are advertised on the Local Offer. Quarterly and bi-annual performance reviews continue. A provider meeting took place in the quarter expanding the membership to include other providers who deliver activities to children with special educational needs and disabilities, this is leading to joint working to broaden the offers available to children and young people.</p>		
PED04c	Review direct payments with all recommissions co-produced with parents and young people.	
<p><u>Supporting Commentary:</u> Val Armor This has been reviewed in terms of commissioning to get the best offer and value for parents and carers</p>		
PED04d	Improve quality and timeliness of Education Health and Care Plans.	
<p><u>Supporting Commentary:</u> Charlotte Finch As is shown in data above, timeliness is on an ever-improving trajectory. QA audits are conducted regularly and are showing improvements in the quality of plans. Headteachers report that they are noting the improving quality of plans. Invision 360 is currently being implemented, which should improve the quality of plans further.</p>		
PED04e	Quality assure all provision currently being utilised to ensure that provision meets the needs of our children and young people	
<p><u>Supporting Commentary:</u> Claire Gurney/Jill Farrell Monitoring visits for NMISS continue with a visit taking place in quarter 2 and of the 33 schools commissioned 14 have been monitored covering 62.8% of children placed. The updated monitoring process was presented to SEND Strategic Partnership and is being trialled with a school in the autumn term.</p>		
PED04f	Review in borough specialist provision and revise to meet the needs of Halton's children and young people	
<p><u>Supporting Commentary:</u> Charlotte Finch SEND sufficiency strategy phase 1 is now in implementation phase. Phase 2 now needs to be drafted. So far, the sufficiency strategy has created almost 100 additional resource base places, with potentially 50 additional special school places scheduled to be open between September 24 and 25.</p>		









Objective: Raise achievement across Early Years and all Key Stages, and diminish the difference between vulnerable groups and their peers (PED05)


Ref:	Measure	22/23 Actual	23/24 Target	Current	Direction of Travel compared to same Qtr Prev Yr	Quarterly Progress
PED05 01	Ensure all eligible children for the vulnerable 2-year-old funding access quality EY provision (internally collected termly information – may not match to published data from census)	98%	100% of eligible	91%	N/A	
<p><i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell / Belinda Yen</i> The DfE provided a target of 485 children to be placed. Halton have placed 442 (including 8 Out of Borough (OOB) settings) which equates to 91%. Although the percentage of children placed appears to have gone down since last quarter, the target has increased. Also, once all placements had been made, there were no children waiting to be placed and all eligible referrals were placed.</p>						
PED05 02	Increase the take up of Early Years Entitlement for 3- to 4-year-olds.	93.9%	96%	90.10%	 Q2 22-23 89%	
<p><i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell / Gail Vaughan-Hodkinson</i> The current 90.10% figure is based upon national data published in the August 2023 LAIT. Using the PCT GP registration data and the autumn headcount of 3- & 4-year-old funded children 89% of 3- & 4-year-olds are accessing a funded place. There are sufficient places for all 3- & 4-year-olds who require a place. The Early Years team continue to actively market places, via media channels, posters shared with EY settings and attendance at summer campaigns/activities across the borough.</p>						
PED05 03	Monitor the percentage of Early Years settings (pre-schools, day care, out of school clubs, childminders) with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding (snapshot end of quarter)	91%	N/A	97%	 Q2 22-23 93%	
<p><i>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell / Gail Vaughan-Hodkinson</i> 87.27% of all PVI's are Outstanding, Good or Met. This includes 11 settings (10%) who have not yet been inspected. 2 settings currently require improvement, 1 childminder is inadequate. Of those settings who have been inspected 97% are Outstanding, Good or Met.</p>						
PED05 04	Monitor the percentage of Primary schools with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding	76%	Dependent on Inspection dates	78%	 Q2 22-23 86.7%	
<p><i>Supporting Commentary: Ben Holmes</i> Based on the latest data published, 100% maintained nurseries and 78% primaries are graded good or outstanding. A high number of schools were inspected over the summer term, including several graded inspections, resulting in the increase from 74% the previous quarter. All maintained schools receive support and challenge from their Associate School Improvement Advisor.</p>						
PED05 05	Monitor the percentage of Secondary schools with overall effectiveness of Good or Outstanding (snapshot end of quarter) N.B. 7 out of the 8 schools are academies. (snapshot end of quarter)	50%	N/A	50%	 Q2 22-23 80%	
<p><i>Supporting Commentary: Ben Holmes</i> 50% of secondaries, 100% special schools and the Pupil Referral Unit are graded good or outstanding.</p>						

Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
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Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
PED05a	Monitor and evaluate educational outcomes of all pupils, vulnerable pupils (CIC: EHCP etc.), disadvantaged pupils and the impact of funding streams (including Free EY Entitlement, Catch Up funding, Pupil Premium, Sports Premium etc.) to raise achievement for all and diminish the difference between vulnerable groups and their peers	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</p> <p>ASIA Link Officers to maintained and faith schools, as part of their termly visits, hold leaders to account for educational outcomes and progress of all pupils, especially disadvantaged and SEND. Disadvantaged working groups are led by the local authority, but work alongside education leads, SENDCOs and DSLs to ensure there is an effective pupil premium strategy within each school and that funding is being used to best effect to secure improved outcomes and life chances for children and young people. Guidance is provided to school governors through the director's briefing and through governor briefings to enable them to fulfil their duties. The Virtual School tracks the outcomes for Looked After Children and during 23/24 will continue to expand this to also track Children with a Social Worker. Schools have also engaged with Peer to Peer SEND Reviews, including those with SEND resource base provision.</p>		
PED05b	Monitor and evaluate the impact of COVID-19 lockdown and remote learning offer on all pupils and vulnerable pupils learning	N/A
<p>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</p> <p>No longer tracked directly as foci has shifted post pandemic.</p>		
PED05c	Review the process of risk assessment for schools and settings to target support and drive improvement	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Ben Holmes</p> <p>The School Improvement Team risk assess schools termly (and after Ofsted visits) and adjust targeted support to meet needs of schools. In Q2 all school gradings were reviewed ready for implementation in September 2023. Due to the termination of the School Improvement, Monitoring and Brokering Grant for LAs, the service will move to an SLA model over Q2-Q4, which will impact on the level of support schools can receive, but this will be tracked closely alongside plans for when urgent, intensive support is required.</p> <p>The SLA model has been developed in collaboration with school leaders and will be signed up to in Q3-Q4. We now have a school improvement website to support our new offer. https://haltonschoolimprovement.co.uk/</p>		
PED05d	Build engagement, capacity and governors understanding of the strategic roles and responsibilities	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Ben Holmes</p> <p>Governor training and briefings were well attended in Q2. During workshops the governor roles and responsibilities were promoted in relation to being confident about their roles in relation to safeguarding, PEIA actions and during inspections. Further training from Ofsted is scheduled for Q3 for Governors. Peer reviews are being carried out in partnership with school leadership teams and SEND governors. Governors were also encouraged to attend SEND Roadshows and EHCP assessment workshops.</p>		
PED05e	In partnership with schools, review and design an effective educational vision for the region that meets pupils needs whilst raising ambitions	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Ben Holmes</p> <p>We have a continued focus on the work of the Priority Educational Investment Area plans. Key priorities include Early Years development, improving outcomes in reading and maths through all key phases and improving attendance. A focus of inclusion runs throughout all key priority themes. Plans and Organisation leads for each strand have been identified and commissioned with successful launch events held towards the end of Q2 and delivery has been initiated, with 94% of schools who have been invited to engage in the projects signed up and enrolled.</p>		
PED05f	Launch Halton Learning Alliance Strategic Partnership to develop an inclusive, ambitious approach developing contributing, successful citizens locally, nationally and globally. All educational stakeholders and community members acting with moral purpose for Halton children, young people and community members	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Jill Farrell</p> <p>The HLA has been paused for 23/24 to enable focus on the PEIA across the authority. Schools will be clustered to ensure all benefit and develop greater collaboration between neighbouring schools.</p>		

Objective: Improve participation and skills for young people to drive Halton's future (PED06)

