

Public Document Pack



Corporate Policy and Performance Board

Tuesday, 4 June 2024 6.30 p.m.
Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

S. Young

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Robert Gilligan (Chair)	Labour
Councillor Ged Philbin (Vice-Chair)	Labour
Councillor Sian Davidson	Conservative
Councillor Noel Hutchinson	Labour
Councillor Rosie Leck	Labour
Councillor Geoffrey Logan	Labour
Councillor Alan Lowe	Labour
Councillor Katy McDonough	Labour
Councillor Angela McInerney	Labour
Councillor Norman Plumpton Walsh	Labour
Councillor Sharon Thornton	Labour

*Please contact Kim Butler on 0151 511 7496 or
kim.butler@halton.gov.uk for further information.*

The next meeting of the Board is on Tuesday, 3 September 2024

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

Part I

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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, 23 January 2024 in the Civic Suite - Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chair), J. Bradshaw, Hutchinson, Logan, A. Lowe, A. McInerney, Thornton and Wainwright

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

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: None

Also in attendance: None

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

	<i>Action</i>
CS25 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes from the meeting held on 7 November 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p>	
CS26 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
<p>The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.</p>	
CS27 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 the Board.</p>	
CS28 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT GROUP NOTES	
<p>The Board considered the minutes of the Member Development Group meeting held on 26 July 2023.</p>	
<p>Members commented that the group was progressing well.</p>	
<p>RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.</p>	
CS29 THE CORPORATE PLAN - THE BIG CONVERSATION	

ANALYSIS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Following a report which the Board received at their November meeting, a presentation was delivered to share the analysis of “The Big Conversation” and outlined the next steps.

The Board were reminded that the “The Big Conversation” was about engaging with the public so that they understood the challenges that the Council was facing. It was an approach between the Council and those who lived or worked in Halton to work together to create an improved Borough in all aspects of everyday life. A stakeholder analysis and a Communication Plan had been developed in order to generate and establish as many opportunities as possible to involve all stakeholders in many different ways.

The presentation set out the five themes i.e.

- Improving health, promoting wellbeing and supporting greater independence;
- Building a strong, sustainable local economy;
- Supporting children, young people and families;
- Tackling inequality, helping those who are most in need; and
- Working towards a greener future.

In addition to these, stakeholders were asked to identify additional themes which they felt were significant and those were the environment, local economy and housing.

Members were advised that the consultation closed on 30 November 2023 and the total number of responses received was 1,076. A breakdown of these by source was outlined in the report.

The presentation also outlined the Corporate Plan timeline; During January 2024, key priorities would be identified and agreed with a summary to be shared with stakeholders via drop-in sessions. The Plan would then be finalized and approved at key forums before being launched in April 2024.

Members noted the information presented to them and the following comments were noted from discussions:

- The priorities identified were the same as the current ones;

- There was a concern that the outcome of this consultation would create further work for staff and add to existing workloads; and
- It was suggested that the Council should promote the success of the consultation and the number of people/stakeholders that was reached via social media. 1,076 people responded to the consultation, however, over 12,000 people were indirectly contacted e.g. via social media, partner's newsletters and flyers.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the Board continues to endorse the approach to facilitate the implementation of a new Corporate Plan.

CS30 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS

The Board considered a report which provided a statistical analysis of the Corporate Complaints received during the 2022-23 financial year.

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

At present, the Council aimed to respond to complaints at stage 1 of the procedures within 10 working days and those at stage 2 within 28 working days. There had been a delay in some areas but work was ongoing to improve those response times.

In addition, the report also provided a summary on complaints and queries that had been received by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) during 2022-23. It was noted that the Ombudsman had made 22 decisions during the year and upheld 4 complaints.

It was noted that the LGO were due to introduce a new Joint Complaint Handling Code which would apply to all Local Authorities in England, however, it would not replace the Children's and Adults statutory complaint processes. The Council would be undertaking an assessment of its current procedures against the Code in early 2024.

Operational
Director, Legal
and Democratic
Services

Members queried the data presented in terms of the number of complaints due to the amount of emails they receive from constituents each month. They were reminded that the data demonstrated the number of complaints taken through the formal corporate procedures. Whilst Members may receive emails, these may be determined as queries or general service requests which could be dealt with quickly within service areas.

Some Members of the Board also queried what had happened to the Corporate Complaints Committee which used to review complaints before they were escalated to the LGO. Members were reminded that this Committee had been disbanded some time ago when the Council's procedures were reviewed and the two stage process was introduced, in line with LGO guidance. Officers agreed to confirm the timeline for these changes in due course.

RESOLVED: That the content of the report be noted.

CS31 CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

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

Operational
Director - Policy,
Planning and
Transportation

Since it started to measure its carbon emissions in 2006/2007, overall emissions had reduced in the Council's operations from 26,338 tonnes of CO2 to 8,740 tonnes.

In 2017, the Government reset the baseline in the expectation that public bodies would reduce their carbon emissions by 50% by 2031. In 2017, the Council's baseline was 14,811 carbon tonnes and in 2022/23, it had managed to reduce its emissions to 8,740 tonnes; a reduction of 40.9%. Emissions were 9,327 tonnes of CO2; a further annual reduction of 6.29%

The report outlined a number key projects which had been completed or commenced during 2023 which included:

- Improvements to Council buildings, including solar power schemes and solar farms at different sites;
- Electric vehicle charging points at Lowerhouse Lane and Picow Farm depots;
- Increased climate change awareness across the Council e.g. e-learning training courses for Officers and Members and establishment of a Climate

Change Advisory Group;

- Launch of the Big Halton Forest Project which will work with individuals, communities, organisations, and businesses with the aim of adding a new tree for every citizen by 2030 across the Borough;
- Work undertaken to influence the supply chain to improve sustainability in the supply of goods and services within all published tenders to include social, environmental and economic considerations;
- The Council has engaged in a number of projects to help address climate change relating to private and social housing;
- Work commenced with the Liverpool City Region on the Hydrogen Strategy; and
- Halton received funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and to date, grants of circa £15,000 had been provided to local groups to improve green space, create wildflower spaces and develop food growing initiatives.

Members noted the report and raised the following questions:

- Was possible to include a provision within planning applications that developments should include electric chargers. Officers acknowledged that this was a good point and provided reassurance that this would be considered as part of the consultation on a new Supplementary Planning Document, detailed in section 5.10 of the report;
- What provision will be considered for homes without off-road parking i.e. terrace houses and flats?;
- If new developments included solar panels on new homes, would these belong to the homes or be a leasing arrangement?
- What are the fee tariffs for solar panels in Halton?

Officers agreed to report back to Members in due course.

The Chair acknowledged the questions raised and suggested that some might be more applicable for the consideration of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board.

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

PAYMENTS, UNIVERSAL CREDIT, AND THE LOCAL SCHEME FOR WAR PENSIONS

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which provided updates regarding the delivery of the Government's Household Support Fund, Discretionary Housing Payments, Universal Credit and the Housing Benefit Local Scheme for War Pensions.

Following the report presented to the Board in November 2023 which outlined spend up to 30 September 2023, this report provided an update on spend up the end of December 2023.

Since the last report there had been a significant increase in Household Support Fund expenditure on vulnerable pensioners, the Discretionary Support Scheme, Free School Meal Vouchers, Public Health and Halton's Citizen Advice Bureau. The full details of the spend was outlined in the appendix to the report.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the latest position regarding the Household Support Fund, Discretionary Housing Payments and Universal Credit as outlined in the report, be noted;
- 2) the revision to the Household Support Fund spending plan be noted; and
- 3) the Executive Board be recommended to approve the continuation of the local scheme, that all of a war disablement pension or war widows' pension be disregarded for the purposes of calculating household benefit.

Meeting ended at 7.40 p.m.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 4 June 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

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 identified.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

None identified.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None identified.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

None identified.

6.4 A Safer Halton

None identified.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None identified.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None identified.

8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None identified.

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

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

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 4th June 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: Executive Board Minutes

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

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.

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 22 FEBRUARY 2024

EXB86	TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2024/25
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The Board received the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, (TMSS) which incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Strategy for 2024/25.

The TMSS was appended to the report and detailed the expected activities of the treasury function in the forthcoming financial year (2024/25). Its production and submission to Council was a requirement of the CIPFA Prudential Code and the CIPFA Treasury Management Code.

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

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

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

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

EXB87	CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Finance, on the Council's Capital Strategy for 2024/25.

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

Members were advised that the Capital Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, included on the same agenda; this detailed the expected activities of the treasury management function and incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy for 2024/25. It was noted that the successful delivery of the Capital Strategy would assist the Council in planning and funding its capital expenditure over the next three years.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the 2024/25 Capital Strategy, as presented in the Appendix attached to the report.

EXB88	2023/24 SPENDING AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023
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The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, advising of the Council’s overall revenue and capital net spending position as at 31 December 2023, together with a forecast outturn position.

Appendix 1 presented a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 31 December 2023 and Appendix 2 provided detailed figures for each individual Department. It was reported that in overall terms the outturn forecast for the year showed that net spend would be over the approved budget by £7.144m. Appendix 3 presented the Capital Programme as at 31 December 2023, highlighting the schemes which had been revised.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continue to be limited to only absolutely essential items;
- 2) Executive Directors continue to take urgent action to reduce or defer spending for the remainder of the current financial year, or secure additional funding;
- 3) Council be requested to approve the revisions to the Capital Programme as set out in paragraph 3.24; and
- 4) a review of outstanding sundry debts is undertaken as outlined in paragraph 3.31, particularly within Adults and Community and Greenspaces, to facilitate debt collection, reduce the level of outstanding debt, and avoid increasing bad debt provision.

EXB89	BUDGET 2024/25
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The Board considered a report from the Operational Director, Finance, which outlined a recommendation to Council in respect of the Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax for 2024/25.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), approved at the Executive Board meeting on 16 November 2023, had identified a funding gap of around £3.743m in

2024/25, £0.495m in 2025/26 and £1.347m in 2026/27. The Strategy had the following objectives:

- Deliver a balanced and sustainable budget;
- Prioritise spending towards the Council's priority areas;
- Avoid excessive Council Tax rises;
- Achieve significant cashable efficiency gains;
- Protect essential front line services and vulnerable members of the community; and
- Deliver improved procurement.

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

The Board received regular reports summarising spending in the current year against the budget. The latest report indicated that spending was forecast to be over budget in the current year by approximately £7.144m against a net budget of £140.880m.

The proposed revenue budget for 2024/25 totalled £149.496m; the departmental analysis of this was shown in Appendix B and the major reasons for change from the current budget were shown in Appendix C. A total of £2.702m of savings were approved by Council on 1 February 2023.

The Board was advised that the proposed budget incorporated the grant figures announced in the Local Government Finance Settlement. It included £0.124m for the New Homes Bonus grant, an increase of £0.115m from 2023/24. The budget also included Better Care Funding of £6.982m which was unchanged from 2023/24.

Further information was also provided on the budget outlook, Halton's Council Tax, Parish precepts, Police, Fire and Liverpool City Region (LCR) Mayor precepts, the Capital Programme, Prudential Code and School Budgets.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended

- 1) to adopt the resolution set out in Appendix A, which includes setting the budget at £149.496m, the Council Tax requirement of £64.039m (before Parish, Police, Fire and LCR Combined Authority precepts) and the Band D Council Tax for Halton of £1,758.89;
- 2) to approve the capital programme set out in Appendix F;
- 3) to approve the introduction of a Council Tax Premium of 100% to properties where there is no resident and which are substantially furnished (typically referred to as second homes) from 1 April 2025, subject to legislation being enacted; and

4) to approve the use of Capital Receipts Strategy as set out in Appendix H.

EXB90	PENSIONS DISCRETIONS STATEMENT 2024/25
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The Board received the annual Pensions Discretions Statement for 2024-25 for Halton Borough Council.

The Council was required to publish a Pension Discretion Statement annually, to advise the discretions it intended to exercise under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) – this was appended to the report.

It was reported that the Pensions Discretion Statement for 2024-25 was based upon the statement for 2023-24, which was approved by Executive Board in March 2023. It was noted that no new discretions had been added.

RESOLVED: That the Board approve the Pensions Discretions Statement for 2024-25.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 14 MARCH 2024

EXB96	REVIEW OF COUNCIL WIDE FEES AND CHARGES
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The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive, on the review of the Council wide fees and charges for 2024/25 for services provided by the Council's Directorates.

The Board was advised that, as part of the budget preparations for 2024/25, a review of fees and charges had been carried out. The aim in setting fees and charges was to ensure that the Council fully recovered the cost incurred in providing the service, although this was dependent on a number of factors outside of the agreed charge. These were detailed in the report and noted as including demand, which could change year on year and be affected by weather, economy, regional and national events and demographics; competition, where there may be a strong competitive market; and a statutory element, where some charges were outside the control of the Council and there was no discretion to what could be charged.

Attached at Appendix A was the proposed schedule of statutory fees for 2024/25 and the chargeable rates for The Brindley Theatre and the Registrar's Service were attached at Appendix B and C respectively, for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the proposed fees and charges for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix A and for 2024/25 as set out in Appendices B and C, be approved; and
- 2) the working group set up by the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board, who were currently looking at options for further controls

on Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO), be requested to consider the issues of HMO licenses, fees, and other controls.

EXB97	ICT ROLLING CAPITAL PROGRAMME
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director ICT and Support Services, which sought approval for an ICT Rolling Capital Programme increase from £0.5m to £1.2m and the development of the Council's digital strategy.

As the Authority progressed towards a significant programmed service transformation, it was essential that the underpinning technology supported the delivery of the Re-Imagine Halton Transformation Programme and the 'Customer Journey' transformation project. The new proposed systems would benefit the authority as a whole by providing an automation platform that any service could access, allowing managers the opportunity to redesign their service delivery mechanisms and free up service capacity.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the development of the Council's digital strategy as set out in the report be noted;
- 2) the proposal to fund this development by increasing the annual ICT rolling capital programme by £0.5m as outlined in paragraph 5.7, be agreed; and
- 3) Council be recommended to increase the annual ICT rolling capital programme from £0.7m to £1.2m within the 2024/25 capital programme.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 18 APRIL 2024

EXB107	ANNUAL REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION
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The Board received a report of the Operational Director – Legal and Democratic Services, which sought the approval of Council to a number of changes to the Constitution.

The revised version of the Constitution picked up the changes to the Council's working arrangements that had taken place during the year, as well as other changes which were intended to assist the Council to operate more effectively.

Members were referred to Appendix one where the proposed amendments were listed; these had been considered by the Chief Executive and the Corporate Services Portfolio Holder, in accordance with Article 16.02.

RESOLVED: That Executive Board recommends Council to approve the changes to the Constitution including the matters set out in Appendix one.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 4 June 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director, Legal & Democratic Services

SUBJECT: Annual Report 2023/24

PORTFOLIO: Resources

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To receive the Annual Report of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board for 2023/24, to comment in respect of the same, and to make any changes considered appropriate.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the report be approved.

3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None at this stage

4.0 RISK ANALYSIS

None

5.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None

6.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

None.

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

Document	Place of inspection	Contact Officer
Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit	2 nd Floor, Municipal Building	M. Reaney



CORPORATE PPB ANNUAL REPORT

The Council once again faces severe financial constraints as a result 14 years of austerity cuts imposed by successive Conservative governments. The hard work and dedication of Council Officers and Councillors working in partnership together has mitigated the worst effects, and the Transformation Programme is in progress to deliver savings.

The Finance Department continues to work hard to ensure that Business Rates and Council Tax are collected in a timely and efficient way. The Benefits Division is working to get the Government's Household Support Fund out to all those families that are entitled to it, this is all taking place whilst administering the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction schemes.

Work is continuing across the Council to promote Halton as an employer of choice, a theme of the Transformation Programme, and significant work was carried out in the development of the new Corporate Plan which was adopted by the Council in March.

The Health and Safety team continue to make sure all staff work safely and efficiently and are equipped to carry out their work.

The IT department have ensured that Members and Officers have access to the right equipment to facilitate them in carrying out their roles, and have dealt extremely well with maintaining maximum security.

The Property Services team continues to ensure Council buildings are efficiently maintained, that provision of working space is achieved at an economic cost and that the Council's assets are used to the maximum benefit. Major Projects also manage multiple development projects across the Borough and the Markets team continues to manage and promote very effectively the choices on offer.

The DCBL stadium and catering team continue to strive to make the stadium an attractive and interesting venue for sporting, leisure and social events .

The Legal Services Department continues to provide strong legal support to Council departments and Members. They also deal with the complex legal issues that arise from major project developments. The Member Services and Member Development

Team works diligently to make sure Councillors are fully equipped and kept up to date and provided with the information necessary to carry out their roles.

I would like to thank members of the PPB for their hard work and commitment throughout the year.

Councillor Bob Gilligan – Chair,
Corporate Policy & Performance Board

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2023/24, the Board comprised of eleven Councillors – R. Gilligan (Chair), G Philbin (Vice Chair), J Bradshaw, N Hutchinson, R Leck, G Logan, A Lowe, A McInerney, N Plumpton-Walsh, S Thornton, and K Wainwright.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to Resources, HR and Training, ICT, Property, Democratic Services, Legal Services, Communications and Marketing, Stadium, Civic Catering, Procurement, Corporate Complaints and Area Forums. The Board also has responsibility for monitoring the performance of the reporting departments which during the last year have been Legal and Democratic Services, Human Resources, Financial Services, ICT and Support Services and the Policy and Performance Divisions.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met four times during the year. Set out below are some of the main initiatives upon which it has worked during that time.

HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 2023/24

The oversight of the administration of the fund was a very significant part of the Board's work throughout the year. In June, the Board received a report which provided an update regarding delivery of the Government's Household Support Fund from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023 and spending plans for the Fund during 2023/24. The Board noted the final expenditure of the Household Support Fund from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023. £167,314 was awarded by the Discretionary Support Scheme through its telephone application process. £536,592 was spent on school meal vouchers which were issued during school holidays and £405,500 was spent on supporting those vulnerable pensioner households who were in receipt of a council tax reduction. The Benefits Division co-ordinated

the use of the grant on behalf of the Council and Appendix A outlined how the grant funding was utilised via a combination of Council departments and the Voluntary Sector. In February 2023, it was confirmed that Halton had been allocated grant funding of £2.6M. In April 2023, the Council's Executive Board approved a Spending Plan on how the allocation would be utilised. It was agreed to allocate £356,000 to the Discretionary Support Scheme which would cover a wide range of low income households in need, including families with children, pensioners and people with disabilities. It was estimated that the free school meals vouchers would cost approximately £1,170,000 and this would provide approximately 7,500 children with free school meals throughout all of the school holidays over the next 12 months. In order to support vulnerable pensioner households, it was decided that all those in receipt of a Council Tax reduction would be provided with a one-off award of £120. It was estimated that 4,181 pensioner households would benefit from this award, at a total cost of £501,720. In 2023/24, there would be additional funding allocations to Public Health, Care Leavers and Voluntary Sector Partners. It was agreed to allocate £100,000 to Public Health who would support vulnerable households who may fall outside those covered by the rest of the Spending Plan. They would also target support to those families who had pre-school aged children and who were flagged on the Income Deprivation Index affecting children. In addition, families who had disabled pre-school aged children. £82,126 was allocated for this project. £82,127 was allocated to make a cost of living award to recent care leavers and to those young people who would become care leavers in the next 12 months. Voluntary Sector partners would be again, asked to assist the Council with the delivery of support to residents. The grant allocations made for the previous 6 month period to Citizens Advice, Food Banks, Affordable Warmth etc had doubled for the coming year. Each organisation would be asked to provide a detailed proposal of how they intended to utilise the funding and provide a regular update to the Council with monitoring information for submission to the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP). The Benefits Division would co-ordinate use of the grant on behalf of the Council and progress with delivery of the Household Support Fund during 2023/24 would be reported regularly to the Board. If the grant was not fully spent by 31 March 2024, and/or not spent in accordance with the grant guidance, it would be clawed back by the DWP.

Further updates were provided to Members at the November and January meetings.

THE CORPORATE PLAN

The development of the Council's new Corporate Plan via the Big Conversation was an extremely important area of consideration for the Board during the year.

In June the Board received a presentation introducing “The Big Conversation” which was the Council’s approach to formulating a new Corporate Plan to take effect from April 2024. “The Big Conversation” would engage with the public so that they understand the challenges of the Council. It would be an approach between the Council and everyone who lives or works in Halton to work together in order to create an improved Borough in all aspects of everyday life. The Corporate Plan Survey would consist of 5 themes and 6 questions. There would be different consultation methods depending on the audience. Responses will be monitored during the consultation period and any low response area will be targeted with iWalkers which proved to be an effective consultation method during the elections. Staff within the One-Stop-Shops and Libraries would be able to offer assistance to anyone who required help to complete the survey. All feedback and responses would be scrutinised and evaluated and then in conjunction with North West Employers, be summarised accordingly to establish a number of key objectives to form the Council’s new Corporate Plan.

A further update was brought in September and in November, Members were advised that up until 7 November, a total of 933 responses had been received and a breakdown of responses by source was provided. The report outlined the promotion, consultation and engagement carried out so far, as well as the emerging themes. The gaps and actions were set out and some examples were given to how these had been addressed e.g. visits made to Riverside College and Family Hubs in both Runcorn and Widnes; information had been shared via social media to target relevant groups; and iWalkers had targeted those wards with low responses.

It was noted that the consultation would end on 30 November 2023, after which an analysis would be undertaken to identify the key priorities. January and February 2024 would see further consultation with stakeholders prior to the Corporate Plan being finalised in March, ready for its launch in April 2024.

PROGRAMME OFFICE

In September, the Board received a report on the work of the Programme Office in securing external funding resources into Halton. The report provided an update on the Programmes Office key activities and priorities as well as emerging issues in external funding and funding statistics for 2022-23. The key priorities for 2022-23 had been:

- Embedding the new Programmes Office function, including recruitment to new posts;

- Supporting the delivery of the Government's levelling up agenda, including Towns Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF);
- Disseminating details of funding that will support the Cost of Living crisis;
- Disseminating details of funding that will help mitigate climate change and help deliver HBC's Climate Change Action Plan;
- Ensuring the remaining ESIF (European Strategic Investment Fund) is secured, spent and monitored; and
- Supporting the development of the HBC Cultural Strategy and Heritage Open Days programme. The report also described some of the key schemes currently supported by the team which included:
 - The £23.6 million Town Deal Programme for Runcorn;
 - Halton's allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund;
 - Halton's allocation of an LCR Destination Marketing programme;
 - The Community and Voluntary Sector; and
 - Liverpool City Region and Cultural/Visitor Economy work. It was noted that the Programmes Office would work more with the new Environment and Regeneration Directorate on some smaller projects to try and develop them.

PERFORMANCE ISSUES DURING THE COURSE OF THE YEAR

The Board considered in detail the performance of the reporting departments. Issues which were overseen during the year included:

- Accident statistics
- Market
- School catering and the operation of the Stadium

WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

During 2023/24, the Board retained the expanded Topic Group which oversaw the operation of the Council's Discretionary Support Scheme and included scrutiny of Universal Credit. The Board agreed that additional topic groups would be established when the need arose.

REPORT TO:	Corporate Policy & Performance Board
DATE:	4 th June 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Head of HR Operations Division, Chief Executive's Delivery Unit, Chief Executive's Directorate
PORTFOLIO:	Corporate Services
SUBJECT:	Corporate Accident / Incident Report 1 st April 2023 to 31 st March 2024
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 2023 to 31st March 2024.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That**

- i) the report be received; and**
- ii) the Board notes the contents of the report including the recommendations and actions for 2024/25.**

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:

- A Healthy Halton;
- A Safer Halton; and
- 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.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.



CORPORATE ACCIDENT / INCIDENT REPORT

1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

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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 new HSE Strategy “Protecting People and Places 2022 to 2032” allows for the HSE to adapt and respond to a changing landscape. It also allows it to continue to support the delivery of wider government priorities including the move towards net zero and improving the health of the nation.

The HSE now also has added responsibilities, such as becoming the appointed ‘Building Safety Regulator’ and also has an extended role in chemical regulation following Brexit.

It remains the same that the fundamental principle of health and safety law is that those who create risks are best placed to manage them. The expectations and evidence suggest that most workplaces have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience to manage safety for themselves.

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. Encourage all staff to report incidents to give a true picture and enable

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

appropriate mitigations to be put in place.

National and Local Information together with performance gaps and incident trends form the basis for the Recommended Actions for 2023/24.

By responding positively to identify 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

As the authority moves forward a number of significant changes are being made in relation to how services are delivered and staff recruited. The relevant impact these changes do / have the potential to impact on health & safety together with wellbeing requirements are under constant monitoring.

In December 2022, the authority changed from 2 to 5 directorates. As expected this has enabled a more detailed monitoring of incidents. The internal reorganisation of some services has had an impact on figures as staff have moved under new managers. It is anticipated that this should have a minimal impact overall, but, may have influence on local areas. This is being monitored.

Reportable and significant accidents for Halton Employees are currently at a total of 9 a rise of 1 across all directorates plus 3 near misses (Reduction of 2) from the last data reported.

Violent Incidents corporately are showing currently as 21 verbal and 23 physical incidents (Both showing an increase 8 and 23 respectively). Within the report the categories of threat of violence and sexual harassment have been included for the first time as a number of instances have taken place. At the time of reporting 19 threats of violence and 6 sexual harassment incidents have been reported. Staff have been fully supported and ongoing reviews are in place to understand why these have become a major issue. Within schools for this period there were 23 physical incidents (+1) and 0 verbal (-1).

Lone Working Contact Centre Monitoring update – A new system is to be introduced in May 2024. A clearer position statement will be made in the next report.

Risk Assessments completed on the corporate risk assessment system and are shown at point 7. The figures shown cover the new directorates, with many being reviewed still. In addition, the risk assessment system has undergone changes after concerns over its ease of use were raised. As a result of focus groups, those suggestions have been implemented.

The HSE recently released their annual statistics which includes 135 (+12) workplace fatalities (Construction, Agriculture and Manufacturing are the top 3 workplace categories).

The HSE are continuing to conduct checks on school premises to ensure correct management of asbestos that is required under the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. In addition, the HSE have also launched an asbestos awareness campaign entitled "Asbestos and You".

Work on maintaining appropriate Bomb and Lockdown procedures in HBC buildings is continuing with a number of exercises planned, some of which have been conducted. Results have been passed to managers for consideration and action. In addition staff have been reminded regarding the importance of maintaining both personal and building security via the corporate bulletin system.

2.2 Recommendations 2023/24

The following recommendations are as a result of the accident analysis data for the first half of 2023 from 1st April and will be actioned during the period 2023/24.

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 - ongoing
2.	3	All Managers to ensure preparation / training in relation to ACT and the enactment of Protect Duty	Ensuring safety of staff, public and anyone involved with council business	All managers - ongoing
3.	3	Ensure staff follow Safe Systems of Work (SSOW) to reduce likelihood of involvement in an accident.	Reduction of accidents, suffering and associated financial implications.	All managers - ongoing

GENERAL ACTIONS

Action a series of Lockdown/Bomb Threat Exercises across main Council buildings in anticipation for introduction of Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill.	Ongoing	Health and Safety Team
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 departmental audits actioned and ongoing for all corporate areas	Ongoing	Health and Safety Team and Team Managers.
Action Fire / Bomb / Lockdown risk assessments / procedures council buildings. This has been achieved by a series of audits.	Ongoing	Health and Safety Team and team Managers

3. INFORMATION

3.1 Local/National Information

Key figures for Great Britain (2022/23). Source: HSE.

