

Public Document Pack



Corporate Policy and Performance Board

Tuesday, 2 November 2021 6.30 p.m.
Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David WR'.

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Robert Gilligan (Chair)	Labour
Councillor Ged Philbin (Vice-Chair)	Labour
Councillor Noel Hutchinson	Labour
Councillor Peter Lloyd Jones	Labour
Councillor Alan Lowe	Labour
Councillor Norman Plumpton Walsh	Labour
Councillor Gareth Stockton	Liberal Democrats
Councillor Angela Teeling	Labour
Councillor Kevan Wainwright	Labour
Councillor Andrea Wall	Labour

*Please contact Gill Ferguson on 0151 511 8059 or gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Board is on Tuesday, 25 January 2022*

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

Part I

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1. MINUTES	1 - 3
2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS)	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion and voting on the item.	
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In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 7 September 2021 in the Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chair), Hutchinson, P. Lloyd Jones, G. Stockton, Teeling, Wainwright and Wall

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Philbin, Howard and N. Plumpton Walsh

Absence declared on Council business: Councillor A. Lowe

Officers present: M. Reaney, G. Ferguson, C. Haworth and J. Hughes

Also in attendance: None

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

	<i>Action</i>
CS9 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes from the meeting held on 8 June 2021 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
CS10 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
<p>The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.</p>	
CS11 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
<p>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 this Board.</p>	
<p>Under Minute No EXB2, a Member requested information on the number of businesses that had previously received discretionary non domestic rate relief that were still trading.</p>	
<p>RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.</p>	
CS12 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT GROUP NOTES	
<p>The Board considered the minutes of the Member Development Group meeting held on 30 January 2021.</p>	

M. Reaney

On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked the Member Development Team for their work during the previous months.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

CS13 APPEAL PANEL ARRANGEMENTS

The Board was advised that following a recommendation of the Audit and Governance Board on 7 July, the Council at its meeting on 14 July had agreed that three members this Board would be asked to attend each individual hearing of the Appeal Panel. The Council did not feel that there was a need to make any changes to the terms of reference of the Appeals Panel at this stage, but that would be kept under review.

The Board were requested to consider the Chairing arrangements for future Appeal Panel hearings. It was also proposed that appropriate training could be put in place for members prior to being involved in hearings.

M. Reaney

RESOLVED: That

1. three members of the Board be invited to attend meetings of the Appeals Panel. This would include the Vice Chair of the Board who would sit as Chair of the Appeals Panel. If the Vice Chair was unavailable to attend, a member of the Board would be appointed as Chair of that particular meeting; and
2. appropriate training be put in place for members prior to being involved in hearings.

CS14 WIDNES MARKET UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided an update on Widnes Market, highlighting the investment which had gone into the Market recently and outlined other initiatives which were contributing to the Market's current performance. The report provided detailed information on:

- The new management arrangements in place from October 2018;
- The Internal Audit carried out in February 2019 and the follow up report carried out in February 2021;
- Current occupancy rates;
- Arrears;

- Investment in the Market since 2018 and new services and facilities which had been added;
- Sunday and Wednesday Markets and new food and drink traders;
- The impact of Covid 19 and the support provided to traders; and
- Advertising and social media coverage.

Members were advised that following on from suggestions by traders, the Council was in the process of arranging the traders to nominate trader representatives who would attend regular meetings with the market management team to put ideas forward, ask questions and cascade information back to traders.

Arising from the discussion the Board was provided with information on rent arrears that had been written off, the market management team open door policy and the traders' quarterly newsletter.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CS15 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR Q1 OF 2021/22

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which presented the Performance Monitoring Report for Quarter 1 of 2021/22.

The reports related to the following functional areas which reported to the Board and 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:

- Finance;
- Human Resources and Organisational Development;
- ICT and Administrative Support;
- Legal and Democracy;
- Policy and Performance;
- Property Services; and
- Catering, Stadium and Registration Services.

RESOLVED: That the Quarter 1 Performance Monitoring reports be received and noted.

Meeting ended at 7.20 p.m.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 2 November 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources

SUBJECT: Public Question Time

WARD(s): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider any questions submitted by the Public in accordance with Standing Order 34(9).
- 1.2 Details of any questions received will be circulated at the meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That any questions received be dealt with.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Standing Order 34(9) states that Public Questions shall be dealt with as follows:-

- (i) A total of 30 minutes will be allocated for dealing with questions from members of the public who are residents of the Borough, to ask questions at meetings of the Policy and Performance Boards.
- (ii) Members of the public can ask questions on any matter relating to the agenda.
- (iii) Members of the public can ask questions. Written notice of questions must be given by 4.00 pm on the working day prior to the date of the meeting to the Committee Services Manager. At any one meeting no person/organisation may submit more than one question.
- (iv) One supplementary question (relating to the original question) may be asked by the questioner, which may or may not be answered at the meeting.
- (v) The Chair or proper officer may reject a question if it:-
 - Is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the Borough;
 - Is defamatory, frivolous, offensive, abusive or racist;
 - Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or

- Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.
- (vi) In the interests of natural justice, public questions cannot relate to a planning or licensing application or to any matter which is not dealt with in the public part of a meeting.
- (vii) The Chair will ask for people to indicate that they wish to ask a question.
- (viii) **PLEASE NOTE** that the maximum amount of time each questioner will be allowed is 3 minutes.
- (ix) If you do not receive a response at the meeting, a Council Officer will ask for your name and address and make sure that you receive a written response.

Please bear in mind that public question time lasts for a maximum of 30 minutes. To help in making the most of this opportunity to speak:-

- Please keep your questions as concise as possible.
- Please do not repeat or make statements on earlier questions as this reduces the time available for other issues to be raised.
- Please note public question time is not intended for debate – issues raised will be responded to either at the meeting or in writing at a later date.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton** - none.

6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton** - none.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton** – none.

6.4 **A Safer Halton** – none.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal** – none.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

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

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

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board
DATE: 2 November 2021
REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive
SUBJECT: Executive Board Minutes
WARD(s): Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Minutes relating to the Corporate Services Portfolio which have been considered by the Executive Board are attached at Appendix 1 for information.
- 1.2 The Minutes are submitted to inform the Policy and Performance Board of decisions taken in their area.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Minutes be noted.

3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None.

4.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

5.1 Children and Young People in Halton

None

5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None

5.3 A Healthy Halton

None

5.4 A Safer Halton

None

5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 None.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

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

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

APPENDIX 1

Extract of Executive Board Minutes Relevant to the Corporate Policy and Performance Board

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 16 September 2021

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB24 TAXI LICENSING - POLICY UPDATES RELATING TO THE ASSESSMENT OF PREVIOUS CONDITIONS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which requested approval of amendments to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers Assessment of Previous Conviction Policy and the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers Condition (Driver Conditions).

It was reported that the Regulatory Committee had considered and approved the above amendments at its meeting on 30 June 2021. The reasons why these amendments were necessary were described in detail in Appendix 1 of the report.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the amendments to the 'Previous Convictions Policy' be approved and adopted; and
- 2) the amendment to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Driver's conditions relating to the requirement to report matters relating to their behaviour be approved and adopted.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community and
Resources

EXB25 DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources, which presented an application for discretionary non-domestic rate relief, under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, for consideration.

The report outlined details of the application from Mersey Weaver District Scouts, in respect of their premises at Unit 3, Ringway Road, Runcorn. Appended to the report was the potential annual cost to the Council of granting

discretionary rate relief.

RESOLVED: That the request for 15% discretionary rate relief from Mersey Weaver District Scouts in respect of their premises at Unit 3, Ringway Road, Runcorn, from 1 April 2021 be approved.

Strategic Director
- Enterprise,
Community and
Resources

EXB26 2021/22 BUDGET MONITORING AS AT 30 JUNE 2021

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which reported the Council's overall revenue net spending position as at 30 June 2021, together with an initial forecast outturn position. The report also included the financial impact of Covid-19 with a summary of Government funding made available to the Council to date.

A summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 30 June 2021 was presented in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 and these provided detailed figures for each individual Department. In overall terms the outturn forecast for the year showed that net spend would be over the approved budget by £4.661m. It was noted that this figure was based on current service demand and forecast of future costs and income levels. Appendix 3 presented the Capital Programme as at 30 June 2021.

The implications to the Council of the recently announced 1.25% increase in National Insurance contributions was discussed.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continues to be limited to only absolutely essential items;
- 2) Strategic Directors take urgent action to identify areas where spending could be reduced or suspended for the remainder of the current financial year; and
- 3) Council be requested to approve the revisions to the Capital Programme as set out in paragraph 3.14.

Operational
Director - Finance

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 2 November 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Resources

SUBJECT: Member Development Group Notes

WARDS: N/A

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To consider the notes of the Member Development Group held on 15 July 2021.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The notes of the last meetings of the Member Development Group are before CSPPB as stated in the Constitution.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS – None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS – None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

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

6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton – None.**

6.3 **A Healthy Halton – None.**

6.4 **A Safer Halton – None.**

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal – None.**

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS – None.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES – None.

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

None.

Member Development Group

At a meeting of the Member Development Group held on 15th July 2021
held remotely via Microsoft TEAMS

Present: Councillors V. Begg, I. Bramwell, B. Gilligan, T. McDermott, J. Stockton, T. Stretch, A. Teeling, D. Thompson and P. Wallace.

Officers: K. Mackenzie and A. Scott.

Apologies for absence: Councillors J. Bradshaw and M. Ratcliffe.

MDG 1	ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN	
	It was moved and seconded that Councillor John Stockton be elected Chairman of the Group for 2021/22.	
MDG 2	NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING	
	The notes of the last meeting held on 30 January 2020 were approved as a correct record. Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic and the local elections of 2020 being cancelled, it was noted that a further meeting in 2020 had not been held.	
MDG 3	REVIEW OF CURRENT PERFORMANCE AGAINST TARGETS	
	<p>LOD2 – Number of Members with a Member Action Plan (MAP)</p> <p>The Number of Members with a MAP to date since the election of May 2021 was 54. New MAPs had been sent to all newly elected Members for completion. The other 45 Members would also be sent MAPs for their annual review.</p>	KM
	<p>LOD3 – Percentage of Members attending at least one organised training event in the current financial year.</p> <p>Since April 2021, 22% (12 of 54 Members) had attended at least one training and development event. The target was 100% for the year 2021-2022. All Members had received an updated training offer for 2021-22, with an added number of eLearning modules to enable Members to complete modules in their own time. It was hoped that face to face training could resume later on in the year should this be possible, with a blended learning approach on offer in the future</p>	KM/AS
MDG 4	LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT UPDATE	
	<p>Borough Council Election 2021 – New Member Induction</p> <p>The New Member Induction Programme had been held remotely via TEAMS. All new Members had also met with Member Services individually in person to submit personal documents. Although the</p>	

induction was held remotely, the experience had been the same as in previous years. The Group thanked all officers who had attended and made the experience for the new Members so positive. It was hoped a tour of the Borough might be arranged for later on in the year should this be permitted.

One member of the Group, who had been one of the newly elected Members confirmed the process had been very comprehensive. She added that the post induction mentoring had been excellent, and that the wealth of knowledge of the officer who had supported her was superb. This echoed all of the comments made by both new Members and existing members of the group, who all thanked officers and Members for their mentoring support which had been done remotely in 2021 due to Covid-19 restrictions. Members noted that should any officers or Members wish to become mentors, they would need to complete a short ELearning course.

One Member asked if it was feasible to hold the Induction at a different time of day. Members recognised that it may be difficult given the amount of time and content covered over a two day period. However, packs were given out in advance in 2021, which assisted newly elected Members. All information covered in each presentation was sent to those Members who could not attend.

Learning and Development E-Learning Courses for Members

Alison Scott from the Learning and Development Team informed the group that 4 courses had been recently completed by Members. New courses were frequently being built and added to the E-learning portal. Members who had used the portal were encouraged to feed back their comments to Alison direct. Any Members requiring support to access the system could contact Alison or contact the L and D Team Direct.

Mindfulness for Members

Alison mentioned the Mindfulness session that had been held at the last meeting prior to the pandemic. The offer was open to any Member or group of Members who would find this beneficial. There was also a number of E-learning courses available for Members and officers surrounding mental health and wellbeing.

Fire Safety Awareness E-learning

A member of the group who had recently completed fire safety E-learning felt some aspects of the courses could be more comprehensive. They would pass their comments direct to Alison for action.

On-line phone directory

Members noted that there was access to a phone directory on the Intranet. They mentioned that IT had recently offered a training session that was useful on general Intranet use. Members of the Group asked if this could be provided again when required.

	<p>New Member Mentors</p> <p>The allocation of new Members to Mentors was considered. Members agreed the Mentoring scheme in Halton was very important for new Members, and equally as useful for more experienced Members who became Mentors.</p>	
MDG 5	ANY OTHER BUSINESS/MEMBER SUPPORT ISSUES	
	<p>Members Mobile Phones</p> <p>Some members of the group had experienced issues with their phones. It was suggested any issues be reported via the IT Helpdesk. By doing so issues could be monitored effectively and any recurring themes identified.</p> <p>Members iPad Training</p> <p>The group discussed the use of iPads, and any training issues they may have. Members noted that they should contact Peter Bressington and the IT Helpdesk in the first instance, and they would be given advice and support to use the equipment, including any issues they may have using TEAMS.</p> <p>Members IT Offer</p> <p>Members of the group discussed the IT offer of equipment they currently received. Members felt that it may be timely to look at the offer to check that it was the most suitable for their needs. The Chairman of the Group would raise this with the Operational Director for ICT and Support Services for consideration.</p>	
MDG 6	DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING	
	RESOLVED: The next meeting to be held in October 2021 at a date to be arranged to be held remotely via TEAMS.	
	The meeting closed at 6.32pm	

REPORT TO:	Corporate Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	2 November 2021
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director – Enterprise Community & Resources
PORTFOLIO:	Environmental Services
SUBJECT:	Energy / Carbon Reduction Update
WARDS:	Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide an update on related activities aimed at reducing the Council's impact on the environment and CO2 emissions from Council activities.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: The report and the ongoing work be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Carbon Footprint

3.1.1 The Council started to measure its baseline for carbon emissions in 2006/07. In 2006/07, emissions stood at 26338 tonnes of CO2.

3.1.2 In 2019/20 emissions were 11354 tonnes of CO2. For 2020/21, the overall emissions have reduced to 9770 tonnes, a further reduction of 13.9%. Meaning that since reduction efforts began in 2008, to date the Council has reduced its carbon footprint by a total of 43%.

Emission from specific Sectors	CO2 (Tonnes)
Fleet Transport	937
Business Mileage	148
Street Lighting	1502
Corporate & School Buildings	7183

3.1.3 The key headlines for this year's figures are:

Overall figures

Overall CO2 emissions for 2020/21 – 9,770 tonnes

Overall KWh consumption down by 7.6% from 2019/20

Overall CO2 emissions down by 13.9% from 2019/20 (this is a higher figure than the consumption figure as a result of the conversion factor going down as the grid decarbonises).

