

Minutes

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

Wednesday, 4 March 2026

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COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Council on Wednesday, 3 December 2025 in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Garner, A. Lowe, McDonough, N. Plumpton Walsh, Stockton, Thornton and Wall

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney, G. Ferguson and R. Rout

Also in attendance: Three members of the public

Action

COU45 COUNCIL MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 22 October 2025, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

COU46 THE MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced that Runcorn Town Hall Open Day would be held on 6 December. All were welcome to attend.

COU47 LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader made the following announcements:

- He welcomed the good news regarding the recommendation from Appointments Committee for Andrew Donaldson to be appointed to the role of Chief Executive;
- Children's Services improvement journey continued and Ofsted had noted significant improvements had been achieved;
- The Council had received grant funds of:

- £1.5m from the Government – Pride in Place Fund; and
- £2,170,118m from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority– Connect to Work;
- He wished everyone a happy Christmas and thanked everyone for their contributions in the past year.

COU48 URGENT DECISIONS

Council considered a report of the Interim Chief Executive, on the urgent decisions taken since the last meeting of the Council.

RESOLVED: That Council note the report.

COU49 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Council considered the minutes of the Executive Board meetings on 23 October and 13 November 2025 .

RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.

COU50 MINUTES OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

The Council considered the minutes of the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting on 8 October 2025.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.

COU51 QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 8

It was noted that no questions had been submitted under Standing Order No. 8.

COU52 TO CONSIDER THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE FOR THE APPOINTMENT TO THE POST OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

Council considered the recommendation of the Appointments Committee for the appointment to the post of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service.

RESOLVED: That the recommendation of the Appointments Committee be approved and Mr. Andrew Donaldson be appointed as Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service with effect from a date to be confirmed.

COU53 JOINT HEALTH SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS -
CHESHIRE & MERSEYSIDE: STAGE 1 DELEGATION
(EXB55 REFERS)

Council considered a report that sought approval to delegate Stage 1 consideration of substantial variation to health services, where necessary, when Joint Health Scrutiny (JHS) arrangements may apply.

RESOLVED: That Council

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) approves the proposal for Stage 1 delegation as outlined.

COU54 DETERMINATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE 2026/27
(EXB61 REFERS)

The Council considered a report of the Director of Finance, on the determination of the Council Tax Base for 2026/27.

Councillor Davidson expressed concern at the current Council Budget outlook position which was estimated to be £4.6m over budget. In response Councillor Dennett advised that the predicted overspend had reduced and measures continued to be taken to achieve a balanced budget. A Government Finance Policy Statement that aimed to reform local government finances was expected imminently. Meanwhile, Council finances remained under severe pressure.

The recommendation was unanimously approved by Council as detailed below.

RESOLVED: That Council

- 1) set the 2026/27 Council Tax Base at 37,115 for the Borough and that the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the Environment Agency be so notified; and
- 2) set the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes as follows:

Parish	Tax Base
Hale	675
Halebank	540
Daresbury	424
Moore	338
Preston Brook	368
Sandymoor	1,739

COU55 2025/26 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 30
SEPTEMBER 2025 (EXB62 REFERS)

Council was asked to approve the Capital Programme as outlined in the attached report.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Executive Directors continue to implement the approved 2025/26 saving proposals as detailed in Appendix 3;
- 2) Executive Directors continue to identify areas where they can further reduce their directorate's spending or generate income, in order to ensure the council wide forecast outturn overspend position for the year remains within budget;
- 3) 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;
- 4) the revisions to the capital programme set-out in paragraph 3.25 and incorporated within Appendix 4 be approved.

COU56 APPROVAL OF THE BOROUGH WIDE HOUSING
STRATEGY - KEY DECISION (EXB66 REFERS)

Council was requested to approve the Boroughwide Housing Strategy. A copy of the Strategy document was attached to the report.

Councillor Wainwright queried if the Housing Strategy document had been considered by the relevant Council scrutiny committee and the cost of the housing survey. Councillor Harris agreed to provide a written response to Councillor Wainwright.

RESOLVED: That Council

- 1) note the progress on the production and consultation of the draft Housing Strategy for Halton 2026 – 2031 (Appendix A) and supporting evidence document (Appendix B);
- 2) provides delegated approval to the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Sustainability to agree any final revisions to the draft Housing Strategy; and
- 3) approves the revised Housing Strategy.

COU57 ABSENCE OF A MEMBER

Under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, permission was sought for Councillor McDonough to be granted a period of absence from attending Council meetings for a period of 6 months, concluding on 3 June 2026, due to personal reasons.

RESOLVED: That approval be given for the Member absence as outlined above.

COU58 MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARDS AND THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE BOARD

The Council considered the reports of the following Boards in the period since the meeting of Council on 22 October 2025:-

- Local Economy;
- Health and Social Care;
- Housing and Safer;
- Environment and Regeneration;
- Corporate and Inclusion; and
- Audit and Governance.

Councillor Wainwright requested that market traders be consulted on the Market Business Plan (Corporate and Inclusion Minute CS23 refers)

COU59 COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Council considered the reports of the following Committees in the period since the meeting of Council on 22 October 2025:-

- Regulatory; and
- Appointments

COU60 APPOINTMENTS TO AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE BOARD,
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE POLICY AND
PERFORMANCE BOARD, OUTSIDE BODIES AND
SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR

Council was requested to agree the following appointments.

RESOLVED: That Council approve the following appointments detailed below:

- Audit and Governance Board – Councillor Hughes
- Health and Social Care Policy and Performance Board – Councillor Wallace
- Scrutiny Co-Ordinator - Councillor McDermott

Outside Bodies:

National Association British Market Authorities - Councillor Gilligan

Manchester Port Health Authority – Councillor Gilligan

Catalyst Museum – Councillor Carol Plumpton Walsh

Sankey Canal Restoration Society (SCARS) – Vacant

On behalf of the Council the Leader thanked Sue Wallace Bonner for her work and years of support and he wished her a happy and healthy retirement.

Meeting ended at 7.30 p.m.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 11 December 2025 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), Bevan, Ball, Dennett, Harris, T. McInerney, P. Nolan, Thompson, Wall and Wright

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, S. Wallace-Bonner, T. Gibbs, G. Ferguson, R. Rout, J. Hughes and D. O'Connor

Also in attendance: None

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

EXB69 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2025, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB70 URGENT DECISION

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

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

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

RESOLVED: That the urgent decision taken since

Action

the last meeting of the Executive Board be noted.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB71 FINANCIAL RECOVERY, CHANGE AND INNOVATION RESOURCE APRIL 2026 ONWARDS - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Director of Transformation (Interim), that sought approval to establish and resource a dedicated Financial Recovery, Change and Innovation function for the Council from April 2026, following the conclusion of the current Transformation Programme and its associated funding on 31 March 2026. The proposal would ensure that the Council had the capacity, capability and governance structures required to deliver the scale and pace of change necessary to achieve financial sustainability.

The Board noted that a Financial Recovery Plan was being developed with the aim of demonstrating how the Council could return to a sustainable budget position by 2030/31. To support the Plan and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), it was proposed that a new Change and Innovation Unit (CIU) be established from 1 April 2026. Given the tenure of the current contract arrangements and the rights accrued, appointments to the CIU would be on a permanent basis. Some flexible budget would also be retained to buy-in expertise on an as and when needed basis. It was noted that £2.5m had been included in the MTFS to fund a change programme for the period 2026/27 to 2028/29.

Reason for Decision

Agreement for funding to resource a Financial Recovery, Change and continuous Improvement function for the Council from April 2026 following the end of the Transformation Programme and its funding on 31 March 2026.

Alternative options considered and rejected

N/A

Implementation date

1 April 2026.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves the establishment of a Change and Innovation Unit (CIU) to support the Financial Recovery and Corporate Plan from 1

Chief Executive

April 2026.

EXB72 DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

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

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

The report outlined details of three applications from organisations, in relation to their respective address. Appended to the report was the potential annual cost to the Council of granting the discretionary rate relief. On 25 February 2025, the Board approved the renewal from 1 April 2026, of existing discretionary rate relief awards, for a period of three years, in order to provide certainty for the organisations. Historically, the Council had chosen to only support organisations who operated solely or mainly within the Borough with discretionary rate relief.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) discretionary rate relief for any new applications received during 2025/26, be awarded at the rates approved on 25 February 2025, for the renewal of existing awards, as outlined in paragraph 3.5;
- 2) the application for 10% discretionary rate relief from the National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations (Incorporated) in respect of 12 Runcorn Shopping Centre, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2BS with effect from 4 September 2025, be rejected;
- 3) the application for 10% discretionary rate relief from Widnes Gymnastics Academy in respect of Unit 10 Widnes Business Park, Foundry Lane with effect from 25 August 2025, be approved;
- 4) the application for 10% discretionary rate relief from Widnes Gymnastics Academy in respect of Unit 11 Widnes Business Park, Foundry Lane with effect from 25 August 2025, be approved.

Director of Finance

EXB73 DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORTS FOR QUARTER 2 2025 - 2026

The Board considered a report of the Director of HR and Corporate Affairs (Interim), on progress made against key objectives/milestones and performance targets for the second quarter period to 30 September 2025, for Corporate and Inclusion, Health and Social Care and Children's Services.

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

RESOLVED: That the information contained in the reports be noted.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO

EXB74 PRIDE IN PLACE, IMPACT FUND

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration, that provided an update on the recently announced Pride in Place Impact Fund (PiPIF) of £1.5m for Halton, and the considerations around how to deploy the funding within the required timescales. The funding had to be used to achieve visible impacts by March 2027, and the guidelines outlined that local authorities would act as the accountable body for the PiPIF working with local stakeholders to identify and invest in themes that met local need. The report set out the three following overarching themes that the funds could be deployed on:

- Community spaces;
- Public spaces; and
- High street and town centre revitalisation.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) acknowledge the £1.5 million allocation being made

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

available and note that the Chief Executive has signed the associated memorandum of understanding on behalf of the Council;

- 2) approves delegated authority to the Executive Director for Environment and Regeneration (in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Community Safety and Housing and Environmental Sustainability) to progress projects that meet the strategic objectives of the fund, with specific projects to be determined by Executive Board;
- 3) note the timeline for submission of key documents to MHCLG (first submission in February 2026) and that the Council will act as Accountable Body for the funding; and
- 4) approves delegated authority to the Director Economy Enterprise and Property (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services) to arrange for all required documentation to be completed to the satisfaction of the Director Legal and Democratic Services in relation to any necessary proposed project activities.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

EXB75 CHILDRENS SERVICES COMMISSIONED CONTRACT EXTENSIONS

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director of Children's Services, that sought approval for a series of staged extensions via requests to various contractual waivers, in compliance with Procurement Standing Orders 1.14.4.3 and 1.14.4 iv seeking to waive parts 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders. The waivers were for several contracts identified in the report and overarching rationale was provided for each, alongside individual contractual considerations. The eighteen short term extensions would allow:

- a focused workplan to be spread more equitably across the financial year, resulting in contract end dates of April and October respectively and allow a dedicated focus on each contract;
- the allocated commissioning officers time and space to fully review each contract, allowing for more options to be considered, including the use of open and competitive tenders, or longer-term direct awards, based on quality audits of the outcomes

achieved across the specification key performance indicators; and

- the Procurement Team time to plan the preferred options into their annual work schedules.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) approval be given to the Emotional Health and Wellbeing contract with Barnardo's being extended for 12 months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.3 (non-emergency procedures – not exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive parts 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders;
- 3) approval be given to the Advocacy and Independent Visitor (CRAIV) contract with NYAS being extended for 6 months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.3 (non-emergency procedures – not exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive parts 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders;
- 4) approval be given to the Personal Assistant Services contract with Positive Futures Consultancy being extended for 12 months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.3 (non-emergency procedures – not exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders;
- 5) approval be given to the Specialist Children's Domestic Abuse Service contract with The Children's Society being extended for 6 months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.3 (non-emergency procedures – not exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders;
- 6) approval be given to the Friendships Groups contract with VIBE being extended for 6 months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.3 (non-emergency procedures – not exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders;
- 7) approval be given to the Specialist Seating contract with Newlyn Healthcare being extended for 12

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.3 (non-emergency procedures – not exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders;

- 8) approval be given to the Supported Accommodation contract with P3 being extended for 12 months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 (non-emergency procedures – exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders;
- 9) approval be given to the PAUSE and REACH Programmes contract with PAUSE Halton being extended for 12 months, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 (non-emergency procedures – exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders; and
- 10) the re-commissioning of each service, via open competitive tender, or otherwise, at the extended contract end dates, be undertaken by the Children's Head of Commissioning and Quality Assurance in liaison with the Portfolio Holder for Children's.

ENVIRONMENT & URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

EXB76 WASTE MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Board considered a report that provided an update on the continuing work in the development of the new Strategic Policy and Service Plan documents in respect of the Council's Waste Management Services. It was noted that since the last report to the Board on 11 September 2025, the following actions had taken place:

- work was undertaken to draft a new Halton Waste Strategy document which would be presented to the Board in Spring 2026. The aims of the Strategy would be underpinned by a new Waste Policy which was also in development;
- an Environment Service Transformation Programme supported by the Transformation Delivery Unit was ongoing;
- workforce engagement: staff, management, Trade Unions and HR representatives had met and been fully engaged throughout the development of the Transformation programme;
- work was progressing to bring in additional staffing

resources to deliver effective communication and community engagement on the new services for Halton residents, and the development of a Communications Plan; and

- an update on the new Food Waste Collection Service to be implemented to every household in 2026 was provided including staffing implications.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board endorse the current programme of work, as set out within the report, which is being undertaken to support the Council in meeting its Strategic aims and objectives with regards to the management of waste in Halton; and
- 2) a further report be presented to the Board in Spring 2026.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS, AND COMMUNITY PORTFOLIO

EXB77 CONNECT TO WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration, that advised on the opportunity for the Council to participate in the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's delivery of the national Connect to Work programme, and sought delegated authority to negotiate and execute related Grant Funding Agreements.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board approve the indicative £2,170,118 funding allocation from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority for delivery of the Halton Connect to Work programme; and
- 2) authority be delegated to the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Employment, Learning, Skills and Community, the Director Finance / Section 151 Officer and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, to negotiate and execute Grant Funding Agreements for delivery of the Connect to Work programme.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EXB78 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.

DEPUTY LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB79 ACCOMMODATION REVIEW UPDATE - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration, on the continuing review of the Council's accommodation.

Reason for Decision

To enable notification to be given to the Telecommunications companies, allow for the Municipal Building to be demolished, and to allow for negotiations to be undertaken in respect of the possible future use of the site.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Alternative options were considered in the July Executive Board report.

Implementation date

December 2027.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board approve that arrangements be prepared to decommission and vacate the Municipal Building; and
- 2) the Municipal Building be demolished, subject to the necessary planning requirements being met, and that delegated authority be given to the Executive Director for Environment and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Major Projects to enter negotiations regarding the potential future use of the site.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

ADULT AND SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB80 REVIEW OF TELEHEALTHCARE SERVICES - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director Adult Services, that set out options following a review of the Telehealthcare Services.

Reason for Decision

The outcome of this report and decision was likely to result in savings and potential changes to the charging of the service.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Ceasing delivery of services would impact negatively on a vulnerable cohort of the Borough's population and likely result in more costly, crisis intervention being required.

Implementation date

The outcome from the report is to be implemented as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: That the Board

Executive Director
of Adult Services

- 1) note the report;
- 2) a further report be brought to the next meeting of the Board clarifying the points raised.

On behalf of the Council the Leader thanked Sue Wallace Bonner for her work and years of support and he wished her a happy and healthy retirement.

MINUTES ISSUED: 16 December 2025

CALL-IN: 23 December 2025 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 23 December 2025.

Meeting ended at 2.45 p.m.

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EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 15 January 2026 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), Bevan, Ball, Dennett, Harris, T. McInerney, P. Nolan, Wall and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Thompson

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, G. Ferguson, W. Rourke and R. Rout

Also in attendance: None

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

EXB81 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2025, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB82 URGENT DECISIONS

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

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

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

RESOLVED: That the urgent decision taken since

Action

the last meeting of the Executive Board be noted.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB83 2025/26 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 30
NOVEMBER 2025

The Board received a report from the Director – Finance, advising of the Council’s overall revenue net spending position as at 30 November 2025, together with a 2025/26 forecast outturn position.

Appendix 1 presented a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 30 November 2025 and Appendix 2 provided detailed figures for each individual Department. Appendix 3 presented detail on the High Needs 2025/26 forecast outturn position and Appendix 4 set out the progress against agreed savings.

It was reported that in overall terms the outturn forecast for the year showed that net spend at 30 November 2025, would be over the approved budget by £0.294m. The outturn forecast for the year estimated that net spending would be over budget by £1.281m if no corrective action is taken. This was an improved position from that reported at the end of September 2025 and the report set out a number of areas where improvement had been achieved.

