



**Executive Board**

**Thursday, 7 December 2023 1.00 p.m.  
Halton Stadium, Widnes**

*S. Young*

**Chief Executive**

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

**PART 1**

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<b>2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST</b>	
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.	
<b>3. DEPUTY LEADER'S PORTFOLIO</b>	
<b>(A) WIDNES TOWN CENTRE VISION</b>	<b>9 - 13</b>

*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, 18 January 2024*

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<b>PART II</b>	
<p>In this case the Board has a discretion to exclude the press and public and, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, it is <b>RECOMMENDED</b> that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, having been satisfied that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.</p>	
<b>8. ADULT AND SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO</b>	
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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, 16 November 2023 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building*

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

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, S. Young, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, G. Ferguson and W. Rourke

Also in attendance: None

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

*Action*

EXB49 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

**CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO**

EXB50 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2024/25 – 2026/27 - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2024/25 to 2026/27.

The MTFS sets out a three-year projection of the Council's resources and spending and was based on information that was currently available. The most recent Public Sector Spending Review was published at the end of October 2021 and covered the next three financial years. It was noted that details of the 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement were expected to be released in December 2023 on a provisional basis, with a final settlement expected in January 2024.

The Board was advised that the delay and uncertainty regarding 2024/25 financial resources meant the financial

information included within the MTFS was based on a large number of assumptions and best estimates. The financial forecast would be updated as and when further information was known. Appendix 1 therefore detailed the MTFS from 2024/25 – 2026/27 using a prudent estimate of the financial conditions over the course of the next three years. Appendix 2 presented the Reserves and Balances Strategy.

Reason for Decision

To seek approval for the Council's MTFS for 2024/25 to 2026/27.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The alternative option of not maintaining a MTFS 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.

Implementation date

The MTFS 2024/25 will be implemented from 1 April 2024.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Medium Term Financial Strategy 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 be approved; and
- 4) the award of Council Tax Support for 2024/25 remains at the 2023/24 level of 21.55%

Operational  
Director - Finance

EXB51 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2023

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, advising of the Council's overall revenue and capital net spending position as at 30 September 2023, together with a forecast outturn position.

Appendix 1 presented a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 30 September 2023 and Appendix 2 provided detailed figures for each individual Department. It was reported that in overall terms the outturn forecast for the year showed that net spend

would be over the approved budget by £3.572m. Appendix 3 presented the Capital Programme as at 30 September 2023, highlighting the schemes which had been revised.

It was noted that the biggest pressure on the budget continued to be within the Children & Families Department, where forecast net spend for the year had increased by £0.681m over the past three months. This was predominantly as a result of increased spend against agency staff and staffing costs. Whilst considerable work was ongoing to support recruitment and retention of permanent staff, the impact was not yet being felt of any major reduction to agency numbers. Therefore, it was essential that all Departments ensured spending continued to be restricted to only essential items throughout the remainder of the financial year.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continue to be limited to only absolutely essential items;
- 2) Executive Directors continue to take urgent action to reduce or defer spending for the remainder of the current financial year, or secure additional funding;
- 3) progress with implementation of the three years approved budget savings outlined in Appendix 4, be noted; and
- 4) Council be requested to approve the revisions to the Capital Programme, as set out in paragraph 3.20.

Operational  
Director - Finance

EXB52 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2023-24 HALF YEAR UPDATE

The Board considered a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which presented the Treasury Management Half Year Report as at 30 September 2023.

These reports updated Members on the activities undertaken on the investment and borrowing activities undertaken during the first half of the financial year to 30 September 2023, as required by the Treasury Management Policy.

The report provided supporting information on the economic outlook, interest rate forecast, short term borrowing rates, longer term borrowing rates, borrowing and investments, budget monitoring, new long term borrowing,

policy guidelines and treasury management indicators. It was noted that no debt rescheduling had been undertaken during the quarter.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EXB53 DETERMINATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE 2024/25

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Finance, on the requirement for the Council to determine the Council Tax Base for its area and the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes.

The Council Tax Base was the measure used for calculating Council Tax and was used by both the billing authority (the Council) and the major precepting authorities (Cheshire Fire Authority, Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority), in the calculation of their Council Tax requirements. It was arrived at in accordance with a prescribed formula which represented the estimated full year number of chargeable dwellings in the Borough expressed in terms of the equivalent Band 'D' dwellings.

Taking account of all the relevant information and applying a 97% collection rate, the calculation for 2024/25 gave a base figure of 36,409 for the Borough as a whole. The Council Tax Base figure for each of the Parishes was noted.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve:

Operational  
Director - Finance

- 1) setting the 2024/25 Council Tax Base at 36,409 for the Borough and that the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the Environment Agency be so notified; and
- 2) setting 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

*N.B. Councillors J. Lowe declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business as a family member works at St Lukes.*

EXB54 DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORTS FOR QUARTER 2 2023 - 2024

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive, on progress against key objectives/milestones and performance targets for the second quarter period to 30 September 2023, for the Chief Executives and Children and Young People Directorates.

The Board was advised that the Directorate Performance Overview Report provided a strategic summary of key issues arising from the relevant quarter for each Directorate and was aligned to Council priorities or functional areas. The Board noted that such information was key to the Council's performance management arrangements and Executive Board had a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability. Performance Management would continue to be important in the demonstration of value for money and strengthening accountability.

RESOLVED: That the report, progress and performance information be noted.

EXB55 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. Appendix A to the report set out the Transformation projects for each of the Directorates, as well as the associated delivery plans, which would provide a framework to assess project feasibility.

The Board noted that engagement with employees continued to be a focus in the programme ensuring staff views and ideas were heard in the planning stage of the project. Project themed 'chats about change' sessions had begun in October with Adult Social Care and Customer Journey focused sessions.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board noted the contents of the update; and
- 2) individual project delivery plans are to be submitted to the relevant Policy and Performance Boards for their

Corporate  
Director - Chief  
Executive's  
Delivery Unit

consideration and monitoring.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO**

*N.B. Councillors Thompson and Wharton declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business as members of the Mersey Gateway Crossings Board.*

### **EXB56 MERSEYLINK – AUTHORISED HIGHWAY FUNCTIONS**

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment and Regeneration, that outlined a 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. Under the terms of the Mersey Gateway Bridge Project Agreement (Section, Part 2 of Schedule 18) there was set of defined Authorised Highways Functions which were delegated to the Project Company (Merseylink Ltd).

The Mersey Gateway Project Agreement defined that this arrangement was limited until the duration of the Authorised Period (ten years from Financial Close) and Merseylink were required 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 27 March 2024. It was reported that Merseylink had provided the necessary written request to the Council and the Mersey Crossings Board had confirmed that they considered there was no reason not to confirm the renewal and this should be for the full ten year period.

**RESOLVED:** 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.

Executive Director  
Environment &  
Regeneration

### **EXB57 WAIVER REQUEST FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A NAMED SUB-CONTRACTOR TO CARRY OUT SPECIALIST RESTORATION OF RAILINGS AT BIRCHFIELD GARDENS, WIDNES**

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which sought approval for a waiver in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 iv of Part 3 of Procurement Standing Orders, to appoint Lost Art Ltd as a Named Sub-Contractor for the refurbishment of historic park railings at Birchfield Gardens, Widnes.



The Environment Services Division was currently tendering a package of works for the refurbishment of Birchfield Gardens and the pre tender estimate value for the project was £500k. The majority of the refurbishment works would be undertaken by a Principal Contractor and their domestic sub-contractors, however the restoration of the historic boundary railings element would require a specialist sub-contractor.

It was noted that Lost Art Ltd had been commissioned to undertake a survey of the railing and had provided a quotation for the works of £110,091.50. It was proposed that Lost Art Ltd would be appointed as Named Sub-Contractor to be used by the Principal Contractor due to cost certainty and the quality and workmanship they could provide.

RESOLVED: That the Board gives delegated authority to the Executive Director, Environment and 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 railing as part of the wider refurbishment project at Birchfield Gardens, Widnes.

Executive Director  
Environment &  
Regeneration

#### EXB58 EAST RUNCORN CONNECTIVITY SCHEME

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which sought approval to accept the funding to complete the full business case in support of the East Runcorn Connectivity Scheme (ERC) project elements that were deliverable within the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) 1 period (ending March 2027). These proposals comprised two of the four elements that constitute the ERC and are:

- A56 major maintenance – A558 Junction to M56 Junction 11;
- ERC Active travel routes
- 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
- Leira Way Connectivity Upgrades/Cycle Loop

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement be accepted and the Council be

Executive Director  
Environment &  
Regeneration

recommended to amend the Capital Programme accordingly;

- 2) Mott MacDonald Ltd are retained as external consultant for the project up to a value of £1.61m, via the Warrington Consultancy Framework; and
- 3) the Operational Director – Policy, Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Environment and Urban Renewal, be delegated to procure and implement the necessary works to deliver the A56 East Runcorn Connectivity (ERC) Scheme and active travel routes within funding deadlines.

### **EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS, AND COMMUNITY PORTFOLIO**

#### **EXB59 VARIATION OF NON STATUTORY FEES OF HALTON REGISTRATION SERVICE FROM 1 APRIL 2025**

The Board considered a report which sought approval to vary the non-statutory fees offered by Halton Registration Service from 1 April 2025. The proposed fee structure for 2025/26 had been determined by taking into account inflationary increases and these were set out in Appendix 1. The early setting of the fees was necessary as ceremonies were arranged up to two years in advance. A published fee structure would provide customers with the amount payable and allow the Service to forward plan more effectively to achieve its income targets.

**RESOLVED:** That the variations to the non-statutory fees of Halton Registration Service as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.

Executive Director  
Environment &  
Regeneration

**MINUTES ISSUED: 21 November 2023**

**CALL-IN: 28 November 2023 at 5.00 pm.**

**Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 28 November 2023.**

*Meeting ended at 2.25 p.m.*

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Executive Board
<b>DATE:</b>	7 December 2023
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Executive Director Environment & Regeneration
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Deputy Leader – (Major Projects)
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Widnes Town Centre Vision
<b>WARDS</b>	All

### 1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of the report is to update the Executive Board on the development of a vision and delivery strategy for Widnes Town Centre and outline the next steps in progressing this work.

### 2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board**

- 1) supports the Vision and objectives outlined in the report;**
- 2) agrees the next steps outlined in section 4.1 of the report;  
and**
- 3) agrees to the establishment of a Town Centre Panel.**

### 3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The Council commissioned Aecom and the BE Group to develop a 'high-level' Vision and Delivery Strategy for Widnes Town Centre. The aim of the Widnes Town Centre Vision is to guide the regeneration of the town centre and to identify opportunities and priorities for development.

3.2 This work precedes a Masterplan for the Town Centre and seeks to highlight investment and intervention opportunities and provides a high-level delivery strategy and action plan to deliver these priorities.

3.3 A market analysis was undertaken which was used as a basis for identifying opportunities and market gaps that could be addressed. Equally, a SWOT analysis was undertaken to inform future interventions.

3.4 Guidance has been provided which outlines some practical short-, medium- and long-term actions and advises on where further studies

and planning is required.

