

Public Document Pack



Executive Board

Thursday, 14 November 2024 2.00 p.m.
The Boardroom, Municipal Building

S. Young

Chief Executive

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

PART 1

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Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion or voting on the item.	
3. LEADER'S PORTFOLIO	
(A) URGENT DECISIONS	12 - 13
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*Please contact Gill Ferguson 0151 511 8059 or
gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Committee is on Thursday, 12 December 2024*

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<p>In this case the Board has a discretion to exclude the press and public and, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, it is RECOMMENDED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, having been satisfied that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.</p>	
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EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 24 October 2024 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Thompson

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, S. Young, M. Reaney, E. Dawson, S. Wallace-Bonner, Z. Fearon, G. Ferguson and J. Rosser

Also in attendance: M. Bennett and D. Lyon (Mersey Gateway) S. Scott and D. Trust Dickinson (Halton Housing Trust)

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

	<i>Action</i>
<p>EXB35 MINUTES</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2024, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p> <p>LEADER'S PORTFOLIO</p> <p>EXB36 URGENT ITEMS</p> <p>The Board received a report from the Chief Executive, which provided information on urgent decisions taken since the last meeting of the Board.</p> <p>It was noted that the Council's Constitution gave authority to the Chief Executive to take urgent decisions, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Director Finance and/or the Director Legal and Democratic Services, where necessary.</p> <p>Five urgent decisions had been made since the last meeting of the Board and full details were published on the Council's website.</p>	

RESOLVED: That the urgent decisions taken since the last meeting of the Executive Board be noted.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB37 DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

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

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

The report outlined details of the two applications, in relation to their respective addresses. Appended to the report was the potential annual cost to the Council of granting the discretionary rate relief.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the application for 15% discretionary top up relief from Community Integrated Care, be rejected for the reasons outlined within the report; and
- 2) the application for discretionary rate relief from Runcorn Amateur Boxing Club, be approved at 90%

Director of Finance

HEALTH AND WELLBEING PORTFOLIO

EXB38 HOMELESSNESS FUNDING GRANT ALLOCATION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Adult Services, which outlined the homelessness grant funding allocated by Central Government to reduce and prevent homelessness within the Borough for the period 2024/25. The Council had been allocated £369,000 and the report set out in appendix 1 and 2, proposals for the allocation of the grant for the period.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board note and consider the content of the report; and

Executive Director of Adult Services

- 2) approve the recommendations for expenditure against the grants as described in Appendices 1 and 2.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO

EXB39 GYPSY TRAVELLER WARDEN CONTRACTS - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Adult Services, that advised on a proposal to continue with the existing service provision provided by two Romani Traveller Wardens at two sites at Riverview, Widnes and Canalside, Runcorn. The report set out the advantages of employing site wardens and the service they provided which had proven successful.

The two warden contracts would be initially for three years, with an option to extend by a further two years, subject to performance and would be renewed annually. The combined contract value for the two wardens would be £48,876 annually and a combined cost of £244,380 across the five-year period.

Reason(s) for Decision

The proposal to extend the wardens employment contract will ensure a consistent approach and stability across the three traveller sites within Halton. As the wardens are situated on site, this offers an out of hours service.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Due to previous issues raised, it would not be advisable to consider further service options or employing none traveller wardens, as this would prove more costly and could result in serious issues across the three sites.

Implementation Date

The contract implementation date will be 1 November 2024 for a period of three, plus one, plus one years.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) approve the proposed employment contract for the two Traveller Wardens; and
- 2) agree that the in house wardens will continue to provide site management and support across the

Executive Director
of Adult Services

three Council owned sites.

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

EXB40 ADDITIONAL HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE ALLOCATIONS

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

It was noted that in addition to the current capital funding arrangements through the LCRCA, the Council had received two Highways and Improvement Grants for £306,781.20 each and a Traffic Signal Maintenance and Improvement Grant for £44,394.12. The cost of works undertaken as part of these grant funding agreements would be met entirely from the approved budget allocations for this additional capital funding.

RESOLVED: That

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

Director Planning
and
Transportation

EXB41 A STRATEGY FOR HALTON'S TREES AND WOODLANDS

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which sought approval of an updated Halton Trees and Woodlands Strategy. A review of the Strategy had recently been undertaken as one of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan objectives ES10.

The Board was advised that there had been no material changes to the Council's Policy since the adopted Trees and Woodland Strategy was approved in 2018. A summary of the primary updates to the Strategy was detailed in the report and a copy of the Strategy was attached as Appendix 1.

RESOLVED: That the Board approve the updated Trees and Woodland Strategy attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

N.B. Councillor Wharton declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in the following item of business as he is a Non-Executive Director of Mersey Gateway Crossings Board and left the meeting for the duration of the item.

COUNCILLOR NELSON IN THE CHAIR

EXB42 MERSEY GATEWAY

The Board considered a report of the Director – Legal and Democratic Services, that advised on the requirement to replace the existing Road User Charging Scheme Order (RUCSO) with a new RUCSO to reflect the need to increase toll charges on both the Mersey Gateway Bridge and the Silver Jubilee Bridge. The report also included details on proposed changes to Blue Badge Holders, Penalty Charge Notices and Local User Discount Scheme which would all be subject to consultation which would run for six weeks in November and December 2024.

It was noted that both bridges are described as being operated as tolled crossings, however motorists pay in the form of a road user charge under the Transport Act 2000. The charges are anticipated to remain on the crossing until the Mersey Gateway Bridge, improvements to the Silver Jubilee Bridge and other associated highway network improvements are paid for.

Since the tolls were introduced in 2017, they had remained unchanged and there was now a need to increase the tolls by 20% to ensure that in line with the original proposals the project remained financially robust without the need for additional local or central funding beyond that already agreed.

It was noted that the Mersey Gateway Project had continued to operate with a financial loss and had required Central Government grants. Details of the income and expenditure of the scheme from October 2017 to March 2024 were outlined in Appendix 2 of the report.

Following the consultation period a report would be taken to a meeting of the Council and if approved the updated RUCSO would come into effect from 1 April 2025.

Following a discussion, the Board agreed that the

reference to proposed changes for Blue Badge holders would be deleted in the updated RUCSO before the document is subject to consultation.

RESOLVED: That the Board should

- 1) consult on making an updated RUCSO based on the working draft enclosed at Appendix 1 on the basis prescribed in this report, subject to the removal of the reference to changes for Blue Badge holders.
- 2) after full and proper consideration to any responses received, and having taken them into account, recommend the Council to make the updated RUCSO based on the working draft enclosed at Appendix 1 and delegate to the Director – Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, the authority to make any non-material or consequential amendments as are necessary to give it effect; and
- 3) authorise the Director – Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to take all necessary steps to bring the RUCSO into effect, provided that any material amendments or considerations shall be considered by the Council and subject to its determination before the RUCSO is brought into effect.

Director, Legal and Democratic Services

EMPLOYMENT, LEARNING AND SKILLS AND COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL PORTFOLIOS

EXB43 PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY UPDATE REPORT 2024

The Board received a report of the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration, which sought approval of Halton’s Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) update report. The 2024 update report was prepared by Knight Kavanagh & Page in consultation with partners including Halton Sports Partnership, Sport England and the National Governing Bodies of relevant sports. A copy of the *Halton Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy Update Report August 2024 and Action Plan*, was appended to the report.

The update report set out the changes in demand for and supply of playing pitches in Halton since the previous annual update was conducted in 2023. The report also provided an audit of the quality, quantity and accessibility of playing pitches, current levels of demand and whether pitches are being over/under used.

It was noted that the report was an enabling document and did not commit the Council or any other body to funding any of the actions identified.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves the Playing Pitch Strategy Update Report 2024, including the updated site action plan. This is based upon consultation undertaken by sports provision consultants Knight Kavanagh Page in 2024.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

CLIMATE CHANGE PORTFOLIO

N.B. Councillor Wright declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business as she is a member of Halton Housing Trust Board. Councillor Harris declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business as a tenant of Halton Housing Trust.

EXB44 HALTON HOUSING ANNUAL REPORT

The Board received the Halton Housing Trust's (HHT) Annual Report, which provided an update on their activities since the last report to Executive Board.

The Chair welcomed Sam Scott, Group Chief Executive and colleague Debbie Trust Dickinson, who jointly presented the report to the Board – *Annual Report to HBC Executive Board, October 2024.*

The report outlined the key achievements over the past year which included:

- implementation of a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, customer portal and a Customer Support Hub;
- introduction of a central complaint handling team;
- the Listen, Learn, Act tracker had been implemented, capturing learning from complaints and customer feedback surveys;
- repairs service delivery is improving, the number of jobs completed in target time had increased and average repair wait times had reduced;
- delivering the development programme as set out in the three-year plan. In total, 309 homes (44% of the programme) had been delivered and 66 homes (9% of the programme) were currently on site.

Following a discussion the Board requested that the following be considered by Halton Housing:

- installation of sprinkler systems be considered as part

- of the retro fit programme of works or new builds;
- Neighbourhood Managers make contact with their Ward Councillors;
- Halton Housing Trust magazine which is distributed to tenants should be shared with all Councillors;
- The presentation to be circulated to all Councillors; and
- Halton Housing Trust representatives to attend a future meeting of the relevant Council Policy and Performance Board.

RESOLVED: That the Board thanked Halton Housing Trust for the presentation and noted the report.

EXB45 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

PART II

In this case the Board has a discretion to exclude the press and public and, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, it is **RECOMMENDED** that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, having been satisfied that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

EXB46 DIRECT AWARD OF THE HALTON 0-19 (+25 SEND) HEALTHY CHILD PROGRAMME, PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE CONTRACT 2025 - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Director of Public Health, which sought approval to proceed with a procurement process to grant a direct award to Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (Bridgewater) for the delivery of 0-19 (+25 SEND) Healthy Child Programme (0-19 HCP) for the period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2030, with the option of 2 x plus 1-year, pre-determined extension periods up to 31 March 2032.

Reason(s) for Decision

The justification to use the Provider Selection Regime Process C to direct award to Bridgewater was set out in the

report.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

The alternative option is to undertake a full competitive tender exercise. This was rejected for the reasons mentioned in section 10.

Implementation Date

It is intended that the process to provide a direct award would be undertaken following the Board approval, with the new contract to commence on 1 April 2025.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the Local Authority's statutory responsibility for commissioning public health services for children and young people aged 0 to 19 years (Health and Social Care Act 2012); and
- 2) approves the use of the new procurement regime for selecting providers of healthcare services in England: The Provider Selection Regime (PSR) to direct award to Bridgewater.

Director of
Public Health

EXB47 CHILDREN'S SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME FUNDING - WORKFORCE STABILISATION - KEY DECISION

The report considered a report of the Executive Director – Children's Services which provided an update on the progress to develop a programme around the stabilisation and redesign of Children's Social Care following the Inspection Local Authority Children's Service in May 2024 and subsequent report in July. The aim of the redesign was to develop and implement transformation of the system in a sustainable manner.

A detailed business case around each element of the programme funding request was presented and the report sought Board approval to proceed with the requested investment.

Reason(s) for Decision

The decision to take this approach is based on:

1. Supporting the ambitions of the Corporate Plan
2. Delivering the ambitions and vision of the Children & Young Peoples plan

3. Transforming the Children's Services system to an early intervention and prevention system whilst addressing the financial sustainability of the local system,
4. Doing the right things for the children and families at Halton
5. And ensuring the right support is available at the right time.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Work has already begun through the transformation programme to stabilise and transform Children's Services. It had identified requirements and work is in progress.

The pace and impact is severely hampered due to time, cost and resource constraints across the council, not just in Children's Services.

Progress is being made but not at the scale and pace required to improve services in the manner and pace required by the inspecting bodies.

It was decided early on that to not invest is not an option due to the potential additional impacts/ramifications financially, operationally and reputationally for the Council, and most of all the pace and change needed for the children, young people and their families of Halton.

Implementation Date

Should approval be given on by the Executive Board on 24th October 2024 then the Implementation programme will commence following the completion of the call-in period, from 1st November 2024.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Council be asked to approve the investment as defined in the report for improvement programme funding; and
- 2) delegated authority to approve the expenditure of the programme budget is given to the Executive Director of Children's Services in consultation with the lead member for Children and Young People.

Executive Director
of Children's
Services

MINUTES ISSUED: 30 October 2024

CALL-IN: 6 November 2024 at 5.00 pm.

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 6 November 2024.

Meeting ended at 3.37 p.m.

REPORT TO: Executive Board
DATE: 14 November 2024
REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive
PORTFOLIO: Leader
SUBJECT: Urgent Decisions
WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To bring to the attention of Executive Board urgent decision/s taken since the last meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the report is noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Council's Constitution gives authority to the Chief Executive to take urgent decision/s which are required before the next formal meeting of Executive Board.

These must be made in consultation with the Leader of the Council where practicable, and with the Director – Finance and/or Director – Legal and Democratic Services, where necessary. They must also be reported for information to the next practically available meeting of the Board.

3.2 More information on each can be found on the Council's website:

<http://councillors.halton.gov.uk/mgDelegatedDecisions.aspx?bcr=1>

3.3 The urgent decision/s taken since the last meeting of Executive Board:

Date Decision taken	Decision details
15 October	Household Support Fund – 2024/25 Scheme and Spending Plan

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are none other than the constitutional requirement to report urgent decisions for information.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

None.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The report is for information, and there are no risk issues arising from it.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None.

9. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no climate change implications.

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

10.1 No background papers were used in the preparation of this report. Further information on the decision/s taken is available from the link in Paragraph 3.2.

REPORT TO:	Executive Board
DATE:	14 November 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Director – Legal and Democratic Services
PORTFOLIO:	Corporate Services
SUBJECT:	Taxi Licensing Matter
WARD(S)	Boroughwide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To receive a report from the Regulatory Committee recommending that the Executive Board approve amendments to the current taxi licensing policy/conditions.

2.0 **RECOMMENDED:**

It is recommended that:-

1. The Vehicle Age Policy is to be amended to remove the minimum age requirement from 5 years to 7 for a standard vehicle and maximum from 10 to 12 years and keep the minimum age of 13 years for a wheelchair accessible vehicle, whilst increasing the maximum to 18 years. (Maintaining the same testing conditions as two per year).
2. The proposal for card readers to become mandatory be rejected (so no change in conditions).
3. The proposal to change the colour of purpose-built wheelchair vehicles be rejected (so no change in conditions).
4. The proposal to amend the condition for a spare wheel/space saver to be adopted (to remove the current policy requirement for a space saver/spare wheel in the vehicle, with the implications that the manufacturers specifications apply).
5. The proposal to remove the fire extinguisher be rejected (so no change in conditions).
6. The age of Electric Vehicles to remain the same as the current age policy.

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Several recommendations to change taxi licensing policy/conditions

have been proposed by the Taxi trade. Following the proposals, a consultation exercise was carried out, and the findings can be found in the committee report that was presented to the Regulatory Committee (See Appendix 1).

3.2 On 9th October 2024, the Regulatory Committee considered the proposals as detailed in the aforementioned report (See Appendix 1) and accordingly recommended the position set out in Section 2 of this report be adopted by The Executive Board (see the draft minutes at Appendix 2).

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The subject matter of this report is to adopt changes to Taxi Licensing Policy/Conditions as set out herein.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None

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

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence
None

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy
None

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families
None

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need
None

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future
None

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community
None

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 None

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None

REPORT:	Regulatory Committee
DATE:	9 October 2024
REPORTING OFFICER:	Director – Legal and Democratic Services
PORTFOLIO:	Resources
SUBJECT:	Taxi Licensing Policy Amendments
WARDS:	Borough-wide

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To consider additions and amendments to the Councils Taxi Licensing Policies.

2. RECOMMENDATION that

- 2.1. **The Committee considers the proposals and makes appropriate recommendations to the Executive Board.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. Recently the taxi trade has asked for several amendments to be made to the Taxi Licensing Policies. The request has been on the following points.
 - Age of vehicles
 - Card Readers
 - Colour of purpose-built vehicles
 - Spare wheel/space saver
 - Fire Extinguishers
 - Age of electric vehicles
- 3.2. According to the Council's Constitution the Committee is responsible for determining policies in connection with the grant, variation, suspension or revocation of licences relating to taxi and private hire.
- 3.3. However, the Constitution must now be interpreted in accordance with the case of R (On the application of 007 Stratford Taxis Limited v Stratford on Avon District Council 2011. This Court of Appeal decision interpreted the meaning of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities)(England) Regulations 2000 in respect of matters which must be dealt with by a Council's Executive or by a committee of its council. Essentially, the court held that: (1) it was clear that individual applications relating to taxi matters must be dealt with by the equivalent of this Council's Regulatory Committee and (2) matters calculated to facilitate, or be conducive or incidental to such applications must also be dealt with in the same way but (3) any "plan or strategy" associated with such a function would be an executive function and therefore have to be determined by a Council's Executive. The Stratford case concerned the introduction of a wheelchair access policy. The decision was taken by the Council's Cabinet rather than its Licensing Committee. The challenge from the

taxi trade was that the Licensing Committee should have adopted the policy. This element of the challenge was rejected by the Court.

3.4. Consequently, any decision of the Regulatory Committee on matters contained in this agenda will be by recommendation to the Executive Board.

3.5. In deciding whether to recommend the adoption of a policy the following questions should be addressed:-

3.5.1 Has a proper consultation been undertaken where the duty arises?

3.5.2 Are the proposals necessary and proportionate?

4. POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendment 1 – Age of Vehicles

4.1 The Councils current policy on age limits of licensed vehicles are:

non fully wheelchair accessible vehicles

can be no more than 5 years old when first licensed and the maximum age is 10 years old.

Fully wheelchair accessible vehicles

Can be no more than 13 years old when first licensed and the maximum age limit is 16 years old.

4.2 Members will recall a temporary extension was granted for a period of two years with effect from the 25 February 2023, this is due to expire on the 25 February 2025, this temporary extension does not cover the whole of the trade it only covered qualifying vehicles that were coming up to the maximum age during the period.

4.3 The trade has asked for a review of the vehicle age policy due to the cost-of-living crisis and the price of replacing vehicles.

4.4 A review of the Liverpool City Region vehicle age policies has been undertaken, with Wirral Council being the most recent Authority to have adopted a new policy in June 2024, attached at **Appendix A** is the vehicle policy criteria.

4.5 Recent discussions within the Liverpool City Region have been taking place over the last few months with consideration being given that all the authorities within the region, are to adopt a standardised approach with a number of conditions and policies, the vehicle age policy is one of the policies that has recently been discussed. Research has found that most of the region already have similar criteria in place in relation to the age of vehicles.

4.6 In October 2015, the Deregulation Act 2015 made amendments to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to allow a Private Hire Operator to subcontract a booking to another Private Hire Operator irrespective of where they are licensed. This practice is often referred to as "Cross Border Hiring". The effect of

this deregulation is that vehicles with different criteria can operate across many different authorities. It is only in recent years, that the amendment to the legislation has had an impact on the operation of the licensed vehicles in Halton. Licensing Officers are witnessing increasing concern from drivers licensed by Halton in respect of the number of vehicles that operate in Halton but are licensed by other licensing authorities who have different criteria for licensing vehicles, and this includes age of vehicles. It is reported that individuals are seeking to have their vehicles licensed by other authorities as they are finding it difficult to obtain vehicles that will comply with the current criteria for licensing vehicles in Halton Borough Council. Should an individual wish to have a licensed vehicle licensed by another licensing authority, in order to be able to drive that vehicle the individual must also obtain a driver's licence from that authority and work for an operator who has a licence in that authority. The consequences of this are that both the drivers and vehicles can operate in Halton under the conditions and criteria set by another licensing authority.

PROPOSAL

- 4.7 The temporary amendment – which permits an extension of the time limit for two years - is due to expire on the 25 February 2025 as the economic circumstances have not improved with the current cost of living crisis. The trade has requested that the whole of the vehicle age policy be reviewed.
- 4.8 In determining whether the policy should be reviewed, or an additional temporary amendment should be extended, the following considerations should be considered.
- Replacing a licensed vehicle on attaining current age limit could in the current time of austerity be punitive to the proprietor and place unreasonable financial and/or personal pressure on the licence holders.
 - Removing the conditions in their entirety could lower the standards achieved in the Borough since age restrictions were introduced to, the detriment of the service to which the public are entitled.
 - Any additional extension that may be granted would only benefit a small percentage of the trade whose vehicles reach the current maximum age in the next year or two. Even those licence holders who may benefit from any temporary extension to the current policy, may not necessarily take advantage of the any potential rule change and may choose to obtain a newer vehicle anyway.
 - The committee will also need to have regard to the consultation outcomes, the most recent publication of the DfT Best Practice Guidance, as well as the criteria for licensing vehicles in neighbouring authorities in the City Region as well as other licensing authorities. If it is considered that there should be no change to the current policy, vehicle proprietors may seek to have their vehicles licensed in other authorities where the criteria do not restrict vehicles in terms of their age. Attached at **Appendix B** is the relevant sections from the guidance.
 - The legislation gives licensing authorities a wide range of discretion over types of vehicles that they can licence as Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Vehicles. This is recognised in the DfT Best Practice Guidance which states:
“individual licensing authorities are still responsible for deciding their own policies and making decisions on individual licensing matters applying the relevant law and any other relevant considerations. This guidance is primarily intended to assist licensing authorities, but it is only guidance and does not intend to give a definitive statement of the law: any decisions made by an authority remain a matter for that authority”

CONSULTATION

- 4.9 The trade was consulted on the 10 June 2024 by email and the question was asked - should the age of vehicle be increased.
- 4.10 There were 111 replies to the consultation, which have provided the following information:
- 52 replies are in favour of the change
 - 52 replies are not in favour of the change
 - 7 replies made no comment
- 4.11 The findings with comments were collated and can be found at **Appendix C**.
- 4.12 The public have also been consulted via the Council website on the same question, no comments were received.

5. OPTIONS

- 5.1 The options available to the Committee are to recommend:
- Maintain current policy and readopt the 2-year extension time limit to 25 February 2027 or
 - Maintain current policy, but allow the extension time limit to expire on 25 February 2025 or
 - Adopt the same policy as other authorities in the Liverpool City Region or
 - Remove the minimum age requirement from 5 years to 7 for a standard vehicle and maximum from 10 to 12 years and keep the minimum age of 13 years for wheelchair accessible but increase the maximum to 18. With the same testing conditions as two a year
- 5.2 The Committee are asked to recommend one of the above options to the Executive Board for adoption.
- 5.3 In the event that policy is changed powers will need to be delegated to the Licensing Manager to settle wording of the policy.

6. POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendment 2 – Card Readers

- 6.1 There is currently no condition within the vehicle policy to have card readers in a licensed vehicle.
- 6.2 A request was made by one of the Private Hire Operators that this should be reviewed by the Licensing Department.

PROPOSAL

- 6.3 Should this proposal be reviewed in line with the Liverpool City Region, it may be noted that there are no other authorities within the city region that makes it mandatory to have a card reader in the vehicles.

- 6.4 Adding this to the vehicle licence conditions will add an additional cost for drivers licensed by Halton.

CONSULTATION

- 6.5 The trade was consulted on the 10 June 2024 by email and the following question was asked - should it be a condition that Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles have card readers in the vehicle?
- 6.6 There were 111 replies to the consultation, which have provided the following information:
- 26 replies are in favour of the change
 - 80 replies are not in favour of the change
 - 5 replies made no comment
- 6.7 The findings with comments were collated and can be found at **Appendix C**.
- 6.8 The public have also been consulted via the Council's website on the same question, no comments were received.

7. OPTIONS

- 7.1 The options available to the Committee are to recommend:
- Require a Card Reader for all new vehicles from and all vehicles currently licensed fromor
 - Do not require a Card Reader
- 7.2 The Committee are asked to recommend one of the above options to the Executive Board for adoption.
- 7.3 In the event that policy is changed powers will need to be delegated to the Licensing Manager to settle wording of the policy.

8. POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendment 3 – Colour of Purpose-built vehicles (Wheelchair accessible)

- 8.1 The current vehicle conditions are as follows

Hackney Carriage

Be painted black except where the vehicle is a London style vehicle where it can be any solid colour

Private Hire

Painted any colour other than black

- 8.2 A request was made by the trade to remove the colour on purpose-built vehicles (Fully Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles) due to the cost of replacing the vehicles. Comments have been made that the cost of purchasing a black vehicle is a lot more expensive than purchasing one in any other colour.
- 8.3 The DfT guidance states on colour of vehicles
*Licensing authorities should not impose a livery requirement on private hire vehicles. The more distinctive a private hire vehicle is made to appear, the greater the chance that this might be confused with a taxi. **To assist the differentiation further, licensing authorities which require taxis to be a particular colour should prevent private hire vehicles from being that same colour, unless they are easily identifiable i.e. they are purpose-built vehicles as is the case in many of our cities.***
- 8.4 Residents of Halton are fully aware of the colour of licensed vehicles in Halton and if this was to be changed it could lead to confusion with the public.
- 8.5 In October 2015, the Deregulation Act 2015 made amendments to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 to allow a Private Hire Operator to subcontract a booking to another Private Hire Operator irrespective of where they are licensed. This practice is often referred to as “Cross Border Hiring”. The effect of this deregulation is that vehicles with different criteria can operate across many different authorities. It is only in recent years, that the amendment to the legislation has had an impact on the operation of the licensed vehicles in Halton. Licensing Officers are witnessing increasing concern from drivers licensed by Halton in respect of the number of vehicles that operate in Halton but are licensed by other licensing authorities who have different criteria for licensing vehicles, and this includes colour of vehicles. It is reported that individuals are seeking to have their vehicles licensed by other authorities as they are finding it difficult to obtain vehicles that will comply with the current criteria for licensing vehicles in Halton Borough Council. Should an individual wish to have a licensed vehicle licensed by another licensing authority, in order to be able to drive that vehicle the individual must also obtain a driver's licence from that authority and work for an operator who has a licence in that authority. The consequences of this are that both the drivers and vehicles can operate in Halton under the conditions and criteria set by another licensing authority.

CONSULTATION

- 8.6 The trade was consulted on the 10 June 2024 by email and the following question was asked - should the colour of purpose-built vehicles be changed?.
- 8.7 There were 111 replies to the consultation, which have provided the following information:
- 23 replies are in favour of the change
 - 27 replies are not in favour of the change
 - 61 replies made no comment
- 8.9 The findings with comments where collated and can be found at **Appendix C**.
- 8.10 The public have also been consulted via the Councils website on the same question, no comments were received.

9. OPTIONS

9.1 The options available to the Committee are to recommend:

- Maintain current policy or
- Change policy in specified respects.

9.2 The Committee are asked to recommend one of the above options to the Executive Board for adoption.

9.3 In the event that policy is changed powers will need to be delegated to the Licensing Manager to settle wording of the policy.

10. POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendment 4 – Spare Wheel/Space Saver

10.1 The current vehicle conditions are as follows

When driving a licensed Hackney Carriage or Private Hire Vehicle equipped with a space saver tyre the holder must be aware of and adhere to the VOSA requirements for the use of space saver tyres.

10.2 A request was made by the trade to remove the conditions for a spare wheel/space saver. The request was due to when drivers are purchasing new vehicles, manufacturers do not provide a spare wheel or space saver they now only provide the manufacturer tyre kit (tyre foam).

10.3 Officers have reviewed the conditions within neighbouring authorities, and it is noted some authorities do allow tyre sealant as part of the vehicle condition.

10.4 Comments have been received from the Councils Lowerhouse Lane Depot that they would have concerns regarding how they would continue their journey, and this could be an issue regarding passenger safety.

