

Minutes

**For Presentation to the Council
At the meeting to be held on**

Wednesday, 5 March 2025

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COUNCIL

At a special meeting of the Council on Monday, 10 February 2025 in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors Ball, Baker, Begg, Bevan, Bramwell, Carlin, Connolly, Dennett, Dourley, Fry, Garner, Gilligan, Harris, S. Hill, V. Hill, Hughes, Hutchinson, Jones, Leck, M. Lloyd Jones, P. Lloyd Jones, C. Loftus, K. Loftus, Logan, A. Lowe, A. McInerney, T. McInerney, Nelson, P. Nolan, Philbin, Polhill, C. Plumpton Walsh, Ratcliffe, Rowe, Ryan, Stockton, Teeling, Thompson, Thornton, Wainwright, Wall, Wallace, Wharton, Woolfall and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Abbott, Davidson, Goodall, McDermott, McDonough, L. Nolan, N. Plumpton Walsh, Stretch and Skinner

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney, S. Young and G. Ferguson

Also in attendance: One member of the press and six members of the public

Action

COU62 COUNCIL MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 4 December 2024 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

N.B. Councillors Thompson and Wharton declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the following item of business as they are Non-Executive Directors of Mersey Gateway Crossings Board and they left the meeting for the duration of the item.

COU63 MERSEY GATEWAY

Council considered a report of the Director – Legal and Democratic Services, that outlined the requirement to increase the road user charge for the Mersey Gateway Crossings by 20%. On 24 October 2024, the Executive Board had considered a report to increase tolls and set out a number of proposed changes to the current arrangements. The proposals were addressed in an updated draft Road User Charging Scheme Order (RUCSO) that was appended to the report and Council resolved to conduct a consultation on the proposed revised RUCSO.

The consultation ran from 4 November 2024 to 16

December 2024 (inclusive). The Mersey Gateway Crossings Board had prepared a report on the consultation responses which was attached to the report at Appendix 2. The report requested the Council to make the RUCSO in the form detailed in Appendix 1.

RESOLVED: That the Council after giving full and proper consideration to the responses received to the consultation, and having taken them into account

- 1) confirm that no further consultation is required in respect of the updated RUCSO;
- 2) confirm that no public inquiry is required to be held into the making of the updated RUCSO; and
- 3) make the updated RUCSO in the form (or substantially the same form) as that at Appendix 1 and delegate to the Director (Legal & Democratic Services) in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, the authority to take all necessary steps to bring the RUCSO into effect and make any non-material or consequential amendments as are necessary to enable the updated RUCSO to be made.

Director, Legal
and Democratic
Services

Meeting ended at 6.37 p.m.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 12 December 2024 in DCBL Stadium, Widnes

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor T. McInerney

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, S. Young, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, S. Wallace-Bonner, G. Ferguson, W. Rourke, J. Rosser and R. Rout

Also in attendance: None

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

	<i>Action</i>
<p>EXB60 MINUTES</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2024, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p> <p>CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO</p> <p>EXB61 DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF</p> <p>The Board received a report from the Director of Finance, which presented one application for discretionary non-domestic rate relief, under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, for consideration.</p> <p>It was noted that under the amended provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council was able to grant discretionary rate relief to any business ratepayer. This relief had previously only been available to organisations that were a registered charity, a community amateur sports club or a not for profit organisation.</p> <p>The report outlined details of an application from Community Shop CIC, in relation to their respective address. Appended to the report was the potential annual cost to the Council of granting the discretionary rate relief. Currently, where discretionary rate relief was granted to registered</p>	

charities and non-profit organisations, it was provided until March 2025, in order to provide the organisations with some degree of certainty.

RESOLVED: That the application for 15% discretionary top-up relief from Community Shop CIC, be rejected for the reasons outlined within the report.

Director of Finance

EXB62 SUNDRY DEBTS WRITE-OFF

The Board considered a report from the Director of Finance, which sought approval for the write-off of a number of sundry debts, as the debtor had passed away and their estate had no remaining assets available to meet the outstanding debts.

It was noted that in 2019 the Council's Fraud Investigation Team identified that a significant fraud had been perpetrated against the Council relating to the receipt of Adults Direct Payments. A subsequent Police investigation revealed that the individual involved had been carrying out similar frauds against Oldham Council and the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP). In total the fraud amount to over £1m across the two Councils and the DWP, of which £240,095 related to Halton.

The individual had subsequently passed away and there were no assets remaining in the individual's estate from which the Council could obtain payment of the outstanding debts. As the debt could no longer be recovered, approval was sought to write-off the outstanding debts, which would be fully funded from the bad debt provision.

RESOLVED: That the write-off of debts against the bad debt provision, as outlined within the report, be approved.

Director of Finance

EXB63 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE BOARD

The Board considered a report from the Director of Finance, which outlined two recommendations made by the Audit and Governance Board as detailed below. That Executive Board:

- make changes to the governance of the Transformation Programme by making changes to the Transformation Programme Board to increase transparency, including the addition of two members

of the Audit & Governance Board to the Transformation Programme Board, who should not also be Scrutiny (PPB) Chairs.

- ask each Executive/Corporate Director to identify what items of non-staff related expenditure are defined as essential to the delivery of services within their Directorate, and provide written justification for the essential spend designation, outside of which no other spending would be permitted.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) two members of the Audit and Governance Board be added to the membership of the Transformation Programme Board; and
- 2) consideration be given to the recommendation from Audit and Governance Board as set out in paragraph 3.4, regarding a request to the Executive/Corporate Directors and a report be brought to a future Board meeting.

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

EXB64 DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORTS FOR QUARTER 2 2024 - 20205

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director – Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, on progress against key objectives/milestones and performance targets for the second quarter period to 31 March 2024, for the People Directorate (Social Care Health); and the Enterprise, Community and Resources Directorate.

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

- 1) the report, progress and performance information be noted;
- 2) for future reports the finance and performance

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

sections be reported separately; and

- 3) the finance section be reported to all Policy and Performance Boards.

CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES PORTFOLIO

EXB65 HIGH NEEDS PROVISION CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS – PROPOSED EXPANSION OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITY PROVISION: STATUTORY CONSULTATION FEEDBACK - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Children's Services, that provided a summary of responses received during the representation period for the statutory consultation to expand the number of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) places available at Ashley School in Widnes, to meet need for children and young people with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), taking the total number of places available at the school site from 112 to 152.

In addition, the report also requested approval to use any remaining balance from within the High Needs Provision Capital Funding to support further expansion of SEND provision within Halton, in discussion with relevant schools/educational settings as appropriate, to meet identified SEND need.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) approves the expansion of Ashley School, Widnes for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder to become a 152 place school through the provision of four additional classrooms (subject to planning permission); and
- 2) approves the use of any remaining balance from the High Need Provision Capital funding to support further expansion of SEND provision within Halton.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

HEALTH AND WELLBEING PORTFOLIO

EXB66 HEALTHIER FOOD AND DRINK ADVERTISING POLICY

The Board considered a report of the Director of Public Health, that outlined the implementation of a healthy food and drink advertising policy to ensure unhealthy products are replaced by healthier alternatives on local

authority advertising spaces. A copy of the proposed policy was attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves the proposed policy and the benefits of its implementation.

Director of Public Health

EMPLOYMENT LEARNING AND SKILLS AND COMMUNITY PORTFOLIO

EXB67 PAYMENTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS - IMPACT MITIGATION PLAN

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, that set out proposals for how the Council could best support and assist the community and voluntary sector in the future. This followed the Council's decision to reduce the grants it provided to the community and voluntary sector.

The report outlined the support the Council currently provided to the sector and suggested several areas which, through joint working and sharing resources, knowledge and experience, could be pooled to provide best value to residents, communities and businesses in Halton. One of the areas where an immediate and positive impact would be felt would be to designate a lead officer for promoting and coordinating the Council's interface with the sector and the report outlined how this could be achieved.

It was noted that the Council Internal Audit Report on Payments to the voluntary sector had agreed several actions which included the development of a commissioning policy and performance management framework. If a Commissioning Framework was to be developed, it was recognised that there would be merit aligning it to the principles of the Community Wealth Building (CWB) concept. Local authorities had been working with the Combined Authority through CLES to set out pillars of CWB, information on this was set out in Appendix 1.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves the proposals set out in sections 3.3 – 3.12 of the report.

Executive Director Environment & Regeneration

EXB68 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

- 1) whether Members of the press and public should be

excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and

- 2) whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

N.B. Councillor Nelson declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business as he has a family member who works for Halton Borough Council.

EXB69 STAFF UNPAID LEAVE

The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director, Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, which provided a number of options following an organisational wide staff consultation in respect of reintroducing a four days unpaid leave arrangement at Christmas.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the preferred scheme option E for implementation of the four days unpaid leave during the Christmas period be approved, subject to the conclusion of the agreed consultation process which now includes the Budget Working Group;

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

- 2) the Human Resources Operation Division, be authorised to begin the process for the implementation of the four days unpaid leave during the Christmas period, subject to the conclusion of the consultation process; and
- 3) the Chief Executive be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Portfolio Holder – Corporate Services, to finalise the details of the proposal and to take all necessary steps to bring it into operation.

MINUTES ISSUED: 17 December 2024

CALL-IN: 24 December 2024 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 24 December 2024.

Meeting ended at 1.24 p.m.

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EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 16 January 2025 in Halton Leisure Centre, Moor Lane, Widnes

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), Ball, Dennett, Harris, M. Lloyd Jones, 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, W. Rourke and D. Nolan

Also in attendance: None

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

	<i>Action</i>
<p>EXB70 MINUTES</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2024, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p> <p>CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO</p> <p>EXB71 24/25 SPENDING AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2024</p> <p>The Board received a report from the Director – Finance, advising of the Council's overall revenue and capital net spending position as at 30 November 2024, together with a forecast outturn position.</p> <p>Appendix 1 presented a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 30 November 2024 and Appendix 2 provided detailed figures for each individual Department. Appendix 3 presented the Capital Programme as at 30 November 2024, highlighting the schemes which had been revised.</p> <p>It was reported that in overall terms the outturn forecast for the year showed that net spend would be over the approved budget by £14.246m. The outturn forecast for the year estimates that net spending would be over budget</p>	

by £20.757m if no corrective action was taken. It was clear that Council reserves alone would not be sufficient to fund this pressure. As a result, the Council had applied to Government for Exceptional Financial Support.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continue to be limited to essential items only;
- 2) Executive Directors continue to identify areas where they can further reduce their directorate's spending or generate income, in order to reduce the council/wide forecast outturn overspend position;
- 3) Executive Directors continue to implement the approved saving proposals for 2024/25 and 2025/26 as detailed in Appendix 4;
- 4) the updated forecast outturn position be shared with the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government in support of the Council's application for Exceptional Financial Support;
- 5) Council be asked to approve the revisions to the capital programme set-out in paragraph 3.22 and incorporated within Appendix 3; and
- 6) this report be shared with each Policy and Performance Board in order to ensure they have a full appreciation of the councilwide financial position, in addition to their specific areas of responsibility.

Director of
Finance

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

EXB72 SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2026/27 - KEY DECISION

The Board received a report of the Executive Director – Children's Services, which requested the approval of the School Admissions Policy, Admission Arrangements and Co-ordinated Schemes, for admission to primary and secondary schools, including Academy, Free School and Voluntary Controlled schools for the September 2026 intake.

The Board was advised that on 1 October 2024, the Local Authority issued a statutorily required consultation on the proposed admission arrangements and co-ordinated admission schemes for the September 2026 intake for primary and secondary schools (attached as appendices 1

and 2 respectively). The primary scheme also included the proposed oversubscription criteria for community and voluntary controlled schools for whom the Local Authority was the admission authority.

The report provided details of the consultation, which ran until 12 November 2024. It was noted that no amendments to the oversubscription criteria were suggested, as these reflected the criteria worked well and met the requirements of the Department for Education's School Admissions Code.