Ref:	Measure	22/23 Actual	22/23 Target	Current	Direction of Travel compared to same Qtr Prev Yr	Quarterly Progress
PED06 01	Maintain the percentage of 16-17 year olds not in education, employment or training (snapshot end of quarter, end of year information February)	4.4%	4.4%	6.4%	 Q2 22-23 5.3%	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell <i>As in Quarter 1 the results show a continuation of the issues seen in 2022/23: a significant greater number of young people are not available to the labour market due to illness, including mental health issues, compared to previous years. For those who are not in education or training since March 2023 there have been no education or training options that young people could join mid-year within the borough.</i></p>						
PED06 02	Maintain the percentage of 16–17 year olds whose activity is not known (snapshot end of quarter, end of year information February)	0.5%	0.5%	0.9%	 Q2 22-23 0.8%	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell <i>If young people (and/or their families) refuse to disclose the young person's activity or where they are currently living, they are recorded as cannot be contacted or refused to disclose. In addition, for some households we are unable to gain a response to contact at the door, via phone, email or letter. The figure does rise as we come to the end of each academic year, and we experience issues making contact with young people over the summer period. The current situation is similar to last year, so we anticipate being able to make progress by the February 2024 end of year measure for this outcome.</i></p>						
PED06 03	Increase the percentage of 16-17 year olds with an offer of learning (September guarantee)	96.02%	97%	93%	 Q2 22-23 95.7%	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell <i>Whilst the percentage of offers made to young people is currently lower than Quarter 2 last year, this report is being completed 1 week earlier, therefore we are still in the process of tracking young people and will have more information before the submission deadline to the Department for Education of 31st October 2023.</i></p>						
PED06 04	Increase the percentage of 16-17 year olds participating in education or training that meets the Government definition of full participation (known as Raising the Participation Age)	88.6%	90%	85.7%	 Q2 22-23 87%	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell <i>The increase in the number of young people who are not in education employment or training in 2022-23 also affects this figure as they are not participating in education or training.</i></p>						

Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
PED06a	Closely monitor the cohort of young people not in education, employment or training and identify common patterns/issues to inform actions, guide the effective use of resources and to identify any future commissioning needs	
<p>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell <i>Ongoing analysis takes place to respond to need and ensure the resources available are being targeted appropriately. Work has been targeted at raising the lack of provision issue with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the Education and Skills Funding Agency, as well as speaking to providers in neighbouring authorities to encourage provision into the borough.</i></p>		

Ref:	Milestones	Quarterly Progress
PED06c	Work with schools, the College and training providers to review the post 16 offers of learning made to young people and increase the amount of offers made before the end of an academic year.	
<p><i>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell</i> <i>Final analysis of the information is still being processed to confirm final figure compared to previous year.</i></p>		
PED06d	Work with schools, the College and training providers to report where young people progress to Post 16 as quickly as possible so those who haven't progressed can be identified and contacted to offer support	
<p><i>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell</i> <i>Data from the college and training providers in the borough submitted in a timely manner. Schools supporting with any young people known to them.</i></p>		
PED06d	Work with Post 16 education and training providers in the borough to support the development of provision that does have clear progression opportunities	
<p><i>Supporting Commentary: Háf Bell</i> <i>Significant provision issues in 2023 with two Post 16 providers losing contracted provision with little notice. A resolution was found for both providers. Paper has been submitted to a new provider to evidence need in Halton for more provision, with the desired outcome of encouraging that provider to develop a provision base in Halton, this is still in discussion with the provider.</i></p>		

5.0 Financial Summary



Q2 2023.24
Children and Families



EIP Q2 23.24
Final.pdf

6.0 Appendix I

6.1 Symbols are used in the following manner:

Progress		Milestone	Measure
Green		Indicates that the milestone is on course to be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	Indicates that the annual target is on course to be achieved.
Amber		Indicates that it is uncertain, or too early to say at this stage whether the milestone will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	Indicates that it is uncertain or too early to say at this stage whether the annual target is on course to be achieved.
Red		Indicates that it is unlikely or certain that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.	Indicates that the target will not be achieved unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken.

6.2 Direction of Travel indicator

Where possible measures will also identify a direction of travel using the following convention:

Green		Indicates that performance is better compared to the same period last year .
Amber		Indicates that performance is the same as compared to the same period last year .
Red		Indicates that performance is worse compared to the same period last year .

6.3 Key for responsible officers: **JF** Jill Farrell, Operational Director, Education, Inclusion and Provision Service

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	16 November 2023
REPORTING OFFICER:	Corporate Director: Chief Executive's Delivery Unit
PORTFOLIO:	Corporate Services
SUBJECT:	Transformation Programme Update
WARDS:	Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on progress made within the Council's Transformation Programme.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- 2.1 Executive Board note the contents of the update.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 Work continues to develop the projects outlined in Appendix A, as well as the associated delivery plans, which will provide a framework to assess project feasibility. Where projects are to be taken forward, trajectories will be set for both financial and non-financial outcomes, against which progress will be monitored. This work will continue into November and December.
- 3.2 Engagement with employees continues to be a focus in the programme, ensuring staff views and ideas are heard in the planning stage of the projects. Project specific themed 'chats about change' sessions began in October with Adult Social Care and Customer Journey focused sessions. Future months will provide opportunity for staff to engage with and input in to the other projects within the programme.
- 3.3 Support is being provided to Environment and Economy services to resource and build operational capacity across services. These resources will support the delivery of the Local Plan, and once established, associated activity within the Accelerating Growth project will be formally initiated.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

At this stage no requirement for new or amended policies has been identified.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The estimated savings for the programme are outlined in Appendix B. This is a replication of the table in the report in June 2023, but will be replicated on a monthly basis as this must remain the Council's primary focus in the current financial climate.