Each sector

Overall CO2 emissions for fleet transport down 16% from 2019/20

Overall CO2 emissions for business mileage down 57% from 2019/20

Overall CO2 emissions for street lighting down 15% from 2019/20

Overall CO2 emissions for corporate building down 10% from 2019/20

Overall CO2 emissions for school buildings down 13% from 2019/20.

3.1.4 The impact of COVID has had a significant impact on CO2 emissions in 2020/21 with reductions across all sectors. The majority of staff have been homeworking and many buildings were closed for a period of time during lockdown. Fleet transport and business mileage were also significantly down due to homeworking and reduced service levels at various times of the year during lockdown periods.

3.1.5 In addition to a range of carbon reduction measures over the years a number of changes have also impacted on emissions such as the removal of Academies in 2015 and the introduction of Care Homes in later years.

3.1.6 Whilst 2020/21 saw the impact of Covid we would expect to see some increase in consumption as staff return to the workplace, however, the overall reductions since the Council started to measure its carbon footprint remain significant. The Covid lockdowns impacted on the ability of the Council to deliver new projects as staff resource in all areas was diverted to deal with the pandemic. A number of projects have continued and details are set out below together with the work underway to pull together a more coherent approach with the developing the Council's approach to respond to the Council Climate Emergency motion.

3.2 Street Lighting

3.2.1 The roll out of the LED programme commenced in 2015. Currently around 16,800 of the Council owned street lighting stock of around 20,440 columns have been upgraded to LED.

3.2.2 All the residential areas and side roads are completed, with current work focussed on distributor roads, secondary/primary roads and Principal routes.

3.2.3 Officers are now in the process of designing up and issuing the schemes for this year, which is expected to be around 1500-2000 more upgrades, leaving the remaining to be carried out next financial year.

3.2.4 Traffic signals are now fully LED, and traffic signs are around 95% LED.

3.2.5 The programme is achieving around 70% energy savings with each scheme. Emissions from street lighting have reduced from 4637 tonnes in 2015/16 to 1502 tonnes in 2020/21.

3.3 Roof Top Solar and Biomass

3.3.1 The Solar PV on Council buildings has generated approximately 974,245 kilowatts of energy, which equates to approximately 230 tonnes of CO₂. The total income to date generated from Feed in Tariff (FIT) payments is £374,238. The capital cost of the Solar PV has been repaid but the FIT will continue to 2037.

3.3.2 The Biomass boilers at Brookvale Leisure Centre and Norton Priory have used approximately 4858500 and 625200 Kilowatts, respectively. This equates to a CO₂ reduction of approximately 1000 tonnes. In addition, they have generated a combined income of £278,778 from the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme. This is currently being used to repay the existing capital costs but RHI payments will continue until September 2034 for Brookvale and July 2037 for Norton Priory.

3.4 Solar Farm

3.4.1 The 1MW solar farm on the former St Michael's Golf Course has been operational for just over a year. This scheme provides renewable energy via a private wire to the Stadium. The capital cost of the scheme was approximately £1.3m of which 50% funding was provided by the European Development Fund.

3.4.2 The system has produced 1,131,467 in year one, which exceeded the target of £850,000kwh per annum. The energy generated by the Solar Farm will reduce CO₂ emissions by 380 tonnes per annum.

3.4.3 The scheme has been impacted by Covid with less energy used on site and more exported to the Grid than expected. The combined costs of the energy used on site and that exported to the Grid under a Power Purchase Agreement is approximately £50,000 compared with projections of around £70,000. A proportion of this income has been used to meet the operating and maintenance costs of the solar farm which amount to £15,000.

3.4.5 The Council has developed plans to extending the farm and connecting it to the new Leisure Centre in Moor Lane, Lower House Lane and Municipal Building. The project is also looking to provide EV charging infrastructure at the Depot and will allow Air Source Heat pumps to be installed at the Leisure Centre, which will significantly reduce the carbon footprint of the building.

3.5 Public Sector decarbonisation Fund

3.5.1 Towards the end of 2020, the Government launched a Public Sector

Decarbonisation Fund of 1bn of grant funding, up to 100% of capital costs for energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation projects within public sector non-domestic buildings.

3.5.2 The purpose of the Scheme was to help make eligible buildings more energy efficient and install low carbon heating measures, for example; insulation, glazing, heating controls, and heat pumps. All bids had to include some form of heat decarbonisation of a building by installation of a low carbon heating technology. For example, heat pumps or connections to low carbon heat networks. The cost to save a tonne of carbon (Co₂e) over the lifetime of the project must also be no more than £500.

3.5.3 The Council developed a bid focussed on the DCBL Stadium, which included replacing the current gas boilers with air source heat pumps; replacing existing lighting fittings with new energy efficient LED lighting; replacing single glazed windows; and installing additional insulation.

3.5.4 The improvements will significantly reduce the carbon footprint of the building and support the Council's commitment to reduce its impact on the environment. The Council was awarded £1,295,846 to deliver the improvements and work is currently being implemented and will be completed early in 2022.

3.6 Transport

3.6.1 A number of transport projects have been completed and these are set out below:-

- Improve the Council Fleet - Vehicle Fleet Efficiency 2 Electric Vehicles (service vehicles, meals on wheels / passenger transport service).
- Small trial introduction of HVO fuel in the summer of 2022 for a small number of public space vehicles.
- Bus Strategy - Opportunity to improve bus services and facilities on key corridors, Strategy document with action plan, started March 2021 and due for completion December 2021.
- Workplace charging points at Council Offices.
- Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) - allowed the Council to implement a number of temporary cycle schemes across the borough whilst in lockdown, all but one has now been taken out. The Runcorn Busway from Halton Hospital to Murdishaw Local Centre has been awarded monies to become permanent and should be completed in the next 12 months.
- The EATF has also allowed us to work with 6 schools to encourage walking and cycling to school when coming out of lockdown. This is in partnership with Living Streets and is part of the WoW programme.

- The Delinking of redundant structures connecting to the SJB and the re-alignment of the carriageway has allowed Halton to add a permanent cycle corridor over the SJB connecting Widnes and Runcorn Town Centres. Initial findings showed a dramatic increase in usage by sustainable methods in the first 3 months.
- An EV taxi event was held in September 2021. The aim was to encourage Halton registered Taxi drivers to consider moving over to Electric / Hybrid.
- The Daresbury to SJB Cycle Link via Manor Park is currently in design and we looking to deliver in 2022-23.
- The Council has completed the roll out of 29 EV charging points in residential areas and plans for further phases are being developed.

3.7 Climate Action Plan

3.7.1 In December 2020, the Council declared a Climate Emergency. The work in this area has been affected by Covid19 and the need to divert resources to address the pandemic. The Council recently commissioned APSE Energy to support the work to develop a Climate Change Action Plan and they have been reviewing the Council's current approach.

The Action Plan will seek to:-

- Collate all relevant projects
- Highlight themes for action
- Identify responsible individuals and timetables for projects
- Guide future investment in this area
- Acknowledge progress to date
- Record ongoing projects as well as those planned
- Identify areas in which action needs to be taken
- Link existing relevant plans and strategies, to raise profile of the topic
- Formalise Action Plan as one, covering all the Council's activity areas
- Ensure the engagement of all parts of the organisation

3.7.2 The initial feedback from the APSE work identifies a number of areas for the Council to focus on. These are around strengthening our policy framework, developing training and support, embedding climate change in our decision making processes, particularly service plans and developing capacity, and resource allocation to support the work.

3.7.3 It is intended, over the next 2/3 months, to work with key Council Officers and the Portfolio Holder for Climate Change to develop an action plan to cover the period 2021/22 to 2025/26.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The approach and policies adopted to date are consistent with overall objective in the Corporate Plan.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Investment in energy efficient measures has the potential to reduce the Council's energy costs, reduce carbon emission and generate future income streams for the Council.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton:

None.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton:

Encouraging investment in energy-efficiency will benefit from lower carbon emissions, job creation, supply chain development and increased competitiveness and security of energy supply.

6.3 A Healthy Halton:

Reducing CO2 can bring about improved air quality.

6.4 A Safer Halton:

None.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal:

The transition to a low carbon economy can support the development of the local economy. Ensuring that future economic growth is decoupled from the consumption of fossil fuels and the inevitable carbon emissions.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Individual schemes would have to be assessed on an individual basis to develop risk registers for each measure.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None.

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

None.

REPORT TO:	Corporate Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	2 November 2021
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director – Enterprise Community Resources
PORTFOLIO:	Resources
SUBJECT:	Corporate Accident / Incident Report 1.4.21 to 31.8.21
WARD(S)	Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To report on the performance of health safety management within the Authority for 1st April 2021 to 31st August 2021.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That**

1 the report be received; and

2 the Board notes the contents of the report including the recommendations and actions for 2021/22.

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 The health and safety report on the performance of health and safety management in relation to Key Performance Indicators for the current financial year is appended.

3.2 It highlights health and safety information.

3.3 The report includes information around the number of actual near misses, over 7 day and significant accidents.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The report assists in the delivery of the Corporate Health and Safety Policy.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial implications.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

The provision of a safe working environment and reduction in accidents is important in order to provide:

6.1 A Healthy Halton

6.2 A Safer Halton

6.3 Efficient and Effective Delivery of Services

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Accidents which lead to lost time have financial implications for the authority (although these are always secondary to our concern for the well-being of staff and customers).

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no direct equality and diversity issues arising from this report.



**CORPORATE ACCIDENT / INCIDENT REPORT
CORPORATE POLICY & PERFORMANCE BOARD
1st April 2021 to 31st August 2021**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 clearly places responsibility on those who create the risk to manage it. The HSE Strategy, 'Helping Great Britain Work Well' highlights that members of the board have both collective and individual responsibility for health and safety. As such, the need is for board-level members to champion health and safety and be held accountable for its delivery.

Part of this includes identifying areas for improvement in health and safety management with the intention of improving staff morale, reducing in work-related sickness absence and lowering insurance premiums for legal, moral and financial reasons. In particular having robust health and safety procedures in place provides safeguards against legal action being taken against the Authority.

1.2 Health and Safety Management System

In order to demonstrate how Halton Borough Council as an employer is delivering the HSE Strategy, this report is to provide Management Team with details of health and safety performance in relation to Key Performance Indicators (KPI). Details of KPI's are as follows:

LEAD INDICATORS

Proactive action taken and any outcomes

KPI

1. **Number of risk assessments completed on corporate systems**
Rationale – creating a safe working environment
2. **Number of Near Misses**
Rationale – action taken to prevent further similar incidents and before injuries
3. **Percentage of registered staff on the Lone Working Monitoring System who are utilising the system**
Rationale – demonstrating effective management of lone working risks

REACTIVE [Lagging] INDICATORS

Reactive action taken in response to accidents/incidents

4. **Number of Significant¹ and RIDDOR Reportable Accidents²**
Rationale – identify accident/incident trends and actions required to prevent similar occurrences
5. **Number of Violent Incidents**
Rationale – identify incident trends and actions required to prevent similar occurrences

¹ Accidents that either require more than basic first aid, incur time lost or arise from a failure in health and safety management

² Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, (RIDDOR) 2013, including Fatalities, Specified Injuries, Over 7-day Injuries, Reportable Occupational Diseases & Dangerous Occurrences

National and Local Information together with performance gaps and incident trends form the basis for the Recommended Actions for 2019/20.

By responding positively to identified trends, the Authority can demonstrate compliance with the recommendations of the Health and Safety Executive's guidance HS(G)65 "Management for Health and Safety".

2. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Summary

COVID-19 still remains as the focal point for a large part of Local Authority working as HBC moves towards a cautious return to office buildings for some staff. Working from home will still be actioned by many staff in an effort to combat COVID transmission and it is still a difficult time for many having to deal with illness and bereavement.

COVID risk control measures are still in place across the authority to protect staff with the added protection of requests to regularly test and encouragement to take up the offer of vaccination. There is also the continued availability of the wellbeing programmes and courses.

There is continued demand for personal protective equipment with central distribution still available via the PPE hub at the DCBL stadium. The Hub is receiving further support from the Government with stocks until at least March 2022.

The pandemic reflection on this current report still shows a significant reduction in accidents and violent incidents compared to previous years pre-pandemic.

Reportable and significant accidents for Halton Employees are currently at a total of 6 across both directorates plus 5 near misses.

Violent Incidents corporately are showing currently as 12 verbal and zero physical incidents. Within schools for this period there were 4 physical incidents and 2 verbal involving racism.

Lone Working Contact Centre Monitoring update – registered users have increased from the same period last year whilst actual use has decreased. The decrease could be attributed to the pandemic and homeworking but as 'face to face' visits resume this should reflect in the figures. To further understand non-use an audit is currently taking place.

Fire audits are currently being actioned across all corporate buildings to ensure procedures, training and risk assessments are up to date in preparation for the cautious return of staff to HBC buildings.

A review of security risks assessments for the 4 main council buildings are also currently taking place in light of the forthcoming 'Martyn's Law' which will place a 'duty to protect' on employers and is a legal requirement for public places to ensure preparedness for and protection from terrorist attacks, particularly in buildings such as stadiums and arenas and highly populated buildings.

Risk Assessments completed on the corporate risk assessment system are 1559 for both Enterprise, Community and Resources and People, compared to 1905 last year. Safety bulletin 2021 8 disseminated to all managers in light of reduction in figures.

Total number of COVID-19 sickness absences since 1st March 2020 is 513. For the current quarter to date (Jul, Aug & part-September) the number of absences is 60. These are included in the 513 above. Circa 34% of absence has been caused by COVID-19 for the period 1st March 2020 to date. Only 8 of the cases were reported on the H & S system as staff working within their normal workplace from 1st April 2021 to 31st August 2021.

2.2 Recommendations 2020/21

The following recommendations are as a result of the accident analysis data for the first half of 2021 from 1st April and will be actioned during the period 2021/22.