It was noted that all Halton's secondary schools were either academies, free schools or voluntary aided and were therefore their own admission authorities, with responsibility for consulting and determining their own admissions criteria and their own Published Admission Number (PAN).

Reason(s) for Decision

Local Authorities as the admission authority for community and voluntary schools are required to consult and then determine their admission arrangements annually, and are also required to determine coordinated schemes for primary and secondary admission rounds that apply to all schools.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

Implementation Date

The implementation date is September 2025 which is when the timetabled process for the September 2026 intake commences.

RESOLVED: That the Board approve the Coordinated Scheme for Admission to Primary Schools – which also contains the Local Authority's admissions criteria to community and voluntary controlled schools, and approves the Co-ordinated Scheme for admission to secondary schools, both of which will apply to the September 2026 intake.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

EXB73 CAPITAL PROGRAMME – 2025/26 - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Children's Services, which provided a summary of the capital funding received by the Council from central Government to support capital works and programmes

within schools for 2025/26.

The Board was advised that the Department for Education (DfE) had not announced the School Condition Allocation Capital Grant for 2025/26 however, given the timescales for some of the proposed capital projects, there was a requirement to present this report, so it was compiled using the 2024/25 allocation, which was £704,785.

The report set out details of the indicative funding available to support capital projects across the schools estate and also explained how the School Condition Allocation would be utilised.

Reason(s) for Decision

The Council was required to demonstrate appropriate identification of need against spend from the School Condition Allocation Grant. The work would provide schools with a suitable learning environment and manage the condition of the educational buildings we are responsible for.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Implementation Date

It is intended that all works would be completed by March 2026.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the position regarding capital funding from the Department for Education for 2025/26 be noted;
- 2) the proposals to be funded from the School Condition Capital Allocation and Basic Need Funding be approved; and
- 3) the capital allocations are put forward for inclusion in the budget report to full Council.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

ADULT SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB74 FEE SETTING PROCESS AND REQUEST TO CONSULT CARE PROVIDERS

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Adult Services, which provided information on the

proposed fee setting process and annual uplift for domiciliary care, direct payments, supported living and care home providers within Halton for 2025/26.

The Board requested further information on spending within Adult Services, including details on current trends and demographics. It was agreed that information would be circulated.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the contents of the report be noted; and
- 2) approval be given to actively enter into consultation with care providers in relation to the annual uplift for 2025/26.

Executive Director
of Adult Services

EXB75 ADULT SOCIAL CARE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Adult Services, which provided a copy of the Adult Social Care (ASC) Annual Report for 2023/24. The Annual Report demonstrated an open approach to ASC successes, challenges and where the service could develop further in order to improve outcomes for people with care and support needs and their unpaid carers within Halton.

The theme of this year's report was 'prevention and wellbeing'. The focus of the report was to highlight the work that had taken place across the Directorate in recognising and responding to the National and Local drivers of prevention as a catalyst for change in how services were delivered to prevent or delay the need for statutory services.

The Board thanked Officers within the Adult Services Directorate for all their work.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EXB76 WELLBEING & ENGAGEMENT SERVICES IN HALTON

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Adult Services, which sought approval to make a Direct Award of contract for the period 12 February 2025 to 11 February 2028 (three years) to Age UK Mid Mersey to deliver Wellbeing and Engagement Services in Halton. It was believed that the service, in its current form, could not be replicated by another provider within the borough and to ensure continuity of provision a Direct Ward had been made. Due to the contract being extended previously this Award

had been made via a VEAT Notice and was in compliance with Procurement Standing Orders.

The new contract value for the three years of service would be £356,172.

RESOLVED: That the Board approve a VEAT (Voluntary Ex-Ante Transparency) notice to enable the Council to directly award a three year contract to the incumbent provider for re-settlement support to ensure continuity of care in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.5.8.

Executive Director
of Adult Services

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

EXB77 WASTE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, that provided an update on the progress in developing Plans and Strategies in relation to the collection and recycling of Halton's waste.

At a previous meeting of the Board held on 16 March 2023, Members approved the principles set out in a LCR Zero Waste 2040 Strategic Framework to reduce waste related carbon emissions (Minute EXB94 refers). A Zero Waste Strategy had now been developed for the LCR and a copy was attached at Appendix 1. The Board was requested to endorse the draft strategy document and were advised that a final branded version would be produced.

Members were also advised that from 1 April 2026, all Councils across England would be legally required to offer a food waste collection service to all households in their area. The service must be provided on a weekly basis, be separate and preferably treated by anaerobic digestion. Attached to the report at Appendix 2 was a report produced by a specialist waste management consultancy who were appointed by the LCR Waste Partnership to develop a Strategy to meet the requirements for a food waste collection.

The report also sought approval to support the principals of, in the longer term, the purchase of green gas powered vehicles to collect the food waste. Liverpool City Region Waste Partnership would explore this approach further. In June 2024 DEFRA allocated capital monies to Councils to fund the vehicle and caddy purchasing requirement for food waste collection. Halton was allocated £1.019m. Procurement was now at an advanced stage and

approval was sought to purchase the vehicles and caddies.

The Board noted that in January 2024, DEFRA announced that revenue resource transitional funding would be provided to Waste Collection Authorities from the 2024/25 financial year to implement the weekly food waste collection. Further allocations would be provided in 2026. The allocations to Halton were not known at this stage.

A further report would be brought to the Board on the proposals for the processing/treatment of collected food waste.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) endorse the Zero Waste Strategy for the Liverpool City Region (attached as Appendix 1);
- 2) give delegated authority to the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Executive Board Member for Environment and Urban Renewal, to agree the final branded version of the Zero Waste Strategy for the Liverpool City Region;
- 3) support a proposal to transition to a circular food waste system for the Liverpool City Region by:
 - i. supporting the principles of local circularity and green powered vehicles over the longer term
 - ii. acknowledging the high level business case to support such an approach
 - iii. endorsing the further exploration of this approach by the Liverpool City Region Waste Partnership; and
- 4) approve the capital spend associated with the procurement of food waste receptacles and collection vehicles using monies allocated to the Council by DEFRA for that purpose.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

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

EXB78 SPORTS FACILITY FEES AND CHARGES

The Board considered a report on the proposed fees and charges for Halton Leisure Centre and for services provided by the Council's Sports Services for financial year 2025/26. It was noted that included within the report was a proposal to increase the eligibility age for Halton Leisure

Card from 60 years to 65 years.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the proposed fees and charges as set out in Appendix A are approved; and
- 2) Halton Leisure Card age eligibility criteria be raised from current 60 years to 65 years.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EXB79 VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING - GRANT ALLOCATIONS 2024/25

The Board considered a report of the Director – Adult Services, on Voluntary Sector Grant Funding Awards for 2024/25. Applications were assessed and recommendations agreed by a Panel consisting of the Executive Board Member with portfolio responsibility for the Voluntary Sector and Officers. The report set out monitoring arrangements and the proposed allocation to each organisation based on the budget available.

RESOLVED: That the grant allocations outlined in Section 3.3 be approved.

Executive Director
of Adult Services

EXB80 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

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

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the

case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB81 FULL COST CLIENTS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Adult Services, which sought approval to amend the current practice in relation to contracting on behalf of self-funders in residential care. The Council would still complete assessment and provide information and advice for self-funders, in line with its obligations under the Care Act 2014 but it would no longer contract with residential care providers on behalf of self-funders.

It was noted that in limited circumstances the Council would act as a broker for self-funders, however, an arrangement fee would be charged.

Reason(s) for Decision

Board approval was required to reconsider existing arrangements in relation to the Council contracting with care homes on behalf of self-funders.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

N/A

Implementation Date

1 April 2025.

RESOLVED: That the Council amends its practice in relation to contracting on behalf of self-funders in residential care, as outlined at 3.9-3.11.

Executive Director
of Adult Services

MINUTES ISSUED: 22 January 2025

CALL-IN: 29 January 2025 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 29 January 2025.

Meeting ended at 3.08 p.m.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

At a meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board on Wednesday, 15 January 2025 at The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillor Wright (Chair)
 Councillor Ball
 Councillor T. McInerney
 Councillor Woolfall
 D. Nolan, Adult Social Care
 I. Onyia, Public Health
 L. Gardner, Warrington & Halton Teaching Hospitals
 A. Hindhaugh, Halton Borough Council
 L. Hughes, Healthwatch Halton
 C. King, Halton Housing
 A. Leo, Integrated Commissioning Board
 W. Longshaw, St. Helens & Knowsley Hospitals
 T. McPhee, Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust
 A. Moore, Cheshire Constabulary
 H. Patel, Citizens Advice Bureau
 S. Patel, Local Pharmaceutical Committee
 J. Rosser, Public Health
 J. Wallis, Bridgewater Community Health Care NHS
 R. Walsh, Public Health
 F. Watson, Public Health
 S. Yeoman, Halton & St Helens VCA
 K. Butler, Democratic Services

*Action***HWB17 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2024, having been circulated were signed as a correct record.

HWB18 ORAL HEALTH

The Board received a report from the Director of Public Health which provided an update on child oral health programmes.

It was noted that tooth decay was the most common reason for hospital admissions in the 4-9 year old age group and a North West study found that 1 in 4 children had an average of 3 missed days from school because of dental pain and infection. The study also revealed that almost 4 in 10 children had sleepless nights because of dental pain. Poor oral health was not only a cause of decay in baby teeth but it was also a strong predictor of decay in adult teeth.

Halton had some of the poorest oral health amongst 5 year olds in the North West. A 2021/22 survey found that over a third of 5 year olds had experienced dentinal decay, which was significantly higher than the National average. Children living in the most deprived areas were almost 3 times more likely to experience dentinal decay compared to those living in the least deprived areas.

Members of the Board were advised that the Public Health Team had developed a Halton Supervised Toothbrushing Programme which would be embedded in the Early Years settings as part of the Halton Healthy Early Years Settings Award. This would help to ensure that oral health was seen as an integral part of general health and over time, it was anticipated that the scheme would be rolled out to childminders and schools (up to age 7). The scheme would be rolled out across Halton but limited by funding and therefore the most deprived areas would be targeted first.

Another initiative that was ongoing in Halton was the distribution of fluoride toothpaste and toothbrush packs. This had been funded by the Regional Oral Health Programme and, to date, approximately 1800 packs had been distributed across the Borough which included family hubs, libraries, asylum seeker children, foodbanks and children in contact with social care, including foster carers.

The Board noted and discussed the report and members were encouraged by the ongoing work, in particular, the Supervised Toothbrushing Programme. It was agreed that focus should be given to younger children and it was suggested that the best age to target children was before they started school. The Early Years settings were very supportive and it was hoped, that in time, work would commence with schools. Healthwatch Halton suggested that consideration should also be given to engaging with new parents and educating families at the earliest stage.

Improved oral health care was a National concern and the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry (BASCD) were keen to implement more toothbrushing programmes.

RESOLVED: That the Board support the ongoing participation in regional and local plans.

HWB19 INFANT FEEDING

Members of the Board received a report and

presentation from the Director of Public Health which provided an update on the development of the Infant Feeding Services and the outcomes in Halton as a result of the investment from the Department of Health and Social Care through Family Hubs.

The report outlined the benefits of breastfeeding but rates in Halton were significantly lower than the England average, despite slow and steady increases over the past 10 years. Between 2014 and 2023, breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks increased from 21.8% to 25.7% in Halton. The England average in 2023 was 49.2%.

Halton's Infant Feeding Team delivered antenatal infant feeding workshops, contact and visits new parents upon discharge from hospital. It also facilitated breastfeeding groups and "introducing solid food" workshops. The service also worked in partnership with the Family Hubs leads and Early Help officers and together facilitate groups and activities to promote and support breastfeeding.

Halton holds the Breastfeeding Friendly Initiative (BFI) accreditation status and the renewal would be completed in Summer 2025. BFI accreditation demonstrates that settings meet the evidence based standards for supporting optimal infant feeding. In addition to this, a significant focus had been placed on overcoming cultural barriers to breastfeeding in Halton and a number of approaches were in place to change this and these were outlined in section 3.11 of the report.