CONSULTATION

10.5 The trade was consulted on the 10 June 2024 by email and the following question was asked – should the condition for space saver/spare wheel be removed

10.6 There were 111 replies to the consultation, which have provided the following information:

- 78 replies are in favour of the change
- 18 replies are not in favour of the change
- 15 replies made no comment

10.7 The findings with comments were collated and can be found at **Appendix C**.

- 10.8 The public have also been consulted via the Councils website on the same question, no comments were received.

11. OPTIONS

- 11.1 The options available to the Committee are to recommend:

- Keep the requirement for a space saver/spare wheel in the vehicle as per current policy or
- Remove the current policy requirement for a space saver/spare wheel in the vehicle (with the implications that the manufacturers specification applies).

- 11.2 The Committee are asked to recommend one of the above options to the Executive Board for adoption.

- 11.3 Should the Committee recommend any of the changes to the Policy then they will need to be altered. The Committee would therefore be requested to include within the resolution a delegation of the task of preparing detailed wording and other consequential matters to the Licensing Managers.

12. POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendment 5 – Fire Extinguishers

- 12.1 The current vehicle conditions are as follows

A fire extinguisher shall be maintained within the vehicle in a position approved by the Council. The extinguisher shall comply with BSEN3 1996, bear a K mark and licence number and have a gauge. The extinguisher shall be subject to annual test by a qualified tester and the test certificate shall be produced to the Council when the vehicle tested by the Council.

The fire extinguisher shall be permanently marked with the vehicle registration number and/or plate number.

- 12.2 A request was made to remove this condition due to not being required any longer, as it was not felt safe for a driver to return to a vehicle if it was on fire.

- 12.3 Officers have reviewed the conditions within neighbouring authorities, who do not have this condition as part of their policy.

- 12.4 Officers have contacted Cheshire Fire regarding this condition, and the replied received was that they could make no comment on this condition.

- 12.5 Comments have been received from the Councils Lowerhouse Lane Depot that fire extinguishers are a fire safety support, and all Halton Borough Councils fleet vehicles carry a fire extinguisher.

CONSULTATION

- 12.6 The trade was consulted on the 10 June 2024 by email and the following question was asked – should the condition for fire extinguishers be removed

There were 111 replies to the consultation, which have provided the following information:

- 30 replies are in favour of the change
- 21 replies are not in favour of the change
- 60 replies made no comment

12.7 The findings with comments where collated and can be found at **Appendix C**.

12.8 The public have also been consulted via the Councils website on the same question, no comments were received.

13. OPTIONS

13.1 The options available to the Committee are to recommend:

- Keep the requirement for a fire extinguisher in the vehicle as per current policy or
- Remove the current policy requirement for a fire extinguisher in the vehicle

13.2 The Committee are asked to recommend one of the above options to the Executive Board for adoption.

13.3 In the event that policy is changed powers will need to be delegated to the Licensing Manager to settle wording of the policy.

14. POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendment 6 – age of electric vehicles

14.1 The current vehicle conditions regarding Electric Vehicles are the same as the current age restrictions as set out in paragraph 4.1 of this report.

14.2 A request was made by the trade that the age of Electric Vehicles should be allowed to be licensed for a longer period than the current vehicle age conditions due to the financial cost of purchasing a new vehicle.

14.3 Officers have reviewed the conditions within neighbouring authorities, and they do not have a age policy specifically for Electric Vehicles.

CONSULTATION

14.6 The trade was consulted on the by email and the following question was asked - should the age of Electric Vehicles be amended.

14.7 There were 111 replies to the consultation, which have provided the following information:

- 30 replies are in favour of the change
- 8 replies are not in favour of the change
- 73 replies made no comment

14.8 The findings with comments where collated and can be found at **Appendix C**.

4.9 The public have also been consulted via the Councils website on the same question, no comments were received.

15. OPTIONS

15.1 The options available to the Committee are to recommend:

- Maintain current policy with no difference between licensing conventional and electric vehicles or
- Electric vehicles to have a different age limit as specified.

15.2 The Committee are asked to recommend one of the above options to the Executive Board for adoption.

15.3 In the event that policy is changed powers will need to be delegated to the Licensing Manager to settle wording of the policy.

16. REGULATORS' CODE 2014

16.1 The Regulators' Code 2014 requires regulators (such as the Council) to take into account a number of factors when introducing new policies.

16.2 For example, paragraph 1.2 of the Code states: "When designing and reviewing policies, operational procedures and practices, regulators should consider how they might support or enable economic growth for compliant businesses and other regulated entities, for example, by considering how they can best:

- understand and minimise negative economic impacts of their regulatory activities;
- minimising the costs of compliance for those they regulate;
- improve confidence in compliance for those they regulate, by providing greater certainty; and
- encourage and promote compliance."

16.3 The Code also states that regulators should base their regulatory activities on risk. In the present case the balancing exercise is to weigh any negative consequences on the taxi trade against the positive consequences on the public who use the services of the trade.

16.4 It is taken as read that unnecessary burdens should never be imposed and that all actions need to be proportionate.

17. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

17.1 Any changes made to in relation to the above sections of this report would impact upon existing policies and possibly standards of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles Licensed by Halton Borough Council.

17.2 Any changes made would change elements of existing policy and vary Conditions relating to applicants applying to hold Single Status Driver's and Private Hire Operator's Licences issued by Halton Borough Council.

18. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no other implications arising out of this report.

19. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

19.1. Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

None

19.2. Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

None

19.3. Supporting Children, Young People and Families

None

19.4. Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

None

19.5. Working Towards a Greener Future

None

19.6. Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

None

20 RISK ANALYSIS

N/A

21 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

There are no equality and diversity issues to highlight.

22 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

There are no climate change implications since the decision will have no effect on the environment.

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

Document Place of Inspection Contact Officer

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
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Taxi Consultative Group Agenda	Licensing Section	Kim Hesketh
Current licence conditions/policies		Kim Hesketh
Taxi consultation file		Kim Hesketh



HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE LICENCE

CRITERIA

JUNE 2024

Hackney Carriage Vehicle Criteria

In this document the "Licensing Authority" means Wirral Council, its Regulatory and General Purposes Committee, its Licensing Panel and its Officers.

Although the criteria set out in this document may have been met, approval for the issuing of a licence may be withheld if the Licensing Authority is of the opinion that the vehicle is unsuitable for use as a Hackney Carriage Vehicle to transport members of the public for hire and reward.

Although the Licensing Authority may extend its approval of any particular type of vehicle to all other vehicles conforming to the design of that type, the Licensing Authority may withdraw such general approval if, in their opinion, any unsuitable features arise.

The criteria set out in this document are made under Section 47 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976.

A vehicle that meets the criteria to be licensed as a Hackney Carriage Vehicle must have passed the MOT and Compliance Test in accordance with the Licensing Authority's procedure for testing vehicles before it can be licensed and before each renewal of that licence. Further tests and inspections may be carried out as directed by the Licensing Authority or Merseyside Police.

MOT or Compliance Test Pass Certificates submitted more than 28 days after the date of test will not be accepted.

A vehicle licensed as a Private Hire Vehicle or Hackney Carriage Vehicle with any other Local Authority will not be licensed by Wirral Council.

VEHICLE EMISSION STANDARDS AND AGE POLICY

1. A vehicle presented for the grant of a Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licence with Wirral Council must have been compliant with **Euro 5** emission standards at the date of first registration.
2. A vehicle that is **11 years** of age or more from the date of first registration will be subject to a **licence of no more than 6 months** and will therefore be required to pass an MOT and Compliance test every 6 months.
3. A vehicle that reaches 11 years of age before the expiry of a current licence will be issued with a licence of no more than 6 months in accordance with the criteria set out in paragraph 2 above.

GENERAL CONSTRUCTION

4. The vehicle must be fitted with at least 4 doors and 4 wheels.
5. The vehicle must be capable of carrying at least 4 and not more than 8 passengers in addition to the driver.
6. In addition to the front driver and passenger doors, the vehicle must be fitted with at least two side/rear opening doors.
7. All vehicles must be purpose built and built to accommodate disabled passengers whilst seated in a wheelchair in the rear passenger compartment.
8. Any vehicle to be licensed as a Hackney Carriage Vehicle must be a side loading wheelchair accessible vehicle.
9. The vehicle must hold European Community Whole Vehicle Type Approval (ECWVTA) or GB Vehicle Type Approval category M1. A vehicle that does not hold M1 type approval must be

presented with approved certification that the specific vehicle meets the requirements of M1 category.

10. All vehicles must have separate driver and rear passenger compartments, separated by a transparent partition in accordance with the manufacturer or vehicle converter's original specification.
11. The vehicle must comply with the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 and any subsequent amendment or re-enactment thereof.
12. The steering wheel must be on the offside of the vehicle.
13. Unless approved by the Licensing Authority no fittings outside of the manufacturer's or vehicle converter's specification may be attached to or be carried upon the inside or outside of the vehicle.

BODYWORK

14. The vehicle must be free from corrosion, damage, or unsatisfactory repairs.
15. Paintwork must be of a high standard and the colour and finish of all panels must match exactly.

WHEELS

AND

TYRES

16. Where a vehicle is fitted with alloy wheels, all four road wheels must be of the same type and pattern.
17. Where a vehicle is fitted with wheels intended to be fitted with wheel trims, all four road wheels must be fitted with wheel trims of the same pattern.
18. Alloy wheels, wheel rims, and fitted wheel trims must be free from damage and defects which affect the safety, appearance, or integrity of the wheel.
19. Part-worn and remould tyres must comply with the Motor Vehicle Tyres (Safety) Regulations 1994.
20. Vehicles must not be fitted with tyres that are more than ten years old.
21. All tyres, including the spare where applicable must be the correct size, speed, and load rating for the vehicle as per the manufacturer's specification, and be compatible with the taximeter.
22. All tyres, including the spare where applicable, must be properly inflated in accordance with both the vehicle and tyre manufacturer's specifications.
23. All tyres must have a continuous tread depth of at least 1.6mm across the central three quarters of the breadth of the tyre, and visible tread across the remaining breadth of the tyre.
24. All tyres, including the spare, where applicable, must be free from cuts and other defects.
25. The Hackney Carriage Vehicle must carry a method for dealing with a wheel or tyre should it become defective. This method must be in accordance with the vehicle manufacturer's specification which must be one of the following:
 - a. **full size spare wheel** - which must be the same size and type as the four road wheels and be fitted with a tyre of the same size, speed, and load rating as the four road wheels. Proper tools and equipment for changing the wheel must also be carried

- b. **space saver spare wheel** - which must be the correct size and type for the vehicle and be fitted with a tyre of the correct size, speed, and load rating. The tyre must be correctly inflated in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications. Proper tools and equipment for changing the wheel must also be carried.
- c. **run-flat tyres** - which must be fitted to all four road wheels. Run-flat tyres may only be used if the vehicle is fitted with an appropriate and serviceable tyre pressure monitoring system (TPMS).
- d. **emergency tyre sealant and compressor/inflator pack** – which must be permanently marked with the vehicle registration number.

INTERIOR LIGHTING

- 26. Lighting must be provided for the driver and passengers.
- 27. Separate lighting controls for both passenger and driver must be provided.
- 28. Passenger compartment light switches and window controls must be within easy reach of all passengers.
- 29. In the case of the passenger compartment, an illuminated control switch must be fitted.
- 30. Lighting must be provided at floor level to each passenger door and be activated by the opening of the doors.

SEATS

- 31. Seats must be secure and covered with an appropriate material which must be properly upholstered and in good and clean condition, free from rips, tears and holes.
- 32. If seat covers are used they must be correctly fitted, in a good and clean condition and free from rips, tears and holes.

SEAT BELTS

- 33. Vehicles must be fitted with lap and diagonal seatbelts on all seats, including rear facing seats, as per the manufacturer or vehicle converter's specification.
- 34. Seatbelts and seatbelt mechanisms must be in good working order and free from frays, cuts, and other damage.
- 35. If a seatbelt sustains any frays, cuts, or other damage the seatbelt must be replaced – not repaired.

DRIVER COMPARTMENT

- 36. Vehicles must be provided with a means of communication between the passenger and the driver.
- 37. Vehicles must be fitted with an induction loop system.

PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

- 38. Occasional seats must automatically rise when not in use.
- 39. The rear seat dimensions must be adequate to carry the appropriate number of adult passengers comfortably.
- 40. Suitable means must be provided to assist persons to rise from the rear seat with particular

attention to the needs of elderly and disabled persons.

41. Colour contrasting grab handles must be placed at door entrances to aid passenger access to and egress from the vehicle.
42. Colour contrasting sight patches are required on all passenger seats.

WHEELCHAIRS & RAMPS

43. Vehicles must be built to accommodate disabled passengers whilst seated in their wheelchair and must be so equipped in order that disabled passengers in a wheelchair may be carried comfortably and safely.
44. A ramp for the loading of a wheelchair and the occupant must be made available at all times for the safe loading and unloading of passengers.
45. Any passenger ramp that was not fitted to the vehicle at the time of manufacture must comply with BS 6109-2:1989 and have a minimum safe working load (S.W.L.) of 250kg for the loading of a wheelchair and occupant.
46. Anchorages must be provided for the wheelchair and occupant. Anchorages must be either chassis or floor linked.
47. Restraints must be provided for wheelchairs and occupants which must be independent of each other.
48. Anchorages must also be provided for the safe stowage of wheelchairs when not in use, whether folded or otherwise.
49. An adequate locking device must be fitted to ensure that the ramp(s) do not slip or tilt when in use.
50. The surface of the ramp must be covered with a non-slip material.
51. The edges of the ramp's surface must be marked in a high-contrast colour scheme.
52. Ramps which are not permanently fixed to the vehicle must be permanently marked with the vehicle registration number.

ENTRANCE STEP

53. The outer edge of the floor at each entrance must be fitted with non-slip high-visibility treads.
54. The top tread for any entrance must not exceed 38 cm above ground level when the vehicle is un-laden, except as detailed in criteria 55.
55. Where the top tread for the entrance exceeds 38 cm then an intermediate step must be provided at each entrance into the passenger compartment. The intermediate step must not extend outwards beyond the vertical line of the vehicle's wing mirrors. The step must be covered with a suitable non-slip surface with the edges of the step highlighted yellow.

WINDOWS

56. Windows must be provided at the sides and at the rear of the vehicle.

57. Passenger door windows must be capable of being easily opened by passengers when seated. The control for opening a door window must be clearly identified so as not to be mistaken for any other control.
58. The front windscreen must allow at least 75% of light through, the front side windows must allow at least 70% of light through and the windows rear of the B-pillar must allow a minimum light transmission of 30%.
59. No windows or glass fitted to the vehicle may have been subject to an enhanced film / after-market tinting post manufacture.

HEATING AND VENTILATION

60. A heating and ventilation system must be provided for the driver and passengers with independent controls for the driver and passengers and must be in good working order.

DOORS

61. Where hinged doors are fitted:
 - a. An automatic locking device must be fitted to passenger doors.
 - b. When the vehicle is stationary, the passenger doors must be capable of being opened from the inside and outside of the vehicle by one operation of the latch mechanism.
 - c. The interior door handle must be clearly visible, of a contrasting colour to the interior of the vehicle, and easily accessible to passengers when the door is in the fully open or closed position.
 - d. A hinged door must be capable of being opened to a minimum angle of 90 degrees.
62. Where sliding doors are fitted:
 - a. An automatic locking device must be fitted to passenger doors.
 - b. When the vehicle is stationary, the passenger doors must be capable of being opened from the inside and outside of the vehicle by one operation of the latch mechanism.
 - c. The interior door handle must be clearly visible, of a contrasting colour to the interior of the vehicle, and easily accessible to passengers when the door is in the fully open or closed position.
 - d. There must be reflective strips on both the front and rear edges of the door.
 - e. There must be an illuminated sign bearing the words "Door Open" clearly visible from the rear of the vehicle. This sign must be automatically linked to the passenger doors in order that when either door handle is activated to open the door, the sign is illuminated.
 - f. There must be a sign within the passenger compartment, clearly visible to all passengers, giving instructions on the correct operation of the passenger door.
 - g. An audible or visual warning must be fitted in the driver's compartment indicating when any door is open.
63. Where electric doors are fitted:
 - a. A sign must be clearly displayed inside the vehicle providing instructions on the correct operation of the door opening and closing mechanism.

- b. The door system design shall incorporate a method to detect an obstruction in the path of a closing door. When an obstruction is detected, the door system shall react in a manner that will allow the obstruction to be released
- c. A method for detecting an obstruction and preventing the closure of a powered door shall be included as part of the design of the door controls.

INTERIOR LIGHTBOX

- 64. A lightbox must be exhibited in a prominent position within the vehicle.
- 65. The lightbox must display the word 'CAB' in uppercase letters and the vehicle licence number below it.
- 66. The lightbox must be wired to the ignition so that it will remain lit at all times the vehicle ignition is turned on.

FLOOR COVERING

- 67. The floor of the vehicle must be covered in an appropriate non-slip material which can be easily cleaned.
- 68. The floor covering must not impede the movement of wheelchairs.

LUGGAGE

- 69. There must be provision for the safe carrying of luggage commensurate with the number of passengers being carried in the vehicle.
- 70. Provision must be made for luggage to be kept separate and secured from the passenger seating area.

TAXIMETER

- 71. A taximeter must be fitted to the vehicle, calibrated, and sealed to show the current tariffs set by the Licensing Authority.

EXTERIOR ROOF LIGHT

- 72. An illuminated roof-sign displaying the word 'TAXI' must be securely fitted to the roof of the vehicle in such a position that it is clearly visible from the front of the vehicle by day and night.
- 73. The roof-sign must be connected to the taximeter so that when the vehicle is available for hire the sign is illuminated and it is not illuminated when hired.



PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE LICENCE

CRITERIA

JUNE 2024

Private Hire Vehicle Criteria

Legislation gives local authorities a wide discretion over the types of vehicles that can be licensed as Private Hire Vehicles.

In this document the “Licensing Authority” means Wirral Council, its Regulatory and General Purposes Committee, its Licensing Panel, and its Officers.

The Licensing Authority must be satisfied that vehicles licensed by them as Private Hire Vehicles are suitable in type, size, and design for use as Private Hire Vehicles, that the vehicle is in a suitable mechanical condition and is safe and comfortable.

Although the criteria set out in this document may have been met, approval for the issuing of a licence may be withheld if the Licensing Authority is of the opinion that the vehicle is unsuitable for use as a Private Hire Vehicle to transport members of the public for hire and reward.

Although the Licensing Authority may extend its approval of any particular type of vehicle to all other vehicles conforming to the design of that type, the Licensing Authority may withdraw such general approval if, in their opinion, any unsuitable features arise.

A vehicle that meets the criteria to be licensed as a Private Hire Vehicle must have passed the MOT and Compliance Test in accordance with the Licensing Authority’s procedure for testing vehicles before it can be licensed and before each renewal of that licence. Further tests and inspections may be carried out as directed by the Licensing Authority or Merseyside Police.

MOT or Compliance Test Pass Certificates submitted more than 28 days after the date of test will not be accepted.

A vehicle licensed as a Private Hire Vehicle or Hackney Carriage Vehicle with any other Local Authority will not be licensed by Wirral Council.

VEHICLE EMISSION STANDARDS AND AGE POLICY

1. A vehicle presented for the grant of a Private Hire Vehicle Licence with the Licensing Authority must have been compliant with **Euro 6** emission standards at the date of first registration.
2. A vehicle that is **8 years** of age or more from the date of first registration will be subject to a **licence of no more than 6 months** and will therefore be required to pass an MOT and Compliance test every 6 months.

3. A vehicle that reaches 8 years of age before the expiry of a current licence will be issued with a licence of no more than 6 months in accordance with the criteria set out in paragraph 2 above.

GENERAL CONSTRUCTION

4. The vehicle must be fitted with at least 4 doors and 4 wheels.
5. The vehicle must be capable of carrying at least 4 and not more than 8 passengers in addition to the driver.
6. In addition to the front driver and passenger doors, the vehicle must be fitted with at least two side/rear opening doors.
7. A vehicle with a top tread for the entrance which exceeds 38cm from the ground must be fitted with a step to allow easy access into and egress from the vehicle. Any vehicle that does not have a step fitted must carry a portable step to be available for passengers. Both a fitted and portable step must be robust to carry the weight of a passenger and covered with a non-slip surface. The step height must be no more than 38cm from the ground. The driver of the vehicle must risk assess the use of a portable step on each occasion it is requested by a passenger.
8. Any vehicle to be licensed as a Private Hire Vehicle that is wheelchair accessible and is a rear loading wheelchair accessible vehicle may only be used to undertake school contract work and must load the wheelchair using a tailgate system.
9. The vehicle must hold European Community Whole Vehicle Type Approval (ECWVTA) or GB Vehicle Type Approval category M1.
10. Any converted vehicles will be required to hold the appropriate low volume type approval certificate in the M1 classification or the appropriate Individual Vehicle Approval (IVA) Certificate.
11. The steering wheel must be on the offside of the vehicle.
12. Unless approved by the Licensing Authority no fittings outside of the manufacturer's specification may be attached to or be carried upon the inside or outside of the vehicle.
13. Where bench seats are fitted in the vehicle one person will be counted for each complete length of 16" measured in a straight line along the widest part of the seat.

BODYWORK

14. The vehicle must be free from corrosion, damage, or unsatisfactory repairs.
15. Paintwork must be of a high standard and the colour and finish of all panels must match exactly.

WHEELS AND TYRES

16. Where a vehicle is supplied with alloy wheels, all four road wheels must be of the same type and pattern.
17. Where a vehicle is supplied with wheels intended to be fitted with wheel trims, all four road wheels must be fitted with wheel trims of the same pattern.
18. Alloy wheels, wheel rims, and fitted wheel trims must be free from damage and defects which affect the safety, appearance, or integrity of the wheel.
19. Part-worn and remould tyres must comply with the Motor Vehicle Tyres (Safety) Regulations 1994.
20. Vehicles must not be fitted with tyres that are more than ten years old.
21. All tyres, including the spare where applicable, must be the correct size, speed, and load rating for the vehicle as per the manufacturer's specification.
22. All tyres, including the spare where applicable, must be properly inflated in accordance with both the vehicle and tyre manufacturer's specification.
23. All tyres, including the spare where applicable, must have a continuous tread depth of at least 1.6mm across the central three quarters of the breadth of the tyre, and visible tread across the remaining breadth of the tyre.
24. All tyres, including the spare where applicable, must be free from cuts and other defects.
25. The vehicle must carry a method for dealing with a tyre should it become defective. This method must be in accordance with the manufacturer's specification which may be one of the following:

- a. full size spare wheel - which must be the same size and type as the four road wheels and be fitted with a tyre of the same size, speed, and load rating as the four road wheels. Proper tools and equipment for changing the wheel must also be carried.
- b. space saver spare wheel - which must be the correct size and type for the vehicle and be fitted with a tyre of the correct size, speed, and load rating. The tyre must be correctly inflated in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications. Proper tools and equipment for changing the wheel must also be carried.
- c. run-flat tyres - which must be fitted to all four road wheels. Run-flat tyres may only be used if the vehicle is fitted with an appropriate and serviceable tyre pressure monitoring system (TPMS).
- d. emergency tyre sealant and compressor/inflator pack – which must be permanently marked with the vehicle registration number.

INTERIOR LIGHTING

26. Interior lighting must be provided in accordance with the manufacturer's specification. No additional lighting may be fitted.

SEATS

27. Seats must be secure and covered with an appropriate material which must be properly upholstered and in good and clean condition, free from rips, tears and holes.

28. If seat covers are used they must be correctly fitted, in a good and clean condition and free from rips, tears and holes.

SEAT BELTS

29. Vehicles must be fitted with lap and diagonal seatbelts on all seats, including rear facing seats, as per the manufacturer's specification.

30. Seatbelts and seatbelt mechanisms must be in good working order and free from frays, cuts, and other damage, and show no evidence of repair.

31. For the avoidance of doubt any cut, frayed or damaged seatbelt must have been replaced and not repaired.

WINDOWS

32. Windows must be provided at the sides and at the rear of the vehicle.
33. Passenger door windows must be capable of being easily opened by passengers when seated.
34. The front windscreen must allow at least 75% of light through, the front side windows must allow at least 70% of light through and the windows rear of the B-pillar must allow a minimum light transmission of 30%.
35. No windows or glass fitted to the vehicle may have been subject to an enhanced film / after-market tinting post manufacture.

HEATING AND VENTILATION

36. A heating and ventilation system must be provided and must be in good working order.

DOORS

37. All doors must be easily accessible to all passengers and capable of being opened from inside. It must be clear to passengers how to operate the doors of the vehicle.

Hinged and sliding doors

38. When the vehicle is stationary, the passenger doors must be capable of being opened from the inside and outside of the vehicle by one operation of the latch mechanism.
39. Where sliding doors are fitted, an audible or visual warning must be fitted in the driver's compartment indicating when any door is open.
40. Where sliding doors are fitted, there must be a sign within the passenger compartment, clearly visible to all passengers, giving instructions on the correct operation of the passenger door.

Electric doors

41. Where electric doors are fitted:

- a) A sign must be clearly displayed inside the vehicle providing instructions on the correct operation of the door opening and closing mechanism.
- b) The door system design shall incorporate a method to detect an obstruction in the path of a closing door. When an obstruction is detected, the door system shall react in a manner that will allow the obstruction to be released
- c) A method for detecting an obstruction and preventing the closure of a powered door shall be included as part of the design of the door controls.

FLOOR COVERING

- 42. The floor of the vehicle must be covered in an appropriate non-slip material which must be free from rips, tears, and holes.
- 43. All floor covering fitted must be of uniform colour and material.

LUGGAGE

- 44. There must be provision for the safe carrying of luggage commensurate with the number of passengers being carried in the vehicle.
- 45. Provision must be made for luggage to be kept separate and secured from the passenger seating area.

8.4 Vehicle age limits

The frequency of testing required (see [frequency of vehicle tests](#)) to ensure the ongoing safety of vehicles is a separate issue to the setting of maximum age limits at first licensing, or maximum age limits beyond which an authority will not licence a vehicle.

The setting of an arbitrary age limit may be inappropriate, counterproductive and result in higher costs to the trade and ultimately passengers. For example, a maximum age for first licensing may have adverse unintended consequences. A 5-year-old used electric vehicle will produce less emissions than a new Euro 6 diesel or petrol car – enabling the trade to make use of previously owned vehicles will assist it to transition more rapidly to zero emission vehicles and improve air quality.

Licensing authorities should not impose age limits for the licensing of vehicles instead they should consider more targeted requirements to meet their policy objectives on emissions, safety rating and increasing wheelchair accessible provision where this is low.