5.2 The purpose of the Transformation Programme is to achieve these savings and progress against these targets. As savings start to be tracked and realised, they will be included in this monthly Board report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The Transformation Programme is designed to deliver activity to support the effectiveness of the Council that will cut across all priorities.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The Transformation Programme is designed to deliver activity to support the effectiveness of the Council that will cut across all priorities.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The Transformation Programme is designed to deliver activity to support the effectiveness of the Council that will cut across all priorities.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The Transformation Programme is designed to deliver activity to support the effectiveness of the Council that will cut across all priorities.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The Transformation Programme is designed to deliver activity to support the effectiveness of the Council that will cut across all priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

Governance arrangements will include a detailed risk register. These will be closely monitored throughout the course of each project and measures

put in place to mitigate any risks arising. Any significant risks requiring action outside of the programme will be escalated accordingly.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

Equality Impact Assessments to be undertaken for each of the projects or components of projects where specifically required.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

Impacts on climate change will be considered for each of the projects where required. There are no identifiable impacts on climate change at this stage.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.

APPENDIX A**TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS**

Adults Directorate	<p>Enabling greater independence and flexibility for adults <i>Areas of work now in progress include;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supported Living - Review of service delivery model and accommodation provision for ALD - Supported Living - Pilot with PossAbilities to explore Individual Service Funds (ISFs) - Supported Living - Pilot with CIC to explore models of care which Support Independence Through Technology (SITT) - Review the suitability of Nursing care provision for ALD
Chief Executive's Directorate:	<p>Maximising digital technology innovations across Adult Social Care</p> <p>Becoming an employer of choice <i>Areas of work now in progress include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing a Values and Behaviours Framework - Developing an Employee Review Process - Creating an Employer Brand for Halton - Developing a new approach to engaging and managing Casual workers - Developing a suite of Workforce Reports to enable corporate oversight - Creating a programme of Reward Benchmarking - Reduction of Agency Spend – Care Homes - Reduction of Agency Spend – exploring new options for a managed service - Developing an Employer Value Proposition for Halton <p>Simplifying the customer journey <i>Areas of work now in progress include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Realignment of Administrative Support services - Simplifying the Customer Journey - Supporting the Council's Digital Journey
Children's Directorate	<p>A stable, sustainable service that is improving outcomes for children, young people and families <i>Areas of work currently being scoped in response to the refocusing of resources.</i></p> <p>A clear, affordable and appropriate SEND offer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of service operations (process, decision making, policy and use of data)

	- SEND Transportation
Environment & Regeneration Directorate	<p>Maximising outcomes and opportunities <i>Areas of work now in progress include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing the Leisure offer - Brookvale Recreation centre feasibility study - Developing the Leisure offer – (Sub-projects to be identified) - Stadium - Commission a commercial review - Reducing the Cost of Waste - Increase recycling and reduce contamination - Reducing the Cost of Waste - Optimising Waste Operations - Reducing the Cost of Waste - The development of an enforcement strategy
	Accelerating growth – <i>sub projects in development</i>

APPENDIX B**ESTIMATED SAVINGS**

	2023/24 (£)	2024/25 (£)	2025/26 (£)
Adults / Adults with Learning Difficulties	1,034,802	4,139,208	5,174,010
Children's Services	301,959	1,207,835	1,509,793
Special Educational Needs	100,000	400,000	500,000
Accelerating Development & Growth Income & Asset Realisation	100,000	400,000	500,000
Optimised Services	463,239	1,852,957	2,316,197
Totals	2,000,000	8,000,000	10,000,000

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 16 November 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Environment & Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Environment and Urban Renewal

SUBJECT: Merseylink – Authorised Highway Functions

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To consider the request from Merseylink Limited, for the renewal of the Authorisation Period for the delegated Highway Functions, from 27 March 2024 for a period of ten years.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the request from Merseylink Limited, for the renewal of the Authorisation Period for the delegated Highway Functions, from 27 March 2024 for a period of ten years, be approved.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Under the terms of the Mersey Gateway Bridge Project Agreement (Section 1, Part 2 of Schedule 18) there is a set of defined Authorised Highway Functions which are delegated to the Project Company (Merseylink Ltd).