The Board noted and discussed the information presented and subsequently the following additional information was noted:

- There was no indication that the rising rates was due to expense, it appeared to be more around convenience and health benefits;
- There were 18 fatherhood champions who inform Government policy, one of which was an Infant Feeding Specialist. Dads are supported via the digital platform which gave hints and tips on how dads could support their partner; and
- Infant feeding was second to smoking cessation as the most cost effective intervention. Employers were encouraged to look at their policies for their staff.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the importance of the continued partnership working in Infant Feeding Services

across Halton.

HWB20 UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS MADE ON THE DFE & DHSC FUNDED FAMILY HUB PROGRAMME

The Board received a report and presentation from the Director of Public Health, which provided an update on the progress to date in implementing the DFE and DHSC Funded Family Hub Programme. This included a focus on perinatal mental health and parent infant relationship and a copy of this Strategy was included in appendix 1 of the report.

In April 2022, the DfE and DHSC selected 75 Local Authorities who would become pilot areas for the Family Hubs and Best Start in Life Scheme and Halton was included. Since December 2022, work had been ongoing to develop the principles of the Family Hub Model.

The goal of a Family Hub was to make a positive difference to parents, carers and their children by providing a mix of physical and virtual spaces, as well as outreach, where families can access non-judgemental support for any challenges they may face. Family Hubs provide a universal “front door” to families and offer a “one stop shop” of family support services across social care, education, mental health and physical health needs, with a comprehensive “Start for Life” offer for parents and babies.

In December 2022, Halton launched 3 Family Hub sites in Widnes and 3 in Runcorn and these were based in:

- Windmill Hill;
- Brookvale;
- Halton Lodge;
- Kingsway;
- Warrington Road; and
- Ditton.

In July 2024, the Family Hubs launched “Family Hubs Online” which was a digital automation solution that delivered national and local content and services, which could be easily accessed via any device 24/7. Within 5 months, Family Hubs Online had received over 7,000 users and the top 5 pages viewed were: family hubs home; events; HENRY – healthy families; Start for Life and Adults. Further developments were ongoing on the platform and these were outlined in the report.

Halton was awarded funding to transform services across 6 strands which included:

- Transformation;
- Parenting;
- Infant Feeding;
- Perinatal mental health and parent infant relationship
- Early language and home learning environment; and
- Start for Life and parent/carer panels.

It was important to fund Family Hubs, as it was highly cost effective to support early years and the benefits achieved would have an impact on future services.

The report also outlined the successes of Halton's ambitious approach, which as a result had received, local, regional and national acknowledgement.

The Board noted and discussed the information presented to them and congratulated staff on the success of their work. The Chair also shared some feedback from a service user who had spoken highly of their experience and expressed gratitude for the help they had received.

RESOLVED: That the Board adopt the Halton Family Hub Perinatal Mental Health and Parent Infant Relationship Strategy.

HWB21 ADULT SOCIAL CARE ANNUAL REPORT (2023-2024)

The Board received the Adult Social Care (ASC) Annual Report 2023/24, also referred to as the Local Account. The theme of this years' report was "prevention and wellbeing".

The report highlighted the work that had taken place over the last 12 months in responding to National and Local drivers of prevention as a catalyst for change in how services were delivered to prevent or delay the need for statutory services.

The report also contained high level data on service usage, spend, customer care and safeguarding.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the report.

Meeting ended at 4.00 p.m.

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**CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE
BOARD**

At a meeting of the Children Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 20 January 2025 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Logan (Chair), C. Plumpton Walsh (Vice-Chair), Baker, Begg, Jones, P. Lloyd Jones, Ratcliffe and Ryan

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Goodall and McDermott

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Jones, Z. Fearon, B. Holmes, K. Appleton, D. Roberts, H. Bell and M. Stapleton-Chambers

Also in attendance: None

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

	<i>Action</i>
CYP27 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2024 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
CYP28 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
<p>It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.</p>	
CYP29 QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT 1ST JULY 2024 – 30TH SEPTEMBER 2024 - Q2	
<p>The Board received the quarterly monitoring report (QMR) for quarter two (1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024) for Children’s Social Care and Early Help and Education Departments.</p> <p>The reports informed Members of the key performance indicators identified to measure progress against each of the priorities identified within the Children and Young People Plan.</p>	

It was noted that the new format and content of the QMR was agreed by the Board at the November 2024 meeting. This was then updated to correlate with the priorities identified in the newly launched Children and Young People's Partnership Plan 2024-27, and to comply with the new Corporate QMR reporting template.

Members commented that progress against many of the milestones was in 'amber' so appeared to have stalled, and challenged the reasons for this. The Chair also commented that he had challenged the schools SEND transport policies as there were savings to be made there, as well as in other areas – residential placements, outside foster agencies and court costs. It was agreed that a meeting would be set up to discuss these four areas in particular. Officers would provide relevant information on demand for the services, costs and strategies currently being used. In relation to SEND transport, examples of types of requests being dealt with would be presented at the meeting, to assist Members.

In response to the queries over the amber status' the following additional information was provided in response to questions:

P1.4 – Partner led MAPS – there was work going on in the background and Officers were working with the Early Help Improvement Board and other partners. Additional data would be available in Q3;

P6.5 – in relation to the Local Authority's role in ensuring children who were electively home educated (EHE) were safeguarded and received a suitable education, the Government was progressing a Bill in Parliament which would legislate this;

P6.5/6 – in cases where there was a concern following an inspection, over the quality of education received by a child who was EHE, a Schools Attendance Order could be issued via the Court and the child would be admitted to mainstream education using 'in year fair access';

P5.3 – The two new members of Quality Assurance staff were now in post and had visited all schools. In relation to exclusions it was noted that there was a change in the reasons for being excluded, as incidents relating to drugs possession and use had increased and schools operated a zero tolerance policy towards this. Drugs were being found in adapted vapes and Ketamine and snuff had been discovered recently in secondary schools. Officers advised that a multi-agency partnership meeting was planned to discuss this issue – Councillors Lloyd Jones and Ryan requested to know the details of this so they could attend;

P3.1 – there were improvements in EHCP completions and more were expected in quarter 3; and

P7.7 – agency costs were coming down and social care staff were using Connect Halton for recruitment, in liaison with HR. It was confirmed that the Council did not pay ‘finders fees’ for agency staff who became employed by the Council full time.

RESOLVED: That the quarterly monitoring report be accepted as the mechanism by which Members could monitor and scrutinise progress going forward.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

CYP30 SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN HALTON IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Board received a report from the Executive Director of Children’s Services, which shared the submitted Services for Children and Families in Halton’s Improvement Plan and provided an update against the 12 key areas of improvement.

The ILACS (Inspecting Local Authority Children’s Services) Areas of Improvement document was appended to the report, from A1 to A12 and these were presented to the Board one by one.

It was reported that budgetary decisions throughout the improvement journey would be informed by the priorities identified within the Improvement Plan. The Finance and Investment Board would track spend and the impact this was having on the outcomes for Children and Young People and families. One Member requested to know the membership of the Finance and Investment Board, referred to in paragraph 5.1. This would be sought and sent following the meeting.

In response to Members questions regarding A3 - Quality of Social Work Practice - Plans, Assessments and Planning, it was commented that 1.1 support and targeted work had been undertaken by the Social Work Academy, this included assessment training. The impacts of the training were already being felt, for example the numbers of child court cases were reducing and positive financial benefits were being seen. Further impacts would be reported at a later date when the results of audits carried out in December 2024 were available.

RESOLVED: That the Improvement Plan be accepted as the mechanism by which Elected Members can monitor and scrutinise progress going forward.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

CYP31 A REPORT ON THE WORK TO DATE ON DBV AND IMPACT

The Board considered a report from the Director of Children's Services, which provided a progress update, (against the targets set out in the DBV Grant) on the Delivering Better Values (DBV) project, covering the period of the third quarter, from October 2024 to January 2025.

DBV was a Department for Education (DfE) programme working to identify and implement local opportunities to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND, across 54 Local Authorities and to aid local systems (alongside existing local and other DfE programmes) in their objective of achieving financial sustainability.

Halton was identified as being eligible to apply for the DBV grant funding so an application was submitted. Halton was awarded the full grant of £1m which provided an opportunity to positively transform inclusive practices across Halton.

The report provided detailed updates on the work being carried out in workstreams 1 and 2, and described the next steps to be taken.

Further to Members questions on the Programme, the following information was provided:

- Some schools, including academies, were initially hesitant to participate in the DBV Programme, for a number of reasons, such as waiting to see results before committing. The Council's Quality Assurance Officers were also now in place and monitored the Programme. Most Academy Trusts in Halton were now participating in the Programme;
- In order to select two High Dependency Pilot Units within secondary schools for the exploration of invest to save measures, Officers requested expressions of interest from schools at the Halton Association of Secondary Headteachers (HASH) meeting. Once they were received, the schools were visited and the ones that offered the best existing resources were selected;
- The numbers of children in Halton that received extra time for exams – this was not to hand so would be sent following the meeting, with last year's figures for comparison; and
- The PRU was intended a temporary measure for

excluded children, however some got stuck there. Some obtained EHCP's but the aim was to diagnose these children whilst in mainstream schools, to avoid later misdiagnosis or exclusion.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

CYP32 NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, OR TRAINING (NEET) AND WHOSE ACTIVITY IS NOT KNOWN TO THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

The Board considered a report from the Executive Director of Children's Services, which gave the annual NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and 'Not Known' figures for Halton and the reasons for growth of the number of young people who were NEET.

The Education and Skills Act 2008 placed two raising participation age related duties on local authorities regarding academic aged 16-17 year olds as follows:

- To promote the effective participation in education and training of 16 and 17 year olds in their area, with a view to ensuring that those persons fulfilled the duty to participate in education or training; and
- To make arrangements to identify 16 and 17 year olds who were not participating in education or training.

The report and accompanying presentation described the work of the 14-19 Team at Halton who provided careers guidance and support to those who were not participating and informed how they worked with schools to support young people to transition from Year 11 into Post 16 education.

It was noted that paragraph 3.10.5 required a correction. The percentage referred to in 2021 should read 95.8%, not 98.8%.

The reasons why NEET and Not Known figures were rising were outlined in the presentation. There were multiple issues affecting provision in Halton, these were outlined and the provision that remained was presented to the Board.

Members were provided with statistics for Halton against national, regional, LCR and statistical neighbours where it was noted that Halton had seen the highest overall increase in NEETS since 2018/19.

The following responses were provided to Members questions:

- Following encouragement and hard work from the Council, *The Growth Company* was now in Halton, based at Murdishaw Community Centre. They were funded by the Department for Education (DfE), this was explained to the Board. They were offering 30 Level 1 and 2 places currently and hoped to increase this once they had more capacity;
- In relation to Council properties, an Education Officer was a member of the Asset Management Working Group who were looking at potential vacant properties for future use by other post 16 providers;
- The possibility of the Council setting up its own provision for 16-18 year olds was unlikely due to funding, as there would be set up costs to pay for and there would be a gap one year before any DfE funding was made available. The Growth Company had set up in Halton despite these risks; and
- Further information on The Growth Company in relation to progression for students and attendance of Widnes students would be provided.

Members understood the challenges faced with provision and welcomed the introduction of Level 1 and 2 courses for students by this company, as there were no others being offered in Halton.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CYP33 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2024

The Board received a report from the Director of Finance, which gave the Council's overall revenue and capital spending position as at 30 November 2024, together with the latest 2024-25 outturn forecast.

On 16 January 2025, Executive Board received the attached report and appendices, which presented details of Councilwide revenue and capital spending by each department and outlined the reasons for key variances from budget.

Executive Board has requested that a copy of the report be shared with each Policy and Performance Board for information. This is to ensure that all Members had a full appreciation of the Councilwide financial position, in addition to their specific areas of responsibility.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

RESOLVED: That the Councilwide financial position
as outlined in the report be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.35 p.m.