- 3.5 The work to date included consultation with commercial agents, public sector agencies and key landholders. Councillors were also consulted through two Members' Seminars. Members will be aware of the challenges facing Halton's town centres as well as the potential opportunities, but the two seminars served to create consensus and get agreement and 'buy in' as to where future limited resources need to be prioritised.
- 3.6 Due regard has been given to the broader context in which Widnes Town Centre would be operating over the next few years, for example, but not exclusively, Climate Change, social deprivation, skills, technological changes, and the way people use town centres.
- 3.7 The consultants concluded that Widnes town centre performs 'solidly' but is primarily retail rather than a broader town centre, and therefore, needs to provide a more diverse offer. Some parts of the town centre are failing. Some parts are hidden. Sustainable transport connections and connectivity within the town centre could be improved. Some other retail, leisure, cultural and civic functions are outside the town centre leading to a lack of critical mass and overreliance on car usage. However, the consultants refer to opportunities in respect of development sites that require further consideration.

To start to address these issues and to proactively progress opportunities in the town, a vision and set of accompanying three objectives has been identified.

**Vision:**

***Widnes town centre is a modern, attractive and vibrant centre servicing a range of needs of the town. The centre is well connected to its community and key assets within Widnes.***

***The town centre is diverse, celebrating and reflecting the Widnes community. It provides a broad range of employment and business opportunities. It is the focus of Widnes' community, social and civic functions, including a thriving evening economy.***

Objective	Comments
<p><b>A more cohesive town centre</b></p>	<p>This objective is in recognition of Widnes' sprawling nature and disconnected layout. The centre can be difficult to navigate for those unfamiliar with it and key elements are poorly connected, despite being physically close (e.g., Widnes Shopping Park and the high street or the Market Hall and the</p>

	high street).
<b>A more diverse town centre</b>	The town centre is heavily reliant on the retail sector, meaning it is vulnerable to downturns in this sector. An economically more diverse offer within the town centre would make the town centre more resilient, but also more attractive as a destination. A thriving town centre should be a location for a broad range of uses, including retail, commercial, civic, community, leisure, food and drink, entertainment, social and residential.
<b>A more sustainable town centre</b>	The town centre is very car-dependent, which has a higher impact on the environment in terms of climate change emissions and pollutants. Reducing the reliance on car trips by increasing public transport use and active travel would improve the sustainability of the town centre. Increasing the quantity of residential dwellings within and near to the town centre means that more users of the town centre would not require car trips.

#### 4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 A Widnes Town Centre SWOT analysis was undertaken and from these future interventions to meet the proposed objectives have been developed.

The proposed interventions include Development Sites; Public Realm options; a focus on Placemaking as well as the need to progress other strategies. It should be emphasised that evidence has also been provided to demonstrate the need for each intervention.

#### Next Steps

The development of a Town Centre Vision for Widnes Town Centre builds on a tried and tested approach applied in the regeneration of Runcorn Old Town. The Council's strategy to date has been

- a) to develop a vision; obtain consensus and agreement as to the key ingredients needed to develop a successful town centre.
- b) develop a Masterplan specific to developable and deliverable schemes.
- c) identify potential delivery mechanisms and funding routes.

This approach has enabled the Council to articulate a clear and coherent set of priorities to developers and key stakeholders when

seeking external funding and inward investment for the town.

Therefore, the following as 'next steps' are proposed:

1. The consultants have identified potential mechanisms for delivery ranging from purely private sector schemes to public sector involvement. It is proposed that an assessment of each delivery mechanism is provided to focus on the role the Council needs to play in ensuring that schemes can be brought forward to the market in a timely manner.
2. Prepare a brief to commission consultants to undertake master planning work in line with the agreed priority development sites.

Factors to consider would be an audit of existing facilities, stakeholder and public engagement, opportunities and analysis, optioning and design, viability assessment, preferred design, delivery and funding options.

3. Undertake an assessment and cost benefit analysis of the short-, medium- and longer-term interventions that have been identified.
4. Establishment of Town Centre Panel. It is proposed that a Town Centre Panel is established to guide the work outlined above and make recommendations arising from the review to the Executive Board would provide options for the future implementation of this work. The Group would comprise:  
Deputy Leader (Major Projects)  
Portfolio Holder Environment & Renewal  
1 representative from each Widnes Ward.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 At this point, the financial implications relating to possible town centre interventions are not known.
- 5.2 A Cost Benefit Analysis will be undertaken which evaluate for example, whether capital investment in the town centre environment/public realm will lead to increase in footfall, or whether revenue interventions aimed at supporting local businesses, attracting 'non-users' of the town centre and improving town centre coordination will produce similar results.

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

Town centres historically provide the major economic focus of a local area, and therefore, this work will have implications for all the Council's priorities. The way we use our town centres has evolved over many decades and continues to change. The primacy of retail in town centres

is reducing, with successful town centres being diverse, experiential places that encourage visits for a wide range of reasons, including cultural, leisure, socialising, education, health, employment and services, as well as retail.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 A risk analysis and options appraisal will be completed as part of the next steps outlined in paragraph 4.1.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Higher unemployment levels and lower health outcomes are close to the town centre. The regeneration of Widnes town centre should look to support and improve social outcomes in these areas. This would include better access to a broad range of employment opportunities, and access to a wide range of health, community, public transport, and support services.

## **9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Consideration of the impacts of climate change, including reducing the carbon footprint, mitigation and adaptation will be required. At the town centre level, this would include such considerations such as reduced private transport use, provision of local renewable energy sources, alternative heating sources, Electric Vehicle charging points, appropriate building design, innovative construction methods, shading, planting. The Widnes Town Centre Vision can have a role to reduce the town centre's impact on the climate as well as promoting good practices for residents and businesses.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 7 December 2023

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Operational Director - Finance

**SUBJECT:** Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief

**PORTFOLIO:** Resources

**WARD(S):** Borough-wide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider two applications for discretionary non-domestic rate relief, under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: That;**

- (i) The request from Hazlehurst Craft Studios CIC for 90% discretionary rate relief in respect of premises at 71 High Street, Runcorn, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, be approved;**
- (ii) The request from Hazlehurst Craft Studios CIC for 90% discretionary rate relief in respect of premises at 1st Floor, 73 High Street, Runcorn, with effect 16<sup>th</sup> February 2024, be approved.**

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Under the amended provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council is 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.
- 3.2 From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 the Council became responsible for meeting the full cost of all mandatory and discretionary relief granted, as part of the Liverpool City Region 100% Business Rates Retention Pilot Scheme.
- 3.3 Two applications for discretionary rate relief have been received as outlined below.
- 3.4 Currently, where discretionary rate relief has been granted to registered charities and non-profit organisations, it has been provided until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 in order to provide the organisations with some degree of certainty.



**Hazlehurst Craft Studio CIC**  
**71 High Street, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 1AH**

- 3.5 Hazlehurst Craft Studio is a not-for-profit organisation. It is a community interest company (CIC) that is limited by guarantee without share capital.
- 3.6 The organisation acquired premises at 71 High Street, Runcorn from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and as a not-for profit organisation they have requested 90% discretionary rate relief in respect of these premises.
- 3.7 The organisation is described as a creative hub situated in the heart of Runcorn that acts as a platform for Halton artists and recent graduates, and they endeavour to bring recognition to emerging artists and to serve as a stepping stone to their future success. The organisation collaborates with the Council, community groups and charitable organisations to make Halton a place for artistic expression, working together to show that the arts have the power to transform individuals and communities.
- 3.8 Their aim is to bridge the gap between artists and the public, transforming the studios into an inclusive venue where the local community engages with talented artists from the area.
- 3.9 The premises are used to provide an inclusive and inspiring space for individuals of all ages and skill levels to explore and develop their artistic abilities. In addition to offering resources and materials for various forms of artistic expression, it provides a hub for creative education and community building. Through workshops, classes and collaborative projects, the community can learn from each other and develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the arts.
- 3.10 The premises also serve as a platform for local artists to showcase and sell their work, thus creating creative job opportunities and contributing to the local economy. Providing affordable studios is vital to support the development of culture within the community providing benefits such as improved mental health and well-being. Supporting these artists enables them to continue their work within Halton encouraging engagement with the culture sector across the community improving aspirations, skills and general wellbeing.
- 3.11 If 90% discretionary rate relief were to be awarded in respect of 71 High Street, Runcorn the full year cost to the Council would be £4,833.44 as shown in the Appendix.

**Hazlehurst Craft Studio CIC**  
**1st, Floor, 73 High Street, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 1AH**

- 3.12 Hazlehurst Craft Studio CIC is currently in receipt of small business rate relief in respect of premises at the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 73 High Street,

Runcorn. This relief will expire on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2024 due to them acquiring their second premises of 71 High Street from April 2023.

- 3.13 The organisation has therefore requested 90% discretionary rate relief in respect of 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 73 High Street, Runcorn. If this were awarded the cost to the council for the period 16.02.24 to 31.03.24 would be £411.64 and thereafter the annual cost would be £3,348.05 as shown in the Appendix.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Board is required by the regulations to consider each application on its own merit. Any recommendations provided are given for guidance only, are consistent with Council policy and, wherever possible, previous decisions.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Appendix presents the potential costs to the Council of granting discretionary rate relief.

#### **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**

Hazlehurst Craft Studios CIC state that they assist with the development of local artists.

##### **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

Hazlehurst Craft Studios CIC state that they support the development of culture within the community, providing benefits such as improved mental health and well-being.

##### **6.4 A Safer Halton**

None.

##### **6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

None.

#### **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

- 7.1 There are no key risks associated with the proposed action.

#### **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 8.1 The applicants offer their services to all sections of the community, without any prejudice.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are none.

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

10.1	Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
	Discretionary Rate Relief Application Forms	DCBL Stadium, Lower House Lane, Widnes	Adel Tomkins Senior Rating Officer – Business Rates

**APPENDIX**

<b>Ratepayer</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Annual Rates Liability 2023/24</b> £	<b>Mandatory Rate Relief Awarded 2023/24</b> £	<b>Annual Cost of Mandatory Rate Relief to HBC 2023/24</b> £	<b>Disc. Rate Relief %</b>	<b>Annual Cost of Disc. Rate Relief to HBC 2023/24</b> £	<b>Actual Rates Liability 2023/24</b> £	<b>Actual Cost of Mandatory Relief to HBC 2023/24</b> £	<b>Actual Cost of Disc. Rate Relief to HBC 2023/24</b> £	<b>Actual Cost of Mandatory &amp; Disc. Relief 2023/24</b> £
Hazlehurst Craft Studios CIC	71 High Street, Runcorn	5,370.49	n/a	n/a	90%	4,833.44	5,370.49	n/a	4,833.44	4,833.44
Hazlehurst Craft Studios CIC	1st Floor 73 High Street, Runcorn	3,720.05	n/a	n/a	90%	3,348.05	457.38	n/a	411.64	411.64

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Executive Board
<b>DATE:</b>	7 December 2023
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Executive Director Environment & Regeneration
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Corporate Services
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Gas & Electricity Supply Contracts
<b>WARDS:</b>	Boroughwide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The report is to notify Members that the Executive Director Environment & Regeneration has approved the award of the corporate gas supply contract to Total Energies. The report is also to seek Members approval to the award of the corporate electricity supply contract to EDF.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted and**

- 2.1 That Members confirm approval of the award of the corporate electricity supply contract to EDF.