No.	KPI No.	ACTION	RATIONALE	RESPONSIBLE
1.	1	All managers and assessors to ensure risk assessments on the corporate risk assessment system across all areas are reviewed and up to date as per safety bulletin 2021 8.	Position statements, section 7 below.	All managers and assessors
2.	3	Lone working audit of all systems, communications, staff usage and any other contributing factors	Reinforce Management Team decision and safety of lone working employees	Health & Safety Team
3.	3	Review Lone Working Risk Assessments and enforce the 'mandatory' use of the Contact Centre Monitoring system when required	Reinforce Management Team decision and safety of lone working employees	All managers - ongoing

GENERAL ACTIONS

Action a series of Lockdown/Bomb Threat Exercises across main Council buildings	2021/22	Health and Safety Team – time period extended due to COVID19
Review and update Health and Safety policies (Corporate & Schools) requiring timescale or legislation reviews	Ongoing	Health and Safety Team
School Audit and Healthcheck visit programme	Ongoing	Health and Safety Team
Programme of fire audits actioned and ongoing for all corporate buildings	2021/22	Health and Safety Team and Facilities Management Representatives/Property Services
Action security risk assessments across main council buildings	2021/22	Health and Safety Team

3. INFORMATION**3.1 Local/National Information**

A series of fire audits have been actioned and are continuing across all corporate buildings to ensure procedures, training and risk assessments are up to date in preparation for the cautious return of staff to HBC buildings. The audits involve checking and reviewing of fire risk assessments to ensure actions are completed and documentation is up to date, building checks, checking of fire routes, signage, integrity of fire doors, training and training records, fire log books, testing records, fire drills, extinguishers etc. This process has been enabled by the involvement of building FMR's (Facilities Management Representatives, previously known as Building Managers, changed at the request of Facilities Management Team).

A review of security risk assessments for the 4 main corporate buildings is also taking place in light of the forthcoming 'Martyn's Law' following on from the Manchester Arena bombing in May 2017. The law will place a 'duty to protect' on employers and is a legal requirement for public places to ensure preparedness for and protection from terrorist attacks, particularly in buildings such as stadiums and arenas and buildings with large numbers of people within such as office buildings. The DCBL Stadium is also due to take part in a security audit that will be actioned by the Cheshire CTSA (Counter Terrorism Security Adviser).

As an authority Halton Borough Council has for many years been working on implementing Bomb/Lockdown procedures and policies in all buildings and schools as well as actioning Bomb/Lockdown exercises in main buildings. The HBC Bomb/Lockdown policy was first produced in 2009. Work will be continuing to review and improve this process.

4. LEAD INDICATORS

4.1 . Number of risk assessments completed on corporate systems

4.1.1 An electronic risk assessment system, based on the Intranet, has been ‘live’ since September 2011.

- Actual number of assessments completed up to 31/8/21 are; 1559

Enterprise, Community & Resources – 1052
People – 507

See section 7 for position statements and comparisons.

4.2 Number of Near Misses

4.2.1 The number reported in the last 3 years are:

2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
12	8	2

From the 1st April 2021 to 31st August 2021 there have been 5 near misses reported on the corporate accident/incident system.

4.3 Percentage of registered staff on the Lone Working Monitoring System who are utilising the system

4.3.1 Lone Working – Contact Centre Monitoring update – registered users have increased from the same period last year and actual percentage use has decreased. The decrease could be attributed to the pandemic and homeworking, however, this should reflect on the next report as ‘face to face’ visits begin to resume. An audit of use and non-use is currently being actioned by the Health & Safety Team.

	June – Sept 2020		June – Sept 2021	
	Registered Users	No's Using System	Registered Users	No's Using System
Enterprise Community & Resources	69	65	82	25
People	267	211	310	89
TOTAL USERS	336	276	392	114
% OF USE	82%		29%	

5 REACTIVE ['Lagging'] INDICATORS

5.1 Number of Significant and RIDDOR Reportable Accidents

5.1.1 The number of significant accidents and RIDDOR reportable to the HSE for each Directorate excluding schools that took place from 1st April 2021 to 31st August 2021 is 6, the same as this time period last year.

Directorate	Specified Injury	> 7-Day	Significant
Enterprise, Community and Resources	0	2	1
People – excluding schools	1	1	1
TOTAL 2020/2021	1	3	7
TOTAL 2019/2020	1	16	28
TOTAL 2018/2019	1	16	89

5.2 Number of Violent Incidents

5.2.1 From 1st April 2021 to 31st August 2021

Directorate	Verbal	Physical
Enterprise, Community and Resources	8	0
People	4	0

Directorate	Verbal	Physical
TOTAL 2020/21	8	1
TOTAL 2019/20	30	12
TOTAL 2018/19	23	10

The 8 incidents for E,C & R occurred within the HDL sites. People directorate had 1 verbal incident involving the HIP team and anti-vac protestors. The 3 other incidents were voicemails received by the Housing Solutions team.

5.2.2 Schools

From 1st April 2021 to 31st August 2021 there have been 4 physical violent incidents and 2 verbal racist incidents within schools.

Schools	Verbal	Physical
TOTAL 2020/21	4	11
TOTAL 2019/20	0	45
TOTAL 2018/19	7	40

6. Risk Assessment Position Statements

September 2018 Enterprise, Community & Resources 1007 People 349

September 2019 Enterprise, Community & Resources 1046 People 418

September 2020 Enterprise, Community & Resources 1255 People 650

September 2021 Enterprise, Community & Resources 1052 People 507

Risk Assessment Position Statement - All Directorates

01 September 2021

		Enterprise, Community & Resources				People			
		<i>Expected No. RAs</i>	<i>Actual No. RAs (up-to-date)</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Earliest Review</i>	<i>Expected No. RAs</i>	<i>Actual No. RAs (up-to-date)</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Earliest Review</i>
20	Home Working Risk Assessment	424	272	64.15	07/09/2021	285	107	37.54	03/09/2021
	Environmental/Fire Risk Assessment	72	39	54.17	15/09/2021	71	43	60.56	15/09/2021
	Fire Risk Assessment					1	0	0	
	Lone Working Risk Assessment	30	13	43.33	02/09/2021	24	8	33.33	24/09/2021
	Manual Handling Risk Assessment	8	6	75	24/11/2021	1	1	100	28/04/2022
	Occupational Risk Assessment	252	185	73.41	08/09/2021	58	23	39.66	23/09/2021
	Ladder Checklist	10	9	90	10/09/2021				
	General Risk Assessment	112	62	55.36	23/09/2021	168	70	41.67	03/09/2021
	COSHH Risk	40	35	87.5	01/02/20	71	38	53.5	23/09/20

Assessment				22			2	21
COSHH (Advanced) Risk Assessment	14	3	21.4 3	15/02/20 22	4	1	25	27/04/20 22
Transport in Depots Risk Assessment	1	1	100	23/08/20 22				
Workstation Risk Assessment	739	427	57.7 8	02/09/20 21	616	216	35.0 6	02/09/20 21
Total	1702	1052	61.8 1	-	1299	507	39.0 3	-

Lynn Pennington-Ramsden
Principal Health and Safety Advisor,
Risk and Emergency Planning
1st September 2021

REPORT TO:	Corporate Services Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	2 November 2021
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director Enterprise, Community and Resources
PORTFOLIO:	Resources
SUBJECT:	Corporate Complaints
WARDS:	All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide statistical analysis of those Corporate Complaints received during the 2020 – 21 financial year.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the content of the report be considered.

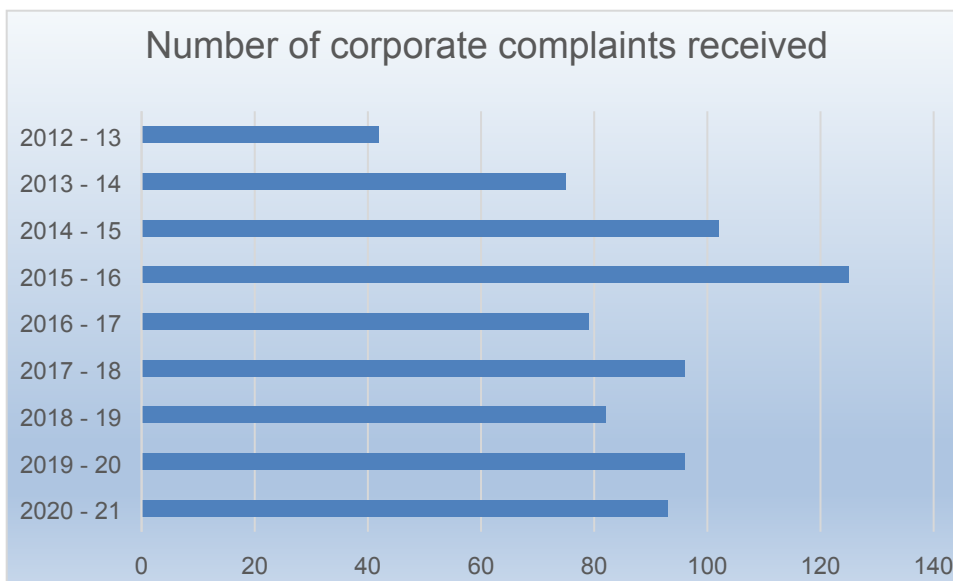
3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Context

- 3.1 The Council presently administers a 2 stage procedure to deal with corporate complaints whereby the public can seek redress if they believe Council departments have failed to deliver a satisfactory level of service.
- 3.2 When complaints are received that have not been raised previously, in the first instance they are normally directed to the relevant department for matters to be investigated and a response to be provided by a Senior Officer from the service.
- 3.4 Should the complainant remain dissatisfied with the initial response or outcome to their complaint they may request an internal review of the Council's actions and position in relation to their complaint. Such reviews are undertaken independently of the service by an appointed Investigating Officer.
- 3.5 If the Council cannot resolve matters to the complainant's satisfaction individuals are advised that they can refer matters to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or relevant Professional body or, in the case of complaints relating to Freedom of information requests that are considered by the Council's Information Governance Team, to the Information Commissioners Office.

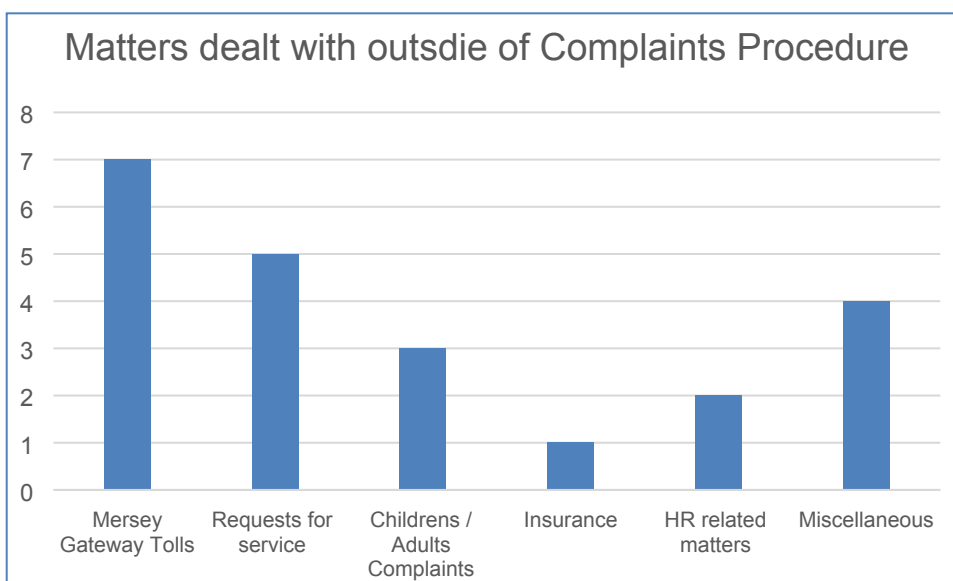
4.0 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS TREND ANALYSIS 2020 - 21

- 4.1 The chart below provides a breakdown of the number of corporate complaints received for each of the preceding 9 financial years from April 2012 to March 2021.



4.2 As the chart illustrates the number of complaints being received rose markedly during 2015-16 but have now fallen back to the average levels over the preceding number of years. This may illustrate the effects of the approach to austerity by central government becoming more visible to service users during that particular period and a greater degree of familiarisation with the consequence of financial constraints since that time.

4.3 Of the 93 complaints that were received in 2020 – 21 a total of 22 complaints that had been received could not be dealt with through the Council’s Corporate Complaints Procedures (CCP). The chart below illustrates the primary nature of those complaints.



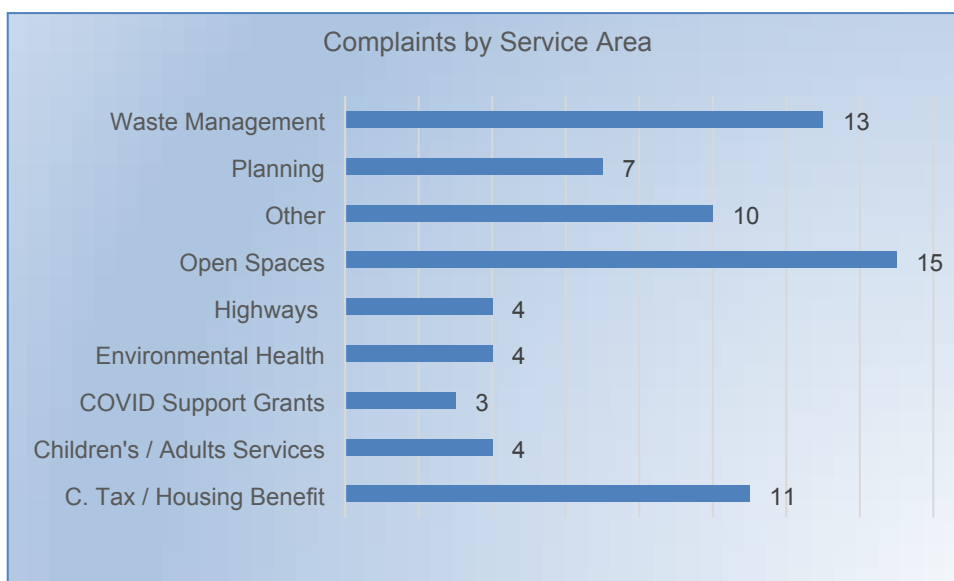
- 4.4 The majority of these complaints concerned matters related to the Mersey Gateway tolling arrangements. In the first instance these complaints are dealt with by the Council's contracted toll operator Merseyflow. Should complainants remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint at stage 1 they can request that their complaint be further considered by the Mersey Crossings Gateway Board.
- 4.5 Of the remainder some were dealt with through the Councils Children's or Adult Social Care Complaints Statutory Procedures. Some concerned insurance related matters, for example damage being caused to a vehicle by an alleged protruding kerbstone and some were employee / staffing related matters. Such complaints were dealt with through the appropriate process e.g. the Council's insurance claims process through internal management procedures.
- 4.6 Some of the complaints were considered as requests for service i.e. where the Council had not previously been aware of an issue, or given the opportunity to address matters. Such requests included enquiries concerning disabled parking bays or requests to cut back vegetation along verges and footpaths. The table overleaf illustrates the primary nature of those complaints that were progressed outside of the complaints procedures.
- 4.7 A small number of these complaints were more general in nature e.g. an individual believing that the Council was not doing enough with regards to economic regeneration or that its open space maintenance programme was inadequate. In such cases the cases explained its position on such matters though in the cases mentioned the individuals concerned maintained their position on the matters.
- 4.8 Presently the Council aims to respond to complaints dealt with at stage 1 of the Corporate Procedure within 10 working days and those dealt with at stage 2 within 28 working days. The table below shows the number of complaints that were received and dealt with at each stage during the year and the success rate for responding to complainants within the relevant target timeframe for the 2020 – 21 and the preceding year.