APPENDIX C

Consultation – policy and conditions

	Should card readers be a condition on the licence for Hackney and Private Hire	Colour of purpose-built vehicles	Should the condition for spare saver/spare wheel be removed	Should the condition for fire extinguishers be removed	Age limit on electric vehicles	Age of vehicles	Additional comments
1	Everyone should have a card reader						No other changes as far as I'm concerned.
2	Card readers should be optional as it is with shops	All purpose built vehicles should be black so where is a distinct difference	Spare wheels should be removed as most new vehicles don't have capacities to carry them	There is no reasonable reason to have them	All vehicles should have the same age restrictions regardless of fuel type	All vehicles should have the same age restrictions regardless of fuel type	It may be a good idea to be able to bring a vehicle on to trade up to 7 years old and removed at 12 years old
3							No further comment
4	Yes for both vehicles	Yes any colour	Yes remove it, new cars don't always come with one, and its just more expense	Yes	Yes	Yes there should be no age limits anymore, the cost of replacing a vehicle is expensive, and with the job being so quite. Sometimes you wonder why. Also should be kept at 2 tests a year, not 3/4	
5	Also I feel that all drivers hackney or private hire should be made to accept card readers as I get a lot of complaints from customers about having to wait longer if a driver doesn't accept this.			The fire extinguishers rule is also a rule that may need changing, as I would rather stay away from and it passengers with me stay away from my vehicle if it caught fire.		Increase age	I have felt for a while now that vehicle ages needs to be looked at, especially the age of bringing a vehicle on the road, the reason for this is the cross boarder working now, with all Wolverhampton plates, and also Uber now in force from various councils using older cars than Halton.
6	Yes card readers should be a condition on the vehicle licence conditions, for both Hackney and Private Hire Vehicles. There have been instances where drivers are insisting on cash payments and taking the client to a card machine, thus increasing the charge and causing anxiety to the customer	They should remain black to identity a Hackney vehicle, which can pick up without booking. Using any colour can increase the probability of Private Hire Vehicles illegally picking up without booking.	All vehicles should include these.	Providing its not an insurance necessity, then the inclusion of a fire extinguisher should be removed from the vehicle licence conditions. In the case of a vehicle catching fire, the advise is to move as far away from the	Comments have been received from the trade that the age limit on electric vehicles should be changed due to the cost of purchasing an electric vehicle, please provide any comments. N/A at the moment.	Yes the age of vehicles should be changed due to the cost of purchasing a new vehicle. Providing your vehicle is fit for purpose (valid MOT), then continued use should be allowed. Drivers out of HBC licensing do not have to abide by the twice yearly MOT, so do not have to follow these same rules. HBC residence	

				vehicle as possible, not attempt to extinguish the fire		who use UBER, could be at high risk of either of being in an accident, or unsure whether the insurance fully covers them as customers. Quite worrying.	
7	Card machines shouldn't be part of the test, I can take payment on my phone.	Colour should remain black on multiple purpose vehicles, as we need to stand out from all the cross border hiring vehicles in our area.	Yes it should be removed, I'd phone the AA or road side assistance	Yes the fire extinguisher should be removed as we aren't trained to use them,	Yes the age should be older, just to encourage people to use electric vehicles more.	Yes the age should be higher as cars and engines now last longer and they're definitely getting more expensive	
8	All Hackney and PH to have card readers for convenience of customers	Any colour due to scarcity and extra expense of black vehicles	All vehicles to carry spare or space savers, safety of customer	Remove extinguisher, we are not trained and fire most likely in engine. Believe it is very dangerous to open bonnet.	Stay same as before.	Raise age to 12 years with 2 tests. Also consider having milage restrictions on new vehicles instead of age. I can bring a 3 year old vehicle on that has done 100,000 miles but not my wife's 6 year old vehicle that has done 34,000.	
9	These should not be a mandatory condition. Its becoming increasingly more difficult to earn a living and often to meet national minimum wage as a Hackney drivers in Halton, additional fee's for card payments only add to this burden. Therefore this should be down to each drivers personal choice of payment method.	London cabs should remain at being any colour however all other vehicles should stay black	This should remain as its important top carry a spare wheel	Should be removed from licensing conditions. Unsure if one has ever been required. In the event of an emergency appropriate emergency service would be contacted	I agree that electric vehicle time limit should be extended. The cost to purchase are typically more expensive and thus will also create an incentive to switch to electric vehicle	As previously mentioned its becoming more difficult to make money, especially with the cross boarder rules no longer in place. Drivers have all taken a huge hit over the past 5 years and average yearly income has rapidly declined, for this reason age of vehicles should be extended to allow drivers to save for new vehicles and to purchase a vehicle within their budget. This also allows drivers with brand new vehicles to pay off any existing finance agreements over a longer period of time to increase monthly affordability.	
10	If a driver doesn't want to use a card reader then I think its his choice, I don't think this should be mandatory to gain a license	I don't think the colour of a purpose made vehicle matters after all London cabs come in all colours.	Cars supplied new don't have a spare wheel they come with a pump and repair kit however a spare wheel is the best option to keep you on the road	Fire extinguishers are a must they should be kept	No comment	The age of vehicle should be extended not only for the cost of replacing with a new one. But speaking for myself my car is tested twice a year by the council workshop, also I service my car every 6 thousand miles to maintain perfect running order and its clean inside and out. Its in perfect condition so why	

						can't it stay longer, with the cost of living through the roof and the amount of competition now in Halton we are barely making ends meet.	
11	No, I have had one for several years but I think its personal choice it should be personal choice. They're a pain to be honest, you often drop off in areas with a poor signal and it can be difficult to get one, if people want to pay by car it's probably better for them to do it through the prepay facility on the app.	I think that any vehicle should be any colour, there's black private hire in widnes with out of town plates so whats the point in Halton being different, the waters have been muddied as the town is flooded with vehicles from other councils so it makes no sense any longer	New vehicles don't come with a spare wheels anymore so I don't think it should be mandatory. They come with a foam pump to reinflate and temporarily fix the puncture until you get to a garage.	I've never had to use my fire extinguisher in 23 years and never known anyone else to have used one so I'd say they're not needed personally.	See point 6.	Halton is now flooded with drivers plated in authorities that don't have age restrictions on vehicles, we're all working in the same area so to make it fair it should be the same rules for everyone. That's why you never see prestige vehicles in Halton, it wouldn't be worth investing in a Mercedes under the current restrictions, I think if age limits were stopped people would be more inclined to but these types of vehicles. If a car is good enough to pass a mot does it really matter how old it is	
12						The main one that really stands out for myself is the age of vehicle, I have been doing the taxis for nearly 20 yrs & always kept my car in tip top condition, but when you see other vehicles working our borough in no wr're near the condition of my car it really hits home. I alike no doubt other Halton taxis are noticing that taxing does not warrant going into debt on a new car when we're struggling to make a wage with the massive change in the job.	To many taxis without Halton plates are having a big impact on our job, our living & I honestly can't really afford going into debt at this present moment until things change. My car is a very good example & when customers are commenting on how nice it is, why get rid of it when there happy to ride in it & I'm happy to maintain & keep it to a high standard.
13	No, people already use them, if they want to pay cash keep it as it is. If a driver who doesn't have a reader and it's the only way to pay, that's up to them to get paid. Just do it through the office if needs be	Keep with different colours, but see if you can do it with the 7 seaters as then private hire only use cars, as it was years ago.	Leave as is	Leave as is	Yes but don't think may will buy, as they still no good as a taxi	As cars are a lot better than years ago, they should be aloud to bring on under 7 years with a maximum mileage of 80,000. And keep the vehicle up to 14 years old, but as long as they don't exceed 300,000 miles at 12 years old, plus get rid of the 3 tests as long as they don't have loads of advise on test.	

14	No	Should remain black	Yes	No	No purchasers choice to buy electric vehicles	Yes	
15	No	Purpose built any colour. Would give drivers more opportunity to find a cheaper vehicle.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes vehicles coming on should have the age limit increased to 7 years. Coming off should be 12 years. Allowed drivers to find a more affordable car. Purpose built cabs should have no limit of expiry	
16	Yes	Yes they should be allowed as its so expensive to have them sprayed	No it should not be removed, due to safety issues	Yes it should be removed, luckily never needed to use one and probably never would.	Yes electric vehicles should be allowed on longer years due to the cost of running and purchasing them	Yes if it passes the taxi tests then they should be allowed to stay on a lot more years, due to the cost of purchasing, the upkeep and standard of the vehicle, far to costly to replace.	
17	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
18	Yes	Yes they should be any colour as far to expensive to get them resprayed if purpose built	No spare tyres space savers should not be removed due to safety issues	Yes fire extinguishers should be removed, never used one in over 40 years.	Electric vehicles should have a longer age restrictions due to cost of purchasing, and battery costs.	Yes vehicles should not have an age restriction and should be allowed to be kept on a lot longer as long as they pass the councils taxi test each year without to many faults due to age.	Vehicles are to costly to replace especially if there's plenty of use left in them, not everyone puts hundreds of miles on their vehicle every year. Plus when your older you can't get finance to replace a car.
19	I do have a card reader & find it useful. However, I don't think it should be mandatory as some drivers may struggle with technology & if you don't have an iphone to connect it too, you will struggle.	No view either way	I think this should be removed, we have some great contacts in Halton that we can ring when needing to replace a tyre.	Definitely support this being removed. If the taxi is on fire, from a Health & Safety point of view, you would put distance between yourself and the car, so unlikely to utilize the fire extinguisher anyway.	I would support the age limit for all cars to be increased due to cost of buying a new vehicle. This will be in line with other councils and taxi providers such as Uber, who are operating with much older vehicles	I would support the age limit for all cars to be increased due to cost of buying a new vehicle. This will be in line with other councils and taxi providers such as Uber, who are operating with much older vehicles	
20	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further	

			without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed			increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
21	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed			No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
22	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
23	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
24	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
25	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
26	No	Any colour doesn't matter	Remove as new vehicles aren't fiited with them anymore	From a safety point of view I'd keep them	No preference	Absolutely not, otherwise standards and safety would be severely impacted	

27	Yes	Yes I think hackneys should be allowed to by any colour, they have the taxi light and some even have the words Taxi and back and sides	Yes it should be removed. A lot of cars now have no space to store a spare wheely and its has to be fastened inside the boot, taking up valuable space. How about as part of the vehicle check if no spare wheel in the vehicle ten there must be an emergency repair kit. Like what most new cars come with.	I don't think fire extinguishers should be removed	This would be great, maybe make it the same length as wheelchair accessible vehicles. Would encourage drivers to but electric which can only ne a good thing	Don't see why not, they are checked every 6 months anyway after 3 years.	
28	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
29	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
30	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
31	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	

32	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
33	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
34	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
35	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
36	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
37	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	

38	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
39	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
40	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
41	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
42	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
43	No should be personal choice	No comment	No comment	Yes remove in 21 years never heard of anyone using one	Yes extend the cost of vehicles have rocketed	Yes extend the cost of vehicles have rocketed	
44	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further	

			the grounds of efficiency, therefore it should be removed			increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
45	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefore it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
46	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefore it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
47	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefore it should be removed	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
48	No should be your own choice, but should have stickers on vehicle saying "No card reader" so the customer understands, I use one myself with no problems	As there is now vehicles from other areas working in Halton with different colour vehicles, I don't see a problem with Halton vehicles being any or a few selected colours	This condition should be removed, if there is no room for a spare in the vehicle, providing they use run flats, personally I'd rather always try and buy a vehicle with a spare.	I like having a fire extinguisher available, I'd have one regardless	No electric vehicles is nothing to do with an age limit. The Dacia Sandero has a new RRP range of £13,795 to £17,295, the Audi A6 has a new RRP range of £44,590 to £69,875 should the Audi get a longer age limit because of no price No the price you pay and the Vehicle type is your choice	New and used vehicles are both expensive at the moment. So rather than extending the vehicles final age limit think about extending the age at which the vehicle can be first tested as a PHV or Hackney, as of now its under 5 years old, if it was say under 7 years old, the price range would be cheaper to buy, a car under 7 years old would have lower mileage and be in better condition than a 10 year old PHV or Hackney Vehicle its age limit extended.	
49	No	No material differences	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency,	No material differences	No material differences	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	

			therefor it should be removed				
50	No this would be very costly problem for me I would have to buy a new phone and card reader a very expensive and unrealistic idea to cater for the few people who want to pay by card	This should remain unchanged to keep the distinction between hackney and private hire	No idea	I have never used one	They wear out just like all others	No change should be made	
51	No	Vehicles should be any colour	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed			No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
52	Yes in all	Yes any colour	Yes removed as most vehicles have no room in boot or run flats fitted	No need for them should be optional	Yes longer due to cost of vehicle	All vehicles should have a longer life span than 10 years not only are newer vehicles more expensive but most if not all that are taken off are in perfect condition and with other private hire vehicles (Uber) are driving around in cars lot older making it easier for them to compete with us and making it a lot harder for us, its crazy to change a perfectly good vehicle for no good reason	
53	Should be made mandatory	Purpose built should be black if Hackney except the London Hackney Cab	Modern cars don't come with spare wheels so condition should be removed	Should remain as a condition	Should be increased	Should be increased	
54	No I can only speak for myself I really have problems with technology. I purchased a card reader and I have to admit I couldn't use it properly. In turn cost me quite a considerable amount of money. In 4 weeks I lost £160.00 because of my inability to use the machine	I feel that the system that is in use is more than adequate. The people of Halton are aware and used to knowing a black vehicle is hackney. So I don't see a need to change the requirements as it could cause confusion for the public.	I feel the public should at least be aware that if a situation arises such as a puncture that the journey can be completed by a wheel change	I cant think of an excuse for not having a fire extinguisher in a vehicle. For the safety of the vehicle the customer and the driver.	Drivers have to look at their own finances to see what is in their budget. I personally would like to see more and more EV's on the road as taxis. But raising the age limit also leaves the door open for other people who may take advantage of it	I feel much the same as point 5 (previous question) the vehicles and standard of vehicle in our borough is excellent and anything that affects that is in my opinion is a risk to the quality of our service to the people of Halton	

55	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
56	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
57	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
58	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	
59	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
60	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
61	No	Does not matter	No longer a fitted item	As a safety issue I think they should be fitted	Makes no difference	As along as a vehicle is well maintained it should be reliable vehicle for the companys fleets. In the long term the age should not be changed as mileage could be the issue and not the age of it.	

62	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
63	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
64	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
65	Yes for both PHV & HCV its more convenient for the customer	No residents of Halton recognize HCV as black only. By introducing any colour to purpose built vehicles, I feel it would be confusing and may lead to PHV drivers chancing their arm on a rank or accepting a hailed fare	Yes if I had a blow out whilst carrying passengers, I'd organize a replacement taxi to take my passengers and phone a mobile tyre specialist	No they are a vital part of H&S and could be lifesaving on that one occasion its needed. Plus, I would suggest all electric cars have an extra appropriate extinguisher in the event of battery or electrical fire	Yes for obvious reasons	Yes for obvious reasons	
66	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
67	I have a card reader in my taxi away it can be a good thing and in others not, Some people want to go out of town and say to the driver do you take card we say yes when you get to the	Colour of the hackney taxis should stay black as it will confuse the customer in widnes and runcorn as we	Fire extinguishers, I know there will be mixed opinions about this question I have mine in and happy to have it.	Electric cars I do know they are expensive to buy like any vehicle it's a big outlay of money and I think if you keep up with	Age of vehicles yes I think they should be removed we have cars coming in to halton now of all ages and they still		Halton borough exercise strict rules with our taxis that we keep them up to a standard the best we can which is welcomed by the

	<p>destination they put it in knowing it's declining. Then its it must be the card I'll get the cash from a cash point you let them out an they run off. So I think it should be left to the driver if he wants one or not but I do have one.</p>	<p>have far to many out of town driver sitting on ranks ect. At least if we leave it as it is people will know it's black it's a hackney.</p>	<p>I don't have an opinion on it I know the fire service do advise to move away leave it to them but if its small or some one is trapped in a accident at least you can fight it until help gets there i suppose.</p>	<p>the maintenance and they are in good order I think age should be looked at to get the revenue back what you paid out.</p>	<p>pass the test from other councils.</p>		<p>way and the testing structure of every 6 months I don't know why we don't change or remove the age. What me and other drivers I've spoke to have mentioned that wheel chair taxis today are so expensive and it's alot more now to buy a wheel chair cab now than what it was years ago. Vehicle manufacturers have come on since back in the 80s 90s where a car would last for maybe 8 years then have more holes than a sieve. When I've looked at knew wheel chair cabs now they are silly expensive and we don't live in a city like Manchester London ect we live in a town so it would be crazy to spend that much money on a wheel chair cab for a small town like widnes or runcorn we don't have the revenue coming in to pay for them. More to the point in my mind if the age of the wheelchair cabs are not removed or altered how are disabled people going to get about of a night time or any time it's restricting them which in my eyes is not fair on wheelchair users they find it hard enough to get out and about by putting age limits on these vehicles would make it even harder</p>
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							<p>as when mine gets to the age I don't think I will be getting another wheelchair vehicle due to the price of them. Its like taking out another mortgage on cabs direct website it's £59,995 Over 6 years that would be about 10k a year about £833 amonth that is cash price if you got a bank loan or finance it would be more plus test fee license fee fuel, service ect. It would be easier and cheaper to get a car due to the cost of living ect. Sorry if I go on I'm just trying to stress how the age rules affect us or could affect us in the future.</p>
68	No	Any colour	Yes remove or make it discretionary	Yes remove as not needed really but again discretionary an option	All vehicles are expensive now, so shouldn't be so age restricted	All vehicles are expensive now, so shouldn't be so age restricted	
69	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
70	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
71	This would be an additional expense to have these in our vehicles.					This is an issue for us. As a small business our vehicles accumulate	

	<p>Our margins are tight now and to impose extra costs would require another increase in our cost to customers.</p> <p>As we own the vehicles, we would also have further administrative costs and we cannot see any value from this both to the business and the customers.</p> <p>Currently we take card payments over the telephone if a customer does not want to pay cash on the day. For business customers we invoice at month end.</p> <p>A separate issue could potentially cause us further problems when dropping at the airport. All airports now charge to drop off and if we are delayed in this by taking card payments drop off charges could considerably ramp up.</p>					<p>high mileage. To purchase a new vehicle is very costly requiring us to take out finance/loan agreements. The depreciation is also considerable on a new vehicle due to the high mileage.</p> <p>We have viewed several 2nd hand low mileage vehicles that are in excellent condition, costs are lower, and we would be able to purchase without expensive finance.</p> <p>As a small business this would be better VFM. However, to only allow them to be licenced for a shorter time is costly to us. Our vehicles are regularly serviced and checked by the council we also carry out our own checks' cleanliness etc so we feel they could continue to provide a good reliable service beyond the restricted years.</p>	
72	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
73	No it should be the drivers choice, as no other outlets are forced to accept cards.	They should remain black for easy identification by the public for their own safety, so they do not hire an uninsured private hire by mistake. I believe this to be very important safety issue	Yes it should be removed	No it should not be removed	I agree with extra years as they are as they are an expensive item	Yes I agree with age extensions as soon as possible as both new and second hand vehicles are expensive. The extension needs to apply particularly to hackney wheel chair vehicles as they will become extinct in the borough because of their cost compared to cars.	Earnings are still low after covid. We must also take into account our private hire competitors who are being encouraged to plate vehicle outside the borough (Wolverhampton) with no age limit at all.
74	Drivers discretion	Any colour as Alpha have black private hire working in the area.	Not needed as most new cars don't come with them, car either come with	Not needed as more drivers are not trained to use them	Electric vehicles are expensive so maybe 8 year old	Needs to come down as other boroughs have longer age limit need to come inline with them maybe 7	

			run flat tyres or puncture repair glue			years to continue to come on and max 12 years	
75	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefore it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
76	Yes to both	No hackney should be black and no other colour	Most modern car don't carry a spare wheel anyone so why should it be part of the MOT procedure unless they are supposed to be fitted with a spare wheel	Should still be part of the MOT	Price doesn't come in to it it's up to the individual	Same as previous question	
77	Yes I think with the way of the world today that a card reader is an important tool for a taxi driver to have in their vehicle at all times Hackney or Private hire and should be made a condition of your licence	The colour of purpose built vehicle should be allowed to be any colour as they are easily identified as a taxi whatever colour they may be plus it might make the purchase of such vehicles a little easier as there will be more to pick from and with cross border rules there is already different colour Hackney vehicles working in the borough	Should just remove this condition most new cars don't come with a spare wheel and with the new electric cars there is no space for a spare wheel so all we are doing is taking up luggage space	Fire extinguisher you know my feelings in this one it's actually dangerous to try and put out a fire we are not trained fire fighters We need to get out get any passengers out and stay out and call the fire brigade	Electric cars are double the price of a similar fuel type vehicle so if the council wants to encourage people to purchase electric cars then the licence conditions need to be more favourable so yes extending the life expectancy is a must.	Age of vehicles in general we have a fantastic fleet of taxis in the Borough but the job is very hard at present and we can't see it getting any better any time soon so we the trade need some help and by allowing people to purchase slightly older cars or keeping their current vehicles for longer would be a little help that the council could do quite easily	
78	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefore it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	
79	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency,	No material difference	No material difference	No the age of vehicle should not be changed on the grounds of providing quality reliable vehicles. Any further increase diminishes the quality of PHV fleet	

			therefor it should be removed				
80	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	
81	No	Colour black is old and other taxi Council's let you have any colour lets be the same as other Councils or have 3 choices black white or silver	Have a wheel if you don't have a wheel and your in a area with no mobile signal you car sort this out yourself and feel safe we're if you have never has one you could be there for a while	No as the fire department says if your car is on fire get to a safe place call 999	No they are bad for the environment you brake down there not enough charge	Big yes	
82	No	Define purpose built	No it shouldn't be removed I think common sense dictates that you should have a replacement of some sort	We've had fire extinguishers for the past 20 odd years or so now so why get rid of them	N/A	My car must go by January next year. Since I have had it, it has been services twice a year by either yourselves or Booths, in 2022 it had a fully reconditioned engine fitted by Booths & Dieselcraft, both reputable businesses, as of today it has only done approximatley 90,000 miles.	Because it has been services by yourselves at the testing station, any faults have been rectified and/or replacement parts fitted on the day so it hasn't been off the road for any kind of failure. I think the vehicle should be licensed with regards to its past test history.
83	Firstly the council will have to change the conditions so that all drivers will have to a smartphone. How will the council work round that, some drivers may still have Brick type phones or might not be tech savvy to know how to work the apps and card reader. Also it means passengers get a free pass if they can't get a signal, or not have any money to pay the fare in the first place how would we know, and what would the council do to protect the driver in this situation. Insist on taking payment up front ?	There is no need to change the council policy on this it will lead to out of Borough private hire ranking up on taxi ranks even more than they do now eg. Wolverhampton Liverpool Knowsley and Sefton private hire.	This needs to be removed at the earliest opportunity for cars that have no designated place to store a spare wheel 95% of other boroughs allow tyre inflation kits so why can't we it doesn't solve every problem but it beats having a spare wheel in the luggage compartment meaning large items like wheelchairs wouldn't fit in. The councils solution at the moment is run flat	taxi drivers are not trained to a fireman's job attending to a car fire were flammable liquids and fabrics are ablaze so why would you expect them to tackle them with a small fire extinguisher. If drivers wish to have a fire extinguisher let them but don't make it compulsory.	I proposed this idea for the forum to ponder and with financial and environmental concerns I think it's justified on its own merits I accept that 4 monthly tests would probably be required and that would be acceptable to drivers as long as they weren't burdened with excessive test fees for this.	Because the Borough is overrun with out of town taxi firms that don't adhere to our stringent regulations concerning licensed vehicles (which drivers don't have a problem with by the way) by letting them use them for longer gives us a more level playing field and 4 month test wouldn't be a problem. Licensed vehicles in this borough are far better than surrounding areas so I think this is a viable proposal.	

			tyres which would mean taking 4 road legal tyres of the car and replacing them with run flats at a cost of nearly £1000 also not all car tyre sizes are available in run flats so maybe invalidating insurance and the cars warranty if the incorrect size tyre is on the vehicle.				
84	No	Should be black	There should always be a spare wheel/space saver	Should be removed from vehicle licence conditions	Electric vehicles could be seriously dangerous after 10 years so no change	The vehicle age should be 12 yrs for cars and 16 yrs for cabs	
85	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	
86	All vehicles should have card readers, it makes it easier for customers		All vehicles should have a spare wheel, it takes 10 minutes to change a tyre & if you have customers in, its quicker for them.	Basically a waste of money now, they wouldn't put a camp fire out let alone a car fire		Yes	The biggest thing that needs addressing is the age of All vehicles. Since covid, they have gone up exponentially. What cost £10,000 pre covid, is now costing upwards of £17,000. The cost of living crisis is crippling the taxi industry at the moment. Taxis are a luxury nowadays. & drivers are roughly about £200 A WEEK down on earnings now. Making us work longer hours, more days. Putting more wear on vehicles in doing so. So it should be brought in line with Wolverhampton criteria. An older vehicle

							doesn't mean a substandard vehicle.
87	Yes	7 seater wheelchair cabs are difficult to obtain in black and should be any colour provided the vehicle is clearly marked as a taxi	All vehicles should have a spare wheel	All cabs should carry a fire extinguisher	Status quo should remain	Registration age should be changed to 6 years 11 months	
88	Yes	Yes	Yes	Should be removed on the grounds of cost and also for being rarely used in real life situations	Yes	Yes	
89	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	
90	No not to be a condition on licence	Should remain black only	There should always be a spare wheel or space saver	Should stay a condition of vehicle licence	Age limit should remain the same as the battery's degrade after 10 years	The age of vehicles should be 12 years and no age limit for wheelchair accessible vehicles	
91	No card readers should not be a condition	Colours options SHOULD stay the same so as to avoid confusion for current drivers when reapplying. Avoids confusion for customers who are aware and use to the current system. Keeps it fair to Drivers who have had to stick to the current system already in place.	Spare wheel/Space saver should be part of conditions as this is a safety feature	Fire extinguisher should be part of conditions as this is a safety feature	No comment	Due to extra rises in cost I believe the age condition should be increased by an extra 5 years on both standard and wheelchair access. This should be accompanied by an extra MOT each year after the normal age limit has expired so 3 MOT a year. 1 every 4 months	
92	No	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	No material difference	No material difference	Vehicle manufacturing industry has seen fit to provide new vehicles without spare wheels on the grounds of efficiency, therefor it should be removed	

93	<p>I personally these should now be made compulsory and be brought into the licensing conditions.we are now after all in the 21st century and a large percentage of our customers carry cards/phones etc for contactless payment, along with the fact again most customers now have salaries paid directly into the bank. Also it can speed up the time taking a booking and the time taken by a fleet searching for a contactless vehicle.</p>	<p>I think the vehicle colours are fine as they are, my personal opinion is all purpose built vehicles i.e.wheelchair accessible should be issued with a hackney plate and coloured Black the plate retained with the owner until the vehicle has served its life whence the plate is returned to the council. The owner then should he decide not to renew a purpose built vehicle should seek a plate elsewhere. My reason for this is the education of the public, after all these years they are still confused as to whether the vehicle is a "taxi" or private hire? To them all vehicles with a licence are "taxis" a word now being replaced by the youth with the word "UBER"</p>	<p>Pretty much all cars today are supplied without a full spare wheel, especially Electric vehicles, as not only is there no space beneath said vehicle the recommendation to not even jack the vehicle up is suggested as it can be dangerous and short out batteries. If the council wish to see an increase in E.V'S in the fleet this necessity would need to be removed, also noting run flat tyres are not a financially viable option either as are way to expensive even to consider on an E.V. as weight restrictions on said tyres makes them extortionately overpriced.</p>	<p>I think fire extinguishers are no longer needed as yet I haven't seen one used, plus so many different vehicles now in production could actually be dangerous as different fires require different extinguishers i.e. electrical fire, petrol fire, diesel etc</p>			
94	<p>I personally these should now be made compulsory and be brought into the licensing conditions.we are now after all in the 21st century and a large percentage of our customers carry cards/phones etc for contactless payment, along with the fact again most customers now have salaries paid directly into the bank. Also it can speed up the time taking a booking and the time taken by a fleet searching for a contactless vehicle.</p>	<p>I think the vehicle colours are fine as they are, my personal opinion is all purpose built vehicles i.e.wheelchair accessible should be issued with a hackney plate and coloured Black the plate retained with the owner until the vehicle has served its life whence the plate is returned to the council. The owner then should he decide not to renew a purpose built vehicle should seek a plate elsewhere. My reason for this is the education of the</p>	<p>Pretty much all cars today are supplied without a full spare wheel, especially Electric vehicles, as not only is there no space beneath said vehicle the recommendation to not even jack the vehicle up is suggested as it can be dangerous and short out batteries. If the council wish to see an increase in E.V'S in the fleet this necessity would need to be removed, also noting run flat tyres are not a financially viable option</p>	<p>I think fire extinguishers are no longer needed as yet I haven't seen one used, plus so many different vehicles now in production could actually be dangerous as different fires require different extinguishers i.e. electrical fire, petrol fire, diesel etc</p>			

		public, after all these years they are still confused as to whether the vehicle is a "taxi" or private hire? To them all vehicles with a licence are "taxis" a word now being replaced by the youth with the word "UBER"	either as are way to expensive even to consider on an E.V. as weight restrictions on said tyres makes them extortionately overpriced.				
95		I believe they should stay black	I think we should be stop with a spare wheel especially in electric vehicles				
96	I believe this should be a part of the conditions given the drivers are able to choose which card machine they want. CWaC Council and LC Council only enforce this on Hackney Drivers whereas I believe Sefton Council enforce this on all vehicles. The choice of terminal should be left to the driver as different companies charge different rate for different level of service, i.e. next day payouts vs weekly payouts	– A vehicle that is black is the second most common colour of car. I believe dictating the colour of vehicles to distinguish between a Hackney and PH is not an effective way to do so. A more effective way is with purpose-built vehicles WAV, LTI/ E7 etc are more what the public would expect a hackney to be. I think a 10–12-year age limit is good practice and keeps the car at a good age, however the maximum of 5 years should be brought down to 7-8 years as the costs for the car are a lot cheaper.	Most newer cars don't have them; I'd say money better to have 24-hour breakdown cover than a spare wheel	No opinion on this, most drivers wouldn't be able to put an engine fire out with what is in the boot			
97	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	
98	No	Purpose built vehicles should stay black	Should remain	Should remain	Should be changed	Should be changed	
99	No drivers should be able to choose if they have a card reader or not	Vehicles should be any colour due to costs associated with respray/purchasing specific colour vehicles	Should be removed as most new cars no longer have a spare wheel included. This also takes up additional space	Yes this should be removed – never used in 20- years	Agree due to costs associated with electric vehicles	Agree due to costs associated with replacing vehicles especially in current economic climate and cost of living crisis	