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 We purchase our energy supplies via the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) framework. CCS are an executive agency sponsored by the Cabinet Office and are the biggest provider of public sector frameworks in the UK thus can provide excellent value due to their bulk buying power.
- 3.2 CCS went through a tender process earlier in the year, the result being that Total Energies, previously named Total Gas & Power, were appointed as their gas provider, and EDF were appointed as their Electricity provider. Both companies were the previous providers so in essence they have both been reappointed. Our new arrangements commenced on October 2nd, 2023, and both frameworks until 20<sup>th</sup> February 2027.
- 3.3 The estimated average annual spend on gas over the duration of the contract for corporate sites is circa £800,000, thus making the total spend over the lifetime of the contract circa £2.75m. The estimated average annual spend on electricity over the duration of the contract for corporate sites is £1.65m, thus making the total spend over the lifetime of the contract £5.64m. The price of both the gas and electricity is fixed for a 12-month period commencing April 1<sup>st</sup> each year throughout the life of the contract.

- 3.4 There are a variety of purchase options available via the CCS framework and given the volatility in the energy market over recent years, it was decided that we should opt for the L24 option. This means the energy is purchased over a rolling 24-month period, the theory being that this gives more opportunity for the energy to be purchased when prices are lower so should offer better value in the long term. The only downside to this is we would need to give at least 2 years notice should we wish to opt out of the contract, so we are effectively tied into the new contracts. This option was approved by Management Team in December 2021.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The above course of action complies with our procurement strategy in respect of obtaining best value for money and ensuring that the procurement process is as efficient as possible.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Purchasing our energy via Crown Commercial Services ensures we obtain good value for money due to their bulk buying power.
- 5.2 Schools and academies are able to purchase their gas and electricity supplies via these contracts, they pay direct and have the necessary funds in place to cover same. In respect of corporate buildings, again the budget is in place to cover the cost of the gas.

#### **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**

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 The risk of not following the above course of action is that we would be in breach of contract as we opted for the L24 contract, and thus have to give at least 2 years notice if we wish to opt out of the contract. If it was decided that we did wish to opt out of the arrangement, we would need to instigate an alternative procurement process in the future which would be unlikely to bring any significant cost savings given the buying power of Crown Commercial Services.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

None.

## **9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 82% of the electricity generated on the EDF supply contract comes from non-carbon generating sources, which is well below the UK average of circa 55%. There are no specific climate change implications in respect of the above course of action

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

None under the meaning of the act

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director Environment & Regeneration

**PORTFOLIO:** Corporate Services

**SUBJECT:** Demolition of the former Waterloo Centre, Runcorn

**WARD** Mersey & Weston

### 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to notify members that the Chief Executive approved a waiver of standings orders under section 1.14.2 Emergency Powers to appoint a contractor to undertake the demolition of the former Waterloo Centre, Runcorn.

### 2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report be noted.

### 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The former Waterloo Centre in Runcorn closed in 2004 and since then has been surplus to Council requirements. No viable alternative use has been found for the building over the years, and without investment, the building started to fall into disrepair.
- 3.2 The intention was to demolish the building in 2019, however concerns were raised by Planning as the building adjoins Edgerton Street Library, which is a listed building.
- 3.3 Over the past couple of years, the condition of the building has deteriorated and is now in a very poor state of repair. The latest report from the structural engineer states that it is not feasible to shore the building up given the level of deterioration and that the building needs to be demolished in a controlled manner before an uncontrolled demolition occurs.
- 3.4 As a result of the above, and following legal advice, the Operational Director for Policy, Planning & Transportation has made the decision that the building should be demolished as soon as possible.
- 3.5 A tender exercise was undertaken in 2019 via the Chest in respect of the demolition of the building. The lowest priced tender return was that of the contractor Excavation & Contracting in the amount of £89,000,



and they would have been appointed to undertake the work had the project not been put on hold due to the concerns raised.

3.6 Whilst the above priced tender no longer stands, to expedite matters and avoid a lengthy tender exercise we have been in negotiations with Excavation and Contracting and they submitted a revised price of £110,000. This revised price is lower than any of the other tenders returned from the 2019 tender exercise.

3.7 Whilst the building has been cordoned off and is of no danger to the public, it is vital that we proceed with the work without delay. In order to allow us to enter into a contract with Excavation and Contracting and avoid any unnecessary delay a waiver of the procurement standing orders via the Chief Executive under emergency powers was obtained.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no policy implications in respect of the above course of action.

#### 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 An allocation has been made from the capital programme as such funding is available to carry out the work.

5.2 Demolition of the building will remove the need for any ongoing revenue expenditure associated with the building, thus reducing the financial liability.

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

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**  
None

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**  
None

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**  
None

6.4 **A Safer Halton**  
None

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**  
The demolition of the building will allow the site to be redeveloped for an alternative use.

#### 7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The risk of not proceeding with these works is that an uncontrolled

collapse of the building may occur.

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no equality and diversity issues associated with the above

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no climate change implications associated with the above decision

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

Officer decision notice- Demolition of Waterloo Building- Notification record of officer decisions- Democratic Services

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Executive Board
<b>DATE:</b>	7 December 2023
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Head of HR Operations
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Corporate Services
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Agency Worker Contract extension
<b>WARDS:</b>	Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This is a report to seek approval from Executive Board to extend the current contract that was procured for the supply of Agency Workers in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.15.3, Acceptance of pre-determined contract extension by Executive Board as the estimated value is likely to exceed £5,000,000 p.a.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDED: That**

- 1) the report be noted; and**
- 2) the Board approve that Halton extend the contract arrangement for a further 12 month period from 1st May 2024 to 30th April 2025 with Matrix SCM.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The current contract was awarded to Matrix SCM in May 2022 and has a pre-determined option to extend for 2 x 12 month periods, the first extension period is from 1st May 2024 to 30 April 2025.
- 3.2 The spend figure for April 22 to April 23 with Matrix was £8,475,694.00.
- 3.3 Since 2019 there has been a continued increase in the use and overall cost of agency workers in the Council. This has come about as a result of an increase in demand, particularly in Social Care services, as well as developing instability within the labour market across a growing number of role types.
- 3.4 Given the resourcing scenarios that continue to emerge it is imperative that the Council seeks to maintain access to a temporary workforce. Continuing participation in a collaborative contract arrangement whilst other options are being explored is the most effective way of achieving this given the economies of scale are generated in the procurement process and remain in place for the duration of the contract.

- 3.5 A managed service ensures that the Council remains compliant with the prevailing legislation pertaining to the use of contingent resources (The Agency Worker Regulations), and the equity and safeguarding requirements of individual role types. This also allows efficient call-off of workers through a single gateway.
- 3.6 Spend figures across the current contract term, along with the savings achieved through use of the current contract, are given in the tables below for information:

Year	Agresso Total Contract Spend £
2018-19	2,074,709.00
2019-20	2,250,852.00
2020-21	3,877,626.00
2021-22	5,148,582.60
2022-23	8,475,693.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,827,463.39</b>

Spend sits across a broad range of cost centres, linked to the service requesting the worker(s).

Historically spend on the contract has been in the region of £2m to £2.5m but the last number of years has seen unprecedented demand, spend on the contract in 2022/23 was £8.5m and it is forecast it will be at similar levels in the current financial year. Work is on-going as part of the Transformation Programme to reduce the reliance on agency which should help to bring the cost down.

Additionally – Total spend on agency placements in 2022/23 was £13.605m, which equates to 62% of costs being procured through Matrix and 38% being off contract. Work is ongoing to place more agencies on the Matrix contract which will help deliver further reductions in costs.

- 3.7 There are always instances of off-contract expenditure (acquisition of workers outside of the Matrix contract), which result from unfulfilled requests where agencies within the scope of the managed service are unable to supply specific role types. This will either be because there are no agencies within the managed service who specialise in certain roles (e.g. highly technical professional occupations such as engineers or surveyors, or specialist staff such as nurses) or available agencies were unable to supply a worker for the required tasks. Typically this usually equates to less than 10% of requisitions, as in 2019/20, 93% of agency resources were successfully resourced through the contract.
- 3.8 However the labour market has significantly changed and over the last full financial year there has been an increase in off-contract expenditure

amounting to £5.3m in 2022-23. This equates to around 40% of overall spend on agency workers. In 2022-2023, 60% of agency resources were resourced through Matrix, marking a reduction of over 30% since 2019/20. This is in part due to the reasons outlined at 3.3 above, but also the fact that the requirement cannot be fulfilled through the Matrix contract, or the requirement sits within a legacy arrangement that came into the Council as part of the inward transfer of care homes (TUPE). Work is currently being undertaken to onboard care homes onto Matrix to reduce off contract agency spend.

- 3.9 It is proposed that the contract be extended to ensure opportunity remains to resource agency staff through the neutral vendor and to avoid the costs and resource commitment of a tendering procedure, but is fully compliant with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 whilst other options are being explored.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The contract is awarded in line with Halton Borough Council's Procurement Standing Order 1.4.1 and the contract will support peripheral resourcing where it is required to ensure that services are sufficiently resourced to deliver a range of provision to Halton residents.
- 4.2 Peripheral resourcing is strictly controlled and monitored across the Council through the HR Operations Division.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The value of spend against agency is significant and has reached unsustainable levels. Whilst it is clear the demand for agency placements needs to be reduced, where there is an ongoing need for agency it should be sourced through the Matrix contract to help control costs. The future on-boarding of agencies through Matrix will help control costs further

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

##### **6.1 Children & Young People in Halton**

Use of the contract may contribute to any or all of the Council's priorities from time to time, by providing peripheral resources to any service where a requirement is identified in order to ensure continuity of provision of service to residents and businesses in Halton that fall within the scope of the Council's operations

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

Use of the contract may contribute to any or all of the Council's priorities from time to time, by providing peripheral resources to any service where a requirement is identified in order to ensure continuity of provision of service to residents and businesses in Halton that fall within the scope of the Council's operations

**6.3 A Healthy Halton**

Use of the contract may contribute to any or all of the Council's priorities from time to time, by providing peripheral resources to any service where a requirement is identified in order to ensure continuity of provision of service to residents and businesses in Halton that fall within the scope of the Council's operations

**6.4 A Safer Halton**

Use of the contract may contribute to any or all of the Council's priorities from time to time, by providing peripheral resources to any service where a requirement is identified in order to ensure continuity of provision of service to residents and businesses in Halton that fall within the scope of the Council's operations

**6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

Use of the contract may contribute to any or all of the Council's priorities from time to time, by providing peripheral resources to any service where a requirement is identified in order to ensure continuity of provision of service to residents and businesses in Halton that fall within the scope of the Council's operations

**7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Financial risk is minimised by awarding the contract within confirmed budgets.