Number of Stage 1 Complaint Responses		
Financial Year	2019 - 20	2020 - 21
within 10 day target timeframe	33 (67%)	46 (80%)
Within 15 days	9 (19)	2 (4%)
Within 20 days	4 (8%)	3 (6%)
20 days +	3 (6%)	6 (10%)
Total	49 (78%)*	57 (74%)*

Number of Stage 2 Complaint Responses		
Financial Year	2019 - 20	2020 - 21
within 28 day target timeframe	8 (57%)	11 (55%)
Within 33 days	1 (7%)	4 (20%)
Within 38 days	3 (21%)	2 (10%)
38 days+	2 (15%)	3 (15%)
Total	14 (12%)	20 (26%)

* Percentage of all complaints dealt with during that year, at stage 1, stage 2 or both.

- 4.9 Whilst a total of 71 complaints were considered some of these were assessed both at stage 1 and 2 of the procedure resulting in a total of 77 complaint responses being provided.
- 4.10 When compared to the previous year the number of stage 1 complaint responses provided within 10 working days has increased quite notably although the overall number of responses provided within 15 days has remained relatively static.
- 4.11 More complaints were considered at stage 2 as compared to the previous year and the number of responses provided within 33 working days has shown a 10% improvement.
- 4.12 A number of complaints were dealt with outside of the target timeframe and this primarily related to staffing availability and in some cases resulted from the complexity of the issue in hand and / or the need to review preceding communications between the Council and the complainant. There was no specific service area that was subject to delays occurring and it remains standard practice that where possible complaints are advised in advance should it be likely that target timeframes will not be met.
- 4.13 The determination of target response timeframes remain discretionary and it is the case that some local authorities choose to adopt longer timescales than those currently applied in Halton. However in taking account of the continued fiscal pressures being faced by the Council it is considered that the timeframes currently in place strike an appropriate balance between the availability of resources and the reasonable expectations of complainants.
- 4.14 As would be expected the nature of those corporate complaints received covered a relatively wide range of Council services as illustrated within the chart below.



- 4.15 The service areas of Open Space Services, Waste Management, and Council Tax / Housing Benefits represented the highest number of complaints received during the year. However, as each of these service areas engage with the Halton population as a whole to a significant extent and therefore the receipt of complaints as a proportion of service users / recipients is not considered to be a cause of concern.
- 4.16 The categorisation of complaints is broadly consistent with that of the preceding year although slightly more complaints were received concerning planning related matters during 2020 - 21. This may potentially have resulted from individuals working from or spending more time at home during lockdown and being more aware of their immediate surroundings e.g. the times at which building works may start on a planning development site etc.
- 4.17 The following table provides an overview of the outcome of complaints that were received during 2020 – 21. It should be noted that in a number of cases an objective determination could not be made due to a lack of independent corroborative evidence or where the subject of the complaint involved external agencies such as local housing providers.

Complaint Outcome	Stage 1	Stage 2
Complaints Upheld	21 (37%)	2 (10%)
Complaints Partially Upheld	8 (14%)	2 (10%)
Complaints Not Upheld	25 (44%)	15 (75%)
Undetermined	3 (5%)	1 (5%)
Total	57	20

- 4.18 In a small number of cases it was not possible for the Council to retrospectively determine what events may have occurred. For example complaints concerning the alleged behaviour of staff, or the nature of interactions between two parties, where the Council has no objective means of corroborating either parties recollection of events. In such circumstances, the Council provides an appropriate explanation of the circumstances and, where relevant, would apologise for any injured feelings that the complainant had experienced.
- 4.19 As can be seen from the table above the numbers of complaints that were upheld at stage 1 was broadly similar to those that were not upheld. This would seem to suggest that service managers are not dismissive of complainants or consider complaints in a defensive manner but rather that they recognise, and are willing to acknowledge, where service provision may have fallen below an acceptable standard and act to put things right.
- 4.20 In contrast a much smaller number of complaints that were considered at stage 2 were upheld or partially upheld. This would seem to provide assurance that the actions taken at a service level had been proportionate and appropriate to the circumstances.
- 4.22 During 2020 – 21 a number of complaints which were received directly concerned COVID related matters as illustrated in the example below and later in this report.
- 4.23 With regards to complaints that were not upheld this broadly reflected a divergence of opinion between the Council and the complainant. For example one complainant was dissatisfied about being asked to socially distance from his son during a football game which took place at Halton Stadium during the first lockdown period. In that instance, and whilst acknowledging the views of the complainant, the actions of the Steward were considered to have been appropriate in that the seating arrangements were advertised at the point at which tickets were sold and both parties were seated within clear sight of each other and were the only occupants of a rearmost row of seats.
- 4.24 In other cases complaints concerned what was perceived by the complainant to be problems with highway drainage that caused excess surface water to collect on their property. However the evidence available to the Council did not support this view, although further jetting of the drains was undertaken.
- 4.25 A number of other complaints that were not upheld concerned the complainants dissatisfaction with the Council's actions regarding the collection of Council Tax or the payment of benefits which they considered to be unjustified, and others concerned waste management matters regarding policy i.e. charging for replacement bins. In the majority of these cases the Council had followed due process and applied existing policy correctly.
- 4.26 The majority of planning related complaints concerned the belief on the part of the complainant that a breach of planning control had occurred and in one instance an objector to a planning permission believed that a technical report which had been submitted by the applicant was not fit for purpose.

In the majority of these cases the Council considered that no fault had occurred and due process had been followed.

- 4.27 With regards to Open Space services complaints, and as in preceding years, the Council received a number of complaints concerning the felling / lopping of trees and the Council's maintenance of shrubbery and open spaces. In the majority of cases the Council referred complaints to its Tree Strategy which detailed the Councils' policy on tree management, or referred to its seasonal maintenance programme.
- 4.28 In a small number of cases the Council considered that whilst the complaint which was made had some merit it would be inappropriate to provide the resolution that the complainant was seeking. For example a complaint was made that a refuse vehicle had damaged a ramp that was being used by children to play on the roadway of a quiet cul-de-sac. Whilst, on the balance of probability, Officers considered the event had likely occurred, it was not in a position to replace the ramp as this would have been inconsistent with the Council acting responsibly with regards to matters of road safety.
- 4.29 In all cases where a complaint was not upheld at stage 1 the Council explained the reasons for its position and confirmed that should they remain dissatisfied the complaint they could request that matters be escalated to stage 2 of the complaints procedure.
- 4.30 A number of complaints were upheld or partially upheld during the course of the year and these occasions provided an opportunity for the Council to both learn from the events and to provide a suitable form of redress to the complainant. It should be noted that none of the complaints which were upheld were progressed by the complainant to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and this could provide assurance that the Council's actions and remedies were appropriate to the circumstances and were acceptable to those affected.
- 4.31 Those complaints that were upheld were not confined to any specific service area and broadly reflected the categorisations of complaints as detailed earlier in this report.
- 4.32 In all cases where a complaint was upheld or partially upheld the Council offered an apology, and took action to remedy the situation and where possible provide a suitable form of redress.
- 4.33 In some situations however it was not possible to retrospectively amend the actions of the Council e.g. where an event had happened that could not retrospectively be 'undone' as in the waste management example referred to later in this report.

- 4.34 In summary those complaints which were upheld or partially upheld generally resulted from human or procedural error, a lack of clarity in communication and the sharing of information, or some form of technical or property related issue requiring repair or maintenance.
- 4.35 With regards to waste management the majority of complaints concerned refuse collection services and, for example spillages occurring which were not cleared by operatives or bins being missed or not being returned to the front of a property after being emptied. In such cases, and in one other instance where staff at the household waste site were not maintaining social distancing, an apology was provided and the complainant advised that staff would be reminded of their responsibilities.
- 4.36 Three complaints were received during the latter part of the year which related specifically to the Council's administration of the Liverpool City Region COVID leisure and hospitality grant and in all cases the Council had applied the correct criteria in determining eligibility. However in one instance, which was considered at both stages of the complaints procedure, it was determined at stage 2 that the communication from the Council was not as clear as it may have been and in that case the applicant was invited to submit further evidence in support of their application.
- 4.37 in one planning related matter concerning the perceived quality of pre-planning advice (PPA) the Council reaffirmed that such advice was provided upon the basis of what was known at the time it was given and was not the determinant of the actual planning decision. However in that instance the Council in reviewing its PPA case notes considered that they could have been better and as a consequence provided an apology and suggested a remedy which was considered acceptable by the complainant.
- 4.38 A further complaint which was upheld at stage 1 involved matters concerning a contractor acting on behalf of the Council. Following a meeting between the complainant and Council and the contractors representatives a suitable remedy was proposed and accepted by all parties.
- 4.39 There were a number of complaints during the year concerning the lack of provision of a service that was directly attributable to the impact of the COVID pandemic on the Council, and in some cases it's contractors, and the various restrictions that were imposed by central government at specific points in time.
- 4.40 In such situations the Council explained how the limitations had occurred and when services would likely be resumed and / or programmed works to be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.41 In a number of other situations complaints arose a result of system failures, e.g. an individual receiving Council Tax related paper documents where they had elected to receive electronic communications. In such situations the Council updated its records and apologised for the inconvenience that had been caused.

- 4.42 There were also a number of instances whereby individuals felt that they had been inconvenienced by what they considered to be a lack of clarity on the part of the person dealing with their enquiry. In all such circumstances their views were brought to the attention of the individual member of staff concerned and they were asked to reflect on how they dealt with the matter.
- 4.43 Other upheld complaints related to payments not being correctly processed or calculated, delays occurring in dealing with matters and a lack of communication from the Council, or incorrect information being provided by the Council. In each of these cases apologies were given and matters expedited or corrected and the issues raised were discussed with the staff involved.
- 4.44 In 15 of the 20 complaints that were determined at stage 2 of the complaints procedure the internal independent review did not identify fault on the part of the Council. In a further 1 case no determination could be made. In these cases complainants were advised of the outcome of the investigation and that if they remained dissatisfied with the way in which their complaint had been dealt with they may seek independent advice from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- 4.45 An analysis of the complaints received during the course of the year does not indicate that any one service is disproportionately represented and this provides assurance that there have been no systemic weaknesses within existing procedures and the ongoing delivery of services across the organisation.
- 4.46 It should also be noted that individual services will also receive complimentary feedback during the course of the year. Unfortunately, as such information is directed to individuals and or specific service areas, such information cannot be summarised within this report.

5.0 LOCAL GOVERNEMENT OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINTS

- 5.1 The following tables provide a summary of the numbers of complaints and enquiries that were received by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman during 2020 - 21.

Service Area	Number
Adult and Care Services	2
Education and Children Services	5
Planning and Development	1
Corporate and other	2
Highways and Transportation	3
Benefits and Tax	1
Housing	0

Environment Services	3
Total	17

5.2 The LGO upheld 6 complaints and the Council had 100% compliance in implementing their recommendations.

6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Complaints provide essential information and inform the development of Halton Borough Council services and policies. The Corporate Complaints Procedure is reviewed periodically to ensure it continues to conform to best practice and remains fit for purpose.

6.2

7.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Improvement and quality assessment agendas increasingly consider the robustness of complaints procedures and how they are demonstrably used to inform and drive change.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

8.1 It is important for the Council to have robust complaint procedures in place to improve service delivery and ultimately help the achievement of all of its six strategic priority areas.

9.0 RISK ANALYSIS

9.2 An inefficient or ineffective complaints system will fail individuals who want to use it and prevent the organisation from learning from complaints. Whilst complaints can result in positive changes for individuals, they are also a key source of intelligence, which can be used to influence the design and delivery of services that the organisation provides and commissions.

10.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

10.1 All complaint forms are issued with a separate form for monitoring diversity of complainants with regard to age, disability, ethnicity and gender. Unfortunately, the majority of corporate complainants choose not to return the monitoring form with their complaint so information collected is extremely limited. However, upon the basis of available evidence there is no indication that any specific social groups are over or under represented by age, gender, disability etc. which suggests that the complaints process remains accessible on an equitable basis.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 2nd November 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Enterprise, Community & Resources

PORTFOLIO: Resources

SUBJECT: Progress Updates regarding the Discretionary Support Scheme, Discretionary Housing Payments and Universal Credit

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1. To provide updates regarding the delivery of the Discretionary Support Scheme, Discretionary Housing Payments and Universal Credit

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the latest position regarding the Discretionary Support Scheme, Discretionary Housing Payments and Universal Credit, be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Discretionary Support Scheme

3.1 The Discretionary Support Scheme is now in its ninth year of operation. Over this period the Scheme has been developed and amended where necessary by the Board.

3.2 When responsibility was passed from the Department for Work and Pensions to the Council and the Discretionary Support Scheme (DSS) was established, the associated grant funding was significantly reduced by Government. The staffing cost of the DSS Team and a proportion of the DSS awards made, are grant funded. However, the Board previously agreed to carry forward any unspent DSS funds, in order to provide a reserve which would be used to sustain the Scheme for as long as possible.

3.3 Details of expenditure during 2020/21 are provided in Section 1 of the Appendix. The DSS made 610 awards during 2020/21 totalling £170,554. The analysis of applications by type and awards granted are also set out in the Appendix. During the first half of 2021/22 (1st April – 30th September) the DSS had made 162 awards with a total value of £66,592. An analysis of these payments is included in the appendix.

Discretionary Housing Payments

- 3.4 In 2020/21 total grant funding of £527,810 was received for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). Actual expenditure totalled £527,396 representing 1,645 DHP awards and giving an under spend of £414. This compares with 2019/20 where 1,391 awards were made with total expenditure of £469,579.
- 3.5 The increase in the number of awards and total expenditure in 2020/21 compared to the previous year has been caused by an increase in Government funding of £58,223. Section 2 of the Appendix provides further details of DHP spend during 2020/21 and a comparison with previous years.
- 3.6 In 2021/22 the Council has received DHP grant funding of £394,099, which is a reduction of £133,711 compared to 2020/21. Section 2 of the Appendix shows the number of DHP awards and value up to 30th September 2021.

Universal Credit

- 3.5 On 27th July 2016, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) commenced the roll out of Universal Credit (UC) Full Service in Halton. This meant that all new working age claimants must now claim UC, and all claims must be made on-line. According to the DWP as at 12th August 2021 there were 15,968 Halton residents claiming UC. Section 3 in the Appendix provides details of the UC caseload in Halton since April 2015.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 4.1 The Discretionary Support Scheme, Discretionary Housing Payments and Universal Credit have the potential to affect all of the Council priorities.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 5.1 DSS and DHP payments will be monitored to ensure they remain within budget.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 6.1 The eligibility criteria and application process for DSS and DHP ensure that no particular groups of individuals are excluded.