- **1.8 million** working people suffering from a work-related illness, of which
 - **875,000** workers suffering work-related stress, depression or anxiety
 - **473,000** workers suffering from a work-related musculoskeletal disorder
- **2,268** mesothelioma deaths due to past asbestos exposures (2021)
- **135** workers killed in work-related accidents
- **561,000** working people sustained an injury at work according to the Labour Force Survey
- **60,645** injuries to employees reported under RIDDOR
- **35.2 million** working days lost due to work-related illness and workplace injury
- **£20.7 billion** estimated cost of injuries and ill health from current working conditions (2021/22)

The HSE are currently running a safety campaign entitled “Work Right”. It is primarily targeted at the various tradespersons (employees and managers) engaged in construction and associated activities. The current focus is called “Asbestos and You” which highlights the dangers and the procedures and management requirements when working in areas, suspected of containing asbestos e.g. older buildings. The HSE website now has an information area entitled Asbestos Essentials, where managers, workers and public can access the relevant information. The HSE have created electronic newsletters to enable associated staff to be kept up to date with any new developments.

Prior to schools closing for their summer break, the HSE announced that they would be undertaking spot checks at schools in relation to Asbestos management, to ensure compliance with Asbestos regulations. To date the Health & Safety Team have only been made aware of one High School being contacted with no visit taking place. The campaign is designed to ensure staff have awareness of asbestos and to ensure, where present, the material is being appropriately managed. The HSE has also reiterated its advice on violence in the workplace. HBC has a number of strategies already in place which are reviewed on a regular basis.

Local:

As staff return to the workplace managers have been encouraged to ensure that not only are work areas suitable but that the welfare of staff is paramount. HBC are currently running a number of mental health sessions which are open to staff.

Retraining of staff is also underway (e.g. Evac chair). In addition updated online training packages have been launched on the enable system i.e. fire marshal training package has been included.

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. In addition staff have received reminders in relation to staff and building security via the corporate bulletin system. In addition, a number of training sessions for managers and decision maker sessions lead by counter terrorism officers have taken place.

In addition, staff have had increased awareness of the ACT training package which is available online.

The Health & Safety Team carried out a number of, unannounced visits to HBC buildings and a number of recommendations have been made. At time of compiling this report further guidance is awaited from the government.

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 01/04/24 are; 1436

Adult Services Directorate – 279.
Childrens Services Directorate – 362
Chief Executive Directorate – 418
Environment & Regeneration Directorate – 313
Public Health - 64

See section 7 for known position statements and comparisons.

4.2 Number of Near Misses

4.2.1 The number reported in the last 3 years are:

2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
10	5	3

From the 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 there have been 3 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 At the time of compiling this report data for the usage of the Lone Working system is unavailable. This is due to the role out of a new system which will see improvements in both software and the way equipment will be used. This has been brought about following technical advances and in response to the survey conducted of those registered on the current system. The target date is current May 2024 so data will be updated after that time.

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 2023 to 31st March 2024 is 8, a fall on this time last year.

Directorate	Specified Injury	> 7-Day	Significant
Adult Services Directorate	0	0	3
Chief Executive Directorate	0	0	1
Childrens Services Directorate	0	0	4
Environment & Regeneration Directorate.	1	4	0
Public Health Directorate	0	0	0
TOTAL 2023/2024	1	4	4
TOTAL 2022/2023 (Old Directorates).	0	3	7
TOTAL 2021/2022 (Old Directorates).	0	2	6

Main Categories (Including Non – Reportable)

	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2022/23</u>	<u>2021/22</u>
STF	30	22	23
Man Han	17	10	11
Equipment	0	3	2

Other Categories 2023/24

Hit by moving or flying object – 11
 Hit something fixed or stationary – 3
 Sharps – 4
 Injured by an animal – 1
 Entrapment – 1
 Exposed to, or in contact with, harmful substance - 2
 Contact with electricity or an electrical discharge - 1

Please note the majority of accidents in the main and other categories resulted in minor injuries, not reportable or requiring further action.

Days Lost

- The main categories of days lost are as follows;

Days Lost

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
1. Slips, trips and falls	67	192	160 (-32)
2. Manual handling	77	200	62 (-138)
3. Equipment	0	0	0

- The total days lost is 222 on the above categories. This represents an ia significant decrease compared to 2022/23.
- Many of the slips have involved inclement weather e.g. ice on walkways, wet leaves that had landed on footpaths, wet grass on verges..
- Within Slips Trips & Falls we have one Individual at 112 days .

5.2 Number of Violent Incidents

- Figures for instances of Threats of violence and where the behaviour would amount to any form of Sexual Harassment have now been included.
- PPPE – Policy, People, Performance & Efficiency.

5.2.1 From 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

Directorate	Verbal	Physical	Threat of Violence	Sexual Harassment
Adults Services Directorate.	Adult Social Services – 6 Commissioning & Complex Care - 0	Adult Social Services – 0 Commissioning & Complex Care - 3	Adult Social Services – 3 Commissioning & Complex Care - 0	Adult Social Services – 1 Commissioning & Complex Care - 0
Chief Executives Directorate.	PPPE – 1 ICT & Support - 0	PPPE – 0 ICT & Support - 3	PPPE – 3 ICT & Support- 7	PPPE – 0 ICT & Support - 0
Childrens Services Directorate.	Childrens Services-HBC Schools – 0 Childrens Safeguarding Unit - 0	Childrens Services-HBC Schools – 23 Childrens Safeguarding Unit - 1	Childrens Services-HBC Schools – 0 Childrens Safeguarding Unit - 1	Childrens Services – HBC Schools – 0 Childrens Safeguarding Unit - 0
Environment & Regeneration Directorate.	Economy, Enterprise & Property- 5 . Community & Greenspace – 9 .	Economy, Enterprise & Property- 0 . Community & Greenspace – 4 .	Economy, Enterprise & Property- 4 . Community & Greenspace – 1 .	Economy, Enterprise & Property- 0 . Community & Greenspace – 5 .
Public Health Directorate	Public Health – 0	Public Health - 1	Public Health - 0	Public Health - 0

Annual Totals	Verbal	Physical	Threat of Violence	Sexual Harassment
TOTAL 2023/24	21	35	19	6
TOTAL 2022/23	13	12	-	-
TOTAL 2021/22	12	0	-	-
TOTAL 2020/21	8	1	-	-

5.2.2 Schools

Following the formation of the five directorates, instances of violence against HBC staff in schools is included within Childrens Services Directorate – Childrens Services HBC Schools calculations. Figures for staff employed by academies are not available .

HBC - Schools	Verbal	Physical	Threat of Violence	Sexual Harassment
TOTAL 2023/24	0	23	0	0
TOTAL 2022/23	1	16	-	-
TOTAL 2021/22	2	16	-	-
TOTAL 2020/21	4	11	-	-

6. BREAKDOWN OF NEAR MISSES & ACCIDENTS

6.1 Near Misses

Division	Cause	Incident/Action
Adult Services Directorate	Other	Staff member descends staircase carrying items in both hands. Misses step and lands on stairs struck lightly by items being carried. No injury. Management advice given regarding the use of handrails and not attempting to overload when carrying.
Childrens Services Directorate	Incorrect medication	Staff member was about to issue prescribed medication to pupil. Staff member correctly gave second check. Found had prepared the incorrect medication. No medication issued to student. Headteacher review conducted. Second member of staff to be always present. Similar bottles to be clearly marked.
Environment and Regeneration	Other	Staff member decanting cleaning fluid from main container into a bucket to dilute and use. Undiluted chemical splashed back hitting face of party. No PPE being worn although readily available. Management advice issued in relation to using the PPE that had been provided and using appropriate methods as trained to decant safely.

6.2 Adult Services Directorate

Department	Cause	Incident/Action
Adult Social Services	Injured while handling, lifting or carrying	<p>> 7 day - IP engaged with other staff administering daily care to service user. During movement of service user, communication breakdown occurred resulting in IP taking full weight of service user resulting in strain to back. Signed off by GP.</p> <p>Training in date, Manager to remind all staff of need for care. Risk assessment and SSOW reviewed.</p>
Adult Social Services	Slipped, tripped or fell on same level	<p>Significant – IP walking in corridor tripped over carpet gripper that had become dislodged, resulting in injury.</p> <p>Fitters attended and repaired the faulty grippers which had worn.</p>
Adult Social Services	Slipped, tripped or fell on same level	<p>Significant – IP walking from building across car park when they have tripped over a highly visible vehicle stop which had been put in place to protect the building when the carpark was resurfaced several months previously.</p> <p>Review of event has resulted no issues with the vehicle stop. IP was found not to be wearing glasses at time. Advice given to IP.</p>

6.2.1 Chief Executive Directorate.

Department	Cause	Incident / Action
Legal & Demographic Services.	Slipped, tripped or fell on same level.	Significant – IP walking on pavement / road areas of Town Hall. Due to adverse weather ice had formed. IP slipped on ice causing injury. Review of risk assessments and procedures carried out. Additional checks and gritting to be put in place.

6.2.2 Children's Service Directorate

Department	Cause	Incident / Action
Childrens Services – HBC Schools	See Schools section	

6.2.3 Environment & Regeneration Directorate

Department	Cause	Incident / Action
Community & Greenspace	Slipped, tripped or fell same level	>7 Days- IP engaged on strimming grass on highway, when has stepped into a pothole causing IP to fall and injure ankle. Review found PPE in place and procedures to have been followed. Pothole repaired
Community & Greenspace	Injured while handling, lifting or carrying	>7 Days – IP moving tables in dining hall. One was jammed due to brush behind. Causing minor injury. Review found no fault. Importance of visual checks emphasised.

Department	Cause	Incident / Action
Community & Greenspace	Slipped, tripped or fell same level	>7 Days- IP engaged on strimming grass on highway, when has stepped into a pothole causing IP to fall and injure ankle. Review found PPE in place and procedures to have been followed. Pothole repaired
Community & Greenspace	Injured while handling, lifting or carrying	>7 Days – IP moving tables in dining hall. One was jammed due to brush behind. Causing minor injury. Review found no fault. Importance of visual checks emphasised.
Community & Greenspace	Exposed to, or in contact with, a harmful substance	Significant – Decanting cleaning fluid from container into bucket to use. IP splashed by the product causing minor irritation. Review found PPE not worn and full instructions not followed. Management advice.
Community & Greenspace	Exposed to, or in contact with, a harmful substance	Significant – IP connecting dishwasher fluid container when product has splashed above gloves onto arm causing irritation. Review found that fluid had changed but looked similar to previous one. Need to check each product emphasised and refer to safety data sheet.
Community & Greenspace	Slipped, tripped or fell same level	Significant- IP slipped on product that had been spilt on floor of kitchen area. Review found product not cleaned nor warning signs in place. Staff reminded of the importance of a prompt response to such matters.
Community & Greenspace	Injured while handling, lifting or carrying	Significant – IP reaching for netting when they dislodged a 2kg dumbbell from its rack, causing it to

		fall onto IPs foot. Review found dumbbell had not been secured correctly when being stored by staff. Reminder sent to all staff.
Community & Greenspace	Another kind of accident	Significant – IP moving waste bins when IP suffers injury to muscle of leg. Review showed training and PPE in place. Staff reminded to adhere to SSOW.
Community & Greenspace	Injured while handling, lifting or carrying	Significant – IP pushing Hot Trolley from kitchen area across uneven ground without help. Trolley tipples over and contents cause injury. Review conducted. Staff advised to have two members to ensure stability and to be aware of route.
Community & Greenspace	Injured while handling, lifting or carrying	Significant – IP opens lid of steamer causing scald to right side. Review found PPE in place, Steamer needs a cooling period before opening. Staff made aware.
Community & Greenspace	Sharps Injury	Significant – IP collecting spring mattress as part of waste collection. Spring came through mattress, pierced glove and caused injury to finger. Review conducted. Training up to date. Stronger glove advised
Community & Greenspace	Slipped, tripped or fell on same level	Significant – IP operating control box for access barrier. Due to the positioning of box, IP had to negotiate slippery surface due to weather. IP slipped causing minor injuries, Review showed correct PPE being worn but extra paving put in to reduce risk.
Community & Greenspace	Injured while handling, lifting or carrying	Significant – IP loading waste bins onto vehicle

		when vehicle pulls away causing shock to IP Review made. Driver of vehicle given management advice and reminded of SSOW.
Community & Greenspace	Exposed to or in contact with harmful substance	Significant- IP working in pool area where there was painting taking place. IP claims that fumes from paint irritated their asthma causing them to have breathing issues. IP self-removed from area where they recovered. Review made with contractors. Water based paint being used. Review made. Possible cause was lack of ventilation. Planning of work to be reviewed and ventilation during work to be monitored.
Policy, Planning & Transportation	Injured while handling, lifting or carrying	>7 Days – IP suffers strain to back whilst securing wheelchair in rear of vehicle. Review made. Training in place, it appears that due to the type of wheelchair, access was partially compromised resulting in IP being not in a proper position. Review on going for process to deal with this type, not seen previously.
Policy, Planning & Transportation	Another kind of accident	Significant – IP using vehicle ramp when unexpected failure of part of ramp occurs, causing hand injury to IP. Review conducted. Item was a bolt which had snapped for reasons unknown. Bol replaced and entire fleet checked with negative result.

6.2.4 Public Health Directorate

Department	Cause	Incident / Action
Public Health	Nil Return	

6.3 Schools

Pupils

	Minor/NFA	Significant	Major/Specified Injury	Totals
Total 2023/24	81	5	0	86
Total 2022/23	42	15	5	62
Total 2021/22	105	5	1	111

6.3.1 Schools Near Misses

Division	Cause	Incident / Action
Childrens Services – HBC Schools	Nil Return	

6.3.2 Teaching Staff

Division	Cause	Incident / Action

Services – HBC	Physical Contact by Service User.	>7 Days – IP is teacher at specialist school. IP is pushed backwards by service user with special needs. This has resulted in the IP being on sick leave. Review of risk assessments and procedures carried out. Additional checks and extra staff to have team teach training to be put in place.
Childrens Services – HBC Schools	Slipped, tripped or fell on same level	Significant – IP is teacher leaving school when has lost footing whilst negotiating steps on exterior of building. Review conducted. Edge markings refreshed. Reminder to be aware of surroundings.
Childrens Services – HBC Schools	Hit by a moving, flying or falling object	Significant – IP is teacher. IP enters cupboard in classroom. As they placed items on lower shelf, files from a higher shelf fell onto IP. Minor cut to head. Review conducted. Housekeeping advice given on correct storage and security of items on shelves.
Childrens Services – HBC Schools	Slipped, tripped or fell on same level	Significant – IP is teacher. Enters kitchen area and slipped on wet floor, causing twisted ankle. Review found no signage in place. Staff to be reminded on correct procedures to be followed
Childrens Services – HBC Schools	Slipped, tripped or fell on same level	Significant – IP is teacher. Enters kitchen area and slipped on wet floor, causing twisted ankle. Review found no signage in place. Staff to be reminded on correct procedures to be followed

7. Risk Assessment Position Statements

Previous:

Directorate	Expected	Completed	%
Adult Services	92	74	80.43
Chief Executives	252	216	85.71
Children's Services	148	100	67.57
Environment & Regeneration	139	117	84.17
Public Health	36	31	86.11
Total	667	538	80.65

Current:

Directorate	Expected	Completed	%
Adult Services	279	197	70.61
Chief Executives	418	337	80.62
Children's Services	362	212	58.56
Environment & Regeneration	313	231	73.80
Public Health	64	47	73.44
Total	1436	1024	71.30

Colin Hill
Principal Health and Safety Advisor,
HR Operations
Chief Executives Directorate.
10th April 2024.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 4th June 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Director of Finance

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Progress Updates regarding the Household Support Fund 2023/24, and the latest Household Support Fund for the period 1st April 2024 – 30th September 2024.

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide the final position regarding delivery of the Government's Household Support Fund for 2023/24, and to report the spending plan for the Household Support Fund for the period 1st April 2024 – 30th September 2024.

2.0 RECOMMENDED That:

- (i) The final position regarding the Household Support Fund for 2023/24 be noted;**
- (ii) The spending plan for the Household Support Fund for the period 1st April 2024 – 30th September 2024 be noted.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Household Support Fund No.4

3.1 A report was presented to the Board on 23rd January 2023 detailing spend for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st December 2023 for the 2023/24 Household Support Fund. This report provides an update setting out the final spend position for the period 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024.

3.2 Since the last report the final spend position for the Household Support Fund for 2023/24 is as follows:

- Vulnerable pensioners, those entitled to Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction, have been awarded a payment of £120. This payment was made in November 2023, and 4,085 pensioners received this award representing a total value of £490,200.
- The Discretionary Support Scheme has paid out £158,077, which covers emergency support and community support.
- Expenditure on free school meal vouchers for the school holidays is now £1,252,335 which represents 13 weeks of school holidays.
- Public Health have spent £77,598 helping vulnerable residents.

- Halton Citizens Advice Bureau have spent £140,000.
- Children's Services have spent £83,400 on care leavers.
- Public Health have assisted families with pre-school age children who are flagged on the income deprivation index affecting children by providing food vouchers with a total value of £84,126.

The Appendix A details the final 2023/24 Household Support Fund spending position.

Household Support Fund No.5

- 3.3 On 26th March 2024 the Government issued guidance and announced the allocation of £1.3m, for the continuation of the Household Support Fund for a further six months from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024.
- 3.4 The Fund has operated since October 2021 in either six or twelve month tranches, however, this latest allocation covers a six month period. The Fund is intended to support vulnerable households with the pressures caused by the continuing cost of living crisis.
- 3.5 The Government guidance for this latest allocation of the Fund remains broadly unchanged, requiring that part of the funding must be distributed on the basis of an application process. However, the Council can still proactively target particular groups of households.
- 3.6 Discussions have been held with colleagues in Council Departments and Voluntary Sector Organisations, who previously supported the delivery of the Household Support Fund to residents.

Discretionary Support Scheme – Application Process

- 3.7 In order to meet the requirement to operate part of the scheme on an application basis, it is proposed to allocate £75,000 of the funding to the Discretionary Support Scheme administered within the Benefits Division, which has an existing telephone application process.
- 3.8 The DWP guidance once again states that the Household Support Fund is intended to cover a wide range of low income households in need, including families with children, pensioners, and people with disabilities.

Free School Meal Vouchers

- 3.9 In order to provide assistance to vulnerable households with children, it is proposed to once again allocate funding to low income families with children, by issuing free school meal vouchers of £12 per week during both the Summer half term and the main Summer school holidays.
- 3.10 It is estimated that the free school meals vouchers will cost approximately £630,000 in total. This will provide approximately 7,500 children with free school meal vouchers during both holiday periods.

Pensioner Households on Council Tax Reduction

- 3.11 To support vulnerable pensioner households, it is proposed that all pensioners currently receiving council tax reduction (CTR) will be provided with a one-off award of £70.
- 3.12 It is estimated that 4,200 pensioner households on CTR will benefit from this award, at a total cost of £294,000.

Public Health and Care Leavers

- 3.13 Public Health will be allocated £40,000 in order to target support to vulnerable households who may fall outside those areas covered by the rest of the Spending Plan. Details of how it is proposed to utilise this funding is being developed.
- 3.14 Public Health are also proposing to target support to families who have pre-school age children and are flagged on the Income Deprivation Index affecting children. In addition, families who have disabled pre-school age children will be targeted for support. It is proposed to allocate £40,000 to Public Health for this particular project.
- 3.15 Colleagues in Children's Services are proposing to continue to provide support for care leavers with the following: energy bill support, household packs to assist with keeping warm, saving energy and cooking, and emergency food and hygiene packs. It is proposed to allocate £40,000 to Children's Services to provide the above mentioned support.

Voluntary Sector Partners

- 3.16 It is once again proposed to ask Voluntary Sector Partners to assist the Council with the delivery of this support to residents. The allocations made previously for a twelve month period, to Citizens Advice, Food Banks, Affordable Warmth etc. have been halved for the coming six months. Each organisation will provide a detailed proposal of how it intends to utilise the funding, and throughout the year will provide the Council with monitoring information for submission to the DWP.

Delivery Co-ordination, Monitoring and Reporting Arrangements

- 3.17 The Benefits Division will once again co-ordinate use of the grant on behalf of the Council. In order to maximise the benefit of the grant funding for the Borough and ensure it is fully utilised, discussions have been held with colleagues across the Council and Voluntary Sector Partners. A proposed spending plan has been prepared as set out in the Appendix B, regarding how the grant funding might be utilised via a combination of Council Departments and Voluntary Sector Partners to deliver support to vulnerable households over the six month period.
- 3.18 The Spending Plan is intended to provide clarity of what actions are required of the relevant Council departments and Partner organisations, with lead officers being identified. It will also provide a basis for monitoring spending

against the grant, with periodic submissions required to the DWP and to ensure it is fully utilised in accordance with the grant guidance by 30th September 2024.

3.19 If the grant is not fully spent by 30th September 2024 and/or is not spent in accordance with the grant guidance, it will be clawed back by the DWP. Initially, a balance of £28,986 remains unallocated as a contingency in case of overspends. Once the actual numbers and costs of items are known, the contingency will be re-allocated to provide additional support.

3.20 In order to commence delivery of the Household Support Fund, the Spending Plan requires the approval of the Executive Board. However given the urgent need to procure free school meal vouchers for the summer half term school holidays, the Chief Executive has approved the plan using delegated urgency powers. Thereafter, it is proposed that regular monitoring reports will be presented to the Corporate Policy and Performance Board.

4.0 POLICY AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

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**

The delivery of support from the Household Support Fund to the Borough's vulnerable households, has the potential to support all of the Council priorities.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 If the grant allocation from the Household Support Fund, is not fully utilised in accordance with the DWP guidance by the deadline date of 30th September 2024, any remaining grant funding will be clawed back by the DWP.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

8.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Household Support Fund 2024 Allocations	DCBL Stadium Lowerhouse Lane Widnes	Paul Garnett

Household Support Fund
Spend for the period 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024

1. Vulnerable Households with children	£
Free school meal vouchers provided for 13 weeks.	1,252,335
2. Vulnerable Pensioner Households	
Paid £120 to 4,085 pensioners in November 2023.	490,200
3. Discretionary Support Scheme	
Spend for 2023/24	158,077
4. Public Health	
Spend for 2023/24	77,598
5. Public Health – pre-school age	
Spend for 2023/24	84,126
6. Care Leavers	
Spend for 2023/24	83,400
7. Other vulnerable households	
Citizens Advice Bureau	140,000
Widnes Foodbank	35,000
Runcorn Foodbank	35,000
Holiday Activity Food programme	10,000
Affordable Warmth – Energy Projects Plus	9,882
Halton Voluntary Action	20,000
Total Expenditure	2,395,618

APPENDIX B

Spending Plan 1st April 2024 – 30th September 2024

Total Grant Allocation	£ 1,297,880
Less Administration Costs (5%)	64,894
Available Grant Funding	1,232,986
1. Vulnerable Households with Children	630,000
Free school meal vouchers for school holidays: Summer half term 27 th May 2024 – 31 st May 2024 (1 week) Summer holidays 22 nd July 2024 – 30 th August 2024 (6 weeks) Based upon estimated 7,500 children entitled to FSM Paid for 7 weeks at £12 per voucher per week	
2. Vulnerable Pensioner Households	294,000
Based on 4,200 pensioner households receiving CTR/HB Award of £70 per pensioner	
3. Discretionary Support Scheme	75,000
Accessed by application	
4. Public Health – Other Vulnerable Households	40,000
Contact – Jayne Hardman	
5. Public Health - Pre-school Age Children	40,000
Contact - Matt Hancock	
6. Care Leavers	40,000
Contact – Emma Wright	
7. Other Vulnerable Households	
Halton Citizens Advice Bureau	40,000
Widnes Food Bank	10,000
Runcorn Food Bank	10,000
Holiday Activity Food programme	5,000
Affordable Warmth – Energy Projects Plus	10,000
Halton Voluntary Action	10,000
8. Contingency	28,986
Total Allocated	1,232,986

REPORT TO:	Corporate Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	6 th June 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Chief Executive
SUBJECT:	Performance Management Reports for Quarter 3 of 2023/24
PORTFOLIO:	Corporate Services
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 third quarter period to 31st December 2023.
- 1.2 Key priorities for development or improvement in 2023-24 were agreed by Members for the various functional areas reporting to the Board as detailed below:
 - Finance
 - Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit
 - ICT and Administrative Support
 - Legal and Democracy
 - Catering, Stadium and Registration Services
 - Property 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 third 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 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 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Not applicable.

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

Not applicable

Corporate Policy and Performance Board– Priority Based Monitoring Report Q3

Reporting Period: 01st October – 31st December 2023

1.0 Introduction

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

2.0 Key Developments

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

Financial Services

2.2 Benefits Division

Processing Times

At 31 December 2023 processing times for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction were as follows: new claims 23.61 days and changes in circumstances 15.46 days.

Department for Works and Pensions – real time information

With effect from 22 January 2024 the Benefits Service will commence providing the DWP with real time information with regards to housing benefit new claims and changes in circumstances. Modifications have been made to the Benefit Service's computer system and an automated link established with the DWP's system. This information was transferred on a monthly basis to the DWP, but now claimant activity can be monitored more effectively, and the Benefit Service does not have to undertake the monthly job of preparing a file to send to the DWP.

Raising Local Housing Allowance Rates

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates have been frozen for several years, however the Chancellor announced in his December 2023 statement that LHA rates in Great Britain will be raised to the 30th percentile of local market rents from April 2024 for the next financial year. The Secretary of State has committed to review the LHA rates annually. LHA rates are used to calculate housing benefit and housing support in Universal Credit for tenants renting from private landlords. The new LHA rates will be published at the end of January 2024.

2.3 Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance Division

Supplier Invoice Processing Performance

At the end of Quarter 3, 91.15% of all supplier invoices paid in 2023/24 had been settled within 30 days. This represents an improvement on 2022/23 performance despite the Purchase to Pay team operating at reduced capacity throughout the current financial year.

Early Payment Scheme

Since August 2022, the Council has operated its early payment scheme for supplier invoices without any external support. This has ensured that any rebate generated by the accelerated payment of invoices is retained in full by the Council.

The amount of rebate achieved and retained by the Council to the end of quarter 3 is £82,555.

Corporate Card Programme

The Council operates a corporate card programme and generates an income stream in the form of a rebate based on the level of spend via corporate cards. To maximise rebate, a strategy has been adopted to pay supplier invoices by card where suppliers have the facilities to receive card payments and are happy to do so.

This approach continues to be successful and the Council's card provider has recently confirmed that the Council is to receive rebate income of £64,512 in 2023/24. This is based on card spending for the period December 2022 to June 2023.

In July 2023, the Council entered into a new agreement with its card provider securing a higher rate of rebate, which will be applied to card spend incurred during the period July 2023 to June 2024. Rebate achieved to the end of December for the current rebate period currently stands at £49,274.

Insurance tender

The Council is currently retendering a range of insurance policies which are due to expire on 31 March 2024. The Council's Procurement team and insurance broker are supporting the tender process, which is being undertaken using a Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation framework agreement. There are five separate lots covering:

- Property
- Computer
- Combined Liability
- Motor
- Engineering and Inspection

The closing date for tenders is 16 February 2024. The contract awards for each lot are due to be confirmed on 22 March 2024.

External assessment of Internal Audit

The Council's internal audit arrangements have recently been externally assessed through a peer review process. The purpose of the assessment was to determine whether the arrangements are compliant with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, which represents professional standards for internal audit. It is a requirement that the Council's internal audit arrangements must be externally assessed against the standards at least once every five years.

The assessment involved interviews with key stakeholders, such as the Chair of the Audit and Governance Board, the Chief Executive, and members of the Council's Management Team. The initial feedback received from the review team is positive and confirms that the Council's arrangements are compliant with professional standards. A report confirming this will be received and presented to a future meeting of the Audit and Governance Board.

2.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division

2023/24 Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring

For the financial year to 30 September 2023, overall Council operational net spending was £57.1m against a budget of £53.5m, resulting in an overspend position to date against budget of £3.6m. The forecast position for the year to 31 March 2024 was an estimated overspend of £8.1m.