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HEALTH POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Health Policy and Performance Board held on Tuesday, 26 November 2024 at the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors Dourley (Chair), Baker (Vice-Chair), Davidson, Fry, Garner, Goodall, C. Loftus, L. Nolan and Thornton and D. Wilson – Healthwatch Co-optee

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Begg and Stretch

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: S. Salaman, A. Jones, D. Nolan, L Wilson, N. Hallmark and P. Preston

Also in attendance: Professor McSherry, Dr Makhumula-Nkhoma & R. Crompton – University of Chester, L. Gardner – Warrington & Halton Teaching Hospitals NHSFT, T. Leo & D. Roberts – NHS Cheshire & Merseyside (Halton Place) and C. Harris – Halton Carers Centre

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

	<i>Action</i>
HEA17 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
HEA18 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.	
HEA19 HEALTH AND WELLBEING MINUTES	
The minutes from the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting held on 10 July 2024 were submitted to the Board for information.	
HEA20 RESEARCH AND PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT CARE PARTNERSHIP CO-CREATION REPORT	
The Board received an update on the Research and Practice Development Care Partnership Co-creation Final	

Report, of using co-creation to explore public and professionals' awareness of location and types of care services (the Continuum of Care) available to older people: a qualitative approach.

Members welcomed Professor Robert McSherry, Dr Nellie Makhumula-Nkhoma and Rhian Crompton, from Nursing and Practice Development in Health and Social Care at the University of Chester.

The Research and Practice Development Care Partnership was a joint venture between Halton Borough Council's Adult Social Care, the University of Chester, Age UK Mid Mersey and the Caja Group. The Partnership aimed to improve experiences of care by forging closer links between social care professionals and researchers. They were part of a national NIHR (National Institute for Health and Care Research) funded programme of Creating Care Partnerships.

It was reported that since Covid-19, some fundamental questions were raised around the provision of domiciliary care and care services and their impact on an older person's quality of life and health and wellbeing. The Continuum of Care and Care Spectra were essential attributes and characteristics aligned to understanding peoples experiences of health and wellbeing throughout the life course. It was important that these helped people and society to shift the perspective from personal successes and failures.

The report described the methodology used for the project and its findings. In conclusion, Members were advised that the co-creation and creative methodologies had proved useful tools in evaluating awareness of care services available to older people, by both the public and professionals. The findings highlighted the importance of location in terms of both home care and community care where people could be close to family and friends, local amenities, GP services etc.

Members welcomed the Report and its findings and the following comments were made:

- The public and stakeholder engagement was good, as it was important to include the opinions of a wide range of people;
- It was refreshing to hear that the University of Chester was conducting the research project as opposed to consultants;

- The Council had made a submission to the NHIR relating to the use of Digital Technologies that focussed on Adult Social Care, in particular those with learning disabilities;
- Mr Leo (One Halton) would contact the Partnership to arrange collaboration between them; and
- Medium Term Recommendations – one Member considered that the low priority section comments (below) should be move to a higher priority:
Create accessible free community based space for connecting; and, explore the possibility of merging existing assessment methods into a single holistic individualised framework.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked the guests for their presentation and sharing the report.

RESOLVED: That the report and recommendations be noted.

HEA21 INTEGRATION BETWEEN WARRINGTON & HALTON TEACHING HOSPITALS NHSFT & BRIDGEWATER COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE NHSFT

The Board welcomed Lucy Gardner, from Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHSFT, who gave an update on the integration between Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHSFT and Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHSFT.

Members were advised that significant opportunities were identified to improve both patient services and staff experiences working at the front line, and were launching a programme of work to deliver integrated and collaborative models of care between both Trusts.

An overview of each organisation was presented with the programme of workstreams and a summary of progress to date was outlined. This included priority services such as urgent and emergency care, intermediate care, dermatology and paediatric audiology, and the rationale for their prioritisation. The next steps to be taken with the integration plan were also explained.

Lucy responded to Members questions as follows:

- Stakeholder and public engagement was crucial to be able to understand the opinions / needs / experiences of people and the aim was to use the responses to help make improvements;

- The services at Urgent Care Centres (UCC) were being looked at and may not offer exactly the same services they do presently. The aim was to ensure that each one was able to meet the needs of both Towns and their communities;
- The numbers of staff across the Trusts would not be increased, but the functions of the existing staff would be shared better, more efficiently;
- The NHS usually has a high turnover rate of staff, so compulsory redundancies as a result of the integration were not planned;
- The intention of the integration programme was to deliver financial savings to support the sustainability of healthcare provision; and
- The name of the integrated service was not yet decided, the current branding was ' Better Care Together' but the final branding was to be agreed.

RESOLVED: That the update is noted.

HEA22 ONE HALTON PARTNERSHIP AND ICB@HALTON UPDATES

The Board considered a report from the NHS Director – One Halton, which provided an update on One Halton Partnership and some of the work programmes undertaken by ICB@Halton.

As discussed previously, the One Halton Partnership Board is the vehicle for the delivery of national priorities, local priorities and Halton's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Achieving One Halton's ambitions was the responsibility of all partners working together to achieve a set of shared strategic objectives for Halton Place: Wider determinants of Health, Starting Well, Living Well and Ageing well.

The report outlined the One Halton Partnership activities, which built on previous reports which had been shared with the Board. The paper also referenced further programmes of work being undertaken by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB@HaltonPlace, which supported the aims and ambitions for the people of Halton, such as: GP, Dental and Pharmacy Services, Urgent and Emergency Care, Cancer Care, Children's Services, Women's Health Hub, Living Well Bus and Community Engagement.

The following information was provided in response to Members questions/comments:

- Children's Services – a 'standardised pathway or model of care' was clarified. For neurodiversity patients, it was recognised that early access to support was needed for people whilst waiting for assessments, as there were long waiting lists;
- The challenges still being faced by Mental Health and Dental Services were highlighted;
- The Pharmacy Service has proved to be accessible to most people and an excellent resource for the NHS, as they were able to provide good advice. Accessibility issues were discussed – it was felt that some were under pressure from dispensing prescriptions on time and now had to offer this additional service;
- One Member commented that the Police should be included in the ICB Partnership as crime formed part of the wider detriments in relation to employment opportunities; and
- EHCP diagnosis waiting lists were still very long which was related to shortages within the workforce – this was being addressed by the recently established SEND Improvement Board.

RESOLVED: That the One Halton update is received and noted.

HEA23 REPORT ON ACTIVITY TO SUPPORT CARERS

The Board considered a report from the Executive Director – Adult Services and the Chief Executive of Halton Carers' Centre, which provided information on the activity to support carers in Halton.

It was reported that in 2024 a new All Age Carers Strategy had been agreed under the One Halton governance framework; this was attached to the report, *One Halton Carers Strategy 2024-2027 and Delivery Plan*. This Strategy arose from a review of the previous Strategy, engagement with carers and the wider partnership, and incorporated changes to national guidance where this had occurred. Halton worked with partners in the independent, voluntary and statutory sectors, to ensure a wide range of factors, engagement and types of provision that could be supported.

The Board were given details of the Council's statutory requirement to assess carers needs, and were apprised of the number of assessments and reviews which had taken place over the last three years. They learnt of the support available to meet carers own wellbeing needs, and

were given details of the Council's respite offer, the use of Direct Payments by carers and how the Carers Break Fund was utilised.

The Board welcomed Mr Carl Harris, Manager of Halton Carers Centre, who presented details of examples of activities being undertaken at the Centre, such as: cooking for young carers, gardening, bee keeping, First Aid training, day trips out eg. Chester Zoo, Christmas parties etc.

He explained it was important that carers had somewhere to be with other carers and for them to mix, so they knew they were not alone. It was rewarding for him and the team at the Centre to see carers enjoying time off which was therapeutic for them.

The following was noted after Members questions:

- The Centre was promoted in schools and colleges but most referrals came as a result of 'word of mouth';
- There were 13 staff employed at the Centre;
- The Centre was a charity sector organisation where the Council and the ICB funded approximately 63% of the Centre's annual budget. The remainder came from donations from partners and grants;
- Additional activities had taken place this year, such as sensory workshops, Dementia support groups, school holiday programme for young carers, podiatry service and Carers Week;
- It was recognised that the life of a young carer in particular was a difficult one and they deserved all the support that was available to them;
- A quarterly funding report was produced by the Centre and would be made available for Members to see; and
- A regular newsletter was also produced and would be shared with Members.

Mr Harris invited all Board Members to visit the Centre at their convenience in the future.

Members welcomed the invitation and information provided and agreed that the work of the Centre was impressive and offered a great deal of support to Halton's carers of all ages.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments made be noted.

Executive Director
of Adult Services

HEA24 HSAB ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Board received the Halton Safeguarding Adults Board's (HSAB) Annual Report for 2023-24.

Under the Care Act 2014, Safeguarding Adults Boards (SAB) were responsible for producing an annual report setting out their achievements and highlighting priorities for the following year.

The Report had been developed in conjunction with HSAB partners to ensure the report encompassed a multi-agency approach. The report included performance data and comparisons between years, achievements in the year and highlighted areas of good practice regarding safeguarding in the Borough.

Members were advised of the priorities for 2023-24: Quality Assurance, Co-production and Engagement, and Learning and Professional Development – the achievements against these priorities were presented.

The Board discussed the reporting of safeguarding incidents in the Borough and the facts and figures presented to them. It was noted that it was important that people knew when to report something, which may start as a concern initially. It was commented that e-learning on safeguarding was available to all Members which was invaluable, as it gave the confidence to be able to ask the right questions when visiting places such as care homes and other facilities in the communities.

The Annual Report was approved by the Board, this would now be published and shared with HSAB member organisations.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) notes the report; and
- 2) approves the Annual Report for publication.

Executive Director
of Adult Services

HEA25 HOUSING SOLUTIONS PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Board received a report from the Executive Director of Adult Services, which gave an update of the homelessness service provision administered by the Housing Solutions Team.

The report provided details on homelessness

performance, services being commissioned, Section 21 Notices seeking possession or eviction, future challenges and contributing factors affecting the service delivery, as well as funding information. It was reported that a recent survey had found that Halton had the lowest number of rough sleepers and hotel occupancy in comparison with its neighbours.

The following points were made by Members:

- One Member queried the status of 12 empty housing units in Grangeway, Runcorn, for the past 10 years. It was noted that the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Wright, had set up a working group to look at this and other empty properties in the Borough;
- The costs of accommodating homeless people in temporary accommodation were discussed;
- It was confirmed that people sleeping/living in cars were considered to be 'rough sleeping';
- Poor social housing conditions should be reported to Environmental Health, not the Housing Solutions Team;
- It was commented however that due to poor social housing conditions, there were cases where tenants had made themselves intentionally homeless, in order to escape a property making them ill; and
- It was felt that social landlords should be made more accountable with regards to the safety and conditions of their properties.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

HEA26 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS - QUARTER 2 2024/25

The Board received the Performance Management Reports for quarter two of 2024/25.

Members were advised that the report introduced, through the submission of a structured thematic performance report, the progress of key performance indicators, milestones and targets relating to Health in quarter one of 2024-25. This included a description of factors, which were affecting the service.

The Board was requested to consider the progress and performance information; raise any questions or points for clarification; and highlight any areas of interest or concern for reporting at future meetings of the Board.

Officers reminded the Board that from February 2025, the performance monitoring for Adult Social Care would be aligned with the new performance measures outlined in the Adult's Directorate Business Plan 2024/25, and this would take effect from quarter 3 reporting.

RESOLVED: That the Performance Management report for quarter two of 2024/25 be received.

Meeting ended at 8.50 p.m.

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SAFER POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Safer Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 4 February 2025 at the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors N. Plumpton Walsh (Chair), Carlin (Vice-Chair), Baker, Bevan, Bramwell, Goodall, A. Lowe, A. McInerney, Ratcliffe and Wallace

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Skinner

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: N. Goodwin, S. Hill and K. Butler

Also in attendance: Councillor M. Lloyd Jones (observer), S. Heath (Cheshire Constabulary), D. Haddock (Cheshire Constabulary), D. Price (Police & Crime Commissioner's Office) and S. Whalen (Police & Crime Commissioner's Office)

**ITEM DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

SAF17 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chair's announcements.