Council had approved the 2025/26 Capital Programme on 5 March 2025. Since then, the Programme had been revised to reflect a number of changes in spending profiles and funding as schemes had been developed. Appendix 5 brought all the separate elements together and report on the Council’s total planned capital programme expenditure and the report set out those schemes that had been revised.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Executive Directors continue to implement the approved 2025/26 saving proposals as detailed in Appendix 4;
- 2) Executive Directors continue to identify areas where they can further reduce their directorate’s spending or generate income, in order to ensure the council wide forecast outturn overspend position for the year remains within budget;
- 3) this report be shared with each Policy and

Director of
Finance

Performance Board in order to ensure they have a full appreciation of the councilwide financial position, in addition to their specific areas of responsibility;

- 4) Council be asked to approve the revisions to the capital programme set-out in paragraph 3.31 and incorporated within Appendix 5; and
- 5) the forecast position for High Needs set-out in Para 3.19 to 3.24 and Appendix 3, be noted.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

EXB84 SCHOOLS CAPITAL PROGRAMME – 2026/27 - 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 2026/27 financial year.

The Board was advised that the Department for Education (DfE) had not announced the School Condition Allocation Capital Grant for 2026/27 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 2025/26 allocation, which was £1,076,826.

The report set out details of the indicative funding available to support capital projects across the school 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 School Condition works would be completed by March 2027.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the position regarding schools capital funding from the Department for Education for 2026/27 be noted;
- 2) the proposals to be funded from the School Condition Capital Allocation 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

EXB85 SCHOOL ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS 2027/28 - 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 Coordinated Schemes, for admission to primary and secondary schools, including Academy, Free School and Voluntary Controlled schools for the September 2027 intake.

The Board was advised that on 1 October 2025, the Local Authority issued a statutorily required consultation on the proposed admission arrangements and coordinated admission schemes for the September 2027 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 14 November 2025. 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 2026 which is when the timetabled process for the September 2027 intake commences.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves 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 Coordinated Scheme for admission to Secondary Schools, both of which will apply to the September 2027 intake.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

EXB86 SERVICES TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Children’s Services, that requested a waiver in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 iv of part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders to allow the continuation of a contract with Career Connect to deliver, on behalf of the Council, the provision of services to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education, employment and training, for a period of four years.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

It was noted that since the introduction of the Halton Participation Strategy in 2014, Career Connect had been commissioned to provide a service in 2014, 2018 and 2022. Since the initial contract in April 2014, and through all subsequent contracts, Career Connect had performed well against agreed outcomes, supported Halton to meet its statutory duties and they worked well with the 16+ Education to Employment Team. Given the value-added benefits outlined in the report and the changes to procurement regulations, approval was sought to continue with the contract with Career Connect from 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2030.

RESOLVED: The Board approve that the contract with Career Connect should be extended for a further four years without going through a Procurement process, in

pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 (non-emergency procedures – exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders, as advised by Procurement Team.

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

EXB87 ADDITIONAL HIGHWAY GRANT ALLOCATIONS

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director - Environment and Regeneration, that sought approval to accept capital funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) in compliance with Standing Orders.

It was noted that in addition to previous capital funding arrangements through the LCRCA, Halton had now received:

- a grant of £190,000 as part of the Active Travel Fund 5;
- notification of an imminent Active Travel Fund 6 grant (Consolidated Active Travel Fund). LCR approvals were ongoing, but it was expected £577,000 would be allocated to Halton; and
- £564,556.12 had been allocated for Pre-Development Work of the Transport Pipeline projects that were due to be constructed with the future funding from the Transport for City Regions Capital allocation to the City Region. Final Grant funding Agreement for this was awaited.

Full details on the schemes it was proposed the grant funding would be invested in were outlined in the report.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board approves the Director of Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Environment and Urban Renewal, be delegated to accept the Grant Funding Agreement and enable timely delivery of the agreements; and
- 2) the Director Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Environment and Urban Renewal, be delegated to deal with any matters relating to procurement and operation of these agreements.

Director -
Planning and
Transportation

EXB88 POLICY DOCUMENTS: LIVERPOOL CITY REGION LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY, TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT, HOUSE EXTENSIONS SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT, AND VEHICLE CROSSING GUIDANCE

The Board considered a report that sought approval to support the adoption of the following documents:

- Liverpool City Region Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LCRS);
- Transport and Accessibility Supplementary Planning Document (SPD);
- House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Associated Technical Guidance:

- Vehicle Crossing Guidance (VCG)

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) the Board approves the Strategies for adoption; and
- 3) Authority is delegated to the Director of Planning and Transportation in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Environment and Urban Renewal and Climate Change and Housing, to amend the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) if required.

Director -
Planning and
Transportation

EXB89 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.

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS, AND COMMUNITY PORTFOLIO

EXB90 DCBL STADIUM - PITCH REPLACEMENT - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report that sought approval to proceed with the necessary works for the replacement of the pitch at DCBL Stadium as outlined in the report.

Reason(s) for Decision

To agree capital investment to enable replacement of the artificial pitch at the DCBL Halton Stadium.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None. The pitch is required to be compliant with Rugby League specifications as set out in 3.3 and 3.4.

Implementation Date

To commence in September 2026.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Members give approval to proceed with the works as identified in the report;
- 2) Executive Board approval is given for recommendation to Full Council for an adjustment to the capital programme of up to £546,000; and

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

- 3) approval of the detailed costs and the option to be undertaken, be delegated to the Executive Director Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Employment Learning, Skills and Community.

MINUTES ISSUED: 20 January 2026

CALL-IN: 27 January 2026 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 27 January 2026.

Meeting ended at 2.23 p.m.

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EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 12 February 2026 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), Bevan, Ball, Dennett, Harris, T. McInerney, P. Nolan, Thompson, Wall and Wright

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, G. Ferguson, W. Rourke, R. Rout, S. Foy and H. Hamlett

Also in attendance: Councillor Ratcliffe

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

	<i>Action</i>
<p>EXB91 MINUTES</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2026, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p> <p>LEADER'S PORTFOLIO</p>	
<p>EXB92 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2026/27</p> <p>The Board received a report of the Chief Executive, which set out the proposed Calendar of Meetings for the 2026/27 Municipal Year, which was appended to the report for information.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the Calendar of Meetings for the 2026/27 Municipal Year, as appended to the report.</p> <p>CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO</p>	<p>Interim Chief Executive</p>
<p>EXB93 BUDGET 2026/27 - KEY DECISION</p> <p>The Board considered a report from the Director - Finance, which outlined a recommendation to Council in respect of the Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax</p>	

for 2026/27.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), approved at the Executive Board meeting on 11 September 2025, had identified funding gaps of around £44.937m in 2026/27, £58.964m in 2027/28, £74.656m in 2028/29, £94.107m in 2029/30 and £118.613m in 2030/31.

In terms of consultation, it was noted that the Council used various methods to listen to the views of the public, and Members own experiences through their Ward work was an important part of that process. Individual consultations took place in respect of specific budget proposals and equality impact assessments would be completed where necessary.

The Board received regular reports detailing spending in the current year against the budget. The latest report indicated that spending was forecast to be over budget in the current year by approximately £1.281m against a net budget of £183.052m.

The proposed revenue budget for 2026/27 totalled £224.237m; the departmental analysis of this was shown in Appendix B. A total of £5.158m of savings were proposed and were detailed in Appendix E.

Table B in the report demonstrated the Council position where it would be unable to present a balanced 2026/27 budget without seeking Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) from Government. Receipts from Council Tax and Business Rates were insufficient to fund the forecast net spend for 2026/27. Table B forecast that Council would have to borrow £34.966m in 2026/27 to provide a balanced budget. On 18 December 2025, an application for EFS for the 2026/27 financial year was submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Board was advised that the proposed budget incorporated the grant figures announced in the Local Government Finance Settlement. Several updates had been made to Halton's Core Spending Power (CSP) at the Final Local Government Final Settlement. Income received from the Mid-Mersey Business Rates Pool were included within Halton's 2025/26 baseline funding position, which had increased the funding to be received in 2026/27 and 2027/28 from transitional arrangements. A small uplift to the Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant had been made to reflect new burdens arising from the Renters' Rights Act. Government had also announced a

new Recovery Grant Uplift for authorities in receipt of Recovery Grant Funding that were due to see their CSP rise by less than the 17% national average over the three years covered by the Settlement. These changes were worth an additional £3.5m, £3.7m, and £4.7m to Halton in 2026/27, 2027/28, and 2028/29 respectively. The report outlined the Government consultation on the Fair Funding Review and the impact of the review on Halton's CSP.

Further information was also provided on Halton's Council Tax, Parish precepts, Police, Fire and Liverpool City Region (LCR) Mayor precepts, Business Rates, the Capital Programme, Prudential Code, School Budgets, Dedicated Schools Grant position, adequacy of reserves and exceptional financial support.

The Board acknowledged the support of the Member of Parliament for Halton and Halewood, Derek Twigg who had lobbied the Government on behalf of the Council in respect of the Local Government Finance Settlement.

On behalf of the Board, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services thanked the Council Finance team for their work in preparing the Budget document.

Reason(s) for Decision

To seek approval for the Council's revenue budget, capital programme and council tax for 2026/27.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

A number of alternative budget proposals have been considered by the Budget Working Group.

Implementation Date

12 February 2026.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended

- 1) to adopt the resolution set out in Appendix A, which includes setting the budget at £224.237m, the Council Tax requirement of £71.959m (before Parish, Police, Fire and LCR Combined Authority precepts) and the Band D Council Tax for Halton of £1,938.81;
- 2) to approve the capital programme set out in Appendix D; and

Director of Finance

3) to approve the budget savings set out in Appendix E.

EXB94 CAPITAL STRATEGY 2026/27

The Board considered a report of the Director – Finance, on the Council’s Capital Strategy for 2026/27.

It was reported that all councils were required to produce a Capital Strategy annually, the aim of which was to ensure that the Council understood the overall long-term policy objectives and resulting capital strategy requirements, governance procedures and risk appetite.

Members were advised that the Capital Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, included on the same agenda. This detailed the expected activities of the treasury management function and incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy for 2026/27. It was noted that the successful delivery of the Capital Strategy would assist the Council in planning and funding its capital expenditure over the next three years.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the 2026/27 Capital Strategy, as presented in the Appendix.

Director of Finance

EXB95 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2026/27

The Board received the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, (TMSS) which incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Strategy for 2026/27.

The TMSS was appended to the report and detailed the expected activities of the treasury function in the forthcoming financial year (2026/27). Its production and submission to the Council was a requirement of the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code.

The Local Government Act 2003 required the Council to have regard to the Prudential Code and to set Prudential Indicators for the next three years, to ensure that the Council’s capital investment plans were affordable, prudent and sustainable.

The Act therefore required the Council to set out its

treasury strategy for borrowing and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy (AIS), which set out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. Government guidance noted that authorities could combine the TMSS and the AIS into one report, which the Council had done and was included in Section 4.

Members noted that the production of a Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement was required and a formal statement for approval was contained within the report at paragraph 2.3, with the full policy shown in Appendix A.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to adopt the policies, strategies, statements, prudential and treasury indicators outlined in the report.

Director of Finance

EXB96 REVIEW OF COUNCILWIDE FEES AND CHARGES

The Board considered a report of the Director - Finance, on the review of the Council wide fees and charges for 2026/27 for services provided by the Council's Directorates.

The Board was advised that, as part of the budget preparations for 2026/27, a review of fees and charges had been carried out. The aim in setting fees and charges was to ensure that the Council fully recovered the cost incurred in providing the service. However this was more difficult given the impact of inflation uncertainty, wage increases and the unpredictable nature of utility costs. These were detailed in the report and noted as including demand, competition and statutory elements.

Attached as Appendix A was the proposed schedule of statutory fees for 2026/27 and the chargeable rates for The Brindley Theatre and the Registrar's Service were attached at Appendix B and C respectively.

RESOLVED: That the proposed fees and charges for 2026/27 as set out in Appendix A and for 2027/28, as set out in Appendices B and C, be approved.

Director of Finance

EXB97 DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board received a report from the Director – Finance, which advised 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. An application for discretionary rate relief had been received from Power In Partnership Ltd and details of the application were set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That the application for 75% discretionary rate relief from Power In Partnership Ltd in respect of Unit 10, Expressway Industrial Estate, Pimlico Road, Runcorn, be approved for the period 1 April 2023 to 23 June 2025.

Director of Finance

EXB98 INTEGRATION OF HR AND PAYROLL MODULE INTO THE UNIT4 FINANCE SYSTEM

The Board received a report which sought approval to integrate a HR and Payroll module into the Unit4 ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) Finance System and the inclusion of the project within the Capital Programme. Following final approval, the HR and Payroll implementation would be scheduled for September 2026, with planned activities covering system build, testing, staff training, cutover planning and go-live.

The integration and single system solution would:

- enable the removal of current inter-application administrative procedures for transferring data from one system to another;
- allow for the decommissioning of some internal systems and eradicate the need for ongoing development and maintenance of these systems;
- provide a reduction in day to day management time across the Council;
- rationalise resources, justifying the principles of Invest to Save and Best Value, with financial payback.

The annual capital financing cost of funding the implementation over 10 years would be approximately £60,225 per annum.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the integration of the HR and Payroll Module into the Unit4 ERP Finance System, be approved; and
- 2) Council be requested to include the project within the Capital Programme at an estimated cost of £456,459 as outlined in paragraph 5.1.

Director of HR and Corporate Affairs (Interim) /Director of Transformation (Interim)

ADULT SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB99 UPDATE ON PROGRESS TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT FOLLOWING THE ADULTS DIRECTORATE'S CQC ASSURANCE RATING OF GOOD

The Board considered a report of the Interim Director – Commissioning and Provision, that provided an update on the progress the Adults Directorate had made against the CQC Local Authority Framework following their assessment and rating as 'Good' in July 2025. From the CQC report the Directorate had further scrutinised the analysis of Halton's Services and performance to consider areas where its continuous improvement needed to be focussed. An Improvement Action Plan had been drawn up as a result and a working group met monthly to look at progress against these action and developments were moving forward. Progress to date against the Improvement Plan was set out in Appendix Two.

RESOLVED: That the report is noted.

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

EXB100 ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION: CONFIRMATION - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which provided an update on outcome of the public consultation on the immediate Article 4 Direction made on 24 September 2025, removing permitted development rights for the change of use of a building from that of a use falling within Class C3 (dwelling house) to that falling within C4 (small HMOs) for parts of the borough.

Following the conclusion of the consultation period, it was noted that no matters had arisen that were material to the decision and it was not proposed to recommend any changes to the immediate Article 4 Direction that had been previously approved by the Board on 11 September 2025.

RESOLVED: That the immediate Article 4 Direction removing permitted development rights for the material change of use of a building from a use falling within Class C3 (dwelling houses) to that falling within Class C4 (HMOs) made on 24 September 2025 is confirmed.

Director -
Planning and
Transportation

EXB101 ALBERT ROAD (NORTH) PEDESTRIANISATION SCHEME

The Board considered a report that sought approval to commence the pedestrianisation scheme along a section of Albert Road (north) between Deacon Road/Bradley Way and Robert Street, Widnes. The report set out the improvements that the scheme would bring, consultations which had taken place with Local Councillors, transport providers, businesses, residents and the positive public support for the scheme.

Arising from the discussion, Councillor Wall, asked if local businesses were in support of the scheme and officers advised that no objections had been received.

Director -
Planning and
Transportation

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) approves the Albert Road (north) pedestrianisation scheme for delivery, as set out in the report and shown on the Plan in Appendix A; and
- 2) the Director Planning and Transport, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Environment and Urban Renewal be delegated to deal with any matters relating to the delivery of this scheme.

HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PORTFOLIO

EXB102 PUBLIC SECTOR DECARBONISATION FUND - PICOW FARM ROAD DEPOT

The Board considered a report which set out details of grant funding awarded to the Council via the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund (PSDF) and sought approval to implement energy efficiency measures at Picow Farm Road, Runcorn. In 2025, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) had submitted a bid to Phase 4 of the PSDF in respect of the following buildings in Halton:

- Picow Farm,
- Kingsway Learning Centre,
- Runcorn Town Hall.

In respect of Halton, a total of £2,816,409.20 had been awarded. The initial focus of the work would be at Picow Farm Road and the LCRCA had conducted a tender process; and Optimus were appointed as the approved contractor. The cost of the works were within the overall

projected cost of £1,161,300 and the Council would need to make a contribution of between £162,000 and £200,000.

RESOLVED: That Council be requested to include £1,161,300 total estimated cost of the energy efficiency works at Picow Farm Road within the Capital Programme, to be funded by grant funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund and including a Council contribution of between £162,000 - £200,000.