Capital spending at 30 September 2023 totalled £20.1m, which is 90% of the planned spending of £22.3m at this stage. This represents 30% of the total Capital Programme of £67.5m (which assumes a 20% slippage between years).

The updated financial forecast and picture of net spending to 31 December 2023 will be reported to Executive Board on 22 February 2024.

2022/23 Statement of Accounts

The draft version of the 2022/23 Statement was published on the Council's website on Wednesday 04 July 2023. Over the past quarter the Council's external auditor Grant Thornton UK LLP has continued with the audit of the accounts and Value for Money Assessment, the aim being to finalise the audit by mid-February and report the Audit Findings Report to the Audit & Governance Board on 20 March 2024.

Council Tax and Business Rate Collection

Council tax collection for the year to 31 December 2023 is 80.26%, down 0.43% on this point last year. Cash collection for the year to date is £63.2m, this includes £1.8m collected in relation to previous year debt.

Business rates collection for the first half of the year is 82.25%, up by 0.91% on this point last year. Cash collected for the year to date is £50.2m, this includes £0.9m collected in relation to previous year debt.

Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25

On 18 December 2023, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), published the 2024/25 provisional local government finance settlement.

The settlement provided was broadly in line with expectations set-out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy, reported to Executive Board in November 2023. The one major difference being a significant reduction in Service Grant, the level of grant dropped from £1.460m to £0.230m, a reduction of £1.230m or 84%. No explanation was provided for the reduction in grant.

2024/25 Core Spending Power for Halton is £148.215m, a cash increase of £9.155m (6.6%) on 2023/24 figures. The Core Spending Power which assumes a maximum increase to council tax levels and assumptions on growth against business rates and the council tax base is considered to be lower than growth required to remain in line with the Council's cost base.

Core Spending Power for 2024/25 represents a real term reduction on 2010/11 funding levels of £53.7m or 26.6%, or £919.02 per dwelling.

The settlement confirmed a cap of 3% be applied to council tax increases at which point a local referendum must be held and an ASC precept of 2%.

Financial Management submitted a Council response to the provisional settlement consultation and contributed to responses by Sigoma and the Liverpool City Region.

2.5 Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

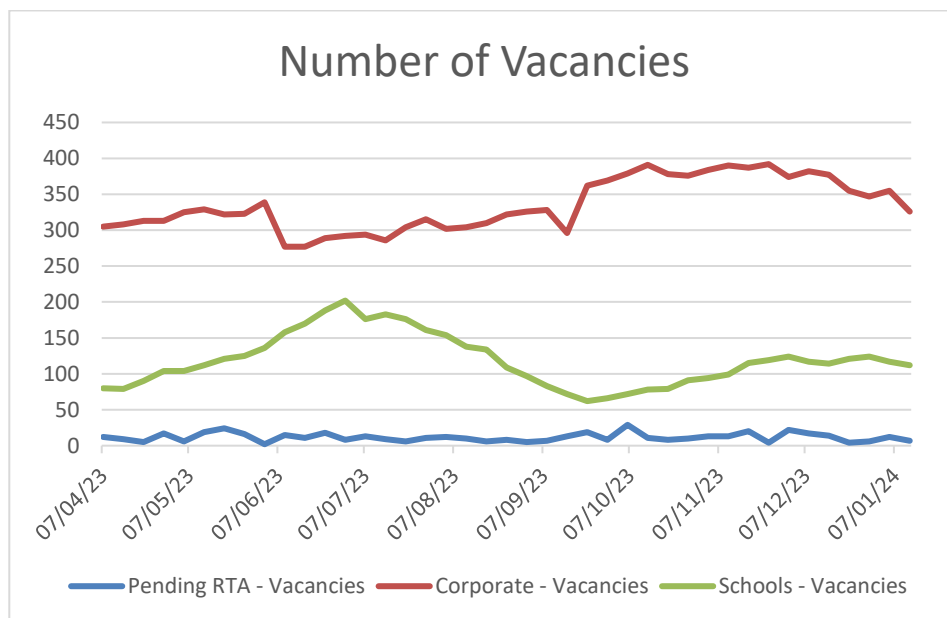
The new HR Business Partnering Model went live on 1st December 2023. Senior Managers were engaged, informed and the Business Partners have started to build the working relationships within their respective directorates, including attending Senior Management Meetings.

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

The 2023/2024 pay award was resolved nationally and despite significant challenges in terms of volume and timescales, the pay and pensions service successfully delivered the processing of the pay award in a shortened period of time for November 2023 pay.

Agency usage remains high, activity has taken place to on-board all care homes on to the Matrix contract to reduce off contract agency spend. Although there are some agencies still in the process of on boarding, the care homes had training to use the on-contract arrangements in the first instance.

Recruitment demand remains consistently high, with the annual school recruitment push at an end we are seeing a significant upswing in demand for the processing of corporate vacancies, as can be seen in the graph below (*please note that the date format shows the month first*).



At the time of writing, there are 333 Council vacancies in the recruitment workflow inclusive of usual recruitment, ‘Adults Always On’, ‘Indeed’, and 124 school vacancies in progress.

Difficult labour market conditions remain to bring barriers in the recruiting and resourcing of many service areas across the organisation. Resourcing workflows remain continuously under review to address the consistent issue. A trial was carried for the ‘Accelerated Growth’ campaign to advertise on different recruitment platforms such total jobs with a quick turnaround in recruitment adapting to the labour market, however this proved unsuccessful with only 1 vacancy being offered.

The Communications and Marketing service continues to support a range of organisational initiatives, including the 'Big Conversation' and Reimagine Halton Transformation Programme.

The service has introduced a new email marketing platform to support the effective delivery of campaigns. A review of the Council's residents newsletter, Inside Halton is also underway.

2.6 ICT and Administration

Quarter three was a considerably busy period for all of the teams across the Support Services and IT divisions.

The completion of the decentralisation of the Administrative Shared Service into the departments was a considerable task but one that was undertaken compassionately and quickly in line with the December 1st deadline to minimise the impact upon the staff within the service.

Training was given and offered to the recipient departments, they are now fully responsible for the monitoring and development of their own administrative staff, along with all HR and Welfare tasks. The central team has now been disbanded with only one redundancy of a team leader and the loss of a further five team leaders to other organisations and 2 internal posts.

The IT teams continue to develop and create the new M365 platforms with the highly successful deployment of the new Dell Laptop devices into trial with over 150 users spread across the authority. The trial is aimed at testing a large number of software packages and user scenarios before the imminent full release of devices to all users over the coming months.

The trial so far has received extremely positive feedback allowing for plans to be brought forward for the wider release. The only hinderance at the moment is physical resource to deploy en-mass as the team is reduced to only 2 senior technicians able to deliver the training currently whilst maintaining other duties. The department as with many others is subject to a number of vacancies – all vacancies will be advertised externally, and the success will be reported back within Q4.

The transformation programme associated with the department linked to the "Customer Journey" programme of work has started to move forward at a pace now the completion of the admin workstream has been agreed and resource can be focused upon the considerable task ahead given the organisational demand for technology.

This has included the development of the Digital Halton Strategy covering the objectives and the technical strategies for this three-year objective.

2.7 Legal and Democracy

The Legal Team has experienced considerate frustration in its attempt to recruit to vacant Solicitor posts. Offers were made to two candidates for posts in the Social Care & Education team, but they were declined – in once case after a number of weeks. Both posts have been advertised twice.

There have also been problems recruiting to a temporary Solicitor post dealing with Accelerated Growth Fund work, and this also remains vacant.

The structure of the Legal team will be looked at as part of the transformation programme, to attempt to address these issues and ensure that there is as full a staff complement as possible.

2.8 Catering - School Meals

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

Two schools left Halton Catering service in November 2023 with a schedule 7 to start with another catering provider by the start of January 2024.

2.9 Stadium

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

Key performances indicators continue to be monitored and developed to ensure appropriate data is gathered. These are focused on stadium usage/occupancy and customer satisfaction. Data received to date (including Q2) on the customer satisfaction surveys reads as follows.

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

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

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

Throughout Q2 and Q3 a social media campaign was launched with the aim of increasing the Stadiums social media following and interaction rates across all platforms, this took the form of a "free event ticket giveaway" which seen Local Chart-topping band The Acoustic Odds alongside local bands perform in front of a capacity audience. This campaign achieved its main aim and we saw growth across all platforms helping to raise awareness of the Stadium and its offering to a wider audience.

The Stadium developed a new way approach to the hosting of live events and established a new partnership between HBC, Widnes Vikings and Giggleshack (local promoter), this allowed the Stadium to host an event with a reduced financial risk. This new approach proved successful, and the event seen a sell-out audience attend. The success of this event has resulted in a positive partnership to move forward with, and further dates have been booked.

Stadium & Catering (New Proposed Division)

Management presented the new proposed Stadium & Catering Division to Steering Group on Thursday 23 December 2023, and opened consultation with staff on Monday 4 December 2023 which could result in significant savings to the service areas.

2.10 Registration Services

The Registration Service has updated its websites: www.halton.gov.uk/registration and www.weddingsinhalton.co.uk;

The Registration Service has completed the recruitment and selection process for a replacement Senior Registration Officer.

The Registration Service has completed the recruitment process with for two Casual Civil Ceremonies Celebrants – with interviews taking place in January 2024.

The Registration Service has successfully completed an accurate and reconciled stocktake of all certificate and secure stationery stock as of 31st December 2023.

2.11 Property Services (Operations)

St Patrick's Nursing Home Redevelopment

New 16 bed extension plus refurbishment work to the remaining accommodation. Works planned to be carried out in phases with an estimated works cost of £2.6m. Planning application submitted. A bid has been submitted to the Public Sector Decarbonisation scheme in order to obtain funds to carry out various decarbonisation works, outcome of the bid anticipated by the end of January. Hoping to commence work on site in April.

St Luke's Nursing Home Refurbishment

Refurbishment of existing accommodation in 4 phases, estimated works cost of £1.1m. A bid has been submitted to the Public Sector Decarbonisation scheme in order to obtain funds to carry out various decarbonisation works, outcome of the bid anticipated by the end of January. Hoping to commence work on site in Spring.

Proposed New Leisure Centre Moor Lane

The contract start date was 9th January 2023, works are progressing well and are on programme and on budget, the contractual completion date is 3rd February 2025.

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

Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022, the work has been tendered and the final evaluation of the tenders is being undertaken. A start on site is anticipated prior to the end of February. An initial soft strip together with some enabling works has now been completed this being required ahead of the main works starting on site.

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

Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022, RIBA stage 3 is completed and early in the new year it is anticipated RIBA stage 4 will start.

Brookvale Rec- Proposed Refurbishment works

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

Pickering Pastures- Proposed new pavilion building

New Build Pavilion, budget estimate is £520k. Executive board approval has been obtained. Works are now being progressed in respect of site surveys, ground investigations and preparing the planning application, following which tender documents will be prepared. Planned start on site late spring/early summer 2024 with completion prior to year end.

Cavendish School - 2 class extension

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

The Brindley- Proposed extension

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022, following which design development has now progressed through RIBA stage 4. The preferred option has been agreed with a budget cost estimate of £5.6m. Planning approval has been obtained. The project is out to tender via the Chest with a return date of January 19th, following evaluation it is hoped site works will start by April 2024.

Runcorn Library redevelopment

Design development works ongoing to create an NHS Health & Education hub. RIBA stage 3 is completed and the next stage RIBA stage 4 is due to start, the budget cost is £1.8m.

Elite House- Redevelopment

Approval to the Town Deal funding was obtained in October 2022. Work to secure an operator is being led by Regeneration and once chosen they will feed into the design process. The Town Deal funding is insufficient to carry out the current desired scheme and there is a bid to the combined Authority for additional funding. This can only be progressed however once an operator is in place and the design developed.

Changing Places Facilities

The 3 Changing Places facilities, at Victoria Park, Halton Lea Library and the Stadium are all now complete, there are a few minor snags to complete at the Victoria Park facility. We have still to get all venues registered with Changing Places this will be undertaken in the New Year, following which all will be available for use.

Unit 10 Refurbishment

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

Decarbonisation Projects

2 funding bids were submitted in November for decarbonisations works. These covered works at both St Pat's and St Luke's care homes as previously mentioned, together with schemes at Runcorn Town Hall, Kingsway Learning Centre and Picow Farm depot, all with the intension of electrifying the heat and hot water provision and moving away from gas. The outcome of the bids will not be known until the end of January 2024.

Education maintenance programme 2023/24

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

Corporate Maintenance programme 2023/24

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

Education SEMH Resource base projects

There are 6 schools where we are upgrading the facilities to create Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) resource bases for both KS1 & KS2 groups. 4 of the projects are now complete, at Oakfield, Victoria Road, Astmoor and Westfield Primaries, works at Woodside primary are ongoing, we are awaiting instruction in respect of Ditton Primary.

3.0 Emerging Issues

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

3.2 Finance - Benefits Division

Universal Credit – Managed Migration

In December 2023, the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) informed all local authorities that during 2024/25 all people receiving legacy benefits, which includes Tax Credits, Employment Support Allowance, Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance (income based), and Housing Benefit will be migrated to Universal Credit.

The DWP plan to commence issuing Migration Notices to working age benefit claimants sequentially starting with Income Support (April–June), Employment Support Allowance with Child tax credits (July – September) and Jobseekers Allowance (September). If a Housing Benefit customer is receiving one of these benefits, they will receive a Migration Notice. From April the DWP will also invite tax credits claimants with Housing Benefit and then Housing Benefit (only) customers to move.

The DWP have indicated that in early 2024 they will be providing councils with more detail on the national roll out plan, and the volumes of Housing Benefit customers involved for individual local authority caseloads.

The Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) statistics indicate at 9th November 2023 there were 16,332 people within Halton claiming Universal Credit. The table below shows the Universal Credit caseload in Halton on a quarterly basis over the past 19 months.

Universal Credit caseload	
Date	Caseload
1 st April 2022	15,262
30 th June 2022	15,283
30 th September 2022	15,533
31 st December 2022	15,581
31 st March 2023	15,817
11 th May 2023	15,969
8 th June 2023	16,057
13 th July 2023	16,072
10 th August 2023	16,138
9 th November 2023	16,332

3.3 Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance Division

The Procurement Bill

The Procurement Bill, which will reform the UK’s public sector procurement rules, received Royal Assent in October 2023. In early 2024 secondary legislation (regulations) will be laid to bring some elements of the Bill and the wider regime into effect.

The Cabinet Office is now working on implementation and ensuring readiness for the new regime, and further guidance and communications materials will be issued over the coming months. A series of learning and development options will also be available to stakeholders to support implementation. Cabinet Office has also confirmed that there will also be a six-month notice period once all the legislation is finalised. This is intended to provide authorities and suppliers time to prepare.

The Act will allow greater flexibility to contracting authorities in terms of procurement procedures. For example, contracting authorities will be able to decide whether to use an ‘open procedure’ or another kind of competitive procedure of their choice, known as a ‘competitive flexible procedure’:

- Open procedure - A single stage tendering procedure, without restriction on who can submit tenders
- Competitive flexible procedure - This will allow contracting authorities the opportunity to design their own procedures, provided that they are appropriate to the procurement in question

It is important to note that the new legal framework will only apply to the Council's procurement activity that exceeds the following thresholds:

Contract Type	Threshold from 1 January 2024
Public Works Contracts	£5,372,609
Supplies and Services	£214,904
'Light Touch Regime' Services	£663,540

Existing procurement legislation will apply until the new regime goes live and will also continue to apply to procurements started under the old rules. Procurement below the above thresholds will continue to be governed by the Council's Procurement Standing Orders.

3.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division

Call for views on new local authority capital flexibilities

On 18 December, the Secretary of State for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) announced a call for views inviting local authorities, sector representatives and other stakeholders to provide views on a set of options with respect to capital flexibilities and borrowing, to be managed locally, that could be used to encourage and enable local authorities to invest in ways that reduce the cost of service delivery and provide more local levers to manage financial resources. The proposals are summarised as follows:

- Extending capitalisation flexibilities to include a wider set of eligible costs, in particular general revenue costs.
- Extending the flexible use of capital receipts to allow authorities to borrow for the revenue costs of invest-to-save projects.
- Allowing additional flexibilities for the use of the proceeds of selling investment assets.
- Introducing a reduced interest rate for borrowing from the Public Works Loans Board for invest-to-save projects.

Financial Management are finalising a Council response to the call for views which will be submitted by 31 January 2024.

3.5 Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

Although the 2023/24 pay award was resolved and processed, it should be noted that the level of pay increase will put extreme pressure on the Council budget.

Use of agency workers remains consistently high in the Council, particularly in Adults and Children's Services where labour market conditions continue to be extremely tight and competitive. This is not restricted to Halton, but the national service and profession skill shortages for care and social care sector. This also correlates to a consistently high number of vacancies (see recruitment update in Key Developments above).

A dedicated workstream within the Transformation Programme continues to be focused on this business issue, adding challenge and capacity to operational service areas to seek solutions to bring usage and associated spend down, the 'indeed' campaign mentioned above being one, the on boarding of the care homes onto Matrix being another to reduce 'off-contract' spend.

3.6 ICT

Digital Transformation enablers delivered in 2022/23:

- Commissioned 137 Days of focused ongoing engineering support to cross-train and co-develop with key members of staff across 30 stated enabling project areas.
- Re-training of key staffing to deliver within and manage cloud rather than on-premise – linked to the retention and development of on-premise BAU support.
- Delivered the Halton Office 365 platform in full – November 2023.
- Established user management through Azure AAD.
- User Data into the Cloud – linked to SharePoint Online and OneDrive
- Initiated the migration away from legacy non-supported application.
- Delivered a Zero Touch device strategy linked to a 5 Year Contracted Device management solution for Laptop and Mobile.
- Delivered Microsoft Security Standards and Policies
- Delivered and maintained compliance with DLUHC, NCSC, security standards.
- Managed Licencing model in place, budget management and re-charge systems developed.
- Detailed User and Management Policies Developed.
- Azure Server management platform commissioned and aligned with Data Centre/Property Strategy.
- Microsoft Virtual Desktop AVD deployed and standardised build ready for use case development.
- VMWare re-design and application deployment solutions in place for legacy applications that will not work within the cloud environment – 18-month deadline for removal of this unsupported platform allowing for extended timescales for departments to upgrade application requirements.
- Teams Telephony in place and connected to Microsoft delivering external voice in line with 365/Device roll-out.
- Structured delivery of the Azure Platform Design, and management strategies for the new environment.
- Intune cloud application deployment and Application Centre in place.
- Initiated the design and pre-development for Zero Trust single tier network.
- Initiated printing review linked to the RMU facility.
- Digitised postal services across the authority.
- Vision in place for the re-organisation of support teams and staffing within the technology areas, linked to a developing strategy for the Customer Services areas and supporting digital platforms – CRM, Call Centre, Web, Ai.

3.7 Legal and Democracy

As in previous quarters, demands on the Legal team continue to increase, particularly in the Children's Social Care area and work continues to increase in the Planning and Environmental fields.

Efforts to recruit continue alongside the ongoing transformation work.

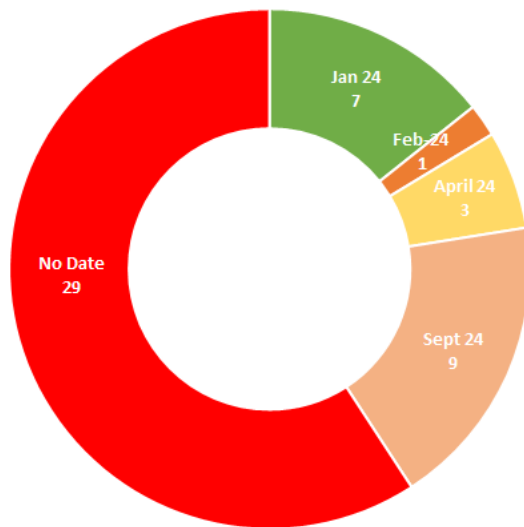
Work will begin in Quarter 4 on the annual review of the Constitution, and preparation for the forthcoming elections are well in hand.

3.8 Catering - School Meals

The school meals management where concerned some schools had made little or no progress in sourcing a new catering provider.

Management contacted all remaining schools for an update and expected transfer date. Please see below.

School Meals Catering Transfer Status



On receipt of the data from schools it was concerning that 29 schools could not give an expected transfer date. To assist schools Management made contact with the DfE who have offered a free procurement service to HBC schools to help ease this burden and ensure they make the right informed decisions. A webinar is scheduled with interested schools and the school meals management on 18/01/24.

Recruitment and retention have still been causing issues, however we have not had to close any kitchens or reduce the service.

3.9 Stadium

Contractual Negotiations

- Widnes FC for season 2024/25
- Halton Table Tennis
- DCBL Sponsorship complete – new 3-year deal

Atlas Security (Term Contractor)

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

3.10 Registration Services

The Registration Service continues to work with HBC ITC Service's, HBC Income and Stopford (an external Registration Management System provider) - to technically develop and allow online appointments for Births, Deaths, Marriage and Civil Partnerships. This use of automation in improving the customers journey is aligned with the "Reimagining Halton" transformation agenda.

From the end of February, the Registration Service will have a vacancy for a Senior Registration Officer, following the retirement of the existing post holder. This vacancy which will hopefully be advertised during January 2024.

3.11 Property Services (Operations)

Protect Duty

The 'Protect Duty', more commonly known as Martyn's Law is due to come in to force later in the year. The legislation will place a requirement on those responsible for certain publicly accessible buildings, locations and venues to consider the threat from terrorism and to implement appropriate and proportionate mitigation measures. It will mainly focus on the requirement to undertake risk assessments of the various locations following which plans must be put in place in respect of implementing appropriate mitigation measures. The impact of this is that it may likely mean the introduction of measures such as public address voice alarm (PAVA) systems in certain venues where not already installed together with the enhancement of other factors such as street furniture, e.g. bollards, to prevent vehicular access to certain areas.

Accommodation review

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

Carbon emission targets

Halton's Climate Change Action Plan has set a target for the Council's own carbon emissions to reach net zero by 2040 in line with the Liverpool City region. Two bids were submitted in November to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), the first covering St Luke's and St Pat's care homes the second covering, Runcorn Town Hall, Kingsway Learning Centre and Picow Farm depot. It is anticipated that the outcome of the bids will be announced prior to the end of January.

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


Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Report 2024-27 Medium Term Financial Strategy to Executive Board - November 2023.		Medium Term Financial Strategy reported to Executive Board in November 2023.
Report 2024/25 revenue budget, capital programme and council tax to Council - March 2024.		On target to report 2024/25 revenue budget, capital programme and council tax to Council - March 2024.

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

Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Provide monthly financial reports to budget holders within 8 days of month end.		Reports all issued on schedule to date.

Provide quarterly financial monitoring reports to Operational Directors for inclusion in Performance Monitoring Reports.		Quarter 3 reports are in the process of being finalised and will be shared with Operational Directors for inclusion in Performance Monitoring Reports.
Provide quarterly monitoring and forecasting reports on the overall budget to Executive Board.		Quarter 3 monitoring report on the overall budget will go to Executive Board on 22 February 2024



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

Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Publish the Statement of Accounts following external audit and the Annual Governance Statement by 30th September 2023.		The draft accounts were published and shared with the External Auditor on 04 July 2023. The audit of accounts commenced at the start of October and now expected to be finalised by mid-February. Audit Findings Report is expected to be reported to Audit & Governance Board in March 2024.









Ref	Objective
FS 04	Make best use of cash resources available to the Council and meet its statutory responsibility by setting, implementing and monitoring the Treasury Management Policy.





Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Establish Treasury Management Policy and report to Council - March 2023.		Treasury Management Policy reported to Council on 08 March 2023
Provide monitoring reports to Executive Board on a bi-annual basis.		Treasury Management update to 30 September 2023 reported to Executive Board 16 November 2023.

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

Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Establish and report prudential indicators to Council - March 2023 .		Prudential indicators reported to Council on 08 March 2023.
Provide monitoring reports to the Executive Board on a bi-annual basis .		Position to 30 September 2023 reported to Executive Board 16 November 2023.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q3 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
FS LI 01	Receive an unqualified external audit opinion on the accounts	Yes	Awaited			NA	External audit expected to provide audit opinion in March 2024.
FS LI 02	Receive an unqualified VFM opinion from the Council's External Auditor	Yes	Awaited			NA	External audit not expected to provide VFM opinion until March 2024
FS LI 03	Proportion of Council Tax that was due that was collected	94.14%	94.25%				This is down by 0.43% on the same point last year.
FS LI 04	The percentage of Business Rates which should have been received during the year that were received	96.18%	97.50%				This is up by 0.91% on the same point last year.
FS LI 05	Average time for processing new claims (Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reduction)	23.71	18	23.61			Although the target will not be achieved, Q3 performance has improved compared to Q1 and Q2.



Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q3 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
FS LI 06	Average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances	9.55	8	15.46			Although the target will not be achieved, Q3 performance has improved compared to Q1 and Q2.
FSLI 07	Proportion of all supplier invoices paid within 30 days (including disputed invoices)	91.13%	92.0%	91.15%			Although payment performance is slightly behind target, there is a marginal improvement when compared to 2022/23

Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit



Key Objectives / milestones

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


Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Promote and take forward the delivery of actions identified within the Organisational D Development Strategy September 2023		The strategy has been reviewed, tailored accordingly, and is now aligned with the Transformation Programme requirements
Regular engagement with Management Team to identify areas of challenge and develop appropriate strategic responses June, September, December 2023, and March 2024.		This is scheduled periodically
Embed knowledge and skills gained from Senior Leadership and Management Development		This will be particularly targeted to supporting Transformation projects.

Programmes (MBA / MSc) December 2023.		
Reconfigure Leadership and Management development in the organisation to align with Transformation Programme principles December 2023.		Leadership & Management cohort established at Level 5, currently procuring level 7 through Northwest Employers, utilising the apprenticeship Levy to fund the qualification
Monitor the embedding of knowledge and skills gained through previously delivered in-house modular Leadership and Management development activity. Ongoing and report in December 2023.		Evaluation and reviews have taken place and this will inform the content and delivery of future programmes


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

Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Establish 20 new apprentice placements within Council services, utilising existing vacancies, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation March 2024.		There is currently no specific resource in position to help to achieve this target. Rectification is planned by resource being placed in the Organisational Development Service, however a model of funding needs to be secured first to enable this. This is currently being examined within the Transformation Programme. A prospective Apprenticeship Officer Job Evaluation has taken place to establish a job grade. There are currently 4 'new hire' apprentices within the Council due to 2 having secured permanent positions.
Establish 20 new existing employee apprenticeships to enable up-skilling in a range of business areas, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation March 2024.		6 conversions this quarter, taking total up to 10 in this current financial year.

Ref	Objective
CXDU 03	Optimise the use of the Agency Worker contract across Council services, to secure ongoing reductions in the incidence and cost of agency usage, and to ensure that correct and appropriate resourcing solutions are being deployed across Council services.

Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Review and consider most appropriate resourcing mix in collaboration with service management in areas of highest agency usage (Transformation Programme) December 2023.		Currently a key strand of Transformation Programme and dedicated resource created in HR Operations. Refer to Emerging Issues above for more information.

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





Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Identify service areas with highest consistent recruitment demand, turnover, and low attraction rates. Develop tailored solutions. (Transformation Programme) December 2023.		Now a key strand of Transformation Programme. Detailed and specific campaigns running to meet requirements. Refer to Key Developments and Emerging Issues above for more information






Ref	Objective
CXDU 05	Develop and implement an organisation wide change programme – The Future Work Programme - to evaluate and introduce revised working practices following to meet the requirements of the changing labour market and employee expectation in the post-pandemic environment (to include use of accommodation, HR policy and practice, wellbeing support, application of technology)

Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Use findings of Corporate Accommodation Review (2023) to determine available workspace capacity and develop optimum balance of 'staff to space'. December 2023.		Corporate Accommodation Review is not yet complete, so December 2023 milestone has passed. It is anticipated that further progress will be made by financial year end – further report to be made in Q4.
Develop contractual model to meet business requirements of 'staff to space' balance. March 2024		This is contingent on milestone immediately above.