100	Yes	Black	Definitely yes	Yes	Raise age limit	Raise age limit by five years at least	
101	Yes everyone should have a card reader in my opinion	Yes I would like any colour for purpose built vehicles but I would also like it for any Hackney vehicle due to the price of black cars. It also limits us to finding black cars to meet the criteria	Yes I feel the need to carry a spare wheel realistically don't feel the need to carry a spare wheel	I feel fire extinguisher is not required these days	I would like to see electric vehicle to get a life of 15 years due to the price	Same as electric vehicles	
102	<p>These should not form a condition for carrying in HCV or PHVs. Taxis are independent / itinerant businesses / traders. It must be for the driver to decide taking into account his/her own business needs and running costs because these readers have a cost to provide and to run.</p> <p>I paid £140 for a stand alone sim based reader and a deduction from sales of 2.7%. Additionally, from experience there are no tips from card users which in effect is a further deduction for the business. There are also signal problems; for example Daresbury Business Park, Windmill Hill and various spots around the borough.</p> <p>A current tactic being deployed against drivers is insufficient funds on cards and on ApplePay the device needs a certain level of charge for a transaction to complete. These users knowingly get into a taxi with insufficient charge. There is nothing in the legislation which covers the device charge and it is a total loss to the driver whom cannot at the best of times get help from the police.</p>	<p>This is no longer necessary given the sheer number of vehicles from neighbouring and further afield boroughs freely operating in Halton. A purpose built vehicle now costs upwards of £65,000. I recently had to pay £2500 for my next vehicle over the costs of the same vehicle in a different colour. The roof sign is sufficient. It is sufficiently covered in law that only a hackney carriage can have a taxi sign and thus they are readily depicted in any colour.</p>	<p>This should be removed. Breakdown cover is used on the road mainly for safety and taxi companies can and do send relief vehicles to those unable to continue the journey.</p>	<p>This condition should be removed. Fire Service advice is to safely evacuate the vehicle and call them.</p> <p>Today's motor vehicles no longer just use fossil fuels but use hybrid and full electric power. Other fuels include LPG. The same standard extinguisher is not suitable nor safe to use on all vehicles. Drivers also do not have any training in fighting fires.</p> <p>Even touching some extinguishers without the correct protection can result in serious injuries.</p> <p>In my previous employment full training on each type of extinguisher was given over two full days with periodic refresher training.</p>	<p>Agree that the age limit should be removed but it should be removed from all types of vehicle because they are now massively more expensive and additionally Halton is a relatively small town and from an earnings perspective doesn't generate the incomes typical of the larger authorities/cities.</p> <p>Historically the age limit was brought in to protect the trade from nearby areas but now with cross border hiring and the proliferation of Wolverhampton licensed vehicles the Halton trade is hampered by this policy.</p> <p>Standards across the Halton fleet are very substantially better than they ever were during the seventies and eighties. This was expressed by the garage</p>	Same as Electric Vehicle comment	

	If this condition goes through it should carry an amendment to cover the device payment method and there must be a minimum fare amount. I'm not advocating higher prices than tariffs; just that the journey should 'clock' more than say £5 for digital payment to be accepted.				lead Mr Cullen. Standards are now very high.		
103	Personally think its time all drivers had card readers. Although its not just making the drivers get a card reader it's the attitude towards using it when customers get in the vehicle	Happy have a purpose built vehicle in other colours as when buying these vehicles there is already such a some range of options a single colour choice can be the different between buying one or not. Maybe changing this would encourage more drivers into having them,	I feel like all vehicles should carry a spare wheel either full size spare or a space saver	Having never used my fire extinguisher and probably never will I would be happy for this to be dropped.	The electric saving when charged at home is huge compared to the cost of petrol or diesel. Any electric taxi that in on for the duration of its life would more than recover its price difference. The extension of age is not necessarily in my opinion as the financial incentive is already to buy one.	The vehicle age is a bit of open one here as I would like to see it that an older vehicle could ne brought on as long as it is under the maximum age. Making staying with halton council more financially viable instead of license shopping to save some money. I'm happy with the maximum age of vehicle and don't think this needs to change	
104	No	No material difference	The vehicle industry has provided new vehicles without spare wheels, for efficiency, so should be removed.	No material difference	No material difference	No. If the age of the vehicles is changed, this could mean the vehicles would be less reliable.	
105						The age of cars should be extended to 15 years.	
106	Yes	Colour of vehicles should be kept black				Age of vehicles should be extended as long as they pass there 2 yearly tests.	
107	Card readers should be available in all taxis "hackney/PH" the high percentage of customers now use card.	Purpose built hackney vehicles should be available in any colour easily recognised	All taxis should have either a full size spare wheel or space saver its avoids getting stranded	No I do not think a fire extinguisher should be part of the compliance test. I have never had the need to use one in the 35 plus years also would all drivers know what to do if required to use it	Most definitely electric vehicles should have a longer age limit due to the cost of purchase and batteries have a much longer life than conventional engines	Yes definitely vehicles should have a longer age limit due to the high cost of replacing and overheads increasing plus the decline in the trade which in turn means less annual mileage . Taking these factors into account drivers will leave rather than get into debt replacing their vehicles which	

					also encourages a cleaner environment	means eventually the trade will suffer..	
108	No not reliable enough	Any colour	Should have a spare wheel	Keep	Same age as petrol and diesel vehicles	Increase the age of vehicles, because of decline in business and cost of living, overrun with cross border taxis and illegally parked card on Hackney ranks	
109	No	Any colour they are purpose built	No new cars don't come with a spare wheel	No	All vehicles are expensive	If they pass the MOT test its shouldn't matter	
110	I have one and have no issue taking card payments at all but don't think it should be made mandatory. We do incur charges for using the card machine and I think it would be hard to police as you'd still get drivers who don't want to use one telling customers that there reader isn't working and stuff like that.	I think this should be changed, I am private hire at the minute but would like to go Hackney in the future and been only able to pick a black car severely limits your choice and therefore might not get the best deal for a car. Also with the amount of out of town drivers in the town now who can use black cars I don't think there's any need for this anymore.	Also think this should be changed most cars now a days don't come with any kind of spare wheel my car didn't and I have to keep it in my boot which takes up a lot of room and can make it difficult fitting things like fold down wheelchairs in.	Don't see the need for these anymore never had to use mine in 8 years and don't know a driver who ever has, I've had to replace mine twice even tho I've never used it as they lose pressure over time.	If your wanting to encourage people to buy thses them the more flexibility the better as they are expensive	I strongly think this one needs changing when I bought my last car there where many better options but I couldn't take advantage as they where older than 5 years old. These cars get MOT'd every 6 months as long as the car passes and in good condition I don't think it should matter how old it is	
111	Yes I think card readers are a must	Any colour	Spare wheels are a must have	Fire extinguishers are not needed		Yes extend to 12 years and 7 years when first put on the taxis would help drivers a lot with the price of vehicles	

REGULATORY COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Regulatory Committee held on Wednesday 9 October 2024 in the Council Chamber. Town Hall Heath Road Runcorn commencing at 6.30 p.m.

Present: Councillors: Wallace (Chairman), Abbott, Bramwell, Dourley Fry, V. Hill, K.Loftus, and Teeling.

Apologies for absence: Councillors: Hughes and A McInerney

Absence declared on Council Business:

Officers present: Alex Strickland (Legal Advisor), Kim Hesketh (Licensing Manager), and Wendy Pringle (Enforcement Officer)

REG MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2024 were taken as read and will be signed as a correct record.

REG TAXI LICENSING MATTERS

The Committee considered four matters, the first was to consider amendments to the Taxi Licensing Policy.

The request was on the following points.

- Age of vehicles
- Card readers
- Colour of purpose-built vehicles
- Space wheel/space saver
- Fire extinguisher
- Age of electric vehicle

1. Age of Vehicles

The Committee considered a report which outlined a request from the Taxi Trade to review the vehicle age policy due to the cost of replacing vehicles. There were 111 replies to the consultation, 52 replies were in favour of the change, 52 replies are not in favour of the change and 7 replies made no comment.

The Committee considered the report and the outcome of the consultation.

RESOLVED: that:-

1. The Council should remove the minimum age requirement from 5 years to 7 years for a standard vehicle and maximum from 10 to 12 years and keep the standard vehicle and maximum age of 13 years for wheelchair accessible but increase the maximum to 18. With the same testing conditions as two per year.

2. Card Readers

The Committee considered a report which outlines a request from one of the Private Hire Operators that this should be reviewed by the Licensing Department. There were 111 replies to the consultation 26 replies where in favours of the change, 80 replies are not in favour of the change and 5 replies made no comment.

The committee considered the report and the outcome of the consultation.

RESOLVED: that:-

1. The Council should not require a card reader.

3. Colour of purpose-built vehicles

The Committee considered a report which outlined a request from the Taxi Trade that purpose built vehicles (Fully Accessible Vehicles) for Hackney Carriage Vehicles should be any colour due to the cost of replacing them. There were 111 replies to the consultation 23 replies where in favour of the change, 27 replies where not in favour of the change and 61 replies made no comment.

The Committee considered the report and the outcome of the consultation.

RESOLVED: that:-

1. The Council should maintain the current policy.

4. Spare Wheel/Space Saver

The Committee considered a report which outlined a request from the Taxi Trade to remove the condition for a spare wheel/space save. The request was made due to purchasing new vehicles, manufacturers do not provide a spare wheel or space saver they now only provide the manufacturer tyre kit. There were 111 replies to the consultation 78 replies where in favour of the change, 18 replies where not in favour of the change and 15 replies made no comment.

RESOLVED: that:-

1. The Council should remove the current policy requirements for a space saver/spare wheel in the vehicle (with the implications that the manufacturers specifications applies).

5. Fire Extinguishers

The Committee considers a report which outlined a request from the Taxi Trade to remove this condition due to not being required any longer. There were 111 replies to the consultation 30 replies where in favour of the change, 21 replies where not in favour of the change and 60 replies made no comment.

RESOLVED: that:-

1. The Council should keep the requirement for a fire extinguisher in the vehicle as per current policy.

6. Age of Electric Vehicles

The Committee considered a report which outlined a request from the Taxi Trade to review the vehicle age policy for Electric Vehicles due to the financial cost. There were 111 replied to the consultation, 30 replies were in favour of the change, 8 replies were not in favour of the change and 73 replies made no comment.

The Committee considered the report and the outcome of the consultation.

RESOLVED: that:-

1. The Council should maintain the current policy with no difference between licensing convectional and electric vehicles.

2. GAMBLING ACT 2005 STATEMENT OF GAMBLING POLICY

The Committee considered a request to approve a Draft Statement of Gambling Policy for recommendation to the Council for adoption. The Committee was advised that one reply was received following the consultation process.

Following the comments received during the consultation exercise, Halton Borough Council will publish on the Councils website the details of the National Gambling Helpline for information.

RESOLVED: that:-

An appropriate form of wording for the Council resolution would be: "The Council":

- (1) Adopts the Statement of Gambling Policy attached to the report to come into effect immediately following the expiry of the current Policy; and**
- (2) directs that the Director of Legal and Democratic Services publishes the Statement in accordance with section 349 Gambling Act 2005 and the Gambling Act 2005 (Licensing Authority Policy Statement) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006".**

3. Taxi Enforcement Policy

The Committee considered a report to accept powers delegated from the City of Wolverhampton Council to Halton Borough Council under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Since the introduction of the Deregulation Act 2015, Private Hire Operators have been allowed to subcontract bookings to any other Private Hire Operator. This has resulted in an increase of vehicles completing bookings in one local authority area although the driver and vehicles are licensed in a different local authority area.

The City of Wolverhampton have recently piloted a scheme with Milton Keynes Borough Council for a period of 6 months. This scheme has been successful and has now been offered to other Local Authorities one of them being Halton Borough Council.

RESOLVED: that:-

1. The Committee approved the proposed formal arrangements between the City of Wolverhampton Council and Halton Borough Council in relation to officer authorisation concerning Taxi and Private Hire licensing functions and accept the powers delegated by the City of Wolverhampton Council under Section 101 Local Government Act 1972.

4. TAXI LICENSING UPDATE

The Committee considered a report summarising the decisions taken by the Taxi Licensing Sub Committee, Regulatory Sub Committee and the urgent decisions taken by the Chief Executive under delegated powers.

RESOLVED: that:-

1. That the contents of the report be noted,

Meeting ended: 19.35

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 14 November 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Director of Finance

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

TITLE: Treasury Management 2024-25 Half Year Update

WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update regarding activities undertaken on the money market during the first half of the financial year to 30 September 2024, as required by the Treasury Management Policy.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Economic Outlook

3.1 The following analysis of the economic situation has been provided by Link Asset Services, the Council's treasury management advisors.

3.2 During the six months ended 30 September 2024 the highlights have been as follows;

- GDP growth stagnating for the first six months of the year
- CPI Inflation falling from 2.3% in April to 2% in June before increasing to 2.2% in July
- The bank of England began its easing cycle by lowering interest rates from 5.25 to 5.0% in August, then holding them steady in the September meeting.
- 10-year gilts climbed to 4.35% in April before falling to 4.00% in September

3.3 The economy's stagnation in June and July points more to a mild slowdown in GDP growth rather than a sudden drop back into a recession.

3.4 The 1.0% month on month (m/m) jump in retail sales in August was stronger than the consensus forecast for a 0.4% m/m increase. The rise was reasonably broad based, with six of the seven main sub sectors recording monthly increases, though the biggest gains came from clothing stores and supermarkets, which the ONS reported was driven by the warmer-than-usual

weather and end of season sales. As a result, some of that strength is probably temporary.

- 3.5 The Government's plans to raise public spending by around £16bn a year (0.6% GDP) have caused concerns that a big rise in taxes will be announced in the Budget, which could weaken GDP growth in the medium-term. However, if taxes are raised in line with spending (i.e. by £16bn) that would mean the overall stance of fiscal policy would be similar to the previous government's plan to reduce the budget deficit. Additionally, rises in public spending tend to boost GDP by more than increases in taxes reduce it. Colleagues at Capital Economics suggest GDP growth will hit 1.2% in 2024 before reaching 1.5% for both 2025 and 2026.
- 3.6 The further easing in wage growth will be welcomed by the Bank of England as a sign that labour market conditions are continuing to cool. The 3m growth rate of average earnings fell from 4.6% in June to 4.0% in July. On a three-month annualised basis, average earnings growth eased from 3.0% to 1.8%, its lowest rate since December 2023.
- 3.7 CPI inflation stayed at 2.2% in August, but services inflation rose from a two-year low of 5.2% in July to 5.6%, significantly above its long-run average of 3.5%. Food and fuel price inflation exerted some downward pressure on CPI inflation, but these were offset by the upward effects from rising furniture/household equipment inflation, recreation/culture inflation and a surprisingly large rise in airfares inflation. As a result, core inflation crept back up from 3.3% to 3.6%.
- 3.8 The Bank initiated its loosening cycle in August with a 0.25 rate cut, lowering rates from 5.25% to 5.0%. In its September meeting, the Bank opted to hold rates steady at 5.0%, signalling a preference for a more gradual approach to rate cuts.
- 3.9 Looking at gilt movements in the first half of 2024/25, you will note the 10-year gilt yield declined from 4.32% in May to 4.02% in August as the Bank's August rate cut signalled the start of its loosening cycle. Following the decision to hold the Bank Rate at 5.0% in September, the market response was muted, with the 10-year yield rising by only 5bps after the announcement.

Interest Rate Forecast

- 3.10 The following forecast has been provided by Link Asset Services.

Link Group Interest Rate View	28.05.24											
	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27
BANK RATE	5.25	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.00	3.00	3.00
3 month ave earnings	5.30	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.00	3.00	3.00
6 month ave earnings	5.30	4.90	4.40	3.90	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.10	3.10	3.20
12 month ave earnings	5.10	4.80	4.30	3.80	3.50	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.20	3.30	3.40
5 yr PWLB	4.90	4.70	4.50	4.30	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.80
10 yr PWLB	5.00	4.80	4.60	4.40	4.30	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.90
25 yr PWLB	5.30	5.20	5.00	4.80	4.70	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.40	4.40	4.30	4.30
50 yr PWLB	5.10	5.00	4.80	4.60	4.50	4.30	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.10

Short Term Borrowing Rates

3.11 The bank base rate has dropped 0.25% on 1st August 24 from 5.25% to 5.00.

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Base Rate	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.00	5.00
Call Money (Market)	5.10	5.20	5.15	5.20	5.25	4.90	5.00
1 Month (Market)	5.25	5.20	5.20	5.20	5.15	4.95	4.95
3 Month (Market)	5.20	5.25	5.20	5.15	5.10	4.95	4.95

Longer Term Borrowing Rates

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1 Year (Market)	5.10	5.25	5.35	5.20	4.95	4.75	4.55
10 Year (PWLB)	4.79	4.76	4.82	4.96	5.18	5.11	4.74
25 Year (PWLB)	5.33	5.25	5.33	5.40	5.60	5.54	5.22

3.12 Market rates are based on suggested rates provided by Link Asset Services. The PWLB rate shown is the Fixed Term Certainty Rate for a new loan with the principal repayable on maturity.

Borrowing and InvestmentsTurnover during the period

	No of deals	Turnover £m
Short Term Borrowing	8	37
Short Term Investments	17	139

Position at month-end

	Mar £m	Apr £m	May £m	Jun £m	Jul £m	Aug £m	Sep £m
Total Borrowing	207	207	192	187	187	187	197
Total Investments	(92)	(88)	(108)	(110)	(115)	(112)	(112)
Call Account Balance	(13)	(26)	(21)	(20)	(6)	(10)	(8)

Investment benchmarking

Benchmark	Benchmark Return %	Performance Apr - Sep %	Investment Interest Earned £000
7 day	5.10	4.94	384
1 month	5.13	5.25	154
3 months	5.11	5.18	708
6 months	5.07	5.44	1,036
12 months	5.02	5.60	188
Over 12 months	-	4.27	344
Property Fund	-	4.26	426
Total			3,241

- 3.13 The above table shows the Council has over-achieved on most benchmarks over the first six months of the year. This is due to the figures above showing the interest earned over the last six months, whereas the benchmarks are based on new investments. As we are moving into a falling rate environment, this will cause a lag in the drop in interest rates received, especially for longer duration investments. There are no benchmarks available for the Council's investment in the CCLA property fund, or for investments held over 12 months.

Budget Monitoring

Net Interest at 30th September 2024			
	Budget to Date £000	Actual to Date £000	Variance (o/spend) £000
Investments	(1,311)	(3,241)	1,930
Borrowings	550	898	(349)
Net Total	(762)	(2,343)	1,581

- 3.14 Due to having larger than expected investment balances over the first six months of the year, the Council has generated an additional £1.9m in interest over the budgeted figure of £1.3m. The borrowings costs have also increased due to the repayment of the Council's LOBO (Lender's Option Borrowers Option) in February 2024, after the budget was set for the 2024/25 year, and due to some short-term borrow taken due to cash flow needs.

New Long-Term Borrowing

- 3.15 No new long-term borrowing has been taken in this period.

Policy Guidelines

- 3.16 The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2024/25, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy, was approved by Council on 06 March 2024. It sets out the Council's investment priorities as being:
- Security of capital
 - Liquidity
 - Yield
- 3.17 The Council will therefore aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity. In the current economic climate and the heightened credit concerns it is considered appropriate to keep the majority of investments short term and to ensure all investments are in line with Sector's credit rating methodology.

Treasury Management Indicators

- 3.18 It is a statutory duty for the Council to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. The Council's approved Treasury and Prudential Indicators were set out in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and are reviewed in Appendix 1.

Debt Rescheduling

- 3.19 No debt rescheduling was undertaken during the quarter.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The financial implications are as set out in the report.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The main risks with Treasury Management are security of investment and volatility of return. To combat this, the Council operates within a clearly defined Treasury Management Policy and annual borrowing and investment strategy, which sets out the control framework

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

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

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

Treasury and Prudential Indicators – 2024/25 – Quarter 2

Prudential Indicators	2023/24	2024/25	
	Full Year Actual £000	Original Estimate £000	Quarter 2 Estimate £000
Capital Expenditure	26,761	53,671	87,283
Net Financing Need for the Year <i>(Borrowing Requirement)</i>	7,311	32,512	34,922
Increase / (Decrease) in CFR <i>(Capital Financing Requirement)</i>	(2,412)	20,202	22,163
Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream <i>(Proportion of cost of borrowing to Council's net revenue)</i>	3.2%	3.4%	3.9%
External Debt <i>(Borrowing plus PFI and lease liabilities)</i>	552,408	533,269	533,269
Operational Boundary <i>(Limit of which external debit is not expected to exceed)</i>	559,675	552,679	552,679
Authorised Limit <i>(Limit beyond which external debit is prohibited)</i>	630,824	627,133	627,133

Maximum Principal invested > 365 days	Investment	2023/24	2024/25
	Limit £000	Actual £000	Estimate £000
Principal Sums Invested over 365 days	40,000	31,700	25,000

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 14 November 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Director of Finance

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: 2024/25 Spending as at 30 September 2024

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To report the Council's overall revenue net spend position as at 31 September 2024 together with a 2024/25 forecast outturn position.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- 1) All spending is limited to only absolutely essential items;**
- 2) Executive Directors identify reductions to their directorate forecast outturn net spend position and urgently implement them; and**
- 3) Council be asked to agree to submit an application for Exceptional Finance Support to cover the deficit position for the year, as recommended within the Medium Term Financial Strategy report elsewhere on the agenda.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Revenue Spending

- 3.1 Appendix 1 presents a summary of spending against the operational revenue budget up to 30 September 2024 and Appendix 2 provides detailed figures for each individual Department. In overall terms, net Council spending as at 30 September 2024 is £8.864m over budget. The outturn forecast for the year estimates that net spending will be over budget by £20.642m if no corrective action is taken.
- 3.2 The forecast outturn overspend has increased from the amount of £19.777m reported to Management Team at the end of July 2024. The increase is largely accounted for within the Children's Directorate where the overspend has increased by £0.682m and the Adult's Directorate where the overspend has increased by £0.368m.
- 3.3 Included within the forecast position is a provision of £0.5m relating to potential costs from a planning appeal awarded against the Council. No actual costs have yet been awarded but it is necessary to provide for an estimate at this stage.

- 3.4 The forecast position continues to be of great concern, there is no evidence of a reduction in spending across service areas despite previous reports highlighting the overspend and funding difficulties.
- 3.5 At the halfway point for the year it is highly unlikely that available reserves will be sufficient to cover the forecast deficit for the year. The Council will therefore need to look towards requesting Exceptional Financial Support from Government which will add to future year costs.
- 3.6 The available reserves to the Council (General and Useable Earmarked) total £11.6m. This level is well below that required to help provide a balanced budget position. Further detail on reserves is provided at para 3.18
- 3.7 The figures reflect a prudent yet realistic view of spend and income levels through to the end of the year. Work will continue to progress on updating the financial position as more information is made available. Included within the forecast position is an estimate to allow for the 2024/25 pay award which has recently been agreed but not yet implemented.
- 3.8 MHCLG officers have been made aware of the Council's financial position and will continue to be updated. Discussions have taken place regarding the process the Council will need to follow in order to apply for the Government's Exceptional Financial Support arrangement. If this action is not undertaken, the Director of Finance will be required to issue a Section 114 Notice under the Local Government Finance Act 1988.
- 3.9 The largest pressure on the budget continues to be within the Children & Families Department, net spend for the year is forecast to be £8.559m (20.3%) above 2023/24 actual spend. There continue to be significant increases in the forecasts relating to salary (agency) costs and children in care.
- 3.10 The use and cost of agency staff continues to be one of the main contributing factors to the overspend position for the year. This is mostly evident within the Children & Families Department and the Care Homes Division. Initiatives and support from the Transformation Programme are ongoing to reduce reliance upon agency staff.

3.11 Analysis of agency spend for the year, together with comparative analysis of 2023/24 costs, is included in the table below.

	2024/25			2023/24
	Q1	Q2	Total	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Adult Social Care	1,341	1,656	2,997	5,927
Chief Executives Delivery Unit	132	179	311	0
Children & Family Services	1,283	1,432	2,715	6,157
Community & Greenspace	116	129	245	336
Economy, Enterprise & Property	86	105	191	343
Education, Inclusion & Provision	99	78	177	393
Finance	14	42	56	56
Legal & Democratic Services	253	274	527	814
Planning & Transportation	94	85	179	206
Public Health & Public Protection	11	10	21	21
Total	3,429	3,990	7,419	14,253

3.12 Within the approved budget for the year is a £4m target against the Transformation Programme. To date budget savings of £0.129m have been identified against this target. In addition, the Transformation Delivery Unit (TDU) have identified some reductions in mitigating and controlling costs although these will not lead to an overall reduction in the budgeted target.

3.13 The forecast overspend is significantly above that which has been recorded in recent years. Whilst the current year net budget for the Council has increased by £7.7m (5.45%), this is well below the forecast increase in net costs, currently estimated as an increase of £22.837m (15.5%).

Revenue - Operational Spending

3.14 Operational net spending for the first two quarters of the year is higher than the budget to date by £8.864m Based on current forecasts it is estimated net spend will be over budget for the year by £20.642m if no further corrective action is taken.