Interim Chief
Executive

MINUTES ISSUED: 18 February 2026.

CALL-IN: 25 February 2026 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 18 February 2026.

Meeting ended at 2.16 p.m.

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HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

At a meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board on Wednesday, 14 January 2026 at DCBL Stadium, Widness

Present: Councillor Wright (Chair)
 Councillor T. McInerney
 Councillor Woolfall
 I. Onyia, Public Health
 Foy
 McPhee, Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust
 A. Leo, Integrated Commissioning Board
 L. Gardner, Warrington & Halton Teaching Hospitals
 Hughes
 S. Patel, Local Pharmaceutical Committee
 G. Augustine – Pan Cheshire Child Death Overview Panel
 W. Longshaw – St. Helens & Knowsley Hospitals
 A. Hindhaugh – Children’s Services
 C. Baker – Public Health
 J. McNally – Cheshire Police
 K Butler – Democratic Services
 F. Waton – Public Health
 D. Wilson – Healthwatch Halton
 J. Rosser – Public Health

Action

HWB21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor A. Ball, E. Doyle – Cheshire Fire, L. Windle – Halton Housing, H. Bennett – Mersey Care and H. Patel – Citizens Advice Halton.

HWB22 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2025 having been circulated were signed as a correct record.

HWB23 UPDATE ON HALTON'S PARTNERSHIP RESPONSE TO RISING KETAMINE USE

The Board received a report from the Director of Public Health, which provided an update on the rise in Ketamine use and associated harms in Halton. The report also provided Members with some reassurance that the co-ordinated partnership response remained proportionate, evidence-led and aligned to Halton’s priorities for young

people, adults and communities.

Ketamine was a dissociative anaesthetic with legitimate clinical uses, however, there has been an increase in recreational misuse which cause physical, psychological and behavioural harms. The shifting patterns of use are thought to be driven by low cost, wide availability and limited awareness of related risks factors.

Halton's Combatting Drugs Partnership (CDP) identified Ketamine as an emerging and rapidly escalating issue in Halton. The partnership held a Ketamine-specific workshop in November 2024 at which Partners reported a number of concerns.

In March 2025, the Ketamine Task and Finish Group was established to deliver a coordinated, whole-system response, with aims focused on strengthening evidence and intelligence, improving coordinated interventions, and enhancing multi-agency collaboration. Membership included representatives from Public Health, Education, Police, the NHS, Youth Services, Change Grow Live and safeguarding teams. The group reported into several senior forums, including the Combatting Drugs Partnership, the Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Group and the Safer Halton Partnership.

Cheshire Police reported a significant increase in ketamine use and supply affecting young people in Halton and outlined their response through Operation Yellow Darting. Specialist officers worked with The Bridge School to carry out targeted operations, resulting in several arrests for suspected supply of the Class B drug. Police also delivered awareness sessions in schools on the physical harms of ketamine and continued to encourage public reporting, while engaging with families and communities to safeguard vulnerable young people.

It was suggested that some young people were using the substance as a form of self-medication following pandemic-related trauma and in relation to neurodiverse diagnoses. The Police representative highlighted that it continued to be widely perceived as a party drug and provided the Board with an update on recent police pursuits; options were being explored to address the issue through a review of referral pathways. Social media messaging remained active and wide-reaching, although a more hard-hitting approach was considered necessary.

Following discussions, it was agreed that officers

would investigate and report back on the following matters:

- whether there had been any involvement from the Halton Youth Cabinet;
- whether Whiston had an established referral pathway; and
- the training currently available to staff in the NHS.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Director of Public Health

HWB24 PHARMACEUTICAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Director of Public Health, presented a report which outlined a proposed process on how to respond to pharmacy application notifications and consolidated applications received during the lifetime of the 2025-28 Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA).

In July 2025, the Board received a report which briefed them on the PNA and the proposed local governance arrangements and the responsibilities of Health and Wellbeing Boards. During the lifetime of the PNA, the Health and Wellbeing Board can make written representation on applications to change pharmacy provisions. There were two type of applications: Pharmacy application notifications and Consolidation applications and details of both were contained within the report.

At the meeting in July 2025, the Board approved the publication of the 2025-28 PNA and also delegated the PNA Steering Group to write supplementary statements. In addition to this, the Group sought approval from the Board to grant additional delegated duty to respond to applications on its behalf as part of the National Health Service England decision-making process.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) approve the process for responding to pharmacy applications; and
- 2) delegate the PNA Steering Group to deal with application representations needed throughout the lifetime of the 2025-28 PNA.

Director of Public Health

HWB25 PAN CHESHIRE CHILD DEATH REVIEW PANEL ANNUAL REPORT 2024/2025

A presentation on the Annual Report of the Pan Cheshire Child Death Overview Panel for 2024/25 was

delivered to the Board. The presentation outlined the key trends identified during child death reviews undertaken in 2024/25 and set out the associated recommendations for system leaders and partners.

Partners of the Overview Panel included the Cheshire Local Authorities and the NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board and included representatives from across Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and Warrington. The child death review process was outlined in statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and Child Death Review Statutory and Operational Guidance (England) 2018.

The report highlighted the following points in relation to the Pan Cheshire footprint:

- rates of child notifications were reasonably stable over the last five years;
- there were 59 child death notifications during 2024/25 compared to 52 during 2023/24;
- the rate of notifications across Pan Cheshire during 2024/25 was 2.63/10,000 0–17-year-olds and 2.35/10,000 during 2023/24, compared to the rate of notifications across England, which was 2.98/10,000 during 2023/24;
- the majority of notifications were in children under the age of 1 year (54% - 38/70), this was a similar to the age distribution across England as a whole (61%);
- the most child death reviews were completed in Cheshire East (24/70 - 34%) followed by Cheshire West and Chester (18/70 - 26%);
- 60 % (42/70) child death reviews related to death within the first year of life, 57% (40/70) of which occurred within the neonatal period;
- perinatal/neonatal events accounted for 33% (22/70) of all completed cases reviewed, with 20% (14/70) completed cases categorised as chromosomal, genetic and congenital anomalies; and
- a higher proportion of child death reviews occur in the most deprived decile (19%,13/70), compared to the least deprived (6%, 4/70)

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, the leading modifiable (or vulnerability) factors associated with reviews of death completed by the Pan Cheshire Child Death Overview Panel included:

- issues in service provision in 44% (31/70) of all completed reviews;

- maternal obesity (Body Mass Index ≥ 30) in 24% (17/70) of all completed reviews;
- mental health concerns of the child 20% (14/70) of all completed reviews;
- smoking in 17% (12/70) of all completed reviews; and
- late booking/hidden pregnancy in 12% (12/70) of all completed reviews.

The report also outlined the progress made by the Overview Panel over the past year, including developments in ways of working, increased public and professional awareness, and the delivery of educational events. It was further noted that the final report of the Thirlwall Inquiry was expected to be published in early 2026. The Overview Panel would continue to work with partners to ensure that any required actions and recommendations were implemented to support children, their parents, guardians and carers.

Page 34 of the report noted that a deep dive would be undertaken into the issues in service provision identified in the completed review, in order to provide further clarity on available services and any gaps. The findings would be included in the next annual report, although the information could be shared with Board Members earlier upon request. It was also suggested that the report should be presented to the Children's Safeguarding Board.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) endorse the Pan Cheshire Child Death Overview Panel recommendations for 2025/26 as follows:
 - a) the Directors of Public Health across the Pan Cheshire footprint to ensure that women and families have good access to health advice and services to promote a healthy weight, mental wellbeing, and smoking cessation;
 - b) the Pan Cheshire maternity services are aware of, and refer mothers to, services that support maintaining a healthy weight during, and after, pregnancy and smoking cessation;
 - c) all Pan Cheshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Partnerships to ensure that therapeutic interventions are in place to reduce the harmful effects of adverse childhood experiences

identified; and

- d) Cheshire and Merseyside Health and Care Partnership to assess the feasibility of delivering a comprehensive service for pre-conceptual care and advice for first and subsequent pregnancies.

HWB26 CHILDHOOD ACCIDENTS

The Board received a report from the Director of Public Health which provided an overview of childhood accident data and details of work undertaken by the Council's Public Health Team to prevent accidents in children and young people and to raise awareness of the opportunities for further collaboration with partners.

Unintentional injuries (accidents) were one of the main causes of premature death and illness for children in England. Every year in England, 60 children under the age of five years die from injuries in and around the home, which is one in twelve of all deaths of children aged one to four years.

There are 450,000 visits to A&E departments and 40,000 emergency hospital admissions in England each year because of accidents at home among under-fives. There was a strong link between child injuries and social deprivation with those from the most disadvantaged families more likely to be killed or seriously injured due to accidents. Children from the most deprived areas have hospital admission rates 40% higher than children from the least deprived areas.

In 2023/24 there were 23,925 A&E attendances for injuries in children and young people under the age of 18 in Halton, of these 9,605 were for children aged four and under. This has decreased for all children and young people aged 0 to 17 and for children aged 0 to 4 in the past two years.

The main causes of preventable accidents were a result of choking, suffocation and strangulation; falls; poisoning; burns and scalds; drowning; fire and roads. Types of injury vary by age i.e. younger children being more likely to have burns and poisoning; older children having sport injuries and road traffic injuries; all age groups suffer head injuries and falls.

The report contained an appendix which outlined data analysis relating to hospital admissions and accidental injury

relating to hospital activity and deaths. Effective prevention required co-ordinated action across health, social care, education, police, fire services, and the Council. Public Health's 0–19 service and family hubs played a key role in delivering home-safety and parenting support and the report highlighted the ongoing work through the Home Equipment for Little Peoples Safety (HELPS) programme.

It was noted that Halton appeared to be an outlier, and consideration was given to whether children might be more appropriately treated at the UTC rather than in A&E. Reference was made to suggestions that some families may be using Alder Hey as a primary care setting, with a marked difference observed between activity levels in Halton and the wider North West. It was agreed that the data would need to be checked. It was suggested that the issue may relate to public messaging regarding where children could be seen quickly.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) consider their respective organisations role in accident prevention and opportunities.

HWB27 FATHER INCLUSIVE PRACTICE IN HALTON

The Board received a report and accompanying presentation, which provided an overview of the work being undertaken in Halton to embed father-inclusive practice across the partnership. It also outlined the rationale, progress to date, impacts that had emerged and the next steps to ensure alignment with local priorities and the Best Start in Life Strategy.

It was noted that father's play a vital role in children's emotional stability, social skills and academic success. Research showed that when fathers were actively involved, outcomes for children improved significantly, which included mental health, educational attainment and resilience. Father inclusive practice challenged stereotypes, promoted equality, and ensure that services reflect the needs of all caregivers. In Halton, this approach was critical to address diverse family needs and improve community wellbeing.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) note the report;

- 2) endorse the continued development of father-inclusive practice in Halton;
- 3) support the integration of father-inclusive principles into all relevant strategies and commissioning plans; and
- 4) encourage partner agencies to adopt and embed father-inclusive approaches.

HWB28 NEIGHBOURHOOD HEALTH

The Place Director presented a report to the Board, which outlined the progress that had been made in joining up services in the community more effectively. This included work to better support people with complex health and care needs, help children to thrive, enable adults to remain independent for longer, improve overall health and wellbeing, and reduce avoidable pressures on health, social care, and other public services.

It was noted that, in March 2023, the One Halton Place Based Partnership Board had agreed a model for integrating neighbourhood working, setting out a shared vision and key principles. It was reported that subsequent work had progressed on developing integrated approaches, including same-day access and long-term condition management models.

NHS England had published the *Neighbourhood Health Guidelines 2025/26* on 29 January 2025, followed by a letter from the Department of Health and Social Care on 30 January 2025 advising local authorities and integrated care boards to jointly plan a neighbourhood health model, initially focused on people with the most complex needs. Further national guidance on neighbourhood multidisciplinary teams for children and young people was issued on 19 February 2025.

Partners across Halton had progressed the requirements set out in these documents under the leadership of the One Halton Place Based Partnership Board, supported by Cheshire and Merseyside-wide programmes.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) consider its role in assuring, directing and ensuring

the implementation of neighbourhood working in advance of a more detailed discussion at the next meeting in March 2026.

HWB29 BETTER CARE FUND (BCF) PLAN 2025/26 - QUARTER 2 UPDATE

The Board received a report from the Executive Director – Adult Services, which provided an update on the Quarter 2 Better Care Fund (BCF) Plan 2025/26, following its submission to the National Better Care Fund Team.

In line with the national requirements, the quarter 2 report focussed on reporting on the spend and activity funded via the discharge funding allocated to the local authority and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside (Halton Place).

As at the end of quarter 2, there were no areas of concern to advise the Board of, however, spend and activity would continue to be monitored via the Better Care Commissioning Advisory Group, as part of the joint working arrangements.

RESOLVED: The Board note the report.

Meeting ended at 3.54 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, 10 November 2025 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Logan (Chair), Goodall (Vice-Chair), Baker, Fry, Jones, P. Lloyd Jones, Ratcliffe and Ryan

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Dourley and C. Plumpton Walsh

Absence declared on Council business: None.

Officers present: K. Appleton, J. Dunning, P. France, B. Holmes, G. Prince, and I. Moorhouse.

Also in attendance: S. Turner (Observing) and Councillor T. McInerney in accordance with Standing Order Number 33.

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

Action

CYP22 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 8th September 2025 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

CYP23 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.

CYP24 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The minutes relating to the Children, Young People and Families Portfolio, taken from the Executive Board meetings held since the last meeting of this Board, were attached as Appendix 1 for information.

It was confirmed that the report on Home to School Transport for SEND children will go to Executive Board in November. Even though the PPB was not referenced in the report, the Portfolio Holder stated that he would notify Executive Board that the recommendations in the report

came from the PPB.

CYP25 CHILDREN'S SERVICES DIRECTORATE QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT (Q2 2025/26)

The Board received the performance management report for Quarter 2 for 2025-26.

The key priorities for development or improvement in 2023/24 were agreed by Members and included in the Business Plan, for the various functional areas reporting to the Board as detailed below:

- Education, Inclusion, Provision Services
- Children and Families Services

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

There had been an increased attendance in the Family Engagement Hub and the Edge of Care Service successfully reducing residential placements. More children were placed in care which raised the number to 384 but this number included care leavers. Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) timeliness was above the national average and timeliness had improved with EHCP annual reviews.

The new Ofsted framework had been launched, and secondary school standings had increased above 71% for good or outstanding Ofsted grading. There had been a significant drop in exclusions and suspensions and attendance in mainstream schools but attendance at the PRU (Pupil Referral Unit) had improved.

164 staff members had received training through the Social Work Academy. There had been a reduction in using agency staff due to successful recruitment of agency workers by the Council. There had been an increase in permanent staff off long-term sick.

The Council struggled to recruit foster carers, but this was a national problem. To mitigate this, a new App had been launched called 'Tell A Friend' which had some success but did not cover sufficiency needs.

Schools were contacted to see if they would be interested in expanding their resource provision for SEND pupils and at least six schools expressed an interest in this. Consultations will be had with these schools, their

communities and the DfE around this. Ashley High School will have four new classrooms built on site for their pupils by September 2026 and Brookfields School was also looking to expand their provision. Officers wanted to focus on SEND provision being expanded in secondary schools as this was where the demand was.

Prior to the meeting, several members of the Board received a presentation on the Youth Trailblazer Project (YTP) for care leavers and NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) young people. The project's purpose was to help young people access employment or education and it utilised money from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR).

For the future, officers would focus on reducing care demand, stabilising fostering provision, and helping create a care home with non-for-profit organisations.

It was noted that there was no alternative building for the PRU to move to and there were no funds available to build a new PRU. This was a priority for the Council's Strategic Asset Plan. Officers were working with the Headteacher of the PRU to ensure that they received all the provisions needed to educate the pupils there. This included a incentivising curriculum and well-trained teachers. The PRU enhanced its breakfast club provision, and it now had 10 children attending on average daily. To improve attendance, the PRU had a minibus to pick up pupils so they would not need to rely on public transport.

In terms of funding, LCR would like to continue doing NEET work at a local level so possible delays with Central Government could be avoided.

Officers had worked hard to reduce delays with court hearings regarding SGOs (Special Guardianship Orders). They previously took up to two years but recently cases had been resolved in less than three months. Work had been done to reduce the amount of time that C2 applications (an application in existing court proceedings relating to children) took due to the rising number of children in care. Legal orders caused delays with moving children out of foster placements onto SGOs. Delays for court hearings could take up to four and a half months.

Discussions were had with a national provider regarding getting children to school, but funding was needed from the DfE (Department of Education) to do this. This scheme would improve student attendance and academic

attainment for when they are in care.