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

- 7.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

APPENDIX**1.0 Discretionary Support Scheme**

The expenditure for the Scheme during 2020/21 is shown in the table below.

Expenditure 2020/21

	£
DSS team staffing expenditure	106,500
DSS awards expenditure	170,554
Total expenditure	277,054

1.1 Expenditure during 2020/21 was spread as follows;

Month	Total Awarded (£)
April	9,173
May	3,067
June	15,114
July	24,239
August	16,786
September	11,391
October	9,803
November	18,112
December	13,293
January	10,661
February	21,002
March	17,913
Total	170,554

1.2 The number of awards and average amount of each award paid during 2019/20 was as follows;

Type of Award	Number Granted	Cost (£)	Average Award (£)
Emergency Support	412	22,710	£55.12

Community Support	198	147,844	£746.68
Total	610	170,554	279.60

- 1.3 The following table shows the number of applications received during 2020/21, together with the number of awards granted, analysed between Emergency Support and Community Support;

Breakdown Of Applications		Emergency Support		Community Support	
		Runcorn	Widnes	Runcorn	Widnes
Applications received	1,936	707	559	381	289
Number of awards granted	610	249	166	104	91
Awarded amount	£170,554	13,593	9,072	83,654	64,235
Percentage awarded	31.5%	35.2%	29.7%	27.3%	31.5%
Applications rejected	1,326	458	393	277	198

- 1.4 Over two thirds of the applications received were rejected and the reasons for rejection are detailed below;

Reasons For Rejection	
Excess income	55
Non-dependent in the property	39
Not liable for council tax	99
Police reference required (e.g. if money lost or stolen)	20
Security check, I.D. validation failed	60
Relying too much on Discretionary Support Scheme	5
Homeless	11
White goods (washing machine & fridge for medical needs only)	35
Not receiving a means tested benefit	47
Alternative help available	306
Requested a replacement item	161
Non-Halton resident	162
Sanctioned by DWP	14
Two awards	41
Three awards	5
Requested cash	62

Application withdrawn	47
UC budgeting issue	6
UC delay issue	1
Payment due	47
General budgeting	102
Payment delay	1
Total	1,326

- 1.5 Of those applications which were approved, the main categories of award were as follows;

Awarded Items	Number
One Adult to last up to 2 weeks food award	293
Additional adult	27
Child pack award	188
2 Adults food award	77
Toiletry Pack	111
Vegetarian food award	4
Gluten Free food award	6
Nut Allergy food award	1
Cold food award	0
Household Items	0
Bedding Only	56
Single Bed with Bedding	147
Single Bed	3
Single Mattress	6
Single Bed Frame Only	1
Double Bed	1
Double Bed with Bedding	10
Double Mattress	36
Double Bed Frame Only	11
Bunk Beds with Bedding	2
Bunk Beds	0
Cot with Bedding	11
Sofa	158
Set of Curtains	160
Cooker	65
Washing Machine	4
Fridge	8
Kitchen Equipment	169
Fuel	86
Removal	6
Cooker Connection	2

1.6 The table below shows where referrals to the DSS were received from;

Sign posting (referrals received from)	Referrals
Food bank	0
Creative Support	15
Children's Duty Team	9
Citizens Advice Team	40
DWP	1180
Fuel Supplier	7
Grangeway Court	15
Halton Direct Link	1
Halton Housing Trust	17
Housing Solutions	15
Halton People Into Jobs	1
Private landlord	1
Local Housing Association	28
Police	0
Changing Lives	155
SHAP	24
Social Services	28
Welfare Rights	5
Brennan Lodge	14
Family & friends	11
Credit Union	4
Halton Borough Council	144
Total	1,714

1.7 The onset of Covid19 in March 2020 has clearly impacted everyone's lives in the whole country, and the table below shows awards made from the Discretionary Support Scheme that are Covid19 related.

Month 2020/21	No. of emergency support awards	Value £	No. of community support awards	Value £
April	30	£1,655	2	£2,686
May	15	£752	0	0
June	9	£597	0	0
July	7	£399	0	0
August	0	0	0	0
September	6	£358	0	0

October	9	£580	0	0
November	5	£334	0	0
December	0	0	0	0
January	2	£158	0	0
February	1	£65	0	0
March	3	£213	0	0
Total	87	£5,111	2	£2,686

- 1.8 Based upon the experience of 2020/21 and the impact of Covid19, there is clearly a continued need for the Discretionary Support Scheme and it appears to be operating well. At this stage it is not proposed to make any changes to the Scheme's application criteria.
- 1.9 During 2021/22 for the period 1st April – 30th September 2021 the table below shows the payments awarded categorised between emergency support and community support.

Emergency support		Community support		Total	
No. of awards	Value	No. of awards	Value	No. of awards	Value
93	£5,648	69	£60,944	162	£66,592

2.0 Discretionary Housing Payments

The table below shows an analysis of DHP expenditure for 2020/21

Purpose of DHP award	Total amount of DHP award £
Benefits cap	£46,611
Under occupancy (Bedroom Tax)	£194,629
LHA reform	£25,648
Other	£260,508
Total	£527,396

- 2.1 Of the 1,645 DHP awards made during 2020/21, 1,010 were to UC claimants with a total value of £342,248.
- 2.2 The table below provides a summary of DHP grant funding and expenditure since April 2013;

Year	Grant Funding £	Amount Spent £	Council contribution £	No. of awards
2013/14	382,452	413,562	31,110	2,620
2014/15	386,553	518,310	131,757	2,016
2015/16	343,725	361,381	17,656	1,516
2016/17	388,533	379,974	-	1,201
2017/18	406,692	412,767	6,075	1,403
2018/19	536,534	535,414	-	1,544
2019/20	469,587	469,579	-	1,391
2020/21	527,810	527,396	-	1,645
2021/22 To 30/9/21	394,099	195,825	n/a	588

- 2.3 We have continued to grant full year awards to those customers who are in properties adapted for a disability.
- 2.4 Rent in-advance cases are only supported through DHP payments if the household are receiving assistance from Housing Solutions, either through statutory homeless duties or those where homeless prevention assistance has been granted.
- 2.5 The Council's DHP grant funding for 2020/21 increased by £58,223 compared to 2019/20.
- 2.6 As indicated in the table above in 2021/22 the grant funding has been reduced by £133,711 compared to 2020/21. This represents a 25% cut in DHP funding, and it is worth noting that other Liverpool City Region local authorities have also had significant reductions to their DHP funding allocations for 2021/22.

3.0 Universal Credit

3.1 As at 12th August 2021 there were 15,968 Universal Credit (UC) claimants in Halton. The table below shows the growth in the UC caseload in Halton since April 2015;

Date	UC caseload
April 2015	720
Sept 2015	1,592
Dec 2015	1,901
May 2016	1,990
Aug 2016	2,171
Oct 2016	3,330
Nov 2016	3,779
Dec 2016	4,122
April 2017	5,941
May 2017	6,185
Aug 2017	7,148
Nov 2017	7,492
Feb 2018	8,210
May 2018	8,969
June 2018	9,242
Nov 2018	10,390
March 2019	10,631
May 2019	9,702*
Sept 2019	10,179
November 2019	10,296
14 th March 2020	10,918
May 2020	14,070
11 th June 2020	15,589
July 2020	15,846
August 2020	15,925
10 th September 2020	16,090
October 2020	16,250
11 th November 2020	16,295
10 th December 2020	16,502
16 th January 2021	16,517
11 th February 2021	16,398
11 th March 2021	16,459
8 th April 2021	16,500
13 th May 2021	16,371
10 th June 2021	16,277
8 th July 2021	16,149
12 th August 2021	15,968

*DWP Revision

- 3.2 The effect of Covid19 and the lockdown is clearly illustrated in the table above on the UC caseload, which after March 2020 shows a significant increase in the number of people claiming UC in Halton. After April 2021 the UC caseload has reduced by over 500 cases, which suggests a recent slight improvement in the local economy.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 2 November 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Enterprise, Community & Resources

PORTFOLIO: Resources

SUBJECT: Collection Fund Progress Report

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1. To provide an update on the Council's Collection Fund position on council tax and business rates.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the latest position regarding the Collection Fund be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Council Tax Position Statement as at 30 September 2021

3.1 The 2021/22 council tax net collectible debit (the billed amount) is £69.512m, to date £37.940m of this has been collected which results in a collection rate of 54.58%, up by 0.69% on the same period last year.

3.2 Comparing the in-year collection rate to the same period last year is arguably misleading due to the number of payment deferral plans which were agreed due to the impact of the Covid pandemic. Last year the Council had agreed to approximately 4,500 deferral plans allowing the taxpayer to switch their payment plan from 10 payments commencing in April to instead start from June.

3.3 To allow for a more meaningful comparison we can instead compare the collection rate to the same period in 2019 which shows a decrease of 0.47% to the collection rate. No payment deferral plans (directly as a consequence of the Covid pandemic) have been agreed to in the current year.

3.4 As well as in-year collections the Council also actively pursues council tax debt from previous years. For the year to date the Council has collected £1.116m of old year debt. This enables the Council to reach the target council tax collection rate used in setting the Council's net budget. For a number of years the target council tax collection rate has been 97% but was reduced to 96% for the current year (2021/22) due to the unknown impact of the pandemic on the likelihood of increased bad debt.

3.5 Table A below shows the impact and importance of collection of arrears. This compares the forecast collection rate to the actual in-year collection rate and

collection rate to date. It shows that in each year from 2013/14 whilst what has been collected in-year is less than the forecast target continued recovery has meant the target figure has been achieved for all years to 2018/19.

Table A – Arrears Collection Rate

	% Forecast Collection Rate	% Collected In-Year	% Collected to 30 September 2021
2013/14	97.93	95.82	99.00
2014/15	96.50	95.47	98.84
2015/16	96.50	95.21	98.58
2016/17	97.00	95.04	98.26
2017/18	97.00	94.62	97.67
2018/19	97.00	94.75	97.22
2019/20	97.00	94.57	96.43
2020/21	97.00	94.12	95.35

Council Tax Reduction Scheme

- 3.6 At the start of the Covid pandemic there was a concern that working age applications for the local council tax reduction scheme (CTRS) would increase on the cessation of the furlough scheme put in place by Government to protect workers. Early on in this process the Council were projecting the cost of a 35% increase to working age claimants, reflecting the peak position of council tax claimants in 2012. The latest available information shows that this isn't the case and numbers over the period have been more stable than at first forecast
- 3.7 The number of working age claimants as at 01 April 2020 was 7,474, claimant total as at 30 September 2021 is 7,955, an increase of 481 or 6.4%.
- 3.8 The cost to the Council of applying discounts through the council tax reduction scheme is currently £10.594m which equates to 13.22% of the gross debit value, compared to 13.11% as at 01 April 2020.

Business Rates Position Statement as at 30 September 2021

- 3.9 The 2021/22 business rates net collectible debit (the billed amount) is £57.623m, to date £31.554m of this has been collected which results in a collection rate of 54.76%, up by 1.16% on the same period last year.
- 3.10 Similar to council tax a higher number of payment plan deferral schemes were put in place during 2020/21 which makes comparing collection rates from this year to last a little less meaningful. Comparing the current in-year collection rate to 2019 shows the collection rate is down by 2.64%. There are no obvious reasons for this and it is envisaged the differential between the two will be reduced as the year progresses.
- 3.11 In the current year the amount of aged debt collected for business rates amounts to £0.969m

Covid19 – Business Rate Reliefs

- 3.12 At the beginning of the pandemic Government announced an extension to the business rate relief scheme for sectors including retail, leisure, hospitality and nurseries. This provided 100% rate relief to all businesses within the sector regardless of their rateable value. The value of these additional reliefs to Halton businesses in 2020/21 amounted to £14.057m. The Council received a grant payment from Government to reimburse the reliefs provided.
- 3.13 In the current year Government have continued to support businesses from the same sectors albeit capped for larger businesses, 100% relief was provided for the period April 2021 to June 2021. From 01 July 2021 relief has been reduced to 66% for the remainder of the year. The approximate value to Halton businesses is £5.383m. Again the Council will receive this funding directly from Government.

Collection Fund Recovery Procedures

- 3.14 From January 2021 the Council's recovery procedures had fully recommenced after a period of restrictions. Warrington Magistrates Court had reopened on a virtual basis which once again allowed the Council to summon debtors to Court to obtain liability orders. This has helped where necessary the Council re-engage fully with enforcement agencies and pursue attachment to earnings and benefits.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 As at 31 March 2021 the council tax balance sheet position showed the Council had a gross surplus position of £1.8m (to be shared with major preceptors). In setting the 2021/22 budgets the Council approved use of £0.4m of the Collection Fund surplus in balancing the overall budget.
- 4.2 As at 31 March 2021 the Business Rates position showed the Council had a gross deficit position of £19.7m. This excludes grant of £14.4m received from Government to apply 100% rate relief to small businesses and the retail, leisure and hospitality sector during 2020/21. The resulting deficit balance of £5.3m can be spread over the next 3 years. Further to this, Government are committed to compensating Council's for 75% of losses on the Collection Fund, which is estimated at £2.9m.
- 4.3 For the year to 31 March 2022 it is currently forecast the income generated from council tax and business rates will be in line with budgeted expectations.

5.0 Implications for the Council's Priorities

5.1 Children and Young People in Halton

5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

5.3 A Healthy Halton

5.4 A Safer Halton

5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

5.6 The financial implications outlined in the report could potentially have a detrimental impact on funding services to deliver the priorities.

6.0 Risk Analysis

6.1 The report is based on latest available information and therefore subject to change throughout the year depending on how the economy continues to recover post the Covid pandemic.

7.0 Equality and Diversity Issues

7.1 There are none.

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

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

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 2 November 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Enterprise, Community & Resources

SUBJECT: Performance Management Reports for Quarter 2 of 2021/22

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To consider, and to raise any questions or points of clarification, in respect of performance management for the second quarter period to 30th September 2021.
- 1.2 Key priorities for development or improvement in 2021-22 were agreed by Members for the various functional areas reporting to the Board as detailed below:
- Finance
 - Human Resources & Organisational Development
 - ICT and Administrative Support
 - Legal and Democracy
 - Policy & Performance
 - Property Services
 - Catering, Stadium and Registration Services

The report details progress made against objectives and milestones and performance targets and provides information relating to key developments and emerging issues that have arisen during the period.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the Policy and Performance Board

- 1) Receive the second quarter performance management report;**
- 2) Consider the progress and performance information and raise any questions or points for clarification; and**
- 3) Highlight any areas of interest and/or concern where further information is to be reported at a future meeting of the Board.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Departmental objectives provide a clear statement on what services are planning to achieve and to show how they contribute to the Council's strategic priorities. Such information is central to the Council's performance management arrangements and the Policy and Performance Board has a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no other implications associated with this report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Departmental service objectives and performance measures are linked to the delivery of the Council's priorities. The introduction of a Thematic Priority Based Report and the identification of business critical objectives/ milestones and performance indicators will further support organisational improvement.