Key Performance Indicators







Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q3 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXDU LI 01	Average FTE days lost to sickness	12.98 (Days)	9.5 (Days)	8.47 (Days)			Improvement from outturn at Q3 of 2022/23 (8.65 days). Refer to narrative in key developments above around the implementation of HR Business Partnering to increase value in this topic area.
CXDU LI 02	Percentage of Employees without sickness	66.45	70.00	8.47 (Days)			Higher than same period as last year and better than outturn for whole of 22/23. Also, refer to comments against LI 01 above.
CXDU LI 03	Total Full Time Equivalent Staffing Establishment (Indicator for information only)	3,204	For information Only	81.54%	For information Only	For information Only	Reported for information purposes only.
CXDU LI 04	Total Staff (head count) (Indicator for information only)	4,127					

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q3 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXDU LI 05	Total Agency Worker Usage (number of placements – year to date)	766	650	528			<p>Improvement from Q3 2022/23 however outturn continues to be driven by high usage in Childrens and Adults services, resulting from labour market conditions.</p> <p>Usage across all areas, although reduced in comparison to last years is still high – refer to emerging issues above for more information. <i>(Please note, data includes 27 'off-contract-placements)</i></p>
CXDU LI 06	Total Agency Worker Cost (cumulative gross cost – year to date)	£8.34m	£5.0m	£10.5m			<p>See commentary in LI 05 immediately above and emerging issues.</p> <p>Target will inevitably be missed. <i>(Please note, the 22/23 actual has been updated to include 'off-contract' spend and has therefore increased from £8.5m previously reported)</i></p>





Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q3 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXDU L109	The percentage of top 5% of earners that are:	61.45%	55%	62.6%			Fluctuation in (a), (b) and (c), due to turnover.
	a) Women						
	b) From BME communities	2.7%	2.0%	2.78%			It should be noted that recruitment in to the top 5% of earners is not generally a high volume, and as such scope for significant change over time is low.
	c) With a disability	0%	8.0%	0.00%			
CXDU LI 10	No of staff declaring that they meet the definition of disability within the Equality Act 2010 as a % of the total workforce.	1.25%	10.00%	1.86%			Fluctuation in (a), (b) and (c), due to turnover. It should be noted that recruitment in to the top 5% of earners is not generally a high volume, and as such scope for significant change over time is low.
CXDU LI 11	Minority Ethnic community staff as % of total workforce.	0.99%	1.00%	1.5%			Demonstrates improvements and data is higher than whole of 2022/23, however fluctuation exists due to turnover and outturn tends to remain around target level.
CXDU LI 12	Average time to recruit (Applicant Tracking System reported figure)	19 Days	12.2 Days	15.4 Days			Outturn demonstrates the number of days taken from vacancy closing date to completion of recruitment. Improvement in this outturn is reflective

Key Objectives / milestones




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

Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Continued Enhancement and delivery of the E5, M365, Azure platforms to enhance and deliver new technologies into the authority - March 2024.		Significant progress continues to be made in the delivery stages of Office 365 and Azure Cloud services. Many user data sets have been migrated and will continue through Q2/3 when it is envisaged will be completed.
Delivery of the Front Door transformation programme delivering changes in process, customer contact and customer journey - March 2024.		As defined within the body of text, the project is now underway with considerable efforts being made to define and design both procedural and technical definitions and designs
The continued development of the Records Management Unit enhancing all opportunities and creating a central fulfilment centre within - March 2024.		Ongoing development has included enhancing support for Information Management and prevention of data loss, which includes enhancements that have been implemented in respect of hybrid mail.
Development of Interactive Services, through integration with the Contact Centre and One Stop Shop's - March 2024.		An evolving programme of work moving now at pace - development of the project documentation and objective set is now underway and will be reported against as the department evolves and changes with the delivery of the objectives in line with the transformation objectives for the department
Management and development of commercial ICT opportunity within desktop, hosting and DR provision - March 2024.		The continued development and delivery of the Finance solution into partners within the city region continues with additional services and deliveries continually sought
Continued compliance with Central Government and NCSC Security guidelines and compliance requirements – March 2024.		Actively monitored by DLUHC/NCSC and external audit – progress has been good through Q1, on target.



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





Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Delivery, deployment and Management of the E5, M365, Azure managed cloud platforms, enhancing user experience. - March 2024.		Ongoing preparatory work in the form of workshops with support staff provided by contracted support organisation. Most initial configuration of the Councils Microsoft Azure Tenant has been completed, currently working on the development of the end user experience, which is expected to be completed by the end of Q2. As within the body of text
Continued development and internal, commercial use of the Print Unit, Records management Unit - March 2024.		Ongoing development has included enhancing support for Information Management and prevention of data loss, which includes enhancements that have been implemented in respect of hybrid mail. The transfer of land search functions now complete and transfer of post, income and budget in process and delivery through the RMU is now underway.
Continued development of Contact Centre and One Stop Shop Services/Facilities/Integration with Authority wide process - March 2024. development and internal, commercial use of the Print Unit, Records management Unit - March 2024.		With the advent of the Front door/Customer Journey transformation programme, the department will evolve at pace and begin to report against developments over the coming months as the objectives are set.
The development of improved information governance and Security compliance in line with government guidelines - March 2024.		This has been built into the configuration of the Councils Microsoft Tenancy and will continue to be enhanced and reported via the SIRO reports to Management Team. These changes will continue to evolve as the deployment of the new transformed ICT platform matures. This is part of a gradual change programme supported by the Councils ICT Security Programme to minimise disruption to users, while enhancing capabilities and improving the Councils security and compliance position.







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

Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
The delivery of the Front Door transformation programmes across Admin and Support Services - March 2023.		The disaggregation of the Administrative Support Division is now underway as part of the transformation programme greater detail within the body of this report.
The delivery of new and enhanced IT Security Management and Compliance systems/facilities across the authority's user base - March 2024.		Most preparatory work has been completed. The onboarding of a Security Operations Centre will be the priority for Q2 and Q3
The delivery of new and enhanced technology provision across the authority's user base - March 2024.		Users have already been migrated for their email and calendar facilities. These will now be further enhanced to ensure improved data loss prevention and security of the council's information assets with the recently introduced MFA and background security measures.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q3 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
ICT LI 01	Average availability of the Council's M365 Systems (%).	N/A	99.9%	100%			This new KPI relates to the new M365 platform that remains currently under development – The department has moved into the test phase of the development with over 150 users across all departments testing and evaluating the build and the software deployment and device deployment technologies – to date this has been highly successful with very positive feedback.


Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q3 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
ICT LI 02	Security Incidents across quarter	N/A	10	8			In line with the delivery of the new M365 platform this statistic will be monitored by new systems currently under development – Again to evolve with the programme of work. Limited issues experienced and within the monthly target.
ICT LI 03	Service Desk Call Resolution	86.56%	90%	90%			<p>The Service Desk continues to be challenging with a reduced staffing due to both the posts being vacant – the Job adverts have been posted internally before the Christmas Break and will be posted externally early new year – currently the department within this area holds a number of vacancies – this is due to increase with imminent retirements as well – all posts will be advertised externally when possible.</p> <p>The levels of calls experienced at the moment are high with the changes to the ageing platforms and the move to Teams and M365 – as an unexpected number of users are struggling to get to grips with the changes – subsequently needing high levels of support for minor user issues.</p>

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q3 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
ICT LI 04	Average working days from delivery to completion of a new Laptop.	1 (Days)	1 (Days)	2 (Hours)			Again, a new KPI that will evolve with the considerable programme of work underway. With the advent of the new Dell Laptop contract completed mid-June, the device test for M365 role out plan has started with a 2-hour training session for all new users in place. This will evolve and the training will ramp up once the department can recruit and train further resources currently the team only has 2 people to carry this out – again these people are needed for day-to-day tasks limiting the training sessions.
ICT LI 05	Number of resolved customer contacts – Contact Centre	27500	27000	28960			The level of calls into the contact centre are at an expected level with seasonal changes to call patterns with Adult Social Care and Waste Management being the main focus – Q4 will show considerable changes again as the weather has been a considerable factor over the last few weeks.
ICT LI	Number of resolved contacts – One Stop Shop's	15500	15500	13090			The level of foot fall into the Shops continues to rise, with seasonal and service dependant changes are considered with Social Care and Homelessness accounting for a high level of the contacts over this winter period



<u>Legal & Democracy</u>

Key Objectives / milestones



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









Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Review constitution - May 2023.		The revised Constitution was approved at Annual Council

Ref	Objective
LD 02	To provide efficient and effective Democratic Support Services that provides Elected Members, as key decision makers, with the necessary information, support and training opportunities to fulfil their individual potential and management and governance role effectively.

Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
To ensure that all members have been given the opportunity of a having a MAP meeting where desired.		All Members have been offered a MAP meeting.
To induct all new members by October 2023.		The new Members have been inducted.

Key Performance Indicators



Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q3 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
LD LI 01	No. Of Members with Personal Development Plans (54 Total).	54	54	54			All Members have been offered a MAP. Take up is a matter of personal choice.

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q3 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
LD LI 02	Percentage of Members attending at least one organised Training Event.	52 98%	54 100%	34 61%			Reasonable progress has been made, but as always attendance is a matter of personal choice for Members.
LD LI 03	Average Time taken to issue prosecutions from receipt of full instructions (working days).	10 (Days)	10 (Days)	10 (Days)			The target has been met.
LD LI 04	Average time taken to file application for Care proceedings at Court from receipt of all written evidence from client department (working days).	3 (Days)	3 (Days)	3 (Days)			The target has been met.
LD LI 05	% of Executive Board minutes published within 5 working days after the meeting.	100%	100%	100%			The target has been met.


Community & Environment

Key Objectives / milestones












CE 05	To routinely use customer feedback to drive forward service improvement in the Registration Service
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Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Ensure our services are available to those who wish to or who need to use them by providing accessible information in a range of ways (e.g. written information, online services).		<p>Registration Service information is provided in written format e.g. leaflets and price lists. We also provide information via our own websites:</p> <p>www.halton.gov.uk/registration and www.weddingsinhalton.co.uk</p> <p>In accordance with General Register Office (GRO) protocols, we provide the latest statutory Registration information and guidance, via web links: www.gov.uk</p> <p>In addition, to assist those with physical and sensory access needs; and to help plan and prepare for their visit to the Register Office, we also provide a web link to:</p> <p>https://www.accessable.co.uk/halton-borough-council/access-guides/halton-register-office</p>
Seek the views of the local community and make adjustments to our service delivery when appropriate, based on customer feedback, to improve the service going forward. Where feedback cannot be acted upon, an explanation will be given.		<p>As part of our annual reporting to GRO, we have a Customer Engagement Strategy (2022/20233).</p> <p>In addition, we have a published set of Service Standards at:</p> <p>www.halton.gov.uk/registration and www.weddingsinhalton.co.uk</p>

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

Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Business Plan & Marketing Strategy		The Environment Services Division was able to deliver all works within the Council's agreed specification for green space management.

Key Performance Indicators





Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q3 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CE LI 10	Registration Service - Births - 98% registered within 42 days	100%	100%	100%			Highlighted Performance: 97.30% Deaths Registered within 2 working days. 94.79% Customers seen early or on time within 10 minutes of the appointment time. Figures in line with expectations
CE LI 11	Registration Service - Deaths with MCCDs (no coronial involvement) - 90% registered within 5 days	87%*	100%	100%			Figures in line with expectations
CE LI 12	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Primary Schools.		75%	72.02%			Figures are now based on revised October Census day figures.
CE LI 13	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Secondary Schools.		60%	64.27%			Figures are now based on revised October Census day figures.
CE LI 14	Take up of school lunches (%) – primary schools.		60%	56.8%			Figures are now based on revised October Census day figures.
CE LI 15	Take up of school lunches (%) – secondary schools.		50%	61.58%			This figure will be revised after October Census to get a more accurate number of pupils on roll




Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q3 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CE LI 16	Room Occupancy – Meetings (Box Level)	12.34%	40%	29.75%			New KPI for monitoring occupancy rates.
CE LI 17	Room Occupancy – Conferences (Bridge & Karalius)	50.19%	60%	43.46%			New KPI for monitoring occupancy rates.

Property Services


Key Objectives / milestones

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



Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Ensure the leisure centre is on track on 31st March 2024 both in terms of time and cost by project managing it throughout the year.		The work is currently on programme and on budget, the contractual completion date being 5 th February 2025.
Ensure the contractor commences on site with the major upgrade works at both St Patrick's and St Luke's by 1st Sept 2023.		Works have been delayed due to the Decarbonisation works bid to the PSDS, it is hoped to commence works on site in Spring 2024
Ensure all the projects are progressed in line with the school maintenance programme and are delivered by 31st March 2024.		The majority of the works have now been completed, all remaining projects will be complete by 31 st March 2024
Ensure all the projects are progressed in line with the corporate maintenance programme and are delivered by 31st March 2024.		A significant number of the projects are now completed, others are still to be completed. The budget will be fully spent at year end.

Submit a decarbonisation funding bid in conjunction with the Combined Authority by October 2023 and be successful in having the funding approved by 31 st March 2024.		It was decided not to submit bids in conjunction with the Combined Authority, two separate HBC bids have been submitted however. We should be notified if these have been successful or not by the end of January 2024
Ensure there is a wide and varied mix of commodities and services on offer in the Market and ensure occupancy levels are maintained or increased by 31st March 2024 .		There are a wide and varied mix of commodities and services on offer at the Market, Occupancy rates have dropped slightly however since last year. The reason for this is challenges posed by both the cost of living issues due to inflation, and the car parking charges associated with the nearby car park.
Ensure all necessary servicing, and repairs and maintenance is carried out within our properties by 31st March 2024 and ensure building managers are satisfied with the service provided.		Servicing of plant and equipment is continuing to be carried out at all premises in line with legislative requirements.




Ref	Objective
EEP 08	<p>Corporate Priority: To design, manage and improve processes to generate increasing value for customers and other stakeholders.</p> <p>To undertake Employee Reviews for all staff</p>

Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
All EDRs to be completed by September 23		All EDRs reported as completed by relevant managers

Ref	Objective
EEP 09	<p>Corporate Priority: To design, manage and deliver a place-based business support programme for Halton</p> <p>Commission support sessions to provide advice and guidance based on initial diagnostic.</p>

Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Scheme in Place September 2023		Delay in procurement but will be mitigated with delivery over the remainder of the programme.
Scheme finalised March 2025		On-line to be delivered by March 2025

Ref	Objective
EEP 10	Corporate Priority: Secure funding, support procurement and ground-breaking to take place for Ultraviolet at Sci Tech Daresbury Commissioning of Ultraviolet

Milestone	Progress Q3	Supporting Commentary
Funding Secured Q3 2023 / 2024		Work is currently ongoing to finalise the Full Business Case for IZ funding to support Project Violet Phase 2. The Joint Venture have commenced tendering and a start on site is anticipated in Q1 2024.
Procurement Q4 2023 / 2024		The Joint Venture have commenced tendering.
Groundbreaking Q1 2024 2025		Start on site is anticipated in Q1 2024.

Key Performance Indicators

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

7.0 Financial Statements

Finance Department

Revenue Budget as at 31 December 2023

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	6,500	4,868	4,765	103	134
Insurances	1,044	980	977	3	10
Supplies & Services	359	290	309	(19)	(28)
Rent Allowances	35,500	22,167	22,167	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,748	1,050	982	68	76
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	36	36	0	0
Discretionary Social Fund	106	30	6	24	33
Discretionary Housing Payments	300	169	169	0	0
Household Support Fund Expenditure	1,487	1,487	1,487	0	0
Energy Bills Support	41	41	41	0	0
LCR Levy	2,241	1,681	1,681	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	17	0	0	0	17
Bad Debt Provision	77	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	49,490	32,799	32,620	179	242
Income					
Other Fees & Charges	-344	-256	-236	(20)	(36)
Burdens Grant	-60	-60	-94	34	34
Dedicated schools Grant	-123	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Liability Order	-541	-500	-535	35	44
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	0
Schools SLAs	-295	-295	-311	16	6
LCR Reimbursement	-2,241	-1,681	-1,681	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-400	-119	-119	0	0
Rent Allowances	-34,800	-21,500	-21,136	(364)	(478)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-40	-51	11	27
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-300	-279	-279	0	0
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-515	-386	-393	7	5
Universal Credits	-5	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Admin Grant	-204	0	0	0	0
Household Support Fund Grant	-1,487	-892	-892	0	0
Energy Bills Support	-41	-36	-36	0	0
Alternative Fuel	-57	-20	-20	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-134	0	0	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grants	-153	-140	-140	0	0
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-82	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-42,009	-26,204	-25,923	(281)	(398)
Net Operational Expenditure	7,481	6,595	6,697	(102)	(156)
Recharges					
Premises Support	268	193	193	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,069	1,508	1,508	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,330	-3,778	-3,778	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,993	-2,077	-2,077	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	4,488	4,518	4,620	(102)	(156)

Comments on the above figures

As at the end of December 2023 the department is reporting an overspend of £0.099m, it is expected net spend for the year will be over the approved budget by £0.156m

Staffing forecasts for the year now include the actual 2023/24 pay award. Due to a number of vacancies and where possible, recharging staff time to grants, staffing costs are forecasted to be under budget by £0.134m. This has the impact of reducing the forecasted overspend of £0.248m reported at the end of quarter 2.

Rent allowances continue to be an area of concern. Increased demand for supported accommodation results in increased costs for the Council over and above the housing benefit grant received. This should ideally net to zero, however Government will only support up to a nominal figure after which, 60% will come from housing benefits and the remaining 40% is up to the Council to support. The impact of this can be seen from the £0.478m forecasted overspend by the end of the 2023/24 financial year.

The insurance budget is also under significant pressure, new contracts are out for tender and there has been an increase in costs across all policy premiums, resulting in an estimated overspend of £0.134m which has been funded from the insurance reserve.

The most notable area of underspend against budget continues to be concessionary travel, where net spend will be approximately £0.076m lower than budget at financial year-end, a slight increase from the forecast in quarter 2. Concessionary travel has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic as overall usage levels are still lower than pre covid levels. Bus operators indicate that current levels have become the new standard, and it is unlikely we will see passenger numbers grow much further. Reimbursement levels will need to be renegotiated and updated to reflect the new standards of operation, following the update, it is likely that the full budget profile will be utilised for Concessionary Travel again in the 2024/25 financial year.

Approved 2023/24 Savings






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




FINANCE DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

Progress Against Agreed Savings

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

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

			District (BID) income.					
F16	Concessionary Travel	1,892	Due to a decrease in passenger numbers following Covid, it is considered that the budget for concessionary travel costs can be reduced. The budget was underspent by £421k (20%) in 2021/22. A reduction in this budget will not prevent any eligible concessionary passenger from still being able to travel.	150	0	0		On Target
F17	Council Tax	84	Increase the charges applied when a court summons is issued by 30% (£23), to achieve full cost recovery over the three year period.	40	40	40		On target, summons cost increased for 2023/24
F17 Cont	Council Tax	N/A	Establish a new post dedicated to reviewing council tax exemptions. It is considered at least a 3% reduction in Single Person Discount awards could be achieved, generating	116	0	0		Post appointed to and review of exemptions to commence over the next quarter.

			approximately £150k of additional council tax income, less the cost of the new post.					
F18	Financial Management - Treasury Management	1,152	Closer management of medium- to long-term cash balances will give greater opportunity to invest in higher interest bearing accounts due to increasing interest rates.	300	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Interest payable on target to achieve increased target.
Total Finance Department				893	65	90		

CHIEF EXECUTIVES DELIVERY UNIT

Revenue Budget as at 31 December 2023

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	2,795	2,045	2,042	3	4
Employees Training	117	62	59	3	5
Apprenticeship Levy	300	125	139	(14)	(19)
Supplies & Services	303	290	263	27	68
Total Expenditure	3,515	2,522	2,503	19	58
Income					
Fees & Charges	-211	-135	-124	(11)	(15)
Schools SLA	-533	-533	-532	(1)	(1)
Total Income	-744	-668	-656	(12)	(16)
Net Operational Expenditure	2,771	1,854	1,847	7	42
Recharges					
Premises Support	117	88	88	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,023	768	768	0	0
Asset Rental Support	53	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,491	-4,119	-4,119	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-4,298	-3,263	-3,263	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-1,527	-1,409	-1,416	7	42

Comments on the above figures

With the formal introduction of the Transformation Programme, the Chief Executive's Delivery Unit (previously Policy, People, Performance & Efficiency) is undergoing a period of change within the current financial year. In quarter 3 the net spend outturn performance is forecast at £0.042m under budget, which is a marginal decrease from the £0.057m forecasted at the end of quarter 2.

The most notable impact within the last quarter, is the restructure taking place in recruitment and resourcing, this has resulted in an updated employee spend forecast of £0.004m under budget, down from £0.053m last quarter. The increased costs will be built into the budget for 2024/25 but the current year variance has been funded through the existing underspend generated from secondments to the Transformation Programme.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

Capital Project as at 31st December 2023

	Annual Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Expenditure				
Transformation Programme	5,000	3,750	1,967	3,033
Total Capital	5,000	3,750	1,967	3,033



Comments on the above figures

The Transformation Programme has begun within the Council, a number of staff are now in post and consultancy work has begun in the following areas which should positively impact the Council in both financial and non-financial objectives:

- Employer of choice (Workforce)
- Adults Social Care
- Childrens Social Care
- Customer Journey (Front door)

POLICY, PEOPLE, PERFORMANCE AND EFFICIENCY DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

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

ICT & ADMINISTRATION**Revenue Budget as at 31 December 2023**

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employee Expenditure	8,126	6,094	6,382	(288)	(372)
Supplies & Services Expenditure	950	909	916	(7)	(28)
Capital Finance	78	58	36	22	28
Computer Repairs & Software	1,333	1,020	1,131	(111)	(82)
Communication Costs	13	10	84	(74)	(81)
Premises Expenditure	175	142	111	31	39
Transport Expenditure	3	2	1	1	1
Total Expenditure	10,678	8,235	8,661	(426)	(495)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-996	-50	-107	57	209
Schools SLA Income	-610	-610	-606	(4)	(4)
Total Income	-1,606	-660	-713	53	205
Net Operational Expenditure	9,072	7,575	7,948	(373)	(290)
Recharges					
Premises Support	557	418	418	0	0
Transport	16	12	12	0	0
Central Support	1,797	1,348	1,348	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-10,951	-8,215	-8,215	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-7,087	-6,437	-6,437	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,985	1,138	1,511	(373)	(290)

Comments on the above figures

At the end of December 2023 the department is expected to exceed the annual approved budget by £0.290m. Marginally worse original position from that reported in Q2 (£0.260m).

Employee costs for the year are expected to exceed the budget position by approximately £0.372m. This is based on staff turnover saving targets not currently being achieved. In the 2024/25 financial year the Administration Staff will be disaggregated, and their respective budgets will move to the service areas, however for the current financial year, the budgets will remain in the ICT and Administration Department for reporting purposes.

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

Supplies & Services, Computer Repairs & Software, and Communication costs are all forecasted to be over the budget profile by the end of the financial year. With the shift to Windows 11 and the

more efficient laptops, the Council will see an increase in the costs as both legacy and new systems are in operation.

The new model will cost more due to the enhanced technology and reliance on cloud software, however, the efficiency of the new system should have a significant impact on the efficiency of the Council's staff.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

Capital Projects as at 31 December 2023

	Annual Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Expenditure				
ICT Rolling Capital Project	700	525	287	413
Total Capital	700	525	287	413

Comments on the above figures

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

ICT AND SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

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

LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT**Revenue Budget as at 31 December 2023**

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	1,436	1,106	1,048	58	77
Agency Costs (Locums)	0	0	577	(577)	(757)
Supplies & Services	164	128	154	(26)	(28)
Civic Catering & Functions	26	19	6	13	11
Legal Expenses	218	163	399	(236)	(271)
Transport Related Expenditure	11	8	7	1	4
Total Expenditure	1,855	1,424	2,191	(767)	(964)
Income					
School SLA's	-92	-92	-78	(14)	(14)
Licence Income	-284	-213	-205	(8)	42
Reimbursement & Other Grants	0	0	-25	25	25
Fees & Charges Income	-70	-54	-57	3	5
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-596	596	776
Total Income	-446	-359	-961	602	834
Net Operational Expenditure	1,409	1,065	1,230	(165)	(130)
Recharges					
Premises Support	58	43	43	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	282	212	212	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	340	255	255	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,749	1,320	1,485	(165)	(130)

Comments on the above figures

As at the end of December 2023 the department is reporting a net overspend against budget. It is currently forecast that net spend for the department will be over the approved budget by approximately £0.130m at the end of the financial year.

Employee costs for the year are still expected to marginally be below the approved budget. This is a result of the number of vacancies that exist within the department but mitigated by agency costs. The main area of concern for the department is the volume of agency costs resulting from hard to fill vacant posts. It is expected these costs will be in the region of £0.757m at the end of the financial year. This figure has increased due to additional staffing resources required for Children's Care Orders and clearing a backlog of cases. Whilst it has been agreed that these costs will be funded from reserves it is important that the Council takes action to begin to reduce reliance on agency usage. Benchmarking work is currently being undertaken to review the structure and remuneration offers at other Local Authorities to identify if there is any action which can be taken to reduce the agency costs.

Within the forecast £0.271m overspend against budget of legal expenses, there is an estimated £0.353m costs relating to the contracting of barristers, most of which again, are due to the limited number of staff available to clear an increasing caseload. The impact of the transformation and recovery work in Children Services, along with increased support from the recruitment team, should help alleviate the pressure seen in this area.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

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

COMMUNITY & GREENSPACE**Revenue Budget as at 31 December 2023**

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	17,085	12,606	11,991	615	820
Premises	3,817	2,200	2,048	152	274
Supplies & Services	1,609	1,307	1,372	(65)	(86)
Hired & Contracted Services	607	413	637	(224)	(299)
Book Fund	140	108	113	(5)	(7)
Food Provisions	371	158	268	(110)	(147)
School Meals Food	1,965	1,474	1,540	(66)	(88)
Miscellaneous Transport Costs	117	77	96	(19)	(25)
Other Agency Costs	601	490	429	61	81
Other Expenditure	0	0	9	(9)	(9)
Waste Disposal Contracts	6,885	1,146	1,077	69	91
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	67	48	16	32	43
Grant to Norton Priory	172	172	174	(2)	(1)
Capital Financing	201	180	118	62	83
Total Expenditure	33,637	20,379	19,888	491	730
Income					
Sales Income	-3,962	-3,098	-2,292	(806)	(1,075)
Fees & Charges Income	-5,752	-4,691	-5,113	422	564
Rental Income	-221	-149	-182	33	43
Government Grant Income	-827	-3,244	-3,434	190	252
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-676	-445	-496	51	67
SLA Income	-2,391	-2,321	-2,139	(182)	(242)
Internal Fees Income	-592	-158	-275	117	156
Capital Salaries	-173	-106	-73	(33)	(43)
Transfers From Reserves	-20	51	51	0	2
Total Income	-14,614	-14,161	-13,953	(208)	(276)
Net Operational Expenditure	19,023	6,218	5,935	283	454
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,825	1,369	1,369	0	0
Transport	2,046	1,504	1,592	(88)	(117)
Central Support	3,856	2,893	2,897	(4)	(5)
Asset Rental Support	199	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-540	-409	-409	0	0
Net Total Recharges	7,386	5,357	5,449	(92)	(122)
Net Departmental Expenditure	26,409	11,575	11,384	191	332

Comments on the above figures**Financial Position**

The net department spend is £0.191m under budget at the end of Quarter 3 and the estimated outturn underspend against budget for 2023/24 is £0.332m.

This represents a significant improvement on the forecast outturn overspend of £0.564m estimated at the end of Qtr2. The variance between the two quarters is largely attributed to employee and premises costs over the year to date being lower than expected.