SAF18 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2024 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

SAF19 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.

SAF20 ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE IN HALTON

Members of the Board received a report from the Director of Public Health on the Alcohol and Substance Misuse Services work that provided support for local people. In addition, the Board also received a presentation which highlighted the following main points from the report:

- Partnership working;
- Work within Adult Services;

Action

- Work within Children and Young People Services; and
- The impact of alcohol and substance misuse on hospital admissions.

The Board discussed the report and it was noted that Members:

- suggested that there needed to be more publicity, for example, in GP surgeries, to raise awareness of the long-term effects of alcohol and substance abuse;
- felt that the needle exchange had worked well in the West Bank ward; and
- expressed concerns about the rising use of Ketamine and suggested that lessons be taught in schools to educate young people about the physical health and mental health risks associated with Ketamine.

Members also asked a number of questions about the report and it was agreed that further information would be circulated after the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Board consider the information presented.

Director of Public Health

SAF21 CHESHIRE POLICE PERFORMANCE AND LOCAL POLICING UNIT UPDATES FOR RUNCORN AND WIDNES

The Board received a presentation from the Cheshire Police Halton Area Commander and the Widnes Local Policing Unit Commander, which provided an update on policing performance and priorities for Halton.

The presentation outlined:

- The Force priorities:
 - Violence and Intimidation against Women and Girls;
 - Incident Management and Response Times;
 - Victims Code of Practice;
- Force performance data for 2024; Cheshire was the second best Police Force in the Country for charged/summonsed outcome rates for sexual offences and third best for charged/summonsed outcome rates for Violence Against the Person;
- Halton Performance – recorded crime rates for Widnes and Runcorn;
- Bringing offenders to justice journey – all crime and Domestic Abuse;

- Anti-Social Behaviour – although there had been a slight increase in 2024 in Widnes, there had been a decrease in Runcorn;
- Good News Stories which included a significant decrease in active County Lines in Halton;
- Public Confidence – Cheshire was the second highest ranking Police Force for overall confidence in local police and third highest which the public thought the police were doing an excellent or good job in their local area; and
- Examples of how the public could get involved e.g. Residents Voice; and Community Cohesion Groups.

Members noted the information presented and following discussions requested if Councillors could be provided with updates following incidents within their wards, as this was the practice previously. They also requested any updates on cybercrime and if “knife sweep” could be carried out in Runcorn, as one had not taken place for some time.

Members also raised concerns about parking issues within the Borough; the Police and Crime Commissioner informed Members that following a series of meetings it was anticipated that a resolution had been found to help tackle the issues and he would provide more information as part of his presentation.

The Board thanked Police colleagues for their attendance and hard work in keeping the Borough safe.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

SAF22 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Cheshire’s Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) attended the meeting to deliver a presentation to Members of the Board on the refreshed PCC Plan for Cheshire. The current PCC was elected in 2024 and was currently developing the Police and Crime Plan to 2028.

The Commissioner’s Office had consulted widely on the development of the new plan and the three core principles identified were:

- Listen to the public – to ensure locally informed policing priorities and support for victims;
- Modernise using technology and innovation and consider the police estate to be fit for the future; and
- Reduce crime – provide an accessible and

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

responsive policy service with prevention and intervention culture firmly embedded with a focus on supporting rehabilitation.

Members were reminded that the Council's Community Safety Team worked in partnership with the PCC Office to support crime reduction in Halton.

The PCC addressed the concerns of Members regarding parking issues around the Borough and acknowledged that although this was a frustration for many, he did not want to divert Police attention from other more serious crimes. However, in order to try and find a resolution to the issues, he suggested "hotspot policing" (overtime) to enhance Police presence but of course this would be subject to available funding.

Following discussions, it was agreed that parking issues would be added to the next agenda of the Community Safety Partnership.

The PCC also informed the Board that his Office would be moving from Winsford to Runcorn Town Hall later in the year.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be received.

SAF23 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2024

The Board received a copy of a report, which was presented to the Council's Executive Board on 16 January 2025. The report outlined the Council's overall revenue and capital spending position as at 30 November 2024, together with the latest 2024/25 outturn forecast. The report also described the reasons for key variances from budget.

The Executive Board had requested that a copy of the report be shared with each Policy and Performance Board for information, to ensure that all Members had a full appreciation of the Councilwide financial position, in addition to their specific areas of responsibility.

RESOLVED: That the Councilwide financial position as outlined in the report be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.28 p.m.

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 12 February 2025 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Woolfall (Chair), P. Lloyd Jones (Vice-Chair), Hughes, Hutchinson, K. Loftus, Ryan and Thornton

Apologies for Absence: Councillor L. Nolan, Skinner, Stockton and Wall

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: S. Burrows, A. Plant, R. Taylor and F. Harris

Also in attendance: None

**ITEM DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

	<i>Action</i>
<p>EUR21 MINUTES</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2024 having been circulated were signed as a correct record.</p>	
<p>EUR22 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME</p> <p>It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.</p>	
<p>EUR23 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES</p> <p>The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board relevant to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.</p>	
<p>EUR24 BUILDING SAFETY LEVY</p> <p>Members of the Board received a report from the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which provided an update on the new Government initiatives and associated regulatory burdens.</p>	

It was noted that the purpose of the Building Safety Levy (BSL) was to introduce a charge imposed on developers of new residential buildings to fund the remediation of unsafe buildings, particularly those with cladding issues, post Grenfell. The Levy would ensure that developers bear the cost of fixing building safety issues and would be introduced in Spring 2025.

The report and the accompanying presentation described how the BSL would work, the exemptions inclusions and discounts and how the charges would be collected and paid to the Department.

It was agreed that a copy of the presentation slides would be circulated to Members after the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Board receive a presentation

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EUR25 HALTON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS)

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, on the proposed update to the Local Development Scheme (LDS). This needed to be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by 6 March 2025. The LDS informed work required to maintain a Local Plan, in line with National Policy.

Halton's Local Plan consisted of the adopted Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022) and the Joint Waste Plan (2013). The statutory Local Development Plan was the set of Local Plans that together formed the statutory basis to determine whether or not planning permission should be granted.

The LDS underpinned Halton's Delivery and Allocations Local Plan, which provided a timetable of works to be undertaken in 2025/26.

Once the LDS had been approved by the Executive Board, it would be made available on the Council's website.

RESOLVED: That the Board endorse the draft Local Development Scheme and agree its submission to Executive Board for approval.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EUR26 PEST CONTROL – REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES

The Board received a report from the Director of

Public Health regarding a review of fees and charges for Pest Control services. The report set out the services undertaken by the Environmental Health Team which comprised the control of rats in the Borough. This included the provision of rat treatments to domestic premises, which was currently free of charge. However, it was proposed to introduce a charge to cover these costs with effect from April 2025. The team also provided treatments for nuisance pests such as mice, ants and wasps, however, there was a charge for this service.

Members were advised of the risks of introducing a fee, however, in response to the Council's budget position, a number of proposals had been put forward for consideration and one such proposal was to introduce a charge for the provision of rat treatments on domestic properties.

It was noted that all Cheshire and Merseyside local authorities had retained an in-house pest control service and most now charge for rat treatments, although some still offered a free service. A breakdown of this information was included in section 3.8 of the report.

The cost of rat treatments by a private contractor would range between £120-£240. The actual cost of providing an average rat treatment in Halton had been calculated as £45.60 (including VAT). The Council currently received over 2,500 requests for rat treatments each year and this number had increased gradually year on year.

Members were asked to consider a proposal to introduce a fee of £45.60, with effect from April 2025 for all rat treatments on domestic properties and noted that:

- There would be no reductions or concessions, as applying a means test to the service would significantly increase administration costs;
- The proposal would disproportionately impact low-income households;
- The proposed fee had been set as low as possible and was considerably less than using a private contractor;
- Removal of free rat treatments was likely to lead to an increase in enforcement work for the Environmental Health Team;
- There was a risk that a reduction in rat treatments would lead to an increase in rat activity in the Borough; and
- A full list of fees and charges for domestic pest control was set out in section 5.6 of the report.

Members noted and discussed the report and further to questions, the following additional information was provided:

- Residents affected by rat problems from neighbouring properties e.g. derelict buildings, would not have to pay for treatments. However, the Council would take legal action against the owner of the problematic premises and this would incur charges to the Council;
- 95% of rat treatments were provided to domestic properties; a small amount of work was for schools or Council buildings. Going forward new job codes would be created to ensure the impact of the proposal could be measured; and
- 75% of rat problems were currently reported via the Council's website and 25% went through the Contact Centre. If a means tested benefit was applied, those affected would have to go through the Contact Centre and therefore, this would add work to the Contact Centre, which in turn would apply hidden costs.

Some Members of the Board expressed their concerns about the proposed charges and the impact this would have on low income households, as well as the health and safety implications for all residents of the Borough. It was also suggested that some people who have rat problems also use bird feeders, which can attract rats, and therefore, Members asked if some educational information could be made available to the public.

Following discussions, the Board agreed that recommendation (1) of the report be amended to "endorse the proposal to introduce a new fee that recovers the full cost of rat treatments on domestic properties, with the exception for those in receipt of benefits (subject to proof)".

They also requested that a further update report be brought back to the Board in November 2025.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) endorse the proposal to introduce a new fee that recovers the full cost of rat treatments on domestic properties, with the exception for those in receipt of benefits (subject to proof); and
- 2) recommend that the proposal is taken forward by Executive Board and Council, as part of the budget setting process for 2025/26.

Director of Public Health

EUR27 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 3 OF 2024/25

The Board received the Performance Monitoring Report for Quarter 3 of 2024/25.

The key priorities for development of improvement in 2024/25 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans for the various function areas reported to the Board as detailed below:

- Development and Investment Services;
- Highways and Transportation, Logistics and Development Services; and
- Waste and Environmental Improvement and Open Space Services.

The reports detailed progress against service objectives and milestones, and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

RESOLVED: That the Performance Management report for quarter 3 of 2024/25 be received.

EUR28 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2024

The Board received a copy of a report, which was presented to the Council's Executive Board on 16 January 2025. The report outlined the Council's overall revenue and capital spending position as at 30 November 2024, together with the latest 2024/25 outturn forecast. The report also described the reasons for key variances from budget.

The Executive Board had requested that a copy of the report be shared with each Policy and Performance Board for information, to ensure that all Members had a full appreciation of the Councilwide financial position, in addition to their specific areas of responsibility.

It was noted that Environment and Regeneration was the only Directorate still working within budget.

RESOLVED: That the Councilwide financial position as outlined in the report be noted.

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CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 21 January 2025 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chair), Philbin (Vice-Chair), Davidson, V. Hill, Hutchinson, Leck, Logan, A. Lowe, N. Plumpton Walsh and Thornton

Apologies for Absence: Councillor McDonough

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: E. Dawson, M. Reaney, S. Riley, J. Yates and K. Butler

Also in attendance: None

**ITEM DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

	<i>Action</i>
CS22 MINUTES	
The Minutes from the meeting held on 5 November 2024 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
CS23 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.	
CS24 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
The Board was presented with the minutes relating to the Corporate Services Portfolio, which had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of the Board.	
CS25 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT GROUP NOTES	
The Board considered the minutes of the Member Development Group meeting held on 26 September 2024.	
RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.	

CS26 ICT PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Board received a report from the Director of ICT and Support Services which provided an update on the department's programme of work.

The report outlined the different workstreams of the programme which included delivery of Microsoft365; Customer Journey Transformation; the Business Analysis Programme and Artificial Intelligence (AI) and details of each were described in the report. These were big projects but once completed they would bring many benefits, including cost savings.