3.2 These are statutory functions that would normally be within the powers of Halton as the Highway Authority but have to be delegated in order to allow Merseylink to exercise these functions, so they can practically and effectively deliver their asset and network management obligations for the Mersey Gateway project road.

3.3 The ability of Halton as the Highway Authority to make such delegations is conferred under the Contracting Out (Highways Functions) Order 2009.

3.4 Clause 41.1.1 of the Mersey Gateway Project Agreement defines that this arrangement is limited to the duration of the Authorisation Period (ten years from Financial Close) and requires Merseylink to seek renewal of the authorisation period by up to a further ten years on or before the expiry of the Authorisation Period, which would be 27th March 2024.

3.5 Merseylink have provided the necessary written request to the Council for the extension of the Authorisation Period, as shown in the Appendix.

3.6 The Mersey Gateway Crossings Board have confirmed that they consider there is no reason not to confirm the renewal and that this should be for the full ten-year period.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton**
None.

6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**
The continued operation of the Mersey Gateway supports the Council's Employment, Learning and Skills priorities.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**
None.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**
None.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**
The continued operation of the Mersey Gateway supports the Council's Urban Renewal priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 If the authorisation period were not renewed, it would be to the detriment of asset and network management delivery and Mersey Gateway project road reliability, availability and accessibility.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

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

- 10.1 Only exempt information has been used in the preparation of the report.



For the Attention of:
Mr Stephen Young
Chief Executive
Halton Borough Council
Municipal Building
Kingsway
Widnes
WA8 7QF

Our Reference: MER-SPV-HOC-01369

Your Reference: None

Date: 28/09/2023

Title: Mersey Gateway Bridge Project
Subject: Authorised Highway Functions – Authorisation Renewal
Contract Reference: Project Agreement ,Cl 41.1.1,

Dear Sirs

Merseylink Limited were granted Authorised Highways Functions under Clause 40 of the Project Agreement. Under the above referenced clause this is limited to 10 years from commencement, expiring on 27th March 2024.

We would be grateful if this could be renewed and seek your approval for this to be extended.

Yours sincerely
For and on behalf of
Merseylink Limited

Hugh O'Connor
General Manager & Company Representative
Tel +44(0) 1928 246701
Mob +44(0) 7983 636961
Email hugh.oconnor@merseylink-limited.co.uk

Attachments - -None



FS 615882

28/09/2023 MER-SPV-HOC-01369

Page 1 of 1

Merseylink Limited
9 Howard Court, Manor Park, Runcorn, WA7 1SJ

Registered in England & Wales – No. 08780602

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	16 November 2023
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director, Environment & Regeneration
PORTFOLIO:	Environment and Urban Renewal
SUBJECT:	Waiver request for the appointment of a Named Sub-Contractor to carry out specialist restoration of railings at Birchfield Gardens, Widnes.
WARD(S)	Farnworth

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 A waiver, in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 iv of part 3 of Procurement Standing Orders, is sought to appoint Lost Art Ltd as a Named Sub-Contractor for the refurbishment of historic park railings at Birchfield Gardens, Widnes. The waiver request has been approved by HBC Procurement subject to Executive Board Approval (Procurement Ref: 134W23).

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That the Board gives delegated authority to the Executive Director, Environment & Regeneration, in consultation with the Executive Member for the Environment and Urban Renewal, to approve the waiver, ref: 134W23, to appoint Lost Art Ltd as the Named Sub-Contractor to undertake the restoration of historic park railings as part of the wider refurbishment project at Birchfield Gardens, Widnes.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Environment Services Division is currently tendering a package of works for the refurbishment of Birchfield Gardens, Widnes, which comprise the restoration of boundary structures and railings, re-building of footpaths, pond refurbishment, replacement of site furniture and soft landscape works. The pre-tender estimate value for the overall refurbishment project is £500k.

3.2 The majority of the refurbishment works will be undertaken by a Principal Contractor and their domestic sub-contractors however for the restoration of the historic boundary railings element we require a specialist sub-contractor to be used due to the nature of the material (wrought iron) and historic details which we wish to preserve.