7.2 As part of the procurement process, Halton Borough Council has carried out a financial assessment on the preferred supplier and has confirmed that they are a financially viable organisation

**8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The preferred supplier will be required to demonstrate that they embrace and comply with the Equality Act, and their services will be monitored to ensure this is the case.

**9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None identified

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

10.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Executive Board
<b>DATE:</b>	7 December 2023
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Corporate Director: Chief Executive's Delivery Unit
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Corporate Services
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Transformation Programme Update
<b>WARDS:</b>	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 the Executive Board note the contents of the update.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The focus of the work within the programme continues to be the development and planning of the projects outlined in Appendix A and where necessary, continued assessment of project feasibility. Where project feasibility has been determined the development of Delivery Plans and associated trajectories, against priority delivery actions, is underway. The development of trajectory data will be used to enable the monitoring of progress against both financial and non-financial outcomes and learning within the projects. This work will continue throughout December.
- 3.2 The recruitment campaign, noted in the previous update on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2023 continues to be rolled out and progress is being made to resource the required capacity to support the delivery of the Local Plan.

## **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**

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

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

**APPENDIX B****ESTIMATED SAVINGS**

	<b>2023/24 (£)</b>	<b>2024/25 (£)</b>	<b>2025/26 (£)</b>
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
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,000,000</b>	<b>8,000,000</b>	<b>10,000,00</b>

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Executive Board
<b>DATE:</b>	7 December 2023
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Executive Director – Adult Services
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Adult Social Care
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Adult Social Care Annual Report 2022-2023
<b>WARD(S)</b>	Borough Wide

### 1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide Executive Board with the Adult Social Care (ASC) Annual report for 2022-2023

**RECOMMENDATION: That that Board note the contents of the report**

### 3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Attached to this report is the ASC Annual Report for 2022-2023, also known as 'the local account'.
- 3.2 As agreed by Adults SMT in Spring 2023, the theme of this year's report is 'making a difference'. As well as context as to what the local provision of ASC looks like and the direction of ASC during the report period, the report also looks at how ASC has made a difference to people through the services we deliver, through our workforce and through innovative thinking.
- 3.3 The report looks at some examples of where services, staff and innovation have positively impacted on people who use our services. Sections contain feedback from people and staff as to how this has made a difference.
- 3.4 The report also contains high level data on service usage, spend, customer care and safeguarding.
- 3.5 In previous years the report has been published around springtime of the year following the report period. This year a decision was made to bring publication forward to autumn.
- 3.6 The report has been circulated to the Health Policy and Performance Board and will be presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board and is available on the HBC ASC webpage.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The Annual Report serves as a review mechanism for Adult Social Care to consider as part of ongoing continuous service improvement measures.

4.2 Whilst the report is not mandatory it is good practice, as endorsed by ADASS, and supports communication, information sharing and transparency between adult social care, the people who use our services and our stakeholders.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The Annual Report is published online, incurring no print costs.

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

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

None.

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

None.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The report highlights the work of the Division.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 As the report will be a publicly available document this may prompt challenge, comment or enquiry from the community and stakeholders.

7.2 HBC Communications have been informed to let them know that the document is available to the public via the HBC website.

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**

None under the meaning of the Act.



# Adult Social Care Annual Report 2022-2023



## Foreword

The UK Government's 2021 People at the Heart of Care white paper identified innovation as key to delivering 'outstanding quality' in adult social care in England. Whilst Adult Social Care in Halton has long prided itself on working in new and exciting ways to achieve better outcomes for people with care and support needs, during 2022-2023 there were a number of key innovations in the way in which we deliver services: from how we develop our work force to investment in new ways of working - all of which contribute to making a difference to the lives of the people who use adult social care services in Halton.

Actively working with partner agencies, Adult Social Care is achieving outcomes that people themselves have determined will make a difference to their lives. This Adult Social Care Annual Report focuses on *how* adult social care in Halton is making a difference, illustrating just some of the type of work that adult social care undertakes, and *what difference it makes to peoples' lives*.

Thank you to all the partners who have contributed to and supported the work of adult social care in Halton throughout 2022-2023.

I hope that you find this Adult Social Care Annual Report informative and that it gives you just a flavour of the breadth of work that is going on in Halton.

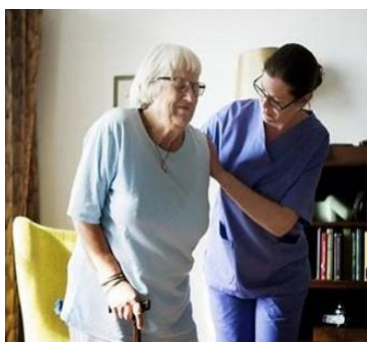
Councillor Joan Lowe

Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care



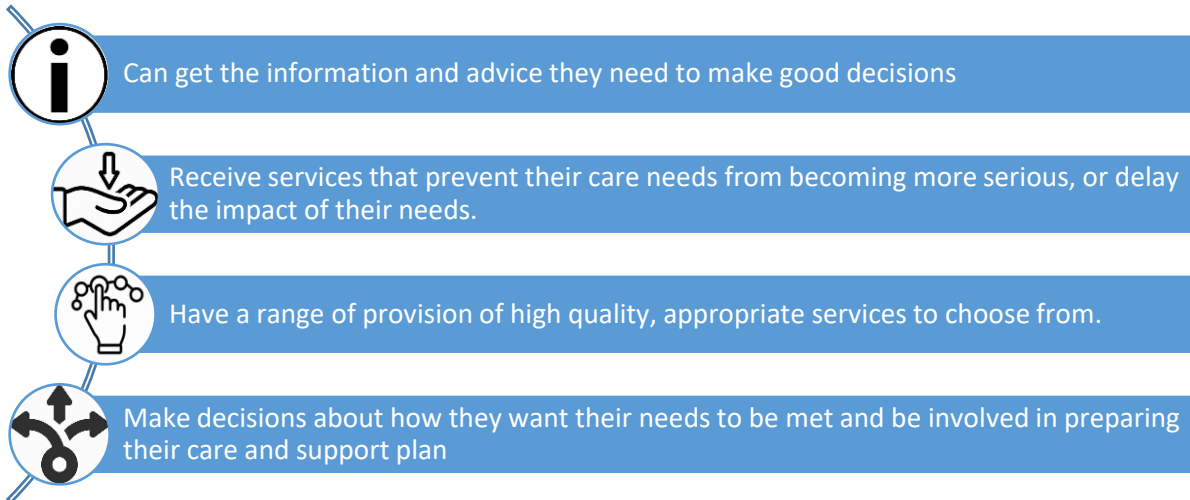
## 1.0 Adult social care – making a difference to people in Halton.

- 1.1 Adult social care in Halton offers practical support to enable people to live independently and achieve the outcomes they want to be able to live a good life.
- 1.2 A 'good life' looks different for every person – an active social life, involvement in their community, maintaining relationships with friends and family, living a healthy lifestyle, improving wellbeing, living independently. The knowledge and expertise that Halton's adult social care workers have is used to help people to achieve *their* good life.
- 1.3 Adult social care continues to make a difference to people at a time when the sector is under intense pressure. National trends in relation to funding pressures, increasing demand and more complex needs, impacted further by the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic, are largely reflected locally.
- 1.4 Halton's Adult Social Care directorate is constantly looking to mitigate the impact of these demands to continue to make a positive difference to people's lives. This report gives examples of how we went about this in the period 2022-2023 by:
- ✓ Making a difference through our **services**
  - ✓ Making a difference through our **workforce**
  - ✓ Making a difference through **innovation**.
- 1.5 The areas highlighted in this report represent just a small amount of the variety of work undertaken by the directorate. For more information on the areas covered in this report or on the work adult social care more generally please contact [ASCServiceDevelopment@Halton.gov.uk](mailto:ASCServiceDevelopment@Halton.gov.uk).



## 2.0 What does social care in Halton look like?

- 2.1 Halton's Adults Directorate is responsible for assessing the needs of adults with care and support needs in-line with the Local Authority duties of the [Care Act 2014](#). Under the Care Act, local authorities have responsibility to make sure that people who live in their areas:



- 2.2 Adult social care in Halton is made up of several services offering a wide range of interventions to make a positive difference to people's lives. Working closely with partners such as health, education, housing providers and voluntary and community organisations people are connected to information and help within their neighbourhoods. A summary of the council's key adult social care services is shown below.

### Care Management



Registered Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, and other care staff work with individuals and families to help people maintain a good quality of life. Through connecting people to support in their communities or arranging appropriate social care support because of frailty, illness, disability or mental health condition, people's needs can be met in a holistic way.

### Mental Health



Services offer prevention, identification of mental ill health, early intervention, and access to support, treatments and recovery. Working closely with local partners such as health, education and employers, our mental health teams look to improve the determinants of poor mental health, creating a place-based approach to improving mental wellbeing.

### In House Care Homes



The Council has a portfolio of four residential care/nursing homes and a community support centre. In our care homes people with a disability, health condition or long-term support need because of frailty, receive 24-hour care and support.

### Halton Intermediate Care and Frailty Service (HICaFS)



Integrated with health, this service supports the hospital discharge process and reablement of patients after a hospital stay. It also supports people through social care, occupational therapy, and nursing where they can be cared for at home, avoiding unnecessary hospital admission or re-admission.

### Independent Living Services (ILS)



ILS Services helps people maintain their dignity and independence to remain living in their own home. The Housing Solutions Service helps people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness under the Council's statutory duties. The Halton Integrated Safeguarding Unit works with services, providers, and the public to ensure that people are safeguarded against abuse.

### Community Services



This service area aims to help people live a fulfilling life, retain their independence, learn new skills, and avoid social isolation through undertaking meaningful activities that they choose. The service offers a wide range of opportunities for people with health conditions, learning or physical disability to engage in voluntary work, training, and social activities.