6.2 Although some objectives link specifically to one priority area, the nature of the cross - cutting activities being reported, means that to a greater or lesser extent a contribution is made to one or more of the Council priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 At the time at which Annual Business Plans are developed Directorate Risk Registers are also refreshed and updated.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Not applicable.

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

Not applicable

Corporate Policy and Performance Board– Priority Based Monitoring Report

Reporting Period: **Quarter 2 –1st July – 30th September 2021**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of issues and progress against key service objectives/milestones and performance targets, during the second quarter of 2021 / 22 for service areas within the remit of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board.
- 1.2 It covers key priorities for development or improvement in the various functional areas reporting to the Board in relation to the Council's priority of Corporate Effectiveness and Business Efficiency i.e.:
- Financial Services
 - Human Resources, Organisational Development, Policy, Performance and Efficiency
 - ICT Infrastructure
 - Legal and Democracy
 - Catering, Stadium and Registration Services
 - Property Services
- 1.3 The emergence of the global COVID19 pandemic early in 2020 has had a significant and unavoidable impact upon Council services the full extent of which is yet to become known. The Council, along with key partner agencies, has prioritised its resources upon mitigating the serious risks to public health, the protection of vulnerable residents, and the social cohesion of the local community. In developing appropriate responses to emerging national and local priorities this situation is likely to remain the case for the foreseeable future.
- 1.4 The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress to date is explained within Section 8 of this report.

2.0 Key Developments

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

Financial Services

2.2 Benefits Division

Covid19 Self-isolation Support Payments

In mid-September 2021 the Government announced that the Self-isolation Support Payment scheme would be extended to end on 31st March 2022. The table below shows the number of awards paid at 30th September 2021.

Self-isolation Payment awards at 30th September 2021

SIP Awards	Mandatory	Discretionary
Fund available	£407,000	£275,000
No. of awards	729	329
Current spend	£364,500	£164,500

Universal Credit Implementation

The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) statistics indicate at 12th August 2021 there were 15,968 people within Halton claiming Universal Credit. By way of providing context, in March 2020 there were 10,918 Halton residents claiming Universal Credit, and this illustrates the impact of Covid19.

Processing Times

At 30th September 2021 processing times for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction were as follows: new claims 16.80 days and changes in circumstances 12.97 days.

2.3 Audit, Procurement & Operational Finance DivisionInsurance

2021 has already proven to be very difficult year in the insurance market with challenging conditions continuing due to insurer capacity reducing and increasing rates. The changes in the market and upward pressure on premiums had started well before the onset of the global coronavirus pandemic, which has further exacerbated the situation. It is recognised that we are now in the hardest general insurance market for more than 20 years, not just for the public sector but across all sectors.

In terms of the Council's insurance arrangements, we are currently approaching the end of the third year of the casualty insurance contract which has an option to extend for up to two additional years. The Council is currently awaiting confirmation from the insurer on their intentions in relation to the two year extension of the long term agreement. Experience from other insured bodies has shown that some insurers are seeking additional premium or requiring the insured to accept a higher level of self-insurance.

Procurement – Green Paper

Following the UK's withdrawal from the European Union the future of how publically funded bodies are to procure the goods and services they need is under Government consultation. The requirement to publish tenders in the Official Journal of the European Journal (OJEU) via Tenders Electronic Daily (TED) has been replaced by a UK system called Find a Tender (FTS).

The Government is currently reviewing the feedback provided during the consultation on the Green Paper, which will then hopefully allow them to draft legislation to assist in their stated aim of speeding up and simplifying procurement processes.

Invoice Processing Performance

The Council has paid 93.4% of its invoices within 30 days during 2021/22 to date. The calculation includes invoices where payment is delayed due to the invoice being in dispute. The comparator figure for 2020/21 was 92.6%.

2.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division2021/22 Quarter 1 Spending

For the financial year to 30 June 2021, overall Council operational net spending (excluding Covid) was £25.8m against a budget of £25.6m, resulting in an overspend position to date against budget of £0.2m. The forecast position for the year to 31 March 2022 was a prudently estimated overspend of £4.7m.

Covid costs and loss of income for the first quarter of the year totals £3.9m, with forecast costs through to the end of the year of £12.5m. It is expected these costs will be funded in full from Government grant.

Capital spending at 30 June 2021 totalled £2.990m, which is 97% of the planned spending of £3.071m at this stage. This represents 8% of the total Capital Programme of £35.118m (which assumes a 20% slippage between years).

The updated medium term financial forecast and half year Council wide spending will both be reported to Executive Board on 18 November 2021.

Council Tax and Business Rate Collection

Council tax collection for the 2nd quarter of the year is 54.58%, up 0.69% on this point last year and down by 0.47% from that reported in 2019/20. Cash collection for the year to date is £39.483m, which includes £1.116m collected in relation to previous year debts.

Business rates collection for the year to 30 September 2021 is 54.76%, up 1.16% on this point last year but down by 2.64% from that reported for the same period in 2019/20. Cash collected for the year to date is £29.668m.

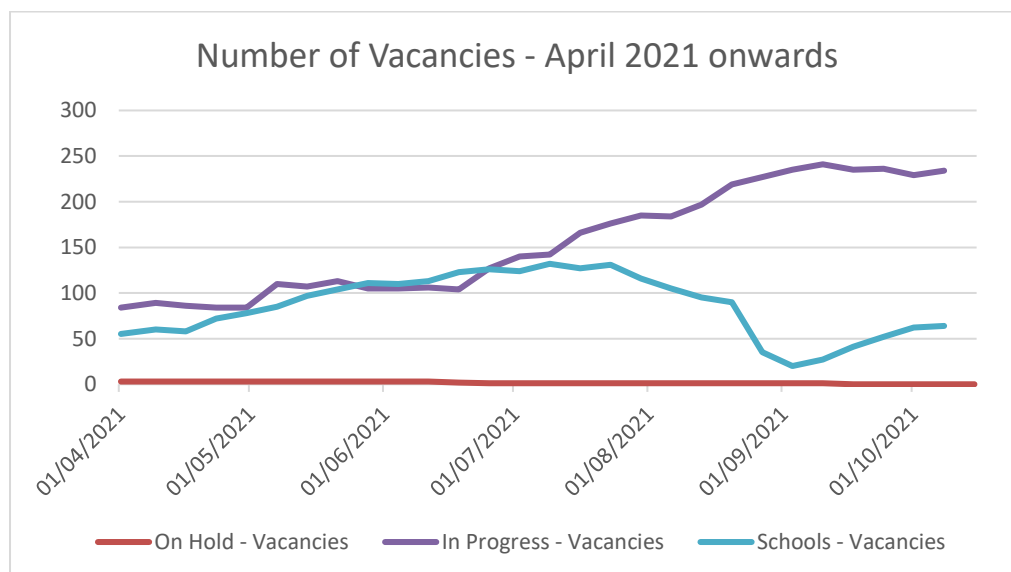
Breathing Space

From 04 May 2021 the Debt Respite Scheme (Breathing Space) gave someone in problem debt the right to legal protections from their creditors. There are two types of breathing space: a standard breathing space and a mental health crisis breathing space. As at 30 September 2021 the Council has in place 97 Breathing Space applications for debts totalling £0.179m. The breakdown of which is as follows:

- Council Tax – 56 applications, value of debt £0.119m
- Sundry Debts – 4 applications, value of debt £0.008m
- Mersey Gateway – 37 applications, value of debt £0.052m

Human Resources, Organisational Development, Policy, Performance and Efficiency

2.5 The Efficiency, Resourcing & Recruitment Service has come under significant pressure as a result of unprecedented demand for recruitment across the council, and schools. The graphic below shows the pattern of demand over the year to date and as can be seen, recruitment to Council services it is at unprecedented levels. School recruitment hit a higher than average peak over the summer and then fell away, although current vacancy numbers are higher than would normally be expected at this time of year.



Given the resources available, there is no scope to intensify activity to meet demand, instead some services will experience slower recruitment until such time as demand subsides.

Consultation with neighbouring authority's reveals a similar picture, with all LCR Council's enduring low applicant numbers for many posts, and the completion of recruitment procedures resulting in no appointment. It is clear that the dynamics of the sub-regional labour market have altered during 2021, although research has not yet firmly concluded why that is. Over the coming month's analysis will continue, however it is clear that some services cannot be optimally resourced because the labour market will not supply sufficient people.

A new Organisational Development & Performance Management Service went live on 1st July. The merging of these two business disciplines into one coherent service model now connects business planning, performance monitoring, and Organisational Development under a single management line. They use performance information (both employee and service based) to inform the development of OD interventions and programmes will now begin to take place, to enhance delivery against the key objectives set out in business plans and ultimately contribute to the delivery of the Council's priorities.

The policy framework developed in 2020 to enable the Council to safely return physical premises and work spaces to operation following the 'lockdown' between March and July 2020 and Nov – Dec 2020 has now been revised and updated. The Policy function within the Department has played a pivotal role in coordinating a temporary policy position which permits safe return to office spaces of staff who have been homeworking, but wish to reconnect with the office environment, from 1st October 2021. A report on the take up of this will be made in the Q3 monitoring report.

As of 1st September 2021, team meetings and one-to-one sessions have been reintroduced to staff groups who remain working remotely. The aim is to re-build team and manager-employee relationships effectively following the disruption created by the pandemic. Guidelines to staff are clear and risk is minimised. This approach has been taken up in many areas and is proving successful.

During the quarter, preparations were made for a return to face-to-face delivery of learning and development activity. This is set against a COVID-safe protocol and has resumed safely and successfully.

Linked to the above, it was previously reported that the Council had considered its options around how employee capability, working practices, premises and technology can be combined to ensure an effective organisation for the future, and the basis of a structured 'Future Work' change programme had been developed. The work associated with this programme will commence in spring 2022.

The Council published its Public Sector Apprenticeship Report 2021 (April 2020 – March 2021). All public sector bodies that employ 250 staff or more are required to complete an annual report on their progress towards meeting their public sector apprenticeships target. Link:

<https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/opacity/transparent.aspx>

The service is currently exploring the appointment of another new hire HR Division apprentice and also developing a career qualification framework (linked to CIPFA approved qualifications) within the Finance Division to initially appoint 2 apprentices.

ICT and Administration

2.6 Return to the Office:

As the Authority begins the process of staff returning to the office ICT Services have enabled all 'green' desks with the required equipment (minus laptop) that staff would have had pre-lockdown/Home Working Plan. We are aware that staff needed to take equipment home at the start of the lockdown.

When more than 50% occupancy is allowed staff may need to bring equipment back into the office to work on 'red' desks – ICT Services will not be able to provide additional equipment for any of the 'red' desks moving forwards – this has to be done from equipment that staff have taken home. If any members of staff needs assistance with assembling equipment on a 'red' desk then please contact the ICT Helpdesk in the first instance. If any colleague feels that it is appropriate for an individual to have a complete set-up in work as well as at home then of course we can facilitate this once an appropriate Cost Code has been provided.

Sickness levels, remained over this quarter at a reasonable level with only a small number of staff testing positive with COVID symptoms. One Stop Shop staffing issues noted and discussed within the next section.

The ICT teams covered all emergency calls over this continued period of home working effectively, with all calls resolved quickly without any disruption to key services. Software Systems and Hardware maintenance plans remain in place linked to out of hours and weekend working to compliment extended front-line working hours.

The Halton Cloud continues to support all 2600 desktop users with an average of 1800 concurrent users connected into services at any one time from home, system uptime over this quarter has been excellent, whilst accommodating a considerable number of changes and adaptations to the requirements profile of our user base over this extended period of the pandemic.

The recent issue with access into the corporate email system was resolved as the sixteen associated data bases linked to the service corrupted during an essential weekend upgrade this in turn slowed email services down, no email or total loss of service was experienced. This issue caused a disruption of service on the Monday morning leading to minimal disruption as the system was reconfigured. The infrastructure teams dealt with the issue as quickly as the technology stack allowed resolving the problem. Given the extent of the issue this caused delays over a two day period. Further measures are in place to limit any further disruption but as with any complex system out of the ordinary one off issues can occur that cannot be planned for given the complexity of the systems in place.

Considerable efforts continue to be made to enhance online meeting capability, with new and innovative solutions under development to enhance hybrid working within Teams and Skype as the authority starts to return to the office environment as well as promotes home working where possible over the next few months.

2.7 The Records Management Facility is fully operational and supporting the authority and its clients with new services being developed supporting the authority through centralising data and improving secure access to physical as well as digital data sets.

- Incoming mail scanning (corporate)
- Hybrid mail (corporate)
- RMU Office now open at Picow Farm Road
- Sefton invoicing contract services delivered throughout the lockdown
- Cemeteries support
- Open Spaces Service support
- Courier service

Warehouse: RMU staff, observing social distancing, are continuing to work on warehouse tasks as required.

Data retention in SharePoint (SP): creating a process to prepare SP data for migration to the new SP environment is underway. This will align with the corporate wide Records Retention Policy.

2.8 Schools ICT Programme: Halton Borough Council (HBC) ICT Services following the restructure has adapted and changed its services to schools and academies in order to meet the changing requirements of schools. The service offers a comprehensive package of support ranging from basic admin machine connection to the council network to scheduled technician visits, and have added services and key personnel supporting the technical requirements to improve the overall support package from HBC. This service will now continue with the extended offer of GDPR support SLA's for all schools.