Net employee spend is estimated to be under the approved budget at the end of the financial year by £0.820m. This is due to the number of vacancies within leisure services and reduced casual usage in line with 2022/23 actual data. The costs included within the report now take account of all 2023.24 pay awards being agreed and paid to employees.

Utilities budgets for 2023/24 were inflated due to the expected rise in energy costs, however, the actual charges to date have not been as high as forecasted. There has also been a considerable saving on Crematorium gas charges as the new cremator is more efficient. Gas usage at the Stadium has been reduced due to using heat source pumps. Energy costs for the year are under review and a prudent approach has been taken in estimates.

Hired and Contracted Services has increased since Q2 due to additional costs of Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Programme, funding for these costs will be met by additional Government Grant recorded against income.

Food Provisions is overspent due to the continuing increase of food costs from suppliers driven by high inflation over the past year.

Due to delays in receiving waste disposal contract invoices spend for the year has been estimated based on the average costs from 2022/23. Any changes to these estimates could have a large impact on the Department's outturn position.

Sales income for the year is expected to underachieve compared to the budgeted income target. Shortfalls in income at the Stadium, school meal sales plus a reduction in room hire at Community Centres and Libraries are forecast to contribute towards lower income levels. This shortfall against the income target is mitigated by reduced employee costs and casual usage at these establishments.

Other Income categories are estimated to overachieve against budget due to additional income levels for Trade and Green Waste Collection fees plus letting fees and promotions at The Brindley.

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

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

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

Capital Projects as at 31 December 2023

Project Title	2023/24 Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Stadium Minor Works	34	20	18	16
Halton Leisure Centre	15,056	12,600	12,550	2,506
Brookvale Pitch Refurbishment	28	14	13	15
Open Spaces Schemes	851	200	150	701
Children's Playground Equipment	105	20	20	85
Upton Improvements	13	0	0	13
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12	1	1	11
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340	0	0	340
Runcorn Town Park	284	120	117	167
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,023	35	32	991
Pickerings Pasture Café	520	0	0	520
Litter Bins	20	0	0	20
Totals	18,286	13,010	12,901	5,385

Comments on the above figures**Brookvale Pitch Refurbishment**

This project is now completed - waiting on invoice for outstanding works so project can be closed down.

Halton (Moor Lane) Leisure Centre

Construction is on track and in line with expected spend.

Open Spaces

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

Children's Playground Equipment

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

Upton Improvements

Open space improvement works undertaken.

Crow Wood Park

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

Landfill Tax Credits Schemes

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

Runcorn Town Park

Project to renew park infrastructure. Project is ongoing with 2 contracts on site. Carry forward to complete work in season and for contingency payments.





Wigg/Spike Island Recovery Works

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

Pickerings Pasture Café

Site surveys are on-going, planning application and tender documentation currently being prepared; the anticipated start on site is Spring 2024 with a completion Autumn 2024.

APPENDIX A

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
COMM1	The Brindley Theatre	64	Reduce Box Office opening hours from 10am-5pm Monday-Friday to 10am-2pm. Currently 80% of tickets are purchased online or by telephone and this is increasing each year. Replace all non-LED lighting in the building. This is estimated to reduce on-stage energy costs by 75%.	10 10	0 0	0 0		Box Office core opening hours were reduced to 5 hours (Mon – Fri) 10am – 3pm. They will be realigned to 4 hours daily 11am – 3.00pm (Mon – Fri) from 1 September onwards. No LED lighting has yet been installed but is planned for later in the financial year.
COMM3	Sport & Recreation	471	Restructuring the roles and responsibilities of the Sports Development Team	0	36	0		On track to meet savings identified for 2024/25.
COMM4	Stadium & Catering Services	751	Franchise the concourse only catering services to an external operator. An organisational restructure is currently being implemented for Stadium & Catering Services to reflect recent service changes.	50 40	0 0	0 0		
COMM6	Area Forums	170	Reduce the base budget provision to £50k temporarily for one year, with all unspent monies in 2022/23 (currently £120k) being carried forward to be spent by the relevant Area Forums in 2023/24. The base budget position will then be reviewed for 2024/25.	120	-120	0		Implemented in 2023/24 budget setting.
COMM5	Stadium & Catering Services – School Meals	12	Cease to deliver the school meals service, which has made significant losses of over £200,000 for a number of years and is forecast to make a similar loss by year-end. Work would be undertaken with schools over the next two years to support	0	0	12		Work underway in school meals being delivered through alternative means

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Savings Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
			them to secure an alternative means of delivery, whether in-house or via an external provider.					
Total Community & Environment Department				230	-84	12		

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ECONOMY ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY DEPARTMENT**Revenue Operational Budget at 31 December 2023**

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,491	4,195	4,118	77	103
Repairs & Maintenance	1,980	1,453	1,464	(11)	(14)
Premises	123	110	116	(6)	(6)
Energy & Water Costs	1,782	1,057	860	197	262
NNDR	763	702	639	63	84
Rents	175	167	165	2	2
Economic Regeneration Activities	27	3	3	0	0
Security	501	331	372	(41)	(55)
Supplies & Services	430	300	267	33	44
Supplies & Services - Grant	772	356	356	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	264	120	120	0	0
Capital Finance	44	44	44	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	40	40	40	0	0
Total Expenditure	12,392	8,878	8,564	314	420
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-860	-488	-562	74	98
Rent - Commercial Properties	-908	-566	-528	(38)	(50)
Rent - Investment Properties	-44	-34	-30	(4)	(5)
Rent - Markets	-852	-644	-609	(35)	(47)
Government Grant	-1,387	-614	-614	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-585	-633	-643	10	13
Schools SLA Income	-299	-294	-258	(36)	(36)
Recharges to Capital	-282	-114	-119	5	7
Transfer from Reserves	-1,270	-1,229	-1,229	0	0
Total Income	-6,487	-4,616	-4,592	-24	-20
Net Operational Expenditure	5,905	4,262	3,972	290	400
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,006	1,505	1,505	0	0
Transport Support	23	16	19	(3)	(3)
Central Support	1,710	1,283	1,283	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-7,728	-5,796	-5,796	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,985	-2,992	-2,989	-3	-3
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,920	1,270	983	287	397

Comments on the above figures

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

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

Comparison to Previous Quarter

Economy, Enterprise & Property outturn has improved from a forecasted net spend outturn of £0.204m over budget to £0.397m under budget at the end of the financial year.

Supporting Information

The Department consists of 154fte of which 66fte are core funded, with a staff turnover savings target of £0.134m. There has continued to be delays in recruiting across the department, and so the projection is currently that employee expenditure across the department will be under budget by £0.103m at financial year-end.

By carefully monitoring the accounts, the department has used grant/external funding where possible to try and relieve the pressure on the core Council budget. This is reflected in employee expenses this quarter where various projects have been identified and staff time has been charged accordingly. This process will continue throughout the year. This Q3 report includes the 23/24 pay award. Projections for the final quarter of the year have been updated.

As inflation is running much higher than originally predicted at the time of budget setting, the department will be expected to absorb any price increases that may arise from within the budget allocations made. This is proving difficult for repairs and maintenance due to the continued increase in the price of materials. The Repairs and Maintenance programme is constantly under review to keep within budget. However, there is a risk that unexpected events may occur which require expenditure to be incurred, that has not been allocated for.

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

As a result of Tarmac taking up occupancy at Unit 10 Catalyst Park, the Council has received a NNDR refund of £30k. Projections have been updated with regards to NNDR costs at the Markets.

Due to the energy costs budget increasing significantly in 2023/24, the department is forecasting that it will be £0.262m under budget in year as costs have not risen as much as expected, but costs are still predicted to be £0.461m higher than 2022/23, which is an increase of over 43%. The forecast may change during the following quarter depending on the change in energy usage over this time.

A stop on non-essential supplies and services budgets has contributed to the under spend for the Department. It is anticipated that the budget will be under budget by £44k at year end.

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

As in previous years, and the long recovery from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the financial challenges of commercial property rent continue to present a significant financial challenge, though the third quarter of the year has seen an increase in the amount of commercial property income. This is due to Agency Staff within Asset Management being able to focus on the rent reviews and licence fees. There is also a focus within the team to fill the vacant properties within the portfolio. The current projection is that the income target will not be achieved by £0.050m.

Due to adverse trading conditions in the retail sector which have been made worse due to inflation and increased utilities costs, the department is projecting to under achieve on market rental income targets this budget year. The occupancy rate is approximately 89%. The School Cleaning Service Level Agreement (SLA) is not covering its costs this budget year due to the need to employ agency staff to cover sickness and leave and the pay award. A review of SLA charges has been undertaken ahead of the next budget year. The demand for the service is also decreasing as schools move to Academies.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

Capital Projects as of 31 December 23

	Capital Allocation £'000	Allocation to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Expenditure				
3MG	24	14	14	10
Murdishaw	30	8	8	22
Equality Act Improvement Works	282	230	230	52
Kingsway Learning Centre Improved Facilities	36	0	0	36
Halton Lea TCF Roof Top Garden	35	0	0	35
Property Improvements	254	210	210	44
Waterloo Building Runcorn	93	1	1	92
Woodend - Former Unit 10 Catalyst Trade Park	200	234	234	-34
Foundry Lane Residential Area	2,634	1,308	1,308	1,326
Police Station Demolition	406	406	406	0
Runcorn Station Building Development	80	30	30	50
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	82	20	20	62
Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development	291	18	18	273
Changing Places	212	180	180	32
Town Deal	2,240	825	825	1,415
Total Capital	6,899	3,484	3,484	3,415

Murdishaw – HBC supported the capital works to the former Youth Centre/Boxing Club which has been brought back in to use as the Tea Tree Café, a community project supported by Onward Homes. The funding was provided to match fund Onward Homes contribution. A programme of improvements to the external facilities at Murdishaw Community Centre is currently being priced with works anticipated in the Quarter 4.

Equality Act Budget - It is anticipated that most of the budget will be spent by year end, as the department has some access improvement works which are adjacent to the Brindley yet to be invoiced.

Kingsway Learning Centre – A PA system was recently installed in the building. The department is awaiting the final invoice.

Property Improvements- It is anticipated that this budget will be fully spent by year end. The department has already completed a number of projects from this fund, inclusive of the heating/ventilated replacement works at Phoenix Park, the installation of the new safety barrier system, and the new audio equipment at the Brindley and we have allocated the Halton Lea lift replacement project to this code, so all will be spent by year end.

Waterloo Centre - The demolition works are likely to commence in February, the Council a date for the disconnection of the services which is late January. The anticipated cost of the work is circa £115k plus fees.

Woodend Former Unit 10 - All works are complete other than the provision of the new gas supply.

Foundry Lane – Foundry Lane is moving to a crucial stage with reserved matters to enable the beginning of construction on the site. Planning permission should be determined in January to allow the construction company to start on site by the end of this financial year.

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

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

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








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

Changing Places - All 3 changing places facilities are complete, bar a few minor snags at the Victoria Park facility. The department is still in the process of getting them all registered on the Changing places website, all will be complete by year end.

The Town Deal programme –The seven projects which make up the Runcorn Town Deal programme are progressing and are currently on track to be completed by 31st March 2026 when the funding ends.

3MG - The substantive programme for 3MG in terms of land disposals is now 90%+ complete with up to 900,000 square foot of development in the pipeline some of which will require professional support over the coming years which will continue this as an ongoing project.




ECONOMY, ENTERPRISE AND PROPERTY DEPARTMENT
APPENDIX A

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
EEP1	Capital Works Team	N/A	Increase the level of fee income by increasing the percentage charged or charging by time, including those works not currently charged for.	10	0	0		On target.
EEP4	Cleaning Services – Council Buildings	580	Review cleaning arrangements, with a focus on only emptying bins and cleaning toilets daily.	0	100	0		Until the accommodation review is complete, only limited savings will be made in 2024/25
EEP2	Caretaking & Security Services	641	A review and restructuring of caretaking arrangements.	0	52	0		Restructure will take place in 24/25. It is anticipated the full saving will not be met in year. Cannot achieve savings for security due to anti-social behaviour in Halton Lea. Police have advised security is kept on site until this is resolved.
			Reduce security cover at Halton Lea for opening/closing and then static guarding 7.00am to 7.30pm Monday to Friday, and 9.30am to 3.00pm on Saturdays to cover the opening hours of Halton Direct Link.	35	0	0		
EEP5	Corporate Buildings	927	Generate additional rental income by providing additional office space for external organisations at Rutland House, by letting out the remaining three floors.	120	0	0		Reflected in 2023/24 budget.
EEP6	Facilities Management	165	Restructure the team in light of an expression of interest for retirement.	44	0	0		Reflected in 2023/24 budget.
EEP8	Technical Support & Market Team	392	Restructuring of the team	98	0	0		Reflected in 2023/24 budget.
Total Economy, Enterprise & Property Department				307	152	0		




8.0 Application of Symbols

Symbols are used in the following manner:

Progress Symbols

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Performance Indicator</u>
Green 	Indicates that the <u>objective is on course to be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.	<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	N / A
	Indicates that the measure cannot be compared to the same period last year.

REPORT TO:	Corporate Policy and Performance Board
DATE:	6 th June 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Chief Executive
SUBJECT:	Performance Management Reports for Quarter 4 of 2023/24
PORTFOLIO:	Corporate Services
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 final quarter period to 31st March 2024.

1.2 Key priorities for development or improvement in 2023-24 were agreed by Members for the various functional areas reporting to the Board as detailed below:

- Finance
- Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit
- ICT and Administrative Support
- Legal and Democracy
- Catering, Stadium and Registration Services
- Property 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 final 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 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 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Not applicable.

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

Not applicable.

Corporate Policy and Performance Board– Priority Based Monitoring Report Q4

Reporting Period: 01st January – 31st March 2024

1.0 Introduction

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

2.0 Key Developments

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

Financial Services**2.2 Benefits Division**Processing Times

At 31 March 2024 processing times for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction were as follows: new claims 22.65 days and changes in circumstances 9.23 days.

Universal Credit – Managed Migration 2024/25

In March 2024 the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) issued further guidance to local authorities, which stated that from April 2024 the DWP will begin to notify working age benefit claimant households regarding when they will migrate to Universal Credit. The DWP will arrange an advertising campaign to raise awareness of the move to Universal Credit, and explain the actions claimants need to take when they receive a migration notice.

The Migration Notice tells the claimant that their legacy benefits will be ending, and they need to make a Universal Credit claim by a specific date.

This will be a minimum of three months from the date the Migration Notice is issued. If a claimant does not make a claim by their specified date, their legacy benefits which may include Housing Benefit will be terminated. When the Council receives a “stop notice” from the DWP to cancel a claimants Housing Benefit, the claimant will then be entitled to two further weeks of Transition to Universal Credit Housing Payments at the existing Housing Benefit rate. The impact of this additional work for the Council’s Housing Benefits Team is currently unknown.

The DWP statistics indicate at 8 February 2024 there were 16,545 people within Halton claiming Universal Credit. The table below shows the Universal Credit caseload in Halton on a quarterly basis over the past 23 months.

Universal Credit caseload	
Date	Caseload
1 April 2022	15,262
30 June 2022	15,283
30 September 2022	15,533
31 December 2022	15,581
31 March 2023	15,817
8 June 2023	16,057
9 November 2023	16,332
8 February 2024	16,545

2.3 Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance Division

Supplier Invoice Processing Performance

90.39% of all supplier invoices paid in 2023/24 were settled within 30 days. The 9.61% of supplier invoices that were settled after 30 days includes any invoices that were in dispute.

Early Payment Scheme

Since August 2022, the Council has operated its early payment scheme for supplier invoices without any external support. This has ensured that any rebate generated by the accelerated payment of invoices is retained in full by the Council. The amount of rebate achieved and retained by the Council during 2023/24 was £114k.

Insurance tender

The Council has retendered a range of insurance policies that were expiring on 31 March 2024. The Council’s Procurement team and insurance broker supported the competitive tender process, which was undertaken using a Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation framework agreement. Five separate lots were awarded. Details of those lots and the successful bidders are shown as follows:

Lot	Successful bidder
Property	Maven
Computer	Maven
Combined Liability	Zurich Municipal
Motor	Zurich Municipal
Engineering and Inspection	Risk Management Partners

The outcome of the tender process was beneficial for the Council. An overall saving on premiums was achieved despite the difficult insurance market. Additionally, the Council was able to secure a reduction on the amount of self-insurance (excess) on its public liability and employers liability policies from £600,000 per claim to £500,000 per claim.

Customer payments

Following the withdrawal of the payment kiosks from HDL in April 2023, the Council has experienced a significant reduction in the number of customers wishing to make payments in cash. Cash payments can however still be made to the Council via the many PayPoint outlets located across the Borough.

The Council also continues to see a reduction in the number of customers choosing to pay by cheque. During 2023/24, the Council received an average of just 12 cheque payments per week.

In contrast, during 2023/24 there was an increase in the number of telephone payment transactions, touch tone transactions, and internet payments received by the Council. These are more cost effective income collection methods for the Council.

2.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division

2023/24 Quarter 3 Financial Monitoring

For the financial year to 31 December 2023, overall Council net spending was £96.2m against a budget of £90.7m, resulting in an overspend position to date against budget of £5.5m. The forecast position for the year to 31 March 2024 was an estimated overspend of £7.1m.

Capital spending at 31 December 2023 totalled £31.5m, which is 94% of the planned spending of £33.6m at this stage. This represents 51% of the total Capital Programme of £61.5m (which assumes a 20% slippage between years).

The financial outturn position for the year to 31 March 2024 will be reported to Executive Board on 13 June 2024

2022/23 Statement of Accounts

The external audit of the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts has now concluded. The accounts together with the Audit Findings Report and the Auditor's Annual Report were reported to Audit & Governance Board on 20 March 2024. Documents relating to the conclusion of the audit have been published on the Council web-site. The Council's External Auditor has given an unqualified Audit Opinion regarding the 2022/23 accounts, with their Audit Findings Report providing a relatively clean bill of health with no significant recommendations. The Auditor's Annual Report provides a value for money assessment and makes number of key recommendations which management will be responding to.

Council Tax and Business Rate Collection

Council tax collection for the year to 31 March 2024 is 93.8%, down 0.11% on this point last year. Cash collection for the year to date is £74.3m, this includes £2.2m collected in relation to previous year debt.

Business rates collection for the year to 31 March 2024 is 96.7%, down 0.94% on this point last year. The collection percentage has been impacted by a larger site coming on to the rating list during March 2024, the Council has billed the organisation in full for the rates due but remains unpaid at financial year-end. Excluding this site the collection rate would have been 97.7%, up by 0.08% on this point last year.

Business rate cash collected for the year is £60.9m, this includes £1.1m collected in relation to previous year debt.

2.5 Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

The HR Business Partnering Model is embedding within the organisation with HR presence in Senior Management Meetings supporting both strategic and operational priorities and objectives.

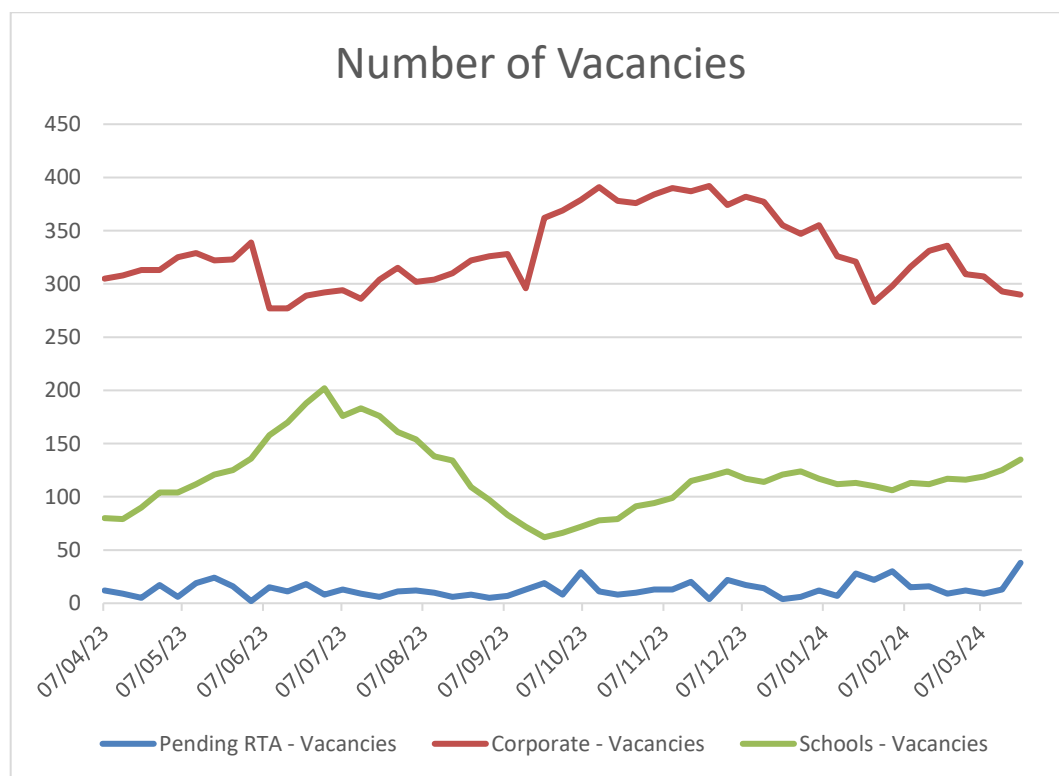
The services within the HR Operations Division (Resourcing & Recruitment, Payroll & Pensions, Health & Safety and Business Partnering) remain under significant pressure in the current year. Additional demand persists across all areas.

The services are working collaboratively to deliver what the wider Council now requires informed by the new corporate priorities, values and the Transformation Programme together with business as usual.

The Division has successfully recruited to the Principal Health & Safety Advisor role and process has commenced to recruit to the Health & Safety vacant post.

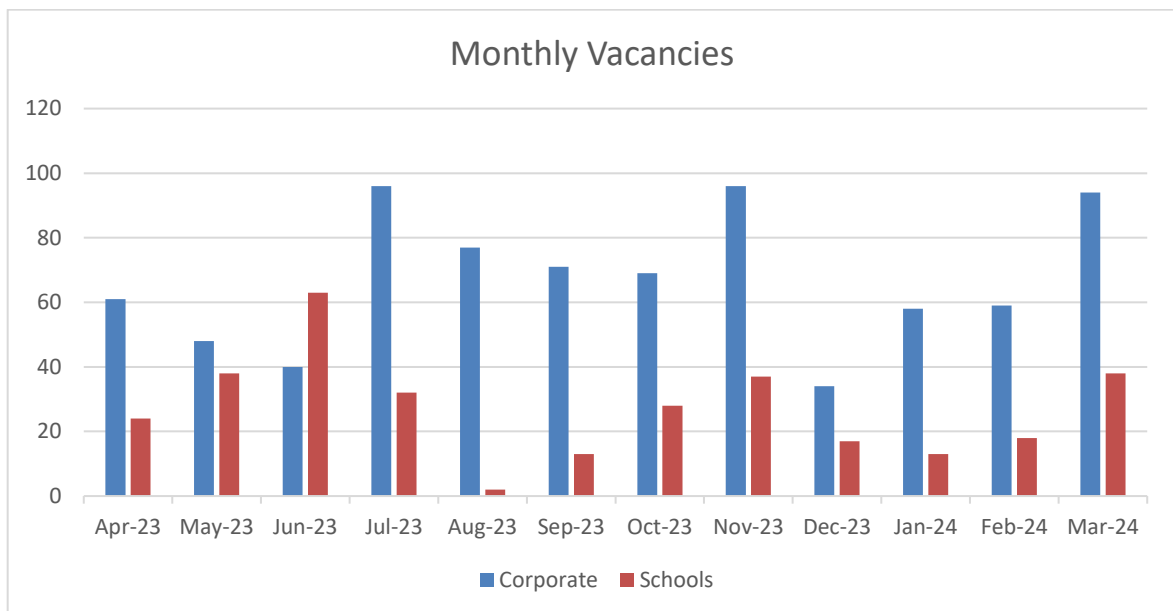
Agency usage remains high, work has been carried out to on-board all care homes to reduce off contract agency spend with clear processes for requesting an agency worker. This process is now part of the HR Operations as business as usual to challenge operational service areas to seek solutions to bring usage and associated spend down.

Recruitment demand continues to be high, with the service seeing an upswing in demand for the processing of corporate vacancies, as can be seen in the graph below. Although vacancy demand has remained consistently high, the 'pending RTA – Vacancies' throughout the year has remained consistently low compared to historic data where this has increased as a result of school recruitment resulting in little to no impact on corporate recruitment.



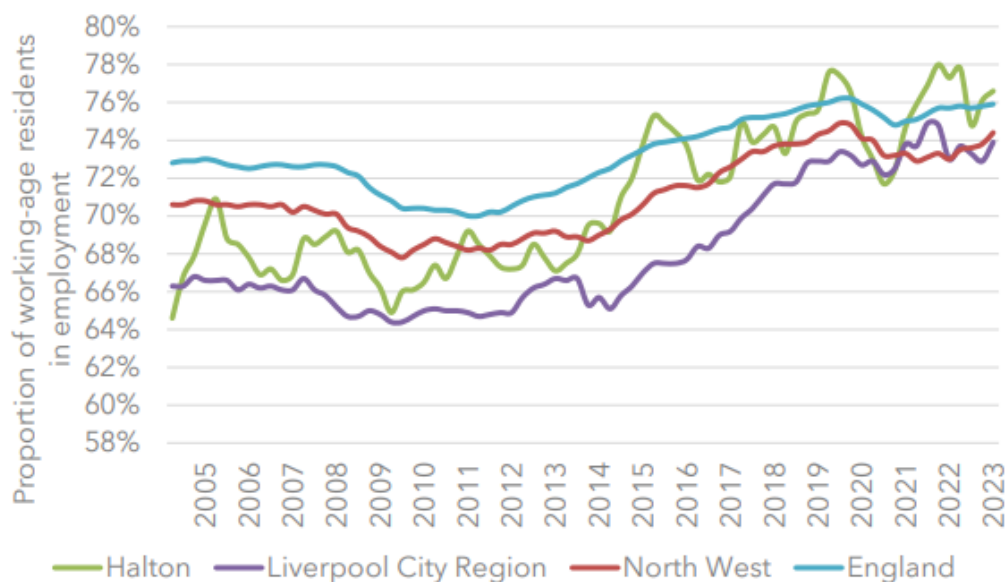
At the time of writing, there are 306 Council vacancies in the recruitment workflow inclusive of usual recruitment, 'Adults Always On' campaign, 'Indeed' campaign, and 138 school vacancies in progress. The graph below shows vacancies for corporate and schools month on month for 2023/24.

To support ongoing communications campaigns across the Council, following a successful recruitment process, appointments have been made to the vacant Communications Officer and Marketing Communications Assistant posts



Difficult labour market conditions remain to bring barriers in the recruiting and resourcing of many service areas across the organisation. This is consistent with the overall employment rate in the local economy increasing in recent times to 77%, above both regional (74%) and national levels (76%) as demonstrated below. Resourcing workflows remain continuously under review to address the consistent issue to streamline processes and shorten recruitment timescales.

Employment rate



2.6 ICT and Administration

Given the large number of vacancies across the wider service and in particular within IT the service continues to struggle to recruit into these posts due to the lack of suitable candidates and low volumes of applicants, link this to a widening issue with sickness the services are depleted at this point in time.

But it must be loudly noted that those currently in place are more than stepping up with many people working way outside of their normal functions and delivering new and innovative services out to the authority across all teams within IT.

All pulling together to deliver M365 and its component parts through to delivering detailed training whilst delivering the new Dell devices and the new ways of working associated with this role-out.

The feedback so far from the 700+ users now on the devices has been fantastic with all users noting without exception the speed and ease of use as a considerable benefit to productivity and their general working day.