### 3.0 The direction of adult social care during 2022-2023

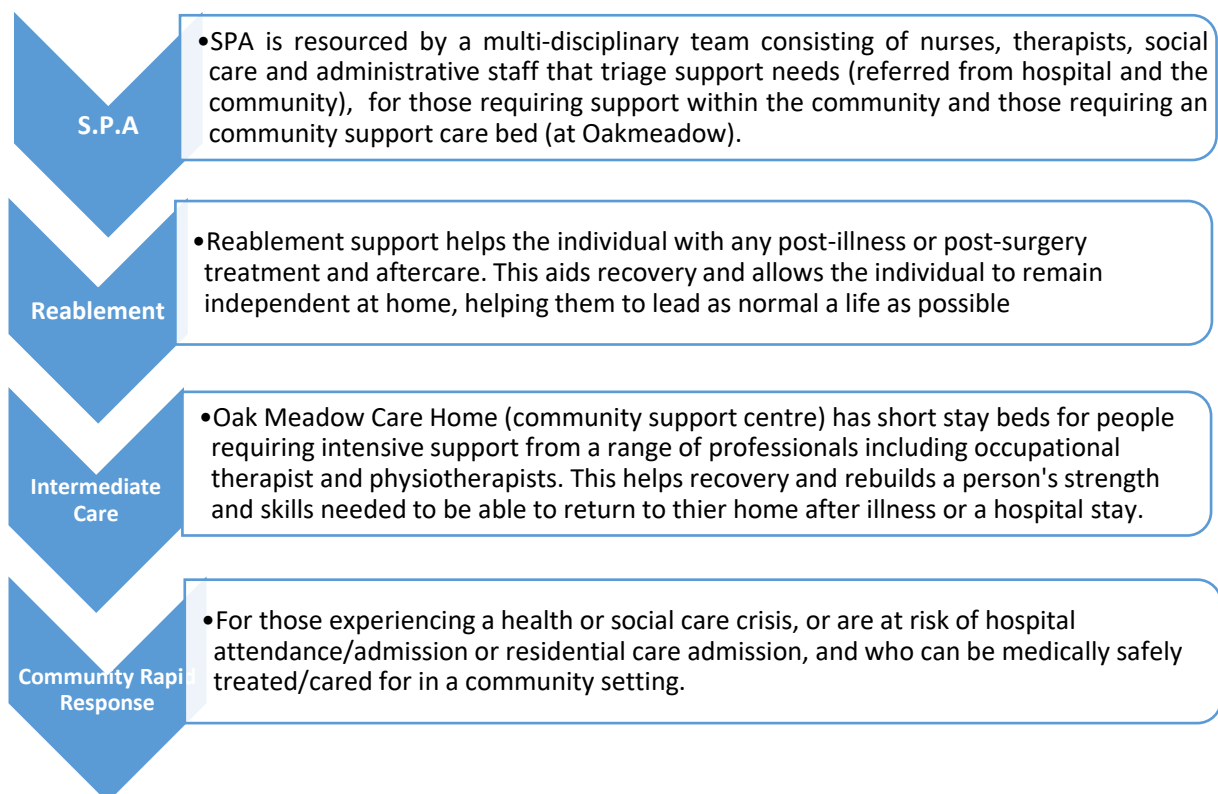
3.1 Adult social care in Halton is driven not only by national policy, but also a local health and wellbeing agenda. The Halton Borough Council Health Policy and Performance Board priorities for 2022/23 are shown below with a summary of progress achieved during that time frame.

Priority	Progress made during 2022-2023
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reforms in the Government White Paper: <a href="#">People at the Heart of Care</a> were put on hold, along with associated funding. However, proposed changes to Government policy in relation to the lifetime '<a href="#">Care Cap</a>', were closely examined in Halton prior to the 2 year delay announcement. A group was established to look at the implications of these legislative amendments and, specifically, the associated costs to the Council. The work of this group provides a foundation for any further move towards a cap on care.</li> <li>✓ Whilst the adult social care budget was stretched, it was used effectively in our proactive approach to prevention and delay of care needs through minor adaptations, social prescribing effective reablement and commissioning appropriate in-borough provision.</li> <li>✓ Our Quality Assurance team have conducted benchmarking of hourly rates across the sector and continue to advocate a living wage rate.</li> </ul>
<b>Managing demand for services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The demand for adult social care services was ever-increasing and Halton adult social care responded through the Transforming Domiciliary Care Programme, adopting a 'home first' approach to hospital discharge and investing in a significant increase of domiciliary care hours.</li> </ul>
<b>Workforce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provision for workforce development, progression and career recognition, where there is a strong emphasis on staff ability, motivation and opportunity is a priority in Halton. This has been evidenced in our professional progression policies for social work, occupational therapy and care home nursing preceptorship, supervision and caseload management policies and adult social care induction framework.</li> </ul>
<b>Quality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The Council's adult social care Quality Assurance and Contracts team have been working closely with providers of services to ensure that expected standards are met through the implementation of quality improvement actions plans.</li> <li>✓ The intention is to move more towards provider self-assessment of quality and a greater level of trust to identify emerging issues. This has been partially implemented through the Provider-Led Concerns and Enquiries model led by the Integrated Adult Safeguarding Unit.</li> <li>✓ HBC itself will be subject to <a href="#">Care Quality Commission</a> inspection from 2023. In readiness for this work has been undertaken to prepare including developing a performance dashboard, incorporating all the current measures captured across services.</li> </ul>

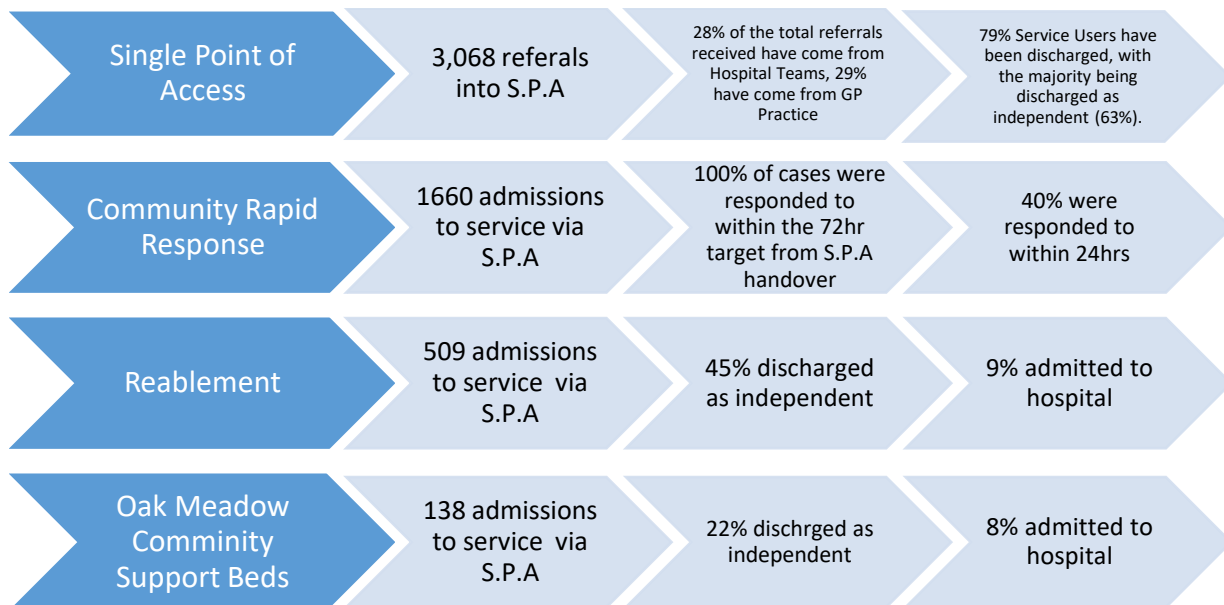
## 4.0 Making a difference to people through our services

### Capacity and Demand

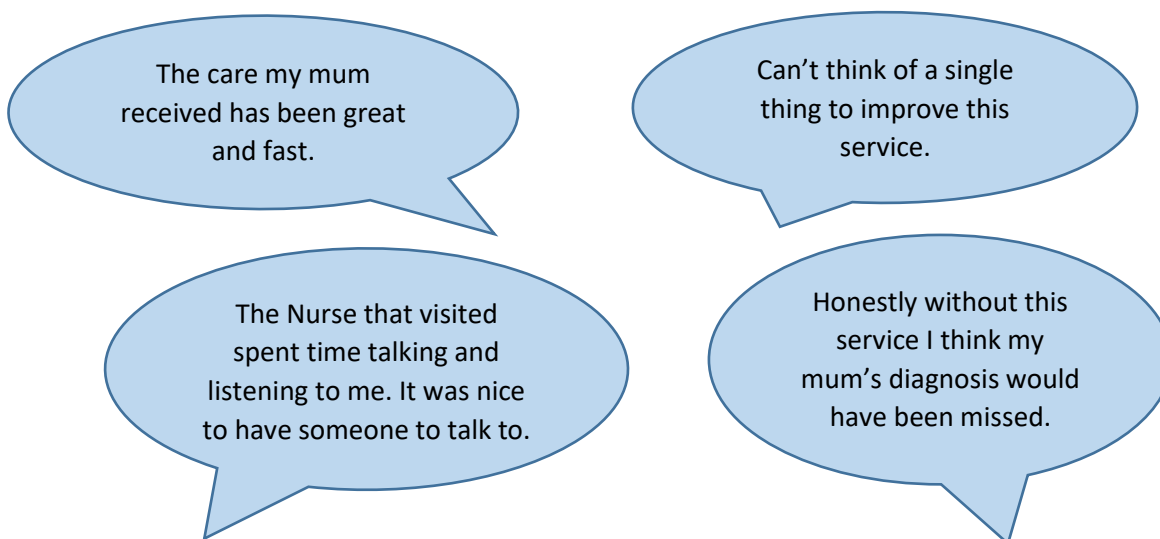
- 4.1 Responding to capacity in Halton across hospitals, therapies and care homes was a priority during 2022-2023. The launch of the [Halton Integrated Care and Frailty Service](#) (HICaFS) in December 2021 replaced the services previously provided separately in Halton by the Rapid Access Rehabilitation Service, the Capacity & Demand Team and the Halton Integrated Frailty Service.
- 4.2 By bringing together the functions of each of the services and developing a new single point of access (SPA), HICaFS manages capacity across both health and social care through seamless, safe management of referrals for people requiring Adult Community Services, potentially preventing hospital admission, supporting early discharge from hospital, promoting independence, and coordinating care closer to home for those needing rehabilitation after a hospital stay or illness.
- 4.3 HICaFS is made up of the 4 service elements, shown below:



- 4.4 During the first full 12 months of the service's operations the service has been able to help people receive the care and support they need to remain independent in the community, and in most cases, avoid a hospital admission.



Examples of feedback from people who have used the service...



In House Care Homes Clinical Development

4.5 Halton Borough Council has a [portfolio of owned and operated care homes](#):

- 1 residential care home
- 1 community support centre
- 3 nursing homes with specialist nursing care and for people living with dementia.

4.6 In early 2023 a seconded post was introduced to the HBC Care Homes Division for a Clinical Lead Nurse, undertaking 4 core functions across the HBC Care Homes:

1. Providing expert practice support
2. Providing professional leadership and consultancy.

3. Identifying and undertaking education, training, and development of staff.
  4. Involvement in research, evaluation, audit, and service development.
- 4.7 The role actively promotes personalised care and provides accessible and timely advice to the care home nurses, supporting their professional practice and development within their role, resulting in improved resident experience. The Lead Nurse is visible within the homes and is an additional channel to obtain views and any concerns of residents, respond to any emerging issues quickly.

#### The difference this has made...

- ✓ Improved clinical effectiveness, through access to training and mentoring, of our nursing team leading to better resident experience of nursing care.

### Occupational Therapy Single-Handed Care

- 4.8 Traditionally, care requiring the use of moving and handling equipment would involve the use of two carers. Single handed care involves the use of equipment and techniques to reduce the number of carers needed to safely care for people who need assistance to transfer, from chair to bed for example. This can aid capacity within teams.
- 4.9 Adult social care has invested in equipment and training to adopt this approach and single-handed care in Halton is now well embedded into practice. It is part of the assessment process, considered in the way we commission care and runs right through to how care rotas are developed. Our investment in single handed care is a means to providing services which promote dignity and independence.

#### Examples of equipment used in single handed care:



- 4.10 Developing and using this approach has enabled social care to have greater flexibility in the provision of care and greater responsiveness, for example in supporting quicker hospital discharge.