3.15 Within the overall budget forecast position for the quarter, the key budget variances are as follows;

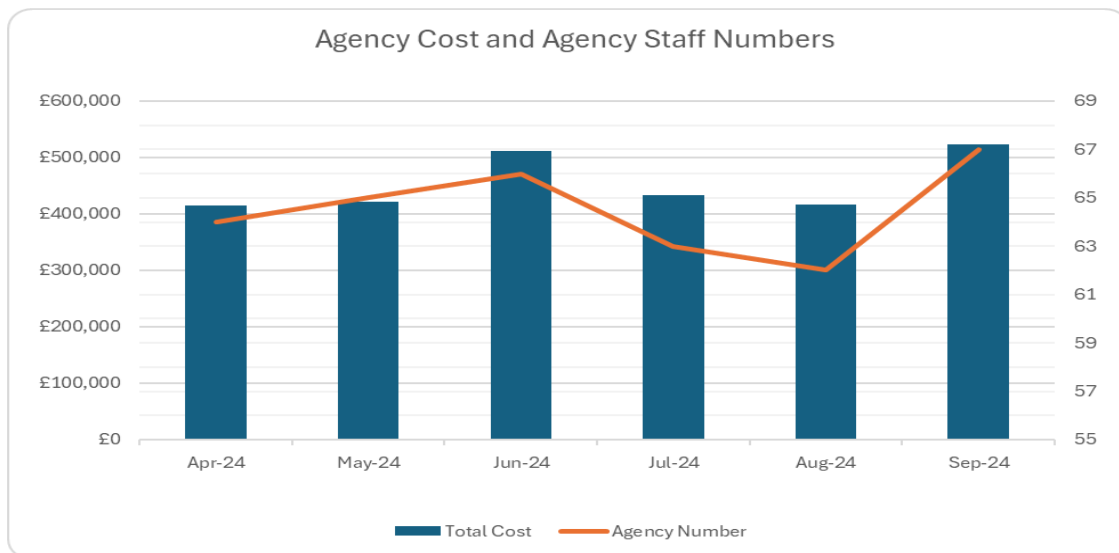
(i) **Children and Families Department**

Employee Expenditure

Employee costs are over budget profile at the end of financial year 2024/25 by £3.056m. There continues to be heavy reliance on agency staff to fill vacancies across the structure.

The chart below demonstrates agency costs that cover the month of April to September based on the period that was worked. An

estimated figure has also been included in September for invoices not yet received for work that was provided in September. The chart also includes the number of agency members of staff where an invoice has been received within each period.



Various workstreams are in place to target the difficulties in recruitment, including a recruitment work group, social work academy and market supplements for applicable posts.

Residential Care

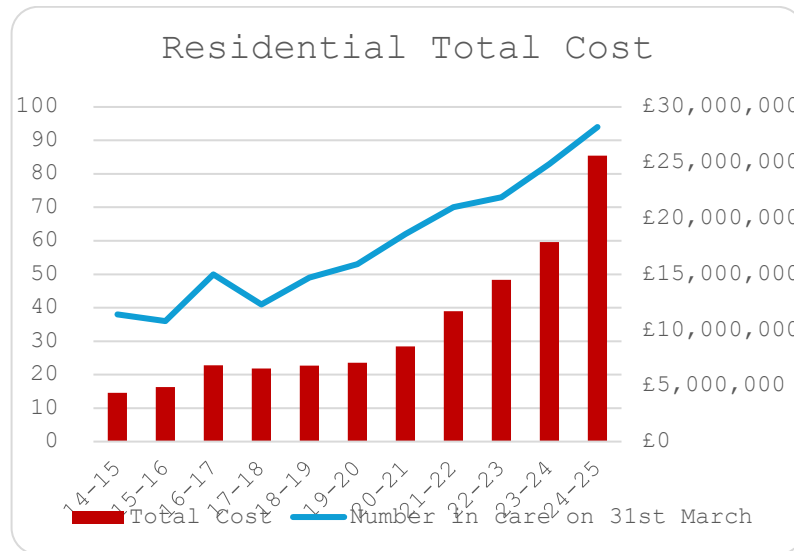
Out of Borough Residential Care continues to be the main budget pressure for the Children and Families Department as the costs of residential care have continued to rise year on year.

Provision	Weekly Costs	30-Sep-24		31-Jul-24	
		No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year	No. Placed	Estimated cost for the year
Residential	£2000 - £3000	3	425,275	2	197,563
Residential	£3001 - £4000	15	3,177,897	14	2,576,320
Residential	£4001 - £5000	11	2,464,877	12	2,707,103
Residential	£5001 - £15000	41	16,205,195	38	15,556,103
Secure	£6397 - £8137				
Leaving Care	£443 - £7175	18	2,643,101	19	2,742,900
Parent & Child	£2000 - £5500	6	715,298	6	663,491
Total:		94	25,631,643	91	24,443,479

At the end of financial year 24/25 the estimated overspend is £7.394m over budget for residential placements. Overall cost of packages are increasing due to the complexity of support the young people require as well as standard package cost increases.

The graph below illustrates the rising costs of Residential Care, for consistency this does not include the costs of Unaccompanied

Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) as these costs were not included in previous years.



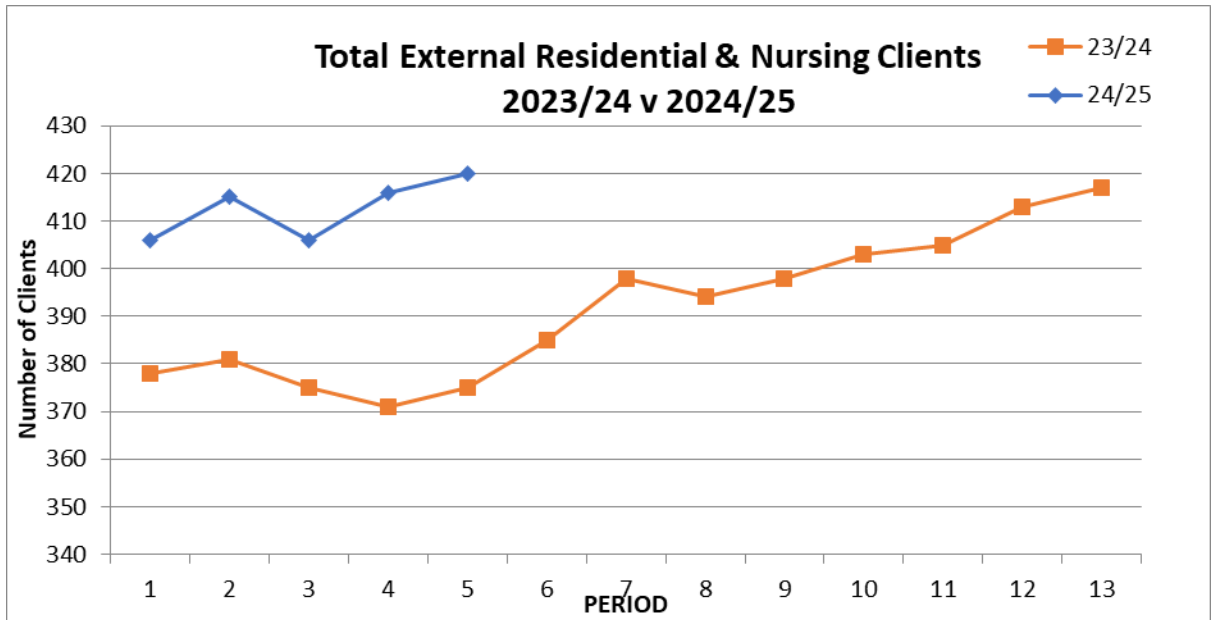
(ii) **Adult Social Care Directorate**

Community Care

At the end of September 2024 expenditure on Community Care services is over budget profile by £1.4m. It is anticipated that at the end of the financial year it will be overspent by £2.4m. This is an increase of £0.3m from the previous position reported at the end of July.

There are currently 420 residents in permanent external residential/nursing care as at the end of August 2024 compared to 406 in April, an increase of 3.4%. Compared to the 2023/24 average of 390 this is an increase of 7.6%. The average cost of a package of care since April has increased from £866 to £881 a slight increase of 1.7%. In addition to these placements there are 94 residents placed within council internal care homes.

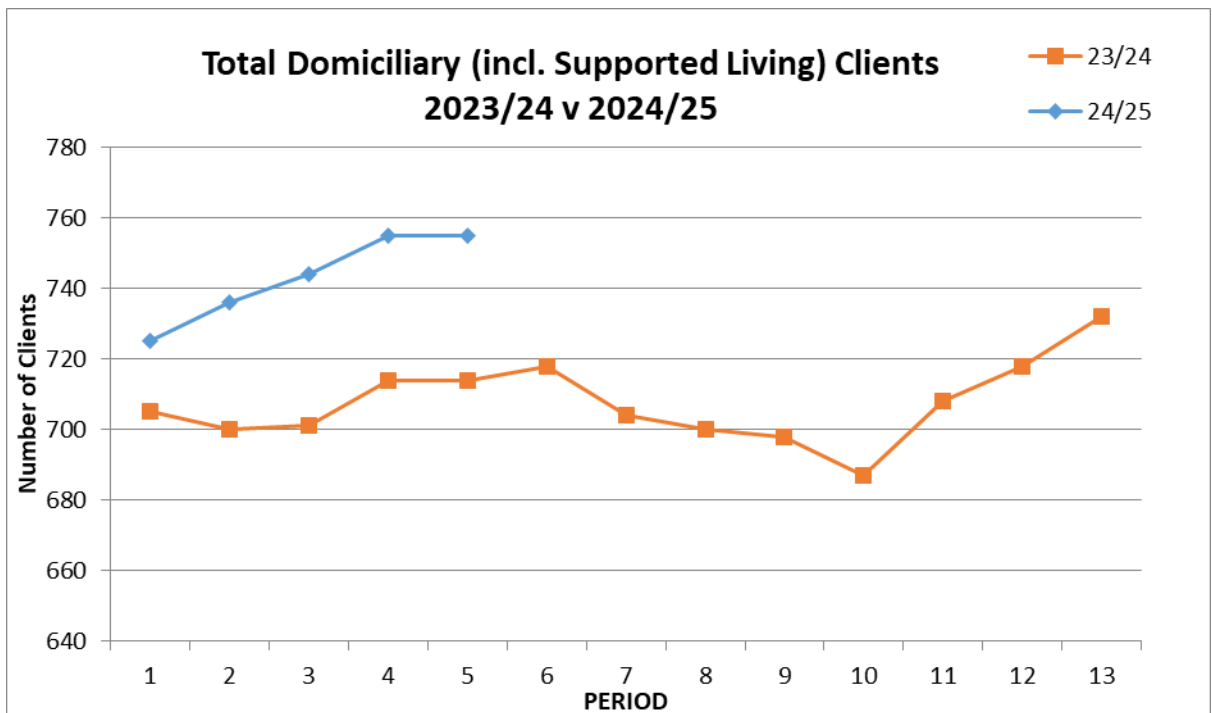
The graph below illustrates the demand for permanent placements.



Domiciliary Care & Supported Living

There are currently 755 service users receiving a package of care at home compared to 744 in June, a slight increase of 1.5%. However, the average number of service users during 2023/24 was only 707, an increase of 6.7% which demonstrates demand for the service has increased this financial year.

The graph below illustrates the demand for the service from April 2023 to date.



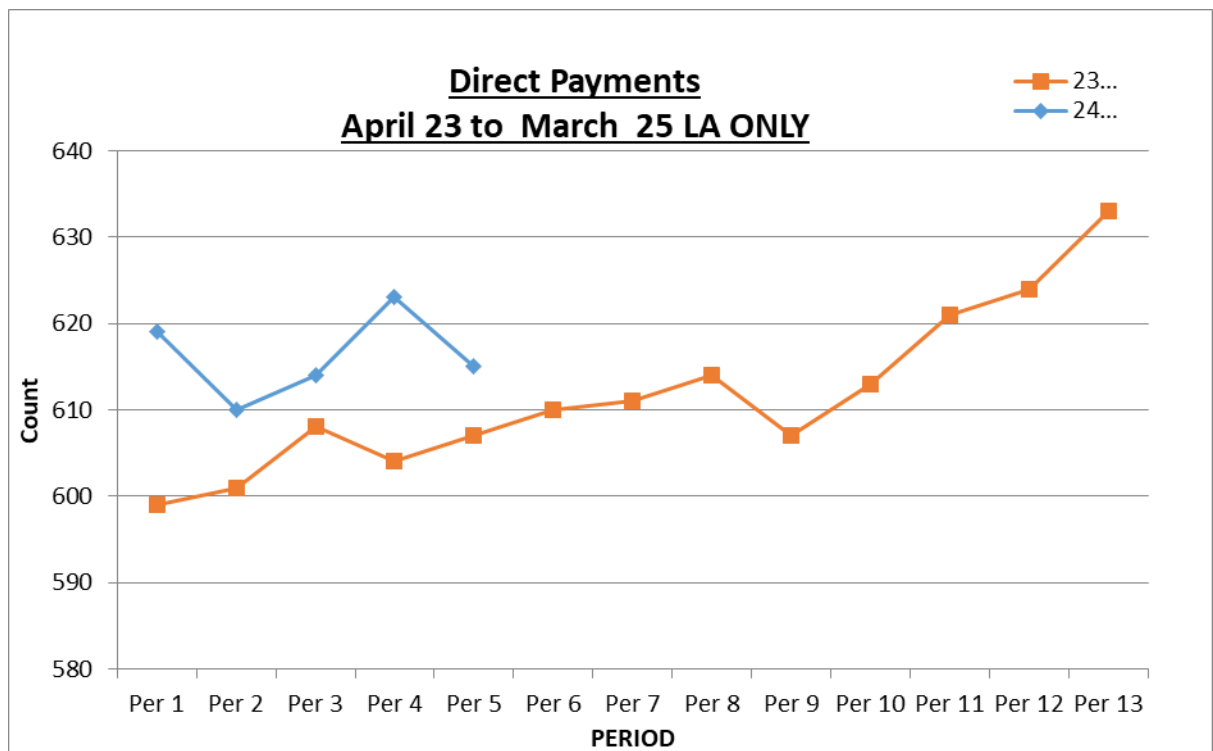
Direct Payments

In August 615 clients received a Direct Payment (DP) compared with 619 in April a very slight decrease of 0.64%. However the average number of DP's in 2023/24 was 591, therefore there has been an increase of 4.06% on last year's average.

The average cost of a package of care has decreased since April from £529.04 to £455.65 in August, a reduction of 13.7%.

Currently there are 193 service users receiving a DP to pay care providers that have an hourly rate higher than the Council's domiciliary contracted rate of £21.18. This is an increase from period 4 of 32 clients and a financial increase of £5,860 per week (£0.152m to year end if this continues). This appears to be a trend and is exerting additional pressure on the budget.

The graph below illustrates the demand for the service from April 2023 to date.



Care Homes

Spend to 30th September 2024 across the division is over budget profile by £0.315m. The forecast for the end of 2024/25 financial year is an estimated outturn position of £1.198m over budget. This is assuming the level of agency continues at a similar rate and includes higher spend assumptions later in the financial year due to winter pressures surrounding staffing and utilities.

Recruitment of staff is a continued pressure across the care homes. There remains a high number of staff vacancies across the care homes. A proactive rolling recruitment exercise is ongoing supported by HR.

Due to pressures with recruitment and retention in the sector, heavy reliance is being placed on overtime and expensive agency staff to support the care homes. At the end of September 2024 total agency spend across the care homes reached £1.887m, the cost of this has partially been offset by staff vacancies.

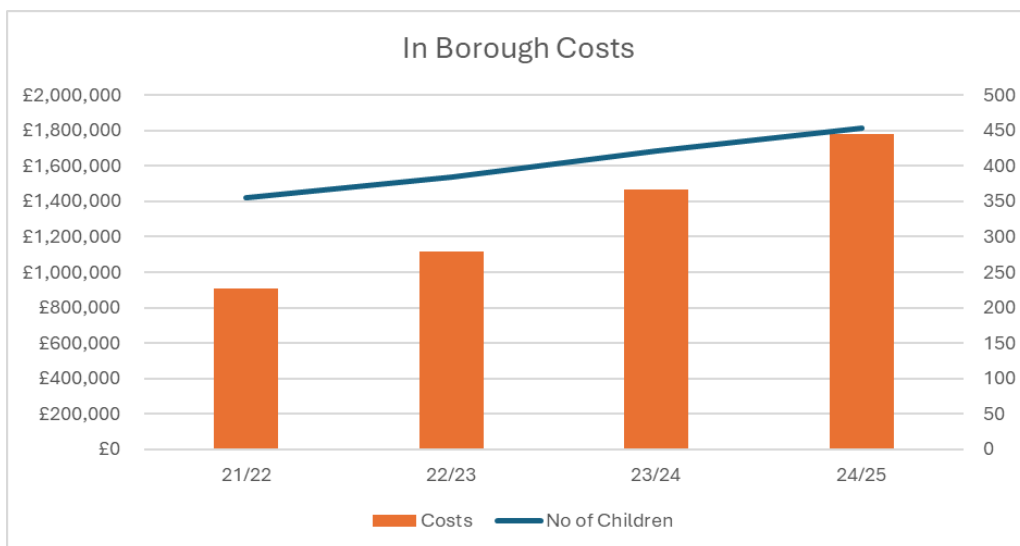
(iii) Education, Inclusion and Provision

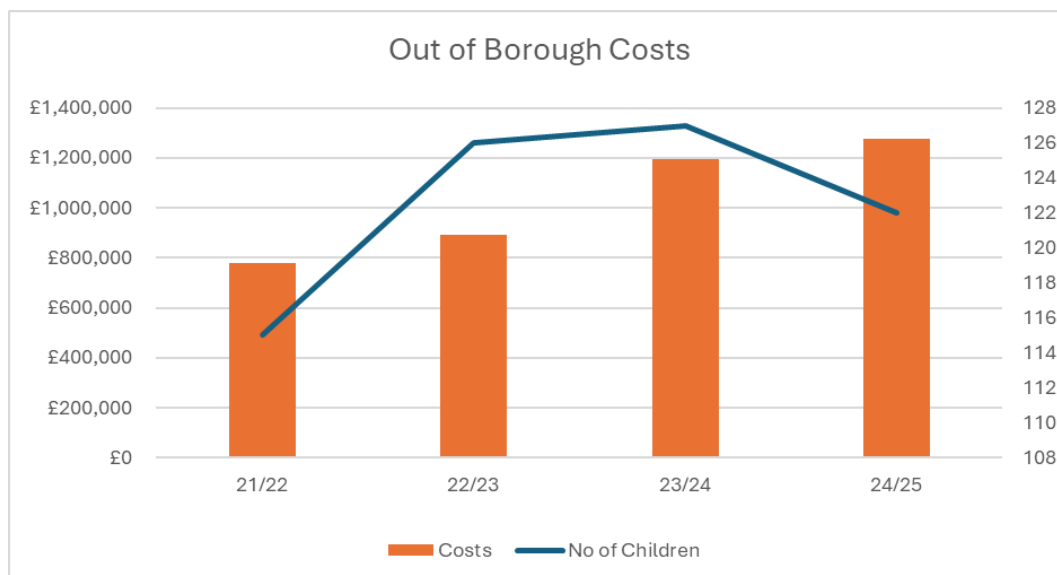
Schools Transport is the main budget pressure for Education, Inclusion and Provision. The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide Special Educational Needs (SEN) pupils with transport. This is split into two main areas of SEN pupils attending In Borough and out of Borough Schools.

The table below illustrates the split between the two areas, and how each areas spend compares to the budget.

2024-25 as at Sep-24					
Area	Number of Users	Budget £000	Projected Spend £000	Variance £000	Average Cost per User
In Borough	453	1,826	1,781	46	£3,931
Out of Borough	122	434	1,274	(840)	£10,443
Total	575	2,261	3,055	(794)	

The graphs below show the trend in the number of SEN children using this service and the associated costs.





A further pressure on the departmental budget for the year relates to Psychology and SEN Assessment services provided to schools. For a number of years these costs have been funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The Department for Education have recently advised that these costs cannot be DSG funded as they are outside of scope in meeting the grant conditions. It is therefore currently assumed this cost will fall upon the Council's budget at a cost of £0.860m, until at such time other sources of funding are found.

Collection Fund

- 3.16 Council tax collection through to the end of September 2024 is 53.82% which is -0.11%% on the collection rate at the same point last year.

Debt relating to previous years continues to be collected, the Council utilises powers through charging orders and attachment to earnings/benefits to secure debts. £1.44m has been collected in relation to previous year debt.

- 3.17 Business rate collection through to the end of September 2024 is 58.76% which is up 2.41% on the collection rate at the same point last year.

£1.343m has been collected in relation to previous year debt.

Review of Reserves

- 3.18 As at 30 September 2024 the Council's General Reserve is unchanged from the previous period at £5.149m, which represents 3.44% of the Council's 2024/25 net budget. This is considered to be a minimum balance level.

- 3.19 There is a regular review of earmarked reserves undertaken to determine whether they can be released in part or in full to assist with funding the Council's current financial challenges, recognising that this only provides one-year solutions.

Reserves Summary

- 3.20 A summary breakdown of Council reserves is presented in the table below, this shows the balance of reserves as at 30 September 2024.

Summary of General and Earmarked Reserves	
Reserve	Reserve Value £m
Corporate:	
General Fund	5.149
Transformation Fund	6.432
Capital Reserve	0.499
Insurance Reserve	1.000
Specific Projects:	0
Adult Social Care	0.507
Fleet Replacement	0.328
Highways Feasibility Costs	0.102
Local Development Framework	0.494
Community & Environment	0.253
Mersey Valley Golf Club	0.483
Mersey Gateway	27.560
Various Other	0.656
Grants:	0
Building Schools for the Future	6.529
Public Health	1.881
Supporting Families Performance Payments	0.534
Children's & Education	0.741
Domestic Abuse	1.186
Enterprise & Employment	0.111
Various Other	0.768
	0
Total Earmarked Reserves	55.213

- 3.21 Held within the Transformation Reserve is £6.432m, set aside to provide funding for providing future balanced budgets and a range of potential spending commitments in future years associated with delivering the Transformation Programme.
- 3.22 The above table shows the diminishing level of reserves available to assist with funding any future budget overspends and balancing future budgets. Only the £11.581m of the General Fund and Transformation Reserve could now be used for these purposes, as all remaining reserves are committed for specific purposes. It is therefore essential over the coming year that

councilwide spending is brought in line with budget and the Transformation Programme delivers the required budget savings.

Capital Spending

3.23 Council approved the 2024/25 Capital Programme on 6 March 2024. Since then the capital programme has been revised to reflect a number of changes in spending profiles and funding as schemes have developed. Appendix 3 brings all the separate elements together and report on the Council's total planned capital programme expenditure over the next three years. The schemes which have been revised within the programme are as follows:

- a. Allocation of Children's Capital
- b. Oakmeadow & Peelhouse Improvements
- c. Property Improvements
- d. Waterloo Building
- e. Port of Weston
- f. Kingsway Leisure Centre Demolition
- g. MG Handback Land

3.24 Capital spending at 30 September 2024 totalled £17.3m, which represents 25% of the total Capital Programme of £69.8m (which assumes a 20% slippage between years).

Approved Savings

3.25 On 02 February 2023, Council approved saving measures against the budget for the three year period 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2026. Appendix 4 lists those savings covering 2024/25 and 2025/26, together with RAG rated information on progress to date with developing and implementing the target savings.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 As at 30 September 2024, net revenue spend is forecast to be £20.642m over the budget for the year.

4.2 It is clear Council reserves alone are insufficient to meet this pressure. Urgent corrective should be taken as soon as possible across all Council services to identify spend reductions.

4.3 Departments should ensure that all spending continues to be limited to what is absolutely essential throughout the remainder of the year, to ensure that the forecast outturn overspend is minimised as far as possible and future spending is brought in line with budget.

4.4 It is recommended to Council that an application be submitted for the Government's exceptional Financial Support, to assist with funding the forecast overspend and future budget setting.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 There are a number of financial risks within the budget. However, the Council has internal controls and processes in place to ensure that spending remains in line with budget as far as possible.

7.2 A budget risk register of significant financial risks has been prepared and is included at Appendix 5.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1072

10.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act

Summary of Revenue Spending to 30 September 2024

APPENDIX 1

Directorate / Department	Annual Budget £'000	Budget To Date £'000	Actual To Date £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	September 2024 Forecast Outturn (o'spend) £'000	July 2024 Forecast Outturn (o'spend) £'000
Adult Social Care	22,714	11,162	11,331	(169)	(335)	0
Care Homes`	10,043	4,825	5,140	(315)	(1,198)	(1,290)
Community Care	16,404	8,612	10,081	(1,469)	(2,433)	(2,128)
Complex Care Pool	10,704	1,195	890	305	308	128
Adults Directorate	59,865	25,794	27,442	(1,648)	(3,658)	(3,290)
Finance	5,031	5,274	4,775	499	369	(219)
Legal & Democratic Services	-618	-124	319	(443)	(976)	(858)
ICT & Support Services	2,278	666	955	(289)	(588)	(89)
Chief Executives Delivery Unit	1,169	189	219	(30)	(63)	6
Chief Executives Directorate	7,860	6,005	6,268	(263)	(1,258)	(1,160)
Children & Families	38,362	14,703	20,217	(5,514)	(12,333)	(11,617)
Education, Inclusion & Provision	9,769	2,795	3,574	(779)	(1,642)	(1,676)
Childrens Directorate	48,131	17,498	23,791	(6,293)	(13,975)	(13,293)
Community & Greenspace	25,408	9,867	9,704	163	395	324
Economy, Enterprise & Property	2,336	651	631	20	30	25
Planning & Transportation	8,406	1,784	1,553	231	102	(53)
Environment & Regeneration Directorate	36,150	12,302	11,888	414	527	296
Corporate & Democracy	-3,801	-2,733	-1,547	(1,186)	(2,380)	(2,373)
Public Health Directorate	1,291	89	-23	112	102	43
Total Operational Net Spend	149,496	58,955	67,819	(8,864)	(20,642)	(19,777)

Adult Social Care

APPENDIX 2

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	17,543	8,776	8,249	527	1,060
Agency- Covering Vacancies	0	0	580	(580)	(1,160)
Premises	481	263	247	16	0
Supplies & Services	511	297	319	(22)	(45)
Aids & Adaptations	37	18	21	(3)	0
Transport	242	120	152	(32)	(60)
Food & Drink Provisions	214	107	89	18	30
Supported Accommodation and Services	1,385	652	608	44	90
Emergency Duty Team	115	0	0	0	0
Transfer To Reserves	282	0	0	0	0
Capital Financing	13	0	0	0	0
Contracts & SLAs	1,090	537	534	3	0
Housing Solutions Grant Funded Schemes					
Homelessness Prevention	471	148	130	18	0
Rough Sleepers Initiative	167	48	49	(1)	0
Trailblazer	100	50	43	7	0
Total Expenditure	22,651	11,016	11,021	(5)	(85)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-873	-430	-393	(37)	(70)
Sales & Rents Income	-480	-311	-317	6	10
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-2,308	-658	-635	(23)	0
Capital Salaries	-121	-61	-61	0	0
Housing Schemes Income	-631	-626	-625	(1)	0
Total Income	-4,413	-2,086	-2,031	(55)	(60)
Net Operational Expenditure	18,238	8,930	8,990	(60)	(145)
Recharges					
Premises Support	529	264	264	0	0
Transport Support	581	291	400	(109)	(190)
Central Support	3,465	1,732	1,732	0	0
Asset Rental Support	13	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-112	-55	-55	0	0
Net Total Recharges	4,476	2,232	2,341	(109)	(190)
Net Departmental Expenditure	22,714	11,162	11,331	(169)	(335)