Digital poverty was quite high in Halton and so the One Stop Shops remained an essential aspect of the front door into the Council for many, with increased footfall along with violent incidents and abuse experienced by staff. Approximately 428,00 cases were dealt with each year in the One Stop Shops.

Members were advised that the programme of work would also link to the partnership with NHS led Halton Health Hubs. Options were being explored to increase the number of Council services within the locations bringing services into the community on a face-to-face basis. Digital poverty meant that not all interactions could be digital.

Members of the Board scrutinised the report and the following additional information was provided in response to questions:

- with regards to AI, as owners of information, the Council would be responsible for any breach of data. However, a lot of AI was a base of knowledge and the type of AI the Council would hold would be kept onsite;
- there were in-house opportunities for AI, although it would be a big piece of work to analyse the data;
- it was suggested that digital poverty and those with literacy problems could be frustrated with new systems, however, it was noted that 80% of people contacted the Council via mobile phones and access would be tailored to mobile access.

The Board thanked officers for an interesting and reassuring report and appreciated that in-house talents would be used to move the Council forward.

RESOVLED: That the Board supports the ongoing programme of work.

CS27 CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

The Board received a report from the Assistant to the Chief Executive which provided an update on related activities aimed at reducing the Council's impact on the environment and CO2 emissions from Council activities.

Since it started to measure its carbon emissions in 2006/2007, overall emissions had reduced in the Council's operations from 26,338 tonnes of CO2 to 7,987 tonnes.

In 2017, the Government reset the baseline in the expectation that public bodies would reduce their carbon emissions by 50% by 2031. In 2017, the Council's baseline was 14,811 carbon tonnes and in 2023/24, it had managed to reduce its emissions to 7,987; a reduction of 53.9% in total and an annual reduction of 8.6%.

The report outlined a number key activities which had been completed or commenced during 2024 which included:

- Improvements to Council buildings, including solar power schemes and solar farms at different sites;
- Installation of Electric Vehicle Chargers;
- UKSPF funding;
- Procurement – published tenders to include environmental measures; and
- Continued awareness raising of climate change across the Council e.g. e-learning training courses for Officers and Members and establishment of a Climate Change Advisory Group.

Following discussions it was noted that:

- Feedback from a Liverpool City Region meeting which indicated that funding would continue across the region for the installation of further electric vehicle charging points;
- A query was raised about the electric vehicle charging point at Runcorn Town Hall which was located behind the locked gate and whether an additional one could be installed for public use; and
- It was confirmed that the cost of solar panels and installation totalled £2.27m.

RESOLVED: That the report and the ongoing work be noted.

Assistant to the
Chief Executive

CS28 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS

The Board considered a report which provided a statistical analysis of the Corporate Complaints received during the 2023-24 financial year.

The report outlined the two stage procedure to deal with corporate complaints; a corporate complaints trend analysis from 2022-23; the nature of those complaints received; and outcomes. The data showed that the Council had received 83 corporate complaints, reduction from the 112 that had been received in the previous year. Given the challenges the Council had faced it was considered a fair outcome.

At present, the Council aimed to respond to complaints at stage 1 of the procedures within 10 working days and those at stage 2 within 28 working days. More complaints had been considered at stage 2 compared to the previous year but the response time had marginally dipped.

The report also provided a summary on complaints and queries that had been received by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) during 2023-24. It was noted that the Ombudsman had made 32 decisions during the year and upheld 4 complaints.

Members were advised that the complaints process would be reviewed in due course to identify any improvements that could be made and thereafter, an update report would be presented to the Board.

RESOLVED: That the content of the report be noted.

CS29 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2024

The Board received a copy of a report, which was presented to the Council's Executive Board on 16 January 2025. The report outlined the Council's overall revenue and capital spending position as at 30 November 2024, together with the latest 2024/25 outturn forecast. The report also described the reasons for key variances from budget.

The Executive Board had requested that a copy of the report be shared with each Policy and Performance Board for information, to ensure that all Members had a full appreciation of the Councilwide financial position, in addition

to their specific areas of responsibility.

In response to the queries from Members of the Board, the following additional information was provided in response to questions:

- Page 51 – employers expenditure was the overall spending on employees and this was over budget. However, the current position was better than at the end of September 2024 and the main reduction had been in staffing within the Children’s Directorate;
- Page 71 – Members queried the staffing costs in Legal Services and it was confirmed that this was due to a high number of Locums over the past few years and as a result of a huge increase in workload and difficulties in recruitment due to salaries. A report was presented to Council in December 2024 and there was a workstream within the Transformation which was due to be completed in February 2025. Members were advised that the Legal Department had struggled for the past few years with no changes to the structure or increase in budgets;
- Page 75 – Members queried what expenditure “agencies – addition to establishment” meant and it was confirmed that this was an additional post to the normal establishment structure, most likely due to a response from the Ofsted inspection. Temporary posts had been created in services which had been criticised and needed to improve;
- Members acknowledged that whilst the Council must be cost effective, services carried out both in Children’s and Adult Services was about the care of human beings. Particularly in Children’s Services, private companies were being allowed to charge Council’s significant amounts money and take advantage of vulnerable situations; and
- Page 76 – Community and Greenspaces – Members asked if anyone was looking at how food provision was being spent in Community Centres and an example about how Murdishaw Community Centre was using a supplier from Blackpool rather than a local supplier was provided. There was also a query about how the new kitchen at the community centre had been tendered. Officers agreed to look into these queries and report back in due course.

RESOLVED: That the Councilwide financial position as outlined in the report be noted.

Director of
Finance

Meeting ended at 7.48 p.m.

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Audit and Governance Board held on Wednesday, 20 November 2024 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Polhill (Chair), Wall (Vice-Chair), Connolly, Dourley, Gilligan, N. Plumpton Walsh and Ratcliffe

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Abbott, Begg, McDermott and Wallace

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: E. Dawson, M. Murphy, S. Baker, G. Ferguson, M. Guest and R. Rout

Also in attendance: L. Luddington and M. Green - Grant Thornton UK LLP

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

	<i>Action</i>
BEB18 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2024 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
BEB19 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS	
<p>The Board considered a report of the Corporate Director – Chief Executive’s Delivery Unit, which provided an update on the governance arrangements for the Council’s Transformation Programme. The Council’s Transformation Programme had started to operate on 1 April 2023, since then it had grown in both scope and complexity. The programme was in place until 31 March 2026 and the governance primarily sat with Executive Board, who acted as the Programme Board.</p> <p>In August 2024 a Transformation Programme Board was established. This was a working party consisting of ten Executive Board members.</p> <p>In addition to the Board, a level of scrutiny operated across the projects through Topic Groups led by the Chairs of the relevant Policy and Performance Boards. Any</p>	

recommendations emerging from this scrutiny were referred to the Transformation Programme Board via the Lead Member for the respective project. The Terms of Reference for the Transformation Programme Board were appended to the report.

The Board discussed the governance arrangements for the Transformation Programme Board and agreed that for the purposes of transparency, the Executive Board be recommended to consider that members of the Audit and Governance Board should be included as part of the Board membership.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) Executive Board be recommended to consider that members of the Audit and Governance Board be included as part of the Transformation Programme Board membership.

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

BEB20 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023/24

The Board considered a report of the Director of Finance, which sought approval of the final 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

The 2023/24 AGS was originally presented to the Board in June 2024. The areas identified for development in the action plan remained unchanged from the version previously approved by the Board.

Once approved the AGS would be signed by the Council Leader and Chief Executive and published on the Council's website.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 be approved.

BEB21 2023/24 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS, AUDIT FINDINGS REPORT AND LETTER OF REPRESENTATION

The Board considered a report of the Director of Finance, which sought approval for the Council's 2023/24 Statement of Accounts (Appendix 3), and the report of the Audit Findings of the External Auditor (Grant Thornton) on the 2023/24 financial statements. The report also sought approval of the Council's Letter of Representation.

It was reported that the Statement of Accounts set out the Council's financial performance for the year in terms of revenue and capital spending and also presented the year end financial position as reflected in the balance sheet. The key elements were detailed in the report.

The External Auditor presented the Audit Findings report which summarised the findings from 2023/24 external audit. Section 2 of the Audit Findings report presented the finding of the External Auditor in respect of matters and risks identified at the planning stage of the audit and additional and significant matters that arose during the course of their work. Appendix B of the Audit Findings Report presented an action plan of recommendations for future improvement to the Statement of Accounts. These would be reviewed by management for appropriate action.

In addition, the Council was required to provide the External Auditor with a Letter of Representation relating the financial statements, as shown in Appendix 1. The letter was required to be signed by the Chair of the Board on behalf of the Council.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the draft Letter of Representation in Appendix 1 be approved and any subsequent additions or amendments be approved by the Director - Finance, in liaison with the Chair of the Board;
- 2) the External Auditor's draft 2023/24 Audit Findings Report in Appendix 2 be received and any subsequent additions or amendments be approved by Director - Finance, in liaison with the Chair of the Board; and
- 3) the Council's draft 2023/24 Statement of Accounts in Appendix 3 be approved and any subsequent additions or amendments be approved by the Director - Finance, in liaison with the Chair of the Board.

Director of
Finance

BEB22 EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

The Board considered a report of the Director of Finance which presented the 2023/24 External Audit Annual Report.

On behalf of the Council's External Auditor, Grant Thornton UK LLP, L. Luddington and M. Green, presented the Annual Report, which detailed the Council's overall

arrangements, as well as providing key recommendations regarding any significant weaknesses identified during the review. It was noted that the report identified a number of significant weaknesses, and the external auditors had made key recommendations where the Council should take action to improve, together with management's responses. In addition, a number of improvement recommendations were identified within the report, along with management's responses.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the contents of the 2023/24 External Audit Annual Report shown in the appendix be noted, including the recommendations contained within the Report;
- 2) Council be asked to consider the two statutory recommendations contained within the report, at its meeting on 4 December 2024; and
- 3) Executive Board be requested to ask each Executive/Corporate Director to identify what items of non-staff related expenditure are defined as essential to the delivery of services within their Directorate, and to provide written justification for the essential spend designation, outside of which no other spending will be permitted.

Director of Finance

BEB23 REVIEW OF AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE BOARD TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Board considered a report of the Director of Finance which advised on a review of the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Audit and Governance Board. The review had been prompted by the recent external assessment of the Council's internal audit arrangements, which included a recommendation that the Board's TOR should be aligned with that suggested by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

A proposed terms of reference for the Board had therefore been developed in accordance with the model TOR recommended by CIPFA in its publication 'Audit Committees Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (2022 edition)'. The revised TOR were attached to the report as Appendix A.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) considers the revised terms of reference for the

Director of Finance

Board, which align with CIPFA recommended practice; and

- 2) delegates authority to the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Chair of the Board to finalise any proposed amendments prior to submission to Full Council for approval.

BEB24 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

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

RESOLVED: That, as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

BEB25 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Board received a report from the Head of Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance, updating Members on the internal audit activity since the last progress report to the Board on 25 September 2024. It also highlighted any

matters that were relevant to the Board's responsibilities as the Council's Audit Committee.

Members were referred to appendix one, which listed all the planned work for the year and its current status. The schedule of audits had been updated to reflect the progress made in completing audits since the last update to the Board. By the end of October 2024, 732 days of audit work had been completed, which represented 63.1% of the total planned days for the year.

Appended to the report were the executive summaries of the reports issued numbering 2 to 15, as listed in the report.

RESOLVED: That the Internal Audit Progress Report and comments made be noted.