### The difference this has made...

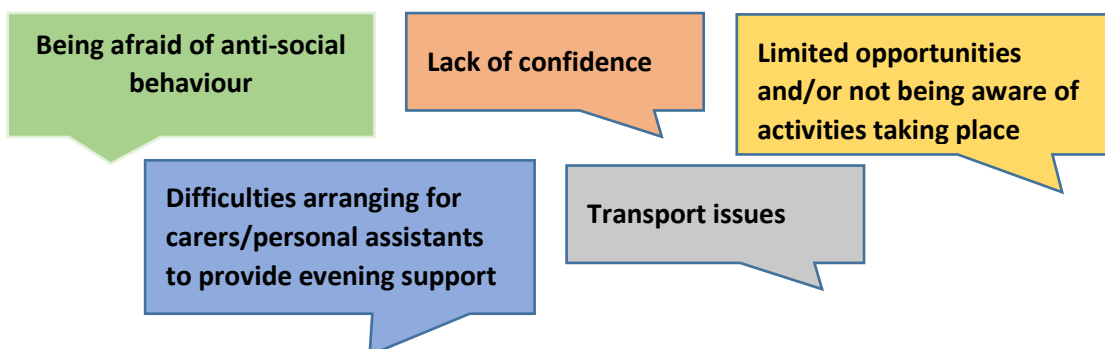
- ✓ Potentially a safer system of working
- ✓ Enhances people's choice and control
- ✓ Greater dignity and privacy
- ✓ Less handling and increased comfort
- ✓ People able to stay at home for longer

### Stay up late

4.11 In support of the national 'Stay up Late' campaign, adult social care in Halton believes that all people with learning disabilities, and autistic people, should be able to lead full and active social lives – including a social life in the evening if they so wish. Working with partners such as care providers, people who use services and carers, inflexible support that prevented people with learning disabilities or autism from staying up late was challenged. Working together we explored the following to better understand the needs of people:

- what night-time activities take place in Halton
- timings of available activities
- why people feel they can't, or don't want to, 'stay up late'
- what benefits and risks there are to people 'staying up late'

4.12 Working with people who use services, adult social care was able to find out what the issues were and how they could be overcome to stay up late if people wish to do so. Some of the reasons that people quoted for not wanting to go out in the evening were:



4.13 Individual choice is key. It was clear from speaking to people that not everyone wants to stay out late and recommendations for action reflected this freedom of choice. Some of the work to improve the choices around staying up late has already been undertaken, some is ongoing and some will happen in the future, and includes:

- A local publicity campaign around stay up late.
- An event for adults with learning disabilities to promote engaging in social activities (including staying up late).

- Events that ceased during the pandemic should be encouraged to re-start again.
- Establish a service user group to ensure that sustained progress is made in relation to enabling adults with learning disabilities to live the life they want.
- Providers to continue exploring the benefits of shared transport.
- Further explore how to help adults with learning disabilities to feel safe when going out, particularly at night.
- Explore the use of technology.
- Explore the use of funding and its flexibility to support innovate support to stay up late.

#### The difference this has made...

- ✓ Adults with learning disabilities feel heard, having the opportunity to talk about their fears and their wishes and contribute to service development.
- ✓ Adults with learning disabilities will have the same opportunities as everyone else to live a full and active social life, if they wish.
- ✓ Services in the future will be designed to support them to live the life they want to live, removing barriers and improving choice and control.

## 5.0 Making a difference through our workforce

- 5.1 Acknowledgement has been made on a national level that the adult social care workforce makes a substantial contribution to how our communities function and how individuals with care and support needs are enabled to access social care, leisure, education, employment, housing, meaningful occupation etc.

### Workforce Planning

- 5.2 During 2022/23, the adult social care implemented a programme of workforce planning, ensuring that adult social care careers are seen as rewarding, with opportunities to develop and progress, and access a fair living wage. To achieve this, work got under way to look at effective recruitment, attracting new workers into the sector and increasing diverse representation; defining career pathways with opportunity to undertake associated qualifications; continued personal and professional development; and recognition of individual achievements.
- 5.3 Our in-house care home services offered 'test bed' sites for taking forward innovation around workforce approaches and the Cheshire and Merseyside Local Workforce Action Board (CMLWAB) funded work looking at 'Enhancing Quality in the Care Home Sector'. Nursing Care has a critical role to play in this. The project work implemented a 'grow our own' approach.



### The difference this has made...

- ✓ Establishing new Nurse Associate and Assistant Practitioner roles, both of which and offer accompanying learning towards formal qualifications and act as a steppingstone to further progression.
- ✓ Close working with a local further education college (Riverside College) to promote recruitment into the wider social care workforce in Halton amidst a difficult national social care recruitment backdrop.

## Developing HBC Care Home Nurses

- 5.4 With the introduction of the Care Home Clinical Lead post supporting the continuous the clinical quality process, focus was also given to developing progression pathways and specific inductions for our care home nurses to make Halton's care homes an attractive place to work.
- 5.5 Developing the induction and a 12-month programme of specific support for new nurses to help them translate their knowledge into everyday practice (Preceptorship) aims to support recruitment and retention as it is rolled out. The policies and supporting tools support care home managers and nurses, along with a progression pathway for employees who wish to progress, as part of the council's commitment to recognising and supporting this valuable workforce.

### The difference this has made...

It is anticipated that the work underway will:

- ✓ Support our staff with recognition, retention and progression adding value to care home nursing roles.
- ✓ Provide care home nurses with a clear progression pathway that supports workforce development outcomes.
- ✓ Encourage new, innovative roles to enhance care delivery and resident experience.

## Adult Social Care Training and Social Work Professional Development

- 5.6 During 2022 a new post was established to give particular focus to adult social care training and social work professional development. As a result of this new post the following has been achieved during 2022/23:



Development of a structured Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), a 12-month, employer led and employment-based programme of support and assessment for newly qualified social workers. Nine newly qualified social workers are on the programme and 2 more due to start.



Coordinating and oversight of student social worker placements. Since March 2022 seven students have been recruited from placements.



Three experienced Halton Community Care Workers were recruited onto the Council's Social Worker Apprenticeships Programme. Three further Community Care Worker have been selected to put forward for the training in 2024.



In order to support the apprentices, the student social workers and the new qualified social worker, coordinated monthly support sessions across the year have been introduced. These sessions focus on a relevant subject identified through meeting with team managers and ASYE assessors and utilising their knowledge and skills to each facilitate a session.



Working with Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Partnership and University of Central Lancashire, Halton is maximising the opportunities for experienced social workers to train as Practice.

Educators, increasing the council's capacity to supervise, teach and assess social work students on practice learning placements.

#### The difference this has made...

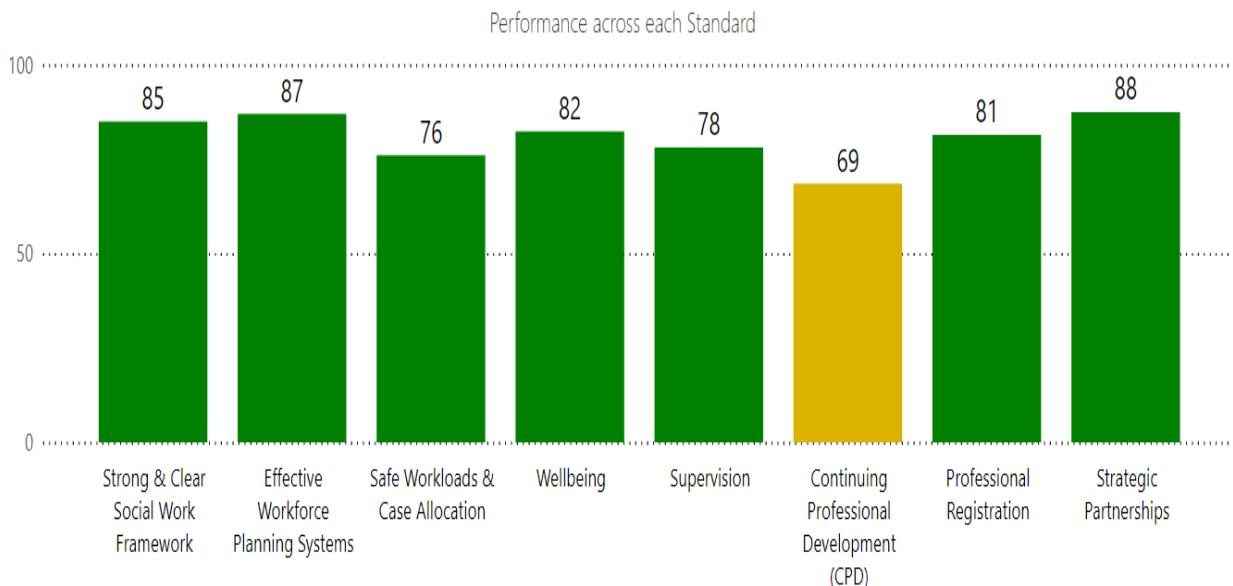
- ✓ Investment in workforce development improves recruitment, retention and job satisfaction, making careers in social work and social care more attractive.
- ✓ Links with education establishments, regional and national social work/care partners provides opportunity to promote Halton has a desirable location to start and continue careers in social work and social care.

### Social Care Health Check

- 5.7 Every year a 'Social Work Health Check' is undertaken nationally by the Local Government Association. It aims to assess how areas are performing against the [Standards for Employers of Social Workers](#).
- 5.8 Halton participates in this annual survey as just one of the ways to help keep a check on how supported the workforce feel and it can help identify how to further support workforce, which in turn helps the provision of quality social care in Halton and improve recruitment and retention.
- 5.9 For this annual survey there was a response rate of 33% overall (41% for mental health social workers and 32% for adults' social workers).

5.10 The chart below shows that respondents scored 7 out of the 8 domains positively (shown in %), indicating satisfaction in those areas. This provides Managers with a baseline to monitor staff support and take action in the area identified.

### 5.11 Survey Results across the standards



## 6.0 Making a difference through innovation

### Care Management

6.1 Adult social care in Halton gives staff the freedom to work freely with people to find solutions that enable *that* person to live *their* good life, often trying new and unique approaches. Here, a social worker gives an example as to how this works in practice, and the benefits it brings to the people they work with.