The following additional information was provided in response to Member's questions:

- A court order would be required to remove a child from their home. However, if a child was deemed to be at immediate risk, then the police would administer a police protection order, or an emergency protection order could be issued. If there were court delays, then a Section 20 could be discussed with the child's parent or guardian as this would mean the child is voluntarily put into care.
- Cost Placement Panels will report to Corporate Parenting Board as part of the new structure. Historically, they reported to the Head of Children's Services.
- Debts from placements had increased due to residential placement costs increasing and there not being enough in-house foster carers. This was being addressed through the DCS Forum.
- The Board noted that officers worked hard to try to mitigate rising residential placement costs for out of borough placements, but Central Government would need to help all local authorities resolve this issue as it was a national issue.
- Officers confirmed that risk assessments were put in place to protect children and teachers when violent incidents happened in school. The children and school staff involved in any reported incidents were safe and positive feedback had been received from the headteachers of schools where these incidents happened.
- JUNO is a non-for-profit organisation who LCR partnered with to purchase properties and turn them into in-borough care homes. They had recently bought one property in Halton and planned to purchase two more. There will be eight placements by 2027. It was noted that large numbers at residential homes would not be accepted by Ofsted

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CYP26 QUARTERLY REPORT FROM THE HALTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

The Board considered the Quarterly Report from the Halton Safeguarding Children Partnership. The report detailed the achievements of the Partnership and how it

addressed areas for improvement that were identified in the Halton Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) Business Plan. The key priorities for development or improvement were agreed by strategic leaders and included in the HSCP Business Plan 2024-27.

Progress had been made against the Council's priorities and the work done by the multi-agency strategic group. The Partnership had three goals: improve the quality and timeliness of practices regarding neglect; safeguarding children from violence and exploitation; and protecting children as victims of domestic abuse.

Weekly safeguarding meetings were held regarding children who were identified as high risk and monthly operational meetings were held to discuss concerning trends, for example, the rise in ketamine use. The Partnership had formed a robust response to this including awareness activities.

A mock inspection was undertaken for child domestic abuse victims, and this showed that insufficient services were in place. Therefore, awareness raising undertaken with different age groups and schools were being informed in a timelier matter when incidents happened so they could support the child in their school who were affected.

Work had done to train frontline practitioners and improve attendance for high-risk children. Work needed to be done to improve transitional safeguarding between child and adult social care.

The Board praised the work done by the Partnership.

The following additional information was provided in response to Member's questions:

- Following some investigation work, officers found a high correlation between poverty and neglect for children. Therefore, they planned to tackle the root cause of this.
- As teenage pregnancy was a lot higher in Halton than the national average, the health and education sub-boards will investigate this imminently.
- Drug usage had reduced amongst young people following the success of workshops focusing on this.
- Schools recently received a new toolkit to ensure that they were being 'inclusive by design'. The toolkit will be highlighted through numerous workshops and training.

- It was confirmed that the Council adopted the Joseph Rowntree definition of poverty regarding its children.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CYP27 HALTON'S VIRTUAL SCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

The Board considered the Virtual School Annual Report 2024-25 which covered the educational outcomes and achievement for Halton's Children in Care, and the school's wider work across children's services.

The school was going through a restructure which was planned for January 2026 due to the increased number of children coming into care. The school's priorities were a new reading support programme, a Virtual School College to help NEET care experienced young people, improving attendance and reducing exclusions, and supporting vulnerable groups.

75 children moved placements, and 26 children moved school, but these moves were structured and planned. Exam results were good, attendance had improved, and exclusions and suspensions had reduced. 73% of year 12 and 13 pupils were in further education or employment.

There had been an increased number of delegates attending training and the training offer for parents and foster carers had been increased.

Work was planned to ensure that new school starters were ready for school and officers were keen for children in care and with social workers, to perform as well as children not in care. More support around maths was planned as this was a subject that pupils struggled with.

It was planned that six new members of staff will join the school, and they will help support the physical schools that virtual school pupils attended and their families.

The following additional information was provided in response to Member's questions:

- Every local authority must have a virtual school which would oversee the education outcomes for children in care.
- Children still attend a physical school and could go to a school anywhere in the country, but they must be a Halton child to be monitored by the virtual school.

- The Virtual School worked closely with the YTP (Youth Trailblazer Project), and they put plans in place together for young people in the virtual school.
- The Board will receive a full report on NEET children at the meeting in January 2026. The Board requested that this report include overlaps with the YTP.
- Officers linked in with the Literacy Trust and hosted three events for parents and carers to promote reading for pleasure to children. They will review its courses.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CYP28 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES 2025

The Board considered a presentation on the performance outcomes for schools across Halton at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), and Key Stages 2, 4 and 5. In the accompanying presentation it was noted that:

- There were no progress measures for the primary stage or transition stages due to Covid-19 as the current Year 7's did not sit exams in Year 2 and the current Year 11's did not sit exams in Year 6.
- Halton had a higher percentage of EHCP, SEND, and children that received free school meals compared to the national average.
- Early Year profiles which are done at the end of reception, increased in 'good level of development' nationally and in Halton to 68% and 62% respectively.
- The performance of SEND children and children with EHCPs decreased but children who received free school meals improved in their academic performance and were above the national average.
- 76% of pupils in Halton passed their phonics exam in Year 1 compared to 80% nationally.
- 69% of children listed as 'most vulnerable' achieved their expected standard compared to 67% nationally.
- Halton matched the national average in reading, writing and maths as a combined score but were below the national average at 'greater depth'.
- More 'disadvantaged children' in Halton scored 2% higher than the national average in reading, writing and maths.
- In 2025, Halton pupils with EHCP pupils outperformed the national average for EHCP pupils.
- Halton's Key Stage 4 results were not as good as its Key Stage 2 results, and they were below the national average but there was visible improvement 'at pace' after a drop the previous year.

- In terms of 'Level 8' attainment for GCSE results, this had improved so Halton was closing the gap with the national average.
- English and maths results were at pre-pandemic performance levels.
- There was a low number of pupils in Halton undertaking the English Baccalaureate but those who did take it performed very well.
- EHCP pupils in Key Stage 4 had achieved close to the national average in their results.
- Three new Early Intervention Officers had been recruited, and they will do collaborative working between headteacher groups.

The following additional information was provided in response to Member's questions:

- The national average attainment performance for children who received free school meals was 51.2% whereas it was 51.7% in Halton.
- Officers planned to hold annual 'keep in touch' meetings with schools to continue exam result improvements.
- Officers will review obtaining more finances for schools who had more 'vulnerable' children.
- External support advisors were effective for schools to help them support vulnerable children.
- Early Intervention Officers visit children in nursery settings. There was no statutory duty for children to attend nurseries, but officers looked at links between educational attainment, safeguarding and non-attendance.
- Officers will bring a presentation on the Cradle to Career Project to January's meeting.
- It was unknown why the English Baccalaureate numbers were low, but it was predicted that it was because pupils did not often like taking a qualification not in English.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Head of
Children's
Services

Meeting ended at 20:54

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, 19 January 2026 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Logan (Chair), Baker, Dourley, Fry, Jones, Ratcliffe, Ryan and Skinner.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors P. Lloyd Jones.

Absence declared on Council business: None.

Officers present: K. Appleton, H. Bell, L. Carr, L. Ellis, Z. Fearon, P. France, B. Holmes, S. Leece and I. Moorhouse

Also in attendance: L. Stridgeon (Right to Succeed) and Councillor T. McInney in accordance with Standing Order Number 33.

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

Action

CYP29 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 November 2025 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

CYP30 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.

CYP31 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The minutes relating to the Children, Young People and Families Portfolio, taken from the Executive Board meetings held since the last meeting of this Board, were attached as Appendix 1 for information.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.

CYP32 CRADLE TO CAREER – HALTON LEA

The Board received a progress report following the first 3 years of the Cradle to Career project in Halton Lea and outlined the proposals for years four to six. Cradle to

Career was a 'place based' initiative that worked with the local community and services, including schools and health, to improve the lives of young people in the area. It was primarily funded by the LCR (Liverpool City Region) but funding also came from charities, the LCR Mayor and the National Lottery. It was managed by Right to Succeed.

Cradle to Career started in September 2021 and had recently finished its third year with a focus on literacy, early intervention and strengthening family support. Years four to six of the project focused on literacy, preventative measures for possible NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) young people, and family access to services. The Multi-Disciplinary Team carried out the family support and schools identified students who were at risk of becoming NEETs.

The Youth Offer was extended until August 2026 and focused on 'embedding' community voices. The project focused on what measures already existed and what could be improved or expanded on so it would last long-term. Speech and language work was done with Early Years and mental health within family support was explored. Funding for the project was available until August 2028 and would focus on what provided the most benefit and how it could continue.

The following additional information was provided in response to Member's questions:

- The Youth Offer was made up of different areas, and involved directive work with young people and included specific offers with youth clubs and gyms that focused on wellbeing;
- The work with young people was targeted so the same groups of young people were met with each session and work was done with them around antisocial behaviour which led to a 22% reduction of antisocial incidents;
- The LCR identified the areas that the project worked on;
- Halton Lea was selected to have the project as it was the poorest area in Halton;
- Officers agreed to share the presentation and impact measures with the Board Members;
- Cradle to Career's focus areas were identified through meetings with residents, local schools and Ward Members;
- 1900 young people attended sessions with Cradle to Career and 266 went on outings with them;

16+ Education to
Employment
Team Leader

- There was a 34% reduction in child protection referrals from Halton Lea and higher GCSE results;
- There was a 13% reduction of children leaving Early Years;
- The local community felt that they were engaged with and community groups were able to access more funding;
- The Steering Group worked on what would happen when the project ends. North Birkenhead was a year ahead of Halton so lessons would be learnt from them;
- All areas of the LCR had their own Cradle to Career projects;
- The Board could determine a way forward with future projects by identifying project areas that should continue; and
- Other areas of Halton could get their own project following the success in Halton Lea.

RESOLVED: That the report and presentation be noted.

CYP33 NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, OR TRAINING (NEET) AND YOUTH GUARANTEE TRAILBLAZER

The Board received the Annual NEET and Not Known figures for Halton and an update on the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer (YGT) outcomes. Central Government stated that 16 to 18 year olds should be in education or training and local authorities must promote and support young people to get into education or training. Halton's NEET figures amongst young people had increased since 2021. Last year, the biggest increase in NEETs were 17 to 18 year olds who had dropped out of education or left employment. Work was undertaken to see why young people were dropping out, leaving education or training.

A specialist provider called SWRAC came to Widnes in June 2025 and offered education to young people with EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plan). This led to a reduction in the figures. The Council applied to the DfE (Department for Education) for additional Post 16 provision to meet the need of young NEETs in Halton.

The YGT was specifically for 18 to 21 year olds and was funded by the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) through the LCR. The YGT launched in September 2025 and needed to deliver the allocation of funding for Year 1 in order to receive funding again for 2026.

As stated in the report, there were four different funding streams for the YGT where there were many ways and methods used to engage young NEET people, including care leavers, to help them get into work or education. They had been successful in getting previously disengaged young people engaged with the programme and successful progression outcomes were achieved. Workshops were held with young NEET people and teams went out and engaged with them too. Local businesses were offered a grant to support them in employing young people aged 18 – 21 year olds. 81 NEETs had engaged with the YGT since September 2025, including 24 care leavers. 18 young people had secured employment and others obtained qualifications. The YGT had forged relationships with many different companies and sectors.

The following additional information was provided in response to Member's questions:

- An employed young person who was not in training to obtain a qualification was not considered a NEET;
- The NEET did not include those in the care of Halton who lived outside the borough outside the borough but not non-Halton residents in care in Halton;
- NEET young people in care affected by county lines were known by the Council;
- NEETs who left their education setting were only asked to consider dropping their course if they were not coping;
- It was challenging to place young people known to the Youth Justice Service in education depending on the nature of their offence;
- Working for companies provided self-discipline for NEETs;
- Officers will provide the number of employers receiving financial incentives to hire NEETs;
- Courses were available for young people who were at risk of becoming a NEET; and
- Central Government's funding arrangements were difficult for companies and the Council to work with when helping NEETs.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

N.B. Councillor Skinner declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the following item of business as she worked with SEND pupils and had a pupil who attended Inglefield Children's Centre.

N.B. Councillor Baker declared an Other Disclosable Interest

Welfare to Work
and Health
Manager

in the following item of business as her daughter worked at Inglefield Children's Centre.

CYP34 HALTON LOCAL AREA SEND SUFFICIENCY STRATEGY

The Board received Halton's SEND (special educational needs and disability) Sufficiency Strategy and accommodating presentation on the progress on the priorities identified being delivered and what was done to meet SEND needs in Halton. The strategy outlined the priority to ensure that EHCP students could have their needs met in mainstream schools and that there were Council-led resource provisions and alternatives.

In the last three years, the Council obtained £5.9 million from the DfE which opened two classrooms at Cavendish School, space to be utilised at Brookfields School so 40 more children could be accommodated, and a classroom extension at Ashley School. All special schools had capacity assessments. Resource provisions were carried out at mainstream schools. Based on projections, 464 specialist provision placements were needed by 2030, and mainstream schools will need to accommodate 300 pupils with EHCPs and 770 SEND places.

In September 2025, head teachers and school governors met to discuss the projected SEND and EHCP needs. Extensions and remodelling were discussed within school sites as well as onsite SEND provision. Developed SEND units were investigated to see whether they could accommodate pupils in KS1 and KS2 for primary schools and KS4 for secondary schools. In summer 2025, the Council obtained £1.2 million which was not enough to carry out the same amount of work as before. Primary school SEND provision was strong but secondary schools needed more provision.

Secondary school SEND provision and pupils already in SEND provision at primary schools were prioritised for the next phase of the strategy. Schools were asked in September 2025 if they were interested in increasing their SEND provision. There was a lot of interest so these schools had viability assessments to see if they could accommodate more pupils and how much it would cost. Officers will determine which schools could take on more pupils in Spring 2026. School trusts had additional channels that needed to be addressed for this. Schools that progress will have plans submitted to the DfE. The new provision at schools would open in September 2026, following an induction of the new pupils.

The following additional information was provided in response to Member's questions:

- Funding was not available to build a new specialist school, and mainstream schools had an increase in surplus school places;
- School leaders, the Diocese and school trusts were worked with regarding surplus school places. A report on this went through QA and the LGA;
- Independent specialist schools were not determined by the Council. The Council would only engage with private schools if the needs of pupils could not be met at public schools;
- Parental preference of schools had an impact on whether a child would go to a private or public specialist school;
- Officers would provide Board Members with a list of which schools wanted more SEND provision;
- 25% of pupils in primary schools had SEND needs; and
- Halton pupils had priority entry for the private specialist schools in the borough.

Director of
Education,
Inclusion &
Provision

RESOLVED: That the strategy be noted.

CYP35 CHILDREN'S RESIDENTIAL SUFFICIENCY UPDATE

The Board received a report and accompanying presentation detailing the progress of the Sufficiency Strategy within Children's Services. Fostering was considered as part of the strategy but was not ready to be implemented. There were 24 residential homes in Halton, and they were all privately owned; 16% of these home's placements were Halton residents but Halton's services had to accommodate all placements. Some of these homes were single placements which meant that the child placed there had very complex needs and the Council needed a better working relationship with these providers. Halton had 59 children placed in children's homes and 15 of them were placed out of borough.

Due to their close vicinity of each other, Halton, St Helens and Knowsley did not consider each other's placements as 'out of borough'. There were 32 supported accommodation placements in Halton and 38% of these placements were occupied by Halton children; these children were aged 16 to 18. To improve working relationships with the private residential home providers, quarterly forum meetings were held with their service

managers.

As it was too difficult to open and operate a children's home independently, the Council made a service level agreement with JUNO who worked closely with the LCR. JUNO match funded with buildings and paid the care staff but Halton residents were prioritised for placements. As JUNO was not for profit, any profits they made were invested back into the Council's Early Help intervention agenda and grassroots.

If a child was removed from a complex need placement, then the provider would quickly refill it and charge a lot of money. The Forum changed this in Halton so that providers in Halton could not remove a Halton resident from their placement without notice and officer support. Engagement between the providers and Council had improved.

Historically, there was a reliance on children in care to be housed externally and in foster placements but the homes with JUNO will make it more internal. JUNO will open four children's homes, supported accommodation was planned for 16 to 18 year olds, followed by 'trainer flats' for care leavers. This model was based on successful models in other authorities. Proactive work was done with Ofsted to manage expectations.

The following additional information was provided in response to Member's questions:

- The JUNO houses would accommodate 13 children in care and another provider will open supported accommodation for 20 care leavers;
- At the time of the meeting, JUNO owned one home and was buying another. Council built houses did not have a layout that was suitable to be a children's home;
- Historically, the Council was not always notified when a private children's home opened in its borough.
- 17 applications for children's homes in the borough had been challenged by Children's Services but only two of these had been rejected by the planning committee; and
- In the past there were issues with unregulated children's homes being opened in the borough but the Council's who placed their children there and the Police did not act against them. This led to serious safeguarding issues being raised by residents and homes being closed down;

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

In order to complete the presentation of the following items, a Motion to Move Standing Order Number 50 was Made, Seconded and Agreed by the Board.