Given the team only has 2 people part time delivering the training the programme this delivery has moved at pace, the objective is to recruit into a further 2 posts to push the project forward with an objective of late summer to complete the roll-out of the new devices subject to resource.

The delivery of M365, One Drive and full Teams access linked to SharePoint Online is again moving at pace given the complexity of the business requirements linked to SharePoint and call-groups.

We fully appreciate there are issues at the moment with the integration of Skype and Teams at this stage in the project. This was highlighted at the start of the process as 15-year-Old technology is currently trying to integrate with constantly updating new technology. We ask the teams working with us to respond in a timely manner to upgrade requests and work with us to change and upgrade ways of working/process and document library designs; required to work within the new environments. Again we appreciate change isn't always easy to implement within busy working environments but as a business we wanted this new way of working and the IT teams are more than willing to help you through this process, but it must be understood we are a limited resource dealing with thousands of users with a plethora of individual requirements – the objective behind online services and cloud computing is to standardise as much as possible to reduce costs and improve efficiencies.

2.7 Legal and Democracy

Recruitment difficulties have continued in Legal Services, leading to the consideration of alternative strategies.

Maternity cover is in place for a Group Solicitor who will commence her leave in Quarter 4. Arrangements have been made to deal with the departure of the Principal Members Service Officer at the end of Quarter 3.

2.8 Catering - School Meals

TUPE transfers are in the process for several schools, we have a further 5 schools leaving at the end of March / early April 2024. This will still leave 37 schools that Halton provide the catering for. We estimate 50% of these schools will leave in September 2024 with the remaining schools leaving between September 2024 and March 2025.

2.9 Stadium

The Stadium Management Team continue to engage with the Transformation Team in reimagining the Stadium, its commercial viability and sustainability.

Key performances indicators continue to be monitored and developed to ensure appropriate data is gathered. These are focused on Stadium usage/occupancy and customer satisfaction. Data received to date (including Q4) on the customer satisfaction surveys reads as follows.

- 89% of returns rated the stadium in terms of 'Quality of Venue' between 4 and 5 stars.
- 93% of returns rated the stadium in terms of 'Quality of Catering' between 4 and 5 stars.

- 89% of returns said they would likely or very likely use the stadium again.
- 84% of customers would likely or very likely recommend the stadium to others.

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

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

Throughout Q4 the social media campaign continued in partnership to celebrate Halton's 50th Anniversary. The aim is still to increase the Stadiums social media following and interaction rates across all platforms, this included various competitions resulting in free ticket giveaways. The Take That Experience performed to a packed-out audience in the Stadium Event Hall.

HBC, Widnes Vikings and GiggleShack (local promoter), hosted another sold out comedy night which was a great success. 2 high profile acts have been confirmed for June and September 2024.

The Stadium was approached and subsequently staged several fixtures for the City of Liverpool FC due to ground sharing issues. Management built a positive relationship with the board and has resulted in the City of Liverpool FC signing a 2 seasons agreement with Halton Borough Council (The DCBL Stadium), starting 2024/25.

The Widnes Vikings kicked off the season 2024 in February 2024. Management and the Vikings are working on ways to increase the spectator atmosphere whilst minimising costs for both parties.

Management have agreed with HBC Finance to open up the executive box level for meeting rooms to all HBC staff at no extra charge, in a bid to increase occupancies levels and secondary spend of refreshments.

Stadium & Catering (New Division)

The consultation process for the Stadium and Catering Division closed on the 25/01/2024. Categorisation letters were issued to at Risk and Assimilated positions on the 06/02/2024 and the 'At-Risk' period started for those employees on 07/02/2024. Recruitment for all the new positions started on 29/02/2024 with the appointment the new Divisional Manager on 01/03/2024. Recruitment and implementation of the new structure will be completed by 30/04/2024.

2.10 Registration Services

The Registration Service has successfully opened a brand new suite within the Civic Building at Runcorn Town Hall. The Preece Suite (located on the first floor) is a modern suite suitable for all types of ceremonies.

The Registration Service has updated its websites: www.halton.gov.uk/registration and www.weddingsinhalton.co.uk;

The Registration Service has completed the recruitment and selection process for a replacement for three Casual Registration Officers

The Registration Service has successfully completed a full stocktake on all certificates and secure stationary issued by GRO. All records were accurate and up-to-date as of 31st March 2024.

2.11 Property Services (Operations)

maintenance programme was approved by the Asset Management Working Group. The budget has been fully spent with us being slightly over budget at year end. The majority of projects on the list have been completed with a couple having to be deferred until next year due to the availability of funding.

Education SEMH Resource base projects

There are 6 schools where we are upgrading the facilities to create Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) resource bases for both KS1 & KS2 groups. 5 of the projects are now complete, at Oakfield, Victoria Road, Astmoor and Westfield and Woodside Primaries, we are still awaiting instruction in respect of Ditton Primary.

Demolition of the Waterloo Building, Runcorn

This project is now complete, and the site has been left ready for redevelopment. Planning permission has been granted for a supported living residential scheme which will be delivered via a private sector developer.

Runcorn Waterfront Scheme

The demolition of both Belvedere & Churchill Hall has been tendered and a contractor appointed. It is hoped that works will commence on site within the next few weeks. This is the first stage of the above scheme which is being delivered in conjunction with HHT.

3.0 Emerging Issues

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

3.2 Finance - Benefits Division

Household Support Fund 5

The Council received formal notification on 26th March 2024 from the Department for Works and pensions (DWP) of the extension of the Household Support Fund for the period 1st April 2024 to 30th September 2024. Halton's grant allocation is £1.3m for this 6 month period, and a spending plan is currently being developed with Council departments and voluntary sector partners that have previously been involved in the delivery of the Household Support Fund. The DWP has arranged a meeting on 18th April 2024 for all local authorities to attend to enable further guidance to be given, and councils will have the opportunity to ask questions concerning delivery of the latest Household Support Fund scheme. The DWP also require that a Household Support Fund delivery plan be submitted by 10th May 2024.

3.3 Audit, Procurement and Operational Finance Division

Procurement Act

The Procurement Act 2023 received Royal Assent in October 2023 and secondary legislation was laid in March 2024. However, the changes to the public sector procurement regime have not yet taken effect.

In March 2024, the Procurement Regulations 2024 were laid in Parliament to bring some elements of the Bill and the wider regime into effect. It is currently anticipated that the new regulations will then take effect in full in October 2024. The Cabinet Office will issue notice of the 'go-live' date for the new regulations at least six months in advance.

Once the Procurement Regulations 2024 are live, they will govern all above threshold procurement activity from that time. The Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) 2015, which currently govern procurement activity in the UK, will continue to apply for any above threshold procurement commenced before the go live date. Details of the current thresholds are provided below:

Contract Type	Threshold from 1 January 2024
Public Works Contracts	£5,372,609
Supplies and Services	£214,904
'Light Touch Regime' Services	£663,540

The Act will allow greater flexibility to contracting authorities in terms of procurement procedures. For example, contracting authorities will be able to decide whether to use an 'open procedure' or another kind of competitive procedure of their choice, known as a 'competitive flexible procedure':

- Open procedure - A single stage tendering procedure, without restriction on who can submit tenders
- Competitive flexible procedure - This will allow contracting authorities the opportunity to design their own procedures, provided that they are appropriate to the procurement in question

The Procurement Team are preparing for the forthcoming changes by accessing briefings from the Cabinet Office. Procurement documentation and Procurement Standing Orders will also be updated in due course.

However, in the short term, it is unlikely that there will be any significant changes to the way in which the Council conducts its procurement activities.

It should be noted that procurement activity below threshold will continue to be governed by the Council's Procurement Standing Orders.

3.4 Revenues and Financial Management Division

2023/24 Statement of Accounts

Financial Management are currently in the process of drafting the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts for the Council. The deadline for publishing the draft accounts continues to be a challenging target date of 31 May 2024. The deadline date for the accounts to be signed off by the Council's External Auditor (Grant Thornton) is 30 September 2024.

Financial Distress in local authorities - Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee Report

The Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee published their report on 'Financial distress in local authorities' on 1 February 2024. The report can be found [here](#). The inquiry reviewed the current funding arrangements across local government, analysed the main exceptional expenditure pressures currently facing local authorities and identified priorities for the next government.

Amongst the conclusions made by the Committee included:

- Local authorities have seen significant reductions in their spending power coincide with increasing demand for their services and inflationary pressures exceeding those in the wider economy. Recent funding settlements have not kept pace with these pressures.

- The prospect of further real terms funding cuts is likely to exacerbate existing concerns about systemic underfunding, with the current funding gap nationally already estimated at £4bn.
- Reform of the Children's social care system is urgent and necessary. Despite the additional funding that the Government announced in Autumn 2022, its plans do not provide sufficient short-term financial support to local authorities to enable them to maintain the quality of services that vulnerable people need and deserve.

There were a number of recommendations made including:

- The Government must include additional funding in the local government finance settlement for 2024/25 to ensure local authorities bridge their estimated £4bn funding gap, setting out which local authorities are being prioritised and why for this financial settlement. The Government must also set out what longer term support will be provided to local authorities if the £4bn funding gap is not fully met in the forthcoming financial settlement.
- The Government must work urgently with local authorities to better understand their short-term budgetary pressures on social care work to develop a package of support and funding to enable continued service delivery while wider system reforms are implemented.
- The Government should support local authorities by reviewing possible ways of facilitating greater collaboration across local authorities so that they can collectively deliver more children's care services directly rather than through private suppliers.

3.5 Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

As the 2024/25 pay claim remains under national negotiation this will result in a delayed agreement. As a result the delayed national agreement will place significant increased pressures on the Pay & Pensions team to process at an unknown later date. It also places pressure on the Council budget planning process. The later these agreements are made, the more retrospective work there is to be processed by this service area, and resources do not exist to cover this so a pragmatic approach will be taken, usually incurring cost to the Council in respect of overtime and additional hours worked.

Use of agency workers remains consistently high in the Council, particularly in Adults and Children's Services where labour market conditions continue to be extremely tight and competitive in care sectors.

Refer to CXDU LI 05/06 in Appendix 1 for volumes and expenditure. This is not restricted to Halton, but the national service and profession skill shortages for care and social care sector. This also correlates to a consistently high number of vacancies (see recruitment update in Key Developments above).

3.6 ICT

In terms of the full removal of the existing Skype telephony systems the Contact Centre has been one of the larger stumbling blocks in terms of the old systems in place and the complexity of switching from the current on-premise system that is integrated into the authorities CRM system which in turn is integrated into over 1200 processes and hundreds of systems dealing with over 25'000 calls into the authority per day be that direct or into the contact centre. This is a considerable undertaking.

As noted within reports to the Corporate Management Team and Exec Board work is underway as part of the current Transformation programme through a work stream titled Customer Journey. This programme of work will now encompass the IT and Workstream delivery objectives with the Contact Centre being one of the main projects moving into the 24/25 work programme.

Over the last few months, the project team has evaluated and reviewed a large number of options and systems for the delivery of a contact centre solution that will integrate with Teams and one that will move the authority forward with greater integration into the Web, social media, and self-help services with potential links to Ai driven technologies and Knowledge based services such as Bot's.

At this stage the project is almost at the point of being able to decide upon the direction of travel and the procurement of linked cloud-based services that will have the ability to also link into the Halton CRM solution that as discussed manages a huge number of systems and services. This is a system we would not want to replace as the functionality developed in-house by the IT development team over the last 15 years can-not be replaced cost effectively or functionally as there isn't anything in the marketplace as good – this is an asset to the organisation, the development teams will upgrade and reconfigure the CRM over the next couple of years to utilise the latest technologies and enable integration with cloud services and product sets.

The project will detail and define the wider ICT and workstream programme as the funding becomes available.

The project will report back through QMR and Management Team and Exec Reports quarterly but now funding has been agreed and awaiting final council approval to project is starting to move forward at pace.

3.7 Legal and Democracy

The annual review of the Constitution is nearing completion, and the revisions will be considered by Executive Board in Quarter 4, and the Annual Council in Quarter 1 of 2024/25. Preparations continue to move quickly for the local, Police and Crime Commissioner and Combined Authority Mayoral elections, taking place in Quarter 1. Arrangements have been made for the induction of new Councillors in May.

Recruitment strategies will be further developed for hard to fill posts in Legal Services and Members will be kept up to date.

3.8 Catering - School Meals

The School Meals Management are still concerned some schools had made little or no progress in sourcing a new catering provider.

Management contacted all remaining schools for an update and expected transfer date. Please see below.

School have contacted the DfE after a webinar was arranged by the school meals management and Wade Deacon. A free procurement service to HBC schools has been offered to help ease the pressure and ensure they make the right informed decisions.

Recruitment and retention have still been causing issues. We have not had to close any kitchens or reduce the service in HBC School Kitchens in 2023/24.

3.9 Stadium

Contractual Negotiations

- Widnes FC for season 2024/25 (Completed)
- City of Liverpool season 2024/25 (Completed)
- Halton Table Tennis

Management finalised the agreement with Widnes FC to play at the DCBL Stadium. This ensures the financial viability of playing at the stadium for the next 2 seasons.

Management have negotiated a deal with the City of Liverpool FC to play their home fixtures at the DCBL Stadium for the next 2 seasons. This is new income stream for stadium which increases for football by at least 100%.

Halton Table Tennis agreement will be reviewed in quarter 1 of 2024/25.

3.10 Registration Services

The Registration Service continues to work with HBC ITC Service's, HBC Income and Stopford (an external Registration Management System provider) - to technically develop and allow online appointments for Births, Deaths, Marriage and Civil Partnerships. This use of automation in improving the customers journey is aligned with the "Reimagining Halton" transformation agenda.

The Registration Service is currently in the process of recruiting a new Principal Registrar. Interviews to take place on 10th April 2024

The Registration Service will be holding an Open Day on Saturday 6th April, this will allow prospective couples to view all the ceremony room available at Runcorn Town Hall, meet the staff make reservations and ask any questions.

3.11 Property Services (Operations)

Protect Duty

The 'Protect Duty', more commonly known as Martyn's Law is due to come in to force later in the year. The legislation will place a requirement on those responsible for certain publicly accessible buildings, locations and venues to consider the threat from terrorism and to implement appropriate and proportionate mitigation measures. It will mainly focus on the requirement to undertake risk assessments of the various locations following which plans must be put in place in respect of implementing appropriate mitigation measures. The impact of this is that it may likely mean the introduction of measures such as public address voice alarm (PAVA) systems in certain venues where not already installed together with the enhancement of other factors such as street furniture, e.g. bollards, to prevent vehicular access to certain areas.

Accommodation review

With the new agile approach to working since the COVID pandemic, i.e. with office-based staff only needing to be in the office for a minimum of 40% of the time, subject to service requirements, our main office accommodation is now significantly underutilised which gives us an opportunity to rationalise our office bases. Following on from a report produced in January 2023 looking at our accommodation, a Member working group was set up to look at the various options available to us in respect of rationalising our accommodation. The general feedback from this group was that it was accepted that the Municipal Building was probably the most appropriate building to vacate (due to significant refurbishment requirements and cost) however it was made clear that a 'head office' type facility was to be maintained in Widnes. It was agreed that further work will be carried out in respect of options for that, and that a report would be brought to Exec Board in due course to seek approval to the proposals.

Carbon emission targets

Halton's Climate Change Action Plan has set a target for the Council's own carbon emissions to reach net zero by 2040 in line with the Liverpool City region. Two bids were submitted in November to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), the first covering St Luke's and St Pat's care homes the second covering, Runcorn Town Hall, Kingsway Learning Centre and Picow Farm depot. It was anticipated that the outcome of the bids would be announced in April.

4.0 High Priority Equality Actions

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

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



5.0 Performance Overview

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




<u>Financial Management</u>

Key Objectives / milestones

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


Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Report 2024-27 Medium Term Financial Strategy to Executive Board - November 2023.		Medium Term Financial Strategy reported to Executive Board in November 2023.
Report 2024/25 revenue budget, capital programme and council tax to Council - March 2024.		Reported to Council 06 March 2024.

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



Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Provide monthly financial reports to budget holders within 8 days of month end.		Reports all issued on schedule to date.
Provide quarterly financial monitoring reports to Operational Directors for inclusion in Performance Monitoring Reports.		Outturn reports are in the process of being finalised and will be shared with Operational Directors for inclusion in Performance Monitoring Reports.
Provide quarterly monitoring and forecasting reports on the overall budget to Executive Board.		Outturn report on the overall budget will go to Executive Board on 13 June 2024

Ref	Objective
FS 03	Provide for public accountability by reporting the Council's stewardship of public funds and its financial performance in the use of resources by preparing


	the statutory Statement of Accounts in accordance with the latest accounting standards.
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Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Publish the Statement of Accounts following external audit and the Annual Governance Statement by 30th September 2023.		The draft accounts were published and shared with the External Auditor on 04 July 2023. The audit of accounts commenced at the start of October 2023 and was completed in March 2024. Documents now published on Council web-site.

Ref	Objective
FS 04	Make best use of cash resources available to the Council and meet its statutory responsibility by setting, implementing and monitoring the Treasury Management Policy.







Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Establish Treasury Management Policy and report to Council - March 2023.		Treasury Management Policy reported to Council on 08 March 2023
Provide monitoring reports to Executive Board on a bi-annual basis.		Treasury Management update to 30 September 2023 reported to Executive Board 16 November 2023.









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

Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Establish and report prudential indicators to Council - March 2023.		Prudential indicators reported to Council on 08 March 2023.

Provide monitoring reports to the Executive Board on a bi-annual basis.		Position to 30 September 2023 reported to Executive Board 16 November 2023.
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Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q4 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
FS LI 01	Receive an unqualified external audit opinion on the accounts	Yes	Awaited	Yes			Unqualified audit opinion received March 2024
FS LI 02	Receive an unqualified VFM opinion from the Council's External Auditor	Yes	Awaited	Yes			Report received March 2024. Report included 3 key recommendations relating to financial sustainability, governance and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
FS LI 03	Proportion of Council Tax that was due that was collected	94.14%	94.25%	93.81%			Council tax collection for the year to 31 March 2024 is 93.81%, down on this point last year

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q4 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
FS LI 04	The percentage of Business Rates which should have been received during the year that were received	96.18%	97.50%	96.69%			Business rates collection for the year to 31 March 2024 is 96.7%, down 0.94% on this point last year. The collection percentage has been impacted by a large site coming on to the rating list during March 2024, the Council has billed the organisation in full for the rates due but remains unpaid at financial year-end. Excluding this site the collection rate would have been 97.7%, up by 0.08% on this point last year.
FS LI 05	Average time for processing new claims (Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reduction)	23.71	18	22.65			Target of 18 days not achieved, but an improvement of over 1 day compared to the same time last year.
FS LI 06	Average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances	9.55	8	9.23			Target of 8 days not achieved, but a slight improvement compared to the same time last year.
FSLI 07	Proportion of all supplier invoices paid within 30 days	91.13%	92.0%	90.39%			Invoice payment performance is slightly down on 2022/23.



Operational HR Division, Chief Executives Delivery Unit

Key Objectives / milestones

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


Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Promote and take forward the delivery of actions identified within the Organisational Development Strategy September 2023		The strategy has been reviewed, tailored accordingly, and is now aligned with the Transformation Programme requirements
Regular engagement with Management Team to identify areas of challenge and develop appropriate strategic responses June, September, December 2023, and March 2024.		This is scheduled periodically
Embed knowledge and skills gained from Senior Leadership and Management Development Programmes (MBA / MSc) December 2023.		This will be particularly targeted to supporting Transformation projects.
Reconfigure Leadership and Management development in the organisation to align with Transformation Programme principles December 2023.		Leadership & Management cohort established at Level 5 in collaboration with The Solace Group, and at level 7 through Northwest Employers, utilising the apprenticeship Levy to fund both qualifications. Commissioned Northwest Employers to deliver Children's Service Management Development, consisting of 5 cohorts each receiving 6 modules linked to the outcomes of Transformation.
Monitor the embedding of knowledge and skills gained through previously delivered in-house modular Leadership and Management development activity. Ongoing and report in December 2023.		Evaluation and reviews have taken place and this will inform the content and delivery of future programmes

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


Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Establish 20 new apprentice placements within Council services, utilising existing vacancies, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation March 2024.		There is currently no specific resource in position to help to achieve this target. Rectification is planned by resource being placed in the Organisational Development Service, however a model of funding needs to be secured first to enable this. This is currently being examined within the Transformation Programme. A prospective Apprenticeship Officer Job Evaluation has taken place to establish a job grade. 2 'new hire' apprentices have started in this quarter, with 1 leaving the organisation, thus taking the current number to 5 within the Council.
Establish 20 new existing employee apprenticeships to enable up-skilling in a range of business areas, compliant with the requirements of apprenticeship legislation March 2024.		16 conversions this quarter, taking total up to 26 in this current financial year.

Ref	Objective
CXDU 03	Optimise the use of the Agency Worker contract across Council services, to secure ongoing reductions in the incidence and cost of agency usage, and to ensure that correct and appropriate resourcing solutions are being deployed across Council services.


Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
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Review and consider most appropriate resourcing mix in collaboration with service management in areas of highest agency usage (Transformation Programme) December 2023.		This is a key strand of Transformation Programme activity in terms of addressing future requirements. In the prevailing situation, dedicated resource is now active in the HR Operations area to further engagement with services. A proactive approach is being taken.
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Ref	Objective
CXDU 04	Work with high demand service areas to develop and implement effective recruitment programmes, optimising labour market engagement to attract high quality candidates.





Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Identify service areas with highest consistent recruitment demand, turnover, and low attraction rates. Develop tailored solutions. (Transformation Programme) December 2023.		Now a key strand of Transformation Programme activity. Detailed and specific campaigns are running to meet requirements. Refer to Key Developments and Emerging Issues above for more information. Broader work is ongoing around Employer Value Proposition (EVP), employer branding, career pathways, succession planning, and retention.



Ref	Objective
CXDU 05	Develop and implement an organisation wide change programme – The Future Work Programme - to evaluate and introduce revised working practices following to meet the requirements of the changing labour market and employee expectation in the post-pandemic environment (to include use of accommodation, HR policy and practice, wellbeing support, application of technology)











Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Use findings of Corporate Accommodation Review (2023) to determine available workspace capacity and develop optimum balance of 'staff to space'. December 2023.		Corporate Accommodation Review is ongoing. The prevailing budget challenge, linked to uncertain cost influences such as energy costs, long term maintenance costs, and property values, means that a







		prudent approach to determining the optimum way to configure the Council's estate is required. This is being overseen by the Asset Management Working Group with representation from the Chief Executives Delivery Unit present on that group.
Develop contractual model to meet business requirements of 'staff to space' balance. March 2024		This is contingent on milestone immediately above.

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q4 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXD U LI 01	Average FTE days lost to sickness	12.98 (Days)	9.5 (Days)	11.46 (Days)			Improvement from outturn at Q4 of 2022/23 with a total 11.46 days for TFY for 2023/24. Refer to narrative in key developments above around the implementation of HR Business Partnering to increase value in this topic area.
CXD U LI 02	Percentage of Employees without sickness	66.45	70.00	82.5			Higher than same period as last year and better than outturn for whole of 22/23. Also, refer to comments against LI 01 above.






Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q4 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXD U LI 03	Total Full Time Equivalent Staffing Establishment (Indicator for information only)	3,204		3127			
CXD U LI 04	Total Staff (head count) (Indicator for information only)	4,127	For information Only	4168	For information Only	For information Only	Reported for information purposes only.
CXD U LI 05	Total Agency Worker Usage (number of placements – year to date)	766	650	656			Improvement from Q4 2022/23 however outturn continues to be driven by high usage in Children's and Adults services, resulting from labour market conditions and is just above yearly target. Usage across all areas, although reduced in comparison to last years is still high – refer to emerging issues above for more information. (Please note, data includes 28


Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q4 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXD U LI 06	Total Agency Worker Cost (cumulative gross cost – year to date)	£8.34m	£5.0m	£13.2m			See commentary in LI 05 immediately above and emerging issues. <i>(Please note, the 22/23 actual has been updated during the year to include 'off-contract' spend and has therefore increased from £8.5m reported at end of 22/23 FY)</i>
CXD U L109	The percentage of top 5% of earners that are:	61.45%	55%	58.82%			Fluctuation in (a), (b) and (c), due to turnover.
	a) Women	2.7%	2.0%	3.16%			It should be noted that recruitment in to the top 5% of earners is not generally a high volume, and as such scope for significant change over time is low.
	b) From BME communities	2.7%	2.0%	3.16%			
	c) With a disability	0%	8.0%	20%			
							As above Outturn reflects significant changes to previous data and is based upon additional data from

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q4 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CXD U LI 10	No of staff declaring that they meet the definition of disability within the Equality Act 2010 as a % of the total workforce.	1.25%	10.00%	14.98%			Indicates significant increase from Q4 22/23 at 1.29%, reflecting significant changes to previous data and is based upon additional data from Staff Workforce profile data which was loaded to iTrent in Q4.
CXD U LI 11	Minority Ethnic community staff as % of total workforce.	0.99%	1.00%	2.02%			Demonstrates improvements, however fluctuation exists due to turnover and outturn tends to remain around target level.
CXD U LI 12	Average time to recruit (Applicant Tracking System reported figure)	19 Days	12.2 Days	10.2%			Outturn demonstrates the number of days taken from vacancy closing date to completion of recruitment. Significant improvement from Q4 22/23 at 35.3 days. Improvement in this outturn is reflective of the process changes to streamline pre-checks



Key Objectives / milestones

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

Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Continued Enhancement and delivery of the E5, M365, Azure platforms to enhance and deliver new technologies into the authority - March 2024.		Significant progress continues to be made in the delivery stages of Office 365 and Azure Cloud services. Many user data sets have been migrated and will continue through Q2 24 when this aspect of the initial delivery is envisaged will be completed.
Delivery of the Front Door transformation programme delivering changes in process, customer contact and customer journey - March 2024.		As detailed within the body of the QMR significant progress has started to be made with funding bids now approved and awaiting council approval through to moves forward in the design and delivery of key project phases – linked to a Halton Digital Strategy delivery plan.
The continued development of the Records Management Unit enhancing all opportunities and creating a central fulfilment centre within - March 2024.		Ongoing development has included enhancing support for Information Management and prevention of data loss, which includes enhancements that have been implemented in respect of hybrid mail – with the implementation of new software and changes to process creating greater financial efficiencies.
Development of Interactive Services, through integration with the Contact Centre and One Stop Shop's - March 2024.		Again, as noted within the body of the QMR considerable progress has been made in the design and delivery plans for the new systems and the integration into the services. The shops continue to develop new services within the areas with a number of new partner agencies and charities linking to the shop's with surgeries now in place for Health and Homelessness
Management and development of commercial ICT opportunity within		The continued development and delivery of the Finance solution into



desktop, hosting and DR provision - March 2024.		partners within the city region continues with additional services and deliveries continually sought.
Continued compliance with Central Government and NCSC Security guidelines and compliance requirements – March 2024.		Audits are complete – with additional funding awarded by DHLUC for the enhanced provision of security across the authority. Also, separate funding awarded to the council to develop a standardised security compliance regime across all UK government agencies. HBC is one of 30 bodies awarded this funding – offering considerable recognition to the work carried out so far by the HBC security team.


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

Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Delivery, deployment and Management of the E5, M365, Azure managed cloud platforms, enhancing user experience. - March 2024.		Ongoing preparatory work in the form of workshops with support staff provided by contracted support organisation. Most initial configuration of the Councils Microsoft Azure Tenant has been completed, currently working on the development of the end user experience, which is expected to be completed by the end of Q2 24. As within the body of text
Continued development and internal, commercial use of the Print Unit, Records management Unit - March 2024.		Ongoing development has included enhancing support for Information Management and prevention of data loss, which includes enhancements that have been implemented in respect of hybrid mail. The transfer of land search functions now complete and transfer of post, income and budget in process and delivery through the RMU is now underway.