**“** *I was working with a young adult who has Autism. They were motivated to have a social life and explore the world of work. However, initial support that we had explored together, such as travel training, had not been successful due to the person feeling very anxious when in public places and requiring emotional support and reassurance. The person felt that they were losing their independence.*

*Through getting to know the person, understanding their barriers to independence and what they felt could help them, a Direct Payment was agreed to get them a support dog. This required research to understand how this could work for the person and the benefits it could bring. Whilst not an ‘everyday solution’, it was a perfect solution for this person. The benefits of having a support animal are well documented, and for adults with autism, service dogs can be a vital bridge to independent living. Having the dog in place gave the*

*person the confidence to take up work experience placement - help them gain the independence they desired and opportunity to learn skills for their future.* ””

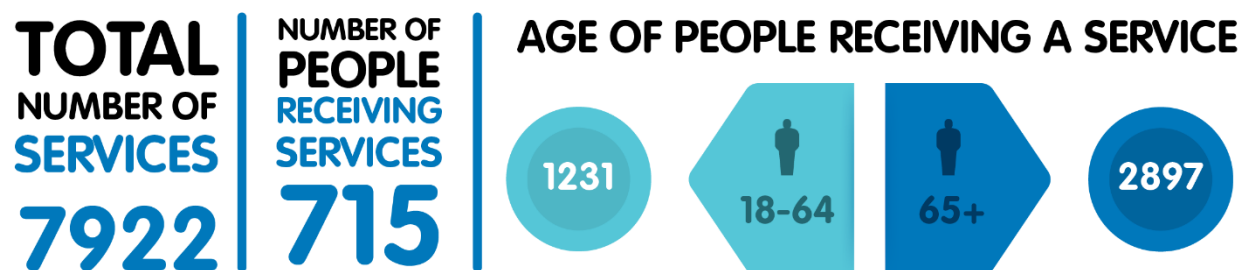
## 7.0 Key figures

7.1 Collecting and analysing data helps adult social care services in Halton to monitor capacity, pick up on changes in demand for services, provides evidence to direct future service developments and helps allocate resources across the range of interventions we offer. The figures below illustrate the demand for adult social care and across which services. It also includes data from our Adult Social Care Customer Care function that helps us to act where experiences have fallen short of a person’s expectations.

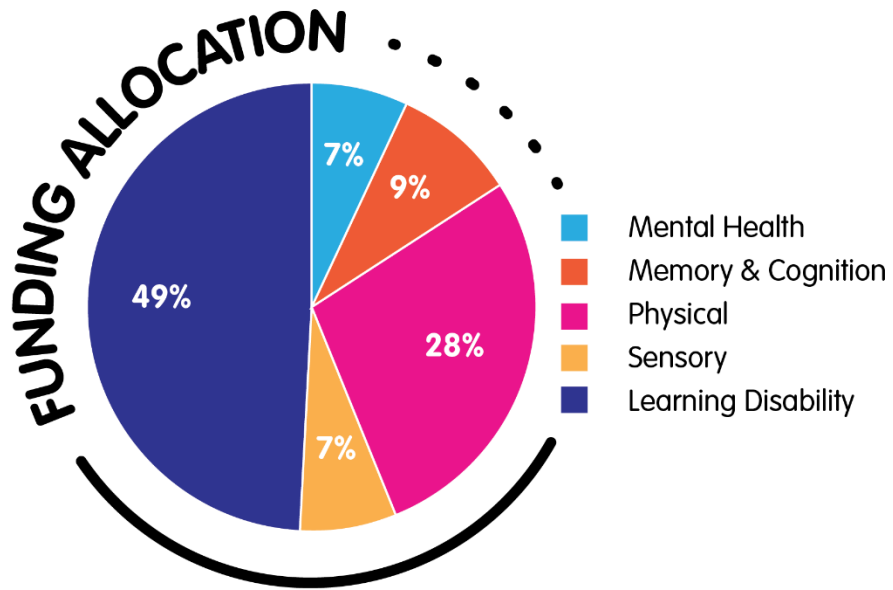
### 7.2 Assessment of needs



### 7.3 Services in place



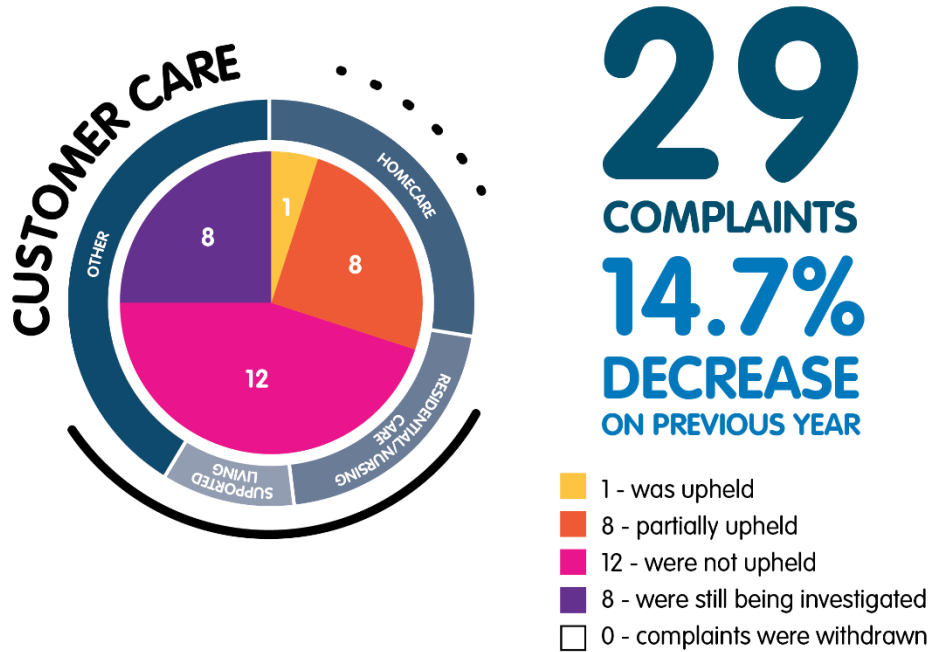
7.4 Percentage of funding allocation by support need



7.5 Safeguarding

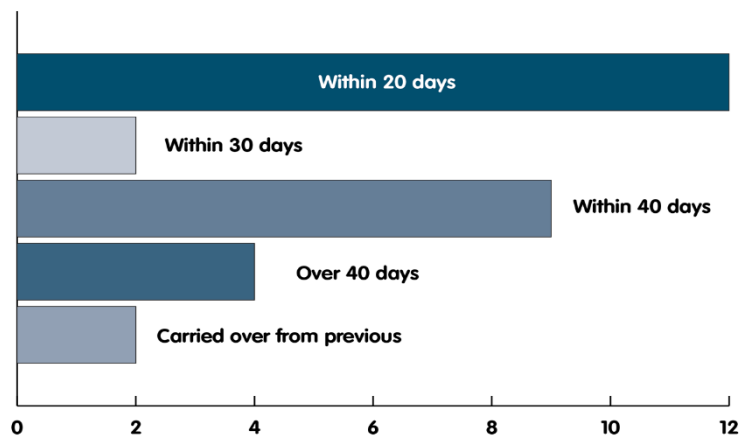


7.6 Adult Social Care Customer Care



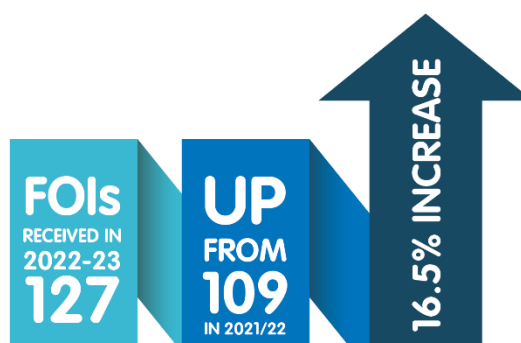
Complaints Completion

All complaints are allocated to appropriate team managers by the council’s Adult Social Care Customer Care Team. The council is obliged to provide a response within the 20 days, however, where complaints are complex and require further in-depth investigation, the complainant is notified if an extended period is needed. The table below shows complaints response times.



## 7.7 Freedom of Information (FOIs) requests made to Adult Social Care

The number of FOIs received relating to adult social care



The table below shows the teams to which the FIO relates to:

Team	2022-23
Care Management	36
Commissioning	18
Independent Living	3
Intermediate & Urgent Care	2
Housing Solutions	34
Mental Health (exc. Housing Solutions)	0
Policy, Performance & Customer Care	0
Finance	3
Quality Assurance Team	0
Complex needs	0
Telehealth	0
Safeguarding	5
PBSS	0
Community	0
Cross cutting	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>

The table below shows where the request for information came from:

Requester	2022-2023
Business	32
Charity	3
Media	14
Public	69
Trade Union	0
Other inc MP, NHS and student.	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>

## 8.0 Talk to us

### If you would like further information about any aspect of this report

Please contact [ssdcustomer@halton.gov.uk](mailto:ssdcustomer@halton.gov.uk) or telephone Halton Borough Council's contact centre on 0303 333 4300 and ask for Adult Social Care Policy, Performance and Customer Care Team.

### If you would like to speak to someone about having an assessment for social care

Please ring our dedicated Social Care telephone line or call into one of our [Halton Direct Link 'one-stop shops'](#) and speak directly to one of our staff. Website: [www.halton.gov.uk](http://www.halton.gov.uk) / Telephone: 0151 907 8306 (Halton Adult Social Care 24 hours).

### Ever considered a career in care?

There are many diverse and rewarding roles and professions in the care sector. If you would like to know more visit the ['Think Care Careers'](#) website or see Halton Borough Council's [vacancy page](#) on our website for our current opportunities.

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<b>REPORT TO:</b>	Executive Board
<b>DATE:</b>	7 December 2023
<b>REPORTING OFFICER:</b>	Executive Director – Environment & Regeneration
<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Environment and Urban Renewal
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Halton Freeport Retained Rates Fund
<b>WARD(S)</b>	Borough Wide

## 1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for Halton Borough Council to implement the Halton Freeport Retained Business Rates Fund

## 2.0 **RECOMMENDED: That**

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the Board supports the progress made on the Freeport and specifically the retained business rates fund to deliver local regeneration priorities.
- 3) gives delegated authority to the Executive Director for Environment & Regeneration, Operational Director Finance, in consultation with the portfolio holder to take the necessary steps develop a Halton Freeport Retained Business Rates Fund,
- 4) authorises the Operational Director Finance to enter in to and manage the processes required to facilitate the Business Rates Retention and Tax Increment Financing processes.

## 3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### 3.1 **Freeport Development**

In 2021 Halton Borough Council supported the development of a Freeport application in support of the Liverpool City Region's economic aspirations. The Freeport had two major elements: to provide connectivity to Port of Weston and to raise project funding to deliver Halton Council's economic aspirations in the form of Tax Incremental Financing. Tax incremental financing (TIF) is a method of raising revenue to pay for regeneration.

#### **TIF Mechanism**

- 3.2 TIF relies on taxes raised based on future increases in land values to finance current improvements, which will (to a degree) achieve those increases in land values and thus generate increased tax revenues.

**Under a TIF mechanism, the projected growth in business rates can be used to fund upfront costs associated with addressing barriers to development and enabling economic growth.**

TIF can be limited to a specific jurisdiction (municipal or similar authority), geographical area and/or to a particular project which needs funding, or it can be a more general tax-raising vehicle. It can be used to regenerate an area, provide infrastructure, or be applied to public projects which would not otherwise attract funding. This is something that has been successfully implemented in a number of enterprise zones in the UK.