CYP36 QUALITY ASSURANCE OVERVIEW REPORTS QUARTER 1 AND QUARTER 2, 2025/26

The Board received the Quality Assurance Overview Reports for Quarters 1 and 2 for 2025-26. It was noted that, individual audits showed improvements in workforce stability and practises in the previous six months. Thematic audits of practises undertaken had been carried out and children in care plans were scrutinised. Good practises through quality assurance were found and this led to positive feedback from children and families. The action plan for Quarter 1 focused on learning. For Quarter 2, it showed that practises had improved but areas deemed 'inadequate' stayed the same. Improvements were seen in multiagency practices, but work needed to be done regarding inappropriate safeguarding referrals from schools.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CYP37 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2025

The Board received a report the Council's overall revenue spending position as at 30 November 2025 with the latest year-end outturn forecast.

RESOLVED: That the Council's overall spending position as at 30 November 2025 be noted.

Meeting ended at 21:04

LOCAL ECONOMY POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Local Economy Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 17 November 2025 in The Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillors Jones (Chair), Teeling (Vice-Chair), Connolly, Garner, Gilligan, Hutchinson, Rowe and Ryan

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Begg and Skinner

Absence declared on Council business: None.

Officers present: L. Carr, D. Cooke, S. Davies, S. McDonald, L. Nulty, J. Stevens, and I. Moorhouse.

Also in attendance: None.

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

ELS17 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 15th September 2025, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

Regarding the swimming pool at Halton Leisure Centre, officers noted that the pool was in disrepair when obtained by the Council. A report was made of all the defects, and the Council will see which defects the constructor could be held accountable for. There had been no extraordinary issues with anti-social behaviour. As there was no retention on the project, legal proceedings were required to hold the construction contract to account.

As the contract was agreed some time ago, officers will liaise with Property Services to see who approved the contract.

It was suggested that the pool's abrasive surface was caused by the pool's hard water, but this was contested.

ELS18 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.

Action

Property Services

ELS19 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Board was presented with the minutes relating to the Employment, Learning & Skills and Community Portfolio, which had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of the Board.

It was noted that the Board could not comment on items that had been approved.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.

ELS20 CULTURE AND CULTURE 26; MADE IN HALTON

The Board received a report and accompanying presentation on Culture 26; Made In Halton. Halton will be delivering a borough of Culture in 2026 titled Culture 26; Made In Halton; this was being developed in partnership with Cultivate Halton. Culture was defined as literature, music, theatre and performance, visual arts, dance and digital media. Culture 26 was part funded by the UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund) Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR). Halton's first year of culture was in 2021.

There were four elements of Culture 26: Leadership, Communication, Diversity and Dynamism. Halton's creative consultations were held at Norton Priory and Widnes Market and showed the Council's commitment to inclusive cultural engagement through Cultivate Halton's growing network of artists, organisations, and communities. Culture 26 will link in with Visit Halton which was a successful tourism project that was funded with SIF (Strategic Investment Fund) money. Visit Halton was deemed the best tourism project in the LCR and won national awards.

The Reconnecting Runcorn scheme is made up of eight projects with £23.6 million of towns fund investment to boost skills, transport, housing, environment, and visitor attractions. Partnership opportunities were made as part of the project and more would surface as the project continues. Aspire Grants were available for residents who wanted funds to produce a cultural project.

Cultivate Halton would invest locally through inclusive programmes, festivals, and community hubs after it was granted £100,000 from the LCR Combined Authority allocation to Halton. A Cultural Officer would aim to unite sectors to co-create an inclusive cultural offer to transform Halton into a tourism destination. Cultivate Halton would

include topics like arts, technology and sciences. Festivals that happened in the borough will be built upon like Halton Fest and Eco Fest. An independent panel will allocate all grants to projects at the end of December 2025. A Film Fest was planned, and promotional work was planned with Halton Castle.

The new Place Strategy would be a longer-term strategy for the borough to strengthen collaboration between the Council and external cultural participants.

In response to questions raised by the Board, the additional information was provided:

- Historically, LCR expressed an interest in a partnership bid, but they were keen for the boroughs to collaborate amongst themselves. Halton planned present artwork from artists from neighbouring boroughs.
- LCR wanted to stop the Culture Programme after St Helens and the Wirral's second year of culture but Halton did not have a second year so Halton and Sefton will have their culture year in 2026, and Knowsley will have theirs in 2027 which will be the last one. Its replacement was being determined. The Board requested that this comes to a future meeting.
- The Studio was an active studio venue, and it will be part of Culture 26.
- The Panel who awarded the Aspire Grants consisted of the Deputy Lieutenant of Cheshire, the relevant Executive Board member, the Director of Liverpool Independents Biennial, a culture officer from LCR. Halton officers advised the Panel. All Panel members were uninvolved in the grant process.
- A promotional stall for Culture 26 will be held at Widnes Market during the Christmas light switch on.
- The Arts Council have been asked to fund the 'Light Up Halton' project which will connect more rural areas and their communities and get them to these events.
- Six schools with the lowest literacy rates were being supported to promote Lewis Carroll who was born in Halton.
- The funding from LCR would be spent by the end of 2026 and was allocated to grants, officer roles and culture projects like Halton Fest. Officers agreed to share a list detailing how the money was allocated.
- The old art space in the Brindley will become part of the new library. The former gallery has the potential to be moved to the ground floor of the Brindley and there is also new art space at Halton Lea library and

Culture Officer

Culture Officer

Kingsway Learning library. Artists were given a month to hang their pictures for free in these spaces.

- Conversations regarding arranging bus trips to help residents attend these art hubs.
- Sport, food, and faith were consciously left out of Culture 26 in favour of different art mediums. Sport, food and faith stories could be told if they were done through the medium of art. Art was focussed on so Culture Halton would be as inclusive as possible.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ELS21 HALTON LIBRARY SERVICE REVIEW - SERVICE UPDATE INCLUDING RUNCORN LIBRARY RELOCATION

The Board received a report and accompanying presentation on the library service. In the accompanying presentation, it was highlighted that there had been an increase in footfall in its temporary location in Church Street due to its doors being left open. Events held at the library were popular. The library will move permanently to the Brindley in 2026, and officers were keen to maintain community engagement and utilise the existing Brindley audiences. Self-service technology will be at the new library, but staff will remain on site. The new library will have an outdoor reading space and larger space for events, and a cafe will be onsite too.

The library had a new electric delivery van which will deliver library books to schools, residents and care homes monthly. A phased staggered approach was planned with the vehicle to reach areas which were least efficient for deliveries. The van will also go to places with a high footfall. This service had received positive feedback and was free for residents; it was especially praised by isolated residents. Promotional work for this service will be rolled out over the next 12 months. If needed, library staff could refer residents to Council services.

The Board noted that Halton's libraries were successful and requested promotional material for their residents. They also praised the library staff for their work in the community.

In response to questions raised by the Board, the additional information was provided:

- In 2026, the library would exclusively use BorrowBox for users to access newspapers and magazines.
- All four libraries in Halton were granted 'sanctuary'

status.

- Consideration be given by the libraries to Halton adult learners who authored books. Noting however, that there is high demand from self-published authors to have their items stocked by the libraries and it is not always possible or compliant with the libraries stock policy.
- The new library service had 'library reading time' with some schools where the library van delivers new books to a class to read. This was to improve child literacy.
- Halton adult learners who wrote books had their books in the libraries but there were a lot of self-published authors who wanted to have their books there too. Therefore, these books were part of a rotating stock.
- The survey showed that there was a low footfall after 6pm so this was why the libraries close earlier during the week.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ELS22 YOUTH GUARANTEE TRAILBLAZER (YGT)

The Board received a report providing an update on the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) Youth Guarantee Trailblazer. In August 2025, the Council, as part of the LCR, was commissioned to deliver the DWP/LCR Youth Guarantee Trailblazer which was aimed at supporting care leavers and young people aged 18-21 that are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). Halton's YGT launched with £300,000 from the LCR in September 2025 and tried different approaches to captures its NEET residents.

Part of the Trailblazer was 'Halton People into Jobs' which helped refer young people to up skilling or signposted them to specialist services, including for mental health. NEET young people can meet with advisors who provide practical support, including CV amending and interview practice. This could also include the means of transport to get to a job. The end goal was to help 42 young people get jobs. One young person now teaches other adult learners with IT skills and is obtaining a teaching qualification.

A door-to-door service and phone calls were done to reach out to NEET young people as they would not come to the Council office for support. 36 NEET young people had been helped by November 2025 and would be managed to ensure that they were progressing in obtaining employment

or further education. Care leavers were referred to the service and officers provided funding to help young people; 14 care leavers engaged with the service and five have secured employment.

There was a wage incentive for those who helped young people get into work and remain there when apprenticeship funding was delayed. Funding for the project needed to be managed to ensure as many young people as possible could be helped. Some young people requested support with being self-employed, for example, the YGT helped a young person be a self-employed tattoo artist. In some cases, multiple attempts had to be done to get young people into employment.

The launch event at the stadium became a workshop and they learnt which areas needed to be covered to help young NEET people. 61 young people had engaged with the service since its launch. Lots of different teams worked together to make the YGT work and different elements were looked at to help them. Positive feedback was received from young people who engaged with the YGT.

For the future, the NEET/Care Leaver Panel will be re-established and the YGT will be promoted more. Promotion was done at the leisure centre and other places to reach out to as many young NEET people as possible. Young NEET people were met with weekly.

The Board praised the work done by officers of the YGT.

In response to questions raised by the Board, the additional information was provided:

- The YGT worked with Halton College and students have been referred to them. They would also attend the College's events.
- Funding had been used to put NEET young people into education and taster sessions were done with adult learner courses.
- Out of borough care leavers do not get home visits by the YGT but they may be signposted to services nearer to them.
- The YGT had funding until the end of March 2027.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The Board received the performance management reports for Quarter 2 of 2025-26 (1 July 2025 to 30 September 2025) and were requested to consider and raise any questions or points of clarification in respect of these.

The key priorities for development or improvement in 2025-26 were agreed by Members and for the various function areas reported to the Board as follows:

- Enterprise, Employment and Skills; and
- Community and Environment.

The report 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.

In response to questions raised by the Board, the additional information was provided:

- The original budget for Supplies and Services was provided by grant funding and set in 2019; therefore, it was highly likely to overspend. The Council was borrowing this money from the Public Works Loan Board to bridge the funding gap.
- Officers agreed to bring the audit report on waste services to the next meeting.
- Officers would seek information on why £500,000 was set aside for Extended Producer Responsibility as no information was provided on it.
- It was requested that the external contractor responsible for the IT systems in the meeting rooms be contacted regarding the IT issues.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Director of
Environment &
Regeneration

Director of ICT
and Support
Services

Meeting ended at 20:47

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LOCAL ECONOMY POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Local Economy Policy and Performance Board on Monday, 26 January 2026 in the Board Room - Municipal Building, Widnes

Present: Councillors Jones (Chair), Teeling (Vice-Chair), Begg, Connolly, Garner, Gilligan and Rowe

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Hutchinson, Ryan and Skinner

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Arrowsmith, L. Carr, D. Cooke and I. Moorhouse

Also in attendance: 3 members of the public

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

Action

ELS24 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 17 November 2025, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

ELS25 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.

ELS26 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Board was presented with the minutes relating to the Employment, Learning & Skills and Community Portfolio, which had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of the Board.

The Board agreed to have a 'spotlight' scrutiny session on Culture 26; Made In Halton.

It was agreed that 'Connect2Halton' will be presented at a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.

ELS27 YOUTH HUBS (HALTON PEOPLE INTO JOBS)

The Board received a report and accompanying

presentation on the delivery of Youth Hubs which were delivered by Halton People into Jobs. The scheme was funded by the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) and the hubs opened in Widnes and Runcorn. The grant was given in December 2025 for one year and supported young people aged 18 to 24 who were unemployed and received Universal Credit.

The Youth Hubs worked with Job Centre+ and NEETs (not in employment, education or training) young people and was an alternative to the job centre which could be intimidating. The work coaches at the Hubs engaged with NEETs and care leavers. Computers were available to access so young people could search for jobs.

Referrals were made to the Hubs through the job centres or self-referral. The Hubs went live on the 7th January 2026 and by the 26th January 2026 there were 50 referrals. It was noted that on average it took five attempts to get young people to engage with the Job Centre, but when young people were engaged, they stayed with the service. The Hub included sign posting young people to skills learning, housing or mental health referrals. The service tailored programmes to the user's needs.

The work supported the Council's NEET agenda and Care Leavers Strategy, and extra funding was made available through the YGT (Youth Guarantee Trailblazer). Work was done to get NEETs employed by the Council and if they applied to a job and were rejected, they were referred to Halton People into Jobs. Laptops were given to NEETs through the YGT.

The terms of the funding stated that 200 young people across Halton needed to be supported. Intensive case loading needed to be provided to care leavers/hostel dwellers/ex-offenders. 40 NEETs had to use the service as a job broker and 100 sessions had to be given to 200 young people; research was done to see what young people wanted training sessions on.

The desired outcome targets were 30% of young people into work, 10% volunteering, 10% work experience and 10% into education. The first person had already started employment in January 2026.

81 NEETs had engaged with the YGT since its launch in September 2025 and 18 of these had secured employment. The Health Improvement Team was based in Halton People into Jobs, and they managed health referrals

required by NEETs. NEETs got a free three-month gym membership with the leisure centres to improve wellbeing. Successful events were held with employers, different teams within the Council, care leavers and NEETs.

In response to questions raised by the Board, the additional information was provided:

- The Council applied for the grant to carry out this work to accommodate the YGT. Officers were confident that they would receive another grant to carry on this work;
- Job Centre+ was keen for this work to continue;
- Employment specialists were moved into the team to continue this work;
- If the Youth Hubs were deemed inappropriate for someone then they would refer them to a programme that would work for them;
- NEETs went to Job Centre+ who referred them to the Hubs. Additionally, events were advertised in local media, social media and through posters and leaflets. Officers would also knock on doors to engage with young people;
- Grants could be used to fund employment placements of NEETs and seminars were held between employers and NEETs;
- Access to Work was pre-employment support to help NEETs stay in work;
- The Team had good relationships with employers and matched employment opportunities between employers and NEETs;
- The YGT paid for training courses to help get NEETs employed;
- Programmes were made by the Business Development Team for young people who wanted to be self-employed;
- Provisions stopped for care leavers when they turned 18, therefore the digital resources were beneficial for them;
- Officers agreed to provide a yearend report of the work done by the Youth Hubs;
- It was unknown how many could engage with the service as it was unknown how many young people were on Universal Credit;
- Young people who needed support with drugs and alcohol were referred to CGL (Change Grow Live) and counselling if therapy was needed;
- Payments from the DWP were made monthly and the Council claimed the money for the work done at the

Welfare to Work
and Health
Manager

end of each month;

- Recruitment was made more difficult as most job applications being online. CVs were sent with cover letters noting the economic incentive of hiring a NEET through the YGT;
- NEETs who were met through door knocking were identified through Council NEET data; and
- The College notified the Council when a young person was leaving their course and becoming a NEET.

The Board praised the work done on the Youth Hubs and YGT and requested that officers kept applying for funding to carry on the work.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ELS28 HALTON ADULT LEARNING POSITION STATEMENT 24/25

The Board received a report and accompanying presentation on the Halton Adult Learning Service performance in the academic year 2024/25. Funded through the Liverpool City Region's (LCR) devolved Adult Skills Fund, Halton Adult Learning delivered a range of accredited and non-accredited courses in Runcorn and Widnes which addressed the skills gaps in the borough and across the LCR. The service was assessed by Ofsted as it was externally funded. In 2025, the service received a 'good' Ofsted rating.

English, Maths and ICT were the main courses the service offered but arts, crafts and wellbeing were also available. Drama was a new course available for 2026 following a successful recruitment of a new teacher. There were 1588 enrolments in 2025 which was an increase from 2024 and 61% of the enrolments were new learners. 98% of the allocated funding of the service was spent in 2025; funding that was not spent had to be repaid to the LCR.

Historically, there was a struggle to recruit good tutors but there were a lot of high-quality applicants in 2025. Support staff were upskilled and had achieved teaching qualifications to teach adults; this increased the service's capacity. Employers used the service to train their employees too. An open day was held in Summer 2025 which highlighted the work gone into the arts and crafts curriculum. Adult learners will exhibit their work as part of Culture 26; Made In Halton. Enterprise learners sold their crafts on their market stall.

For non-accredited courses, 99.4% of learners stayed on their course and for accredited courses, 83.2% of learners stay on accredited courses and 73% achieved their qualification. This had increased over the past three years. There was a disparity in the accredited courses due to English and maths qualifications. The exam board changed for 2026 as the previous one did not provide enough feedback for learners. All learners who undertook the reading and writing course passed in 2025. Positive feedback was received by the learners who emphasised how supported and encouraged they were.