- 3.3 The supplier Lost Art Ltd, who specialise in the restoration of historic landscape furnishings, were commissioned earlier this year to undertake a detailed survey of the railings to ascertain the works required and the costs involved. Lost Art Ltd have since provided a quotation for these works to the value of £110,091.50. We now wish to appoint this supplier as a Named Sub-Contractor to be used by the Principal Contractor for this element of the park refurbishment works for the reasons outlined below.
- 3.4 Prior investment in consultancy – Lost Art Ltd were commissioned to undertake a survey of the railings earlier in 2023 which involved a detailed inspection of the entire park boundary and the preparation of a report, schedule of recommended works and calculation of costs and we are confident in their appraisal and recommendations.
- 3.5 Cost certainty – Lost Art Ltd have confirmed their price for carrying out the works having carried out a recent detailed inspection and appraisal and their quoted rates appear to be consistent with our pre-tender estimates.
- 3.6 Quality and workmanship – Lost Art Ltd are recognised as specialists in the restoration of historic landscape furnishings and have been involved in many prestigious park restoration projects in the UK. The quality of their work has been recognised by several awards including the ICON Conservation Awards, Museums and Heritage Awards, The Engineering Heritage Awards and The Civic Trust Award.
- 3.7 Due to the clear financial and commercial benefit the request for this waiver has been approved by HBC Procurement (ref: 134W23) subject to Executive Board Approval.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The proposals are in keeping with policy CS18 – High Quality Design, and will provide a well-designed and attractive landscape setting providing safe access for all, promote healthy lifestyles and contributing significantly to ‘sense of place’.
- 4.2 The proposals are in keeping with policy CS22 – Health and Wellbeing, supporting opportunities to support the Borough’s cultural, sport, recreation and leisure offer.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The pre-tender estimate total value for the overall refurbishment project is £500k which will include the restoration of boundary

structures and railings, re-building of footpaths, pond refurbishment, replacement of site furniture and soft landscape works. The cost of the railing refurbishment by Lost Art Ltd is included within this estimate.

- 5.2 The current project budget allocation for the refurbishment works is £551k. This allows a project contingency figure of £51k for unforeseen items and inflation.

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

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

Birchfield Gardens provides a range of different habitats and informal play opportunities, which are well suited to a wide age range of young people to enjoy. Refurbishment of the site will further enhance access to these opportunities.

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

The refurbishment project contract will be procured through the Council's Environment Services Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS). This system provides a framework of contractors who are invited to tender for construction projects such as this. The Environment Services DPS is open to suitably qualified contractors including local businesses based in Halton.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Improved facilities and access to public open spaces will encourage more recreation and exercise in the area, helping to combat obesity, to encourage cardio vascular and muscular activity to promote mental well-being for local communities.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

The refurbishment of Birchfield Gardens will significantly improve this area of public open space and as such contributes to the priority, *'To ensure pleasant safe and secure neighbourhood environments, with attractive, safe surroundings, good quality local amenities, and the ability of people to enjoy life where they live'*.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

Use of specialist suppliers such as Lost Art Ltd will ensure that restoration works within the park will be carried out to the highest standards and as such will contribute to the priority, *'To transform the urban fabric and infrastructure. To develop exciting places and spaces and to create a vibrant and accessible Halton - a place*

where people are proud to live and see a promising future for themselves and their families’.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 Lost Art Ltd are recognised as specialists in the restoration of historic landscape furnishings and have been involved in many prestigious park restoration projects in the UK. The quality of their work has been recognised by several awards including the ICON Conservation Awards, Museums and Heritage Awards, The Engineering Heritage Awards and The Civic Trust Award.
- 7.2 The refurbishment project will be governed by the JCT Intermediate Building Contract 2016 which makes provision for the use of Named Sub-Contractors through the use of the named Sub-Contractor Tender (between the sub-contractor and employer) and the named Sub-Contractor Agreement (between the sub-contractor and principal contractor).
- 7.3 Under this agreement HBC, as employer, may choose sub-contractors that it has particular confidence in to undertake specialist work rather than leaving this to the discretion of the Principal Contractor.
- 7.4 In conjunction with the contract documents mentioned above, the Intermediate Named Sub-Contract/Employer Agreement (ICSub/NAM/E) will also be used with the sub-contract to ensure HBC as employer retains a direct contractual relationship with the sub-contractor.
- 7.5 Dialogue has been undertaken with Legal Services to discuss the proposed contractual arrangements and the view is that from a legal point of view the proposed contract arrangements do carry a certain level of risk, albeit low. Environment Services have considered the Legal advice and are comfortable that the level of risk is low and wish to proceed with the proposed contractual arrangements.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 No significant Equality and Diversity implications have been identified.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The recommendations of this report support the Council’s response to the environment and climate emergency by limiting waste and encouraging re-use of resources. Through the refurbishment of existing railings to Birchfield Park, rather than their removal and replacement, the proposal reduces the need for new materials and their associated emissions and extends the life, and therefore the

embodied carbon, of the structures.