### **Liverpool City Region and Freeport**

- 3.3 Objectives of the Halton Freeport Retained Business Rates Fund

Overall Freeport objectives:

1. To establish a hub for global trade and investment in Liverpool City Region
2. To deliver local regeneration, levelling up and inclusive quality jobs to communities of need
3. Deliver the net zero ambition

Halton Borough Council intends to establish the Retained Business Rate fund on a similar basis to the Tax Increment Finance Fund established for the local Enterprise Zone using a prescribed number of projects as outlined in the Full Business Case and Retained Rates Strategy and will be implemented flexibly with the funding to meet needs in a changing environment in line with the following principles:

- a) Contribute the appropriate pro-rata share to the management costs of the Freeport Management Team.
- b) Contribute to the Halton Council staff resource required to deliver the Freeport objectives in Halton and to deliver the Freeport management requirements relating to the 3MG Tax Site.
- c) maximise the regeneration impact of the 3MG Tax Site and development of new customs site locations in the borough by improving connectivity and transport infrastructure.

- d) deliver regeneration, levelling up and the development of 'live work play' assets in Halton.
- e) Support the innovation, net zero and sustainability objectives of the Freeport.

3.4 Halton Council has signed up to the LCR Freeport Gateway Policy and will engage positively in the development of an MOU with Government and the Freeport Management Board

TIF allows Halton Borough Council (HBC) to invest in public infrastructure and other improvements in advance and anticipation of NNDR uplift receipts. HBC can then pay later for those investments. We can do so by capturing the future anticipated increase in NNDR revenues generated by the project.

### 3.5 **Freeport MOU**

The Retained Rates Strategy (RRS) is a core document of the LCR Freeport and referenced in the Memorandum of Understanding between LCR Freeport and Government. The Retained Rates Strategy sets out a response to the Government's requirements for the administration of retained rates across the three billing authorities of LCR Freeport – St Helens, Wirral and Halton Councils and the role of LCR Freeport Management Board, the LCR Combined Authority and Government.

### 3.6 **Changes in Business Rating System**

3.7 Government advice is that billing authorities will be compensated if there is any change to the business rates arrangements which reduces or eliminates income from business rates within tax sites.

3.8 The expectation is that each billing authority will borrow to invest in projects to accelerate the delivery of the LCR Freeport Tax Site and support the regeneration, innovation, skills, and net zero policy objectives with investments in their local areas. It is understood that the benefit of these projects and tax sites will be felt across LCR communities through the provision of employment and opportunity.

### 3.8 *Criteria for Nominated Projects*

*The Government expects income from Business Rate Retention within the defined area growth to primarily be used to fund the following:*

- *freeport operating costs (Starting with a commitment of £200,000 in 2024 / 2025). Note the first £50,000 of Retained*

*Rates Fund is reserved for HBC (earmarked for feasibility works for the Port of Weston access road), £200,000 in 2024 / 2025 for Freeport but if the rates are not accrued this amount is not due,*

- physical and/or digital infrastructure that will facilitate investment in the Freeport area,*
- land assembly and/or site remediation works that will facilitate investment in the Freeport area,*
- skills and workforce development,*
- innovation initiatives,*
- regeneration and/or the development of 'live work play' assets within the Freeport Travel to Work Area,*
- mitigating the displacement and/or negative externalities (e.g., additional traffic) associated with the Freeport,*
- activity in support of the Freeport's Net Zero ambitions;*

### **3.9 Initial outline of nominated projects**

*As part of the Outline Business Case, Full Business Case and Retained Rates Strategy the following projects have been suggested, however, from the initial gateway criteria for projects and will be subject to feasibility, value to the public purse and presentation of a full business , due diligence and subsidy control*

- 1) Runcorn Station Quarter*
- 2) Halton Leisure Centre*
- 3) Ditton Railway Station*
- 4) Foundry Lane – 360 new homes*
- 5) Brindley Theatre Public Realm*
- 6) Fleet Replacement Diesel to Green energy*
- 7) Mersey Gateway Access to sites from Ashley Way*
- 8) Enterprise Centre Land*
- 9) Office Development Mersey Gateway*
- 10) Conversion of Runcorn Library to Health and Education Centre*

*Further to the above the following can be considered for the scheme”.*

- Contingency, in the event of devaluation, non-payment and voids*
- Delivery team costs, including Freeport Management Team and local authority functions in regeneration, delivery, finance, legal*
- Interest costs associated with borrowing to support investments*
- Transaction and other costs associated with investments in regeneration projects*

*The final point above provides flexibility with the fund but this must “deliver regeneration, levelling up and the development of 'live work*

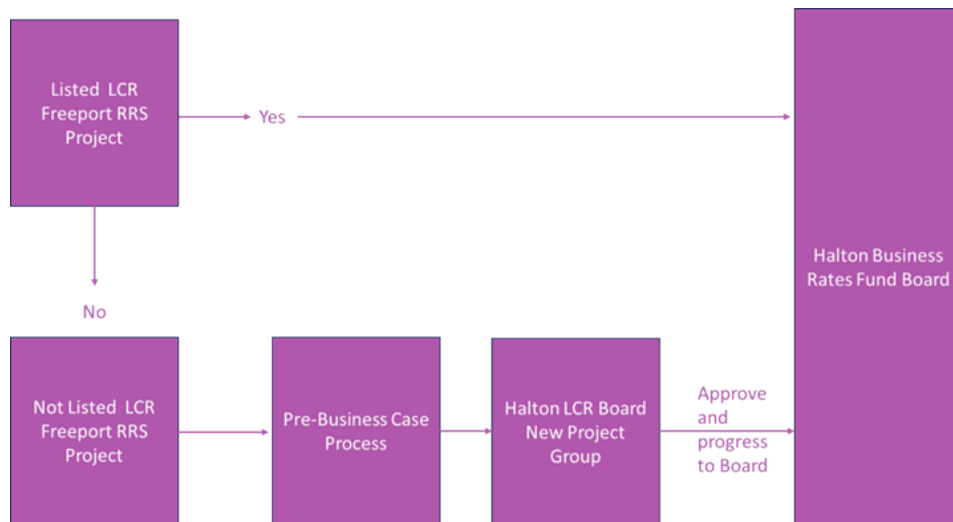
*play' assets in Halton." Along with Halton objective d). (3.3 above)*

**Governance arrangements**

3.10

*Projects confirmed as 'in scope' will be managed by the billing authority. Projects will be invited to prepare a business case, proportional to the scale of the project, in line with requirements of the billing authority. LCR CA Assurance Framework provides a useful context for establishing investment by the public sector in future projects. "The business case and appraisal process will be determined and managed by each billing authority following the process agreed within each Retained rates Business Case, approved by the local Council." Each billing authority will set out its own governance process for the approval of funds allocated from retained rates.*

*The local billing authority will report to the Freeport Team – and directly to DLUHC – as required in the LCR Freeport Memorandum of Understanding.*



**Board Representatives**

3.11

- a) *Local Officials: Halton officials who can provide insights into the community's development priorities and ensure that TIF aligns with broader goals. Namely:*
  - *OD Economy, Property, and Investment*
  - *Portfolio Holder Regeneration*
- b) *Economic Development Specialist: Specialist in economic development can offer guidance on how TIF funds can be effectively used to stimulate growth and create jobs.*
- c) *Regeneration and Business Growth Manager*
- d) *Community Representatives: Include community members who can represent the interests of residents and provide feedback*

*on how TIF projects impact their neighbourhoods.*

- e) *Portfolio Holder Regeneration*
- f) *Real Estate Professionals: Real estate experts can assist in evaluating property values, redevelopment opportunities, and the potential impact of TIF projects on property values.*
- g) *CA / SIF Investment Team*
- h) *Legal Counsel: Having legal expertise is crucial to ensure that all TIF-related activities comply with local laws and regulations.*
- i) *Legal Advisor HBC*
- j) *Accountants/Auditors: These professionals can oversee financial reporting and auditing of TIF funds to maintain transparency and accountability.*
- k) *OD Finance*
- l) *Urban Planners: Urban planning experts can help design and execute TIF projects that align with the community's long-term development plans: Local Plans Manager*
- m) *Business Representatives: Involve local business leaders who can provide input on how TIF can support business growth and expansion.*
- n) *Council Leader nominated Business Representative*
- o) *Natural England Representative*

***The be Quorate, 1 of each category a, e and k must approve a business case.***

6. *Process per project*

- a. *Projects listed go straight to a business case (See appendix 1)*
- b. *Projects not listed go through a gateway process first (See appendix2) then if successful to business case.*

7. *Monitoring Arrangements*

*Each projects business case will have a Monitoring and Evaluation arrangements detailed.*

8. *Appointed Auditors*

*Internal / External auditors to be appointed to provide retrospective oversight.*

**4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Freeport is a stated priority of the Liverpool City Region and Halton Borough Council has agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Central Government and Wirral and St Helen's Councils.

**5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Halton Retained Business Rates Fund is an estimated £80

million scheme using retained NNDR income from the freeport boundary and this will net approximately £40 million of regeneration project income.

Projects will be awarded on a case by case basis once business rates income is understood.

- 5.2 As a general principle local authorities will not be able to borrow if there is a "more than negligible risk" of the council failing to repay its debt without government support.

Prior to approval of any scheme HBC will undertake a thorough due diligence process. Ensuring the cost of any borrowing is affordable from both the retained and future forecast of business rates within the Freeport area. Any additional external funding generated from other sources will also be taken into account.

The guidance further sets out the types of expenditure which PWLB borrowings should be used for. These are:

**Service delivery**

This is expenditure which forms part of the local authority's public service delivery. This includes areas such as transport, education and social care.

**Housing**

This includes expenditure on building new homes, maintaining existing homes and purchasing built homes to deliver housing services.

**Regeneration**

This is expenditure used to invest into assets to create new social and economic benefits. For example, investing in assets which are of value to the public but which the private sector does not see as commercially valuable.

**Preventative action**

This is expenditure that is used to provide support to companies or assets which without the additional funding would no longer be viable. This may be done to protect jobs or prevent economic and social decline in the area.

- 5.3 Initial estimates suggest that the 25 years (2046 to the lifetime end point) years Halton Retained Business Rates Fund rates retention period can support the delivery of the masterplan through approximately £40m of Tax Increment Financing.

The Council will establish an Investment Strategy and Rates Reinvestment Policy. The investment strategy will detail the priorities for delivery in line with the priorities mentioned under point 3.3.

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

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

None

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

The Halton Retained Business Rates Fund will support the delivery a range of private and public sector projects aimed at improving employment opportunities.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Providing additional opportunities for local people and providing access to local employment increases the potential for healthier living.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

The Freeport Investment strategy and retained rates fund is a significant tool which could support a number of urban regeneration priorities in Halton over the next 23 years.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Financial risks will be mitigated by ensuring that the income from NNDR is secured and an annual audit will be carried out with quarterly monitoring.

7.2 The TIF process has risks associated with it in terms of affordability of any borrowing but this would be managed through a due diligence process. The 23 years of the scheme means that the cost of borrowing could be spread over time.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 All facilities developed under the scheme will be fully accessible for all residents and businesses; as such, there are no equality and diversity issues.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 The project will deliver high quality projects in Halton to promote sustainable transport, waste management and recycling and accessible facilities in town centres. All projects will make best endeavours to ensure that materials are sustainably sourced.



9.2 *Physical buildings will be designed to the highest BREEAM standards*

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

None within the meaning of the Act.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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