One Stop Shops

Service Area	HDL HaltonLea	HDL Widnes	Grand Total	Percentage
Council Tax	1564	1798	3362	23.82%
Adult Social Care	1024	1884	2908	20.60%
Finance and Support Services	586	848	1434	10.16%
Waste Management	431	607	1038	7.35%
Corporate Processes	340	375	715	5.07%
Benefits	389	312	701	4.97%
Environmental	293	358	651	4.61%
Highways	213	254	467	3.31%
Open Spaces	222	232	454	3.22%
Unknown	251	178	429	3.04%
Housing Solutions	121	144	265	1.88%
Education	138	96	234	1.66%
Transportation	144	79	223	1.58%
Property Services	60	107	167	1.18%
Human Resources	75	78	153	1.08%
HDL - internal procedures	86	66	152	1.08%
Planning and Building Control	52	83	135	0.96%
Community And Leisure	68	57	125	0.89%
Registrar	34	68	102	0.72%
Revenues	47	52	99	0.70%
Childrens Social Care	42	46	88	0.62%
Halton Housing Trust	30	28	58	0.41%
Legal and Licensing	18	26	44	0.31%
Economy	14	27	41	0.29%
External Agencies	23	11	34	0.24%
Tourist Information	14	3	17	0.12%
HBC - OOH Procedures	1	7	8	0.06%
Families Information Service	2	5	7	0.05%
EDT	1	1	2	0.01%
OLD SHPS - no longer used	1		1	0.01%
Youth Services	1		1	0.01%
Grand Total	6285	7830	14115	100.00%

Contact Centre

Service Area	Contact Centre	Percentage
Adult Social Care	5614	20.98%
Waste Management	5466	20.42%
Council Tax	4494	16.79%
EDT	2439	9.11%
Childrens Social Care	1772	6.62%
Corporate Processes	1227	4.58%
Registrar	1007	3.76%
Environmental	744	2.78%
Highways	670	2.50%
Benefits	555	2.07%
Open Spaces	397	1.48%
Housing Solutions	340	1.27%
Unknown	308	1.15%
HBC - OOH Procedures	274	1.02%
Education	200	0.75%
Property Services	185	0.69%
Planning and Building Control	181	0.68%
Halton Housing Trust	180	0.67%
Finance and Support Services	170	0.64%
Transportation	125	0.47%
Community And Leisure	112	0.42%
Revenues	110	0.41%
Legal and Licensing	57	0.21%
HDL - internal procedures	45	0.17%
External Agencies	29	0.11%
Families Information Service	24	0.09%
ICT Services	15	0.06%
Economy	14	0.05%
Human Resources	4	0.01%
Risk and Emergency Planning	3	0.01%
HHT OOH	2	0.01%
OLD SHPS - no longer used	1	0.00%
Grand Total	26764	1

Legal and Democracy

2.9 Council in July accepted a recommendation to make some changes to the committee structures, which have now been put in place.

At the same meeting, Council approved a revised Code of Conduct for Members. A training session on the new Code was put on for all Members in September with a very high attendance. Recruitment exercises have been successfully carried out for key posts in the Department.

Catering, Stadium and Registration Services

2.10 The Registration Service continues to manage and deliver its statutory duties in response to the restrictions and easements as legislated in the Coronavirus Act 2020. On the 19th July 2021, the restrictions on the numbers of persons eligible to attend such ceremonies were lifted. Therefore the predominant focus of the Service has been to ensure that previously cancelled and postponed marriage and Civil Partnerships ceremonies have been able to take place where requested. The Service has also recruited four casual civil ceremony celebrants to ensure that we have appropriate capacity and resilience to deliver on the expected ceremony programme for 2022/2023. There are also a significant number of statutory Notices of Marriage and Civil Partnerships that will need to be retaken and these are being dealt with in priority order.

Stadium

2.11 The stadium continued to host weddings under COVID guidelines and more recently opened up for reduced numbers for meetings and conferences. Enquiries we have received for meetings & conferences are vastly down on previous years however this was to be expected.

A Christmas Function calendar has been put together with 4 dates in December proving to be popular with initial bookings reaching 50% of capacity.

Decarbonisation work has started at the stadium with the planned works anticipated to take over 12 weeks. This should greatly reduce the stadium's carbon footprint.

The i-Pitch has reopened for community usage with some of the restrictions still in place allowing for smoother change overs between bookings and reduced capacity for parents.

School Meals

2.12 The service is currently experiencing a high turnover of staffing, we continue to use casuals and agency staff as and when required but finding this high turnover along with COVID absences and general sickness is putting pressure on certain catering outlets.

Property Services

2.13 Property Services Operations

Millbrow Care Home- Proposed refurbishment

The proposed refurbishment works at Millbrow, at an estimated cost of £1.5m, have been on hold since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Adults Services are now looking again at their model of delivery and further feasibility works are being undertaken in respect of the service requirements going forward.

Proposed New Leisure Centre Moor Lane

The works cannot progress until vacant possession of the site has been obtained. The CPO process is ongoing, all objections have now been removed and we are waiting for the planning inspectorate to confirm the CPO.

The anticipated start on site date is July 2022, this could be sooner however if the CPO is confirmed within the next couple of months. The tenants have found alternative locations and are both planning to have vacated site by March 2022.

Education maintenance programme

The 2021/22 Education maintenance programme was approved by Council In March. The programme consists of 18 separate projects at a total cost of circa £1.36m. 10 of the projects were completed across the summer period, the remaining projects will be carried out throughout the remainder of the year and all should be completed by year end.

Corporate Maintenance programme

The 2021/22 corporate maintenance programme was approved by the AMWG in January. The programme consists of numerous projects which will be undertaken across the full year. Some smaller projects have been completed, other projects are at varying stages, all the budget should be fully expended by year end.

Mersey Gateway Handback Sites

A settlement deed is now in place, in respect of the remaining outstanding works on the handback sites, this has yet to be signed by all parties however due to some outstanding issues with UU which are yet to be resolved. We have confirmed with Mersey link that once signed all sites will have been deemed to be handed back. Mersey link are on site with the making good works to C&T Garage adjacent to site B, Viking House has now been demolished, the cladding works are yet to complete however. UU have some works to complete on Site A&C other than that any other necessary outstanding work will be completed by HBC using the funds set aside by the agreement.

Crow Wood Lane Supported living development

Design development work has been completed however the project has been put on hold whilst Adult Services consider other options.

71 High Street Runcorn- Refurbishment

Planning approval is in place for the above. The works are currently out to tender, the budget has been confirmed as such once a contractor has been appointed the works will be able to commence on site. The anticipated start date is January 10th 2022 with completion by early July 2022.

Decarbonisation scheme- Halton Stadium

£1.3m has been secured from the Government's decarbonisation fund for works at Halton Stadium, a further sum has also been approved, the total cost of the work being circa £1.67m. Works have commenced on site and are progressing well however there will be a delay with the installation of the air source heat pumps due to the delivery being put back by the manufacturer due to the excessive demand for the units. All other works are progressing on programme.

Brookvale Rec- Proposed Artificial Pitches

Planning approval has now been obtained in respect of the above, and the football foundation have confirmed the funding is in place. The pre start meeting has been held and works are due to start on site on November 8th, with completion in spring.

Pickering Pastures- Proposed new pavilion building

A feasibility study has now been undertaken in respect of the proposal to replace the existing ranger cabin building with a new pavilion type facility which would include a café area. This has been circulated to Open Spaces for consideration.

Broseley House- Demolition

Works were due to commence on site in early July but had to be delayed due to Scottish Power Energy Networks not being able to confirm a date when the internal substation would be disconnected. That work is

now programmed in and should be completed by late October as such it is anticipated that the actual demolition contractor will be able to get back on site in late October, to commence the demolition work, the contract period is 8 weeks as such the works should be completed by the year of the calendar year.

Cavendish School- Internal remodelling

The Internal remodelling works commenced on site in late July and were completed by early September to tie in with the start of the autumn term.

Lunts Heath- Eco Classroom

The installation works to create a new Eco classroom commenced on site as programmed and were completed to tie in with the start of the autumn term.

6 Church Street, Runcorn Old Town- Refurbishment to form HPIJ Offices

The above project is currently out to tender. It is anticipated that, the subject to the tenders coming back within budget, that the works will commence on site in the new year and by complete by the end of March 2022

The Brindley- Proposed extension

Design development works are on-going in respect of the above to ensure we meet the next stage of the Town Deal Funds requirements.

Camden Buildings- conversion to arts/cultural hub

Design development works are on-going in respect of the above to ensure we meet the next stage of the Town Deal Funds requirements.

3.0 Emerging Issues

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

Financial Services

3.2 Benefits Division

Discretionary Housing Payments

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are used to help people who have to pay rent who are receiving Housing Benefit or are receiving a housing cost element as part of their Universal Credit entitlement, and are struggling to pay their rent. Each year the Council is allocated DHP funding from the government that it can use to help people who are experiencing difficulty paying their rent. DHP awards are usually paid for a limited period, for example, for 12 weeks to allow a person to re-adjust their finances so they can pay their rent in the future. In 2020/21 the Council received £527,810 DHP funding from the government and this full allocation was used. On 20th September 2021 the Council was notified by the DWP of its mid-year DHP funding, which brings the total funding for 2021/22 to £394,099. This is a reduction of £133,711 and makes the DHP scheme less generous than last year. Other Liverpool City Region Councils have also experienced significant reductions in their funding allocations, and similar to ourselves will be adjusting their schemes to reflect this change.

3.3 Audit, Procurement & Operational Finance Division

Procurement – Net Zero

The Government has recently issued a Procurement Policy Note (PPN 06/21) that sets out how Government departments, executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies should take account of suppliers' Net Zero Carbon Reduction Plans in the procurement of major contracts. Under the new arrangements, as part of assessing a supplier's technical and professional ability, in scope organisations should include, as a selection criterion, a requirement for bidding suppliers to provide a Carbon Reduction Plan confirming the supplier's commitment to achieving Net Zero by 2050 in the UK. The plan should also set out the environmental management measures that the supplier has in place and will be utilised during the performance of the contract. The new arrangements apply to any procurements advertised on or after 30 September 2021 that have an anticipated contract value of £5m per annum or greater.

Whilst the measures set out in PPN 06/21 only currently apply to major Government contracts, it is indicative of the general direction in which the UK government is travelling and it is likely that similar requirements will be extended to local authorities in due course.

Building Back Better: Government Plan for Health and Social Care

In September the Government announced its decision to raise taxes to fund health and social care reforms by introducing a new, UK-wide 1.25 per cent Health and Social Care Levy. As part of the plans, the Government has committed to investing £5.4 billion in Adult Social Care over the next three years to deliver funding and system reform commitments. A lot of detail still needs to be clarified but key points include:

- Care costs will be capped at £86k from October 2023;
- There will be an increase in the maximum savings limit from £23,250 to £100,000 from October 2023;
- There will be an increase in the threshold when tariff income applies from £14,250 to £20,000k from October 2023;
- There will be an increase in the Personal Expenditure Allowance for persons in residential care. The allowance is currently £24.90 per week but will rise in line with inflation from April 2022;
- There will be an increase in the Minimum Income Guarantee applied to the financial assessment for those persons in receipt of domiciliary care from April 2022;
- There will be more flexibility for persons accessing Deferred Payment Agreements.

The full impact in terms of the Council's finances cannot yet be fully determined. However, the care cost cap will require the introduction of a system to monitor individuals' spending on personal care and will have a significant impact upon workloads within the Division. It is also anticipated that the proposals will reduce the Council's income from client contributions towards care costs.

3.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division

Comprehensive Spending Review 2021

The Comprehensive Spending Review will be published by HM Treasury on 27 October 2021. It is planned the Chancellor of the Exchequer will set out a 3 year plan for public finances over the period 2022 to 2025. Whilst not yet confirmed it is hoped this will in turn lead to a multi-year settlement for Local Government although this won't be known until December when the provisional local government settlement is announced.

The Council has contributed towards submissions on the Comprehensive Spending Review through the Liverpool City Region. This concentrates on three main themes; the need to fund demographic changes and increased unit costs in social care; an opportunity to lay the foundations for the Levelling up agenda and the need to provide local authorities with planning certainty.

Human Resources, Organisational Development, Policy, Performance and Efficiency

3.5 Holiday Pay Entitlement

Following references in previous reports, there had been an absence of clear direction in legal terms on the matter of holiday pay entitlement resulting from voluntary overtime. Conflicting case-law still exists and legal cases remain pending in the UK legal system. One notable case. ‘Flowers –v- East of England Ambulance Trust’ was set to be a leading precedent in this matter, however during the quarter the case has been settled outside of the Court system. As such, this remains an ongoing matter and further advice is now awaited from Local Government National Employers. It may rest on local negotiation between the Council and its Joint Trade Unions. Further updates will be made as appropriate.

The outcome of government consultation on measures to restrict ‘Special Severance Payments’ is awaited, which will likely bring about a regulatory framework that will limit severance payments in a wide range of scenarios. Once the regulations are confirmed, the Council’s Staffing Protocol will need to be redrafted, negotiated with the joint Trade Unions, and submitted to the Council’s Appointments Committee for approval.

The continual need to engage agency workers to meet increased service demand in areas such as adult social care has been highlighted in previous reports, and the situation continues. The HR service is supporting a restructuring exercise in two of the Council’s care homes, with an implementation date of November 2021. It is clear that a large number of vacancies will remain. This will add further pressure to the service itself, and to the recruitment service. Nursing vacancies in particular continue to prove challenging to fill.

In addition to the issue outlined above, care and nursing vacancies are expected to arise as a result of the new legislation requiring that all people working in care homes must be fully vaccinated against COVID19, or have evidenced clinical exemption, by 10th November 2021. We know at this stage that some staff will not be as they are not exempt and refuse to take the vaccine. Those employees will be dismissed from the Council as it will be illegal for them to work in the setting in which they are employed from the 11th November. Whilst some redeployment opportunities may present themselves, it is not certain, thus we cannot assume that employment can continue for those individuals with the Council.

ICT and Administration

3.6 Email Security: The biggest and potentially most harmful security threat closest to all of us is Cyber, with HBC being part of the Government’s infrastructure the whole organisation and its contacts are a clear target – we see this regularly, and while the service can protect you using technical controls, ultimately as an organisation we are relying upon all of our people to understand the risks and to be aware.

As Officers and Members we have to be vigilant in terms of such attacks as in reality no amount of technical security solutions or specialist systems can stop an individual wrongly giving away their secure access credentials in this way.

The vast majority of attacks use the individual’s username and password to log into their own personal or work email account and send out vast numbers of spam emails from that person’s account allowing these spam emails initially to get past security systems as the email address and domain are initially trusted. These attacks can send literally millions of emails in one go, ultimately bringing down the originating email system by swamping the system internally and ultimately getting the domain banned across thousands of email systems. All originated from a user allowing their details to be stolen.

The ramifications for the authority are huge and as users we have a responsibility to not be duped by such attacks – in short if you feel the email is in any way suspicious do not access any links and please contact the IT helpdesk at the earliest opportunity.

The service is happy to offer training to all Officers and Members – guidance is also available on the intranet within the ICT portal. In order to reduce the risk, ICT services will be introducing some key initiatives over the next 6 months – an enhancement to the security of e-mail, better mobile phone protection and mandatory training for new users before they are allowed to sign into the Councils systems for the first time.

Legal and Democracy

3.7 The operation of the newly adopted Code of Conduct for Members will be monitored, and any necessary amendments will be reported to the Audit & Governance Board for consideration in the first instance. Recruitment to some key points in the Department continues.

Property Services

3.8 Carbon emission targets

Government have brought into law a new carbon emissions reduction target of a 78% reduction over 1990 levels by 2035. This brings forward the previous target and will have the effect of speeding up the need to switch away from fossil fuels to heat and provide hot water to our buildings and move to electrically run heat pumps. APSE have been carrying out an assessment of the Council's position with regards moving forward with this agenda and will be reporting on same in due course.