Meeting ended at 7.20 p.m.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Development Management Committee on Tuesday, 28 January 2025 at Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors S. Hill (Chair), Leck (Vice-Chair), Bevan, C. Loftus, Philbin, C. Plumpton Walsh, Polhill, Rowe, Thompson and Woolfall

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Carlin

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Jones, A. Plant, A. Evans, A. Strickland, G. Henry, A. Blackburn and C. Nixon

Also in attendance: One member of the press and 8 members of the public

**ITEMS DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE COMMITTEE**

	<i>Action</i>
DEV1 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes of the last meeting held on 4 November 2024, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
DEV2 PLANNING APPLICATIONS TO BE DETERMINED BY THE COMMITTEE	
<p>The Committee considered the following applications for planning permission and, in accordance with its powers and duties, made the decisions described below.</p>	
DEV3 22/00203/FUL - PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF 136 HOMES, WITH ASSOCIATED GARAGES, INFRASTRUCTURE, LANDSCAPING AND SERVICES ON LAND NORTH OF CHESTER ROAD, BETWEEN PRESTON BROOK BRIDGE AND WINDMILL LANE, PRESTON BROOK	
<p>The consultation procedure undertaken was outlined in the report together with background information in respect of the site.</p>	
<p>Since the publication of the agenda it was noted that an error was found in the report and clarification was</p>	

required in relation to page number 20 of the report and the assessment table presented. It was confirmed that financial contributions of Open Spaces was calculated on the basis of the Council's Open Spaces calculator and not the table in the report.

In reference to the published AB list, it was stated that the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) had confirmed that the updated ecological information provided addressed all concerns raised by the Ecology and Waste Advisor, and no further condition was required. Therefore, the request for delegated authority in respect of this was no longer required.

The Committee was addressed by Ms Dainty, who spoke in objection to the proposal. She argued *inter alia* that:

- The Wharf is next to the site and is used by 1000 Canal boats per annum;
- Compliance with Policy HE3 of the DALP was not considered;
- The proposed embankment was not in keeping with the character of the Village;
- Water quality would be affected;
- *Bridgewater Canal* was not consulted on the proposal;
- The Wharf was of recreational and commercial importance and a vital site from a tourism perspective;
- The proposal would cause damage to businesses on the Wharf and adversely affect tourism;
- The developer had not engaged with residents;
- The boundary line was in the wrong place;
- The heritage line was in the wrong place;
- Morris Homes had carried out road works without permission;
- There was no privacy for boaters;
- A verbal agreement was made regarding a mesh fence – this has not been done; and
- Security concerns and concerns over road access to the site.

Mr Trevaskis, Clerk to Preston Brook Parish Council (PBPC), then addressed the Committee. He apologised for the late email sent yesterday and tabled copies of this. He stated that he was not speaking to oppose the development, but its scale and the omission of certain details were not acceptable to the Parish Council. He cited *inter alia*, that:

- The provision of quality housing and the proposed lowering of speed limits was welcomed by PBPC;
- Preston Brook was a commercial and historical area and at the heart of the community was the Bridgewater Canal, which was of deep historical importance and significant relevance to the Village;
- The terramesh bund which would be visible from the Canal would affect the naturalness of the area – this should be replaced with natural stone;
- The Heritage Impact Assessment fell short in terms of the proposed schemes wider impacts;
- There was no reference to Policy HE3;
- Impacts on Preston Brook tunnel were not taken into account;
- PBPC were not invited to discussions relating to the Section 106 funding; and
- The development would bring disruption and huge changes to the Village.

On behalf of the Applicant, Mr Williams then addressed the Committee. He advised that the development had been in planning stages for a number of years and the best development solution had been presented. He stated the following, *inter alia*:

- The development would contribute to Halton's housing needs;
- It included improved footway and cycleways;
- Following highway authority discussions the development would be served from two access points;
- Morris Homes had engaged fully with the Council;
- The Heritage Impact Assessment had been accepted by the Council's Heritage Advisor;
- Financial contributions towards Green Belt compensation were agreed;
- Morris Homes had agreed to fund a TRO to reduce the speed limit on the A56 from 40mph to 30mph;
- The site comprised 31% open space; met the 10% bio net diversity; and had a 67% gain in hedgerows;
- In line with DALP Policy, the scheme proposed 25% affordable dwellings, with the proposed tenure a mix of 26% delivered as first homes, 18% intermediate, and 56% affordable rent;
- There were no outstanding objections from statutory consultees; and
- The proposal offered high quality housing for Halton.

Further to the representations already made by

neighbours and PBPC, an update was presented by Officers concerning a 20 page letter of objection circulated late yesterday (referred to by Mr Trevaskis above), covering 5 themes:

- Design of the project;
- Protection of the historic environment;
- Infrastructure;
- Use of Section 106 funds; and
- Community safety.

The Case Officer set out the points of objection behind each theme and provided the Council's detailed response to each one.

In response to matters raised by speakers, Officers advised that matters relating to the Wharf were private, to be dealt with by the Owners. Regarding the impact on the structure and integrity of the Canal, this is owned by Peel Holdings who had raised no objection to the proposal. In regards to the 1.8m wire mesh not being secure, this is a form of boundary treatment recommended by Cheshire Police. It was recommended in the Council's '*Designing for Community Safety*' supplementary planning document, furthermore the fence type is used across the Borough to secure commercial sites.

The Committee discussed the proposal and considered it to be compliant on planning grounds overall, but raised questions on the allocation of a portion of the Section 106 funding for Wigg Island, as opposed to being for the community of Preston Brook. Officers advised that a development of this nature was required to comply with Policy CS(R)6, that necessitates compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land. As Wigg Island is the only Green Belt area of land within the Council's ownership located in Runcorn, this justified its inclusion in the recommendation before the Committee. Members questioned whether an alternative site existed within the Preston Brook Parish; it was confirmed by Officers that no such alternative site existed. It was clarified that not all Section 106 funding would be allocated to Wigg Island. Officers advised that the Council's Open Spaces Department would work with the community to identify suitable projects within Preston Brook for the majority of the funding.

The Committee debated whether the recommendation could be amended so that all Section 106

funding was directed to the Preston Brook Parish area alone. Members were advised that clear justification for such an amendment would be required because to do this, would mean that the Green Belt compensatory element would not be met, resulting in non-compliance with the Development Plan.

After clarification, it was understood that the Policy regarding the Section 106 funding could not be amended as it was national policy. The strong sentiments of the Committee in relation to the use of the Section 106 funding in this case were noted and clarity over the Committee's options in respect of this were provided as follows:

If Members did not agree with the Officer recommendation, then they would need to amend the proposal for the spending of the Green Belt compensation to improve greenspaces within the area of Preston Brook. To do this Members must recognise that this would be contrary to the Development Plan. Therefore, to approve the application, Members must consider if the benefits of the proposed development outweighed the non-compliance with the Development Plan.

The Committee considered the matter and concluded that the a portion of the Section 106 funds should be spent within the area of Preston Brook Parish Council (rather than Wigg Island). Members acknowledged that this was contrary to the Development Plan, but concluded that the benefits from the proposed development in terms of delivering housing in general, and affordable housing in particular, should be given substantial weight. Accordingly Members concluded that this outweighed any non-compliance with the Development Plan.

The application was moved and seconded and the Committee voted to approve the application, subject to the above amendment in relation to the Section 106 agreement and conditions listed below.

RESOLVED: That the application be approved subject to the following conditions.

1. Time;
2. Approved plans;
3. External facing materials (GR1);
4. Site levels (GR1);
5. Soft tree felling (HE1);
6. Tree protection CS(R)21 and HE1);
7. Landscape and Ecological Management Plan

- (CS(R)20 and HE1);
8. Securing landscaping / detailed planting plan (GR1, GR2 and HE5);
 9. Construction Environmental Management Plan (HE9) ;
 10. Lighting strategy (HE1 and CS(R)20);
 11. Standard hours condition (GR2);
 12. Sustainable drainage management and maintenance plan (HR9);
 13. Drainage verification (HE9);
 14. Off site highway works including hedgerow replacement (C1 and C2);
 15. Parking and servicing (C1 and C2);
 16. Site waste management plan (WM8);
 17. Climate change (CS(R)19);
 18. Securing bund construction and other noise mitigation (HE7 and GR2);
 19. Ground contamination and remediation strategy (CS23 and HE8);
 20. Securing LAP and LEAP (GR2);
 21. Permitted development removal – garages (GR1 and GR2); and
 22. Permitted development removal – fences (GR1 and GR2).

DEV4 MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

The Committee was advised that the following appeals had been received and/or were in progress:

23/00200/FUL

Proposed removal of existing conservatory and construction of single storey rear extension at Sexton Cottage, Daresbury.

21/00711/FUL

Proposed division of one flat into two flats on ground floor at Unit 5 Salisbury Street, Widnes.

23/00194/FUL

Proposed internal reconfiguration of existing dwelling and part double, part single storey extension at 62 Church Road, Hale.

24/00125/FUL

Proposed two storey pitched roof extensions to front and side, single storey flat roof rear extension and new roof over existing side extension and detached garage at Tileacres, 29 Hale Road, Hale, L24 5RB.

24/00097/FUL

Erection of two drive-thru units with 'drive-thru' facilities together with associated car parking, servicing and landscaped areas, at Green Oaks Centre, Widnes.

22/00569/OUT

The Secretary of State has called in the planning application for the Heath Business and Technical Park, Runcorn. This will be considered at a Public Inquiry.

And the following appeals had been determined:

24/00004/FUL

Proposed extension above existing garage at 25 Hale Road, Hale (Dismissed).

24/00053/ADV

Advertisement consent for 1 no. internally lit LED digital display at 85-87 Victoria Road, Widnes (Dismissed).

Meeting ended at 7.30 p.m.

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TAXI LICENSING SUB COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Taxi Licensing Sub Committee on Friday, 22 November 2024 in The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillors Wallace (Chair), Hughes and K. Loftus

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Hesketh and A. Strickland

Also in attendance: None

**ITEMS DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE COMMITTEE**

Action

TLSC23 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2024, having been circulated were signed as a correct record.

TLSC24 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Committee considered:

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

applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That, as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

TLSC25 TAXI LICENSING MATTER

Case: 783

RESOLVED: That the Single Status Driver's Licence be revoked.

Meeting ended at 1.37 p.m.

TAXI LICENSING SUB COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Taxi Licensing Sub Committee on Friday, 29 November 2024 in The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillors Wallace (Chair), Bramwell and K. Loftus

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Hesketh, W. Pringle and A. Strickland

Also in attendance: None

**ITEMS DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE COMMITTEE**

Action

TLSC26 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Committee considered:

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

RESOLVED: That, as in all the circumstances of the

case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

TLSC27 TAXI LICENSING MATTER

Case: 784

RESOLVED: That the application to renew a Single Status Driver's Licence be refused.

Meeting ended at 11.27 a.m.

TAXI LICENSING SUB COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Taxi Licensing Sub Committee on Friday, 20 December 2024 in the The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillors Wallace (Chair), Hughes and Teeling

Apologies for Absence: Councillors

Absence declared on Council business:

Officers present: K. Hesketh, W. Pringle and A. Strickland

Also in attendance: None

**ITEMS DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE COMMITTEE**

Action

TLSC28 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 22 November 2024 and 29 November 2024, having been circulated were signed as a correct record.

TLSC29 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Committee considered:

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

applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with subsection 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph, 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

TLSC30 TAXI LICENSING MATTER

Case 785

RESOLVED: That the review of a Single Status Driver's Restricted Licence be revoked with immediate effect in the interests of public safety.

Meeting ended at 3.15 p.m.

REGULATORY SUB COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Regulatory Sub Committee on Monday, 9 December 2024 at The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillors Wallace (Chair), Abbott and Fry

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Hesketh, W. Pringle and A. Strickland

Also in attendance: None

**ITEM DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

Action

REGS15 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on the 31 October 2024 having been circulated were signed as a correct record.

REGS16 APPLICATION FOR A GRANT OF A PREMISES LICENCE - 71B ALBERT ROAD, WIDNES, WA8 6JS

PREAMBLE

A meeting of the Regulatory Sub-Committee (acting as Licensing Committee under the Licensing Act 2003) of Halton Borough Council was held at Municipal Building, Widnes on Monday 9th December 2024 commencing at 12 Noon.