Care Homes

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
<u>Madeline Mckenna</u>					
Employees	698	349	316	33	35
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	70	(70)	(152)
Other Premises	101	38	39	(1)	(3)
Supplies & Services	20	8	12	(4)	(2)
Food Provison	48	20	24	(4)	(1)
Total Madeline Mckenna Expenditure	867	415	461	(46)	(123)
<u>Millbrow</u>					
Employees	2,056	1,028	618	410	679
Agency - covering vacancies	3	3	458	(455)	(950)
Other Premises	129	51	70	(19)	(38)
Supplies & Services	61	27	49	(22)	(25)
Food Provison	78	33	39	(6)	1
Total Millbrow Expenditure	2,327	1,142	1,234	(92)	(333)
<u>St Luke's</u>					
Employees	2,884	1,442	1,012	430	740
Agency - covering vacancies	250	250	696	(446)	(1,023)
Premises	172	73	109	(36)	(67)
Supplies & Services	59	21	47	(26)	(26)
Reimbursement & Grant Income	-104	-104	-104	0	0
Client Income	-44	-44	-44	0	0
Food Provison	120	60	62	(2)	(3)
Total St Luke's Expenditure	3,337	1,698	1,778	(80)	(379)
<u>St Patrick's</u>					
Employees	1,839	919	590	329	566
Agency - covering vacancies	42	42	504	(462)	(1,001)
Other Premises	157	55	64	(9)	(17)
Supplies & Services	64	29	22	7	14
Food Provison	122	50	49	1	2
Reimbursement & Grant Income	-21	-21	-21	0	0
Total St Patrick's Expenditure	2,203	1,074	1,208	(134)	(436)
<u>Care Homes Divison Management</u>					
Employees	362	180	141	39	77
Supplies & Services	0	0	2	(2)	(4)
Care Home Divison Management	362	180	143	37	73
Net Operational Expenditure	9,096	4,509	4,824	(315)	(1,198)
Recharges					
Premises Support	264	88	88	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	683	228	228	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	947	316	316	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	10,043	4,825	5,140	(315)	(1,198)

Community Care

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Residential & Nursing	13,372	6,302	7,279	(977)	(1,345)
Domiciliary Care & Supported living	12,890	5,867	5,846	21	46
Direct Payments	14,125	7,389	8,035	(646)	(1,155)
Day Care	648	389	274	115	7
Total Expenditure	41,035	19,947	21,434	(1,487)	(2,447)
Income					
Residential & Nursing Income	-13,182	-5,842	-5,849	7	6
Community Care Income	-2,270	-1,043	-1,048	5	11
Direct Payments Income	-1,014	-435	-441	6	8
Income from other CCGs	-135	-34	-34	0	0
Market sustainability & Improvement Grant	-2,796	-1,398	-1,398	0	0
Adult Social Care Support Grant	-5,167	-2,583	-2,583	0	0
War Pension Disregard Grant	-67	0	0	0	(11)
Total Income	-24,631	-11,335	-11,353	18	14
Net Operational Expenditure	16,404	8,612	10,081	(1,469)	(2,433)

Complex Care Pool

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Intermediate Care Services	5,220	2,109	2,226	(117)	(233)
Oakmeadow	1,831	884	921	(37)	(74)
Community Home Care First	2,111	818	649	169	338
Joint Equipment Store	871	276	276	0	0
Development Fund	582	66	0	66	133
Contracts & SLA's	3,243	98	98	0	0
Inglenook	127	55	41	14	28
HICafs	3,703	1,210	1,066	144	289
Carers Breaks	494	225	156	69	138
Carers centre	371	0	0	0	0
Residential Care	7,225	3,629	3,629	0	0
Domiciliary Care & Supported Living	4,227	2,113	2,113	0	0
Total Expenditure	30,005	11,483	11,175	308	619
Income					
BCF	-13,484	-6,742	-6,742	0	0
CCG Contribution to Pool	-2,865	-1,432	-1,432	0	0
Oakmeadow Income	-19	-16	-13	(3)	(4)
ASC Discharge Grant Income	-1,631	-816	-816	0	0
ICB Discharge Grant Income	-1,282	-1,282	-1,282	0	0
Other Income	-20	0	0	0	0
Total Income	-19,301	-10,288	-10,285	(3)	(4)
ICB Contribution Share of Surplus				0	(307)
Net Operational Expenditure	10,704	1,195	890	305	308

Finance Department

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	6,945	3,373	3,343	30	60
Insurances	986	565	322	243	260
Supplies & Services	417	279	366	(87)	(167)
Rent Allowances	35,500	15,651	15,651	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,748	533	530	3	6
LCR Levy	1,748	0	0	0	0
Bad Debt Provision	77	0	0	0	(145)
Non HRA Rent Rebates	70	27	25	2	3
Discretionary Social Fund	106	53	0	53	106
Discretionary Housing Payments	300	150	101	49	97
Household Support Fund Expenditure	2,625	1,235	1,235	0	0
Total Expenditure	50,522	21,866	21,573	293	220
Income					
Fees & Charges	-335	-155	-159	4	9
Burdens Grant	-60	-66	-78	12	24
Dedicated schools Grant	-144	-10	0	(10)	(19)
Council Tax Liability Order	-581	-439	-493	54	108
Business Rates Admin Grant	-157	0	0	0	0
Schools SLAs	-312	-312	-307	(5)	(5)
LCR Reimbursement	-1,748	0	0	0	0
HB Overpayment Debt Recovery	-400	-200	-184	(16)	(36)
Rent Allowances	-34,700	-13,041	-12,926	(115)	(232)
Non HRA Rent Rebate	-70	-35	-37	2	(3)
Discretionary Housing Payment Grant	-300	-300	-93	(207)	(21)
Housing Benefits Admin Grant	-498	-249	-244	(5)	(9)
Housing Benefits Award Accuracy	0	0	-12	12	12
Universal Credits	-5	-3	0	(3)	(5)
Household Support Fund Grant	-2,625	0	-243	243	0
VEP Grant	0	0	-5	5	5
CCG McMillan Reimbursement	-87	-43	-25	(18)	5
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-151	-76	-329	253	316
Transfer from Reserves	-7	-7	-7	0	0
Total Income	-42,180	-14,936	-15,142	206	149
Net Operational Expenditure	8,342	6,930	6,431	499	369
Recharges					
Premises Support	377	188	188	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	2,365	1,183	1,183	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-6,053	-3,027	-3,027	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,311	-1,656	-1,656	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	5,031	5,274	4,775	499	369

Legal Services

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	1,511	873	864	9	17
Agency Related Expenditure	0	219	527	(308)	(616)
Supplies & Services	385	260	277	(17)	(33)
Civic Catering & Functions	23	9	3	6	12
Legal Expenses	218	19	126	(107)	(259)
Transport Related Expenditure	11	10	6		7
Other Expenditure	0	3	3	0	0
Capital Financing	0	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	2,148	1,393	1,806	(417)	(872)
Income					
School SLA's	-98	-78	-77	(1)	(20)
Licence Income	-301	-139	-129	(10)	(49)
Government Grant	-42	-42	-42	0	0
Reimbursement & Other Grants	-161	-161	-161	0	0
Fees & Charges Income	-74	-40	-21	(19)	(35)
Transfer from Reserves	-27	-27	-27	0	0
Total Income	-703	-487	-457	(30)	(104)
Net Operational Expenditure	1,445	906	1,349	(447)	(976)
Recharges					
Premises Support	53	26	26	0	0
Transport Support	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	275	139	139	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Support Costs Income	-2,391	-1,195	-1,195	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,063	-1,030	-1,030	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-618	-124	319	(447)	(976)

ICT & Support Services Department

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,596	2,746	2,631	115	230
Supplies & Services	921	409	565	(156)	(310)
Capital Finance	100	50	11	39	81
Computer Repairs & Software	1,724	1,547	1,734	(187)	(374)
Communication Costs	13	0	59	(59)	(122)
Premises	159	81	73	8	17
Transport	3	1	0	1	2
Total Expenditure	8,516	4,834	5,073	(239)	(476)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-1,056	-533	-556	23	36
Schools SLA Income	-646	-554	-490	(64)	(130)
Reimbursements & Grant Income	0	9	18	(9)	(18)
Transfer from Reserves	-148	-148	-148	0	0
Total Income	-1,850	-1,226	-1,176	(50)	(112)
Net Operational Expenditure	6,666	3,608	3,897	(289)	(588)
Recharges					
Premises Support	550	275	275	0	0
Transport Support	19	10	10	0	0
Central Support	2,380	1,190	1,190	0	0
Asset Rental Support	1,494	0	0	0	0
Support Costs Income	-8,831	-4,417	-4,417	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-4,388	-2,942	-2,942	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,278	666	955	(289)	(588)

Chief Executives Delivery Unit

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	3,304	1,605	1,623	(18)	(35)
Employees Training	99	50	52	(2)	(9)
Apprenticeship Levy	300	136	147	(11)	(21)
Supplies & Services	391	154	124	30	62
Total Expenditure	4,094	1,945	1,946	-1	-3
Income					
Fees & Charges	-223	-122	-118	(4)	(9)
Schools SLA Income	-565	-539	-509	(30)	(56)
Transfer from Reserves	0	0	-5	5	5
Total Income	-788	-661	-632	(29)	(60)
Net Operational Expenditure	3,306	1,284	1,314	(30)	(63)
Recharges					
Premises Support	174	87	87	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,209	605	605	0	0
Asset Rental Support	53	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-3,573	-1,787	-1,787	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-2,137	-1,095	-1,095	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,169	189	219	(30)	(63)

Children & Families

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	15,065	6,758	8,283	(1,525)	(3,056)
Other Premises	415	141	160	(19)	(34)
Supplies & Services	1,723	1,135	1,449	(314)	(610)
Transport	360	138	112	26	45
Direct Payments	1,097	548	631	(83)	(178)
Commissioned services to Vol Orgs	224	101	101	0	0
Residential Care	17,570	6,168	10,321	(4,153)	(7,394)
Out of Borough Adoption	96	0	0	0	96
Out of Borough Fostering	4,253	1,716	2,176	(460)	(991)
In House Adoption	548	165	129	36	68
Special Guardianship Order	2,510	1,115	1,144	(29)	(70)
In House Foster Carer Placements	2,739	1,194	1,031	163	302
Lavender House Contract Costs	234	80	73	7	15
Home Support & Respite	340	179	174	5	8
Care Leavers	248	134	188	(54)	(107)
Family Support	53	22	30	(8)	(22)
Contracted services	3	2	2	0	0
Early Years	0	0	0	0	0
Emergency Duty	132	0	0	0	(51)
Youth Offending Services	321	10	10	0	(140)
Transfer to Reserves	8	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	47,939	19,606	26,014	(6,408)	(12,119)
Income					
Fees & Charges	-33	-7	0	(7)	(14)
Sales Income	-4	-2	0	(2)	(3)
Rents	-81	-21	-24	3	0
Reimbursement & other Grant Income	-766	-450	-365	(85)	(111)
Transfer from reserve	-5	-5	-5	0	0
Dedicated Schools Grant	-50	0	0	0	0
Government Grants	-10,371	-5,285	-6,270	985	(86)
Total Income	-11,310	-5,770	-6,664	894	(214)
Net Operational Expenditure	36,629	13,836	19,350	(5,514)	(12,333)
Recharges					
Premises Support	398	199	199	0	0
Transport	16	9	9	0	0
Central Support	2,274	1,137	1,137	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-955	-478	-478	0	0
Net Total Recharges	1,733	867	867	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	38,362	14,703	20,217	(5,514)	(12,333)

Education, Inclusion & Provision

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	7,419	3,563	3,683	(120)	(311)
Agency - covering vacancies	72	36	163	(127)	(227)
Agency - addition to establishment	0	0	14	(14)	(15)
Premises	14	12	11	1	3
Supplies & Services	3,258	1,765	1,747	18	41
Independent School Fees	9,113	4,557	4,551	6	0
Schools Contingency	181	132	132	0	0
Transport	43	21	18	3	(10)
Schools Transport	2,341	580	948	(368)	(737)
Early Years Payments	10,002	5,001	5,001	0	0
Early Years Pupil Premium	177	89	89	0	0
Commissioned Services	1,719	620	770	(150)	(300)
Inter Authority Special Needs	855	447	447	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	173	86	68	18	10
Capital Financing	4,608	2,103	2,103	0	1
Total Expenditure	39,975	19,012	19,745	(733)	(1,545)
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-424	-243	-254	11	(30)
Government Grant Income	-7,120	-4,644	-4,644	0	0
Dedicated Schools Grant	-22,492	-11,246	-11,246	0	0
Inter Authority Income	-311	-155	-157	2	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-1,788	-894	-821	(73)	0
Schools SLA Income	-481	-240	-318	78	25
Transfers from Reserves	-84	-42	0	(42)	0
Total Income	-32,700	-17,464	-17,440	(24)	(5)
Net Operational Expenditure	7,275	1,548	2,305	(757)	(1,550)
Recharges					
Premises Support	344	172	172	0	0
Transport Support	528	264	295	(31)	(92)
Central Support	1,605	802	802	0	0
Asset Rental Support	17	9	0	9	0
Recharge Income	0	0	0	0	0
Net Total Recharges	2,494	1,247	1,269	(22)	(92)
Net Departmental Expenditure	9,769	2,795	3,574	(779)	(1,642)

Community & Greenspaces

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	17,358	8,358	7,845	513	1,024
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	124	(124)	(249)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0	0	134	(134)	(268)
Premises	3,521	1,609	1,644	(35)	(60)
Supplies & Services	2,108	987	1,032	(45)	(90)
Hired & Contracted Services	510	418	418	0	0
Book Fund	128	80	80	0	0
Food Provision	388	213	195	18	37
School Meals Food	1,960	693	716	(23)	(45)
Transport	117	14	18	(4)	(9)
Other Agency Costs	441	247	247	0	0
Other Expenditure	0	0	58	(58)	(60)
Waste Disposal Contracts	7,002	1,598	1,470	128	255
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	64	32	18	14	29
Grant to Norton Priory	172	87	87	0	0
Transfers to Reserves	0	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	33,769	14,336	14,086	250	564
Income					
Sales Income	-1,373	-755	-734	(21)	(44)
Fees & Charges Income	-5,470	-3,091	-3,129	38	83
Rental Income	-235	-108	-123	15	30
Markets Income	-910	-462	-437	(25)	(50)
Government Grant Income	-1,165	-1,165	-1,165	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-703	-323	-323	0	0
School SLA Income	-1,313	-404	-404	0	0
School Meals Income	-3,598	-1,383	-1,283	(100)	(200)
Internal Fees Income	-286	-29	-59	30	60
Capital Salaries	-173	-43	-33	(10)	(20)
Transfers from Reserves	-15	-15	-15	0	0
Total Income	-15,241	-7,778	-7,705	(73)	(141)
Net Operational Expenditure	18,528	6,558	6,381	177	423
Recharges					
Premises Support	1,675	837	837	0	0
Transport	2,257	1,097	1,111	(14)	(28)
Central Support	3,897	1,949	1,949	0	0
Asset Rental Support	199	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-1,148	-574	-574	0	0
Net Total Recharges	6,880	3,309	3,323	(14)	(28)
Net Departmental Expenditure	25,408	9,867	9,704	163	395

Economy, Enterprise & Property

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	4,805	2,549	2,390	159	329
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	154	(154)	(320)
Agency - in addition to establishment	0		0	0	0
Repairs & Maintenance	1,706	917	967	(50)	(99)
Premises	136	119	119	0	0
Energy & Water Costs	1,247	471	417	54	107
NNDR	690	670	660	10	10
Rents	173	92	89	3	7
Economic Regeneration Activities	21	0	0	0	0
Security	544	251	278	(27)	(55)
Supplies & Services	555	194	186	8	17
Supplies & Services - Grant	1,931	367	367	0	0
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	59	59	59	0	0
Capital Finance	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer to Reserves	185	185	185	0	0
Total Expenditure	12,052	5,874	5,871	3	(4)
Income					
Fees & Charges Income	-833	-396	-427	31	63
Rent - Commercial Properties	-872	-233	-223	(10)	(20)
Rent - Investment Properties	-38	-19	-19	0	0
Government Grant	-2,311	-1,041	-1,041	0	0
Reimbursements & Other Grant Income	-148	-76	-73	(3)	(6)
Schools SLA Income	-227	-201	-197	(4)	(8)
Recharges to Capital	-295	-198	-201	3	5
Transfer from Reserves	-1,120	-1,120	-1,120	0	0
Total Income	-5,844	-3,284	-3,301	17	34
Net Operational Expenditure	6,208	2,590	2,570	20	30
Recharges					
Premises Support	2,074	1,037	1,037	0	0
Transport	30	14	14	0	0
Central Support	1,947	973	973	0	0
Asset Rental Support	4	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-7,927	-3,963	-3,963	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-3,872	-1,939	-1,939	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	2,336	651	631	20	30

Planning & Transportation Department

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,545	2,688	2,530	158	295
Agency - covering vacancies	110	93	120	(27)	(54)
Agency - in addition to establishment	24	12	57	(45)	(48)
Efficiency Savings	-150	-75	0	(75)	(150)
Premises	193	119	96	23	47
Hired & Contracted Services	59	29	36	(7)	(180)
Planning Appeal Provision	0	0	0	0	(500)
Supplies & Services	144	35	158	(123)	(246)
Street Lighting	1,609	358	337	21	42
Highways Maintenance - Routine & Reactive	1,772	648	587	61	122
Highways Maintenance - Programmed Works	1,851	252	107	145	290
Fleet Transport	1,455	703	654	49	98
Bus Support - Halton Hopper Tickets	23	19	15	4	8
Bus Support	498	249	390	(141)	0
Agency Related Expenditure	8	7	8	(1)	(2)
Grants to Voluntary Organisations	31	31	31	0	0
NRA Levy	74	73	73	0	1
LCR Levy	1,059	529	529	0	0
Contribution to Reserves	359	0	0	0	0
Total Expenditure	14,664	5,770	5,728	42	(277)
Income					
Sales & Rents Income	-96	-78	-88	10	20
Planning Fees	-826	-409	-274	(135)	(268)
Building Control Fees	-245	-122	-128	6	12
Other Fees & Charges	-908	-456	-610	154	307
Grants & Reimbursements	-153	-90	-90	0	0
Government Grant Income	-111	-39	-39	0	0
Halton Hopper Income	-24	-12	-2	(10)	(19)
Recharge to Capital	-365	-91	-91	0	0
LCR Levy Reimbursement	-1,059	-529	-529	0	0
Contribution from Reserves	-1,036	-1,036	-1,036	0	0
Total Income	-4,823	-2,862	-2,887	25	52
Net Operational Expenditure	9,841	2,908	2,841	67	(225)
Recharges					
Premises Support	560	280	280	0	0
Transport	749	390	383	7	13
Central Support	1,534	767	767	0	0
Asset Rental Support	851	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-5,129	-2,561	-2,718	157	314
Net Total Recharges	-1,435	-1,124	-1,288	164	327
Net Departmental Expenditure	8,406	1,784	1,553	231	102

Corporate & Democracy

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual Spend	Variance (Overspend)	Forecast Outturn
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Expenditure					
Employees	412	206	169	37	0
Contracted Services	39	20	0	20	0
Supplies & Services	119	60	80	(20)	0
Premises Expenditure	5	5	7	(2)	0
Transport Costs	1	0	0	0	0
Members Allowances	983	492	475	17	0
Interest Payable - Treasury Management	1,099	550	807	(257)	(273)
Interest Payable - Other	357	119	197	(78)	(100)
Bank Charges	132	44	128	(84)	(100)
Audit Fees	348	174	15	159	0
Contingency	986	493	0	493	986
Capital Financing	2,408	2	2	0	0
Contribution to Reserves	0	0	0	0	0
Debt Management Expenses	20	10	0	10	0
Precepts & Levies	240	40	35	5	(30)
Agency Related Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0
Business Support Grants	0	0	0	0	0
Transformation Efficiency Savings	-4,000	-2,000	0	(2,000)	(3,871)
Total Expenditure	3,149	215	1,915	-1,700	-3,388
Income					
Interest Receivable - Treasury Management	-4,152	-2,076	-2,559	483	966
Interest Receivable - Other	-19	-6	-6	0	0
Other Fees & Charges	-158	-79	-47	(32)	0
Grants & Reimbursements	-255	-85	-85	0	0
Government Grant Income	-377	-126	-189	63	42
Total Income	-4,961	-2,372	-2,886	514	1,008
Net Operational Expenditure	-1,812	-2,157	-971	(1,186)	(2,380)
Recharges					
Premises Support	21	10	10	0	0
Transport	0	0	0	0	0
Central Support	1,016	533	533	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
HBC Support Costs Income	-3,026	-1,119	-1,119	0	0
Net Total Recharges	-1,989	-576	-576	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	-3,801	-2,733	-1,547	(1,186)	(2,380)

Public Health

	Annual Budget £'000	Budget to Date £'000	Actual Spend £'000	Variance (Overspend) £'000	Forecast Outturn £'000
Expenditure					
Employees	5,345	2,238	2,184	54	48
Agency - covering vacancies	0	0	17	(17)	0
Premises	6	0	0	0	0
Supplies & Services	387	188	169	19	38
Contracts & SLA's	7,913	3,372	3,319	53	16
Transport	4	2	0	2	0
Transfer to Reserves	19	19	19	0	0
Other Agency	24	24	24	0	0
Total Expenditure	13,698	5,843	5,732	111	102
Income					
Fees & Charges	-83	-61	-62	1	0
Reimbursements & Grant Income	-306	-276	-276	0	0
Transfer from Reserves	-1,714	-65	-65	0	0
Capital Salaries	0	0	0	0	0
Government Grant Income	-12,193	-6,297	-6,297	0	0
Total Income	-14,296	-6,699	-6,700	1	0
Net Operational Expenditure	-598	-856	-968	112	102
Recharges					
Premises Support	149	75	75	0	0
Transport Support	22	11	11	0	0
Central Support	2,387	1,194	1,194	0	0
Asset Rental Support	0	0	0	0	0
Recharge Income	-669	-335	-335	0	0
Net Total Recharges	1,889	945	945	0	0
Net Departmental Expenditure	1,291	89	-23	112	102

Capital Programme as at 30 September 2024

Appendix 3

Scheme Detail	2024/25 Original Allocation £000	2024/25 Revised Allocation £000	Q1 Spend £000	Q2 Spend £000	Q3 Spend £000	Q4 Spend £000	Total Spend £000	Allocation remaining £000
Childrens Directorate								
Capital Repairs	749.0	749.0	151.0	531.0			682.0	67.0
Basic Need Projects	600.8	600.8	0.0	0.0			0.0	600.8
SEND capital allocation	3,355.2	3,355.2	178.0	519.0			697.0	2,658.2
SCA unallocated	255.6	448.0	0.0	0.0			0.0	448.0
Family Hubs & Start for Life	53.2	53.2	1.3	54.1			55.4	(2.2)
Childcare Expansion	314.8	314.8	0.0	0.0			0.0	314.8
Directorate Total	5,328.6	5,521.0	330.3	1,104.1	0.0	0.0	1,434.4	4,088.8
Adults Directorate								
Halton Carers Centre Refurbishment	199.0	0.0	0.0	0.0			0.0	0.0
Grants - Disabled Facilities	600.0	1,050.0	353.0	227.0			580.0	470.0
Stair Lifts	270.0	200.0	66.0	23.0			89.0	111.0
Joint Funding RSL Adaptations	270.0	150.0	53.0	24.0			77.0	73.0
Telehealthcare Digital Switchover	0.0	135.0	60.0	0.0			60.0	75.0
Oakmeadow & Peelhouse Network Improvements	0.0	40.0	0.0	0.0			0.0	40.0
Millbrow Refurbishment	0.0	100.0	26.0	8.0			34.0	66.0
Madeline McKenna Refurbishment	0.0	50.0	9.0	73.0			82.0	(32.0)
St Lukes Care Home	0.0	50.0	10.0	14.0			24.0	26.0
St Patricks Care Home	1,200.0	50.0	14.0	16.0			30.0	20.0
Directorate Total	2,539.0	1,825.0	591.0	385.0	0.0	0.0	976.0	881.0

Capital Programme as at 30 September 2024 Continued

Scheme Detail	2024/25 Original Allocation	2024/25 Revised Allocation	Q1 Spend	Q2 Spend	Q3 Spend	Q4 Spend	Total Spend	Allocation remaining	2025/26 Allocation	2026/27 Allocation
Environment & Regeneration Directorate										
Stadium Minor Works	30.0	30.0	7.9	7.7			15.6	14.4	30.0	30.0
Halton Leisure Centre	8,997.0	8,997.0	2,030.0	3,045.4			5,075.4	3,921.6		
Children's Playground Equipment	67.8	67.8	1.0	1.0			2.0	65.8	65.0	65.0
Landfill Tax Credit Schemes	340.0	340.0	0.0	0.0			0.0	340.0	340.0	340.0
Upton Improvements	13.0	13.0	0.0	0.0			0.0	13.0		
Crow Wood Park Play Area	12.0	12.0	0.0	0.0			0.0	12.0		
Open Spaces Schemes	600.0	600.0	130.0	154.4			284.4	315.6	600.0	600.0
Runcorn Town Park	468.6	468.6	0.0	6.8			6.8	461.8	280.0	280.0
Spike Island / Wigg Island	1,933.5	1,933.5	2.4	4.4			6.8	1,926.7		
Pickerings Pasture Cafe	503.0	503.0	0.0	0.0			0.0	503.0		
Replacement Cremator Widnes	308.0	308.0	0.0	77.3			77.3	230.7		
Litter Bins	20.0	20.0	0.0	0.0			0.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
3MG	134.5	134.5	0.0	0.0			0.0	134.5		
Murdishaw redevelopment	21.2	21.2	5.4	0.0			5.4	15.8		
Equality Act Improvement Works	293.2	93.2	8.7	17.6			26.3	66.9	300.0	300.0
Foundary Lane Residential Area	1160.0	1160.0	1.8	464.8			466.6	693.4		
Town Deal	11352.9	11552.9	174.9	261.8			436.7	11,116.2	7,190.4	
Property Improvements	360.2	460.5	4.3	131.1			135.4	325.1	200.0	200.0
Runcorn Station Quarter	484.7	484.7	0.0	60.5			60.5	424.2		
Waterloo Building	0.0	75.0	46.0	66.0			112.0	-37.0		
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	178.2	178.2	0.0	0.0			0.0	178.2		
Runcorn Waterfront Residential Development	484.7	268.7	8.6	122.9			131.5	137.2		
Changing Places	24.1	24.1	2.5	0.1			2.6	21.5		
Sci-tech Daresbury Project Violet	2200.0	2200.0	0.0	0.0			0.0	2,200.0		
Port of Weston	0.0	3,960.0	0.0	1.3			1.3	3,958.7		
Kingsway Leisure Centre Demolition	0.0	750.0	0.0	30.7			30.7	719.3		
Bridge and Highway Maintenance	0.0	2,265.6	281.0	313.0			594.0	1,671.6		







Capital Programme as at 30 September 2024 Continued

Scheme Detail	2024/25 Original Allocation	2024/25 Revised Allocation	Q1 Spend	Q2 Spend	Q3 Spend	Q4 Spend	Total Spend	Allocation remaining
Runcorn Busway	0.0	0.0	227.0	80.0			307.0	-307.0
ATF3 Murdishaw to Whitehouse	0.0	3,000.0	175.0	363.0			538.0	2,462.0
ATF4 Widnes Town Centre Accessibility	0.0	114.5	0.0	0.0			0.0	114.5
A56 Reconstruction (Delph Lane)	0.0	943.7	351.0	0.0			351.0	592.7
Dukesfield ATL (Waterloo Bridge)	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0			1.0	-1.0
LCWIP Phase 2 Daresbury	0.0	3,861.7	629.0	56.0			685.0	3,176.7
Additional Pothole Funding	0.0	429.1	0.0	0.0			0.0	429.1
CRSTS	5,819.4	5,288.6	1,656.0	884.0			2,540.0	2,748.6
Street Lighting - Structural Maintenance	1,025.6	1,025.6	0.0	37.0			37.0	988.6
Street Lighting - Upgrades	969.4	969.4	0.0	0.0			0.0	969.4
East Runcorn Connectivity	5,851.7	5,851.7	453.0	207.0			660.0	5,191.7
Risk Management	597.8	597.8	5.0	0.0			5.0	592.8
Fleet Replacements	4,927.4	4,927.4	1,082.0	455.0			1,537.0	3,390.4
Early Land Acquisition Mersey Gateway	212.4	212.4	0.0	16.4			16.4	196.0
Mersey Gateway Crossings Board	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0			0.0	0.0
Mersey Gateway Handback Land	0.0	27.0	0.0	26.9			26.9	0.1
Directorate Total	49,390.3	64,170.4	7,283.5	6,892.1	0.0	0.0	14,175.6	49,994.8
Chief Executives Directorate								
IT Rolling Programme	1,026.9	1,026.9	27.7	668.2			695.9	331.0
Halton Smart Microgrid	11,000.0	11,000.0	0.0	0.0			0.0	11,000.0
Transformation Programme	3,740.0	3,740.0	0.0	0.0			0.0	3,740.0
Directorate Total	15,766.9	15,766.9	27.7	668.2	0.0	0.0	695.9	15,071.0
Grand Total	73,024.8	87,283.3	8,232.5	9,049.4	0.0	0.0	17,281.9	70,035.6

Progress Against Agreed Savings

Appendix 4

Adult Social Care




	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
ASC1	Housing Solutions	474	Remodel the current service based on good practice evidence from other areas.	0	125		Anticipated to be achieved, currently under review.
ASC2	Telehealthcare	680	Explore alternative funding streams such as Health funding or Disabled Facilities Grants.	170	0		Currently Under Review
			Increase charges / review income.	170	0		Charges were increased by 40% w.e.f. April 2024, so this should be achieved
			Cease the key safe installation service.	15	0		Service still being provided
ASC17/18	Quality Assurance Team	395	Review the activities of the Quality Assurance Team, given there are fewer providers for domiciliary care and the transfer of four care homes into the Council.	0	0		Saving implemented
			Merge the service with the Safeguarding Unit.	50	0		

ASC16	Shared Lives (Adult Placement Service)	115	Engage with an external agency currently operating Shared Lives to take over the running of this service. It is anticipated that this would provide an improved service.	58	0	u	Service currently still provided in-house, although a balanced budget will be attained for 2024/25 as a result of current temporary savings, and work is ongoing to ensure the 2025/6 structure can achieve the permanent savings target
ASC19	Voluntary Sector Support	N/A	Review the support provided by Adult Social Care and all other Council Departments, to voluntary sector organisations. This would include assisting them to secure alternative funding in order to reduce their dependence upon Council funding. A target saving phased over two years has been estimated.	200	100	✓	Anticipated to be achieved
ASC4	Positive Behaviour Support Service	349	Increase income generated in order to ensure full cost recovery, through increased service contract charges to other councils.	100	0	✓	Contracts being re-costed on renewal, saving anticipated to be achieved
				150	0	u	ICB funding not secured, although a balanced budget will be attained for 2024/25 as a result of current temporary savings, and work is ongoing to ensure the 2025/6 structure can

			Review the Integrated Care Board contribution for Adults, to ensure the full recovery of related costs.				achieve the permanent savings target
ASC15	Learning Disability Nursing Team	424	Cease provision of this service. The service is a Health related function rather than Adult Social Care, but this is a historical arrangement. The Integrated Care Board would need to consider how they want to provide this function.	424	0	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Costs now recharged to the ICB
ASC14	Care Management Community Care Budget	18,982	Attract £500k investment from the pooled budget (BCF) from 2024/25. Undertake work in years 1 and 2 to reduce reliance upon contracted services from 2025/26. Services are currently in the process of being redesigned on a "Strengths Based Approach" ie. focused upon prevention.	500	1,000	<input type="checkbox"/>	Position currently being reviewed.