The Ofsted toolkit focused on inclusion which was something that the Council performed well in. EDI markers in the toolkit asked how many learners were BAME (black and minority ethnic) and over 50. There was a high enrolment of female learners. Learner support offered by the service included resources to help them access their learning e.g. bus transport or childcare. Over 300 qualifications were certificated in 2025. There was an increase in residents accessing functional skills qualifications with 58 learners undertaking English and maths courses in 2025.

There was a robust withdrawal policy to reduce the number of learners dropping their courses. A small amount of funding from the UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund) funded numeracy placements. As of January 2026, the service was consistently performing at 100%.

In response to questions raised by the Board, the additional information was provided:

- Work was done with the College to see where the skill gaps were, and the College worked with NEETs on progression qualifications;
- The service had a good relationship with the LCR, and they would obtain opportunities for Halton adult learners;
- More resources were needed for the service to grow their offer;
- Local groups could be liaised with to improve some of the learning offers, for example a performance space for the drama students;
- Managers are exploring different sources of funding in the hopes of building an immersive classroom in the future;
- The Adult Learning Service worked very closely with Halton People into Jobs and they would make referrals to each other;

- Accredited courses through the Carer Centre could be considered in the future as being a carer could be a barrier to adult education;
- An ambassador programme was launched to promote courses and practical support to develop skills;
- A new family learning tutor had joined the service and had ideas to expand the family learning part of the service. This part of the service was where the most inactively economic learners originated from;
- Three test and learn projects were planned for 2026. This included the ESOL (English as a second language) Baby Steps, Care Leaver Ambassador Programme and Adult Learning Ambassador Programme;
- Level 3 accredited courses were equal to an A Level qualification and Level 2 was a GCSE;
- The most popular courses for men were creative writing, digital skills and art;
- Work was ongoing to increase the number of adult learners from the most economically deprived wards;
- Work was done to promote the service through social media and leaflet drops; and
- Funding was being sought to safeguard out of classroom working.

The Board praised the work done by the Adult Skills Team and asked that an update be provided in the future.

Quality & Learner Experience Manager

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ELS29 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2025

The Board received the Council's overall spending position as at 30 November 2025 as outlined in the Appendix.

In response to questions raised by the Board, the additional information was provided:

- It was agreed that Connect2Halton would provide an update on their work at a future meeting. This update would include agency costs;
- Regarding houses being adapted for accessibility, the Board queried if the adaptations and adapted houses could be reused or bought to save money;
- The Board referred the Community Investment Levy (CIL) to the Housing & Safer Policy and Performance Board to be scrutinised;
- Sickness levels within the Council remained high but had reduced; and

Business Manager of Connect2Halton

Housing & Safer PPB

- The Board noted that the predicted financial savings needed to be scrutinised.

RESOLVED: That the Council's overall spending position as at 30 November 2025 be noted.

Meeting ended at 20:35

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HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Health and Social Care Policy and Performance Board held on Tuesday, 25 November 2025 at Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors Dourley (Chair), Baker (Vice-Chair), Davidson, Goodall and N. Plumpton Walsh and Healthwatch Co-optee D. Wilson.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors A. Lowe and McDonough

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: S. Foy, H. Moir, and K. Butler

Also in attendance: T. Leo – Halton Place, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside and 2 members of the public

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

HEA21 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2025 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

HEA22 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following question was received:

This question relates to agenda item 5B HSAB annual report 2024/25

An Explanation and a reason why Halton Borough are in breach of the Care Act from 2022 to present date, although Halton Borough have employed a New Independent Chair in October 2024 and an Independent Scrutiny Director of Safeguarding in January 2025. Halton Borough for the 4 years regarding safeguarding annual reports have breached the Care Act as follows:

An explanation why 2 New Employers employed in October 2024 and January 2025 under new structure and hopefully

Action

different culture are still breaching care act?

Supplementary question as follows :

The Safeguarding adults annual report is on the agenda for Tuesday 25th November meeting, to be approved. The safeguarding adults annual report has already been released in to the public domain?

<https://councillors.halton.gov.uk/documents/s81175/App%201%20HSAB%20Annual%20Report%202024-25.pdf>

The Care Act 2014 requires each SAB to publish an annual report. Most SABs already produce annual reports, although their content and format vary. The Care Act (Schedule 2.4 (1) a – g) defines the minimum content of an annual report thus:

As soon as is feasible after the end of each financial year, a SAB must publish a report on:

what it has done during that year to achieve its objective,
what it has done during that year to implement its strategy,
what each member has done during that year to implement the strategy,
the findings of the reviews arranged by it under section 44 (safeguarding adults reviews) which have concluded in that year (whether or not they began in that year),
the reviews arranged by it under that section which are ongoing at the end of that year (whether or not they began in that year),
what it has done during that year to implement the findings of reviews arranged by it under that section, and
where it decides during that year not to implement a finding of a review arranged by it under that section, the reasons for its decision.

Safeguarding Adults Boards – Annual reports - SCIE
[\(https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/safeguarding-adults-boards-checklist-and-resources/annual-reports/\)](https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/adults/safeguarding-adults-boards-checklist-and-resources/annual-reports/)

The group has considered a number of SAR referrals received and feedback provided to Halton Safeguarding Adults Board in terms of outcomes and recommendations.

Care Act 2014 - Explanatory Notes
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/notes/division/5/1/10/3/4>

This page contains the following errors:

error on line 1 at column 2099: Extra content at the end of the document

Below is a rendering of the page up to the first error.

289. Sub-paragraph (1) requires the report to describe what the SAB has done during the year to achieve its main objective and its strategy, and how each member of the SAB has helped to implement the strategy. The findings of Safeguarding Adults Reviews concluded that year (whether or not they were started in that year) and actions taken that year in response to Safeguarding Adult Reviews must also be recorded in the annual report. That is either action taken to implement findings or, where a decision has been taken not to implement a finding, then the reason for that decision. The report must also record the total number of ongoing reviews, whether or not they were started in that year.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/schedule/2/crossheading/annual-report>

1) As soon as is feasible after the end of each financial year, an SAB must publish a report on—

- (a) what it has done during that year to achieve its objective,
- (b) what it has done during that year to implement its strategy,
- (c) what each member has done during that year to implement the strategy,
- (d) the findings of the reviews arranged by it under section 44 (safeguarding adults reviews) which have concluded in that year (whether or not they began in that year),
- (e) the reviews arranged by it under that section which are ongoing at the end of that year (whether or not they began in that year),
- (f) what it has done during that year to implement the findings of reviews arranged by it under that section, and
- (g) where it decides during that year not to implement a finding of a review arranged by it under that section, the reasons for its decision.

(2) The SAB must send a copy of the report to—

- (a) the chief executive and the leader of the local authority which established the SAB,
- (b) the local policing body the whole or part of whose area is in the local authority's area,
- (c) the Local Healthwatch organisation for the local authority's area, and
- (d) the chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board for that area.

(3) "Local policing body" has the meaning given by section 101 of the Police Act 1996.

Commencement

We are aware in
2020 3 SARs request
2021 3 SARs request
2022 1 Sar request
2023 1 SAR request
2024 4 SAR Request
2025 11 SAR Request

As the Chair of the PPB from the following legislation care act and other policy's provided the detail of the SAR information that has to be published in the Annual reports.

The Care Act is being breached, if the figures for the SARs aren't being published and the reasons. For SARS being declined and no outcome from the Safeguarding adults reviews, how are the PPB Scrutinised. (This is not my question but a major concern, 4 years later and the public are picking up on it).

Response:

In respect to the question and supplementary question submitted relating to agenda item 5B, the Halton Adults Safeguarding Board Annual Report 2024-25, as the Board required time to consider in detail the question and evidence supplied, they were not in a position to provide the member of the public with a response at the time of the meeting and therefore in line with the Standing Order relating to dealing with Public Questions, a written response would be provided in due course.

Executive Director
of Adult Services

HEA23 HEALTH AND WELLBEING MINUTES

The minutes from the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting held on 9 July 2025, were submitted to the Board for information.

HEA24 URGENT CARE IMPROVEMENT

The Board received a report from the Halton Place Director, which provided an update on the Urgent Care Improvement Programme and its current performance against national standards, which resulted in the continued focus of resources and efforts to drive forward improvements.

Over the past year, both Warrington and Halton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, had faced

challenges on their emergency care performance, which had led to their classification as Tier 1 status. To address these issues, both Trusts had received additional support from the National Emergency Care Improvement Support Team (ECIST) alongside assistance from other external agencies.

Key sentinel metrics, supplemented by a wide range of indicators, were used to monitor performance and reported daily. Although standards had been achieved, results remained inconsistent. As a result, the improvement programmes were important to improve performance and deliver positive benefits for patient outcomes.

It was noted that the current Accident and Emergency (A&E) 4-hour performance, remained below the national standard, which indicated a continued pressure on emergency departments. In response, Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust was progressing several key actions to improve patient flow and overall performance within A&E and these were outlined in section 3.5 of the report. Warrington and Halton Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust operated a smaller bed base, and many of its challenges resulted from consistently high bed occupancy levels, which averaged 101% on most days. In response, Warrington had implemented a substantial improvement programme within A&E, with full details provided in section 3.7 of the report.

The report explained that the wider system work programme was taking forward actions to help hospital trusts. These focussed on reducing unnecessary A&E visits and making sure patients could leave hospital promptly once they were medically ready.

Following discussions and questions raised by Members of the Board, some additional information was noted:

- Some Board Members shared personal encounters of A&E and suggested that the statistics provided in the report did not truly reflect lived experiences. They also suggested that clearer communication was needed to help prevent unnecessary attendances at A&E and encourage use of alternative services such as Urgent Treatment Centres (UTC);
- Board Members were reassured that, through Healthwatch, hospitals were actively seeking patient feedback across a range of services. They were also assured that Halton had performed well in reducing unnecessary hospital attendances and supporting

people to remain well in the community, whilst recognising that further progress was still required to meet national standards. It was further noted that, with Healthwatch's support, Warrington Hospital had introduced live A&E waiting times on its website, along with waiting times for the UTC in Runcorn. This enabled patients to make informed choices about the most appropriate service to access. However, similar information was not yet available for Whiston Hospital;

- The "Blackburn Come Back Model" was introduced in October 2025, which aimed to reduce the number of patients waiting all night in A&E by offering them a timed appointment in the morning. The Board requested a future update on the progress of this model in due course, as well as patients who had remained on wards for more than 21 days;
- Healthwatch raised concerns about the standardisation of UTC's across Cheshire and Merseyside, saying that they did not want to see this as a cost cutting exercise or see standards being lowered across the Board, but rather that they would like to see the consistent services and opening hours at all UTC's. The Board was advised that whilst financial constraints needed to be considered, the development programme was intended to analyse and compare variations, before reviewing services to ensure maximum impact;
- Questions were raised about whether Halton had a similar provision to the "Hospital at Home" scheme in Cheshire West, which had proven highly effective in supporting elderly patients by avoiding A&E attendances and hospital admissions; Members were advised that a range of options were being explored;
- Ambulance handover times were also discussed. A site visit last year observed 32 ambulances waiting outside Whiston Hospital. Whilst handover times remained behind target, it was noted that improvements had been made and A&E triage was moving in the right direction, despite performance still being rated in the red; and
- Finally, the Board asked about the impact of the Integrated Care Boards staff reduction programme on the hospitals and it was explained that although staff reductions were expected in the future, emphasis would be given to protect critical areas whilst working with partners to manage any impacts.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

Halton Place
Director

- 1) supports the ongoing Urgent Care Improvement Programmes that aim to reduce pressures in the acute hospital setting and improve overall patient care and experience for local people; and
- 2) continues to have oversight on the key improvement metrics to ensure progress towards the standards and seek assurance that Halton residents are being treated within an efficient and effective health system.

HEA25 HSAB ANNUAL REPORT 2024-5

The Board received the Halton Safeguarding Adults Board's (HSAB) Annual Report for 2024-25.

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. Members were advised of the four strategic priorities for 2024-25: communication and involvement; strategic intervention and early intervention; making safeguarding personal; and learning development and assurance. The report also included performance data and comparisons between years, achievements in the year updates on partner agencies and sub-groups of the HSAB and highlighted areas of good practice regarding safeguarding in the Borough.

The Board thanked the HSAB for the report and were pleased to note its achievements. They were also complimentary of the referral service and officers agreed to feed this back.

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

HEA26 PRIORITY BASED PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
REPORT QUARTER 2 2025-26

The Board received the Performance Management Reports for quarter 2 of 2025/26.

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 Adult Social Care in quarter 2 of 2025-26. This included a description of factors, which were affecting the service.

It was noted that the report did not include any Public Health data, however, this would be reported in quarter 3.

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.

Following discussions, it was noted that:

- there was an anomaly with data relating to referrals/signposting for homelessness. The Performance Team was undertaking a piece of work to look how this was recorded; and
- a piece of work was being undertaken regarding the pressures around respite and crisis accommodation which was captured within the transformation programme; an update would be provided at the next Board meeting in February 2026.

RESOLVED: That the Performance Management report for quarter 2 of 2025/26 be received.

Executive Director
of Adult Services

Meeting ended at 7.29 p.m.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Health and Social Care Policy and Performance Board held on Tuesday, 10 February 2026 at Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors Dourley (Chair), Baker (Vice-Chair), Davidson, Goodall, S. Hill, N. Plumpton Walsh and Wallace.

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Lowe and McDonough

Absence declared on Council business: None.

Officers present: N. Hallmark, D. O'Connor, I. Onyia, S. Westhead and I. Moorhouse.

Also in attendance: S. Foyle – Healthwatch Halton, L. Gardener - Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, A. Leo – Halton Place, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside, D. Wilson – Healthwatch Halton and 2 members of the public.

Councillor K. Loftus (Observing)

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

Action

HEA27 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held 25 November 2025 having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record.

HEA28 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following question was received:

This question related to agenda item 5E Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assurance: Update on Progress

Under the Improvement Action Plan, clarification was sought on the steps in place to support residents who wished to return to residential or nursing placements within the borough. It was also queried whether the Council had a strategic plan to commission additional residential and nursing dementia placements to address gaps in provision, and whether such plans were being developed in partnership with carers and families.

In response, officers stated that residents placed out of borough who wished to return to a care home in Halton were allocated a social worker who worked with them and their families to support a move back to an appropriate in-borough placement that met their assessed needs. The Council identified a growing demand for specialist provision, particularly for older people with advanced dementia. Therefore, plans were agreed to develop an Enhanced Dementia Unit at St Luke's, one of the Council-operated care homes. This project was in early planning stages, with implementation plans being developed. As part of this process, consideration will be given for collaboration with individuals and families who may be affected.

Supplementary question as follows:

Not all people living with dementia who are being discharged from hospital require specialist placements but are classed as 'bed blocking' so are being placed 'anywhere' with an available placement which limits contact with their family network. Are the Council working with hospitals to avoid this practice?

It was agreed that a written response would be provided after the meeting and officers would separately meet with the public speaker.

HEA29 HEALTH AND WELLBEING MINUTES

The minutes from the Health and Wellbeing Board meeting held on 8 October 2025, were submitted to the Board for information.

HEA30 WARRINGTON AND HALTON TEACHING HOSPITALS NHSFT (FOUNDATION TRUST) (WHH) AND BRIDGEWATER COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE NHS FT (BRIDGEWATER) INTEGRATION UPDATE

The Board received a report on the Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHSFT (WHH) and Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS FT (Bridgewater) which provided an update on the integration of the WHH and Bridgewater. The purpose of the integration was to improve services to patients as both WHH and Bridgewater provided similar services. Patients in the area would be referred to both WHH and Bridgewater and there had been an issue before where there were three waiting lists for the same service with three different waiting times.

An early benefit of the merger was that 100 patients a month received care at home instead of needing to attend

the hospital. Integration would save both organisations money and allow funding to be reinvested into NHS services and reduce waiting times. The report contained the full progress to date as well as the business case for the merger. Integration would start in April 2026, following a final review by NHS England.

The merger was split into three phases. Phase one focused on completing the legal transaction and setting up the infrastructure to ensure delivery, commence the integration of leadership, corporate services and clinical support functions from the beginning. Phase two focused on embedding initial infrastructure changes and driving early benefits whilst commencing work on the longer-term clinical integration and priority services. Phase three oversaw the transformation of remaining clinical services and the shift towards a new model of care.

AI would be used to diagnose illnesses quicker and the merger would focus on services that affected the elderly first. The final approval of the merger would need to be made through the Secretary of State. New processes following the merger would need to be safe and communication between WHH and Bridgewater during the merger would be a focus.

As part of the merger, engagement sessions with external partners were held monthly to keep them updated and their questions were answered. More engagement work was done with Healthwatch to keep the public and patients up to date with the merger.