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





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





Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
The delivery of the Front Door transformation programmes across Admin and Support Services - March 2023 .		The disaggregation of the Administrative Support Division is now complete as part of the transformation programme New initiatives are now within the body of this report.
The delivery of new and enhanced IT Security Management and Compliance systems/facilities across the authority's user base - March 2024 .		Most preparatory work has been completed. The onboarding of a Security Operations Centre will be the priority for Q2 24, with work currently underway analysing the SEIM and SOC services available to the authority – this will be subject to Management Team and Exec Board reporting Q1 2024. For the 5 year procurement of a security contract.



<p>The delivery of new and enhanced technology provision across the authority's user base - March 2024.</p>		<p>As noted within the body of this report this is an ongoing objective with the implementation of M365 linked to the Dell device roll-out, the delivery of MS Teams to all users with the added implication of the contact centre delivery, linked to the user base adopting change and new process – finally linked to a limited resource base for delivery again noted.</p>
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Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q4 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
ICT LI 01	Average availability of the Council's M365 Systems (%).	N/A	99.9%	99.98%			<p>This new KPI relates to the new M365 platform that remains currently under development –</p> <p>The department has moved into the test phase of the development with over 700 users across all departments testing and evaluating the build and the software deployment and device deployment technologies – to date this has been highly successful with very positive feedback.</p>

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q4 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
ICT LI 02	Security Incidents across quarter	N/A	TBA	TBA			In line with the delivery of the new M365 platform this statistic will be monitored by new systems currently under development – Again to evolve with the programme of work. Limited issues experienced and within the monthly target. As noted a contract is under review with the objective to let that contract Q1 2024.
ICT LI 03	Service Desk Call Resolution	86.56%	90%	89.99%			The Service Desk continues to be challenging – Currently the service has no FTE's within post on the service desk this is causing issue as calls are spread across the teams – we have recruited into one post to be filled May 24 we are still struggle to fill the other – new Job adverts have been posted externally – currently the department within this area holds a number of vacancies. recruitment issues across the authority.

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q4 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
ICT LI 04	Average working days from delivery to completion of a new Laptop.	1 (Days)	1 (Days)	2 Hours for the delivery			Again, a new KPI that will evolve with the considerable programme of work underway. With the advent of the new Dell Laptop contract completed and the roll-out underway, the team only has 2 people to carry this out due to vacancies and sickness – again these people are needed for day-to-day tasks which is limiting the training sessions. But on the positive side over 700 devices have been issued with extremely positive feedback associated.
ICT LI 05	Number of resolved customer contacts – Contact Centre	27500	27000	30017			The level of calls into the contact centre are at an expected level with seasonal changes to call patterns with Adult Social Care and Waste Management being the main focus – Q4 will show considerable changes again as the weather has been a considerable factor over the last few weeks.

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q4 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
ICT LI	Number of resolved contacts – One Stop Shop's	15500	15500	17066			<p>The level of foot fall into the Shops continues to rise, with seasonal and service dependant changes are considered with Social Care and Homelessness accounting for a high level of the contacts over this winter period. The levels of abusive members of the public are rising at an alarming rate to the extent the Police are constantly attending the locations resulting in a number of arrests for abusive and often potentially violent behaviour. Many of them single males with issues relating to homelessness. The level of calls into the contact centre are at an expected level with seasonal changes to call patterns with Adult Social Care and Waste Management being the main focus – Q4 will show considerable changes again as the weather has been a considerable factor over the last few weeks.</p>

<u>Legal & Democracy</u>

Key Objectives / milestones











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

Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Review constitution - May 2023 .	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The revised Constitution was approved at Annual Council.

Ref	Objective
LD 02	To provide efficient and effective Democratic Support Services that provides Elected Members, as key decision makers, with the necessary information, support and training opportunities to fulfil their individual potential and management and governance role effectively.

Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
To ensure that all members have been given the opportunity of a having a MAP meeting where desired.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	All Members have been offered a MAP meeting.
To induct all new members by October 2023 .	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	All new Members have been inducted.



Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q4 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
LD LI 01	No. Of Members with Personal Development Plans (54 Total).	54	54	54			All Members have been offered a MAP. Take up is a matter of personal choice.
LD LI 02	Percentage of Members attending at least one organised Training Event.	52 98%	54 100%	36 65%			All Members have been offered numerous training opportunities. Take up is a matter of personal
LD LI 03	Average Time taken to issue prosecutions from receipt of full instructions (working days).	10 (Days)	10 (Days)	10 (Days)			The target has been met.
LD LI 04	Average time taken to file application for Care proceedings at Court from receipt of all written evidence from client department (working days).	3 (Days)	3 (Days)	3 (Days)			The target has been met.
LD LI 05	% of Executive Board minutes published within 5 working days after the meeting.	100%	100%	100%			The target has been met.


Community & Environment


Key Objectives / milestones

CE 05	To routinely use customer feedback to drive forward service improvement in the Registration Service
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Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Ensure our services are available to those who wish to or who need to use them by providing accessible information in a range of ways (e.g. written information, online services).		<p>Registration Service information is provided in written format e.g. leaflets and price lists. We also provide information via our own websites:</p> <p>www.halton.gov.uk/registration and www.weddingsinhalton.co.uk</p> <p>In accordance with General Register Office (GRO) protocols, we provide the latest statutory Registration information and guidance, via web links: www.gov.uk</p> <p>In addition, to assist those with physical and sensory access needs; and to help plan and prepare for their visit to the Register Office, we also provide a web link to:</p> <p>https://www.accessable.co.uk/halton-borough-council/access-guides/halton-register-office</p>
Seek the views of the local community and make adjustments to our service delivery when appropriate, based on customer feedback, to improve the service going forward. Where feedback cannot be acted upon, an explanation will be given.		<p>As part of our annual reporting to GRO, we have a Customer Engagement Strategy (2022/20233).</p> <p>In addition, we have a published set of Service Standards at:</p> <p>www.halton.gov.uk/registration and www.weddingsinhalton.co.uk</p>

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

Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Business Plan & Marketing Strategy		No recommendation received from transformation. New Stadium & Catering Division proposed for live implementation 01/05/24. This will be a priority for the new Divisional Manager of the service.











Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Manage greenspace areas as per the agreed specification - March 2024 .		The Environment Services Division was able to deliver all works within the Council's agreed specification for green space management.

Ref	Objective
CE 07	Implementation of actions to ensure that the Council achieves its waste related targets and objectives.

Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Continue to deliver communications and awareness raising initiatives to ensure that participation with the Council's recycling services is maximised and that residents comply with the requirements of the Council's Household Waste Collection Policy - March 2024 .		Activities to meet this objective have remained on-going. This includes the production and delivery of a booklet to Halton households providing information and advice on how to 'recycle right' by setting out the details of the materials that residents can recycle at home in their blue bin or box.

Key Performance Indicators


Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q4 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CE L1 09	Residual household waste per household.	625kg	625kg	591kg			This is an estimated figure but it does show that household waste levels are lower than those in Q4 in the previous year.
CE L1 10	Household waste recycled and composted.	39.3%	40%	37%			This is an estimated figure but it does show that recycling levels are slightly higher than in Q4 in the previous year, but the annual target will not be met.
CE LI 10	Registration Service - Births - 98% registered within 42 days	100%	100%	100%			Birth registered within 42 days 98% (National benchmark – 95%)
CE LI 11	Registration Service - Deaths with MCCDs (no coronial involvement) - 90% registered within 5 days	87%*	100%	100%			Deaths registered within 2 working days of request – 98% (National benchmark 95%)
CE LI 12	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Primary Schools.		75%	72.02%			Data is based on period 3 as year end data has not been finalised.







Ref	Description	Actual 2022/23	Target 2023/24	Q4 Position	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
CE LI 13	% Take up of free school meals to those who are eligible - Secondary Schools.		60%	64.27%			Data is based on period 3 as year end data has not been finalised.
CE LI 14	Take up of school lunches (%) – primary schools.		60%	56.87%			Data is based on period 3 as year end data has not been finalised.
CE LI 15	Take up of school lunches (%) – secondary schools.		50%	61.58%			Data is based on period 3 as year end data has not been finalised.
CE LI 16	Room Occupancy – Meetings (Box Level)	12.34%	40%	29.74%			Data is based on period 3 as year end data has not been finalised.
CE LI 17	Room Occupancy – Conferences (Bridge & Karalius)	50.19%	60%	43.46%			Data is based on period 3 as year end data has not been finalised.

Property Services


Key Objectives / milestones

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



Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Ensure the leisure centre is on track on 31st March 2024 both in terms of time and cost by project managing it throughout the year.		Works are currently progressing well on site. The project is both on budget and on programme for completion by 03/02/25

<p>Ensure the contractor commences on site with the major upgrade works at both St Patrick's and St Luke's by 1st Sept 2023.</p>		<p>The projects have been delayed, initially as a result of the need to incorporate the decarbonisation works, the latest estimated costs for both projects are over budget however so further discussions are required in respect of progressing same.</p>
<p>Ensure all the projects are progressed in line with the school maintenance programme and are delivered by 31st March 2024.</p>		<p>All works included in this years' schools maintenance programme have now been delivered.</p>
<p>Ensure all the projects are progressed in line with the corporate maintenance programme and are delivered by 31st March 2024.</p>		<p>The corporate maintenance programme has been delivered and the budget for 2023/24 has been fully spent on the programmed works.</p>
<p>Submit a decarbonisation funding bid in conjunction with the Combined Authority by October 2023 and be successful in having the funding approved by 31st March 2024.</p>		<p>Two bids were submitted to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. These were not in conjunction with the Combined Authority however but standalone bids for Halton. We still await the outcome of both bids, which is due in early April</p>
<p>Ensure there is a wide and varied mix of commodities and services on offer in the Market and ensure occupancy levels are maintained or increased by 31st March 2024.</p>		<p>There is a wide and varied mix of commodities and services on offer in the Market. Occupancy levels are slightly down from the start of the year however, the reasons being the difficult trading conditions resulting in reduced footfall to the market</p>
<p>Ensure all necessary servicing, and repairs and maintenance is carried out within our properties by 31st March 2024 and ensure building managers are satisfied with the service provided.</p>		<p>All necessary servicing and repairs and maintenance has been undertaken and the feedback from Managers is very positive.</p>




Ref	Objective
EEP 08	<p>Corporate Priority: To design, manage and improve processes to generate increasing value for customers and other stakeholders. To undertake Employee Reviews for all staff</p>

Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
All EDRs to be completed by September 23		Completed

Ref	Objective
EEP 09	Corporate Priority: To design, manage and deliver a place-based business support programme for Halton Commission support sessions to provide advice and guidance based on initial diagnostic.

Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Scheme in Place September 2023		Internal procurement delays slowed down the commissioning of the service but with one exception the service is fully up-and-running now.
Scheme finalised March 2025		Scheme is now starting to deliver priorities and will meet targets by the end of 2024 - 2025.

Ref	Objective
EEP 10	Corporate Priority: Secure funding, support procurement and ground-breaking to take place for Ultraviolet at Sci Tech Daresbury Commissioning of Ultraviolet

Milestone	Progress Q4	Supporting Commentary
Funding Secured Q3 2023 / 2024		Discussions with the CA are ongoing in relation to Investment Zone funding however the earliest anticipated approval has now been pushed back to Q1 2024-25
Procurement Q4 2023 / 2024		A procurement exercise has been completed by the Joint Venture using the Procure Partnerships Framework.
Groundbreaking Q1 2024 2025		The start on site is likely to be delayed by the funding situation.

Key Performance Indicators

STRATEGIC ISSUES	BASELINE POSITION	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 1	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 3	INTERVENTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
High Unemployment	2.7% of economically active people are unemployed (2021 Census)			HBC's contribution: HPIJ delivery of Welfare to Work & Health programmes (Ways to Work, Restart, Work & Health, Pioneer Programme and Supported Internships Programme)	Percentage unemployed (aged 16-64 years). Percentage of economically inactive of working age
Low wage residents	Data not available from Census 21? Data from Adzuna – median salary in Halton is £26,000 which is 14.3% less than the national average of £30,000 (although there has been a YOY increase of 8% in Halton)			Employers signing up to the LCR Fair Employment Charter	Percentage of employees' earnings below real living wage.
Low-income households	Data??			HBC's contributions: HPIJ delivery of Welfare to Work & Health programmes (Ways to	Percentage employees who are local (FTE) employed on contract for one year or the whole

				Work, Restart, Work & Health, Pioneer Programme and Supported Internships Programme). Better off calculations for HPIJ jobseekers. In work support to help low-income households increase their hours or change their job.	duration of the contract, whichever is shorter.
Good employment	Data not available from Census 21? Current Data from Adzuna – 26.93% in Permanent Employment, 9.68% in Contract Employment and 63.39% unspecified	HPIJ unable to implement new employer engagement strategy due to staffing related issues highlighted above		Employers signing up to the LCR Fair Employment Charter <u>HBC's contribution:</u> Employer Engagement Strategy to be updated to recognise and celebrate 'good' employers in the borough.	Proportion of employed in permanent and non-permanent employment. Adzuna data??
(appropriate) External Funding Maximised	Some bids are logged, some are not. No strategic view on whether bids should be made. Officers writing bids which can take them away from core work;	All potential bids registered on a Business Justification form. All relevant officers in Department trained in bid-writing.	Increase in appropriate funding secured. No resource issues in delivering. No clawback issues.	6 bid-writing courses p.a. scheduled. 3 monitoring and evaluation courses p.a. scheduled. Central log of all bids maintained.	to establish a Business Justification Case for all bids over £50,000 to ensure the relevance and deliverability of externally funded schemes – to be signed off monthly by OD. All bids to be logged with the

	not always using skills of Programme's Office.	All project leads logging funding bids on central system.			Programmes Office and all officers within the Dept to attend the Bid-Writing course before drafting any bids.
Climate change agenda and carbon emissions	CO2 emissions for 2022/23 amounted to 8740 tonnes.	Reduce emissions by 1%	Reduce emissions by 5%	<p>Submit a funding bid and obtain funding to carry out decarbonisation works to various buildings.</p> <p>Continue to deliver the LED lighting replacement programme.</p> <p>Carry out further rationalisation of our property portfolio to reduce emissions.</p> <p>Help carry out education programme for officers and Members alike</p>	Percentage reduction in CO2 emissions from Council activities. The emissions for 2022/23 were 6.29% lower than for the previous year.

OPERATIONAL ISSUES	BASELINE POSITION	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 1	OUTCOMES AT END OF YEAR 3	INTERVENTIONS	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
<p>Low skills levels in LSOAs are not being addressed in line with need.</p>	<p>No. of unemployed of working age population compared to number of actual HBC Adult Learning enrolments (Top 5 LSOAs for unemployment)</p> <p>Central and West Bank – 145 claimants, only 56 enrolled (38%)</p> <p>Appleton and Halton View – 100 claimants, only 35 enrolled (35%)</p> <p>Grange – 95 claimants, only 17 enrolled (18%)</p> <p>Halton Lea – 90 claimants, only 30 enrolled (38%)</p>	<p>Central and West Bank - 43%</p> <p>Appleton and Halton View - 40%</p> <p>Grange –25%</p> <p>Halton Lea – 38%</p> <p>Q4 Update Central and West Bank 41.5%</p> <p>Appleton 38.6%</p> <p>Halton View 40.7%</p> <p>Grange 45%</p> <p>Halton Lea 46.1%</p>	<p>Central and West Bank – 48%</p> <p>Appleton and Halton View - 45%</p> <p>Grange – 35%</p> <p>Halton Lea – 43%</p>	<p>HBC’s contribution: Targeted marketing of LSOAs – working with Customer Intelligence Team and use of Adzuna dashboard. Outreach and engagement schedule.</p>	<p>To increase the number of Adult Learning enrolments from residents aged 19+ living in Halton’s LSOA areas</p>
<p>The number of HBC adult learning withdrawals has shown a year-on-year increase. Withdrawals adversely affect income levels.</p>	<p>14% overall withdrawals in the year 21/22</p>	<p>12%</p> <p>Q4 Update 5% currently (academic year so far)</p>	<p>10%</p>	<p>HBC’s contribution: Early intervention for learner issues. Implementation of ‘Extensions in Learning’ process. Reviewed onboarding process – distance learning.</p>	<p>To reduce the number of withdrawals in the Adult Learning Service</p>
<p>Halton adult Learner Voice does not consistently get used to</p>	<p>19 limited detail success stories provided in 21/22. Format does not</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Meaningful case studies</p> <p>Q4 Update</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>Annual marketing strategy. Promotional videos of learning.</p>	<p>To increase the number of Adult Learning Case Studies produced each year</p>

promote the service	showcase effectively the impact of the service	9 total – 6 social media celebrations and 3 Learner of the month celebrations with half of the academic year to go.			
A reduction of HBC AEB funding due to performance levels only achieving 98%	-£14,197.92 (2% of overall budget)	0% Q4 Update Currently at 55.5% of total allocation with half of the academic year to go	0%	To increase enrolment numbers. To reduce withdrawals. To deliver more accredited provision.	To reduce our Adult Education Budget threshold level, year on year
Marketing and promotion of the Adult Learning Service is inconsistent	10 Marketing events attended in 21/22	38 Q4 Update 15 attended (10 in target wards) with half of the academic year to go	38	Attendance at partner events Increased social media presence and followers. Increase to at least one marketing activity per week during term time.	To deliver an annual programme of outreach and engagement adult learning activities
Targeted employer engagement activity to increase the number of opportunities made available to HPIJ customers accessing employment programmes	51 employer visits made by appointment 272 sales calls made to employers 35 speculative visits made to employers	200 2000 Q4 update Unable to provide accurate data for end of year 1 due to staffing related issue highlighted above	300 3000	Targeted employer visits Targeted sales calls made to employers	To review HPIJ Employer Engagement Strategy, implement improvements and increase the number of opportunities sourced by local employers for local residents
Increase the number of Economically Inactive customers that we engage with on programmes not just for	12% of Ways to Work participants on programme were Economically Inactive	25% Q4 update Achieved 23% at end of years (of Ways to Work participants on programme were	75%	Attendance at Jobcentres on a weekly basis (engaging with Work Coaches that support Economically Inactive customers) Attendance at partner/community events	'Economically inactive individuals are those not in work and not actively seeking work (unlike unemployed individuals who are actively

unemployed people (focused on Economically Inactive)		Economically Inactive)		Attendance at Jobs Fairs Increased social media presence and followers Community Engagement Plan and Outreach Based Approach	seeking work). Not all economically inactive individuals claim benefits. For those that do, this would include those claiming either "legacy" benefits or those within specific conditionality regimes in Universal Credit: The former includes Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Income Support (IS). The latter includes claimants within the Preparation Requirement or Work Focused Interview Requirement conditionality regimes.
Marketing and promotion of HPIJ services for programmes that allow self-referrals is inconsistent	Ad-hoc partnership working across the Borough Leaflets posters and and stands displayed across community venues for some programmes but not all	48 Q4 update Minimum of 50 activities took place across the HPIJ team	48	Attendance at Jobcentres on a weekly basis Attendance at partner/community events Attendance at Jobs Fairs Increased social media presence and followers Increase to at least four marketing activities per month	To deliver an annual programme of outreach and engagement activities to market and promote HPIJ programmes that local residents can self-refer to

Place Based Business Support Programme Delivered Targeted flexible place-based business support for existing businesses with growth ambitions and employment potential which provide equitable access across the city region. To include all businesses including social enterprises	Lead Officer nominated. Specialist advice commissioned in order to support businesses	9	58	Diagnostic sessions performed by trained staff and appropriate support sources for the business. Specific support can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy • Corporate Marketing • Procurement • Finance • Access to funding • Business Start • Digital Marketing 	Diagnostic approved by CA April 2024. Business Start Website agreed March 2024.
To provide support to Start-ups, with a focus on enterprise ready entrepreneurs (within 3 months of establishing a business) and a focus on founders who are looking to employ people within 24 months, export and/or generate high turnover growth. To include all businesses including social enterprises.	This service is currently not delivered by Halton BC	5	11	Business Starts being delivered in all sectors (non-specialised)	TBA by CA
Programmes Office fully resourced	Programmes Office	Team fully recruited and operational.	Programmes Office systems fully established	Full team recruited.	to establish the Programmes Office Team,

	<p>established Oct 1st, 2022.</p> <p>Two positions remain unfilled.</p>	<p>Programmes Office systems fully embedded in EEP Dept.</p>	<p>across the Council.</p>	<p>Roles and Responsibilities fully understood by Dept.</p> <p>New systems established – see strategic issue above.</p>	<p>ensuring the full team is in place and competent, with clear roles and responsibilities.</p>
<p>Externally Funded schemes effectively monitored</p>	<p>Programmes Office established as monitors of the Town Deal programme.</p>	<p>Two claims successfully submitted and annual draw down received.</p> <p>GFAs issued to relevant projects.</p> <p>Roles and Responsibilities clearly allocated and understood.</p>	<p>Six claims successfully submitted and annual drawdowns received.</p> <p>No clawback/issues.</p> <p>Audit issues successfully dealt with.</p>	<p>Regular Town Deal catch ups with relevant staff.</p> <p>Roles allocated and understood within Programmes Office.</p> <p>Systems established to successfully record and complete claims.</p>	<p>To ensure effective systems are in place and understood for the monitoring of the Town Deal programme to minimise the risk of clawback/non-compliance.</p>
<p>Reduction in Market occupancy levels</p>	<p>Market Hall 92% occupied at 31st Dec 2022</p>	<p>Maintain occupancy at 92%</p>	<p>Increase occupancy to 95%</p>	<p>Continue to promote the Market as a positive location to trade from.</p> <p>Maintain competitive rental rates compared to other town centre rental costs</p>	<p>The Market Hall occupancy is at 87.6% as of 31st March 2024. The slight reduction is down to the continued difficult trading conditions. There have been a number of recent enquiries, so we are anticipating this figure increasing in due course.</p>
<p>Reducing Ex-Trader Market Debt.</p>	<p>£29,833.69 as at 13th March 2023</p>	<p>Reduce debt by 5%</p>	<p>Reduce debt by 15%</p>	<p>Continue to work with the finance recovery team to put payment plans in place.</p> <p>Continue to actively manage existing traders' debt so they are not in debt if they decide to leave the Market.</p>	<p>Percentage of Ex-Trader debt outstanding. The figure at year end has increased slightly to £30,971, this is as a result of a couple of traders leaving within the year with some</p>

					outstanding debt.
Level of satisfaction with repair & maintenance service delivered via the FM team	75% of surveys returned were rated as either good or excellent	80% Of surveys returned rated as either good or excellent	85% Of surveys returned rated as either good or excellent	Issue questionnaires to building managers in order to rate the level of service provided. Continue to deliver a repairs and maintenance service in a timely manner, with quality contractors. Continue with the procurement of contractors, when necessary, based on best value principles.	Percentage of surveys returned in 2023/24 where the service was rated as either good or excellent was in excess of the 85% target figure.
Continued Successful Delivery of Capital schemes if workload increases due to accelerated regeneration	3 Projects Managers currently in post managing external consultants to help deliver various schemes	90% of schemes delivered within the contractual completion date and within the contract sum.	95% of schemes delivered within the contractual completion date and within the contract sum.	Additional Lead Officer post created with Lead Officer now appointed. Currently 2 vacant project manager posts however, with 1 agency surveyor covering in the interim. Increased use of consultants to help deliver various schemes	Monitoring successful delivery of individual projects within work programme. Over 90% of projects completed were delivered on time and within the contract sum.

70. Financial Statements

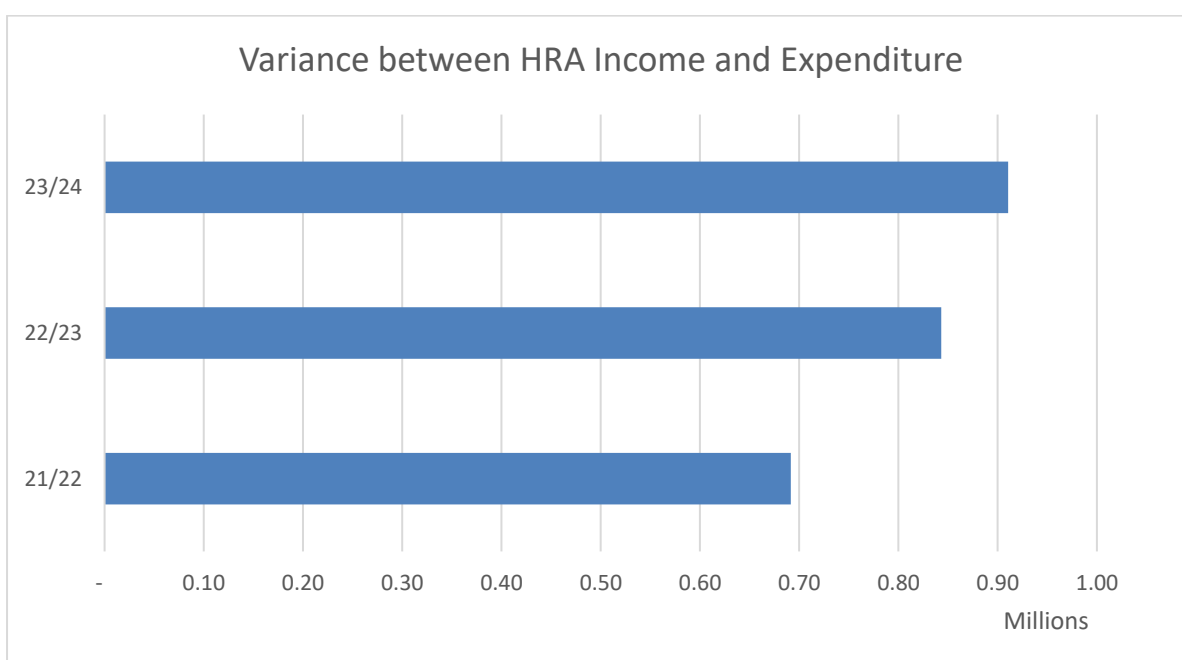
Finance DepartmentRevenue Budget as at 31 March 2024

	Annual Budget	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure			
Employees	6,500	6,415	85
Insurances	1,039	1,048	(9)
Supplies & Services	446	406	40
Rent Allowances	30,945	30,945	0
Concessionary Travel	1,748	1,684	64
Non HRA Rent Rebates	51	51	0
Discretionary Social Fund	73	6	67
Discretionary Housing Payments	273	273	0
Household Support Fund Expenditure	2,528	2,528	0
Energy Bills Support	40	40	0
LCR Levy	2,241	2,241	0
Transfer to Reserves	17	0	17
Bad Debt Provision	110	281	(171)
Total Expenditure	46,011	45,918	93
Income			
Other Fees & Charges	-344	-385	41
Burdens Grant	-60	-104	44
Dedicated schools Grant	-123	-123	0
Council Tax Liability Order	-541	-649	108
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	-157	0
Schools SLAs	-295	-311	16
LCR Reimbursement	-2,241	-2,241	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-236	-236	0
Rent Allowances	-30,390	-30,049	(341)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-70	0
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-285	-285	0
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-493	-524	31
Universal Credits	-204	0	(204)
Council Tax Admin Grant	-2,526	-2,526	0
Household Support Fund Grant	-55	-55	0
Energy Bills Support	-129	-129	0
Alternative Fuel	-300	-300	0
Transfer from Reserves	-82	-85	3
Total Income	-38,531	-38,229	(302)
Net Operational Expenditure	7,480	7,689	(209)
Recharges			
Premises Support	268	268	0
Transport	0	0	0
Central Support	2,069	2,069	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,330	-5,330	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,993	-2,993	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	4,487	4,696	(209)

Comments on the above figures

As at 31st March the Finance Department is reporting an overspend against budget of £0.209m. Finance as a department is underspent at year end on the majority of account classifications, however increasing pressures on Housing Benefits, and the need to increase the bad debt provision for Council Tax Liability Orders is so significant that any areas of underspend must be utilised to help mitigate the pressures faced by those 2 areas.