Total Adult Social Care Department	1,837	1,225		
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Finance

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
F9	Internal Audit	300	Restructure in light of potential retirements over the next two years within the Internal Audit Team.	0	50		No official changes made yet
F13	Discretionary Support Scheme	221	Review the roles, procedures and structure of the team.	25	0		On track
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		On track
Total Finance Department				65	90		

Legal and Democratic Services

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				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	15		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Budget adjusted inline with the savings in the ICT department
Total Legal Services Department				15	0		

Children and Families

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
C1	Ditton and Warrington Road Daycare Centres	52	Closure of Ditton and Warrington Road daycare centres, given the significant on-going net losses at both centres. Sufficient alternative provision exists nearby, as well as in the adjoining nursery schools.	26	0		Early Years has now closed and budget for 24/25 has been removed
C2	Children's Centres	1,293	Review the operation of Windmill Hill Children's Centre, where there is the potential to save on premises and staffing costs.	0	22		This is subject to further review as external factors are changing the original review parameters. Potential alternative funding also to be reviewed.
C3	Children with Disabilities and Inglefield	858	Explore the potential for selling Inglefield and then purchase two bungalows within the community to provide a more appropriate setting.	112	0		Amount was removed at budget setting as will not be achieved
Total Children & Families Department				138	22		

Education, Inclusion and Provision


Ref	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
EIP1	Education Psychology Service	339	There is excess demand from schools for the Education Psychology Service. The service is valued and there is opportunity to expand our offer and generate additional income.	52	0	✓	
EIP2	SEN Assessment Team	82	Consideration will be given to funding the full service costs from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.	80	0	✗	DSG funding removed as does not comply with grant conditions.
EIP5	Commissioning	148	Review with Health colleagues how the Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service for Children in Care, Care Leavers and Carers could instead be provided by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) as they are commissioned by the Integrated Care Board.	148	0	u	To be reviewed.
Total Education, Inclusion and Provision Department				280	0		

Community and Greenspace

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
COMM3	Sport & Recreation	471	Restructuring the roles and responsibilities of the Sports Development Team	36	0		✓ Restructure is currently underway
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 them to secure an alternative means of delivery, whether in-house or via an external provider.	0	12		✓ The cessation of the service is underway with the majority of schools ending their contracts by the end of the calendar year.
Total Community & Greenspace Department				36	12		

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
EEP4	Cleaning Services – Council Buildings	580	Review cleaning arrangements, with a focus on only emptying bins and cleaning toilets daily.	100	0	U	A review of the cleaning service is underway with some positions removed from the structure. The full savings will not be achieved until the accommodation review is complete.
EEP2	Caretaking & Security Services	641	A review and restructuring of caretaking arrangements.	52	0	U	The restructure can now take place following the retirement of a member of staff. The full saving will not be made until financial year 25/26
Total Economy, Enterprise & Property Department				152	0		

Policy, Planning and Transportation

Ref.	Service Area	Net Budget £'000	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value		Current Progress	Comments
				24/25 £'000	25/26 £'000		
PPT6	Traffic	N/A	Consider introducing civil traffic enforcement for traffic violations. Employ private sector civil enforcement officers to issue fines and generate income. It would take 12 months to apply for powers from the DFT and put the scheme in place. The Environment & Urban Renewal Policy & Performance Board will consider this via a Topic Group.	150	0		Not currently viable, therefore no income will be generated in the current year as the traffic enforcement will not be carried out.
Total Policy, Planning & Transportation Department				150	0		

Symbol

Objective



Indicates that the objective is on course to be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.



Indicates that it is uncertain or too early to say at this stage whether the milestone/objective will be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.



Indicates that it is highly likely or certain that the objective will not be achieved within the appropriate timeframe.

2024/25 Budget Risk Register as at 30 September 2024

Appendix 5

Risk No	Risk Identified	Impact	Likelihood	Risk Score	Risk Control Measures	Assessment of Residual Risk with Control Measures Implemented			Responsible Person	Timescale for Review	Progress Comments	Date Updated
						Impact	Likelihood	Risk Score				
1	<p>Pay costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay award • Staff Turnover Saving Target • Agency, casuals and overtime • National Living Wage • Pension Costs 	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget based upon individual staff members/vacancies • Budget monitoring • Contingency • Balances • Medium Term Forecast • Engage with Cheshire Pension Scheme and pension actuary • Recruitment and retention scheme children social care workers. • Social Care Academy for children social care workers • Connect to Halton 	3	3	9	ED/SB/Executive Directors	Monthly	<p>2024/25 pay offer accepted but not yet implemented, covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •£1290 on all pay points from 1st April •Equivalent to 5.77% on point 2 and 2.5% on point 43 •2.5% on all pay points above 43 and below chief officer level <p>Estimated 4% 2024.25 budget uplift will cover cost of pay award. Connect to Halton scheme went live September 2024, agency and casual appointments to be covered by the scheme.</p>	30/9/24

2	Redundancy and Early Retirements	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits Tracking Process • Future savings to take into account cost of redundancy and early retirements. • Seek Government approval to use capital receipts to fund transformation costs. • Transformation Reserve 	2	3	6	ED/SB	Quarterly	Tracker created to monitor redundancy costs in current year. Transformation reserve created to cover costs but limited reserves will impact use of this. Look to capitalise compulsory costs where possible where evidence exists it creates in a longer term saving.	30/9/24
3	Savings not achieved	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget monitoring • Contingency • Reserves / Provisions • Rigorous process in approving savings. • Review of savings at departmental and directorate level • Monthly budget monitoring 	4	2	8	RR/ED/SB	Monthly	Savings for 2024/25 have been written into Directorate budgets. Budget savings monitored closely and if necessary offsetting savings sought. Transformation Programme Board meeting on monthly basis to discuss progress against programme.	30/9/24

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium Term Financial Forecast • 2023/24 to 2025/26 savings agreed February 2023. • RAG monitoring of savings included in quarterly monitoring reports. • Transformation saving targets reported monthly through Transformation Programme Board. 							
4	Price inflation	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prudent budget provision • Latest forecast information used eg. utilities • Budget monitoring • Contingency • Balances 	3	3	9	ED/SB	Monthly	CPI for September 2024 is 1.7% and RPI is 2.7%. Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecast inflation to hit low of 1.5% in 2025 and remain at just below 2% through to 2027.	30/9/24

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPI/RPI monitoring • MTFS 							
5	Review of LG Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business rates retention – 100% Pilot and Review • Fair Funding Review • National Public Spending Plans • Social Care Green Paper 	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPs • SIGOMA / LG Futures • Liverpool City Region & Merseyside Treasurers Group • Medium Term Financial Strategy • Member of business rate retention pilot region • Dialogue with DCLG 	3	3	9	ED/SB/NS/M W/MG	Weekly/ Monthly	Business rate retention pilot continues through to March 2026. New Government are committed to providing more certainty on LG Finances through multi year settlements. No indication of funding for April 2025 onwards. Chancellor to make budget statement 30 October, further updates could be provided then.	30/9/24
6	Treasury Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borrowing • Investment 	2	3	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treasury Management Strategy • Link Asset Services advice 	1	3	3	ED/SB/MG	Daily / Quarterly	Investment rates continue to be high relative to last decade. BoE base rate at 5.00%, general thoughts are for this rate to be	30/9/24

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treasury Management planning and monitoring • Attendance at Networking and Benchmarking Groups • Officer Training 						lowered towards the end of the financial year and further reductions beyond this. Council to use internal reserves ahead of any new borrowing being undertaken.	
7	Demand led budgets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in Care • Out of borough fostering • Community Care 	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget monitoring • Contingency • Balances • Review service demand • Directorate recovery groups • Monthly budget monitoring 	4	4	16	ED/SB/NS/MW	Monthly	Children in care, numbers and costs continue to exceed budget. Numbers of children in care and with protection plans reviewed on a weekly basis. Community care costs and numbers on increase, reviewed on a regular basis.	30/9/24
8	Mersey Gateway Costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs • Toll Income • Funding 	4	2	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular monitoring with Crossing Board • Capital reserve • Government Grant 	2	1	2	ED/SB/MG	Quarterly	Arrangements in place to monitor spend and availability of liquidity fund.	30/9/24

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting treatment 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liquidity Fund 							
9	Council Tax Collection	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council tax monitoring on monthly basis Review of Collection Rate Collection Fund Balance Provision for bad debts Review recovery procedures Benchmarking 	3	2	6	ED/PG/SB/P D/BH/MG	Monthly	Collection rate to 30 September 2024 was 53.82% which is marginally lower than the rate of 53.93% at the same point last year. It is uncertain at this point if collection for the year will be at the same level as for 2023/24. To 30 September 2024 £1.44m was collected in relation to old year debt.	30/9/24
10	Business Rates Retention Scheme	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and monitoring of latest business rates income to baseline and estimate for year. Prudent allowance for losses in collection Prudent provision set aside for losses from valuation appeals 	3	1	3	ED/SB/LB/M G	Monthly	Collection rate to 30 September 2024 was 58.76% which is 2.41% higher than the rate at the same point last year. It is uncertain at this point if collection for the year will be at the same level as for	30/9/24

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular monitoring of annual yield and baseline / budget position Benchmarking Groups Review recovery procedures 						2023/24. To 30 September 2024 £1.34m was collected in relation to old year debt.	
11	Income recovery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncertainty to economy following Brexit, cost of living and high inflation 	3	3	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate charging policy Budget monitoring Contingency Balances Income benchmarking 	3	2	6	ED/MM/SB	Monthly	Income shortfalls identified and cause of increased concern in certain areas are being closely monitored. Cost of living crisis adds to uncertainty over collection.	30/9/24
13	Capital Programme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs Funding Key Major Projects Clawback of Grant Availability and timing of capital receipts 	4	3	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Management Regular monitoring Detailed financial analysis of new schemes to ensure they are affordable Targets monitored to minimise clawback of grant. 	3	2	6	Project Managers/ED /SB/LH	Quarterly	Capital receipts have been fully committed therefore new capital schemes need to bring own funding.	30/9/24

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cashflow • Contractors 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractor due diligence • Dialogue with Government departments. 							
14	Academy Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of transfer upon Council budget • Loss of income to Council Services 	2	4	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early identification of school decisions • DfE Regulations • Prudent consideration of financial transactions to facilitate transfer • Services continue to be offered to academies • Transfer Protocol 	1	3	3	ED/SB/NS	Monthly	Consideration given in MTFS for loss of funding.	30/9/24
15	Reserves <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diminishing reserves, used to balance budget, fund overspend positions. 	3	4	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitored on a quarterly basis, reported to Management Team and Exec Board • Benchmarking • Financial Forecast • Programme to replenish reserves. 	3	3	9	ED/SB	Quarterly	Monitored and reported on a regular basis. Council reserves at historic low levels. Reserves will need to be replenished within future budgets	30/9/24

16	Budget Balancing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council has struggled to achieve a balanced budget position for a number of years. • Forecast for current year is an overspend position of £19m. • Reserves insufficient to balance current year budget. • Before transformation targets, there is a forecast budget gap of £68.5m through to 2028/29. 	4	4	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current year budgets monitored on a regular basis. • Forward forecasting through to March 2029 reported on a prudent basis. • Regular conversations with DHLUC re Council's financial position. • LGA to undertake a financial assurance review. • Transformation programme in place. 	4	4	16	ED/SB	Ongoing	Updated benchmarking to be reported to better inform Transformation Programme targets.	30/9/24

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 14 November 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Director of Finance

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 –
2028/29

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To establish the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy for the period 2025/26 to 2028/29.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: That;

- (i) the Medium Term Financial Strategy presented in Appendix 1, be approved;**
- (ii) the 2025/26 base budget be prepared on the basis of the underlying assumptions set out in the Strategy;**
- (iii) the Reserves and Balances Strategy presented in Appendix 2 be approved;**
- (iv) the award of Council Tax Support for 2025/26 remains at the 2024/25 level of 21.55%.**
- (v) Council approve the submission of an application to Government for Exceptional Finance Support”.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Medium-Term Financial Strategy

3.1 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out a three-year projection of the Council's resources and spending. It has been based on the most recent information that is currently available. The 2025/26 financial year sits outside of the period of time covered by the most recent Public Sector Spending Review, published in October 2021. The Chancellor has commissioned a new Spending Review which is intended to set Government Departmental Expenditure Limits over a three-year period. The Spending Review is set to conclude in Spring 2025, which will not be in time to inform 2025/26 budgets. 2025/26 Departmental Expenditure Limits are anticipated to be announced in

the Budget on 30 October 2024 and will be for a single year only. Details of the 2025/26 Local Government Finance Settlement are expected to be released in December 2024 on a provisional basis, with a final settlement expected in January 2025.

- 3.2 The uncertainty regarding 2025/26 financial resources means the financial information included within the MTFs is based on a large number of assumptions and best estimates. The financial forecast will be updated as further information becomes known.
- 3.3 There is considerable uncertainty surrounding Local Government Funding in 2025/26 and beyond. The previous Government had committed to commissioning a Fair Funding Review, which would change how funding is apportioned between councils. This was originally proposed in 2016 and then repeatedly delayed, with the Fair Funding Working Party not meeting since 2019. The proposed Business Rates Baseline Reset and a move to 75% Business Rates Retention were also postponed indefinitely. There has been no confirmation from the new Government whether these schemes will be re-started, or whether there are any plans to implement fundamental reforms of the Local Government Finance system in the future.
- 3.4 Appendix 1 details the Medium-Term Financial Strategy from 2025/26 – 2028/29 which has been produced using a prudent estimate of the financial conditions over the course of the next four years.
- 3.5 The Strategy provides initial guidance to the Council on its financial position into the medium-term. It assumes the achievement of budget savings proposals totalling £1.349m relating to 2025/26, which Council approved on 1 February 2023. Details of these savings can be found in Appendix 3.
- 3.6 Adopting a prudent view, the Strategy identifies that further revenue budget savings of approximately £38.1m, £14.5m, £7.3m, and £9.3m are required over the next four years. As a result, a total of £69.2m will need to be removed from the Council's budget by reducing spending or increasing income, by 2028/29. This represents 46.3% of the 2024/25 net budget.
- 3.7 The projections within the strategy show there is continued need to find a significant level of budget savings over the next four years, the scale of which will be extremely difficult to implement.
- 3.8 The Council's Transformation Programme will be key to closing the budget gap, as it will require fundamental changes to the way the Council delivers services. Work is currently ongoing to refocus and reprioritise the Programme given the scale of financial challenges that the Council faces.
- 3.9 The Council has a legal duty to set a balanced budget each year, meaning that anticipated expenditure cannot exceed the income which the Council expects to receive in any particular year.

Exceptional Financial Support

- 3.10 If a local authority does not expect to be able to set a balanced budget, they can apply to the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS). This will normally take the form of a capitalisation direction, permitting the authority to meet revenue costs through capital resources. It is important to note that EFS is not a long-term solution to solving financial difficulties. The additional capital resources required will take the form of borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board. The cost of this borrowing, which can be significant, must be met from future revenue budgets, putting additional pressure on the funding available for core services. Government will only grant EFS where they are satisfied that authorities will continue to mitigate and manage their cost pressures, in order to ensure they return to a sustainable budget position in the short to medium term. Any authority receiving EFS will be subject to an external assurance review and will be required to regularly report to Government on their financial position.

Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988

- 3.11 If MHCLG do not approve an application for EFS, the Section 151 Officer of any council which cannot set a balanced budget, will be required to issue a Section 114 Notice under the Local Government Finance Act 1988. Once the Notice is issued, no new spending can be undertaken without authorisation of the Section 151 Officer, and the council must meet within 21 days to discuss how to reduce expenditure to match the funding available. Government may also elect to intervene in the management of the council, either through direct instructions to make certain changes or the appointment of commissioners to take over operations.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The MTFS represents the “finance guidelines” which form part of the Council’s medium-term corporate planning process. These guidelines identify the financial constraints which the Council will face in delivering its key priorities and objectives, and are an important influence on the development of the Corporate Plan, Service Plans and Strategies.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The MTFS provides a guide to projected funding resources and spending requirements over the four year term. The grant amounts included in the MTFS are based on the latest information provided by Government. As new information comes to light the forecast of future income streams will be updated. Decreases to funding resources will create further budget pressures for the Council in delivering its key priorities and objectives.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy

6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families

6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need

6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future

6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community

There are no direct implications, however, the revenue budget and capital programme support the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 The MTFFS is a key part of the Council's financial planning process, and as such it aims to minimise the risk that the Council fails to achieve a balanced budget.

7.2 The financial forecast is presented on a prudent basis but there is continued uncertainty around Government support, funding levels and the high cost of inflation. This will be reviewed on a constant basis to help mitigate the increased level of risk.

7.3 The failure to set a balanced revenue budget may lead to the requirement for the Council's Section 151 Officer to issue a Section 114 Notice.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 There are no direct equality and diversity issues.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct climate change issues.

10.0 REASON FOR THE DECISION

10.1 To seek approval for the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2025/26 to 2028/29.

11.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

11.1 The alternative option of not maintaining a Medium-Term Financial Strategy has been considered. However, this would not follow good financial

management practice, as the Medium Term Financial Strategy is a key element in informing the Council's financial planning and budget setting processes.

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

12.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2028/29 will be implemented from 1st April 2025.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Local Government Grant Settlement 2024/25	Revenues and Financial Management Division, Halton Stadium, Widnes	Steve Baker

Appendix 1

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2028/29

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out a four-year projection of the Council's resources and spending covering the period 2025/26 to 2028/29. The projections made within the MTFS must be treated with caution and require continuous updating as the underlying assumptions behind them become clearer.
- 1.2 The MTFS represents the "finance guidelines" that form part of the medium-term corporate planning process. These guidelines identify the financial constraints which the Council will face in delivering its key objectives, and are an important influence on the development of the Corporate Plan, Service Plans and other strategies.
- 1.3 Beyond 2024/25 there is great uncertainty regarding the funding of local government. There has been no indication from the new Government as to when, or if, there will be a major review of local government finances.
- 1.4 The following measures will continue to be considered throughout the period covered by the MTFS:
- **Business Rates Retention** – The movement towards an increased retained share of business rates for local government has been cancelled. It is not clear what impact this will have on the 100% rates retention pilot scheme operating within Liverpool City Region. This arrangement has increased the funding available to Halton, by allowing all growth above the business rates baseline to be retained rather than shared with Government. For the purposes of the MTFS, it has been assumed that the pilot scheme will remain in operation during 2025/26, but will cease in 2026/27, leading to a reduction in funding of approximately £6.296m.
 - **Business Rates Baseline Reset** – A reset of the business rates baseline was due to take place in 2021/22, but was subsequently postponed. Halton has seen a high level of growth in business rates since the previous reset in 2013 and would be expected to lose funding from a reset in the baseline. The greater the delay to the reset, the more difficult it becomes to implement as there will be additional years of growth to account for, leading to larger changes to the funding of individual authorities which will likely require transitional arrangements to mitigate. It has been assumed that the reset will not take place within the time period covered by the forecast.
 - **Assessment of Needs Reset** – Central Government's current assessment of the needs of individual authorities has not been updated since 2013, and in many cases is based on data that is even older. Halton is an area of high deprivation which has worsened relative to other areas over this period. A

review of the relative needs of individual councils, and changes to the allocation of government grant funding, would likely lead to increased funding for Halton. A Fair Funding Review was proposed to address this issue in 2016, but this appears to have been indefinitely delayed. There has been no indication from the new Government as to whether a fundamental review of local government finance will be undertaken over the course of the current Parliament. The MTFS assumes that the distribution of funding to councils will not be subject to significant change prior to 2028/29.

- **Autumn Budget 2024** – The Chancellor is expected to deliver the Autumn Budget on 30 October 2024 which will provide an update on Government plans for tax and public spending based on the latest forecast from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR).
- **Social Care Reform** – It has been confirmed that planned reforms to the Adult Social Care system, which would have capped the lifetime contributions that individuals were required to make towards their care, has been cancelled. In preparing the forecast, it has been assumed that the funding already provided to implement the scheme will remain with authorities to fund current social care pressures.

2.0 Council Tax Support

- 2.1 Funding to support council tax discounts is received from Government through a grant included in the Settlement Funding Assessment. Every council is responsible for implementing a local scheme to offer council tax discounts to those residents who may have been eligible to this previously through Council Tax Benefit.
- 2.2 The Halton scheme uses as a basis the previous regulations relating to Council Tax Benefit, which ensures that support for claimants with disabilities, claimants with children, and claimants who are working is maintained. Residents who qualify for the scheme will have their liability reduced to 21.55% of the maximum amount paid.
- 2.3 Council Tax Support Grant is not separately identifiable within Settlement Funding Assessment. It is assumed the level of funding will move in line with the Council's overall Settlement Funding Assessment.
- 2.4 The MTFS assumes that the level of Council Tax Support given to existing claimants will remain at the rate of 21.55% for the period of the MTFS. It also assumes that Council Tax Support funding will not be shared with Parish Councils.

3.0 Council Tax Forecast

- 3.1 For 2024/25 the council tax for a Band D property in Halton is £1,758.89 (excluding Police, Fire, LCR and Parish precepts), which is expected to generate income of £64.039m.
- 3.2 When setting council tax levels, higher increases reduce the requirement to make budget savings. However, there are other factors that need to be considered when determining the appropriate increase in council tax. These factors include:
- Halton has the fourth lowest council tax levels in the North West for 2024/25.
 - Halton's 2024/25 council tax is £55.67 (3.1%) below the average council tax set by unitary councils in England.
 - Inflation - the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as at September 2024 (latest available) is currently at 1.7% and the Retail Price Index (RPI) is at 2.7%.
- 3.3 The 2025/26 council tax base shows an increase of 304 Band D equivalent properties to a total of 36,713, assuming a collection rate of 97%. The increase in the tax base will result in an increase of £0.535m of council tax income.
- 3.4 In 2024/25 the Council utilised £0.234m of council tax surplus income to balance the budget. It is anticipated that there will be no surplus generated from council tax in 2024/25 to aid with setting the 2025/26 budget.
- 3.5 For the purposes of this strategy it is assumed the Council will apply a council tax increase of 2.99% in 2025/26. It is further assumed there will be a 2% increase for the adult social care precept in 2025/26. Beyond 2025/26, the forecast assumes an increase in council tax of 1.99%, plus an additional 1% for the adult social care precept.
- 3.6 Table 1 estimates the net amount of council tax income that will be generated by various percentage increases in Halton's Band D council tax for the next four years, assuming no change in council tax base beyond 2025/26. The council tax referendum limits have not yet been confirmed by government for 2025/26. The MTFs assumes that these limits will remain at 3% for council tax, plus an additional 2% for the adult social care precept in 2025/26, reducing to 2% for council tax and 1% for the adult social care precept for 2026/27 onwards.

Table 1 – Additional Council Tax Income 2025/26 to 2028/29

Projected Increases in Council Tax Income	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000
0%	-	-	-	
1%	678	685	692	699
2%	1,356	1,383	1,411	1,439
3%	2,034	2,095	2,158	2,222
4%	2,712	2,820	2,933	3,050
5%	3,390	3,559	3,737	3,924

3.7 The Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill, published on 11 May 2022 introduced legislation which allows authorities to increase the council tax payable on a dwelling where there is no resident, and which is substantially furnished (typically referred to as second homes), by up to 100%. The determination to apply the charge must be made at least one year before the beginning of the financial year in which the charge will be applied. The Council made this determination within the 2024/25 Budget report, approved by Council on 6 March 2024. The premium will therefore come into effect on 1 April 2025.

4.0 Business Rates Retention Scheme

4.1 The aim of the business rates retention scheme is to promote economic development and generate future growth in business rates. The Council will only be rewarded if it increases its local share of business rates above a pre-set baseline. Conversely if the local share of business rates collected falls below the baseline position, this would be to the Council's detriment.

4.2 An estimate of the Council's share of retained business rates will be provided to MHCLG in January 2025.

4.3 Following the cancellation of the Government's move towards increased business rates retention by local authorities, it has been assumed that the Liverpool City Region 100% business rates retention pilot will end in 2026/27, reducing the funding available to Halton by an estimated £6.296m. No allowance for transitional arrangements beyond the end of the scheme has been included within the forecast. The Liverpool City Region are currently lobbying Government for a long term extension of the rates retention pilot.