- 9.2 The wider refurbishment project will also create environmental improvements across the site. The development of marginal and aquatic planting to the pond and the programme of arboricultural work will improve habitats for wildlife, increase biodiversity and ensure the longevity of the existing tree stock.

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

Document: Halton Core Strategy

Place of Inspection: Picow Farm Depot

Contact Officer: Martin McCoy

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	16 November 2023
REPORTING OFFICER:	Executive Director – Environment & Regeneration
PORTFOLIO:	Environment and Urban Renewal
SUBJECT:	East Runcorn Connectivity Scheme
WARD(S)	All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The Executive Board has previously received three reports on the ERC project, which is a defined scheme in Halton's Third Local Transport Plan:

- 17 June 2021 – East Runcorn Connectivity – Scheme Development
- 16 June 2022 – East Runcorn Connectivity Scheme
- 13 July 2023 – Transport Infrastructure Update

1.2 This report seeks approval of funding to complete the full business case in support of the ERC project elements that are deliverable within the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) 1 period (ending March 2027). These proposals comprise two of the four elements that constitute the ERC scheme and are:

- A56 major maintenance - A558 Junction to M56 Junction 11
- ERC Active travel routes (six in total):
 - Silver Jubilee Bridge to Shopping City
 - Runcorn East Station Access
 - Chester Road (A56) to Daresbury Park
 - Halton Brow, Main Street and Norton Lane
 - Bridge Street to Windmill Hill Avenue North
 - Leiria Way Connectivity Upgrades/Cycle Loop

1.3 The remaining elements of the ERC programme are expected to fall within the CR STS 2 funding cycle and will be the subject of separate funding bids.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: That

- **The Council accepts the funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement and the Capital Programme is amended accordingly.**
- **Mott MacDonald Ltd are retained as external consultant for the project, up to a value of £1.61m, via the Warrington Consultancy Framework.**
- **Delegate power to the Operational Director (PPT), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Environment and Urban Renewal, to procure and implement the necessary works to deliver the A56 East Runcorn Connectivity (ERC) Scheme and active travel routes within**

funding deadlines.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 East Runcorn represents an area of considerable physical growth in the borough, with large scale housing development, employment land allocations, and investment at Sci-Tech Daresbury. This planned growth is supported by transport network enhancements, and the ERC (East Runcorn Connectivity) project provides this infrastructure. To secure funding for this scheme, a full business case has to be developed to show the project offers value for money, is deliverable, and the need for the project is proven.

3.2 The ERC scheme is referred to in Halton's Local Transport Plan 3 and is justified by technical analysis work found in the East Runcorn Sustainable Transport Study and the recent Halton Local Plan Transport Network Impacts Study. These studies identified highway capacity improvements and sustainable transport improvements would be required to enable a successful delivery of the Local Plan land allocations.

3.3 The on-site delivery of the ERC project within CR STS 1 is likely to have costs in the region of £30m.

3.4 Mott MacDonald Ltd will be retained on the basis that they have completed the previous work undertaken on the business case, and this continuity will ensure that a robust business case for the A56 and active travel routes will meet the Government's Green Book and 'Webtag' appraisal mechanisms, together with meeting the objectives of the Liverpool City Region's Transport Growth Strategy.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The significant investment described in this report is directed by the Council's strategic policies of the Local Plan, the Mersey Gateway Plus Regeneration Strategy, Local Transport Plan 3, Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan, and aligns itself with the priorities of the Liverpool City Region.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The full ERC scheme is expected to be a 10 year project, split over two funding periods of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CR STS). Pre development funding has been obtained in the previous two years. Further LCRCA funding will be required from November 2023 to continue to develop the Business Case to deliver the A56 major maintenance and Active Travel Routes. An application for the cost to complete the business case work, £1.61m, has been submitted to the LCRCA and Halton is awaiting confirmation of this allocation from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA)

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Indirect benefits will stem from an improved physical environment for local communities and better transport connectivity and travel choices.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