The meeting was held to hear an application (Appendix C) made under section 17 of the Licensing Act 2003 for the grant of a Premises Licence at 71b Albert Road Widnes. The application was amended prior to the hearing (by way of email dated 2nd December (timed 18:37) to the Licensing Manager) to withdraw Steven Hewitt as the proposed DPS and to have the terminal hour for all

licensing activities at 2am (rather than 4am originally applied for). The Application was further amended during the hearing by the Applicant to reduce the terminal hour on Sunday to 1am (Monday morning) with 30 minutes drinking up time (throughout the week) (the latter being requested by Cheshire Police and agreed by the Applicant) and all other matters remaining as set out in the Operating Schedule and subject to the mandatory conditions in sections 19-21 Licensing Act 2003 and the additional conditions imposed by the Sub Committee set out herein.

In attendance were: -

1. Members of the Regulatory Sub Committee comprising Councillor Pamela Wallace, Councillor John Abbott, Councillor Mike Fry ('the Sub Committee')
2. Karl Barry - Consultant for the SER Holdings Ltd and Costin Serban - Director of SER Holdings Ltd ('the Applicant')
3. Kim Hesketh (Licensing Manager)
4. Alex Strickland (Legal Adviser)
5. Wendy Pringle (Taxi Enforcement Officer)
6. Lesley Halliday (Cheshire Police)
7. Jon Prior & Kath Harkin (Cheshire Fire)
8. Councillor E Jones (Ward Member)
9. Lyn Fletcher and Mr Jones ('Residents')

The hearing was triggered as a result of representations lodged by the Residents who attended the hearing and others who did not, namely Mr. K. O' Brien and Ms. A. McNamara. Also, Councillor Eddie Jones and Councillor Ged Philbin lodged relevant representations together with Cheshire Police and Cheshire Fire.

After the Chair of the Sub Committee had introduced the parties, the Sub Committee adjourned for 15 minutes to allow for discussions between the Applicant and Cheshire Fire. Cheshire Police and Cheshire Fire then attended the Sub Committee to outline the basis of their representations before the public session recommenced. Upon reconvening, the Legal Adviser outlined the procedure to be followed.

1. **Details of the application (as amended before and during the hearing)**

As set out in the Operating Schedule to the Application (Appendix C) with the amendment that the

terminal hour of 4am was substituted for 2am (Monday to Saturday) and the terminal hour for Sunday (Monday morning) was to be 1am.

In addition to the above, there was to be a 30 minutes drinking up time (to allow for last entry before the terminal hour). This was requested by Cheshire Police and agreed to by the Applicant.

The Applicant and Cheshire Fire have agreed upon submission of the appropriate Fire Risk Assessment before the premises commence trading.

The Applicant acknowledged that a new DPS would have to be appointed before supply of alcohol could take place.

2. The Hearing

The Licensing Manager presented the Licensing Report dated 9 December 2024 with appendices including Location Plan (Appendix A), the schedule of Licensed Premises in the local area (Appendix B), the Premises Licence Application (Appendix C), the representation from Cheshire Police (Appendix D) the representation from Cheshire Fire (Appendix E), representations from ward members and residents (Appendix F), extract from S182 guidance (Appendix G) - setting out the nature of the application, noting that there had been objections from Cheshire Police, Cheshire Fire, ward members and local residents. The Licensing Manager noted also that the Applicant had changed the application since the original submission to allow closing at 2am (instead of 4am) through the week (since altered to 1am on Sunday (Monday morning) and to remove Steven Hewitt as potential DPS.

The representative on behalf of the Applicant made clear that the original application was somewhat ambitious and noted that in the Liverpool City Region many premises do trade until the early hours of the morning. Nevertheless, the Applicant was mindful of the need to work with the community and had considered the representations from Cheshire Fire and Police and decided to respond by withdrawing Steven Hewitt as the proposed DPS. The Applicant had also scaled back proposed opening hours and hours of licensable activities from an original terminal hour of 4am to 2am (Monday to Saturday) and in a further concession proposed a terminal hour of 1am on Sunday (Monday morning). The back door would be used as a fire

exit only. The Applicant was happy to agree a condition on bottling disposal and conditions around litter. The pub was to be part of the local community and the Applicant expressed a willingness to work with them. When the pub was trading, it was anticipated that some 15-20 jobs would be created, paying a living wage. The Applicant had discussed fire safety matters with Cheshire Fire and had agreed they would submit the appropriate risk assessment to them for approval before commencing trading.

Responding to questions from the Sub Committee, the Applicant confirmed that Steven Hewitt would not be involved at all in running the Premises and that in the event of the licence being granted, a new DPS would be proposed/appointed in the usual way.

In response to questions, the Applicant confirmed that the back door to the premises would remain closed and only used as a fire exit (and a condition confirming this would be acceptable). The Applicant proposed to provide CCTV cameras on the entry with a focus on that (and not on properties/residents) to mitigate problems around fly tipping. The Applicant agreed to a condition governing times of bottle disposal and that the frontage should be kept clear of litter and cigarette receptacles would be provided outside the entrance to the premises. The Applicant further confirmed that deliveries would take place at the front of the premises only and that a condition requiring those under 18 to leave the premises by 8pm (or 15 minutes after the conclusion of a special sporting event) would be acceptable. The Applicant confirmed that doors to the premises would remain closed during live or recorded music other than to allow for reasonable access and egress.

In response to questions from Cheshire Police, the Applicant confirmed again that Steven Hewitt would not be involved in the running of the premises and accepted that they would agree to a condition for 30-minute drinking up time.

In response to questions from Cheshire Fire, the Applicant confirmed that they had agreed to submit an appropriate Fire Risk Assessment before the Premises were opened and to liaise with Cheshire Fire throughout to ensure fire safety.

Cheshire Police indicated that the main concern of their representation (Mr Hewitt as the proposed DPS) had been dealt with and that they would be satisfied with a 30-

minute drinking up time could be added as a condition to any licence, if it were to be granted.

Cheshire Fire indicated that they were satisfied with the agreement reached with the Applicant on the issues raised in their representation.

Councillor Jones addressed the Sub Committee and made clear that his concern was for local residents who sought a measure of natural justice. It was socially unacceptable to require local residents to put up with noise, disruption and anti-social behaviour that he considered would result from the application. He also indicated that although statutory formalities had been followed on notification (which the Licensing Manager confirmed), many residents would not be aware of the application and many did not make representations, because such have not been successful on previous applications.

Lyn Fletcher (for the Residents) agreed with the points made by Councillor Jones. She acknowledged that the Imperial had been a successful bar that operated in the past, but considered that the proposed 2am closing time was too late, creating the potential for noise nuisance, anti-social behaviour and disruption from taxi operators - 'the lot'.

In summing up – Lyn Fletcher made clear her focus was on residents of the town that should not be forgotten, and their wellbeing should be paramount. Councillor Jones was concerned if the licence was granted, it may have an impact on other premises that would seek longer hours and be to the detriment of the amenity of local residents. Cheshire Fire indicated they were satisfied with the agreement reached with the Applicant and Cheshire Police indicated they would welcome the 30-minute drinking up time condition. The Applicant indicated they had sought to respond to local concerns, by reducing the proposed terminal hour through the week to 2am and to 1am on Sunday (Monday morning). They had also decided to withdraw the proposed DPS (Steven Hewitt) in response to representations from Cheshire Police and Cheshire Fire and were agreeable to a range of further conditions as proposed in the hearing. Overall, these were thought to mitigate any concerns that the statutory licensing objectives were not being met. The aim would be to ensure the premises operated as a community venue and if there were to be any future problems, they could be dealt with by way of statutory review. There was also a wish to resolve any matters informally with residents through the Ward

Member(s) if at all possible. On this basis, the representative for the Applicant maintained that the application for the premises licence should be granted.

All parties then withdrew from the room for the Sub Committee to conduct deliberations on the matter.

3. The Determination

The Sub Committee deliberated on the matter (keeping an open mind on all issues until the point of decision) and resolved to grant the (amended) application for the Premises Licence on the terms set out in sections 1 (including mandatory conditions) and 2 of this Notice with the inclusion of following the conditions:-

- The back door to the premises would remain closed and only used as a fire exit (to keep public nuisance to a minimum).
- Provision of CCTV cameras on the entry with a focus on that (and not on properties/residents) to mitigate problems around fly tipping (to keep public nuisance to a minimum)
- Any bottles to be disposed of only after 8am Monday to Saturday and 10am Sunday (to keep public nuisance to a minimum)
- The frontage should be kept clear of litter and cigarette receptacles would be provided outside the entrance to the premises (to keep public nuisance to a minimum).
- Deliveries would take place at the front of the premises only (to keep public nuisance to a minimum)
- Patrons (accompanied) under the age of 18 be required to leave the premises by 8pm (or 15 minutes after the conclusion of a special sporting event) (to protect children from harm).
- Doors to the premises would remain closed during live or recorded music other than to allow for reasonable access and egress (to keep public nuisance to a minimum).
- 30-minute drinking up time (as set out above) (to keep public nuisance to a minimum and to deal with any potential problems of crime and disorder).

The above determination was taken specifically on the assurances that were given to the Sub Committee by/on behalf of the Applicant that Steven Hewitt would not have any involvement in the premises and that Cheshire Fire were satisfied that suitable agreement had been

reached in respect of providing a suitable fire risk assessment before the premises started trading and to abide by reasonable requests from Cheshire Fire going forward on the fire safety issue (to promote public safety). It was further noted that a new DPS would have to be proposed/appointed in the usual way.

4. **Specific reasons for the Determination**

In making its determination, the Sub-Committee had regard to the statutory licensing objectives, the statutory guidance and Halton Council's own Statement of Licensing Policy.

The Sub Committee found that:

1. Whilst the Sub Committee was sympathetic to the issues raised by Residents and Ward Members (including Councillor Philbin who was not in attendance), it was conscious that the Applicant had significantly amended the original application to take account of concerns raised by Responsible Authorities and Residents, notably by withdrawing the original proposal for DPS (Steven Hewitt) and reducing the proposed hours of operation.
2. The Sub Committee were encouraged by and gave particular weight to the fact that the Applicant had listened to concerns raised by Cheshire Police and Cheshire Fire and subsequently withdrew Steven Hewitt as the proposed DPS.
3. The Sub Committee were further encouraged with the express undertaking given on behalf of the Applicant, that Steven Hewitt would not have any involvement in the management of the premises going forward, thereby taking account of the concerns that were raised by both Cheshire Fire and Cheshire Police. This factor carried significant weight in reaching this determination.
4. The Sub Committee were satisfied that the agreement reached between Cheshire Fire and the Applicant over the vitally important issue of fire safety, represented the best way forward and provided a reasonable and sustainable approach to addressing the question of fire safety for the premises.
5. The extra conditions imposed by the Sub Committee

were considered to be a reasonable and proportionate response to promoting the statutory licensing objectives in respect of this particular application.

6. On balance, the Sub Committee therefore finds that the application (as amended) does not undermine the licensing objectives and therefore resolved to grant the Premises Licence on the basis set out herein.

Parties were reminded that they have the right to commence a formal review of the Premises Licence should any issues arise in the future.

5. **Time that the determination shall take effect**

Forthwith.

Meeting ended at 2.01 p.m.

APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Appointments Committee held on Monday, 16 December 2024 at the Karalius Suite, Halton Stadium, Widnes

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), McDermott, T. McInerney, Ratcliffe and Thompson

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Davidson

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: S. Young, Z. Fearon, K. Bate and G. Haining

**ITEMS DEALT WITH
UNDER DUTIES
EXERCISABLE BY THE COMMITTEE**

	<i>Action</i>
<p>APC15 MINUTES</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2024, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and agreed as a correct record.</p>	
<p>APC16 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985</p> <p>The Committee considered:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) whether members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Committee during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and 2) whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public 	

interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That, as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

APC17 APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR - CHILDREN'S EDUCATION, INCLUSION & PROVISION

Following a long-listing recruitment process and the drawing up of a shortlist, the Committee considered candidates for the post of Director - Education, Inclusion and Provision.

RESOLVED: That Benjamin Holmes be appointed to the post of Director - Education, Inclusion and Provision.

Meeting ended at 12.33 p.m.