The following additional information was provided in response to Member's questions:

- The Trust Officer agreed to see if there was a local issue regarding referrals between doctors and hospitals in Warrington and Halton Hospital Trust;
- Healthwatch run a PPRG (Patient and Public Reference Group) on behalf of the combined trust and invited two elected members from Halton join. Any elected member of the Council could attend the PPRG sessions on the merger. This included members of the Board;
- Regarding the merger, there had been no pushback from staff representatives and regular staff engagement sessions were held and well attended;
- No compulsory redundancies were planned as part of the merger and most NHS organisations had already integrated nationally;

- The NHS only had national staff satisfaction surveys, not local;
- The integration work would work with nearby hospitals outside the borough, but it would not affect how they would operate or referrals that were made there;
- Council commissioned services from hospitals should not be affected by the merger as there was no intention to change service provision; and,
- The Board recommended that a three-way meeting be held with Adult Social Care and Public Health Service be held.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

HEA31 WARRINGTON AND HALTON TEACHING HOSPITALS
NHS FOUNDATION TRUST - SHUTTLE BUS SERVICE

The Board received a report on the Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust - Shuttle Bus Service which included the timetable change proposals. Previously, the bus service ran seven days a week and it was funded by the hospital's budget. The Trust was asked by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside to review this service and look for cheaper alternatives or consider ceasing the service. 22 service runs were made by the shuttlebus per day (11 round trips between the 2 sites).

As part of the review, a quality impact assessment was undertaken and following an assessment which took several months, it was found that the shuttle bus ran with very low numbers in the evenings and at weekends where there were frequently no passengers. Following this review, it was agreed that the number of services ran each weekday would reduce from 22 (11 round trips) to 16 (8 round trips), and the service be removed at weekends. No public consultation was required with this as it was not an NHS service.

No formal complaints were received from patients or visitors on this change, but some concerns were raised by staff members who were supported. Public comments received online indicated a willingness to pay and this would be considered by the Trust's Executive Management Team.

The following additional information was provided in response to Member's questions:

- The Board Members supported retaining the shuttlebus service and introducing a charge;

- If the shuttlebus became a chargeable service, then extended hours would be considered;
- It was noted that one month notice was given for the shuttlebus service change; and,
- It was agreed that the Trust and Council would work together on future changes.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

HEA32 HEALTHWATCH HALTON - STAFFING

The Board received a report from Healthwatch Halton which set out the proposed changes to the staffing arrangements for Healthwatch Halton, following the retirement of the CEO. As Central Government was planning to end Healthwatch in 12 months, it was proposed that the CEO of Healthwatch Warrington become the CEO of Healthwatch Halton. The money saved from this appointment would be used to fund an outreach worker post.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Board endorses the proposed changes as set out in the report; and
- 2) That the new Healthwatch Co-Optee be appointed by Full Council in May 2026.

HEA33 ELECTED MEMBERS SCRUTINY TOPIC GROUP 2025 - MENTAL HEALTH - FINAL REPORT

The Board received the final report of the Mental Health Elected Members Scrutiny Topic Group. The Health and Social Care PPB identified Mental Health services across the borough as their scrutiny topic for 2025/26. As a result, the Topic Group was formed, and a topic brief was agreed in the June 2025 meeting.

Three topics were proposed as the scrutiny topic for 2026/27, Teenage Pregnancy, Substance Misuse and the Stronger for Longer service. Teenage pregnancy had a lot of overlap with the Children, Young People & Families PPB and was a small topic. Substance misuse was addressed by the Combating Drugs Partnership which reported to the Housing & Safer PPB, and it was a complex topic. Therefore, it was recommended that the Stronger for Longer service be the topic of review, combined with services and preventative measures for over 55-year-olds.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Board recommends the report's action plan be ratified by the Executive Board; and
- 2) That 'Stronger for Longer' be the scrutiny topic for 2026/7.

HEA34 CARE QUALITY COMMISSION (CQC) ASSURANCE: UPDATE ON PROGRESS

The Board received an update report on the Care Quality Commission (CQC) Assurance. The report noted the progress made by the Adults Directorate against CQC Local Authority Assurance Framework following their 'Good' rating in July 2025. 83 authorities in England had completed their CQC Assurance out of 153 and Halton was unlikely to be reassessed for a few years. Areas of improvement had been made as part of an Improvement Action Plan and a Care Contingency Process would be introduced too. Work achieved as part of the Improvement Action Plan was set out in the report. The Plan would be signed off in March 2026.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

HEA35 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT - QUARTER 3 2025/26

The Board received the Performance Management Report – Quarter 3 for 2025/26. Highlights included a new Halton Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy, and the Council had been awarded a grant to tackle homelessness.

The number of smokers in Halton had reduced and Central Government funding was awarded to the Council to reduce it further. Suicide rates had increased in Halton to above the England average. Work with children's health was carried out, for example, children in schools were shown how to brush their teeth effectively. There had been good performance work from the drug and alcohol prevention teams.

The following additional information was provided in response to Member's questions:

- It was noted that there was an issue with school children vaping. To tackle this, the Council was working with Trading Standards to target sales being made to underage users and illegal sales. Additional funding grant would help to address this; and,

- To reduce homeless numbers, the Whitechapel Centre would go out to homeless people in the borough to get them into shelter.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

HEA36 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2025

The Board received a copy of a report, which was presented to the Council's Executive Board on 15 January 2026. The report outlined the Council's overall revenue and capital spending position as at 30 November 2025, together with the latest 2025/26 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 Council's overall spending position as at 30 November 2025, as outlined in the report, be noted.

Meeting ended at 19:38

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CORPORATE AND INCLUSION POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Corporate and Inclusion Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 20 January 2026 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chair), Philbin (Vice-Chair), Carlin, Logan, McDermott, A. McInerney and C. Loftus

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Davidson, McDonough and N. Plumpton Walsh

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: D. Cooke, E. Dawson, H. Hamlett, J. Hughes, M. Reaney and K. Butler

Also in attendance: None

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

	<i>Action</i>
CS26 MINUTES	
The Minutes from the meeting held on 4 November 2025 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
CS27 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.	
CS28 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, and were attached as Appendix 1 for information.	
CS29 ACCOMMODATION REVIEW UPDATE PRESENTATION	
Members of the Board received a report and accompanying presentation which provided an update on the continuing work on the Council's accommodation review.	

The Council currently had a portfolio of circa 92 properties with an annual revenue expenditure in the region of nearly £10m (in 2024/25). In order to help reduce expenditure, JL Property Solutions was commissioned to undertake a report in respect of the use of the building assets and one of the key findings outlined in their report was that the Council had twice the amount of office accommodation than it needed. It was recommended that office space should be consolidated by closing at least one of the main office buildings. The report also suggested that some office space could be leased to third parties and consideration be given to a new purpose build office or co-locating with other public sector bodies.

To date, the Executive Board had approved proposals to vacate the Municipal Building and work towards getting the site redeveloped, as part of the wider Town Centre Regeneration Plan. They had ruled out the option of a new build due to costs and alternatively wanted to consider creating a head office facility in another Council building, which would be a more cost effective solution.

The report outlined the progress made to date, which included rationalisation of space in Runcorn Town Hall to accommodate the Police & Crime Commissioner's Office, which would generate additional income. Unused space in the Civic Building and Rutland House was also being refurbished to create additional meeting room space. An accommodation working group of officers had been established, whose remit was to work through various tasks and functions. A further update would be presented to the Board in six months time.

The presentation outlined the positive outcomes of the Accommodation Strategy which included the redevelopment of the Municipal Building site and receipt of capital expenditure; alignment with the Town Centre regeneration; generation of revenue savings; cost avoidance; reduction of carbon emissions; and improved and joined up services. Members suggested that this work and the work of the Town Centre Strategy be closely linked.

RESOLVED: That Members of Board note the presentation.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

CS30 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

The Board received a report from the Interim Director, HR & Corporate Affairs regarding the recently developed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

The Policy set out how Halton met its duties and responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. It also described the Council's vision and commitments, the roles and responsibilities of employees, managers and Elected Members; the protected characteristics and how the Council supported them.

The Policy had been formatted to maximise accessibility. Adjustments to page colour, font size and type, line spacing, and alignment had been made to support users, including those with neurodiversity and colour-blindness. As part of the review, the document had also been tested using Immersive Reader to confirm that information would be conveyed accurately for individuals using this or similar assistive technologies. A slightly more interactive version would also be made available on the intranet for Council employees.

Reference was made to the section on changing rooms and transgender guidance. It was noted that the Council was awaiting forthcoming Government guidance following the Supreme Court ruling, after which the implications for the Council's buildings and facilities would be considered.

RESOLVED: That the Board note and endorse the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

CS31 COUNCILWIDE SPENDING AS AT 30 NOVEMBER 2025

The Board received a copy of a report, which was presented to the Council's Executive Board on 15 January 2026. The report outlined the Council's overall revenue and capital spending position as at 30 November 2025, together with the latest 2025/26 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 Council's overall spending position as at 30 November 2025, as outlined in the report, be noted.

CS32 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

CS33 MUTUALLY AGREED RESIGNATION SCHEME

The Board received a report from the Interim Director of HR and Corporate Affairs, which outlined the options for the introduction of a Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme (MARS).

Members were advised of the current redundancy process and appendix A of the report outlined the scheme and guidance. Two options were presented for the Board's consideration relating to eligibility criteria (question 4) and the method for calculating payments (question 7).

Members noted the report, and following discussion, it was agreed that a further meeting would be arranged to address outstanding issues and examine the proposed scheme in greater detail. Members were advised that the scheme was not intended as a blanket offer for all staff, but rather as a discretionary tool available to managers.

RESOLVED: That the Scheme be endorsed and submitted to the Executive Board for approval, subject to a further meeting of the Policy and Performance Board Members to address outstanding issues and examine the proposed Scheme in greater detail.

Interim Director –
HR & Corporate
Affairs

Meeting ended at 8.06 p.m.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Development Management Committee on Tuesday, 2 December 2025 at Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Leck (Chair), Thornton (Vice-Chair), S. Hill, Hughes, P. Nolan, Philbin, C. Plumpton Walsh, Polhill, Rowe, Thompson and Woolfall

Apologies for Absence: None.

Absence declared on Council business: None.

Officers present: A. Plant, L. Wilson-Lagan, T. Gibbs, E. Breheny, S. Moorhouse, J. Parry and I. Moorhouse

Also in attendance: None.

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

Action

DEV10 MINUTES

The following amendment was proposed to be made to the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 1 September 2025:

“Following three warnings to the public attendees regarding their disruption of the meeting, the meeting was suspended at 19:12. Due to the continued disturbance by the public and refusal of some members of the public to leave, the Chair called for clearance of the public gallery. Again, due to the refusal of some members of the public to leave and the position seemingly escalating, the meeting was moved to the Council Chamber without attendance of the public. The press remained in attendance and the meeting reconvened at 19:20.”

The Amendment was Moved and Seconded and the Committee voted to approve the amendment to the Minutes.

RESOLVED: That the minutes held on the meeting of the 1 September 2025 be signed as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

“Following three warnings to the public attendees regarding their disruption of the meeting, the meeting was suspended at 19:12. Due to the continued disturbance by the public and refusal of some members of the public to leave, the Chair called for clearance of the public gallery.

Again, due to the refusal of some members of the public to leave and the position seemingly escalating, the meeting was moved to the council chamber without attendance of the public. The press remained in attendance and the meeting reconvened at 19:20." replace "Following three warnings to the public attendees regarding their disruption of the meeting, the Meeting was suspended at 19:12 and reconvened at 19:20." for Minute DEV8.

DEV11 PLANNING APPLICATIONS TO BE DETERMINED BY THE COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the following applications for planning permission and, in accordance with its powers and duties, made the decisions described below.

DEV12 25/00107/OUT - OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR UP TO 94 DWELLINGS WITH ALL MATTERS RESERVED EXCEPT FOR ACCESS AT LAND AT HILLTOP FARM WINDMILL LANE PRESTON ON THE HILL WA4 4AZ

The application was removed from consideration following a late objection from Preston Brook Parish Council. Although notified on 13 March 2025, the Parish Council submitted its objection on 28 November 2025, after the agenda was published. Planning legislation required comments within 21 working days, but failure to consider this objection could risk judicial review as it may constitute material evidence.

DEV13 25/00262/FUL - PROPOSED DEMOLITION OF EXISTING WORKSHOP, LEAN TO SHED AND PICKING LINE ENCLOSURE, AND THE ERECTION OF 2 NO BUILDINGS TO PROVIDE FOR THE STORAGE, SORTING AND PROCESSING OF WASTE MATERIALS TOGETHER WITH A NEW WELFARE BLOCK, WEIGHBRIDGE OFFICE AND ANCILLARY INFRASTRUCTURE INCLUDING WATER TANKS, WEIGHBRIDGES, REVISED VEHICLE PARKING, DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS AND ODOUR CONTROL PLANT & EQUIPMENT AND STACK

The consultation procedure undertaken was outlined in the report together with background information in respect of the site.

Since the agenda was published, the local flood authority confirmed no objections, provided that an updated drainage system was implemented, which the applicant agreed to. For odour control, the applicant reported improvements including a new air extraction system in the

new building, and this to be covered by a condition to avoid delays. The applicant argued that a new road noise assessment would be unnecessary as site operations and surrounding land would remain unchanged. If it was required, they requested that the assessment account for the proposed extraction system; discussions on this were ongoing.

In response to points raised by the Committee, it was noted that:

- There were an excessive number of seagulls at the site, and some form of pest control would be needed to resolve this. Officers would raise this issue with the Environmental Agency and look at this being a condition;
- Odour control needed to be strictly monitored by the IPPC (Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control) as food waste was managed onsite;
- The Environmental Agency had the best techniques to manage odour control. If the application was approved, then they would be able to enforce this; and
- The site had recently come under new ownership.

After consideration of the application and updates provided by officers, the proposal was Moved and Seconded and the Committee voted to delegate authority to the Director of Planning and Transport in consultation with the chair or vice chair to determine the Application.

RESOLVED: That the application be delegated to the director planning and transport in consultation with the chair or vice chair to determine the Application.

If approved, be subject to the following schedule of conditions and any others considered necessary:

- Standard 3-year timescale for commencement of development specifying approved plans
- Condition requiring submission and agreement of a Construction Environmental Management Plan
- Materials condition(s), requiring submission and agreement of building external finishing materials
- Condition requiring submission and agreement of detailed landscaping scheme
- Condition relating to boundary treatments
- Condition requiring vehicle access, parking, servicing etc to be constructed prior to

- occupation / commencement of use
- Condition securing relocation of cycle parking details
- Condition restricting waste throughput to 450,000 tonnes per annum
- Condition requiring surface water drainage to be carried out as approved condition(s) requiring a site investigation, remediation and verification plan
- Condition(s) restricting external storage locations, height, processing
- Submission and agreement of a lighting
- Condition requiring site and finished floor levels be carried out as approved
- No materials, waste or otherwise shall be burnt on site
- Requiring submission and agreement of provision for bird boxes
- Landscape and habitat management plan

DEV14 MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

The following applications had been received / were in progress:

22/00569/OUT

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

25/00254/COU

Proposed change of use to flexible letting at Rotherham House, Lunts heath Road, Widnes, WA8 5BB

25/00254/COUGEN

Appeal against enforcement notice at Rotherham House, Lunts heath Road, Widnes, WA8 5BB

Meeting ended at 18:48

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Development Management Committee on Wednesday, 14 January 2026 at Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Leck (Chair), Thornton (Vice-Chair), Hughes, P. Nolan, Philbin, C. Plumpton Walsh, Polhill, Rowe, Thompson and Woolfall.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor S. Hill.

Absence declared on Council business: None.

Officers present: A. Blackburn, H. Bradley, E. Breheny, G. Henry, C. Nixon, A. Plant, S. Moorhouse and I. Moorhouse.

Also in attendance: 36 members of the public.

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

Action

DEV15 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2025, having been circulated, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

DEV16 PLANNING APPLICATIONS TO BE DETERMINED BY THE COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the following applications for planning permission and, in accordance with its powers and duties, made the decisions described below.

DEV17 25/00346/REM - APPLICATION FOR THE APPROVAL OF RESERVED MATTERS, NAMELY LAYOUT, SCALE, APPEARANCE AND LANDSCAPING PURSUANT TO CONDITION 2 ATTACHED TO OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION 22/00423/OUTEIA COMPRISING 500 DWELLINGS, INTERNAL ESTATE ROADS, OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPING, AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE AND WORKS. ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS ADDRESSED IN THIS APPLICATION INCLUDE CONDITIONS 3 (DESIGN PARAMETERS), 5 (PROW), 6 (PHASING). LAND OFF HALE GATE ROAD, WIDNES

The consultation procedure undertaken was outlined in the report together with background information in respect of the site.