New business investment and job creation provides a more resilient economy, and the ERC corridor will connect residents in Halton and the wider LCR to employment and learning opportunities at the Enterprise Zone and neighbouring business parks in Astmoor, Manor Park, and beyond.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The projects will deliver improved and new active travel linkages offering opportunities for modal shift and behavioural change that leads to healthier lifestyles.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Upon completion, the projects will provide a more resilient, safer, and well-connected routes within East Runcorn and our town centres for cyclists and pedestrians.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The combination of projects will support an improved urban environment to existing and future residents, businesses, and visitors by enabling currently constrained areas to become more accessible.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 All large highway projects have associated project risks with uncertainty arising from various aspects of the process, such as securing funding, land acquisition, stakeholders, fluctuating prices, severe weather, consents, environment factors, ecology assessments. These risks may lead to increased project delivery timescales and costs. These risks will be identified as the scheme develops and highlighted in the development of the Options Appraisal Reports for the various elements. The project team will work to reduce and mitigate these as the detailed business case evolve.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising from this report

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Investment in active travel is fundamental to tackling climate change. A significant amount of carbon emissions and air pollution. Many local journeys are over short distances (less than 5km). The initiatives set out in this report ensure that people in Halton have a realistic sustainable choice in the way they travel.

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

<i>Document</i>	<i>Available</i>	<i>Contact Officer</i>
Local Transport Plan 3 (Adopted).	Online	Rebecca Taylor
https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/TransportPolicy.aspx		

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 16 November 2023

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director
Environment and Regeneration

PORTFOLIO: Employment, Learning Skills and Community

SUBJECT: Variation of the non-statutory fees of Halton
Registration Service from 1st April 2025

WARD(S) Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek the approval of the Board to vary the non-statutory fees offered by Halton Registration Service from 1st April 2025.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

The Board approves the variations to the non-statutory fees of Halton Registration Service as set out in Appendix 1.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Marriage Act 1995 and the Civil Partnership Act 2005 allows local authorities to set fees for ceremonies in approved premises. In January 2011, the Executive Board Sub Committee agreed to set these non-statutory fees; outside the usual timeframe for setting fees due to ceremonies being planned up to two years in advance.

3.2 The proposed fee structure: Appendix 1 is for 2025/2026 and which has been determined by taking account of inflationary increases. In addition, where possible market research of neighbouring registration districts has also been carried out - to ensure that our fees are both competitive and reflect the high standard of our venue and facilities.

3.3 The early setting of the fees for 2025/2026 is necessary as ceremonies are arranged up to two years in advance. Therefore, we must have a published fee structure in place so that customers understand the amount they will be required to pay. The early setting of the fees will also enable the Service to forward plan more effectively to achieve its income targets.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The above proposals are in line with the Authority's new governance arrangements for delivery of registration services as outlined in the White Paper "Civil Registration: Vital Change" (2002), which enables the authority to have the freedom to make policy decisions locally without recourse to the General Register Office.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The proposed fees will take effect from 1 April 2025 and should assist the Service with meeting its allocated budget.

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

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

None identified.

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

None identified.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

None identified.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

- 7.1 There are no anticipated risks associated with these recommendations.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment of 8th May 2012 found that there were no equality or diversity issues in the setting of the Registration Service fees, against any of the protected characteristic groups.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The implementation of the recommendation will have no effect on the environment.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
New governance arrangements for the Halton Registration Service, Executive Board Sub Committee (29 March 2007)	Halton Register Office	Registration Service Manager Superintendent Registrar

Appendix 1 - Halton Registration Service Price List		
Marriage, Civil Partnership (for venues under the 1994 / 2004 Acts)		
Venue	Current Fees 2024/2025	Proposed Fees 2025/2026
Boston Suite and Lounge		
Monday to Thursday	350.00	370.00
Friday	410.00	430.00
Saturday	460.00	480.00
Sunday (11am to 1pm)	510.00	530.00
Bank Holiday	610.00	630.00
Leiria or Drawing Rooms		
Monday to Friday	410.00	430.00
Saturday	460.00	480.00
Sunday (11am to 1pm)	510.00	530.00
Bank Holiday	610.00	630.00
Pergola (10 people standing only)		
Monday - Thursday (9am to 12noon)	100.00	120.00
Civic Suite and External (Approved Venues)		
Monday to Friday	460.00	480.00
Saturday	510.00	530.00
Sunday (11am to 1pm)	560.00	580.00
Bank Holiday	660.00	680.00
Council Chamber		
Monday to Friday	570.00	590.00
Saturday	630.00	650.00
Sunday	730.00	750.00
Bank Holidays	830.00	850.00
Reservation Fee, Pre- Ceremony Interview Fee, Certificate Package Fee	100.00	120.00
New Combined Ceremony Reservation Fee to include: Reservation, Ceremony Interview and Certificate Package Fee		