4.4 The business rates multiplier, used to calculate the rates charged on commercial properties, is updated each year by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation figure for the previous September. If Government make the policy choice to freeze the multiplier to avoid increasing costs for businesses, they will compensate local authorities through additional grant funding.

4.5 The most recent forecast for business rates estimates that there will be a deficit for 2024/25 of approximately £1m, primarily due to higher than anticipated levels of charity and small business rates relief being awarded. This deficit will not impact on the Council's budget in 2024/25, but will need to be factored into

the 2025/26 budget position. The impact of the deficit means that the funding generated from business rates is likely to decrease between 2024/25 and 2025/26.

- 4.6 Table 2 shows the estimated business rates income received in each year of the forecast, assuming that inflation remains close to the Bank of England target of 2% during 2025/26 and remains there for the duration of the forecast.

Table 2 – Business Rate Retention

	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000
Projected Business Rates Income	63,091	64,164	65,447	66,756	68,091
Business Rates Surplus / (Deficit)	2,472	(1,000)	0	0	0
Section 31 Grants and Top-Up Multiplier Adjustment	15,141	15,472	15,782	16,097	16,419
Top-Up Funding	4,519	4,007	4,087	4,169	4,252
Forecast Business Rates Retained (Incl. Top-Up Funding)	85,223	82,643	85,316	87,022	88,763
Increase / (Decrease) in Business Rates Retained	0	(2,560)	2,673	1,706	1,740

5.0 Dedicated Schools Grant Deficit

- 5.1 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is a ring-fenced grant allocation which is used to fund a variety of education services, with the majority forming the Individual Schools Budget.
- 5.2 The conditions of the grant make clear that it can only be spent on the Schools Budget, so that any underspend must be carried forward to future years.
- 5.3 In recent years, significant pressures on high needs budgets have led to many local authorities recording deficits against the DSG. Proper accounting practice requires these deficits to be offset against the council's General Fund, reducing the funding available for other local services.
- 5.4 In 2019/20 the Government issued a statutory override, to be applied from the 2020/21 financial year, which requires DSG deficits to be carried forward to the Schools Budget in future years, and prevents this being funded from General Fund resources.

- 5.5 The statutory override is due to expire on 31 March 2026. Without further government intervention, DSG deficits will need to be funded from General Fund resources from 1 April 2026. Given the level of deficits on a national basis, with some authorities recording a DSG deficit greater than the balance on their general fund, it is highly likely that the expiry of the statutory override would trigger a number of Section 114 notices and applications for EFS.
- 5.6 Halton is currently participating in the Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme, which supports local authorities to improve services to children and young people with SEND and aims to deliver effective and financial sustainable SEND services. Table 3 shows a forecast of Halton's DSG deficit before any impact of the Programme, and if the Programme successfully achieves its aims.

Table 3 – Forecast DSG Deficit

Year	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Unmitigated Cumulative Deficit	£5.3m	£10.8m	£17.8m	£25.8m	£33.9m
Target Cumulative Deficit	£5.3m	£8.8m	£13.5m	£18.4m	£22.1m

- 5.7 Due to the high impact that the ending of the statutory override will have on a large number of authorities, the forecast assumes that this will be extended until at least 2029/30. If the statutory override does end on 31 March 2026, an additional £10.8m of spending pressures would need to be included within the 2026/27 budget.

6.0 Four-Year Financial Forecast

- 6.1 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) provides a forecast of the increase in revenue expenditure that will be required over the next four years in order to maintain existing policies and programmes.
- 6.2 The Council's financial position over the course of 2025/26 – 2028/29 is extremely uncertain due to the ongoing political uncertainty surrounding the future of local government funding, the continuing increase in demand for key Council services, and costs within Adults and Children's social care increasing above the rate of general inflation. This forecast uses prudent estimates based on the information that is currently available. Figures should be treated with caution and will need to be continually updated as new information becomes available.
- 6.3 For the purposes of this forecast it has been assumed that there will be no major changes in the allocation method of Local Government funding within the next four years. It has been assumed that Halton will continue in the 100% business rates retention pilot scheme during 2025/26, but that this will cease in 2026/27.

- 6.4 It has been assumed that council tax will rise by 2.99% in 2025/26 which was the maximum allowed without a local referendum for 2024/25, plus an additional precept for Adult Social Care of 2%. For 2026/27 onwards it has been assumed that the referendum limit will revert to 2% with a 1% additional increase for the adult social care precept. For the final two years of the forecast, it is assumed that council tax will rise by 1.99%, plus the additional 1% precept. Any increase in council tax below these levels would lead to an increase in the required level of budget savings.
- 6.5 At September 2024, Retail Price Index (RPI) inflation stood at 2.7%, with Consumer Prices Index (CPI) inflation at 1.7%. 1.7% has been built into the MTFs for general contract inflation, with 6.4% inflation built into the forecast for social care contracts which are sensitive to increases in the National Living Wage.
- 6.6 For 2024/25, a pay rise of £1,290 pro rata was agreed for spinal column points 1 – 43, with a 2.5% pay rise agreed for all staff above this point. A 2% increase in pay budgets has been allowed for in each year of the forecast. If pay awards exceed or fall short of this level, the impact on the forecast will be as follows:

Table 4 – Pay Forecast

Increase in Pay	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	Total	Difference to MTFs
1%	987	999	1,007	1,015	4,008	(4,117)
2%	1,973	2,010	2,050	2,091	8,125	0
3%	2,960	3,045	3,136	3,230	12,370	4,246
4%	3,946	4,099	4,263	4,433	16,742	8,617
5%	4,933	5,173	5,432	5,703	21,241	13,116

- 6.7 Employer pension contribution rates have been set at 20% for 2025/26. The next triennial valuation is due to be undertaken by Cheshire Pension Fund during 2025/26, which will set the employer contribution rates for the following three years. For the purpose of the forecast, it has been assumed that the contribution rate will not change during 2026/27 - 2028/29.
- 6.8 It has been assumed that there will be no change to the grant funding received from Government, with the exception of the Services Grant. This grant has seen significant reductions in value over the past two years and it has been assumed that this funding will cease altogether in 2025/26. This has added £0.252m to the forecast.
- 6.9 The net revenue costs associated with the capital programme are included in the forecast. It is estimated that there will be an increase in costs of £0.619m in 2025/26, primarily relating to the opening of the new Halton Leisure Centre. Costs are forecast to increase by £0.090m in 2026/27 and £0.034m in 2027/28. The forecast assumes that any new capital projects which are approved over the medium-term will be self-funded through capital grants, capital receipts or will generate revenue savings to fund the cost of borrowing.

- 6.10 It is currently forecast that there will be an overspend of £20.942m against the 2024/25 revenue budget. The most significant pressures are caused by Children's Services (£12.333m) and Adult Social Care (£3.658m).
- 6.11 Where current-year spending pressures are expected to re-occur in 2025/26, additional budget has been built into the forecast. £1.198m has been included for agency staffing costs within the in-house Care Homes, £2.433m for Adult Social Care packages, £2.326m for agency staffing costs within Children's Services, £9.426m for Children's Social Care packages, £0.644m for Home to School Transport costs, and £0.858m for additional costs within Legal Services related to increases in caseload.
- 6.12 The additional costs associated with the Children's Service Improvement Programme Funding, presented to Executive Board on 24 October 2024 have been included in the forecast. The programme aims to stabilise the service and is anticipated to lead to decreases in the costs of placements and agency staff. £4.310m has been included in the MTFS during 2025/26 to reflect the costs of the additional established posts, with an additional £0.260m required in 2026/27. The Programme is expected to produce cost mitigation of £2.091m during 2025/26, with further cost reductions of £3.336m and £1.215m anticipated in 2026/27 and 2027/28 respectively. The progress of the Programme will be regularly evaluated and these figures will be updated in future forecasts.
- 6.13 Funding has been included within the forecast to account for an increase in demand for Adult Social Care packages based on historical data. £2.382m has been included for 2025/26, with an additional £2.499m, £2.621m, and £2.749m provided in the following three financial years. Rising demand for Adult Social Care services is major risk to the Council's budget. The figures included in the forecast are based on the average increase in costs due to demand over the past four years. The following table shows the impact on the budget if demand is lower or higher than forecast:

Table 5 – Adult Social Care Demand

Percentage Demand Increase	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	Total	Difference to MTFS
3%	1,458	1,502	1,547	1,593	6,101	(4,150)
4%	1,944	2,022	2,103	2,187	8,257	(1,994)
4.9% (included in forecast)	2,382	2,499	2,621	2,749	10,251	0
6%	2,916	3,091	3,277	3,474	12,759	2,508
7%	3,403	3,641	3,896	4,168	15,107	4,857

- 6.14 There has been a significant rise in demand for placements within Children's Services over recent years. Funding has been included within the forecast for these demand pressures, based on historical data of placement costs. This is

a highly volatile budget and there is a risk that the funding provided in the MTFS may be insufficient to meet future demand, although this should be mitigated by the work being carried out within the Children's Service Improvement Programme. The following table shows the impact on the budget if demand is lower or higher than forecast:

Table 6 – Children's Social Care Demand

Percentage Demand Increase	2025/26 £000	2026/27 £000	2027/28 £000	2028/29 £000	Total	Difference to MTFS
5%	925	972	1,020	1,071	3,989	(4,375)
7%	1,296	1,386	1,483	1,587	5,752	(2,611)
9.77% (included in forecast)	1,808	1,985	2,179	2,392	8,364	0
11%	2,036	2,260	2,508	2,784	9,588	1,225
13%	2,406	2,719	3,072	3,472	11,669	3,305

- 6.15 Growth of £1m has been included in the MTFS for 2025/26 to reflect the costs associated with services which will cease to be funded through the Public Health Grant and will instead need to be funded from the Council's core budget.
- 6.16 On 1 April 2025, the Youth Justice Service will cease to operate through a shared services arrangement, and will move to a model hosted by a single local authority. The new arrangement means that Halton will no longer provide ICT services to the organisation, leading to a loss of income of £0.232m.
- 6.17 An increase in demand for home to school and client transport has led to a significant increase in the amount spent on casual drivers within the service. From 2025/26, it has been determined that these staff should be employed on a permanent basis, requiring an additional budget of £0.350m per year.
- 6.18 During 2024/25, the Department for Education issued a statement on the conditions of the Dedicated Schools Grant to clarify that Special Educational Needs assessments and educational psychology services cannot be funded through the grant. These costs will now need to be met from the Council's own resources at a cost of £1.032m per year.
- 6.19 A combination of falling interest rates and lower cash balances than in previous years mean that the income received from investments is likely to fall significantly in 2025/26. £0.964m of growth has been added to the forecast to account for this in 2025/26, with £0.413m included for 2026/27, and £0.286m included for 2027/28.
- 6.20 During the 2023/24 budget setting process, the Council approved budget savings proposals which covered three financial years. These approved savings have been included in the forecast for 2025/26 with a value of £1.349m

and are detailed in Appendix 3. £0.217m of savings approved for previous financial years have not been achieved, and are unlikely to be achieved in future years. These have been included as growth items within the forecast for 2025/26.

- 6.21 In recent years, a significant amount of reserves have been utilised to help balance the Council's budget, whilst work was undertaken via the Transformation Programme to change the way services are delivered and establish permanent budget savings. As a result, reserves are now at a very low level and therefore the forecast assumes that £2m will be provided in 2026/27 in order to replenish reserves.
- 6.22 There have been an increase in housing benefit claims in relation to residents in supported accommodation in recent years. The Council awards full housing benefit for these residents, but is only reimbursed by the Department for Work and Pensions for the value of the rent in a standard property. This leaves the Council to pick up the additional costs associated with maintaining and managing these homes. An additional £0.100m is included in each year of the forecast for these costs.
- 6.23 On 01 February 2023, Council approved a Transformation Programme with the aim of making significant changes to the organisational culture and the way that services are delivered over a three-year period, enabling the Council to reach a long-term, sustainable financial position. The target budget reductions for the Programme totalled £20m between 2024/25 and 2026/27. As the forecast deficit has increased significantly over the past year, the Transformation Programme is currently being re-prioritised with the aim of delivering more savings over a shorter time period. Due to the uncertainty surrounding the direction of the Programme, at this stage no savings have been included in the forecast. Any future savings made by the Transformation Programme will reduce the Council's funding gap.

Table 7 – Medium Term Spending Forecast 2025/26 – 2028/29

Increase in Spending Required	Year on Year Change £'000			
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
Removal of 2024/25 Transformation Targets	4,000	0	0	
2024/25 Approved Savings Unachieved	217	0	0	0
Capital Programme	619	90	34	1,000
Pay and Price Inflation	6,870	5,469	5,834	5,747
Effect of Interest Rates on Investments	964	413	286	0
2024/25 Overspend – Children's Services	11,752	0	0	0
2024/25 Overspend – Adult Social Care	3,631	0	0	0
2024/25 Overspend – Home to School Transport	644	0	0	0
2024/25 Overspend – Legal Services	858	0	0	0
Service Demand Pressures – Children's Care	1,809	1,985	2,179	2,392
Service Demand Pressures – Adult Social Care	2,382	2,499	2,621	2,749
Service Demand Pressures – Home to School Transport	350	0	0	0
Children's Improvement Funding	4,310	260	0	0
Cost Mitigation from Children's Investment	(2,091)	(3,336)	(1,215)	0
SEN Assessments and Psychology Services	1,032	0	0	0
Public Health Change to Grant Usage	1,000	0	0	0
Legal Salary Costs	100	0	0	0
Housing Benefit Subsidy Costs	100	100	100	0
Loss of Youth Justice Service Income	232	0	0	0
Additional Client Transport Posts	350	0	0	0
Contingency	1,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Reverse 2024/25 10% Supplies and Services Savings	0	840	0	0
Reverse 2024/25 10% Property Maintenance Savings	0	247	0	0
Reverse 2024/25 10% Highways Maintenance Savings	0	459	0	0
Cease the Delivery of the School Meals Service	(247)	0	0	0
Other Known Additional Costs	213	554	18	19
Changes to Government Grant Funding	252	0	0	0
Replenish Reserves	0	2,000	0	0
End of Business Rates Retention Scheme	0	6,296	0	0
Agreed Savings	(1,349)	0	0	0
Total Increase	38,998	19,876	11,857	14,007

7.0 The Funding Gap

7.1 At this level of spending there is a significant funding gap with the forecast level of resources. Table 8 demonstrates the forecast gap between spending and forecast resources from 2025/26 to 2028/29.

Table 8: Funding Gap 2025/26 – 2028/29

	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	2028/29 £'000
Increase in Net Spend Forecast (Table 7)	38,998	19,876	11,857	14,007
Decrease / (Increase) in Business Rates Retained (Incl. Top-Up) (Table 2)	2,580	(2,673)	(1,706)	(1,740)
Increase in Council Tax Base (Para 3.3)	(535)	(646)	(653)	(660)
Decrease / (Increase) in Council Tax Surplus (Para 6.4)	234	0	0	0
Funding Gap Before Council Tax	41,277	16,558	9,498	11,607
Funding Gap After Estimated Council Tax Increase	38,055	14,478	7,316	9,317

7.2 The table shows that total savings of £38.055m are forecast to be needed to balance the 2025/26 budget, assuming a 4.99% increase in council tax. This amounts to a 25.46% reduction to the 2024/25 net budget.

7.3 There are additional shortfalls of £14.478m, £7.316m, and £9.317m forecast from 2026/27 – 2028/29, bringing the total cumulative shortfall over the next four years to £69.166m. These figures assume a council tax increase of 2.99% from 2026/27 onwards.

7.4 This represents a significant challenge for the Council to balance its budget, and a shortfall of this magnitude can only be addressed through restricting current levels of spending, the urgent identification of budget savings, a review of the services which the Council provides to the public, a review of fees and charges, and an application to Government for Exceptional Financial Support.

8.0 Capital Programme

8.1 The Council's capital programme is updated regularly throughout the year. Table 9 summarises the fully funded capital programme for the next two years.

Table 9 – Capital Programme

	2025/26 (£'000)	2026/27 (£'000)
Spending	19,460	9,847
Funding:		
Prudential Borrowing	4,216	1,669
Grants	13,844	8,178
Capital Receipts	1,400	0
Total Funding	19,460	9,847

8.2 The current system of capital controls allows councils to support and fund the capital programme by way of prudential borrowing. Such borrowing is required to be:

- prudent
- affordable, and
- sustainable

8.3 The capital programme is underpinned by the Capital Strategy agreed by Council in March 2024.

8.4 The Council has used prudential borrowing provided that the cost of borrowing has been covered by revenue budget savings and the spending forecast continues this assumption.

8.5 In previous years the Council has been extremely successful in attracting capital grants and contributions. In this way, the Council has been able to undertake significant capital expenditure without financing costs falling on the revenue budget and this approach will continue.

9.0 Reserves and Balances

9.1 The Council's Reserves and Balances Strategy is attached in Appendix 2. It sets out the Council's strategy in respect of the level of reserves and balances it wishes to maintain, by reference to the financial needs and risks associated with the Council's activities.

9.2 The level of balances and reserves will be reviewed as part of the budget monitoring and final accounts processes.

10.0 Conclusions

- 10.1 The Council has used significant amounts of reserves over recent years to help provide a balanced budget position and avoid making permanent budget savings. This approach is no longer sustainable given the low level of reserves remaining and therefore it is essential that future spending requirements are managed in line with available budget. The forecast funding gap of £69.671m over the next four years will require the Council to make significant savings, if the Section 151 Officer is to avoid issuing a Section 114 notice. It is clear that, to achieve the level of savings required, it will no longer be possible for the Council to maintain the range and level of service provision that it currently offers.
- 10.2 This Strategy highlights that considerable budget savings will be required over the short-term in order for the Council to deliver balanced annual revenue budgets. In order for this to be done in a managed and sustainable way, it is highly likely that the Council will need to apply to MHCLG for Exceptional Financial Support to provide sufficient time to enable the Transformation Programme to enact changes across the whole organisation with the aim of bringing the Council's expenditure back in line with available funding. The additional costs of borrowing associated with EFS are not included within this forecast, but are estimated to be approximately £0.9m per year, for 25 years, for each £10m borrowed. These costs are subject to change caused by the movement in interest rates.
- 10.3 The Business Rates Retention Scheme carries further risks to the funding available to the Council over the medium and longer term. The lack of certainty provided by Government means that it is very difficult to predict both the timing and extent of the impact upon the Council's budget of potential future funding changes.
- 10.4 The future levels of savings required will be directly influenced by the decisions made concerning council tax increases. Council tax increases will reduce the level of savings required, although the legislative requirements regarding council tax referendums will restrict the Council's scope to implement these increases.
- 10.5 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy provides a framework and underlying assumptions which will be used in the preparation of the 2025/26 annual budget. It has been based upon information that is currently available, however, revisions to the Strategy will need to be made as new developments take place and new information becomes available.
- 10.6 Appendix 2 sets out the Council's Strategy in respect of the level of reserves and balances it wishes to maintain, by reference to the financial needs and risks associated with the Council's activities.

RESERVES AND BALANCES STRATEGY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following sets out the Council's Strategy in respect of the level of reserves and balances it wishes to maintain, by reference to the financial needs and risks associated with the Council's activities.
- 1.2 The overall strategy is to provide the Council with an appropriate level of reserves and balances in relation to its day to day activities and to ensure the Council's financial standing is sound and supports the achievement of its long term objectives and corporate priorities.
- 1.3 The Director, Finance will undertake quarterly reviews of the level of reserves and balances and take appropriate action in order to ensure the overall Strategy is achieved. The outcome of the reviews will be reported to the Executive Board and will be used to inform the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), the annual budget setting process and the final accounts process.
- 1.4 The Strategy concentrates upon the Council's key reserves and balances, being those which may potentially have a significant affect upon the Council's financial standing and its day-to-day operations.

2.0 RESERVE BALANCES

- 2.1 As at 30 September 2024 the balance of the Council's general reserve was £5.149m. It has been the Council's policy to maintain general balances at a reasonable level, based upon the financial risks and challenges it faces. This is particularly important at the current time, given the increasing demand-led pressures upon Children's Services and Adult Social Care.
- 2.2 The Council has used reserves in helping to provide balanced budget positions, but the level of reserves is now such that using reserves in this way is no longer sustainable. There is an urgent need to start the process of replenishing reserves, although in the current climate and against the need to take on Exceptional Financial Support this makes replenishment difficult. This forecast assumes from year two reserves will be replenished by the value of £2m in each year.
- 2.3 In addition to the general reserve the Council holds earmarked reserves set aside for specific purposes. As at 30 September 2024 the balance of earmarked reserves was £51.739m, a breakdown of which is presented below. It should be noted that the Mersey Gateway reserve of £27.560m is ringfenced for the Mersey Gateway project.
- 2.4 Held within the Transformation Reserve is £6.432m, set aside to provide funding for towards meeting the Council's 2024/25 overspend position and a range of potential spending commitments in future years associated with

delivering the Transformation Programme. The remaining reserves are earmarked for specific, committed purposes and are therefore not available to support the Council's wider financial needs.

Summary of General and Earmarked Reserves	
Reserve	Reserve Value £m
Corporate:	
General Fund	5.149
Transformation Fund	6.432
Capital Reserve	0.499
Insurance Reserve	1.000
Specific Projects:	0
Adult Social Care	0.569
Fleet Replacement	0.328
Highways Feasibility Costs	0.964
Local Development Framework	0.494
Community & Environment	0.253
Mersey Valley Golf Club	0.483
Mersey Gateway	27.560
Various Other	0.668
Grants:	0
Building Schools for the Future	6.529
Public Health	1.881
Supporting Families Performance Payments	0.534
Children's & Education	0.741
Domestic Abuse	1.186
Enterprise & Employment	0.851
Various Other	0.767
	0
Total Earmarked Reserves	56.888

3.0 PROVISIONS

Sundry Debtors

- 3.1 The Council makes provision for bad and doubtful debts based upon an annual review of outstanding debts profiled by age and the associated risks of non-payment, depending upon the types of debt.
- 3.2 Past experience has shown that after 43 days (the period covering the initial stages of recovery action) the likelihood of sundry debts being paid reduces significantly and therefore the risk of them not being recovered increases greatly. Increased provision will therefore be made for all sundry debts outstanding for more than 43 days.

- 3.3 The bad debt provisions in respect of sundry debtors at 31 March 2024 totals £5.760m.

Council Tax / Business Rates (NNDR)

- 3.4 Bad debt provisions are made in respect of Council Tax and National Non Domestic Rate (NNDR) debts. The bad debt provisions (Council Share) in respect of Council Tax and NNDR debtors at 31 March 2024 totals £17.402m.
- 3.5 The levels of bad debt provisions held are considered prudent in relation to the current level and age profile of outstanding debts. But they will be reviewed annually, particularly in the light of the prevailing economic climate. Therefore appropriate provisions will be made to minimise the risk of financial loss to the Council.
- 3.6 The Council is also required to hold a provision for NNDR valuation appeal claims. The provision as at 31 March 2024 totals £2.003m.

APPENDIX 3

2025/26 APPROVED BUDGET SAVINGS

Department	Service Area	Description of Saving Proposal	Savings Value £'000
Adult Social Care	Housing Solutions	Remodel the current service based on good practice evidence from other areas.	125
Adult Social Care	Voluntary Sector Support	Review the support provided by Adult Social Care and all other Council Departments to voluntary sector organisations. This would include assisting them to secure alternative funding in order to reduce their dependence upon Council funding. A target saving phased over two years has been estimated.	100
Adult Social Care	Care Management Community Care Budget	Attract £500k investment from the pooled budget (BCF) from 2024/25. Undertake work in years 1 and 2 to reduce reliance upon contracted services from 2025/26. Services are currently in the process of being redesigned on a "Strengths Based Approach" i.e. focused upon prevention.	1,000
Children & Families	Children's Centres	Review the operation of Windmill Hill Children's Centre.	22
Community & Greenspace	School Meals	Cease to deliver the school meals service.	12
Finance	Internal Audit	Restructure in light of potential retirements over the next two years within the Internal Audit Team.	50
Finance	Council Tax	Increase the charges applied when a court summons is issued by 30% (£23), to achieve full cost recovery over the three year period.	40
Total Approved Savings			1,349

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 14 November 2024

REPORTING OFFICER: Director of Finance

PORTFOLIO: Corporate Services

SUBJECT: Determination of Council Tax Base 2025/26

WARD(S): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Council is required to determine annually the Council Tax Base for its area and also the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes.
- 1.2 The Council is required to notify the Council Tax Base figure to the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the Environment Agency by 31st January 2025. The Council is also required to calculate and advise if requested, the Parish Councils of their relevant Council Tax Bases.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) Council set the 2025/26 Council Tax Base at 36,936 for the Borough, and that the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and the Environment Agency be so notified; and
- (2) Council set the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes as follows:

Parish	Tax Base
Hale	674
Halebank	546
Daresbury	301
Moore	344
Preston Brook	373
Sandymoor	1,645

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council Tax Base is the measure used for calculating Council Tax and is used by both the billing authority (the Council) and the major precepting authorities (Cheshire Fire Authority, Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner and Liverpool City Region Combined Authority), in the calculation of their Council Tax requirements.
- 3.2 The Council Tax Base figure is arrived at in accordance with a prescribed formula, and represents the estimated full year number of chargeable dwellings in the Borough, expressed in terms of the equivalent of Band 'D' dwellings.
- 3.3 The Council Tax Base is calculated using the number of dwellings included in the Valuation List, as provided by the Valuation Office Agency, as at 14 October 2024. Adjustments are then made to take into account the estimated number of discounts, voids, additions and demolitions during the period 14 October 2024 to 31 March 2025.
- 3.4 The tax base calculation has included an element for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The estimated amount of Council Tax Support payable for 2025/26 is converted into the equivalent number of whole properties which are deducted from the total.
- 3.5 The tax base calculation will include an element for Care Leavers Discretionary Discount. The estimated amount of Care Leavers Discount payable for 2025/26 is converted into the equivalent number of whole properties which are deducted from the total.
- 3.6 The tax base calculation will include an element for Foster Carers Discretionary Discount. The estimated amount of Foster Carers Discount payable for 2025/26 is converted into the equivalent number of whole properties which are deducted from the total.
- 3.7 An estimated percentage collection rate is then applied to the product of the above calculation to arrive at the Council Tax Base for the year.
- 3.8 Taking account of all the relevant information and applying a 97.0% collection rate, the calculation for 2025/26 provides a tax base figure of **36,936** for the Borough as a whole.

- 3.9 Taking account of all the relevant information and applying a 97.0% collection rate, the appropriate Council Tax Base figure for each of the Parishes is as follows

Parish	Tax Base
Hale	674
Halebank	546
Daresbury	301
Moore	344
Preston Brook	373
Sandymoor	1,645

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Council Tax Base will enable the Council to set the level of Council Tax to be charged for 2025/26.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCILS PRIORITIES

- 6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**
- 6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**
- 6.3 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**
- 6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**
- 6.5 **Working Towards a Greener Future**
- 6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

There are no direct implications, however, council tax revenue supports the delivery and achievement of all the Council's priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 There would be significant loss of income to the Council if the Council Tax Base were not agreed, as it would not be possible to set the level of Council Tax to be charged for 2025/26.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 None.

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None

10.0 REASON FOR THE DECISION

10.1 To seek approval for the Council Tax Base for the Borough and also the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes.

11.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

11.1 The Council is required to determine annually the Council Tax Base and to notify the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, the Environment Agency and Parish Councils.

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

12.1 The Council Tax Base 2025/26 will be implemented from 1st April 2025.

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

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Working Papers	DCBL Stadium	Stephen Baker

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

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