Rent Allowances alone report a spend above the budget profile of £0.341m. Demand for supported accommodation continues to grow as the population of Halton face the increasing pressures on cost of living. Central Government contribution to supported accommodation is capped at a nominal figure after which, 40% of the costs will be suffered by the Council. An increase in support has been included within the initial 2024/25 budget of £0.100m to help reduce the budgetary pressure within Finance, but seeking to reduce the spend where possible in other areas will be crucial to continue supporting significant pressure Rent Allowances faces.



The insurance budget is also under significant pressure increased costs across all policy premiums, this resulted in expenditure exceeding £0.110m of the budget, although these costs have been met from insurance reserve in year, and an increase in budget in the 2024/25 financial year will seek to reduce the pressures faced by these increases.

Council Tax Liability Orders have over achieved in income, contributing £0.108m of underspend to the department outturn, however there is a high likelihood that these debts are not cleared within the typical timeframe if at all. This is reflected in the increase to the bad debt provision of the department, £0.172m more than the budget profile, as the balance of debt held grows in relation with the pressures to households within Halton.

Concessionary Travel continues to represent an area of underspend within the department, at the end of the financial year, costs were £0.064m lower than budget. Concessionary travel has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic as overall usage levels are still lower than pre covid levels. Bus operators indicate that current levels have become the new standard, and it is unlikely the Council will see passenger numbers grow much further. Reimbursement levels will need to be renegotiated and updated to reflect the new standards of operation, following the update, it is likely that the full budget profile will be utilised for Concessionary Travel in the 2024/25 financial year.

Discretionary Social Fund has also helped mitigate the increased budget pressures through the use of the Household Support Fund, a majority of the expenditure within this area is eligible spend under the grant, therefore generating an underspend of £0.067m for the financial year ended 31st March 2024.

The Council Tax Admin Grant has been rolled up into the RSG within this financial year so was not received separately, reflected by the £0.204m target not being achieved. This budget position has been corrected in 2024/25 financial year.

Approved 2023/24 Savings






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

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

APPENDIX A

Progress Against Agreed Savings

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

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

			billing and collection of Business Improvement District (BID) income.					Chamber of Commerce has been charged at the increased amount
F16	Concessionary Travel	1,892	Due to a decrease in passenger numbers following Covid, it is considered that the budget for concessionary travel costs can be reduced. The budget was underspent by £421k (20%) in 2021/22. A reduction in this budget will not prevent any eligible concessionary passenger from still being able to travel.	150	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On Target
F17	Council Tax	84	Increase the charges applied when a court summons is issued by 30% (£23), to achieve full cost recovery over the three year period.	40	40	40	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	On target, summons cost increased for 2023/24
F17 Cont.	Council Tax	N/A	Establish a new post dedicated to reviewing council tax exemptions. It is considered at least a 3% reduction in Single Person	116	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Post appointed to and review of exemptions to commence over the next quarter.

			Discount awards could be achieved, generating approximately £150k of additional council tax income, less the cost of the new post.					
F18	Financial Management - Treasury Management	1,152	Closer management of medium- to long-term cash balances will give greater opportunity to invest in higher interest bearing accounts due to increasing interest rates.	300	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Interest payable on target to achieve increased target.
Total Finance Department				893	65	90		

Chief Executive's Delivery Unit**Revenue Budget as at 31 March 2024**

	Annual Budget	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure			
Employees	2,845	2,907	(62)
Employees Training	117	78	39
Apprenticeship Levy	379	379	0
Supplies & Services	203	337	(134)
Total Expenditure	3,544	3,701	(157)
Income			
Fees & Charges	-241	-245	4
Schools SLA	-532	-532	0
Total Income	-773	-777	4
Net Operational Expenditure	2,771	2,924	(153)
Recharges			
Premises Support	117	117	0
Transport	0	0	0
Central Support	1,023	1,023	0
Asset Rental Support	12	12	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,491	-5,491	0
Net Total Recharges	-4,339	-4,339	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-1,568	-1,415	(153)

Comments on the above figures

The Chief Executive's Delivery Unit is reporting an overspend against approved of £0.154m at the end of the financial year. This is a decrease in position from the outturn forecast of £0.042m under the approved budget reported at Qtr3.

The change in outturn performance is largely due reclassification of costs of the payroll software initially being recorded as non-revenue expenditure, however, upon review of the contract and its nature, only an element of the costs can be capitalised. This resulted in £0.120m more expenditure funded from revenue than anticipated, however in the 2024/25 financial year, an increased provision for software costs has been made to reflect the updated quarterly charges.

Another impact on performance has been changes to structure within the HR Service Centre which has resulted in increased costs. 2024/25 budgets have been updated to reflect the new structure.

The budget within the HR Service Centre has also faced pressures from higher costs relating to recruitment of senior positions within the Council, £0.041m of expenditure has been generated in relation to assessment centre costs which are not built into the budget and are funded from department performance.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

Capital Projects as at 31 March 2024

	Annual Capital Allocation	Actual Spend	Total Allocation Remaining
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure			
Transformation Programme	5,000	2,260	2,740
Total Capital	5,000	2,260	2,740

Comments on the above figures

The Transformation Programme has begun within the Council, a number of staff are now in post and consultancy work has begun in the following areas which should positively impact the Council in both financial and non-financial objectives:

- Employer of choice (Workforce)
- Adults Social Care
- Childrens Social Care
- Customer Journey (Front door)

The remaining 2023/24 allocation will be carried forward to the next financial year.

CHIEF EXECUTIVES DELIVERY UNIT

APPENDIX A

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

ICT and Administration Department**Revenue Budget as at 31 March 2024**

	Annual Budget	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure			
Employee Expenditure	8,126	8,406	(280)
Supplies & Services Expenditure	1,122	1,276	(154)
Capital Finance	78	32	45
Computer Repairs & Software	1,021	1,021	(0)
Communication Costs	155	155	0
Premises Expenditure	175	135	40
Transport Expenditure	3	2	1
Transfer to Reserves	147	147	0
Total Expenditure	10,827	11,175	(347)
Income			
Fees & Charges	-996	-1,087	91
Schools SLA Income	-610	-606	(4)
Transfer From Reserves	-150	-150	0
Total Income	-1,756	-1,843	87
Net Operational Expenditure	9,071	9,332	(260)
Recharges			
Premises Support	557	557	0
Transport	16	16	0
Central Support	1,797	1,797	0
Asset Rental Support	726	726	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-10,951	-10,951	0
Net Total Recharges	-7,855	-7,855	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,216	1,477	(260)

Comments on the above figures

At the end of the 2023/24 financial year the ICT and Administration department has exceeded the annual approved budget by £0.260m. A slight improvement to the original position from that reported in Q3 (£0.290m).

The largest contributing factor to the overspend is staff turnover savings targets, these have not been met within the year, resulting in a £0.280m overspend. In the 2024/25 financial year the Administration Staff will be disaggregated, and their respective budgets will move to the service areas. The staff turnover savings targets will therefore be lost in the process, therefore impacting the Council as a whole rather than solely in one department.

The over achievement of income against Fees and Charges relates to external client income for traded services. This is for Agresso implementation and support at partner sites, a drop from the forecasted position in Q3 however, reductions in expenditure have offset this change. With a number of agency staff across the Council, the department is continuing to recharge licence costs for non HBC staff to their respective departments, this should help budget holders more readily see the impact agency staff are having on Council's finances

as there is not just the direct fees to be considered, there is strain on a number of other services and existing contracts which do come at additional costs.

A number of leases have expired within the year in relation to MFDs, a new contract is currently out for tender, but the gap in contracts has generated an underspend in capital finance of £0.040m.

With the shift to Windows 11 and the more efficient laptops, the Council will see an increase in the costs as both legacy and new systems are in operation. In addition the new hardware is unable to be capitalised due to the nature of the contract, resulting in increased pressures on the revenue funding streams. This new model will continue to cost more due to the enhanced technology and reliance on cloud software, however, the new system should have a significant impact on the efficiency of the Council's staff.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

Capital Projects as at 31 March 2024

	Annual Capital Allocation	Allocation to Date	Actual Spend	Total Allocation Remaining
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure				
ICT Rolling Capital Project	700	700	281	419
Total Capital	700	700	281	419

Comments on the above figures

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

**ICT AND SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT
APPENDIX A**

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
ICT3	External Clients	N/A	Recharge the Youth Offending Services for the full cost of ICT services which are hosted by Halton, but have not thus far been recharged. This approach has been agreed by the Cheshire and Warrington partner councils.	232	0	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The costs have been recharged for the 23/24 financial year
Total ICT and Admin Department				232	0	0		

Legal and Democratic Services Department**Revenue Budget as at 31 March 2024**

	Annual Budget	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure			
Employees	1,436	1,364	72
Agency Costs (Locums)	0	814	(814)
Supplies & Services	164	175	(11)
Civic Catering & Functions	26	12	14
Legal Expenses	260	614	(354)
Transport Related Expenditure	11	7	4
Total Expenditure	1,897	2,986	(1,089)
Income			
School SLA's	-92	-78	(14)
Licence Income	-284	-324	40
Reimbursement & Other Grants	-42	-42	0
Fees & Charges Income	-70	-43	(27)
Transfer from Reserves	0	-752	752
Total Income	-488	-1,239	751
Net Operational Expenditure	1,409	1,747	(338)
Recharges			
Premises Support	58	58	0
Transport Recharges	0	0	0
Central Support Recharges	282	282	0
Asset Rental Support Costs	0	0	0
Support Recharge Income	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	340	340	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,749	2,087	(338)

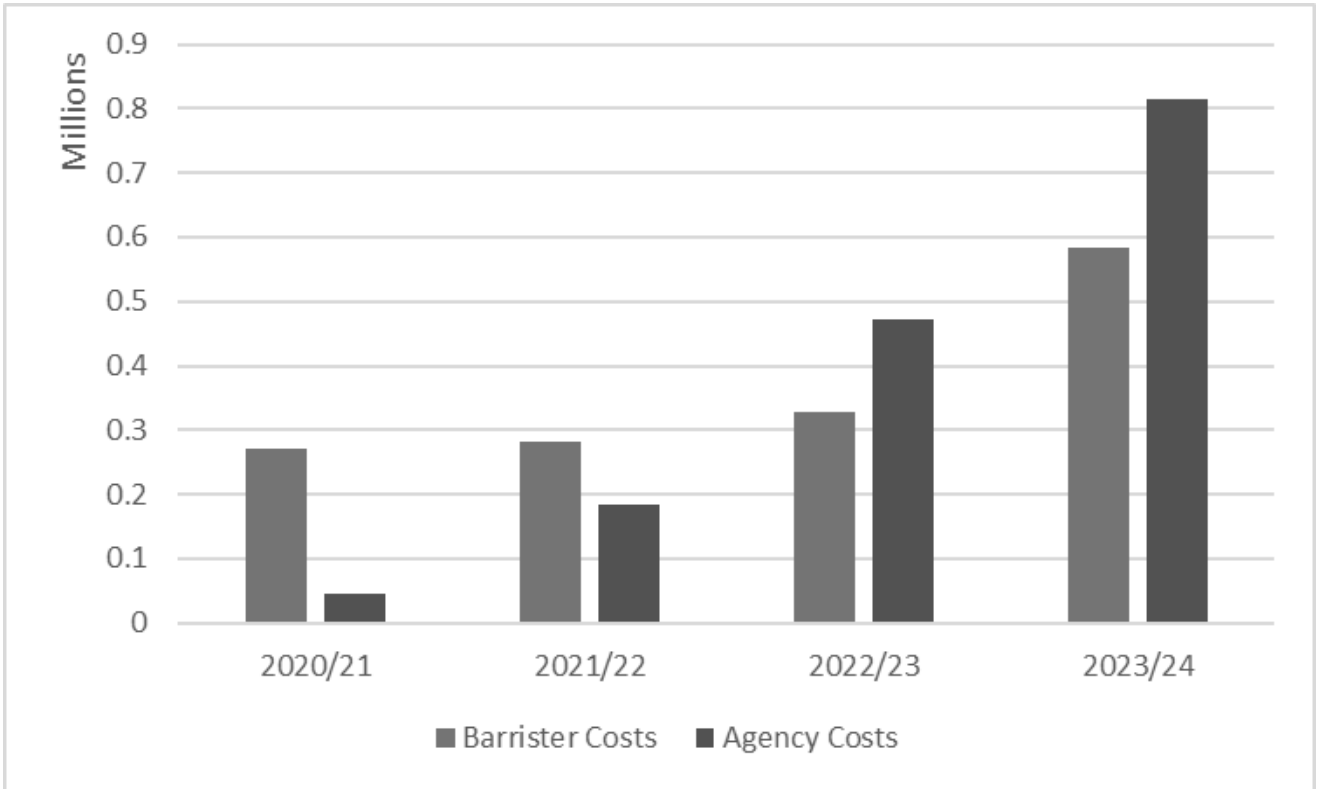
Comments on the above figures

As at the end of the financial year 2023/24 the Legal and Democratic Services Department is reporting a net overspend against budget of £0.338m.

Employee costs for the year are marginally lower than the budget profile, this is the result of a number of vacancies that exist within the department. However, The Council has experienced significant difficulty with recruitment into these vacant roles. Local Authorities are unable to provide the same level of compensation as the private sector so in order to meet the rising demand on the service (Children's Care Orders in particular) there has been reliance on agency staff which resulted in a significant cost of £0.814m for the financial year. This expenditure alone is equivalent to 42% of the initial expenditure budget for the department. The impact of the transformation and recovery work in Children Services, along with a review of the structure within Legal Services, aims to reduce the pressures within subsequent years.

Despite the overspend in agency costs being funded from reserves the department is still in excess of its budget profile by £0.338m, this is due to an overspend of £0.480m on Barrister Fees alone.

Again this increased cost is in relation to the staffing pressures and the volume of work required to meet the demand on the service. The rate at which barrister and agency spend is increasing can be seen below:





The budget pressures on agency and barrister fees are so significant within the department that if they were removed, Legal and Democratic Services would be under the approved budget profile by £0.143m. The work to reduce spend where possible is helping to minimise the impact on the Council’s reserves, however, it is unable to fully eliminate the overspend, so the work to reduce these pressures going forward is crucial to bringing expenditure back within the budget profile.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT**APPENDIX A**

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value			Current Progress	Comments
				23/24 £'000	24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
L4	Marketing, Design and Communications	45	Review the frequency of production of Inside Halton, as part of the wider consideration of the Council's communications strategy required for the Transformation Programme	0	15	0		A review of the frequency will take place in 2024/25
L5	Mayoral Services	102	Review the various budgets comprising the Mayoral function, with a target to achieve a 20% savings across these.	20	0	0		Budget has been brought in line with actual expenditure.
Total Legal Services Department				20	15	0		

COMMUNITY & GREENSPACE**Revenue Budget as at 31 March 2024**

	Annual Budget	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure			
Employees	16,785	16,064	721
Premises	3,913	3,321	592
Supplies & Services	1,446	1,740	(294)
Hired & Contracted Services	963	1,121	(158)
Book Fund	140	140	0
Food Provisions	371	353	18
School Meals Food	1,965	2,221	(256)
Transport	117	123	(6)
Waste Disposal Contracts	6,885	5,623	1,262
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	170	142	28
Grant to Norton Priory	174	174	0
Other Agency Costs	498	477	21
Other Expenditure	61	79	(18)
Transfers to Reserves	459	459	0
Total Expenditure	33,947	32,037	1,910
Income			
Sales Income	-1,305	-1,244	(61)
Fees & Charges Income	-5,099	-5,248	149
Rental Income	-213	-236	23
Government Grant Income	-1,132	-1,135	3
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-876	-912	36
School SLA Income	-2,061	-2,081	20
School Meals Income	-3,576	-3,427	(149)
Internal Fees Income	-418	-406	(12)
Capital Salaries	-166	-96	(70)
Transfers from Reserves	-78	-78	0
Total Income	-14,924	-14,863	(61)
Net Operational Expenditure	19,023	17,174	1,849
Recharges			
Premises Support	1,825	1,825	0
Transport	2,046	2,087	(41)
Central Support	3,856	3,856	0
Asset Rental Support	3,006	3,006	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-540	-540	0
Net Total Recharges	10,193	10,234	(41)
Net Departmental Expenditure	29,216	27,408	1,808

Comments on the above figures

The net departmental expenditure is £1.808m under budget at the end of the 2023/24 financial year.

Spend on employees is £0.721m under the annual budget. Management-level restructures have taken place across the Department during the year, with further a further restructure taking place within the Community Safety Division, and another underway within the Stadium and Catering Division. In order to facilitate these restructures, posts have been held vacant on a temporary basis, leading to a reduction in costs. There have also been difficulties recruiting to certain roles due to a lack of qualified applicants, which has led to some posts being vacant for longer than planned.

Spend on premises costs is £592k under budget in 2023/24. The Department was provided with an increase of £1.2m in utility budgets for 2023/24, based on an estimated increase in energy bills, however, the actual increase in costs was not as high as anticipated. Additionally, £0.126m of credits for prior-year gas costs were received by the Department following a reconciliation of energy bills which has increased the level of the underspend significantly. This underspend is unlikely to occur in future years as utility budgets have been reduced for 2024/25.

Both Supplies & Services, and Hired & Contracted Services budgets show a significant overspend in 2023/24. This is a budget pressure throughout the Department and is primarily caused by inflationary cost increases of key goods and services over recent years. Software and other essential licence costs now far exceed the budget available, with an overspend of £0.062m occurring in 2023/24. Difficulties in recruiting to some technical roles within the Brindley Theatre have necessitated a large increase in consultancy costs, with spend exceeding £0.074m, although this needs to be considered alongside an underspend on contracted staff.

School Meals food costs have been severely impacted by the high rate of inflation on food ideas during the last 12 months. Expenditure increased by 10% from 2022/23 despite a decrease in the number of schools which contract with the service.

Waste Disposal Contract costs are £1.262m under budget during 2023/24. £0.996m of this underspend relates to a refund received following Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority carrying out a reconciliation of the total contract costs for prior years across the Liverpool City Region. The percentage of contract costs charged to Halton has reduced in recent years, meaning that it is likely that this refund is a one-off occurrence. The remaining £0.266m of the underspend relates to 2023/24. Although costs did increase slightly from 2022/23, this increase was smaller than anticipated given current high levels of inflation.

Sales Income is £0.061m below the income target in 2023/24, primarily due to a shortfall in catering and bar sales at the Stadium. School Meals Income is also significantly under the budget target. 2024/25 is the final year of operation for the School Meals service, so this will cease to be a budget pressure in the medium- and long-term.

Fees and Charges income is £0.149m above the target budget in 2023/24. There were significant increases in the income generated by the Leisure Centres as the service continued to recover from the impacts of Covid-19. In addition to this, management have introduced new recruitment initiatives over the last 12 months which has led to an increase in the number of swimming instructors, allowing more income to be generated. Income at the Brindley also increased during the last financial year, with the theatre once again managing to cover its operating costs.

There was a shortfall of Capital Salary income in year, primarily due to difficulties recruiting to Landscape Architect roles. It is anticipated that income will increase in 2024/25 after a successful round of recruitment towards the end of 2023/24.

Inflationary increases in fuel and repair costs have resulted in an overspend of £0.041m on Transport Recharge budgets.

Capital Projects as at 31 March 2024

Project Title	2023/24 Capital Allocation £'000	Actual £'000	Total Allocation Remaining £'000
Stadium Minor Works	34	31	3
Open Spaces Schemes	850	314	536
Children's Playground Equipment	107	107	0
Upton Improvements	13	0	0
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12	1	11
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340	0	340
Town Park	284	125	159
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,023	54	969
Pickerings Pasture Café	520	17	503
Litter Bins	20	20	0
Halton Leisure Centre	15,057	17,260	(2,203)
Brookvale Recreation Centre Pitch	28	13	15
TOTAL	18,288	17,942	346

Comments on the above figures**Stadium Minor Works**

A stage, lighting equipment, and crowd barriers have been purchased in year, allowing additional events to be held at the Stadium.

Open Spaces Schemes

This covers a variety of smaller schemes which are all fully-funded from external sources. In 2023/24, projects included work on the Sankey Canal, improvements at Birchfield Gardens, and work on the dog exercise area at Hale Park.

Children's Playground Equipment

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

Town Park

The scheme includes the renewal of footpaths and landscape improvements within Town Park. The next phase of work is due to continue during 2024/25.

Spike Island / Wigg Island

Consultants have now been appointed and the scheme is underway.

Pickerings Pasture Café

Site investigation works are currently ongoing to inform the foundation design.

Halton Leisure Centre

Work on the new leisure centre has progressed well. The contractor is slightly ahead of schedule, which has caused the payments made in 2023/24 to exceed the original allocation, and it is anticipated that the building will be handed over to the Council in the final quarter of 2024/25. The additional expenditure in 2023/24 will be funded by a reduction in the anticipated expenditure during the next financial year.

Brookvale Recreation Centre Pitch

Work on the pitch is complete and the retention payment was made in 2023/24.

ECONOMY ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY DEPARTMENT**Revenue Operational Budget at 31 March 2024**

	Annual Budget	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure			
Employee Related Expenditure	5,611	5,453	158
Repairs & Maintenance	2,034	2,149	(115)
Premises	161	158	3
Energy & Water Costs	1,781	1,560	221
NNDR	738	635	103
Rents	195	297	(102)
Economic Regeneration Activities	19	15	4
Security	551	625	(74)
Supplies & Services	445	429	16
Supplies & Services - Grant	597	597	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	168	168	0
Capital Finance	60	60	0
Transfer to Reserves	592	592	0
Total Expenditure	12,952	12,738	214
Income			
Fees & Charges Income	-1,146	-1,210	64
Rent - Commercial Properties	-878	-847	(31)
Rent - Investment Properties	-44	-39	(5)
Rent - Markets	-831	-802	(29)
Government Grant	-1,260	-1,260	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-718	-718	0
Schools SLA Income	-299	-264	(35)
Recharges to Capital	-305	-324	19
Transfer from Reserves	-1,566	-1,566	0
Total Income	-7,047	-7,030	(17)
Net Operational Expenditure	5,905	5,708	197
Recharges			
Premises Support	2,006	2,006	0
Transport Support	23	25	(2)
Central Support	1,710	1,711	(1)
Asset Rental Support	1,266	1,266	0
Recharge Income	-7,728	-7,728	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,723	-2,720	(3)
Net Departmental Expenditure	3,182	2,988	194

Comments on the above figures

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

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

Comparison to Previous Quarter

Economy, Enterprise & Property's outturn has reduced from a projected £0.397m under budget at Quarter 3 to £0.194m under budget at financial year end. There are two reasons for this.

A rent review was carried out for Rutland House. As the rent review was later than the time frame specified in the lease agreement, the review was backdated to 2017 which incurred a cost £102k which was not projected in quarter 3.

The final quarter of the year witnessed an increase in the repairs and maintenance programme.

Supporting Information

The Department consists of 154fte of which 66fte are core funded, with a staff turnover savings target of £0.134m, by carefully monitoring the accounts the department has used grant/external funding where possible to try and relieve the pressure on the core Council budget. Various projects have been identified and staff time has been charged accordingly. The Department has also delayed the recruitment of vacancies to help achieve a balanced budget. As a result, the employee expenses this year is £0.158m under budget at financial year-end.

As inflation is running much higher than originally predicted at the time of budget setting, the department will be expected to absorb any price increases that may arise from within the budget allocations made. This is proving difficult for repairs and maintenance due to the continued increase in the price of materials. The Repairs and Maintenance programme is constantly under review to keep within budget. However, the final quarter of the year has seen an increase in urgent repairs and maintenance, as a result the budget is £0.115m over budget. There is a risk that this budget will remain volatile in financial year 24/25 and will need to be reviewed on a regular basis.

The energy costs budget increased significantly in 2023/24, as costs have not risen as much as expected the department is £0.221m under budget. It is worth mentioning that costs are still £0.501m higher than 2022/23, which is an increase of nearly 50%.

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

As in previous years, and the long recovery from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the financial challenges of commercial property rent continue to present a significant financial challenge, though the third and fourth quarter of the year has seen an increase in the amount of commercial property income. This is due to agency staff within Asset Management being able to focus on rent reviews and licence fees. There is also a focus within the team to fill the vacant properties within the portfolio. The budget reveals that the income target for commercial properties. was not achieved by £0.031m.

Although this is offset by the reduction in vacant properties reducing the level of business rates payable by the Council.

Due to adverse trading conditions in the retail sector which have been made worse due to inflation and increased utilities costs, the department is projecting to under achieve on market rental income targets this budget year. The occupancy rate is approximately 89%. We have seen a uplift of rental income in the final quarter of year. This could be due to the promotion of the service.

The School Cleaning Service Level Agreement (SLA) is not covering its costs this year due to the need to employ agency staff to cover sickness and leave and the pay award. The demand for the service is also decreasing as schools move to Academies. A review of the service provided is currently being conducted.

Approved 2023/24 Savings

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

ECONOMY ENTERPRISE & PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

Capital Projects as of 31 March 24

Project Title	2023/24 (Outturn)		
	2023/24 Capital Allocation	Actual	Total Allocation Remaining
	£'000	£'000	£'000
3MG	24	16	8
Murdishaw	30	8	22
Kingsway Learning Centre Improved Facilities	32	32	0
Equality Act Improvement Works	289	289	0
Property Improvements	269	269	0
Waterloo Building Runcorn	109	109	0
Woodend Unit 10 Catalyst Industrial Estate	204	204	0
Police Station Demolition	406	406	0
Foundry Lane Residential Area	2,471	1,310	1,161
Runcorn Station Building Development	80	30	50
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	82	30	52
Runcorn Waterfront Residential	291	22	269
Changing Places	212	188	24
Runcorn Town Deal	2,303	1,829	474
Totals	6,802	4,742	2,060

3MG - The substantive programme for 3MG in terms of land disposals is now 90%+ complete with up to 900,000 square foot of development in the pipeline some of which will require professional support over the coming years which will continue this as an ongoing project.

Murdishaw – HBC supported the capital works to the former Youth Centre/Boxing Club which has been brought back in to use as the Tea Tree Café, a community project supported by Onward Homes. The funding was provided to match fund Onward Homes contribution. A programme of improvements to the external facilities at Murdishaw Community Centre is currently being priced.

Kingsway Learning Centre - The works to upgrade the public address system are now complete.

Equality Act Improvement Works - All works included in the programme for 2023/24 have been completed.

Property Improvements - All works included in the programme for 2023/24 have been completed.

Waterloo Building, Runcorn -The demolition works are complete, there will be some retention monies due for payment next year circa £3k.

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

Woodend Unit 10 - The works are complete, and the tenants have moved in however the new gas connection is still outstanding and is due to be completed soon. This is not affecting the office space as the gas heating is just to the main warehouse area.

Police Station demolition - The demolition works were completed some time ago. The overage payment has now been made.

Foundry Lane – Foundry Lane is moving to a crucial stage with reserved matters to enable the beginning of construction on the site. Planning permission has been approved to allow the construction company to start on site in the near future.

Changing Places - The works are complete, the final facility at Victoria Park has yet to be registered, this will be due very soon.

Runcorn Town Deal - Work continues to develop and deliver all Runcorn Town Deal projects by March 2026.

Runcorn Station Development

A Cost Estimate Summary Report was produced by Network Rail providing two options as a way forward, Option 1 a full scope of works (costing £1.5m for GRIP 3 validation and surveys and GRIP 4 outline design, approvals and close down), option 2 a phased approach (costing £480k, which is the total amount of development funding that we have available)




It was decided to progress with the full scope of works so not to delay the programme further and potential for increased costs between stages

A meeting with the LCR CA Capital Development Team took place to review Gateway 3 criteria to allow the project to access capital funding earlier in order to commit to full scope of works for outline design stage. Gateway criteria evidence has been submitted to LCR CA for review.




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	N / A
	Indicates that the measure cannot be compared to the same period last year.