Since the agenda was published, additional variations of the provision to the offsite highway improvements, and amendments to the affordable first homes provision within the Section 106 agreement for the site had been made.

The AB list should have referred to application 25/00346/REM rather than 25/00346/OUT. The outline application (25/00346/OUT), approved in July 2024, granted permission for 500 dwellings, a local centre, a later living scheme, a new primary school, and access points, with scale, layout and landscaping reserved for future determination.

Residents and the Parish Council requested further consultation and a redesign; however, neither were a statutory requirement. The applicant carried out a leaflet drop and met with the Parish Council, while Halton Borough Council undertook its public consultation and issued 105 letters to residents and published a press notice.

The proposal complied with the National Model Design Code and the Council's supplementary planning document (SPD). Officers considered the site acceptable. The scheme included four areas: the historic edge near Hale Bank, the rural edge adjoining the field, the Hale Bank fringe and the Hale Bank core.

A heritage statement was not required as the outline application concluded that the development would not harm the conservation area. Under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), any low-level harm must be balanced against public benefits and optimal site use. The Conservation Officer recommended strengthening the green buffer to mitigate potential harm, and the application included measures to address this.

Although the draft 2007 Open Space SPD was not met, it was advisory and not a Council adopted policy. The scheme met the requirement for 20% affordable housing and provided 74 affordable rented homes and 26 affordable ownership homes. While no specialist housing was included, 144 homes were adaptable. For new builds, the Halton Housing Needs Assessment recommended 25–30% two-bedroom homes and 35–40% three-bedroom homes; this scheme provided 13.6% two-bedroom and 53.36% three-

bedroom properties.

The Committee was addressed by Mr Anderton who objected to the proposal. He presented the following points:

- Residents were in 'disbelief' of the application due to the local infrastructure and amenities being inefficient for a new development;
- Ditton Railway Bridge was due to have a structural survey in 2026. Members were made aware of the Bridge's condition for decades through infrastructure reports;
- Burst water mains on the Bridge led to long traffic delays;
- The public consultation was inefficient as not all residents were contacted about the development;
- In the public meeting with residents, it was requested that residents discuss their concerns with the applicant and that the site be redesigned. These requests were denied by the applicant;
- The development was detrimental to the area due to external social and economic factors, and more community engagement should be done to mitigate these concerns;
- Section 106 funding will not be spent on the local community;
- Constituents did not feel supported by their local Councillors; and
- The application should be deferred until an independent review of Ditton Railway Bridge was conducted to confirm its safety, the developer agreed to a NPPF consultation with residents, and the developer went on a site visit with residents to discuss concerns.

The Committee was addressed by Mr Gee, the Planning Consultant hired by Hale Bank Parish Council who objected to the proposal. He presented the following points:

- The application was a "Reserved Matters Application" and the housing in the application was not scrutinised;
- The public consultation of the application was insufficient, there was no design review and limited digital access;
- The house designs did not consider Hale Bank's character;
- There was no heritage impact assessment and there was no evidence that there was no impact;

- The Parish Council was concerned about the standard of housing for the site as only 49% of the homes would meet National Space Standards and there was no wheelchair accessible homes;
- There was no certainty that the later life scheme, new school and local centre would be delivered; and
- The development did not address Ditton Railway Bridge which was 'structurally deficient'.

The Committee was addressed by Ms Ashworth, the agent for the applicant, who supported the officer's recommendation to approve the application. She added that:

- Halton needed new homes, and the outline application was approved in July 2024;
- The proposal conformed with the outline parameters with layout, scale and appearance;
- The applicant worked collaboratively with all consultees during the pre-application and application stages;
- The proposal improved the permeability of the site, maximised pedestrian and residential connections, provided new play areas and 'ecological features';
- The applicant's Social Manager worked with the local community in unemployment and adult learning sessions in Widnes and Runcorn and a design competition with the pupils at the local primary school was held. Riverside College students also helped design the site;
- Feedback from residents was incorporated into the proposals; and
- The homes were energy efficient, building regulation compliant and met Central Government's housing standards.

Officers clarified that in the outline planning application, a survey was carried out on Ditton Railway Bridge, and it was deemed acceptable for the development. Therefore, it could not be considered as part of this application. Additionally, the Parish Council submitted their objection to the application much later than the 21-day deadline as they submitted it over three months late.

In response to points raised by the Committee, it was noted that:

- If the application was refused and went to appeal, it was possible that planning permission would be granted;
- Ditton Railway Bridge needed to be fixed to resolve

the flooding issue, but a set amount could be reserved to install a relief road for the bridge;

- The amended drainage system had been presented to United Utilities, and the development could not progress until they stated that they were happy with it;
- Network Rail would organise any surveys for Ditton Railway Bridge and the Council would resolve any highway issues with it;
- The Council did not adopt the National Space Standards in the local plan, but they could be added to a future policy; and
- The Committee was informed that considering the noncompliance with the space standard when balanced against the benefits of the scheme would not outweigh the grant of permission in this case.

After consideration of the application and updates provided by officers, the proposal was Moved and Seconded and the Committee voted to approve the application.

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

- 1) Deed of variation relating to the provision for open space, BNG and affordable housing
- 2) Schedule of the following conditions:
 - Plans condition listing relevant drawings
 - Tree protection
 - Noise mitigation scheme
 - Drainage
 - Landscape management plan
 - Hard and Soft Landscaping
 - Boundary treatment
- 3) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Planning to determine the application following submission of an acceptable drainage scheme.

[The Meeting was suspended at 19:12 to allow members of the public to vacate the public gallery. The Meeting reconvened at 19:15.]

DEV18 25/00384/FUL - PROPOSED EXTENSION TO EXISTING RESIDENTIAL BEDSIT STUDIOS TO FORM NEW BLOCK C - CONSISTING OF 19 NEW ONE-BEDSIT STUDIOS. MIDWOOD HOUSE, TRAVIS STREET, WIDNES, WA8 6FT

The consultation procedure undertaken was outlined in the report together with background information in respect of the site.

Officers highlighted the key points as stated in the

report and noted that no representations on the application were submitted and recommended that the application be approved, subject to the conditions.

After consideration of the application and updates provided by officers, the proposal was Moved and Seconded and the Committee voted to approve the application.

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

1) S106 or other appropriate agreement securing financial contributions for Greenspace Provision (£9,702.81) and Recreational Pressure Mitigation (£5,286.94)

2) Schedule of the following conditions:

- Standard Full Permission 1
- Approved Plans (Policy GR1)
- External Facing Materials (Policy GR1)
- Standard Hours Condition (Policy GR2)
- Site levels (Policy GR1)
- Parking and Servicing Implementation (Policy C1 and C2)
- Details of cycle and motorcycle parking (Policy C1)
- Waste and Storage Collection (Policy WM9)
- Ground Contamination (Policy CS23 and HE8)
- Acoustic Report (Policy HE7)
- SUDS (Policy HE9)
- Bird and Bat Boxes (Policy HE1)
- Breeding Birds (Policy HE1)
- Site Waste Management Plan (Policy WM8)
- Climate Change - (Policies CS(R)19 and GR5)
- Arboricultural Method Statement (Policy HE5)
- Recreational Pressure Householder Leaflet CS(R)20

3) That if the S106 or other appropriate agreement is not secured within a reasonable period of time, authority be given to refuse this planning application.

DEV19 MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

The following applications had been received / were in progress:

22/00569/OUT - HEATH BUSINESS AND TECHNICAL PARK

The Secretary of State called in the planning application. This was considered in a Public Inquiry held over September into October 2025. The appointed Inspector appointed presented their draft report to the Secretary of State. The Council expects of the informed of the decision

on or about 9 March 2026.

25/00254/COUGEN - APPEAL AGAINST ENFORCEMENT NOTICE ROTHERHAM HOUSE HEATH ROAD WIDNES

In view of the dismissal of the appeal against the refusal of the application for the proposed change of use at Rotherham House reported below, the Council requested an early decision on this Enforcement Appeal. An update will be provided at a later date.

25/00261/COU - 1-4 SALISBURY STREET WIDNES

Proposed change of use of the first floor and part ground floor from E-Class to twelve (12) Sui generis single occupancy HMO rooms and retention of E-class floorspace on ground floor at 1-4 Salisbury Street, Widnes.

25/00272/COU - ODDIES SOCIAL CLUB

Proposed change of use of ground floor of premises from extant (sui generis) licenced social club use with ancillary car park to storage and distribution class (B8) use with ancillary car park at Oddies Social Club, Hale Road, Widnes.

The following appeals have been determined:

25/00254/COU - ROTHERHAM HOUSE

Proposed change of use to flexible letting at Rotherham House, Lunts heath Road, Widnes, WA8 5BB
APPEAL DISMISSED

Meeting ended at 19:21

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APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Appointments Committee held on Thursday, 27 November 2025 at the DCBL Stadium, Widnes.

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chair), Dennett, Gilligan, Ratcliffe and Thompson

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Davidson

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Haining and H. Hamlett

Also present: Sharon Senior, Executive Director, North West Employers

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

APC15 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Action

The Committee considered:

- 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 4 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 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

APC16 SELECTION INTERVIEWS FOR THE POST OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

Following a long-listing recruitment process and the drawing up of a shortlist, the Committee considered candidates for the post of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service.

RESOLVED: That Mr Andrew Donaldson be recommended to the Full Council for appointment to the post of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service.

Meeting ended at 2.15 p.m.

REGULATORY SUB COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Regulatory Sub Committee on Monday, 15 December 2025 at Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Wallace (Chair), Begg and Fry

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Hesketh, E. Philpott and C. Harrison

Also in attendance: None

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

REGS1 APPLICATION TO REVIEW A PREMISES LICENCE -
RUNCORN KEBAB HOUSE, 70 HIGH STREET,
RUNCORN, WA7 1JH

Action

This is the formal notification of a decision made by Halton Borough Council's Regulatory Sub-Committee at a hearing held under the Licensing Act 2003 ("the Act") on 15 December 2025 in the Civic Suite at Runcorn Town Hall.

This hearing was held to review the premises licence for the premises known as "Runcorn Kebab House", located at 70 High Street in Runcorn, ("the Premises") in light of an application made under section 51 of the Licensing Act 2003 on behalf of the Secretary of State ("the Applicant").

In attendance were:-

1. Members of the Regulatory Sub-Committee comprising Cllr Pamela Wallace ("Chair"), Cllr Victoria Begg and Cllr Mike Fry (collectively referred to as "the Sub-Committee");
2. Jack O'Brien ("Immigration Enforcement");
3. Hollie Durkin ("Cheshire Police");
4. Kim Hesketh ("Licensing Manager"); and

5. Emily Philpott (“Legal Adviser”)

Not all parties arrived on time and the Sub-Committee resolved to wait 10 minutes before commencing the hearing. During this time, the above representative from Immigration Enforcement arrived with apologies. However, the Premises Licence Holder, Mr Mustafa Hassan Ahmed Omar Abdalla, did not attend.

The hearing began at 1:40pm. After the Chair had introduced the parties, the Legal Adviser outlined the procedure to be followed. She confirmed that as the Premises Licence Holder was not in attendance, the Sub-Committee first needed to determine whether to hear the matter in his absence or adjourn. She explained that the Licensing Manager had posted notice of the hearing to his last known address by Royal Mail tracked delivery on 18 November 2025 and had hand delivered a further copy on 5 December 2025. However, no response had been received from Mr Abdalla. In fact, no correspondence had been received from Mr Abdalla since around 2022. The Licensing Manager went on to explain that whilst there had been a recent application to transfer the premises licence to Runcorn Fresh Bites with immediate effect as detailed further in her report, they had since withdrawn that application. As such, they were no longer part of the review proceedings and were not attending today.

The Sub-Committee found that the Premises Licence Holder had been served with adequate notice of the hearing and, in accordance with Regulation 20 of the Licensing Act 2003 (Hearings) Regulations 2005, determined to hold the hearing in the Premises Licence Holders absence.

THE HEARING

The Licensing Manager confirmed to the Sub-Committee that this was an application by Immigration Enforcement to review the premises licence following immigration offences at the Premises. She confirmed that the annual fee had not been paid since 2022 and the licence had therefore been suspended. The Licensing Manager summarised the contents of her report, referring to the appendices which included the premises licence (Appendix A), the Application and supporting documentation (Appendix B and C) and the representation and supporting documentation submitted on behalf of Cheshire Police (Appendix D) and relevant sections of the Revised Guidance issued under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003 (Appendix E) (“the Statutory Guidance”).

Jack O'Brien presented the Applicant's case. He confirmed that the North West Immigration Compliance and Enforcement ("ICE") team visited the Premises on 1 February 2025 after intelligence had been received that illegal workers were being employed at the Premises. Officers from the ICE team found one employee who was identified as an immigration offender as checks confirmed that he had an outstanding asylum claim and was working illegally. A civil penalty was issued to Four Seasons, who were operating at the Premises at the time, for £45,000 in relation to this offence and remains unpaid. He confirmed that during an interview, the employee explained that he was helping a friend and that this was the first time he had worked at the premises and was compensated in food and cigarettes. However, the employee had keys to open and close the Premises, was preparing the food and taking money from customers. He therefore requested that the Sub-Committee revoke the premises licence as the Premises Licence Holder had failed to meet the licensing objectives of prevention of crime and disorder due to illegal working at the premises.

In response to questions from the Sub-Committee regarding the connection between the Premises Licence Holder and Four Seasons, the Licensing Manager confirmed that the Council had no knowledge of Four Seasons operating at the Premises until the review application had been received. She confirmed that the Premises Licence Holder under the premises licence was Mr Abdalla and no transfer application had been received. There had been no correspondence from Mr Abdalla since 2022 and, as already stated, the annual fee had remained unpaid since then.

Hollie Durkin made representations on behalf of Cheshire Police. She confirmed that although the application to transfer the licence had been withdrawn, she noted that the director for Runcorn Fresh Bites, the applicant for the transfer application, and the Premises Licence Holder had been linked to incidents that could not be disclosed. She believed that the transfer application was a diversion from the Immigration Enforcement application to review the premises licence and to undermine the licensing objectives. She confirmed that the premises had been open for trade past its allowed operating hours of 23:00pm. This was confirmed when local Police Officers carried out checks and were offered food past 23:00pm with the premises continuing to trade despite having a suspended licence for nonpayment of annual fees. She confirmed that Cheshire Constabulary supports the Applicants request for revocation

of the premises licence, citing a pattern of disregard for the law and the licensing objectives.

THE DETERMINATION

In reaching its decision, the Sub-Committee considered:

- The Report prepared and presented by Licensing
- The review application and supporting documentation
- The written representations and supporting documentation, including:
 - The written submissions on behalf of the Secretary of State; and
 - The written submission of Cheshire Constabulary
- The oral submissions of:
 - Jack O'Brien for Immigration Enforcement; and
 - Hollie Durkin for Cheshire Police

The Sub-Committee also considered:

- The Licensing Act 2003 and Regulations made thereunder;
- Guidance issued by the Secretary of State under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003; and
- The Council's Statement of Licensing Policy

The Sub-Committee in reaching its decision has had due regard for its public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and considers that in reaching its decision that it has fulfilled its duty under the Act.

At the outset of the hearing, legal advice was given on the scope of the hearing and the power and discretion of the Sub-Committee (Annex I). The parties made no representations as to that advice and decided to hold the hearing and proceed with in absence.

The Sub-Committee was not satisfied that the Licensing Objectives would be promoted if the Premises Licence continued in light of the evidence presented by representatives from the Immigration Enforcement and Cheshire Police and determined that the appropriate and proportionate step in the circumstances was to **revoke** the licence.

REASONS FOR THE DETERMINATION

In reaching its decision the Sub-Committee found that

there had been failures to promote the crime prevention objective. There was clear evidence of illegal working at the Premises. The Sub-Committee placed importance on the Statutory Guidance, confirming that employing a person who was disqualified from work by reason of their immigration status was a criminal activity that the panel should treat particularly seriously. The crime prevention objective was positively undermined.

The Sub-Committee also placed weight on Cheshire Police's representations that the premises had also undermined the prevention of crime objective by operating past 23:00pm whilst the licence was suspended for non-payment of the annual fee. The Sub-Committee agreed with Cheshire Constabulary's assertion there had been a pattern of disregard for the law and the licensing objectives in light of this and the illegal working.

The Sub-Committee were not confident that the Premises Licence Holder was still actively involved in the premises given that the Council had not directly heard from him since 2022; the annual fee, which was the Premises Licence Holder responsibility, remained unpaid and as the business was operating at the Premises at the time of the immigration offence was Four Seasons, of which he was not a named director. This was further supported by his failure to respond to the review proceedings and his non-attendance at the hearing today. As such, the Sub-Committee were not satisfied that the Premises Licence Holder could ensure the promotion of the licensing objectives, in particular the prevention of crime and disorder going forward.

Meeting ended at 2.16 p.m.

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