3.9 Agile working/return to the office

COVID-19 has necessitated the need for home working which in the main has proved successful and quite popular. As of October 1st officers are able to return to the office environment albeit to reduced occupancy levels which will be reviewed moving forward. This shift in working arrangements has presented us with the opportunity to embrace more flexible working arrangements on a more permanent basis in the future. This in turn could enable us to make better and more cost effective use of our accommodation and potentially enable us to vacate space and generate more income from renting that space out to other organisations, hence it is important that this opportunity is acted upon.

3.10 Ventilation guidance for safe use of buildings

As a result of the COVID pandemic new guidance has been issued in respect of the importance of ventilation within buildings, the majority of our building have now been surveyed to assess ventilation levels and determine where there may be areas that are poorly ventilated. CO2 monitoring will be rolled out over the coming months in areas where we have determined there may be issues to help assess the quality of air. Where there are problem areas these can then be looked at to determine how best to proceed.

4.0 High Priority Equality Actions

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








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

5.0 Performance Overview

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

Financial Management

Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
FS 01a	Report 2022-25 Medium Term Financial Strategy to Executive Board - November 2021.	
FS 01b	Report 2022/23 revenue budget, capital programme and council tax to Council - March 2022.	
FS 02c	Provide quarterly monitoring and forecasting reports on the overall budget to Executive Board.	
FS 03a	Publish the Statement of Accounts following external audit and the Annual Governance Statement by 30th September 2021.	
FS 04a	Establish Treasury Management Policy and report to Council - March 2021.	
FS04b	Provide monitoring reports to Executive Board on a bi-annual basis.	
FS 05a	Establish and report prudential indicators to Council - March 2021.	

Supporting Commentary

FS 01a

On target to report the Medium Term Financial Strategy to Executive Board in November 2021. The financial forecast is being regularly updated.

FS 01b

Work has commenced with Management Team and Budget Working Group to develop budget proposals for 2022/23.

FS 02c

Quarter 1 monitoring report on the overall budget was reported to Executive Board on 16 September 2021. Quarter 2 budget monitoring position will be reported to Executive Board on 18 November 2021.

FS 03a

The Council's External Auditor (Grant Thornton UK LLP) has not yet fully commenced with the audit of the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts which has resulted in the deadline not being met.

FS 04a

Treasury Management Policy reported to Council on 03 March 2021

FS04b

On track to report to Executive Board on 18 November 2021

FS 05a

Prudential indicators reported to Council on 03 March 2021

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
FS LI 01	Receive an unqualified external audit opinion on the accounts.	Awaited	Yes	TBC	?	n/a
FS LI 02	Receive positive comment (annually) from the External Auditor relating to the financial standing of the Council and the systems of internal financial control.	Awaited	Yes	TBC	?	n/a
FS LI 03	Proportion of Council Tax that was due that was collected	94.14%	94.25%	54.58%	✓	↑
FS LI 04	The percentage of Business Rates which should have been received during the year that were received	96.18%	97.50%	54.76%	✓	↑
FS LI 05	Average time for processing new claims (Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reduction)	16.22	18	16.80	✓	↔
FS LI 07	Proportion of all supplier invoices paid within 30 days (including disputed invoices)	92.6%	93.0%	93.4%	✓	↑

Supporting Commentary

FS LI 01

External audit not expected to provide audit opinion before the end of January 2022 at the earliest

FS LI 02

External audit not expected to provide a conclusion on the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources until January 2022 at the earliest

FS LI 03

This is up by 0.69% compared with the same point last year but down by 0.47% from 2019/20. There remain uncertainty on council tax levels for the remainder of the year pending the national and local economic recovery to the pandemic.

FS LI 04

This is up by 1.16% compared with the same point last year but down by 2.64% from 2019/20. There remain uncertainty on business rate levels for the remainder of the year pending the national and local economic recovery to the pandemic.

Policy, People, Performance & Efficiency Service

Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
PPPE 01a	Promote and take forward the delivery of actions identified within the Organisational Development Strategy June 2021	
PPPE 01d	Embed knowledge and skills gained from first phase of Senior Leadership and Management Development Programme (MBA) December 2021.	
PPPE 02b	Establish 10 new apprentice placements within Council services, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation March 2022	
PPPE 04b	Implement resourcing plans with service management in appropriate areas December 2021.	
PPPE 04c	Ongoing monitoring of agency usage and spend April, September, December 2021, and March 2022.	

Supporting Commentary

PPPE 01a

This is progressing well. Some examples given in this report (refer to Key Developments) and the new Organisational Development & Performance Management structure above will support this further.

PPPE 01d

On track. Projects delivered in Autumn by Cohort 1 will be evaluated and assessed.









PPPE 02b









2 commenced in quarter.

PPPE 04b/c

Refer to narrative in Emerging Issues section.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
PPPE LI 01	The number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness (Corporate)	10.02 (Days)	9.5 (Days)	5.58 (Days)		
PPPE LI 02	Percentage of Employees without sickness	73.74	70.00	79.48		
PPPE LI 03	Total Agency Worker Usage (number of placements – year to date)	746	650	316		
PPPE LI 04	Total Agency Worker Cost (gross cumulative cost – year to date)	£3.7M	£2.5M	£2,162,475		

Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
PPPE LI 05	The percentage of top 5% of earners that are: ¹					
	a) Women	63.19%	55%	63.16%		
	b) from BME communities	2.78%	2.00%	2.60%		
	c) with a disability	0.89%	8.00%	1.25%		
PPPE LI 06	Average time to recruit (Applicant Tracking System reported figure)	11 days	13 days	9.9%		

Supporting Commentary

PPPE LI 01

Figure largely as expected at this stage in year (2.56 Q1 and 3.02 Q2). At Q2 in 2021/21 this indicator was at 8.53 days.

PPPE LI 02

Positive, and aligned with anecdotal information elsewhere in report (was 80.65% at this time last year)

PPPE LI 03

Q2 outturn suggests target likely to be missed. Associated narrative included in Emerging Issues section above.

PPPE LI 04

Q2 outturn suggests target likely to be missed. Associated narrative included in Emerging Issues section above.

PPPE LI 05

Positive movement on component indicator (a), which follows improvement in 2020/21.

Fluctuation exists in (b) and (c), due to turnover.






It should be noted that recruitment in to the top 5% of earners is generally very limited, and as such scope for significant change is low, however as noted in Emerging Issues above there are 3 senior recruitments taking pace over the summer.

PPPE LI 06

Positive outturn, particularly in context of increased demand. Better than last quarter (11.5) and same time last year (12). This is reflective of the effort the team are putting in to complete recruitment as quickly as they can.

ICT and Administrative Support Services

Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
ICT 01a	Continued Enhancement of the virtualization platform to enhanced or new technologies - March 2022.	
ICT 01b	Further development of Cloud Services Platform - March 2021.	
ICT 01c	SharePoint and Records Management enhancements - March 2021.	
ICT 01d	Interactive Web Services Enhancement and further SharePoint Integration - March 2021.	
ICT 02a	Continuing improvements, enhancements and commercial use of Cloud system - March 2021.	

Supporting Commentary

ICT 01a

Enhancements to the Halton Cloud platform continues at pace with the integration of ICT ICT 01b Vendor cloud based systems and services within our own platform.

ICT 01b

Enhancement planned in line with vendor software release to enhance functionality and the user experience

ICT 01c

Enhancement planned in line with vendor software release to enhance functionality and the user experience



ICT 01d





Enhancement planned in line with vendor software release to enhance functionality and the user experience

ICT 02a

All of the authorities' internal and external clients now successfully utilise this solution – delivering HBC services to partners, clients and internal users.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
ICT LI01	Average availability of the Council's operational servers (%).	100	99.00	99%		

Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
ICT LI02	Average availability of the Councils WAN infrastructure (%).	100	99.00	100%		
ICT LI03	School Support SLA: % of calls responded to within <u>agreed</u> target*:					
	a) Priority 1	100	85.00	85%		
	b) Priority 2	100	90.00	90%		
	c) Priority 3	100	90.00	95%		
	d) Priority 4	100	95.00	95%		

ICT LI01

Remains in line with target, linked to Halton Cloud Data Centre configuration. A real achievement given the considerable levels of work undertaken over this period mainly out of hours.

ICT LI02




Remains in line with target. Inclusive of planned down time. Especially during these times when connectivity to the centre is key.

ICT LI 03

Again, this has been an unusual time with schools impacted by the pandemic and the support required changing on a daily basis with issues also changing on a daily basis. The move to online learning has now impacted the schools especially those that would not upgrade their data connections due to cost, again the Schools and importantly the Corporate teams have worked hard to support any issues that may arise.

Legal & Democracy

Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
LD 01	Review constitution - May 2021 .	
LD 02a	To ensure that all members have been given the opportunity of a having a MAP meeting where desired.	
LD 02b	To induct all new members by October 2021 .	

Supporting Commentary

LD 01

The revised Constitution has been approved.









LD 02a

All members are offered a MAP meeting.

LD 02b

All new Members have been inducted.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	20 /21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
LD LI 01	No. Of Members with Personal Development Plans (56 Total).	56 (100%)	54	48 89%		
LD LI 03	Average Time taken to issue prosecutions from receipt of full instructions (working days).	10 (Days)	10 (Days)	10 (Days)		
LD LI 04	Average time taken to file application for Care proceedings at Court from receipt of all written evidence from client department (working days).	3 (Days)	3 (Days)	3 (Days)		
LD LI 05	% of Executive Board minutes published within 5 working days after the meeting.	100%	100%	100%		

Supporting Commentary**LD LI 01**

All newly elected Members have been offered a PDP.

LD LI 03 - LD LI 05

All newly elected Members have been offered a PDP.

The target has been met.

Community & Environment**Key Objectives / milestones**

Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
CE 0 1a	Deliver a promotion and educational campaign (school meals) - September 2021 and January 2022 .	TBC

Supporting Commentary

TBC


Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
CE LI 01	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Primary Schools.	Data unavailable	75%	TBC		

Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
CE LI 02	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Secondary Schools.	Data unavailable	60%	TBC		
CE LI 03	Take up of school lunches (%) – primary schools.	Data unavailable	60%	TBC		
CE LI 04	Take up of school lunches (%) – secondary schools.	Data unavailable	50%	TBC		

Property Services

Key Objectives / milestones

Ref	Milestones	Q2 Progress
EEP 02a	Proposed new Leisure Centre, Moor Lane- Commence works on site by 31st March 2022	
EEP 02b	Crow Wood Lane, Assisted residential development- commence on site by 31st December 2021	
EEP 02c	Deliver agreed programmed maintenance programme to Corporate Buildings by 31st March 2022.	
EEP02d	Deliver agreed programmed maintenance programme to schools by 31st March 2022.	
EEP 02e	Deliver agreed decarbonisation works to Stadium by 31st December 2021.	

Supporting Commentary

EEP 02a

The CPO Process is on-going. All objections have been withdrawn. We are now just waiting for the planning inspectorate to confirm the CPO. The existing tenants have found alternative locations and are working to vacate site by Spring 2022.

EEP 02b

The project has currently been put on hold by Commissioning as such this milestone will not be achieved.

EEP 02c

The programmed maintenance programme to corporate building is progressing and it is anticipated that the available budget will all be spent by year end.










EEP02d

The programmed maintenance programme to schools is progressing well, there are 18 separate projects on the programme, 10 of which have been completed across the summer period, the remaining projects are due to be completed by year end.

EEP 02e

The works are currently on site and progressing well, however the delivery of the air source heat units has been significantly delayed as a result of current demand so that element of the work will not be completed by December 31st.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Measure	20 / 21 Actual	21 / 22 Target	Q2 Actual	Q2 Progress	Direction of travel
EEP LI 01	Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions indicator (Tonnes CO ₂ e).	11354	11240	n/a		n/a
EEP LI 02	Capital receipts	£614,532, 82% of the target achieved	£1.5m based on an estimate for the amount and timing of receipts as at 20/5/2021	£280,000	19% of the target 	
EEP LI 03	Commercial and investment portfolio – rent receivable against the budget to monitor receipt of income of rents and service charges.	Investment £39,325 Commercial £319,573	Investment £44,740 Commercial £609,270	Investment £22,150 Commercial £164,706	27% of the target	
EEP LI 04	Occupancy rates of commercial and investment portfolio.	100 % Investment 90% commercial	100 % Investment 90% commercial	100 % Investment 90% commercial		
EEP LI 05	Occupancy of Widnes Market Hall.	93%	94%	97%		
EEP LI 06	Unit Costs – Office accommodation space (reported annually).	1069sqm	1058sqm	n/a		n/a

Supporting Commentary**EEP LI 01**

The figures are collated annually and therefore interim updates are not possible.

CO₂ emissions for 2020/21 amounted to 9770 which equated to a 13.9% overall reduction from 2019/20. Energy consumption in buildings actually fell by 7.6%, but with reductions in each of the other sectors together with a reduction in the kw/h-CO₂ conversion factor due to the increasing mix of renewal energy being generated the overall CO₂ emissions have reduced by almost 14%.

COVID has had a significant impact on CO₂ emissions in 2020/21 with reductions across all sectors. Clearly the majority of staff have been homeworking and many buildings were closed for a period of time during lockdown. Fleet transport and business mileage were also significantly down due to homeworking.

The breakdown is as follows:- School Buildings 2798t, Corporate buildings 4385t, Unmetered supply 1502t, Fleet Transport 937t, & Business Mileage 148t. The target for 2021/22 has been set at 9672 tonnes CO₂e, a 1% reduction, this will be difficult to achieve given the very unusual circumstances in 2020/21 as a result of COVID.

EEP LI 02

Two completions during Q2, 4/5 Dock Rd Widnes and land sold to Aldi at Green Oaks Way Widnes

Transactions underway of Linner Cottage and outbuildings and yard, Widnes; 67 Edinburgh Road Widnes, land Croft St Widnes is a new lease.

EEP LI 03

The income received has been affected by request from a number of occupiers for further rent holidays and non-payment of rent due to Covid situation. Asset management are working with colleagues in income recovery. The tenant of no 5 Granville Street has vacated and the unit is on the market. Other vacant units are, 6 Church Street Runcorn to be used for HPIJ and the former Frankie and Bennies unit at the Hive. It is unlikely that the units will be re-let until Q3. It is uncertain whether the income target will be achieved by Q4

EEP LI 04

There are 8 vacant properties which will be on the market or unable to market until refurbishment works eg 71 High St Runcorn or clarifying planning status eg the former bus depot Moor Lane Widnes have been completed

EEP LI 05

The Market management team continue to proactively engage with potential traders as a result the current rate has gone up to 97% with only 5 stalls vacant.

EEP LI 06

This KPI is only reported annually therefore interim figures cannot be given




7.0 Financial Statements

To be confirmed at the earliest opportunity





8.0 Application of Symbols

Symbols are used in the following manner:

Progress Symbols

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

Direction of Travel Indicator

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